

knew what misery she had caused, and while she also knew she had been forgiven, she could not face the look in the eye of the man whose love she longed for, and had sinned for, but who must always be far from her, till the end of her life and his. She went home to her idiot brother, and sat on the floor beside him, and said nothing. She was lonely with him, for he had his realm—his wild realm—of fancies; and she had only the stern world to fight; and her own past memories to face. The idiot fell asleep beside her, his great head lolling in her lap; and the hours went by, and still she sat there conjuring up that room she had left behind at the Castle, and those therein.

If they whom Elsie thought on were not merry, at least the insupportable constraint of the first few moments was gone, and they soon drifted into easy talk upon old days and old friends. They asked for her father, and here she gravely, and as Benoni thought, apprehensively, said that she expected him, but that he had gone far across the hills, and it was possible he might be late. They sat about the table eating, but they would drink no toasts, they said, until Black Fordie came.

At last they heard his rough footstep on the stair, and he entered boisterously on them. They all rose to their feet, as he glowered in astonishment at them, though he had known of Benoni's mission across the sea. The years had dealt hardly with him. His hair was very grey, his shoulders stooped, and his face wrinkled. Still the old sturdiness was there too, and his eyes flashed out sharp looks at the three men. Venlaw he had always liked. Brian he had never forgiven. Had he met him a year ago he would have killed him. Elsie cured that. Just now their presence acted on him strangely. His hand leaped out to Andrew's, and clutched it with a hungering eagerness, and then to Benoni, and it caught him by the shoulder. "You're verra welcome back, Andy," he said, "and I've a noggin waitin' for ye, Benoni, and no siccan a'ane as the lass has put on the table for ye. But it's in a bottle which naeboddy ken's o' but mysel'."

He had not yet spoken to Brian, and still not looking at him, but with his eyes on Andrew, he said: "Ye hae cam frae the Arctic world; ye hae cam frae the land o' exiles. Did ye ken if they heard there o' a wastrel and villain, that carried the name o' Fordie?"

"John Fordie," replied Andrew, firmly, "it's but few months since one of that name

laid hand in mine, and said: 'When ye set foot on the soil o' auld Scotland again, the first step ower the Border, get aff yer horse, and gang doon on your knees, and kiss the ground for me, whether it be rock or heather; for I'll never see the like o' that land. It's a land that God loves, and made for men, and no for vagabonds such as was I.'"

"Did he say that?" interrupted the old man with a slight huskiness in his voice. "Did the hard-hearted secondrel say that?"

"That, John Fordie, and more. 'And when you get above Braithen town,' said he, 'stand still, and look down at it, and say: A man went out frae Braithen town like a thief in the dark, and he took a' his sins and his shame wi' him, and the bad luck that gang wi' baith; but he left his heart ahint him.'"

"Did the raff say that?" cried the old man, interposing, and he struck his leg with his whip as though disturbed in mind; for his was a stern nature, and it had been said of him, all his life, that he never forgave—and even yet he did not look at Brian.

"And this more, he said," continued Andrew,—"When you gang doon to the Shiel-side dip yer hand in the water, and whistle that song we used to sing as we paddled alang frae Cowrie Castle to Margaret's Brae, *For Ilka Man and Ilka Muid that Lives by Shielie Water*; and when you see the Castle, and enter it, ye'll find a man they ca' Black Fordie. And he's a guid man, but he's a stern man; and ye'll say to him that there's a lad at the Arctic Circle that, maybe, he'll never see again, wha wad gie ten years o' his life to say to his face, 'Ye're a gran' man, John Fordie, and a bad day it was for you and for him, when he brocht shame on ye.' And tak' his hand and gie him the grip o' the clan, and what mair be the will o' God.'"

The old man dropped into a chair, his hands on his knees, his head bent forward, his eyes upon the floor. "Did the lad say that?" murmured he; "did the laddie say that?"

There was silence. Jean's face was turned pityingly away, and Brian had drawn slightly aside. Benoni seemed intent on his flute, which he was balancing in his fingers.

Presently the old man rose and walked over to Brian. "I'll no say that I loe the sicht o' yer face, Brian Kingley, for ye've done mair wrang than guid tae me and mine; but I'm willin' to let bygones be bygones, and there's my hand, an' ye'll take it!"

Brian clasped the extended hand. "You've got a son, John Fordie," said he, "whose