

"After Her," said Robin shortly.

"Her?" said the Laird; "who is Her?"

"She is Her," snapped Robin, "who else?—her that is desecrating your fowls."

"I thought ye said——" began the Laird.

"I said nothing of the sort," cried Robin passionately.

"I say She is Her and Her ways are the ways of Death. She comes like the Shadow and goes like the same; and what she *is* in heaven or earth or under the earth I ken no more than the unbornt babe—and none does," he added, "save Simon Ogg."

"Simon Ogg!" said the Laird. "He is the very last person likely to know anything of this business. He's scarce crossed his threshold since his mother's death. Try as I may, I've not been able to come at speech of him. He's locked himself up like a hermit. I went to have a word with him just now after the funeral; but directly he saw me coming he was off like a hare. As you're going down the street you might look in on him and bid him come up to the House to see me. He can't live on alone in that cottage, poor lad; and there's none in the village 'd house him but me; so I must take him in and find him work in the garden for a bit. The poor lad seems to have taken his mother's death to heart, as though she'd been the best mother in the world to him."

"She was the only mother he ever had," said Robin sourly.

"I thought as much," mused the Laird. "And I suppose a man's mother is a man's mother still—however much he wishes she was some one else's." "And you," he called after the little figure disappearing in the dark, "might remember that, and that once you had a mother yourself. . . . You'll likely find him alone in his cottage brooding over his loss, poor lad," he added, not without feeling, and passed on.