

the skiff is under the window; step into it, an' do thou go on the bay wi' me an hour."

"I havena any mind to go, John. It is nine by the clock, an' to-morrow the peat is to coil an' the herring to kipper; yes, indeed."

"Well an' good. But here is matter o' mair account than peat an' herring. Wilt thou come?"

"At the end I ken weel thou wilt hae thy way. Mother, here is John, an' he is for my going on the bay wi' him."

"Then thou go. If John kept aye as gude company he wouldna be like to bring my gray hairs wi' sorrow to the grave."

John did not answer this remark until they had pushed well off from the sleeping town, then he replied fretfully, "Yes, what mother says is true enough; but a man gces into the world. A' the fingers are not alike, much less one's friends. How can a' be gude?"

"To speak from the heart, John, wha is it?"

"Ragon Torr. Thou knows we hae sat i' the same boat an' drawn the same nets for three years; he is gude and bad, like ither folk."

"Keep gude company, my brother, an' thou wilt aye be counted ane o' them. When Ragon is gude he is ower gude, and when he is bad he is just beyont kenning."

"Can a man help the kin he comes o'? Have not his forbears done for centuries the vera same way? Naething takes a Norseman frae his bed or his cup but some great deed o' danger or profit; but then wha can fight or wark like them?"

"Christ doesna ask a man whether he be Norse or Scot. If Ragon went mair to the kirk an' less to the change-house, he wouldna need to differ. Were not our ain folk cattle-lifting Hieland thieves lang after the days o' the Covenant?"

"Christine, ye'll speak nae wrang o' the Sabays. It's an ill bird 'files its ain nest."

"Weel, weel, John! The gude name o' the Sabays is i' thy hands now. But to speak from the heart, this thing touches thee nearer than Ragon Torr. Thou did not bring me out to speak only o' him."

"Thou art a wise woman, Christine, an' thou art right. It touches Margaret Fae, an' when it does that, it touches what is dearer to me than life."

"I see it not."

"Do not Ragon an' I sail i' Peter Fae's boats? Do we not eat at his table, an' bide round his house during the whole fishing season? If I sail no more wi' Ragon, I must quit Peter's employ; for he loves Ragon as he loves no ither lad i' Stromness or Kirkwall. The Norse blood we think little o' Peter glories in; an' the twa men count thegither o'er their glasses the races of the Vikings, an' their ain generations up to Snorro an' Thorso."

"Is there no ither master but Peter Fae? ask theesel' that question, John."