

LXVII

ONE KENS WHAT HE KENS

THE Laird was writing busily that morn when Robin appeared in the hall. His hand was behind him, and Danny at his heels.

"I was right," he said, nodding.

"You aye are," said the Laird, writing on. "What is it?"

"It's the Lord, as I tell't ye," said Robin; and he held up a lank-necked cockerel.

"I knew it," said the Laird. "Once you let it begin, it would go on. Where did ye find him?"

"I didna find him."

"Who did then?"

"Danny."

"He's worth six of you," said the Laird. "What's he at now?"

"Catching the drops from the neb of the departed," said Robin.

The Laird looked and saw his Squire sitting still as a grey statue, with delicate pink tongue and tilted muzzle, catching the red drops as they fell from the beak of the dead bird.

"Danny!" called the Laird harshly, "don't play at murder!" And the little man rose and came to him across the stone-flags, looking for once a little foolish. "And you," said the Laird to Robin, "might go down to the village and see if they know anything there," said the Laird. "There's mischief hatching in Hepburn or I'm mistaken."

That evening Robin betook himself to the village ale-house. There he found the people gathered as of wont; but now there was no clack of voices as he entered. The toppers sat round sipping, a darkness brooding over them.