

steps. That strange night-wanderer in the woods was Ninian's greatest mystery. It was one he never was to solve. To-night his own re-echoed steps brought up that old experience for a moment; then he heard an infant's cry in some high attic chamber—peevish, as it were with anger that it should be born. Its mother hushed it; he could hear her plainly coax it to its sleep, and sing to it a drowsy strain of "Colin's Cattle." Its whimpering done, the burgh slept again.

Fresh from a long sederunt at the Bailie's, he had a feeling in himself as of a person walking on a crag far up in mountains, looking down through openings in mist at things deplorable, revealed in glimpses—harrying beasts, sin writhing in the depths, iniquitous concerns, greed, pillage, cunning, murderous doings. It seemed amazing folk should sleep at all,—MacCaillein's castle or the poorest hovel of the lanes, when the spirit of unrest and evil stalked abroad.

And yet the night, for all its lifelessness, had some wild spirit of its own, in flying clouds that swept across the moon like reek. He wondered. The tide beat on the walls and the river roared; the wind, as it were, blew where it wist, untrammelled; these indifferent to results, though subject to some law outwith themselves. Was it so with men? That they were driven, too, by a force beyond themselves, to make from sin and goodness at the last, far hence, some strong and perfect life, as the life of the *ceilidh* stories?

He felt the weariness of the past week's doings mount on him; he was a little dazed, his mind in a half delirium.

And then of a sudden was he wide awake, with the *beachdair* of him uppermost!

The way to his house was past the Fisherland. It was a tenement of substantial build, with half a dozen families at its southern end where it looked on fields; but at its north with one house untenanted since Whitsunday, when the owner, Campbell of Craignure, took for the summer to his country-seat. The shadow of the church obscured three-fourths of it, but a corner stood blank-white in the