

one in the secret cellar, and was coming up. He turned hastily round, and there was Sandy Beg.

"Thou scoundrel!" and he fairly gnashed his teeth at the intruder, "what dost thou want here?"

"I want money an' help."

Badly enough Sandy wanted both; and a dreadful story he told. He had indeed engaged himself at Wick for a whaling voyage, but at the last moment had changed his mind and deserted. For somewhere among the wilds of Rhiconich, in Sutherland, he had a mother, a wild, superstitious, half-heathen Highland woman, and he wanted to see her. Coming back to the coast, after his visit, he had stopped a night at a little wayside inn, and hearing some drovers talking of their gold in Gallic, a language which he well understood, he had followed them into the wild pass of Gualon, and there shot them from behind a rock. For this murder he had been tracked, and was now so closely pursued that he had bribed with all the gold he had a passing fishing-smack to drop him at Stromness during the night.

"I'll gae awa now ta some ither place; 'teet I will! An' I'm hungry—an' unco dry;" all of which Sandy emphasized by a desperate and very evil look.

The man was not to be trifled with, and Ragon knew that he was in his power. If Sandy was taken he would confess all, and Ragon knew well that in such case transportation for life and hard labour would be his lot. Other considerations pressed him heavily—the shame, the loss, the scorn of Margaret, the triumph of all his ill-wishers. No, he had gone too far to retreat.

He fed the villain, gave him a suit of his own clothes, and £50, and saw him put off to sea. Sandy promised to keep well out in the bay, until some vessel going north to Zetland or Iceland, or some Dutch skipper bound for Amsterdam, took him up. All the next day Ragon was in misery, but nightfall came and he heard nothing of Sandy, though several craft had come into port. If another day got over he would feel safe; but he told himself that he was in a gradually narrowing circle, and that the sooner he leaped outside of it the better.

When he reached home the old couple who hung about the place, and who had learned to see nothing and to hear nothing, came to him and voluntarily offered a remark.

"Queer folk an' strange folk have been here, an' ta'en awa some claes out o' the cellar."

Ragon asked no questions. He knew what clothes they were—that suit of John Sabay's in which Sandy Beg had killed Peter Fae, and the rags which Sandy had a few hours before exchanged for one of his own sailing-suits. He needed no one to tell him what had happened. Sandy had undoubtedly bespoke the very vessel containing the officers in search of him, and had confessed all, as he said he would. The men were probably at this moment looking for him.

He lifted the gold prepared for any such emergency, and,