

She inclined her head, but did not speak. Already the strain of the brief interview was telling, and she inwardly prayed for his swift departure.

"Was there ever anything between you that would vex the heart o' the woman my son hopes to marry? She is above the cammon, and I would not have her vexed after—you understand?"

"There was nothing but a bit of foolish fun, Mr. Dennison. What has happened to me is as common as the rising and the setting of the sun, and will be as long as men are as they are. I'm not even sorry that it happened. I dreamed a foolish dream, maybe, and it's over, but that's all. It's not going to break or even bend me! So don't trouble your mind easy, Mr. Dennison, and do nothing to stop my marriage or vex the lady's heart. And leave Archie alone. He has had his lesson, and I want no unhappiness to come to him through me."

Mr. Dennison was deeply moved by this appeal.

"My dear," he said, and he took both her hands and clasped them warmly in his grasp, "I canna tell ye what I feel. I won't forget it, nor will his mother when she hears of it. Ye are fine! I wish there were mony mair like ye for it's you and such as you that keep men in the right way. Goodbye the noo. But we'll meet again. It's a must! I was fella pleased wi' the daughter my son wants to give me, my dear, but—but at this moment I could not have it had been you!"

Mollie answered not at all save by the starting of her eyes. She walked with him to the door, still smiling bravely, and stood while he got into the waiting car.

"Mr. Archie has walkit on, sir," said the chauffeur, and Mr. Dennison nodded, took off his hat, and walked bare-headed till the car had swept round the corner and the cottage was out of sight.

When they made up with Archie, swinging along the road like one in hot pursuit, they drew up silently, and Archie jumped into his seat.

But no word, good, bad, or indifferent, did father and son speak to each other as they sped towards Dunmohr.