

their presence there was a military necessity, my wife made the best of it without complaint.

When two weeks had passed I felt my health fully restored, and one day when the cool autumn air invited me to exercise I mounted my horse, and, thinking to go only a few paces beyond the wall, rode out without escort, not stopping to speak to Catherine who was occupied within the house. The day was so delightfully invigorating, however, that I pressed on in high spirit until I came to the Lake of Darvra. The tiny boat was moored at the water's edge, with its white sail lashed to the mast. I rode past this boat and around the road where we had pursued Lord Kilmac's band, until I came to the secret entrance to the hermit's cave, and still on to the open mouth of the cave itself. And when I had come there I drew my prancing horse suddenly on his haunches, for right in front of me, peering over the rocky threshold and into the cave, was my Scoutmaster, David Potton. He was pale and emaciated, and his gaunt form was more wasted than ever; besides, he seemed to be weak, and suffering from unhealed wounds. But there was an expression of fear in his face now which was a stranger there, and it was his unexpected appearance in this startled attitude that caused me to rein up my horse in amazement. Right before his eyes were the decayed bodies of Lord Kilmac's Irish troopers, whom we had slain for their abduction of Lady Betty; but the Scoutmaster was gazing over these gruesome objects at something real or fancied beyond.

"David!" I cried.

He laid his hand upon his sword and turned quickly upon me. Then, recognising me, he beckoned me to come to him.