

4 WHEN LOVE CALLS MEN TO ARMS

in the byre, safe from the cold, but in the soft, summer nights we let them lie out among the daisies. The only duty I had at my early age was to drive the cows from the field to byre and back again, and in the morning and evening to carry milk to Kilellan Castle.

How well I remember the dawn of many a winter morning on the road to the laird's, when the eyelids of the stars seemed too frozen to shut at daylight, when the hoar-painted grass crinkled underfoot while the hoops of the milk-pails sank into my cold palms and my toes seemed dead in my shoon. But I was a sturdy lad for my years and, although the chilblains glowed rosy on my fingers, it was a healthy breath that formed icicles on my woolen scarf.

But it was late summer when Don John came to Kilellan. I mind well that evening when I had barred the cows in the wee pasture, and was coming home through the bit wood to the house. The burn was gurgling under the brambles and the trout leaping in the linn; the midges were tickling my bare legs and the beetles grumbling in the air. I had aye like the long summer nights, but that one is in my mind for another reason.

I took my milk-pails and started for Kilellan Castle, which was set back in the woods on the hill. Not even from the mountains could you see a tower of it, the timber grew up so tall and so close to it.