

CHAPTER I

GLENORCHAR CASTLE faced the moor with a challenge. With much the same air of blatant mastery was its owner wont to stand upon the broad new terraces—a hand in each pocket jingling coins and keys, white-spatted feet planted firmly apart—surveying his new acquisition. The deer forest, the hills, the dark loch, all had become his indeed. But, save at those hours when the fussy passage of the motor-launch broke the reflections of wood and mountain on the placid waters, Glenorchar defied the cotton spinner and his money: the personality of the stranger remained as alien to the wild, mysterious land as did the excrescence of stone and mortar, turreted, battlemented, madly begabled, which called itself Glenorchar Castle.

For the cynic, it has been said, everything has a price and nothing has a value. To cross the threshold of Lord Weyford's residence in the Highlands was to receive an object-lesson in the power of money—and in its limits; to discover how things of themselves priceless can be robbed of all value. The Vandyke cavalier, with the lovelocks falling about his face, with the tragedy and greatness of a lost cause and the premonition of an early death stamped in high dignity on his young beauty—what was his presentment doing on the walls of the Southron spinner? The man who had bought it was careful that there should be no mistake as to the manner of its coming there. "This picture," an ornamental silver plate