

the manse, and Miss Isobel was full of spirits and fun, yet had a way with her that kept folk from being too pushing. However it was, Nannie was a handful for any woman, and specially for one who hadn't had marriage to sharpen her wits; and if Jean hadna been braced up through falling out with her lad, I doubt she would never have curbed her spirit. But I think all are no sent to the same teacher for wisdom; and some of us learn the meaning of life by pain; and some by the joy that makes the heart unfold like the gowans in the sun in the summer-time.

Kirsty held that it was her that educated Nannie; for she was aye scolding the lassie and dragging her up by the wrong end, as she did her own bairns—who would one and all have gone wrong if it hadna been for David keeping them straight when Kirsty was away teaching the neighbours their duty to their childer.

Well, it wasna long before we saw that Jean's work with Nannie would soon be over, for more than one Skyrle laddie was wanting her; and on summer nights the road by the shore was taken up by young lads strolling past Jean's house and casting an eye round for a sight of Nannie. But none could say it was the lad's blame for wishing to walk along Seagate in the gloaming, it being a bonnie part of the town and a near way to the cliffs. The house faced the sea; and when the tide was out, it was fine to see the rocks all brown and red and gold with seaweed, and little pools among them, and the fishing boats drawn up on the shingle.

And even at night it was bonnie, with the sea stretching out, dim and mysterious, and the red light from the harbour tower flashing over it like a vivid dream across a sleep.

And, moreover, it did no harm for the lads to go by; for Nannie was aye reading love stories and hadn't a thought to spare for the real thing dressed in serge breeks.

It was when she was turned sixteen that Kirsty was curious to explain a change that came over Jean.

She had been close and silent, living to herself, since she had had the bairn and had parted from her lad; and her face had grown strong and set, as though she had a secret locked away somewhere behind it. But quite sudden-like her eyes began to soften, and her face changed, with a look on it you notice in the woods just before the spring comes in; and Kirsty said to herself, "Jean must be courting."

But though she watched and made errands to Seagate most evenings, there was never a sign of any lad seeking Jean. If she had thought, she would have done better to go to Miss Isobel (she was aye Miss Isobel to Kirsty, though by that time the lassie had gotten anither name); for she would have seen by her face, after Jean had been calling, that good luck had come to her. And so it had; for Willie Murgatroyd had sent Jean a letter saying he had kept single for her sake. He was a rich man now, and was winning home to see if she had forgotten him.

As you may think, Jean had no done that; and so she wrote and telled him; and then set herself to count the days before his