

"I'd liefer bide with minnie," said he, "if yer Honour pleases."

"Ye must find a better reason than that, my lad," said the Laird.

Simon fell back on the old argument.

"Your Honour killed my father," he said.

"What if I did?" said the Laird curtly.

Simon bit his thumb and pondered.

"Only," said he, "it was none that neighbourly."

"And anyway," said the Laird, "because I killed your father that's no reason you should kill my deer."

Simon shifted uneasily.

"A lad must live," he said, "and I'm far ower wankly to work."

"You're strong enough to steal," said the Laird.

"That's easier done," said Simon.

"So's going to gaol," said the Laird.

Simon pondered.

"There's minnie, too," he said. "There's none but me to work for her."

"Ye're not strong enough to work," said the Laird. "You're forgetting."

"There is other things I do for her," said Simon.

"What sort of things?"

"I fetch her whiskey," said Simon. "She will miss that sore."

"Sorer than ever she'll miss you," said the Laird. "I can tell ye that. D'you know, my lad," he added earnestly, "your dear mother has been at me these seventeen years to get me to put you away for her."

"Same as ye did daddie?" gasped Simon.

"She's not particular," said the Laird, "only so long as you go; and she gets her crown a week and her cottage to herself. And I'm going to oblige her."

Simon knelt down.

"I'd liefer not be murdered," he whimpered, "if it's all the same to Mr. Hepburn."