

of the land. He went first to the outer door with the candle before he said good night, drew back great bars, and opened the oak. The sky was studded with pale golden stars; the open air was dense with the perfume of the wood, the saline indication of the seaward. On the rocky edge of the islet at one part showed the white fringe of the waves now more peaceful; to the north brooded enormous hills, seen dimly by the stars, couchant terrors, vague vast shapes of dolours and alarms. Doom stood long looking at them with the flame of the candle blowing inward and held above his head—a mysterious man beyond Montaignon's comprehension. He stood behind him a pace or two, shivering in the evening air.

"You'll be seeing little there, I'll warrant, Count, but a cold night and inhospitable vacancy, hard hills and the robber haunting them. For me, that prospect is my evening prayer. I cannot go to sleep without it, for fear I wake in Paradise and find it's all by with Doom and the native hills for me."

And by that he seemed to Montaignon more explicable: it was the lover he was; the sentimentalist, the poet, knowing the ancient secret of the animate earth, taking his hills and valleys passionately to his heart. The Frenchman bowed his sympathy and understanding.

"It's a wonder Mungo kept his word and went to bed," said the Baron, recovering his ordinary manner, "for it would just suit his whim to bide up and act sentry here, very well pleased at the chance your coming gave him of play-acting the man of war."

He bolted the door again with its great bars, then gravely preceded his guest to the foot of the turret stair, where he handed him the candle.

"You're in a dreary air of the house," he said apologetically, "but I hope you may find it not uncomfortable. Doom is more than two-thirds but empty still, and the bats have the old chapel above