

the swishing sound of a tide on sand, and made a pattering among the alder leaves, but the chance of discounting Margaret's anticipated bantering on his changed appearance—once again remembered with a twinge—by breaking with tutorial dignity upon her hiding, was too precious to be resisted. On an impulse that a moment of reflection would have quelled, he strode across the river gravel laid a score of years ago so thick on the path that led to the dovecote that even yet the grass had not won through it, and he hammered loudly on the door.

There was no answer from within, nor the slightest sound of movement.

A wild-bird with a doleful whistle rose a little way off by the water-side, and swept across the valley towards Drimdorran House, whose windows seemed more unbelievably aloft in space than ever. All the other watery windy voices of the night were blent for the moment in a deep sonorous hum, as if Glen Aray had become a bagpipe drone to which this searcher in the darkness had his ear; a gust of rising wind was blowing from Dunchuach.

Æneas stood back a pace, and, lifting up his head, peered at the tower, whose rounded form stretched high above him like a lighthouse. A just conception of its size had never been conveyed to him before; it was the first time he had stood close up beside its white-harled walls, and in the gloom they looked immense, mysterious, invested with some immaterial essence as of ancient secrecy and dead men's frustrate plans. It had been immemorially old when his own folk owned Drimdorran, yet it showed no symptom of decay, or Duncanson, no doubt, had long since made an end of it with a blast of powder, for its useless presence roused his visitors to curiosity and speculation.

A second time he rapped in vain, then groped to find the sneck. His thumb fell on it as by custom, and he pushed the door, to find, with some astonishment, the place all dark within. All dark and tenantless! He could not doubt that he had seen a light a minute or two