

Ragon had not at first intended to positively swear away his friend's life; he had been driven to it, not only by Margaret's growing antipathy to him and her decided interest in John's case and family, but also by that mysterious power of events which enable the devil to forge the whole chain that binds a man when the first link is given him. But the word once said, he adhered positively to it, and even asserted it with quite unnecessary vehemence and persistence.

After such testimony there was but one verdict possible. John Sabay was declared guilty of murder, and sentenced to death. But there was still the same strange and unreasonable belief in his innocence, and the judge, with a peculiar stretch of clemency, ordered the sentence to be suspended until he could recommend the prisoner to his majesty's mercy.

A remarkable change now came over Dame Alison. Her anger, her sense of wrong, her impatience, were over. She had come now to where she could do nothing else but trust implicitly in God; and her mind, being thus stayed, was kept in a strange exultant kind of perfect peace. Lost confidence? Not a bit of it! Both Christine and her mother had reached a point where they knew

"That right is right, since God is God,  
And right the day must win;  
To doubt would be disloyalty,  
To falter would be sin."

Slowly the weary winter passed away. And just as spring was opening there began to be talk of Ragon Torr's going away. Margaret continued to refuse his addresses with a scorn he found it ill to bear; and he noticed that many of his old acquaintances dropped away from him. There is a distinct atmosphere about every man, and the atmosphere about Ragon people began to avoid. No one could have given a very clear reason for doing so; one man did not ask another why; but the fact needed no reasoning, it was there.

One day, when Paul Calder was making up his spring cargoes, Ragon asked for a boat, and being a skilful sailor, he was accepted. But no sooner was the thing known, than Paul had to seek another crew.

"What was the matter?"

"Nothing; they did not care to sail with Ragon Torr, that was all."

This circumstance annoyed Ragon very much. He went home quite determined to leave Stromness at once and for ever. Indeed he had been longing to do so for many weeks, but had stayed partly out of bravado, and partly because there were few opportunities of getting away during the winter.

He went home and shut himself in his own room, and began to count his hoarded gold. While thus employed, there was a stir or movement under his feet which he quite understood. Some