

tunes of one very dear to him. The twinkle in it, indeed, had something a little ironical. But the groups went dancing on before him, and everyone said that Benoni had never played so well. From the way he looked to right and left from time to time, it was clear he was expecting somebody; and one had known when his expectations were fulfilled by the very immediate impulse he gave to his music.

Presently among the gossiping and staring crowd there passed Jean and Brian, followed by John Fordie and Andrew Venlaw. They came into the circle of dancers. Brian led Jean out gravely into the centre, and danced a measure with her lightly yet sedately. And when it was finished, with all eyes upon them, all dancing stopped around them, he kissed her full upon the mouth: and that was how Braithen knew that Brian Kingley and Jean Fordie were to marry.

#### CHAPTER XIV.—THE RETURN.

It was so still the Fort seemed sleeping. The intemperate sunshine fell upon it ardently; its walls, its roofs, the very mortar creasing its stones, were soaked in heat and silence. A slumberous dog caught at an intrusive gnat, the great blue-bottles of a short-lived summer boomed on the panes, the chain of a bear rattled lazily, as Bruin turned to a new position of idleness in his yard. Human life seemed absent. The windows and the doors of the Fort were open; no sound came from them save from one room, and then it was only the ticking of a clock.

Yet, if one had looked into the cool dusk of that window there would have been seen a strange thing. A girl half-sat, half-knelt, upon the floor, her eyes upon the clock. She was motionless, she was silent, save that had you also knelt beside her you would have heard her heart beating up against her bosom like a muffled pendulum. She was watching, waiting; and though lips have sometimes a trick of silence, hearts have the impertinent habit of crying out. This girl's heart was calling, so loudly, indeed, that a traveller approaching the Fort from a distant point in the horizon must easily have heard it, if the voice of a heart is like that of the lips. Perhaps he did hear it, but not in the fashion which would go for evidence in a court of law. We cannot swear to soundless voices; yet sometimes they speak so plainly that one in telling what they said might declare to speaking the truth, Heaven helping him.

The traveller paused when his eyes fell upon Waiting Mountain. It was his first welcome home.— This was his home now, and should be, to that hour when the father of his biographer should bid him a staunch God-speed upon the great journey man takes when he goeth to his long home. The mountain slept; but he could see its breath rising in hot palpitations, and come floating towards him, a fragrant wafture on his cheek. As the smell of some perfumed letter, or the balm of some forgotten relic, floats up to a man's nostrils as he fumbles among old tokens, and his past heaves on him like a ghost, so Andrew Venlaw stands still in that flowered plain, and faces suddenly the wilderness of his past, which, by the spirit of an unconquerable manhood, he had made into a garden: for he had learned and performed according to the great charm, the noble spirit of peace, which is self-sacrifice. He had come back to return no more; but here lay a vast field of endeavour, and on yonder fort there flew the flag of the bold adventurers of the North, the splendid freebooters of the wilds: his heart swelled big. He was a chief of hardy comrades, a leader of men.

He had left his companions behind, and had hurried on that he might reach the Fort alone, not that he might brood upon matters of retrospect or affection, but to face the hard duties of his future, the possible solitariness of the rest of his natural life, with that iron heart credited to him by his people and the heathen.

He came on. Beyond the belt of woods to his right were the Indian lodges. His mind hung over them for a moment. He framed some new conditions of policy then and there; but first and last, and interwoven with these thoughts, was a wholesome, generous solicitude regarding Summer-Hair, her father, and their people. His thoughts dwelt upon Red Fire for a moment. Red Fire should be his friend. Red Fire should marry Summer-Hair. No doubt he had done so. Here Venlaw paused. Well, so much the better for Red Fire and for Summer-Hair and for—he paused again, and presently pushed on, as though some thought had disturbed him, angered him, and he was walking over it.

In the south, where he had been detained in consultation with some of his superior officers, he sent word by couriers carrying the yearly news that he would arrive at Fort Savjour about this time, and again the previous night he had urged a courier on, and