

herself would take the chance to run. Were ye no' feared I was lost among the mounts?"

"I feared for nothing," she answered, happy. "What always happens is the thing one never thought of, and I took time and thought of everything that could befall."

Æneas and Janet were already at the table; the girl had not gone home.

At another hour the spirit of a company thus gladly brought together would be different, but over them to-night there was solemnity. The mystery of Paul Macmaster clamoured for solution. They scarce were seated when Ninian brought it up.

"I ask you to excuse me," Æneas interrupted. "Was I a good soldier this month back in your command?"

Ninian beamed. "Ye couldna have been better! Ye did what ye were told, the sodger's first concern, and held your tongue. If I was ever in a corner I would cry for Æneas-of-the-Pistol."

Æneas flushed. "That bit of it," said he, "is neither here nor there. I only ask assurance that I played my part as a soldier should, nor questioned anything you did, nor pushed decisions of my own. I went with you on sufferance; led you into trouble, and I felt the least that I could do was to be the humble private. Now that the campaign's over, and a new one's started closely concerning myself, I must take another rank."

He spoke with great decision, yet without offence, and Ninian clapped him on the shoulder.

"Well done!" he said, with heartiness. "You're a man for the brindled hill, where each man does his own bit stalking."

"With me it stands like this," said Æneas. "I am greatly in the dark about affairs at the period when my father disappeared. Particularly I know little about Duncanson, and instead of working back from that amazing story we got from Lovat, I think it better to begin at the other end. How came my father to have anything to do with Duncanson?"

It was a somewhat lengthy history he got from Alan-