

Hannah Lamond.

(By Professor Wilson.)

Almost all the people in the parish were leading in their meadow hay on the same day of midsummer, so drying was the sunshine and the wind; and huge, heaped-up wains, that almost hid from view the horses that drew them along the sward beginning to get green with second growth, were moving in all directions towards the snug farmyards. Never before had the parish seemed so populous. Jocund was the balmy air with laughter, whistle and song.

But the trees threw the shadow of 'one o'clock on the green dial-face of the earth; the horses were unyoked, and took instantly to grazing; groups of men, women and children collected under grove and bush, and hedgerow; and the great Being, who gave them that day their daily bread, looked down from his eternal home on many a thankful heart.

The great golden eagle, the pride and the pest of the parish, swooped down, and flew away with something in its talons. One single, sudden, female shriek arose; and then shouts and outcries, as if a church spire had tumbled down on a congregation at service. 'Hannah Lamond's bairn! Hannah Lamond's bairn!' was the loud, fast-spreading cry—the eagle has ta'en off Hannah Lamond's bairn!

And many hundred feet were in another instant hurrying toward the mountain. Two miles of hill and dale, and copse and shingle, and many brooks, lay between; but in an incredibly short time the foot of the mountain was alive with people.

The eyrie was well known, and both the old birds were visible on the rocky ledge. But who shall scale that dizzy cliff, which Mark Stewart, the sailor, who had been at the storming of many a fort, attempted in vain? All kept gazing, weeping, wringing their hands, rooted to the ground, or running backward and forward, like so many ants essaying their new wings. 'What's the use—what's the use o' any puir human means? We have no power but in prayer!' and many knelt down—fathers and mothers thinking of their own babies.

Hannah Lamond had all this while been sitting on a rock, with a face perfectly white, and eyes like those of a mad person, fixed on the eyrie. Nobody had noticed her; for strong as all sympathies with her had been at the swoop of the eagle, they were now swallowed up in the agony of eye-sight.

'Only last week was my wee sweet wean baptized!' and on uttering these words, she flew off through the brakes and over the huge stones, up—up—up—faster than ever huntsman ran in to the death, fearless as a goat playing among the precipices.

No one doubted—no one could doubt—that she would be dashed to pieces.

No stop, no stay. She knew not that she drew her breath. Beneath her feet Providence fastened every loose stone, and to her hand strengthened every root. How was she ever to descend? That fear but once crossed her heart, as she went up—up—up—to the little image of her own flesh and blood. 'The God who holds me now from perishing—will not the same God save me when my child is on my bosom?' Down came the fierce rushing of the eagles' wings, each savage bird dashing close to her head, so that she saw the yellow of their wrathful eyes!

All at once they quailed and were cowed. Yelling, they flew off to the stump of an ash jutting out of a cliff, a thousand feet above the cataract; and the frantic mother,

falling across the eyrie, in the midst of bones and blood, clasped her child—not dead, as she had expected, but unmangled and untorn, and swaddled just as it was when she laid it down asleep among the fresh hay, in a nook of the harvest field!

Oh, what a pang of perfect blessedness transfixed her heart from that faint, feeble cry. 'It lives—it lives—it lives!' and baring her bosom, with loud laughter, and eyes dry as stones; she felt the lips of the unconscious innocent once more murmuring at the fount of life and love!

Below were cliffs, chasms, blocks of stone, and the skeletons of old trees, far, far, down, and dwindled into specks; and a thousand creatures of her own kind, stationary, or running to and fro!

Was that the sound of the waterfall, or the faint roar of voices? Is that her native strath? and that tuft of trees, does it contain the hut in which stands the cradle of her child? Never more shall it be rocked by her foot! Here she must die; and, when her breast is exhausted, her baby too! And these horrid beaks, and eyes, and talons, will return, and her child will be devoured at last, even within the dead bosom that can protect it no more!

Where, all this time, was Mark Stewart, the sailor? Half way up the cliffs. But his eye had got dim, and his heart sick; and he, who had so often reefed the top-gallant-sail, when at midnight the coming of the gale was heard afar, covered his face with his hands, and dared not look on the swimming heights.

'And who will take care of my poor bedridden mother?' thought Hannah, whose soul, through the exhaustion of so many passions, could no more retain in its grasp that hope which it had clutched in despair. A voice whispered, 'God.' She looked around, expecting to see an angel; but nothing moved except a rotten branch, that, under its own weight, broke off from the crumbling rock. Her eye watched its fall; and it seemed to stop, not far off, on a small platform.

Her child was bound within her bosom—she remembered not how or when, but it was safe; and, scarcely daring to open her eyes, she slid down the rocks, and found herself on a small piece of firm, root-bound soil, with bushes appearing below.

With fingers suddenly strengthened into the power of iron, she swung herself down by brier and broom, and heather, and dwarf-birch. There, a loosened stone leaped over a ledge, and no sound was heard, so far down was its fall. There, the shingle rattled down the rocks, and she hesitated not to follow. Her feet bounded against the huge stone that stopped them, but she felt no pain. Her body was callous as the cliff.

Steepest as the upright wall of a house was now the face of the precipice. But it was matted with ivy, centuries old, long ago dead, and without a single green leaf, but with thousands of arm-thick stems, petrified into the rock, and covering it as with a trellis. She bound her baby to her neck, and, with hands and feet, clung to that fearful ladder.

Turning round her head and looking down, lo! the whole population of the parish—so great was the multitude—on their knees! And hush! the voice of psalms! a hymn, breathing the spirit of one united prayer! Sad and solemn was the strain, but nothing dirge-like—breathing not of death, but of deliverance. An unseen hand seemed fastening her fingers to the ribs of ivy; and, in sudden inspiration, believing that her life was to be saved, she became almost as

fearless as if she had been changed into a winged creature.

Again her feet touched stones and earth. The psalm was hushed; but a tremulous, sobbing voice was close beside her, and, lo! a she-goat, with two little kids; at her feet! 'Wild heights,' thought she, 'do these creatures climb, but the dam will lead down her kids by the easiest paths; for oh, even in the brute creatures, what is the power of a mother's love!' and, turning her head, she kissed her sleeping baby, and, for the first time, she wept.

Overhead frowned the front of the precipice, never before touched by human hand or foot. No one had ever dreamed of scaling it; and the golden eagles knew that well in their instinct, as, before they built their eyrie, they had brushed it with their wings. But all the rest of this part of the mountain side, though scarred and chasmed, was yet accessible, and more than one person in the parish had reached the bottom of Glead's Cliff.

Many were now attempting it; and, ere the cautious mother had followed her dumb guides a hundred yards, through dangers that, although enough to terrify the stoutest heart, were traversed by her without a shudder, the head of one man appeared and then the head of another; and she knew that God had delivered her and her child in safety into the care of their fellow creatures. Not a word was spoken—eyes said enough. She hushed her friends with her hands, and with uplifted eyes, pointed to the guides lent to her by Heaven. Small green plats, where those creatures nibble the wild flowers, became now more frequent; trodden lines, almost as easy as sheep paths, showed that the dam had not led her young into danger; and now the brushwood dwindled into straggling shrubs, and the party stood on a little eminence forming part of the strath.

There had been trouble and agitation, much sobbing and many tears, among the multitude, while the mother was scaling the cliffs; sublime was the shout that echoed afar, the moment she reached the eyrie; then had succeeded a silence, deep as death; in a little while arose that hymning prayer, succeeded by mute supplication; the wildness of thankful and congratulatory joy had next its sway; and now that her preservation was sure; the great crowd rustled like a wind-swept wood.

And for whose sake was all this alternation of agony? A poor, humble creature, unknown to many even by name; one who had but few friends, nor wished for more; contented to work all day, here, there, or anywhere, that she might be able to support her aged mother and her little child; and who, on the Lord's Day, took her seat in an obscure pew, set apart for paupers, in the church!

'Fall back and give her fresh air,' said the old minister of the parish; and the close circle of faces widened around her, lying as in death. 'Give me the bonnie bit bairn into my arms,' cried first one mother, and then another; and it was tenderly handed round the circle of kisses, many of the snooded maidens bathing its face in tears. 'There's no a scratch about the puir innocent; for the eagle, you see, maun hae stuck its talons into the lang claes and the shawl. Blin', blin' maun they be who see not the finger of God in this thing!'

Hannah started up from her swoon, and, looking wildly around, cried, 'Oh, the eagle! the eagle has carried off my bonnie wee Walter!' A neighbor put her baby to her breast, and, shutting her eyes and smiting