

'Is't you, lad, or a wraith sent to warn me o' my end or yours?' he asked, leaning heavily on his elbow out of the bed.

'It's me, Rob, come back,' said the unmistakeable tones of Fergus Macleod's own voice. 'Just one grip, man, and I'm away. You know where.'

'She's in the smith's, sir,' Rob answered; and though Fergus's iron grip nearly brought the tears to his eyes with the pain of his maimed hand, he never uttered a groan.

'I know. Wish me good luck, Rob, and let me off. I'll be here again to-morrow.'

So saying, Fergus wrung his hand again, and disappeared as quickly as he had come. Then Rob lay back in his bed, and wiped the sweat-drops from his brow. He was wildly excited, and made a new song before he slept,—a song, he always said, which was the masterpiece of his life.

The pony was standing by the smith's open door, so Fergus went round by the end of Rob's house and out on the road. He did not know very well what to do. To speak to Sheila suddenly, or even to let him see her on the road, might startle her. He felt quite at a loss how to proceed. But speak with her that very night, that hour if possible, he must. He had endured the keenest torture waiting till Alastair should be ready to accompany him home. Alastair would not hurry himself for anybody, least of all for Fergus, and told him plainly he need not be so desperately impatient after he had waited philosophically so long, when nobody asked or wanted him to wait at all. There was truth in what Alastair said,—he had indeed teased his old chum unmercifully on the voyage. Fergus took everything in such terrible earnest, it amused Alastair intensely.

Presently, the short, sharp click of hoofs gave warning of Sheila's approach. Fergus looked helplessly round. There was no escape, unless he stepped the drystone dyke and hid himself behind it. So he just walked on rather stupidly in the middle of the white road until the pony came up.

'Fine evening,' Sheila said, in her quick, pleasant way. 'Is that you, Peter Fraser?'