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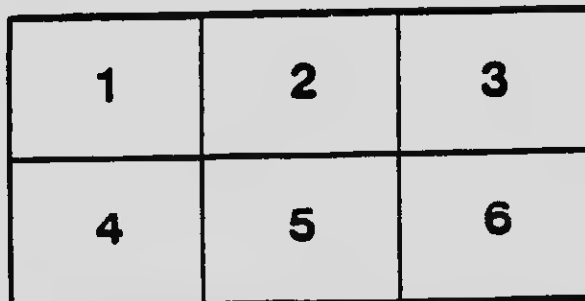
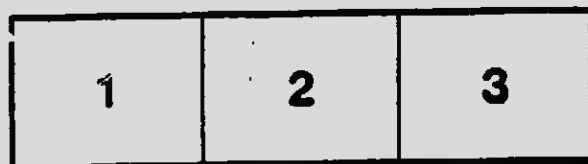
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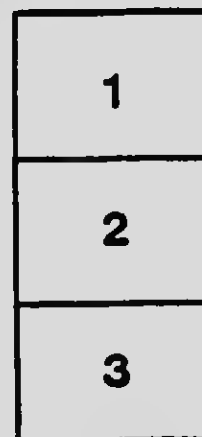
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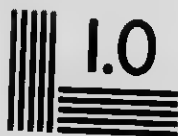
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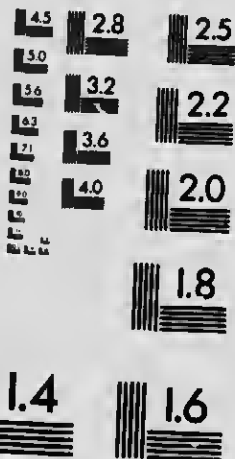
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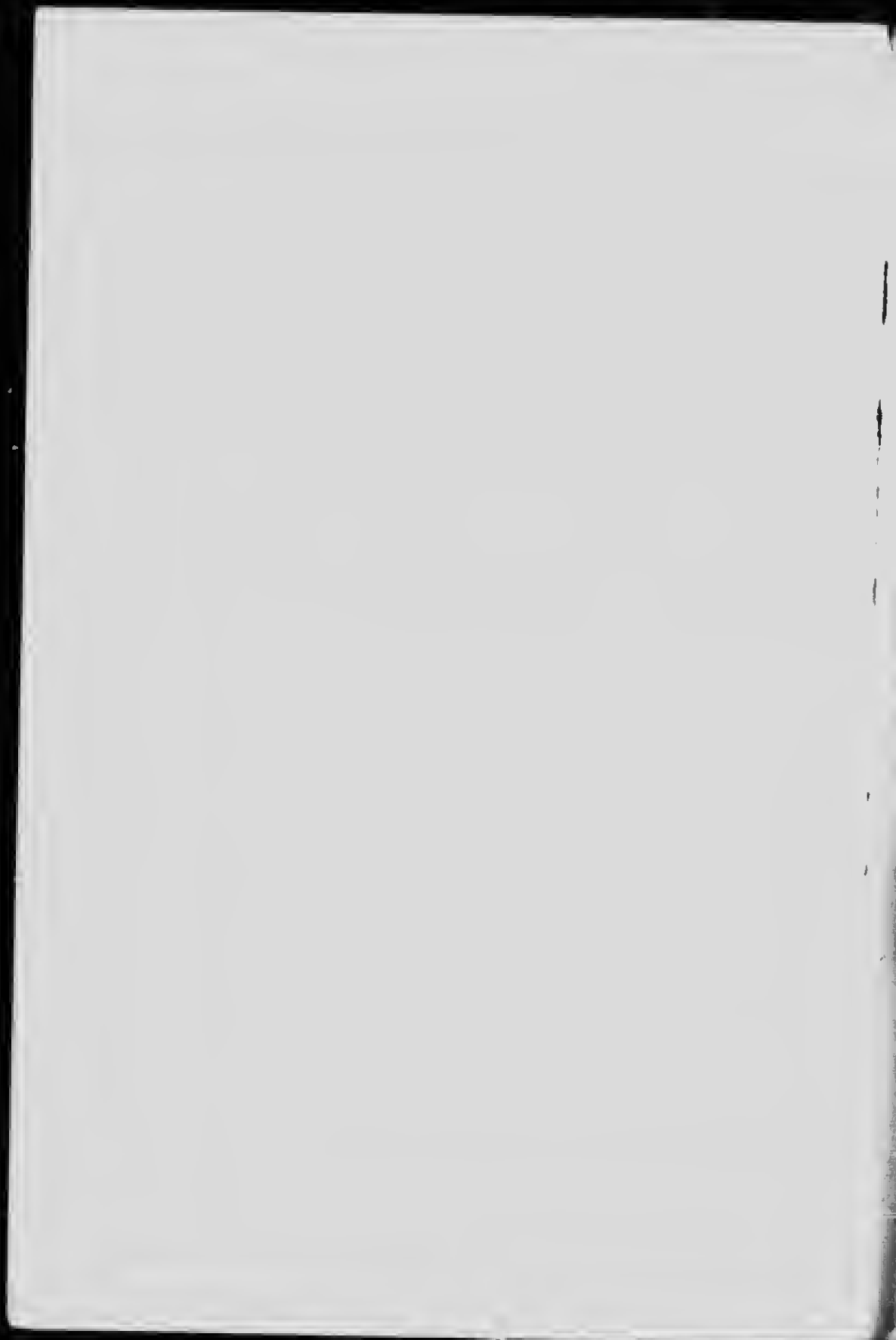
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Vol. 11.



A SON OF GAD



A SON OF GAD

BY

JOHN A. STEUART

AUTHOR OF

"THE MINISTER OF STATE"; "WINK ON THE LIPS"
"THE ETERNAL QUEST"; ETC.

*A troop shall overcome him:
But he shall overcome at the last*

TORONTO
WM. BRIGGS

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NOTE

Among the signs of the times there is no more remarkable, no more encouraging omen than the swift drawing together of the two great Anglo-Saxon peoples. This story of Great Britain and America illustrates the community of interest and sentiment which is fast Americanising England and Anglicising America.



CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. A HOME-COMING AND A PRAYER OF VENGEANCE	1
II. HOSTILITIES—SOME ADVENTURES AND THE RESULT	7
III. THE BANKS OF OHIO—AN UNEXPRCTED MEETING	15
IV. A TRYING INTERVIEW	22
V. AFTERTHOUGHTS AND A PROOF OF LOYALTY	28
VI. CONSPIRATORS	35
VII. CONSPIRACY TAKES A NEW TURN	40
VIII. IN THE LION'S DEN, AND WHAT HAPPENED THERE	46
IX. THE LION'S DEN— <i>continued</i>	53
X. CAPTAIN MACLEAN SEES A VISION	60
XI. ENTER MR. ROLLO LINNIE	70
XII. TREASON	76
XIII. A DIPLOMATIC BATTLE	84
XIV. AN EXCHANGE OF CIVILITIES	92
XV. IAN LEADS INTERLOPERS A DANCE	99
XVI. TRIUMPH AND DISAPPOINTMENT	105
XVII. AMONG THE SHEEPFOLDS	113
XXIII. A MILLIONAIRE AT WORK	117
XIX. NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS	122
XX. YOUNG AMERICA AT LARGE	132
XXI. YOUNG AMERICA— <i>continued</i>	136
XXII. MOTOR VERSUS GIG	143
XXIII. THE LAIRD A PRISONER—CONNIE MAKES A DIS- COVERY	148
XXIV. THE MAKING OF MILLIONS	155
XXV. A MOMENTOUS INTERVIEW	161
XXVI. A TEST OF LOYALTY	170
XXVII. THE LAIRD'S SECRET	177

CHAPTER	PAGE
XXVIII. A STRANGE CONTRIBUTION TO HIDDEN TREASURE	183
XXIX. A WOODLAND EXPLORATION	189
XXX. A SUM IN ARITHMETIC	192
XXXI. GROUSE SHOOTING, WITH SOME HINTS ON RICHES	200
XXXII. PLAYING FOR A GREAT PRIZE	209
XXXIII. AN OLYMPIAN FESTIVAL	213
XXXIV. PEER AND DEMOCRAT	219
XXXV. FOR THE GLORY OF THE LAIRD AND OF NORMAN	228
XXXVI. A PRECIPITATE LOVER	233
XXXVII. A VITAL RECKONING	240
XXXVIII. CONNIE GIVES A LESSON IN CHIVALRY	247
XXXIX. SHILBECK GIVES BRITONS A TIP	255
XL. PACKING THE HALF-HOOP OF DIAMONDS	263
XLI. REALISED IDEALS	270
XLII. REVELATIONS	277
XLIII. A PEEP FROM BEHIND CURTAINS	284
XLIV. ROLLO DISCHARGES A DEBT	290
XLV. AN ENCOUNTER IN THE NIGHT	295
XLVI. NEW YORK—THE EVERLASTING LESSON	300
XLVII. A HASTY DEPARTURE—AVE ATQUE VALE	308
XLVIII. THE WRECK	314
XLIX. SHILBECK AND BRASH EXCHANGE VIEWS	321
L. HOPE AND DESPAIR	331
LI. CONNIE MAKES A CONFESSION	339
LII. AMERICAN WOMANHOOD—LADY ARDVENMORE IN QUEST OF INFORMATION	346
LIII. TWO MESSAGES	353
LIV. THE KING AND HIS OWN	359
LV. HANDS ACROSS THE SEA	367

	PAGE
DUKE	183
.	189
.	192
HES	200
.	209
.	213
.	219
IAN	228
.	233
.	240
.	247
.	255
.	263
.	270
.	277
.	284
.	290
.	295
.	300
.	308
.	314
.	321
.	331
.	339
.	346
.	353
.	359
.	367

A SON OF GAD

CHAPTER I

A HOME-COMING AND A PRAYER OF VENGEANCE

DUNVEAGLE Castle was a blaze of variegated light, recalling in its festive pomp the glorious night of fifty years before when the last heir, Alan MacLean, came of age. Thoughtful people, however, marked a tragic contrast, token and consummation of many an unhappy change. In the earlier jubilation torches glowed ruddily on tartan and bare knee, and blithe feet tripped and blither hearts bounded to the music of the pipes. The splendour of the great ball is still a legend or the source of legends over half a county; nay, memories of it travelled far beyond seas whither doting children of the heather carried them for rehearsal in the hour of dream or reminiscence. Decrepit age renews its youth in telling how the Marquis cracked his thumbs in the reel and his lady, daughter of a historic house, twirled, flashing in brocade and gems, with as light a foot as the trimmest of the lasses. Baronets were thick as daisies on the May lea, and of the commonalty there flocked a whole countryside. How changed the scene now! Where was the ancient glory?

The intervening half-century brought a rushing new generation with unheroic standards and unholy ideas of progress. A grasping, greedy world laid a ruthless hand

on Dunveagle, wrested it from an immemorial race, and set up within its antique halls a degenerate fustian grandeur that was to the old order as tinsel to gold. Now after a brigade of southern botchers had completed their vandalism under plea of renovating and modernising, the new master was taking possession; and lo! instead of Highland pipes an Italian string band strumming lifeless foreign trash, and instead of pinewood torches electric jets clustered among the ivy like a swarm of fantastic fire-flies, and heathenish lights, miscalled fairy, that cast on rhododendron and sycamore sickly hues of blood.

"Tawdry, awful tawdry," said the veterans, spitting in contempt. "Tinklers' tinnies giving themselves the airs of gold and silver cups. What next?" Whither had the native spirit fled, that no one in authority gave a thought to old ways, old tastes, old customs, old families, or old friendships? Where was reverence, that brazen pride vaunted itself thus? where the ancient race-honour that the records of the chiefs of Dunveagle were wiped out, even as the schoolboy wipes his scrawl off a slate? What was the cause of degeneracy? Money, money, money; men, honour, tradition, all that quickened honest pride, all the heart held dear, bartered for money.

And the new master, who was he? Duncan Ogilvie, son of John Ogilvie, who, as his critics well remembered, had once been fain to warm himself in the smile of the MacLean. The patriarchs of Glenveagle bobbed their heads, moralising drearily. They had seen some strange, some dramatic changes; ay, indeed, many strange dramatic changes, but none so strange, so dramatic as this. Ah, dear! who could tell what the world was coming to? Nevertheless, a living dog being of more consequence than a dead lion, the old laird's tenants were ready with an address of welcome to the new.

From a rocky perch two miles away a white-headed

man looked down on the scene of revolution and gaiety, his heart bursting with rage and revenge. It was Alan MacLean, whose majority had been the occasion of the gala-night fifty years before. He had resolved not to witness that ultimate passing of his heritage to another, to be away in Edinburgh, or London, or Paris, anywhere, so only that his eyes might be spared the sight of consummated ruin and disgrace. But the fate which baffled him in big things seemed likewise to thwart him in small. A careless leap over a runnel among the heather in sheep-driving, and he was down with a sprained ankle. Ian Mackern, known far and wide as Ian Veg, because of his diminutive stature—Ian, who was his faithful companion, related that for full five minutes he lay where he fell, using language which chilled the blood under a blazing sun. The testimony is weighty, since only words of unholy power could have so affected Ian Veg. Eased a little by the use of expletives, the laird turned to his attendant. "Ian Veg," says he, with a gleam of that humour which was his good angel, "d'ye think now I'm worth taking home? If it was another man who was so clumsy, I'd say he deserved to lie where he blundered. But I'll just leave the matter to you."

The next minute Ian was trudging through the heath, bent double under Dunveagle. The burden was lighter than it seemed; for though the laird was a man of inches, as became a chieftain, six feet two on mother soles, he was lean as a greyhound.

"The waist of a girl and the clean shank of a deer" was Ian's description of his master; and in truth, the present difficulty was one of length rather than of weight: for the man above being so long and the man beneath so short, it was a hard matter to keep the hurt foot off the heather.

The laird was delivered into the tender hands of Janet,

Ian's wife; but he must needs do the bandaging himself, and he did it in a smother of self-anger. As for the pain, he gave no sign of suffering; his mouth was tight, his face grimly set as if he dared the worst and were defiant. The binding done, he took to a back room, rumbling angrily like an incipient earthquake.

"Can I bring you anything to read, sir?" asked Janet, touched by the pathos of the disabled, desolate figure.

"Read!" he cried. "God's sake, woman, what do I want with reading? But if you bring me something to kick, I'll be obliged to you."

"I was thinking, sir, reading will be better than kicking," rejoined Janet, who was privileged and not afraid to take liberties.

"Oh, exactly so," he retorted in a tone half of banter, half of displeasure. "Exactly so. Spectacles, an arm-chair, and a meek spirit for the maimed and the halt. Add an old wife's posset, and be done with it. I'll tell you one thing you might do, Janet," he added, his eyes beginning to smile; "you might bring me my pipe. Tobacco's the only friend that's always the same." And when he was pulling like a philosopher—"So you'd set dislocated joints and mend damaged tendons with reading. That minds me of the fellow who recommended whistling as a cure for the toothache. Not long ago I saw it proved by a syllogism that books, like men and women, are not always what they're thought to be. But you'll never have heard of a syllogism, Janet."

"No, sir," answered Janet, as if ignorance were a crime.

"Don't fret," said the laird soothingly. "Thank God you know all about scones."

Janet's face brightened.

"And the pickling of salmon, sir."

"Especially when it's poached, you old jade; especially when it's poached. You've made hare soup in your time,

also; and I'll say this, that in patties you're an artist, not to speak of collops and toddy. You've a way with a braxy ham, too, that makes the mouth water at the thought of it. Yes, you're a woman of accomplishments, Janet, though you don't know how to cook a syllogism."

"If you tell me about it, sir, I'll try," said Janet modestly, whereat the laird roared to the forgetting of his anger and his sprained ankle.

"It's too dry, Janet," he replied, wiping his eyes. "You could make nothing of it, for all the fat in Glenveagle wouldn't soften it. It's fit neither for roasting nor boiling, for stewing nor frying. We won't have syllogism for dinner, thank you. As to the reading, let me see——" He cast his eye on a remote shelf near the ceiling, on which reposed some dusty volumes.

"There's a book up there on Eternal Punishment, Janet," he said. "My mother's sister—the Colonel's wife, you mind—left it to me thinking I needed a warning, and I've never opened it. Hand it down: we'll see what the fellow makes of hell." His face grew suddenly grim. "If it's worse than some places you and I know, Janet, we owe the ancient enemy our sympathy."

Three days he kept to the rear part of the house, moving, with Ian's aid, from his bedroom to his sitting-room, and back again from his sitting-room to his bedroom. On the fourth day, which completed the enemy's triumph, he became explosively irritable, poured upon Ian a torrent of wrath that would have cost any other man a broken head, fell foul of Janet's cookery, cursed the writer on theology for "a doitering idiot," and cast his book into the empty grate as in token of the burning it deserved. All afternoon he sat glooming at the crags through the little square of a window, fierce, silent, foodless, an incarnation of rankling misery and smouldering fury.

When Dunveagle woods began to darkle in the gloaming

his anguish became an unbearable fever. When the woods were black and night had seized upon the topmost hill, he crept out surreptitiously, leaning on his staff, and hirpling to the front looked down on the lights effusively welcoming another to his home, the home of his fathers for untold generations, the home taken from him by rapine and chicanery. And as he gazed, the set of the wind being towards him, there was borne to his ears the sound of cheering. They had come, the usurpers had come, and time-servers and lick-spittles were shouting in their honour. Janet, who had seen him go forth and lurked behind in the shadows, lest, as she explained to Ian, he might be tempted "to put a hand on himself" in that moment of agony, Janet watching stealthily while she held her breath in terror, averred she distinctly heard a groan. Possibly she was right; for the laird fancied himself alone, and was suffering mortally. But if so, the groaning mood must have passed instantly. For the next moment Janet's heart stopped as she saw him drop by the rocky parapet and turn his face to the sky.

"I thought that maybe he had found grace," she afterwards related; "that the waters of bitterness and the bread of affliction made him know his own weakness. But understanding of weakness was never the way of the MacLeans. He prayed, ay, he prayed; but his words, mercy on us that mouth of man should utter them! 'Oh, Lord,' he cried—and ye never heard such pleading from a minister in yer life, for it was burning hot from the heart of him—'Oh, Lord, as Thou art strong and lovest justice, help me to be avenged.' There was more," added Janet, "but I was too feared to listen, for he was uncanny, and I just boltit in by dreepin' with cold sweat."

Thus from his craggy retreat the dispossessed witnessed the triumphal arrival of the new master of Dunveagle.

CHAPTER II

HOSTILITIES—SOME ADVENTURES AND THE RESULT

FOR well-nigh a century the lairds of Dunveagle had had their backs to the wall in sore unequal battle. The latest of the line fought hardest of all, repulsing harpy lawyers and greasy money-lenders, even sousing them, for sake of cleanliness, in the horse-pond, double-locking and barricading his great iron-clamped door, and planting himself grimly behind loopholed walls, musket in hand, to give besiegers the welcome of the desperate. Once he condescended to seek help, and old friends turned cold. The effect was to stiffen Dunveagle's back, to make him stand with feller purpose behind his ramparts, the poison of a new hate embittering the old feud.

His wife, who stood to him as mate and second right arm, fell in the fray, the victim of the wolves and beagles. In the heyday of romance, when a crowd of suitors hung on the smile of the lovely and spirited girl, he had been victor against tremendous odds. Ladies in the bloom and ardour of youth are captivated by a straightforward gallant siege, and Alan MacLean was the very model of gallantry. The song of a local bard celebrates, not unworthily, in the gay style of "Lochinvar," the moonlit ride on the crupper which made the beauty of a county mistress of Dunveagle. Her rich friends never condoned the crime of "marrying a pauper," nor did she once regret it, for Alan was a lover to the close. What if she, who had been so delicately

nurtured, fared hard? Was the fare not mystically sweetened? Give a true woman love, and she will return tenfold, ay, a hundredfold, in heroism, only she must have the abiding passion of the strong man hardened and proved in conflict with the world, the deep, absorbing glow as of an *amethyst*—not the prattled fatuities, the sentimental fictions of the moonstruck boy. The storms beat upon Dunveagle, and made the young wife's loyalty invincible.

For a moment at the home-coming Alan's own heart misgave him. "This is all I have to offer," he said, with a doleful droop of the countenance, and certainly the mouldering castle never seemed barer or bleaker than in contrast with the sumptuous mansion she had left. Instead of looking round to see the bleakness and the bareness for herself, she looked straight into his doubting eyes. "I didn't elope to make stone walls and upholstery my husband," she answered lightly. And there was no more doubting.

When she dropped by his side MacLean lost both heart and second right arm. Necessity made him still a fighter, and love for her turned him into an avenger. But a man beset by misfortune is as a treasure-ship in the midst of pirates, or a hare among closing hounds. When death had momentarily weakened the defences a lurking foe gained entrance to Dunveagle. Word of the black treachery reached Alan by the open grave, and those who beheld his face had ever after a haunting vision of desperation. As if to make the stroke doubly cruel, two sounds, each like the cry of doom, rang in his ears together. According to custom, the dead woman's only child, a boy of five, held a cord as the coffin was let down. All went solemnly and quietly until little Norman, suddenly realising that "Mama" was going from him for ever, broke into a shriek of terror, at the same time pulling frantically to get her back. The grief-stricken father had hardly disengaged the

SOME ADVENTURES AND THE RESULT 9

tiny, fiercely clutching fingers, his own shaking as with palsy, when the white-faced messenger despatched by Janet appeared, panting out his cry of alarm.

Dunveagle wheeled about, the blood at his heart frozen. For one moment he gazed in stupefaction, his face blank and ghastly, like the face of a stunned man. Then all at once it quivered in living pain, and his hands clenched spasmodically.

"What!" he cried, striding forward as if he would seize and choke the bringer of bad news. "What is this, you tell me?"

The messenger repeated his tale in pants and sobs, for he had run desperately, and at that the livid darkness of tempest overspread the countenance of Dunveagle.

"This is the honour of the law," he said brokenly, turning back to the open grave. "You're better there, my poor Kate," looking at the forlorn coffin in the narrow depth below. "Ay, much better, much better!"

A little soft hand crept nestling into his, and an awed, tear-stained face was lifted in inquiry. Unconsciously he patted the boy's head.

"Norman, dear," he said, striving to speak calmly, "I am called away on urgent business at the castle. You'll stay and see mother hopped. And you, sir," to the minister interrupted in the last sad rites of religion, "will not forget a bit prayer for us all. As God's in heaven, we need it."

Again he bent forward over the open grave, and hands went out ineffectively, so like a falling man he seemed.

"Good-bye, Kate," he said in a half sob. "Good-bye, my brave, loyal little woman; I didn't think to leave you like this. Good-bye. You'll understand and forgive. Good-bye—good-bye."

He turned to the company, drawing his hand across his eyes as if to free them of mist.

"Friends," he said, and the strong voice shook, "I leave her to you. Do to her as you would be done by in the last hour, and God requite you. Kilross," addressing an old friend, "can I have your riding horse? You can have my place in the carriage."

With that he mounted and rode, his features wrought in a passion of grief, anger, and vengeance. If ever you have known a man go forth quietly and purposefully with the set face of one determined to kill, you may picture his look.

Half an hour after he passed through the kirkyard gate a foaming, wild-eyed horse drew up, panting, at the castle door. Janet ran out to meet her master, her face wrung with anguish, and behind her in the great hall appeared a man—a stranger.

"Janet, woman, will you dry your eyes and hold this horse?" said Dunveagle, with a terrible composure of manner. He threw her the rein and strode in.

"What have we here?" he cried, eyeing the varlets of the law. "Sneaks and interlopers who steal into a man's house at the heels of death. God's sake! but you're a bonnie lot."

He was one against three, and hampered by terrorised, screaming women; but in less than five minutes the varlets were out, two holding cracked heads, and the third, as it appeared, bleeding to the death. Dunveagle followed them to the doorstep. "That's our plan with the like of you," he cried in a white fury. "By the heaven above, I'll ride the life out of you beside the door you have desecrated."

He was flinging himself on his horse to trample them when Janet clutched him by the knees.

"Master, dear, don't do murder," she pleaded. Her weeping suddenly stopped in this development of the tragedy. "For her sake that's gone, don't do murder."

SOME ADVENTURES AND THE RESULT 11

He drew back, the hard breath rattling in his throat, and looked at her curiously.

"'For her sake that's gone,'" he repeated hoarsely. "Ay, for her sake. Thank you, Janet, for minding me. They can go."

They went crawling, bandaged and miserable, to protest against being sent to distract on the devil.

At that point an oily lawyer in Perth intervened. He began by writing letters which Dunveagle treated with silent disdain. But presently the penwiper set in motion certain obscure machinery which one day brought a sheriff's officer and a posse of county police to the castle gate. Denied admittance, they climbed the wall and tried a back door, which was impregnable. Then, like scouts gingerly feeling about an enemy's fortress, they moved round by the front, and there Dunveagle himself awaited them. The sequel is still the delight of many a winter fireside.

"And what may the whole police force of Perth want at Dunveagle Castle?" he asked affably, caressing a gleaming, long-barrelled gun. He stood before the black stone entrance, and behind him in the twilight of the great hall were ranged his boy Norman, also fondling a gun; Ian Veg, with a hacked, rusty Ferrara still bearing marks of blood; and Janet, grasping a huge oak cudgel.

"I must crave your pardon," quoth Dunveagle, looking forth on the warlike array, "for having to ask the reason of this honour. I would fain remember the rites of hospitality and the feelings of men who may have breakfasted somewhat hastily and lightly. Forgive a blunt question. What is it brings you here?"

Beguiled by the soft words and the engaging manner, the sheriff's officer stepped briskly forward, but next instant drew yet more briskly back, for Dunveagle's gun had gone up with a purposeful motion.

"Better stay," he remarked urbanely, "until we have had something more of a confab before shaking hands. As you may suppose, it goes against my stomach to be rude, even to self-invited guests. But if we were to come together too quickly and disagree on a chance word or act, it's hard to tell what might come of it. So we'd better begin by understanding each other. Will you state in as few words as possible exactly what it is you want, or on whose behalf you have come?"

Thereupon the sheriff's officer, unfolding a big blue paper, began to read. At the third sentence Dunveagle interrupted. "The name's quite sufficient," he said peremptorily. "I know all about the wee Jew body in Perth. By his way of it I owe so much principal and so much interest, which he reckons on a plan of his own, the miserable son of Belial. I understand he got the money from the bank on my note of hand."

"And paid it back when the bill was dishonoured," said the other.

"I'm glad he had the grace to do that," rejoined Dunveagle. "I wouldn't like the bank to lose. I've no quarrel with the bank. Well, if he knocks off seventy-five per cent. of the interest, I'm ready to renew."

The sheriff's officer answered he had nothing to do with renewals, that what he wanted was cash or its equivalent, and hinted he meant to be satisfied.

Dunveagle threw his chin in the air.

"Sits the wind so harsh as all that?" he said. "There may be two opinions, but I cannot help thinking you've come for a Highland man's breeks this time."

The sheriff's officer looked round and up the castle front; they might possibly get breeks off this particular Highlandman.

"I think I understand," returned Dunveagle. "By my reading ye've come all this way to roup me, to seize,

SOME ADVENTURES AND THE RESULT 13

harry, and sell, just to please a damn wee black, garlic-eating Jew, who must have been wet-nursed by a she-wolf, and got his notions of honest dealing from Judas Iscariot. Am I right?"

The sheriff's officer answered in the affirmative as to the main fact.

"Well, you see," said Dunveagle very deliberately, "if you take the trouble to put yourselves in my place, as fair and reasonable men you'll perceive objections—first, that the garlic-eating son of Judas aforesaid is a foreigner, an extortioner, and a usurer who cheats in bad English, claps thirty shillings to the pound, calling it interest, and gets you sent to make me pay what I don't owe; second, that it's part of a Christian's creed to resist Israelitish usurers and extortioners, though they were clothed with the sanctity of old Abraham, who knew as well as most folk on which side his bread was buttered; third, that I owe but a small part of what the Jew demands; fourth, that I'd like to entertain the gentleman himself in this matter of collection; and fifthly and particularly, that I have the plain man's dislike of being rought. You'll agree with that."

The sheriff's officer would neither agree nor disagree; he had not come to argue.

"Oh, well, there's one thing I'm thinking you will agree in," said Dunveagle, drawing himself up more haughtily, "and it's this: A man of your knowledge will have heard that possession is nine points of the law, and as you have at this present moment just one point in your favour to my nine, I'm of opinion you'll agree it would be wise to show the valour which is called discretion, because I tell you candidly, as between man and man, that he who tries to enter my house by force had better set about it by saying his prayers, for it would be too late to say them when the trial's made. That's told you to save misunderstanding and trouble. But as we like to be hospitable in

the Highlands here, I wouldn't have you go away empty. I think there's a drop of old ale left, or would you prefer a dram to hearten you?"

Obliged to decline such hospitality, the sheriff's officer was proceeding to restate his business, when Dunveagle interposed.

"Oh, very well," he said; "Ian," casting a glance over his shoulder, "the gentlemen will not drink." With which he stepped quickly back, and banged the door in the amazed face of the law.

The laugh was momentarily on his side, but in the end it proved frightfully dear, as such jests are apt to be, and added its purgatorial tortures on the night, long after, when old, lame, and impotently furious, he looked down from the clifty heights of Craigenard on the son of the man once banished by his will, returning to take possession of Dunveagle.

CHAPTER III

THE BANKS OF OHIO—AN UNEXPECTED MEETING

MACLEAN of Dunveagle and his tenant, John Ogilvie of Craigenard, disagreed over a trifle not worth remembering, and the dispute waxed into a quarrel. Though at bottom generous, both were hot when their whiskers were pulled, and one was naturally inclined to be imperious. Wherefore it came that the weaker man went to the wall, overcome by an arbitrary exercise of authority, that is to say, John Ogilvie was informed, in a moment of passion, that after a certain date, already near, he would no longer be suffered to remain at Craigenard. The injured man, full of fiery resentment, took passage to America with his young wife and their child Duncan, a yellow-haired, wide-eyed toddler, who thus went forth into the great world appropriately holding his mother's skirt. Then the twin satirists, Time and Chance, took a hand in the game, with results which made mortalists eloquent over the freaks of destiny. Driven in his turn from the old home, MacLean took refuge in Craigenard, a remnant left to him in the general wreck of his fortune, and an Ogilvie filled his place in Dunveagle. Fate was giving one of her high lessons in dramaturgy: putting the first last, making the least greatest, exalting lowliness, humbling pride.

John Ogilvie had been a saturnine, brooding man; shrewd, energetic, sentimental, magnanimous, yet withal unforgetting and in certain cases unforgiving, as all good

Highlanders are. Though he prospered on the Ohio farm, the memory of the injustice which made him an exile rankled in his mind, and often when he was among the maize he dreamed of the heather. It became a family custom when the winter logs blazed on the great hearth, and wind and snow, it might be with blizzard force, lashed the stout double windows, in the ruddy warmth of the winter fireside it became the custom to beguile the evening with tales of home and the olden time, which grew ever the more vivid with the passing of the years. As he recited the stories and legends of his early life, John Ogilvie was by turns strangely wistful and strangely excited; occasionally, too, a chance reference brought to his face the black look of one who mentally rehearses a deep wrong.

One night, while the corners of his mouth were still grim from such a rehearsal, he found himself alone in the stable with his boy.

"Duncan," he said, under a sudden impulse, "I have something to tell you." And point by point he went over the cause of their exile, dwelling in rough, blunt words on the laird of Dunveagle's harshness. The boy listened first in wonder and then in a tingling indignation.

"Father," he cried, when the tale was done, his eyes flashing vengefully, "I'll make them all smart yet. We'll go back, see if we don't. Ay," he repeated, his hands clenched as if he were already at grips with the enemy, "we'll go back—maybe to Dunveagle itself."

John Ogilvie smiled as one smiles at a bright impossibility. Nevertheless, his face glowed in a pleasure of anticipation.

"That wouldn't be easy, Dunk," he returned slowly. "At home in Scotland I was taught not to put my trust in money. I won't say the lesson was wrong, though if I had had a little more ready money at the critical moment,

we mightn't be here. It would take a heap of siller to do what you speak of."

"We'll get the siller, father," returned Duncan, with the quick assurance of youth; "we'll get the siller."

He ran to his mother, who was preparing a plain Scots supper, for they cherished their Scottish tastes and habits.

"Mother," he cried eagerly, "how would you like to go back to Craigenard?"

She turned on him a startled face.

"Laddie," she demanded, "what are ye hawering about? If I had but a sprig of heather from Craigenard or a trout out of the Veagle water, I'd count myself happy. Dunkie, dear, what's been turning your head? I'm afraid we've seen for the last time the bloom on the hills of Craigenard and the sun shining on the bonnie woods of Dunveagle."

And she bent abruptly forward to stir the porridge, her face twitching.

Half that night the boy lay dreaming, Craigenard and Dunveagle mingling feverishly in his visions. What he wanted was money; money, the mighty magician that seemed to perform all the wonders of the world. By scraping the family could furnish perhaps a hundred dollars in ready cash. That would not even suffice for their passage back. He must make money, and make it speedily, not merely enough for a voyage home, but a huge fortune.

Within a fortnight he was a junior clerk in the freight department of a great American railroad, at the dazzling salary of three dollars a week. An observant freight agent saw, noted, and commented. "I reckon the youngster'll do," he said, expectorating half a pint of liquid tobacco by way of emphasis. "Yes, sir, I reckon he'll do."

The prediction was so much to the point that in five years the youngster was directing the policy of that freight agent. For ten more he tossed and jostled in

the strife for place, passing to and fro from one railway to another with varying fortune and some trying experiences. Midway up he grew impatient, and was tempted to take a hand in a Wall Street gamble. The "boom" burst with sudden and disastrous effects. One evening Duncan Ogilvie accounted himself a moderately rich man, the next he was penniless.

"Lost everything," he remarked quietly, lighting a cigar. "Well, we must see how we are to take it out of Wall Street yet." A man who takes reverses in that spirit may be beaten once or twenty times, but he is not to be conquered. "You bet Ogilvie'll have the aces yet, and don't you forget it," said a fortunate "bear" admiringly. "I know the man that plays to win." And again the prophecy was fulfilled.

Time passed, and there came a gigantic scheme of reorganisation from which Duncan Ogilvie emerged as president of his original railroad, with a fortune, a mansion in Fifth Avenue, and a name among the world's financiers. Some of his old comrades noted that the announcement was made exactly thirty years from the day on which he wrote his first way-bill.

His assumption of power inaugurated a new policy in railway finance. Before it was division—now it was unity. The railroads had been cut-throat competitors; it was his to make them allies. Entering into fraternal alliance with other presidents, he devised a "bull campaign" such as Wall Street had never before seen. The combination bought "for control," the public accepted the lead, and the organiser found himself with more millions than even his financial genius could use.

"I have taken it out of Wall Street," he said, with a chuckle, smoking his cigar placidly as he had smoked it in the day of ruin. "That little lesson twelve years ago has been worth as many millions to me. If you would

succeed, pray the gods to slap you in the face as a start. It makes you fight the better."

Those who envied his success, those who were dazzled by his manipulations not only in Wall Street, New York, but in Capel Court, London, little guessed that the first inspiration in the career of wealth came from a rocky bit of moorland on the hill-face above the Veagle water. It was his own opinion that but for his father's story that night in the stable he would never have quitted the Ohio farm. From such obscure incentives spring world-moving events.

When the full tide of prosperity came, his riches grew by the compound process which Providence reserves for the gratification of millionaires. Every move meant triumph and loads of gold; but in the absorbing game of fortune-making he never forgot his father's tale or the place he had left. So it came that when at last the law ousted Alan MacLean from Dunveagle, a firm of London solicitors bought the estate for Duncan Ogilvie—a master-stroke of the great dramatist.

John Ogilvie did not live to see that consummation of a wild dream, but his wife did.

"Well, mother dear, Dunveagle at last," said the new laird when the hubbub of welcome was over on the night of the home-coming.

"My son, my son," she cried, "if those that are gone could but see this!" and she could say no more.

As a girl she had been privileged to peep on tiptoe at the grandeur of that gay gathering half a century before when Alan MacLean shone a jubilant hero. Now MacLean crouched like a hurt eagle on his rock above and his castle was hers, to do in as she wished. Was she thrilled by a gratified pride? elated by a triumph that avenged all wrongs? If so, the expression of her emotion was singular, for stealing off for a little by herself she wept as in grief or pain.

A little later her granddaughter took her joyously to a sumptuous bedroom, caressed her tenderly, babbling the while like a gleeful child, and left her. To Miss Constance Ogilvie the fairy godmother was veritably throwing open the doors of enchanted castles. The whole air was charmed; the whole world radiant. Not that she was vaingloriously intoxicated; but it happened that she was young, eager, romantic, human, intensely human. Wherefore her pulses danced giddily in the realisation of a delectable dream.

The elder woman had different thoughts and feelings. With a mother's pride she delighted in the splendid success of a son who had the admiration of the admired and the envy of the envied. But not the richest upholstery, nor the costliest lace, nor the softest down, nor troops of servants, nor even filial love, could altogether satisfy the heart that looked back. She went to bed, but could not sleep; for fifty years were unrolled before her mind's eye. She saw herself with short skirts and blown hair running about the braes. She saw her father and mother, her sister, her brother, her husband, young and lithe, now gone, all gone. She went again the bosky way by the Veagle side, where, on a never-to-be-forgotten summer evening, among the hazels, she heard the word that sends a quiver through the maiden heart. She saw herself going home a bride to Craigenard, and leaving it forlorn, a wondering boy holding tightly to her dress. And at that last vision she could lie no longer. Rising as from awesome dreams, she cast a cloak about her shoulders and sat down by the window. In the glimmering summer night she could discern the dark outline of Craigenard through an opening in the woods, and as she gazed with dimmed eyes she would have given Dunveagle ten times over for one hour on that craggy height with those who once made her happy there. She forgot where or how she sat. She did not know that tears rained

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING

21

on the sable trimmings of the cloak, nor how long she had gazed, when she was startled by the sudden rustling of bushes below her window, as if someone were pushing through the shrubbery. She drew back, mindful of her dress, and half intending to call her son. But while she hesitated, there came the sound of voices, and, looking out again, she saw Duncan face to face with the intruder.

CHAPTER IV

A TRYING INTERVIEW

LIKE his mother, and for similar reasons, Duncan Ogilvie also was unable to sleep. He therefore dressed and stole out alone in the hushed hour before the dawn to prove to himself that he was not lost in a world of hallucinations. For it was hard to believe in the reality of this crowning of a life's ambition, this strange feeling of lordship that was partly joyful, partly eerie, and wholly new.

It is perhaps given to one man in every hundred millions of the race to turn the dreams of youth to actuality on the confines of old age. Strength, daring, and good fortune are needed, and of the happy conjunction Fate is a niggard. Nevertheless, she has her favourites, whom the seneschal Luck attends in all their ways, so that their footprints are records of victory. Duncan Ogilvie had outdone his utmost ambition, yet the habit of success had not prepared him for the singular feeling of mingled awe and gladness which now made a turmoil in his breast. Was the place towards which he had through so many tumultuous years been striving at last verily his? Were these in very truth Dunveagle woods, lying like blurred clouds to the skyline? Was that the mystic crooning of the Veagle water like the dying echo of a far-off chant in his ear? Had the boyish word come true, then?

*" 'Are these the links of Forth?' she cried,
'Or are they the Crooks of Dee?
Or the bonnie woods of Warroch head,
That I so fain would see?'"*

The rhyme recalled an old dream. On the night before leaving Craigenard his mother dreamed a dream, which she related in this wise—

"The Veagle water was in spate and came roaring down past Craigenard. Duncan fell in and was carried away. I ran with all my might by the waterside, keeping him in sight, and I saw him going on, on down past Dunveagle Castle till he was lost in the big river below. And at that I woke, dripping with fright, and couldn't go to sleep again. Next day, being troubled, I told my dream to a wise woman, old Kirsty of the Ness, long since gone home, the dear body, for I was thinking it boded ill, and indeed ill our affairs were then going. 'Was the water clear or drumlie?' says she. 'That was the queer thing,' said I. 'Though it was in spate, it was clear as a well in the rock.' 'Then,' says she, 'honey, if God grant you days, you'll be a proud woman yet, for Duncan will own every foot of land you saw him floating by.'" And, wonderful to think, when Kirsty had long been dust her word was fulfilled. Every foot of the land was his. That was the thought that was so hard to accept, or accepting, to realise.

To satisfy a sudden yearning unlike anything he had ever felt before, he had stolen out into the dew for a little quiet meditation while the castle slept. The sun was already up, kindling the great heights, ben after ben, with a fire that spread before his eyes till the upper woods of Dunveagle glowed in a crimson deluge. Leaning against the bole of a big beech, he gazed enchanted. Yes, there were things here which money could not buy, a charm not to be reckoned in dollars nor locked in strong-

rooms as security; perfume too rare for the market, pictures above the ken of art, poetry beyond the poet's line. His city friends had laughed at him for a sentimental desire to be buried among the moors; would the scoffers could see the colours dashed along the slopes and breathe the incense of Dunveagle at dawn!

A hare, foraging for breakfast, squatted a moment, its ears cocked, looking at him as if to ask the reason for an unjustifiable intrusion; a rabbit came nibbling to his feet; a cock-pheasant almost brushed him with its wing—his hare, his rabbit, his pheasant. The sweetness of possession thrilled through him. Dunveagle in the dewy summer dawn was paradise, an enlarged and glorified Eden, and it was his, his after years of hard toil and planning.

Yet in that very moment there rose from the depths of his joy a wave of sadness.

"If only she were here," he said to himself. "If only she were here," and looked with a new sentiment on the possessions spread out to the morning light.

He had married for simple love while life was yet a battle and the victory far off. Ay, and she had stepped with him as comrade and inspirer, suffusing with womanly softness the metallic glare of his existence, bringing feminine grace into hard ways, keeping a sweet spot in the heart, and ever drawing bright pictures of the time when they should go together to the old homeland, in fulfilment of their great dream.

A boy and girl came to them; the boy went, and his mother pined and began to look far beyond Dunveagle. One evening Ogilvie returned home to tell her he had made another million, but that night she cared no more for millions. Duncan Ogilvie bound up his heart and went on with his work, heaping up riches because he could not drop out of the competition. But the keen edge of joy was dulled, the ravishing delight gone. Now,

as he thought of what might have been, a sharp pain smote through him. In the worst of the strife no man had ever seen Duncan Ogilvie flinch or blench, but anyone beholding him in that moment under the beech tree would have marked a face pathetically unlike the one familiar to the world.

He lifted his eyes to the upper spaces aflood with rosy light, and the simple old faith came back. Who knew: she might be there, nay, she might be nearer, thinking his thoughts, sharing his sadness and his satisfaction. He was in this mood, when a sudden rustling of bushes made him start, half in awe, half in surprise. His mother watching above did not hear the challenge, but she heard the response.

"A ghost, sir, a ghost," came in the northern accent. "A poor, feckless phantom, haunting scenes of past happiness. That's all. He craves forgiveness for the intrusion and the trespass. It's but the whim of an old man, hovering for a last peep where he once went unquestioned."

A shaft of light picked him out as he spoke, and Mrs. Ogilvie, peering down, uttered a stifled exclamation, for through all the disguises of time and the wreckage of misfortune she recognised MacLean.

"Dunveagle," she said in a gasp, giving the old name, and it seemed she must swoon from excitement. But the next instant she was dressing with frantic haste. In the days of her poverty she had learned to dress quickly, but it is doubtful if she ever dressed more quickly than now. With a hood over the hair to save time, and the big cloak wrapped tightly about her, she went breathlessly downstairs, and in another minute was beside her son. At the sight of a lady McLean raised his bonnet, bowing ceremoniously.

"You don't know me, sir," she said, her voice husky with emotion.

"Madam," was the answer, "the light is uncertain, and one's eyes don't improve with age."

She took a step forward.

"Will you shake hands with John Ogilvie's widow?" she asked.

He winced as if struck across the face.

"John Ogilvie's widow," he repeated; "John Ogilvie's widow," and then hurriedly, as if covering a breach of manners, "Will John Ogilvie's widow shake hands with me?"

She held out her hand, and he bent over it with elaborate old-world gallantry.

"It is an honour, madam, which I did not expect this morning," he remarked, lifting his head, "and I wish it was John Ogilvie's wife instead of his widow. He went away bearing me a grudge; he might be rejoiced now to find how tartly the fates have made retaliation. There's nothing in this world, madam, but revolution, and the stinging of the wheel as it spins. I'm so used to buffeting and trampling, I would fain have him here to enjoy the full measure of his triumph."

"You speak bitterly," said Mrs. Ogilvie, instinctively drawing back. "It was not for bitterness I mentioned John Ogilvie's name."

"I trust you will accept my apologies," he returned. "We are enjoined to speak no ill of the dead. Besides, I have a liking for naked truth, and John Ogilvie was a good man."

"On my own behalf and my mother's, I thank you for that," said Ogilvie warmly.

"Sir," responded MacLean, "I have been guilty of folly, of prideful things that it's no comfort to call to mind; but if any man said I lied, I'd give him a florin's worth for his groat, old as I am. In spite of old disputes and differences, I say John Ogilvie was a good man."

I take it I have the honour to address his son and my successor."

Ogilvie bowed.

"I congratulate you," pursued MacLean. "Once upon a time I could have welcomed you to Dunveagle, but Fortune has deprived me of that privilege. Now——"

"It is my privilege to welcome you," struck in Ogilvie.

"Thank you," returned the old man; "and may I remark without offence that times are changed when it is the privilege of any man to welcome MacLean to Dunveagle?"

In spite of him, there came the haughty, defiant ring of the fighting chieftain.

"But, doubtless," he went on, "you have observed that life is often satirical with the best of us. Madam, pardon me, but I fear you may get a chill. The dews are heavy with us, and I perceive your slippers are thin. If you will accept my apologies for a most unwarranted intrusion, which I deeply regret, I will not detain you any longer. I wouldn't be here were it not that old hearts have strange likings for old ways and old feet follow them."

The bonnet went up in farewell salute, and he was turning into the woods when Ogilvie spoke.

"Mr. MacLean," he said, "I would not have you go like that. For the moment at least let us forget the past. I can well understand why you are here; and since we have the good fortune to meet, may I have the honour of receiving you as my guest?"

MacLean bowed politely, yet with the proud dignity of the fallen chief.

"After I have had the honour of receiving you," he returned. "Madam," turning to Mrs. Ogilvie, "I think you must know the way to Craigenard. You shall be welcome at any time you may be pleased to visit it."

And with a sweep of the glengarry he disappeared.

CHAPTER V

AFTERTHOUGHTS AND A PROOF OF LOYALTY

MACLEAN climbed back to his rocks in an ire equally oblivious of age, obstacles, and sprained ankle. He had descended in a frenzied brooding upon ruin to have a last look at his lost inheritance, but had not counted on being caught and tricked into a show of amity with the usurpers.

"To think of making an ass of myself like that!" he muttered again and again. "What a doitered, infatuated old idiot I must be getting!" and each repetition was a fresh sting.

Smoke from the domestic hearth was already curling peacefully against the morning sky when he drew near to Craigenard. Ian Veg, who thought his master still cosy in bed, was starting hillward with crook and dog, but spying the laird, turned in surprise for explanation.

"You are out early the day, sir," he called affably, at the same time giving a deferential salute of the cap.

The laird wiped a drenched forehead; the observant Ian noted that feet and legs were also drenched, and knew there had been wading through long grass.

"Wonderful wit!" returned the laird tartly.

"What, sir?" Ian asked innocently.

"To discover at five in the morning that it's early in the day. You'll be finding out next that the moon shines at night, that water runs downhill, and other marvels."

Ian opened his eyes in a keener scrutiny of his master's face. To all appearance the man was perfectly sober, but what had made him savage?

"Since you know so much, perhaps you can tell me if breakfast's ready," said the laird. "I've an appetite for useful knowledge at the moment."

"I will not be able to say just offhand, sir," replied Ian, "but I'll see," and turned on his heel in search of Janet.

"The laird's gone clean daft," he cried, bouncing into the kitchen a minute later, "an's dancin' like a hen on a hot griddle. D'ye understand plain words?" he demanded, as Janet stared. "Dunveagle's dancin'!"

"He's blither than some folk I could name," retorted Janet. "What's he dancin' for?"

"I give ye leave to go and ask," rejoined Ian; "but one thing I may tell ye, he's skreighin' for breakfast."

Janet glanced at the ancient eight-day clock.

"It's not breakfast-time," she said, unmoved.

"Just go and tell him," suggested Ian, "and I'll watch the ploy."

Janet knew her husband; she also knew the laird. Therefore, instead of wasting time and breath on the foolishness of man, she turned, like a general in the crisis of battle, to her lieutenant.

"Maggie," she said good-humouredly, "whip you out for some fresh eggs. I'll see to the kettle."

Then she returned to Ian.

"Wash yourself, Ian Veg Mackern," she said, with authority; "you'll have to wait on the laird, for me and Maggie's got other things to do."

But for one small circumstance Ian would promptly have told her to go to Hades. He had been married thirty years, and experience had long since taught him to discriminate between the orders that might be disregarded

and the orders that must be obeyed. Accordingly, when the laird sat down to breakfast, Ian was dutifully, if rather starchily, in attendance. The laird cast a scowling glance over the table; then he looked at Ian.

"The new gentry's coming to call on me," he said, with the rumble of thunder in his voice.

Ian heard like a statue.

"The new gentry's coming to call on me," repeated the laird; and still Ian gave as little response as a deaf mute.

"Ye damn fool, d'ye hear what I'm telling you?" roared the laird, seizing an egg as if to use it for a missile.

"If ye throw it at me, sir," remarked Ian, "I'm no sure ye can have another. The hens iss layin' wild."

The laird set down the egg and repeated the information about the new gentry. Ian's face became a study in the sublimity of its indifference.

"Ian Veg Mackern," cried the laird murderously, "your insolence will drive me to give you what you deserve!"

"It's no for me to say against your pleasure, sir, but you will be the only man in the country that could do it," returned Ian, making a pretence of arranging dishes on the table.

"I hate an obstinate devil of a wooden post where I expected a man," said the laird.

"It's disappointing," owned Mackern coolly.

"Ian Veg," cried the laird, "I see you're in league with the rest to drive me mad! I have to repeat that the new gentry's coming to see me."

"It iss no concern of mines at all, sir, what the new gentry will do or not do," responded Ian Veg. "They can come to Craigenard if you want them, or they can go to Jerusalem if it suits them better; ay, or they can break their necks over a crag, or droon themselves in the Veagle water, just as they like. It will not be for me to poke my nose in."

"But it's for you to listen when I speak."

"And that's just what I wass doing, sir."

"And it's for you to speak as well as listen when I wish you," pursued the laird explosively. "Will you tell me if you hear that?"

"I hear so much of one thing and another that whiles I wish I wass dead too, and not listening at all."

"Then you've only to go on a little further as you're doing to get your wish," retorted the laird. "The new gentry are coming to see me, and I want you to make things ready."

"The new gentry's called Ogilvie, I'm thinking," said Ian.

"What of that?" demanded the laird.

"Oh! just thoughts of my own, sir," answered Ian; "that iss all."

"Well, take care they don't get out," counselled the laird. "As to the new gentry, their name is Ogilvie, and I want you to understand that when they come to pay your master a visit you'll stand behind and do what you ought to do and stop your sniffing, you infernal wild cat. Do you hear that?"

"I'm afraid the salmon will be cold and the eggs too, sir, if you don't begin," said Ian gravely. "It's not to-day or yesterday too that Ian Veg learned his place. When will the pock—the gentry be coming, sir?"

"Perhaps this afternoon, perhaps to-morrow, perhaps next day."

Ian considered with the air of a man of many engagements.

"I will be busy in the hill the three days, I'm thinking," he said.

"Why," cried the laird, altering his tone, "what the devil's the matter with you, Ian Veg?"

"Maiter, sir!" responded Ian in deep amazement.

"Maiter! Oh, nothing in the world will be the maiter, I suppose."

"You're as mysterious as an old maid with an improper secret," rejoined the laird. "Come, out with it."

"Well, then, sir, if you must know I will tell you," replied Ian, bracing himself as for an ordeal. "It's just the new gentry; that's what's the maiter. For I did not think to see the day when a MacLean would be in Craigenard and a tam black Ogilvie in Dunveagle; and I did not think, too, that the sun would rise on any morning when Ian Veg Mackern would be told by his maister to wait on an Ogilvie. But the world iss all upside down and the top and bottom all wrong, and Ian Veg iss an old man that will not be able very well to fall in with new fashions and things. If you wass to use poother and shot on him just like an old done dog, you wouldn't be doing wrong, sir."

The note of wounded loyalty touched the laird, who had a Highlander's appreciation of fidelity. There was no need to ask Ian for an explanation of his attitude. His conduct for forty years furnished both exposition and commentary. Through good and evil hap, through the hostility of foes and the treachery of friends, through the long-drawn tragedy of crowding disaster, he had clung to the laird, to the effusion of blood and his own undoing. With a bite and a sup and something to cover his nakedness he was content, so only that Dunveagle benefited. His wages were now two years in arrear, not because the laird could not or would not pay, but because Ian knew his master had the greater need of money. And in this antique spirit of devotion to a fallen house he was vigorously aided—nay, urged by Janet, who never complained save when a fighter for Dunveagle evinced a disposition to mount the white feather. The couple conspired to retain for their master a pathetic semblance

of the ancient lordship, to pose him still as the munificent giver, the hospitable host, the quixotically generous patron, to sustain his pride, and buoy him with a sense of power. They called him Dunveagle, though his title to the distinction was gone, and Ian made a visit to Perth, his wrists bearing the iron bracelets, because someone had impugned the laird's honour. In return they asked nothing but bread and raiment, a licence to criticise, and unfettered liberty to do as seemed to them good in the interest of the man they served and loved. Thus it came that Ian took liberties with the laird on which not another man in Glenveagle would have ventured.

"You forget, Ian," said the laird, softened by the fresh proof and the old memory of loyalty; "you forget that the Ogilvies come to me as friends. Would you have me lacking in proper courtesy? Tell me, did you ever see MacLean rude or boorish to any man who came to his door as a friend?"

"Never," answered Ian promptly, "never; and I tell you, sir, that if Dunveagle calls the tevil friend, Ian Veg will be ceevil to him."

"After all, Ian, there's some difference between an Ogilvie and the devil," said the laird, smiling.

"Ay," assented Ian quickly, "I haf hard that the tevil is a gentleman: I haf not hard so much of Ogilvie. Some of us mind," he went on, "when the Ogilvies had as little shoe-leather for their feet as the rest of us, and this day they are sitting in Dunveagle Castle. That's a fine turn up. Some of us mind, too, when black Jock Ogilvie married Jean Meldrum o' the Whins, and what was she? I've seen her kilt her coats and tramp the blankets like any other country lass; and now her fine legs are in braw silks and laces, they say."

"It's true, Ian," admitted the laird, "you and I have seen some changes together."

"More than iss good for our stomachs," cried Ian; "more than iss good for our stomachs. We haf seen the hoolet in the eagle's nest—that's fine. We haf seen the goose putting on the feathers of the peacock—that's fine too. We haf seen kinless upstarts in the castles of them that had a name and a habitation at the flood, ay, and a boat of their own too."

"It's not mentioncd in Scripture, Ian," remarked the laird.

"All things iss not mentioned in Scriptor, sir," returned Ian. "If you haf found no word of MacLean there, I haf seen no mention of Ogilvie."

He was proceeding on a rising tide of eloquence when there came a tap to the door and in walked Janet.

"I wass thinking, sir, you will be ready to clear away," she said, casting an eye over the table, "and you haf not started. The salmon will be spoiled, and the eggs too."

"I'll finish in a minute, Janet," answered the laird, falling to. "The fact is we have wasted time talking. I have been telling Ian that the new gentry are coming to see me, and to tell you the truth he's not too well pleased."

Janet glanced from one to the other for a cue.

"And if it iss your will, sir, that the new gentry's coming to see you, what odds iss it if Ian Veg is pleased or no pleased? I will be thinking Craigenard iss not his at all." And she looked at Ian as if daring him to contradict her. Ian knew better.

CHAPTER VI

CONSPIRATORS

IAN went forth from the presence to take counsel with his assistant and confidant Alick Ruah (Alick of the Red Hair), whom, cynic-like, he engaged because the boy's name was a byword with every old wife in the district. Did a fond mother wish to nip the budding Satan in her darling, she did it by pointing to the awful consequences of depravity in Alick; did a preaching father desire a red-hot example of wickedness, he had it offhand in the history of Alick. Some have fame thrust on them; Alick's reputation was honestly won in a brilliant course of evil-doing; and this greatly pleased Ian, who came to the shrine of respectability sneering.

Alick's mother, Mary Ruah, was long a familiar ill-cherished figure in Glenveagle. Her boy's inheritance were the congenital red head and certain propensities which, it was commonly held, never did and never should make for righteousness. Mary's career had been varied and adventurous, and the end tragic or glorious according to the point of view. The simple facts are these.

One Saturday night Mary came forth into the main street of Aberfourie, her best Sunday bonnet tilted dizzily over her right eye, and challenged any man, woman, or child within hearing to a bout with the bottle. Some choice spirits being present, time and place were forthwith arranged. Three competitors entered the lists against her,

Ian Veg, Tom of the Croft, and Donald Mohr of the Whins, an umpire, pledged to soberness, holding the stakes, which were two bottles of a noted whisky. Donald Mohr dropped out early; Tom presently followed, and Ian Veg and Mary settled cosily to the contest by themselves. "Here's to you, Mary, my lass," cried Ian in Gaelic. "Win or lose, I never met your match in petticoats. It's a pleasure to drink with you; but it sticks in my mind you're in for a licking this twist."

"And I'm obliged to you, Ian Veg," returned Mary. "About the licking—we will see by-and-by."

"Fuich, you're hiccuping already, Mary," rejoined Ian, "and that's not a good sign, my lass. Here's at ye."

At four on the Sunday morning Ian stottered home, leering like a conqueror, half the prize swinging perilously in his coat-tail; the other half he had chivalrously presented to Mary, and medical evidencce was to the effect that this finished her.

When he heard some days later that the heroic Mary was no more, it came "like a stoond in his conscience," as he declared, to do something for her orphan boy, a task which he was the readier to undertake since inscrutable Heaven had denied Janet and himself children of their own. Alick was already picking up a precarious living, and as nobody's brat in particular was flouted and abused at the pleasure of such as had the muscle to thrash him or the nerve to incur his ill-will. The number included none of his own age or size.

Ian took him in hand curiously, as a breaker takes in hand a horse that has defied and beaten rivals, trained him with a doting care and finished him off, a pattern of undevout heroism. The boy was without fear or conscience, would venture anything, had wit to devise, a head for difficulties, and a remarkable power of the fists. Withal, he had the faculty of hero-worship. Within three months

he hung on Ian's image. Napoleon and Sir Colin Campbell were great men, but could they equal Ian Veg in a predicament? In turn, Ian was prouder of Alick than of all his works beside. Whoever else might quail or run in a crisis, Alick stood defiant as the rocks that tore and ripped the Veagle water: and the mentor was pleased to note that the direr the peril the keener was Alick's delight.

"Alick," said Ian one day, meditatively smoking his pipe, "I wass just thinking to myself that you'll do."

The boy had half killed a neighbouring herd, twice his own size, and come out of the fray without a scratch. That was Ian's lesson in ethics.

It chanced that when Ian passed out from the laird's presence that Alick was supping his morning porridge. A jerk of the head brought him trotting at Ian's heels, and the pair were soon in deep deliberation over the laird's folly. Alick heard the tale with indignation and contempt, for he had been taught that the right way with an enemy is war to the knife. Besides, he was there to uphold the honour of the MacLeans, even against themselves, and—curse and confound the Ogilvies.

"Do you know what I think?" said Ian. "It iss this: that the old gowk has invitit them. Well, you and me will see them in cinders, Alick, my lad, afore we wait on them."

An unholy light gleamed in Alick's eye.

"Um," he said, nodding vehemently in confirmation.

"Let us see," continued Ian. "If they walk, they'll come by the wee footbridge; if they ride or drive, it will be the big bridge. Anyway, you see, they'll have to cross water."

"And the bridges is fifty feet high," remarked Alick, with a grin of intelligence.

"About that," returned Ian.

"I have a plan," cried Alick.

Ian looked round carefully.

"No so loud," he cautioned, "no so loud. Mind that stone walls have ears whiles. Yer just a reg'lar wee tevil with plans, Alick. What is it now?"

"The bridges is wood," answered Alick.

Ian struck a match on the bowl of his black cutty pipe, and began to pull thoughtfully. Then, taking the pipe from his mouth, he looked hard at his companion.

"Take care, Alick Ruah, of the freckles," he said.

"Go on like that, and you'll soon be in the prison of Perth, and I'm in a poseetion to tell ye the air is not at all good, nor the meat and drink too, not to speak of having to make yer own bed in the morning, which is the business of women, and not of men at all. Forby it might be a hanging job if the trash was drooned. Haf you thought of that, Alick Ruah?"

"A bit of the saw and a bit spate," suggested Alick, undaunted by the prospect of hanging. "Maybe rain would come if we prayed for it."

"Ay, maybe the goose will come when the fox whistles," returned Ian. "A bit of the saw and a bit spate. The saw we could manage if the night was dark enough, but about the spate, do you think you and me's in that well with Providence we can get a spate when we want it? It iss in my mind there iss no chance of a spate."

Thereupon he began to unfold a plan of his own, a plan so tame, so unheroic, that Alick feared Ian was getting old and losing his spirit. Ian, in fact, was basely thinking of saving himself and leaving the laird to the consequences of his infatuation. Before Alick could express his sentiments on the point, they were interrupted by Janet.

"Collogin' again," she cried. "One would think you two bodies haf the whole care and planning of the world. Ian Veg, your porridge will be getting cold if you don't

take care, and you, Alick, what I am wondering iss this, if there's enough in your head to get me a troot or two."

"A troot or two," cried Alick, sniffing treason, and glanced at Ian.

"That will be exactly what I said, Alick Ruah," responded Janet. "I haf an awful fancy for a troot. If you wass to bring me a basketfu' you'll see what will happen."

He went obediently to search out his fishing-tackle, Ian, by Janet's orders, helping: then when he was gone on his mission, Ian went in to breakfast, which he ate gloomily, while receiving instructions from his wife concerning the expected visit of the Ogilvies. He said nothing, but when he strode forth again, red rebellion shone in his eye. "The Ogilvies," he muttered to himself, going into the stable; "that's what the Ogilvies deserve." And he crunched his heel viciously on a stone.

CHAPTER VII

CONSPIRACY TAKES A NEW TURN

IT chanced that on the afternoon of next day Ian and Alick, resting on a knoll behind Craigenard to breathe and mop their streaming brows, looked down on the green windings of Glenveagle. From a craggy gap to the west the turbulent river leaped, to flash down the valley in cascades and running lines of foam where the rocks were thick, or gloom in pools and eddies that were black in the brightest noon. The pine woods wore their richest olive, the fields their most vivid green. In fine, Glenveagle was in summer dress, and the lush verdure of Glenveagle is a thing of beauty which city people travel far to see.

"It's bonnie," remarked Ian, filling his lungs with the scented breeze. "Man, it iss grand when the sun shines like that in Glenveagle. Alick, my lad, it iss a good thing to be living this day, too."

He swept his eye over glen and mountain with ineffable satisfaction. Then it lighted on the grey turrets of Dunveagle Castle, rising in the midst of a billowy sea of foliage, and at that his face darkened.

"Alick," he said, incipient anger ringing in his voice, "if the tevil had not too much hand in this world, it iss down there you and me would be, and not melting up here. Now it iss the Ogilvies that iss there, the son of black Jock Ogilvie, of Craigenard, here, and Jean Meldrum of the Whins, ay, and Jean herself, too. That's a change

for you. If you live long enough you will see some wonderful things, Alick, my man."

He shut his lips with a smack, his eyes still bent on the grey points among the green.

Instead of answering, Alick leaped to his feet. "What's yon?" he cried excitedly. "What's yon?"

"Alick Ruah," responded Ian, also rising, "if you make me jump like that, look you, I must learn you manners with the stick. What are ye crying and glowering at?"

"They're coming," was the answer. "See yonder at the end of the avenue among the trees."

Ian held an outspread hand over his eyes and gazed

"Ay," he said, "they're coming." And he added comments on the general economy of things, which it would not be edifying to repeat. Spitting in disgust, he turned to his companion.

"Where's yer saws and yer spates and yer prayin' now?" he demanded. And almost as he spoke Alick announced another discovery.

"The laird's seen them, too. There's Maggie looking for us," he cried, excitement quivering in his voice.

With the celerity of a weasel Ian slid behind a rock. "Let her find us, then," he growled. "And will you be coming down out of that, too, Alick Ruah, or will you need my cromak about the legs of you?"

Alick likewise dropped out of sight, and the two made off hillward. Five minutes later Maggie was on the knoll they had left, shouting vociferously.

"Alick," said Ian, with a grim chuckle, "Maggie hass lungs and legs. It is a peety to be deaf when a bonnie lassie's cryin' to ye, but business iss business. We haf that job in the hill that can't wait."

Finding her shouting in vain, Maggie once more plunged in pursuit. The fugitives quickened their pace for that

urgent business in the hill, of which a minute before neither had heard. Behind, Maggie gave tongue at intervals and with increasing vehemence.

"Maggie can skreigh," remarked Ian almost in admiration. At the end of a mile's race over the rockiest, steepest ground the pair could choose, she overtook them. Her hand was pressed to her side; she streamed at every pore, and her final challenge was a gasp. Ian turned in amazed concern.

"God bless my soul, Maggie, what iss the maiter?" he cried. "You should mind that running like that is awful bad for the heart. What for did you not cry after us?"

"I did," panted Maggie.

"There's Alick," returned Ian, pointing to that model of veracity. "If there was a cry in the hill this blessed day, ask him. Now, Maggie, take breath and tell us what iss the maiter."

"The laird wants you, and so does Janet," blurted Maggie.

"Yer flustered, Maggie," rejoined Ian tenderly. "Take time and tell us all about it."

Whereupon Maggie reported with much panting that Ian was wanted instantly, that the Ogilvies were coming, and that, metaphorically speaking, Craigenard was standing on its head and madly kicking its heels in the air. He would have questioned further, and to that end invited her to sit down. But if Alick was under Ian's thumb, Maggie was under Janet's, so having delivered her message, she made for home. The conspirators looked at each other in a silence more eloquent than speech.

"Alick," said Ian presently, "you and me's two fools. If you kick me I'll kick you—for our own sateesfaction."

From a point of vantage beside a grey rock they

watched the carriage from Dunveagle climbing like an ant far below. Luckily, the fat English horses crawled so slowly there was a moment to consider a plan of procedure.

"Alick," said Ian, "me and you might, as you would say, tell the laird to go to blazes, and we might tell Janet to go to blazes, but it iss in my mind it will not do to tell the laird and Janet together to go to blazes. I wish Maggie had tumbled in a bog-hole. It iss bad any way ye look at it. I must be off, though. But sit you here, Alick, watching, and when you see the trash near the far gate yonder, bolt down with the biggest skelloch you can get out of you, and get me back to the hill."

"What about?" asked the practical Alick.

"If you wass afraid of a licking, I'm thinking you would find a story," answered Ian pungently.

Alick beamed.

"Very well, then," he said, with easy self-confidence.

"And if ye fail in one jot or tittle," said Ian, with scriptural impressiveness, "it will be better for you, Alick, my lad, not to come down at all."

"Very well," repeated Alick, his features crinkling in a grin of content.

On reaching the house, Ian found the laird already dressed in gala tartan.

"Where's Alick?" was the first question.

"Up by in the hill, sir," answered Ian innocently.

"Bring him back, then, quick!" said the laird; "I want him."

So Ian went gloomily to the back of the house, put the first and third fingers of his left hand into his mouth, and the second on the point of his carnelian nose, and blew. Now, when Ian put his heart into it, there was not his match at the long whistle among all the shepherds of Glenveagle. But his whistling now was without pith or spirit.

"You've done better than that in your day, Ian Veg," said the laird grimly. "Try again."

The second time, being touched in his pride, Ian made the echoes ring.

"That'll likely do," said the laird drily. "Now get into your kilt."

"Your tartan or mines?" asked Ian.

"When did MacLean's followers receive MacLean's friends in the Mackern tartan?" was the retort. "You have ten minutes to dress."

Sullenly, and not too briskly, Ian went to the back kitchen, where Janet awaited him with a tub of water and half a bar of acrid soap. A minute later Alick followed, breathless. Janet eyed the pair as Bumble might survey particularly undesirable casuals.

"Ay," she remarked tartly, "a woman has a fine handling with her men folk. They gaither dirt like drookit hens. Maggie, bring yer scrubbin' brush."

She left to make herself "snod," but presently returned to expedite the washing. Ian was spluttering foam, rubbing stung eyes, and cursing wickedly.

"And to think I haf to thole this for the tam black Ogilvies," he cried in disgust and rebellion.

"Ay, and more too, if you will not be hurrying, Ian Veg!" came from the door. "The laird's waiting."

Even Ian's docility failed in that moment of trial. Turning, towel in hand, he blinked at his wife with red, truculent eyes.

"Will you be so good as to take my compliments to the laird, and say that if he gives better soap I will make better time?" he retorted. "And if I wass you, Janet, I would not be standing aboot with only half my clothes on. I have seen things that wass more becoming."

"Your kilt and your sporan and your stockings iss laid out on the bed," rejoined Janet, unmoved, "and yours too,

Alick. And mind, both of you, there'll be a fine splore if the new gentry comes and nobody out to meet them."

Within the prescribed time Ian and Alick appeared before the laird, resplendent in MacLean tartan, in metal buttons, buckles, sporan, and hair-oil. The laird cast a critical eye over them, and signified they would do, though he would have preferred less shine on the face and less grease about the head. Then he gave the final orders. He hated the Ogilvies, but, hating or loving, banning or blessing, Highland sentiment dictated that guests should be received in honour. Besides, he was proud of his tartan, the sole remaining emblem of vanished splendour. It had been conspicuous on many a glorious, many a disastrous field. Its scarlet had been deepened to heart's crimson at Flodden; it had brightened the victories of the great Montrose, been with Dundee at Killiecrankie, and Charlie at Culloden, and fluttered in the van of forays and clan battles innumerable, from Loch Gruinard and Benbigger down. Never in any crisis of fortune had it been disgraced by cowardice, by discourtesy, or inhospitality; it should not be disgraced now, when honour was all that remained to be upheld. So Alick went to open gates with particular instructions as to behaviour, and to Ian fell the duty of holding the carriage door as the occupants stepped out. He did it with a high head, a set face, and a silent tongue, disdainfully pushing the nigger footman out of his way.

CHAPTER VIII

IN THE LION'S DEN, AND WHAT HAPPENED THERE

THE effect of sentiment, half consciously disguised as goodwill, the visit was in truth an invasion of the mediæval by the modern, and something more, as both sides acutely felt. In its heart the mediæval fiercely resented the advent of the modern as at once a shameful injustice and a blatant impertinence; and the modern was nervously uncertain of the spirit of the mediæval. For you are to note it was not merely the common clashing of old and new, the collision, as it were, of two hemispheres and two civilisations; it was or might be the revival of old hatreds, the reopening of deadly feuds. To be sure the olive branch stood between, but might it not enwreath the dagger? In the day of their power the MacLeans had dealt hardly with the Ogilvies; the wheel turned, and behold the Ogilvies sat in the seat of the MacLeans. Not from friendship is a Roland thus given for an Oliver.

And indeed when Alick had closed the last gate behind them, the Ogilvies had a sharp tremor of misgiving at their temerity in walking wantonly, as it were, into the lion's den—a lion whose claws had on less excuse turned to murderous steel points. Had their exile blotted out remembrance of Highland honour, that they did not know better? For the Highlander stands brother to the Arab in this, that the welfare of his guest, even when

an enemy, is sacred as his own life. MacLean might go to Dunveagle and cut Ogilvie's throat with gusto; but Ogilvie at Craigenard was safe while MacLean had a blade to defend him.

He was out himself to greet them, the eagle feather of valiancy in his glengarry, the jewelled horn of the skenedhu, reserved for great occasions, gleaming above his stocking. His welcome had the courtly grace of the patrician. There is an air of quality which is the special gift of time; and the Ogilvies were perhaps vaguely conscious of the rawness of brand-new grandeur beside an immemorial mien of lordship. They could not lay haughtiness to their host's charge. His manner was easy, cordial, gracious, if also nobly proud and subtly impressive. They knew he was as poor as the hawks that haunted his bleak crags, and notwithstanding a benign exterior, as fierce and independent.

Connie, who had eyes and ears for a multitude, marked yet other things which surprised, yet somehow did not displease. One was that immediately on bidding them welcome he replaced his bonnet on his head, not defiantly nor arrogantly, yet as one who would have the action noted.

"An American," she said to herself in her rapid Western way, "would remain bareheaded." And thereby Miss Ogilvie, who knew much, evinced ignorance of the privileges of chieftainship. In the glorious days of old a MacLean had done his prince a redoubtable service, and in reward had warrant for himself and his descendants for ever to stand covered in the royal presence. The man who faces kings, bonnet on head, is not likely, if you will consider the matter, to uncover before meaner men, even if they are perched on piles of gold. Wherefore after the lordly duck of greeting MacLean clapped his head-piece on again, as one above the conventions of ordinary people.

But his demeanour was marked by a quaint, elaborate courtesy, which Connie, whose appreciation of old-world romance was quick and keen, pronounced "as good as a scene out of the *Morte d'Arthur*." The reader may be pleased to glance at an impressionist portrait which she dashed off for her friend, Kitty Dunbar, in New York.

"Imagine a patriarch of six feet, not in Hebrew robe and sandals, but in kilt of flaring Highland tartan, sporran—which grannie tells me is the Gaelic for purse—(it wouldn't do for us to wear it so openly on our fronts, dear), buckle-shoes, and jewelled dagger, called skenedhu (Anglice, black knife), as if he were a hoary Italian bandit retired on his laurels. Picture him, too, quite as lean but hardly as angular as our typical Yank, but in place of a withered goatee put a great glistening sheaf of white beard; above that set an eagle beak inclining to what your favourite novelist calls 'the aquiline'; flanking that, like a pair of twin sentinels, put a pair of grey hawk-eyes, equally capable of the caresses of a lover (things, to be candid, we women would sell our souls for, Kitty darling) or the piercing flash of the sworn foe. Crown all with a fuzzy-wuzzy tangle of snow-white hair on which, if you please, my hero keeps his bonnet (that's the Highland word for what is neither cap nor hat) in presence of the finest lady in the land. 'The rude man!' you exclaim in your impetuous way. On the contrary, splendid, an old lion in the glory of his age, a trifle uncertain perhaps in his temper, like the noble creatures of his sex, but a woman's hero to the last fibre of him. America produces nothing like him, nothing quite so picturesque and therefore so interesting. Take dear old Don Quixote, add Northern shagginess and shrewdness, rig him out in Highland costume, set him down among the everlasting hills and crags (now gorgeous with sunshine and colour), and

you have some idea of my chief. A century and a half ago his family sang

“ ‘ Come o’er the stream, Charlie, dear Charlie, brave Charlie,
Come o’er the stream, Charlie, and dine wi’ MacLean ’

with a great deal too much heart and fervour for their own interest. Do you know who my present heroine is? Joan of Arc! Grace Darling! Fudge. It’s Flora Macdonald. My chief’s great-great-great-grandfather kissed her hand, and never after kissed another woman. Match me such loyalty among your gallants of to-day. My hero has a history. He once owned Dunveagle, and has a son whose picture at seven years of age hangs in the dining-room on the rock, a sweet-faced, winsome, innocent tot in golden ringlets, and a ruffle of lace, who looks at you wistfully as for a kiss. Now he’s an officer in the British Army, and I daresay not so wistful and innocent as he once was. I hear he is on the way home from India. Possibly he may be here on furlough when you come.”

As was her way, Miss Ogilvie trips along too fast. She does not tell, for example, that the man who had faced delirium on the New York Stock Exchange with the coolness of a bronze statue was strangely embarrassed before her mountain knight, nor for reasons easily guessed was Mrs. Ogilvie in a voluble mood. It devolved on the ardent, unconventional Connie herself to dispel the chill of reserve and uncertainty.

“Well!” she cried, glancing from the laird to his henchmen, “really and truly we are in the Highlands at last.”

Her father warned her by a look to be careful, a warning secretly repeated by her grandmother; but she skipped on heedless.

“Mr. MacLean,” she said, stooping towards him, “will you tell me if that is a real dagger you are wearing?”

“It is the skenedhu, Miss Ogilvie,” MacLean answered

gravely. "It is worn for ornament now, more's the pity; but once it was carried for use."

"How romantic!" she cried. "One makes out it must have been rarely exciting in the good old times when men settled their differences with the dirk instead of going to law. Grannie has told me about them, and I have read a little too—Ossian's poems and Sir Walter's books and other works. Don't you think, sir, the world is growing tame?"

Unwittingly she held the stirrup, and the next instant the laird was on his hobby-horse.

"Tame!" he repeated, a ringing scorn in his voice. "Is the Caillach that sits blinking and snuffing in the greasach tame?"

"Grannie, dear, will you translate for me?" asked Connie sweetly, turning to her grandmother.

But the laird, sensitive as an electric needle, quickly interposed.

"I will translate myself, Miss Ogilvie," he said. "The translation is just this, that the world is now like an old wife that sits mumbling among the ashes. I think the world grows too politic and prudent."

"Delightful!" she cried. "And has that skindoo killed anybody in its day, Mr. MacLean?"

"I wouldn't wonder," he answered, his eye twinkling. "It is old, and once long ago there was blood on it."

A shade of horror crossed Connie's face, but she was too eager to be long or deeply horrified. Had he a claymore as well as a skindoo?

"If Mrs. Ogilvie will excuse us while we go to the little room upstairs that I call the armoury," he said, rising with the enthusiasm of a boy, "I will show you a broadsword."

Connie and her father accompanied the laird; Mrs. Ogilvie, having thoughts of her own, remained behind in the little drawing-room once her pride, and sent for Janet. But the two had hardly dipped into the past when Connie

was back, a huge sword swung on her shoulder and a dancing delight in her face. Her father and the laird followed close, the latter in a pother of wonder over this frank, irruptive, cordial Western girl, so curiously unlike the young ladies of his acquaintance.

"Beyond all doubt we are in the Highlands at last!" she cried. "See, a relic of the good old times!" laying the weapon across her grandmother's knees. "An Andrea Ferrara, isn't it, Mr. MacLean?"

"You can see the St. Andrew's cross for yourself," replied the laird proudly.

"Yes, to be sure, and it has been in the wars too, Mr. MacLean, hasn't it?"

"Count the notches, Miss Ogilvie. It was at Inverlochy and Kilsyth. It helped to prog Argyle out of his own castle of Inverary when he forgot his manners and patriotism, which, to say truth, he hardly ever remembered. After that it was at Killiecrankie, and Culloden, and other places. Oh yes, it has been in the wars."

"And done murder," suggested Connie archly.

"Miss Ogilvie," returned MacLean, drawing himself up like an offended warrior, "war is not murder. A thief and a villain go out to murder in the dark, but a soldier goes and kills his man in broad daylight, like a gentleman. Perhaps you are interested in Montrose, Miss Ogilvie."

"The great Marquis! Listen!" and she recited—

*"He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small,
Who dares not put it to the touch
To gain or lose it all."*

"Is that the man?"

"That's the man," replied the laird, his face flushed with excitement. "Well, he put it to the touch, and you know what happened."

He turned abruptly to the window, and stretched an arm

towards Dunveagle. Instinctively all eyes followed the pointed hand.

"You see the right peak of the castle yonder," he said, "under that is a bedroom."

"Mine," responded Connie, with a start.

"Then," said MacLean impressively, "Miss Ogilvie has the honour to own a room once occupied by the great Marquis."

"Tell us about it," she said breathlessly. "Tell us."

"It was after Philiphaugh," replied MacLean, "when they were hunting him by hill and river, like a brock—that is a badger, you understand. And in his extremity he honoured the MacLean of that day by seeking refuge in Dunveagle. Three nights he slept in that room under the right peak; and when he went, having no better gift to bestow, he left that sword. 'Take,' he said, 'it is all I have to give in the present state of my fortune. A loyal Highlander once presented it to me. I present it in turn to another loyal Highlander.'"

"I daresay it was accepted as good payment," said Connie.

"Payment!" repeated the laird, "none thought of payment. Men did not barter all for money then. Montrose died at Edinburgh, as you know, and MacLean is no longer in Dunveagle. But the thought keeps me company many a time, and I would not exchange it for a cartload of gold, that in his sore straits the great Marquis was sheltered at Dunveagle. And that's the sword; count the notches, and reckon every notch the lives of half a score of enemies."

He drew up, his eye flashing, his face dusky red. Even Connie felt that the atmosphere had grown suddenly and dangerously electric; and for one swift moment Duncan Ogilvie saw MacLean wield the sword of Montrose in vengeance.

CHAPTER IX

THE LION'S DEN, CONTINUED

THE laird himself was quite quick to realise the embarrassment, and his chivalry leaped to the rescue.

"Tut, tut!" he cried in laughing self-reproach. "Talking of swords and wars when we should be minding our friends." He turned with an exquisite gallantry to Mrs. Ogilvie. "We are over head and ears in old associations," he remarked, every sign of heat vanished. "Every stone here speaks with a strange tongue. I am sure you would like to go through the house for old sake's sake, as the saying is. Will you do me the favour to say where you prefer to begin?"

He bent his grey eyes upon her, smiling as if his sole business in life were to please. And in truth he was thinking how to eliminate himself, so that his presence should not disturb while his visitors communed with the ghosts of the "old dead time." He knew better than most what it was to have them swooping back with choking memories. Many and many an hour he passed with the glorious dead, his mind in a burning glow at the thought of their deeds, or brooded with rankling heart over things that had long since melted into air, into thin air. In such hours of absorption he resented intrusion himself, and he had a sufficient regard for the golden rule to consider his guests when the past held them, as he could well guess, in a throttling grip.

"I'm thinking there is no need, Mrs. Ogilvie," he

said, "to show you the way about Craigenard, for indeed, as I find to my cost, old feet remember the steps of their youth better than the steps of yesterday. If they had their will at the last, likely they'd just walk back to the starting-point again. The house, top to bottom, is open to you ; will you act as guide while I attend to some little business with my man, Ian Veg?"

"Thank you, sir," returned Ogilvie, speaking for his mother, "that is thoughtfully and kindly done."

"Well, well," rejoined the laird hastily. "Once—but never mind that. Harrowing is good for ploughed land, but bad for the feelings, Mr. Ogilvie." And bowing, he withdrew.

"Mother, it is as you predicted," said Duncan Ogilvie softly. "Highland delicacy and chivalry are not a mere tradition. How did he guess? Come."

So she led them slowly by the old familiar ways, upstairs and downstairs, along narrow passages, into obscure or hidden corners. And as she explained how the rooms looked in the days when she was mistress and housemaid in one, where this or that piece of furniture stood, and how the whole was arranged and set off with little devices of her own, she had often to stop in the middle of a sentence. For it is not all exultation that comes even to a millionaire's mother when she revisits the home where she once sat sewing, perhaps with weary hands and eyes, that he might be dressed like other boys. There was no need to sew now, but—but——

"Duncan," she said, coming to a stand in an upper room, "it was here that I tried on your first kilt. I have a bit of it yet, and a proud woman I was, for every stitch in it was my own. Your father was to drive down by to the laird with his rent, and was taking you with him."

She turned abruptly to look out of the window, and Connie gently kissed the wet face. But Duncan Ogilvie

stood motionless and speechless, as under a spell, gazing upon himself in the kilt which his mother had made. And the financial potentate, whose whispered word excited every telegraph wire and tape machine on two continents, forgot his heaps of gold and the fierce joy of contention and the rapture of victory. Ay, the multimillionaire, whose operations dazzled the imagination, whose name had a magic beyond that of the magician's wand, was again a penniless boy, looking up proudly at his mother in delight over his first kilt. And in that moment of so little worth seemed deeds and parchments, safes and strong-rooms, so remote and phantasmal the dusty clangour of steel highways, so poor the satisfaction of controlling them, that if a wizard had offered to restore the past on condition that present wealth were surrendered, he would joyously have cried out, "Yes, yes, take it all, only make me a boy again with all the old faces about me." In very truth he would have given the profits on many a deal in Wall Street for a repetition of that ride with his father to pay the laird his rent. He was here in the old place, but his father—alas! more than wide seas separated them. For

"Disappearing and passing away
Are the world, and the ages, and we."

A laugh under the window recalled all three—a laugh that rang clear as a bell with merriment.

It was Alick.

"My God!" thought Ogilvie, "I'd give a million to be able to laugh like that."

They descended, and were bidden to a feast which they durst not decline, though they had scant appetite. Janet called it a "high tea," and Alick's keen nose told him how it came that that morning for the second time he had got a half-holiday to catch trout.

From outside, as the company sat down, came the hum of the pipes.

"I hope you will like it, Mrs. Ogilvie," said the laird graciously. "I told Ian Veg to play some of the old tunes."

Mrs. Ogilvie was glad, in spite of the pain, her son was silent over feelings he could not name, but Connie was openly gleeful, for old memories and old music did not harrow her soul.

Ian Veg received instructions to play that day if he had never played before and never hoped to play again. But, indeed, the mandate was unnecessary; for Ian was a piper born, whose joy in his art was both incentive and reward. Two things he did, with the brilliancy of genius and no sense of effort—make his chanter discourse melody, and lie for the MacLean. He lied with the awesome, convincing innocence of a child. When he took the pipes potential rivals turned into ravished disciples. For himself, he had one lasting regret—that it was impossible to have a friendly trial of skill with the MacCrimmon. "Man," he declared once, "it would be better than three glasses of whisky."

Enthusiasm could go no further than that.

For consolation he rendered the great man's "Lament," so that all the grief of parting, the poignancy of tragedy and death wrung the listener's heart. It was said he could make the MacCrimmon himself first weep in pity over human woe, and then turn green with envy of the art that drew his tears. The "Lament" rose now as if the moaning of women and the desolate crying of children and the stifled sobs of strong men—all the despair and anguish of breaking hearts—were borne on the wind from bleak hillsides.

*"No more, no more, no more for ever,
In war or peace shall return MacCrimmon;
No more, no more, no more for ever,
Shall love or gold bring back MacCrimmon!"*

Mrs. Ogilvie listened as in a trance. It was not the sound of the pipes she heard, nor the brave streaming

of the ribbons glancing past the window she saw. The laird and Duncan, noting her far-off look, were sympathetically silent. Even Connie's face was dreamily melancholy.

"Balclutha set to music," she remarked presently; "I had no idea the pibroch could be so sad."

"You will know now what is meant when one says that the pipes wail, Miss Ogilvie," returned the laird.

She nodded. What she fain would have done was to lean her cheek on her hand and muse on the pathos of human destiny.

But Ian Veg had changed to a ranting quick-step, and the company pricked up unconsciously.

"Don't you think, sir, he understood human nature who first sent men to fight on music?" asked Ogilvie.

"Ay," replied the laird, "the music keeps the nasty cold feeling from getting about the heart."

"Truly feudal," cried Connie, catching a glimpse of the strutting Ian. This new world of mediævalism was deliciously quaint, romantic, and restful after the hurry and burnished glare of New York; and Miss Connie was avid of new sensations.

Presently Alick was summoned to dance, and he danced with such enchanting lightness that Connie inquired whether he had not springs concealed on his feet.

"Not springs, but a spring," answered the laird jocosely. "It is with the Highland dancer as with the poet, Miss Ogilvie: he must be born, he cannot be made."

When Alick bowed, glengarry in hand, after the sword dance, the laird regretted that for lack of dancers they could not have a reel. "But," said he, "if it's your pleasure when Alick's got breath again, he'll sing you a song."

"A Highland song?" inquired Connie.

Yes, it should be Highland, that is to say, Gaelic.

And Alick was told what to sing. The laird well knew what he was about, for the melody which flowed from Ian's fingers gushed in Alick's voice. It was a pure gift, exercised without thought or sense until the boy came under the influence of Ian. That worthy had himself been wont to roar out "Heather Jock" and "The Wee Drappie o't," with Gaelic ditties too expressive for the English language; but with the advent of his protégé he sang no more, except in a humming monotone when he groomed the horses. "Alick, my lad," he said one day, when the twain were together in the barn, and Alick had been carolling like a lark, "though ye could never learn to pipe till the Day of Judgment, it iss God's truth ye can sing. When Dunveagle goes to kingdom come, and the worst happens to you and me, I'll play the pipes and you'll do the bit song, and maybe fling yer heel in a dance; that'll get us meat and drink."

And the hopeful received a whack of approbation which sent him head foremost into the straw. He rose with the light of battle in his eye, but Ian smiled. "I'll overlook yer impidence, Alick," he remarked blandly. "Ye haf music in ye; come, and I'll learn ye a song."

It was one of Ian's ballads—a song of the boatmen of Argyle, where Ian was born—that he now sang with the expression of a cherub—

*"Fhir a'bhata, na horo-eile
Fhir a'bhata, na horo-eile
Fhir a'bhata, na horo-eile
Gu ma slan-duit's gach ait 'an teid thu."*

When he finished Mrs. Ogilvie's eyes were glistening, and he marvelled, for he did not know that John Ogilvie had sung the same song in that room fifty years before.

Miss Ogilvie was enchanted, not by the poetry and the sentiment, which were Hebrew to her, but by the unstudied sweetness of the singer.

"You must come to the castle," she said, "and I will

play your accompaniments, and perhaps I may be able to help you in learning new songs."

But her father had other thoughts as he looked into the freckled face and fearless eye of Alick.

"My boy," he said to himself, "you'll make a spoon or spoil a horn." Alick wondered why he stared so hard.

The laird, sedulous in his courtesies to the close, regretted the speed of time when at last they had to go; but when he and Ian stood together a moment watching the descending carriage, he remarked, "They're safe out of our hands, Ian; may we never look on their faces again."

"And what do you think, sir?" responded Ian ferociously, "they gave me siller. It will be for bad luck, tam them!" And he spat on the hand that held the money.

CHAPTER X

CAPTAIN MACLEAN SEES A VISION

TWO days later Craigenard was thrown into an ecstasy, which obliterated all thought of the Ogilvies or their doings. For Norman, with the dash of a soldier, accomplished a surprise by arriving ten days before he was expected, though not a moment before he was welcome. Long and often had the exile's return been the subject of passionate reverie and vehement enthusiasm. Ian talked of tar barrels to illuminate the countryside; Janet planned pasties and confections enough to give a whole army an indigestion; and through many a twilight hour the laird brooded, at once fondly and bitterly, on his son's homecoming. So much had happened since Norman left, and the changes were so tragic! Poor boy! how would he take it all?

A reception was already in the initial stage, when one evening at dusk the hero slipped quietly in upon them, making, as Ian half-gleefully, half-sorrowfully complained, ducks and drakes of six months' hard planning. And, in truth, had he come as enemy to seize, sack, burn, and put to the sword, he could scarcely have caused an intenser commotion. Janet wept openly and unashamed as if he were her very own recovered from the grave, an example which Maggie followed out of pure sympathy: for a little the laird was inarticulate like one strangely intoxicated; even Ian was unsteady. In the general giddiness Alick

alone kept his head, and he entertained himself with sarcastic compliments on Maggie's good looks when she was dissolved in tears, a gallantry acknowledged with the besom.

Thus the sun went down on a delirium of joy. It rose next morning on hearts which, if beating more equably, still overflowed with affection, zeal, and good humour. To the amazement of some the laird himself fell into a mood of cooing softness, almost of doting tenderness. It seemed that a vacancy in his heart was filled, and that at last he was content. He listened as if the sound of Norman's footstep were the sweetest music, gazed as if no face in all the world but his were worth looking at. Three whole days this tender mood lasted; then suddenly, as was the laird's way, came an irruption. On the fourth afternoon he burst out breathing fury, and spying Ian and Alick, fell on them without cause or pretext. They took the assault patiently as part of the day's fare, but when he swept on, a fiery whirlwind, Ian looked significantly at his companion. "Alick, my lad," he said, "Dunveagle will be the only man living this day we would take *that* from."

For half the injustice which the laird had packed into three blasphemous sentences blood had been shed. Alick's black eyes were glowing, and Alick's veins tingled viciously. The time had come to strike, even in the case of Dunveagle. But there Ian corrected him. It was the laird's privilege to miscall, likewise to blaspheme if it were his sovereign pleasure, and any man or boy who thought otherwise should have the fear of God and a sense of duty put into him with a hazel rung. Ian's reasons were manifold and forcible; but the chief reason was this, that if the laird did wrong tenfold, he made amends a hundredfold. "Ye mind the day," said Ian, "that he grippet and threw me in his rage. I could hardly keep my hands off him. I canna tell, and no man can understand how they fided

to be at him. But by the grace o' God I was able to keep myself in. How could I ever hold up my head again if I wass to give way and mark the laird, or maybe kill him, too, in the heat? So I just never let on but he was playing with me. Well, away he went like a mad bull, after knocking me down and calling me all the bad names he could think of. Ye ken, Alick, what a power o' the tongue he has."

Alick nodded decisively.

"I haf heard fish-wives at it," pursued Ian, "but fuich! they're just bairns beside the laird when his dander's up—just bairns. Well, as I was saying, off he went, snorting and tearing; but in ten minutes he was back. 'Am I to get it all over again, my lad?' thinks I, for it came into my head that maybe he was looking for somebody else to have a go at, and couldn't find anybody, and so was to have at me again. 'If I am to have another dose,' thinks I, 'it will be harder to keep the hands quiet.' But that wasn't what he wanted at all. 'Go in, ye tam fool,' says he, 'and get a gless of whisky from Janet. And I see something's torn yer breeks; I never saw yer match for getting through breeks, Ian Veg. There's a pair hinging behind my door; tell Janet to give them to you,' says he, 'and God's sake, man, what sort of a coat is that to wear? What haf you been doing that it's torn like that?' says he. 'Tell Janet to give ye the coat behind the door as well as the breeks.' Now, Alick, you may think what ye like, being young and daft, but when yer as old as me ye'll understand that the man who makes up like that should haf the leeberty of swearing when it's his pleasure."

Meanwhile the laird had met Norman and thrust a note, the cause of the tumult, into his hand.

"What do you think of that?" cried the outraged man. "If old Nick ever put more presumption into one little act I have never heard of it."

Norman read the note deliberately and with an unmoved countenance, the countenance of the soldier inured to alarms and excitements.

"Why, father," he said, handing it back, "I should call it cordial and polite. Of course you'll go."

Now here was a thing which the laird could not have believed had anyone predicted it, for no man will believe treason of the son he cherishes in his heart.

"Go!" he repeated, staring in a kind of dismay. "Go, Norman! Accept an invitation from the Ogilvies! You are jesting."

"Upon my honour, sir, I am not," was the earnest response. "There's a certain etiquette to be observed in these things. The Ogilvies were here as your guests."

"Because I was a fool," cried the laird. "Because I was a fool." And for the tenth time he explained the circumstances of the invitation.

"Well, they seem to have been charmed with their reception," remarked Norman.

"Ah, just so," returned the laird quickly. "You see, my honour was at stake. Having begun by making an ass of myself, I had to go through with it. But when I saw their backs going downhill again honour was satisfied, and I resolved that so far as I am concerned it should be the last of them. You call this note polite; I construe it as an insult. For what does it mean, Norman—what does it mean? That I am bidden by usurpers to enter my own house, to sit at my own table as a guest—a stranger. That polite!" he cried explosively; "I could give you a fitter word for it."

"You must go, father," said Norman quietly. "You were nice about your honour the other day; you must not go back on it now."

"Do I understand," demanded the laird hotly, "that you counsel me to accept the patronage, ay, and the pity, of

an upstart Ogilvie who smiles upon me because he has accomplished his revenge? I did not expect that from any son of mine. And I tell you," he went on in a rising voice, "I would still kick an Ogilvie out of my way as I would kick a cur that comes snarling at my heels."

"Your son, sir, understands and sympathises in your feelings," rejoined Norman. "But is there any use in brooding too much on our wrongs or resenting the inevitable? We simply press the thorns to our bosom."

"Man," retorted the laird, the old Adam rampant within him, "I had no notion you were so fine at the preaching. All I can say is it was lucky for Solomon he lived early. He'd have no chance with the wise young men of to-day."

"If you take it like that, sir," returned Norman, with admirable self-command, "permit me to apologise and retire. I dreamt of no rivalry with Solomon. But we must remember that, however distasteful the presence of the Ogilvies may be, after all it is not their fault that we are no longer at Dunveagle. Common sense tells us that."

'Ay," rejoined the laird, nothing softened, "you do well to remind me of my misfortunes. Common sense! God, you can have your common sense if you give me common justice!"

And he stalked away in a hot indignation, which now included Norman.

Of old the boy had a proper pride and a natural and just resentment when cause arose. But since going out into the world, it appeared, he had developed the damnable heresy which fools misname common sense, correctly the detestable, spiritless habit of saying "Kismet" when the other side wins. Hence the suggestion that the man robbed of his inheritance should honour people who were hand-in-glove with the robbers. Well, he would see his enemies in the hottest spot beyond Jordan before letting

them patronise him in his own house. He would not do it, no, not if the sun and the moon stood still for witness.

Yet Norman's words, coming from between those firm lips and accompanied by that look from the straight, honest eyes, troubled him. "Must go," he kept repeating to himself; "must go."

The question, on reconsideration, was how to find a plausible excuse for not going.

Later in the day Ian Veg, going hillward among the sheep, was struck breathless by a singular sight, nothing less than his master leaping to and fro across a burn like one bereft of his wits. More than once the gymnast stumbled and went down, but instantly he was up and at it again as for a wager.

"The laird is gyte," said Ian to himself, a superstitious tremor chilling his blood. He thought of the Ogilvies and cursed them. Had they smitten the poor man with the Evil Eye, or merely by some outrage made him mad? And while Ian speculated the laird rolled heavily, as rolls the huntsman that comes a cropper at a ditch, and this time he did not attempt to rise. Ian saw him examine his foot and look about him. At that sign of helplessness Ian descended with an admirably feigned air of ignorance, and tramped, whistling, across an open space. A shout brought him to, and a beckoning wave of the hand made him hasten in surprise to his master.

"I was jumping this confounded burn, Ian," the laird explained, as if he had come to grief in the course of an ordinary walk, "and I'm foundered again. Do you think you could give me a lift home?"

He got the lift, and, reaching home, took to bandages and an easy chair with a grim satisfaction over which Ian speculated with much intelligence and eager interest.

In the meantime Norman had borrowed Alick's fishing

tackle and betaken himself, like a philosopher out of employment, to the Veagle water. Without thought he took a familiar path through heath and tough upland grass, grey lichened rocks, bracken and stunted fir, and so down precipitous ways into a cathedral dimness, musical with leafy murmur and rustle and song of bird. Ah, God! how good it was to be back in Dunveagle woods after nearly ten years of the white dust and gaunt aridity of India! Along the cool, odoriferous aisles he swung, ankle-deep in moss, or tripped down stairs of tree roots with the feet and heart of a boy perhaps into an embowered dimple abloom with bluebells and wild roses, where he would pause inhaling spice; then, again, into the vaulted alleys, where the sunshine entered in filtered drops of gold. The brushwood was often thick and the path imaginary, but it was as a dozen years of life recovered to thrust the branches aside and feel the soft smiting of leaves on the face.

On the edge of a tiny opening he leaned against a great rock warm with sun and moss, and looked round in a trance of delight. Upward the massy woods surged gloriously, here a waving, tempestuous green, there a ripple of silver as the wind caught the foliage from below or pressed it sidelong; beyond were the hills in their summer veils of blue, and in his ears were the voices of waterfalls. One fall was close at hand. By passing round the rock against which he leaned he could drink of the stream, the clearest and coldest, it was said, in all that hill country.

When presently he stepped forth he came upon something which made him start back as with a sense of wanton intrusion. A slim, girlish figure in white lay on the brink of the burn face down, gazing into the water. Beside her on the grass lay a straw hat, carelessly flung off, and the daintily slippered feet were turned upward to the day. Though thus prone, she gave the impres-

CAPTAIN MACLEAN SEES A VISION 67

sion of agility and supple grace, and as she gazed the toes drummed in sweet content.

There is a strange magnetism in a man's eyes when they happen to be fixed on a maid. All at once she turned her head, then instantly she was up like a startled fay and fastening on her hat. A vision of beauty held Norman as in a spell of bewilderment. He felt rather than saw that she was fair; that her hair, touched by the sun to something rarer than gold, threatened to slip from its bonds; that she was of medium height, and divinely, that is to say becomingly, dressed. Suddenly he marked the crimson in her face, and was ashamed as one who unwittingly plays the spy. It was almost like surprising Psyche in her bath.

Their eyes met: hers, as it seemed, in appeal; his for once abashed and confused. He would have fled as one guilty of sacrilege, but to fly without a word would but aggravate the sin; therefore, doffing his cap, he made the appropriate apology. At that she smiled, and though counting many pretty women among his friends, Captain Norman MacLean had never in all his life seen the match of that smile.

"Why, of course," she responded, an enchanting embarrassment in her manner, "you couldn't know that I was here watching fish at play, could you?"

"But I am a trespasser, and therefore doubly an intruder," he explained.

"Oh," she laughed, "you were only going through the woods. It cannot be a deadly crime to go through the woods, even in Scotland, the country of notice-boards and standing threats of prosecution."

She was actually finding excuses for him then. Had he come upon a new order of being, or was the old order endowed with a magical charm? Her intonation, he noticed, was neither Scotch nor English, but a blend of both, with something pretty and piquant added.

Before running away he feasted yet a little more, insensibly and because he could not help himself. He marked the fine intelligence of the full brown eyes, the curve of the slender neck, rising like the white stalk of a flower from a ruffle of lace; followed the gentle swell of the bosom, and the folds of the rich oriental sash at her waist, the spirit of an old chant beating along his veins—

“Beauty, all must follow thee;
Beauty, Beauty, ohey, ohey.”

She turned back to the stream with a renewed flush, which her fair, clear complexion made the more vivid.

“One sees to the very bottom of these pools,” she remarked irrelevantly. “The fountain of Bandusia couldn’t have been clearer. The fish haven’t much chance of hiding, poor things. I fancy the water must be deep.”

Norman MacLean went back half a generation to the time when he used to bathe in that very pool.

“Twenty feet at least just in front of you,” he said. “But, you see, being scooped out of the living rock, and having nothing muddier than sand in the bottom, it is perfectly transparent.”

She was mistress of herself now, the flood of crimson had ebbed, but the eyes were still exceedingly bright with a sort of gracious mockery, as it seemed to Norman.

“Do you fish here?” she asked, glancing at his rod and basket.

“Where the trout can see every move you make it would be idle to fish,” he answered.

He apologised again and was turning to go, when there came a rustling on the other side, and the face of Mr. Ogilvie appeared, framed in the Sundered foliage. Behind him, peering intently, stood Mr. Rollo Linnie, a young gentleman of whom this history shall have more to relate. Captain MacLean cast a backward glance,

CAPTAIN MACLEAN SEES A VISION 69

but did not stay his step, and in another moment was out of sight.

"Con, what on earth have you been about?" asked her father.

"Watching the trout here," she answered, "and that gentleman on his way to fish stumbled on me. Poor fellow, he was as flustered as if he had come plump on a company of witches in the midst of their orgies."

"We thought we had lost you," said her father.

Mr. Rollo Linnie said nothing, but Connie noticed he was scowling.

CHAPTER XI

ENTER MR. ROLLO LINNIE

WHEN Norman returned to Craigenard, wondering whether the storm had blown over, he was surprised to find his father in bandages and a remarkably complacent frame of mind. Though the swathed, outstretched foot suggested pain, the laird's face bore an expression of beatitude, such as comes to the martyr in the moment of supreme triumph. He was smoking peacefully, and when Norman expressed concern at sight of the bandages, he looked up as to say, "Don't you go to the trouble of pitying me, because you don't understand. I am perfectly happy in my suffering. You who are cursed with false ideas of things can have no notion of the bliss that is in my soul."

He explained contentedly that he had been "up in the hill a bit," had leaped a burn, and being, he supposed, less agile than of old, had fallen and done *that*.

"So you may just write for me, Norman," he added, "and say that a second sprain of the ankle prevents me from accepting the hospitality of the Ogilvies." He brought out the words in a tone of triumph. "Doubtless they have friends who would in any case be more appreciative."

But before the order could be obeyed Mr. Ogilvie's nigger footman brought a second note extending the invitation to Norman, of whose arrival news *had* reached the castle. Norman handed the note to his father.

"Ay," said the old man on reading it, a red glimmer

coming into his eye, "and one of Duncan's black cattle has brought this, eh? Well, what are you going to do?"

"What would you advise, father?" asked Norman in turn.

"Get a sprained ankle," returned the laird curtly.

Norman laughed. "I'll consider for a minute while Janet entertains the messenger," he said, and went out, leaving his father on a rising tide of disgust and alarm. For to the laird hesitation in such a case was one of the unpardonable sins. "Consider," he repeated, "consider," and he swung his foot off the chair with an expletive the reverse of saintly.

Unwittingly he did his son an injustice, for in truth there was neither doubt nor hesitation in Norman's mind. What really occupied it was a vision of an angelic figure in white, a pair of warm brown eyes, and a mass of lovely riotous hair with the glint of ripe wheat in scudding sun-bursts. He easily guessed who she was; yet she had shown no vestige of the pride of wealth, nor resentment at being disturbed in the privacy of her own grounds. On the contrary she seemed eager to apologise for being in his way. A shepherd's daughter could not have been more simple or natural; a daughter of the gods more beautiful. So the answer was written according to the heart's impulse; also, the writer thought, according to the laws of good breeding and neighbourly feeling; but without further consultation with the laird.

In the midst of his turmoil Norman recalled the glimpse of Linnie's lean face peering like a fox's, and he made no doubt that the good Rollo was on the prowl after the fashion of his house. That house had an interesting and instructive history. Some fourscore years before, two young men, Scots advocates, shook the unproductive dust of Edinburgh off their feet and took the road to London. One was named Henry Brougham, and he had the temper

and muscle of a bully; the other was Alexander Linnie, and in his soft adaptability he realised to the utmost the apostle's ideal of being all things to all men, though his aims were scarcely apostolic. Both struck root in the new soil and flourished, for it is a soil that yields increase to the good husbandman. The bully tore and shouldered his way up till men hailed him as Lord High Chancellor. As for his deeds, they are written in the book of the chronicles of the lawyers of England. You will, however, search that compendious work in vain for a record of the deeds of Alexander Linnie. One afternoon at the door of Westminster Hall he bade his friend good-bye. "I won't be here to-morrow," he said. "Life is short, Henry, besides being somewhat uncertain; and time flies. My stomach cries out against this weary waiting for better dinners. I go where I think the fare is ampler. Heaven bless you."

What followed amazed some and moved more to envy. There was a plunge into the "black pool of agio," that is to say, a haunting of dim, questionable alleys hard by Threadneedle and Throgmorton Streets. A little later Mr. Linnie received his friends in an airy office, sumptuously upholstered. One day Henry Brougham called, hard, gaunt, sour as unripe sloes, and Mr. Linnie, fancying he looked hungry, ordered a two-guinea luncheon.

"You do the thing in style," growled Henry.

"As you see," returned Mr. Linnie, smiling benignly; "and I know just enough of the law, my dear Brougham, to keep clear of it." A deep saying which not everyone could interpret. The future Chancellor nodded—he understood.

The good sailor can run close to the wind; and Mr. Linnie's legal knowledge was invaluable. Israelites sat at his feet as a later and greater Gamaliel, and he is born to make money who can guide the Jew in the shady labyrinths of finance. There were whispers of transactions which

made mere men of the world stare. Where was the law? they asked foolishly. Timid and ignorant people fear or reverence the law as an all-powerful enemy or ally. Mr. Linnie slapped the law on the back as the Irishman slapped the devil, for a jolly good fellow that knows how to do a friend a good turn. While moralists wagged their sapient heads, Mr. Linnie's fortunes swelled nobly.

In due time came an estate in Scotland; and when Alexander Linnie went to his fathers, it was with the satisfaction of having done excellently well in this world, whatever might betide in the next. Truth to tell, he did not vex himself about the hereafter.

"One world at a time, my friend," he laughed once when a preacher became serious. "One world at a time. It ought to be enough for any reasonable being; I assure you it is enough for me. Besides, how are you to prepare for what you don't know? Be sure that when the time comes I will do my very best to adapt myself to circumstances. Thanks for your friendly interest. Good evening."

It happened opportunely that when he desired to invest in land and found a family the spirit of progress was clearing out decayed Highland lairds. He made his selection, and built a mansion on the edge next to his neighbour's best land. "Why on the edge?" he was asked, and he answered significantly in the Scots phrase, "We'll shog yont." He was on the point of shogging yont when death intervened.

Three sons enjoyed the fruits of his well-devised labour. Two got their portions in cash, entered the great world, and died gallantly in the pursuit of pleasure. The third took the estate, and settled to the arduous duties of a country gentleman devoted to sport. Fate revels in irony; her malice is especially tickled when young bloods take to scattering piles of laboriously accumulated gold. A practical philosopher reckons there are but three

generations between shirt sleeves and shirt sleeves. The time came when the great-grandson of Alexander Linnie discerned shirt sleeves ahead more clearly than was at all pleasant, and he bethought him how they were to be thrust out of sight. "Lord! no shirt sleeves in my day," he prayed, with an uncertainty of the inmost soul. Wherefore Rollo was bred to the law, encouraged by the shining example of his great-grandfather, and dropped into the multitudinous sea of London to bring up what pearls he could.

Now in London it has pleased Providence to set fools and wise men in the proportion of ten thousand to one. Thus the man of wit has a wide choice, and Mr. Rollo Linnie was no fool. Latter-day morality mixes and refines too much, compounding merits and defects so thinly that genius, which thrives on lustiness, dies of inanition. Not by half measures are eminent saints or sinners made; not by keeping the ear bent to catch the voice of conscience do practical men come to greatness. Happily for himself, Mr. Rollo Linnie's gifts were virginal and unadulterate. Therefore he played the game without scruple. He saw misguided people dash headlong into action and smiled. Intuition and an aversion to toil enabled him very early to divine that the chief end of man is not gained by vulgar work, and he meant to travel to fortune by the easiest and quickest way.

"Pooh, my dear fellow," he answered, when someone asked when he intended to buckle to, "the art of success lies in getting others to buckle to for you. I am developing my plans."

"Setting your snares," quoth the other unkindly.

Linnie only smiled.

"Show me a man who goes into any worldly transaction to benefit the other side, and I'll pull up stakes," he returned. "Till then——"

"Number one," put in the other.

"And, my dear sir," answered Linnie, "to whom or to what does a man owe devotion, if not to number one? I love to think that charity, like other virtues, begins at home. Ta, ta."

In London his good angel procured him an introduction to the Ogilvies, whom he instantly recognised as big game. He followed them to Scotland, and Teviot Hall being within easy distance of Dunveagle, the elder Linnie as representing the county families promptly took the millionaire under his wing. This he did partly on his own account, but chiefly on his son's. For with luck and the blessing of heaven, Rollo's angling might have golden results.

CHAPTER XII

TREASON

THE laird on his craggy height tore the wrappings from his foot, lit his pipe, wasting half a box of fusees in the process, and betook himself in a fever of vexation to the solitude of the hills to think. As a preliminary he tried to pick a quarrel with Janet and failed. That incensed him the more, and striding forth, he found excuse for calling Ian Veg the biggest ass in three counties.

"You might be a Sassenach or a Yankee for all the sense you have," he roared. "I don't know what I do with you here."

"Nor me too, sir," answered Ian meekly. And the laird, again baffled, passed on, snorting. It is idle to waste words on a man who won't fight. Alick escaped a trouncing by being absent on an errand.

Such exercises scarcely conduce to calm thinking, and in truth the laird was furiously wroth. For his son, the apple of his eye, the guardian of his honour, was guilty of a crime too heinous for speech—the crime of bending the knee to the enemy. In the past the MacLeans had bled for their faith, suffered fines and confiscation, lived like foxes in holes and caves of the earth; but never in love or hate had they flinched. For their friends the open hall; for their foes the unsheathed sword—that had always been the religion of the MacLeans. But now—

"'Will you walk into my parlour?' said the spider to the fly."

And the fly walked in eagerly.

Had the sun of India withered Norman's pride that he should demean his father's house? Had a degenerate world corrupted him to the forgetting of the blood that flowed in his veins?

"You must go, father," he had said, bending to disgrace. The laird had revolted at thought of that base surrender; but unhappily he could not put his son in chains, and blind with infatuation, Norman went off at the first beckoning to sit at the Ogilvies' table, to drink the Ogilvies' wine, doubtless to revel in the Ogilvies' magnificence. Worse yet, he returned in a flush of gratification.

"The Ogilvies are very pleasant people," he dared to say. "You do them an injustice. I assure you they're delightful—no side, no pretence, no humbug of any sort for all their wealth."

Unable to answer fittingly, the laird took to the heather to consider his shame. For companion he had Moses, the wise old deerhound, so named, the laird once explained, because he was an incarnation of that spirit of meekness which led the great lawgiver to slay the Egyptian. Many a solitary walk the pair had together, communing like brothers. When the laird fell into one of his violent tantrums, Moses wagged his tail in lively sympathy and appreciation. Similarly, when Moses, in the interest of his own dignity, found it necessary to turn over an impudent mongrel cur and make the fangs meet in its throat, the laird was ever ready to uphold him against the owner of the mangled dog. Each had the talent for war; and both contrived to get a great deal of their favourite amusement.

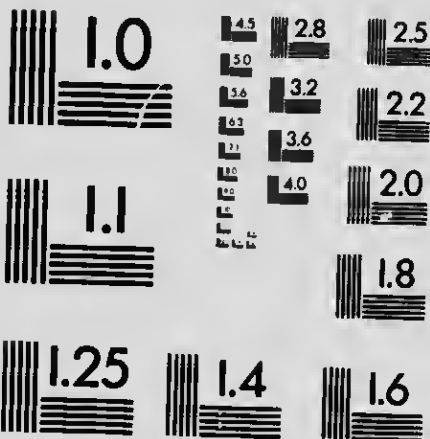
On a mossy stone in the hollow of the hills the laird sat, anger and dejection working upon him in almost equal parts. At his feet Moses crouched expectantly.

"Tell you what it is, Moses, my boy," remarked the



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laird, looking down. "This world is going post-haste to perdition."

Moses wagged his tail as if the sentiment were exactly his own.

"Going to perdition," repeated the laird. "Yes; there's no doubt of it when a man can no longer depend on his own flesh and blood."

The shaggy, upturned countenance looked exceedingly sage; the eye seemed moist with pity.

"Ah, Moses! you don't know what it is to be a father."

Whereat the eye of Moses gleamed with a new emotion, as if to say, "My dear friend and master, don't you rush to conclusions. You know the frailty of man; but have you fathomed the folly of dogs? Believe me, a dog has his own troubles. Ah! these family vexations."

For half an hour the laird bent, chin sunk on breast, in a fiery reverie; and Moses, finding his interest gone, went placidly to sleep, for a dog in the sun is the model of a practical philosopher. His master, less happy, was turning over for the twentieth time the iniquity of the world and the tragic lot of fathers, when he was disturbed by the click of an iron-shod boot on a stone, and looking up quickly he saw Alick's back bobbing out of sight. Putting his fingers in his mouth, he whistled peremptorily. Moses sprang to his feet, bristles on end, growling. Knowing better than to disregard such a summons, Alick promptly wheeled.

"Come back here," shouted the laird, as if Alick were an escaping criminal. Alick obeyed, and Moses lay down again, his nose between his forepaws, alert for emergencies.

"Well, and where have you been, eh?" demanded the laird severely.

"Up in the hill, sir," answered Alick in his most innocent manner.

"Ah, just so!" retorted the laird; "though you mightn't think it, I can still make out you must have been up before you could come down. Heh!"

"Yes, sir," admitted Alick, shifting uneasily from one foot to the other.

"Yes," continued the laird, keeping a glittering eye on the boy, "I'm old, and a bit gone in the head and the feet—withering top and bottom, as a clever fellow like you would say—but I have still wit enough to understand one must go up before one can come down. Yes, indeed. Now, if it's a fair question, Alick Ruah, what were you doing up in the hill?"

"Seeing Donald, sir."

Donald was the shepherd of the upper reaches, and lived in a sheiling in a cory far above, where the deer fed in winter and the Highland cattle grazed in summer.

The laird bent a little forward, looking keenly at Alick out of eyes narrowed to mere pinholes.

"Seeing Donald," he repeated; "you leave your work in the middle of the day to make calls. We'll not speak of such trifles as waste of time and money. Was it on business you went, or just in the beaten way of friendship, as the fellow in the play says?"

On chance that the question might be a joke, Alick laughed, but the laugh died in mid-course.

"Fine fun, isn't it?" said the laird, with a terrible dryness. "Man, I like a laddie with some notion of humour in his head, for it's the plain truth, Alick Ruah, that not everyone has the wit to laugh in the right place. I'm not sure that I'm too well gifted in that respect myself. But that's by the way. As between master and man, will you tell me, now, what you were seeing Donald about?"

"The gathering," answered Alick.

The laird hitched himself forward an inch or two, as if to get to closer quarters.

"Ay," he said, "the gathering; and will you have the goodness to tell me who sent you to see Donald about the gathering?"

He spoke quietly, but Alick's acute ear detected the prelude of tempest in the tone.

"Ian Veg, sir," was the reply.

"And who told Ian Veg to send you?"

"I—I don't know, sir."

"Alick Ruah," said the laird, bending yet a little further forward, "you're a hard bit of a nut to crack, but we're going to reach the kernel this time. Now, think again, and tell me who asked Ian Veg to send you to Donald."

"Indeed, sir, I'm not sure," replied Alick, with great earnestness; "but it's in my mind, sir, it was the captain."

"Do you think, Alick Ruah, that by any chance you would be likely to catch a weasel asleep when there's mice and rabbits and things about?"

"No, sir." Alick's reply was prompt and emphatic, for he knew the weasel.

"I was thinking that," said the laird. "When Alick's interested his weather eye is uncommonly wide, and a thing doesn't get into his mind for nothing or without reason. And you tell me it was by the captain's orders Ian Veg sent you to Donald. One point more, have you in your own mind any notion why the captain gave Ian Veg such an order?"

"No, sir, not a notion," was the quick response. For once Alick was gratified to be able to plead honest, down-right ignorance.

"You're quite in the dark," remarked the laird. "Well, can you tell me about the gathering? I haven't heard."

"Oh!" returned Alick, "Ian Veg wanted to know if Donald would be ready for this day week, because he wanted to send word to the neighbours."

"Go on," said the laird grimly; "you're just running over with information. What said Donald to the business?"

"He said, sir, he didn't care——"

Alick pulled up suddenly, profanity to the laird being straitly forbidden.

"Out with it," said the laird. "He said he didn't care——"

"Well, sir, he wasn't very well pleased, and he told me to tell Ian Veg he didn't care—the curse of a tinkler's cuddy when it was."

"Solitude is making Donald poetic. We'll have to ask him the precise worth and potency of the curse of a tinkler's cuddy, Alick. As I understand, then, the gathering is arranged for this day week?"

"Yes, sir."

"Umph! Well, I'm much obliged to you for telling me. You can be stepping down by and say to Ian Veg that I hope to be back in the course of an hour or so, and that, if it suits his convenience, I'd like a word with him. And hark you, Alick, I have the most wonderful shears you ever saw—for clipping long tongues. If we're to continue friends, not a word to anybody about all this. You understand?"

Alick grinned. Oh, yes, he understood—perfectly; and the laird should see what a bridle he could put on his tongue.

Reaching home presently, he remarked casually to Ian, "The laird will be down in a little while, and would like a word with you."

"Who told you that?" demanded Ian, sensibly touched to resentment.

"Oh, a man who knows, just himself," answered Alick, as if he and the laird were daily in the habit of talking things over and exchanging views.

"Just himself," repeated Ian. "So you and the laird danders round confabin' and collogin' just like twenty-year-old cronies. Man, it's a wonder, Alick Ruah, that you will dirty yer tongue speakin' to common folk after that. As he tells you everything, what does he want with me?"

"You'll know soon enough," returned Alick, discreetly moving beyond range; and he looked so knowing, and at the same time so saucily provoking, that Ian was torn between a desire to be gracious in order to get news and to make an example of him for his impudence.

Within an hour Ian was summoned to the little back room, where he found the laird alone, with a pipe in full blast. Ian expected a storm and found the most genial sunshine.

"Ian," said the laird, as if he had never been ruffled in his life, "I've been thinking about the gathering. It's about time, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir, it's time," answered Ian, with remarkable alacrity.

The laird ran over his engagements, his face puckering in perplexity. He was dreadfully pressed; it was simply intolerable what a poor man had to do.

"There's all that, and more, Ian," he said hopelessly, naming some of the matters that pressed most urgently. "We must make a push, that's all," he added, like one prepared to sit up o' nights if need be. "I think we'll manage for this day fortnight."

Something clicked in Ian's throat.

"Send up and let Donald know," continued the laird, "and see to all the other necessary arrangements."

Ian shuffled as in pain.

"I wass thinking, sir, maybe it would be better to have it a little sooner," he ventured, his throat suddenly parched. He ran over his reasons, the laird listening gravely and

with an evident desire to assent. But he shook his head as one who is sorrowfully forced to refuse.

"No," he said, "it can't be done, Ian. We'll have the gathering this day fortnight. Lay your plans for that, please."

Divining the futility of argument, Ian went forth with a drooping head. How was he to tell the captain?

"The laird was right," he thought, in bitter self-accusation; "oh, yes, he was right. There's no doot am the biggest ass in Scotland."

The laird, watching from his window, chuckled.

"Checkmated this time, Ian Veg Mackern," he said to himself. Then all at once his face hardened. "They'll be deciding for me next which side of the bed I'm to get out at in the morning. Well, we'll see."

CHAPTER XIII

A DIPLOMATIC BATTLE

IAN found the captain, and, with a fallen face, told his tale. Thereupon the captain found the laird; but neither appeared to have any thought of the sheep-shearing. As two persons with the same matter burning like an acid at their hearts assume an elaborate indifference to its existence, till suddenly, as at a chance prick of memory, one calls out, "Oh, by the way, that reminds me," or "Upon my word, I had quite forgotten," so these two, sitting down affectionately to outwit each other, talked of things "from China to Peru"—crops and weather, contrasts between East and West, who was married, who dead, and who in prison, but never a word of the real subject of their thoughts, till a casual reference to sheep suggested shearing. Then Norman was reminded how he had looked forward to the great summer event, how on frizzling stations in India he had in fancy inhaled the scents of windy moors and heard enraptured the music of bleating and barking, of the clicking of shears, and the laughter of shearers. The laird listened, his eye twinkling curiously.

"Ay," he remarked, "all that's doubtless fine to dream of when you are far away. But I never suspected you had so much poetry in you, Norman. Perhaps it's true what I once heard, that every Highlander is at heart a poacher, a smuggler, a lover, and a poet. Have you ever tried to jingle on your own account?"

"No, sir, never."

"It's best so," rejoined the laird. "Though King David and some others thought it worth their while to twang the lyre, as the thing is called, it's my conviction that little good ever came of the poet's trade. Only the other day I read, in a breach of promise case, that the fellow's cleverness in rhyming cost him five hundred pounds, besides law expenses. But to come back, it's very odd I should have been talking to Ian Veg about the clipping not an hour ago. You won't have too long to wait; we've arranged for this day fortnight."

No man who has been twelve years in the army and most of his time in India would dream of making a wry face over a blasted hope unless it had involved the chance of a fight. Norman looked steadily at his father for a moment, then placidly smote the ash from his cigar.

"This day fortnight," he repeated, as if taking a mental note of the date.

"Yes, I think it can be managed by that time," said the laird; "at any rate, I am pushing. The weather seems likely to hold, and I trust you won't be disappointed in your dream of a good clipping."

Norman gazed into his own smoke, thinking of the animated face of Miss Ogilvie; for it happened that he had invited her to the clipping for that day week, and she had responded with a gleeful acceptance. He acted from the spur of rivalry, which often drives sensible men into folly. Rollo Linnie suggested a party, ostensibly for angling and a picnic, in reality, as the astute Norman discerned, to exhibit his own familiar footing with the heiress who was the talk of the county. But in the midst of the arrangements for ascending a tributary of the Veagle Mrs. Ogilvie called out, "That's by Craigenard sheepfolds," and instantly, as if inspired by the imp of the perverse, Connie whipped aside on the cue.

"Oh, Captain MacLean!" she cried, "I have heard so much of the romance of sheep-shearing. You are a Highlander. Will you tell me about it?"

The instant answer was, "Will you come to see it, Miss Ogilvie?" And despite the wet blanket promptly cast upon the scheme by Rollo, the invitation was as instantly accepted.

"Yes, dear, you certainly ought to go," put in Mrs. Ogilvie by way of confirmation. "This world has not many better things than a Highland sheep-shearing under a blue sky."

It was a favourite topic of hers. Indeed, her chief joy in the grandeur of old age was to transport Connie from the dazzle and magnificence of Fifth Avenue to remote hills and glens mystically purple with heather, mystically yellow with broom, and invested with a thousand sacred memories of happiness and grief, of triumph and defeat, of love and death. And Connie, who had the American girl's eager, sensitive intelligence superadded to the Scottish glow of imagination, revelled in those tales of humble, romantic lives and wild hillsides. So that when Norman's invitation came, seconded by Mrs. Ogilvie, her heart leaped out responsive as at the touch of ancestral things.

"I hope it will be soon," she said rapturously, when she had thanked Norman.

"You see the impatience of the American girl, Captain MacLean," laughed Mr. Ogilvie. "If she's going a trip to the moon she must travel by lightning express."

"Thanks, papa dear, for the inheritance," retorted Connie, with a filial duck. "The American girl is—what shall I say? A limited edition of the American father, specially bound."

"An *édition de luxe*," murmured Norman.

She turned on him a radiant look, and noted, not without surprise, the crimson suffusing the Indian tan on his cheek.

"That's very pretty, Captain MacLean," she responded, an expression in her eyes that smote to the heart of Rollo. "Papa talks of impatience. If he got his way he'd have us all travelling by electricity at a minimum rate of a hundred and fifty miles an hour, and he thinks he'll manage it yet—in America. The British people are still, I understand, muddling over the alphabet of the science of locomotion. And I must say that beside our palace cars their stuffy wooden boxes are—are dreadfully trying."

It was odd to find this lovely blossom of womankind striking thus into the dust of industrial highways. It may be doubted whether Norman had much attention for the criticism, but there was no question of the enchantment of the critic, who, as it seemed, could invest logarithms with a heart, and endue the integral calculus with sentiment. It was strange, sweetly strange, to one bred in British proprieties, which make woman either a drudge or a doll, to find a masculine sense and knowledge of affairs flowing from that soft mouth, a mouth so piquantly rich, so delicately moulded, that in very truth it reminded him of the poet's rosebud in the first flush of bloom. Honey and song were better suited to those lips, but then economics became honey and song in passing them.

All the while Rollo watched as one watches a victorious rival and enemy beating down with ridiculous ease the outworks of one's chosen fortress. What infernal caprice was this? Nay, it was worse than caprice, it was deliberate rudeness. "Clipping," said Rollo to himself in the bitterness of resentment. "Ay, it'll be a bonnie sight to see the last hope of the MacLeans snipping at dirty sheeptails like the rest of the beggarly clan."

Rollo was petulant over his first reverse, and also vindictive, for his instinct was to crush the penniless

interloper on the spot and, figuratively speaking, cast him out to the ravens. Norman had no eye for this new enmity, nor indeed would he have troubled about it had he had a year to note and con.

For he was under the spell, not of the millionaire's daughter (there his blood would have rebelled), but of the lovely girl whose charming naturalness made him forget her riches, whose graciousness and vivacity were at once magnet and tonic. He was not aware that Connie's heart swelled gently in pity for the disinherited. Had he guessed that he would have flung out, hugging his fatuous Highland pride like a thorn in his breast.

She heard the story of the MacLeans of Dunveagle with glowing sympathy, and the indignant comment, "What a shame!" Later, in that evening hour when tender sentiments steal unawares into the heart, she sat at her window, cheek on hand, musing. Even into this quiet spot the tragic ironies of life penetrated, and she was concerned in them, in a sense was at the core of them, not as victim, but more or less as cause. Sighing unconsciously, she lifted her eyes upon the darkling woods; thence they rose slowly to the craggy uplands ablaze with ruddy gold. All that had once been *his*. How hard, how monstrously unfair were some of the methods of fortune.

The feeling made her delicately considerate in her bearing towards Norman. Besides, she confessed to herself privily, he was very handsome and courteous and manly, and took disaster without either venom or repining. "That's grit," she told herself, falling back on the racy western vernacular, and of all qualities in man she admired grit most. Then Rollo's gallantries were becoming tedious, and beyond doubt beginning to savour of presumption. At that thought the red lips compressed themselves dangerously. Mr. Rollo Linnie had better be careful lest he found himself carrying too much sail for his ballast. They

were coming who might shock him rudely, and meanwhile there was Captain MacLean with his dark, stirring history, his fine face, and manly ways.

Rollo left Dunveagle chagrined, though not daring to show temper. Like most of his race, he could endure slight, ay, even insult and contumely, if such endurance were politic. Moreover, in pursuing his game he had a patience that was more than Christian.

"So," he said to Miss Ogilvie, with affected blitheness, "you are going sheep-shearing instead of angling?"

"Sheep-shearing instead of angling, thank you, M. Linnie," she returned, with a smile that was as gall.

The sentence, which sent Rollo away inwardly fuming, committed Norman to unsuspected trouble.

The laird too, in his own fashion, had felt the influence of the angelic, that is to say, had looked with a momentary admiration into the expressive face under the golden arch of hair, thought it wonderfully good for an Ogilvie, and dismissed it from his mind. Norman was unable to act so decisively, because by no possibility can one-and-thirty think with the head, or see with the eyes, or feel with the heart of threescore-and-ten. The problem, therefore, was to make threescore-and-ten think with the head, and see with the eyes, and feel with the heart of one-and-thirty. How was it to be done?

The proselytiser began afar off, as if the Ogilvies and sheep-shearing were, of all subjects in the world, farthest from his thoughts, drew in gingerly, dropped a hint, and scurried away as from a match inadvertently dropped into a powder magazine. Circling back, he ventured closer, and ever a little closer, like a bird that scents provender, but is afraid of a trap. Then, coming yet nearer, he attacked his problem like a desperate mathematician, taking it this way and that, inverting it, turning it round, but getting neither opening nor shadow of a cue. For the laird, laughing here

and blindly misunderstanding there, exhibited an obtuseness and frivolity sufficient to drive any schemer frantic.

Now a great man, whose cunning gave him control of the councils of Europe, has said, "In a diplomatic contest, if you want to win, tell the truth. Any fool can bungle with prevarication and circumlocution. Naked truth is for experts, and in their hands is deadlier than the best-devised falsehood."

At the end of half an hour's futile skirmishing Norman blundered upon Bismarck's simple plan. When the card, so carefully hidden up the sleeve, at last came out, the laird drew up, frowningly.

"So, then, all this is for the pleasure of an Ogilvie," he said severely.

"Rather, sir, for the honour of a MacLean," answered Norman.

"How's that?—how's that?" demanded his father brusquely. Then, with the convincing simplicity of a child, Norman described the little bout of rivalry at Dunveagle.

"I was, perhaps, presuming a little on the precedent set by yourself," he explained. "Old and young, the Ogilvies sang your praises for your kindness when they visited you. Upon my word, sir, it did my heart good to hear them. With a sneer that nearly brought the back of my hand slap into his false face, Linnie made some remark. Then—you know how unaccountably such things happen—there arose a sort of contest before we knew what we were about. I won; that's all. And now, sir," he ended, with the conscious assurance of virtue, "I transfer the matter to your hands."

"Oh Lord, keep it to yourself," cried the laird, fidgeting on his seat. "Keep it to yourself; I have no taste for trokings of the kind. Besides, I have arranged the clipping for this day fortnight."

"Shall I express your regrets, then, and say the engagement for this day week is off?" asked Norman calmly.

"My regrets!" retorted his father. "I have no regrets at all in the matter. Express your own regrets if you have any. I am minding my own business in my own way, and I can't pretend to be sorry if my arrangements don't give entire and universal satisfaction. I have no call to be so nice."

"Very well, father," said Norman, with a filial meekness which sorely belied the tumult within; "I'll say that the gathering is not, after all, to take place on this day week, giving such reasons as may seem fit."

"Reasons!" repeated the laird. "Why should we give reasons? Who is entitled to reasons? Is it not reason enough that I have decided it?"

"Yes, of course it is, sir," responded Norman, rising as if to go. "I daresay Rollo Linnie will be glad my project has miscarried."

"Stay a moment," said the laird, in a changed tone. "Stay a moment. Am I to understand you arranged the gathering for this day week, not so much to please an Ogilvie as to spite a Linnie?"

Norman owned he guessed correctly. The laird's face darkened.

"In the hour of trouble," he said, with hard, drawn lips, "I appealed to Linnie, and he turned his back on me. More than that, he was in league, as I afterwards found out, with those who were ruining me. When there's a striving between a MacLean and a Linnie I know my duty. You assure me you planned the clipping to baffle Linnie, not for love of the Ogilvies."

"I have told you, sir, exactly how it was," answered Norman, tingling in expectation.

"Then," cried the laird, "it shall be as you have arranged. Alick Ruah," he called, spying Ian's lieutenant, "tell Ian Veg I want him, and let me see you putting your laziest foot first."

CHAPTER XIV

AN EXCHANGE OF CIVILITIES

NORMAN went forth from his father's presence with a smothered sense of iniquity and a vivid feeling of elation. That he owed his victory to Linnie was plain as the sun in the heavens; for if his father did not loathe the sublime Rollo with a loathing bitter as death there certainly should be no clipping on that day week. With philosophical reflections on the uses of an enemy, Norman lighted a cigar. This was not the first time that a foe had stood him in good stead. He owed promotion and the D.S.O. to misguided adversaries who had not the sense to accept the inevitable quietly and at the right moment. Well, heaven helps those who have wit enough to help themselves.

That night Captain MacLean lay a long time awake, dreaming delectably. Eight years before he had fled from the distress and confusion of family ruin; he came back in doubt and hesitation because his father wished to see him again before going the way whence there is no return. He expected no enjoyment, and behold this delightful surprise. Was Fate beginning to relent?

Next day he called at Dunveagle to learn Miss Ogilvie's pleasure in the matter of arrangements, and was persuaded to stay for luncheon, the more easily perhaps that Mr. Rollo Linnie was of the company; and Mr. Linnie's thin lips grew yet thinner in a grin of pain as the plans were

laid. The clipping itself, Norman explained, promised little in the way of adventure; perhaps Miss Ogilvie would like to see something of the gathering as well. She responded with a smile, for which Rollo would have risked his salvation.

"Captain MacLean," she said, "will you take charge of me?" A sudden vertigo came upon Rollo, the effect of which was to make him grin inanely.

"Connie, Connie," put in Mrs. Ogilvie, "you must not impose on Captain MacLean. What do you know of hill climbing?"

Whereupon Captain MacLean with a good deal less than his usual coolness replied that Miss Ogilvie was in no sense whatever guilty of imposition, and that he, Captain MacLean, considered it an honour, as it certainly was a felicity, to be entrusted with such a charge. At that moment an unearthly cackle came from Rollo; his face was ashy grey, like the face of one mortally smitten, and, indeed, incredible things were happening in this farce of the beggar and the queen. The insolence of the beggar any fool could understand; but, in heaven's name, what was the queen thinking of? Was she in jest or in earnest? The question was soon answered.

"Yes," she said, happiness in every feature of her face, "I should dearly like to see a gathering. Grannie has told me so much about these things. Would it be too much trouble to arrange for me, Captain MacLean?"

Mrs. Ogilvie, chancing to glance at Rollo just then, was moved to express a fear he was not enjoying his luncheon. He looked up with a ghastly simper on his grey face. Upon his honour he never enjoyed anything more, and nearly choked on the assurance. As if to add to his torture, Miss Ogilvie struck in mischievously.

"Do you care for clippings and gatherings, Mr. Linnie?" she asked, her eyes bright with mockery.

Oh, yes, he cared; in fact he was passionately fond of them. Most romantic—he, he—liked sheep all his life; had once—he, he—been nearly drowned by falling head foremost into a tub of sheep-dip. Took a drink before he could help it. Beastly. A shepherd held him up by the heels and let the stuff run out. Ha, ha.

Evincing a pretty interest, Miss Ogilvie asked if he had had many such experiences. Oh, bless her heart, lots! And he told of dog-fights, cat-fights, goat-fights, boy-fights, and other events likely to thrill the heart. Thus he was led on, hot, flustered, floundering, and fearfully unhappy.

He cooled into haughty, icy reserve going down the long avenue with Norman after luncheon. They walked in silence till they reached the great gate; then Rollo's resentment boiled over in a sarcastic remark on the joys of sheep-shearing. The winning man can afford to be genial, and Norman took the reference pleasantly.

"Since you are interested," he said, "you may honour us by being one of the party?"

As he expected, this increased the overflow of bile. "Never mind," he thought; "the anger of the pot never gets beyond the ashes."

"Thanks," returned Rollo, flinging his nose in the air, "but I never put my spoon in another man's kail."

"The habit that Neil had he always stuck to," rejoined Norman urbanely. "You'll have heard of Mackillop's invitation?"

"What was it?" demanded Rollo.

"Oh, just take or leave!" was the response.

"Mackillop," said the tingling Rollo, "was one of the gentlemen who were from home when good manners were dealt out."

"Maybe like Saul, the son of Kish, he was out looking for his father's asses," rejoined Norman, with exasperating

composure. "Or possibly knowing the qualifications of those who dealt out manners, he kept out of the way."

"I warn you, I'm not in love with insinuation, Captain MacLean," cried Rollo, his lip quivering.

" 'What a man sows that shall he reap,' as the silly woman said when she sowed oatmeal," retorted Norman.

The muscles of Rollo's face twitched in rage.

"I warn you again that I am not in the habit of taking insults lightly," he hissed.

"Nor I of giving them," replied Norman indifferently.

"And on your present warning, for which I am obliged, I have only to remark it's a pity the big-nosed man should take all references to noses to himself. But here we are on the highway, Mr. Linnie, which, I fancy, is wide enough for two. Suppose we try the plan of each going his own way?"

"And much sorrow at the parting, I'm sure," snorted Rollo.

"With a company of two and both of one mind there's nothing for it but agreement," returned Norman. And with a smile that was as the thrust of a dirk, he was through a wicket and knee-deep in bracken—a trespasser in Dunveagle woods.

Rollo watched with drumming arteries as long as the retreating figure was visible. "Damn you!" he muttered, his fingers clinching as on the other's throat. "Curse the whole beggarly, long-shanked breed of you. See if I don't make you smart for your insolence."

Meanwhile Norman swung on with an easy stride, smiling half in pity, half in contempt.

"I believe he was on the verge of a challenge," he told himself. "Poor fool! Three minutes would satisfy all concerned, if the game were worth the candle."

How could Mr. Linnie know that as a swordsman Captain MacLean was the pride of the Indian army, and had even

disarmed the boast of the Paris fencing ring? Ignorance is sometimes at once a bliss and a blessing.

The arrangements for the sheep-shearing involved an incredible number of interviews with the Ogilvies, most of them long. Throughout the ladies were in a simmer of enthusiasm; but Mr. Ogilvie, as was his wont, watched, withholding comment until all was ready. Then, being alone with his daughter, he remarked between puffs of cigar smoke—

"Con, I like your friend Captain MacLean. He's got his head on in the right way—and he needs it, for I can see he plays a hard part."

Connie smiled, not without a dainty suffusion of colour.

"Yes, I like him. But your other friend Mr. Linnie hates him like poison. You'd better look out. I want no blood spilt on my doorstep."

"I think," she returned, her smile suddenly hardened into a frown, "I think Mr. Linnie is one of the enterprising gentlemen who, given an inch, proceed to help themselves to an ell. At times he acts as if he thought he had a sort of right of pre-emption. And I can see he treats Captain MacLean with studied rudeness."

Her father looked hard at her.

"Well," he said, "I daresay Captain MacLean knows how to take care of himself. As to notions of pre-emption, nothing pre-emptive is admitted here. You understand?"

She answered in the affirmative, remarking at the same time that she could not help pitying the MacLeans, their lot was so hard.

"I don't know," responded her father, "that we owe the MacLeans much pity. There was a time when their pity did not extend to us. Not," he explained, "that I believe in raking up the past. A busy man has better employment than auditing accounts of old dead wrongs. But in

fondling the cub, one can't help remembering how the old wolf bit."

"Mr. MacLean was very good when we called at Craigenard," Connie pointed out. "You know Grannie was charmed and touched."

"Grannie was holding converse with ghosts, dear. But for her we should not have set foot in Craigenard. When you are old you'll perhaps understand her feelings. I readily grant, however, that MacLean was exceedingly gracious, and graciousness must have been difficult, considering who is at Dunveagle. But the fact is MacLean is still a gentleman. At the same time you might find yourself mistaken if you construed his civility as goodwill."

"You don't mean to call him a hypocrite?" she cried.

"No, not a hypocrite, only a Highlander, possibly with his own ideas of revenge."

"Revenge?" she repeated incredulously, thinking of Norman.

"In spite of the transcendentalisms of young ladies' colleges, I am afraid the natural man still gloats upon revenge," was the reply. "To be sure, the day of dirks and broadswords is over. Our methods are more refined and——"

"Cruel," put in Connie, who, as a graduate of an American college, read Emerson.

"Perhaps," remarked her father, "the world had more real conscience and tenderness when a man took the person he hated by the beard and smote him under the fifth rib in the ancient effective way than it has to-day when murder is both a crime and a breach of good manners. Being a plain man, I won't argue about such subtleties. Only I want to say that a gentleman, especially a Highland gentleman, does not necessarily cherish an affection for everyone to whom he is civil. As to Captain MacLean, he

rings genuine, and I like his straight look. In a deal I'd take his word as readily as his bond."

"And what of Mr. Linnie?" asked Connie, with a little thrill of curiosity.

"Ask me later on," was the answer. "You start at four in the morning, don't you?"

"Earlier," she replied. "We start at daybreak."

"Then, if it's fine, you'll see something worth remembering all your life—a Highland dawn. During the last twenty years I have seen many a midnight, but few dawns. I've a mind to go out also. You ride, of course. Who goes as your guide?"

"Captain MacLean has told off the boy Alick for that duty, because he says none of our men would be of any use among the heather."

"Well, be careful," said her father. "Be careful. It would be unpleasant to fall over a precipice or stick in a bog."

Thus Dunveagle. At Craigenard Ian Veg spoke darkly with Alick, touching the happy results likely to come of an unforeseen and absolutely unavoidable accident to horse and rider.

CHAPTER XV

IAN LEADS INTERLOPERS A DANCE

TO break necks innocently two things are needful—zeal and craft; and the greatest of these is craft, since it furnishes occasion for the deed. Now, Ian Veg, to his sore vexation, could count on neither. Alick had lately come under the spell of the captain, and the blind could see the captain was under the evil spell of the usurpers at Dunveagle. Indeed, Ian had an acute feeling that his master's son, on whom the family honour rested, in whom the family hate should centre, was bewitched to infatuation. Alick he could set right peremptorily and effectively with the stick, but the same summary treatment could not be applied to Norman.

It was to be expected, of course, that the "hussy Ogilvie" would set her cap for lineage and good looks. It was the way of all women; Ian understood it was especially the way of American women, and turning the matter over in his own mind, he made use of language which drew on him the sharp reproof of Janet.

"Oh, I'll not say but she's well enough in the face," he retorted in Gaelic, "but she's not to have our Norman like a poodle on a string."

"There's many a fine man would like to be her poodle," quoth Janet quietly.

"Shame to you, Janet Mackern," was the rejoinder.

"It's thinking I am you don't care *that* if he goes after her or not," and he snapped his fingers angrily.

"If I was you, I'd say my prayers for a pickle sence, Ian Veg," said Janet, with provoking calmness.

"It's a fine day when the fox preaches," cried Ian, and bounced away, convinced that the very air was treacherous.

He called for Alick, with a vague notion of beginning a course of correction on the spot, but was balked, for Alick happened to be receiving final instructions from the captain. His look of elation made Ian comment mentally, "We'll take that out of you, my lad."

It added piquancy to the situation that Ian was himself appointed guide, an honour conferred upon him because he knew crag and chasm and peak as the faces of his daily friends. No one thought of calling to mind that he also knew the most perilous paths, the deepest, ooziest channels, and most treacherous bog holes, nor did anyone suspect his secret satisfaction in the knowledge.

While the moorlands were still a spectral, chilly grey, they were out; Ian and his two collies leading, and Connie some twenty paces behind on her pony, with Alick alert at its head and the captain attentive by the stirrup.

The rider tingled in suppressed excitement. She had imagined a lightsome voyage of discovery, and, lo! an uncanny adventure into Dantesque regions of gloom. In her fancy mountains had always stood laughing in sunshine or robed in the majesty of tempest; never in this darkling weirdness that was neither night nor day, neither sunshine nor mist. Looming in stupendous vagueness, they reminded her of bergs unveiling minatorily in the path of a fog-bound ship. The intervening wastes, glimmering eerily with grey heath and ebony bog, suggested unholy revels, so that she half expected to have her blood made cold by the gleam of vanishing phantoms or the twinkle of a witch's skirt. Miss Connie had never before looked on the face of the moorland when it reflects the first faint silver of the east, nor felt the mysterious life of the hills at the parting of light

IAN LEADS INTERLOPERS A DANCE 101

and darkness. The place awed ; and the company perhaps embarrassed.

For the sake of diversion she remarked the aloofness of Ian, who strode on ahead, silent and ostentatiously indifferent.

"He's a queer fish," replied Norman in a low voice ; "tender as a dove, hardy as a wild cat, as true as steel, and as cruel."

"A hotch-potch of Celtic vice and virtue," she smiled down.

"And both highly spiced," was the answer.

"Tell me about him," she said coaxingly.

Norman glanced ahead ; the way was tolerably clear for a mile or so, and Ian was too far in advance to hear.

"There's a little tale that is characteristic and worth telling," he said, and this is the pith of what he told :—

Many years before a brace of cockney tourists, chancing to be out among the hills with Ian, recreated themselves blithely at his expense. He retorted nothing ; nay, he even smiled as the arrows of their wit went home. The diversion was so rare, they scarcely noticed that he was leading them through pitted morasses, up and down ugly gorges, and by the brinks of dizzy precipices. They were suddenly amazed, however, when ten miles from the nearest habitation he was obliged to leave them to themselves, having urgent business elsewhere. It was then well on towards evening. The mist and the rain, for which the guileless Ian had been waiting and praying, came drizzling down, blotting out every headland and landmark. They had not gone half an hour in their own courses when, with the sensation which no man who has experienced it ever forgets, they discovered that they had absolutely and hopelessly lost their way. A fearful night of floundering and serambling followed. Towards dawn next day, two drenched, miry, hungry, spent men came upon a solitary

cottage. Heaven be praised, here was succour at last. They knocked faintingly. A moment later a nightcapped head popped out above them, and, behold—the astonished face of Ian. He was struck with an exasperating pity. Bless his heart and soul, where had they been? He thought they were back to their mothers long ago. The wild, dark, wet hills were no place for pretty gentlemen from London. He was afraid their fine new clothes were ruined, and that was a great pity, for as he knew good clothes were dear. All the same, he hoped they had enjoyed themselves after coming so far for pleasure. Well, he was a poor, hard-working man who had to rise early, and so must be bidding them “good night.” It was sociable of them to knock him up in the passing, and he hoped that if they came that way again they would not forget him. With that the head withdrew, and the window went down, not without hints of a satirical chuckle.

“Delightful!” cried Connie, who rejoiced in originality, even when it was wicked. “He’s mastered the art of tit-for-tat.”

Ian heard a peal of frivolous laughter, but did not deign to look back.

An hour they kept to the primitive road, by which the glen carted home its peats, but the guide, considering the end with himself, took the first chance of striking out among pathless bogs, and, for the sake of stumbling feet behind, quickened his pace. In spite of Alick’s utmost vigilance, the pony tripped often and sank, causing much merriment between Miss Ogilvie and her sedulous knight, the captain. It was great fun, this rough-riding, and an adventure to describe at length in letters to New York.

Ian meanwhile, glancing furtively over his shoulder, cursed the nimble feet of the pony and the traitorous skill of Alick. A cunning touch at the right moment, an artfully contrived blunder, and the baggage would be head-

foremost into the black bog. "I'd jist like to see ye over the head in it," he thought savagely. If those sucking black lips once got hold!

He led them straight through the heart of the morass. Once it had been part of the great Caledonian forest, and the mouldering tree stumps, deceptively wreathed, were still effective stumbling-blocks for the unwary. But what Ian put most faith in were the slimy holes and ditches, altogether hidden or gracefully veiled by luxuriant heather. If only the beast of a pony would make a real slip; if only Alick—but that felonious child of Belial was too evidently in league with the enemy.

The truth is that the difficulties so carefully devised by Ian put Alick on his mettle. Only the born hillsman could have piloted the pony from tuft to tuft of the shivering quagmire, between the pools of liquid peat, across the hidden runnels and heather-fringed holes that gleamed like the eye of a beast lurking privily for prey. Alick saw everything, and his hand was prompt on the bridle to urge or retard. Unhappily, however, a horse has four feet, and while Alick looked to the pair in front the pony went down behind, or *vice versa*, so that it was like a boat in a heavy sea, now going down by the head, now by the stern. Moreover, the farther they went the wilder became the plunging. Alick, mire to the eyes, was dripping from effort and excitement, and to mire the captain added a very obvious anxiety. Ian, grimly expectant, hopped and leaped with a devilish agility in front. At last a quick cry came from behind. Suspecting a false alarm, he did not turn until the excited voices of the captain and Alick assured him of an accident. What he saw on facing about was a pony embedded to the nozzle, and Miss Ogilvie in the captain's arms. The captain was saying something in sharp rebuke to Alick, and Alick turned a scarlet, accusing face to Ian. Mr. Mackern noted, as a thing not wholly

unpleasing, that, despite all her gallant's care, Miss Ogilvie had not entirely escaped the slime. "But I wish," he said to himself as he stepped back, "I wish she was where the powny is."

Examination showed that the pony's hill climbing was done for that day, and that Miss Ogilvie's wrist had been badly twisted. The question was whether she would proceed or return. She felt her wrist, glanced at her miry skirt, and asked how far they had still to go.

"A matter of three mile, and maybe a bittock," announced Ian, giving his imagination rein, and added gratuitously, "The worst threc mile in all the hill, too."

Connie considered a moment. Could Alick return with the pony, and would they bear with her if she went on? Bear with her? The captain would not abide that strain; and Ian suppressed a groan.

"We'll be late at the mairch," he said, starting with a resolution that those who followed should sweat for it. After five hundred yards of matted heather Connie was glad to take the captain's arm. "Oh, that's it, is it?" said Ian mentally, casting a backward glance. "If he's going to carry her like a lame shcep, better begin soon than syne," and struck up an acclivity where only hill-born toes could grip.

CHAPTER XVI

TRIUMPH AND DISAPPOINTMENT

CONNIE reached the top panting, and as a stratagem to recover breath, drew Ian's attention to the glory of crimson and gold now flooding the east.

"Ay," he responded, hardly taking the trouble to glance upward. "It will be gey and hot by dinner-time," and turned on his heel. There was nothing for it but to follow him, and the following was not easy. Sometimes on a slippery steep Connie fairly swung on the captain's arm, in a confusion that lent brilliancy to eye and cheek. Once he felt the dancing tumult of her heart against his own, and for one divine moment experienced the giddy ecstasy of a doubting soul admitted into Paradise.

She climbed bravely, but skirts are skirts, and a maid is a maid, and matted heather and slippery hill-sides are hard to tread. Wherefore there was closer clinging than one intended or the other durst expect. But the preoccupation of these personal concerns did not prevent the open-souled American girl from rejoicing in the exhilarating freshness and the oriental pomp of colour, here silver-grey, there gold, and yonder a burning crimson, with ineffable tints of pearl and opal between. A spirit lighter and subtler than wine electrified heart and nerve.

"Glorious," she cried, "glorious!" and scrambled upon a low rock. The keen breeze of dawn made her ears tingle pleasantly, and brought the bloom of Shiraz to her face. The blood raced in her veins, every pulse danced exuber-

antly. Throwing back her head, she took a deep draught of the light, perfumed air.

"And half these hills," she cried in self-forgetful ecstasy, "belong to Dunveagle."

The words were not out when she burned with shame for her cruelty and clumsiness. Oh, how could she have forgotten herself? Looking down in dismay, she saw the quiver of pain in Norman's face.

"Yes," he answered quietly, "half these hills belong to Dunveagle."

"Oh, Captain MacLean!" she cried in a tense voice.

Then all at once she stopped, her lips compressed. The next instant she leaped from the rock.

"Come," she said hurriedly, "or Ian will be wishing you had not brought me." And she climbed two hundred yards of a smooth, steep slope without help.

They were beginning to look down on the brooding mists, now shimmering in the sunlight like vast webs of gossamer, interwoven with pearls of surpassing lustre. Above the vermilion was fading into dim white, and Norman agreed with Ian in predictions of a blazing day.

Two thousand five hundred feet above sea-level they paused again to take breath, Connie, thanks to Norman's delicate courtesy, being once more mistress of herself. But they had not admired the kindled radiance more than a minute, when there came, in the inexorable voice of Ian, "We'll be jogging."

Without waiting for response, he headed for the crest, which an hour before had seemed but a short mile away, then mysteriously receded to treble that distance, and now after all the climbing and panting was still half a league off.

"Distances are deceptive among the mountains," Connie remarked, and over the implacable shoulder in front came the single word "Whiles."

But at last with the captain's aid she was on the top, palpitating and giddy, and, lo! a glory unutterable, a glory of shining moor and crag, of flashing cataract and flaming peak, such as her town-bred imagination had never conceived. She could not seize details. She had merely an indelible impression of innumerable domes, a dazzling brightness, and an unpeakable peace, while the streams and the wind of the morning sang enchantingly in her ear.

She was startled by a voice at her side, and turning quickly, found Ian regarding her impatiently. In some confusion she asked whether he had spoken.

"I was just saying yonder's the mairch," he announced, indicating a stream which was a series of cascades. "Ye see, a burn's the cheapest sort of a dyke among the hills. Listen. Gosh! Yon's Donald's dogs."

Thereupon he mounted a rock, said something quietly in Hebrew or Gaelic, and instantly his dogs were off, right and left. For the next half-hour he gave no heed to his companions. A little he directed the dogs by force of lung and frantic waving of arms. Then as they diminished he blew on two crooked fingers a whistle that made Connie clap her hands on her ears. Out and out went the dogs until she lost sight of them, but Ian saw them, and blew with piercing variations, which, even to the untutored sense, denoted alternate command and rebuke. All at once an answering whistle came down upon the wind like a challenge. Ian, screwing his face fearfully, sent one blast back. Then the long-drawn modulations changed to notes of exceeding sharpness, flying knots of sheep began to appear, and Connie understood, without Norman's explanation, that the gathering had begun in earnest.

An hour later three large droves converged, and a delicious babel of bleating and barking filled the air. It was now seven o'clock, and the shepherds, tramping stolidly behind their clamorous flock, flung coats and

waistcoats open to the glowing June sun. The wind had died. It was to be a hot, cloudless day, a perfect paradisaical day, if one had time to spend the long hours among the odorous heather.

Connie followed the baaing multitude, enraptured with the wild, pathetic music, the appeal of the great gooseberry eyes turned on her as if craving pity, the inimitable alertness of the dogs, the splendour of the summer day, and, above all, her own elated feelings. She did not know that as often as occasion served Ian Veg entertained his fellow-shepherds with fragments of a character-sketch in which she innocently played the part of the Babylonish woman on the prowl among Scottish hills. Perhaps it was well for Ian that the captain was equally ignorant.

The slow procession traversed a wide, sunlit slope, slanted across a valley, adroitly steering to clear the bogs, crossed a ridge, and in a cosy dip of the hill found the fold, with a crowd of people waiting, among whom Connie easily distinguished the laird.

He pushed through sheep, dogs and men, greeting her handsomely; listened with interest to the tale of her experiences and impressions, condoled with her on bemired skirts, said gallant things about young ladies' pluck, and excusing himself for having to be in several places at once that day, passed to a corner of the fold where Ian was using unquotable language to beasts that bolted blindly in every direction save through the gates open to receive them.

"I expected you an hour ago," the laird said brusquely. "What kept you?"

Ian clutched an obstreperous ram, and without looking up intimated that he was prepared to gather sheep or pull horses out of bogs; but he could not undertake to gather sheep and assist foundered horses at the same time. A dexterous jerk made the ram spring forward through the

open gate, and the rest of the flock poured after him. Ian stood up, wiping his brow upon his shirt sleeve.

"Maybe, sir," he said, a lowering fire in his eyes, "you will haf seen Alick going down with a horse on three legs. If anybody wass to ask me, I would likcly say that if it had stopped at home the sheep and the shepherds would be here an hour since, too."

"Well, well," returned the laird, willing for politic reasons to mollify the bristling Ian, "we won't discuss that now. The men look warm, and to say the truth you've appeared cooler yourself many a time. You'll find the bottle in the cart yonder, and, by the way, see that Miss Ogilvie is treated first."

Ian found the bottle and glass, sidled up to Connie, and announced bluntly that by the laird's orders she was to drink.

"What is it?" she asked, beaming upon him in a smile that would have won any heart but his own.

"Very good stuff, mem," answered Ian; "just Highland whisky." His words were polite, but his air implied he could not for his life understand why good liquor should be wasted on her.

"Thanks," she responded in the same engaging manner, "but I really can't drink whisky."

Ian might be lacking in goodwill, b t he would not fail in duty.

"The laird said it," he rejoined doggedly, and filled the glass.

The laird chancing to return at the moment, Connie laughingly protested against a too fiery hospitality.

"She says she's not taking whisky the now," Ian explained, with a sidelong look at his master.

The laird exploded in Homeric laughter.

"Oh, I see," he cried, "it's Ian Veg and the Ferntosh. Well, you must understand, Miss Ogilvie that certain of

our Highland customs put the blush on teetotalism. When a fair and distinguished visitor honours us on an occasion like this, she is expected to conform."

But as she still hesitated, Ian Vcg struck in—

"If she will not drink, I may be going. It iss high time the clippers was at it."

The captain tugged at his moustache in a vehement desire to kick Ian for his insolcnce. But the laird knew a better way.

"We're not going to let Miss Ogilvie off like that," he responded gaily. To Ian's disgust he took the glass in his own hand, and toadingly as a serving-man (so the smouldering henchman thought) presented it to Connie.

"And what am I to do?" she asked, her face aglow with interest and excitement.

"If it please you, drink success to the clipping, Miss Ogilvie," replied the laird.

She bowed to him, raising the glass with a smile so bewitching that for one dazzling half-second Ian almost wished he were young and rich; but he crushed the unworthy feeling down. Janet, if a trifle tart in the tongue, was good enough for him; and any barefooted lassie herding or milking cows about the braes was better for an honest man than this shameless American baggage.

In her eagerness to comply with local custom, she toasted incautiously, and Ian had the happiness to see her gasp and weep.

"*Thig sin as do shròin's thèid an cràdhadh innte*" ("That will come out of your nose and pain will go into it"), he quoted mentally.

He went off to those who better knew and appreciated the pungency of Highland waters; and Norman, with a meaning glance at Connie, inquired for the commissariat.

"Bless me!" the laird cried apologetically, "I had quite forgotten. Miss Ogilvie, you must overlook the pre-

TRIUMPH AND DISAPPOINTMENT 111

occupations of gathering day. When we have breakfasted ourselves we are too apt to think the whole world has breakfasted as well. Norman, you'll find a basket in the cart yonder. What's in it I cannot tell. I only know that Janet cackled over it like a hen with one chicken. She said it was to be carefully handled."

He had to go round a corner to fetch it, and being out of sight, was held for half a minute by talk of a deeply personal import. There had evidently been a contest for the honour of drinking first after Connie, and Donald, Ian's colleague "in the hill," was lucky man.

"Boys, I wish I knew where her sweet lips touched," Norman heard him say.

"You'll know by the taste," put in a wit from a neighbouring farm; and being vain of his voice, he hummed:

"There's kames o' honey 'tween my love's lips,
And gowd among her hair."

"Honey and gowd both, by gosh," responded Donald. "I've nine pound ten by the half-year, not to speak of three bolls of coarse oatmeal and two bags of Indian for the dogs, and I'd give all the meal, and maybe some of the siller, just for one wee taste of the lips of her father's daughter. I was looking at her coming doon by, and what I said to myself was this, 'there's a lassie, and, as sure as the sky's above our heads, she'll make hearts dunt.' If God had only seen fit to bring me into this world with a silver spoon in my mouth, I'm thinking I'd know where to sup."

"Brose and a horn spoon for you, Donald, my lad," quoth the wit.

"Well," returned Donald sweetly, "here's to the lassie that deserves no worse a man than myself. I wish I was in the captain's shoes."

"Take yer drink and stop yer clash," said Ian curtly.

"Oh, ho," cried Donald, who was four-and-twenty, and merry, and a connoisseur in feminine beauty, despite a meagre education. "What's the matter with my lord now?"

"I want to hear the click of the shears," retorted Ian. "Some folk that should know better forget this is clipping day and not clyping day at all. If it is whisky ye want, take it and pass the glass. D'ye think you're the only man that's dry?"

When Norman returned with the basket he was smiling vividly, but declined to reveal the cause of his interest.

CHAPTER XVII

AMONG THE SHEEPFOLDS

THE breakfast was ideally suited to a June day and a mountain appetite—cold boiled chicken, cold salmon, a bottle of cream of such quality and flavour as heathery uplands alone produce, with fit and dainty accompaniments. For the laird had put Janet on her mettle, and Janet's mettle meant the honour of the house of MacLean. In consequence, Maggie received instructions to wring the neck of the plumpest pullet at Craigenard, and Norman's rod, opportune as Aaron's, furnished the salmon. The *tout ensemble* was pure delight to a cook's soul. Moreover, the culinary instinct was quickened by something moving sentimentally in Janet's old bosom. "I wouldn't wonder but Ian's right for once," she thought, as she went about the business. "The Holy Book itself can't make out the ways of a man and a maid." Being a woman, Janet entertained herself with long, tender views. By the providence of God and the skill of lovers in crossing fences, it was hard to say what might come to pass. Who knew, the king might have his own back again, with unexpected treasure to boot.

"Well," she mused, packing deftly with arms bared to the elbows, "there's nothing I know that is better to court on after a morning among the hills than a nice chicken like *that*," and she pressed the savoury pullet with pride, "and a slice of Veagle salmon like *that*, with cream and scones and things. Maggie," she cried, "you're sure everything's here?"

"Everything," answered Maggie, "and it's wishing I am I was up by the fank eating it."

"You needn't be going so far for something to eat, Maggie," was the response. "There's plenty more porridge in the pot."

"Send the porridge to the fank," retorted Maggie; but Janet's lyric feeling ran too high to be disturbed by a mere impertinence.

When the time came, Norman spread a snowy cloth on the green turf, made a seat for Connie on a tuft of dry heather, and the feasters began without undue preliminary. Connie declared it was the best breakfast she had ever eaten, and probably she was right. For five hours' morning exercise makes a delicious sauce, to say nothing of super-excellence of cooking.

They had finished, and were moving off joyously among the shearers, when there appeared on the bridle-path below a figure on horseback. It was Mrs. Ogilvie, with Alick for guide and guardian. The captain hastened to meet them; the laird remained beside Connie.

"You were quite right, Grannie dear," were almost her first words. "It's been glorious, and we have yet to see the clipping, haven't we, Mr. MacLean? Why isn't papa with you? He'd enjoy it."

"A very heavy mail has detained him," answered Mrs. Ogilvie. "By the way, I've news for you, Connie. Jeff and Kitty Dunbar are in London and will be with us next week."

"Oh!" said Connie, and Captain MacLean was puzzled to make out whether the ejaculation meant gladness or regret.

"Come and see the clippers," she added without comment, and turning quickly went off with the laird, the captain following with Mrs. Ogilvie.

With a child's wondering delight, she watched the fleeces rolling down as by magic under the dexterous hands of the shearers.

"They come off in one roll without rag or tatter," she cried in admiration.

"It is the ambition of every good shearer to bring his fleece off whole," the laird explained.

"Do they never nip the flesh as well as snip the wool?" she asked, for it seemed nothing but a miracle kept the clicking blades out of the flesh.

"Of course accidents will happen in the best hands," the laird replied. "But—ah!"

They were standing by the shearing-stool of Ian Veg, and even as the laird spoke the sheep under Ian's hand plunged suddenly. Connie gasped at sight of a gaping red wound.

"Ian, that's not like you," the laird remarked, more in surprise than reproof.

Ian did not express the thought which boiled in his mind, to wit, that if God gave certain people grace enough to stay at home and mind their own business, certain other people might be able to clip without drawing blood.

Instead, he called out gruffly, "Alick, the tar!"

Alick came at a trot, stuck the point of a stick into the tar-pot, and rubbed it on the wound with a palpable pride in his own surgical dexterity. Connie could see the prone body quivering.

"Poor thing," she exclaimed, "it seems to hurt dreadfully." Nothing but the laird's presence kept back the scathing retort that sprang to Ian's lips. Grunting contemptuously, he turned the sheep over and drove the shears points viciously out of sight. Connie held her breath for more blood, but in another minute the sheep rose clean and graceful from the midst of her cast-off winter clothes, was branded on the side by the alert Alick, and bounded away lithe as a Derby racer. To grip another and fling it, trotters up, on the shearing-stool was to Ian the work of a second. It squirmed and wriggled, but an iron left leg was on its body and the glimmering steel points were at its throat. The tangled fleece opened, rolled snow-white from the pink skin. Ian called for the branding-iron, and the ewe, a young mother, leaped off, crying brokenly for her disconsolate lamb. Connie exclaimed in admiration, but Ian gave no heed, and the party of inspection passed on. By chance they halted beside Donald, who sang softly to

himself in rhythm with the shears. Feeling their gaze, he looked up, blushing like a girl in her first season.

"Isn't it very hard work?" Connie asked, with an enchanting inclination towards him.

"Oh, no, men!" Donald answered. "Ye see, when a sheep finds it's no use kicking, it just lies still. But they're awful thrawn whiles though."

"A little like the lasses, eh, Donald?" put in the laird.

"A wee bittie, sir," said Donald, in hot confusion.

"Donald, Donald, what are you saying?" cried the captain.

"Politely assenting," interpolated Connie, with a rippling laugh, and moving on, remarked confidentially to Norman, "Apollo in the guise of a Highland shepherd, and apparently without the knowledge that he's handsome."

The encomium was well meant, but she had never seen Donald studying himself in the cracked glass on his bothy wall when about to descend for conquest among the lasses of the glen.

The captain wondered how Miss Ogilvie would feel over the secret sentiments of her Apollo. "It would neve do to tell her," he reasoned, "yet she's not a woman if she wouldn't be pleased."

At that moment Mrs. Ogilvie, coming up, remarked casually, "I forgot to say, dear, there was a big bundle of letters for you in the morning's mail."

Now even a sheep-shearing, with all its sunshine and romance and merriment, speedily loses interest to a woman who knows there are letters awaiting her, and presently Miss Ogilvie discovered it was high time to go. There being no other escort, Captain MacLean must needs see the ladies home.

"And of course you'll stay for luncheon," said Connie, in a manner that was not to be resisted

CHAPTER XVIII

A MILLIONAIRE AT WORK

THE responsibilities of an American railway magnate are not to be evaded nor abridged by taking ship to Europe and seeking refuge in lonely Highland castles; for the seclusion of Edcn itself would not protect him from the diabolical energy of the telegraph and the Postal Union. Duncan Ogilvie might cherish the illusion of country ease at Dunveagle, but he was merely lengthening the chain which bound him to Wall Street, New York. On starting for the Craigenard sheepfolds his mother left him with two secretaries laying siege to ramparts of correspondence, and when she returned the typewriters still clicked desperately.

That clicking meant chaos and a breakdown of the local postal arrangements. The Postmaster-General had not reckoned on this invasion of the solitudes by a prince of the market-place, and omitted to provide for the speedy handling of bales of letters and sheafs of telegrams—all urgent. In the despair of utter confusion his lieutenants petitioned for assistance. The Government pooh-poohed till stinging complaints came from the millionaire; then, in a frenzy of zeal and that fine regard for efficiency which distinguishes national departments, appointed a boy of at least three months' experience, who, after the manner of his kind, blithely proceeded to make confusion worse confounded. Then the young lady telegraphist protested in hysterics. She was a Lowlander and civilised, had ac-

cepted a post in the benighted Highlands in expectation of rural, leisurely ways ; and behold ! she was being hurried to her grave because fussy, idiotic people three thousand miles away were every minute of the day asking silly questions and demanding instant answers. She had had hopes in life, but where was a girl's chance of happy marriage if she was to be all her time bent double over a cursed telegraphic instrument ? With characteristic energy the Government superseded her, and doubled the number of telegraph messengers, that is to say, increased it from one to two ; and as Mr. Ogilvie still complained, a second-hand bicycle was added to the staff. The budding official who was appointed to scour the mountain roads on this engine of swiftness spent much valuable Government time by the wayside in a brown study over punctures. The wiggings that ensued when important despatches were hours late in reaching Dunveagle hurried the Aberfourie postmaster into old age at a rate which alarmed his doctor. He was not accustomed to American methods.

"They're killing me !" he said tragically ; "they're killing me !" and wiped a weary brow.

The glen generally speculated on these things half in wonder, half in awe. A new spirit was among them, and its manifestations were marvellous.

"Keeps three men at the writing together," said one who sometimes had a glass of ale with the butler, and was therefore accepted as an authority on ways and means at the Castle.

"Shorthand and machine-writing too. What d'ye think of that ?"

"How does he manage it ?" asked another

"I'll tell ye what my friend the butler says," answered the first, rising several degrees in importance. "He explains it in this way. He says the brains of Americans is packed, as ye might say, in wee drawers, and that as one

drawer shuts another opens of itself. By opening and closing, time about, ye see the same brain can carry on a lot of things at the same time. They're a wonderful, wonderful lot, the Americans."

"But Ogilvie's oreeginally Scotch," objected a sceptic.

"Ay, born in Scotland, but bred in America!" triumphantly returned the friend of his highness the butler. "It's all in what you're used to. Catch a monkey young, and ye can almost make a man of it."

"Ay, indeed," assented the sceptic significantly. "I mind seeing a monkey in a show at Aberfourie, and it was just as wise and clever-looking as some men I know. As sure as death, I thought it was going to preach and explain things to us."

Meanwhile, the subject of all this talk dictated to his stenographers on matters involving millions, and smoked cigars as if there were absolutely nothing on his mind. At Connie's entrance in search of letters, he looked up smiling, for though he carried on the business of a whole cabinet in a single head, he had always a pleasant face for visitors, and his daughter's interruptions were never inopportune. Not once nor twice had a curly-headed prattler broken deliberations of national import and retired with a kiss of triumph.

"Well, Con, back again?" he cried as she now entered. "And how went the clipping?"

"Splendidly," was the answer. "Papa, you can have no idea how glorious it is out among the sheep and the heather a day like this."

"Am I not my mother's son?" he asked, laughing.

"Grannie's descriptions are first-rate," Connie rejoined, "full of affection and colour; but for the real thing you must go out yourself."

"You must know most real things if you are to appreciate them," he responded. "I suppose New York grows dim

in contrast with the Highlands. By the way, you very soon put your horse out of action—a brilliant start in mountaineering."

"Then you saw the boy?"

"Yes; and he gave me a really vivid description of the performance."

"I think," she said solemnly, "it was the old man's fault. Papa, I believe he hates us. I fancy I can see hatred in his face."

"Pooh! you're too imaginative, Con. Captain MacLean was very kind."

"Very," she returned, with an unconscious emphasis. "So was the laird himself. The captain saw us home, and, of course, we invited him to stay for luncheon."

"I'm glad of that. I want a rational chat after my morning's work. I've been at it full tilt ever since Grannie went out."

"She says you have letters for me, papa."

"Yes, almost a sackful. The good philanthropists who live on other people are finding you out, I should think." He handed her a bundle.

"By the way, I suppose you know Jeff Dunbar and his sister are to be with us shortly?"

He looked at her meaningly.

"Grannie told me," she replied simply. "Any others coming?"

"Yes, some others; but we'll speak of them later on. Meanwhile, present my compliments, and ask Captain MacLean to excuse me for a little. I'm in the midst of a problem."

The problem solved, he greeted Captain MacLean warmly, thanking him for his courtesies and good offices towards the ladies.

"I don't think I've ever seen them better pleased with an outing," he remarked, glancing at his daughter. "The heather is so romantic compared with dusty railways"

"And the heather," returned Norman affably, "gives romance for reward. Railways offer something more solid."

"Well, yes!" Mr. Ogilvie admitted. "Steel rails and rolling stock are solid enough. Yet, sir, man does not live by bread alone," and he swung off into talk of clippings and moorland, as if there were not a thought of finance in his head. Connie, listening and watching, told herself, with a little thrill, that he liked the captain.

CHAPTER XIX

NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

AMONG the expected guests was Brash, the prodigious Hiram Brash, whom Mr. Ogilvie had picked out of a railway train somewhere between New York and Philadelphia, instructed in the mysteries of railroad manipulation, and elevated as a model of smartness to his own right hand ; also the Hon. Job Shilbeck, a political wire-pulier and boss of autocratic influence. None who knew them ever doubted that, as the Western phrase goes, both men had their heads right screwed on. The children of poverty, they made themselves great men. Did an ambitious capitalist desire to use the legislature in a little scheme for which he was prepared to pay, Job Shilbeck was his man. Did an aspiring patriot pine to serve his country in a post of emolument and honour that would bear a fair percentage of commission, Job Shilbeck was his man also. No one—not the most experienced, not the most astute—quite understood his methods ; but one fact was indubitable : there he was, and such as needed his aid must take him at his own price. The figure being stiff, he prospered mightily. Brash was younger, but hardly more modest, and certainly not less well equipped by nature for the arduous battle of life.

When these two arrived at Dunveagle, together as happened by the caprice of fortune, the air became crisper, the horizon expanded as to the strains of "Hail, Columbia," or it might have been to the animating flash of diamonds. With your dominant American diamonds and tobacco are

the harmonious twins—a softer sex combines diamonds and lace—but always there are diamonds in evidence of the national wealth, diamonds blazing in hair, or ear, or bracelet, in shirt-front or cuff. You might be mistaken about Mr. Ogilvie's adopted country; a glance at Job Shilbeck and Hiram Brash sufficed for a right conclusion. Their nationality was as plain as if the bird of freedom screamed it from their heads.

On the first day at Dunveagle Brash the magnificent, casting a critical eye over the landscape, owned the place was good enough for a summer vacation, but confessed himself unable to understand (an unwonted bit of modesty) why an up-to-date New York railroad financier should wilfully pitch on a hermitage among the moors. Even the scenery was not at all up to Mr. Brash's standard.

"Now if I wanted scenery," he remarked, taking a cigar from the breast-pocket of his waistcoat (a lingering habit of earlier days), "if I was gone on woods and mountains, which, thank the Lord, I ain't, I'd go out west to Colorado or pitch my tent in the Yosemite. Now there you *do* get scenery."

"No, you wouldn't," drawled Shilbeck. "No, you wouldn't," he repeated, expectorating meditatively. "I know ye better'n that. And I'll tell yc why. There wouldn't be any grease-boxes about to keep yer hands sweet, and where there ain't any grease-boxes, there ain't any scenery for Hiram Brash. When you took me for that last run up the Hudson, what did you do? You shut down the windows of the smoke-room, talked patent couplings at a pressure of forty-five to the square inch, and minded as much about the Pallisades as if they were the pyramids of Egypt with old king what-his-name on top of 'em. And when we went out shootin' in the Rockies the time Roosevelt was there, with that Englishman that had so much trouble fixing the bit o' glass in his eye, didn't we

lose an A1 bear because you had to do some figuring on yer shirt cuff? Yes, sir, that's 'bout the size of your enjoyment of scenery."

Job Shilbeck chuckled and Mr. Ogilvie laughed.

"Dessay that's 'bout right," Brash owned, not ill-pleased to receive such a testimonial for zeal before his patron. "You don't catch me goin' back on the grease-box. No, siree. The greasc-box keeps the wheels of the Republic hummin'. What does the world want to-day more'n anything else? Why, locomotion. You run faster an' smoother than anybody else, and yer fortin's made. That's how I figure it out. There's money in the grease-box, and don't you forget it, though for that matter there's money mostly everywhere if a man only knows how to pick it up. Shouldn't be s'prised if there's money even here. Any minerals in these hills, sir?" he asked, lifting his eyes.

"Rock and bog oak," answered Mr. Ogilvie, smiling.

"Well," said Mr. Brash, "guess if there was mineral people here wouldn't know what to do with it. Or, if they mined it, could not get it carried away. 'Pears to me Noah must have built the British railroads and that his family's running 'em yet. I've been all over their lines, and I tell you what it is, we wouldn't put their expresses on our side tracks. As for the railroad managers, they ain't got no idea beyond muddlin' up schedules and stickin' to 'em like grim death. Some day a live American will come over here, build a road, and knock spots out of 'em."

"You're the man, Brash," said Mr. Ogilvie quietly.

"With your lead, sir," returned Brash. "For the present there's more fun at home. Ten thousand miles of road under one eye, and every mile of it as slick as greased lightnin', that's what suits my constitootion."

"Sir John Rolston may be here before you go," said Mr. Ogilvie, "and you'll have an opportunity of discussing these things with him."

"And who is Sir John Rolston?" Brash inquired.

"Chairman of the Great National Railway," Mr. Ogilvie announced.

"Oh, I know," responded Brash. "One of the fossils that turn up once a week, get a junior clerk to instruct 'em, sign their names to what they don't understand, and snooze for another seven days. 'Pears to me it's always Sunday with folks on this side, though I don't know that they've got any more religion than we have. Hullo! the ladies."

Mr. Brash switched off to meet Mrs. Ogilvie and Connie; the Hon. Job Shilbeck turned more leisurely.

"Enjoying the scenery?" cried Connie, equally to both.

"I thank you, ycs, Miss Ogilvie," Brash answered, with an uneasy deference of manner for which she easily found a reason.

Two years before in New York a matchmaker had said piquantly, "Why don't you marry, Mr. Brash?"

"Dunno," replied Brash; "ain't got time, I s'pose."

"Oh," rejoined the lady archly, "where there's a will there's always a way, as the history of mankind proves. Very busy men have found time to get married."

"That's so," Brash owned reflectively.

"Besides," cooed the lady, who would presently have marriageable daughters of her own, "the Bible says it is not good for man to be alone."

"Is that so?" cried Brash with animation, and on being referred to the passage, "Sure enough, there it is. Well, I'm danged if I had any idea the Bible gave tips of that sort. Very interesting 'bout that rib business, ain't it? Funny idea."

"Providence," explained the lady sweetly, "is never at a loss to accomplish its own ends."

"'Pears so, don't it? I ain't much on Sunday-schools and that kind of truck, but I guess Providence is all right. It does feel lonely sometimes," added Mr. Brash, almost sentimentally.

"Well, you think it over," beamed the counsellor, "and you'll feel so lonely you'll just go right off and look for someone to keep you company."

Brash promised and kept his word. "Why, dang me," he said to himself, turning over the Biblical injunction, "stop weddin's, and where are you to get your population? Let your population run down, and what becoms of biz? Ruin biz, and the world's up a tree like a sick coon. Besides, a team of two's always better'n a team of onc."

As a good citizen he had a duty to perform, and as a man of business his thoughts, like the industrious apprentice's, turned to his master's daughter.

"Good lookin'," he said, running over the qualities in which he meant to speculate. "That ain't a fault. Clever—that ain't any fault either. Got tone," Mr. Brash mused. "A man who can afford it likes tone; that certainly ain't a fault. Besides, when the old man kicks off——" Mr. Brash first pursed his lips and then drew them in with a smack of exceeding relish. "That's all right," he said to himself, with emphasis. "Yes, I guess that's about as right as a Wall Street corner lot."

Thereupon he began to consider ways and means. Carte-blanche was given to his hatter and his tailor, and his bootmaker and his shirt and collar makers, and all the other makers that fit a man out for tender and romantic business enterprises. "They go mostly by appearances, dearie me, they do, and quite right too, quite right, bless their hearts—hey doodle-oodle." Mr. Brash's jubilant spirits are to be inferred from that note of exaltation.

He made his proposal, like an ideal railway manager, dwelling with fervour on the mutual advantages that would ensue. But God in His wisdom has withheld the business mind from young ladies, and Mr. Brash was politely but firmly interrupted.

"If I have taken you too sudden, Miss Ogilvie," he said, mistaking her meaning.

"Oh, no!" she returned, a little sparkle of fire in her eyes. "A foolishness of this sort is never too sudden, because it should never be at all. You must never speak a word of it again."

She rose, making him a stately bow of dismissal, and Mr. Brash reeled from her presence in a stupor of amazement.

"Refused!" he gasped. "Refused—me refused!" And then, as his emotions settled, "Hiram Brash, 'pears to me you've gone and made a triple-cylindered, fifty thousand horse-power idiot of yourself. Yes, sir, that's what ye've gone and done."

Thereafter the relations were delicate. Not that Mr. Brash was sensitive enough, which is to say foolish enough, to allow delicacy of relations to disturb him after the first shock, though in mock humility he once condescended to mention one or two of his own defects as a setting for illustrious merits. "I ain't much on Emerson," he said, knowing that author to be a favourite with Miss Ogilvie, "nor on the writing fellows generally. Books ain't in my line; nor I ain't gone on pictures and statoos, though I buy 'em, of course, same as my neighbours. But if you want a train equipped quick when a rival road's gettin' up steam I guess I'm there. And as to runnin' the thing, why, put me aboard the engine, put me in the caboose, it don't matter. I reckon that train'll reach its destination some minutes ahead of scheduled time. There ain't any gatherin' of wild strawberries when I'm about."

The self-judgment, as Connie knew, was absolutely just. Unquestionably Mr. Brash was one of America's lightning railroad men.

The Hon. Job Shilbeck was of another order. Mr. Brash was a "hustler"; even his enemies, and he was not

beloved of the entire race, admitted so much. Job Shilbeck, like deep water, ran very still. Except in moments of relaxation, he was not a talker; he hardly seemed to be a doer. Yet on any morning when he was attending to business the United States press from Maine to California had a smart attack of fever; and the United States press does not waste rhetoric and big headlines on anybody who is not distinctly somebody, save at advertisement rates. Ian Veg Mackern (who might have been a journalist had Fate been unkind), taking stock in country fashion, summed him up graphically by the proverb that, like the white horse at the mill door, he thought a good deal more than he said. A cigar was constantly between his teeth, as if to keep the tongue behind them from incontinence; certainly he kept his own counsel, till the sphinx lips parted to give instructions in a new move. Then caucus and clique throbbed, and the temperature of the press rose suddenly.

Now as a finely devised civilisation proves, the political manager is the most useful instrument ever created by an obliging Providence for the benefit of the kings and princes of finance. Ogilvie did not meddle directly in politics, partly from lack of taste for the game, partly because he preferred to have his chestnuts plucked out of the fire by others. Wherefore Job was on the list of the millionaire's friends, and had crossed the Atlantic to have a look at effete monarchies which yielded professional politicians no boodle, and shoot grouse on the Dunveagle moors.

He cared nothing, or less than nothing, for grouse, or dogs, or gamekeepers, or ghillies, for pedigrees or old castles, or indeed for any of those things which move the envy of the flunkey and the admiration of the picturesque tourist. He could sit among the August heather—he actually achieved the feat—without a thought of its bloom and perfume, turn a deaf ear to the singing of the wind in the woods, and the lowing of kine in the pastures. Nay,

more, he could turn a poulterer's eye on the soaring eagle. But he desired very ardently to ferret particulars of Mr. Ogilvie's plans regarding a certain movement, of which exciting whispers were already in the air, and to that end was ready to endure stagnation and ennui.

The ladies having gone about engagements of their own, Mr. Ogilvie inquired whether his guests were "game" for a climb. The question being in effect a challenge, they could not decline, though both detested walking, and at home boarded a street car for a journey of fifty yards and took an elevator for ten steps of stair. But they were in the Highlands, where strange notions prevailed, and—yes, they were game for a climb.

"Good!" cried Mr. Ogilvie, and stepped out with more of a Highlander's ardour for the braes than they cared to see. He led them by bosky paths, where there was no sky but the arching foliage, and no sound but the whisper of leaves or the twitter of disturbed birds; across glades that gleamed with wild flowers and laughing brooks; through clumps of hazel where the clusters of young nuts smote their faces, as with a fore-smack of autumn, and raspberry thickets already luscious with fruit; paths that his young feet had trod or ever he had dreamed of stocks and railway management. Great God! what water had run under bridges since then. Ay, and they who walked with him marvelled why "one of the smartest men in New York" grew so dreamy and absent-minded. How should they know that memory and imagination, the wondrous twin-sisters, had taken him to themselves and were showing him, as in a mirror, long-vanished faces, and were repeating in his ears the very tones of voices that had long been still? How should they know that Dunveagle woods of common oak and fir were magical as the garden of the Hesperides, because they were the lost gardens of his youth? They did not know, nor could

they understand. So he spoke of none of these things; but at the edge of the wood he stood peering into the thick darkness of an old fir.

"What's up now?" Job inquired. "Reckon there ain't any coons in a patch like this."

"I'm only looking," announced Mr. Ogilvie quietly, "if the blackbird's nest is still there. No, it's gone, like so much else. Once, long ago, I saw two boys climbing the tree for eggs, and I still remember their terror on being caught by the laird."

"Guess he's dead now, sir," said Brash, as one might say, "Time does for all enemies."

"Not a bit of him," was the reply. "People live longer among these glens than about Wall Street."

"You see that house?" pointing upward—"the largest that's visible? That's Craigenard. You'll not remember the name an hour, though to me it's too musical to be forgotten. In the days of which I speak I was at Craigenard, and he was at Dunveagle."

"And where's he now?" Job asked.

"Up there," Mr. Ogilvie answered.

"Jupiter!" cried Brash. "That's like a dime novel."

"No, Brash, not like a dime novel," Mr. Ogilvie returned; "only like life, which is ten thousand times stranger than the strangest dime novel."

Mr. Shilbeck stroked his goatee thoughtfully.

"Reckon that's about right," he said slowly. "Yes, I reckon it is. Life's a mighty cur'us thing, come to think of it. Mighty cur'us."

His friends had never before found Mr. Shilbeck so perilously near a fit of moralising.

"Pretty rough on the old man, sir," said Brash; "cut up bad, I expect."

"His race don't carry their hearts on their sleeves," responded Mr. Ogilvie, "but one may imagine his feelings."

"I should just reckon," assented Mr. Brash. "The mildest rooster going don't like a rival bird on his perch. No, sir. It's human nature to kick. Hullo, what's that on the rock above?"

Mr. Ogilvie had no difficulty in recognising the long, lean figure.

"My predecessor at Dunveagle," he answered.

"Let's go up and interview him," suggested Brash in the spirit of a schoolboy bent on larks.

"Better not," replied Mr. Ogilvie, turning to go. He did not add what was in his mind, that the man was a gentleman and hospitable, and that perhaps the larder was lean. A little later they fell in with the captain, and took possession of him for luncheon. When they reached the castle, Jeff and Kitty Dunbar were awaiting them, having arrived some hours ahead of time.

CHAPTER XX

YOUNG AMERICA AT LARGE

JEFF and Kitty Dunbar, even more trenchantly than Shilbeck and Brash, represented a triumphant latter-day Democracy. The framers of the American Constitution, sagacious as they were, did not foresee that one day the British Colonies, which about the year 1775 "cut the painter" and began housekeeping on their own account, would, ere the architects and designers of fate were comfortably in their graves, achieve the distinction of setting the world an example not only in riches and enterprise, but also in social ambition. Absurd old Europe had its blue blood—alas! running thin in these days, in spite of constant infusions of golden ichor from the West—its titles, orders, ribbons, and baubles in general to distinguish the elect from the mob. To the sturdy forefathers of the Republic these vanities were so many devices of Satan to keep the minions and victims of kings in fit amusement against the day of reckoning. Therefore, such gewgaws as stars and coronets were banished. But time, as the Republican poet says, "makes ancient good uncouth; they must still be up and onward who would keep abreast of"—fashion. What to the simple forefathers appeared a master-stroke of wisdom was turned in the cynicism of time and prosperity to folly. However, the mischief was done. You cannot rip up a national constitution as if it were an old dress to be cut and reshaped to newer modes. The inhibition stood unalterable as a dead man's will. Was America hence

doomed to Quakerism? Nothing of the sort. If not an aristocracy of blue blood and vainglorious titles, why not a better thing, to wit, an aristocracy of wealth? With the inspiration of genius and the conquering ardour of youth, America made unto herself a golden image, saying, "Be thou the national ideal: by thee let us be judged." So that Napoleon's question, "What has he done?" became in the new order, "How much is he worth?" The worship of millionaires was instituted, with degrees of piety and fervour nicely graduated to the idol's financial standing. Privileges were apportioned by the same scale and method. A man worth one million was permitted for most part to be a law unto himself; five millions entitled him to be a law unto others in all matters of taste and most matters of conviction. Ten millions made him a corner-stone of churches (if he were so inclined); twenty gained him the right hand of fellowship from the inner guild; with fifty he became a demi-god, and above that figure his sublimity inspired an awe and reverence not to be expressed in definite terms.

The reader perceives here a fine revolution. The American Constitution was designed to keep a free, innocent, and independent people happy. But free, innocent, and independent people have instincts of pleasure, and unable to force a way through title-deeds of defunct respectability, ingenuously made a way round them.

Once established, the new aristocracy plumed itself upon being more rigidly exclusive than the old. As well might a blind beggar expect to dispense with his dog, or a nigger with his tan, as a suitor at the New Court gain admittance without evidence of superfluous wealth of at least ten years' standing. Except in the case of stray noblemen, the Republican régime recognised but one passport, one faith.

Those who had worshipped longest and most devoutly

became by natural process leaders and priestesses, and the name of Dunbar stood high on the blazing scroll of honour. Jeff and Kitty entered the charmed circle at birth. For it was their great luck to have had a grandfather who wisely laid the family foundations wide and strong. Where the father sowed, the son reaped gloriously. A fortuitous fate brought Giles Dunbar and Duncan Ogilvie together, and the rest followed as naturally as rivers flow to the sea.

Exquisitely alive to the rights and responsibilities of his position, Jeff Dunbar lived sumptuously and spent royally. He knew and loved Paris, where, in his frequent visits, there clustered round him such sprigs of European nobility as chanced to have fresh devices in pleasure, and the heirs of industrial potentates to whom the odour of machinery and warehouse did not cling too offensively. His expenditure was on the newest scale of Republican simplicity. Once, after an English blood was presented to him, the introducer remarked as a possible commendation, "He has an allowance of five thousand a year."

"Of five thousand a year!" repeated Jeff. "Good Lord! how does he contrive to exist?"

His own allowance was such as enabled him to give the costliest wine parties that ever dazzled the gayest city on earth, take a proprietorial interest in the racecourse and the ring, and, in general, support the character of Wall Street and the fair fame of the Republic. Of his mission to Dunveagle, one of the chief priestesses in New York wrote to a disciple in London—

"I learn that Jeff and Kitty Dunbar are going to visit the Ogilvies at their country seat in the Highlands of Scotland. That means business, of course. We are all on the tiptoe of expectation. Everybody admits it will be the event of the season. Of course, we'll insist on having the wedding here in New York. Speculation is rife as to

decorations, etc. I put the flowers alone at a minimum of \$12,000."

Thus the inner circle. Jeff's own ideas were vaguely similar. He liked Connie. She was of the right set as well as the right sort, and he supposed a fellow must marry, were it only to keep the family plate intact. Once Mr. Giles Dunbar mentioned the matter to Mr. Ogilvie in the way of business, and Mr. Ogilvie saw no objection to an alliance, if the young people were insistent. Privately he thought that Jeff's tastes were perhaps expensive and not too domestic; but he was content to leave the matter virtually to his daughter. Her sentiments, it appeared, were still somewhat uncertain.

Jeff was not elated over the presence of Shilbeck and Brash, nor did Brash rejoice over the presence of Jeff. Mr. Shilbeck was indifferent. Jeff was the son of Giles Dunbar, a man of first-rate importance, and therefore to be tolerated; that he spent money like a fool was none of Mr. Shilbeck's business. Mr. Brash could not rise to the same philosophic apathy; for it was rumoured that Jeff was succeeding in the great enterprise in which he had himself failed.

"Going to collar the whole blessed boodle," reflected Mr. Brash, spitting in an anguish of contempt and envy.

CHAPTER XXI

YOUNG AMERICA, CONTINUED

AS a man of resource in pleasure with a name to maintain and a taste to gratify, Mr. Dunbar proceeded to take possession of Dunveagle like a second Cæsar, whose *veni, vidi, vici* was as inevitable as the light that comes of sunrise. He inspected the stables, tried the fast horses one by one in a buggy, looked into howling kennels, examined curios and bric-à-brac, not like a connoisseur, but like a millionaire; passed judgment on the castle and grounds, and more comprehensively on the scenery visible from the castle front.

"Well, sir," he remarked, "and these are the Scottish hills one reads so much about. They appear to me to have stopped growing too soon."

Being a good American, he declined to climb to hill tops merely for the sake of wide views; but he guessed a considerable "towerist" traffic might be done if light railways were run up famous bens.

Notwithstanding the grime which the fastidious eye discerned on them, he would have fraternised with Job Shilbeck and Hiram Brash, had they shown any disposition to be sociable; but Hiram was curt, if not positively hostile, and Job smiled ambiguously. Job, in fact, was amused.

"Say," he remarked one day to Brash, as the two watched Jeff going off with the ladies. "Pretty good tailor's ad., ain't he? Jimminy! what 'ud the world be without its fools?"

"And if the old man was to hand in his checks tomorrow," returned Hiram, "the tailor's ad. would have more millions than I can think of without gettin' giddy."

"For how long?" asked Job. "For how long? If nincompoops hadn't millions to lose, where'd we come in? In sayin' my prayers, I never forget a word of thanks for the lot of complete, patent-gear'd fools that's goin' round loose. They're the greatest blessin' we have."

"So," admitted Hiram, chewing the stub of his cigar absently; "as ye say, it 'ud be a poor world without 'em. No soft snaps. Can't you get him," jerking a shoulder in the direction in which Jeff had gone, "into one of yer nice, safe little deals, eh?"

Job closed one eye knowingly.

"He's fresh enough," he responded. "Heard he put up a cool five thousand dollars on one night's blow-out in Paris. In the words of my respected Sunday-school teacher, there's hope of Jeff. Yes, Jeff's very promisin', very promisin'. Shucks! ain't he right, too?"

"Right's the limited mail," returned Hiram briskly. "Don't admire yer greasers that hold to things as if they were glued to 'em. Jeff's right in gettin' rid of what he don't understand. Say, the old man's in pretty deep with Ogilvie. Jericho! if there was to be a split there."

"That ain't likely," rejoined Job thoughtfully; "they're pretty thick now, I reckon; and Jeff's goin' to marry the girl, they say. That'll rivet-and-bolt things. Well," Job went on, holding his cigar in one hand and modestly feeling a fifty-guinea diamond stud in his shirt front with the other, "what I say is this: she's too good for him. Connie Ogilvie's a dashed pretty good sort of a girl. I like her; and listen to what I'm goin' to tell ye, Brash. If a fellow was young and spry and tolerable good-lookin', he'd mop up his face and put on his best bib and tucker, and call round 'bout tea-time, and if his head was right

screwed on, he'd do biz before leavin'. Yes, sir. Brash," he asked suddenly, "why don't you marry?"

"Dunno," answered Brash, with a start. "Guess I ain't got time."

"I guess I ain't a busy man," retorted Shilbeck, "and I guess Giles Dunbar and Duncan Ogilvie ain't busy men. No, I reckon we ain't busy, and I reckon busy men don't have no thought of keepin' the population agoin'. I'll tell you what it is, Brash, you'll be too old if you don't look out. 'Tain't good for a man——"

"Oh," Brash interrupted sharply, "ye needn't be makin' yerself tired slingin' scripture at my head. I know all about that—read the whole story how Adam goes to sleep (plenty of time on hand, I reckon), and the Lord, thinkin', maybe, he was lonely, takes a rib and makes Eve for company. Well, d'ye s'pose Adam ever wished that rib had never been made into a woman, eh? I guess that after he got company Adam was many a time mighty glad of a chance to take a walk all by himself in the back garden. If you ask me, Eve didn't turn out exactly an angel, by all accounts. Guess Adam was out coolin' himself when Old Nick slithered round. 'Tain't good for a man to be alone, eh? Well, maybe not. But my notion is that if it's bad in the fryin'-pan, it's pure hell in the fire."

Mr. Shilbeck listened, his eyebrow arched in surprise. He did not expect so much scriptural knowledge from Brash, but, being an eminently practical man, he pursued his own train of thought.

"Then there's Jeff's sister. She ain't a thing to sneeze at, and she'll divide the boodle with Jeff. Yes, sir, 'pears to me there's pretty good biz for the man that's young and spry and tolerable good-lookin', and has his head righ screwed on."

"Likely she's fixed up too," returned Brash.

"She ain't married that I've heard of," rejoined Shil-

beck. "Crossin' the Atlantic has made ye sick and innocent. I tell you Kitty's all right, good-lookin' enough, and 'bout as lovin' as they make 'em, besides havin' the dollars. All the expresses you run out of New York in ten years won't figure out at half the amount. Say, I'll tell you something. You remember the other day, when you were carpeted with Ogilvie, and I was takin' the air for the good of my health outside?"

Mr. Brash remembered.

"Well, I sat down under one of the thickest of the trees over there smokin', and who comes and sits nigh, only round the corner so's they couldn't see me, but Miss Ogilvie and Miss Dunbar. They talked, and, not bein' able to get away, I was 'bliged to listen. Well, Kitty she was layin' off 'bout London and Paris and the people she'd met there—princes and dooks and earls, and what not; and it's my opinion Kitty's in love with a—what d'ye call 'em that they stick on their heads at shows?"

"Crowns," suggested Brash.

"No, not crowns," returned Shilbeck; "a cut lower down. Coronets, that's it; can never remember their foreign words. Well, Kitty she went on 'bout this dook and that earl, and t'other something else, till Connie called out, 'For shame, Kit, and you thinkin' of gettin' engaged.' And, quite peart like, Kitty says back, 'Oh, my modest, demure Miss Puritan Quaker, do you never smile at anybody because you're engaged?' At that Miss Ogilvie cries out 'Hush! hush!' and the two went off gigglin' so's you'd hear them far enough. Now, what I said to myself, Brash, was this, 'If a fellow was young and spry and tolerable good-lookin', he might go in and win against them all.'"

Before Brash could formulate his sentiments on so delicate a point the pair were interrupted by a furious snorting noise, as of a beast in a rage, and the next instant Jeff

swung round the corner in his new model sixteen-horse-power automobile, which but a week or two before had been the pride of Paris. It had won an international race in scenes of unparalleled excitement and glory. There and then Jeff became the owner at a highly fancy figure, and it had followed him to Dunveagle under charge of a French engineer, M. Guy Dumont, whom Jeff promptly rechristened Johnny. "Don't mind my calling you Johnny," Mr. Dunbar had said; "it's short and homelike, besides being easily remembered." And Johnny M. Dumont was thenceforth called. Already Jeff had scoured the country on this new wonder, to the terror of man and beast.

"Goin' out to skeer the life out of some more hosses?" Mr. Shilbeck now inquired pleasantly.

Mr. Dunbar smiled.

"It ain't the hosses that's skeered most," he answered. "Folks hereabout don't know how to handle ribbons. I'd just like them to see me behind Black Bess when she's doing her 2.35 exercise in Central Park. Say, Johnny and I have put on the goggles for a spin. Are you fellows game?"

Mr. Shilbeck reckoned he wasn't insured against accidents, and Mr. Brash found he had business to attend to for that day's mail.

"Well, ta-ta," cried Jeff gaily; "I'm going to pace a bit."

Half an hour later a motor, tooting as for dear life, tore into Aberfourie, scattered half the population of children and dogs along the main street, and drew up snorting at the "Inver Arms," whither an indignant chief of police followed on purpose to arrest it. Johnny, with many gestures and some half-intelligible speech, referred the law to his master, who happened at the moment to be in friendly converse with the landlord.

Going inside, the law stated its business, produced its notebook, and proceeded to ask questions.

Jeff smiled urbanely.

"Guess," he said, "this sort of thing's been provided for. What's the regulation?"

"Oh, you'll find out the regulation," retorted the law, who was fat, and could not forgive the outrage of being made to chase a motor travelling at thirty miles an hour.

"I guess that's so," rejoined Jeff coolly, applying a vesta to his cigarette. "My purpose in asking was to save you trouble. If you run over the regulations for me I guess we can come to business at once. You see, it's like this, the motor's French and accustomed to racing; and getting its head a bit on the open road, it kind of ran away. That's a fact. But of course I'm responsible for its good conduct. What's the damage?"

The chief of police, who was also sergeant and constable, stated the consequence of imagining that the county highway was a racing track for giddy young motors. With an unmoved countenance Jeff put down the amount. "There, if you give me a receipt, I guess it'll be all right," he said affably.

"But I can't take your money," returned the amazed constable.

"Look here," rejoined Jeff, "I'm taking a little rest and refreshment in an inn, leaving my motor outside in charge of my man. You rush in stating I've broken the law. As a lover of peace, I want to square the law. I hereby tender the law solatium for its wounded feelings, and call the host to witness the fact. Now, sir, take it or leave it as you darn please; the responsibility rests with you."

With that he lay back smoking serenely, like a man conscious of having done his duty. The law fumbled, said it did not wish to go to extremes, but it was necessary to warn gentlemen against the sport of racing the local expresses. It could neither impose nor accept fines.

"Ah!" said Jeff, with the same unruffled composure; "well, then, I guess the police force of this place falls in love and gets married, and dies and leaves widows and orphans same as in other places. Do me the favour of adding that to their provident fund as a token of my interest and good wishes," and he pushed the money across the table.

"Oh, sir," cried the constable, his eyes dilating, "I didn't expect that."

"If you had you wouldn't have got it," rejoined Jeff. "Twice within an hour I've taken you by surprise, and surprises are the savour of life. It's been a gratification to us both."

"Guess I can race a bit now," he remarked, when the constable had elaborately entered the amount on an extra leaf of the official notebook, rolled the money in paper, and gone away smiling. "Widows and orphans fetch men everywhere—a beautiful trait in human nature," added Jeff reflectively, "a beautiful trait."

Jeff departed, tooting like a prince, and a mile out of Aberfourie overtook a gig with two men, who declined to make way. Instead there was turned on the occupants of the motor a scornful red face, the face of Ian Veg.

CHAPTER XXII

MOTOR VERSUS GIG

THE laird himself drove according to wont, Ian Veg accompanying him equally as companion and attendant. Now the laird loved a spirited horse, and for his private use he still maintained the fastest, hardiest, and usually the wickedest that the unerring judgment of Ian could procure. Spotted Billy, the present occupant of the post of honour, was a model of the equine vices and of one grand crowning virtue. Since first he stood between shafts nothing had ever passed him in a fair race; nothing, he and the laird appeared to think, ever would. He was swinging along easily at a ten-mile pace, when the motor came up behind impudently tooting to make way. Billy lifted his head and threw back his ears. In the same instant the laird asked, "What's that wheezing behind, Ian?"

"I'm thinking it iss that thing from the castle, sir," Ian answered after that look already noted.

"And they want to pass us," said the laird grimly. "Ian Veg, we'll see about that."

He gave a touch on the rein, and Billy began to step out, his left ear erect, his right playing to and fro, as happened when he was excited over a chance of fun. But the head craned a little, and the feet flew, all four of them together as it seemed. Billy could trot his fifteen miles an hour without a wet hair (if the feeding were hard), and to that pace he now rose blithely.

"Ay, we'll see if they pass us, Ian Veg," repeated the laird, carefully keeping the middle of the narrow road.

Billy's zest was beautiful and inspiring to behold, but neither he nor his master understood motors, nor guessed that what was killing to horseflesh was no more than gentle exercise to the mechanical demon behind. Every moment the tooting grew louder and more insistent, with a fiendish undertone of throb and whirl like the raging beat of iron pulses.

It was a new sound to Billy, and a feeling of uncanniness began to creep over him. Reading defiance in the back of the flying gig, Jeff leaned forward, his eyes agleam behind their goggles.

"Golly!" he cried, taking stock of the glancing hoofs. "The deacon's mare that won't be passed. Johnny, sure's you're alive, it's a race."

He touched up the motor, and Johnny kept the horn going. In front the whip flicked lightly, and Billy sprang, straining on the bit, his nozzle out like a racer's. The laird sat forward with a set face, and in his excitement Ian gripped the side of the gig. Billy had never done better, yet behind the relentless motor forced the pace—toot, toot, toot, whirl, throb, like a thing out of its senses with conceit. Billy broke into a gallop, but that the laird would not have. No, they would not pay the insolent thing behind the compliment of galloping. But next minute Billy again broke from the trot, and this time, instead of checking, the laird gave him a loose rein.

"See at him, see at him, sir!" Ian called out in frantic glee. "As sure's death, Billy's the boy yet."

"Ian," responded the laird from between set teeth, "tell me, is the thing holding its own?"

Ian twisted on his seat.

"No," he cried, "it's losing; it's losing. Come on, ye snorting brute; come on." And without knowing it, he shook a clenched fist at the lagging motor.

Now the motor had slackened for reasons which Ian did not comprehend, had, in fact, slowed down in a spirit

of playfulness to prove how easily it could overhaul the vauntful gig; and even as Ian challenged, it came on again, tooting hilariously. Getting close up, Jeff called out to make way, but the only answer was a look of scorn and defiance from Ian.

"Johnny," remarked Jeff, with great cheerfulness, "it's a race all right. Keep your tooter going."

He edged up on the left in a joyous furore of humming and tooting. 'Till then Billy was simply on his mettle; from that moment pride vanished, and he flew from fear—sheer living fear. In half a minute, as it seemed, the spume was showering from his mouth, his flanks whitened, and the glossy back was drenched. His pace was the flight of terror, with death in diabolic glee at its heels.

"Ian," said the laird in a half-gasp, "I think he's run away."

He laid his weight on the reins, but Billy heeded no more than if a child were toying with him. Then the two men drew together suddenly with all their weight. No mouth could withstand that terrific jerk. Billy's head went up; but simultaneously those who pulled dropped back, holding a broken rein. Half an instant they looked at each other blankly. Then without a word, Ian rose, clambered over the dashboard, and setting his feet on the shafts, got astride of the frenzied Billy. Guessing his intention, the laird sat rigidly still. Ian slipped forward, his knees gripping hard, and the laird watched breathlessly. Ian stretched for the bridle, toppled, recovered himself, stretched again, straining desperately, then lifted a despairing crimson face, and sat up, dizzily holding to the saddle.

Jeff saw, and with the quick intelligence of his nation, grasped the situation. In a moment the power was off the motor and the horn silent.

"What made the darned thing go like that?" he said, disappointment and concern mingled equally in his tone. All he could do now was to follow quietly like an im-

provised ambulance to be ready in case of need. He was perfectly cool, but Johnny was excited. "Zair, zair!" he cried, his eyes starting in their sockets. "Mon Dieu! zey will be turn over upside down; zey will be, what you call it, kill, slain!"

"Hope not," returned Jeff; "but we must keep them in sight."

Five miles Billy held the road, vehicles and pedestrians crushing aside to let him pass, and startled workers running from fields to get a glimpse of him. At the turn to Craigenard Ian, still riding postillion, leaned forward to guide him; but Billy was not to be guided. For one moment, as the wheel took the bank, the gig seemed to poise in the air; the next Billy was gone, taking the shafts and leaving the body. When Ian's wits returned, Jeff was dragging the laird from beneath the wreck.

"He's hurt," said Mr. Dunbar quietly; "get him into the motor."

The laird lifted a pallid face.

"No," he said peremptorily, "no." But his features twisted, and his lips closed on a gasp of pain.

"Don't you worry, sir," responded Jeff pleasantly. "Johnny, you work the motor alongside here. Be careful now and be quick. Hurt about the shoulder, sir?"

"A little," answered the laird, keeping his teeth clenched. "But I'll manage for myself, thank you."

"It will be easier with assistance," replied Jeff imperturbably. "Americans aren't priests and Levites to pass by on the other side when a man's down. Now, sir, make yourself easy. We won't be a second."

"I'll not put a foot in it," cried the laird fiercely, "you understand?"

"If you just put your left arm round my neck, so, it will be over before you can say Jack Robinson," was the response. "There, easy, men, easy. Sorry it hurts so much sir."

In truth, the laird was hurt more than he guessed. Every movement was as a stab, and nothing but an imperious will suppressed a groan. Before he knew he was in the detested motor, with Ian Veg supporting him. The masterful Jeff, jumping up in front, headed softly for the castle.

"I thought you were to take me home," the laird protested. "I won't go to the castle."

"After first aid," said Jeff blandly. "To jolt you over the road without it is a responsibility I won't take and a cruelty I can't think of. As I'm partly responsible for this, I guess I'm just going to see it through. Now, my man" (to Ian Veg), "keep your master steady."

At the inner gate they met Mr. Ogilvie with Shilbeck, Brash, and Rollo Linnie; and, in his own lightning way, Jeff explained what had happened.

"I don't know why I should be here, Mr. Ogilvie," the laird struck in, "but it seems I'm for the infirmary."

"I'm both glad and sorry to see you, sir," Mr. Ogilvie replied sympathetically. "At the least you'll allow us, as Mr. Dunbar says, to render first aid."

He was carried in, to the momentary consternation of the ladies; and Mr. Ogilvie gave instructions to despatch the fastest horse in the stable for a doctor.

"I guess, sir," said Jeff, "the fastest horse this time is my motor. Johnny, whip her about."

He had hardly gone when Connie despatched the following note to Craigenard:—

"Dear Captain MacLean,—Lest you should be alarmed by a horse with broken shafts, I write to tell you Mr. MacLean is here, and I hope not seriously hurt. Will you come as soon as possible, but do not worry yourself conjuring up tragic pictures.—Yours sincerely, CONSTANCE OGILVIE."

Half-way up the messenger met the captain, who had started instantly on Billy's arrival.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE LAIRD A PRISONER—CONNIE MAKES A DISCOVERY

IN his day the laird had been in many a sore plight, but in none that took him more acutely in a tender spot than this. To be resigned under the affliction of two ribs and a collar-bone broken was not perhaps a feat beyond his piety; but it was quite another thing to be helpless on his back in the enemy's house.

"How long am I expected to lie here?" he asked the doctor, not too amiably, and when the probable period was named, he spoke disparagingly of science, not omitting to curse his own stupidity in getting mangled.

His friend, the Rev. Mr. Winnock, minister of the parish, came with the solace of religion; but the laird was as little to be comforted as Rachel. From habit he treated the Church with the respect due to an established institution. *Noblesse oblige*; one must set an example even where one's faith is weak. Besides, he had said more than once, "as ministers go, Winnock's a good fellow; a little inclined, perhaps, like the cloth in general, to associate Christian grace with solid worldly prosperity, but on the whole undoubtedly a good fellow, a true sportsman, a judge of horseflesh, and as genial a companion as ever drained a glass of toddy. These virtues the laird admired and appreciated. But he did not admire nor appreciate the balm and oil which Mr. Winnock brought for broken bones and a wounded pride.

"My dear old friend," he said, looking up at the minister, "you and I have known each other a long time."

"Five-and-twenty years, I'm proud to say," responded Mr. Winnock.

"And so far as I can remember we've never worn masks. We've said our say and done our will and gone our way without any pretending."

"No pretending," repeated Mr. Winnock; "none, none whatever."

"Then, as you love a sinner in misfortune, no sermons or moralisings. I'm beyond medicine of that sort. Tell me a story with as much as you like of the devil in it, and when you go home send me the wildest novel in your library. Yet not that, either. God knows I'm mad enough. No, let it be something sane, but none of your sermons; a Walter Scott if you can, and *Rob Roy* by preference. Did I ever tell you of the family interest in Rob?"

"Never," replied Mr. Winnock, settling down.

"That's queer," said the laird. "Well, the story'll pass the time now. Once when some of his people were crossing the hills here, they whipped up more Dunveagle cattle than was at all neighbourly. Rob found out what they had done, apologised like a gentleman, said it was hard to keep fools right—a true enough word for the pulpit, my friend—and sent back twice the number of black cattle that had been lifted, with this message, 'that none can gar ye blush, all I send in addition to what's your right are bonny beasts of my own rearing; no man's mark is on them but mine. When I come Dunveagle way again there'll be a quaigh and a collop.' Well, time passed, and Athole, over by here, got his tarry fingers on Rob, and what's more they stuck. Athole was putting up a grand new gibbet on a hill, where all could see Rob hanged. The news came to Dunveagle, and next morning,

when Athole's minions looked in, Rob's place was empty. After that there were quaighs and collops at Dunveagle. Ugh! men didn't lie uselessly on their backs then.

He little guessed there was a conspiracy to keep him prisoner, the captain and the doctor being among the conspirators.

"You see," Connie told them, "we are responsible for the accident, and Mr. MacLean mustn't leave until it's quite safe to remove him, must he?"

She looked at the captain as one pleading for a favour; and to his shame Norman forgot his father's grumblings and sufferings.

"You are very good, Miss Ogilvie," he murmured.

"No, don't say that," she cried. "Promise!"

She laid three dainty electric fingers on his arm, and his arteries began to beat excitedly.

"Promise!" she repeated, archly bending towards him; and Kitty adding a plea to Connie's, he incontinently surrendered. The girls clapped their hands; now they had only to master the laird, who was at their mercy. He was more difficult to manage, but in the end he too capitulated on condition that he might have Ian Mackern beside him.

So Ian returned for a space to the castle, lording it over the army of servants like a native prince over a troop of aliens. With Connie he could do nothing, and his master was equally helpless. The laird studied her closely as a new product of civilisation; a very charming, beneficent product, he was obliged to own, despite the fact that she was an Ogilvie, and insisted even with him on having her own way. A little wistfully he thought what her power over young men must be, seeing she did what she liked with the old. "If she does this with the dry tree," he said to himself, "what will she not do with the green?"

As a consequence of all these arrangements, Alick went

much to and fro between Craigenard and Dunveagle. From the first, Connie had been interested in this nursling of the hills, and now bestowed marks of her favour, which for some time were more embarrassing than welcome. For one thing he sang under her direction, and this led to their being often alone. At such times, in addition to Gaelic songs, he gave her delectable bits of autobiography and piquant scraps of the history of the old race of Dunveagle. One day, half by accident, he told her something which set her thinking deeply and compassionately. Before many hours were past, she was to think yet more deeply on the same subject.

That evening the laird, being troubled and feverish, talked in his sleep. As it chanced she was nurse and sole listener, and she shuddered eerily as the sick man's delirium confirmed Alick's rational statement. What he said stirred new chords within her. For the first time in her life she began to project herself imaginatively into the position of one who has to plan rigorously, and perhaps to pinch in order to make ends meet. She recalled certain apophthegms of millionaires bearing on the blessings of poverty, but could remember no instance of the rich man flinging away his riches for sake of the benefits he commended to others. Here was a curious inconsistency—nay, she feared, a glaring insincerity or drug to the ailing conscience. An honest lover of privilege, she had no disposition to complain of heaven for making her a rich man's daughter; but her very appreciation of the power of money opened her eyes to the disadvantages and trials of those whose purses were lean. By an odd chain of association these thoughts suggested reasons for a rankling resentment in certain breasts against her own presence at Dunveagle.

A mere woman of the world would have shut eyes and ears to such things, or arbitrarily made them impossible. Now Connie, while woman of the world, as every

American damsel is a woman of the world, was something more, and in this instance that something more was everything.

Thinking strange, new thoughts, she suddenly asked her protégé—

"Alick, if you were told you could have your dearest wish, what would it be?" and promptly as tongue could speak came the answer, "Get Dunveagle back for the laird, mem."

"Ah," she said, with a little start; and then recovering with a smile, "And do you think there's any chance of that?"

Now to a boy of fourteen, vibrating in every fibre with hope and confidence, all things are possible, and Alick answered accordingly.

"But," Connie rejoined, "it would take a great deal of money to buy back Dunveagle. Have you any idea how much?"

Alick had the same clear idea of the amount required as of the internal arrangements of Jupiter; but ignorance was no bar to belief. Yes, no doubt it would take a great deal of money, but what of that? The laird was saving up.

"Saving up!" she repeated in surprise.

"Yes, mem," returned Alick, gloating over a great secret.

"And I know where he keeps his money."

"Why, of course he'll keep his money in a bank like other people," said Connie.

But Alick smiled at her ignorance.

"No," he answered, "he doesn't keep it in a bank, because people would take it from him. But——"

He stopped suddenly as on the brink of a precipice. Connie caressed him with her eyes; Alick's vanity was flattered.

"Where then?" she asked graciously.

"It's a secret," he replied, feeling the sweetness of having a great lady hanging on his answer.

"And you won't trust me, Alick?"

"No, mem; Ian would kill me."

"Then Ian knows."

"Yes, mem; it was Ian that told me."

"Does Captain MacLean know?"

"No, mem, none but Ian and me knows outside the laird himself."

"And does the laird know that Ian and you know?"

"No, mem."

Connie's eyes opened a little wider.

"And you won't tell me," came in the most delicious tone of complaint. "I thought you were good enough friends with me, Alick, to tell me a thing that Ian knows."

Alick looked at her, recalling an axiom of Ian, that a woman's secret is like chaff on the wind, free to all.

"I promised not to tell," he responded stubbornly.

"Ian made me swear I'd never tell."

"And you never break your word?"

"No, mem."

"If you were to make a promise to me, let us say, you'd keep a secret from Ian?"

"Yes, mem."

She looked hard into his eyes.

"Yes, I believe you would," she said. "You're not a saint, but you haven't learned to lie. Well, now, knowing where the laird's bank is, I daresay you also know how to get at it."

"Oh, yes, mem," replied Alick promptly. "I found out the place for myself."

"And will you tell me how you found it out, Alick?" she asked caressingly.

To that, being outside the scope of his oath, he had no objection, and Connie learned that the laird's bank was in the hidden fissure of a great rock a mile above Craigenard.

"Perhaps you further know the amount?" she smiled.

"Oh, yes, mem. One day, when the laird was away, Ian and me took it out and counted it."

"And what happened then?"

Her face was keen with excitement, and Alick answered as if fascinated—

"Well, mem, Ian asked me if I had any money, and I said yes, I had a little. 'Very well,' he said, 'look what I am going to do, and if you want to see the laird back in Dunveagle you'll do as I do,' and with that he put his money with the laird's, and I did the same."

Connie's eyes were shining.

"So you added to his store. And how much did you put to it?"

"Ian put in two shillings and one shilling, and I put in one shilling and a sixpence."

"And have you added any since?"

"Oh, yes, mem. We got six months' wages not long since, and put in the half of it."

"Alick," said Connie, drawing a deep breath, "I want you to promise you'll never say a word to anybody about telling me all this, to Ian or to anybody. You promise?"

"Yes, mem; I'll never say a word of it to anyone but to you."

"Good! Mind, if you do, something terrible will happen to you. But I am sure I can trust you. What you have told me is very interesting, and I want to think it over."

She opened her purse and took out two pieces of gold.

"You'll take these—there, now, don't trouble thanking me. Another time will do, and then, perhaps, if you're very good, Alick, you and I may have a secret of our own."

When he left her it was of the captain's position she was thinking. It was pathetic.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE MAKING OF MILLIONS

YOU would not expect the railway policy of the American nation to be moulded in a remote castle among the Scottish hills. But as the seat of the French Government in the day of the great Emperor was wherever Napoleon happened to be, so the centre of American railway organisation moved to and fro under the hat of Duncan Ogilvie.

On the morning after Connie's confidential talk with Alick, the American mail was the heaviest and most important that had ever reached Dunveagle. The Atlantic cable, speaking in cypher, kept Mr. Ogilvie informed of the fluctuations of events in the place of intrigue and tumult, but details or suggestions from allies and lieutenants were reserved for the post. Thus it came on mail day that, save for the pastoral silence and the greater purity of atmosphere, the millionaire and his two secretaries might have fancied themselves in Wall Street.

The mass of correspondence epitomised and digested, with a celerity that was a lesson in business methods, the scribes were dismissed and Messrs. Shilbeck and Brash summoned to a cabinet council. A glance as they entered showed that the master-mind was working intensely. Mr. Ogilvie's holiday face was gone, the lines, never long absent from the face of the fighter, were insidiously reappearing, the lips were tight, the nerves plainly strung; in a word, the whole countenance bore the keen, set, purposeful

expression which belongs to him whose daily business it is to meet and overcome difficulties. In such a face the student of physiognomy finds at once a record and a stimulus; and without in the least knowing the fine name for the art, Messrs. Shilbeck and Brash were both experts.

Mr. Ogilvie greeted them very quietly as they entered. His manner was always quiet when his mind was concentrated—so quiet that a stranger or a fool who mistakes fussiness for energy might have thought him indifferent. But Duncan Ogilvie was never indifferent in business, never worked but with all his forces well in hand and alert for attack or defence. Insensibly the minds of Shilbeck and Brash responded with a bracing quiver, a throb as of deep-set machinery giving the first purr. But they, too, were cool; they, too, knew how to keep a serene face when the engines beneath were going full pitch.

"Guess we may smoke," said Mr. Shilbeck, and, suiting the action to the word, clipped a cigar end. Smoking preserves a man from precipitation, and of all things Mr. Shilbeck looked on unconsidered action as the consummation of folly. Some fool dubbed him "Job the Silent," but his associates knew that his silence was a great deal more than most men's speech. So to preserve it, he said, "Guess we may smoke."

"We'll all smoke," responded Mr. Ogilvie, and cigars were lighted. But a minute later they were all dead, save Shilbeck's, the red end of which glimmered like a fiery eye keeping watch. For the stakes were millions, and the game became absorbing, even to hardened players.

With that brevity in which every word is worth thousands, Mr. Ogilvie sketched certain prospective movements in New York, indicated what he thought the money markets would bear without strain, and what they wouldn't, the opposition that was inevitable and the plans for

crushing it. Into five minutes' speech he packed the essence of forty years' experience and a wisdom above price. He spoke as the general who completes his strategy for a campaign, but keeps his tactics fluid for contingencies—a general, moreover, who knows precisely where his adversary is vulnerable and where invulnerable, where to strike and how to strike. He never made the mistake of underrating opponents; that error is the child of ignorance and conceit. But, having weighed and resolved as far as might be, he thrust difficulties out of sight. "In counsel it is good to see dangers; but in execution not to see them, except they be very great." My Lord Verulam's shrewd truth Mr. Ogilvie discovered for himself and took to heart.

Shilbeck and Brash listened without a word, but before he was half done, the latter was chewing his cigar as for a wager. His eyes shone, his sallow face was flushed, for Mr. Brash's prophet eye spied unlimited spoil.

"That's ripping!" he cried, when Mr. Ogilvie had finished. "Yes, sir, I guess that'll just make Noo York sit up and scratch its head."

"It'll be something for our friends of the financial press to drivel over," smiled Mr. Ogilvie.

He had but a poor opinion of the financial journalist, who, he said, is always sapiently foolish before and portentously wise after the event.

"Yes, sir," Mr. Brash confirmed; "guess the goose will cackle this time."

Mr. Shilbeck took the cigar from his mouth, rose with marked deliberation, kicked the spittoon into position, and thoughtfully expectorated. All that accomplished with becoming dignity, he sat down again.

"Yes," he assented, making himself comfortable once more; "reckon the goose will cackle all right."

He began to smoke again, his long countenance as

expressionless as a sleeping elephant's. But Mr. Shilbeck was far, very far from being asleep.

"Reckon Giles Dunbar has something to say," he remarked, stretching his legs, and blowing a long whiff. "May as well tell us what it is."

Mr. Ogilvie read a confidential letter from Mr. Dunbar, and Mr. Shilbeck gazed upward with rapt eyes, as if absorbed with pictures on the ceiling.

"You see, he's confident of everything but Congress," commented Mr. Ogilvie.

Mr. Shilbeck rose again, slid the spittoon along a yard with his foot, again expectorated with the same thoughtfulness, and again sat down.

"Just so," he said, emitting a thin blue streak. "Just so. He ain't the first man that's been uncertain in his own mind 'bout Congress. No, sir. Congress don't exactly lay itself out to make men easy in their minds. No, sir, it ain't that style. Congress is a pretty ticklish bucking mustang sort of an animal to ride, pretty ticklish. Bucks like Ole Nick just when you don't expect it. Talk of bronchos! I tell ye a broncho's a suckin' dove beside Congress. Yes, sir, an innocent lamb, that ain't got no thought but to be meek, and please, and cuddle up, and be made into cutlets."

"You're the man to ride the mustang," said Brash admiringly.

"Well," admitted Job modestly, "I have been on it when it bucked pretty bad. Only in a case of this kind the thing bucks wuss because the other side's always puttin' ginger under it's tail. There's been a heap of ginger put under that unfortunate animal's tail."

He was not going to admit that lobbying is an easy art. To have done that would be an act of self-derogation, and self-derogation does not pay. Besides, the opposition had money, and Congressmen unhappily were extremely

human. It was on this point that Mr. Shilbeck made the record speech of his life.

"It's like this," he said gravely. "You look up the Constitution, read about Congress, and feel happy. Congress is an institution to be proud of. To this day, sir, Congress begins biz with prayer and all that. It's just beautiful to hear the parson slingin' off and askin' for a blessin' on their deliberations. No better intentions in the world; ye'd just think it was a sort of pan-millennial meetin' till they begin to hustle round, and then, holy Father Abraham! the saints that signed the Declaration of Independence must squirm in the grave. Those that are runnin' for offices and want boomin' in the noospapers make speeches, but they don't count. For ye see the speeches are meant for editors lookin' out for something spicy and strong to write about, for party managers, foreign correspondents, country people and such."

"Not for Congress," said Brash.

"No, sir, not for Congress. Congress don't give a continental for speeches. Congress keeps one eye on this," and Mr. Shilbeck facetiously slapped his right-hand breeches pocket, "the other bein' for public opinion. Pocket and public opinion, that's the shrines that Congress worships at. You may go to Congress and orate like an angel, but ye don't get no votes on that plan. No, siree. Eloquence is a fine thing to talk about and put in school-books, and mention in noospapers and on tombstones, but it don't count."

"What of such men as Jim Blaine, and Webster, and Clay?" asked Mr. Ogilvie.

"I ain't denying that a fust-class orator's useful to stump the country," Mr. Shilbeck returned. "He gets votes up and down 'bout 'lection time. But he don't count in Congress, and he don't get into the White House. Your ora-tors don't become presidents. Jim Blaine didn't, and Webster didn't, and Clay didn't. As to Congress, the real

work's done in the lobby. When a man sits down at his desk he knows how he's goin' to vote, and he writes letters instead of listenin' to speeches. He don't want 'em."

"We're lucky in having a good man for the lobby, then," Mr. Ogilvie remarked amiably. "We'll rely on you."

Mr. Shilbeck took a fresh cigar and lighted it.

"When my friends act on the square," he replied, "I reckon they'll find me actin' on the square too."

It was all that was needed, and the council turned to other business.

In the end it was decided that Mr. Brash should take the next steamer from Liverpool to New York. Mr. Ogilvie's judgment said he ought to go himself, because the scheme was big, and the developments were likely to be rapid and intricate, and he still had most faith in his own head. But he had promised his mother and daughter to remain at Dunveagle for the summer, and on the basis of that promise made his arrangements. The consequences were to be such as even his sagacity could not foresee.

CHAPTER XXV

A MOMENTOUS INTERVIEW

ON leaving the council chamber they found Connie, with Captain MacLean and Jeff, coming down the massive stone stair after a visit of ceremony to the laird. For the tenth time Jeff had been making apologies for his evil deeds, and for the tenth time the laird declined to accept them.

"I will allow no man to apologise for my own crass stupidity," he declared. "The fault was mine, not yours at all."

"I ought to have known that the horses in the Highlands might be scared by motors, sir," returned Jeff in sturdy politeness.

"I am not aware that even an American is expected to be omniscient," was the response. "As the Oxford professor remarked, the youngest and wisest of us cannot know everything. My mind on the matter, sir, is this, that men in the Highlands or anywhere else ought to be able to take care of themselves. Once in this quarter they were."

"That was in the good old times, Mr. MacLean," put in Connie, "when that sword you showed me was in the way of work, and Montrose honoured Dunveagle."

He turned on her the eager, kindled face of a child.

"Please tell Mr. Dunbar that," she said, with the engaging authority which made her irresistible. Half unconsciously she adjusted the coverlet, and the ministrations of tender feminine fingers brought to the laird, as with

a sigh from the past, the memory of other years. Ah, God! what he had loved and lost in his hard, solitary, fighting life. Well, thanks be to Heaven, he, even he, had tasted of its best long centuries ago, when the white hair was brown, and the lined face was smooth, and the strong heart unconquerable. And the bliss he had known, a fleeting hour of Paradise, this fair, smiling creature would doubtless bring to another. The touch of those delicate hands would soothe the favoured one like an anodyne when he was vexed or fevered, those fine eyes would melt upon him in fondness, that voice would caress to peace and happiness. The laird almost forgot she was an Ogilvie.

She repeated her request, and he began to tell the story of Montrose and the sword. To Connie's horror Jeff laughed, making derisive remarks on barbarism and obsolete methods of war, and with a flushed, half-indignant face she whipped him away, lest the patient should be wroth.

"I must instruct Jeff in these things," she said to herself. "He doesn't understand." And she was disposed to be offended because Jeff was an American out and out, because he loved the smart and up-to-date, and lacked taste for the pageantry of history.

Linnie, who had been keeping Kitty in amusement, marked her passing out with the captain, her face extraordinarily bright, and a vehement jealousy seized him. "That fellow again," he thought viciously. "Curse and confound him. This is no better than the return of the whole MacLean tribe to Dunveagle. I wonder Ogilvie tolerates them."

But the first words he addressed to Connie were a polite inquiry for her patient. "He's doing splendidly," she answered, with an interest which almost gave Mr. Linnie jaundice. "Come, let's have a walk round the garden," she added, linking her arm in Kitty's.

To prevent Captain MacLean's presumptions, he contrived to accompany them. Connie was in her most playful, which is to say her most dangerous, mood. That mood of light mischief was somehow never adopted towards Captain MacLean. With him, indeed, as with most others, her merriment bubbled like a fountain, yet in his presence her gayest laughter had an undertone of seriousness. Perhaps it came of admiration, for a woman is incapable of frivolity when in her inmost soul she admires; perhaps of pity, perhaps of something else, some budding instinct which she but vaguely understood herself. In any case, the indubitable fact was that while she could banter and tease Rollo and Jeff almost to the verge of cruelty, she was conscious of an odd underlying restraint in the company of Captain MacLean.

Accepting her whimsicality as an unexpectedly good omen, Rollo set himself to play in his best style; and in such a game Mr. Linnie's gifts were not contemptible. Kitty was, of course, included in his gallantries as second best stake in case the plans for the first should miscarry. As "the mouse that trusts to one poor hole can never be a mouse of any soul," so the hunter ambitious to bag an heiress will certainly have more than one barrel to his gun. Of the two, Miss Ogilvie had the greater attraction; but Kitty's charms were unquestionably worth a prudent man's attention. Besides, it might not be at all an ill stroke of policy to make the Dunveagle heiress conscious of a rival. Luckily for his schemes, he had them to himself. Jeff kept them company for a little, but having warmer interests elsewhere, he betook himself to the stables, where, to his infinite diversion, he forgathered with Ian Veg. Brash was packing for the voyage home. Mr. Shilbeck was engaged on mandates to his many captains and subalterns beyond the Atlantic, and Mr. Ogilvie and Norman were smoking by themselves under a great beech.

To these two the situation might have been embarrassing, since the feelings of dispossessed and dispossessor are not usually concordant; and, indeed, on thus finding themselves for the first time alone, the sense of constraint was for a moment oppressive.

But throw two reasonable, courteous, catholic-minded men of the world together, and were they sworn foes they will discover common ground. Here, moreover, the elements of personal antagonism were eliminated. From Mr. Ogilvie's eyes the scales of illusion and prejudice had long since fallen. Knowing its frailty, he did not count too much on friendship, nor trouble with enmity, knowing its foolishness. "To cherish hatred for others," he had said, "is only to keep your own sores open. Men are neither angels nor fiends, but weak, unstable things engaged in a terrific struggle for existence. What they would they do not, what they would not they do. In the stress of circumstances motives and intentions change. Therefore it is best to take the friend of to-day as if an adverse wind might, against his will, make him an enemy to-morrow: and an enemy as if to-morrow would make him a friend."

Therefore, he never thought it worth his while either to gush or to plan revenge. The Master-Dramatist makes folly of both.

The captain too had been up and down the world, learning under the sternest and best of schoolmasters, and had returned, bringing a practical philosophy. He found a stranger in Dunveagle, but knew that stranger was as little responsible for his own misfortunes as were the stars in the midnight sky. He could sit on a bench beside the new lord of Dunveagle without any itching to cut his throat, nay, even with something of the spirit of comradeship. The man had succeeded magnificently where others had failed, but why hate him?

On the other hand, the lucky one, realising that fortune is a jade and a gamester, was not in the least disposed to plume himself on her favours. But he was disposed to admire the grit of the man who could sit in the midst of possessions which had once been his own without a sign of resentment because they had passed to another. "That's strength of character," he remarked mentally, "and the world is built on character."

A chance reference to Brash's departure suggested stocks and railways, and next minute Mr. Ogilvie had broken his own rule of never talking finance except to financiers.

"It must be very interesting, sir," Norman remarked, "particularly when one is successful."

"You think so," responded the millionaire. "Well, yes, like everything that is uncertain, it has its spice of excitement. But I'm not at all sure what the wise man would say of it. You have been in some hot spots, Captain MacLean, and know better than I can tell you how the luckiest of us scrapes through by the skin of his teeth."

"That, sir, is certainly the case so far as any military success worth counting is concerned."

"So far as any considerable success is concerned. I daresay you know what it is to stand alone in the fight, thinking all was lost when luck came to the rescue. At any rate, I know."

"The chances with you, sir, are many," rejoined Norman. "If you are down to-day you are up again to-morrow. The army is niggard of chances."

"And you think our chances are good. Well, I believe it's a common fallacy to imagine that others have opportunities denied to ourselves. I fancy, however, analysis would show that opportunities are pretty evenly distributed. I used to think that no business or profession on earth had as many natural and acquired difficulties and obstructions as railway finance. I know now that these are rife in all callings."

With us the failures are about 99 $\frac{7}{8}$ per cent. ; in other words, our successes average something like an eighth of one per cent. If the risks of such a margin were known, do you think any prudent man would face them? He would either be a hero or a fool if he did, and yet, as I need not tell Captain MacLean, it is the risk lightly taken, the forlorn hope driven home, that tells."

"The old proverb, sir, of faint heart never winning fair lady," said Norman.

"Precisely. Your armchair philosopher says that the man who attempts the impossible is an ass foredoomed to failure; but who is to discover whether a thing be possible or not until it is tried? One thing is certain, that the man who is always calculating risks may as well give up at once. If you look at it closely, this world is all risks. Any night we may be killed in our beds by an earthquake or a falling star. What was the matter with Hamlet, think you? Want of brain-power? He is the brainiest of all Shakespeare's characters, and most of them had brain enough and to spare. What he lacked was not head, but backbone; and I tell you there are more futile Hamlets going round than a good arithmetician could count. Well, sir, a man with us goes in knowing that the odds are 99 $\frac{7}{8}$ per cent. against him. Heartening, isn't it? Yet the strewn wrecks are no deterrent. The crowds are just as eager, just as confident as if the percentage were reversed."

"They know success is splendid when it comes," said Norman.

Mr. Ogilvie looked at him curiously, with eyes bright and contracted as by opium.

"Yes," returned the financier, "I'm not hypocrite enough to say there are not gratifications in success, especially if you've fought hard for it. There is; human nature says there is, and human nature never lies. The man who goes in, taking his happiness and all his worldly goods in his hand, fights on a margin of an eighth of one per cent., and

wins, has a satisfaction which your Hamlet could never enjoy were he to live to the Day of Judgment. Does anyone think that Napoleon was not intoxicated with joy after Austerlitz, Wellington after Waterloo, Sherman after Savannah, Grant after Richmond? Do you think Jay Gould wasn't elated when he found himself master of the New York Stock Exchange, or Ben Disraeli the Jew, when he sent the fleet of Christian England against the hereditary foes of his race? They may have walked steadily and talked rationally, but they were drunk all the same. Yes, success is sweet, always has been, always will be."

"A safe affirmation, sir," Norman remarked.

"The only question is," pursued Mr. Ogilvie in a changed tone, "how long does the sweetness last? As one of our American poets says—

"'E'en if won, what's the good of life's medals and prizes?
The rapture's in what never was or is gone.'

Ay, our beloved Autocrat was right there."

He smoked a moment in silence, and then inclining towards his companion spoke as he had never spoken to an outsider before.

"Captain MacLean," he said genially, "I am going to tell you something on the condition that it is taken in the spirit in which it is given. You know affairs well enough to understand that in all big business concerns there are rings and inner rings. In politics, for example, there is the Cabinet visible to all eyes; there is also the inner Cabinet known only to the few. The Cabinet, as a whole, has its uses, departmental and so forth, but the inner Cabinet constitutes the real power, shapes policy, declares war, makes terms of peace, arranges indemnities. It is exactly the same in finance. You have your Exchanges quoting to all the world; but the motive power is hidden behind, and three-fourths of the members are the merest puppets, however they may plume themselves on their cleverness and influence. In New York there are perhaps a dozen

financiers of real power, men who inaugurate big schemes, who lead where the crowd must follow. In London there are hardly more. The rest don't count, as we say. And I happen to have been able to push my way into the inner ring on our side; and that ring when it takes concerted action can bring about results as certainly as you can solve a mathematical problem."

He glanced round lest idle ears should be listening.

"Naturally," he went on, "it keeps its own counsel. Hints and rumours do indeed get out as if the air carried news like an infection. But only those within really know what is going on. And now I come to the point. Within three months press and bucket-shops will be babbling of certain movements on the New York Stock Exchange which will have strong support from London; and I think, Captain MacLean, if you care to take a hand you will have no cause for regret—provided you come in and go out as directed."

An expression of surprise and hesitancy came into Norman's face; then the colour surged over cheek and brow; for, with the sole intention to benefit, Mr. Ogilvie had done an exceedingly cruel thing.

"I cannot tell you, sir, how much I feel indebted to you," he responded, "but I have really no knowledge whatever of such things."

Mr. Ogilvie laughed lightly.

"As to that, I'll tell you a little secret," he said, mistaking the momentary confusion of the other. "In nine cases out of ten, when outsiders come in, it's the man of blessed ignorance who wins. You open your eyes, but there's no cause for amazement. To the mass, speculations on 'Change are a pure gamble. Even the broker who buys and sells for the inner ring seldom knows the reasons for his instructions. And that is why so many of them get left, to use an expressive Wall Street phrase. If the expert

misses, what is likely to be the fate of a pure outsider? Disaster, you say, and nine times in ten you'd be right. But the tenth man has luck and wins, never knowing how or why. The world is full of anomalies. Lawyers, who are all their lives making other people's wills, spoil their own; doctors neglect their own health, shoemakers are ill shod, bankers make bad investments for themselves. You catch my drift?"

"I infer, sir, and am grateful for the inference, that my ignorance would not be allowed to stand against me," Norman returned.

Mr. Ogilvie bowed.

"But," continued Norman warmly, "I could not think of troubling one whose hands are already full."

But in the kindness of his heart Mr. Ogilvie seemed bent on pushing matters to extremity.

"Pray don't think of trouble," he rejoined quickly. "It would give me great pleasure to do for you what I hope to do for myself."

They were interrupted by Connie, who brought a letter for the captain, saying that Alick, the original messenger, was turned over to the housekeeper for refecation.

"And where are the others?" her father asked.

"Jeff is somewhere with his motor," she answered, "and Mr. Linnie is giving Kitty a lecture on the geological formation of the Dunveagle hills. You are both as grave as church deacons on election night; what's under consideration?"

"Things that young ladies don't in the least understand," replied her father.

"Oh, thank you!" she cried. "I never knew anyone, papa dear, who can match you for politeness when you're in a complimentary mood. Perhaps Captain MacLean has a better opinion of our intelligence."

She turned so witching a face to Norman that if he had had the secrets of the world they were hers for the asking.

CHAPTER XXVI

A TEST OF LOYALTY

SHE lingered but a moment, however, going so abruptly Norman thought he must have offended her. With that fear tormenting him he took leave of Mr. Ogilvie, and, having business with his father arising out of the letter, went alone to the laird's room. The simple business done, the laird asked what his son had been doing for some hours.

"Chatting with Mr. Ogilvie," Norman answered indifferently.

"Oh!" said the laird in surprise; "and what, if it's a fair question, did you find to chat about?"

Norman laughed, but not very heartily.

"Various things, father," he replied; "but the chief thing was counsel to a penniless man to go to a baker's and buy himself bread while it is cheap."

The laird hitched himself up in bed like a wounded war-horse rousing at the sound of the trumpet.

"What's that?" he demanded. "Counselling a penniless man to go to the baker's and buy bread, did you say? I'm no hand at riddles; have the goodness to speak plainly."

"Then to put a simple fact simply," responded Norman, "he was good enough to mention a coming movement on the Stock Exchange, and to advise me to take advantage of it, as if one should shout to a drowning man to provide himself with a lifebelt. The satire of the thing is delicious."

"Did he mean to be satirical?" asked the laird, scenting for offence.

"Quite the contrary, sir; quite the contrary," Norman replied with emphasis. "The proposal was made in pure generosity and goodwill."

"Umph!" the laird interjected.

"The satire was quite unconscious," Norman went on, "though perhaps the keener edged on that account. In the goodness of his heart Mr. Ogilvie wanted to give me a chance of making a little money."

"Of making money!" repeated the laird, as if trying the words like suspects. "What of the alternative? Any notion of fleecing?"

"We must be fair," said Norman. "Mr. Ogilvie's sole idea was to benefit me."

"You are convinced of that?"

"Absolutely."

"Ah, well!" as in disappointment. "And what did you say?"

"What could I say? I thanked him, saying that I had no knowledge of such operations. His reply was that knowledge isn't necessary. It seems that on the Stock Exchange men make fortunes on the principle of luck. It's a sort of glorified Monte Carlo, where you play against tremendous odds and win with your eyes shut. But as Mr. Ogilvie himself was to look after my little speculation I'd of course win."

"And had you no inclination to take him at his word?"

"In the army, sir, we are taught to repress inclination when ways and means are doubtful or non-existent. I think that on the whole the best plan is for the penniless man to avoid the temptation of the baker's shop. I have no money to risk."

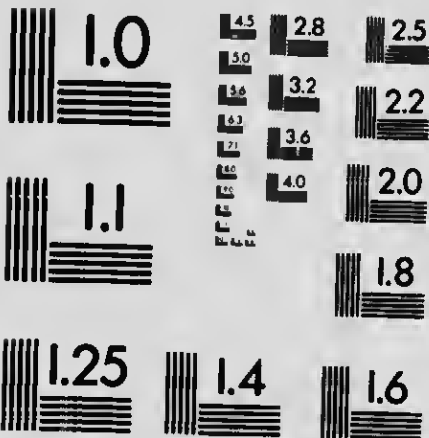
"And if you had?"

The laird's eyes were gleaming.



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"An 'if' is an awkward stile to get over," laughed Norman. "Mr. Ogilvie, I remember, spoke of the thing as a certainty. It's certain the sun and the moon and the stars are overhead, but we can't put them in our pockets. But I must be off. You are comfortable, father?"

"Quite comfortable, thank you, quite. If I were at home I could not be more considered or better attended, possibly not so well. You'll see to things at Craigenard, Norman. It's a sore trial to be on one's back like this."

Left to himself, the laird fell feverishly to thinking. The reference just made to money was the first that had passed Norman's lips since his home-coming, and the tone was unmistakable. Like a strong man, he might put a bridle on his tongue, but a chance movement revealed the canker-ing sore. In a throbbing heat the laird went over his own experiences. Heavens! what he had suffered from want of money. So-called preachers and moralists babbled about the evil of wealth and the blessings of poverty. Bah! the evil of wealth was in lacking it; the blessing of poverty in being without it; and the man who said otherwise, though he seemed to speak with pentecostal tongue, was a liar and a humbug. All men, he told himself, in their hearts desire riches, the priest as much as the publican, perhaps more; the noble as well as the pauper. One standard ruled the world. Even salvation was a matter of *£ s. d.*, since the Church herself declared in practice that one rich man's soul is worth a gross of the souls of poor men. Money is king of the modern world. The laird did not reason thus without cause. He had tasted the blessing of poverty, and found it bitterer than aloes; and the one soul he cherished and loved more than his own was finding it bitter also. Norman would not complain, but that did not make the great curse the lighter.

Well, what if he were able to take advantage of this offer? The notion of being indebted to an Ogilvie was in itself almost as a draught of poison; but yet worse was the notion of that penniless man going to buy bread. All at once the laird sat up with a jerk and pulled the bell.

"Will you be good enough to tell Captain MacLean I should like to speak to him?" he said to the attendant who answered. But Captain MacLean had gone off with Mr. Dunbar in his motor (at Miss Ogilvie's suggestion, as it afterwards appeared), and Ian Veg was sent for. Ian came hot-foot from an argument with the nigger coachman in the stable, his tousle of grey hair over his forehead, his eyes still smouldering.

"Fighting again, Ian Veg?" asked the laird.

Ian swept back the rebellious hair.

"Nearly, sir," he answered.

"So I judged. One would think that at your time of life you'd be giving over fighting; but with some of us it's the older the worse, like the fox's whelp. What were you meaning to fight about?"

"Well, sir, that black man in the stable took it upon him to miscall the Scotch."

"And naturally you wanted to fight him. You grow older, Ian; I'm not sure you grow any wiser. He's twice your weight."

"Overfed, sir," said Ian contemptuously. "No wind. A touch on the stomach, and the rest would be easy."

"They hang white men for killing black, Ian. I didn't bring you to Dunveagle to knock my host's servants about. How is it every bantam cock must be fighting?"

"Nair, I suppose, sir," answered Ian drily.

"There never was a lawbreaker but he had some excuse," retorted the laird. "However, it wasn't to discuss your fighting qualities I sent for you now, Ian. Just see that the door is tight. That's it. Ian, have you anything

against me—anything that can be put right while there's time?"

Ian gazed a second as if smitten with sudden fear.

"God's sake, sir, what's wrong?" he cried. "You're not fey. You're not going to die!" for it seemed that nothing but the approach of death itself could have prompted that question.

"Yes, Ian, soon," the laird announced solemnly. "I am seventy."

"I'm sixty-five," rejoined Ian in a voice of tragedy, "and I'm not thinking of dying yet."

"It's time for a man of sixty-five to think of the end, Ian, for he's only a milestone or so behind the man of seventy. But it wasn't exactly of that either I wanted to speak to you. You're sure the door is shut tight? Thank you. We've been a long time together now, Ian—you and I—haven't we?"

"A long time, sir," said Ian in a kind of stupefaction.

"Yes, we've stood by each other through a good many changes. And I was afraid, Ian—for, indeed, I'm no saint any more than yourself—I was afraid you might have something against me. Some little grudge, say, in your own mind."

"Against you, sir?" cried Ian, as in agony. "When did I make you think, sir, I had a grudge?"

"Never, Ian. We've struck a bit fire out of each other whiles, but that's all. It's the simple truth, you've been a loyal servant to me."

"Don't be speaking that way, sir," pleaded Ian. "As sure's death, it makes me cold down the back. If you were to go and die, sir, then it would be the luck of the old horse for Ian."

"It's quite certain I'm going to die then, Ian," rejoined the laird softly. "Because the doctor hasn't been born yet who can get the upper hand of Death. But I'm glad

to hear you have nothing against me, Ian, neither on the top of your mind, nor at the bottom, where a good man sometimes smothers the thoughts he won't speak even to himself. We have to do that at times for sake of our friends."

Ian regarded his master with a look of exquisite misery.

"What for did I go to Perth that time with the policeman?" he cried. "What for do I hate——"

"Hush, hush, Ian," interrupted the laird, his eyes misty at sight of the red, troubled face of his servant.

"The first place of the MacLeans," said Ian, "is away in the West, beside the sea that's as bonnie as a lassie's smile in summer, and worse than a king's rage in winter, and the place of the Mackerns is with the place of the Macleans. Ian Veg aye minds that. And when a MacLean of Dunveagle wanted a Mackern from the West, what did Ian do? Fuich! what am I saying? Didn't he just bundle up and take his Cromak and his wife, going to himself that as long as the good Lord God in heaven saw fit to give him the use of his hands and his bits of legs they were the laird's? And if any man says that Ian has not kept his word, wet day or dry, from that time to this that man's a son of Beelzebub, and I don't care what's his name."

"It's all true, Ian," said the laird, his eyes yet a little mistier, "every word of it, and it's not half the truth, either about you or your wife Janet. I'm more grateful to you both than I can tell."

"There's just one thing, sir, if you'll let me mention it," said Ian sheepishly.

The laird pricked up.

"One thing, is there?" he returned. "I run too fast then. Let us have it."

"No, no, sir," cried Ian, startled by his own indiscretion.

"We're squaring accounts," said the laird.

Ian's face quivered.

"I'm just a doitering old fool," he said. "Never mind me."

"But I will," said the laird. "I ask what you're keeping back."

"Well, then," cried Ian desperately, "it iss just the Ogilvies. You lying here, and me going about and seeing their black beasts—their servants, sir—where they should not be at all."

"Ian," said the laird, with affected severity, "you must not talk like that. We're guests here, and it becomes guests to keep civil tongues in their head. But we're off again. To come to business, I want you to do something very particular for me. But, first, you'll take an oath of secrecy."

CHAPTER XXVII

THE LAIRD'S SECRET

AT that suggestion of a vow, Ian's face took on an expression of acute pain, as if pride and loyalty were both hurt ; but the laird was quick with salve.

"Don't think, Ian," he said, "I'm asking you to take this oath because I couldn't trust you without it. You know whether I have always trusted you or not. This is just a way of saying how important I consider a secret which you of all living beings besides myself will alone know. And now swear."

By an improvised form, without Bible or blade, Ian took the oath, and waited in a beating curiosity and impatience. In a low voice, tentatively and with many stops like a man feeling his way, the laird proceeded to unfold the secret which he had kept so long and so jealously. Ian listened as under a spell, his countenance on the strain as if every faculty and feature were impressed to aid his ears in taking in a strange and moving tale.

By degrees, too, the speaker lost the air of extreme caution, spoke faster, and ever with more passion, till at last, shooting out the whole arm, he gripped Ian and drew him down upon a chair by the bedside.

"Come closer," he said, as one who dreads the lurking ears of doors and panels. "There, that's it. You follow what I'm saying, Ian?"

"Yes, sir," Ian answered, his very flesh creeping. He had seen the laird, as he thought, in all moods of joy and

grief and wrath and regret and revenge, but never with such an eerie, mysterious aspect as this.

"You know, Ian Veg," he went on, in that tone of suppressed excitement which thrills more than the wildest violence, "you know that a desperate man does desperate things, ay, and foolish. If the world went well with us at every turn, God! what Solomons we'd all be. It's easy to be a good sailor, going with fair wind and tide; it's hardly so easy when they're both rough and against us. If a man wanted your life, you'd do your best to prevent him, wouldn't you? And you wouldn't be too particular about your method. Well, Ian Veg, men wanted my life, lay in wait for it like thieves and assassins, tried every plan hate and greed could suggest to get it. Wherever I turned there was an enemy in ambush ready to spring on me. For a while, damn them, they got as good as they gave. I've that satisfaction, anyway, Ian. But at last you mind that the Philistines put out Samson's eyes. I was alone. I had none to meet my enemy in the gate. I could trust no one, except Janet and yourself, and your devotion has been a miracle of human goodness. Ian, I thank you now."

"Don't, sir, don't!" Ian cried in anguish.

"One thing the recording angel will set down is this," pursued the laird. "In his heart Alan MacLean never knew how to be ungrateful. That white mark will stand against many black marks, and who knows, Ian, the Great Judge may smile at the eternal bar and say, 'Alan MacLean, you have sinned much; here and here you are red as scarlet, but in this one little spot you are white as wool. It saves you, Alan MacLean; pass on.' Imagine the surprise of some godly folk at that. But not to wander, nobody knows how I was set upon by thieves, but I was determined to fight to the last drop of blood."

"I know, sir," said Ian, in a heaving pant.

"Yes," responded the laird. "You knew I fought, but you didn't always know how."

He wiped a moist forehead.

"You remember the captain's mother, Ian?"

"Till the day I die I'll mind her, sir," cried Ian, "and how we felt when we lost her."

"Thank you, Ian," returned the laird, with an effort to keep a quivering voice steady. "My God! how much has come and gone since then. But we mustn't unman ourselves by going back on that. Well, one day when she felt her time coming—Ian, there's something that tells people when their time is near at hand—when she felt hers, she came to me one day very quiet like with a little bag in her hand. 'I made this myself,' she said, holding it out, 'and there's something in it; a little money that I have saved, a pound now and a pound again, and it's all in gold. I thought'—and, Ian, the look in her face has never left my eyes; when we meet again she'll see her own image there—'I thought,' she said, coming a wee bit nearer n.e., 'I thought it might be useful one day for Norman. Poor boy, he'll not have much.' It was all I could do to speak, but I took the bag, saying it would be Norman's, and hid it, never knowing how much the gold was."

Both men's eyes were wet; simultaneously they brushed away that sign of weakness.

"When she left us," continued the laird—"you mind the way of it, Ian—the question was how to keep the harpies from getting their fingers on the treasure. One night, when there wasn't a soul near, I went out to the wood, and under the starlit vault swore an oath before the living God that the man who tried to take it would die, if I had to hack him in pieces. God took pity, and saved me from murder and death on the gallows. But God's pity was all I had. There's no use ripping up old wounds. The past is past; let it be. You know what happened. You were for me, Ian, you and Janet, when everybody else was

against me ; and if I have ever wronged you, done or said anything to hurt you, I ask your forgiveness now."

Ian bowed his head, caught the laird's hand and pressed it to his lips.

"Ian, man," said the laird in a kind of choking protest, "you'll make a woman of me. There, there."

For a moment he was silent, and then went on.

"Yes. You and Janet stuck to me when all else failed me, not counting my boy, who couldn't help, poor little soul ; and you did more than you thought, for it was by your help I was able to keep the bag. Never mind how. It was never out of my thoughts, neither it nor my oath. God's mercy preserved me from spilling blood, but the temptation was awful, Ian. It makes me shiver whiles at midnight yet. Well, I left Dunveagle a beggar. They came and roused me, they came all together like a pack of hounds about a spent hare, and they left me stripped, like Job on his dunghill ; but, Ian, man, I saved my treasure. It lay here flat against my very heart. One day, when they had my keys and were searching the drawers and boxes, one of them—there were two—turned and asked me if I wasn't concealing something. A kind of dizziness came on me, a wild feeling to put him from ever speaking again. You know me, Ian. I could have laid him dead before he could raise a hand or a cry come out of his throat for help. Ay, both him and his companion, who had turned also. For a minute I was just drunk and giddy as I looked at them. 'Some day,' I thought, 'an old woman will be showing the dark stain on the floor where their blood ran out.' Ay, and I had no thought but to do it, for I could stand no more. But there's a Providence takes care of us from ourselves. Just when I was stretching my hand for my skenedhu, kept sharp on purpose, your wife, Janet, came in and saved me. Dear me, how hot it is ! My handkerchief, Ian, and a drink."

He wiped his brow and took a long draught of cold water.

"And then, sir?" Ian asked fearfully.

"I turned without a word," said the laird, "and the coward had his life. Till we're all before the Judgment-seat he'll never know how near he came to losing it that day. Well, I went, keeping my treasure. I went to Craigenard—you'll mind how—and still there was the need of hiding."

Ian wriggled as if his chair were a quick-set hedge, and breathed as if someone had him by the throat.

"I hid the money, Ian," pursued the laird, "no living soul but myself knowing where."

Ian started like a guilty man, his face drawn, his eyes hard on the laird.

"And at last," said his master, "I have reached my point. Listen with all your ears to what I am going to tell you now."

And then minutely, point by point, he described the place of that great rock which Ian knew so well and had visited so often, with full knowledge of the hoard it held.

"I kept my secret from everybody, as you can understand," the laird went on, while Ian tingled in pity and remorse over men's pathetic errors. "You'll understand now, too, why I asked for an oath of secrecy. Now to the reason for telling all this. From the wreck I managed to save a little, a very little of my own, to which I have since added an odd penny now and again. It's all together in that hole in the rock."

Ian thought he must cry out to relieve himself and undeceive the laird, but he managed to hold his peace, shutting his lips the tighter the more urgently the feeling within struggled for expression.

"Do I trust you now, Ian?" the laird asked. "Well, listen. I want you to go up there, taking care that no one

sees you. The original bag you'll find rolled up inside another of stouter make. This last also holds my little savings. Bring me that here, but leave the other where you find it, and, Ian, as you love me, take care it is well hidden, and that nobody spies upon you. You must be as secret as the grave."

Luckily the laird was himself too cager and excited to mark fluctuations of feeling in another.

"At once, sir?" Ian asked.

"Yes, at once. I want it here within the next two hours. If I weren't on my back I'd go myself. But I put my faith in you, Ian."

"And you'll not be sorry, sir," returned Ian, preparing to go; and the laird smiling upon him construed his haste as yet another proof of that devotion which had stood the tests of forty years.

On his upward way Ian looked in at Craigenard to make sure that Janet and Maggie were suitably employed, and then with a humming head went about his mission.

"If only the laird knew," he said to himself; "if only the laird knew. Gosh, what a ploy!"

He sped on like a boy, nerve and muscle alive with excitement. He almost feared the treasure would not be there now that it was wanted. What if it were gone? What if within the last twenty-four hours robbers had discovered it? It made him cold to think of such a catastrophe, and he sped the faster.

At last the grey, craggy turrets rose on his view, and next minute the pinnacled top of that rock of gold itself. The sight of that familiar object almost made his heart stop; an instant later it stopped wholly, for there, as Ian approached, was a human figure plainly, palpably bent over the crevice that held the gold.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A STRANGE CONTRIBUTION TO HIDDEN TREASURE

A MOMENT Ian stared like one paralysed by shock ; the next he darted forward silently, as one pounces on a thief. His foot struck against a stone, and a startled face was lifted quickly to his, the face of Alick. With a cry of rage, Ian sprang at the boy, gripping him by the throat.

"So this is what you're doing when you get me out of the way," he said in a savage pant. "Maybe I'll learn you."

Nothing but the devilish nerve and agility of Alick saved his windpipe. With the slippery litheness of an eel he twisted from Ian's grasp, leaped like a goat to a point of rock above, and turned, every rebel instinct within him aflame.

"If you want Janet not to know you, come after me," he said, the black eyes and scarlet face adding ferocity to the words.

A second Ian frowned on the blazing imp, then looked down at the pile of spilled gold glittering in the sun. At the thought of that treachery he turned upward again.

"Alick," he cried, his voice like thunder, his eyes discharging lightnings, "I haf misdooted ye for a good while now, but I didn't think ye'd do this. It's best to be plain with me ; how much did you take?"

"Take?" repeated Alick, his black eyes flashing more

wickedly. He tore off a loose fragment of rock. "Ask that again," he said, poisoning the missile.

"You'll put me to the trouble of leathering you," replied the irate man below.

"I'm thinking not," retorted Alick, "for, look you, the very first move you make something will happen. You mind what you told me once, always to get in the first blow. And as to what you are saying, do you think it is taking the laird's money I'd be, Ian Veg? Do you think I go about with tarry fingers?"

"One that's thick with the Ogilvies would do anything, I'm thinking," rejoined Ian.

"Say that again!" cried Alick, poisoning his fragment of rock afresh.

"Oh, ay," responded Ian contemptuously; "throw away, throw away. For all that I've done for ye, Alick Ruah, nothing would please you better than to dance the Highland Fling on my corp."

"Don't be setting your bonnet so high, Ian Veg," was the reply. "Maybe I wouldn't think it worth my while. But what I'm waiting for the now is just you to say again what you said about me and the Ogilvies."

Now Ian understood Alick from the crown of his rebellious head to the sole of his defiant foot, and, looking up, had a pungent sense of the futility of argument at long range; also of the folly of attempting to chase a wild cat among rocks, a wild cat, too, with all its passions of resentment and revenge ablaze.

He looked again at the spilled gold, a ruddy heap in a grey, lichened dent of the rock, and noted that the inner bag, the laird's particular treasure, lay with its mouth open. That worked upon him to a fresh access of fury, but fury was lost on the mocking imp above, and presently he fell back on the methods of diplomacy.

"If you come down, Alick, and tell me what brought

you here and what you were doing," he said, "I'll promise not to lay hands on you."

Making his footing securer, Alick bent a concentrated gaze on the man beneath. He owned to himself that he had never caught Ian in a lie; indeed he was disposed to think that the ability to lie with any degree of craft was not among Ian's resources, natural or acquired.

"Say this, then," he replied: "'If I try to touch you may God strike me dead'"; and when Ian had complied, "Very well; now, if you'll put down that cudgel, I'll put down this stone."

That matter having also been arranged to his satisfaction, Alick descended.

"You think I have been stealing," he said, facing Ian squarely. "Listen, and I'll tell you how I did it. But first you must promise not to breathe a word to anybody, for it's a secret, and I had to swear, too. If you hadn't come on me you wouldn't know."

"Tell me, Alick," Ian said impatiently, on taking the necessary pledge; and thereupon Alick told a tale which made Ian gape. To begin with, Mr. Mackern learned that, all unsuspected, Alick had got on confidential terms with Miss Ogilvie, that certain conversations had taken place between these two touching the laird's affairs, and that, doubtless for some dark reason of her own, the lady was extraordinarily sympathetic.

"Just a dodge to pick you, Alick," Ian broke in sceptically.

"Wait and you'll see," was the response. "Maybe you noticed, and maybe you didn't, that the captain and Mr. Dunbar were got out of the way to-day, that Miss Dunbar was mostly with Mrs. Ogilvie, and that Miss Ogilvie was very busy by herself, and in a dreadful hurry too. 'Alick,' says she, 'I want you to do something important, to do it quick, quick, and for your life not to let anybody know, not

your dearest friend. Who's your dearest friend, Alick?' says she. 'Ian Veg, mem,' says I."

"You said that?" cried Ian, with a thrill of pleasure and remorse.

"I said, 'Ian Veg's my dearest friend,'" continued Alick.

"Well, you'll not tell this, even to him,' she says; 'promise,' says she. I promised, and then she said, 'If you break your word I'll never trust you or be friends with you again.' But, Ian, you found out without telling."

Ian nodded; Alick went on.

"She gave me a purse just bulging with gold. 'There,' says she, 'you're to go and put that in the little bag that the laird never touches' (for I told her about it, but not where it is), 'and here's a little something for your trouble.' She was speaking fast and looking round as if afraid of somebody listening. The blood was coming and going in her face too, and her breast was jumping and dancing. 'Now you'll be quick, Alick,' she said, 'and take great care not to let anybody see you, for it would never do to be found out.'"

"And you put it in there?" said Ian, drawing a long breath.

"I was putting it there when you came," was the answer.

Ian cast a look at the gold, and a choking fury seized him. His impulse was to pick out Connie's gold piece by piece, and fling it to the winds.

"The dirty dirt," he cried furiously. "Thenk-ee for telling me, Alick. You did it for the best. But you're surely mad. Their trash can't stop here; there would be no luck with it."

"You mind what you and me once agreed about getting money for the laird?" Alick replied. "At first I was for refusing point-blank, though Miss Ogilvie was kind and nice about it."

"Kind and nice!" repeated Ian in mingled scorn and anger. "Alick, I think the sooner you and me pairts the better."

"Steady a bit," cried Alick. "Is there no way of using folk, d'ye think, but knocking their noses off? The other day I was reading in the paper about a battle somewhere, and one side took guns from the other side, and then turned them on the side that lost them. It was that that put thoughts into my head."

A great light, a sudden radiance overspread Ian's face.

"Body and soul of me! Alick," he cried, "I'm not fit to breathe the same air as you. Man, that's grand. I take back everything I said. Here's my hand. Man, yer a deep, wicked, cunning, wee tevil. Turning an enemy's guns on themselves! Fuich! as sure's death your head is worth ten thousand of mines, to take that gold that we might fight them that gave it."

"Just that," replied Alick, his heart beating a tattoo of jubilation.

Ian stooped and began to shovel the gold from hand to hand with the doting avarice of a miser; then piece by piece he counted it.

"Fifty-two!" he cried breathlessly.

"Yes," said Alick, "fifty from Miss Ogilvie and the two she gave me for myself."

"Your two?" responded Ian, every nerve in him dancing. "You mean to tell me you put yours in, too? I haf been a great big ass this day. If ye think there'll be any sateesfaction in the thing, take that Cromak to me. For it iss just the God's own truth, Alick Ruah, yer wonderful cliver."

"You're sorry for thinking I would break my word and take the laird's money?" said Alick, whose dearest testimonial was still the good word of his mentor, Ian Veg Mackern.

"Sorry?" echoed Ian. "That iss not it at all. I'm fair ashamed to look you in the face. But, man, Alick, I'm glad, too; oh, yes, gladder than if I wass getting fou at your wedding. For look you, Alick, there's things in you the spoon didn't put in. Turning their own guns on them. Fifty-two gold sovereigns—a pound note for every week in the year—from the Ogilvies to fight the Ogilvies. I'll never miscall ye again. Is there any chance of getting more, d'ye think?"

"Maybe," replied Alick, "if a body was to try hard."

"Alick, cross your hands on mines," said Ian, holding out his own. "There now, you and me's entered into a covenant as firm as scriptur can make it, and it's this: that we'll bleed the Ogilvies every chance. That's our business with them from this day on. And, mind you, if one of us breaks the covenant, plagues and boils and things will come on him just as the Bible says. Man," he cried, "if you and me was to get back: Dunveagle! Think of that. Alick, bleed them, and the minute you forget your covenant, may the tevil catch you by the hind leg."

CHAPTER XXIX

A WOODLAND EXPLORATION

HE began to gather up the condemned gold, recounting it in a kind of vengeful glee, as of one who had found means of feeding fat a very bitter grudge. Then he opened the bag which held the laird's especial treasure, drew forth a letter superscribed in a thin, tremulous, woman's hand, put in the gold which was to turn like a curse against the givers, reverently replaced the letter, tied the bag securely, and replaced it deep down in the crevice. That done, he took the whole of his master's savings (pathetically increased as we have seen), explaining that the money was urgently needed at the castle for purposes to be stated later on; and having craftily as bandits covered all marks of disturbance, the pair descended swiftly. For Ian had already tarried too long, and Alick was impatient to report to Connie. Jerking out comments and opinions on the projects which a conniving Providence was opening out, they tore down through the Tyrian purple of the early August heather, and plunged into the green coolness of the Dunveagle woods, wiping their streaming faces. Half-way down they paused at the sound of voices, and a minute later came on the captain with Miss Ogilvie and Miss Dunbar, gathering wild flowers, in a little dingle by the brookside. At sight of her messenger Connie put a finger meaningly on her lips, and the two, doffing their caps, passed on.

The expedition into the woodlands was unplanned and unexpected. On returning, Jeff was busy with his motor.

Mr. Linnie had been politely but effectually dismissed by Kitty, and the ladies either in weariness or coquetry had turned to Norman for entertainment. He related bits of the Iliad of Dunveagle, and Kitty was stirred to an unwonted interest. She asked many questions, and the end was that the captain offered to conduct her to some of the more romantic spots. Kitty beamed her thanks, saying she was ready.

Now Connie had other business on hand, but at that proposal she must needs cry out that she too would make one of the party, and the trio started into the leafy wilds, which Norman knew so well, and, alas! loved so fondly.

Connie walked thinking of many things, but especially of the misfortunes of the house of MacLean. She was infinitely glad to be mistress of Dunveagle, but her heart smote her at the thought that she reigned at the cost of another's happiness. Sometimes in communing with herself, she wondered what would become of the estate if one day she should return, as expected, to take her place as a leader of fashion in New York. A man of the world, especially an American man of the world, to whom the excitements of the city were as the breath of life, would never consent to live a cloistered existence in Dunveagle. Not Eden itself would tempt him from the roar and dazzle of the glittering multitude, and she vaguely understood the law that where the man is there the woman must be also. Yes, she supposed that under another name she would go back to New York and rejoin the elect, who make social laws for the Republic, and outdo the splendour of princes.

What would become of Dunveagle then? She had thoughts on the subject, haunting thoughts that she durst not frame too clearly even to herself.

During the last few weeks her interest in this Dunveagle problem had been quickened and deepened in a way that none suspected, that she hardly herself understood. Hence

in this ramble through the woods, though she was the soul of gaiety, she often glanced strangely at one of her companions. For there were thoughts at the back of her mind that would not be put to rest.

She marked or fancied, and fancy furnishes proofs strong as Holy Writ, that Kitty was at pains to be agreeable. And never in Connie's eyes had she seemed so dangerously bewitching, not merely in looks and manner, but in the point and vivacity of her conversation.

The American girl, a fastidious or crusty European will tell you, is voluble to excess. Kitty, like a good American, carried her nationality into everything, sacred and secular. She travelled quickly, read quickly, thought quickly, talked quickly, and on all that a woman of the world ought to know, her knowledge was encyclopædic. To-day she seemed brighter, wittier, more discursive than Connie had ever seen her, and there could be no doubt about it, she was drawing the captain out of his melancholy reserve.

The appearance of Ian and Alick intensified the turmoil in Connie's breast, so that it needed all her tact to keep a semblance of self-possession. She burned to follow and question Alick, but that being impossible, she joined in admiration of scenes she scarcely saw, laughed at jests she scarcely heard, and to her own dismay proved that on trying occasions she might be the reverse of cool. She seized the first opportunity of proposing a return, and from the abruptness of her manner the captain was certain that from some inexplicable cause he had offended again.

"Always making a mess of it," he said to himself, and resolved for the future to intrude upon her as little as possible.

Meanwhile Kitty was asking if Connie were well. "I thought you looked pale and abstracted, dear," Miss Dunbar said.

"Oh, only a headache, dear," Connie answered. "Will you excuse me if I go to my own room just for a little?"

CHAPTER XXX

A SUM IN ARITHMETIC

IAN delivered his gold in such an elation of spirits as he had not enjoyed for twenty years. To have mentioned Nemesis would be meaningless, for Ian was no Grecian; but he had Hebrew notions of vengeance, and could lay a ready finger on a score of passages in the Bible that suited his case like a prescription. The learned speak of retributive justice. Ian knew nothing of fine names, but he had a perfect appreciation of the prophet's prayer, "Rid me of mine enemies; revenge me of my persecutors."

The Bible being universal, gives to each searcher precisely what he seeks, good or evil. Ian passed backward lightly over the New Testament, with its doctrines of meekness and forgiveness; but he dwelt with a fierce, wholehearted delight on the implacable vengeance of the Old, and could quote texts with more than devotional zeal.

"The minister tells us," said Ian, "we can't go far wrong if we keep to the Bible. I'm content. Listen to this—"

"And after he had slain Sihon, the king of the Amorites, he spoke; that's your meek Moses for ye. Ye'll observe his plan. First he makes sure of killing his man, and speaks afterwards."

"And it came to pass when he began to reign, as soon as he sat on his throne, that he slew all the house of Baasha. Not one left to complain, ye see, or spread false reports."

"And Jehu said to the captain of the guard, go in and slay them, and let none escape. Not a mother's son of them."

The Hebrews did what they wanted without going to lawyers. When a man had a grudge he just sharpened up his bowie-knife, as ye might say, watched his chance, and gave it to the other fellow under the fifth rib. Generally speaking, that settled all accounts."

The Hebrew passion of vengeance surged deep in Ian as he handed the gold to his master. The Ogilvies had come from America with pipes playing a triumphal quick-step; they would return to the wail of a coronach.

"Well, Ian," said the laird, taking the bag with an eager, nervous hand, "is everything right?"

"Everything iss right, sir," Ian answered confidently.

"You were longer than I expected."

"You know, sir, I had to be awful careful."

"True, true," admitted the laird. "Better be slow and sure than hasty and found out. We must keep this to ourselves, absolutely. The other bag is safe, Ian?"

"Quite safe, sir," Ian assured him. At the same time he was saying in his heart, "If only you knew, if only you knew. But it's not good for a man to know everything."

"Ian," said the laird, drawing in the money, "this must not come to the ears of anyone, man, woman, or child. As there are things between man and his Maker not fit for the market-place, so there are things between man and man that must not be bawled from the house-top. I'm obliged to you for another service, another mark of devotion. I have just one thing more to ask."

"Yes, sir?" said Ian interrogatively.

"God made us all what we are, Ian," rejoined the laird.

"A few of us saints perhaps, but most of us just common, ordinary sinners. Some He made patient and some the reverse, just as He made one apple sweet and another sour. But the sweet and the sour are both of His making, and if an apple sets your teeth on edge you should not curse, because the apple is not to blame. When I vex you, Ian,

think of that. Just say quietly to yourself, 'The apple's a bit tart, but it's not to blame; it was made that way.' You follow me? Likely I'll say things to you I shouldn't say, cross, unkind things, for indeed, Ian, between you and me, vows and resolutions to be good don't help much. But you'll understand and never mind, for after this we must be to each other as lock and key."

"It has always been the plan of Ian Veg, sir, and he iss too old to change now. But though he iss old he expects things yet, and it iss in his mind this day that the trash will be away out of this yet."

The laird looked at him very hard.

"When you and I are away too, Ian," he responded.

"I never heard that dead men take any pleasure in what goes on about them," said Ian meaningly. "Something tells me I'll dance the Highland Fling in Dunveagle yet."

The laird smiled, hut Ian's face darkened.

"Yes, sir, and another kind of reel too that some folk little think of——"

"Ian, Ian," cried the laird, starting to find his own vague thoughts shaped by another, "we must not talk like that. For you and me mum's the word. We know what we know, and for the present let that be enough. And now will you see if Norman's about, and say I want a word with him? Another time we'll talk more."

Though he had much to say, or rather to hint darkly, Ian was nevertheless glad to be released, because his feelings had more than once during the interview threatened to break bounds. "Turn their own guns against them," he kept repeating in his mind. Brain had never devised a better, subtler, deadlier, more inspiring method. Alick was beyond doubt a clever limb of Satan.

Ten minutes later Norman closed the door of his father's room from the inside.

"You'll be surprised I've sent for you again," the laird

said, smiling up at him. "But since you left I have been thinking of things, and if it's your pleasure to take a hand in the game Mr. Ogilvie mentioned, I'm agreeable. Here's something for the play," and he pushed the bag of money toward Norman with an expression which said, "There's a thing which is a great worry to me. Take it off my hands, and no speeches, please."

Norman took the bag mechanically, lifted it, heard the chink of coin, and laid it down, his face tense with amazement.

"But this is impossible, father," he returned.

"Why impossible?" asked the laird. "Isn't it there?"

"But after all, what Mr. Ogilvie advises is mere speculation," Norman protested. "And every penny may be lost."

"If it's your pleasure it's mine," rejoined the laird doggedly.

He declined to discuss the question of refusal or the possibility of failure. Meditating upon his bed, like David of old, he had had wild, exultant thoughts of a dramatic turn of the wheel of fortune.

He wanted money, desperately, as a starving man wants food. The honour and tradition to which he had so long clung, with Celtic inveteracy, were of no avail. He must sacrifice to convention; he must go with the tide or be broken on the rocks. Not even in the very midst of his tragedy had the sense of the omnipotence of money been so acute as it became now. He needed money, if not for himself, then for his portionless son, and when the chance came, even the risky chance of Stock Exchange speculation, he leaped at it as leaps the condemned prisoner for liberty and life. What can a man love more than himself? asks the cynic. Sometimes he loves bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh more; and perhaps he feels most the fatherhood of God who most feels his own fatherhood.

The laird told himself that he was risking next to nothing—if it were lost let it go; he had survived heavier losses, and there would still remain the precious treasure which no finger of his had touched, or would touch. That should not be risked; but all else would cheerfully be staked. He was even willing to be under an obligation to Duncan Ogilvie, and self-sacrifice could not go beyond that. So he said with all the emphasis of his masterful nature, "It is my pleasure."

But in deciding this he had omitted to take one small but vital circumstance into account, to wit, that in arguing with Norman he was arguing with Alan Maclean, re-endowed with all the force and independence of youth, plus something that had never been Alan's. Norman was touched, but he was also obdurate. While he had a head to plan and two hands to execute, not a fraction of his father's scant supply would he touch. So with brief, broken thanks and expressions of gratitude, for he was not at all sure of himself, he left abruptly.

For the space of a minute the laird gazed hard at the closed door; then his eyes rested on the bag of money, procured with so much difficulty, refused so emphatically. He was both glad and angry, touched by filial love, provoked by filial disobedience. His face shone with a mingled radiance of storm and sunshine; then, sudden as the caprice of an April day, his expression changed to one of set determination, and he rang the bell. He wished to know

Mr. Ogilvie were engaged, and if not whether he could spare a moment for business. Glad to serve his guest, Mr. Ogilvie at once complied with the summons.

"You have been good enough to make a certain proposal to my son," the laird said, explaining his business without circumlocution. "We've talked the matter over, and there's a mite," pushing the bag towards his host. "It will be a favour to me, Mr. Ogilvie, if you take charge of it, for

indeed I'm an old wife in such things, and Norman's an infant in arms. It's his, of course, though he has left the details to me. Will you see that the thing is done on his behalf?"

"No commission could give me greater pleasure," Mr. Ogilvie answered warmly. "How much is there here, sir?"

"Indeed, I'm not sure to a pound or two," was the reply. "But you can count and let me know at your convenience."

"We'd better count now," said the man of business.

"Count now!" cried the laird. "Indeed, you'll do nothing of the kind. Do you think I'd trust you with the pounds, and oblige you about the sixpences? You'll count it when you have nothing better to do, and not a minute before."

And with an easy air of affluence he thrust the bag from him. None looking on would have guessed that it was as a slice of his very heart.

When Mr. Ogilvie left the invalid's chamber, Connie, who had somehow scented the visit, lay cunningly in wait, Kitty innocently bearing her company. Her eyes opened at sight of the bag, and with a little catch of the breath, which happily passed unnoticed, she asked what it contained.

"Only a little investment of Captain MacLean's," her father answered. "By the way, if Kitty and yourself are disengaged, you might count it for me. Mr. MacLean, who is the captain's agent, is not sure of the amount."

Connie took the bag, thrilling lest her perturbation should betray itself, and the girls hastened to her own particular room. There in a singular palpitation she emptied the contents on the table. These consisted of gold, silver, and copper, and Scotch bank-notes crumpled into the similitude of waste paper.

"My!" Kitty cried, "Mr. MacLean's bank does pay in odd assortments. Why doesn't he write a cheque like an ordinary Christian?"

Connie did not answer. "Let's count," she said instead.

First they counted the gold, marking the amount on the back of an old envelope; then in the same manner the silver, the copper, and the bank-notes.

"Add it up, Kit," said Connie, her own mental state being untrustworthy.

Kitty settled as to a vexing problem in the higher mathematics.

"My!" she cried, struggling helplessly between the farthings and the pence, "how John Bull does muddle up things! If he don't make love better than he figures, how does he ever get to the point? This is worse than awful. It's easy enough when you've only to add and tick off two by our system. Let me see, you divide by twenty, twelve, and four, don't you?"

"I think," answered Connie, "you divide by four, twelve, and twenty. You see, four shillings one dollar, five dollars one pound sterling, not taking the eccentricities of exchange into account."

"That don't help much so far's I can see," rejoined Kitty, her brows knit in desperation.

"You'll give yourself wrinkles if you pucker your face like that, dear," Connie commented.

"Enough to give anyone wrinkles," retorted Kitty.

"Here are three single farthings and four separate halfpence. What do you make of that?"

Connie leashed her emotions and stooped to arithmetic.

"Four twos are eight and three are eleven," she answered after a profound effort.

"How do you get that?" inquired Kitty, who usually calculated in round figures and disdained anything meaner than a dollar.

"You've got four halfpence or ha'pennies, haven't you? That's eight quarters."

"Oh, no, it isn't," cried Kitty. "Eight quarters are two dollars."

"We're not talking of twenty-five-cent pieces," returned Connie. "Four ha'pennies make eight quarters or farthings, and three more quarters make eleven."

"Oh, do they? Well, then, now you've got your eleven, how are you to divide it by twenty? How many pounds sterling in eleven farthings? Con, it don't seem right, somehow."

"Hardly, dear," Connie owned.

They took a piece of fresh paper, and by dint of various experiments in compound addition, subtraction, and division, finally arrived at a result, which, with some hesitation, they accepted as correct. Connie studied the figures with an infinite pity. Poor laird! Poor Captain MacLean!

"Kitty," she said all at once, "get a pen and ink, and we'll mark it down."

But no pen was in the room, Mrs. Ogilvie having evidently carried off the last, and Kitty went in search of one. As soon as she was gone Connie rose, stepped softly to the door, and glanced out; then turning swiftly, she opened a cabinet, drew out a drawer, lifted a purse of gold, and counting hurriedly, put a handful with the laird's store. When Kitty returned she was gazing out of the window.

"Thank you, dear," she said, turning graciously, and wrote down a figure which Kitty did not see.

CHAPTER XXXI

GROUSE SHOOTING, WITH SOME HINTS ON RICHES

THE day of all days in the year to the Highlands again came round—the day on which sporting millionaires are proud to go forth arrayed as ghillies, for which legislators cease their babbling and leave the nation to its fate, which sees the rampant cockney sniffing among the moors. A fortnight the railways from the south had kept overdriven traffic superintendents in one long nightmare; a week they had been in a virulent congestion. At the London termini facing north mobs of lackeys, sweating, blasphemous porters, distracted inspectors and guards dodged violently among piled-up barrows and stacks of gun cases—all for the sake of “kittling the muir fowls’ tails.”

The twelfth, as it chanced, fell on a Monday, and all Sunday the Highlands lay in a hushed expectancy. Everybody was aware of an electric brooding in the air. The shepherd felt it as he leaned on his staff, looking up purple mountain sides; the gamekeeper was acutely conscious of it as he made the final round of his kennels; it affected the preacher as he thundered from the pulpit to strangers who wondered, when they gave the discourse any attention at all, if he could possibly mean what he said. The day before city journalists had discussed, with the miraculous omniscience of the Press, the “prospects of the twelfth” as a question more vitally important than wars and parliaments; and from the Pass of Birnam to John o’ Groat’s

men and women talked grouse, grouse, and nothing but grouse.

The Dunveagle party, having the fever smartly, was out almost with the sun. It included besides the host an English railway magnate, a London financier of international relations, the Hon. Job Shilbeck and Mr. Jeff Dunbar, worthily representing the greatest of republics, Captain MacLean and Mr. Rollo Linnie. The elder Linnie had promised to take a gun (his own moor being let for sake of the £ s. d.), but was prevented by an attack of the aristocratic disease especially eulogised by Lord Chesterfield. The doctor would have called it rheumatism, but Mr. Linnie insisted on suppressed gout, and suppressed gout it was, since the man of science depending on fads and vanities cannot afford to be headstrong.

The enthusiasm infected both sexes, old and young. Not for the first time in her life Connie wished herself a man, that she might do as men did, and Kitty too was inclined to be envious over the privileges of a barbarous sex. Even Mr. Ogilvie's heart beat a little higher and faster than usual, for whatever moralists may say, a man finds first experience of the sport of nobles on his own moor exceedingly sweet.

Mr. Shilbeck alone smoked and tramped without an extra throb of the pulse, save what came of bodily exertion. He had never before set foot on a grouse moor, and seemed indifferent whether he ever set foot on one again. He got into knickerbockers and gaiters purely as a concession to the foolishness of fashion, expecting little, and getting according to expectation. He was neither disappointed nor envious of those who had better luck.

"Don't seem to get the hang of this thing," he remarked genially to his attendant ghillie, when he had missed his bird for the twentieth time in succession. "Don't seem to hit 'em even by chance." And took the failure so little

to heart that next minute he was working an abstruse calculation on his shirt cuff, never so much as glancing up when a covey whirred beside him. The ghillie reported that assuredly he had a bee in his bonnet, since only a man with a fearful buzzing in the upper storey could scrape with a pencil on clean shirt linen while the grouse were rising all about him.

Three days Mr. Shilbeck held out in stolid toleration of the fatigue of incessant tramping and the disappointment of futile shooting. On the fourth day near the time of luncheon he threw himself on a bank of brilliant bell-heather, and looked half-defiantly, half-pityingly at his misguided friends, blazing away right and left. Mr. Linnie, who chanced to be near, sat with him out of sympathy.

"Say," remarked Mr. Shilbeck, mopping a hot forehead, "I'm beginnin' to feel as if I had just enough of this kind of foolin'. Reckon it ain't just what it's 'sposed to be."

"There may be better things if one only knew them," returned Mr. Linnie.

"I should smile," rejoined Mr. Shilbeck enigmatically.

"Money-making, for instance," suggested Rollo, choosing that subject as one likely to be agreeable to his companion and not objectionable to himself.

Slowly and with the fine care of a connoisseur Mr. Shilbeck bit the end off a cigar.

"That's one of 'em," he said. "Anyway, it's a rational employment for human beings. I don't call it rational to go tramping the life out of yourself up hills and across bogs after darned things ye can't hit anyway. I think I'll vamoose."

The word being new to Mr. Linnie, his eyes opened for enlightenment.

"I'll go back to Noo York," explained Mr. Shilbeck, "and take a turn to Washin'ton to put the screw on one or two Congressmen, just to let 'em know I'm alive. Make

a few dollars, you understand. It's the kind of sport that suits my constitootion. Yes, sir."

He wiped his mouth, struck a match, and began to smoke.

"It's the great national sport in America, isn't it?" Rollo asked.

"Making dollars?" responded Shilbeck blandly. "Yes, sir, the people of the U-nited States believe in dollars. Dollars made 'em; dollars keep 'em goin'. George Washin'ton gave the U-nited States a start; smart man George Washin'ton, though he died poor, which is contrary to the American spirit. No chance to make his pile, ye see, bein' most of his time lickin' the British, and he turned 'em out, you bet."

"Certainly he managed that," Rollo admitted.

"Yes, sir, he turned 'em out," repeated Job, "though you needn't be takin' on 'bout it now. That gave the country a start, and the people of the U-nited States have gone on takin' advantage of that fact ever since. Already they've made themselves the richest nation on earth, and they're only beginnin', just beginnin' proper. In the future, sir," continued Mr. Shilbeck prophetically, "the stars and stripes and the American eagle will be the universal emblem of wealth. Mark me, the U-nited States are stretchin' their arms abroad for a scoop that'll make the poky nations of Europe sit up, and Asia wonder if the world's bust."

He stroked his goatee complacently.

"Yes, sir, the American bird is spreadin' its wings, and no man can say where it won't light; no, sir, not if he was the lineal descendant of the whole blessed tribe of prophets. A few weeks ago, at a London dinner party, I counted seven American millionaires with their confidential agents. You don't fancy they crossed the Atlantic for their health? They're over here spyin' out the land like Jacob."

"Moses, I think," put in Mr. Linnie modestly.

"Well, we ain't goin' to quarrel 'bout names," responded Job. "It's some time since I looked up my history books, but maybe you're right. That don't matter. The point is that those seven millionaires are over here on a little prospectin' expedition; yes, sir, as I said, spyin' out the land, and they're goin' to possess it, too, sure's the Israelites grabbed Canaan. Up to the present time the high-flyin' Britisher, when he found himself stone-broke, has been in the habit of importin' American wives, for the sake of the capital attached. The thing took the fancy of our girls, because it was thought toney to have a handle to your name, and sail in before kings and such, and a good deal of capital has left the U-nited States in that way. But it's beginnin' to come over here in other ways, and for other purposes than to keep dead-broke lords goin' the rig. You're young, Mr. Linnie," continued Mr. Shilbeck expansively, "and long before you need trouble buyin' lotions to prevent baldness and grey hair, you'll find American capital controllin' all your best-payin' industries; American electric cars carryin' your people; American ships carryin' your goods; American factories hummin' in your towns; American hotels and restirants at your street corners; American brains in your best offices. We've been feedin' ye for a considerable while, and now we're makin' arrangements for running the whole show. Once on a time the U-nited States were a colony of England, now England's becomin' a colony of the U-nited States. The eldest child's comin' back to make things hum. Men like Ogilvie there are returnin' to stir up your British fossils, and they're goin' to succeed, too, and don't you forget it."

"Mr. Ogilvie," said Rollo, "is one of America's most successful men, isn't he?"

"If you get his autograph in the right place on a cheque on the First National Bank of the Republic for twenty

million dollars, you may accept it as good," answered Mr. Shilbeck.

Mr. Rollo Linnie blinked as if suddenly dazzled.

"And Mr. Dunbar?" he asked, in a tremor of excitement.

"You mean Jeff's old man? Likewise good for the amount stated, or any other to which he puts his name," was the reply.

Rollo drew a long breath under the quizzical gaze of Job.

"But there's something of a difference between 'em," Mr. Shilbeck explained, "a pretty considerable difference, and it's this—one has only a daughter, t'other has a son and a daughter."

"I don't quite understand," said Rollo, lighting a cigarette to hide a momentary confusion.

"No?" returned Job meaningly. "Well, put it in this way. 'Spouse I was young and tol'rably good lookin', and wanted a soft snap, what in this country you'd perhaps call formin' family ties on the dowry principle, I'd figure it out to myself like this—'Dunbar, got a son and daughter, therefore divides his pile in two; Ogilvie, daughter only and no son, disposes of his in one lot'; and havin' figured it out, I reckon, I'd lay my accounts and go in bald-headed."

"Go in to win, I suppose?" remarked Mr. Linnie, with a fluttering sensation in the breast.

"Exactly so," replied Job. "Go in to win; and supposin' it was just a little dicker in dollars I was after—affection bein' counted to come in later on, you understand—I'd tackle the undivided pile first, puttin' on my best drawin'-room manner. I'd be mighty careful about that, for it's worth a big start in the kind of handicap we're speakin' of. You see, it's mostly a matter of looks with a girl, and if the outside of a man's all right and slick, the rest don't count. She can't have a look at the inside of his head to

see what's there, and she don't know anything about moral qualities. So she just takes him as he stands, like an article bought at auction. Well, I'd lay my accounts for number one; but that failin' I'd go for number two, which in this case would be good enough for any or'nary man, I reckon."

"That's a very mercenary view of the thing," Rollo commented, his eyes glittering with interest.

"I was takin' it as a business transaction," returned Mr. Shilbeck. "Of course, if you want flummery you can have it, though I don't take much stock in that kind of thing myself. I ain't denyin' that to trot a girl round, proud to show your friends she's good-lookin', is an additional satisfaction; but take you my word for it, it's the amount attached that's in most people's minds, not the girl's looks."

"But not everyone can go in as you say, Mr. Shilbeck, with a chance of winning," said Rollo.

"That's so, of course," Job owned reflectively. "I reckon girls are the most curious works of nature. It's impossible to say when you have 'em, that's a fact. Skittish ain't the word for 'em. An idea gets into a girl's head, and if it pleases her all the surgery in the U-nited States won't extract it. There's a rhyme I came across somewhere 'bout convincin' a woman against her will, she'll hold the same opinion still, or words to that effect. Po'try scores there. Let me tell you something. A friend of mine in Noo York had a daughter that he was just dead gone on, handsome, best of education, European travel, and all the rest—just a beauty. Well, he was all his spare time plannin' her future and the fine man she'd marry—none of yer common or'nary hoppers 'bout town, but a genoowine article of the right sort. Well, when he was plannin' all this, what does she go and do? Why, sir, she goes and gets religion—gets it pretty bad too."

Mr. Shilbeck spoke as if religion were an infectious

disease, to be caught like whooping-cough or the measles. "Yes, pretty bad," he repeated. "Next thing she was teachin' Sunday-school and layin' off 'bout bein' good and loving our neighbour as ourselves, and all that. Next step was to take up with the passon that ran the Sunday-school, ex-dry-goods clerk that got religion kind of sudden too. Imagine a bear rampin' around with a sore head; that was her father. Was it any good? No, sir. She married her passon, and after a while stopped layin' off 'bout lovin' our neighbours. 'Pears she wouldn't have anybody lovin' the passon but herself. Then the old man dies, and the passon, makin' out he'd got a good thing, shut up shop, and went in for yachts and racehorses. By-and-by he crosses to this side and lives like a prince, supported by his wife, European stylc. No," added Mr. Shilbeck oracularly, "ye never can tell what a girl will do, nor what she'll fancy. She's as hard to pin to one leadin' idea as a candidate for the presidency."

His eyes wandered over the moorland to his fellow-sportsmen. Norman had just brought down a brace, a circumstance which attracted Mr. Shilbeck's attention.

"Now there's Captain MacLean," he went on, pursuing his own train of thought. "Ain't got a cent, I believe, but he's got a way with him, and he's got tone. I 'low the British army gives tone, and in fact," affirmed Mr. Shilbeck, "he's just the sort of man for a girl to go and fall in love with. If I was Jeff I'd see a certain contract completed with just as little delay as possible."

"Jeff!" repeated Rollo, wincing in spite of himself; "is he—has he aspirations then?"

"Aspirations!" echoed Mr. Shilbeck. "Come with the engagement-ring in his pocket; showed it to me one day—half-hoop of diamonds in the best Tiffany style, just beautiful. Oh, Jeff ain't got any flies on him when it comes to joolery, and his old man's 'bout as cute as they make 'em."

Jeff's to arrange a sort of family combine, you understand. There ain't any secret about it. Noo York expects it, and I don't see why Noo York should be disappointed. All the same, if I was Jeff I'd be lookin' to the clevis-bolt. Yes, sir, I'd make that half-hoop of diamonds toe the mark."

Mr. Linnie grinned inanely. He had forgotten the interruption of his sport; he was painfully intent on this startling revelation.

"Sir," continued Mr. Shilbeck, with great emphasis, "if Jeff went and lost that girl, old Giles Dunbar would raise hell. Yes, sir, and if I was Jeff, I'd attend to business instead of goin' tootin' in a motor with a peuky Frenchman, as if there wasn't a girl 'bout the place. Natrilly she don't like it."

"Ah!" said Rollo, paling in the tumult Mr. Shilbeck had raised. "And his sister, Miss Dunbar, is she free?"

"Stands to reason," answered Job, "that Giles Dunbar's daughter ain't without admirers. Gilt edges are generally good on any market. But in this world nothing's impossible except bringin' the dead to life again, and makin' sure of happiness; and if a young fellow that's got a tol'able appearance and his head right screwed on was to look spry—Hullo! there's lunch."

And he rose to join his friends, Mr. Linnie following with no great alacrity.

CHAPTER XXXII

PLAYING FOR A GREAT PRIZE

FOR the rest of that day Mr. Linnie seemed to be idiotically bent on ruining his reputation as a sportsman.

"Too much whisky at lunch," his attendant said to himself. "Ay, it must be too much whisky," and kept discreetly to the rear. "They've gone and primed young Linnie till he can hardly see," he told a fellow-ghillie. "There, just look at that," as Rollo blazed with both barrels. "Two shots and not so much as a feather. It's not safe. For God's sake take care of yourself."

Mr. Linnie was, indeed, dangerous and intoxicated, but not with the liquor which ghillies envied him. With a sudden and painful acuteness he had realised that a crisis was upon him, that if he was to make a bold bid for fortune the time had come.

Mr. Shilbeck's words rang in his ears, at once trumpet-call and warning. "If you get his signature to a cheque for twenty millions, you may accept it as good." Heavens! twenty millions, a veritable gold mine, dug, minted, and put away ready for use. The thought affected Rollo in a manner which more than justified the ghillie's deduction. That was the trumpet-call. The warning about Jeff and the captain was less exhilarating. Jeff might be tolerated, but damn the captain. Why was that interloper allowed there at all? The rivalry with Jeff was legitimate, if it could not be called welcome. In his own mind he turned

Mr. Dunbar over and over, analysed him, took his dimensions, weighed him in the balance, and reluctantly admitted his claims. His lot as the son of a multimillionaire was one which made Rollo's mouth water, like the thought of a luscious pear. To have coin for the gratification of every conceivable fad, foible and taste, however rare, however expensive; to be able to procure the costliest the world offered in yacht, racehorses, motors, or whatever else in devices of pleasure a fertile invention might suggest; to dictate at will to tailors, jewellers, and wine merchants without thought of the time of reckoning, conferred privileges which Mr. Rollo Linnie, as an amateur of fashion, readily recognised. Moreover, though at Dunveagle on a tender and momentous mission, Mr. Dunbar was not violently nor fatuously in love, and if he missed his chance, why, then the possibilities to others were the more glorious.

Next minute, however, Mr. Linnie ground his teeth over something mentioned incidentally by Shilbeck—the infernal fickleness of the feminine heart. Somewhere in the course of his reading he had come across a saying of Voltaire, that sense is like a beard and women have none. They twisted like serpents, changed like the chameleon, and often chose like fools. “It’s too true,” he reflected, thinking of personal observations of such a temper; “too true.”

He went on with his shooting as in a vexed dream, and ended the day in a nervous fever. In the evening he bade a curt good-bye, and went off without going near the castle. He had plans to mature, and he could do that best driving meditatively in the odorous August dusk.

The issue was a series of artfully arranged calls. Among the blessings conferred by nature upon Rollo was a paternal aunt, Miss Jemima Linnie, and a sister, Miss Grace. The elder maiden, though already past the fiftieth milestone in life’s pilgrimage, had all the zest and more than

the frolic of youth, dressed like five-and-twenty, maintained a coquettish archness in converse with men, a genial sympathy with their failings, and a wondrous receptivity of heart in regard to their fancies. She was troubled by a growing massiveness of girth, detrimental to the spirit of sprightliness; but this tendency to surplusage of body she valiantly combated by hooping and binding so rigidly that she moved as if encased in tight-fitting steel corselet, sat bolt upright, like a cask on end, and breathed as if she were in a state of chronic agitation. But what she lacked in ease and lightness of figure she made up in vivacity of manner. From the first she was softly interested in Mr. Ogilvie, and more than once wondered why he did not think of installing a new mistress at Dunveagle.

"Every head of a house should be married," Miss Jemima had said privately. "It's a duty he owes to society; and I'm sure every man who can afford it would be greatly the better of a wife to look after him." Had Miss Linnie opened her whole heart she would have added, "And I'm perfectly certain every woman would be greatly the better of a husband."

Sometimes in the hour of dreams that comes even to stout spinsters of fifty, she allowed herself to shape the domestic economy of Dunveagle, and take personal charge of the happiness of its master. Her niece was half her age, fair, freckled, alert for the main chance, and plentifully endowed with the family regard for number one.

Rollo accused them of neglecting the Ogilvies, urged a more neighbourly spirit, and packed them off to their duty. So it came to pass that, while the gentlemen shot grouse on the moor, the ladies drank tea in the drawing-room, "sized one another up," in Kitty's shrewd words, and passed judgment on a whole county.

Miss Jemima knew all things and all people worth knowing, the taste and inclination of every man of note,

and especially the correct ages of ladies who got to "a certain age," and stopped till it became convenient to advance. As she remembered when many of them were in short frocks, her smiling assurance, "I know exactly," was as damaging as a birth-certificate.

The impression she produced was not perhaps such as she designed or imagined.

"Poor old thing," Kitty remarked confidentially to Connie; "I guess she's herself got to the point at which a woman takes a turn backward. If she's fifty now, how much younger will she be in five years hence? It's a fearful fight with old age."

A dinner-party at Teviot Hall cemented a friendship auspiciously begun in London and developed by tea-drinking at Dunveagle; and then came the golden opportunity to which the astute Rollo had been cunningly leading up. At Aberfourie there is a yearly gathering for Highland sports, the most notable in the county. Rollo was so fortunate as to be on the committee of management, and at the appropriate time he took care that the millionaire of Dunveagle had a place of honour among the patrons. There followed an invitation to the ladies for the games during the day and the ball in the evening. Connie hung back, but Kitty pressed, and Rollo was transported by an acceptance. He saw twenty millions drawing perceptibly nearer; he saw presumptuous interlopers thrust out into the cold. In one thing unhappily he failed, in spite of his protests; Captain MacLean, in virtue of his military fame, was invited to be one of the judges. But Rollo vowed with himself to make that a matter of no moment in the arrangement for the party from Dunveagle.

CHAPTER XXXIII

AN OLYMPIAN FESTIVAL

ON the festive day Aberfourie breakfasted to the merry din of bugles and pipe music. From early morning the country folk flocked in, a picturesque, characteristic throng, some in gigs, some on horseback, but most on foot, for lofty and low alike made holiday in honour of "the Games." The railway too contributed its quota, competitors in the coming tournament for most part, champion athletes, prize dancers, and musicians, faded hangers on, and, lest the fun should flag, a leaven of the quick-witted, nimble-fingered artists, whose field of operations is other people's pockets.

A little before noon the carriages of the quality began to glitter and jingle in all varieties of splendour; here a duke's, there an earl's, yonder a baronet's, and between, the flashing turn-out of mercantile or financial prince, for the present seeking the mystic glory that comes of leasing Highland grouse moors and deer forests. The waggonettes and dog-carts of the smaller gentry furnished the humbler elements of foil and contrast; and the whole, when at last the converging point was reached, presented a spectacle of Roman pomp and bustle. Indeed, with but a slight change of circumstance, one might have fancied all this brave pageantry a prelude to the gladiatorial contests and chariot races that once made the populace of Rome drunk with excitement. Here, to make the illusion of semblance closer, rolled the lordly Tay (swollen imperceptibly by the Veagle), to which

the presumptuous Roman had likened his muddy Tiber; here was the motley crowd, bronzed, lusty, and hilariously loud-voiced, ready for any revel; above all here were the flashing wheels, the splendid horses, dancing under the curb in all the pride of gay trappings and faultless condition.

The rousing clamour of bugles from four-in-hands and the criticism passed upon the coaches of greatness served to divert attention from the insignificant vehicles which crept along, like poor relations, anxious only to escape notice. Among these was the Craigenard dog-cart, with Ian Veg on the driver's seat, the captain by his side, and Alick on the back seat.

They were all in native dress, which is to say kilts of MacLean tartan, and below were Ian's pipes, a pair of dancing shoes, the property of Alick, and a stout leather case of portmanteau size, belonging to the captain. They entered the field unrecognised, save for official salutations to the captain, and next minute were lost in the throng.

Half an hour later there wheeled into the white-tented field an equipage which instantly became a centre of attraction and interest. It was drawn by four gleaming blacks, their necks superbly arched, their rich manes tossing royally as they flung their heads, their full, undocked tails almost sweeping the ground, their richly mounted harness sparkling as with gems. On the box erect between two smiling girls sat a sable-faced coachman in livery of green and gold, handling his mettlesome team with the ease and aplomb of the practised whip. That he was proud of them one could see by a glance at the dusky face, proud of their shape, their style, their mettle, and their instant, graceful obedience to his touch. The ladies, looking down upon the curved necks and quivering ears, were also proud; for God has created few finer things than a perfect horse, and here at their feet were four perfect examples of subtle strength and grace.

"The new laird of Dunveagle," the whisper ran, and the crowd pressed to examine the turn-out of a millionaire, once as poor as themselves, and consider his taste in coaches and horseflesh. For the most part the gazers were dumb, for four such horses had never before entered Aberfourie together, and the face of the man himself was a matter for silent wonder and study. A cynic, however, found his tongue, and his words, winged with sarcasm as it seemed, reached the millionaire's ears.

"Umph! black coachman, black horses; black's the colour for gold. Grand taste."

The rich man turned swiftly, and his eye fell on a battered figure within a foot of his chariot wheels. It had a fiddle under its arm, and its face bore evidence of many sprees, but it looked up saucily out of its red eyes. It was but a glance the man above gave, for what have millionaires to do with broken-down fiddlers? The gleaming blacks passed on, champing their bits; and the owner of the fiddle turned suddenly at a touch from behind.

"Pocket pickin' so early in the day," he cried, swinging about. "Who's that?"

"There's a heap in your pocket worth picking, Lauchie Duff, I'm thinking," was the response.

Lauchie's face beamed in spite of scars.

"Ow, ow, Ian Veg!" he cried, wringing the hand held out to him like a forty-year-old crony. "Who'd have expected such a sight for sair een? And how's the pipes, man, how's the pipes?"

"Oh, just about as well's the fiddle, Lauchie," beamed Ian.

"And that's as sick as the devil after a bellyful o' cauld kail," was the response. "Ian Veg, men o' our persuasion's no owre well treated by a godless world. When would your blowin' and my scrapin' get us a coach-and-four like the ane that's just passed, d'ye think? Dunveagle's puttin'

on style. And Duncan lookit doon as if he'd never laid eyes on me afore. Man, I fiddled at Jack Ogilvie's weddin' wi' Jean Meldrum o' the Whins; micht have had Jean mysel' if I'd likit. But God in His Providence never made me a marryin' man. The meesery o' my friends is quite enough for me. So Jean Meldrum just took Jock Ogilvie, and ye see what's happened. She's a fine lady the day, I'm telt, and I'm—never mind what, I'm good for a gill yet. Where'll we go?"

Ian protested it was too early in the day for whisky, giving as a reason for abstinence that he expected to do a little piping by-and-by.

"Oh!" cried Mr. Duff, throwing back his head as if sniffing a desire on Ian's part to pose for respectability. "So you're goin' to squeeze the auld bags, are ye? And you're grown fine and sober, Ian, since that time ye drank Mary Ruah into glory. Nae doot, ye've things on yer conscience like the rest o' us. But tell me what's the auld Dunveagle doin' hob-nobbin' wi' the new Dunveagle? I thought he'd have cuttit his throat first."

"So he should," returned Ian.

"That's yer opinion, is it?" said Lauchie. "Faith, they say he come near killin' himsel' one day no long ago, when you and him was oot thegither. Both on the skite, I suppose."

"Sober's you are this minute, Lauchie," Ian replied.

"And that's a great deal soberer nor's at all naetral or agreeable, Mr. Mackern," was the rejoinder. "But, tell me, what's wrang wi' the laird—I mean the auld ane?"

Ian made an eloquent contortion of face, indicating that he must not blab in a public place.

"Is it so bad as that?" Lauchie answered sympathetically. "Well, there's no place for a crack like a public-house. Come!" And he bore the half-resisting Ian off.

Meanwhile the Dunveagle drag had wheeled into place,

and the party alighted, Mr. Rollo Linnie receiving them graciously on behalf of the committee.

"I congratulate you on the fine day you've brought," he said comprehensively to Connie and Kitty; "I think you'll see good sport."

The girls expressed their pleasure, and between salutations, between promiscuous jest and laughter, asked how the display was to open.

"There's a little military parade first," he told them. "Some of our fellows are officers in the local corps of Volunteers, and they want to air their new uniforms."

The last clause was meant to show that a man who was a man—Mr. Rollo Linnie, for instance—needed no military trappings to set him off.

"Oh!" replied Kitty mischievously, "I love to see officers in uniform. In Berlin I kissed my hand to the Kaiser, and he saluted like a brick. I felt blushing all over when the crowd turned to look at me; but the Kaiser was lovely, I tell you. I can understand now how kings and emperors are useful for show. The German officer, too, knows how to get into his clothes—as my brother Jeff says—but he's not a patch on the Hungarian. I just love to see Hungarians in uniform."

She broke off with an exclamation as the strains of "The Highland Laddie" floated to their ears, and next minute the 55th, or Aberfourie Highlanders, swung into the field, headed by their pipers. The girls scrambled back to the coach-top, Rollo and Jeff assisting them, and the others following more leisurely.

"I wish Captain MacLean were here to see," said Connie; "as a military man he'd be interested."

"Hullo!" cried Jeff, as in instant reply, "there he is, see, just come out of that tent, and in full regimentals too, by Jove!"

Kitty levelled a field-glass.

"And he's got his medals on too," she added quickly. "Isn't he just lovely?"

Connie breathed a little faster; Rollo could have groaned. He did not expect this.

"Oh, there's another officer beside Captain MacLean," Kitty pointed out. "Who's that?"

"That," replied the laird, trying to look as if he were not in the least gratified, "is young Lord Kinluig, an officer in my son's regiment."

The 35th advanced; Captain MacLean took up a position on an improvised stand over which floated the Union Jack, with Lord Kinluig beside him, and a group of local notabilities behind. The music changed, and the Aberfourie warriors strode past to the "Pibroch of Donald Dhu," a war tune which had sent the captain and his comrade into the real thing; then wheeled, and came back to "Blue Bonnets over the Border." All at once the pipes stopped, the company halted facing the flag, and the bugle sounded the general salute, the captain standing in a rigid acknowledgment which drew comments and exclamations from the Dunveagle coach. Then the red-faced bugler also ceased, the captain descended and proceeded along the ranks, peering and smiling.

"What's he doing?" Kitty asked eagerly.

"Inspecting," answered the laird.

"A farce," put in Rollo bitterly.

"Oh!" said Kitty, as in response to both.

A drill exhibition followed, the captain made a little speech, the pipers struck up a quick step, and the Aberfourie Highlanders marched off briskly—into civil life. Thereupon Captain MacLean made his way to the Dunveagle brake, taking with him his friend and comrade, Lord Kinluig.

CHAPTER XXXIV

PEER AND DEMOCRAT

THE welcome to Norman was easy and cordial, both girls giving their hands and their smiles as to a familiar friend. With Kinluig it was necessary to stand more upon ceremony, for besides being a stranger, he was young, handsome, and a peer. He stood the democratic tests capitably, for it chanced that, although a lord—a circumstance, as he once explained apologetically, he really couldn't help—his disposition was genial and his training such as kills the prig. In five minutes he was at home with the men; in half an hour the ladies almost forgot he bore a title. "If you weren't told you'd never guess he is an earl's son," Kitty whispered in admiration.

He conformed in no wise to the American notion of a lord. He did not, for instance, in the least resemble the starchy, drawling little Duke of Fossilborough, whom she had met and ridiculed at Newport; he was equally unlike the Earl of Bobshaw, who had swaggered through New York drawing-rooms with a coronet under his arm, as if it were a new patent magnet, warranted to attract gold. Subsequently in her visits to Europe she had met specimens of nobility dowered with the qualities of man, and Kinluig seemed to be fashioned on the best models. He wore no monocle, cultivated no drawl, irritated by no airs of condescension. On the positive side he had frankness, good looks, engaging ways, and an admiration for the captain that was not to be hidden.

Referring to the military display just ended, Kitty commented wittily on men in short frocks, and both girls asked Captain MacLean's opinion of the local force. But he would not criticise. The men were civilians, and civilians don't become soldiers merely by getting into uniform and enjoying themselves on a gala-day. Partly from irresponsibility, partly from the stimulus of bright eyes, Kinluig permitted himself more freedom of speech.

"I know what he'd have liked, Miss Dunbar," he said in answer to a question at which the captain had merely smiled. "First, he'd have liked to take the men down to a quiet spot by the riverside, and talked to them like a father about dressing and bearing, and the use of steel and lead. Then he'd have liked to take them uphill in face of a sniping foe to see how his precepts were bearing fruit."

"You're always bloodthirsty, Kinluig," the captain remarked.

"Don't forget that bit of fun with the Buffs," rejoined Kinluig. "I thought of it to-day, listening to that pibroch."

The voices of Connie and Kitty came together in a demand for particulars.

"May I tell?" asked Kinluig, looking at his superior officer.

"You must tell," responded Kitty before the captain had chance of reply. "Captain MacLean is superseded in command. You are not to mind his authority."

She beamed as if to say, "It's useless trying to resist; give in pleasantly." The captain bowed.

"If there were authority," he said, "it could not be resigned into worthier hands," and having no taste for incense, turned to talk with Mr. Ogilvie.

"The thing is told in a sentence," Kinluig began, as both girls instinctively drew closer. "It was in one of

the little shindies up among the hills, which a thoughtful Indian Government arranges for practice. Some of us had got into a devilishly hot corner—I beg your pardon."

"Oh, don't!" returned Kitty. "It's delightful. You had got into a corner of the kind you mention——"

"Thank you—yes, and those who had been irregular in their devotions were beginning to have regrets, you know."

"And that was just the whole lot, I guess," put in Kitty.

"Well, possibly you're not far out, Miss Dunbar. Soldiers aren't parsons. In any case there we were, peppered much too hotly for pleasantness; for the beggars above had got our range to a yard, and the men were throwing up arms and turning over—we were lying down, of course—at a rate that meant wiping out, if it lasted any considerable time."

"It must be terrible to see men dying," Connie remarked, with a shudder.

"Well, yes, I daresay it is, if you stop to think of it. One can't call it a cheerful spectacle when strong men roll in the dust, crying out; but our fellows kept pretty quiet, to do them justice. It depends on how and where a man's hit whether or not he makes a fuss. We hadn't time to think of that. Captain MacLean was in command, our major being wounded. 'What's it to be, sir?' I asked. 'Why, what should it be?' he answered, running his eye up the slope. 'Strike up,' he said, turning to the pipe-major, and on the spur of the moment there came the 'Pibroch of Donald Dhu,' which you have heard to-day. That's how I thought of the thing, but the circumstances were slightly different. Miss Ogilvie, I fear the story is unpleasant to you."

Connie's face had grown ominously pale, but it was the pallor of interest and excitement.

"No," protested Connie; "please go on."

"Well, there came the word of command from our captain. You should have seen the Buffs leap. I can see

them this minute, for they meant to kill, and when men mean to kill there's something in their faces that, once seen, you don't forget. Up went the captain, and after him we raced. From the pinging of lead you might have imagined a thousand swarms of bees were about our ears. Men dropped thick, for the shooting was dashed good for savages. The brigadier had detected our fix, and sent an order to retire. But Captain MacLean has a deaf ear on occasion, as Nelson had a blind eye."

"Weren't you horribly afraid?" asked Jeff, who had joined the listening group.

"Some of us might have been: if we'd got the chance," was the candid reply. "In ten minutes we were among the beggars with the bayonet, and there was one of the most agile seampers you ever saw. That's where Captain MacLean got his D.S.O."

"And what's his D.S.O.?" Kitty inquired.

"The Distinguished Service Order," Kinluig explained.

"I think he ought to have had the V.C."

"I know what that is," Kitty said. "He never told us about the other."

"No, and probably wouldn't if you were to know him twenty years. He's not of the men who talk about themselves. But the army will give you his record, ay, and predict for you what he's to be."

"And what's that?"

"A general, if he gets half a chance," was the emphatic reply.

Connie smiled softly to herself. She knew his record, having very privately consulted army lists, and drank in with a kind of thrilling greediness the praise of his brother officer.

Conversation was interrupted by a movement in the ring, announcing that the sports were about to begin. Rollo dropped hurriedly from the Dunveagle drag, inviting the

millionaire to accompany him within the space reserved for patrons, judges, and committee-men, but for the present Mr. Ogilvie preferred to remain with his own party.

"Hullo!" exclaimed Kinluig at sight of a particularly active old Highlander within the enclosure. "The governor."

"Lord Ardvenmore never misses the Games," said the laird.

"I verily believe he'd as soon think of missing his dinner when he's hungry," Kinluig responded, with a little laugh. "The Games are a sort of annual dissipation. He's one of the judges to-day. There go some of the competitors at last."

A shout of glee went up from the watchers as there appeared half-a-dozen giants in undress shirt and kilt. One could see the knotted sinews in their great bare arms, and the thin shirts hardly hid the mighty chests. They chatted together amicably as four others bore into the arena what appeared to be two tree trunks, sawn short, one being slightly longer and heavier than the other.

"What are they going to do with that timber?" Mr. Shilbeck inquired, giving the first sign of interest in the proceedings.

"Going to make it turn somersaults," answered Kinluig.

"Sainted Aunt Maria!" exclaimed Jeff, who was actually tasting a new sensation.

"It's called tossing the caber," the laird explained.

"Caber is Gaelic; the tossing consists of turning the caber over on end."

"Funny kind of sport, turnin' undressed timber end-ways," Mr. Shilbeck remarked.

By this time one of the sons of Anak had the caber high in air, and was staggering drunkenly in the effort to balance it.

"A little too much liquor on board for that job, I reckon,

sonny," commented Mr. Shilbeck, whereat the company laughed.

The next instant the staggering giant gave a mighty lurch, the caber tilted forward, took the ground, rose slowly, paused at the perpendicular, hesitated, and fell to the side.

"Failed, by jimminy!" cried Jeff, his right shoulder unconsciously hitched as if he too were heaving a caber.

"Not much sign of liquor there, I think," said Kinluig, turning genially to Mr. Shilbeck.

"Quite right, sir, quite right," Job admitted, with equal affability.

The next giant who took up the caber failed likewise, and the next, and the next.

"Reckon tain't so easy as it looks, makin' that pole turn a somersault," said Mr. Shilbeck at large. "They'd better toddle home and come another day. Likely people lookin' fret 'em and put 'em out."

But as he spoke there stepped forth from the group of gladiators one whom the crowd welcomed with a resounding cheer.

"Ah, here's Donald himself," said the laird. "You'll see it going over now."

Donald squared his hereulean shoulders, stooped, seized the caber, hoisted it, took a little uncertain step back, a little resolute race forward, rose till he stood on his toes, and spun the eaber in air as a child might spin a walking-stick.

The crowd pealed as the caber went over, but Donald did not heed. In the time of Games cheers were his daily farc.

"Goliath of Gath," cried Connie.

"That's always what Donald does," said the laird. "They make the handicap heavier and heavier to get others to enter, and as you say, Miss Ogilvie, it's a ease of walking off with the Gates of Gaza each time."

"I guess," Jeff said, taking stock of the athletic figure, "he'd be an ugly hand in a row."

"You'll have a hint presently of what he'd be likely to do," returned the laird.

To the caber tossing succeeded the wrestling, and here again Donald was to prove his brawn. There was but one man who would hazard his clasp, and when the vast arms closed like iron bands on that venturesome person, beholders gasped as if their own ribs were cracking.

"He's good stuff," said Kinluig, referring to the lighter man, "but Donald grips like a python."

The wrestlers swayed and turned, their backs arched, the calves of their legs knitting and writhing. Then suddenly Donald crouched and drew; the crooked back of his antagonist straightened, the knees bowed, and Donald laid his man on the grass.

While the crowd roared the platform was made ready for the dancers.

"By the way, isn't our friend Alick to dance?" Kitty asked the captain. Yes, Alick was to dance, but the captain doubted if he would dance to much purpose.

"They come here from all quarters," he explained. "Good dancers every one of them, and oddly enough one of the best is your Goliath of Gath."

In the midst of the preparations the laird, looking forth a trifle anxiously, spied two figures crossing the field towards the reserved enclosure. They were lovingly linked together, and walked with jerky, irregular steps. Under the arm of one a bagpipe straggled like a dead turkey with spread wings; under the arm of the other was tucked a fiddle. The laird had premonitions of trouble and was not disappointed.

At the gate there was a sharp altercation with the keeper, but he of the pipes prevailed, and passed in triumphantly, taking his friend with him. A moment later Mr. Rollo Linnie stepped from the door of the committee tent, and the heart of the watcher began to beat fast. As he

expected, Rollo pounced on the linked figures, who drew up, swaying unsteadily. What Mr. Linnie said was not much, but like Mercutio's wound, it was enough. The laird saw the principal figure lay down its pipes, fix its bonnet more firmly on its head, and trip out, squaring defiantly.

"Norman, go and see what's wrong with that spitfire now," the laird said in sudden concern. "Be quick, or he'll assault Linnie before you get there."

Norman obeyed with military alacrity, every eye on the drag watching intently.

"What's this?" he demanded sharply, taking Ian unaware. "What do you mean, sir, by conduct of this sort?"

Mr. Lauchie Duff took two steps backward, recovered, and hiccoughed, grinning on the captain.

"It's a wee maitter o' private honour," he explained. "Our friend Ian was always a stickler for honour."

In the same instant Ian turned, his face as a flame of fire.

"Here's a man, sir," he said, jerking the head scornfully at Linnie, "that thinks God Almighty has handed the management of the world over to him."

"He's not fit to be here in that condition," Rollo interposed in self-defence, "and I've ordered him out."

"True," rejoined Ian, "but ye made a mistake to think he wass a big enough ass to go for the like of you. As for my condection, will ye oblige me by standing out and trying it?"

"That's fair and square," commented Lauchie. "Al haud yer pipes, Ian."

Rollo turned to Norman. "As these two are, I infer, under your care," he said, with mock politeness, "I advise you to get them out of the way as quickly as possible. The committee cannot tolerate this."

"I'm here to pipe," Ian declared aloud, "and I'm going to pipe, and you can stick your committee——"

"Ian, Ian," interrupted the captain.

"Him and his committee," retorted Ian contemptuously, "that doesn't know a chanter from a cabbage stock."

For his own sake and Ian's, Norman desired to avoid a scene. A crowd was gathering, and no man, even if he be victor, looks heroic disputing and wrangling in a crowd. Besides, there was but one man whose word, in present conditions, would have the smallest effect with the enraged Ian.

"If you will have the goodness to wait one minute, I will send for my father," Norman said quietly to Rollo, and hastened off.

When the laird arrived he took Ian aside, and for a minute the pair held animated conversation, Ian's thumb jerking vehemently over his shoulder at Rollo. Alick, slippered and ready for the dance, ventured to intervene with a plea. He had learned the great art under Ian Veg's eye; by a special act of grace, it was conceded Ian should play to him in the competition; the chance of a prize was gone if Ian were to be thrust out.

"On your honour, Ian, are you fit to play?" the laird asked, looking hard at his henchman.

"Fit!" cried Ian, cocking his bonnet a little more defiantly, "I'm fit to play the tevil out of hell."

"That would be ill done, Ian," returned the laird soothingly. "Leave him where he is."

Thereupon he spoke softly to Linnie, and more persuasively still to others of greater influence, amongst them the Earl of Ardenmore.

"Tut, tut!" cried his lordship, smiling sympathetically upon the culprit. "To throw a man out because he's stepped half an inch out of the straight line. If that rule were to hold, which of us should see salvation?"

CHAPTER XXXV

FOR THE GLORY OF THE LAIRD AND OF NORMAN

IN the dancing interest centred, so far as Dunveagle was concerned, in two competitors, Alick Ruah and the champion in the wrestling and caber tossing, scarcely to be recognised in his new guise, so airily lithe and springy he appeared. In the feats of strength he seemed brawn and brawn alone; but on the platform ready for the dance he was all grace and suppleness. The novice-critics made the mistake of associating might of thew with heaviness of bulk and slowness of movement. A giant to their mind must necessarily be a sort of human elephant or dray-horse. They understood nothing of bodies compacted on the principle of finely tempered steel.

The fact is, the rectified essence of many types of manhood lay packed under Donald's glengarry. In heroic ages he would have excelled equally at Olympus or Delphi, the Isthmus or Rome. A runner, a leaper, a wrestler, a dancer almost without match, he would have been a hero for Pindar's muse. You beheld him in one attitude, say rigid with the dark olive-brown skin drawn tight over muscle and bone, and he suggested carved bronze; he relaxed, and you had the almost superhuman suppleness, the agile grace, springy as steel, flexible as a serpent, which Greek art has made immortal. He wrestled, and the Roman gladiator stood before you.

Beside him Alick was as the stripling David to Goliath. And like David, Alick was not abashed. A ludicrous con-

trast in point of size, giant and boy were alike in this, that each could use hands and feet with a miraculous skill, the effect of pure bodily genius.

By a stroke of irony they took the floor together, the difference in stature calling forth examples of the rough pleasantries by which a crowd signifies its good humour. There were a score of expert pipers present, each eager to pipe, but it was Ian Veg who stepped to the front, ribbons flying bravely, buckles gleaming, head thrown back like the proud protagonist in a great drama. He took up his position in front of the dancers, and the pipes squealed. For half a second the laird's heart stopped in fear, and somehow every one on the Dunveagle drag inclined on the strain. Even Shilbeck felt and obeyed the magnetic influence. Ian gave his drone a vicious twist, as one flicks a horse that jibs unexpectedly in a crucial moment. "Heavens!" thought the laird, with a chilly quiver, "he's not fit after all," and in his mind's eye he saw Ian hurried off in disgrace by order of the gloating Rollo. But even as his blood ran cold there rose the strong, clear note indicating that all was well.

The dance was "Ghillic Challum." The dancers raised their glengarries, bowed (Alick instinctively towards the Dunveagle coach), and turned each to his crossed swords. The next moment they were bobbing, arms akimbo. Connie and Kitty clapped their hands, for this made all stage exhibitions artificial and clumsy; the laird breathed quickly, his eye moving to and fro between dancers and piper. Mr. Shilbeck forgot to smoke, and Mr. Ogilvie beat time, his blood leaping in a rapture. The measure quickened, up went the dancers' right arms in crescents over the head, and the dancers' buckled feet were as sunbeams twinkling among sword-blades. The attention was concentrated on Donald and Alick, but one watched Ian in wonder and admiration.

"He's the drunkest man that ever put finger to pipe at Games," commented Mr. Duff, "and listen till him. I can play mysel in drink, but owre fou I slither. The higher ye fill him the better the playin'."

The music ceased; the dancers bowed to a tumult of clapping and roaring.

"Glorious!" cried Mr. Ogilvie, clapping frantically.

"Glorious!" echoed Kitty and Connie.

"Yes," Mr. Shilbeck owned, "pretty good."

It was as near hyperbole as Mr. Shilbeck ever ventured.

In the ring, a group of the privileged, including Captain MacLean and Jeff, gathered about Donald and Alick.

"I think he's won," the giant said, smiling down on his rival. "You'll have seen that, my lord," he added to the Earl of Ardenmore and strode away. He did not tell that by a false step deliberately planned he surrendered his own chance to Alick.

"I've more cups and medals than I know what to do with," he remarked later in confidence, "and the wee devil's a brick."

Meantime Ian did his best (and it was much) to renew hostilities with Mr. Linnie.

"What d'ye think of yerself now?" he demanded, snapping his fingers in Rollo's face. "You and yer committee taking it on yerselves to judge me. Go home and buy a penny whistle." And he went off disdainfully to receive congratulations. But the captain took care they should not be washed down with liquor.

Others succeeded in sword dance and Highland Fling. Then once more giant and stripling stood up together for a reel, and Ian tuned and took his place, still drunk, still divinely capable. And the dancing over, there came the surprise of the day. Without whisper or hint to any friend Ian had entered for the pipe competition, contriving, by means of his own, to get his name entered as an un-

published addition to the programme. The competitors included famous players, from MacVorlich, the Earl of Ardenmore's own piper, down through many Macs already noted in the annals of games. Mackern was oldest of them all, was out of practice and was drunk, ay, very drunk, though not wholly, if the observer's eye went deep enough, with the drunkenness of ardent waters. Through the old brain and fingers swept the fiery tides of youth, the passion of an indestructible devotion.

Ian was not piping from vanity, nor for the paltry triumph of a prize, but for the glory of the laird and of Norman. So he stepped forth in a glorious intoxication more spiritual than spirituous, to hold for one dazzling moment his beloved up to the admiration of the world. For Ian, like the primitive creature he was, could not separate his own honour from his master's. If he suffered with the laird, the laird should rejoice with him; such were Ian's faith and ideals. He that loveth much shall not only be forgiven much, but shall perform miracles. The fervour of the gallant wearing his lady's favours was feeble and insipid beside Ian's hot, relentless loyalty. He had taught Alick to dance, and piped him to victory; he was now to do a much greater thing.

When he stepped out, his bonnet askew, his rebel hair in his eyes, the judges looked grave, but by the time he had turned twice in the allotted space, the gravity was on the faces of his rivals. For the small, grey-headed figure did not simply play a certain tune, he evoked the very spirit of the warrior Gaei—dauntless, thrilling, triumphant; so that listeners, women almost as much as men, felt the roused impulse for the onset; and then, all at once, as at the wave of a magician's wand, a gush of piteous, yearning emotion subdued the excited multitude to an ineffable sadness. As a minute before it itched for the fight, so now it sighed over the poignancy of human misery. The most affecting of the

ancient tragic poets, the sublime Greek, confidant and instrument of Fate, the still sublimer Englishman, whose pen was the very stylus of tragedy, had their match in the transhumanised Celtic player. For it was not Ian that piped, great as Ian was in piping, but the genius of loyalty herself.

He ended, and returned to his place in a tempest from two thousand throats. He was not surprised. He knew what he had done, and his rivals knew also. The Earl's own piper met him with congratulations; the Earl himself wrung his hard right hand. Better still, Norman was glad, and presently came a message that he was wanted on the Dunveagle drag.

It chanced that Linnie went to his friends without knowing of this message, and Ian, balancing giddily, was helped up at his heels—to receive a welcome from the young ladies for which Rollo would have given his soul. But Ian's eyes were for the laird. "Am I fit now, sir?" he asked, as one might say, "It was all for you; I hope you're satisfied."

"Fit!" echoed the laird; "Ian Veg, you're a greater piper than I thought. I'm proud of you."

In testimony of general appreciation, Mr. Ogilvie poured out a glass of sparkling liquor, and Ian, despite himself, drank to the ladies and the laird of Dunveagle. Mr. Duff, watching close at hand, remarked, *sotto voce*, that in this world some people have an undue share of luck.

CHAPTER XXXVI

A PRECIPITATE LOVER

TO the Countess of Ardvenmore, as first fiddle among the quality, fell the distinction of presenting the prizes. Her son acted as aide-de-camp, and a brilliant group, including the Dunvcaglc party, supported her, smiling when she smiled, looking gracious as she looked gracious, according to the best traditions of the art. Connie and Kitty being conspicuous in the foreground were subjected to much whispered criticism, directed partly at their looks, as representing the beauty of American womanhood, but chiefly at their riches, as representing the ideals of a whole world.

It was owned they passed creditably in looks, that their cosmopolitan airs were piquant and engaging, and that, withal, they seemed commendably modest for young people who doubtless had much incense burned under their noses, and were every minute of their lives taught by a hundred subtle teachers that the earth and its glories are for such as can afford to pay. On the other hand, it was noted they were not in the least appalled or confused by the ordeal of rubbing shoulders with a nobility that traced its lineage back into the mists of antiquity—ay, even beyond the time of Noah himself, report affirmed. They appeared very much at ease, and in truth presented as fair a front, as elegant and nice a manner as if they had just arrived, fresh varnished, from court.

Now Aberfourie had heard, or was led to understand, or believed—at any rate, succeeded in getting the notion into its head—that while America is pre-eminently the land of

gold, it is less pre-eminently the land of high breeding. But with a living refutation of the slander before its eyes, Aberfourie amended its opinion of the Republic.

The prizemen entered to the roar of brazen lungs, the youngest and oldest being the heroes of the crowd. When Ian Veg stepped forward as first prizeman in his competition, Kinluig managed to whisper in Lady Ardenmore's ear, "Shake the old fellow's hand, mother." His reason given afterwards was, "You see, the old chap was very drunk, very militant, and very amusing. He not only won the prize, but gave us a great deal of fun."

Had he been making a confession, he would have added that Miss Ogilvie and Miss Dunbar were evidently interested in the grey-headed breaker of conventions.

The Countess graciously gave the cue, and Ian had a conqueror's ovation. Almost for the first time in his life the recipient of honour stood dazed and dumfounded, till glancing aside he saw the laird beaming in pleasure. That was enough; Ian's wits returned.

"I will be much obleeged to yer ladyship," he said hastily, doffed his bonnet, and was gone.

Alick, the youngest of the prizemen, received Benjamin's portion of applause, and he, too, being no courtier, was put out. The Countess's jewelled fingers affected him as something superhuman, something to be touched with awe and trepidation. Except Miss Ogilvie's, Alick had never felt a hand so soft, so rich, so potent to confuse. When the great lady looked in his face, smiling and speaking words he could not hear for the buzzing in his head, he reddened like a girl. At the first chance he doffed and turned to go; but to his dismay the example set by the Countess was followed by Connic, by Kitty, and a score of other fine ladies, who passed him from hand to hand with a diabolic politeness harder to endure than the rage of a hundred masters. In the end his eyes, like Ian's, turned to the laird with a piteous expression, as if to say, "This is bad, sir, but

you see I can't help it." Finding himself free at last, he bolted, to another and final round of applause.

The presentation of prizes over, the élite turned, humming daintily, to other concerns, and Lord Kinluig contrived to have the Dunveagle young ladies attached to his mother. To the protégées thus thrust upon her by a diplomatic son Lady Ardvenmore bore herself with gentle beneficence and a close, critical watchfulness. What sort of beings were they precisely, these daughters of Fortunatus? They were fabulously rich of course, and riches appealed acutely to one whose high estate, like the high estate of many of her class, was embarrassed by a confounded lack of guineas. Thus vigorously her ladyship occasionally permitted herself to speak of aristocratic straitness of purse.

They were rich, but so were cheesemongers and publicans, and haberdashers and pawnbrokers. Her ladyship's fishmonger owned stocks and freehold property; her ladyship's butcher had lent her £500 on the sly, making his own exorbitant rate of interest, the rascally Jew; her ladyship's London tailor had a smarter turn-out than her ladyship's own. Brewers died millionaires. Stockbrokers built churches—from remorse probably. Beyond all doubt craft and commerce brought money. And these two slim misses were stupendous heiresses, blissfully ignorant of the worries of making ends meet; but, great heavens! if they should be vulgar.

The Countess of Ardvenmore, an exceedingly fine, fine lady of a stock of undisputed hoariness, suffered much. Grasping money-lenders had put her under trustees, brutal tradesmen harassed her as if she were expected to pay bills like any common person. "I am apostolic in one sense at least," she declared, with a touch of bitter humour. "For, like Paul, what I would that I do not; what I would not that I often do." But no power on earth ever did, would or could induce her to countenance vulgarity.

She therefore regarded these shining divinities from the

West, if not with suspicion, at least with dignified and secretly critical reserve. For nearly twelve months she had been abroad, partly for health, partly for economy. Rumours had reached her here and there in her travels of the Midas of Dunveagle, and the doings of his family and friends. She returned, and on her first public appearance found them engaging the attentions of the future Earl of Ardvenmore. The situation was therefore one for tact and observant eyes. They had not birth, these young favourites of fortune; the question was, had they breeding?

First impressions were favourable, but one must not be misled by the superficial. In conventional phrase the girls behaved like ladies. They indulged in none of the ostentatious display of wealth rightly or wrongly associated in her ladyship's mind with the tastes of American women. They seemed well informed, could talk agreeably on European topics, and their intonation was tolerable. Mr. Ogilvie, too, was prepossessing as a sensible, affable, self-possessed man of the world. Jeff she regarded a little doubtfully as a sort of Republican colt running wild, and boggled unmistakably over the Hon. Job Shilbeck. Hence from the moment of introduction she ignored Mr. Shilbeck, and Mr. Shilbeck in return marked for future reference the hi-falutin' airs and pinchbeck almightiness of the British aristocracy.

By a movement of which she was hardly conscious, so clever are sons in using mothers, when the time came she entered the ball-room openly chaperoning the Americans. The friendliness was emphasised to all eyes, when Lord Kinluig led off the dance with Miss Ogilvie. His mother, watching with mingled feelings, noted that he evidently took some pains to be agreeable as the pair went round in the waltz. Of course *she* smiled with a particular interest; what girl would not, when the heir to the earldom of Ardvenmore, one of the oldest in a country of long lineages, condescended to be attentive? One thing, how-

ever, her ladyship failed to notice, being too intent on her own thoughts, to wit that while her son spoke most earnestly his partner's eyes stole to Captain MacLean, who was dancing with Kitty. For it happened that Lieutenant Lord Kinluig's talk was not of the soft nothings of a ball-room, but of war and his comrade's bravery.

Rollo, going round absently with a chance partner, marked the glow of interest in Miss Ogilvie's face, and fell gloomily silent. Dulness hanging on the breach of rudeness is no relish for the dance, and next minute his partner pleaded fatigue. In the same moment Miss Ogilvie went by radiantly with Kinluig. Jealousy could endure no more. Getting rid of his unlucky partner without sign or token of regret, Rollo went off to drown chagrin in wine.

Returning by-and-by, he was able to dance with Kitty, and later with Connie. By that time wine, jealousy, and a spirit yet more potent were working madness in the brain. He went round mechanically, now in a wild dream, now in a cold nightmare in which he was clutching at something that for ever eluded him, and all the while he chattered with the boisterous gaiety of desperation. But the last thing the fox loses is cunning. In spite of a light head and beating arteries, Rollo was still essentially himself. Connie mentioned the heat, and he proposed a whiff of fresh air.

"It's glorious outside," he said in a sudden vertigo. "The harvest-moon is at its best; it's splendid."

"Not moon-struck, Mr. Linnier" she returned in her light, familiar way.

He affected to laugh; would she come and see? She was an American, bred in social freedom, self-reliant, and unafraid because habituated to the chivalry of gentlemen. Following her Western ways, she did in Aberfourie as she would have done in New York.

"If you like," she answered. In a kind of dizziness, Rollo wrapped a cloak of silk and down about her shoulders, and led her out.

"Too late for your moon, Mr. Linnie," she cried, looking up into the glamorous obscurity of the night sky.

"Do you mind very much?" he asked, steadying his nerves.

"Not at all," was the reply. "Only I'd like to see a Highland harvest moon in all her glory. How deliciously fresh!" she added, inhaling a long breath of meadow, pine and cornfield.

The great tent was erected on the edge of a pasture beside a hedge fragrant half the summer through with honeysuckle. From the dim heights above a larch wood streamed downward, dropping somewhere among the declivities and hollows into birch and hazel, and spreading lower still into groups of gnarled oak, stretching almost to the tent-roof. Connie looked into the mystic gloom, and the spirit of poetry and adventure stirred within her.

"I wonder what's concealed up there," she said, with a sweep of her hand. "Let's have a peep into the darkness," she added, like a child tempted to peer into a pit.

Before he could respond she was tripping across to the nearest of the big oaks. He followed, scarcely daring to believe it all true. His chance had come. The beauty, the great, the coveted heiress had invited him into the secrecy of the woods alone with herself. What did it mean? What could it mean but one clear thing? His brain beat as beats the gamester's when fortune dangles a great prize. A single point danced before him in a fiery radiance. He could have cried out. This very night, so help him God, this very hour, he would cast the die. They were alone, they two; she with her twenty millions, he with his raging passion. Every pulse in his body was a battery, charging nerve and artery to an unbearable anguish of eagerness. She must not escape. Now or never, now or never—he was within an ace of saying it aloud. Now or never.

They passed under the shadow of a great hoar oak still dense with leafage, she lightly, unsuspectingly curious; he

half delirious. All at once a chill struck her. "Ugh!" she cried. "It's cold and dark in here, and likely there are dreadful creeping things about. Let's get back."

"A minute, please, Miss Ogilvie," he replied, with a gulp. "One minute. I—I want to tell you something."

"Tell me out here in the open," she said, moving off.

He sprang and caught her bare hand. She was surprised, but neither dismayed nor disconcerted.

"Oh, Mr. Linnie," she said, "you must be unwell, your hand simply burns. Come inside quick."

"You must not go," he answered, tightening his grip. "You must not go."

"And why must I not go, pray?" she asked, affecting a composure she did not feel.

"Because, Miss Ogilvie——" He gulped for breath like a choking man. "Because——"

"Mr. Linnie, you really are ill," she cried. "It is not good for you to be out. Come."

But she was not to escape like that. She made a movement to go, and he drew her hastily back.

"You must not go," he said as if still struggling for breath. "You must not go. I have something to say to you, something to tell you. Yes——"

And the pent-up passion broke bounds in a torrent. He hardly knew what he said; he knew not at all what he did.

"Let me go!" she cried, making an effort to get free. "I insist on your letting me go at once."

But his only answer was to draw her closer. In another instant his arms were about her, and his face was bent close to hers. She gave a panting cry, and struck upward with her right hand.

"You coward!" she gasped. "Oh, you coward, to take advantage of a woman like this!"

He reeled backward, his arms falling limp, and Connie fled in a fury of anger.

CHAPTER XXXVII

A VITAL RECKONING

HE saw her appear an instant in the light of the tent, and then flash out of sight—a swift vision of indignation. Stupefied and absolutely still, he gazed at the point of disappearance. In spite of a strange humming in the head, he was vaguely conscious of silence—the profound, ominous silence which tells that the bolt has fallen and struck. He seemed to be in the midst of ruins, to stand in the graveyard of his own hopes and ambitions. What had he done? Was he mad? All at once by an involuntary contraction of the muscles he gave a hard little laugh—an unearthly cackle as if some demon moved him to ironical mirth over his own fall.

“Damnation!” he cried, the profane word ringing incongruously in the stillness of the night.

Turning at that, he strode towards the woods above as if trying to escape from his humiliation, his dire, unutterable folly. But as the moth to the candle, the undetected criminal to the scene of his crime, he wheeled and came back, a vehement longing upon him to know what was going on inside the tent, what Miss Ogilvie was saying and doing, to rush in defiantly lest any should dare to gloat or sneer over his discomfiture. By heaven! he would have satisfaction out of any man who ventured by so much as the turn of an eye to insult. The paralytic calm was gone; he was in a frenzy of wrath and resentment. As he walked, planning vengeance, all at once a figure stepped

out of the darkness and, standing directly in his path, spoke taunting and sarcastic words that were as fuel to a raging furnace. He flung out in a spasm of rage—

"This is the third time to-day you have insulted me, you infernal old ruffian," he cried. "Get out of my way, or I'll kick you like the meddlesome cur you are."

The figure in front turned its head to the side. "Alick, just come and hold my pipes," it said, in a tone which distinctly suggested gratification, and out of the night came another figure, eagerly responsive, and took the pipes. "Ye hard his words, Alick, 'Kick ye like the cur ye are.' Ye'll bear witness if anything happens after such a tempting of Providence."

With that, Ian Veg, for the reader has divined it was he, took a step forward.

"Now, whey-face, are you ready?" he asked purposefully.

"You dare to address me like that!" the outraged Rollo cried, and sprang at his tempter.

It was dark, and save Ian himself, none knew quite how it came about, but instead of bearing his antagonist down, Rollo found himself full length on the grass.

"You'll better kick me," he cried, as Ian bent over him. "It would be like you to strike when a man's down."

"Like you, Mr. Rollo Linnie," retorted Ian, "and if you wass up and me down it's in my mind that's what you'd be doing. But some of us iss clean fighters. Get up."

Rollo rose, shook himself, seemed to draw away, turned like a tiger and leaped. The onset carried Ian off his feet, and both men rolled down a steep bank, locked in a deadly embrace. At the bottom, Alick saw with glee, the old man was uppermost.

"That wass not friendly, Mr. Linnie," he heard Ian say, "and it must not happen again. We'll just keep a finger on your thrapple. There, now, be quiet, or as sure's I'm

living ye'll never be laird of Teviot Hall, and that's a grand place too. We've come to the time of settling accounts, me and you. This morning ye wanted to turn me out of the grounds, ye stinking brock, and ye'd haf managed the thing but for them that's not to be named with the like of you."

Ian's fingers insensibly pressed harder.

"You were great on the committee then; would you like the committee to see you now? Or maybe it's Miss Ogilvie ye'd like to have a look at you. Lie quiet, I'm telling you."

The pressure on Mr. Linnie's windpipe made him gurgle as if choking.

"Ay, maybe ye'd like her to see you. By your way of it I'm a cur, and by her way of it you're a coward. Twice over she called you a coward. That wass fine."

The man below writhed in a horrible convulsion.

"I've told you to be quiet if you want to be laird of Teviot Hall," said Ian. "It's hardly worth a body's while to be troubled licking you, though ye've had something this night you'll mind for two days and a Sunday too. Listen, and I'll tell you a wee secret, sir," continued Mr. Mackern in a tone of mocking politeness. "Alick Ruah and me saw and hard everything. And I will confess to you I never liked Miss Ogilvie till this night. You had it fair between the eyes, Mr. Linnie; I'm judging you see the sparks flying yet."

Another horrible convulsion showed how the man below was suffering.

"I'm proud of the lassie," Ian went on, adjusting his hold, and placing a knee where it would be most serviceably oppressive. "For, look you, all by herself she told you the truth, naked from the hand of God. She said you are a coward twice over, so that you would mind it in yer hours of meditation. A coward, and that's as true as gospel of

any man that would wheedle a lassie out into the woods at night, and then try——”

“It’s a lie,” croaked Linnie. “She came herself, and, what’s more, she invited me.”

“Invited you!” retorted Ian. “Man, she had little to do. But I’m thinking she was just mistaken in you like other folk, and trusted to you being a gentleman and all that, as she would trust Captain MacLean.”

Rollo squirmed furiously; but he was held as in a vice.

“You just worked on her feelings, for I’ll not deny you haf the tongue of the serpent that tempted Eve. Every lassie, rich or poor, bonny or no bonny, has her feelings given by God Almighty Himself, and it’s the way of lassies to listen to things; but it iss never the way of a man that iss half a man to do as you did, you carrion hawk. If she invited you out for a canty wee while by yourselves, how iss it she called you a coward, twice over? Because you wouldn’t come to the scratch, eh? You’re a bonny lover, a fine lover, a brave, gallant lover. ‘Coward,’ says she, ‘coward, coward,’ and struck you in your false face for laying hands on her.”

“Damn you!” cried the man beneath fiercely, giving a heave which sent Ian into the air.

But he recovered like a goat, and as a terrier at the throat of a rat, he turned his man over and readjusted his grip.

“She struck you in your false face,” repeated Ian, “and if you don’t take care I will be making it falser yet, ay, so false that your old aunty will not know you, man.”

“Let me up,” cried Rollo. “I’ll make you rue this.”

“I’m ready to believe you’ll try,” was the response. “You’ve the heart for it, I know that. Ye’d like to get me under the flail. But before that chance comes to you, Mr. Linnie, there’s four things I want you to do—first, to apologize to me for your conduct this morning, which was fair disgraceful; second, to apologize for your conduct this

evening, which is more disgraceful again; third, to swear that if ever your gab gets going about this, you'll tell the honest, downright truth, neither more or less; and fourth, that you'll own you just made a common, scurvy, dirty scoundrel of yourself, trying to play back-stair juckery-packery with a lassie that's owre good for you."

Ian felt in his heart no call to play the champion for Miss Ogilvie, but the chance fell in handily with his own plans, and what was more to the point, plainly aggravated the suffering of Rollo.

Cooled by the dewy ground and considerations of prudence and helplessness, Mr. Linnic evinced a desire to discuss terms and conditions.

"Let me up," he said, "and we'll see about it."

"I'll tell you a wee story," returned Ian. "Once a fox that was hard set said to the hounds, 'If you turn your heads the other way for half a minute I'll show you something you won't forget.' The hounds did as he wanted, and when they looked again what d'ye think they saw? Just a pair of clean heels. We'll be seeing about it as we are."

Since he was helpless and the other inexorable, Rollo, with all his pride protesting, expressed regret for his rudeness and arrogance of the morning in terms dictated by Ian, repeating the formula for the offence of the evening, and swore also, according to set form, that if ever he spoke of the incident or its results to tell the truth and nothing but the truth. Over "the back-stair juckery-packery," as Mr. Mackern called it, he squirmed fearfully.

"Ian Veg," he cried, in an anguish that would have touched most hearts, but had no effect on Ian's, except perhaps to harden it, "I swear to you on my word of honour."

"Indeed, you needn't be troubling, Mr. Linnie," Ian replied, indicating with a snort what he thought of the proffered security. Nevertheless, remembering Rollo's

abject surrender in the more personal matters, made openly and aloud in the presence of Alick, who might be expected to mention the thing in confidence to friends here and there—being mollified, that is to say, by a personal triumph—he presently allowed Rollo to rise.

"You have done a dirty trick," were Mr. Linnie's first words, and they were hissed with exceeding venom.

"I wouldn't go so fast if I wass you, Mr. Linnie," Ian responded meaningly.

Rollo picked up his hat and swung on his heel, muttering imprecations, but he had not gone three strides when he turned and came back.

"Ian," he said in a tone of mingled appeal and bravado, "let bygones be bygones. You've been winner. You're welcome to all the satisfaction you can derive from the victory, but I ask you as a man to keep it to yourself."

And he passed a silver coin into Ian's hand.

"What's this, sir?" asked Ian, holding it towards the light.

"Something to drink my health with," Linnie answered, with an assumption of goodwill.

"I am not sure how that would look," Ian rejoined thoughtfully. "If it's to be a money transaction, as the saying goes, half a croon's on the scrimpit side. Besides Alick's in the secret, and he's glibber in the tongue nor me."

"Oh, confound it!" cried Rollo irritably. "Clean me out. You should have put your hand in my pocket when you had me down."

"I should haf given that tongue of yours a twist," was the retort. "It's forgot its mainners already."

"Never mind manners," Linnie cried; "I want this kept quiet. How much do you think will shut your mouth?"

"This is a day of great things," Ian responded calmly. "I would think the bittie rag apiece." *

* A one-pound Scotch bank-note is often called in Gaelic "the rag."

Rollo groaned inwardly.

"What?" he cried. "A sovereign each?"

"About that," said Ian, winking invisibly at Alick.

Rollo felt his pockets and produced £1 15s.

Ian reached for the money.

"That leaves the two half-croons short," he said, counting like a money-lender. "We'll say ye'll pay another time."

"You know the bargain," said Rollo bitterly.

"Fine," answered Ian. "Fine, and you'll not forget what's owing, Mr. Linnie."

Without replying, Rollo plunged into the darkness behind the tent, and next minute Ian heard the violent click of a gate and the sound of hurried footsteps on the road.

"Well, Alick Ruah," he said, with great content, in their mother-tongue, "two pounds more for Dunveagle."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

CONNIE GIVES A LESSON IN CHIVALRY

SOME hours later, in the thick blackness that heralds the dawn, the Dunveagle coach, rolling homeward with a yawning load, was passed by a horseman riding furiously, his face low down on the horse's mane. The rumble of wheels, the rhythmic hoof-beats of the four blacks, and the drowsy approaches of sleep, all helped to drown the clatter of the pursuer, and it was not until he dashed, a momentary apparition, into the glare of the lamps that those on the coach were roused.

As the startled leaders swerved Jeff called out in a half gasp of fright, "Why, it's Linnie, Rollo Linnie."

"Surely not," responded Mr. Ogilvie. "Linnie would have spoken; that man is riding as if for life."

"Reckon it was Linnie all right," Job Shilbeck observed from the front seat.

"Then something must be wrong," said Mr. Ogilvie. "But why in the name of wonder didn't he speak?"

"Like to ketch him up, sah?" the coachman asked, turning a gleaming face.

"If it's safe, Bibbs," answered his master. "But take great care; these roads are not made for racing."

"All right, sah," Bibbs returned, gathering the reins a little tighter. The long whip went out with the crackle of musketry, and the four blacks leaped exulting to the traces. Three miles they had their heads and a level road; but they never got sight or sound of the desperate nag in front. It

had gone into the night with what frenzy of madness only one on the coach could guess.

At the avenue gate, in obedience to an order, Bibbs drew up, and all listened intently. But the only sounds were the dismal sighing of elm and chestnut, and the fretful murmur of the Veagle in its rock-strewn channel. Connie's ear was painfully strained, and Connie's blood ran cold at the thoughts excited by that glimpse of a distraught horseman in the lamplights. What if he were found on the morrow mangled and dead in a ditch? What if he lost his seat and were dragged to a horrible death by a maddened horse? What if in his insanity he committed suicide, with hideous circumstances implicating others? Ugh! why couldn't men have sense?

"You are cold, dear," Kitty whispered. "You shiver."

"Did I shiver?" returned Connie. "It's always cold in the dawn, or perhaps someone walked on my grave."

"You may go on, Bibbs," said Mr. Ogilvie. "We'll probably have news in the morning."

The morning brought no news; but next day there came a letter to Miss Ogilvie, which she read behind the locked door of her own room. It was a letter of burning contrition, of abject self-abasement. The writer had offended heinously, but he explained, as Adam must once have explained to Eve, that he couldn't help it, that he had been swept out of his senses by a frantic adoration. He prostrated himself at her feet, threw himself on her mercy, with no plea but that of her own distracting loveliness. To that he had succumbed, with the unfortunate results she knew. Would she forgive? Nay, she must forgive, could not help forgiving—because she was an angel. And let her consider what she was asked to pardon him for: nothing, on the honour of a gentleman, but a blind indication how he adored. If that was the unforgivable sin, then he was doomed. She could punish him as she liked; but before heaven he could not help his transgression.

CONNIE GIVES A LESSON IN CHIVALRY 249

Twice in a giddy turmoil of head and heart she read the letter. Then after a turn or two to compose her thoughts she began a reply which had to be scored, and altered, and recast many times before it expressed her sentiments. In the end this is how it stood :—

“DUNVEAGLE CASTLE, *Friday*.

“DEAR MR. LINNIE,—I have read your letter with feelings which I need not attempt to describe. When a man behaves ill to a woman, I am not at all sure that it is in the least incumbent on her to accept an apology, wipe out the offence, and allow the old relations to be resumed. In fact, they cannot be resumed with the old sense of trust and freedom. For an element has come in that chills like a December wind, or, worse still, scorches like a fire; and this though both sides honestly try to forget the past. It is one of the tragic things of life that a person cannot go wrong and draw back, and proceed as if no false step had been made. The false step means a deflection, a bias that can never be wholly overcome or set right.

“When you praise me it is very hard to turn a deaf ear. I am a woman and like praise as a child loves toys. The good word of men is the breath of life to us women. Heaven help us, God made us so. Yes, Mr. Linnie, we love your approbation of our little gifts and graces; but please do not imagine that because we listen to flattery we perceive a lover in everything clothed after the manner of a man. We would always fain see the friend; the other I think Heaven chooses for us, and he comes and takes possession as by right divine. But he does not seize with violence. Had Mr. Linnie known or remembered this, I should not now be writing this letter.

“I note and take into account differences between some codes of the old world and the new. In my country girls mingle freely with boys. Time passes, and the girls grown to women still mingle freely with the boys grown to men.

There are no restrictions as here, as if men and women should be muzzled like mad dogs, or fettered like straying horses. And therein I count my country fortunate ; therein I see elements of greatness and graciousness because of equality. For I cannot but think it ill with a nation when its young men and women cannot be comrades and friends. In my country the result of social union is that it is the pride and glory of man to honour and protect woman. From her earliest youth the American woman is accustomed to chivalry in men. She takes it almost as a birthright, and receiving it every day of her life, she looks to man as to one hardier and stronger than herself, and honourable in proportion to his strength.

"You perceive what I mean and my reason for saying it. An American gentleman getting or making the opportunity would not have done the thing for which Mr. Linnie is now in sackcloth and ashes. I know British gentlemen who would not either. Let me be plain, for we Americans like frankness. What did you do ? Finding me in your power, you sought to overwhelm me with professions which I did not expect, which I did not encourage, which I did not desire ; nay, you even laid hands on me, using your strength to compel me to your will. Was that chivalry ? I trusted you as a friend rooted in honour, and—but I dare not give your conduct a name. Oh, Mr. Linnie, it is much more dreadful than you think when a woman finds herself mistaken in a man.

"But I must stop. As to forgiveness, I dislike the office. You may come to Dunveagle as you have done hitherto, with the reservations which good sense will suggest, for I should wish your indiscretion and my disappointment to be kept private. I wish it were possible to forget an almost incredible piece of folly and presumption.

"Yours, with sincere regrets,

"CONSTANCE OGILVIE."

CONNIE GIVES A LESSON IN CHIVALRY 251

Having finished, she carefully read the letter. Studied in the ebb of passion it seemed severe, for she had written in a glow of indignation. Besides, she had not only to chastise Linnie, she had to defend herself, lest by any licence of imagination he might construe good nature as cause and excuse for making himself a barbarian. Hence the ardent account of the social code of America. That was true, and she swelled agreeably at the thought that it was also a stroke for her country.

It was not in her disposition to scold, still less to pose as a moralist improving the occasion when she got an unlucky sinner squirming on her hook. But Mr. Linnie had behaved abominably, intolerably, and she owed it to herself, to her father, ay, and vicariously to her countrywomen, to vindicate her position. She must prove to Linnie that she would not run when he chose to beckon; indeed, the implication that she was ready to capitulate at his demand hurt her most of all.

"If that were my game," she said to herself in a flash of anger, "Mr. Rollo Linnie is hardly the man who would be honoured."

He deserved condign punishment, and he should have it. In the end, however, she decided to take Kitty into her confidence, and the pair held an animated council of war.

"There's something I want to consult you about, dear," Connie said in some embarrassment, and as the best mode of explanation, produced Rollo's letter. Kitty read it, with amazement in every feature of her face.

"Con," she cried, "this looks serious. But I don't understand. Tell me."

Connie briefly stated the facts.

"I'll tell Jeff," Kitty said, with decision. "He'll horse-whip the fellow, and that's better than he deserves."

"No, dear," Connie replied anxiously. "We must have

no scandals. Remember, we're not in New York. Here the thing would be out as if beacons blazed to announce it. And somehow, Kitty darling, you can't rub the dirt of a scandal off quite clean. Something sticks, and the whiter the mark the more conspicuous the blot. No, we must take other means. Please tell me what you think of that."

And she put the reply into Kitty's hand. Kitty took it in, as it were, in a gulp.

"First rate!" she exclaimed. "First rate! It's worse than a flogging. Your little lance is deadlier than my horsewhip. If anything would or could make him feel mean, and grovel, and skulk, it's that. I never knew you could write so well."

"If indignation can make poets, why not letter-writers also?" Connie laughed. "You may suppose I was very angry."

"I should just think you were!" Kitty cried. "And as to the writing, dear, forgive me. I ought to have remembered you took all the English prizes at college, including composition. But then we always wrote about things that didn't interest us a bit. This is a sort of thing one would sit up half a night over. And you've done it splendidly—just splendidly—cuts like steel, a beautiful piece of mental surgery. First you probe, and then drop in your acid, that burns like fun; and it's all so naturally and neatly done. That's what I admire. Besides, it's not only a dose that'll make Rollo Linnie contort, but a lovely essay on American chivalry. There, I must kiss you for that eulogy of the American man. He's a perfect darling. I think half the men in Europe still believe women are inferior beings, to be divided into two great classes—slaves and playthings. If I were to marry over here——"

"As Countess of Ardenmore," put in Connie.

"Con, how can you?" demanded Kitty.

CONNIE GIVES A LESSON IN CHIVALRY 253

"I think that for a lord Kinluig's a very good fellow," Connie returned.

"Oh, good enough!" owned Kitty, as if one need not expect much of a lord. "He'd never do what Linnie did. But you've given the fool a dressing down."

"You don't think it too severe?"

"Severe? Tarring and feathering would hardly be justice. What would Jeff say?"

"This is absolutely between ourselves, Kit," Connie said anxiously. "You won't tell anyone? It's not worth Jeff's notice."

"Don't fear, I won't tell. But what would Jeff say? I guess it would be a case of shooting at first sight, letting daylight—I believe that's the phrase—into the contrite Linnie. You've done better. That's tip-top, and it'll go just as it is; and what is more, I'll see it posted, for you might rue, and then our brave Rollo would go without his deserts."

She turned to the window, stood a moment looking out, the sealed letter in her hand, and wheeled back, her face in a ripple of merriment.

"You have told me something, Con," she said; "now I have something to tell you. Don't be shocked, for indeed it's too ridiculous."

A light of intelligence came into Connie's face.

"Kinluig hasn't been proposing already, Kit?" she said.

"I think the epidemic's in the air."

"I think it is," Kitty assented, with a little laugh. "But you haven't hit the mark. Kinluig's a very cautious sort of a young person, besides being a gentleman and a peer—with a mamma to look after him. No, dear, Kinluig hasn't proposed anything of consequence in this quarter yet; but Miss Linnie the elder, Rollo's charming and honoured aunt, is under the laburnum proposing to your father. There now, don't look so shocked; you'd laugh if you saw her."

And with mock dramatic action Kitty recited :—

“ My aunt, my dear unmarried aunt,
Long years have o’er her flown,
Yet still she strains the aching clasp
That binds her virgin zone.
I know it hurts her, yet she looks
As cheerful as she can.
Her waist is ampler than her life,
For life is but a span.”

“ Kit,” cried Connie, “ you are cruel.”

“ Poor old thing, if she could but shed thirty years,” Kitty replied. “ Her efforts to recapture youth are positively tragic. Every time she smiles a concourse of wrinkles gathers in mockery, as if to prove that all the flirting and coquetry of five-and-fifty won’t rout them. Con, think of her waist ; would the most daring masculine arm display its littleness against that vast circumference ? ”

“ Kit,” repeated Connie, “ you certainly are cruel. Let us go and witness the attack.”

When they reached the laburnum Miss Linnie was desecrating on the woe-begone aspect of her nephew.

“ I veritably believe,” said Miss Linnie, with conviction, as she smiled upon the young ladies—“ I veritably believe the poor fellow is in love. He has all the symptoms.”

CHAPTER XXXIX

SHILBECK GIVES BRITONS A TIP

ROLLO took his punishment in a very characteristic fashion, that is to say with outward signs of penitence and dejection, and an inward resolution not to be cast down. Thinking him mortified by shame, Connie, despite her provocation, was disposed to pity; but in truth what she attributed to wounds of honour was in reality due to the failure of a soaring ambition.

For weeks Mr. Linnie had lived and moved in a rapturous trance, that vision of twenty millions dazzling his weak sight. By day he thought of it; by night he dreamed of it, and day and night he devised plans, made resolutions. At Teviot Hall there was much to spur his ambition, had spurring been needed. He looked round and discerned a thousand half-concealed marks of poverty; he thought of his own pleasure and discovered a thousand obstructions. They would all disappear if the right lips could be induced to utter just one short word. And why shouldn't they speak the right word? Mr. Linnie looked in the glass and beheld as good a man as any he knew, a figure that fashion made her own, an air of distinction, indubitable proofs of breeding; what more could any woman in her senses desire? Turning to the other side, why shouldn't he make the most of such qualities and graces? Most men, he observed, climb to fortune by a long and tedious ladder, and many fall and are pushed off and crushed in the attempt to ascend. To the wise

and daring matrimony presents itself as a sort of patent elevator—quick, easy, safe, and sure, which shoots the happy man up from among the struggling crowd. Moreover, quoth Rollo the cynic and sophist to Rollo the lover and mercenary, why do American girls come to Europe but for husbands? He ran over a list of decayed aristocrats, who had re-established themselves for ever as men of fortune and votaries of pleasure by capturing stray American heiresses. He knew none who needed an heiress more urgently than himself. Wherefore, putting on a bold front, he returned to Dunveagle, and was received with a courtesy which made him doubt whether he had really given offence at all. What if Miss Ogilvie's letter of chastisement were a ruse, or the mere artful fencing of one who, while convention-bound to make a defence, is really longing to surrender? Mr. Linnie knew, or divined, or had heard that women are deep and sly in their methods.

"Poor beggars," he reflected, half pityingly, "they have to wait until they're asked" (his good aunt had waited forty years without losing hope); "and then there's a ridiculous etiquette or pride that keeps a woman, except in the last extremity, from jumping at the man she wants. I'll not mount the white feather yet, no, not just yet."

He walked, of course, with extreme circumspection, but he felt more and more that Miss Ogilvie had not been quite so angry as she pretended. At any rate, she gave no hint of a breach; and Miss Dunbar too was agreeable, if sometimes disposed to laugh unaccountably, an effect of mere girlish frivolity.

In the midst of these plans and meditations he was one day startled by the news, received first hand, that Mr. Shilbeck had completed arrangements for returning to New York. In a quick tremor of fear Rollo asked if he were going alone.

"No," answered Job; "Jeff and his sister are going with me. They reckon it'll be mighty dull here when the fall rains and mists come on. Besides, Jeff's gcttin' kind of tired causin' accidents with his motor, and of course Miss Dunbar'll be wanted in Noo York."

"Oh," said Rollo blankly.

"Yes, sir, Miss Dunbar is as necessary to a Noo York season as the sun to a summer day. You ain't got any idea of the sort of girl she is at home in Noo York. Nat'rilly, you understand, she don't show her paces here; ain't nothin' to pace for, as ye might say; but you see her in Noo York, why, sir, a gold bond certificate ain't in it. You should just see the Britishers that cross the hccrin'-pond to teach us manners followin' her about, and trippin' over each other to get introductions to her. Say," added Job, with a comic twist of the countenance, "young Lord Kinluig was pretty sweet t'other day, wasn't he?"

"Oh, was he?" said Rollo, with portentous indifference.

"You may bet on it," returned Job, "and what's more he's been here since with Captain MacLean, and I reckon, quietly between you and me, Kitty had on her best smile for the occasion. There was some talk of Lord Kinluig visitin' America, jestin' like and all in earnest, you understand; and Kitty 'peared to take her breath a bit at the idea of a lord followin' in her tracks. But I didn't gather," continued Job, with a meaning expression, "that she was in any way mad 'bout it, and I rather suspect your friend Kinluig will be in Noo York 'fore he's many months older. Why, Mr. Linnie," he exclaimed in quick surprise, "have you been takin' something that don't agree with you?"

"Me? I'm all right," Rollo answered, feeling himself a livid green.

"I thought maybe something had upset you," said Job; "lobster salad or such. I dussn't touch lobster salad myself for fear of the gripes. I lost a big deal once through eatin'

lobster salad, and you don't ketch me hoein' that row again. But about Kinluig, I expect to see him in Noo York in the course of the season. I don't know why titles go down so well with Amurican girls; but I do know, Mr. Linnie, that if I was young and spry and tol'able good lookin'——" He stopped suddenly, bending a quizzical look at his companion.

"And pray what would you do?" Rollo asked, his arteries beating under an assumed lightness.

"Do?" repeated Job. "Well, I don't say I'd win; no, I don't say that, but by the holy Jerusalem I'd have a good look in."

Rollo was in an agony.

"A good look in?" he echoed fatuously.

"Yes, sir," replied Mr. Shilbeck; "a good square look in. "God dash it!" he cried, "why should our Amurican dollars always go to support empty titles? It's not that I object to Amurican capital comin' to Europe as part of the baggage of an heiress, but what makes me sick is the valoo that's put on titles by people callin' themselves democrats. I'm for honest merit, Mr. Linnie, and if I saw a young man of the right sort liftin' his eyes to the gold and diamonds I'd say, 'Good, sonny; go in and win, and d—— the titles.'"

"But suppose a man wanted to marry money, as the saying is," Rollo submitted, tingling all over; "that is, supposing for the sake of argument, he could be mercenary in such a matter, a title would be a great aid."

"Ondoubtedly," owned Job, "unless the girl was sensible; but I don't know that girls ever are sensible in fallin' in love, as it's called, though in my experience there's more dickerin' than lovin'. They're always selecting the wrong man. The busiest court in Amurica to-day is the D. orce Court, because girls want to get rid of the men they've married by mistake, and take others they fancy they'll like better. We've conveniences in that way that you ain't got

on this side. As to name-handles, there's people in Amurica to-day that's mighty sorry our Constitootion excloodes titles—girls 'specially, and I regret to say there's some darned idjits of fathers that cncourage the silliness."

At a chance question from Rollo, Job described how the honest plebeian American, the sturdy bourgeois with baggy breeches and a love of plug tobacco, toils, often in shirt-sleeves, to make money, and ever more money, that his children may soar into a social paradise he has never known himself. Sometimes, according to Mr. Shilbeck, he deals in lard, sometimes in pork, sometimes in corn, sometimes in molasses; at other times he manipulates oil, builds and runs railroads, or strikes into Wall Street; but whatever the means, the aim is always the same—to buy his children diamonds, yachts, racers, brown stone mansions, and in lucky cases, titled European husbands. With the last ambition Mr. Shilbeck pronounced himself exceedingly sick. Rollo feared the mercenary Briton would cause him equal nausea, but here Job showed uncommon charity.

"I ain't goin' to blame men for pickin' up wealth when they can get it for the takin'," he said. "What I don't understand is this: why do the likely young fellows of the British Isles allow the nincompoops with titles to be always on the win?"

"You have given the reason yourself," answered Rollo, wishing to heaven it were not true.

"Look here, Mr. Linnic," rejoined Shilbeck, with unwonted animation; "I have been lookin' into one or two things since comin' to this side, and I've looked particularly into your title-market, and what do I find?"

"I don't know, sir," Rollo returned, quivering all over.

"No, sir," Job went on, "you don't know. Nat'rilly you don't. But I'm goin' to tell you. Perhaps you noticed, perhaps you didn't, that I used the phrase title-market. You don't use it here because you Britishers ain't always

got the courage to be honest with yourselves. But the thing exists all right; yes, sir, the thing exists as real as the Bank of England—which is 'bout the most real thing you have—only not quite so open to the eye, maybe. Well, sir, I've figured it out on information obtained, and this is what I find—that for ten thousand pounds spent in the right way you can have a knighthood, and twice as much will make you a baronet. A peerage is slower and dearer, but it too has its price."

Rollo saw himself a knight, a baronet, a peer.

"And if you wanted to buy, how would you go about it?" he asked, with unconscious eagerness.

"How'd I go about it?" responded Job. "I'll tell ye how I'd go about it. As a first step I'd go into politics; as a second step I'd combine politics and fashion, meanin' by fashion the cult of the petticoat. Mark me, it's the influence of the drawin'-room and the boodor that gets a man into office in this country. Don't you forget to cultivate the women-folk. As a third step I'd lay myself out for fightin' doubtful constituencies for the party in power—that's always a payin' game. Providin' I win, there I am ready to go head down with the Government; providin' I lose, there's my claim—established. Then I'd subscribe to party funds, and off and on to fashionable charities, first keepin' back my name from the noospapers till they had worked up a proper interest and excitement by guessing, and then lettin' 'em have it plump."

"What do you mean by fashionable charities, Mr. Shilbeck?" Rollo asked feverishly.

"That depends on cikumstances," replied Job astutely.

The same charities ain't always fashionable. If religion was in the air, I'd help to build churches and fit out missionaries—that's always fetchin'. The noospapers talk of it, deacons and managers pass resoolotions thankin' you, and passons orate 'bout yer broad-minded generosity and

zeal for humanity and all that. It's reckoned respectable, and that pays too. Then if some great folk happened to be fussin' round with schemes for benefitin' the poor, I'd dump down a cheque—that I reckon's as good biz as any."

"What about sport?" Rollo asked; "keeping racehorses, for example. The English love horse-racing."

"Maybe," Job replied slowly, "but I haven't observed that it pays particular to go in for racehorses; no, I'm inclined to think it don't pay, 'tain't respectable enough; on the whole, I'd be disposed to keep to politics, fashion, and charities, and, sir, them that dispenses titles couldn't resist me."

"There's only one thing lacking to make the reasoning perfect," said Rollo. "Before a man can follow your advice, he's got to have the £ s. d., the dollars, you know."

"I was comin' to that," returned Job. "S'posin' a young fellow was more'n or'nary in looks, and hadn't no flies on him so to speak, poor and honest, you understand, and liftin' his eyes afar off, like the prodigal son, to diamonds and dollars, as you say. Well, he'd go in sayin' that, in case the thing was O.K., it was his intention later on to procure a title for his beloved, that she being of the same mind, they'd work together, and he was sure her help would tell, and stuff of that sort. Girls, especially Amurican girls, like to help. An Amurican girl's head is just humming with ideas as a rule, and if she cottoned to a man she'd see him through, you bet. Of course, there's differences in girls same as in men; some like love pure and sweet as honey from the comb; others like it with gold fastenin's; others, again, with a kind of headgear that ain't to be purchased in the United States. But generally the right sort of girl likes to help."

Mr. Linnie was greatly heartened. Pluck and policy would accomplish anything, and he lacked neither. All at once he remembered Jeff.

"By the way," he said carelessly, while his heart thumped, "since he is leaving, I suppose Mr. Dunbar has completed that contract you once spoke of?"

Job smiled, then looked grave, then turned his eyes cautiously to make sure they were alone.

"It's my opinion," he answered confidentially, "there's a twist in the tackle that don't let it run smooth."

"A hitch?" said Rollo, holding his breath.

"That's 'bout the size of it, I reckon," was the response.

"Mr. Linnie, look here. I like you, and I'll tell you something interesting. I rather fancy Jeff's goin' to take that half-hoop of diamonds back to Noo York with him."

Mr. Shilbeck chuckled softly.

"And then, sir, I reckon old Giles Dunbar will do a little stampin'; yes, sir, I just reckon he will."

Mr. Shilbeck chuckled again, but Mr. Linnie was speechless.

CHAPTER XL

PACKING THE HALF-HOOP OF DIAMONDS

MR. SHILBECK was right. The intellect trained in the intrigues of New York and Washington easily discerned something amiss in Mr. Dunbar's game. Moreover, he was fortunate in opportunities to mark and learn. Unobserved and absolutely by accident, he one day came upon Jeff and Connie on a seat among the shrubbery, so intent on themselves, they had neither eye nor ear for soft intruders. A delicate sense of fitness told Job that to withdraw might disturb and startle them. So he remained quietly concealed, with no intention of playing the eaves-dropper, yet forced to listen, and what he heard interested him profoundly.

"Ah!" he said to himself, "reckon Jeff's got to business at last."

In fact, Jeff was pressing with quite unwonted ardour a matter of vital personal import, and his companion, a little agitated and nervous, as Mr. Shilbeck made out, was fencing with the ingenious perversity which wantonly misunderstands and misinterprets.

Mr. Shilbeck admired the woman, but his sympathies were certainly with the man.

"Pretty hard row to hoe, Jeff old man," he said to himself; "pretty hard."

A student of the subtler instincts of mankind, he was amused by this combat of head and heart, this onset of the roused emotion, and the light parryings with which the

attacker was kept from closing. Jeff was apparently much less delighted by the game of foil.

"Why, Con," Mr. Shilbeck heard him declare, "you almost make me think you don't care for me. You do, indeed."

"Care for you, Jeff?" was the response, made in a tone of pained surprise and reproach. "How can you say that? Haven't we played together and been friends ever since we can remember? Haven't I always shown that I care for you? And—and I care for you now, Jeff. Oh, yes, I do."

"Well, then, why do you hold me off like this?" Jeff demanded. "Why can't we settle it?" And instinctively Mr. Shilbeck bent his ear for the reply.

"Oh, well, you see," said Connie, with a catch of the breath which did not escape the listener's notice, "because—because——" She stopped, as if unable to finish.

"A woman's reason," thought Shilbeck, bending his ear a little more. "Jeff, yer on a ticklish bit of ice."

"Because why, Con?" Jeff asked in a tone of offence.

"There now," cried Connie, "you're angry, and you'll make me sorry we've talked like this at all."

Jeff was instantly at her feet.

"Got him on toast," reflected Job.

"I wouldn't make you sorry for ten thousand worlds," Jeff declared, with the extravagance of a lover.

"I knew you wouldn't," Connie returned in prompt approval, as if humouring a fractious child.

"But, Con, aren't we——?"

"Sh," and Job, putting his eye to a hole in the thicket, saw that she had clapped a hand on the suppliant's mouth.

"There," she laughed, "it's nice to be as we are a little while longer, dear, dear friends. I think I'm nervous to-day. I'm sure I'd be frightened—if you went on as you've been doing. I should indeed. And there's lots and lots of time, isn't there, Jeff? There, I knew you would be good. Come, I think Kitty's calling."

Mr. Shilbeck, being obliged to retire in haste, neither

PACKING THE HALF-HOOP OF DIAMONDS 265

heard nor saw what followed; but he had learned enough to enable him to put two and two together very effectively and logically.

"I'd like to be present when old Giles Dunbar hears of *this*," he said within himself, thinking the matter over. "Giles counted Jeff had a dead sure thing. Talk of a bear with a sore head! Halleluiah!" And in the fervour of expectation, Mr. Shilbeck smoked vehemently.

Twenty minutes later he walked in casually on Jeff, who was in shirt sleeves, packing, and it chanced that the case containing the famous half-hoop of diamonds lay open on a table.

Job took it up with an air of perfect innocence.

"You ain't packin' this, of course," he remarked.

Jeff lifted his head, looked searchingly at Job, strode across the room and tried the door.

"Look here," he said, turning abruptly. "Between ourselves, yes, I'm packing it."

Mr. Shilbeck laid down the case in astonishment.

"But I thought it was to be left behind," he said.

"So did I," returned Jeff, "but you were wrong and I was wrong. Shilbeck, there are more things in heaven and earth that it's possible to be wrong about than you suspect until you try."

"But you don't mean——"

"Yes, sir," Jeff interrupted, "I do. We both made a mistake; see? Minds me of the old joke about putting salt on a bird's tail; seems the easist thing in the world—until you try. Yes," said Mr. Dunbar, taking the case and thrusting it into a corner of a portmanteau, "it's going right in there for the present. Another time, you understand. Another time."

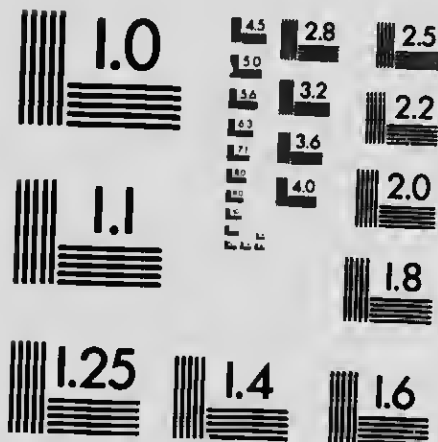
"Postponed?" Job ventured.

Jeff nodded.

"Fact is," he explained, "she don't cotton to the thing



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just now—timid—afraid to take the jump. You know what girls are.”

“So,” said Job, his eyes bent thoughtfully on the floor, the goatee grasped firmly in his right hand. He was thinking that if all tales were true most girls showed a surprising readiness to take that particular jump.

“There ain’t a hitch anywhere, I reckon?” he asked.

“None,” answered Jeff promptly; “none whatever. Just timidity. Girls are so funny.”

“Very funny,” said Shilbeck.

“Told me she carcd for me and all that,” Jeff pursued. “Guess I must come back again, that’s all.”

Job considered a moment and then said quietly, “Didn’t mention in any way she’d be a sister to you, did she?”

“Sister!” cried Jeff. “Shilbeck, are you dreaming?”

“Girls are so funny when they’re timid and afraid to jump,” returned Shilbeck; “but I reckon if she didn’t say she wanted to be a sister to you it’s all O.K.”

He kept an admirably grave and innocent countenancce.

Jeff’s expression was inquisitive, suspicious, and decidedly uneasy.

“I don’t know that I much like it,” he cried. “There, that’s honest. And I’ve an idea you smell a rat. Nobody has ever found any sand in your eyes, Shilbeck. In any case you know how matters stand. Tell me what you think.”

Mr. Shilbeck gave his goatee a little tug absently, as if lost in thought.

“Girls are mighty curious things,” he answered, with great deliberation. “They’re just like an April day, when you think they’re goin’ to shine they rain, and when ye think they might rain they shine. Ye don’t ketch me puttin’ my money on ’em; no, siree. Now in the case before us I reckon there ain’t the smallest possibility of a chance that any other fellow’s snoopin’ and nosin’ round? I put the question hypothetically, of course.”

Jeff stared as if he saw an apparition.

"Great heavens! Shilbeck," he cried, "what put that in your head? You know I wouldn't stand that. I'd assassinate him right away. You don't imagine that Miss Ogilvie——?"

Mr. Shilbeck raised his hand.

"I don't imagine nothin'," he rejoined, "but you'll allow that a nice girl like Connie Ogilvie runnin' loose in Europe here would be likely to attract attention."

"Do you mean to insinuate?" Jeff demanded, suddenly grown resentful and truculent.

"No, sir," Job answered quietly, "I don't insinuate. That ain't my style, as you know. But we've got to look at things fair and square, and if my friend Duncan Ogilvie's daughter wasn't what you'd call a prize, I reckon my friend Giles Dunbar's son wouldn't be rampagin' round Dunveagle. That's as I figure it. Well, sir, d'ye think Mr. Jeff Dunbar's fool enough to suppose he's the only man that's got eyes for a girl? No, sir; he's too cute for that, or he ain't his father's son. You put a first-class security on the market, and what's the result? A howlin' rush. You set a nice, good-looking girl like Connie Ogilvie on a pedestal of twenty-dollar gold pieces, and do you think only one man in a crowd would see her good points? Shucks, Jeff Dunbar, the man who thought that would be a patent, compound-cylindere, ten-thousand horse-power idjit. All I say is that it's as nat'ril as lyin' for men to notice a nice girl, and in Europe here I reckon there are some who don't do anything else worth speakin' of."

"Oh, damit!" cried Jeff impatiently. "I'd win against them all."

"Of course," said Job; "of course, bein' an American with yer head on right side to the front. And yet I'm not sure it's just what you'd call first-rate policy to be eternally tootin' and snortin' in a motor with a man that don't know

enough to speak plain English, never heedin' there's such a thing as a petticoat about. No, I ain't at all sure that it's first-class policy."

"Why, what do you mean, Shilbeck?" Jeff asked, half in fear, half in resentment.

"A girl's human, ain't she?" returned Job. "A girl likes to feel that folks go round thinkin' of her."

"Is it a question of heart or vanity?" Jeff demanded brusquely.

"Maybe it's heart, and maybe it's vanity," quoth Job sapiently. "And maybe it's a mixture of both. But the point is this, a girl's human. I'm not sure Mr. Jeff Dunbar has always remembered that elementary fact. What's the consequence? He tries to rush business, and the girl's scared."

"And would you advise me to stay and see it out?" Jeff inquired purposefully.

"That mightn't look well," Job replied. "I reckon it'll be all right, Jeff. I wouldn't take on 'bout it. If it's a time limit give a time limit."

"Never fear," Jeff observed; "I'm not going to take on about it. But I'm an American, Shilbeck. I'm an American, and I hate like poison to fail."

"Nat'rilly," Job assented, "nat'rilly. That's the U.S. style."

Jeff stood, one hand in his breeches pocket, the other scratching his head

"Well," he remarked desperately, "all I can say is this, some girl's got to wear that ring."

"Don't you go and upset the apple-cart by 1 . . . things," Job admonished. "Don't you be slingin' round engagement rings; it don't pay. No, sir, you don't, as a rule, get satisfactory returns from that sort of speculation. Have you ever been out on a moose-hunt?"

"Moose-hunt?" echoed Jeff. "Of course I have—

across the Canadian border there. But what's a moose-hunt got to do with it?"

"Havin' been on a moose-hunt," responded Mr. Shilbeck, "you'll remember 'bout the care you took stalkin' yer game. You didn't get to windward and shout and carry on. No, sir, you lay low. Now, 'pears to me a girl's pretty much like a moose. If she's a little shy, and yc want her badly, yc've got to do yer stalkin' mighty careful. But it'll be O. K. yet, Jeff," he broke off cheerfully. "I reckon she'll jump all right. You ain't in the habit of 'lowin' yerself to be beat."

"Shake hands," cried Jeff; "shake hands. That's the best word you've said yet. No, by thunder! I'm not in the habit of allowing myself to be beat."

At the same time another was revolving the same problem in a different way, but to similar issues. Mr. Rollo Linnie had no difficulty in convincing himself that Miss Ogilvie was as eager to receive him back into favour as he was to return. "Noly," he reflected, "I must be more careful in future, more discreet—that's the word—more discreet. I was too impetuous; perhaps I overdrank myself. Girls like boldness, but not too much boldness. Well, we'll be more discreet next time."

If he misinterpreted Connie's goodwill, the mistake might be fatal to his projects regarding Kitty, the more especially since he distinctly recognised a rival in Kinluig. But no, he could not be mistaken, Miss Ogilvie was glad to have him back; her letter was a sly little dodge to test him. He was mightily encouraged by observing that she grew less and less free with Captain MacLean. She was often silent and embarrassed in his company. "In fact," reasoned Mr. Linnie, "she sees through that arrant pretender, and is getting sick and tired of him."

The effect of all this on the person principally concerned was that she lived in some sort the life of a juggler, who must keep so many balls spinning simultaneously in the air.

CHAPTER XLI

REALISED IDEALS

NOT long after the departure of the American visitors, Captain MacLean had luncheon at the castle on the special invitation of Mr. Ogilvie. The refecton over, host and guest retired by themselves to the library, and Norman was aware of a peculiar, meaning expression in the millionaire's face, a twinkle as of one who is quietly revolving a secret.

"Shall we smoke?" Mr. Ogilvie asked in his most cordial manner. "Wholesome tobacco fumes will help to keep the maggots out of my daughter's bindings."

"Miss Ogilvie has gathered a fine collection, sir," Norman observed, glancing round.

"Yes," the host acknowledged. "There's a notion abroad that women are absorbed in jewellery, lap-dogs, perfumes, amusements, and frivolity generally. I don't find it true of my daughter. Perhaps the American woman is—what shall I say?—a little more eager in mind than her cousin in Great Britain. But that's a mere impression and may be quite wrong."

"I rather fancy it's right," returned Norman, the thought of a particular example of bright American womanhood carrying conviction.

"Well, perhaps so," said Mr. Ogilvie, smiling; "but it wasn't to talk of books or compare national characteristics I suggested coming here."

With that he stepped into an inner room, unlocked a

desk, and returned bearing in his hand a folded piece of paper. Throwing himself into an armchair, he looked at his guest with that enigmatic expression which Norman had already noted.

"In asking the honour of your company at luncheon to-day, Captain MacLean," he said, "I may as well confess I had ulterior purposes. We are all creatures of mixed and sometimes dark motives. To be brief, I had a little business to transact. Some time ago you were good enough, or rather your father was good enough on your behalf, to entrust me with a certain commission; and I assure you nothing of the kind ever gave me more genuine pleasure."

The captain bowed in turn, colouring perceptibly.

"Well, to save trouble, and also to enable me to act promptly in case of need, I made the investment in my own name as agent or trustee. Naturally I selected securities that were well regarded, and I am glad to say expectations were more than fulfilled. At a certain point we sold out, and now, Captain Maclean, I have the pleasure to hand you a cheque for the proceeds," and he passed the paper to the astonished Norman. "If you endorse it, I think any bank in Aberfourie will probably hand you the cash in exchange."

"I am totally unversed in the ways of business," Norman stammered, less at ease than if he were charging a battery in full blaze. "And I hardly know in what terms to acknowledge your goodness, sir."

"If you will permit me, I will suggest means, Captain MacLean," Mr. Ogilvie responded, "by not troubling about it."

"That is the way of ingratitude," Norman rejoined, crumpling the cheque like waste-paper, "and I cannot agree to it, though indeed I'm utterly at a loss how to express myself. We army men are not much exercised in speech."

"An excellent thing too," remarked Mr. Ogilvie in great good humour. "In the army, or out of it, give me the doers, and anyone else is welcome to the talkers."

"Upon my word, sir," cried Norman, though by no means ill pleased with a sentiment which he had himself often expressed, "just at this moment I am disposed to envy the talkers. My father spoke to me of your kindness, but I had no idea what was coming of it."

"The result will not, I hope, be the less satisfactory on that account," observed the millionaire affably.

"Satisfactory!" repeated Norman, unfolding the cheque. "Why, sir," he exclaimed at sight of the figures, "this is surely impossible; this is out of all hope or reason."

"Not quite impossible, since the thing's done," answered Mr. Ogilvie, hugely enjoying the captain's amazement. "But a very fair return on the investment, I venture to think."

He did not say that he had simply transferred the stock to himself at its highest market value and written a cheque for the gross proceeds. To the trafficker in millions such a transaction was not worth two minutes of golden time; yet he had a keener gratification in developing the little scheme of surprise than in half a dozen gigantic successes.

"In any case," rejoined Norman, still struggling with astonishment, "this must be much, very much more than the amount invested."

He looked at the cheque again, as if to assure himself his eyes were not deluded. For the little slip of paper represented a larger sum of money than he had ever before handled or possessed at one time, larger than he could hope to save by years of rigid economy.

"A little more, perhaps," Mr. Ogilvie owned, smoking quietly. "Occasionally, you know, one gets a chance."

"But rarely, sir, passes it on to another," said Norman. Mr. Ogilvie sat up.

"There I think you are mistaken, Captain MacLean," he replied warmly. "In my own ups and downs, and I've had my full share of them, I have discovered a surprising amount of goodness in my fellow-sinners. And surely it's a poor soul that makes a deity of its beggarly, wretched, ignoble little self. I know we financiers have a hard name, and I'm not going to deny that on the whole we deserve it; our sins indeed are so many and so deep of hue I sometimes doubt whether there'll even be a back seat for us in Paradise."

"I'm afraid, sir, you're not the only people who have reason to doubt," Norman laughed.

"I daresay not," returned Mr. Ogilvie genially. "If you pardon me for a personal illustration having no personal significance whatever, if you and I were to knock for admittance together, it may be St. Peter would look as kindly on me with my scrip as on you with your red sword. I don't presume to judge. The only thing that seems tolerably certain is that both of us would be full of regrets for deeds done in the flesh, and all chance of amendment gone. Do you know, captain, I often think of that parable of the foolish virgins? It's terribly suggestive, terribly true. No man should be reckoned in extremity while one chance remains. Brave men may even make stepping-stones of failure and defeat; I've seen it done many a time. But to hear that ring of doom, 'Too late, too late!' to find the last, the very last of a world of chances gone like yesterday—ay, that's the stuff despair is made of. What's the most tragic picture in history? Isn't it Napoleon at St. Helena gazing over the sea to the lost world of opportunity and ambition, which he, the whilom master of kings, must never enter again—never, never?"

Norman murmured assent. He had read all about Napoleon's victories, studied Napoleon's strategy, was fired by Napoleon's example, but had not thought of that tragic

gaze across the sea. "My God!" he cried suddenly, "what thoughts must have tortured him."

"His mistake was," said Mr. Ogilvie, "that he pushed fortune too hard; that like a jealous lover he wanted her all to himself. For punishment she cast him on that desolate isle of the sea, with a puffed-up idiot for a jailer. But for one glorious moment he had revenge. He died dreaming that he was at the head of his victorious army. There for an instant he got the better of fortune, of the stupid jailer, and the stupid British Government. They could not prevent the dream of the dying Napoleon. Fortunately, most of us have not Napoleon's climbing ardour, nor Napoleon's talents. We do as we may or can like bees in a hive."

The captain inclined his head as at a too familiar truth.

"And you have probably noticed," Mr. Ogilvie observed, "that the world's hosannas are rarely for the saints, until the saints are dead. The best man I ever knew died in Sing Sing prison; the worst I ever knew gave of his ill-gotten gains to what are called philanthropic and religious institutions, and as I gathered from the funeral sermon went straight to Abraham's bosom. I fancy it's the irony of these things that makes sceptics and pessimists. The unthinking mass, however, play the great game of Vanity Fair as if they liked it; and some of us being in can't get out. What's the consequence? Men of my own profession find that if they're to live they must do a little squeezing of rivals, even as soldiers crush a foe; neither snivel, but—and here, after describing a circle, I return to my point—even the callous financier occasionally allows himself the luxury of turning aside to pluck a rose, just for its perfume and its dew. You perceive?"

The captain's perception was quick enough, but his tongue seemed miserably slow and clumsy in putting mingled feelings into words. Mr. Ogilvie came politely to his relief.

'Having carried through one small transaction to our mutual satisfaction, Captain MacLean," he said, "may I make one suggestion, and it's this. With men who operate much in stocks it is a rule to take fair profits and reinvest. The outsider often forfeits both profit and capital by holding on too long. You have had the luck to sell at the best point. My advice would be to divide the proceeds, keeping half, say, and reinvesting the other. It will afford me much gratification to undertake the office of broker or agent again."

While Captain MacLean was endeavouring to express his gratitude, fervently, but with no great measure of fluency, the door opened, and Miss Ogilvie walked in. Pausing curiously, she looked from one to the other in mute apology for the intrusion. She had known they were together, guessed their business, and could not resist the impulse to investigate for herself.

"I hope I'm not intruding," she said; "I want a book," and moved to the great bookcase which lined one side of the room. Captain MacLean was instantly by her side, with proffers of assistance in the part of librarian.

"I'm not quite sure what I want," she answered, letting her eyes meet his.

"A common failing of the sex, Con," her father remarked.

She ran to him with vehement upbraidings, and punished him with a caress.

"Don't blush, dear," he said, submitting blissfully.

"After all, you're not responsible for the failings of your sex."

At that she broke away, declaring he was very rude and ungallant.

"Oh, well, since I'm out of favour I'd better go," he responded.

Gracefully as a hawk in mid-air she wheeled, begging him not to "mind"; but he replied, gravely this time, that

if the captain would excuse him he would despatch some business which awaited him elsewhere.

"Perhaps," he remarked, as a Parthian shot, "Captain MacLean will help you to make up that piece of chaotic instability called a woman's mind."

She hurled gay reproaches at the retreating figure, for they were great chums, then shyly faced her companion.

As their eyes met, an electric shock passed through each.

Connie turned with burning cheeks to the bookcase.

"I'm very stupid to-day," she cried in a vexed tone. "Please tell me what to read."

"There's enough here, Miss Ogilvie," Norman returned, with singular gravity.

They ranged swiftly over *éditions de luxe* of authors ancient and modern, grave and gay, a great company of silent philosophers, wits, and story-tellers. But that day it was impossible to fix the mind on books.

Happening to look from the window, Connie started as one who is suddenly surprised, made a hasty excuse, and ran off. Looking out in turn, Norman saw her whisking Alick out of sight. A few minutes later Mr. Ogilvie found him still gazing from the window as in a trance.

CHAPTER XLII

REVELATIONS

HAVING feasted under the generous stimulus of the housekeeper and a valiant appetite, Alick was conducted to a room so rich and dainty, that it seemed to epitomise the luxury of a world. There Miss Ogilvie awaited him almost as ardently as if he were the forbidden lover coming secretly to his lady's bower. She would have carried him thither in the first instance but for the intuitive knowledge that all young animals, and particularly young animals in the shape of boys, are most pliant after feeding to their heart's content. She wondered, in her impatience, why it took him so long to eat, forgetting his capacities in that direction; when at last he appeared, rosy, and exceedingly happy, she closed the door quickly, and the two sat tête-à-tête, a singular contrast of fine lace and hodden grey.

By this time Alick had learned to look in Miss Ogilvie's face without feeling that the earth gaped under him, and now he was cool enough to mark her extraordinary brightness and vivid interest in himself. Conversation opened agreeably with compliments to his own and Ian's triumph at the games, and a general reference to the pleasures of a picturesque event. As he listened, lines of merriment radiated from the corners of Alick's mouth, then all at once he laughed outright, as one laughs over a ludicrous memory suddenly called up.

"What makes you laugh, Alick?" Miss Ogilvie asked in a tone that at once expressed surprise and winning confidence.

"Oh, mem," he answered, struggling between contrition

for bad manners and an inclination to break out again, "it was Ian and Mr. Linnie I was thinking of."

"That little difference of theirs on the morning of the games?" she suggested.

"Yes, mem, and the night too."

"The night too?" she repeated, a new note in her voice.

"Yes, mem; the night was the biggest bar of all, that's the best fun," he explained, lest the vernacular might be lost on her.

"Then you had fun at night, Alick," she said, keeping her eyes on his face. "You see the disadvantage of being a woman. Was there great fun at night?"

She was smiling so divinely that Alick's soul was puffed up.

"Yes, mem," he cried, "and most of the fun was about yourself too."

A boy is the bluntest of instruments when he chances to hit. She gave a little start and held her breath.

"About me, Alick?"

"Yes, mem," he answered, his eyes dancing.

Connie's blood ran cold, but she maintained an admirable nerve.

"You must excuse my stupidity, Alick," she observed sweetly, "but I don't understand."

Alick's heart was leaping so jubilantly, he forgot the prudence which Ian had so often inculcated with a stick.

"Well, mem, it's this," he said. "Ian's not what you'd call friends with Mr. Linnie."

"And it is a serious thing of course to be out of favour with Ian. What did Mr. Linnie do to offend him?"

"Once when the laird was in trouble the Linnies were bad to him."

"And I suppose that whoever is bad to the laird is bad to Ian."

"Yes, mem. And when Mr. Linnie was for putting him out at the Games that day Ian was mad with rage;

and Lauchie Duff—that's the old fiddler, mem—told him night was the time to settle accounts of that kind; so it was done in the night."

Miss Ogilvie's interest was more intense than Alick guessed. Her purpose with him was quite other than to hear tales of brawls and unequivocal hatred; but on a sudden, horrible suspicions were thrust upon her, and these in turn brought a cold fear. She had assured herself that the vast indifferent night had alone heard the insolence of Rollo Linnie. What if unsuspected eyes and ears were about? She would fain have turned to other concerns, but Alick that day had the spell of the ancient mariner, and when he spoke it seemed she could not choose but hear. Her reputation was at stake; her woman's curiosity on tiptoe. It would be a fine scandal for Glenveagle and the glens and dales for fifty miles around if Mr. Linnie's idiotic impertinence were known. She hated him with a new fiery hatred. Why had she not let Jeff or another horsewhip him? In that moment she could have horsewhipped him herself.

"It was done in the night?" she repeated, forcing down her agitation.

"Yes, mem."

She could see that Alick was mentally smacking his lips. Was he moved by the mere boy's delight in fighting, or was there damaging knowledge behind? She recalled that distracted figure of a horseman dashing past in the darkness. What did it all mean?

"And I suppose there was great fun at the settling of accounts, Alick?" she remarked, toying with a lace handkerchief. Alick's face took on a look of beatitude far beyond the reach of a saint.

"Yes, mem," he answered, his voice ringing with glee. "Gosh! Ian gave it to him."

"You mean thrashed him?" she asked in surprise.

"Yes, mem, thrashed him."

"But Ian is old, while Mr. Linnie is young; how could Ian thrash him?" she returned, almost wishing Ian had killed him.

"But you see, mem, Ian is awful with his nieves," Alick explained joyously.

"With his what?"

"His nieves, mem. This," and Alick held up a doubled fist.

"Oh, I see!" and Miss Ogilvie eased her mind with a laugh.

From that point they got swiftly on confidential terms, and Alick told a tale which filled the listener with a freezing horror. He made no attempt to palliate; he had a barbarian's indifference to feeling.

"You see, mem," he told her radiantly, "when you and Mr. Linnie came out from the dancing Ian and me was waiting in the dark. Lauchie Duff was to be there too, but he wasn't fit."

"Wasn't fit?" she repeated mechanically, her breast like a cauldron.

"No, mem. Lauchie whiles takes a drop too much, and Ian had to put him to bed in a stable loft; so we were just by ourselves. When Ian saw the two of you he gripped my arm and said wild like below his breath, 'There he is, there's the——'" Alick pulled up. "It was a bad word, mem," he explained. "Sometimes when he's mad Ian uses bad words."

"Like the rest of us, Alick. Omit it and proceed."

"Well, we watched you both going over to the wood, and then there was a queer noise, as if you was angered, mem. 'Alick,' says Ian to me, 'listen; as sure's death the beast's making love to her.' That's what he said, mem."

"The silly man," said Connie, all her pulses beating furiously.

"Ian was awful mad, mem. 'I'll dirk him,' says he, in quiet to me, 'and if you tell I'll dirk you too. The like of

him making love to any respectable lassie. Wait a bit though; if she listens to him she can have him and welcome; if not, Linnie's in for it this very night.' It was pretty black under the trees," Alick proceeded eagerly, "but we saw him gripping you, mem, and then you slapping him in the face. 'See to that,' says Ian. 'Alick, that's good,' and we heard you telling him he was a coward several times over. Ian said he never heard or saw anything that pleased him better."

"That was good of Ian," Connie said, not without some smack of offence. But Alick, engrossed in his narrative, held on.

"Then, mem, we saw you running away, and waited. 'Alick,' says Ian, 'we've got him now. The Lord, or the devil, or somebody has delivered him into our hands.'"

Connie lifted an admonishing forefinger.

"Alick," she cried, "you may tell your story, but you mustn't be blasphemous."

"No, mem," Alick replied, in nowise daunted by a word he did not understand. "'We've got him,' says Ian, 'and look you, that's the man who wanted to keep you from getting a prize, don't forget that.' 'No fear,' says I, for I hated Mr. Linnie just as much as Ian. 'What's the ass's colt going to do now?' says Ian. 'Is he going after her, do you think?' But the man turned and went to the wood, walking quick. 'It'll be better up there,' says Ian; 'we can do as we like,' but just then Mr. Linnie turned and came back."

"A premonition, perhaps," said Connie, seeking relief in speech.

"Maybe that, mem," returned Alick, to whom the suggestion was Greek. "When he came near enough Ian stepped out in front of him, and said, 'How do you do, Mr. Linnie? It's been a trying kind of a day, sir,' and then Mr. Linnie cried out, 'It's you, is it, you spawn of Satan?' And the next thing he was at Ian's throat."

In a bubbling glee he described the scuffle of the two men, the feigned retreat of Rollo, and the fierce second charge which carried both to the bottom of the steep declivity. Act by act, word by word, he recounted all that ensued. When he told of Ian's championship of herself Connie flamed, whether with shame or gladness she could not tell, but through all she listened with a painful intentness. Rollo's forced apologies brought a break of laughter, and a little thrill of admiration for Ian. It was beyond her to understand how the old man had done it all, because she did not know or forgot that hate and rage gave a tiger strength. But the climax of surprise came at the end, and for a moment lifted her beyond all thought of self.

"And you had a little jollification of your own, I suppose," she said when Alick described how Rollo had cleared his pockets under the coercion of the inexorable Ian.

"No, mem," Alick answered quickly. "It was all for the laird, and that was why Ian made him pay."

She scrutinised his face with marvelling eyes.

"You mean to tell me you kept nothing for yourselves?"

"No, mem, not a penny."

Connie felt as if she were discovering new provinces of human nature; at the same time it reminded her of the real business of the interview.

Alick had thrice been entrusted with a delicate mission on the laird's behalf, and she waited anxiously for his report. He was able to tell her that her contributions had been added to the little store according to instructions, omitting, however, to mention that his honorarium went with the rest.

"That's good, Alick," she said, smiling her loveliest. "And of course," she added radiantly, "none but ourselves knows."

Alick flushed guiltily, and Miss Ogilvie asked in alarm—

"Does anyone know? Quick, tell me; does anyone know?"

Alick's lips and throat had never before been so dry, out he managed somehow to articulate—

"Yes, mem, somebody knows."

"Oh, Alick, Alick!" she cried in piercing reproach. "What have you done?"

Alick rose, as if drawn from above by the nerve roots.

"I couldn't help it, mem," he pleaded; "as sure's death I couldn't help it. When I was putting in the money the first time Ian came on me."

"Ian!" she repeated in a passion of mortification.

"Must Ian know and meddle with evverything? Sit down and tell me all about it."

She was flashing and pcremptory now, and Alick obeyed in such a tremor as even Ian could not inspire.

"Well, now," she said, on hearing all, "will this man, this Ian of the universal scent, hold his tongue, do you think?"

Alick gave vehement assurances of Ian's good faith, stating reasons for the interference.

"He thought," said Alick, with a forced laugh, "he thought, mem, I was helping myself when I got him out of the way. When he saw how it was he was awful glad."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, mem. And when he knew about y' mem, he said it was grand—and——"

Alick drew up as if among quaking bogs.

"And what?" she demanded.

"Oh, just that anybody who was the laird's friend was his friend."

Assuredly she was coming upon new provinces of human nature.

"Thank you," she said. "It seems Ian and I were confederates without knowing it. Well, we must reconsider the position. There's only one thing more at present, that you are not to mention what has passed now to anyone alive, not even to Ian. Remember."

And Alick gave his word of honour.

CHAPTER XLIII

A PEEP FROM BEHIND CURTAINS

HE was dismissed with yet another token of confidence, for it seemed that, in the extraordinary situation which had arisen, the millionaire's daughter must enlist the goodwill, and, above all, secure the silence, of this imp of the hills. She admired him, as she admired his chief and confederate, Ian Veg, for inveterate, invincible loyalty to a lost cause, but wished with some degree of fervour they could execute their schemes of help and vengeance without involving her.

When Alick disappeared, grinning blissfully, she turned back into the room, her face all at once fallen to a wistful seriousness, shut the door, and took up a position by the window. Never before had the independent, self-reliant American girl felt so acute a longing for a confidante to counsel and sympathise. Her grandmother was out of the question, Kitty was gone, and here was a matter which could not be put into a letter.

"What a vexing tangle," she thought, "and all through the meddlesome idiocy of other people."

If Ian had minded his own business; if Rollo had not been an impertinent fool! The Man of Ross might do good by stealth, but the plan was a failure in Glenveagle, where in very truth every good and evil thing came to light. What was she to do? Cut the Gordian knot of her difficulties or try to untie it?

Before she could formulate her thoughts the sound of

footsteps on the gravel outside reached her ear, and slipping behind silken draperies she saw her father and Norman pass in close, animated conversation. What were they talking of? Could one of them but guess—something. If Captain MacLean had never entered her life all these vexations would not have come either. Did she wish she had never seen him? A hot denial flamed through her at the traitorous thought. Is there not a pain that is the essence of joy? Go back on herself? No, never, however entanglements might threaten.

The two men sauntered on to an angle in the castle wall, and she crept forward to keep them in view, taking care to be well screened in case they should turn abruptly. At the corner they paused, making a half turn, so that she saw Norman's face. He was smiling; yet the smile but deepened his habitual sadness of expression. That surely was not the conventional soldier face, hard with the insolence of brute force and the trade of slaughtering. It was strong, and in a fury she could imagine it terrible; but its characteristic quality was the sensitiveness which comes of fine nerves, chivalry, and manly courage; and she knew, oh, yes, she knew that with all its power it was caressingly tender. But why was he so hauntingly sad? Was it because of the rude cruelty of fortune? Or because—but that guess she durst not name. With the hot blood surging into her face she blew him an invisible kiss. Oh, if things were different—if women could make the desire of their hearts known without being gossiped about, jeered at, and misunderstood! Or if the right man had but the wit to speak the right word at the right moment!

The smile faded from Norman's face, and the suggestion of pathos deepened. It was the sadness lying on that countenance like a grey pall on a June sky which first awoke her interest. She tried to account for it; remembered the blood of the Celt flowed in his veins, and

read her Renan and others on the Celtic races, pursuing endless myths and legends through the regions of antique time, and ever circling swiftly back to the point of departure. Then bit by bit she made out the romantic story of his misfortunes; later they came much together, and behold! her ideal man, the conqueror, the woman's idol. And now, as she had just learned, his furlough was near an end, and he was going away.

The two passed out of sight, and there fell on Connie an appalling sense of loneliness. Then as thought took wing her emotions burned afresh. She pressed her hands to her eyes to ease the ache and throb behind; then as at a sudden recollection she took from her pocket a letter which she began to read, the fingers that held it trembling. It was dated New York, signed "Jeff," and was to this effect:—

"I was more of a straight up and down fool than my worst enemy would believe when with you at Dunveagle. But it's a fact we never know our privileges until we lose them. I blame the motor. It was a new toy, and—but you understand all that. It's put away in disgrace now; I could take a hatchet and smash the thing up. That's how I feel. New York is as gay as ever. I have looked round the clubs, and the fellows were howling glad to see me. Some of them congratulated me on the happiness which is not mine. If they had kicked me I think I'd have felt better. I have done three first nights at the theatres, and flung a bouquet at a prima-donna who was as withered as sheepskin under her paint, besides doing six dinners in different places. But it's no good. Everything is out of joint. The pater, too, wanted to know what I had been doing in Europe and said things that are not pleasant to remember. In fact, Con, I am right down miserable. I want you. Say I may go back by the next steamer and put this ring, that's burning a hole in my heart, where it ought to be. I want you here. I want you to take your

proper place in society, which is first place in the first city in the world. Come back and don't be moping among the peat-bogs. I'll hate Dunveagle if you stay there any longer."

For Jeff the epistle was passionate, but the writer was not so absorbed in the main purpose as to forget all else. Connie learned that Lord Kinluig had written seriously about a visit to America; "and," added Jeff, "Kit has ever since been granting interviews to milliners and dressmakers, no faith tailors, European style. Suppose you come out with Kinluig. You can't possibly think of missing the season here. Everybody is asking when you are to return."

She turned this letter over curiously, reread the heading, the signature, certain passages of appeal. Was that the sort of letter somebody would write if he had a similar favour to ask? She could not think so. Yet Jeff was as good as the best of his kind, and assuredly one of the prizes of New York. It would be delicious to reign in that brilliant court she knew so well, to set the fashion, to glitter in and out, the cynosure and envy of a gilded multitude—yet—yet—

"Oh, Brignall banks are fresh and fair,
And Greta woods are green.
I'd rather rove with Edmund there
Than reign our English queen."

A tap came to the door, and a servant announced that the Misses Linnie, aunt and niece, were in the drawing-room.

She found the two beaming in sultry geniality on Mrs. Ogilvie, who was apologising for a dulness due to headache. Connie played hostess under a feeling of revolt, thought of the arts of hypocrites and self-seekers, and when tea was brought mischievously proposed to invite the gentlemen.

"We'll see how spinsters of five-and-fifty conduct their wooing," she reflected, "and show that some they affect to despise are honoured and welcome here."

Instead of sending a message she ran out herself, and

presently returned in triumph, bringing Captain MacLean and her father.

For the sprightliness and antiquated grace of Miss Jemima in greeting Mr. Ogilvie she was prepared. "Desperate cases need desperate courage," she remarked mentally; and the good Aunt Jemima had reached the point when action must be unequivocal. Sweet and twenty may be coy and capricious; but five-and-fifty, or by'r lady some ten years less, must, to succeed, be as direct and resolute in the quest of a husband as besiegers about a fortress. The reception of Norman was less sultry, and Connie, noting the nice distinction made, steelled herself for conduct that should not be misunderstood. If these bland pretenders dared by word, look, or manner to insult, as surely as she was an American they would be punished. The captain was hardly seated when Mrs. Ogilvie, with an old woman's tact, announced that he was about to leave them.

"I think he's very unkind," she said, nodding reproachfully at Norman.

The Misses Linnie turned heads and eyes stiffly, as if the machinery being rusty and out of gear were hard to work, and bestowed on him an icy look.

"Oh, really!" said Aunt Jemima. "I daresay he finds little in the Glen to interest him now. Things are so much changed."

Connie took a quick sip of tea to drown a fiery retort in the birth, for she read the innuendo plainly.

"You ancient vixen," she remarked to herself, looking over the cup rim at Jemima's unctuous face. "I daresay he doesn't find you interesting, anyway."

"The Glen was always interesting to me," the captain replied, turning his straight military eyes on Miss Linnie, "and was never more interesting than now."

"Good," thought Connie, glancing at Aunt Jemima; but that serene and amiable lady was unruffled.

"Soldiers," put in Mr. Ogilvie, "must be where their country needs them."

"And I'm sure they wouldn't wish to be anywhere else," rejoined his mother, the Highland spirit warming within her. "Though when they're far away I'm afraid they forget what's left behind."

Norman hastened to assure her she was mistaken, and as was his way furnished concrete proofs.

"I remember once in India, Mrs. Ogilvie," he told her, "when the enemy's guns were actually playing on us, overhearing the two best soldiers in the regiment in a little private talk at the bottom of a ditch. 'Peter,' said one, 'five years ago this very day you and me was drinkin' oorsels fou thegither in Scotland.' 'Man Bob, I was just thinkin' of it when ye spoke, and wishin' to God we were drinkin' oorsels fou there the now. Destroyin' the heathen's dry work. Mind yer head; there's the whistle o' a shell.'"

There was a peal of laughter; but immediately Miss Grace remarked in her frostiest manner, "I wouldn't like to have anyone belonging to me in the army."

"Wouldn't you?" answered the captain urbanely. "Unfortunately we cannot all occupy easy-chairs at home."

"Oh," chimed in Connie, "if I were a man I think I'd be a soldier. It's splendid."

It was the first time the sentiment occurred to her, but it was expressed with all the force of a long-cherished ideal.

"Joan of Arc managed the thing, Con," her father remarked.

Thereupon he rose, smiling enigmatically, shook hands with the visitors, and carried Norman off to the billiard-room. They were hardly gone when a horseman clattered up the avenue, and next minute Mr. Rollo Linnie, much spattered from hard riding, was announced.

CHAPTER XLIV

ROLLO DISCHARGES A DEBT

WHEN he rode away some hours later he was flushed and in choler, the reasons being chiefly these. Once rid of his aunt and sister, Connie must needs share the fun in the billiard-room, and Rollo, who had challenged the captain, was maddened to observe that her interest was for his opponent's play. The fellow was too evidently worming himself into favour, and Rollo's business was to humiliate him and reap laurels by the same stroke. But nerves excited by malice and wine, a luck that was infernal, and that something else yet worse worked together for discomfiture.

In truth he came ill prepared for the task. That day he had been recklessly sociable in Aberfourie, and riding home with a hot mind bethought him of a plan of action. Jeff Dunbar luckily was out of the way, the rejected half-hoop of diamonds doubtless searing his heart. That was one point to the good. Against it, however, had to be put the other point that Kitty was also gone, thus reducing chances and rendering it imperative to make the utmost of what remained. By the bountifulness of fate, what remained was best by the odds of two to one. Shilbeck's words concerning the whole pile and the divided were a delectable refrain in Mr. Linnie's ears. "Twenty millions undivided, twenty millions undivided," his good angel chanted. "Rollo, my boy, go in and win. You deserve it, you're young, you're plucky. You're a man

ROLLO DISCHARGES A DEBT

291

of fashion, and between ourselves you're in devilish need of the cash. Screw up your courage and at it."

One must not be too nice about means when the stake is glorious. Already Mr. Linnie had been rebuffed. Well, what of that? Is the victor always victorious at the first attempt? As to the failure he was himself to blame. He had been too precipitate, in too great a haste to clutch the prize; his zeal had defeated itself. He would be wiser now, but he must act promptly. Rumours were going that the Ogilvies intended to return to New York for the winter, and if he missed his chance—Rollo's heart gave a leap—great heavens! he missed twenty millions, on the authority of Mr. Job Shilbeck.

Under the inspiration of such thoughts he turned aside and cantered up the castle avenue in lyrical assurance that faint heart never won fair lady.

The presence of Aunt Femima and his sister vexed him a moment, but they were deftly sent home. Next, and with a yet sourer face, he discovered Captain MacLean. Well, the man would have none but himself to blame if he fared ill at Rollo's puissant hand.

As to the main purpose Mr. Linnie had diligently conned all the expedients suited to his case, and decided without hesitation for instant strenuous siege. With this resolution he dismounted and flung his rein to a groom; with this resolution he marched upon the drawing-room in top-boots and routed his aunt and sister; with this resolution steeled and fixed he sought the billiard-room to humiliate Norman.

The start was inauspicious. He missed what a child would have taken; left the balls so that a child could not help scoring. He bit his lip, the sallow face flushing dangerously. It is characteristic of the old Adam that in a pinch his instinct is to seize his club and strike. Rollo's fingers were about the cue, but where they ached to be was about his opponent's throat.

Refreshments came in, and he drank greedily, but the liquid was as oil to fire. His hand became so tremulous that more than once he had to pause on his stroke to take breath, a circumstance which incensed him the more; and no one looking on was surprised when at length the cue tore through the cloth. He turned away with an exclamation of disgust.

"I can't play to-night," he cried, and had just sufficient presence of mind to express regret to Mr. Ogilvie.

The millionaire smiled genially.

"The best of hands will shake at times, Mr. Linnie," he said. "Besides, there are worse misfortunes than a cut cloth."

Divining the effect of his presence on Rollo, Norman would have left, but Connie contrived to detain him, and Mr. Linnie went first.

Vengefully disappointed and bitter, he rode into the night. He was baffled now, but not beaten; not beaten, he repeated, waving his whip in air and bringing it down cruelly on his horse's flank. Would he could bring it down on MacLean's head. He would bring down something heavier, ay, very much heavier. Opportunity was not yet exhausted. In this flaming mind he reached the avenue gate, and spying a man outside in the road, called more peremptorily than he knew, "Hi, come here, will you, and open this gate for me."

The figure swung round, cocked its head, put its hands in its pockets, and sniggered.

"Maybe you'll just try the plan of opening it yerself, Mr. Linnie," it answered.

In the darkness Rollo could not recognise the face, but the voice was unmistakable. Jerking his horse angrily into position, he stooped, pulled the gate open, and passed through to devote his attention to the figure in the road.

"It's you," he hissed. "I might have known you

wouldn't oblige me," and made a motion as if he meant to strike with his whip.

"Ay," quoth Ian Veg, "you're quite right there, sir. I haf no reason that I can mind to be obliging."

With a muttered imprecation Rollo turned to go.

"I'm saying, Mr. Linnie," Ian called, "you'll not be forgetting the half-croons."

Rollo wheeled as wheels the trooper to cleave an adversary.

"Half-croons!" he repeated, his horse almost treading upon Ian. "I know what you deserve more."

"Will you be keeping back your beast, sir?" Ian said. "To tell you the truth, there's corns on my toes. You were saying what I deserve."

"Your insolent head cracked," cried Linnie. "That's what you deserve."

"But you'll not be thinking of that, sir," Ian returned nonchalantly. "Maybe it's not just what you'd call the best of heads, but it's done me a long while now, and a crack would not likely improve it. So you'll just let the head alone, sir."

"Learn to keep a civil tongue in it, then," retorted Linnie.

"I'm a hit old to begin the learning now," said Ian, keeping well on guard, "though if you wass to show me the way I might try. But I wouldn't haf you miscalling my tongue. Never a word passed it to you, Mr. Linnie, but the truth. If the truth will not always taste well, iss that my fault?"

"Take care," cried Linnie, bending forward truculently. "Take care. Your insolence may have its reward quicker than you expect."

"You'll be giving that another thought, I'm thinking, Mr. Linnie," Ian responded, unmoved.

"And why should I?" Rollo demanded from between set teeth. "Why should I? Answer me that."

"Because if you and me wass to come to grips——"

"Grips!" repeated Rollo, "grips! Do you think I'd dirty my hands coming to grips with you?"

"A little while ago you wass not so anxious to keep them clean," was the cool response. "Maybe you wass too far gone. A man is not always able to mind when he's sober what he did in drink."

"Mackern," cried the man above, bending again, "I've a very good mind to teach your tongue some manners."

"Indeed, it's not worth your while, sir," was the answer. "There's just the two half-croons atween us, and if you'll be paying I'll be jogging, for I'm on the laird's business, and you know he wass never good at the waiting. If you'll not be paying I just wanted to mention Alick wass saying he would not fash himself holding in any longer. And it's just come to this, Mr. Linnie, that we can make shift to do without the half-croons if you make shift to do with the clyping."

The man on the horse thrust his hand into his pocket, brought forth two half-crowns, and flung them at Ian.

"There," he cried, "there's your money."

"Wass it in the bargain that I wass to search for them in the dark?" Ian asked, moving neither hand nor foot.

"Ugh, you turn my stomach!" Rollo answered, throwing himself from his horse. He struck a match, picked up the coins, and put them into Ian's hand.

"Does that satisfy you?" he demanded ferociously. "And now listen—if red-head or you ever say a word of all this, as sure's the sky's above you'll rue it! You hear?"

"I'm not deaf, Mr. Linnie," Ian responded quietly, turning to go his way. Half an instant Rollo gazed after him in a blazing anger, then scrambled into the saddle and rode off at a gallop.

CHAPTER XLV

AN ENCOUNTER IN THE NIGHT

MEANWHILE Norman followed Rollo leisurely, his thoughts with those whom he had just left. Connie was the last to shake hands with him, and he fancied the delicate fingers trembled in his own. But he must not build castles in Spain. Presently he would have the distractions of duty, and in the interval there must be no hugging of delusions. That way lay bitterness and disappointment.

Behind, little as he guessed it, Connie was in a feverish perturbation. Making an excuse as soon as he was gone, she ran to her own room. A minute later she stole out like a thief, hooded and cloaked, and after a timorous glance round lest anyone should be spying, walked swiftly in the direction which Norman had taken.

"What am I doing?" she asked herself fearfully, and womanlike ran on without trying to answer. Her quick eye had marked the malignancy of Rollo's face, and her heart suggested terrible possibilities. As she knew, he had lately been much ruffled and hurt, and baffled hope, she told herself, might well move to a madness of outrage on suspected rivals. She had heard of such things; then she thought her fears ridiculous. "As if *he* couldn't take care of himself after all he's seen and done," she thought. "Ay, but suppose an assassin's hand were to strike in the dark," the instigator whispered. "Suppose he is taken unaware. Suppose——"

In this turmoil of anxiety all at once she heard voices and stopped to listen, every pulse in her body, as it seemed, still. A note of anger signified an altercation, and she ran on again. The note rose higher; she heard the voice distinctly and knew it. "My God!" she gasped, "they've met. They've met." And she was right.

Having galloped half a mile as if the chariot of death were at his heels, Rollo abruptly drew rein, whirled a second in vengeful thought, turned, and rode back as furiously as he had gone, blind as a mad beast for revenge. Ten minutes afterwards Norman, walking quietly homeward, descried a solid blackness in the comparative lightness of the trees. Stopping for better observation, he made out the figure of a horse, and beside it a man—both motionless. Suspecting an accident, he hurried on, inquiring as he approached if anything were wrong. Rollo's head was dizzy, and his throat so dry he could scarcely articulate.

"The night's fine," he answered, with a hard cackle of a laugh, "and I fancied I might take the air without question. But it seems one cannot do even that without the meddling of interlopers."

The retort was both a rebuke and a challenge. Norman accepted the first; the second he could afford to disregard.

"I am sorry for interrupting you," he said apologetically. "My excuse is that I was afraid you had had an accident and might be hurt."

He was passing on, but the other stepped in his way.

"And it's like your effrontery to pretend you wouldn't be pleased if I were hurt," returned Rollo, his eyes gleaming like a cat's in the dark.

"It's a question we needn't discuss," rejoined Norman, again making to pass.

"You're in a great hurry to sneak away, aren't you?" said Rollo, maintaining his minatory attitude. "If practice

makes perfect, you ought by this time to be a master of the art of sneaking, for you've been doing it pretty hard of late."

It was a brutal insult, meant to sting and provoke. Norman's jaws clenched; he felt the tightening of muscle and that first sharp leap of the outraged blood which makes for vengeance; but his feelings had long since been subdued to the curb, and it was with perfect self-possession he replied—

"Mr. Linnie, you forget yourself."

"Oh, do I?" retorted Linnie, condensing every species of affront and contumely in his tone. "Perhaps, then, you'll teach me how to remember myself again. The present is always the best time. We're alone; begin the lesson."

He unlooped the rein from his left arm, and flung it upon the horse's neck.

"I think, sir," was the response, "each of us may profitably mind his own business. I cannot account for the honour you have done me in waiting thus, nor am I in the least disposed to put you to the trouble of telling me."

"But I'll oblige you without the asking," replied Rollo, his voice shrill with passion. "Perhaps you think I was blind to the studied insults you put upon me this evening; perhaps you think I haven't seen your infernal insolence every time we've met lately. Perhaps——"

"I'm not a roadside brawler, Mr. Linnie," Norman struck in. "And I request that you be good enough to let me pass unmolested."

"When I've told you a little of what I think of you," Rollo answered.

"Pray don't put yourself to the trouble," said Norman. "I am as little eager for your opinion as for your company. Make way."

"D—— you!" cried Rollo, in a hoarse fury. "It was always the way of the beggarly MacLeans to be upsetting and insolent to their betters."

Connie, who had crept to within thirty yards in the shadow of the trees, heard the cruel words, and panted to brand the speaker as a liar.

"Why does Norman endure it?" she asked herself. "If I were a man I'd thrash him on the spot—the—the coward."

It was well for Rollo, for himself, and perhaps also for Miss Ogilvie, that Captain MacLean was trained to keep his head and his temper in a crisis. Even when taunted, tempted, and stung in open malice, he saw clear as noon what consequences would follow if he were to crush this viper in his path. To give Mr. Linnie according to his deserts would be to give him victory. It was impossible for an officer of the British army to engage in night brawls with chance quarrellers, and Rollo knew it.

"Let me pass on!" Norman demanded again, this time more peremptorily.

"Oh, I'm not nearly done with you yet," was the response. "I haven't half stated how much I despise you; I couldn't do it in a week. But I want to tell you I perfectly understand your game. You affront me because you want to curry favour with Miss Ogilvie—as if she would care a snap of the fingers about a pauper like you. She tolerates you out of charity, and in her heart despises you as much as I do. There's a truth to think over."

"Oh, what a lie! what a lie!" was gasped in the darkness twenty yards away.

From her hiding-place Connie could discern the figures of the two men facing each other. A great pain, such as she had never felt before, was racking her, and she leaned against a tree-bole, her hand pressed to her heart. What would happen next?

"You have taken it on yourself to introduce a name which must not be bandied or soiled in any squabble of ours," she heard Norman say.

AN ENCOUNTER IN THE NIGHT 299

Her head sang, her eyes were dazzled, her limbs could scarcely bear her.

"Oh, you're on that tack, are you?" Rollo cried. "Well, if you want an excuse, take it. I give you leave; I invite you."

He drew back a step, crouching like a tiger.

"We're in private grounds," Norman reminded him.

"That's easily remedied," Rollo rejoined. "Come outside, come anywhere. I'll go with you among your bare crags, where you're at home. Come—I challenge you."

"No," returned Norman, "I won't."

"You won't?"

"No."

"Ho! so the white on the liver's coming out. And why won't you?"

"Because," answered Norman, his voice ringing—"because if I began I should kill you."

"That's like your d—— conceit," Rollo cried in a frenzy. "In Miss Ogilvie's name, on Miss Ogilvie's behalf, I give you *that*," and he swung his whip, bringing it down on the captain's face.

Connie could endure no more. In a blaze of anger and solicitude she rushed forward, the rustle of her skirts making both men turn simultaneously. Next instant she was by Norman's side. He was holding the whip which he had wrenched from Linnie; she took it and flung it in Linnie's face.

"That is Miss Ogilvie's answer to what you have said," she cried in a white heat. "Go!"

He staggered back, muttering incoherent apologies.

"Go!" she repeated peremptorily. "You are in private grounds. Go!"

He went, leading his horse like a man without strength enough to mount, and Connie turned to Norman.

CHAPTER XLVI

NEW YORK—THE EVERLASTING LESSON

ON returning to his customary haunts, Mr. Shilbeck found his friend Mr. Hiram Brash in wondrous spirits, and his friend Mr. Giles Dunbar inclined to be "droopy" and irritable. "Touch of liver complaint, I reckon," Mr. Shilbeck remarked in company, but in his own mind assigned another cause for the ill humour.

Of Mr. Brash he had from the first, as we know, prophesied pleasant things. "If that boy don't die rich he'll die young," was the prediction formed on early impressions. At that time only one other had discovered Hiram's qualities, to wit the man who stood as Fate's instrument in helping him over the first stile. With uncommon liveliness of interest Shilbeck had ever since watched the progress of Ogilvie's protégé and lieutenant, remarking more than once in sheer admiration, "That's the right stuff; yes, sir, Hiram'll make things hum yet."

Of late Hiram had been fulfilling the friendly prophecy with remarkable energy and success; but as the humming was mostly in the interests of other people he prudently stopped a moment to consider the future. His judgment was that having played jackal so well the time had come to set up as lion on his own account. Accordingly there began to lie upon him impressive airs of leadership. Besides his hand was at present thrust deep into the huge pie which engaged the abilities of the first financial cooks of the age, and there existed no logical reason why he should not pull out his share.

It is the ambition of every true son of the Republic to live or die a millionaire—preferably to live, but at any rate, living or dead, to be reckoned among the owners of millions; and no man breathing was more loyal to the national ideal than Mr. Hiram Brash. The time, happily, was full of encouragement. He looked round and saw men far less worthy than himself enjoying the magic glory, moving in the magic circle. He clenched his massive right fist, a fist that had greased waggon wheels and was not ashamed—he, too, could grip and hold, and by thunder he would.

As for Mr. Giles Dunbar, he had already done what few men, kings or financiers, are able to do in a baffling world—he had outstripped youthful dreams and aspirations. Golden possibilities develop and increase as civilisation grows. In Mr. Dunbar's youth what Mr. Dunbar had actually accomplished would have been accounted as fabulous as a fairy tale. In talking with Mr. Rollo Linnie, Mr. Shilbeck had put the Dunbar millions at twenty, but a serious estimate would have multiplied that figure by three, and left a snug fortune of loose change. But give a man a county, and he aspires to a state; confer a state, and he pines for a continent. Giles Dunbar had performed marvels beyond imagination in the day of small things; yet there were still very dear objects to be achieved. For as it is the ideal of every level-headed American to make his "pile" more quickly and splendidly than anybody else, so it is his final desire to round off by founding and consolidating a family, that is by freeing it for ever from the plebeian contact of trade and commerce. Mr. Dunbar was now vigorously engaged in the great enterprise of adding a permanent member to the aristocracy of wealth which is the pride of America, and the envy of the whole Christian world beside. Noble foreigners peck at it and sometimes, as Mr. Shilbeck remarked, carry off considerable portions

to reinvigorate effete systems and replenish exhausted coffers. And that, too, comes into the plan of family-founding.

Quite recently Mr. Dunbar had made a startling discovery. He seldom condescended to read books; being a practical man, as he many a time observed himself, he found the newspapers sufficient; but it chanced that being alone one evening in his own drawing-room he picked up a volume which Kitty had left among the silken cushions, and turning the leaves incuriously, lighted on a scrap of verse which caught his eye simply because, by the manner of setting, it stood out from the rest of the text.

"But at my back I always hear
Time's winged chariot hurrying near,
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity."

He started like one rudely shocked while taking his ease. In the intense absorption of the game he had not heard, or at any rate had not heeded, that flying chariot of Time. "It's true," he thought, reading the lines again; "yes, it's true," and by an odd coincidence of association there came into his head other lines more startling still—

*And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods
laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be
merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy
soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things
be, which thou hast provided?*

For a moment he fell into a muse. A snatch of the everlasting lesson learned long, long ago at his mother's knee had come back in the stillness of the evening hour. What was the meaning of it? He had heard the Scotch Mr. Ogilvie talk of people being "fey." Surely he was not fey. And yet that sudden call to the soul to dislodge, that resistless flight of time—the thought clutched the heart as with fingers of ice.

"It's a mighty strange thing, this life of ours," he moralised silently. "You strive for a generation, and just

as you succeed, lie down and turn away from the whole show as if it didn't matter the toss of a feather." Instinctively he looked round the gorgeous room. "Yes, it's all very strange."

Kitty's entrance broke his train of reflection. The figure of the hurrying chariot remained with him, not for sentimental reverie or moral deduction, but as an incentive to make haste. All men—millionaires and beggars—must go down into the unlighted darkness; and for him bedtime could not be far off. But before the grim nurse appeared, imperatively beckoning on the stair, some things of a far-reaching, practical import had to be done.

He was bitterly disappointed with the course of some of them. Ready to grant his children any indulgence which might promote their social interests, to pay for their pleasure what kings and princes could not afford, he made but one condition—that they should keep their wits alert and profit by opportunity. Now Jeff had gone to Europe ostensibly for purposes of travel, in reality to consolidate the family interest on a well-planned base, and came back unsuccessful. He might and did gloze; but the plain English of it was failure, and failure was the one mortal offence which Mr. Dunbar consistently refused to condone. There had been a hot scene, as Jeff hinted in the letter we have read, and the father had closed the interview with a testimonial to the son which it certainly was not pleasant to remember.

On landing Mr. Shilbeck was obliged to hurry to Washington, but he returned to New York as quickly as might be, and immediately made his familiar way down among the sky-scrapers and elevators of Wall Street. Smoking placidly, he was whisked up half a dozen storeys, and dispensing with formality, walked straight in upon his friend Dunbar.

"The very man I wanted to see," Dunbar cried heartily. "Looking O.K., too. Well, and how's Europe?"

"Europe, sir?" answered Mr. Shilbeck, seating himself. "Europe's 'bout played out. I've come back, feelin' better disposed than ever towards the U-nited States. I tell you it's the country."

"So?" said Dunbar. "And how's Ogilvie?"

"Spry as usual," replied Job laconically.

"And his place? Very pretty, I'm told."

"That's accordin' to taste," said Mr. Shilbeck. "It wouldn't suit you, and it wouldn't suit me. Castle, I reckon, dates from the Flood; antiquarian ain't the word for it, though Ogilvie has pulled it about and added and restored a good deal. It's dumped down in a hollow beside some runnin' water, and the woods crowd round it so's you can only see the sky and some mountain tops. I felt all the time as if there wasn't air enough for the lungs."

"Ah," said Dunbar, "depend upon it, it's the women-folk that took Ogilvie there. His mother belongs somewhere round there, and Connie was always going on about romance and all that. As a rule, it don't pay any dividend, that sort of thing, Shilbeck. Guess you met my son and daughter there."

Mr. Shilbeck intimated that the guess was perfectly correct, whereupon Mr. Dunbar touched an electric button, as if a new and important idea had flashed upon him, told a boy in buttons he intended to remain invisible for an hour, and turned again to his friend.

"Now, Shilbeck," he said, "if you have no objections I want to have a good square talk with you."

"Fire away," responded Job, stretching his legs to signify assent and readiness.

"We're old friends, aren't we?" began Mr. Dunbar.

"Nigh five-and-twenty years since we dickered first," said Mr. Shilbeck.

"And all that time we've known a good deal of each other's affairs. Now, what I want to ask you, Shilbeck, is

this, What were my son and daughter doing at Ogilvie's place? How did they spend the time?"

"Pretty hard enjoyin' themselves, I judge," answered Shilbeck.

"Umph!" said Dunbar, as if the exclamation were pressed out of him. "Well, we needn't be going about the bush. You know that apart from business pretty close relations have for some time existed between Ogilvie's family and mine."

"Folk talk of an amalgamation," responded Shilbeck.

"Let them call it that if they like," said Dunbar. "I may tell you that something of the sort was discussed and found feasible—yes, perfectly natural and feasible. Well, Jeff goes to Europe to ratify the agreement in the ordinary way, and he's come back—I daresay you know how he's come back."

"He said something about an extension of time," Mr. Shilbeck replied, as if the matter in hand were an accommodation bill subject to renewal.

"Extension of time!" repeated Mr. Dunbar in disgust. "The triple-plated idiot has come back with the heart of diamonds, or whatever it is, in his pocket. Now what I want to find out, and you're the only man I can ask, Shilbeck, is this—what did he do all the time he was staying with the Ogilvies?"

"Pretty much what he wanted to do, same's at home, I reckon," answered Job.

"I want you, Shilbeck," said Mr. Dunbar, "to do me the favour of speaking your mind quite plainly. We're old friends, as we've just said, and whatever you tell me is told in confidence. I beg of you to have no fear of hurting my feelings. Now oblige me by saying what use Jeff made of his time in Europe."

"That's a pretty tall order, seein' Jeff's one of the liveliest young men 'bout Noo York," Job returned, "and can cover more ground in a given time than any other man

of his age and inches I know. But we're old friends, as ye've reminded me, Dunbar, and ye've told me to take no account of yer feelin's. That's how to get the trewth, generally speakin'. Well, I ain't the man to sour on a friend, and I'll be candid 'cordin' to order. What did Jeff do in Europe? Well, first he goes to Paris and invests in a motor—fancy vehicle, fancy price. Next he hircs a native Johnny to oil the thing and speak French to it. After that he crosses to London, and I reckon he just showed the Britishers in that city what a real live American can do when he's in earnest about it. I reckon he made the dollars fly——"

"Well, well! thank Heaven we can afford *that*," put in Mr. Dunbar a trifle testily.

"He appeared to be quite aware of that fact, and to take full advantage of it," Mr. Shilbeck remarked. "There were times when I was proud of Jeff, seein' I didn't foot the bills. There wasn't a thing to be done that Jeff didn't do."

"There you're wrong," cried his father.

"I'm referring to London," replied Job. "There wasn't a thing to be done that Jeff didn't do, nor a thing to be seen that he didn't see, nor a thing to be bought that he didn't buy, nor a man, woman, or child worth knowin' that he didn't know. He was at dinners, and afternoon teas, and horse races, hob-nobbin' with the best of 'em, from princes and dooks down. Then he comes to Ogilvie's place, bringin' his motor and the Johnny to oil it along, and you just lay your old boots he wakened up that district like a cyclone. There wasn't a horse in the county would take the road with any comfort when Jeff and the motor were about, nor a livin' thing that didn't stand aside and let him pass, except the old laird, that's Ogilvie's predecessor, and he came to grief."

"Came to grief?" echoed Mr. Dunbar.

"Yes; had a sort of 2.40 circus horse he was ready to lay

money on and wouldn't get out of Jeff's way, and the nat'r'il thing happened—he smashed up."

"Jeff didn't tell me that."

"Too triflin', likely," responded Shilbeck. "At Ogilvie's place he was considerably engaged with that motor, and I ain't goin' to say he was as lovin' and attentive as a man with a half-hoop of diamonds near his heart might be s'posed to be, though Connie 'pcared to cotton all right."

"Ah!" said Mr. Dunbar, drawing a long breath. "And Ogilvie, what did he do?"

"Nothin' in particular," answered Job.

"That's just it," cried Dunbar in vexation. "That's Ogilvie all over. Said once a daughter shouldn't be coerced. Fiddlesticks! As if a daughter shouldn't do what's right and proper, as she's told. You spoke of an extension of time. Now it may be all right, but I don't like it. When a sugar-plum's offered you open your mouth and take it if you want it; you don't ask for an extension of time. There wasn't anybody else about, I guess."

Mr. Shilbeck carried his mind slowly back to Dunveagle; he thought of Linnie; he thought particularly of Captain MacLean.

"Nat'rilly," he began cautiously, "there's always folks comin' and goin' at a place like Ogilvie's. You can't plank a millionaire down in Scotland without attractin' attention, any more'n you can leave a sugar cask in the sun unknown to the flies. But I reckon Connie's all right. The place is new, and Jeff was motorin' and all that; but Connie's a girl of sense, and it'll be all right. And now since we're talkin' confidentially, let me congratulate you about Kitty."

Mr. Dunbar opened his eyes.

"Why," he asked in astonishment, "what about Kitty?"

"You haven't heard?" said Shilbeck, gurgling delectably.

"Well, let young folks tell their own secrets. I ain't goin' to, and you needn't ask me. Now tell me about Brash."

"Brash is all right," answered Dunbar. "Brash is going full steam ahead."

CHAPTER XLVII

A HASTY DEPARTURE—AVE ATQUE VALE

FROM Mr. Brash's point of view Mr. Brash was in fact doing excellently well. The schemes in hand were big, the prospects golden. Dipping delectably into the future, he saw himself master of a Fifth Avenue palace and a millionaire's retinue. Almost insensibly, therefore, in the frequent consultations with Mr. Dunbar, he began to assume the port and authority of a principal. The voice, indeed, was still the voice of Jacob, but the hands were unmistakably Esau's. The hands, moreover, were near and excessively active, while the voice was three thousand miles away, and inevitably lost something of its force in transmission. Taking stock, Mr. Brash was disposed to felicitate himself, and play his own hand as interest might dictate. Why shouldn't he follow the universal rule? Did gratitude cry "halt"? Pooh! The man who was deterred by gratitude would have crusts and husks for his portion.

Now Mr. Brash on his own indubitable authority was not built that way. Ogilvie had helped him. True. Well, who helped Ogilvie, and who, pushing further into the past, helped Ogilvie's helpers? The line of helper and helped ran back (could it be traced) to the beginnings of Wall Street, a point which marked the limit of Mr. Brash's historical knowledge. Turn and turn about was the great law, and the successful ones were such as stepped nimbly on the shoulders of their fellows. Well, he guessed he could step as nimbly and deftly as the best.

He was vastly encouraged by the friendliness of Mr. Giles Dunbar, who after all was senior partner in the great firm,

and, as much duller eyes than Brash's could discern, for the present ill-humoured over the hitch in the proposed family alliance. The great man had written to Mr. Ogilvie, and Mr. Ogilvie replied in effect—

"There was a compact, that was true ;
But then she had a will. Was he to blame ?"

"Where a woman's life-long happiness is at stake," he added, "there ought to be reasonable freedom of choice."

At that heresy Mr. Dunbar's brows gathered. "As if," he muttered, "any girl would not be proud and glad to have Jeff. If it were only hinted he were in the market ! Shucks ! Ogilvie makes me sick."

In stress of emotion Mr. Dunbar, like other men of genius, often returned to the expressive if inelegant language of his youth.

While these thoughts were vexing the father's mind there came a letter from Miss Ogilvie herself to the son, saying many winsome, womanly things, and one thing in particular which put the lover on his mettle. He replied passionately, and got a response which in the circumstances he felt obliged to submit to headquarters. There was another interview, from which Jeff retired with the limp and drooping aspect of one whose interest in life is gone.

On the victor the effect was such that the family physician intervening, ordered an absolute rest in the country. Thereupon the "bears" on 'Change raised the cry of alarming illness, and the Dunbar-Ogilvie stocks were furiously hammered. In defiance of medical orders Mr. Dunbar hastened back to the post of duty, physically unfit, mentally in a blaze, and the "bulls" had their innings. The stocks recovered with a bound, but Mr. Ogilvie, sitting at the end of a wire three thousand miles away, thought it prudent to realise Captain MacLean's share. To Norman it was a second fortune, and his gratitude and wonder were expressed accordingly. As for the laird he was dumb—whether from gladness or hurt

pride none could tell. Half the money was at once set aside for him; the other half on Mr. Ogilvie's advice was kept fluid for use as occasion might serve.

"I'd employ it at home now," he said, with a smile. "I rather suspect we're in for squally weather on our side, and it's just as well to keep out of storms if possible."

He named certain stocks and shares which he had himself been watching with interest in London, and gave introductions which secured for the captain "inside favours." The result was a further miraculous increase of capital. For the first time in the history of the house it seemed that whatever a MacLean touched turned to gold, and the experience was so novel and amazing that the lucky one had a feeling of uneasiness. "I don't pretend to understand it," he said, for army men are babes in business. The laird too was astonished beyond expression, and a little doubtful. Ian alone took developments as if expecting them.

"Alik, my lad," he said one day while imparting good news, "what did I tell you? The pounds and the half-croons iss doing it, and you'll just be keeping up your pecker. We'll be back in the castle yet."

At the sign of squalls Mr. Ogilvie had immediately prepared to return to New York, but on the cabled assurance of Brash that all was well, and the knowledge that Dunbar was at the helm, he altered his plans. In this he was influenced by a frequently expressed desire from his mother and daughter that he would not leave them except in case of necessity. Connie seemed especially anxious to keep him beside her. He suggested that if he went she should go with him, but the suggestion was a trifle nervously put aside. Of late he had marked her absent and ill at ease, a circumstance which the masculine intelligence attributed wholly to the character of the private correspondence from New York. It is sometimes the habit of shrewd people to look abroad for reasons that lie close at hand.

Captain MacLean came and went, a welcome guest and companion, and Mr. Linnie, whose hardihood was beyond all praise, was permitted to abase himself afresh, though very prettily and firmly a line was drawn which he was henceforth forbidden to pass. Thus things went until the time was at hand when Norman must return to duty in the south.

Meanwhile Mr. Ogilvie was frequently uneasy with the thought that his place was in New York. "I don't quite like the look of things," he said one day as if thinking aloud, and Connie pounced on him for the reason. "Oh," he answered, like one taken off his guard, "I'm not sure I can tell you why. You've felt the brooding before the storm. Perhaps that explains my feeling as well as anything. Probably I'm a donkey for my pains, but I'd like to be there myself."

Was he too fey? Had he a presentiment of things to come?

That very night there came a cable message intimating the first rumblings of a tempest. A man of swift judgment, his decision was instant, and within half an hour he was packing for departure. By chance the laird and Norman were dining at the castle on that last evening.

"It's an odd thing," Mr. Ogilvie remarked to the captain, "that I should be going to-morrow and you but two days later." And at parting, "Well, good-bye. Water flows fast in these days, and a good deal will probably run under bridges before we meet again. I thank you for very grateful companionship, Captain MacLean."

The captain bowed, and Connie, a palpitating white figure, unconsciously fastened wide eyes on his face.

"I shall always be interested in you," Mr. Ogilvie went on; "always—and I wish you the best of good fortune in your profession."

Norman replied appropriately, indicating that if it were not foolish impertinence towards one who already had all that man could crave he would return the wish.

"My dear Captain MacLean," responded Mr. Ogilvie,

looking at him very kindly, "no man is so secure in his place or estate that he can afford to despise goodwill. Therefore wish me luck."

Norman did, and they shook hands. Next day Mr. Ogilvie sailed.

The liner which carried him had barely got the last bag of mails on board at Queenstown and turned, the black smoke pouring from her funnels, the sixteen thousand horse-power beating full stroke for the open Atlantic, when an event on which no man counted, though it was strictly in the order of nature, shook New York. Another machine yet more wonderful than the sixteen thousand horse-power, after running at high pressure for half a century as if its action were perpetual, ceased like a shivered locomotive. One morning Mr. Dunbar entered his office alert and full of schemes; at noon he was carried forth silently, recking not a whit of success or failure, or aught that Wall Street said or did. When the dread whisper ran men stared aghast for a moment as over an impossible, unimaginable disaster, then turned in raging self-interest to a convulsed market. 'Change was panic-struck, but the master who had roused and allayed so many commotions, who had so often and so cunningly pulled strings which made puppets dance, returned no more to control the furious elements. He had gone home and ta'en his wages.

The catastrophe did not come without warning. America, it appears, is hugely afflicted in the biliary organ. The engrossed financier—who could not spare time to take a holiday—blamed the liver, sent for a bottle of patent medicine, and went on amassing millions—a stupendous, unconscious satirist. The harassed brain meanwhile finding its protests unheeded, fell silent, worked a sullen slave under pressure, and laid up vengeance in secret cells against the day of reckoning. Then in the appointed moment, when the schemes of a lifetime were culminating in victory, as in a lightning-flash the driven slave revolted, and the strong man fell with a horrible, inarticulate gurgle

—once again pointing the dread sentence, *Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.*

Wall Street, like its fellows the world over, discounts human life; and the death of a king was the signal for a revolution which made sober men frenzied. Brash, the coolest of mankind, went about dripping and shouting vociferously what few heard or understood in the clamour. He was as a man on a sinking ship, or rather a man perched on an avalanche who saw frightful precipices ahead, yet was impotent in all save the power to call out his agony. The Dunbar-Ogilvie interests were the avalanche, and the only man in all the world who could avert destruction was somewhere out on the Atlantic. So does fortune contrive her ironies.

At Sandy Hook Mr. Ogilvie received the first news of the panic and its cause. For a little he was stupefied, the first time that even a momentary paralysis overcame that clear brain.

"Dunbar dead!" he repeated to himself; "Dunbar dead and buried!" It could not be. The mind refused to accept the idea; then as it was driven home there came surging thoughts of the results. He had not to be told that, figuratively speaking, 'Change played battledore and shuttlecock with himself, tossed him as the sea in its fury tosses a skiff, threw him down, and trampled upon him like maniacs. He went up the bay picturing ruin and trying to estimate what resources might still remain. The slow speed of the ship moved him to a fretting impatience. He wanted to be at the scene of the wreck, if only to assure himself of the fulness of destruction.

He was besieged by reporters, for every newspaper in America lay in wait for him. What did he think of the turn of affairs? What did he intend to do? He answered with obstinate negatives, knew nothing, would say nothing, except that he was back "to face the music." At the wharf he consigned his baggage to a porter, and whirled as fast as cab could take him to headquarters.

CHAPTER XLVIII

THE WRECK

HE found the confusion of desolation. A mighty hurricane had smitten the corners of his house and left a strewn ruin. Some day, when life is burned or frozen off our planet, or, it may be, an erring world is shattered because of disobedience to established law, there will fall the awful, unspeakable silence of completed havoc. Such a silence now seemed to be upon Mr. Ogilvie's world. Why hadn't he returned sooner? Why hadn't they divined what was coming? And, in the name of all that is ironic and tragic, why was he on the Atlantic in the fatal moment? He made no doubt he could have saved the situation; at any rate, he could have tacked and turned in the storm, taking advantage of every flaw and change. As it was, the vessel had gone full sail on the rocks, apparently without so much as a hand at the tiller. "The idiots!" he said to himself bitterly; "the idiots!"

His mind travelled back to Dunveagle and all he had left there, and a smother of pain came about his heart. Was it to be beggary? He winced under a fresh pang. All this would be in the British Press, and at that very instant those whose very existence was as his own might be moaning in hopeless, uncomforted distress. That must not be. Seizing a cable form, he wrote a message of encouragement, and with the act the whole heart was animated, for in quickening others we insensibly quicken

ourselves. With faculties revived, he began to inquire and examine like an architect planning reconstruction amid blackened and toppled walls.

He asked for Brash, but Brash, it appeared, was taking a needful holiday up the Hudson. A summons was sent by telegraph, and meantime the telephone brought Jeff. The tale Mr. Dunbar told was not heartening, though the signs of personal grief were less poignant than might have been expected.

"What do you intend to do?" Mr. Ogilvie asked, getting promptly to business.

"What can I do?" was the helpless answer, for, though an American, Jeff had no notion of business.

"I'll think that out," Mr. Ogilvie responded.

"Of course," said Jeff eagerly, "if there is any help I can give you personally, you have only to let me know."

"Of course, of course," Mr. Ogilvie returned. "Meantime, let me congratulate you on not having had all your eggs in one basket."

"And you, sir?" Jeff asked.

"I'm here," was the answer, "to sink or swim with the old ship. Otherwise, I haven't your luck, for it happened that most of my eggs were in one basket. It has fallen, and you see the smash. Your late father, who was one of the shrewdest men I ever knew, began some years ago to pull out and invest in real estate. Fortunately for you, it turns out he was wise. In time I might follow his example, but this has come, and I can't get out, even if there was anything to get out with."

Jeff took it as being at best a case of salvage, and as such was content to leave it to the saving grace of Mr. Ogilvie. He left without venturing upon private or personal matters beyond an intimation that the family expected Mr. Ogilvie to make the mansion in Fifth Avenue his home for the present. Mr. Ogilvie was politely thankful,

but explained that his arrangements must be subject to many unknown conditions; and shaking hands, immediately summoned the broker. As confidential man on the spot, he knew more than Jeff, but his story was no less dolorous. It was a bad smash, a very bad smash, the worst smash he could remember. For it was an onset without resistance, or resistance so feeble and ill-directed it counted for nothing.

"Why weren't you here?" Mr. Ogilvie was asked.

"Because I don't happen to be omniscient," he replied.

"Nothing but your own presence," said the broker, harping on the fretted string, "could have saved us."

"And I was at sea in a double sense," was the rejoinder. "Tell me, was the other side jubilant?"

Yes, the other side was elated; and worse than that, there were traitors in the army of defence.

"Ah, where individual interests are to be served that must always be the case," Mr. Ogilvie said, not without a touch of bitterness. "I could not expect even my friends to throw away fortunes for me. That's not in human nature. I take it they unloaded in a panic. I've seen very level-headed men lose their wits in a crisis; but I hope the defections were not serious."

Names were given, and at the mention of one of them the lines on Mr. Ogilvie's face hardened visibly.

"What!" he returned. "You mean to tell me he hammered with the rest?"

It was pitiable and contemptible, but true. Mr. Ogilvie gazed very hard a second or two, his lips compressed grimly.

"I think I've got as much information as a man can comfortably digest at one time," he said then. "Thanks for coming."

He held out his hand. It was hot, but its touch was nothing to the flashing of his dark eyes. They burned with a Celtic fire of anger.

Two days passed before Mr. Brash was well enough to return, and in the interval the fallen man had many opportunities of realising that beyond all doubt or question he was down. A utilitarian age and a practical people apply the standard of the precious metals. Ogilvie had been honoured and envied because he was rich; the crowd had seen him hurled from his pedestal, and many a huckstering financier, who a little before would have bartered salvation for his favour, said, in his loftiness, "I have more to my name to-night than Ogilvie"; and turned to other gods. In a thousand subtle ways it was proved that king, president, or millionaire has prayers and hosannas just so long as he keeps his place. *Le roi est mort; vive le roi.* He was a genius who first gave the sentiment. Those who had once spoken enviously of Ogilvie's success now referred pityingly to his failure. A few discerning ones said, "Ogilvie's been in storms before, and come out all right. He ain't going to twiddle his thumbs, you bet." But the rabble went its way after the manner of the rabble, clamouring that another lion was down; and Society proceeded to make its arrangements, the space provisionally left for Miss Ogilvie's name filled by another.

On the other hand there were numerous signs and tokens of goodwill. In a contest your true American is an electric machine that goes straight on without hesitation or compunction, but having won, or seen a rival fall by the way, he sets the world an example in cheery generosity. Thus while on the one hand Ogilvie was battered cruelly, on the other he was embarrassed by sympathy and proffered aid, for well they knew he was worth helping.

At first his answer was, "I really don't know how I stand yet, nor what can be done." Then it became, "You're very kind, but for the present I'll just help myself. I think there's bread in the Republic for me yet. Gentlemen, I take off my coat and go at it again."

So he said to his friends in general ; so he said with particular emphasis to Jeff, in the second business interview.

"Don't you risk a dollar for me," he told Mr. Dunbar, on some suggestion of co-operation. "You don't care for business ; I do. You have not been trained to it ; I have. Therefore, don't you touch it. What hurts me most now is the thought that others are suffering innocently through me ; perhaps execrating my name, and that's not pleasant. What's done, we can't undo, but we can draw a line to prevent what might be. I could never forgive myself if I allowed you to become deeper involved. Thank your stars you are as you are. We walk half our time in darkness, and in the best light we can't see round corners. Perhaps this is sent to prevent greater ills ; one doesn't know. In any case my duty is clear. If your father were here he and I would stand together ; but he's not here, and I stand alone."

And so it was.

Brash returned in a great fervour of regret and sympathy ; but the way had been paved for his reception, and both were heavily discounted. Mr. Ogilvie was perfectly calm and absolutely resolved. It was not a time to mar chances by getting ruffled ; but neither was it a time for cherishing mock friends.

"It suited you, Brash," he said curtly, breaking in on Mr. Brash's stammerings, "to clear out, and you did. The only comment I have any right to make is that possibly a more delicate or more loyal man would have waited till I got back ; but you chose to do otherwise. This is a free country, and however much I may be disappointed, however much I may suffer, you were merely exercising your rights. The only question for discussion now is, how much are your interests and mine still intertwined ?"

"I don't think they're intertwined at all, sir," Brash answered.

"You took care to get them disentangled. Well, that

was prudent, and saves trouble. Technically, however, I believe you are still in my employment. Hence there arises the question of notice and of salary."

"No, sir," cried Brash, his sallow face flushing; "you need not consider that."

"Good again. You've looked to these things also. There never was a smarter man, Brash, than yourself. Your forethought obviates waste of time and chance of misunderstanding. Everything's in order; nothing has to be adjusted between us."

"Except," replied Brash warmly, "that I'm mortal sorry, sir."

"For what, Brash? For the crash, or your own action?"

"Both," cried Brash, burning in shame now that he was face to face with the man who first raised him, whose will had so long been his law. "Fact is, I couldn't help it."

"The excuse of all men who are tempted and yield," returned Mr. Ogilvie. "You were not made for resisting temptation, Brash. Finding it too much to protect me, you naturally thought of yourself. I'm not going to blame you for obeying the first law of nature. You were wise. Had you disobeyed, you would now be like me—stripped, as bare as a tree in winter."

"Don't talk like that, sir," Brash pleaded; "you make me feel bad. I ain't ungrateful."

"There is a proverb in the old country that the proof of the pudding is in the eating," was the reply. "You know how we came together, Brash. I think it may fairly be said I gave you your start. But I didn't bind or buy. When I was absent you had a chance, and took it. I had no right whatever to expect you to ruin yourself out of loyalty to me. Sentiment doesn't pay in these times. If I was a little surprised, a little hurt, perhaps, it only shows that I had still something important to learn. I have learned, and the lesson has been so rubbed in that I am not likely

to forget. Henceforth I shall know that your active and clever brain is devoted to some other interest than mine."

"I hope, sir, we may still work together," said Brash, squirming, with hot gills.

Mr. Ogilvie laughed drily.

"Heaven knows," he returned. "Misfortune makes strange bedfellows, and the crooks and windings of life are past all reckoning. We don't know what's awaiting us at the next bend of the way. It may be a bridal march, it may be a funeral hymn; a smiling sun, or a roaring tornado. To-morrow, or the day after, I may have to go to you, hat in hand, and beseech you to help me. But I promise not to trouble you if I can help it. You may take it, Brash, that I will wear my nails to the quick working, and exhaust brain and heart planning, before I presume to go to you."

He turned away flashing as if the interview were closed, but swung back as the door knob rattled, to see the familiar face of Mr. Job Shilbeck.

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CHAPTER XLIX

SHILBECK AND BRASH EXCHANGE VIEWS

MR. SHILBECK advanced, solemnly shook hands with both men, and dropped on a chair, lank and loose as a doubled-up flail. He was not easily agitated or put out, but the cadaverous sphinx face now bore indubitable marks of anxiety.

"Pretty busy, I reckon," he remarked, looking at Mr. Ogilvie. "Things have humped since we parted on the other side, haven't they? Under-pinnin' out of gear, and the eternal bottom heavin'."

"Like a rough sea," Mr. Ogilvie assented. "Yes, I'm as busy as the man who doesn't know what to do first. And you, what have you been doing?"

"Me! Oh, I've been foolin' round Washin'ton," answered Job.

"And how are things at Washington?"

Mr. Ogilvie was guarding himself like one on slippery ice.

"Pretty sick," replied Shilbeck, giving his cigar stump a twist of disgust. "Yes, sir, if you ask me, pretty damn sick, anyway in my department. Looks as if the almighty bottom, 'stead of heavin', was knocked clean out."

He sat up with gathered brows.

"What the tarnation made Giles Dunbar go and die?" he demanded querulously.

"Couldn't help it, I fancy," Mr. Ogilvie replied, with an involuntary glance at Brash; "you may dismiss the idea that he died of malice prepense."

"I dunno 'bout that," grumbled Job, his face a pucker of wrinkles, and every wrinkle a grievance. "Brash, you might have doctored him for another week or so till we got things straight. They were for chuckin' me out down at Washin'ton."

"Oh, they've grown rude," said Mr. Ogilvie.

"Yes, sir," continued Shilbeck, "wanted to chuck me out; me that's pulled the strings that made 'em dance. I tell you it wasn't no patent medicine, warranted pleasant and easy to take. It was gall, sir, pure gall; that's what it was. 'So this is your dead sure thing, is it?' they said, for of course I had put it pretty strong to 'em. 'Comin' here with yer thunderin' lies to get yer hands in our pockets,' for ye see," explained Job, "I was not only gettin' their votes, but inducin' 'em to invest as a guarantee of good faith—as the noospapers say—and when the thing smashed they nat'rilly rounded on me. They even went so far as to say it was a put-up job from the start, and there never was any real bottom in the concern."

"You know that's a lie," put in Mr. Ogilvie, with quiet emphasis.

"Oh, yes, *I* know all right," Job returned. "But when a crowd of howlin' dervishes is shoutin' for yer blood, 'tain't exactly the time to argue out the rights and wrongs of a thing. Havin' lost money, they weren't just as reasonable as ye could wish. So one said that it was a put-up job, another that Giles Dunbar committed suicide because he'd been found out and dussn't face the music."

"And did they confine their remarks to Dunbar?" Mr. Ogilvie asked curiously.

"No, sir," Job replied quickly. "By no manner of means. They went for me as stated, and since you ask, some of 'em wanted to know what you were goin' to do with your castles in Europe."

"Ah! that's interesting."

SHILBECK AND BRASH EXCHANGE VIEWS 323

"They were pretty ugly, I can tell you," Mr. Shilbeck went on. "Uglier than I ever remember 'em. If Giles had held on till you got back things would be different. Reckon he worried. When he went off to nuss his liver I smelled trouble ahead and wired him strong to that effect. He comes back prepared to fight, but next thing he goes and dies, and the whole darned show blew up."

"Washington, I guess, is hopeless just at present?" Mr. Ogilvie said.

"Yes, sir, for the present the bottom's clean out of Washin'ton so far's our little schemes are concerned. Government itself looks funky, and I heard more'n one Senator, who ought to know better, holdin' forth on the iniquity of trusts and combinations and Stock Exchange rule and all that. Washin'ton's heart's in its boots, though I reckon it'll worry round. How's Wall Street?"

"Sicker than Washington," replied Mr. Ogilvie; "a good deal sicker."

"Then I reckon I'll go back to the country," said Job.

"Been taking a holiday in the country?"

"Yes, sir, when Washin'ton fired me out I reckoned I'd just go and ease my mind in the country for a spell. That's why I haven't come to see you sooner. But it don't matter, seein' our friend Brash is here."

For the first time he gave a real attention to Brash, who shrank like a pricked india-rubber ball.

"Somebody," Shilbeck went on, with blundering frankness, "somebody told me he had vamoosed the ranch, pulled up tent-pegs, and cleared out. I said it was a blank lie. Reckon that's right, ain't it?"

For a little there was oppressive silence. Mr. Brash flushed, paled, and flushed again. Mr. Ogilvie drew in his breath and then said quietly but firmly—

"No, it's wrong."

"Wrong?" Job repeated, throwing away his cigar in the

excitement. "Wrong? Maybe you'll have the goodness to inform me if old mother Earth's standing on her head. Why, Brash, you ain't gone and left us, have you?"

A fiery shudder passed through Brash; his tongue was palsied. Mr. Ogilvie politely stepped into the breach.

"Mr. Brash," he said, "has done what every man is perfectly entitled to do, looked after his own interests. A man's fortune, like a man's salvation, is a personal matter. Brash has, prudently no doubt, decided that it will pay him better to change camp and colours. It's all in the way of business."

Shilbeck turned from Ogilvie to Brash.

"Is that so?" he asked.

"Yes, speakin' generally, that's so," Brash answered, pronouncing his own doom.

Shilbeck tugged at his goatee.

"Well, if this don't beat creation!" he cried. "Brash, I counted on you more'n anybody else, and when some coon or other said you were a deserter, and in that way judged there was no bottom in our scheme, I took the liberty of tellin' him he was a howlin' nor'-wester of a liar. Now, 'pears I must go back and apologise."

Had Brash in that moment of shame and vexation been a free agent he would have reverted to his first allegiance, but as he was committed hand and foot elsewhere there came the inevitable revulsion.

"I don't see," he replied, beginning to look defiantly at Shilbeck—"I don't see why you should go and take on 'bout me to the extent of callin' other men liars. You ain't my keeper, and what I do or don't do ain't your concern at all."

"When a man tells me what I don't want to hear 'bout a friend," responded Job impressively, "I naturally and as a matter of course make him out a liar. I'm genoowine to that extent. I counted on you, Brash, same as if you were

SHILBECK AND BRASH EXCHANGE VIEWS 325

my brother. I said to myself, 'Whatever happens, whoever comes or goes, Brash is safe; I know Brash, and he ain't the man to play low.'

"Take care what you say 'bout playin' low," Brash cried, with the ring of injured honour.

"I never knew him to act on anything but strict on the square," Shilbeck pursued as if there had been no interruption; "he's as square as a four-foot back kitchen garden, and I'll plug a hole in any man that says different.' That was my feelin', Brash, and I expressed myself accordin'ly, and I said to myself further, 'Of course he couldn't keep Giles Dunbar from dyin' any more'n he could help Ogilvie bein' on the roarin' ocean when he was badly wanted here in Noo York. Therefore he couldn't help the smash. But when the storm's over you'll find Brash where he ought to be. Brash ain't none of yer willows that bend this way and that as the wind happens to blow. No, sir, Brash is a bit of true American steel.' And when I came on here and found you two together my heart whispered, 'There, didn't I tell you it was all right? Brash is at his post; Brash is same's you expected.' That's what my heart whispered on enterin' this room, and now," Mr. Shilbeck continued in a tone of profound grief, "'pears I've got to go and apologise for thinkin' well of my friend. If that ain't hard lines I won't plump for friendship any more."

"I wouldn't if I was you," Brash retorted hotly, "and I want to say this: don't you shed any tears over me, and you needn't take it on yourself any longer to be my friend. You ain't my judge, and you ain't responsible for my conduct. If you look after your own doorstep I guess I can look after mine."

Shilbeck waved an arm in pained deprecation.

"Shucks!" he ejaculated—"shucks!"

"Tain't shucks by a long way," Brash cried ferociously.

"You've got to mind your own business and stop meddlin' and jawin', or by thunder you'll be sorry."

"Brash," responded Shilbeck despondently, "you've no idea how much I feel like weeping this minute. I've known you from the start. I've seen ye greasin' axles, and admired the way it was done. I said, 'That's how axles ought to be greased, and the man who is smart in little things will be smart in big things; the man who greases axles well is *primy fashee* fit to be president.' Later on I saw you despatchin' trains, and I said, 'There's a man who understands the whole art and science of train-despatchin'.' Then I saw you at Ogilvie's right hand, and I said, 'By Jericho! if there's a man in the railroad biz in Noo York with a head on him it's Hiram Brash. Mark me, you ain't heard the last of Brash. Brash is just beginnin'.'"

"Oh, freeze up!" Brash flung out; but Shilbeck went on without change of tone.

"'Some day Giles Dunbar will die'—ye see I was right—'and Ogilvie will get tired makin' money, and then ye'll see Brash come out on top.' All that I said more'n once; but I'm bound to tell you, Brash, that your last act is somethin' that takes me in the pit of the stomach and knocks the wind out of me. I didn't expect it, and if I hurt yer feelin's in sayin' so, why, go right ahead and put a hole in me. I reckon it don't matter. If Job Shilbeck can't be proud of his friends, if he's got to go and apologise for thinkin' well of 'em, why, you see, the game ain't worth playin'."

Brash, who was recovering his nerve, responded with a satirical guffaw.

"It wouldn't be right to kill a man that's so beautiful and moral," he returned.

"I feel serious over it, Brash," Shilbeck said, his lugubrious expression eloquently corroborating his words. "Yes, sir, very serious. But of course you'll do exactly as

SHILBECK AND BRASH EXCHANGE VIEWS 327

you wish, Brash. Don't let any sentiment for me interfere; never mind my feelin's. You go right ahead—kick away the ladder when you've got up, and I'll swallow my pride and go back sayin' I was mistaken in ye and apologise. What right have I to be upholdin' you, or interferin'?"

"You speak sense at last," Brash remarked with another cackle, "what right?"

"No right whatever," Job acknowledged meekly, "except the right of an old friend and admirer; and 'pears the day of friendship's over. That sort of old-fashioned truck's played out. So you just go ahead, Brash, and never mind me."

"I will, you old fool," was on Brash's tongue, but he kept the words back. He had all at once conceived a violent dislike for Shilbeck because he had done the man wrong, and these plaintive reproofs were as poison. He rose abruptly, remarking with a livid smile that he couldn't think of putting a busy man to the trouble of preaching any more sermons.

"Good-bye," he said to Job; "we may meet again."

"So," replied Shilbeck significantly; but Brash had turned unheeding to Mr. Ogilvie.

"I'm sorry for you, sir," he said, "mortal sorry, and that's a fact."

"Thank you," Mr. Ogilvie responded, looking him hard in the eyes so that he faltered, "but you are a little ahead of me. I haven't yet begun to be sorry for myself. Good-bye."

A scowl came into Brash's face; he cast a vindictive glance at his old master, turned, and hurriedly left the room.

Shilbeck held his breath till the door closed, then leaped like a wild cat, his face suddenly wrought to a crimson fury.

"Dang his skin! Of all the infernal, mean, low down skunks!" he cried, striking the desk with his clenched fist.

Mr. Brash, pausing expectantly outside, heard the words, compressed his thin lips hard over set teeth, and went his way with a darkened countenance. Shilbeck should rue that.

Within Shilbeck, recovering from the fierce recoil of feeling, went on to describe Brash's infamous conduct, which made it a nice point whether he, the Hon. Job Shilbeck, a wirepuller of eminence and honour, could ever speak to, recognise, or countenance the man again.

By a well-feigned air of dejection and grief he had done his best to win the traitor back through shame working on conscience. But Brash was not only impenitent, but insulting to boot, and the galled Shilbeck talked of treachery in a foaming torrent. Brash was guilty of a heinous offence against honour, private friendship, and Mr. Shilbeck's purse. Worse than all, he went into the enemy's camp carrying secrets—a fact which particularly vexed Job, since his secrets were not of a kind for malicious opponents and the Press. If Hiram blabbed—and there might be profit in blabbing—he was undone. Even as it was, he scarcely durst show his face in Washington. If Brash talked he could not return until fresh elections brought new men and new interests to obliterate memories of the old. Even then ill-disposed persons might remember and jeer to one's detriment. Not that Mr. Shilbeck was sensitive over moral obliquity or brooded darkly on scorn; his hide was proof against men's tongues so long as their acts were not injurious. He would not forgive, no, not if Brash were to beseech on bended knee—a method which Brash showed no disposition to adopt. Hiram had done a mean thing, and could betake himself to his father the devil.

Mr. Ogilvie listened without interruption, and nodded sympathetically, revolving his own thoughts. What he made out most clearly from the cataract of passion was his own complete isolation. He was not disappointed nor cast

SHILBECK AND BRASH EXCHANGE VIEWS 329

down, for he came insensibly to understand that *nitor in adversum* was the motto for a man out of favour with fortune. He did not complain, had no thought of complaining. The master of the universe ordained it so, and he bowed his head; yet the knowledge bit none the less keenly, because there was no kicking against the pricks.

He had now seen Jeff Dunbar, Hiram Brash, Shilbeck, and others; and though he had been comforted and encouraged in a hundred ways, he yet read as clearly as the Babylonian king saw the writing on the wall: "You stand alone; you must fight alone." Without shrinking he accepted the judgment.

That evening while fashionable New York dined and dressed for the play, he sat down to write his first letter to Dunveagle; it caused grievous trouble. He who was wont to keep the pens of two secretaries racing together could hardly find expression for the feelings which seethed and contended within him, for he wished to tell the truth without inflicting a touch of needless pain. In the deep stillness of the night this is what he finally wrote:—

"MY DEAREST CON,—I have waited a little while to take bearings before writing you a letter. My cable would tell you something, and I daresay the newspapers have told you a great deal more. Don't let them vex you. But I must tell you, because I feel you would like to know, that the situation here is very grave, and that my losses and dislocations are such as to make readjustment of ways and means necessary. I cannot yet say exactly how things may turn out. The panic exceeded anything the oldest operator remembers. Had I been here I think things would be different. However, let that pass.

"Now that affairs are settling a bit people are beginning to be ashamed of themselves for having so completely lost their heads. The tone in Wall Street is distinctly better, which will help once I get my plans straight. I stand

alone, Con, and mean to fight while there is a shadow's shadow of a chance to retrieve. If I can help it no man will be able to say I owe him a dollar ; and, thank God, no country in the world is so liberal of opportunity as America. It is in a crisis like this one values the possibilities afforded by the United States.

"Already, I think, I begin to see glimmerings of light. How it will go with some of our cherished dreams, I don't know. I hope for the best when my resources are all available. I hope in particular that Dunveagle may not have to go by the board. It is so new and so dear to us all—to Grannie, to you, to me—that I will make a desperate fight to keep it. But I know, dearest Con, that if any sacrifice for my sake is needed, my mother and my daughter are ready. I am proud to think the American girl—and despite your Scotch blood, Con, you are good American—not only knows how to rise with grace and discretion, but to stoop with grace and courage ; and I would put my little girl against the world for good sense. On one thing I am resolved, whatever happens you keep your own. Had this kept off a little longer, Dunveagle might be your own also. As it is, it is mine, and must take its chance of the melting-pot ; but what is yours is yours, and you keep it.

"You may read this letter to Grannie or not, as you think right. But comfort her for me. Poor old body, this will be a sore blow to her. Well, she knows better than I can tell, that if I could help it she would not suffer a moment's pain or worry, and that while I have a head to plan and two hands to execute she will not be forgotten. I had much more to say, but this is enough now. Keep up your heart and cheer Grannie ; I'm all right. Ever your affectionate father,

"DUNCAN OGILVIE."

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CHAPTER L

HOPE AND DESPAIR

CONNIE was heroically hoping against hope when this letter reached and prostrated her. She had read all the early reports in the newspapers, flung them away in unbelieving anger, resolved to read no more; harked back and read everything that appeared concerning her father and his schemes. The British Press, through enterprising New York correspondents, fed her fears liberally, and kind friends, mostly anonymous, sent her bundles of American papers. The reading of these became a passion, or rather an intermittent fever, recurring with painful rigours and paroxysms on the arrival of each fresh batch.

In a semi-delirium she saw the whole United States in a quiver of excitement. She knew that American public opinion is gaseously inflammable, and that torches were sedulously applied; worse still, that her father's name was bandied from tongue to tongue, and sullied with evil-speaking. But one at least would not believe their monstrous lies, one at least would stand by him in the tempest of obloquy and scandal. Speaking figuratively, she dashed a defiant fist in the world's face, hurling back the infamies of traducers. More practically she set herself with cheery fortitude to comfort and sustain the afflicted mother. These ministrations proved the best of cordials, for the sunshine we bring to others first warms and heartens ourselves. That is why generosity is so good a medicine and selfishness so ill a disease.

Connie had yet other things to agitate her, ay, and happily to console her as well, things that wound themselves into the very core of being, sweetening and purifying like a holy dew. In more than one sense she had passed into a new existence, blissful enough in moments of electrified feeling to bring oblivion of all else. But she saw Mrs. Ogilvie's drawn, troubled face, and her heart smote her. So she forgot herself, put on a sunny face, and thrust malignant and mendacious papers out of sight, asking herself, why should they lose heart? The statements of newspapers vying with one another in capping sensation with sensation were not to be taken as gospel. Wasn't her hero at the helm, the hero who had never failed in an emergency and wasn't going to fail now? So after the first shock of consternation she reasoned in the privacy of her own mind ; so she blithely assured Mrs. Ogilvie.

They were together when the letter arrived in a batch of general correspondence, and Connie dexterously slipped it out of sight in order to read it by herself. When the chance came head and heart beat so tumultuously that for a moment the familiar writing jiggled in a senseless blur. Drawing in her breath to steady and control herself, she read, first in a desperate eagerness, and then in a freezing terror. On finishing, she fell limply into a chair, her face as the face of death. For a little she lay quite still, not suffering, for the blow had momentarily deprived her of sensation, only, as it seemed, hanging vaguely over a chasm that was horribly black, and held in its invisible depths cold, cruel, sucking waters. In an instant she had been whipped out of the warm, ruddy, everyday world into a world of dazed brains and pulseless hearts and impotent wills and grey, rent, stricken wastes, a world dropped from the clouds, and held by some evil power suspended over a yawning silence of desolation.

This mood passed, and there arose a noise as of the

beating of drums in her ears. The wheels of the mind, mysteriously loosed, began to revolve furiously. As in the lurid brightness of lightning she beheld the scene of wreck in New York, with her father, a lonely, tragic figure in the midst, and herself helpless, beyond a self that could not be crossed.

She rose, wringing her hands in impotence. If she were only a man, a son instead of a daughter, the world should see how she could fight for the man who had never seemed so dear, so brave, so good as he did then. But a woman—what could a woman do in a crisis needing strength and skill? Nothing, nothing. Yet why nothing? Couldn't she at least go back to New York and stand beside the fighter to testify a love and allegiance that would go with him to death, if need be.

In the intensity of her emotion she did not hear a slow, weary step outside. But she heard the door opening, though it opened very softly, and turned as her grandmother entered. A glance told the older woman that what she feared was true.

"Bad news, dearie?" she said quietly. "I thought there would be a letter from your father to-day. Has it come?"

"Yes, Grannie," Connie answered brokenly, her first tear falling. "There is a letter from father."

Mrs. Ogilvie took a silk handkerchief and gently wiped the welling eyes.

"Don't be disturbed then, dear," she murmured.

Connie caught her in a quivering embrace.

"Grannie, you're a brick!" came in muffled sobs.

"When I ought to be comforting and strengthening you, you comfort and strengthen me."

Kissing the bent head, Mrs. Ogilvie softly disengaged herself.

"Young people, dearie," she answered, stroking the

golden hair, and again wiping the wet eyes, "feel quickly and deeply. With them it is all happiness or all misery. Old people learn to take life at best as a mixture of good and evil. Come, dearie, let me read your father's letter."

Connie gave it, and watched like one awaiting a verdict of life or death while her grandmother read.

"Poor Dunk!" Mrs. Ogilvie sighed, and handed the letter back.

A new terror came into Connie's face.

"Grannie," she cried, "do you think it's ruin? You have had so much experience; you have seen father do so many things; tell me, do you expect him to succeed now?"

Mrs. Ogilvie removed her spectacles, her hand shaking violently, but her speech and manner were calm.

"Whatever a man can do, your father will do," she answered with confidence. "I have seen him, as you say, do a great many things, some of them very difficult. I'm his mother, Connie dear; it's hard for you to understand all that that means. Come here."

She turned quickly to the window which looked up over Dunveagle woods to the hills crowding peak upon peak beyond.

"Look, dearie," she said, pointing to Craigenard; "yon-der is where he was born. The first look he ever gave showing he knew me was there, ay, and the first word he ever lisped. From the day I first took him in my arms until now I have watched him without growing tired. I can see him this minute in his little kilt running after the cows and the sheep, or tumbling over and over with the dogs, for he was always fond of fun. Ay, more clearly than I ever mind him in New York, for you see it's the early memories that stick. Your father, Connie dear, in a little kilt made by his mother."

"God bless her," Connie whispered, kissing the twitching face.

"Thank you, dear. We need His blessing. Sometimes I start with fear, lest we forget Him in our pride and grandeur. It would be worst for ourselves, darling, if we did. He gave me much happiness. A better son than your father was never born to woman. Many and many a time I've had a sore heart; but it was never made sore by him, except once, when the wee man nearly cried his eyes out, and that was leaving Craigenard. He nearly broke it that time, though he never knew, and didn't mean it. Even then he was always thinking how to please me. Once I mind when things were going so bad against me I just sat down and covered my face in my apron, he came and pulled the apron down and clapped me, saying, in his childish way, he would always take care of me. And through all that's come and gone, Connie dear, he has kept that baby promise. He has taken care of me. Even now, you see, he's thinking of me. Well, I'm praying for him. By God's grace he'll overcome now as he has done in the past. We won't despair."

Connie's rejoinder was another smothering embrace.

"I think," she said, presently lifting her head, "he's preparing us for the worst."

"Well, dearie," replied Mrs. Ogilvie, with the same steadfast quietness, "let us be ready. If we must leave Dunveagle, we'll go knowing he couldn't help it. Let us not add to his burden by murmuring, but rather see how we can help."

"Grannie," cried Connie in a breaking voice, "you're old and I'm young, and yet you're worth a thousand of me."

"No, dear, no," Mrs. Ogilvie returned. "Only I've lived long enough to know that ups and downs come to everybody, the one as much as the other, and all for

our own good. I have heard that people living in hot countries grow weary of the sun and a summer that never ends. Many diseases too come to them that don't come to us. It's the same with life; we need the rain and the clouds as much as the sunshine. As to what's good or bad for us, we're children, Connie dear, but the Father of all knows what's best. It was a great thing for me to come to Dunveagle. Perhaps I was too glad, though it wasn't the fine house and the carriages I wanted. Suppose we must leave it just on getting settled, some day soon we must leave it in any case. And do you know that, although my kith and kin lie among these hills, and I love the very woods and waters of Glenveagle, I have thought at times lately I'd like to cross the Atlantic again and lie down at last beside your grandfather? At the great day it would be kindlier to rise together. So it wouldn't be so hard on me to go as you think. For you, dear, it's different; but you mustn't lose heart or think this is going to spoil your life. Have faith in your father; he deserves it. At present our duty is to show him we don't flinch."

"Grannie," returned Connie, her eyes shining mistily, "I said you were worth a thousand of me; you are worth ten thousand. Will you write to him or shall I?"

"We'll both write, for I think he loves us both equally well," was the answer.

But before Connie was well settled at her desk, Mr. Rollo Linnie was announced. Her first impulse was to send a curt refusal to see him. It was like his impertinence to call at such a time. No, she wouldn't see him. Then in a flash it came to her how he might misconstrue her refusal. She had no doubt regarding his business; he had, of course, come to spy. She could see the cold, heartless smile on his face. "So it is as bad as that," she fancied him saying in his cynical way.

"Cannot even see her friends." And he would go off spreading insinuation like a plague.

She was still in vehement self-debate whether to face him or send a freezing message of regret, when a second announcement brought a quick decision.

The laird had called, his first voluntary visit to Dunveagle in her time. Two minutes of titivation before the glass, and she was down to the drawing-room, pale indeed, but perfectly self-possessed, and towards one of the visitors overflowing with cordiality.

She found the two men sitting severely and ostentatiously apart, their half-turned backs and arched, disdainful shoulders expressing immitigable contempt and enmity. Both rose at her entrance, but her eyes were for the laird alone, who with a glance at her face bowed like a chevalier of other days over her hand. She lingered graciously, turned to Linnie, and swiftly back again to the laird.

"I hope I have not come at an inopportune moment, Miss Ogilvie," he said, with a grave courtesy of manner which reminded her of someone else.

"Oh, no," she replied eagerly; "I cannot tell how glad I am to see you."

Linnie expressed the same sentiment, expecting the same response, but she swept him a bow which stung like a smack in the face. The distinction was too much for an itching pride.

"I hear," he said, stiffening and colouring, "certain reports about Mr. Ogilvie's troubles in America, though of course the newspapers may be all wrong, and I called——"

He paused in confusion.

"To express sympathy," she put in. "It is good of you. My father is over in New York attending to his affairs personally, and I think that is all that need be said between us, Mr. Linnie, on the matter."

Her eyes and manner said, "Go now"; but as she

had guessed, he had come for information, and was not to be so easily turned away.

"If there is anything, Miss Ogilvie——" he was beginning, but she anticipated him.

"Thank you, Mr. Linnie, but I don't think there is," she returned. "I am sure you will forgive me if I say I have a great deal to engage my attention. At present, if you will excuse me, I wish to speak alone with Mr. MacLean."

"Certainly, certainly," retorted Rollo, in a tone which told that at last he was past considerations of forgiveness.

Marking his mood joyously, she rang the bell.

"Don't trouble," he cried; "I can find my way out very well, very well indeed, thank you. It's an easy thing going out once the way is plain."

She smiled in assent.

"Good-bye, Mr. Linnie; another time I hope to have more leisure."

The door opened, hung a moment, then closed behind a defeated and stricken man.

CHAPTER LI

CONNIE MAKES A CONFESSION

SHE turned back to find the laird on his feet, as if also ready to go.

"I am afraid, Miss Ogilvie," he said, stooping towards her with his old-fashioned gallantry, "my errand is as futile as Mr. Linnie's. You may think each of us was born far from the house of good manners, but I assure you this visit was not meant to be impertinent."

"Please do not talk like that, Mr. MacLean," she pleaded, the tone and manner of a minute before magically changed.

She took him by the hand and, hardly sensible of the act, led him to another part of the room, her own favourite corner, where they sat down together. An embarrassing silence followed. He saw her flushing and paling, noting at the same time the quick flutter of her bosom, and said to himself matters must be graver than he had fancied. His heart swelled in compassion, for at the sight of beauty in distress he was a very Don Quixote. Man, generally speaking, was made to fight with, but woman to protect and defend. Yet for all his pity he was careful to avoid the lugubrious mien, because he remembered that when in the depths of misfortune himself, the sigh and the woeful countenance were his worst cause of depression. So it was with an air of positive lightness he said, presently—

"I just came to say, Miss Ogilvie, that if an old fellow like me can be of any sort of use to you in any sort of way

during your father's absence, I'll take it as a favour if you let me know."

He spoke as if her father were away on holiday, and would return happy on the morrow, or the day after. Some people spoil a kindness by a funereal mode of performance; the laird was all for blitheness, even in deeds of charity.

"You are very good," she answered, striving hard to keep her emotions in hand.

With Mr. Linnie she had no difficulty, because she despised, if she did not actually detest him; and contempt is an admirable refrigerator for the feelings. But sympathy melts like a south wind. The very delicacy of the laird, his obvious desire to avoid the sore spot, drew her irresistibly towards him. It was as one carried whither she knew not, that she cried out after a tingling silence—

"Oh, Mr. MacLean, you can help me. You understand. You have known misfortune yourself."

To the laird it seemed an electric belt had been flung about him, binding him to this usurper of his place.

"Yes," he answered, gazing in wonder, "I have known misfortune."

"Then you can feel for others," she said, her breath coming very quick and hard.

"God knows I can," he returned rather unsteadily. "I think I've come to the pitch that if I saw my worst enemy down I'd try to lift him."

A new fear came into Connie's eyes.

"Perhaps," she cried, "you consider us your enemies. Perhaps——"

"My dear young lady," the laird rejoined impulsively, "what makes you say that at a moment like this? If I give you that impression now, call someone who will deal with me as I deserve. Your enemy! My dear Miss Ogilvie, forgive me if I decline to listen to such things."

"Ah, but we are in your place," she persisted, "and I

know you loved it and had to leave it. Now I can understand what your feelings must have been. It is only human you should dislike those who displace you."

"But I don't," declared the laird vehemently, flinging truth and conscience to the wind.

"I couldn't blame you if you did," she responded. "You were born here; your happiest days were passed here; here you had your greatest loss; here your son grew up, and you had to leave it all. Believe me, I understand at this minute exactly how you must have felt. You know what the papers are saying," she broke off.

"Ah!" he replied, with a mighty effort to be composed. "But the papers are great liars—great liars, Miss Ogilvie."

"But they are right now"—she could not keep back the terrible confession. "We are in trouble, Mr. MacLean; great, great trouble."

She wondered at herself as she spoke; wondered above all that a MacLean was the confidant, and wondering drew closer as if for protection.

The laird's white beard was twitching. He regarded her with an ineffable tenderness, the tenderness of a father for a daughter in affliction.

"My dear," he said, with a quivering lip, "trouble comes to us all sooner or later." He put forth a hand unknowingly and laid it on her head. "No one need tell me what it means. But you are young and brave, and your father is clever and brave."

She seized the hand that was on her head and pressed it in her own. "Thank you for that," she cried. "It's noble, it's splendid. He is clever and brave."

He made no attempt to withdraw his hand, and a big, bright tear fell on it like a dewdrop.

"There is no man I admire and respect more than Duncan Ogilvie," he said, the strong voice vibrating. "I respected his father before him. We quarrelled, as doubtless

you know, for men are foolish—foolish, foolish. But even then I respected him ten times more than most men I never had an ill word with. He went away, and I was too proud to call him back. Well, I was punished. The just God metes out justice in His own good time—not hasting, but never failing. I was wrong, and John Ogilvie was right."

It was the first time he had owned so much openly. What made him confess to this helpless, beseeching slip of a girl? He confessed because she was helpless, because she was troubled, because she was the grandchild of the wronged man, and above and beyond all because she wound about his heart.

"Yes," he repeated to tingling ears, "I was wrong, and John Ogilvie was right. I never knew a better man than John Ogilvie; and do you know this, I observe that the good man's son has often the reward denied to himself? Oh, God deals justly in the end, and don't you doubt it. He rules in His own way; He has a million instruments and ten million ways of using them. I am old enough to have learnt this lesson, that the prideful man is just like a bubble or a fleck of foam on the flood. As you remind me, I had to leave Dunveagle; and who succeeded me? John Ogilvie's son. And what is my place now? The place John Ogilvie left. I have read some books now and again, Miss Ogilvie, but I have never known novelist or poet who could devise half the surprises that are everyday affairs with destiny. Why do I say all th's to you, my dear? I will answer in a word: to let you see that I understand."

"Your experience is likely to be ours too; we may have to leave Dunveagle as you left it," she said, with a sob which racked the laird's heart.

"God forbid!" he cried fervently. "You mustn't give way to dismal thoughts. If I'm doleful, don't imitate me.

It's the privilege of the old to draw long faces, but the young were meant to smile."

"Indeed, Mr. MacLean," was the response, "the old, I think, are braver and brighter than the young. There's Grannie; she puts me to shame."

"How is Mrs. Ogilvie?" the laird asked gently.

"I will bring her," Connie replied, springing up. "She would like to see you, I'm sure." And before he could say "nay" she was off.

"Now I've done it," he thought, his eyes fast on the door. "Now in very truth I've gone and done it."

He did not think thus regretfully nor self-reproachfully as the victim of a too generous impulse, but rather as one who surprises himself with a good deed, and on the whole is gratified.

His eyes were still on the door when it opened and the two women entered together, the arm of the younger affectionately about the waist of the elder. He gave the cordial hand of friendship to Mrs. Ogilvie, apologising for his intrusion; but at that both called out in protest, and he sat down, bending gracefully to their will. Mrs. Ogilvie thanked him in set terms for his neighbourly spirit at a trying time, and he made valorous attempts to divert her. A stranger witnessing his behaviour might well have reckoned him frivolous, if not flinty-hearted, so little he seemed to be aware of any occasion for sighs or dolour. With fears of "a scene" quick within him, he was vividly eager to keep Mrs. Ogilvie off the track of misfortune, for he reflected, "Woebegone talk leads to tears, tears to hysterics, and what could I do with two demented women on my hands?" So he dealt out his gayest philosophy, clinching light-spirited wisdom with Gaelic proverbs, subtly designed for the elder woman.

And here his anxiety nearly defeated itself, for in referring to her son and his life and death grapple, he remarked, as

it were, *sotto voce*, *Buaidh 'us piseach air a cheann* (Success and luck attend him). The sentiment coming from his lips made Mrs. Ogilvie's face tremble perilously; but he was prompt with a gay aphorism, and thus saved the situation.

"You're a good Highlander yet, Mrs. Ogilvie," he cried. "Miss Ogilvie has a good drop of the blood too, but you're out and out one of ourselves."

"Till my last breath," she replied ardently; "till my last breath."

"Well, you mind the old saying, 'The day's longer than the bae; we'll be at the top yet.'"

Swinging deftly into other waters, he broke out on the wonders of America to prove that Mr. Ogilvie must in the nature of things succeed, and succeed brilliantly. "I don't pretend to understand it all," he said modestly. "But, madam, the most wonderful thing in my time has been the extraordinary, express-speed advance of America. I count the Americans the most wonderful people living on God's earth to-day in wealth, enterprise, intelligence, and charm." He bowed to Connie. "The country was lost to us by the muddle-headed conceit of English politicians. Ah, madam, what we suffer at the hands of heaven-born rulers! When Boston harbour was black with tea, and England was looking out her old wives to chastise the refractory colonists, the great Chatham told her she couldn't conquer America, and he was right. I'm thinking, from all that I can make out, that America's turning the tables by conquering us. And it was but the other day, madam, I discovered myself a benefactor. You may well look surprised; I was surprised too. You may remember a certain transaction long ago, for which in your heart of hearts you blamed me; oh, yes, you must; and you were right, perfectly right. I was to blame. But we are all blind instruments, working for results which we can neither see nor guess. And I tell you the best

thing I ever did for a friend was to send John Ogilvie to America."

He was again on dangerous ground, but proceeded too impetuously to be interrupted.

"Well, his son became the wonder of a world of wonders. He has done what I in my ignorance would have said was impossible. Those of us who remain in the Glen have narrow ideas, Miss Ogilvie. You tell us there are bits of reverses. Well, what of that? What is it but the man of action getting back into his element? Your son, madam, is where he likes to be, if I'm any judge of human nature, a captain on the bridge, holding straight in the teeth of the storm, and well knowing he controls forces that will win. I wouldn't deprive him of the stern glee of contending."

"Why, Mr. MacLean," Connie cried, tears of gratitude in her eyes, "you make us glad of a storm."

"My dear young lady," was the reply, "not every sailor is a seaman; but some are born to ride the whirlwind. Let them have at it. Many a good sword is spoiled in the scabbard."

He left presently, the champion of these two distressed women, the avowed upholder of the usurper at Dunveagle—ay, and what was more, glorying in the inconsistency.

Next day Ian Veg brought him a newspaper which had come in a roundabout way from Mr. Rollo Linnie. Ian was grimly elated.

"We'll see them out of that yet, sir," he said. "Oh, ay, and not very long to wait by all accounts."

"Ian Veg," retorted the laird savagely, "it will be better for you to mind your own business and cease troubling your head about the people at the castle."

And Ian went off sorrowfully to tell Alick that the laird himself had caught the Ogilvie infection, and, to all appearance, caught it badly.

CHAPTER LII

AMERICAN WOMANHOOD—LADY ARDVENMORE IN QUEST OF INFORMATION

AT Dunveagle the laird's goodwill was the more grateful because unexpected. Besides, he was a man ; and though in "her hours of ease" woman may be "uncertain, coy, and hard to please," in trouble she snuggles instinctively to the stronger nature. And these two were to need all the comfort which the best goodwill could impart.

A second letter came, gently but unmistakably confirming the worst interpretations of the first. There was neither shrinking nor despondency ; but disaster had to be faced, a fact which involved a radical adjustment of policy, which again involved rigorous retrenchment and a realisation of assets. A whole day Mrs. Ogilvie kept her own room, thinking hard, recalling the past and its battles, and fortifying herself for whatever might come with the belief that in the worst straits, when man is powerless, a higher intelligence guides, a higher will controls. It came to that—that and an unfaltering faith in him who had already done so much and was still so eager and competent. And if the worst came to the worst, surely she, of all women, knew how to step down and resume her old place as helper and counsellor. She could still aid in the task of getting daily bread.

There comes to old age a mystic reversion to the thoughts and instincts, if not the energy and activity of youth. The shades of dawn return at evening twilight, so that despite

the character of the day's race, despite a great fame or a shining fortune, he who begins a peasant in the essence of his being ends a peasant. Dwelling much on the past, reminded every hour of those borne away on the "ever-rolling stream" of time, Mrs. Ogilvie would have found it less hard than you would think to lay down her grandeur and take up the old familiar tasks. Her world, though shaken as by an earthquake, was still intact.

Connie's, on the other hand, was shattered, however the fragments might coalesce later. She had never known any other than the sparkling, sumptuous existence to which her earliest remembrance stretched; these devastating December storms were outside the course of Nature as she understood it for twenty years of a summer life. Very bravely she tried to take her grandmother's view; but the philosophy of conduct is of all philosophies the hardest to convert to reality, and her success was indifferent. The sky had darkened with a crash; the golden atmosphere grown chilly and heavy. A thought which at first she rejected as a wild impossibility settled by degrees into numbing conviction, like a mildew of the mind terrifying while it unnerved. Moreover, she had a rankling sense of deception, of craft and treachery. For certain hints dropped without complaint by her father suggested a very black perfidy.

"Of course, of course," she cried desolately, "the whole world must turn on the man who is down."

Having assured herself of swiftly descending ruin, she wrote, as an imperative duty, a letter to Jeff Dunbar, not merely removing all shadow of engagement, but stating as in characters of fire that this crisis made an inevitable parting of the ways. Jeff was gallant in expostulation and a tenderness which, had it come sooner, might have been effective, and even now tore her heart roots. All the same, the answer was inexorable: impossible now, for ever impossible, that was the word in justice to him and to herself.

She would have been in yet deeper misery but for a silver lining to the cloud which her eye alone perceived.

The laird had not said that his call was made at his son's suggestion. In a boiling indignation over newspaper reports, Norman wrote to his father requesting such information as could be obtained without meddling or intrusion. The reply caused him a sleepless night, and next day he wrote a letter which in turn produced a distracting commotion. It was written with the delicacy which half expresses, half conceals, but the recipient read luminously between the lines, and, woman-like, dissolved in pure inquietude of joy. Mrs. Ogilvie, finding her in that evident passion of distress, asked the cause, and for reply received Norman's letter.

"Isn't it noble?" Connie cried, wiping her eyes.

Mrs. Ogilvie read deliberately, as if to get the full meaning before expressing an opinion.

"Very noble, dear," she said, lifting her head; "but the MacLeans were always gentlemen, whatever else they might or might not be."

Connie knew that, but the knowledge only made the question of behaviour the more difficult. What was she to do? How was she to answer? Incapable of hypocrisy, she would fain have let the cry of her heart rise unchecked. All her life she had been accustomed to speak frankly as she felt. But how was she to solve the sphinx-riddle which, once at least, puts every woman on the rack, albeit to torture with delight? Through all the wrappings of language one thought, or rather one feeling, burned clear as a carbon, ay, and scorched when she tried to smother it. In her soul she revolted passionately against the convention which seals a woman's lips, making her wait in silence for the word which the malice of circumstance may for ever prevent. An unspeakable yearning came upon her. If only *he* were by to speak to her, in that low, rich voice

that was itself melody, to cheer with those grave, earnest eyes. She wanted him beside her and dared not ask. That was the cruelty of a woman's position.

For reasons easily guessed he would hesitate to take the first step. Pride and a fear to offend held him back. If he only knew; and why, oh, why couldn't he guess?

In a torrent of emotion she replied at last, saying not more than she meant, but something more than she intended, posted the letter, and tormented herself over what she had done. Was she indelicate? Would he understand, and if so, what would he do?—all the while feverishly awaiting a response which did not come. Then as the days passed with a narrowing sky and a deepening gloom, she began, like a soul in purgatory, to recall word by word what she wrote. She must have slipped and bungled somehow, been too bold or too clumsy—or, had he misconstrued? Was that disaster to crown all the other disasters?

In this suspense she was surprised by a visit from Lady Ardenmore. Her ladyship had been much occupied since the happy day of making Miss Ogilvie's acquaintance, and was only now able to carry out a long-meditated intention. Infinitely gracious, and more than a little curious, she referred adroitly to public rumours, managing with high-bred suavity to indicate that she for one knew better than to believe anything that appeared in the newspapers.

"My dear," she remarked, with the blandness of oil on green wounds, "the inventor of printing is responsible for more lies than a whole generation of women, priests, and politicians, and that's saying a good deal. Don't you think so?" smiling interrogatively at Mrs. Ogilvie.

Towards Ogilvie's mother she bore herself with some suspicion of patronage; Ogilvie's daughter she watched with the narrowness of an interested critic. She was, in fact, turning Connie over in her own mind as a sample or pattern of an article thrust unceremoniously on her atten-

tion, to wit, young American womanhood. In casual meetings abroad, in Paris, on the Riviera, in Rome, on the Nile, she had always regarded Americans from the altitude of the British aristocrat, who in a mixed world must tolerate inferiors. Quite unexpectedly her interest in them became quick and personal, hence, if the truth must be told concerning so great a personage, the reason for her present descent upon Dunveagle.

Business began appropriately with ingenious scouting; then she veered to the qualities of Americans as mirrored in universal opinion, taking care to preserve an attitude of polite neutrality. Thereupon came an item of family news.

"I have just heard," she told them, "that on Saturday last my son left Southampton for New York. It seems, my dear" (Connie being the "dear"), "he struck up a friendship with your young friend Mr. Dunbar, and is now visiting America as his guest. Took me quite by surprise; boys, my dear Mrs. Ogilvie, don't always take pains to keep their mothers well informed of what's in the wind."

"I thought," said Connie, "Lord Kinluig had returned to duty."

"So he had, my dear, but where there's a will I suppose there's always a way. You know how they do things in the army. Anyway, he's on the Atlantic now."

Connie thought of another officer who had returned to duty, wondering how the proverb might apply to him.

"I suppose," pursued her ladyship sweetly, "the Dunbars are very good people. Old Mr. Dunbar, my son mentioned, died somewhat suddenly and tragically. But I fancy he has left his family very rich."

Connie promptly confirmed fancies and suppositions.

"Of course, I met young Mr. Dunbar and his sister," her ladyship added, "only it was casually and in a public place, as you will remember, my dear Miss Ogilvie. Miss Dunbar seems—well, may I say a typical American?"

"Kitty is just one of the best girls in America," Connie replied with emphasis. "I love her."

"And yet," rejoined her ladyship, wagging a withered forefinger at Connie, "the love of the sister does not, I hear—but there, there, no tales out of school. I have been hearing whispers, my dear, whispers of a certain interesting event—postponed, shall I say?"

"There are so many whispers going round at present, Lady Ardvenmore, that one can't attend to them all," Connie answered quietly, and gave the conversation a turn which marked her in her ladyship's mind as a young person of no little tact and discretion.

When the visitor left with some gratifying information, Connie remarked to Mrs. Ogilvie, "What did I tell you, Grannie? We'll have our good Kitty back as Countess of Ardvenmore yet. The old lady doesn't like it a bit. Well, I'm very glad."

The topic would have been pursued with greater ardour but for the pressure of more personal events. A moment, perhaps, Connie contrasted Kitty's prospect with her own, but not ignobly nor jealously, for envy or uncharitableness had no place in her nature. Besides, the course she chose in a certain affair was her own, and if it involved difficulties which might be avoided by taking another, well, she stood to her choice. What she could least endure was the torture of suspense.

In a mood of nervous anxiety she saw the old year going out in a tempest. It was meet, she told herself, that the mellow ruddiness and russet of autumn, which had supplanted the summer greens and purples, should in turn yield to the rigours of winter. Christmas saw a wan, frightened moon riding wildly among storm clouds; then the sky contracted darkly like a gathered pall, and the snow came with spiteful fluffs and flaws of wind. Two days it snowed with scarce a break; on the third a gale

swept the heights bare, filling the hollows with drift, piling the wreath where wreath would hold, with riotous, inimitable art. The day after Christmas the castle was enclosed in "a tumultuous privacy" of blizzard. The two women looked out from time to time, as under the spell of the storm, upon a driven, whirling world of grey, and perhaps drew back with a shiver, thinking it too truly symbolic.

"A real Highland snowstorm," Mrs. Ogilvie remarked plaintively, and recounted memories of the storms of her youth and tales of lost men, till Connie almost fancied she heard shrieks of despair on the wind. A maid entering on these reminiscences, told that a groom who had gone to Aberfourie on a household errand had difficulty in making his way back, adding as an incidental piece of news that he had seen Captain MacLean and the laird at the station.

CHAPTER LIII

TWO MESSAGES

LONG after midnight the blast buffeted turret and window; but though Connie lay very wide awake she heard it only at intervals, and not always when it shrieked loudest or wrestled most violently. For she was mentally absorbed in following *somebody* through the snow, in guessing reasons for his sudden return, and in wondering what would ensue. Was he to answer her letter in person, or had he been called back by business of his own independently of her? Was he offended? Would he come to see her, and if so——?

To none of these questions, tumbling over each other, did she wait to find a coherent answer. It is the plague of the imaginative mind that while it keenly foretastes felicity it also conjures up all manner of dark chances in a crisis, and on one side of her nature at least Connie was compact of imagination. So she dreamed in alternate tremors of joy and fear, hope and despair.

Next morning she was early afoot. The storm had died in the dawn, leaving a white chaos, from which trees and rocks stood out with the haggard gauntness of skeletons. Looking upward from her window, Connie's eye instinctively rested on Craigenard, where black dots were visible moving to and fro in the snow. Wiping her glass, she easily made out Ian and Alick going about their work, and once she caught a glimpse of the laird; but though she looked long and intently, she saw none else.

At breakfast Mrs. Ogilvie spoke of the fury of the storm, and hoped Captain Maclean and his father got home safely.

"It would be a fight," she said, "to get to Craigenard last night. Your grandfather, I remember well, was nearly lost on just such a night. I wonder what brings the captain back again so soon after rejoining his regiment."

She looked to her granddaughter as for enlightenment, but a crumb going awry in Connie's throat brought a fit of coughing. When it passed her face was crimson. "Gone the wrong way, dear?" her grandmother asked simply.

"Absurd," answered Connie, with a little laugh. "Tell me about grandfather," she added, ignoring the reference to the captain's unexpected return.

The arrival of the post-bag turned their thoughts to other things. Though desperately impatient for news, the two women had—unknown to each other—grown afraid of the American mail. It was with a distinct tremor therefore that Connie picked up a letter addressed in her father's hand and another in Kitty's. Her father's was read first, and the reading made her face as white as the snow outside. For an instant the world reeled—as wrecked worlds will—but she rallied herself, compressed her lips firmly, and read again. The message was tenderly affectionate, but affection could not hide, however it might veil, the terrible purport. Connie was to make arrangements, as quickly as might be, for returning to New York; what was to follow made her shudder to think of.

"I did not expect when I left to have to write to you like this," her father said. "But one advantage will be that I can have you both beside me. I own myself a miser in one respect, and think I can do best when the possessions dearest to me are close at hand. I have the best hope for the future, but at present I am like a sick man who cannot get well without an operation. Let us have the operation then, and be done with it. This decision, as you will believe, my dearest Con, is not made hastily. I live now for Grannie and yourself. I am to

blame for trusting too much to others. But many things have happened which I could not foresee, and some on which in any emergency I did not count. They show how little one can reckon on the morrow when his interests are committed to other hands. Well, we must take the bitter with the sweet. I do not repine, and I am sure neither of my heroines will. Fortunately there are still a thousand chances. In the old world once a man is down he hardly ever rises again; in the new world it is his own fault if he does not regain his feet. I am at least making an honest effort. Don't lose heart. The old ship will ride with her nose to the gale yet; ay, and make port."

Tears blinded Connie, but she passed the letter without comment to Mrs. Ogilvie, who, making her own inferences, carried it off to her own room. Taking up Kitty's letter, Connie tore it open listlessly and began to read. She found it a strange contrast to her father's. Miss Dunbar hardly seemed to be aware of catastrophe. There was indeed a passing reference to some "business mess" which she did not pretend to understand. Then came a light remonstrance with Connie for playing so long with the affections of Jeff. But the gist and real purpose of the letter lay in the final part, telling that Lord Kinluig had really accepted Jeff's invitation, and that already the society gossips were busy with tongue and pen, "though, dear," Kitty asseverated, "they have nothing in the world to go on but their own fertile imaginations, and the bare fact that Lord Kinluig is to spend a short holiday with us. I wish you were here, dear."

Connie rose, the letter in her hand, and looked from the window on a landscape that harmonised but too well with her own wintry state. As she gazed, her eyes by some charm of attraction on Craigenard, she perceived a figure moving out from the huddled group of buildings. Her heart gave a bound. Could it be *he*? In a second

her glass was levelled, and then dropped with a gesture of disappointment. It was only Alick. But even Alick was a speck of life in that dead scene, and she watched indifferently. When, however, he deflected from the road into the path leading through the woods to Dunveagle, her interest leapt up again. Could he be bringing a message for her? She kept her eyes on him till he disappeared among the upper pines, and then remembering duty ran conscience-stricken to her grandmother. As she entered Mrs. Ogilvie lifted a drawn, pallid face. "It has come, dearie," she said, a large tear trembling on her lid.

Unable to speak, Connie ran forward with open arms, and for a minute the two held each other in a tight, speechless embrace. Connie drew off, dashing the tears away, and accusing herself of being ridiculous. "I'm just a big baby, a big donkey," she cried, and disappeared to wash the stains from her face.

That operation was scarcely performed, when a note was handed to her with the announcement that the messenger was waiting for an answer.

"Send him to me," she said, and tore the envelope open in an excruciating excitement. What she read was brief and soldierly. The writer had returned for a little on private business, would like to pay his respects at Dunveagle, and as time was short asked if he might call that afternoon.

When Alick arrived she made him sit down, regardless of a trickle of melting snow on the carpet to tell her about his descent through the drifts, about the storm, and the captain's arrival.

"Him and the laird was fairly done when they got home," he told her; "they lost the road, and it was the horse that found it for them again."

She regarded him for a moment as if further questions were on her tongue, but if so she changed her mind, rang the bell, and sent Alick off to New Year cheer while she wrote her reply.

The smirking messenger despatched homeward, she gazed after him till he disappeared in the wood, waited for his reappearance above, and step by step accompanied him on the open slope beyond, watching the more intently the smaller he grew. When at last the black dot vanished from the ground of white, she shook in an ecstasy of excitement.

"He's got it," she cried within herself, "he's got it," and shut her eyes, the better to picture the scene within—the captain taking the letter—eagerly, he must take it eagerly—opening it, reading it, and—but she durst not imagine more.

Then for a while she devoted herself with passionate assiduity to her grandmother.

In her practical Scots fashion the older woman had already begun to prepare for the departure, sighing at the need, but with no thought of repining or turning back. Connie could not so easily accept the idea of surrender. Her mind vacillated electrically between a despairing gloom and a dazzling brightness, which at times blended and interpenetrated so that she hardly knew the dream from the reality. To the dream she clung with her whole soul; the reality she flung from her in a passion of revolt.

It was Mrs. Ogilvie's custom in the afternoon to take an hour's nap, and though to-day there was little chance of sleep, she lay down as usual, though somewhat later. Left to herself, a torturing restlessness fell upon Connie. She fought against it, reminded herself of the need to be calm, thought pityingly of her father striving among the wreckage in New York, and on a filial impulse wrote half a letter, which was torn up as drivel. A book was opened on chance, turned over, and thrown aside as if it were imprinted dulness. Then she went from room to room in a distressing expectancy, seeking something that was not to be found, and finally coming on a fur-lined mantle and a sealskin cap, reminiscences of sleighing delights in New York, she hastily put them on, hardly knowing why, and went out.

The weather was still and crisp, with the sparkle of frost in the air, and the snow glittering rosily in the red splendour of a wintry sun. In its ethereal moods winter is by far the most lightsome of the seasons ; and Connie was not ten minutes out when it had communicated its own fine buoyancy to her senses. After a turn or two in the castle grounds she struck, as from sheer rapture of motion, into Dunveagle woods, the brisk creaking of the frosted snow under foot animating the spirits like music.

In the hollows the shadows were already deepening from blue to black, but she had no thought of night, so exquisitely this magic elixir of air and exercise acted on the heart, precipitated every morbid particle in the blood. Once or twice, indeed, it occurred to her that she must not go too far, nor be too long absent. Grannie would be up and asking for her, and unable to get information might be alarmed. Besides, there was the need to be back in time to receive visitors. Yet under the stimulus of rarefied air and rebounding spirits she held on, sniffing wintry scents of pine and birch, admiring the curved lines of the snow wreaths and the flush that warmed the frosted mountains.

In this elasticity of mind and body she reached the elbow or crook of the stream where one summer day, not many ages ago, as she lay watching the sportive trout, a stranger unwittingly intruded. She remembered every incident of that day as if it had occurred but an hour before, ay, to the minutest throb of her own surprised heart. Drawing near she peered over a gleaming bank of snow into the steely-cold water. The trout were still there, darting with the twinkle of icicles.

All at once she turned, her face uplifted at the sound of crunching feet. Then her heart stopped as Captain MacLean came swiftly round the great rock above. The air seemed to tingle ; her head was spinning. Before she quite knew what was happening, he held her by the hand.

CHAPTER LIV

THE KING AND HIS OWN

AND when she found tongue, what did she catch herself saying? Not words of conventional greeting, not even of surprise, but rather of radiant gladness, as of one who, having waited long, is at last happy.

"You have come," she said, a thousand speeches in the glow of her eyes.

"I was coming," he answered, thinking of the note that lay close to his heart. "I did not expect this pleasure." He would fain have asked, "Did you come to meet me?" but on that presumption his lips shut fast.

A thrilling silence followed. Connie turned to the snowy heights, remarking their grandeur; but had she spoken as she felt, her cry would have been that of the intoxicated singer—

"Are the hills and the lawns where we roam unsteady?
Or is it my brain that reels away?"

She hardly saw the magnificence she extolled. She was not thinking of snowy heights, nor was he.

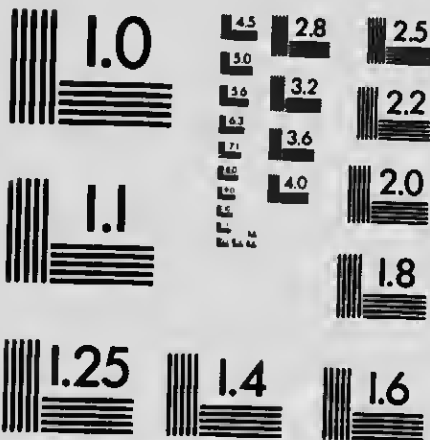
It was the moment when the wintry Highland sun, going down in fiery splendour, tinges the cold virgin white with a ruddy warmth, making the diamonds of the snow crystals flash, and the spectral trees gleam with reflected fire. The radiance streaming between two silver peaks suffused her with new beauty.

"It is very different from what it was when we met here before," he responded, trying to keep the tumult out of his voice.



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"Do you remember it?" she asked, with an eager smile. "Ah, it was summer then; now it is winter, winter," she repeated, turning to go, "when everything is cold and bare."

For a minute he walked silently beside her in a fever of concern and pity.

"Miss Ogilvie," he blurted out suddenly, "will you pardon me for speaking plainly on a matter on which I feel strongly? We soldiers have the reputation of being blunt, and assuredly some of us at least cannot shape our tongues to fine phrases."

She gasped as if something plucked at her heart, feeling as though she must swoon; yet by some miraculous power she kept a fair semblance of self-control.

"Yes, Captain MacLean," she answered simply.

"If I blunder you will understand?" he said.

With eyes on the ground, she promised to try, and he went on—

"Well, then, let me begin by saying that I have read something of what has appeared in the papers."

She lifted her head quickly.

"The papers have been saying cruel things," she said, flushing.

"And untrue," he added. "I don't believe them."

She walked a little in silence, then said in a low but vibrating voice—

"You are very good. Some not only believe the reports, but add to them."

"Cowards!" he returned so fiercely that she started. "You will always find cowards. They are weeds that flourish in every soil. But in this instance they will get the lie yet."

He saw her quiver as in pain, and was rating himself for a crass blunderer when she cried out in an abandon of anguish, "Oh, Captain MacLean, it is true; it is true!" and fluttered away like a wounded bird. Norman stood inert, gazing after her, a strange mist in his eyes. What was he to do? He had made terms with an enemy, stood

by a friend in a pinch ; but this was outside his experience, and threw him off his balance. Connie discovered that he did not immediately follow, and with a fallen heart told herself, "He also is deserting me." But the next minute he was by her side, very pale and, as she rather felt than saw, cruelly agitated under his soldier's reserve. She could have cried out to be forgiven for the wrong she had done him.

"You tell me, Miss Ogilvie, it is true?"

The words came from a dry, stifled throat.

"Yes," she replied ; and then desperately, "But, Captain Maclean, let us talk of something else for the little while we are together. I must not worry you with my troubles."

The response was as a shock of electricity.

"Then I may turn and go back," he said in acute disappointment, and pulled up as if suiting the action to the word.

Her heart was in a riot ; her foot unconsciously kicked the frozen snow.

"No," she pleaded ; "please don't do that."

"Miss Ogilvie," he rejoined in a choked voice, "I have already told you—perhaps it wasn't necessary—that I am a man of clumsy words. May I speak in my own way?"

"Speak," she answered feebly, while kicking the snow more vigorously.

"Thank you. Well, I'll be brief and spare you pain. When I read those reports my blood boiled. I could not sleep or attend to my duties, and I came back on special leave to hear from yourself they were false."

"It is good and noble of you," she replied, keeping down a sob. "I wish I could tell you they are false, but I cannot. They are true, and they mean more than anyone here imagines. You may soon be back in Dunveagle if you like."

"What do you mean?" he demanded, amazement giving his tone a touch of brusqueness.

"I mean," she answered, her face wrung with misery,

"that we must leave it. You are the first outside of ourselves who knows."

She durst not look at him ; but she could hear that he was breathing very hard.

"Miss Ogilvie," he returned, with the emphasis of his whole being, "you must not, you shall not leave Dunveagle."

It seemed to Connie that fireflies all at once began to dance in the falling dusk.

"Ah, but we must leave it, Captain MacLean," she said, her heartbreak in her voice. "We are preparing even now."

"You must not," he retorted almost angrily. "Until I met you I was a poor man—poor in a worldly and in every other sense. Since then I have in every sense grown rich. Will you not permit me to help you?"

She swayed as if falling, and instinctively he put forth a hand to support her. He was startled to find her quaking as in an ague.

"You are ill," he cried in alarm. "I have vexed you. I should not have spoken as I did, but—but, dear Miss Ogilvie, it was my reason for coming back, and I couldn't keep it to myself."

"You are very good," she murmured, and he fancied her gloved hand pressed his own.

"No," he corrected, "the goodness is all on the other side. You know a little of Mr. Ogilvie's kindness to me. What he did was a miracle of generosity, and I cannot stand by if any little aid of mine can be of use. I met him as the enemy of my house ; at any rate, as the usurper of my place and inheritance. There was a deep prejudice, but he and you overcame it. Nay, more ; through him there came to me what I never had before—money, money in abundance. It is every penny at his, at your service if you will accept it."

"But, Captain MacLean," she answered in palpitating admiration and gratitude, "we cannot dream of that. I cannot consent to your risking money for us. Get back with it the birthright that was taken from you. As for

us, we'll soon be in another world. Our little sojourn here will be as a passing dream, to think over in quiet moments, if such should come. Some day, perhaps, we may revisit old scenes to find you where you ought to be, where you deserve to be. If my father were here he would tell you what I cannot. But, dear Captain MacLean, take my ill-expressed gratitude; it is poor, but it could not well be more hearty or genuine."

Ending with a rush, she insensibly laid a hand on his arm, and the touch was as fire.

"It is unkind of you to be ironical," he replied, the muscles of his throat tightening as at the twist of a screw.

"Ironical!" she repeated. "God knows I had no thought of irony. I wish I could make you feel how grateful I am, Captain MacLean."

"I don't want gratitude," he cried. "I want"—the words were almost out before he could check himself.

"What?" she asked, drawing in her breath sharply.

A dizzying thrill passed through Morinan. Dare he take the plunge, and put hopes and happiness to the hazard? Not now, not now. He could not, would not act like a money-lender making terms; and yet she stood on tiptoe for the answer.

"Suppose what you suggest were possible," he said, whipping out of the central current to collect his thoughts.

The reply was swift and decisive.

"Then the King would have his own again."

It was his turn to find the air full of fireflies.

"You mock me," he cried; "you mock me."

"If I do, may a good, generous, brave man never waste another thought on me. Why do you say or imagine that?"

He drew a little closer to him; he could almost feel her warm breath, but the dusk prevented him from seeing her face.

"Because"—he felt himself reeling like a drunken man. "Because, oh!" he ended on a note of tragic disappointment. "I have no right to speak, no right whatever."

"If you don't speak I'll complain you are unkind to me," was the response made with a coolness that surprised herself.

"Then," he cried, like a man making a burst for life, "you must not, you cannot leave Dunveagle. Will you bear with me if I tell you something? If I am rude, if I take a liberty, turn about and leave me."

She neither spoke nor moved, and he went on headlong.

"I told you I came back to hear from yourself that the newspaper reports were false or exaggerated; that is true, and yet"—he almost choked on the confession—"it is not the whole truth. I began to draw pictures in my own mind. You were always the central figure, and you were always at Dunveagle. I could not separate you from Dunveagle. I thought that, that in case of the worst in New York—I thought of the possibility you have suggested, and you were still at Dunveagle. And it was your own, all your very own to do with as you liked."

"That is impossible," she said, in a tone which the fates decreed he should misinterpret. Her hosom was dancing; her face snow-white; but how could he know that?

"Then my picture is demolished," he replied in an accent of despair. "But since I began, Miss Ogilvie, let me end. I was sorry all this had come upon you."

"You need not tell me. I am sure of that," she replied, smothering a flame-like emotion.

"Yes," he continued impetuously. "But I have something else to tell you. I said I was sorry. That's true, and yet, God forgive me, I was glad also."

"Of getting back," she said, holding her breath.

"No, no, Miss Ogilvie, not that," he cried, his tongue and throat parched. "At any rate I was not thinking of myself, and yet it was for myself I was planning. Only you were in the plan. All depended on you."

In the gathering darkness her hand sought his; he gripped it like a vice, and for a little there was no sound but the purling of the burn under its snow banks and the hot beating of two hearts.

"Is my dream too wild?" he asked, his whole passionate being in the question.

He felt her quivering as she answered softly—

"Your goodness prompts you to too much. You forget all that these changes mean. You ought to be at Dunveagle; but my place is elsewhere."

In crises of human affairs cross currents, half-understandings, wrong constructions are the very tools of mischief. Too much boldness, too little boldness, a hair's breadth this way or that, a strained inflection, the misinterpretation of a word, a look, a tone, a gesture, and two souls drawing together are off at a tangent that may end in separation wide as the poles. While she was thinking how generous, how noble he was, and telling herself that love could not permit the sacrifice he proposed, he thought she was merely parrying to keep him at arm's length till he should grow weary or disgusted and desist.

"Then mine is elsewhere too," he returned, like one incurably hurt. "I am very properly punished."

An exquisite pain and terror seized her. How was she to put him right while, at the same time, keeping herself right? He had come back to her once, drawn by what mystic cord she could guess. But a subtle feminine intelligence told her that if he left her now he would never return, never, never. It was as if for one fiery, dazing instant she held the choice of happiness or misery for eternity, and, by a fateful spell, was prevented from deciding. Fed by imagination, her fears became a dizzying panic. Already he appeared to be slipping from her, fading into the darkness of night; and the passion of her heart was a throttling agony.

Without knowing it she withdrew her hand from his, and he took that act of unconsciousness as another measure in the process of disillusionment and dismissal. She blamed him for not understanding; he condemned himself for presumption; and soldier-like shut his lips to take his punishment in silence. Honour, chivalry, delicacy, every sentiment that holds woman in reverence, that makes a

man the son of his mother, the brother of his sister, the lover of his wife, forbade him to speak more, except to offer apologies for vexing her. He had done what he ought not to have done. He had been mistaken: for a moment had perhaps forgotten himself. He craved her pardon. Would she forget and forgive?

Was he bent on driving her mad, or merely on pushing maiden reserve to extremity?

"You are wrong, quite wrong," she cried, her voice breaking on a sob.

Something in the tone rather than in the words illumined, as by a lightning flash, the darkness of his mind. Like a drifting sailor rescued on a pitchy night, he came swiftly back to light on a tide that mingled its spray with the very stars. He saw the figure by his side sway and bend towards him. His arms opened and she melted into them, shaking in the throes of her great fear, her sudden bliss. In a blind ecstasy of endearment he comforted her. The sweetest words she had ever heard sounded in her ears, and she lifted her face to his.

Stars came out thick and fast in the frosty sky, and the low moon peered at them through a silvery gap, chastely as in her first peep at Endymion; but except at lamps by which to see each other's happiness they thought of neither moon nor stars.

When the captain was leaving the castle some hours later, Connie saw him alone to the door.

"Do you know what day it will be to-morrow?" she asked, and as he did not immediately reply, being deeply engaged in studying her face, she laughed. "Of course you don't; men never do remember the right thing. It's the New Year. And, sweetheart, that's for luck."

But when with a like rite he would have reciprocated her good wishes, she drew back, a gleaming forefinger raised in protest.

"To-morrow," she said. "To-morrow—perhaps."

CHAPTER LV

HANDS ACROSS THE SEA

THE frost relaxed, and the earth came out in spots, as if the landscape had contracted a virulent eruptive disease, then was gently hidden again under a stainless white that fell without tremor or breath of wind, so that tree and cave glistened as with gems and filigree of chased silver. A little while, and many waters lifted up their voices and sang together. Sudden thaws and freshets made the burns boil, and the turbid rivers scoop their banks furiously, and even overflow like old Nile. The Veagle came down grandly in brown cataracts that filled the air with the low music of thunder. Bogs and fields gleamed bleakly, as if only recovering from the flood, and every furrow in the hillsides was a leaping brook.

Then day by day the sun stayed longer and grew more genial. Fresh scents were in the air. The earth, putting off desolation and drowsiness, was weaving herself the garments of a new life. Saps were moving resistlessly in the woodlands, primroses gleamed in protected nooks, and the young grass of the valleys tempted sheep from insucculent heights above.

In this rejuvenating tide of spring Mr. Ogilvie returned for a little to Dunveagle. He had pressed Connie to go to him in New York, but she made puzzling excuses, and finally begged him to come home. He noted the word "home," and read in it large, new meanings.

Perhaps he was not struck with amazement when she confided her great secret, nor was he displeased, only a

little sad in losing one about whom the tendrils of his heart entwined with uncommon fondness.

"Ah, Con, Con!" he said. "Unkind Con, wanting to forsake your poor old father."

"Papa, you're not sorry?" she cried, looking into his eyes with a pretty dismay.

"I can never be sorry, dear, over anything that makes you happy," was the answer. "Only, you see, I'm sure rendering my own sweetheart to another, and that's a good deal to ask of one."

She closed his mouth with a kiss, and setting herself on his knee, accused him of not telling her what he thought of Norman. What she hungered for was praise, not of herself, but of *him*.

"As you know, I always thought well of him," her father replied. "And I don't think less of him now when you have honoured him."

"He deserves far more honour than mine," she rejoined, toying with a button.

"Stick to that, darling, and God bless you," was the response. "May he always be so to you, so that whatever comes—and there are more twists and turnings in life than my little Con dreams of—you may cling to him secure in your trust. So long as a woman adores the man of her choice she cannot be unhappy. When she ceases to adore him, I believe nothing in this world will be compensation for that falling away."

"I am sure," she declared, tears of joy and pride in her eyes, "any woman would adore Norman, and be glad in his courage and noble in his nobility."

"He is lucky who has such a champion," her father said quietly. "Well, I wish my little sweetheart, the sweetheart who has grown up beside me, many good things, but I can wish her nothing in this world half so good as a husband of whom she can continue to use the words she has used

now. It will be better for her than heaps of gold and troops of servants. By the way," he broke off, "Jeff Dunbar did not seem too happy when we parted in New York."

"Poor Jeff!" Connie returned wistfully. "I like him; I like him very much. But I always felt we were not meant for each other. Now I know."

"You are sure of your choice, then?"

"Grannie has often told me about mother and you; and I am as sure as *she* was."

She nestled closer, and he kissed her, stroking the fair hair till it was all disordered.

"I was very happy then," he said in a low voice, "and I daresay Norman is very happy now."

For answer she snuggled yet closer, and put a tight right arm about his neck. In this affectionate attitude Mrs. Ogilvie found them.

"Upon my word," she cried, feigning lightness, "you two carry on like lovers."

"So we are, Grannie dear," replied Connie, lifting her head and smiling; "very fond lovers."

"That's good, dearie," Mrs. Ogilvie said in a changed tone. "I've had three lovers in my day, and——"

"Oh, you naughty, naughty old woman!" Connie cried, springing up. "Who were they? Come, you must tell."

"If I must, I must. Well, the first was my father—a girl should always be head and ears in love with her father; the second was my husband; the third is my son. A woman with three such lovers has her fill of happiness; and I can wish you, dearie, nothing better in this life."

Connie put out a hand to each and drew them together, herself standing half between.

"We'll share your last lover, Grannie," she said, with a solemn joy and pride. "He's not all yours, nor all mine. He belongs to us both."

As she spoke a ray of sunshine fell on them thus grouped, and Connie took it as a good omen.

Norman paid a flying visit to see Mr. Ogilvie and arrange matters, the mere thought of which strung Connie's nerves to the cracking point. He had his own plans, which he pushed to an issue with the intrepidity of a soldier. But on one point at least Mr. Ogilvie was equally determined, the ardour on each side (contrary to rule) being on behalf of the other.

In America Mr. Ogilvie's strong head and hand were beginning to bring order once more out of chaos. It had been suggested to him that he should compound in the customary way, and thus at a stroke wipe out half his debt; but he resolutely shook his head.

"A whole conscience, if possible," he said, "and after that a sop to pride. If Heaven gives me health, and my creditors a little time, every man, I think, will have his own."

Many called him Quixotic, but all admired, for we like in others the sacrifices for which we have not heart ourselves. A shrewd few, however, remarked that he was right as usual, that he was pursuing the best, if the hardest policy, and would yet recover everything.

"Give me," said a veteran, "the man who builds on character. That's what tells in the end. Ogilvie's down to-day, but he's the sort of man who'll be up to-morrow; and in the meantime his word's good enough for me."

Now in prosperity a certain sum was settled on Connie and invested in gilt-edge in her own name. When the crash came, she hastened to place it unreservedly in her father's hand. Half a second he hesitated under the dire pressure of circumstances; then, as we know, returned an emphatic negative. What was hers should remain hers. No man could say it had not been legitimately given, and come what might it was not to be taken back. Besides, in that mighty vortex in New York it would be but as a drop to the ocean.

In the swing of events that refusal suggested to Connie

other plans supplementary to Norman's. There was a pretty fight in which all three engaged warmly, but for once she held invincibly to her purpose.

"All the men and arguments in Christendom won't make me alter my mind," she told Norman, laughing fondly in his face. "So papa and you may just as well give in and agree gracefully. It isn't much to give a woman her own way once in a while."

"I didn't mean it to be at all as you propose," Norman responded, as if deprived of keenly anticipated pleasure. "You upset all my plans."

"And must you have your way in everything?" she asked, putting her face close to his. "Mind, it's a bad, bad beginning to be selfish."

Norman appealed to Mr. Ogilvie, and was answered that she was now her own mistress. Thereupon the laird was taken into counsel, but he was in too great a maze over the doings of Providence to have any judgment left. He admitted, however, he was disposed to side with his son, and was treated as cavalierly as were the others.

So when the inevitable came, those social carpenters and joiners, the solicitors, were called in to fashion new covenants according to law. One day a telegram flashed northward to Aberfourie, passed thence post-haste to Craigenard, and bowled the laird over in the midst of a domestic conversation with Janet. It contained but two words; yet as Janet told Maggie, if the old earth had stood on its head and whisked an impudent tail in the sun's face the laird could not have been more dumfounded. The pertinent part of the tale ran thus:—

"'Janet woman,' says he, so white and trembly I thought he was going to fall, though when I looked again and saw the light in his eye I knew it was no falling matter. 'Janet,' says he, in the blessed Gaelic speech, just as I am talking to you, 'you'd hardly believe the

queer things that are happening.' 'Deed no, sir,' says I, 'whiles my head's nearly turned with what is happening.' 'Well, Janet,' he says, 'I have a bit of news for you that'll turn it altogether. Brace up, for you'll need all your strength, for this is the queerest thing that's happened in my time. Dunveagle is ours again.' 'God's sake, sir,' I cried, my heart just jumping in my mouth with fear and gladness, 'do not be making a fool of me. I was thinking the other day of lying down quietly to die where I am.' 'It's a small privilege, that, Janet,' says he. You know his way. 'You can die here or elsewhere, as you like. But I'm not making a fool of you. Norman's got it.' And with that I had just to sit down and greet, and you'd greet too, Maggie, in my place. Well, I looked up half blind, and as sure's death the laird's eyes were running nearly as bad as mine. 'Ay,' he said again, as if he was half speaking to himself to make sure of the thing, 'he's got it. Norman's got it.' And at that, Maggie, I just up and gripped his hand and kissed it, and it was as shaky as my own. But he'd make it all a joke by his way of it. 'Tut, tut, Janet, what's this?' he said. 'What the devil's come over you?' says he. 'If they catch us like this there'll be a fine splore, and, Janet woman, we're too old for a scandal.' Did you ever hear the like of him? Well, who should come walking in with that but Ian Veg himself. 'Ian,' cries the laird, putting a handkerchief to his eyes as if he'd been eoughing badly, 'this wife of yours is gone gyte, making love to an old runt like me. You'll better take her away.' Ian turned on me, not knowing what to say or think, but just glowering. 'There, what did I tell you, Janet?' says the laird, laughing to ease himself. 'We're caught, and there's no jealousy like an old man's jealousy.' Then he looked queer-like at Ian; 'If ye'll not make a Court of Session ease of it, Ian,' says he, 'I'll tell ye something,'

and he told him what was come to pass. Ian just gaped, for he couldn't speak, and didn't like very well to greet before folk. 'If it was the summer time, Ian,' says the laird, 'ye'd be having a fine feed of flies. Why, man, you needn't stare so much, and what in the world's the matter with your jaw?'

"'Is it true, sir?' Ian asked, coming to himself.

"'There's the telegram, Ian,' says the laird; 'read for yourself.' Ian read, and then just gave one hooch that made me jump.

"'It has come, sir,' he said, looking as if he was beside himself. 'I knew it would come.'

"'And how did you know it would come?' the laird asked; but Ian only kept on saying over and over again, 'I knew it would come.'

"'Pick it out of him, Janet,' says the laird to me. 'I'm sure you've got many a secret out of him in your time,' and that's quite true, Maggie, but I couldn't manage it that time."

Thus Janet. Perhaps the laird did not greatly desire to press for Ian's secret; but at any rate he took evasion in good part, ordered Janet to produce the decanter, and invited them both to drink health and felicity to the new laird of Dunveagle.

"And now to the new mistress," he cried, when the rite was performed.

"And who's that, sir?" Ian asked, with a sudden change of mien.

At the name he drew a wry face, whereupon the laird turned on him sternly.

"Ian Veg Mackern, for forty years, more or less, we've been friends, whiles quarrelling, whiles making up, but always, I think, friends. But before we're an hour older we'll quarrel outright, if you don't please me now."

There was the fear of his master's eye, to say nothing of the temptation of liquor. So Ian drank. Then he went

out to seek Alick, who was sunning himself on a rock by the lower sheepfold.

"Alick," he said, producing a black bottle from the inner pocket of his coat and a stemless glass from the outer, "it's in my head that the dram's not just the best thing going for the like of you. But you'll drink now, my lad, if you go as dry's a teetotaller for the rest of your days."

He poured out a brimming glass.

"That's to drink the health of the new laird of Dunveagle."

"And what might they call him?" Alick asked, getting to his feet.

"God bless my heart!" cried Ian, "what's you and me been doing early and late? What haf we been scraping up half-croons for and make Linnie turn out his pockets, and turning the enemy's guns on themselves, as planned by somebody I know? It's not so often Providence helps you and me, Alick; but I am pleased to tell you there's to be a new laird of Dunveagle, and his name's MacLean. You needn't glower, Alick; take off your drink."

Then having taken a thimbleful himself to pass the time while Alick gasped and wiped his eyes, Ian said—

"There's only one thing I don't like. It seems Miss Ogilvie is to be the new mistress. What d'ye think of that? I know you and her's thick; but you needn't be getting red in the face, for indeed I'm not going to fight, Alick Ruah. Folk cannot haf everything they want. It's enough for me and you that we're going back to Dunveagle. As for the new mistress, we'll try to thole her. It was the wee store in the rock that did it, Alick, and the laird never knew. Think of it, man, he never knew."

In the month of flowers and hopes, when Dunveagle woods wore their loveliest green, and breathed their sweetest perfume, preparations for a great festivity were made at the castle. And on the great night there was not within the

Highland border a piper so proud as Ian Veg Mackern, as his pipes sounded the welcome home to the captain and his bride. The fir torches gleamed ruddily on bare knees as they had gleamed on that far-off night when Alan MacLean came of age (the electric jets among the ivy remaining for one evening unlit), and the ball that followed was an old-fashioned jubilant marshalling of the clans. Among those who danced in honour of his captain was Lord Kinluig, who showed a very tender interest in a handsome and costly present which came to the bride from New York. When congratulated on a certain whispered event he flushed with pleasure.

"I knew it was coming," Connie said privately to her husband. "I guessed from the first our good Kitty would be Countess of Ardenmore. I'll be so glad to have her beside me."

"Aren't you sorry, dear, you didn't marry a title?" he asked her.

But she only smiled up at him, as one whose happiness is too deep to be disturbed by foolish questions.

As soon as possible after the wedding festivities Mr. Ogilvie, who had crossed the Atlantic to give his daughter away, prepared to return to his affairs in New York; but before going he saw one thing which made him speechless, namely, Craigenard made over absolutely to his mother. Norman had heard her express a longing to be back there, and next day the old home was hers. So the great magicians, time and vicissitude, once more restored a MacLean to Dunveagle, and an Ogilvie to Craigenard. Mrs. Ogilvie cried softly on taking possession, and even in the home of her youth might have been unhappy, but for the constant love and solicitude of the new mistress of Dunveagle.

The laird, with his small retinue, returned to the castle, bringing the treasure he had guarded so zealously through so many years and hardships. For a little he kept it from

all eyes, scarcely knowing what to do with it; then convinced that the time for delivering it had come, one evening while his son and daughter-in-law were merry in the drawing-room he marched in, handed over the bag, saying it would explain itself, and marched out again swiftly as if to avoid questions. With feelings not to be described, Norman and Connie read the letter and handled the gold.

"Will you give them to me, dear?" Connie asked presently, looking with wet eyes in her husband's white face. "I'll take good care of them."

"Yes, darling—from my mother to my wife," he answered. "My father never told me of this."

"Think how they loved you," she said quietly, and took the treasure into her own keeping. But not until Alick's mysterious hints set Norman inquiring did she confess her own share in certain plots.

The parting with her father tried her sorely, for they were chums of twenty years' standing, but she was comforted by the knowledge that America was again proving kind.

"It's the finest country in the world," her father said. "No other gives a man of grit and brains so many and such good chances. I love the old home—like a Highlander—but I love America too."

"So do I," Connie returned fervently. "So do I. Papa dear, I'm going to be very happy in Dunveagle, and I'm sure," looking at her husband, "Norman won't be angry or jealous if I say part of my happiness will be due to friends beyond the Atlantic. We'll think of one another, visit one another, often, often."

"Hands across the sea, Con," said her father.

A quick joy shone through her tears.

"Yes," she cried. "Hands across the sea, in a double sense—yours and mine—Britain's and America's."

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