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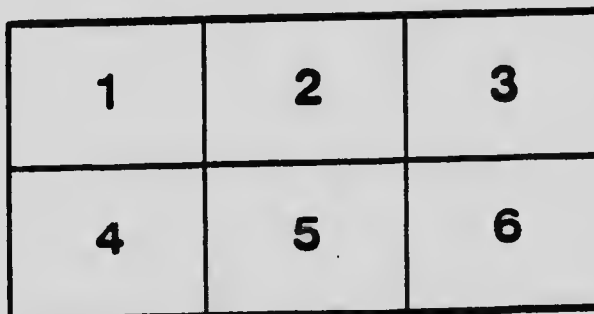
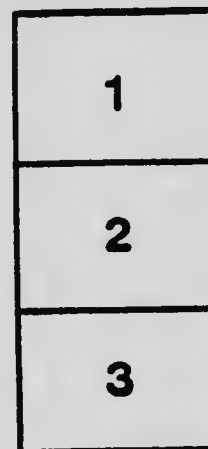
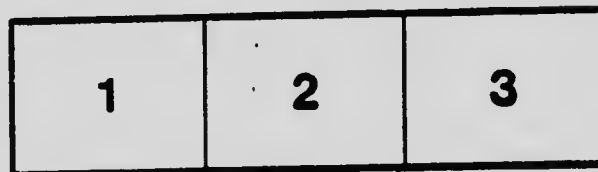
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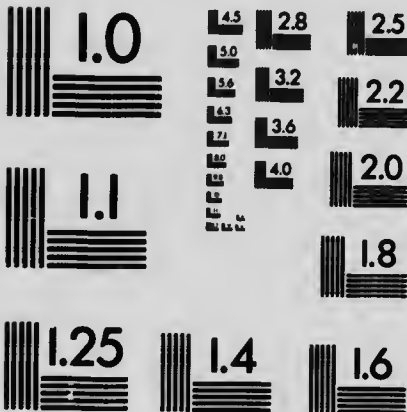
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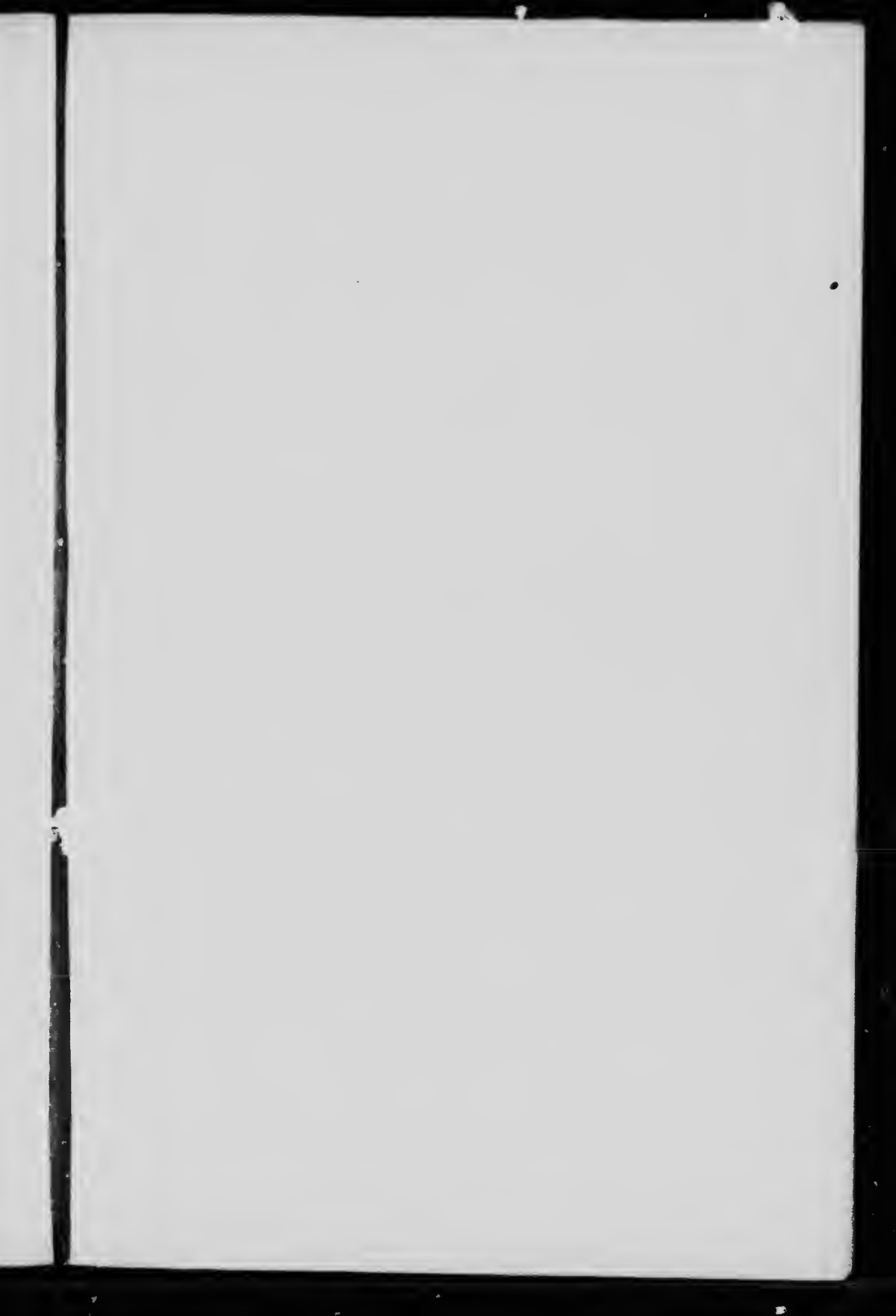
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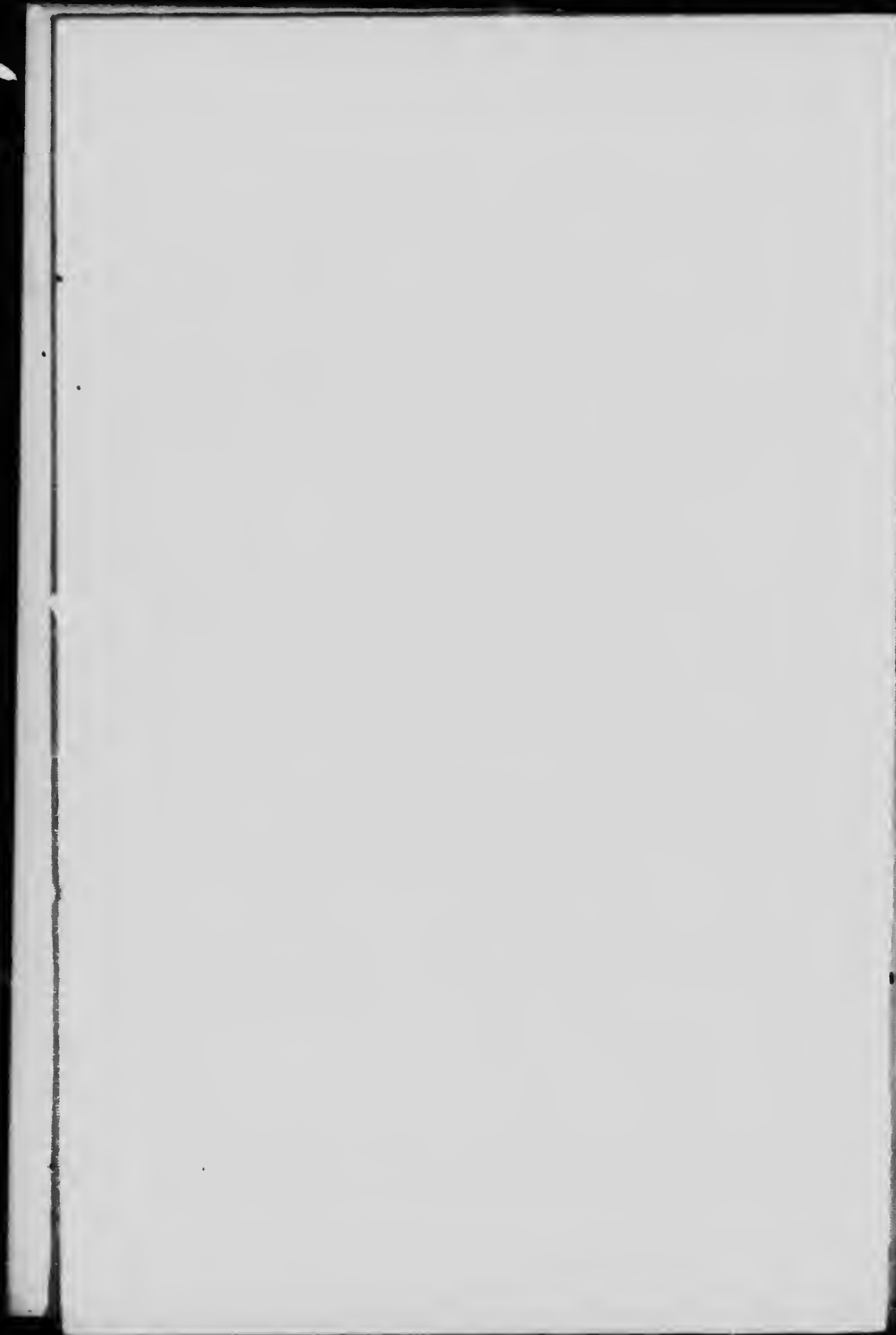
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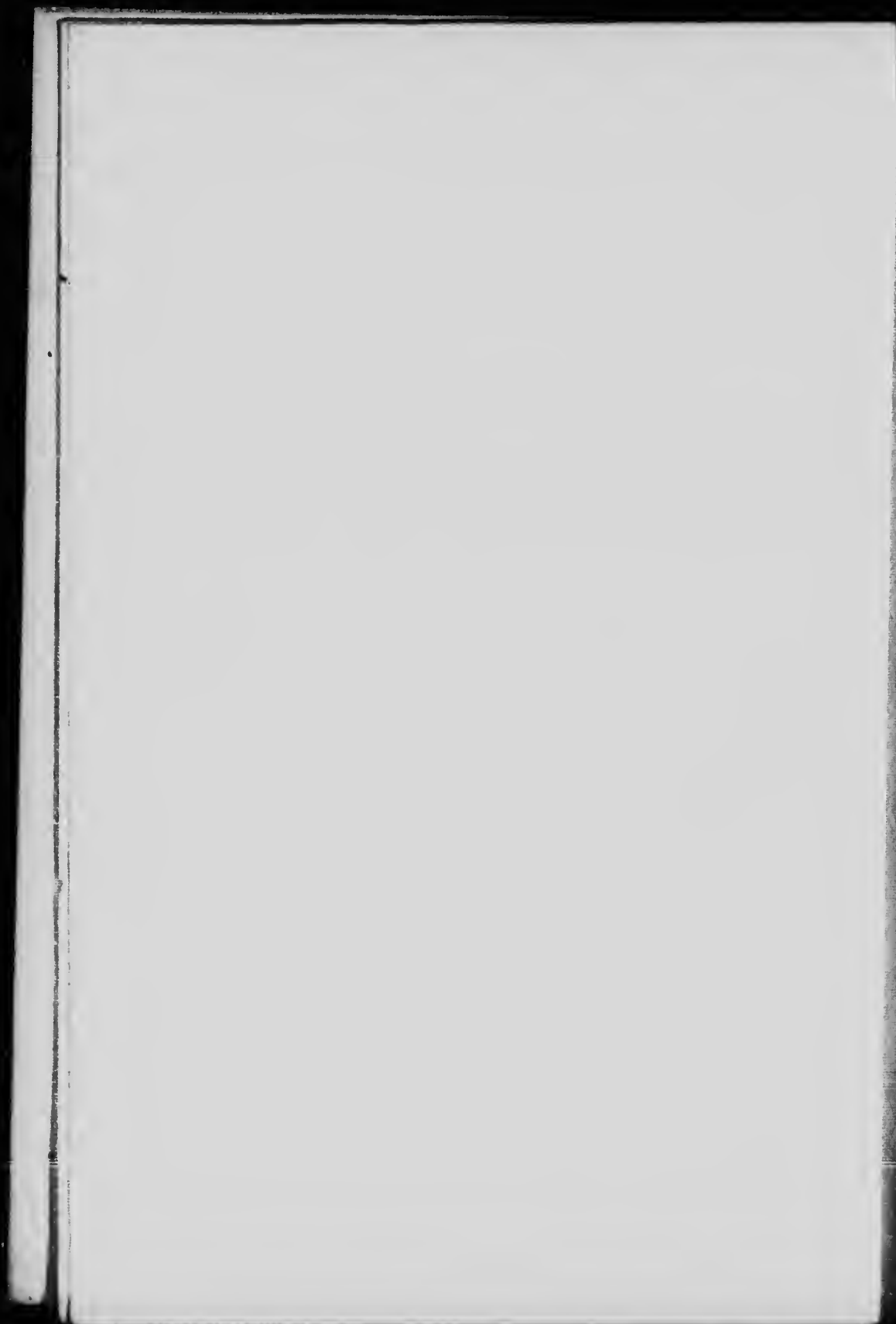
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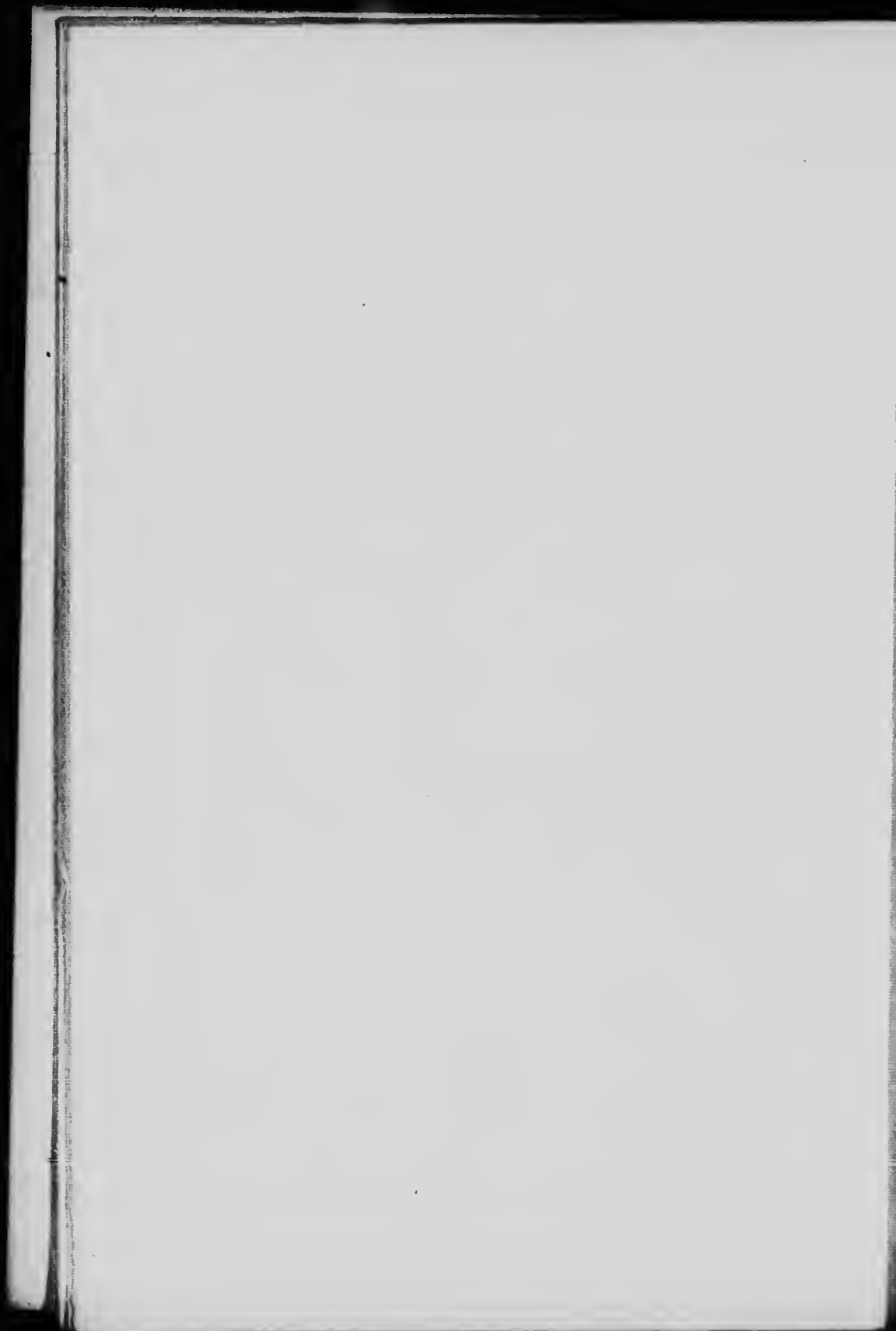


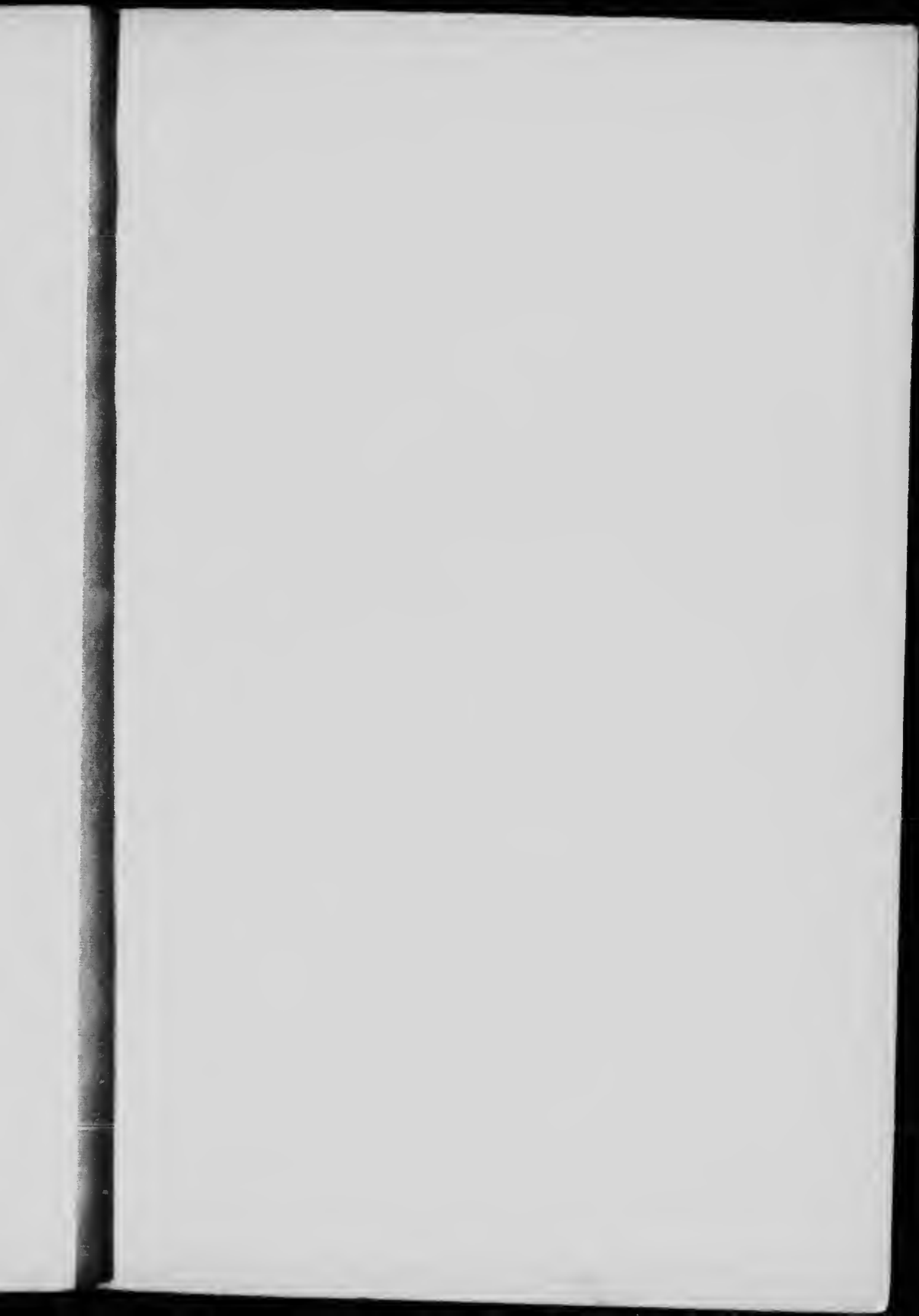






WHEN LOVE CALLS MEN TO ARMS







“Ye will have broken my looking-glass—but I liked myself fine,
she added whimsically

See page 142

WHEN LOVE CALLS MEN TO ARMS

An Autobiography of Love and Adventure, Truthfully
Set Down by Rorie Maclean, Laird of Kilellan, in
the Seventeenth Century, and Here Rewritten
from the Original MS. into Clearer
English

BY

STEPHEN CHALMERS

AUTHOR OF "THE VANISHING SMUGGLER," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY

HOWARD CHANDLER CHRISTY



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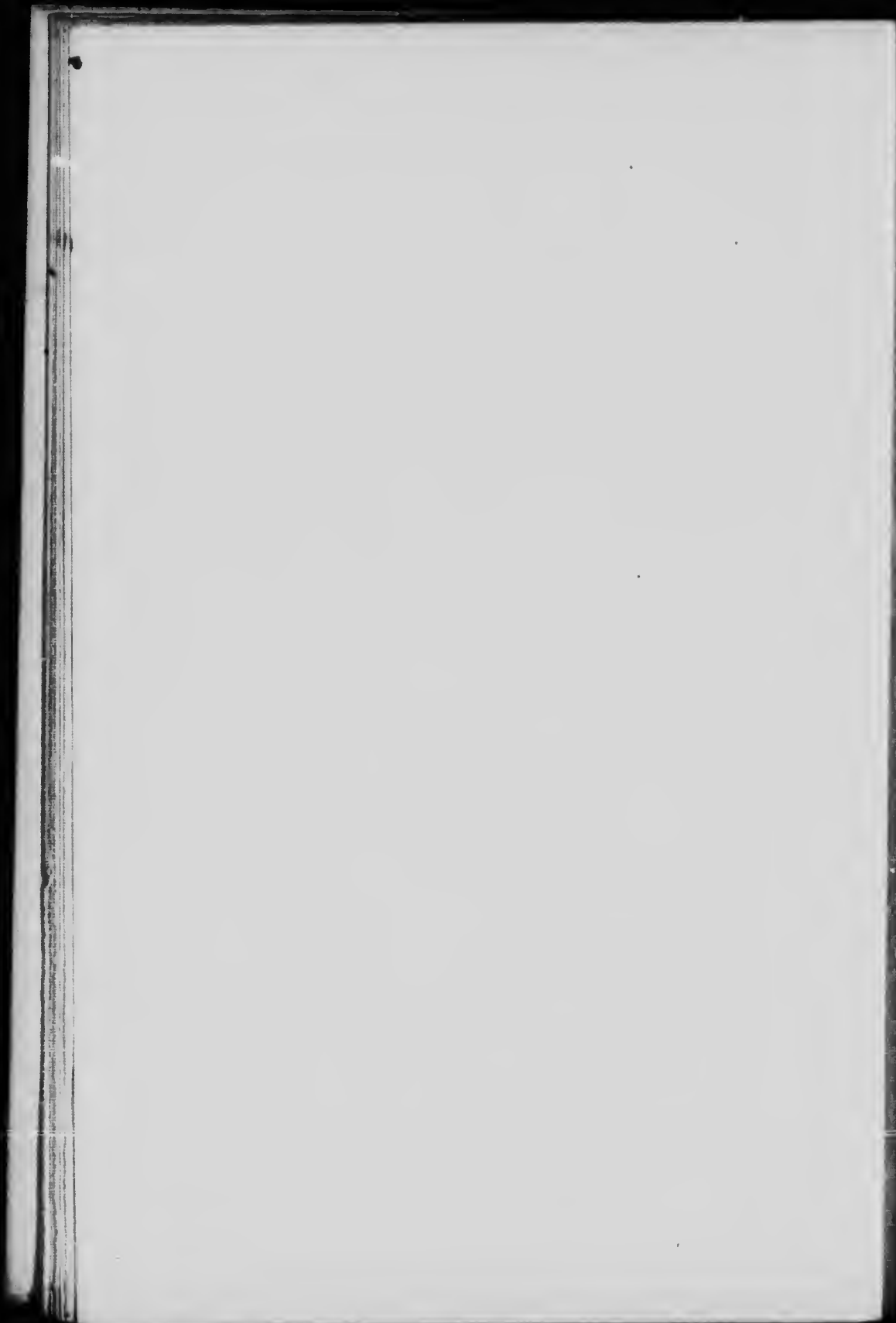
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TO
MY MOTHER
THIS TALE OF MY BIRTHPLACE



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WHEN LOVE CALLS MEN TO ARMS



WHEN LOVE CALLS MEN TO ARMS

CHAPTER I

THE COMING OF DON JOHN

As Mr. Macmurtrie says, I have a story to tell, but I fear mine is a poor hand for the writing. It is not so long ago that I could speak English, for the learning of the Sassenach tongue was the more difficult after the dialect of the Firth of Clyde, which is native to me. If my grammar should stumble whiles and my letters be doubtfully placed, I can only beg that those who come after me with greater learning will bear in mind how much easier the Gaelic would have been to the writer and how much harder to the reader.

“Forbye,” as Mr. Macmurtrie says, “ye’ll not waste words, having mickle to spare. These are perilous times in Scotland, and it behooves a man to finish his work the quicker.”

Yet to my mind there is a peace come upon the land. Murray is killed and Mary passed by the block; the Armada has left nothing invincible but the lady of my story; Queen Bess has gone to her

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rest and a first Scots Jamie sits an English throne; the Bible is half translated by the bishops, and life is pleasant in Kilellan Castle.

Not that England's wars and wranglings ever disturbed us much in Kilellan, for after the Earl of Argyll foreswore the Roman Catholic queen and gave allegiance to Murray at Langside, there was never a call to arms that was not in our own little affairs. Whiles we quarreled with the Macdonalds over the strait or chased the caterans; but even Argyll's matters touched us little in our part of the country, which was called Cowal, for it was nigh impregnable, save from the Lowlands on the other side of the Firth, and it was to the advantage of these to keep peace with us Campbells of Argyll.

Cowal was the frontier of the Highlands, and Kilellan Castle and all the laird's lands covered the broad peninsula between Loch Striven and the Holy Loch. Back of that was Argyll's mountainous playground, while fronting Kilellan Castle was the broadening Firth of Clyde, with the lowland coast of Kyle and Carrick on the other side. Right off the point of Kilellan, the Isle of Bute filled up most of the wide bay formed by the meeting of Striven and the Firth. Indeed, Bute would have been no island but for the strip of sea on the farther side of it, called the Kyles, where the Macdonalds were strongly secure against invasion.

On the point of the laird's peninsula was the clachan of Kilellan. Here every man was a Camp-

bell, and it was a sore task to keep in mind the exact relationship of each to his neighbor. It would have been impossible, but that each man had a surname. The laird went by the name of Black, although he was a grand-nephew of the Earl himself. In all the country he was called Black Jamie, and I think he must have earned the name. Anyhow, his son and grandson deserved it long after the old laird was deid.

Until Don John, the Spaniard, came to Kilellan, my father was the one stranger who ever saved his neck in Black Jamie's country. And that was because he was related to the laird, having married Margaret Campbell, his sister. For the same reason, my father, Angus Maclean, was master of the laird's lands, for the laird was owerfond of fight in his young days, and too decrepit in his old to mind about such matters.

We lived in the big farmhouse about a mile to the west of the castle, and close by the Loch Striven shore, from which our house was sheltered only by a burn and a strip of fir. From the clachan at the point, the shore swept past our house to the burn by the woods in the shape of a crescent moon. This was called Kilellan Bay.

Up to the year 1588, when I was eight years old, I remember little of my life; but that year is vividly noted as the beginning of the strange things that I am going to set down.

It was our custom in winter to lock up the cows

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in the byre, safe from the cold, but in the soft, summer nights we let them lie out among the daisies. The only duty I had at my early age was to drive the cows from the field to byre and back again, and in the morning and evening to carry milk to Kilellan Castle.

How well I remember the dawn of many a winter morning on the road to the laird's, when the eyelids of the stars seemed too frozen to shut at daylight, when the hoar-painted grass crinkled underfoot while the hoops of the milk-pails sank into my cold palms and my toes seemed dead in my shoon. But I was a sturdy lad for my years and, although the chilblains glowed rosy on my fingers, it was a healthy breath that formed icicles on my woolen scarf.

But it was late summer when Don John came to Kilellan. I mind well that evening when I had barred the cows in the wee pasture, and was coming home through the bit wood to the house. The burn was gurgling under the brambles and the trout leaping in the linn; the midges were tickling my bare legs and the beetles grumbling in the air. I had aye like the long summer nights, but that one is in my mind for another reason.

I took my milk-pails and started for Kilellan Castle, which was set back in the woods on the hill. Not even from the mountains could you see a tower of it, the timber grew up so tall and so close to it.

But at different points the trees had been hewn away on the southern side, so that a spy could see the Kyles and Bute, the isles of Cumbrae and Arran and the Lowland shore, and on clear days that gray sea-tower we call Ailsa Craig. At one of the spy-holes in the wood I happened to look through that evening, and what I saw was the real first memory of my life and the beginning of my adventures.

The sea was calm. The Firth's islands were nigh hidden in a warm haze that blended into the sunset of amber and crimson over Bute, but close into Kilellan Bay and as clear as my own hand before my face, was the queerest ship I have ever seen. It had three decks, and about the stern it looked like a floating castle, for it was full of little windows. Its sails were quite different to anything I was familiar with in the Clyde, being shaped like half-moons and painted with crosses and big golden letters. From the sides of this ship, which were striped with gold, dozens of long oars stuck out and moved stupidly, striking one another as if the rowers were learning the art. I remember thinking that the men in that ship must be queer sailors.

I knew in a moment what the ship was; in fact, like a boy of imagination, I had never passed one of the wood spy-holes without stopping to see if the Spanish Armada was in sight. I had heard and knew all about it. My elders had talked of nothing else for a year. It had been expected for months.

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Where was the rest of them? The laird's men could overcome three such clumsy craft as this, especially with such a crew.

Nevertheless, I was filled with excitement and some fright, and started running toward the castle to warn the old laird, for I suddenly remembered that Master Archibald, the young laird, had gone off after his wife's death to fight the Spaniards with the English admirals. The old laird was in his frosty years and, forbye his grandson — Master Archibald's son, Jamie — a lad of my age — there was none else in the castle, beyond the vassals, but Mistress Mary, the laird's bonny daughter. A fine state of affairs! I mind thinking — Master Archibald gone off to fight the Spanish, who were here knocking at his very door. The milk splashed from the pails as I kept speed with my growing excitement, but I was all unconscious of the trail that lengthened behind me, blue as a hedge-sparrow's egg.

On the wide steps by the big-knobbed door of the castle, I found the old laird and Mistress Mary and young Jamie, backed by a throng of gawping vassals. They, too, had seen the ship through a spy-hole, and they, too, were full of wonder. Jamie caught sight of me as I came splashing along, and cried:

“Look, Rorie Maclean! Yon's the Spanish!”

“Spanish!” sneered the laird, who had buckled on his claymore. “If yon's the Spanish, then

Heaven have mercy on the Armada, for Howard'll have none."

Mistress Mary stood with her hand shading her eyes, that she might see better through the dusk. I mind well the bewilderment on her bonny face, and the lace falling back from her smooth arm as she looked at the ship which, all unknown, was bringing much brief joy and sorrow to her.

"But there will be something wrong!" she cried. "They would not come like this."

"Are ye feared, woman?" cried the laird. "Hech, sirs, they are not here to fight. They will have had their bellyful of fight, I'm thinking, and that's what brings them here. But where is the rest of the heathen breed? Ha? And what will be wrong with yon boat? I tell ye, they are drunk as pipers. Ha? Ye hear that?"—as a roar of laughter traveled from the sea. "What was I telling ye?"

We could now distinguish the creaking of the vessel's gear and the dunting of the oars, one against the other, she was so close to land. Above every other sound arose laughter and singing—not like our Scottish singing, but livelier, trickier, and full of a gay wickedness of tune. The singing suddenly ceased, and a long womanish scream skirled through the still dusk.

"God forgive us!" growled the laird, his eyes peering fiercely from under shaggy brows and his underlip protruding dourly. "Hear yon heathen,

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will ye? Drunk and blaspheming, and they sailing to their graves!"

All at once a great sheet of flame leaped up from the high poop of the Spanish ship. At the same moment the oars stopped moving, save for a slackening and slapping as they fell, unmanned, into the sea, and scores of blackamoors suddenly appeared and ran about the decks. The laughter changed to shrieks of fright as the flames leaped higher and spread rapidly to other parts of the ship.

I remember the rapidity of that fire with a cold chill in my hair; how the lows lit up the many little windows, at first with a sputtering dimness, then with a steady glow that brightened and glared until the hot panes burst outward and fell, chinking and hissing, into the sea.

The Spanish ship was doomed. The crowds of men aboard her seemed to be casting about to save themselves. To me that was a simple matter, as the ship could not have been more than a hundred yards from the shore, and I was puzzled when I saw the Spaniards point landward and then throw up their hands or cross them on their breasts. I turned to look at the laird and, cruel man as I had heard he was, I do not think I ever saw an expression of such brutal mirth as glowed in his great, dour face. He was not overtall, but very broad and heavy. With his plaid and philabeg fastened at the shoulder with a big silver brooch, with his bare knees and his hands clasped over his claymore

hilt showing hairy and gnarled, and with his shock of gray, coarse locks straggling around his ears and scowling brow, he looked like one of those ogres I had pictured in the tales my father told me of a winter night. An evil grin spread over his features as he saw the Spaniards point despairingly at the shore, where the men of the clachan were adding fuel to a sudden bonfire.

"Ay!" chuckled Black Jamie, nodding his head at the burning ship. "Ay, ay, ye heathen gomerils. Ye may well put the sign of the cross on your breasts. The whole clachan's sitting on its hunkers waiting for ye, and all hell's singeing in your rear. Ay, skreigh, ye heathen! Skreigh!"—as heart-broken cries came from the Spanish ship.

"Oh, my father!" cried Mistress Mary, turning to the laird with her hands clasped. "Have mercy on them!"

"Mercy!" roared the laird, in sudden fury. "Mercy, is it? Then let them bide where they are. Mercy, is it? Ha!" Black Jamie chuckled. "What for have they come here, but as enemies of the land, to ram Popes and candles and crosses down our very thrapples? Mercy, is it? Come on, Aundra, we'll see to't that they have mercy."

Beckoning to a big kilted vassal who had been standing with a body of serving-men, the laird flung back his plaid from his claymore hilt and started for the shore, grinning and glowering and muttering:

"Mercy, is it? Hech, ay!"

I happened to look at Mistress Mary. She took young Jamie by the hand without another word, and pushed through the gawping vassals and into the castle hall, sobbing so that we could hear her outside.

By this time darkness had set in, and a fine night it was. The stars came out white and clear, except where the smoke from the ship blurred them, or they paled a wee to the vivid bursts of flame. For the Spanish vessel was now all ablaze. The blackmoors who had come on deck after the oars stopped were skreighing like lost souls, but there were others of fairer colour of face who were still trying to restore order.

There was something very far wrong on that ship. I could see them trying to let down a boat, but their hands seemed to be all thumbs. Two men tumbled into the sea and another laughed loudly and jumped in after them. Not one of the three came up. That seemed to be the signal for a final panic. Two and three at a time the Spaniards jumped overboard, and most of them drowned. This was astonishing to me, for to our Kilellan people swimming is like breathing or walking. But I have since heard that few of the Spaniards with the Armada could swim, and very many of them had never been on the sea before that time. Forbye, some of them wore heavy armour.

I followed the laird and his vassal to the shore.

There all the men of the clachan were assembled to watch the burning of the ship. The Spaniards were still jumping from one death to another. Many clung to the vessel until their clothes were ablaze, or the heat drove them into the water. Already the waves were bringing scores of bodies ashore. One man was alive and he was brought before the laird. Black Jamie looked at his swarthy face and his rich garb for a while.

"Who are ye?" he asked, in his best Lowland English.

The man threw out his hands, meaning, I suppose, that he did not understand the words. The laird tried him with a few more questions. Failing to get answer, save in a strange tongue, Black Jamie suddenly lost his temper and shouted:

"Hang the blackamoor!"

The poor soul was led away, while another was brought up from the shore. The result was the same. The laird girmed and snarled at the men of the clachan.

"Is there not a man among ye can speak their tongue?" he said in his own. "Fine would I like to know whence these men come and where the rest of the breed will be."

None could help until a sudden commotion thrust one, Alan Urquhart, into the circle. Alan Urquhart was the lad who plied the ferry-boat between Kilellan and Cloch Point, on the Lowland shore. Alan brought great news.

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The Armada, said Alan, according to word that had been brought through the kingdom by horse, had been defeated in the English Channel by Howard, Drake, Hawkins, and Frobisher. The Spanish fleet, cut off by fire-ships, had attempted to return to Spain through the Pentland Firth. The English admirals were preparing to intercept them in the North Channel and the Atlantic and finish the drubbing.

"But what brings yon Spaniard here?" asked the laird peevishly.

Alan could not say a word as to that, save that the broken Armada might have encountered foul weather. The laird was silent for a while and he peered from under his heavy brows at the five or six survivors that had been collected, one after the other.

"Cam'ells," he said at length, and there was an ominous note in his words, "yon men are the enemies of the land. More, forbye, they are the enemies of my house, for my son, Archibald, is to the wars." His voice suddenly swelled in savage wrath. "Would they be showing mercy to him?"

I had crawled into the circle that I might hear and see better. Looking back on the horrors of that night, I think it must have been a white and open-mouthed face that Black Jamie saw when his eyes fell on me.

"Home, ye whelp!" he fairly screamed. As I

started away, I heard the same mad voice snarl sentence upon the hapless Spaniards.

As I went through the outskirts of the throng a heavy hand fell on my shoulder. I looked up and into the face of my father, Angus Maclean. By the sullen glow of the red-hot ship, I fancied a troubled look in his eyes.

"Go home, lad," he said, sternly, but not unkindly. "This is no place for bairns."

The terror of the night's doings gripped at my young imagination. I ran toward our house as fast as I could go. The road followed the half-moon shore from the clachan to the farmhouse. It seemed to me every tree was a thing of evil, as the guttering flames of the Spanish ship flickered across my path.

I must have gone about half the distance to the house when I came to a stop with my heart throbbing in my throat. Not ten yards ahead of me was something, tall and lightly swaying. I thought I knew every tree and paling-stab on that road, and it was the instinct of the uncommon that bade me halt. There should have been no tree or stab there — in the middle of the road!

Still the thing remained. The thought came to me that if it was a man, he was watching me. My first impulse was to run back and tell my father. But the fear of ridicule was ever too much for a Campbell.

There was a ditch by the roadside. Into this I slipped, my heart floundering as helplessly as my

body. When I was well into the ditch I peered out at the object of my dread. It was still swaying gently in the same place, although it might have been my imagination which had turned it to face in my direction.

I started to crawl slowly along the ditch, meaning to get to the safe side of the thing, when I would make a bolt for home. Now and then I raised my head, always to find that the thing was still there and facing me. Finally, when I was directly opposite the thing, I cautiously peered over the ditch-top just as a flare of light leaped from the Spanish ship, lingered a moment, then went out, leaving me in greater darkness and in greater terror. For I had seen a man!

He was not like our men. He wore no philabeg or plaid. He was tall and graceful, and his legs seemed to be in long hose. He had no bonnet, but in his hand he carried a long, thin, naked sword. And he swayed mysteriously on his heels.

All this I noticed in the flash of fire; but that which attracted me most was a pair of big, sleepy eyes gazing at me out of a very pleasant face. Then a voice spoke in a tongue which I did not understand, except to realize that I was face to face with a Spaniard! I crouched, trembling, in the ditch. Then the Spaniard said something which conveyed to my mind the idea that he wanted me to "come forth," but his words, spoken in English, became confused on his tongue.

As I would as lief have been skewered on my feet, I crawled out of the ditch. Another flare came from the ship as I stood up before the man. Then there was silence. The Spaniard swayed on his heels awhile. I heard him laugh—a merry, death-take-me laugh. I suppose he must have seen that I was a boy, barefooted and kilted.

“Your name, little one?” he asked in English, but uttered as if he had had a heavy meal.

“Rorie,” I quavered.

“Pass, Rorie,” said he with a chuckle. “And,” he added, “tell them you met Don John.”

As I walked away, I heard Don John hum a lively, lilting air.

I went home in a kind of dream. Had every tree concealed a Spaniard I do not think I should have run. Up to that moment I had been taught to regard a Spaniard as something fearful to behold and blood-thirsty. Now, what with the things I had seen my own people do that night, and my encounter with the amiable, chuckling, bare-headed gentleman, my whole idea was changed.

Yet, when I told my mother that there was a real, live Spaniard down by the Long Pasture, and that he was Don John—a nice-spoken man—she barred every door and window till my father came. He looked even more alarmed when he heard my story, and sat up all night with a pistol before him on the kitchen-table and a naked claymore across his knees.

CHAPTER II

I DRIVE HOME A STRANGE COW

By first daylight my father's alarm passed away. The Spaniard had not troubled us. After questioning me again about my adventure, he scratched his head and presently began to laugh.

"And to think I will have been sitting through the night waiting for a bogey," said he. "I will be thinking maybe this Don John of the lad's is but a human chiel, after all. Forbye, Rorie should be driving in the kye."

"Man, Angus," said my mother nervously, "would it be seemly to send the lad out of a morning when there may be a Spaniard waiting for him?"

"No," said my father, "but the blackamoor would not slay the lad in daylight after letting him be in the dark."

In the end, but not without further protest, my mother let me go for the kye. It was a fine summer morning, although the sun was not up yet. I was a bit sleepy after sitting up late, and perhaps my eyes were not as wide open as usual when I crossed the burn, let down the bars of the wee pasture, and called to the cows that were lying among

the wet buttercups. Anyway, I had not called twice before I saw a cow that was coming toward the gate jump to one side. It then turned back and sniffed at something in the grass, the while it whisked its tail excitedly. In another moment a man's head and shoulders appeared above the long grass. And there was my Spaniard of the night before!

He did not see me at first, being too busy rubbing his eyes, stretching his arms, running his hands through his tousled black hair, and yawning. And, indeed, he looked as if he had not slept long enough.

I did not know whether to run or not; but, remembering his kindly manners of the night before, curiosity took hold of me. I called the kye again.

The Spaniard looked quickly in my direction. Then I was sure it was Don John. He had the same want face, and the same devil-take-me air, and when his eyes fell on me he smiled with great good-nature. He called out—in Spanish, I suppose; then, remembering where he was, he said in English:

“Good morning, little man.”

“It's a braw day,” I said bravely and in my bravest Sassenach.

“Ay, sir,” said he, wagging his head, “but a sad one.”

He got to his feet and came toward me, wiping the hay-wisps from his hose and velvet doublet. This last was slashed with some silvery stuff. He

still had no bonnet, but his long sword was sheathed and swung at his side. He looked handsomer than on the night before, and the expression of weariness that paled his face did not reach to his laughing black eyes and his good-natured mouth, which was half hidden by a short black moustache. His beard was the smallest I ever saw on a man's face; it was like as if a hairy beetle had lit on his chin and nestled beneath his under lip.

He came to a standstill a few yards from me and surveyed my bare legs, tattered kilt, and frowsy hair. I seemed to be a strange sort of beast, to judge by the amusement on his face. I gave back look for look, and said:

“Hoo's a' wi' ye?”

At that he put his hands to his sides and laughed uproariously; but suddenly clapping his palms to his temples, he gave a groan.

“And what may be your name, little man?” he presently asked, in English that was clear enough for me to understand.

“Rorie,” I said, “ye will be Don John yersel'? I mind meetin' ye last nicht.”

“Last night!” said he, looking a bit startled. But his face presently took on a quizzical look. “Well, Rorie,” said he, “I am your prisoner.”

I did not quite understand this until he explained at some length that it was a custom to fight and win, or to escape, or to surrender. As he believed there was little sense in fighting any more for the

present, and no way to escape without starvation, he thought surrender was the next best thing. So saying, he unbuckled his long, thin sword and laughingly handed it to me. I hesitated, but decided to take it for good faith.

"And now, Rorie," said he, "I am very hungry, and might have killed and eaten one of your cows if I had awakened before you. Your prisoner would like something to eat; and if there is a stream hereabout, I would like to see it, for, certes, my head aches."

I told him there was a burn; and he helped me drive the cows to it, for you will remember that we had to cross it to get to the farmhouse. When we came to the stream, he knelt down among the stones and drank enough to satisfy a cow, after which he put his head in the pool and said it was grand! Between ducks he took a horn from his belt and said:

"Rorie, if you love me, milk me a cow."

He said it so simply and anxiously that I had not the heart to refuse, although the kye should have been in the byre by this. I said as much to my Spaniard, but he assured me, saying:

"Just tell them you met Don John," as if that name was an excuse for anything under the sun.

Now, my father, observing that I was long away, left the house in a hurry to find out what had become of me. Presently he came splashing into the burn.

"Heaven forgive us!" he cried, too astonished

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at what he saw to be angry. "And what may this be?"

Looking back at it now, I think it must have been an odd picture. There were the cows wandering about the burn, and Don John sitting on a rock squeezing the water out of his hair and whistling a queer but, to me, familiar tune,* while I sat on



my hunkers under a cow, busy milking into a horn, and with Don John's sword tucked under my left arm.

Don John stopped whistling. His hair was as straggly as a crow's nest as he stood up before my father. My father looked at him, and then at me. He was a slow-thinking man, but not suspicious. Kind at heart and generous of mind, his judgments were not hasty.

"I would be troublin' ye, sirrah," he said to Don John, mustering his English; "I would be troublin' ye to say wha ye are, whaur ye come frae, an' what ye may be doin' here?"

Don John replied with that lofty air of his which

* Don John's Lilt.

was never quite free, somehow, from a touch of banter:

"My name is Don John, of Murcia, in Spain, and, as I hope to prove, a gentleman, if an unfortunate one. I am here, by your leave and the generosity of this lad, a prisoner of war."

"Wha's preesoner?" asked my father.

"Rorie's," was the answer, with perfect gravity.

My father, still dumfounded, looked at Don John, then at me, and finally at the sword tucked under my arm.

"I take it," said he at last, "ye're frae the Spanish ship that burnt up last nicht. Neevertheless, an' ye conseeder yersel' a preesoner t' a bit lad wham ye could ha' slain an' ye willed, it's not in my heart to be anger't. But for that —" My father stopped all at once and looked as if a momentous thought had occurred. "Hae ye had yer parritch yet?" he inquired anxiously.

Don John smiled, bowed, and said he had not; whereupon my father, without another word, helped me get the scattered kye together and on the road to the byre. Out of the corner of my eye I saw my prisoner swallow the horn of warm milk with smacks of appreciation that made me like him the better.

When we were nearing the house, Don John looked curiously at my father, and said:

"Indeed, you are good to the enemy."

“Hech, ay,” said my father, his eyes twinkling as they rested on me and the sword. “When an enemy mak’s ye laugh in spite o’ yersel’, it’s hard t’ be serious wi’ yer enemy. Forbye, ye’re no enemy o’ mine that I ken o’. . . . But I’m gey sorry for ye.”

“And why?”

“Weel,” said my father uneasily, “the laird’s a hard man, an’ it’s yon ye will hae the dealin’ wi’.”

“Ah!” said Don John, and that pale shadow of weariness returned to his face.

But it was not there long. Presently he began to whistle his lilt, and when we came to the yard, and Cæsar, our collie, smelt a stranger, Don John just said a word or two in a strange tongue, and Cæsar’s ears stood erect. Next minute the old dog and the Spaniard were as friendly as bees and but-tercups. And when we came into the farm kitchen and my father said to my mother, “Rorie has brought home a strange cow,” she just looked into Don John’s face for a moment or two, then said quietly:

“Will ye hae a sup o’ meat, my lord?”

In that moment I knew, whatever his faults might be, Don John was a good man as women judge.

My mother bustled around and set out her best on the scoured board. There was a bowl of porridge and a bowl of hot milk, and there were hot scones and fresh and kept butter. And for some

reason not then clear to my young mind, Don John's eyes filled with sudden tears when my mother said:

"It may not be what ye will be used to, my lord, but wad ye hae an oat-cake?"

He caught my mother's hand and bent to kiss it; but she pulled it away and ran into the byre with a braw blush on her face, for this way of showing gratitude is a thing our people are not used to. But Don John looked very grave, and presently he said to me:

"Rorie, will you tell Mistress Maclean that I hope I have done no offense, for I swear I would like that oat-cake."

That completely won my mother. She sent in two or three bannocks, for she was busy in the byre, milking; and while Don John and I were eating them with butter and honey, he asked me about the laird.

"I would rayther ye asked o' fayther," I said. He seemed to catch my meaning, for he went on:

"Did any of my friends come ashore — alive?"

"Ay," was all I could say, for my mouth was full.

"What has become of them?"

Now, how could I say "hangit" to a man like Don John? So I ventured no answer and crammed my mouth full of oat-cake until my face must have been braw and red. At that my prisoner sighed; but in a little while he leaned back, satisfied with his meat, and began to hum his tune. By and by my

father came in from the byre with the milk-pails and said:

"Hay, Rorie, ye would best be gone. Y'are late, lad, and the laird will not be a patient man."

Don John stopped humming and looked, first at me, then at my father.

"It's as ye please," said my father — rather sadly; "but ye canna bide here long. If ye care t' gang as ye came, it will no be me or Rorie that's seen ye awa', but an ye stop, the laird will chairge me wi' shieldin' an enemy o' the land."

"I am at your command," said Don John.

"It's as pleases yersel', but the laird'll find ye her aboot sooner than thereaboot. It's go the road ye cam' or face the laird in his cas'le."

"So be it," said Don John, bracing his shoulders as he stood up. "And the sooner the better."

"He hangit yer freends," said my father, in a tone that neither commended nor condemned the act. No fear crossed Don John's face, only a momentary look of great sadness. Then his eyes flashed and he smiled.

"We shall see if he hang me," he said.

"So be it," said my father. He turned to my mother, who had entered after him and said: "Bring a dram, Maggie."

As Don John lifted his cup he said:

"Be it a short memory, or a long one, I shall not forget."

The two men drank. My mother wiped away a

tear, and presently Don John and I were on the road to the castle. His sword swung at his side, for it was not in my heart to keep it from such a fine gentleman; forbye, as he said after I had given it to him, it might have looked to the laird as if he angled mercy through a child.

When we came to the point of the clachan road where it branched off to the left, Don John came to a halt and looked at the bay. There lay all that was left of La Trinidad — as he said the Spanish ship had been called — a ribbed thing like a great bird-cleaned fish, but charred to blackness. Scores of men from the clachan — and women, too — were prowling along the beach, rifling the dead. In the big elms at the beginning of the castle wood, the sunlight glowed upon seven or eight corpses that dangled and tossed in the southwest breeze. Don John sighed, crossed himself, and stood for a while in silence. I think he was praying.

“A sad, sad night, Roric,” said he, huskily, after a while.

He passed a hand over his eyes as we turned into the woods, and presently he whistled softly; but I think his heart was not back of his lilting air, or else he piped to brace himself for the laird.

As we rounded a turn of the path, we came upon Mistress Mary, who was walking toward us with her chin low and her hands clasped before her. I had never seen her look so bonny as on this morning. Although seeming sad, the sun glossed her

brown hair, and the breeze played with the white feather in her highland bonnet. Her arms were bare, and lay, white and shapely, against the plaid skirt that scarce reached her ankles. Her bosom seemed merely to be enfolded in some white stuff that was brought together between her breasts by a silver brooch, which also held a bit of fresh heather.

Don John stopped as if he beheld a wraith. And, certes, she was like some spirit of the summer moors, flushed with the pride and beauty of Scotland, and as lovely in grand simplicity. Full of life as a happy burn in spring, she still minded one of the placid lake where the currents move unseen. As a man I write of a vivid memory of her.

She became aware of us when she was still a little way off. I say "us," but I think her eyes saw only Don John, and into them leapt a look of sorrow and fear. Her first words showed that the fear was for him.

"Ah, sirrah!" she cried; "if ye love life—hide!"

Don John said nothing—only looked at the bonny woman before him with wondering admiration.

"Rorie," said Mistress Mary to me, "has he no got the Sassenach tongue?"

Whether Don John's tongue could be called Sassenach, he promptly found it.

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"Ay, lady," said he, and his hand reached to his head for the bonnet that was not there. He coloured up at that, and Mistress Mary, seeing what was wrong, laughed a wee. And then Don John laughed, too.

"But ye must go," said Mistress Mary. "Has Rorie told ye?"

"I aye," said Don John, "I have come to surrender as prisoner of war. Surely I have nothing to fear but the humiliation."

Mistress Mary turned white, and her fingers clasped and unclasped in her distress.

"Oh, will ye no understand?" she cried. "This is no your country, nor yet England. This is the Hielan's, and the Hielan' ways are hard."

"I understand," said Don John slowly; "but what else can I do? This is a far shore from my own. Would you have me like a savage, living on what I may steal, or accepting food and shelter from those who, by their acts, may incur their master's displeasure? There is but one way. I go to surrender myself, come what may of it."

"But ye canna see the laird," said Mistress Mary, as a subterfuge. "He is abed wi' pains."

"Then must I offer you my sword," said Don John with a most gallant smile. "War has brought sweet misfortune."

Mistress Mary went very red in the face.

"If't could be my right to take it," she said with

some confusion, "ye wad fare better." Then, remembering the gravity of his position, she cried: "Oh, will ye no heed and go back?"

"Nay; but I thank you," said he, softly. "I cannot go back — now."

"Rorie!" and, in her agitation, Mistress Mary found herself appealing to a lad of eight summers, "will ye no tell him to go?"

"Mistress Mary," I said, "he will no tak' heed, even o' the hangin'." I admired Don John's purpose much, but it was pleasant to take the side of so sweet a lady as my kinswoman.

"Indeed," said Don John, smiling, "the Scots are a generous people. I offered this lad my sword, and he gave it back to me; his father drank my health, and his mother fed me with oat-cakes and honey. And now, my lady, you entreat me to safety. Is there none in Scotland to accept my sword? Or is it unworthy the honour?"

Mistress Mary stepped to one side of the path and said angrily:

"Weel, gang yer ain gait!"

Don John moved on, and I followed after; but Mistress Mary caught my arm and whispered:

"Oh, Rorie! Rorie! Dinna let them kill him. Dinna —" Then she remembered my age, I suppose, and she cried after Don John despairingly:

"Come back! Oh, come back! Ye'll hang in an hour."

"Thank you, Mistress Mary," said Don John.

"If you will remain here, I shall return in an hour."

At that, Mistress Mary lost all patience and stamped her foot. But I saw big tears in her eyes, and that she liked Don John as much as I did. The last I saw of her she was standing on the path with her back to us.

We came to the front door of the castle, and Don John knocked with the hilt of his sword. Big Aundra opened the door, and when he saw the Spaniard he was like to drop in a fit. But the sight of me in the rear brought back his sense of reality, and he demanded to know Don John's business.

"Here's another one, Rorie!" laughed Don John. "How difficult it is to be hanged."

"Hangin', is't?" said Big Aundra, who only half understood English. "Ye'll hang, shair eneuch!"

"Thank you," said Don John; and, much to Big Aundra's amazement, he stepped into the hall. "You come, too, Rorie," he added.

I set down the milk-pails at the door and followed Don John and the astonished Aundra, who seemed to have collapsed under a new thought. What it was I did not understand at the moment, but the man's face had turned as white as if he had seen a ghost.

"To the laird," said Don John.

Big Aundra, now as docile as a lambkin, led us up a flight of stairs to the upper story of the castle. Presently he stepped before a big oak door. From behind it came subdued groans, mingled with an

occasional curse in Gaelic. Aundra pointed to it. Don John knocked with his sword hilt, and a voice roared in answer:

"Come in, ye gommeril!"

Don John pushed open the door and stepped inside, with me and Big Aundra close on his heels. Before Aundra or I could see what happened, the laird, who was lying in bed with the pains, gave a fearsome skreigh and cried:

"Aundra! Aundra! A ghaist! A blackamoor! A ghaist!"

Aundra, instead of coming to his master's assistance, took to his heels. I could hear his great bauchles slapping on the wooden stairs, and presently there was a wild gabbling among the superstitious Hieland vassals.

As for the laird, he was doubled up in bed with his plaid wrapped over his heid, and he was moaning. Don John looked at him in pitying amazement: then he chuckled.

"My lord," said he, quietly.

The moaning ceased, and presently Black Jamie's shock of hair, and then his face, gray as rain-mist, came out of the plaid. His look of horror changed to amazement and anger.

"Oho!" he chuckled. "So ye will be a real blackamoor. Eh-hay?"

"What makes you think I came down from a tree?" asked Don John.

"In the name o' Heeven, wha' be ye?" cried

Black Jamie, unconsciously dropping into English, which should have told him that it was no ghost that had addressed him. "Are ye man or deevil?"

"A man," said Don John contemptuously. "Sit up, my lord, or I may think you are not."

Black Jamie sat up in a rage.

"If A'm no a man," he snarled, "A may be a deevil, Maister Blackamoor, as ye may find."

I saw Don John's face darken and heard his breath sough through his nose. But I nudged him, and he calmed down.

"I am here, my lord, to claim the courtesies of war and of equal rank — at least."

"Eh-hay? Toot!" said the laird, his manner visibly changing. "An wha may you be?"

"Don John of Murcia. I offer surrender. I would offer you my sword, but the lad claims that."

"Hay, Rorie, is it yourself?" said the laird in Gaelic, noticing me for the first time. "And what will ye have to say, Rerie?"

So I told my story, not forgetting Don John's mercy to me. As I spoke of it, Don John became uneasy. The laird's mouth curled in a sneer.

"Eh-hay? He thocht t' clip favor by sparin' the bit lad, eh-hay?"

Then Don John broke out in wild wrath. His long, thin sword leaped from its sheath. He pitched it in the air and caught the blade half-way between the handle and the point.

"Sirrah!" he cried. "I will offer you my sword. Will you take the hilt or the point?"

The laird's fierce orbs never quailed, but his gray, beetling eyebrows seemed to bristle a wee. He calmly reached out a hand.

"I will be takkin' the haun'le, thankee," said he.

Don John hesitated before the great gnarled hand that had strung seven of his companions on the dule-tree. Then, with the movement of a man who knows it is the last cast of the die, he surrendered the blade. The laird's eyes gleamed.

"Ay, ay," said he, bending the blade on the floor. "It's a bonny weep, but doesna bear the mark o' much use."

Don John's teeth snapped together. The laird looked curiously at him. The two men fought a battle of proud staring.

"Y'are a brave man," said the laird finally. The Spaniard's face flushed. "Hoo did yon ship come here?"

"La Trinidad was of the Invincible Armada," said the prisoner mechanically. "Your brave sailors defeated us in the English Channel. We, cut off, attempted to return to Spain through what you call the Pentland Firth. We were marked for disaster from the first, and when we rounded Cape Wrath our troubles were only beginning."

Don John's face clouded.

"We were overtaken by a terrible storm. Day after day our galleon met tremendous seas upon a

broken coast. Many of our sailors had been landmen up to that time. The slaves mutinied at the oars, and our vessel was filled with sick and wounded. Food ran short, but there was wine. We did not touch it until we rounded a stormy point and found ourselves in a great, calm channel. Fearing to face the open sea in our weakened condition, we determined to follow the channel and surrender. The slaves were put to the oars with promises of drink. The food, such as was left, was rotten, but we drank. We were defeated men," Don John added, with a flush of shame. "We were voluntarily seeking mercy of our enemies. We held a bitter carousal from which we were awakened by the fire and, I think, the grounding of the galleon. When all was lost, I leaped overboard and swam ashore."

The laird listened to this terse, simple narrative with glowing eyes.

"An' ye were beaten by Howard, eh?" he presently cackled. "Ye will not ken that my son, Airchibald, was wi' Howard, eh? Mebbe," and the laird grinned sourly, "mebbe the Black has gied ye a bellyfu' already. Ooch, ay, we'll no hang ye — My son, Airchibald, micht like a crack wi' ye when he comes hame frae the wars. He'll be for tellin' ye hoo he din it, an' ye'll be for tellin' him hoo it felt. Eh-hay?"

And the laird chuckled hugely at his own cruel jest. He went on jeeringly:

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“What say ye, Rorie? We’ll no hang him? Mebbe yer faither, lad, could gie him a bit wark, mulkin’ coos, maybe, or howkin’ dung. Ay, we’ll no hang him till Airchibald comes hame, so’s he’ll be at the hangin’.

“Here’s yer preen,” he added contemptuously, returning Don John his poor sword. “Gang an’ howk dung wi’t. It’s a’ it’s guid for i”

CHAPTER III

CONCERNING LOVE, CHIMNEYS, AND A CAT

Mistress Mary laughed through her tears when she saw Don John and me come back through the woods. To her mind, I suppose, my Spaniard had escaped unscathed, but Don John's eyes burned like two fierce sunsets. He did not look at Mistress Mary until she barred his path with a hand outstretched in welcome.

"I am that glad," she said, trying to hide that she was crying. He bent over the hand and kissed it. Like my mother, she blushed in a startled way.

"Mistress Mary," said he, a gloaming coming over the tempest of his face, "your father hanged me ten times, but"—and he looked right into her bonny eyes—"it was worth it, still to be alive and breathing the same air with yourself."

I forget what Mistress Mary said to that. Anyhow, as Don John seemed to be in no hurry, I left the two of them there, talking among the trees on that fine autumn morning. I, of course, hurried home with the good news, for indeed it delighted me that I was to have more of Don John's company this side of the grave.

Hours later, my Spaniard came back to the farm.

His poor sword was dancing at his side as he came along, his eyes were bright, and his favourite tune was upon his lips. It was clear to us all at the farm that he was quite happy.

That was the beginning of Don John's love-affair, for I may as well come to the meat of my story. Many a morning and evening after that, as I carried my milk-pails to the castle, I would meet Mistress Mary and Don John walking together. And it was not difficult to guess what was in their hearts. The folks of the clachan kened fine how the wind blew, and for some reason — probably fear, or perhaps it was sympathy — none of them had the heart to tell the laird. That was a good thing; for, knowing how Black Jamie regarded a blackamoor, and having heard from Daft Leezie that Mistress Mary was promised Ronald Macdonald, chieftain of the Kyles, I fancied there would be thunder brewing when the truth came out.

This Daft Leezie, I may tell you, lived in a little cottage in the woods, back of the castle. She was a queer body, maybe fifty years old, but she had been what we call an "auld wife" as long as I could remember. When she was younger, they said, she nursed Black Jamie's bairns; but by and by she became decrepit, and had strange notions. Some said she had the second sight, and for this reason none would lay hands on her, although it was suspected that she was in league with the black devil.

Of all this I am no judge; much less was I then.

But one incident at the time impressed itself on my memory. Don John's principal handiness around the farmhouse was in weeding the garden, which had been allowed to fall into ruin. In spite of the dockans and dandelions that covered the plot, it was all abloom with roses and other flowers. Don John took much pride in the weeding and trimming and the cutting of the walks.

He would take the cart and horse and drive down to the shore for gravel to spread on the paths, and it was after one of those trips that Daft Leezie learned of the love-making. He was long away, and when he came back the horse was moving sleepily up the road, with the reins hanging loose, and there were Don John and Mistress Mary sitting together on the front of the cart. He was talking to her very earnestly, and every now and then the horse would come to a standstill and take a mouthful of grass from the ditch-side. Then Mistress Mary would protest, and Don John would whip up the horse. The animal would keep going for a while; but it was amusing to watch it eyeing the dockans and finally coming to a standstill, while the driver made love to the lady.

Of course, I had seen them together often, but I never thought much about the matter until then. They looked a bonny and likely couple, as the saying is. When Don John backed up his cart of gravel to the garden-gate, he helped Mistress Mary down as if she was the queen getting out of her golden

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coach, and showed her the way among the roses.

It was not my affair, of course, and I had other things to do; but when I was passing, a while later, I saw Mistress Mary fixing a rose in his doublet, and his face was just a wee bit from her brown hair, for, you see, he was holding her bonnet.

They must still have been in the garden when I went in to have my dinner, for the door suddenly opened and in wachled Daft Leezie, with her eyes shut and her skinny hands out in front of her.

"Mistress Maclean! Mistress Maclean!" she yammered excitedly. "Wha's yon in the garden with Mistress Mary?"

My mother, who was just pouring out the broth, told her it was Don John, and began to relate his history, as far as we knew it. But Daft Leezie gave a skreigh and lifted her hand — still with her eyes shut.

"I ken! I ken fine!" she cried. "Yon's her lad. I can see it in her eyes. War — murder — blood — and waur! Hear the skirl of the pibroch. They're feasting, and there's candles — candles everywhere — corpse candles! Skirl, pibroch! See! They're drawing the sword. Porie!" she suddenly screamed. "Rorie Maclean! Ye betrayed the Campbells for a heathen lassie!"

With that, Daft Leezie looked around her as if she had just awakened.

"It's a bonny day, Mistress Maclean," she said, curtsying and taking a stool.

"Leezie," said my mother, and I could see she was frightened, "ye must not be talking such havers."

"Havers! Havers?" cried Daft Leezie. "I will not have said a word sin' a set down." She suddenly peered up the chimney, and added, in a queer, frightened way: "Mistress Maclean, are ye no feared of the lum *?"

"And why should I be feared of a lum, Leezie?" said my mother with a smile, for she knew the poor woman's crazy idea.

"A lum's a fearful thing, Mistress Maclean," said the woman in that pathetic monotone which I have noticed in daft people; "a fearful thing to them that hears the voices. A lum's full of wraiths; and of a cold winter night, they come fighting one another to get in where it's warm. Have ye never hear them girning and skreighing? And then the soot comes tumbling, and spatters in the fire."

"But it is just the wind, Leezie," said my mother nervously.

"Havers!" snorted Daft Leezie. "Wind! Wind is what they ride on. I ha' seen them with my own eyes. It is a man that comes on the north wind, and his face is the face of the dead, and his breath falls down the lum in lumps of snow, and his hair's wet and frozen. And it is a woman who

* Chimney.

rides out of the west — a jealous wench, girning and greetin' and battering the doors and window-panes.

"But it's a mad wench that comes out of the east," the crazy creature continued, her voice taking on a kind of chanting tone; "and her hair is blown wild, and she yammers in the woods and beats the loch till it's white as herself, poor wraith — ower crazed to have a tear to shed. A dry sorrow — a gray woman."

"And what will she be that comes out of the south?" I asked.

"S-s-s-h!" warned my mother. But Daft Leezie suddenly closed her eyes again.

"The sooth!" she cried. "A bonny wraith, burning with love, but tricky — tricky! Forgiving — ay, but here one day and there the morrow — bonny, smiling, weeping, and hurting." She suddenly jumped to her feet and waved her staff in the air. "That's her!" she yelled. "The heathen lassie — Blood! — murder! — war!"

She ran through the door into the sunshine and along the road toward the castle woods, crying:

"Baldy Macnab! Baldy Macnab!"

At that time I did not know who Baldy Macnab was, but I have since learned that he was Daft Leezie's lover, and that he was hanged by the MacDonalds in a cattle-raid. Leezie was never quite right in her head after it.

In the meantime Don John, having taken a long

time to say good-bye to Mistress Mary, came in for his broth. He was very merry.

"And what was the old hag crying about, Rorie?" he asked.

I could not very well tell him, seeing that I did not understand Daft Leezie's raving. But I said:

"She's feared o' lums."

"Say that over again, Rorie," said Don John, his eyes twinkling.

I explained that a lum was a chimney, whereat Don John laughed until his face was red.

"She's feared o' lums!" he mimicked, the tears running down his cheeks.

But I meant this chapter to deal with Mistress Mary's love-affair, which was becoming common gossip. I wondered how soon it would be before the laird heard of it, and what would happen then. It turned out that a more important personage in the business heard about it first. This was the chieftain of the Kyles, to whom Mistress Mary was promised. And here again a lum comes in.

A few days after Daft Leezie's visit, Don John was finishing his porridge when he looked across the table at me and winked. Presently he whispered that I must meet him in the booth. The booth, I must tell you, was the big house where the corn was thrashed and stored. It stood off at right angles to the farmhouse. Joining the other end of the booth were the stables and the byre, running parallel with the house, so that our farm-buildings

formed three sides of a square, with a big tree and a dung-heap in the middle. Behind the booth were the water-mill and the burn.

After porridge I found Don John in the booth. He was standing over a dead cat, and the mischievous light in his eyes made him look like an overgrown lad.

"Rorie," said he, "what do you do with a cat like that?"

"Bury it," I replied promptly.

"Rorie," said he solemnly, "it is unlucky to bury a cat."

"Then, what would ye be for doing with it?" I asked.

"Rorie," he whispered gleefully, "we'll lower it down Daft Leezie's l—lum!"

He fairly choked over the word. I found myself crying with laughter over Don John's suggestion. It seemed exquisitely funny—the glowing fire, the yawning black chimney, and the slow entrance of a waving, hairy apparition. We lay down on the unthrashed corn and laughed until we were exhausted.

Then my Spaniard grew solemn all at once, and so did I. It seemed like the same thought had struck us both. We saw poor Daft Leezie's face grow gray with horror. Then she gave a frightened whimper and began to pray, and before I could stop myself I blurted out to Don John:

"Na, we'll no. It wadna be fair!"

My grown companion looked at me and nodded his head once or twice.

"Na," said he, imitating me, "it wadna be fair."

Of course, we were both disappointed in a way, but Don John's eyes began to twinkle again. All at once he jumped up and swung the cat in the air.

"Rorie!" he cried, "we'll put it down the *laird's* lum!"

Knowing how afraid of a ghost that conscience-stricken murderer was, Don John and I had another fit of laughter, after which we sat down to plan how we were to get on the castle roof. For a reason which will soon appear, there is no need wasting words over the plan.

After dark we left the farmhouse and started for the castle. Don John had a long rope, while I had the cat tucked under my arm. My Spaniard was in high spirits, partly because Mistress Mary had spent two hours in the rose-garden that afternoon and partly at the prospect of frightening Mistress Mary's father.

"Rorie," he chuckled, "we'll lower it until we hear him bellow for Big Aundra. Then we'll pull it up until all is quiet again, when we'll give Black Jamie another sight of it."

He began to laugh softly, but suddenly stopped and laid a hand on my arm.

"What's this, Rorie?" he asked, drawing me into the shadow of a tree.

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To our ears came the rhythmic clatter of shod horses. Presently several riders loomed out of the darkness, led by an enormous man whom I immediately recognized.

"It's Ronald Macdonald, chieftain of the Kyles," I whispered.

Don John gave a kind of start and drew me and himself into the ditch until the horsemen were well past. Then he got up and peered after them.

"Does this road lead beyond the farm?" he asked quickly.

When I told him it did not, he said:

"Yon men are after me, lad."

"Fine I ken that," I said.

"And how did you ken that?" asked Don John, laying a kindly hand on my shoulder. I wriggled, for I was unable to answer his question.

"Is she not a bonny lady, Rorie?" he asked softly.

"Ay."

"And far too good for a poor blackamoor, Rorie?"

I made no answer to that, but he caught the hair at the back of my head and gave it a pull.

"Well, let's return to the farm," he said, half sadly.

"Are ye not going to put the cat down the laird's lum?" I asked, surprised.

"No, Rorie." And there was a sternness in his

voice. "It is ill-mannered to be absent, knowingly, when guests arrive."

With that we started back to the farmhouse. Instead of going by the road we crossed the Long Pasture and surveyed the situation through a break in the hedge. There was a fine uproar in the yard. My father was standing in the doorway with a tallow-dip in his hand. The flame, blown fitfully by the breeze, showed my mother's startled face over his shoulder.

"For why do you want the man, Macdonald?" my father was asking.

"That's business of mine!" roared the chieftain of the Kyles. "Where is he?"

"I tell ye he is not in my house," said my father angrily.

"Have a care, Angus Maclean," snarled the Macdonald. "It has been you and that woman of yours —"

"Hold your tongue!" my father shouted.

"Hold your own!" bellowed the chieftain. "Fine you will know the goings and comings between yon blackamoor and Mistress Mary. Not that I care but to hang the heathen devil, for she is naught but a —"

As he had been speaking Don John had been breathing hard and loosening his sword. As the last words fell from the Macdonald's foul mouth, my Spaniard tossed the coil of rope to me and

leaped through the break in the hedge, into the semicircle of light.

“The heathen blackamoor — Don John of Murcia!” he cried, saluting the Macdonald with his blade. “Chieftain of the Kyles, come off that horse.”

There was silence during a long breath; then Ronald Macdonald let his rage and his tongue loose.

“Seize the blackamoor!” he screamed. “Seize him! Hang him!”

The Spaniard’s long thin sword hissed through the air like a sapling.

“Stand where you are, men!” he cried. To the Macdonald he continued, with angry dignity:

“My lord, ask yourself if your conduct would meet the approval or admiration of the lady whose favour to me has stirred your brute rage? If you are a man of worth, will you honour me and the lady by fighting your own battles?”

Don John’s quiet, scathing manner only served to increase the Macdonald’s rage. He bellowed incoherently to his men, two or three of whom leaped upon the Spaniard. Before I could see how it happened, one of the men staggered back with a gurgling cry and his hands to his throat, and Don John was engaging the second. This duel was not prolonged. My Spaniard’s blade twirled like a switch and down went the second man, groaning terribly. The third man hesitated about engaging so clever

a swordsman and hung back. At that the Macdonald uttered a horrible imprecation, scrambled from his horse, and drew his claymore. He bore down upon Don John, swinging the great two-handed sword and roaring.

"Drop your weapon!" he cried in Gaelic, "for I mean to hang ye!"

Don John, of course, did not understand the Gaelic. He leaped to one side. The claymore whizzed past his head and rose again with greater fury impelling it.

I could see that Don John held little chance against that long, blazing weapon. His light blade would have been shivered to atoms beneath it. I was beside myself with terror for my friend and, hardly knowing what I did, flung the cat with all my strength at the chieftain of the Kyles.

In another moment Don John was at my side and we were running across the Long Pasture as fast as we could go. But I had seen a cat impaled on a claymore and a number of men staring at the phenomenon, all petrified with amazement and superstitious terror. And, as we ran, there came to our ears a sound like the bellowing of a frightened cow.

Don John panted along at my side with his hand on my shoulder. I thought he was exhausted, for as we crossed the road and splashed into the burn, he stumbled and fell. But he was up again and we

kept on running until we reached the dark shelter of the woods on the Loch Striven side of the peninsula.

Sitting under the trees, we gradually regained our breath. Then Don John felt for my head and patted it.

"The cat," he said — or rather, gasped, "the cat was — useful!"

I began to laugh silently at the thought of the cat landing so neatly on the Macdonald's sword-point.

We remained in the woods for a while, listening for sounds of pursuit; but we heard none. Indeed, Ronald Macdonald must have had his bellyful of shame for that night.

"Rorie," said Don John, "how old are you?"

"Eight," I answered, adding, proudly, "rising nine."

"Strange," said he. "You have saved me at every turn. But the end is near, I fear me."

"For whey?" I asked.

"I cannot return to the farmhouse, for I am an outlaw. I have killed at least one man, and even if I had not done so, the truth is out."

"Ye'll be meaning Mistress Mary?"

"Ay, you rogue," said he, feeling in the darkness for my ear, and pulling it.

"Is she yer lass?" I said, feeling that the score of years between us had gone astray in the darkness.



A cat impaled on a claymore and a number of men
staring at the phenomenon



He did not answer for a bit; then he said:

"Ay, that's it, Rorie. She's my lass — poor lass. And I'm her lad — poor lad."

This was too much for my boy's understanding of the world.

"Why does the Macdonald want to kill ye?" I asked presently. "Mistress Mary likes you best. A gommeril could see that. Can he no get anither lass?"

He laughed — sadly — and patted my head.

"After all, Rorie," said he, "you are just eight — rising nine."

"It'll be time to gang hame," I said.

"Hame?" he echoed bitterly. "There is no hame for Don John, Rorie, lad, except the woods and the moors — and winter drawing on."

He explained how impossible it was for him to endanger my father's name and peace of mind by accepting further hospitality.

"The best you can do for me, Rorie," he said, "is to find me some rabbit-hole where I can lie safe until the war is over, or I can get back to Spain."

"That will be very easy," I said, for I had in mind a thing that had been my playground for two summers. "Ye'll live in my cave."

"What!" he cried. "A cave?"

"Ay. It's no big, but it's a grand cave."

"Rorie, Rorie!" he cried, laughing. "What a lad you are."

Now that I think on it, I know that Don John spoke the simple truth. What boy is there, except he lives in a town, who has not a cave or a tree-house hidden away somewhere? And the more I think of another thing, too, the more I believe that the safest place for a man to hide is where a man is most known, for there he is aware of all the places where he himself would hide a friend in an emergency.

I told Don John all about my cave. It was just a hole in the bank of the burn, where the spring spates, coming on a bend of the stream, had whirled and burrowed into the earth, leaving a dry cavern when the burn was low. The mouth of it was hidden by brambles that trailed in the shallow pool, and the roof was a good two feet of fine, root-bound turf. The same waters that had burrowed this cave, year after year, had taken away the sustenance of a big oak, which had rotted and broken off about ten feet above the ground. The hollow trunk left standing thus admitted light and air, and let out smoke when I lit a fire in my cave, while it was too high for anybody to peep in without climbing up the tree-trunk — which was not an easy task for a boy, let alone a man.

This was my cave, and it will be readily understood, as Don John perceived, that once a man was hidden there, it must be a shrewd enemy who discovered him, unless the enemy was actually led

through the brambles, or told to climb the side of the trunk.

Although it was quite black in the woods, I had little difficulty in leading the way. We just retraced our steps to the burn, and then waded through the pools and scrambled over rocks until we came to the bend I have spoken of. We pushed aside the prickly brambles and got into the cave. Don John got out his flint and steel and tinder, and presently he had light enough to see that all was as I had promised.

I showed him a corner where I had strewn heather and dried brackens for a bed, and on this he declared he could very well sleep for the rest of his days. There were broken pots and pans, too, which my mother had given me for my playhouse in the woods, so that a man could make a meal, provided he had the food to cook.

Then, having taken so much responsibility upon me, I promised Don John that I would bring him his porridge in the morning. I warned him not to stir out until I brought him word.

"Rorie," said he, and there were tears in his eyes, "some day you will be rewarded for this."

So I left him that night, never imagining what and how sweet that reward would be when it came.

CHAPTER IV

THE MURDER OF BLACK JAMIE

I had been dreaming of fierce faces, angry voices and clashing weapons all night, and my visions were haunted by that suspense, fear, and excitement which leaves one more tired in the morning. Perhaps it was on account of this exhaustion and the nature of my dreams that I did not readily awake in the dawn when Big Aundra and a number of men from the castle and the clachan came shouting before our house, and pounding at our front door.

Indeed, it was only when I heard my father's voice crying, "Murdered!" that I awoke to find reality in the disturbance. As I slipped on my kilt I heard Aundra shouting loudly:

"Give us the Spaniard, or tell us where the black-amoor is. Ay, fine ye ken, Angus Maclean."

I heard my father answer quietly: "I kenna where the Spaniard is."

"Then, if ye will not deliver him, we must even break in the house!" cried Aundra.

"Ye'll not, I'm thinking," said my father, very calm.

"Shame on ye, Angus Maclean!" cried a number

of voices. As I reached my father's side in the doorway, Aundra went on:

"Ay, shame! Your kinsman, James Black, murdered in his own hall, and ye would hide the heathen devil."

I felt the blood stop flowing in my veins. Black Jamie murdered! I could see the great, hulking figure lying in the castle hall, and the dour, mist-gray face looking up at the dingy roof with dead eyes. Black Jamie murdered!

"Give us the Spaniard!" roared the Highlanders. "Ye are hiding the blackamoor."

So they accused Don John? He, I knew, could not have committed the crime. And they accused my father of hiding him. Before I knew what I was saying, I hurled a childish taunt in their teeth.

"Ay, he is hidden where ye will never find him."

My father started violently. At the same time Big Aundra caught me by the shoulder and, dragging me from my father's side, lifted me off my feet by the hair. I screamed with pain.

"What's this? Speak, ye whelp!"

But I was suddenly released, and I saw the blood of the Macleans darken my father's face. He caught Big Aundra by the throat and, with a snarl of rage and strength, bent his back over his knee.

"Ye coward!" he raved. "Ye would lay hands on my lad!"

When Big Aundra was nigh black in the face,

my father threw him on the ground and glared at the rest of the Campbells, as if in challenge. None moved, except Roderick Dow, who stepped forward and said:

"Angus, ye did the right, but if the boy kens where the Spaniard is, ye will gar him speak."

"I have told ye I kenna where Don John is," said my father sullenly. "And if my lad kens, it will be the first I have heard o't." Turning to me, he said: "Lad, do ye ken where the Spaniard is?"

It was a hard moment for me, but a harder one for my father. Lying was a refuge which he had taught me to scorn, and I could plainly see the pain in his eyes as he asked the question. He knew, from what I had said, that I knew Don John's secret. I looked from his face to the glaring eyes of the Highlanders, and at the uncouth Aundra, whose wrench was still shooting pins and needles through my scalp. In my rage it would have been easy to hurl a lie in their teeth, but rage found more satisfaction in answering:

"Ay, sir, I ken fine where he is, but I will not tell them, even if they pull my hair out by the root."

I have never regretted that speech, for I still remember the look of approval that flashed in my father's eyes. But pain succeeded it when Aundra struggled to his feet and said in cruel, sneering tones:

"Angus Maclean, your kinsman has been slain.

Yon lad is *your* son, and he hides the murderer. Will this day brand ye a traitor?"

My father's face turned white as a dead man's. He looked away over the pastures in the direction of the gloomy towers, beneath which his own brother-in-law lay dead.

"I cannot think Don John did this thing," said he, hoarsely.

"Will that be your answer, Angus Maclean?"

My father paid no heed. Still looking into the distance, he folded his arms and said over his shoulder:

"Did he kill him, Rorie?"

"Not him!" I asserted.

"Then," said my father, looking at Aundra and his men, "I cannot force my lad to give up an innocent man. There's my answer, Aundra."

The ominous silence that followed was broken by a faint but swelling clatter of horse-hoofs. It grew louder and nearer, and in a minute or two a great roan thundered into the farmyard, bearing Mistress Mary. She was pale, but her mouth was set in anger.

"Campbells!" she cried. "Go back. At whose command do ye seek Don John of Murcia? He is innocent. James Black, my father, was murdered at the stroke of twelve by Macdonald of the Kyles!"

"Mistress Mary!" gasped Big Aundra. "Do ye mind what ye say?"

"Ay, well I mind," said Mistress Mary. "Late in the night the Macdonald came to the castle. Ask the traitor who let him in. But the Macdonald slew my father in quarrel. There!" and she pointed a trembling finger over the Isle of Bute. "Take your vengeance there, Campbells of Kilellan!"

She remained upright on the great roan, her arm outstretched like some priestess commanding war. Not a man moved for a moment. Then a great sob burst from the breast of Aundra. He turned on his heel and strode toward the castle. His men followed, with their hairy fists clenched and sobs of rage shaking their erect heads. My father gave a great convulsive sigh and said:

"Now, God help the Macdonalds! A hundred years will not see the end of this." His eye fell on me, and he placed a hand on my head. "Bring in the kye, lad," he said, quietly.

As I turned to go, Mistress Mary became aware of my presence. Instantly a flush spread over her face.

"Rorie," she whispered. "Is he safe? Where is he? What is to do? Help me down."

"Ay, Mistress Mary," I said proudly, as she slipped from the saddle to the ground. "He is well and safe."

"Where is he? — whisper!"

She put her bonny face close to mine; and when I told her that Don John was in my cave, she suddenly gathered me in her arms and kissed me many

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times. I struggled to get away from the cause of much confusion, but she held me tight and said:

“Oh, Rorie, will you see him? Tell him —”

She suddenly stopped, and I mind how the blood suffused her face and bosom. But she only added coldly:

“Tell him what has happened, Rorie.”

That was all. I waited, for she fumbled with the bit of heather that nestled between her breasts. But she turned away and walked to the garden gate, followed obediently by the great roan.

That day the pipes were blown around the castle and in the clachan. They wailed a mournful coronach, too; but there was something menacing in those sounds of Highland grief. When a Campbell weeps, there is war!

I think Don John must have been forgotten quite; but my father drew me aside and warned me to be cautious.

“It is his coming that has wrought all this,” he said; “and they will syne mind it when their first rage is past.”

So that I did not dare carry Don John’s porridge that morning; but I chased one of the cows in the direction of hollow tree, and when quite sure that he knew I was somewhere about, I sang some words to a tune I made up:

“The Laird’s been kill’t by Macdonald;
They quarreled ower you and Mary.

Stay where ye are, and I'll tell ye
And bring ye some parritch at dark."

I sang this — or to this effect — several times, then chased the cow back over the burn. As I ran along, I thought I heard him calling me; but, thinking there might be spies abroad, I did not turn back. As soon as it was dark, however, I pushed my way through the brambles and entered the cave.

Don John did not rise to meet me. Beside a bit fire he lay on the heather bed. His face was flushed, I thought. He might have been asleep; but presently he moved, opened his eyes, and stretched out a weary arm.

"Rorie," he said; and when I remember the tiredness of his voice, the tears come to my eyes.

He was ill. He had to confess it. On his right side was a cruel stab which he had received in his battle with the Macdonald. I knew then why he had seemed so exhausted when he ran with me, and why he stumbled and fell in the burn.

I sat and talked with him for a long time, telling him of all that had passed. He seemed to understand, better than I did at the time, just what had happened at the castle.

"Poor Mistress Mary," he sighed. "They must have compelled her to that horrible scene."

I told about my meeting with her, and gave him her message.

"Was that all?" he asked.

I was not so young but that I understood a little.

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I teased him a while with false messages brimming with love; but when he saw that I was jesting, he seemed so cast down that I felt sorry and straight-way told him how she had kissed me and asked so many questions. I told him, too, how she fumbled with the heather, whereat he smiled and sighed. But he was not happy, I could see.

"Rorie," he said, after a long silence, "you must not tell her where the cave is. She must not come here."

I nodded my head.

"And you must not tell her I am hurt."

To this I made no reply. Presently he turned his head away, and I think he was trying to keep back the tears of sheer weakness.

"Oh, Rorie, lad," he said, "what misery I have brought upon you all. It might as well have been death at the beginning, for though I feel the presentiment of it now, there is so much that cannot be undone."

"Huh!" I protested. "He was a dour man that nobody liked."

"Not that, lad," said he, and became silent. Presently he sat up and laughed.

"Come, Rorie. This is very bad!" he cried. "It is nothing but a little fever. I would you were a leech, lad. When you see Mistress Mary, give her this."

He drew a golden ring from his finger and handed it to me. Had I been Mistress Mary herself, I

could not have felt happier to get this tender pledge. And I was to tell her that some day, when sorrow was no more, he would ask her for it.

When I left him he was quite cheerful and whistling his tune; but methought he was a bit too merry. His hand, when he shook mine, was very hot and dry. I determined to myself that I should tell Mistress Mary of his being ill, for it did not seem right that a man should die of overcaution.

As I came out of the woods and walked over the pasture to the house, I noticed a bonfire on one of the hills of the mainland beyond Bute. It shot up in the night like a fiery fist shaken in mockery and defiance. A few minutes later a flare burst out of the castle woods; and the Macdonalds must have been able to see the illumined turrets of the castle where the deed of war had been signed by a bloody hand. And a dozen pipers blew horror-laden promise of the speedy fulfilment of the law of Moses.

I entered the farm kitchen, and there was Daft Leezie sitting by the fire, weeping. My mother and father, with grave faces, sat near her.

"It will be as it will be," Daft Leezie moaned, rocking from side to side over the staff that she held with clasped, skinny hands under her chin. "War has come upon the land, and it will be the beginning of waur."

I sat down, frightened at the aspect of the old hag. Although I had not said a word to betray my

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presence, the daft woman spoke as if in answer to my thought.

"Ay, ay, Rorie. Is it as bad as that? Poor lad. I see't for myself — a cruel wound, and like to fester. What? Are ye a coward? Are ye afeard of an auld besom * that would cure your hurt? Lie quiet, lad — lie quiet!" Daft Leezie was on her feet and moving to the door. As she passed out, she mumbled: "It'll mend itself, but I will be gathering ye some leaves to drink. Are ye no Mistress Mary's lad, and was it no auld Leezie suckled her to the bosom? But are ye no afeard of the lum, lad? A lum in a mirk wood is a fearful thing — to them that hears the voices."

The yammering tongue died away, and the wachling footsteps were lost in the night. Even my father and mother looked frightened; but to me, who was able to follow every bit of the daft woman's vision, it was a thing of awful dread. Before I knew what I was doing, I had flung myself into my mother's arms and I was sobbing out my terror.

"God have mercy!" said my father. "It's uncanny." But in spite of his own agitation, he leaned forward and patted me as I lay in my mother's arms.

"Hech, ay, lad," he whispered assuringly, "she'll not mind a word of it in the morning."

* Besom — broom — Witch with the broom.

CHAPTER V

THE PASSING OF DON JOHN

Next day Black Jamie was buried in the castle woods. It was one of the most awe-inspiring sights of my life. The corpse, wrapped in a plaid, was carried shoulder high by six Highland giants. Before the body of the dead chief marched fifteen pipers in solemn step, to the slow dirge that wailed and droned through the forest. Behind came two hundred men, who wept, not out of love for the one they buried, but out of sheer savage joy in their misery of rage. And when the last spade of dirt was thrown upon the grave, the laird's claymore was stuck, point upward, at the head — a significant memorial and reminder.

Then Aundra, in the absence of Master Archibald, spoke to the Campbells. I was too far away to distinguish what he said, but when he had done, the Highlanders drew their claymores and raised them to the roof of trees, which presently trembled to a slogan of revenge. With that, the pipers broke into a different tune, and I mind the brave front they made as they marched back to the castle, their sporrans waving rhythmically from side to side, and their feet coming to earth in simultaneous thunder.

All that morning the pipes blared, and when noon came the Campbells of Kilellan embarked in great, flat-bottomed boats. At the bow of each a piper stood, and there were pipers in the stern of every boat. Amidships the grim warriors crowded, while some manned the oars, two men to each blade. Also, two men, standing in each stern, paddled a great steering oar. And so they sailed away in pursuit of Macdonald of the Kyles, not like assassins in the dark of the moon, but in the late autumn sunshine, with their slogan shrieking defiance.

No sooner were they gone, than I saw Mistress Mary leave the gloomy castle and take the path through the woods to the farmhouse. I followed her, for I had Don John's ring. Once she turned, and, having seen me, stopped and waited as if it was myself that she sought.

"Rorie," she said, "it's an ill wind that blows no good. Don John is safe until they return, and it may be days and weeks."

"Ay, Mistress Mary," I said, and I held out the ring.

Such a look as came over her face quite drove from my mind the pretty message I was to give with it. I tried to remember, but all I could say was:

"Don John sent it — for you."

She took the ring and, all ablush, slipped it on her third finger, which was even too slender to fill the circle of Don John's little finger.

"Thank you, Rorie," she said, "and — Rorie, is he well?"

"Na, Mistress Mary," I said. "He has been hurt."

"Rorie!" she gasped, turning very white. She tried to ask me more, but she seemed frightened, and she just whispered in a pitiful way: "Take me to him."

"But —" I began, remembering Don John's order. Circumstances had changed, however, and now there would have been little danger had Don John paid Mistress Mary a visit at the castle. I put it all to Mistress Mary and she agreed with me. So we were presently plodding out of the woods and across the Long Pasture to the burn.

Now, Don John's cave was on the other side, and, whichever way we went, it would be necessary to cross the burn. Mistress Mary thought it would be best to cross at once, as in the Striven woods we would take less chance of meeting any one. So down she sat on a rock and took off her shoes and stockings. Then she told me to go first, and she herself tucked up her plaid skirt and put her bonny white feet into the stream.

When we reached the other side, she would have put her shoes and stockings on again; but I told her that she would have to wade in the pool at the entrance to the cave. She put on the shoes without the stockings.

We walked through the quiet woods to the hollow

oak. Before we waded into the pool, Mistress Mary stopped and looked confused. She glanced at her bare ankles and then at me, but in the end she laughed a wee and stepped into the pool. I suppose she was wondering what Don John would think; but when we pushed aside the brambles and entered the cave, he did not see us.

Don John lay asleep, flat on his back, with one arm outstretched and the other folded across his breast. By a low fire that filled the cave with a delicate haze, Daft Leezie sat, rocking herself and watching her patient. She put her finger to her lips as we entered, but seemed not at all surprised at Mistress Mary's sudden appearance.

She, sweet lass, stood dumfounded in the mouth of the cave. A wave of motherly concern and womanly pity filled her eyes, and tears gathered. Then she crept forward, noiselessly, and kneeling by Don John's side, laid a cool hand on his brow.

He moved a little and sighed. Presently his hand rose and touched the one on his brow. His fingers closed over it. He became still again, with her hand in his. Silence reigned in the cave.

The tears were flowing on Mistress Mary's cheeks, and I, too, felt like weeping. In fact, I presently broke down completely and sobbed. The sound awakened Don John. His eyelids raised, and he looked up into the brimming eyes of the woman he loved so well.

"Mary!" he whispered, unbelievably.



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“John!” And next moment her head was on his breast and his arms lay lightly around her.

It was too much for me. I waded into the pool, and my tears fell among the ripples. I went and sat down at the foot of a tree and cried happily, for I knew that I had brought great joy to Mistress Mary, whom I loved, and to Don John, whom I loved no less.

By and by I heard some one coming through the trees, grumbling to herself, for it was poor, kind Daft Leezie.

“Hay, Rorie, come awa’. Come awa’!” she said in half English. “Yon’s nae place for bairns and auld folk. He’ll no be needin’ us. Come awa’, laddie. Let them be, for the day’s fine, and it’ll rain the mornin — ay, it’ll rain the mornin.”

I walked with her to the farmhouse. On the way she began to whimper.

“Aw, Baldy — Baldy Macnab! They kilt ye the same — ye that was so hard wi’ men — so bonny and saft wi’ me. An’ they hanged ye on a rowan-tree, Baldy — Baldy Macnab.”

In spite of Daft Leezie’s sorrow, I was happy for my friends. And their happiness must have been without a bitter drop for days. Hardly an hour of daylight Mistress Mary did not spend in the cave with Don John. What they said during all that time, and whether they planned any solution of their problem, I have no means of knowing, for I never lingered in the cave longer than was necessary to tell

the clachan gossip, and perhaps to do some little service for the lovers.

Don John rapidly recovered, and in two or three days he was nigh as well as ever. Once or twice they ventured from the cave and wandered deep in the woods, with me as their guide and lookout. But they never crossed the burn together, keeping to the strip of forest that runs up the Striven shore.

But one day Mistress Mary did not come to the cave, and on the same evening, as I carried the milk-pails to the castle, I stumbled upon the cause. He — for it was a man — stood by the grave of Black Jamie.

He was about Don John's age, not so handsome, but better dressed. He wore the same kind of hose, but fine leather boots reached to his knees, where they were folded over. His doublet was not unlike Don John's, but it was mostly concealed by a long, shapely coat, trimmed with fancy conceits and with much lace about the cuffs. Under this coat I could see the end of a sword like Don John's.

He wore no hat — a mark of respect where he stood — but carried it in his hand, a big, black, soft thing with a gay feather in it. He must have looked well wearing it, for his face was of that hard, dour — Here I must stop, for while I was looking at the man's face, I suddenly recognized Master Archibald, now Black Archibald, Laird of Kilellan.

But what surprised and frightened me was what he looked at. On the upright point of the dead laird's sword the head of Ronald Macdonald, chieftain of the Kyles, was impaled!

My little knees shook under me to see that gruesome thing and the young laird standing by it with a look on his face that was something between reverence and an evil smile. It was some time before I realized by these signs that not only Black Archibald, but the Highlanders had returned.

When I left my milk at the castle, Mistress Mary came to me, her eyes red with weeping. She told me, in a choking whisper, what I already knew, for at that minute — the young laird having left the grave, I suppose — the pipes burst out in a wild screech of triumph. Above the din, Mistress Mary bent her head to my ear and said:

“Rorie, if you love him and me, tell him to fly, for my brother has taken oath to slay him.”

When I delivered this message to Don John, he became most sorrowful; not, I am sure, at Black Archibald's threat, but that the dream of many days was ended.

“Rorie,” said he sadly, “I had thought that affairs might right themselves, or that time might show me the way; but now I must go.”

He sat on the ground a while, with his hands clasped around his knees, occasionally whistling his lilt as if it helped his thinking. By and by he said:

“Until the war is ended, and I can govern my

own acts, I must return to Spain — eh, Rorie? But how?"

It was a habit he had, that of putting momentous questions to me, who understood only about half of his words. He whistled some more; then:

"I am thinking, lad, that across the water on the Lowlands shore, the people — I mean the lords, Rorie — might show mercy to their kind. . . . Yes!" he cried, jumping to his feet, "there is no other way. At worst, I shall be a prisoner of war among men who are not savages. Tell Mistress Mary what I say, Rorie; and ask her if she has knowledge of a friend or a thrifty ferryman."

I gave this message; and it was the last word I had with Mistress Mary for days. Her brother, Black Archibald, watched her with the eyes of an eagle. Yet he seemed ever courteous to her. When she walked, he accompanied her. When she rode to the farm, in the hope of catching my ear — as I now know — he would ride with her, and acted toward her as he must have learned to do with the great ladies at court. But behind every act of courteous deference, there was the keen eye and a smile which plainly said:

"Whither you go, I shall go, for in time you must go to him!"

If that was his way of hunting — and I am sure it was — it explains why he never bothered my father or me about Don John, or ever attempted to hunt my Spaniard for himself. It was only the

dread in Mistress Mary's eyes that told me which way the wind blew, or that the wind blew at all.

One day Mistress Mary escaped his vigilance, but only for a moment. She had time to say "Alan Urquhart," when Black Archibald stepped to her side and said:

"Ha! Is this Rorie who has grown so big and important?"

But the name Mistress Mary had mentioned was enough to suggest the plot to a clod. Alan Urquhart, it may be remembered, was the ferryman between Kilellan and the Cloch, a point on the Lowlands shore. I escaped at the first opportunity and related the incident to Don John. He slapped his thigh delightedly.

"That is good, Rorie. Now, you to this Alan Urquhart and say like this:"—and here Don John looked cautiously around—"Mistress Mary sent me to you, Alan.' You'll remember that, Rorie?"

"Ay."

"And if he seems to understand, then you'll look around again—like this, Rorie—to see that no one hears, you understand—and say, 'When?'"

"Ay."

"That's all. If Mistress Mary has already spoken with him, then he will understand. If he does not understand, then you will tell him that there is a fine sum awaiting him if he will row his boat around to the Striven shore the first dark night."

I understood, but it was difficult to remember; so for hours on end Don John and I rehearsed the little play. Sometimes he would give me confusing answers, so that we must have gone over every possible situation. That evening I went to the clachan and met Alan Urquhart as he came from the Cloch.

"Hay, Rorie!" he cried. "It will be a very fine evening."

"It will," I gulped, for already my heart was in my throat.

Alan looked suspiciously at me; then — and I nearly burst out laughing — he began to go through all the little antics that Don John had been at such pains to teach me. He looked back of him and said mysteriously:

"Mistress Mary sent me to ye."

"Ay?"

"And I was to say, 'When?'"

For answer, I shrieked with laughter. Alan gripped my arm and whispered coarsely:

"Whist, lad! Whist! Did ye see me dangling on a dule-tree. Say the word and get ye gone."

I sobered up instantly and wrought my brains for an answer to this, the only unrehearsed possibility. I determined to take the plunge for good or ill.

"The morrow's night by the stroke of the twelve, on the other side of the burn mouth."

"Good. Now, run, lad!" Alan whispered when

he had repeated the tryst. "Alan will be there."

Not only was this satisfactory to Don John, but I was able to whisper it to Mistress Mary when I delivered the milk in the morning. She seemed pleased at first; then her face fell.

"Oh, Rorie. That is this very night."

"Ay, Mistress Mary."

"Give him Godspeed!" she whispered through her tears; and she went back into the castle, too wrought to utter the message which I knew her heart sent.

My story only served to depress Don John, who spent the rest of the day walking up and down in the narrow cave, his brow clouded with grief and omen. But the dark was not an hour fallen, when the brambles were thrust aside, and Mistress Mary, barefooted and pale, stood before us!

"Mary!" he gasped, taking her in his arms. "What have you done?"

"John," she answered simply, "I could not let you go."

"Ah!" he murmured. He held her at arm's length from him and feasted his moist eyes upon her simple beauty. "But your brother?" he said.

"I care not," she said quietly. "I cannot return to the castle — now, nor have I the wish to. I am coming with you."

"Mary! It is impossible!" he gasped, yet his eyes were aglow with the dream of it. "Do you not see —"

She drew back a pace, her head lifted in quiet determination.

"Don John, you say you love me? Heaven knows how I love you — John!" Her voice broke, and she threw out her hands. "I cannot live in that fearful place, even though I shall know you are striving to come back to me. John — John — take me with you. I am not afraid. I will starve, if you can. I will die if — oh, why speak of it?" she cried impatiently. "I have taken the step. There is no going back. Even now he seeks me, his anger rising as every moment passes. There is only one way, John. You must take me with you."

Don John stared at her face, which the flickerings of the firelight revealed in resolute, glorious lines. There was a long pause; then he said in a voice which was athrill with passion and grief:

"So be it, Mary — I see it clearly. I will take you with me."

Then, the crisis past, a more significant stillness fell within the cave. It was broken by Don John, who addressed me.

"Rorie," he said gravely, "you are a child; yet you understand what you see, and in years to come you shall bear witness. I promise, before you, to cherish this woman as my wife until I die. And see, Rorie; in token of faith, I give her this."

He took a locket and a golden chain from his neck and placed it reverently around Mistress Mary's.

"It contains the face of my mother," he said simply. "I make my vow upon her sacred memory. So shall no man speak ill of our union. Mary, give me my ring."

She drew it slowly from her hand and slipped it on Don John's finger.

"And may God have mercy on us both, my husband!" she whispered.

"Rorie," said Don John with a sudden twinkle in his eyes, "it shall be your pleasure, privilege, and honour to kiss Doña Maria, Marquesa de Murcia."

It was a few moments before I realized that he meant Mistress Mary; then I bashfully kissed her and found her face wet with tears. Soon after, I left them and went back to the farmhouse for my supper.

At nine o'clock, which was even late for me to be out of bed, my father looked at me, as I sat by the fire, thinking, and said:

"What is it, lad?"

I would have told him; but at the very first words he raised his hand.

"If it is about Don John, keep your own counsel, lad."

I continued sitting by the fire; and when the old knock said it wanted but half an hour of the twelve, my father did not even raise his head as I passed out. I trotted across the Long Pasture until I came to the burn, which I crossed with little noise. As

I stole through the fringe of woods to the Striven shore, I thought I heard a cry; but it was not repeated, and I went on.

It must have been near midnight when I came out of the woods and saw Alan Urquhart with his boat beached and sitting in the bow with his back to me. I stepped out into the moonlight — and here was a thing that we had all overlooked — and called softly to him. He did not hear, and continued to look seaward.

“Alan!” I whispered as loudly as I dared.
“Alan Urquhart!”

Still he did not move, and it was then I noticed that he sat in a very huddled attitude. I crept up toward the boat, still calling his name. When I reached the side, I put out my hand to shake him, for I felt sure that he must have fallen asleep. But the moment my hand touched him, his head fell to one side and his jaw dropped. Then I saw that he was covered with blood, and I knew that he was dead.

My hair felt like icicles on the moment. I turned and ran into the woods, smothering a desire to cry out. I had not gone a hundred paces before I thought I heard footsteps behind me. I did not stop to look, but ran on through the woods, bumping now and then into trees, but for the most part guided by the rays of moonlight that shot from above. Several times I thought I was still pursued. Once I heard the snapping of a twig near-by. I

stopped short; for if an enemy was tracking me, I did not wish to guide him to the cave.

But the wood became still when I stopped. Blaming my vivid imagination, I pushed on, this time at a walking gait. But again I heard a sound, just as I was wading into the pool; and this time there was no room for doubt. I dashed into the cave and cried:

“Come out — quick — run! There’s a man following me!”

Mistress Mary gave a cry; but Don John pushed her gently back of him, and said as he drew his sword:

“A man, Rorie? Just a man?”

The words were on his lips as the brambles burst aside. Black Archibald appeared in the cave with a sword in his hand. He did not utter a word, but bore down upon Don John. The two men engaged.

In the dim light of the fire it was a strange sight. I hardly know how the men saw one another’s blade. Mistress Mary, ghostly in appearance, stood in a shaft of moonlight which flooded down through the hollow oak. Her hands were clasped tightly over her bosom, but she did not utter a sound.

The battle lasted less than a minute, and Don John was the victor. Black Archibald stood, disarmed, before him.

“Archibald,” said Don John calmly, sheathing his

blade, "I should scorn myself did I slay a kinsman."

"Kinsman?" sneered Black Archibald. "Have ye made yourself kin?"

"Silence!" Don John cried sternly. "Your sister is my wife, by all that is holy in manhood and the sight of God. We were wedded this night on the very spot you would dishonour."

"Liar!" shouted Black Archibald, his hand flying to his breast, while Don John's leaped back to his sword-hilt. "Liar! Seducer! *That* for your honour!"

A flash of light, a volume of smoke, and a deafening roar filled the cave. I heard Don John cry out, Mistress Mary scream, and the brambles crash; then silence.

When the smoke cleared, Black Archibald had disappeared and Don John lay on the ground, his face upward. Mistress Mary was on her knees beside him, piteously calling him by name.

"Mary!" he said faintly. "Mary!"

"John — John — Oh, my husband — my John!!"

"Mary — I did not think — maybe he loved you, too. Forgive him. Rorie — Rorie!"

I came forward from the place where I had been crouching, stricken with terror. Don John looked up at me and smiled.

"Rorie," he said, and his voice seemed to come

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from a distance. "Odds against us — from the beginning. 'Member — my mother — so shall no man speak ill. Rorie, if ever — you go — to Spain — tell them — you met Don John. Mary — good night, dear —"

She bent her head and kissed his brow. Then the everlasting silences were broken only by my sobbing.

CHAPTER VI

MARIPOSA

In the year 1604 I was grown to a strong man. My father, Angus Maclean, lay at rest in the rose-garden. Black Archibald — dour, fierce, silent Black Archibald — lived alone in the gloomy castle — for his son, Jamie, was still schooling himself in the world at Edinburgh. Two graves in the cave in the woods marked the marriage-couch of Don John and Mistress Mary; and in the cottage of Daft Leezie lived a maiden whom they called by a sweet, strange name — Mariposa!

I have set down the memories of one year of my childhood. A body might well ask how I remember so finely the happenings of that period? But it is Rorie, grown up, who writes of Rorie of the kilt and milk-pails, and that which bore small significance at the time became clearer as the growing mind dwelt upon set remembrances. The more I thought, for instance, of Don John and Mistress Mary, the more I honoured one and loved the other; and the more I nursed a silent hatred of their murderer.

For Black Archibald killed them both. After that night in the cave Mistress Mary never returned

to the castle; nor did her brother invite her to his door. In the cottage where Daft Leezie lived, the poor girl bided her time. And next day — I mind it well — the old daft woman came to the castle with little Mariposa in her arms and set a curse upon the laird's head.

“Ay, the curse is upon ye, Black!” the witch-wife cried. “Ye murdered her sire, and ye have murdered her mother and your sister. Would ye look upon her, Black? Then come wi’ old Leezie. Ha, ha! I held ye to my bosom, Archibald. Why was the milk no poison in your moo’? But I’ll ’still it in the bairn for ye yet. Her tongue will blast your life. Her eyes will blight your son’s. Her bonny face will lie heavy on your black heart. The curse of the dead on ye, Campbell of Kilellan! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!”

And away went the old woman, yammering and giggling, leaving Black Archibald gripping the doorpost of the castle. That night he began to drink — not as our men drink; but silently, sitting over the bottle when he was not walking up and down between the candle and the window. He did not even look upon the face of Mistress Mary; and she was laid, without protest, beside Don John in the cave under the hollow oak. And there these two lovers still lie dreaming.

Between a boy of ten years and a baby of one there is still the bond of childhood; and I hardly

ever came to Daft Leezie's cottage on the way to and from the castle, but I stopped a while to play with the little one. When she was able to walk she would stand at the door to watch for Rorie, and her merry little laugh would come through the woods long before she saw me, for she learned to know the rattle of the milk-pails.

Sometimes Daft Leezie would bring her to the farmhouse. My mother would take Mariposa in her arms and cry over her, while my father would look on with a curious light in his eyes. He was a righteous man, my father, and he was sore troubled about this child. He had heard my story, and he had said that Don John was a good man and Mistress Mary a good woman; but, for all that, he was troubled. Daft Leezie would sit by the fire and cackle to herself about blood and curses, and she would nearly always end by saying something about me.

"I ken it! I ken it!" she would gabble. "Ye betrayed the Campbells for a heathen lassie."

At that my father would look anxious, and ask Leezie if there was any evil in the child. At which Leezie would usually chuckle and become silent, but once or twice she burst out in fury.

"It's a lie!" she would shriek. "I saw't in the fire. I heard every word o't. Look on the gowld thing on her neck. The face of his mother." Then this poor old creature would snatch the bairn from

my mother and press it to her withered bosom, at the same time crooning about "Baldy — Baldy Macnab!"

Sometimes I would see the witch-wife sitting at the door of her cottage in the dusk, swaying the baby Mariposa in her arms and humming Don John's lilt to words which she had fitted herself:

This was the tune
When she laid her doon,
And dee'd for a heathen laddie —
And dee'd for a heathen laddie.

By and by, as Mariposa grew older and could talk, the little waif would find her way to the farmhouse by herself. Even my father's face would light up when the voice of the wee witch would cry "Rorie!" The door would be opened to a wraith-child with bright, deep eyes and black curls, dressed in a ragged plaid. She would run in, scramble into a chair, and call for bannocks and honey with the air of a little queen. Sometimes she would stop eating and put up a finger with a warning "S-s-s-h!" And when we obediently hushed, she would creep down off the chair, tiptoe to the fireplace, and peer up the lum. Then she would fill the kitchen with peals of laughter. But my father, knowing where she had learned that trick, would look sad and shake his head.

As time went on, Mariposa and I became almost

inseparable. Indeed, I was lonely and disappointed the days she did not come to the farm. But she was seldom away, and each dawn saw the wild girl by my side as I went for the cows. She was bare-footed most of the time. The exposure to cold and sunshine had deepened the delicate olive tint of her complexion.

In her hand she always carried a switch on those trips, and her merry voice mingled with mine in calling "Coo! Coo-o-o-o!" to the cows. Quite oblivious of the differences of sex and age, she seemed to look upon me as her natural brother-in-arms. She vied with me in climbing trees, and as I grew older she could outstrip me in running.

The long summer days we spent in the woods, or playing in the burn. Our favourite spot was the cave by the pool. There she would lead me when tired of play; and, sitting beside the two graves, she would command me to tell her the story about "John-John." It always began with "Once upon a time," for I never told her who "John-John" and Mistress Mary really were. Black Archibald was the ogre in the story, and, of course, I was the brave little boy. I could not tell it, scemh without getting myself mixed in it.

We always put flowers on the graves; and to make them "real graves" we put "chucky-stanes" around them, and planted primrose and fern-roots. When the spring came again, Mariposa clapped her

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hands because the primroses blossomed and the ferns drooped green and glossy. They were "real graves."

When the repetition of the story became tiresome to her and painful to me, Mariposa must play it. I was "John-John" and she was Mistress Mary; and when she waded through the pool and solemnly parted the brambles, to me — lying as "John-John" on the ground — she was the image of her bonny mother, save for the mischievous eyes and the tangled black locks. It gives me an odd chill now when I think of our playing that tragedy in fun; and I think I ought to have known better, for I was fifteen then.

By and by, Mariposa carried one of the milk-pails to the castle while I took the other; so that age did not decrease our intimacy, for there was hardly an hour of daylight that did not see us together.

Passing through the woods, we sometimes saw Black Archibald slowly pacing among the trees, with his hands behind his back. If curses can hurt a man, I am sure Daft Leezie's hung heavily on him. He seemed possessed of a phantom that made his eyes sunken and his face white. He had grown much like his father, as I remember him, but not so heavy. He was inclined to a gauntness of aspect, and he had a habit of drawing his under lip between his teeth and chewing — chewing — chewing.

Mariposa had no idea who the man was until one day, when we were rehearsing "John-John," it

slipped from me that Black Archibald was really the ogre. A few days later we saw him among the trees. He was standing still, looking away down the Firth to the blue-gray tower of Ailsa Craig. Mariposa stepped from behind a tree and stood before him. The laird gave a great start and bit his lip savagely.

"Ogre!" the child cried. "I dinna love ye. Ye kilt John-John!"

He uttered a horrible oath and dashed at the elf with hands spread like talons. But Mariposa was gone like an arrow, bewitching the forest with a long peal of shrill laughter. Black Archibald rushed after her, his face drawn with rage and terror; but the little witch got behind me and, holding me as a shield, mocked the man, as children do, with unanswerable taunts. At that, Black Archibald threw himself upon me and beat me to the ground in conscience-stricken rage.

"Bring that brat near the castle again," he cried, "and I'll strangle her like a pullet!"

The castle got no milk that night, for it was spilled in the fray. My father looked very grave when I told him what had happened. He commanded me never to take Mariposa to the castle again, especially when he heard later that Daff Leezie, learning of the affair, had gone to the castle front, and there set up a jeering and cackling that drove Black Archibald back to the bottle. I heard afterward that the affair so preyed on the laird that

he raved like a madman, and, without provocation, pitched Big Aundra down the castle staircase.

My father's black looks frightened Mariposa away from the farm for many weeks. Indeed, he never looked at her again without a frown, so that Mariposa and I saw less of one another. Sometimes she would meet me by the burn, and we would drive the cows together; but she seldom came to the house. When she did, her manner was that of a child who felt that some one was doing her a wrong — not that she had done any.

But I found her one day in the cave — weeping bitterly. I tried to comfort her, and was surprised when she suddenly flung herself on Don John's grave and sobbed worse than ever.

“John-John! Oh, poor John-John!” she cried.

I suppose she was thinking of the ogre and the incident in the woods, for by and by she sat up and resolutely wiped away her tears.

“Rorie,” she said, “was John-John a true man, or just a story-man?”

“Why do ye ask?” I said, for this was dangerous ground.

“Because — because the wee boy is true, and the ogre is true — and — and —”

Then she began to sob again. I remember she seldom gave a thought to Mistress Mary. It was always poor “John-John.”

That was the first cloud. But she was naturally a child of the sunshine. When she found one ave-

nue of play stopped, she sought another. One day she coaxed me to go with her to the clachan. The existence of this "wonderful" place she had discovered by accident while avoiding the castle. But she had been too amazed at the number of houses there to venture into it without me.

Without telling my mother or father, I set off with Mariposa. The moment we entered the clachan she became greatly excited, and, tearing her hand from mine, began to peer at the cottage doors. The guidwives chased her away, but that did not dishearten her. Presently she came upon a group of children who were building a great sand-castle. Mariposa, with a cry of delight, joined them, and her deft hands decorated the sand-castle with pebbles, while the others built it. When all was done, she stuck a stick on top and, clapping her hands, danced around the castle. The other bairns caught the idea, and presently they all joined hands and danced around in a ring. And Mariposa began to sing — of all things in the world — Don John's lilt to Daft Leezie's words.

The bairns caught the tune and the words at once, and soon everybody in the clachan could hear them as they danced around the sand-castle, singing in merry chorus:

This was the tune
When she laid her doon,
And dee'd for a heathen laddie —
And dee'd for a heathen laddie.

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They could not have sung it more than thrice before there was a great to-do in the clachan. The guidwives appeared in the doorways, shrieking their horror and calling their children. The bairns broke the magic circle and ran to their mothers' aprons. Then there was a great clatter; and presently the bairns, unhindered — ay, even encouraged — by their mothers, began mocking Mariposa and throwing stones. She looked amazed for a moment; then, tossing her chin, she spun on her heel and marched off, without looking at me or waiting to see if I followed.

Straight to the farm she went, with me trailing behind like a vassal. As she entered the kitchen her eyes were drooped, but her head was erect. My father looked up from the fireside with a doubtful expression. Mariposa returned the look defiantly, and remained standing in the middle of the kitchen — a lonely little figure — seemingly carved out of stone.

“And what will this be?” asked my mother, coming in from the dairy.

At the sight of one of her sex, Mariposa's eyes fell, her face softened, her mouth corners drooped, and in another moment her head was in my mother's apron and she was sobbing like to break her heart. Even my father took pity when I told him what had happened, and he patted the little waif's head.

“Poor lassie!” he said. “Poor wee lass!”

After that incident, Mariposa took her old place

at the farm and drove the cows with me, and milked them with my mother. Indeed, she helped in many ways. It was many a year before she entered the clachan again, and as time went on she became more and more of an untamed creature of the open air. When my father died she was as one of us, sleeping in old Leezie's cottage only that she might mind the old body in her doddering years.

Soon enough she was no longer a child. Into her eyes came the wistful gloaming of young womanhood; and, if ever two souls were sunk in one, she was the living reincarnation of Don John and Mistress Mary. Proud, yet whimsical, and as full of sunshine as her father, beneath her bosom beat the great heart of her mother. In her veins ran the blood of Scotland and of Spain — fearless, fierce, and passionate.

But she was yet a child in knowledge. Womanhood brought to her, I think, only a sense of tenderness and wonder. The two graves beneath the hollow oak seemed to exercise a strange fascination in her mind. No more would she ask me thither, but often she went alone and remained for hours in reverie.

But as quickly would her mood turn to one of irrepressible gaiety. Then she would talk at great speed and with a certain cleverness for finding out one's weak spot and playing on it. But her arrows of wit fell lightly, for they were shot in some wonderful way that left you touched, but unhurt. And

she would sing — never that lilt — but queer songs of her own making, words and tune full of the melancholy of our own Highland songs, but with a trick of ending that left you wondering whether she was not making fun of herself.

Between her and me there was now a sense of equality. When I saw her for the first time with her hair tied, a feather in her bonnet, and an end of her plaid falling straight from her ripening bosom to her feet — it was hard to remember that she was fifteen and I twenty-three. Yet between us there was nothing but that affection of custom which one must stand far off to probe.

Often I caught myself thinking that it would be fitting and pleasant to love this girl, and often I wondered why I did not do so. The idea grew in my head that I ought to love her. It seemed only right that I should. My father was dead, and my mother was growing old. And I was a man, and here was a woman. Yes, I should, by all right, proceed to love this girl. So one day I said to her in the hay-loft:

“Mariposa, do ye love me?”

“Ay, Rorie! What for do ye ask? Do ye not love me?”

“Oh, ay! I was just thinking — that — maybe —”

And I got no further, for she turned and looked at me. Next moment we were both laughing till

the tears ran on our cheeks. It seemed so foolish.

But one summer evening, after we had driven the cows among the daisies of the Long Pasture, Mariposa and I sat on the stile which had been built at the gap in the hedge. We were listening to the cry of a corn-crake in the meadow. By and by somebody came sauntering along the road. I made out it was young Jamie, come home from Edinburgh. He was dressed in grand fashion and dangling a pretty stick, which was tied to his wrist. He was a brave-looking lad, but the sight of him hurt me a little. It may have been that, as my cousin, he stood between me and the acres around Kilellan Castle. And then, with my hairy knees, frowsy head, and clumsy dress, I must have cut a figure to his advantage.

I looked at Mariposa, and she was looking at young Jamie. Here was the living image of the hero in the "John-John" story, and I saw the thought in her eyes. Young Jamie stopped before us and nearly swept up the dust with his plumed bonnet. Mariposa seemed to think suddenly that sitting on a stile was not worthy of the occasion, for she climbed down, made a pretty curtsy, smoothed out her plaid, and blushed.

Young Jamie had nearly quite forgotten me, and he had never seen Mariposa before, so he did not stop long. He asked about the cows, like one whose mind dwells far from cows. Then he wished

us a very good-even. Mariposa climbed back on the stile and, as young Jamie sauntered along, she whispered in my ear:

“Rorie, was Don John like that?”

A feeling not unlike hunger took hold of me. I looked at Mariposa. I meant to speak, but not a word could I think of to say. She looked at me with bright, merry eyes. Then, as I did not speak, a slow alarm crept into them, and the blood glowed in her face.

The veil was parted. A silence fell upon us. The cry of the corn-crake jarred the dusk. The feeling of hunger gnawed at my vitals. But I ate no supper.

CHAPTER VII

THE CRY OF THE CORN-CRAKE

The fact that young Jamie's father was the ogre, was of little consequence to Mariposa, especially as in womanhood she thought that Don John was a legend and Black Archibald no more deserving of the title, "ogre," than any other man with a suitably crusty nature. Even were it not all a legend, what was Don John to her and what Mistress Mary? So when she learned that young Jamie was Black Archibald's son, the knowledge seemed rather to enhance the interesting youth, and the young laird's interest, which being soon apparent, was not displeasing to Mariposa, I could see.

What I could not see, I supposed and felt. Those were the first of my bitter days. Your great hulking Rorie was suddenly become a man in more than mere strength and stature, and Mariposa's eyes were opened to her own power. The first blush of tenderness and wonder gave place, it was easy to see, to a growing appreciation of her own beauty and the other gifts of womanhood.

Both of us felt the difference in each, and between each, in those days. No longer were we the inseparables of Kilellan farm. The trips to the

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woods ceased and the two of us drove the cows only because we hardly realized, after so long, that one could do it just as well.

I found manual labor in the fields a relief to my idle thoughts. The way Mariposa clung to my mother and helped her in the house convinced me that she, too, felt the awkwardness which had suddenly fallen upon our intimacy. A strange shyness overcame me when we were thrown together, and even when my mother was present, I could see that it was as difficult for Mariposa to look straight into my eyes as for me to meet her gaze.

It was as if we were strangers to each other. On meeting her after working in the fields, I would be painfully conscious of my soiled hands and muddy kilt. In those days she began to take pains with her appearance, although I liked her best when she had that reckless hair and the plaid tossed with wild grace across her bosom. Now she must set it gracefully, without the wildness, and her hair must be done in a way that made her bonnier, but gave her more trouble when she was working in the dairy.

The laughter, too, was gone from her lips and eyes, but the softness in its place did not make her look less happy — only in a different way. She used to steal away in the afternoon, and I am sure she spent much time alone in the woods. When I asked her if she had been to the cave, she would droop her eyes and the blood would flood her face

and neck. It hurt me that there was anything she might do, which I might not speak about.

I did not repeat to myself that I loved Mariposa. The meaning of love had revealed itself to me; and only once had I told myself that she was the only woman I would ever love. I looked back through the years and knew that I had always loved her — that way, but until then the waters in the dam had been unloosed and the mill had slept. The same instinctive awakening opened my eyes to something more. Mariposa loved, too. But the rasping cry of the corn-crake was in my heart.

Young Jamie often came to the farm — to speak with me on matters of horses and crops. He had little speech with Mariposa, for at his appearance she fled in seeming confusion. But with the curiosity of the timid roe, she would come back on some pretense. In my bitterness, I noticed how young Jamie's talk wandered and how his eyes would look over my shoulder.

I could have killed the man at times, for it was the way of him to examine the girl closely before he committed himself, as if it was merely a matter of his decision, whether he should take possession of Mariposa or not. When he saw that she was pleasing, he spoke no more of crops, but boldly advanced his suit. He may have loved her, but not as I loved her. His tongue was not tied; neither did he want for fine words.

Mariposa liked it. Even my mother saw that.

She laid her hand on my head one evening as I sat brooding by the fire, for Mariposa had taken to going often to Daft Leezie's. I had seen young Jamie meet her — accidentally, it would seem, but far from it in truth. My mother said nothing, but just let her hand rest on my head for a moment and looked with me into the fire. And I knew that she, too, understood.

Then the meetings became deliberate, and at that I came to my senses. I determined that I should not let him win her without resistance on my part. When my work was over, or when I had none to do, I would swallow my pride and court Mariposa. I picked roses and brought them to her; I helped her with the milk-pails; and one day I took her in my arms and carried her across the burn, for she was wearing shoes and stockings.

My little attentions seemed to please her, but one that did not showed me clearly that all the others merely served to fan her vanity. She was much displeased one evening when I escorted her to Daft Leezie's. The silence that fell when we met young Jamie taught me why.

I had dressed myself a bit braver that night and was not ashamed to walk with her. But when I saw young Jamie in his fine boots and ruffles, my heart sickened. I stubbornly stuck to Mariposa, until he was forced to bid us a polite good-even, but with a savage glare at me. The moment he was gone, Mariposa deliberately picked a quarrel with

me. I returned to the farm, dismissed, defeated, and despairing.

I left her alone after that, and I suppose she must have seen my unhappiness, for I could not do it. Anyhow, about a week later, as I was bending over my work in the farmyard, I heard her voice at my elbow.

“Rorie!”

It was the first word she had spoken to me since that night. I looked up and my heart yearned to her, for there were big tears in her eyes.

“Rorie, are you vexed with me?”

“No, Mariposa — no,” I faltered.

“I — I’m very sorry, Rorie.” And she held out a trembling hand.

I took it in my own soiled fist and looked away at the hills, for there was a strange tightening in my nostrils. I held her hand for nearly a minute, without daring to let her see my face. Then she drew away her hand and ran into the house. But she did not laugh.

For many days after that she was the Mariposa of old. Hope returned to my heart, and one evening after the cows were in for the night — for the days were growing in — I walked with her to the stile. It was getting dark, and that helped me a little. I had made up my mind to tell her again that I loved her. But, oh! what a different love it was, and how hard the telling!

“Mariposa — I like ye better than I used to,” I

stammered. "I mean — ye mind yon day in the hayloft? . . . But things have changed since then, Mariposa. Do ye care for me, lass?"

She did not answer for a while; but she seemed very sad.

"Rorie, I wish I did love ye — the way ye would have me. I do love ye, Rorie, but it is just the way I did in the hayloft. There would be no difference, Rorie, if ye would just go on loving me, and letting me love you, as we did then."

"No difference, Mariposa?"

"Ah, Rorie, I ken what ye would be at," she sighed. "But there are two kinds of love, lad —"

"Ye love Jamie," I said bitterly.

"Maybe ay," she replied, archly. "But there are two kinds, Rorie. When it is you —"

"Ay — me?"

"When it is you, I — I can sit down quiet and be happy, and want nothing more. But —"

"Ay — him?"

"When it is him, I am anxious to do things that will please him, and I am afraid of him, and yet not wanting to fly from him, and — you see, lad —"

"Ay, I see — I see."

We said no more until, having tired of sitting in silence, we got down and started for the house. I laid my hand on her shoulder and said:

"Mariposa, young Jamie is not for you. Do not set your heart ower strong upon him, for it would

hurt me more than my own hurt, to see ye suffer the same."

She looked up into my eyes, for I could not help being terribly in earnest.

"What would you be meaning, Rorie?"

The time had come for me to tell her that young Jamie was her own cousin and son of her father's murderer, but something in her eyes -- a look of disappointment, anger, and distrust -- left me dumb. It was my duty to have told her then -- and there was no reason for hiding anything -- but my own hurt and the feeling that she would suspect another motive, made me hesitate.

Suddenly she whisked herself from under my hand and walked to the house.

"Rorie," she said, without turning her head "I dinna like ye as well."

She kept away from me next day; but my mind was now made up that she should be told the whole story. After Mariposa had set off to meet young Jamie, I spoke to my mother about it, and she undertook the matter. But no opportunity presented itself next day, for Mariposa appeared with a troubled air and at once attached herself to me, as before. Wherever I went, she followed. She uttered hardly a word, but several times I caught her looking at me as if she had something to say. I was further surprised when evening came and she asked me to walk with her to Daft Leezie's. In the

half light and the quiet of the woods she began to speak.

“Rorie, I want to tell ye something.”

“Ay.”

“Last night —”

“Ay!” And I shut my teeth hard.

“Young Jamie and me walked on the castle road. We were sitting on a rock when —”

“Ay. Go on.”

“When the — the ogre stepped out and —”

My heart gave a great leap. We stopped and faced one another. Mariposa began to speak with great rapidity, now that the secret was out.

“He stepped out from the trees and, oh, Rorie! he looked fearful in his anger. He cursed Jamie. He cursed me. Then he pointed to the castle and said: ‘Go home, ye fool.’ Jamie and he fell to quarreling. The laird told him I was — Oh, Rorie, I canna tell ye. I put my hands over my ears and ran. What does it mean, Rorie? Ye ken. I see ye ken. Tell me, Rorie.”

“Mariposa,” I said, “I ken. I would have told ye, and if ye had come i’ the morn my mother would ha’ told ye.”

“Is it anything bad?” she whispered fearfully.

I put my arm around her, but she drew away after a moment’s yielding.

“Oh, lass,” I said, half choked, “nothing of you is bad. None kens it better than me, and who speaks ill of you will have me and my father’s

claymore to answer. But, oh! lass, you have been misguided. I am glad it has come before your heart was broken—though Rorie would have mended that.”

She stood away from me with her hands on her hips, tossing her head and tapping her foot impatiently. The silence ended with a sound of rapid footsteps in the wood. Mariposa started as young Jamie appeared and stamped past us in the direction of the castle, muttering as he went.

“Jamie!” cried Mariposa, and my heart grew cold at the name and the voice. But young Jamie seemed not to hear.

“Jamie! Jamie!” she cried, and still he rushed on.

She ran after him, crying his name, but the “Jamie! Jamie! Jamie!” dying away in the forest, told me that he was either deaf or unwilling to stop.

My mind’s eye saw the thing at once. He had come from the direction of Daft Leezie’s hut. He had been hearing a story, maybe, although I am sure Mariposa thought his huff was that he had overheard our talk. It was on my mind to follow, for I had a feeling of evil to come, but the thought that I might again plunge myself, unwanted, into ignominy, bade me think. It would be better to learn just what had happened.

I started for Daft Leezie’s cottage. It was but a short way. There was a dim light burning in

the window, but when I knocked at the door I got no response. Neither could I hear Daft Leezie moving within. I called her once or twice, then opened the door. The old woman was stretched out on the floor, lying like a crumpled sack on the heather with which the place was strewn. She was not asleep, but unconscious in some ill manner. When I at length succeeded in arousing her, she sat up and in a dazed manner brushed the gray hair from her wrinkled brow. By and by she looked at me.

"Eh, Rorie, is it yourself?" she whispered. "I ha' seen the muckle black devil this night. He came doon the lum. . . ."

"Leezie," I said, "has young Jamie been here?"

She stroked her ragged dress with her yellow, skinny hands. Presently she said:

"Ay, ay — young Jamie — Black Jamie — he came doon the lum."

All at once she began to shake. I thought she was about to fall in a fit, but when I looked closer the old witch was quaking with fiendish laughter.

"Ay, ay! He, he!" she cackled. "It comes back to my mind it was young Jamie. Did I no tell ye, Black Archie? She'll blast your life and blight your son's. Wandering i' the woods, the idiot panting for a sight of her, to ask her who was her father and mother? He, he, he! But auld Leezie tell't ye. Ay, Jamie — Ay? But it's a lie, ye

blaggard—a lie!” the old woman suddenly screamed. “Look on the gowlden locket.”

“Did ye tell him of the murder?” I whispered, kneeling beside her.

“Ay, Rorie,” she yammered. “They hanged him on a rowan-tree—Baldy, that was so hard wi’ men, so bonny and soft wi’ me—Baldy—” She uttered a hair-raising scream and pointed at the fire.

“Look! Look!” she cried. “They’re fighting i’ the castle ha’—Black Archibald and his son. Ha! ye murderer! The curse! The curse! *Ba-a-a-aldy Macna-a-ab!*”

She rolled over on her back with her tongue between her teeth and her eyes turned up into her head. I stood back in horror, for I had never seen a sickness like this, and I knew not what to do. But before my mind’s eye was the castle hall and the father and son in a death struggle. Presently Daft Leezie’s convulsion ceased and her mouth opened.

Between one thing and another I hardly knew what I was doing. With a dim understanding that Daft Leezie was dead, I found myself running through the woods to the castle. I reached the back door, and the first thing I heard and saw was the clash of weapons and a body of vassals in the hall. Among them was Mariposa, calling upon the men to “stop them”—to “save Jamie.” Catching sight of me she cried:

"Rorie, Rorie! Stop them! It will break my heart if he's killed!"

It was in my mind, if indeed Black Archibald and his son were fighting, to let them be; but Mariposa's agony of distress and the thought that she would despise me forever if I stood idle while her lover was in danger, stirred me to action. I threw myself against the human wall and burst into the circle. Black Archibald and young Jamie, both marked with drink, were fighting with rapiers. Big Aundra threw himself upon me. As I struggled to free myself, young Jamie yelled:

"More room! More room!"

The sparks flew from the slithering blades. I caught a glimpse of the laird's face, livid with fear, young Jamie's white with rage, and Mariposa's drawn with anguish. I threw Big Aundra on his back and sprang between the two.

"Enough!" I shouted.

A fork of lightning shot through my side and the castle walls seemed to sway. I had a vague idea that the judgment day had fallen upon us and that the world was a flaming red. I heard young Jamie's voice sneering against his father. A pair of warm arms stole around my neck, and I heard a dear voice calling me afar. Then the dark closed in.

CHAPTER VIII

SHADOW AND SUNSHINE

Our old Bible tells how the Lord spent forty days in the wilderness. The great sleep which fell upon me at this time has left a vivid impression of what He must have suffered, for the Book says He was a man.

There are things in that sleep of wanderings which I never forgot. I had no home and the earth was desolate. Devils sat on high crags and tried to teach me the mysteries of two loves. There were two, they told me, but the explanation of each took two centuries, although in the end I was as confused as ever.

Black Archibald and young Jamie chased one another over thousands of miles of purple seas and cloud-laden precipices, and I, footsore and dying of thirst, followed, crying to them to be at peace. But they would not, for each declared the other had murdered me, and Don John was called to witness. Then they all drew their swords and the mountains shook with the clamour of their striking blades.

Sometimes I would find myself wandering in darkness, weeping for Mariposa, till I could feel

her answering tears blown in my face and hear her calling in the distance :

“Rorie! Rorie! Rorie!”

And stumbling blindly forward, I would answer :
“Mariposa! Mariposa!”

Then would come sleep, with her head on my shoulder; but when I awoke it was always to see her in the arms of young Jamie, and both of them jeering at me. But I followed them until I found each alone. Him I slew, and her I allowed to sleep on until her waking eyes widened with the terror of me. And I slowly strangled her with my hands and shrieked with laughter as I did so. Once again the long night and the thirsty desert. . . .

Oh, those forty days in the wilderness! But here and there was an oasis. Once I was in the best room in the farmhouse and young Jamie was facing Mariposa. She was changed — grown much older, and her face was wan with fatigue and grief. Around her sweet neck was a golden chain, bearing a golden locket which lay in the hollow of her bosom. She was standing erect and speaking quietly, but rapidly, to young Jamie.

“Were I a man like Rorie, as he was,” she was saying, “and ye came to a woman of my house with your lying words, I wadna honour ye by asking ye to go by the door. If my hands were strong enow, I would tear the eyes from your heid and cut your tongue out wi’ your own sword. You and your kind!” she sneered. “Who shot my father

when he had spared him for his sister's sake? Who let my mother lie, friendless and dying, that I might live? *Your father, my — sweet — cousin!* Who struck down Rorie that sought to save a murderer from his drunken son — the murderer of auld Leezie from his drunken sire? Ay, ye grow white! Ye would go by the door. Ye ken ye struck down the auld feckless body that held your sire to her breasts. And ye come here with your wasp's honey on your serpent's mouth. *Love ye?"* And Mariposa burst out in a long, loud laugh. "I love Rorie — Rorie that ye told me was a clod — a grasshopper! I'll wed Rorie if he lives. And if he dies — ay, I'll wed ye if ye will — wed ye and drink wi' your vassals — wed ye and strangle your bairns — wed ye and brand ye in your sleep!"

Sleep. . . . Sleep. . . . No more the dark and the desert and vain wanderings. Sleep and perfect peace. When I awoke, a broad belt of winter sunshine lay across the quilt of the bed, which was set in the wall of the best room. I could hear the sputtering of a peat fire and smell fresh brackens on the floor. Some one was singing a Highland air, and I knew by the whimsical turn of it that Mariposa was near.

I lay still for a while, thinking over all that I had undergone. I had a home, and God's sunshine was on the land. And if Mariposa was still in love with young Jamie, it were better so than that she should be the treacherous wench of my dreams.

By and by I wondered how I came to be abed at that hour. Then I remembered and traced events up to the death of old Leezie and the fight in the castle hall. But I was not sure that the last two were real. They were as the horrible visions of my sleep. After a bit, I believed they might be real, for I had a stiffness upon my right side. I tried to move my right arm, but it would not obey.

I could turn my head, however; and there was Mariposa bending over a bit of sewing. In a little while she stopped humming, and by and by she had to bend her head to see the stitches, although the sunshine was bright.

"Mariposa," I said, but my voice was as the whispering in the desert.

She looked up quickly and laid down her work. She crept to my side and whispered:

"Rorie? S-s-s-s-h! Sleep, lad — dear lad."

I looked into her face and wondered what had come over her.

"Has young Jamie been here?" I asked.

"Ay," she whispered, looking frightened.

But I just smiled and smiled, for perhaps it had not been a dream after all.

"Where did you get that locket?" I managed to say.

"They found it — old Leezie gave it to me.

. . . Sleep, lad."

"No, I will not sleep — yet."

So she sat by my side and put her hand on my brow. By and by she said brokenly:

"I've been thinking, lad — and there's but one love. I *do* love ye, Rorie — the way ye meant — only — so much more than ye meant. Now, will ye sleep?"

The wound was on the right side, a sword-thrust that must have done considerable damage. My only doctor was Mariposa, who dosed me and patched me with herbs and brews, the skill of which she had learned from Daft Leezie.

Poor old Leezie. They found her dead in the cottage. It is not tenanted to this day, for the people are afraid of that particular lum. Whether her death was due to the fit into which I saw her or to the cause of her unconsciousness when I found her, only God and young Jamie know.

But she was dead, and Mariposa became permanently one of our little household. My mother grew to love her as her own child, and her declining days were gladdened by the sight of our happiness. As soon as the fever abated and my mind became clear, there was no further doubt that I would live for many a year.

But my recovery was slow and, as Mariposa was my nurse, the work of the farm had to be done by men from the clachan. There was little to be done, however, for the winter was a hard one, and be-

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fore the sowing season began, events took place that left the farm to itself.

During those winter months the farm slept, you might say. There was an old spinet in the loft and Mariposa learned to play on it with quite some skill. She would sit by it for hours, improvising airs and verses in her wild Gaelic-Spanish way. There was one song of her own make which often runs in my head:

When the woods are groanin',
And cauld the night,
'And the hare is greetin'
By the door,
'And the ewes are bleatin'
In the glen,
Then coorie doon, lad,
It's winter fair.

Syne it be mornin',
Ye're sair to wake.
Who'll make the fire
And boil the pot?
Who'll soup the byre
And milk the kye?
But coorie doon, lad,
It's winter fair.

We improved the long nights, too, with an old Bible, which my father had bought from our friend, Alexander Macmurtrie, the Glasgow lawyer. With the help of the little teaching I had had from my father, I became quite proficient in the letters, and by and by Mariposa learned from me.

We would take turn and turn, reading about how Adam made his first pair of breeches, as the Bible called trews, and about the Israelites, too, leaving out all the hard names, or putting places and names we knew in their stead. The writing was the hardest part of our exercises, for we had nothing but the table to write on with bits of rough chalk or charred sticks.

I have told you nothing of our love, but the ready mind will understand the tenderness that marked all our dealings with the Israelites and the letters. Sometimes we left the poor tribes in the middle of the Red Sea—that was the Firth of Clyde—with Black Archibald—that was Pharaoh—at their heels, and spoke of Mariposa's father and mother, for the story of Don John and Mistress Mary was now a thing of tremendous meaning to her.

You can imagine the kitchen, and the firelight on our two faces, one reminiscent, the other tender and tearful. She would sometimes open the locket and gaze at the face of her Spanish grandmother. For so could no man speak ill of Mariposa. That locket was her talisman against evil. Her grandmother had worn it; her father had worn it; her mother had worn it; and now the consecrated bauble lay on her own sweet bosom.

At the castle matters were in a bonny state, we heard. Black Archibald and his son had not exchanged an unnecessary word since that terrible night. Each lived in his own wing of the castle,

each with his own bitter reflections. But on one thing they were agreed, and the thought of it chills my blood to this day. At a certain hour each night, Big Aundra entered the common-room, lit the candles, put down liquor, goblets, and the cards, and withdrew. Shortly after, father and son appeared and silently took their places at the table. Till long past midnight, I have heard, they played and drank, with never a sound but a curse, or a triumphant jeer. I have no doubt they quarreled, but Big Aundra said no; and that the game ended when one or the other pitched his cards on the table and stalked away to his wing, with not even a word of leave-taking.

In the meantime, a strange sickness visited the clachan, and one of the first to succumb to it was my mother. She caught a sudden chill and coughed herself to death in a week, despite Mariposa's skill with the herbs. It was a terrible blow to both of us, and after we put her to rest in the rose-garden with my father, Angus, we found ourselves in a strange situation. I was not well enough to be about, and we had not thought of marrying for some time yet, for Mariposa, though grown before the time of our women, was barely turned sixteen.

Mariposa solved the problem with her quick wit and good heart. She made up her mind to brave the guidwives of the village and doctor their poor, sick children. And so that I should not be lonely, she must procure a boat from the village. This

boat we kept in the burn mouth, and when the weather was fine I went sailing and fishing.

At first Mariposa had trouble with the guidwives — for they were half afraid of her on account of her blackamoor father and her dealings with Daft Leezie — but their hearts soon warmed to her when she tidied the bairns, whose parents, in some cases, were sneezing and coughing in bed. As for the men of the clachan, they worshipped the very ground she walked on.

And now I come to the beginning of our most terrible adventures. The Macdonalds, you will mind, were at war with our people. For fifteen years it had been kept up, off and on, although the raids were all on the other side of the loch. But now, to all appearances, they had grown tired of it, and were making for peace.

The first I heard of it was from Mariposa, who saw young Ronald Macdonald, chieftain of the Kyles, going and coming to and from his boat and the castle. And after his boat was gone, Black Archibald and young Jamie were walking in the castle woods, as friendly as two cushats.

It was strange. It did not seem possible that the head of the elder Ronald was forgotten; and yet it had been a fair exchange. But a few days later, Mariposa came to the farm in a great state. She was white and trembling; she would knit her brows, and her eyes would flash angrily.

Her story cleared up the mystery of the peace

that had fallen between the Blacks. She had heard a whispering among the men of the clachar, as they stood in idle groups, talking quietly but excitedly, and anon they would shake their fists across the strait. Yet they said, to whom should ask, that the Macdonalds and the Campbells had made a peace; and it was common knowledge in the clachan that in four days — which would be Twelfth-night — the clans were to meet in Kilellan Castle for a grand feast. I could only stare at Mariposa when she told me this, and she must have seen what was passing in my mind, for she said:

“Will it be treachery, Rorie?”

I agreed; and next moment I thanked God that the wound in my side would prevent me having any hand in the business. Even had I been well, I should have protested at any cost. Not that treachery was uncommon in such warfare, or that my neighbors would have held me wrong if I took part in it; but there was something in me that could not thole it.

“What can we do, Rorie?” Mariposa asked, looking across the table at me.

It was in my mouth to say, “Nothing,” but there was an expectancy in her eyes that demanded another answer.

“I kenna,” I said, to gain time. “I will think it ower, lass. Four days, ye say?”

“Ay; that’ll be Twelfth-night.”

Twelfth-night! It is the period of revel; yet

my heart sickened at the sound of it. Perhaps it was part of the diabolic unfitness of the whole plot. Next day my dread took real shape. It was true to the wildest reach of my fancy; ay, and beyond. The women were now whispering of it, and Mariposa among them. A feast — a signal. When I heard it, the skin of my head tightened over my ears, and in my weak state I plumped into a chair with the sweat of faintness.

I shall never forget the next day. All morning long I fidgeted about the house, striving to drive the thing from my thoughts. When Mariposa returned from the clachan, she only looked at me and sat down in silence, with her fingers twining and untwining in her lap. What could we do — a woman and a sick man — against that fierce lot of savages? Next day Mariposa went as usual to the clachan. I pleaded with her to stay at home.

"No," she said. "I canna stay, lad, I must know all. Besides, they might think —"

"Let them think!" I cried.

At that she turned, gave me a queer look, and went out without a word. By and by there was a knock at the door, and in came Big Aundra. He sat down by the fire and grinned.

"Have ye heard?" he whispered.

"Ay." The fainting sweat was on me again.

"Ye will be on hand?"

"Aundra," I stammered, and he must have seen my state. "Aundra —"

"Hech, sir, ye will be weak," said he. "Ye will stay where ye are. There will be work for strong men this night. It was the laird himself bade me ask. He will be sorry, Rorie, for yon fight. It was to have been a peace for all."

Peace! I shuddered. Big Aundra poured me a drop of whisky, told me it would not be well for me to stir out, and went his way. I fell on my knees by the chair and began to pray. It is an ill wind that brings no good. Yet I was uneasy and unsatisfied.

I had been calmer in my mind when Mariposa burst into the kitchen, her face drawn with anger and her eyes flaming rage. She did not speak at first, but walked up and down the room, her plaid flying as she whisked around at each turn.

"I canna stand this!" she said at last in a low, passionate voice. "They are roasting the ox and filling the wassail, and whispering — and whispering — and whispering. What people will they be, Rorie? It is not in my blood to endure it. I will not. I will not!"

Off she went again — up and down — tossing her black locks, and her plaid whisking like a bird's wing. By and by she stopped and listened. Then she tiptoed to the door, opened it, and stood, looking up at the clear, frozen stars.

She was listening, I know; for once or twice she turned her head sharply to the west. All at once she called my name in a fierce whisper. I was at

her side in a moment. She gripped my arm and looked wildly into my eyes.

"Ye hear it?"

I listened. From far away came wind-blown snatches of a faint pibroch.

"The pibroch o' the Macdonalds!" she whispered.

"Ay." And I pointed to the clachan of the Campbells, where a tongue of fire shot up, followed by another and another, until the united blaze threw our shadows behind us. The Campbells had set their bonfire, and next minute the far, faint pibroch was lost in the wild blast of Black Archibald's pipers. I heard Mariposa's breath come fast, and out of the corner of my eye saw the locket gleaming in the firelight upon a madly heaving bosom.

"They'll not do it!" she burst out. "I'll warn them. I'll warn them yet!"

"Mariposa!" I groaned. "What can we do?"

"The boat!" she gasped. "The boat in the burn-mouth."

In a moment I had abandoned the farm to itself, and was running by her side to the woods by the burn. And even as I stumbled forward, a kind of terror put speed in my limbs, for I could have sworn that I heard dead Daft Leezie's voice cackling, yammering and shrieking in the air:

"Porie! Rorie Maclean! Ye betrayed the Campbells for a heathen lassie!"

CHAPTER IX

TWELFTH NIGHT

I cannot explain how I yielded so readily to Mariposa; for, although I know now that I did right, it haunted me as I went that I was betraying my own people. But such was the power of Mariposa over two conflicting duties in my conscience, that, once started on the adventure, I had no thought or will to turn back.

We went through the woods that skirted the burn and headed for the mouth, where my boat was beached. All at once there was a crashing in the thicket on the Loch Striven side. Roderick Dow and several other men of the clachan splashed across the burn. Mariposa, quick as a deer, slipped behind a tree, and whispered me to do the like. But I was too slow, and next moment I was face to face with Roderick.

“Stand — there!” he growled, as if the air breathed of the enemy already.

“Are they coming?” I asked as calmly as I could.

“Hey, Rorie, is it yourself? Ay, they’re coming — boatloads of them.”

“Then God help them all!” I said, solemnly.

"Ye may well say't," chuckled Roderick.
"Come on, Cam'ells."

And off they went, running toward the clachan. Mariposa stepped out from the tree and pulled my arm. In a few minutes we were by the boat. We stopped to listen. The blare of the Campbell pipes came shrilly to our ears; but the Macdonalds had now come far enough down the loch for us to hear the pibroch in conflict.

"Haste!" whispered Mariposa, leaping into the boat.

I obeyed and took the rower's seat, but she waved me into the stern and took the oars herself.

"I will be the stronger," she said.

I protested; but she angrily bade me be still. We pushed off and sailed out of the burn. The moment we cleared the point, the Macdonald pipes broke on our ears with greater volume. Half a dozen lights moved swiftly down the middle of the loch; and as we stopped to mark their position, we could hear the steady wash of their oars.

"Pray we dinna miss them," said Mariposa, drawing a long stroke.

Straight out shot the boat, Mariposa's supple figure bending to greater haste, while I sat chafing at my helplessness. The lights seemed to descend with increasing swiftness; but presently Mariposa glanced from left to right — first at the Macdonald torches, then at the clachan — and hung on her oars.

"In time!" she gasped.

It was a strange scene, as our boat lay there between the murderers and their oncoming victims. Over us were the innocent stars, snapping in the clear dome, which seems so much higher and wider above the water. Before us lay the Isle of Bute; to the left the bonfire lit up the castle where Black Jamie had been slain by the old chieftain of the Kyles; and to our right, six black shadows, surmounted by flaming torches, moved toward us on the long reach of Loch Striven.

Nearer they came. The pipe-music arose in a sullen drone, and the wild but sweet pibroch of the Macdonalds mingled with the fierce pipe-march of the Campbells. Mariposa called to the men of the Kyles. I added my voice; but at first they did not hear us.

The boats came down on us swiftly, and although I shouted with all my strength, it seemed as if we must be run down. One of the boats passed to our left, and then the flare of its torch illumined us clearly. The torch-bearer in the next boat peered ahead, with his light held behind him; then he spoke quickly to the rowers. The oars stopped, the pipes hushed, and all at once a deathly stillness, save for the pipe-music ashore, fell around us.

"Who stops the Macdonald?" cried a full, deep voice.

"A friend!" cried Mariposa promptly.

"A woman. What have we here?"

"And if ye love your lives, blow the pipes," I added, for the Campbells ashore might have caught a hint that something was to do.

The pipes skirled louder than before. The boats lay still, however, except one which slipped alongside of us.

"A friend, ye said?" was the challenge of Ronald of the Kyles. "Are not all friends this night?"

"Ye have no friends on these shores," I said. "I am no traitor, mark ye, Macdonald; but I tell ye, if ye enter that castle, ye will never leave it alive!"

"Ay, ay," said the chieftain coolly. Indeed, it was as if I had passed him the time of night. "Hold the torch, Duncan."

The bearer illumined our boat. Ronald peered at me; then his eyes turned upon Mariposa. I saw a light leap into them. If ever a man was struck by a beautiful face, it was Ronald Macdonald when he first beheld Mariposa. It is the best I have to say of the man.

"Euheu!" he said through his nose. "Hey, Rob. Get in yon boat, and row it whence it came. I take it," said he to me, "that it was a discreet place."

"Ay," I answered, for I hardly knew what to say to this.

"Good — very good," said he. "You take

Rob's place by me. I would speak a word with you as we go."

"But ye will surely not go on?" I began. But he interrupted me:

"Obey me, sirrah. Push off, Rob."

Doubtful and mystified, I stared first at Mariposa, then at Rob, who was already in our boat.

"Go, Rorie," said my lass. "I am not afraid."

"Ye mean well?" I said, looking the chieftain full in the face.

"I would be a dog," he answered. "But time presses. I would have a word with you."

I stepped into the great boat. Instantly a command was given to the rowers, and Mariposa and Rob were left behind.

"Now, sir," said the chieftain, "I take it you mean — treachery?"

I told him all I knew and feared; whereat he laughed.

"'Tis as I expected," said he. "But have never a fear, my friend. What the Campbells have in wit, the Macdonalds have in craft. Is the feast ready?"

"Ay, the oxen and the wassail."

He put his chin on his breast and seemed to fall into deep thought. Once he gave an order for the rowers to ease, so that he should have more time, without appearing to the Campbells to have any suspicion. At last he spoke again.

"I thank ye, Cam'ell. The same thing was in the mind of the Macdonalds."

My heart sickened, though I might have misunderstood him. But was it possible that treachery had been planned on both sides? And I had thrust Mariposa into danger for nothing? And myself into a position —

"But it was well to know," the Macdonald went on coolly. "If the feast is ready, then the feast is to be eaten. Trust a Campbell for that!"

He looked at the distance separating the boats from the shore; then he spoke hurriedly to Duncan. The torch was waved in circles up and down and the pipes hushed. The boats mysteriously closed up together; and while the men rested on their oars, the chieftain quietly spoke to them. What he said related to all I had told him. In conclusion, he said that which plunged me into the depths of shame and horrible remorse.

"Their signal will be given at the drinking of the wassail. Our signal shall be a skirl of Alan's pipe as the bowl is placed before the Black. Does Alan hear?"

"Ay," came a gruff voice from one of the boats.

"I doubt not the Campbell is to slay the Macdonald to his left, so he can draw with his right. At the signal from Alan, the Macdonald will slay the Campbell to his *right!*"

"How shall he draw?" asked a voice.

"The dirk first," was the answer.

The boats moved on, and I sat by the Macdonald's side, with my heart as heavy and cold as stone. Not only did it seem that I had betrayed my kinsmen to no purpose, but I had innocently aided a worse treachery. For if the Campbell turned to slay the man to his left, a dirk would sink into him before he could wield the clumsy claymore. In my heart I prayed that the Campbell signal might be the first, for then it would be a fair fight, at least.

But what was to become of me? Not that I cared—now!—save for Mariposa's sake. Were they going to take me ashore with them, in the very face of the Campbells? And why had the Macdonald sent Rob with Mariposa? That might have been chivalry, even in such a brute, and it had been necessary that he should speak with me. But, now that my boat was gone, what was to be done with me? I put the question.

"Do ye quail, Campbell?" he said mockingly.

"This night ye shall eat at Archibald's board."

"He kens me," I said. "To his cost, he kens me."

"He will ken ye better before the morn," was the retort. "Hey, Sandy!" he cried, dropping from the Gaelic to the dialect. "Gie's yer bonnet and yer plaid. Gie him yours, Cam'ell. We'll mak' a Macdonald o' you."

The blood rushed to my brain, and the voice of

old Leezie cackled in it. Rorie Maclean wearing the hated tartan of the Macdonald! But it was inevitable. So could I pass on the shore with the other men, and — oh! how I prayed that it might be so — escape and warn my people of their own peril. But if the chief spoke in earnest, I knew that I must be recognized at the board. What then?

My heart was like to burst with the very shame of it. We were now close inshore, so close that I could recognize Black Archibald and his son standing in the centre of a semicircle of torch bearers and pipers. Behind them, and to left and right of this half-moon, were scores of men in full Highland dress; and, back of all, the trees cut fantastic figures against the bonfire by the castle.

As the Macdonald's boat ran on the low surf, a dozen men sprang forward to beach it. The chieftain of the Kyles advanced boldly into the semicircle. The Campbells drew their claymores and held them aloft with a shout. Black Archibald welcomed the Macdonald, who gave him a grip of his hand, while his own men hailed the Campbells.

Presently, with scores of Macdonalds, I found myself shaking hands with my own people — with men who would have known me had not shame turned my back to the torches, so that my face was ever in darkness. Oh, the bitter, cruel moment that was! But it was nothing to the rest.

Again the pipes screamed and droned; and the "festal" procession moved toward the castle. First went the torches; then the Campbell pipers; then more torches and Black Archibald, the chieftain of the Kyles and young Jamie, with a few body-men; more torches, then the pipers of the Macdonalds, and a vast mingling of the two clans, lit at intervals by rows of flaming links. Speech was not wanting in the throng; but, to my imagination, at least, it was charged with brutal hypocrisy on both sides.

While we were still in the woods, I tried to escape from the crowd. Nothing seemed easier of accomplishment until I essayed it. Then I found myself hemmed in, front and rear, by Macdonalds. In vain I pushed, but the men of the Kyles blocked the way without a change of countenance, or any sign that they even noticed me. But their steady resistance showed clearly that there was method in their seeming indifference. I groaned aloud. Never was man in so terrible a position. I gave up trying to escape, and, bowing my head in despair, allowed myself to be swept on like a murderer to the gallows-tree.

At the castle door there was a pause. The three chieftains stood in the great doorway, while the Campbell pipers played a pibroch of the Macdonalds, and the men of the Kyles returned the ironic compliment. My brain was like to burst, for it was as if the pipes mocked, jeered, and chuckled.

When the clans moved into the castle, there was a grim, subdued air about the procession. It was but human that each man should draw a long breath of God's fresh air. Who knew that he would breathe when he came out again? As for me, I was incapable of breathing. The air seemed to enter my mouth and go no farther, and an empty sickness seized me. As in a dream, I went in with the rest. In the confusion of seating the "guests," I was not noticed; or if any Campbell recognized me, he but saw one who had a right there, and overlooked the tartan that every other man wore.

Suddenly I looked up and discovered that, if I did not sit down at once, I would be left standing, and a target for all eyes. Every place was occupied but two, and these, to my dismay, were to the left of young Jamie, who sat at the foot of the table. His father was at the head of the table, with the chieftain of the Kyles on his left — a fine place of honour!

I stumbled forward and sat down by young Jamie, just as a Campbell took the farther place. It was Big Aundra! Our eyes met over half an arm's-length.

"Hey, Rorie!" he hailed.

Then his eyes fell upon the tartan. They widened, first in amazement, next in wild rage. Then they half closed, and I heard his breathing come short, sharp, and fierce. My eyes fell to the table.

His great hairy, knotted hand lay on the edge, and his fingers were twitching.

"Traitor!" he hissed in my ear. And never another word did he utter.

But my agony was only beginning, for there was Black Archibald, himself, staring down the table at me. His face was as white as milk, and his teeth were dug into his lower lip. Other eyes followed his, and every orb was a nail, and I was as one crucified. I could feel the breath of young Jamie turned on my right cheek.

The candles swam before my eyes, and the odour of the dried brackens on the floor strangled me. I was in torture, surrounded by eyes and flames — torch-fires. A silence — the silence of death awaiting judgment — surrounded me. I knew every man's hand was at his sword-hilt, for the secret was out. Ronald o' the Kyles was gazing with a sardonic smile at his enemy, as one who would say, "Well?" And still young Jamie and Aundra hemmed me in with appalling silence.

Although the weakness of my wound was upon me, I jerked myself together. I had done right. Even if the cause had proven unworthy, I had tried to do right. For Mariposa's sake, I must preserve my wit. Yet, how to act, unarmed as I was, save for my dirk? And I knew enough of the Campbells to appreciate that a score of swords would seek me as a sheath the moment the signal for massacre sounded.

The significant silence ended. Black Archibald laughed harshly and said something to his vassals. And immediately the feast began. From the kitchen came the drone of a dozen pipes. The pipers entered four abreast. Between the second and third ranks came six men bearing upon their shoulders an immense trencher, upon which lay the haggis, adorned with one tall thistle. Thrice around the board they marched; then the haggis was laid before Black Archibald, who arose and drew his claymore.

“Ox-blood, mutton, and meal!” he cried. “So we bury the sword.”

Under other circumstances the speech would have been hailed with a shout; but Black Archibald’s sneer, as he plunged the blade into the reeking haggis, was caught up and echoed around the board in mocking, quiet laughter.

So the horrible feast went on. As the liquor loosened men’s tongues and stirred their temper, speech became more natural to the situation. A Macdonald deliberately upset a Campbell’s goblet; a Campbell spat on a Macdonald’s meat; and the battle was held in check only by a word from Black Archibald, or a frown from the chieftain of the Kyles. And still young Jamie on one side of me, and Big Aundra on the other, preserved a maddening silence.

As the moment approached, I wrought my brain for a way out of my situation. I could not think

to plunge my dirk into the heart of one of my own people. True, Big Aundra's duty was to the Macdonald on the left of him, but the look in his eyes when he met mine told me that he would attend to me first.

Even if he obeyed his orders, I was still the appointed victim of young Jamie on my right. My only desire was to escape and save Mariposa, for I knew that, whatever side won, she must suffer. None but the Macdonalds knew that she was my companion in the boat, for Roderick and his men had seen only me by the burn-mouth; but, one way or the other, she must be captive to the Macdonalds, or fall a prey to young Jamie, if I died.

The moment approached without bringing me decision. The pipes screamed again, and the was-sail was brought in. The Campbell slogan — fierce and quick — throbbed through the castle, and the wild strain of the Macdonalds wailed above it. Which side would sound the discord first? I prayed God to send it — either one — quickly!

It came — a shriek like a devil bursting from hell! Whether it was Alan's pipe or a Campbell's, I know not. But there was a sudden roar from turret to dungeon. Blades flashed in the torch-fires; seats and doors crashed and splintered. Big Aundra sank forward on the table with a dirk buried in his back. Everywhere, Campbell and Macdonald engaged, surprising surprise.

At the first discord of the pipe, I sprang to my

feet and took a quick step backward. Young Jamie's rapier ripped through the Macdonald plaid. The cursed tartan fell from my shoulders as I sent my fist between the young laird's eyes. He went down like a stone.

At the same moment, Roderick Dow, swinging his broadsword, bore down on me. I thought my last moment had come. But Black Archibald called out something in Gaelic. Instantly the torch-bearers flung their brands to the floor and stamped them out. I dropped on my hands and knees simultaneously, and in utter darkness Roderick Dow pitched across my back.

[NOTE. I must presume that Rorie Maclean speaks with authority of the facts in a historic massacre, but the people of Cowal to-day hold that the great dinner massacre took place at Dunoon Castle, nine miles north-east of Kilellan, and that the participants in the dual treachery were the Macdonalds and the Lamonts. S. C.]

CHAPTER X

AFTER THE FEAST

To my knowledge of Kilellan Castle I owed my life on that terrible Twelfth-night. Nevertheless, my escape from that inferno was not an easy matter.

Luckily for me, the moment the lights were extinguished and the fight began in earnest, my mind became as clear in emergency as it had been confused in suspense; and presently I made an important discovery. In all that yelling, scrambling mass of furious men, I alone was not anxious to find the enemy. True, I was on guard all the time, and had possessed me of a sword which I found on the bloody brackens, but so long as I kept out of the way, I was tolerably safe.

On all sides men roared or screamed; horse-pistols thundered in the darkness of that confined place, and I could hear, in an occasional lull, the hard breathing of wrestlers rustling in the brackens, or the quick, expectant panting of a Highlander feeling for a fresh enemy.

"Campbell!" was the challenge. "Macdonald!" was the retort; and then, not a man's length from me, I would hear them fall to.

Now that darkness hid the faces of men, my temporary situation was simple. If my people held me an enemy, I yet bore them no grudge. My hatred of the Macdonalds was, in a great measure, strengthened by my late mortification. When a Campbell challenged me, I conscientiously replied: "Campbell," and when a Macdonald flung at me, I engaged. My weakness and my wound were forgotten, and I must have fought to advantage, for I live to write these memoirs.

But for Mariposa's sake I avoided the battle which could bring no forgiveness to me. Bit by bit I fought my way to the hall. But the castle door was held by a number of Campbells, who had been posted there to prevent the escape of their enemy. To my left was the staircase leading to the living-rooms. Here, at least, would be respite long enough for me to conceive a plan.

Up I ran. At the landing I paused for a moment. Ahead of me was an open door, beyond which burned a candle. I tiptoed forward, my borrowed sword in readiness. I stopped in the doorway, amazed. Black Archibald stood at the far end of the laird's room, with his back to me. He was pouring whisky into a goblet, and as he drained it, his arm shook violently. Then he jumped into the big bed — the same where Don John and I had frightened Black Jamie — and began fumbling at the wall.

There came a snap, and a whitewashed door,

that had seemed a piece of the wall, creaked inward. The coward was going to fly, or hide, from the danger which he had created.

"It's ower early for bed, Archibald," I said quietly.

He nearly fell flat on the bed, so great was his fright. Then he turned around, and seeing me, his face became inflamed with rage.

"You! You! Traitor!" he cried, picking his rapier off the bed and jumping to the floor.

Then I regretted my folly. Although I had a sword in my hand, I am willing to confess that to this day I am a better hand with the scythe. Black Archibald knew it, too, as I could see by the merciless light in his eyes as he swooped down on me. But I whirled the mighty broadsword like a windmill, and with such rapidity that the laird could but stand and wait till I was tired of the game.

But desperation was in my strength, and to keep clear of the long blade he was forced back until his shoulders touched the bed. Then he sprang at me, but I was as quick to spring, too — not backward, but sideward — and at the second lunge and dodge our positions were reversed. I was cornered against the bed, with hardly room to swing the claymore, and he was standing with his back to the door, coolly smiling as he waited for my next move.

But neither he nor I struck a blow. The square

form of the chieftain of the Kyles appeared in the doorway.

Black Archibald must have seen the reflection of danger in my eyes, for he wheeled around even before he could have heard my "Look out!" In sooth, I doubt if he ever heard it, for Ronald Macdonald made a spring and a sklent with his claymore.

"Hey, Black, is it yourself!" he roared. With the words something heavy and round spun across the room, struck the wall, and, leaving a great stain, fell with a thump to the floor. Black Archibald, if that can be named which is a headless body, swayed on his heels, then gently collapsed in a heap.

The Macdonald looked down on his horrible work with a triumphant sneer.

"Hey, Archibald," said he. "It was the grand dinner!"

Presently he looked at me, recognizing me — to my shame — instantly. But his eyes lingered only a second, then traveled to the door in the wall.

"What's yon?" he cried, above the din from below. "Hey! A passage?"

His eyes actually twinkled as he looked at the opening, and at the other doors of the room. Besides the one which we had both entered, there was another to the left. He opened it, and immediately from the gloom beyond came the pandemonium of

the fight in sudden volume. The candle-light revealed a balcony, which, I knew, overlooked the great dining-hall.

The Macdonald chuckled. Making a dive for the head of Black Archibald, with the other hand he seized the candle. A horrified witness, I stood there where the laird had cornered me, as the chieftain of the Kyles stepped out on the balcony. Looking down into that pit of hell, he lifted the dripping head by the hair, and putting the candle between it and his own face, shouted:

"Macdonalds. A head for the head of my father!"

There was a sudden terrible hush; then a roar of mingled triumph and rage shook the castle from tower to dungeon. A pistol-shot sounded and the candle was snuffed out. The Macdonald sprang back into the room.

"Quick!" he whispered. He scrambled across the bed on his elbows — for he carried the candle and the head with him — and disappeared into the hole in the wall.

Knowing how much more impossible my situation would be if I were found there after that awful sight, I slipped through the secret door and drew it close behind me. It shut with a snap, just as there came the thunder of scores of feet on the staircase and the upper landing.

"Which way?" whispered the Macdonald, in the pitchy darkness.

"I am as much in the dark as yourself," I said.

"Then," chuckled the Macdonald, "we'll light the dip again."

By the dim candle-light a flight of narrow stairs descended. I know now that we were between a false and an outer wall of the castle, in an escape which descended to the foundation. When we reached the bottom, a level tunnel, partly of natural rock, ran outward for a considerable distance. It ended abruptly in a pool of water which I recognized presently as in a natural cavern called the Devil's Kitchen. It was a place where, in summer, the lads and lassies came to wish, for there was a superstition about the pool. A flight of rudely cut steps led up to the open air, to a kind of bower in the castle woods.

Here we had time to draw breath and consider our situation. The sounds of strife within the castle came to my ears as a dull rumble, for the clearer conflict was without the castle, and it seemed fiercest on the beach by the boats.

The Macdonald, observing this, I suppose, stayed not a moment. Throwing away the candle, he changed the head to his left hand and, drawing his red claymore, dashed to the beach. Presently I heard his voice above the tumult, and I could picture him spreading dismay and triumph with the head and his broadsword.

By and by a host of Campbells, led by a man named Dirk Gower, rushed through the woods as

if to fall back on their comrades by the castle door. Close behind them came the Macdonald and his men. As the chieftain passed my hiding-place, he yelled to me:

"Come on, Campbell! Follow your master's head!"

I turned away, overcome with shame and fatigue. The uproar of the battle boomed and crashed in my brain. The trees began to twist and interlace as if to imprison me. I staggered forward, instinctively making for home. When I arrived there, the same strange trance found me laughing at the flames which enveloped the farmhouse from byre to attic. I remember being pleased to think that those who had fired my father's house had turned out the horses and cows, for they were standing stupidly about the fields as I reeled across the Long Pasture to the burn-mouth.

It was not until I came to the boat that I fully realized what I was about. The boat was empty. Mariposa was gone! For that matter, so was the man called Rob. Everything was gone—home, honour, and Mariposa! I had even lost the borrowed sword.

I sat down on the cold stones and curiously watched the icy waters congealing on the burn's edge. I have no doubt the battle was still raging, but I heard nothing and saw nothing, not even the

flames that burned my own home. I was glad, though, that the cows were not suffering. . . .

Presently I saw Mariposa by the boat. She was throwing things into it, and seemed to be in a great hurry. I dimly wondered at all this, until I remembered that we had no home and that Cowal was no place for either of us after this night's work. By and by she roused me and told me to get into the boat. I obeyed. She pushed off and rowed steadily and quietly until there seemed to be nothing in the world but a calm, cold sea, and the stars, and us.

Mariposa drew in her oars and crept to my side. I lay in the bottom of the boat, too tired to think or care any longer.

"Rorie, we did wrong?" she whispered.

"Ay."

"No!" she cried vehemently. "We did right. We did right!"

"Maybe," was all I could say.

She brought a heavy plaid and, laying herself beside me, drew it over us both.

"Where can we go?" she whispered.

I tried to think, but I had no answer to give. So the boat drifted into the loch and the night.

CHAPTER XI

THE MAN ON THE ISLAND

I was awakened by a cry of delight from Mariposa. I sat up in the boat and looked stupidly around me, for after the mingled dreams and realities of the night, this awakening confused my senses for a while.

The boat was drifting in a thin, calm loch, between ranges of mountains that rose almost straight from the water's edge to the clear, cold sky of dawn. Ahead of us were several rocky islets, beyond which the loch widened considerably. Mariposa stood in the bow with her hands clasped and her eyes shining with delight.

"Rorie!" she cried. "Is it not bonny?"

To me it was a ghostly country, perhaps because it was new to my eyes and unexpected to my mind. The islets seemed fairy-like and hung in air; the water around us was smooth and black; and all was so still that I could hear Mariposa's breathing, as the frosty mist broke from her lips. There was no sunlight where we were, the mountains to the right hiding it from all but the tips of the hills. Away over our heads a shaft of rosy flame played on the peaks and made them glow like

wet colours. Patches of snow and icicles gleamed on bald crags, and the warm light crept downward like a slow blush.

The air was keen; but as there was no wind stirring, or even a ruffle on the loch, the cold hurt us little. I was stiff when I stood up, but that soon passed, and presently I had a longing to reach land and run a league or two. All my pains, all my sorrow, were gone in a moment, as a bad dream might disappear in sunshine. Here was peace and a country that was as new to me as if it had been America; the air touched my veins like wine, yet cleared my brain; the sky was cloudless and of a pale opal which richly set off the crimsoning world; beside me was Mariposa, and I was as hungry as a wolf.

In that moment I wondered why I should enjoy living so much, and why the weary terrors of yesternight should now appear so small. But there was Mariposa, and there was the clear dawn, and hunger's necessity awoke every fibre to life.

"Mariposa," I said, "it is splendid."

She said nothing, but her face flushed with pleasure and she drew a deep breath. Then she dropped on her knees, and, putting her chin on the edge of the boat, stared into the black water.

"Oh, Rorie!" she cried. "I can see myself as if it was you."

"I'm no so bonny," I asserted.

She turned her head and eyed me.

"But ye will improve, Rorie!" she said archly.

I took one of the oars and began canting the boat toward one of the islets. Mariposa cried, "Stop!"

When I asked her what might be the matter, she cried:

"Ye will have broken my looking-glass — but I liked myself fine," she added whimsically.

The boat wobbled nearer and nearer to the islet. The waters became green, and we could hear the soft, slow ripple on the gravelly shore. Mariposa sat looking at the now broken water with thoughtful eyes. Presently she said:

"Rorie, I am not like other women."

At this unexpected remark, I stopped canting. I assured her that she was like no other woman on earth.

"But why are not all women alike?" she asked.

"I will no ken myself," I said, a bit staggered.

"Some, ye see, have straight noses and some have noses that turn up. Many have poor teeth if they have good noses. Some, again, have red hair, and some will be altogether handsome, yet not bonny."

"Is my nose turn-up, Rorie?"

"No, lass. It will be straight."

"My hair is black — is it no?"

"Black as — like yon deep water."

"That's a bonny black," she said, reflectively.

"Are my eyes the same?"

"Ay — no. Like the shallow water here."

"Green!" she cried.

"No. That will be but the nearest word. Look ower the other side."

Mariposa leaned over and her hair grazed in the water as she gazed. The inshore waters moved restlessly among the strange things below.

"Eh, bonny — bonny," said Mariposa. Whether she spoke of her eyes or of the waters I did not know for a moment. "It's that clear, but that dark, Rorie — that calm and that moving. It makes me dizzy." After a long silence she turned away her head and said: "If a woman's eyes are like that, I'm thinking it would not be good to look down into them ower long, Rorie." She shuddered. "I'm feared o' the moving waters, lad. They would drive me daft!"

Something lumped in my throat. The scene, the hour, the words, stirred my love to a demonstrativeness that is not common in our people. I drew in the oar and tiptoed forward. She had turned her back to me, but I drew her head back so that her face looked up into mine.

"Ah, lass, ye speak true. Your eyes are the moving waters, and sometimes I fear to look ower long. I pray they hide none of the cruel things in yon sea. . . . Mariposa."

I held her face close to mine. I did not kiss her, for the thrall was too great. But her eyes suddenly burned and seemed to question me eagerly.

"Ay, Rorie!" she whispered tensely. "I love ye now — this minute — better than — better than

Don John. Say that again. Say more like that. Ye never spoke so before."

But I was stricken dumb. The rare passion of words had passed with the rare moment. She must have seen my confusion and pain, for she knitted her brows and looked away. I bent to kiss her, thinking so I could make up for my poor tongue; but she pulled herself out of my arms and said, "No!" Indeed, she seemed as much confused as I was.

"Oh, lass," I said, again moving toward her.

But there came a strange interruption to our love scene. A voice, rich and melodious, arose in song almost at our ears:

"Drink to me only with thine eyes
And I will pledge with mine;
Leave but a kiss within the cup,
And I'll not ask for wine."

I cannot remember how the rest went, for I was too thunderstruck to be aware of anything but the interruption and the singer himself — a very tall, well-built man, dressed like a Sassenach of the poorer kind — save for a Highland bonnet — with a smooth, clear-cut face, now flushed with wine. He sat on a rock on the islet shore, waving a pannikin in one hand, in time to his song.

That any one had witnessed our love-making filled me with great confusion. Mariposa, too, was red in the face, but she was laughing heartily at the odd picture of this merry man on the islet. And,

indeed, it was odd that any one should be on that barren rock. The Sassenach was a scarce figure in these Highlands; yet, here was one holding carousal on an islet not big enough to sustain a goat for a day.

"Hoot mon! Gang awa'!" he cried, in the style of one who is not a Scot but would try our speech. "Yon's the braw day, will she no, whatever? Can the wench mak' parritch? Oh, ay? Then come ashore an' I'll no ask for wine, as Ben MacJonson wad say."

The man's mockery aroused my anger. I canted the boat ashore and stepped out, Mariposa following me. Immediately a change came over the man's face. His eyes swept over and past me and fell with alarm before Mariposa's gaze. He threw away the pannikin and arose, somewhat unsteadily, to his feet.

"Lady, a thousand pardons!" he said, removing the Highland bonnet and sweeping the ground with it. "I had a fancy you were loverish churls and not, as I perceive, a lady of birth and one who indeed must be a gentleman to have won her favour. A thousand pardons!"

Despite the doubtful allusion to me, it was in my heart to forgive the man. Drunk though he was, he was a man of birth, and his sincerity drew my liking to him.

"Say no more," I said. He bowed to me, but continued to look at Mariposa. She, perceiving that her particular forgiveness was required,

blushed and lowered her head. The matter disposed of, the stranger introduced himself.

"I am Bordeaux," he said. "Why, I know not, save that I confess a craving for that Lethe when grief has filled my purse at the expense of my heart."

I judged, of course, that Bordeaux was not his name at all; but, supposing that our acquaintance would be brief, I introduced Mariposa and myself, explaining that we were victims of misfortune.

"And," I added, "if ye have aught to eat, we would be glad to share't. Ye spoke o' parritch."

"I spoke of much I'd lief forget," said Bordeaux, "save parritch. Behind yon rock," and he waved an arm dramatically, "there boils a pot upon a fire, and in that pot — meal, water, eke salt, bubbles to that consummation devoutly to be wished — parritch!"

He picked up the pannikin and led the way to a little cove on the other side of the island. Here, enclosed in a semicircle of rocks, was a bit of smooth gravel beach, which seemed to have been his resting place of the previous night. Drawn up on the beach was a sailboat, containing mast, oars, a quantity of provisions, and — what astonished me most — a number of books. A fire burned in this simple camp and a pot of porridge was on the boil. Our strange friend suddenly seized a potstick and began to stir the porridge vigorously, sing-songing as he did so:

Double, double toil and trouble;
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.
Fillet of a fenny snake
In the cauldron boil and bake.
Eye of newt and —

“And I forget the rest, having but heard by ear. That one he hath not sent to the printer, a rogue that doth borrow his good work and leave his better name. It is a way of printers, for when a name is good the work may be no book, but a bookful. But what’s in a name? The rose — Lumpy!” Bordeaux suddenly wailed, holding up a bit of hard-clotted meal on the potstick. “This comes of leaving a pot for a song. As you know, Lady Mariposa — and there is a name smells sweet of its posy — parritch, I was saying, should be stirred well till it bubbles.”

Mariposa had been looking at me with an amazed, amazed stare, to which I had replied with repeated shrugs of my shoulders; but at the “Lady Mariposa” she coloured happily and listened to the talkative Bordeaux as if he met with her whole approval, although I am sure she understood him and his words no more than I did at the time. He spread three pans on the gravel and poured the porridge.

“Now it must cool,” said he, “which is a grave matter, for you must be hungry. But I forget.” He disappeared and presently returned with the bottle and poured a dram of spirits for Mariposa.

"There. 'Twill take the chill from off your bones, and presently through all thy veins shall run a dull and — Silence, Bordeaux! Tak' aff yer dram."

The liquor was welcome after our cold night in the boat; indeed, by the time we had eaten our porridge, we were in as gay a humour among those rocks as ever I could wish for. Bordeaux was a mystery, but he gave us little time to think of it, save that the mystery grew. He seemed a man of much travel and some learning, although his talk ran a good deal to brawls and versifiers. A lively and not too spotless career must have been his; for he spoke, among other things, of having been with one, Marlowe, when he was slain in a tavern scuffle.

His age was difficult to mark. He could not have been more than thirty, yet his manners were those of an overgrown boy — boisterous, fantastic, and boasting — but his face, marked with drinking, seemed older than I have hazarded. He drank an alarming quantity of spirits, but seemed to grow no more tipsy. He caught my eye as he was pouring a fresh libation, and becoming aware that Mariposa, also, was looking at him in dismay, he waved the pannikin apologetically, and said:

"A thousand pardons, madam. Having so begun the day, so must I proceed, else would I collapse into that state of profound morbidity, or morbid profundity, which is the curse of poor Bordeaux. But when you are gone, alone in the solitary desert, unfrequented wood, I will suffer the pangs of Tan-

talus. A thousand pardons, madam — a thousand pardons.”

Up to this time he had asked no question leading to our presence in the open boat, nor had he given a hint as to his own mysterious behavior; but all at once he said:

“I perceive curiosity in your eyes. Pray do not think I misunderstand a natural weakness. The question is: what do I here? In short, in fine, to be brief — Hast heard of a ship men called La Trinidad?”

I stared at the man, my wits too stunned for full and immediate comprehension. Mariposa's voice awoke me.

“Oh, Rorie —”

“La Trinidad!” I roared. But my voice was not heard in the wild blast of pipe music that suddenly shook the air.

I jumped to my feet and beheld four boatloads of the Macdonalds coming up the narrow strait. On a pole erected in the prow of the foremost craft was the head of Black Archibald. I turned to Bordeaux.

“What place is this?” I shouted above the din.

“Kyles of Bute,” replied the strange man.

“Mariposa,” I said, as quietly as I might, “we must join the Macdonalds again.”

“Are you afraid of them?” asked Bordeaux.

“Are they your enemies?”

“No,” I replied sadly. “Even if I had reason

to fear them, it would help nothing. They must see us as they pass. If ye would have your freedom, Master Bordeaux, we must leave ye."

"And why, pray?"

"Their stronghold is in the strait to the west of Bute," I told him. "It must be close by. They will wear around this isle to reach it."

Bordeaux peered over the rocks, which were ample to hide three persons, besides the sailboat. Unfortunately, my own boat lay to the south side of the islet, and to reach it we must be seen. The stranger was quick to recognize, also, that if we did not make a move, the presence of the boat would arouse suspicion and the islet would be searched for whoever had brought it there. Bordeaux turned and looked at Mariposa. I never saw a man become sober so rapidly.

"Hide!" said he. "I will claim your boat."

"No," I said. "They would hang ye."

"Hang me — hang Bordeaux?" he said, seemingly much amused. "Sir!" he added with ridiculous gravity, "I am a Sassenach."

"It is because ye are a Sassenach they will hang ye," I said, laughing in spite of my fears. "They hate the English, for the Campbells are the friends of the English."

"And why does the merciless Macdonwald hate the Campbell?" he asked.

"As Cain hated Abel — and since."

Bordeaux stood up to his full height and folded his arms. He presented a fine picture of a man; strong and intelligent. His eyes were fixed on Mariposa.

"Are you sure they are your friends?" he asked very gravely.

"God forgive me if I say they are," I said, "but there are some things I canna speak of at this time."

"Your own concerns, my friend. But the lady. She shall stay with me if there be any chance —"

"If they see me they will seek her," I replied. "Better, sir, that we go, and while they stay to take us, do ye hide yourself an' the sailboat."

I saw that it went against his feelings.

"It goes against *my* heart," said I, "to lead this girl into more peril. But they will not harm us, though we be unwilling guests. If ye escape, Master Bordeaux, you and your boat may aid us, if ye follow and watch."

"Ah!" cried Bordeaux, relieved. "In a sieve I'll thither sail. And there, too, lies my duty and Macmurtrie's guineas."

"Macmurtrie?" I stammered. "Would ye be meaning the Glasca lawyer by that name?"

Bordeaux favoured me with a slow stare.

"The same," said he, much surprised.

"Quick!" cried Mariposa. "They are very near."

Indeed, there was no time to be lost, if we were

to make the best of a bad matter. I held out my hand to Bordeaux. He took it in a firm grip and spoke quickly.

"Where is La Trinidad? For I perceived in your eyes —"

"Ay. I ken o' her," I interrupted. "She was burned in Kilellan Bay seventeen year ago. Good-bye. And mind to follow."

"But, stay!" he cried, as Mariposa and I walked into full sight of the Macdonalds. "Where is Kilellan Bay?"

"Down the strait they're sailing up," I said, without daring to turn my head.

"What of La Trinidad's people?" he cried excitedly.

But the Macdonalds had seen Mariposa and me, and the pipes had suddenly hushed. I dared not answer Bordeaux's question, though I longed to ask him one myself. Mariposa and I walked toward our boat. As we went, Bordeaux's voice, once more reckless with insobriety, came to our ears:

"The merciless Macdonwald,
Worthy to be a rebel, for to that
The multiplying villainies of nature
Do swarm upon him."

"Hey, Campbell!" cried Ronald of the Kyles. "I take this kindly. Come away, man. Come away, and bring the lass."

CHAPTER XII

FICKLE WOMAN

The stronghold of the Macdonalds was but a short distance from the Kyles of Bute. It was situated in a valley of the hills, on the mainland to the west of the great isle of Bute, around which wound the narrow straits. I wondered at the time why the clan should have left such a vantage ground as Bute between them and the Campbells, but I have since learned that the big island was held by the priests of St. Blane's and by the Brandanes, hereditary barons whose acres were granted by one of our Stuart kings. In all our Highland warfare, save when a national issue was fought, the clans avoided encroachment upon that which was the king's, or of the king's command.

Had I known this at the time I might more easily have planned the escape of Mariposa and myself from the village of the Macdonalds, and sought sanctuary with the good monks, in the chapel which Malcolm Canmore caused to be built. But not knowing it, I remained for weeks in imprisoned liberty which was worse than death, for every hour of it was charged with a bitterness which those who have tasted a similar heart-hell will understand.

I think of it still, when moments of ill-humour come with their train of gloomy reflections — the horrors of what might have been. But when I remember that the might-have-been is only a nightmare, I draw a great breath of relief. In the understanding of women I was a fool, even more so than most men, and least of all had I learned to understand Mariposa. . . . But this is in the manner of one who, having a fault of his own to confess, first pleads extenuation. I will go on with the history.

The first few days of our captivity in the Macdonald village passed eventfully enough, but few of the happenings concerned us. I was allowed my freedom; but such a freedom! Wherever I went, I was met with a sneer. I was a "traitor," even to those I had sought to save. The men passed me by in contemptuous silence, and the women, who were not done weeping for their slain lovers, husbands, and sons, openly jeered at me. I longed to fly anywhere, and the Macdonalds found more to scorn in my helplessness to find a friendly haven. Gladly would I have taken to the frozen, snow-crusted crags, but Mariposa was the last charge upon the remnant of my honour and self-respect.

With her I had little speech. For some reason she avoided me; and the few words that passed between us convinced me that she was not ill-satisfied. Indeed, it was not long before jealousy whispered to me that she found enjoyment in her situation.

She lodged in the cottage of an old woman who was a relation of the chieftain, and the Macdonald's visits to the place were daily, and fast becoming hourly.

I knew that from the moment the chieftain had set eyes on Mariposa — by torchlight in the boat — he had admired her; and now that war's alarms were past, he was becoming more and more enslaved to her rich, half-foreign beauty. Not only was he constantly at the cottage, but when Mariposa walked abroad, he was almost immediately at her side, behaving toward her in an unmistakable manner. Naturally, none of this escaped my notice, and it hurt me sore to see how Mariposa was perfectly at ease. She was, indeed, seemingly flattered by the attentions of this picturesque savage, as I must ever call him.

Then came events which I must relate in detail. I fear to curtail any part of the business, for on the sore subject of it I have no judgment. I can only relate, faithfully, what happened.

Only one prisoner, besides ourselves, had the Macdonalds brought back from the Kilellan battle. He was the man, Roderick Dow. The fight, I learned, had been an even matter, as most of such conflicts were, the Campbells and the Macdonalds joyfully sacrificing, one might say, an equal number of men on the altar of hatred.

No sooner was the last coronach played in the village than the clansmen took the plaids from

their faces and assembled to the hanging of Roderick Dow. It was not until the rope had been fastened to a rowan-tree and Roderick was led up to it, that I realized what was afoot. I stared in amazed horror and my eyes met those of the doomed man. Roderick never flinched before the Macdonalds' exultant grinning; but when he saw me, a look of utter loathing and contempt crossed his face. That filled my cup. Hardly knowing what I did, or why, save that I forgot Mariposa and the sweet of life, I stepped up to Roderick's side and said to the Macdonalds:

"This man, Roderick Dow, is a good man. Hang me instead."

I had half expected that Roderick would say something, but not he! The scorn in his eyes did not diminish and I fancied a light in his face that meant he would take advantage of the bargain with no more thought than if a dog were to be hanged instead. The Macdonalds, on the other hand, laughed outright, and one or two suggested that it would be as well to hang both!

The chieftain of the Kyles looked keenly at Roderick, then at me. Mariposa stood right behind him, and her face was stamped with the most unbelieving look that ever was seen on a human face. Ronald Macdonald pulled at his beard, and although he hesitated with an answer, there was an evil smile, which said as plainly as words that he would be very thankful to get rid of me if he could accom-

plish it without stain to himself — in Mariposa's eyes.

"Ay, ay," said he. "A bargain's a bargain — queer though it be. Does the other Campbell take to 't?"

"I do that," said Roderick promptly.

"Then it's fair," said the Macdonald in an apologizing way to Mariposa, as if it all depended upon her.

"No," she said slowly, in a voice that was new to me; "it is not fair."

"Then what shall it be?" asked the chieftain, with a hypocritical bow.

For answer, Mariposa — and only I could guess the tempest that was raging behind her calm face — walked up to Roderick and took the rope from his neck.

"There will be no hanging while I'm by," said she, swiftly facing the Macdonalds. Her eyes flashed over the Macdonalds and settled firmly upon Ronald of the Kyles. The chieftain looked admiringly at her, and smiled — a satisfied, anticipating smile, as of a man over savoury meat — and nodded his head in a pleased way.

"Hech, sirs," said he, addressing nobody in particular, but with his eyes on Mariposa, "it would be a fair shame to hang a man wi' such a bonny advocate. For that matter, if the lady'll not have one or the other hanged, I'll not be saying nay. Campbell," said he to the astonished Roderick,

"gang home to young Jamie and tell him the brawest lass of his lands put in a word for you."

At that there was a grumbling among the women, but the men winked and sniggered, especially when Mariposa, with sudden tears in her eyes, knelt at the Macdonald's feet and said simply:

"I thank you, sir."

Roderick looked around in blank amazement. "Thankee, lady," he said doubtfully. "Thankee!" said he curtly to the Macdonalds. But to me: "Thankee. It's a pity they didna let ye hang yourself!"

"I still have the privilege, Roderick," I said.

He stopped and looked at me with stupid curiosity. I could see he was wondering what sort of madman it was, who betrayed his people one day and offered his life for one of them the next. But there came another surprise.

"Rorie," said the Macdonald, with a queer smile, "I'll be thinking, as ye've been that kind to the man, ye might show him through the glen to the boats."

If he 'had stabbed me to the heart, he could not have made a more cruel thrust. Was it his brutal sense of humour that sent Roderick and me apart to argue our reckoning of Twelfth-night? Or was the cunning scoundrel inviting me to escape? In either case I was offered a fresh cup of gall. Mariposa looked at me; but I could not tell whether the odd expression of her face meant that I should

go or stay. I was fairly dumfounded, and hopelessly walked away with Roderick. A roar of laughter followed us as we climbed the hillside, and we could hear it until we had reached the shoulder of the hill and started down the glen toward the beach, where the Macdonalds had their landing-place and a few fisher-huts.

When we were out of sight, Roderick mended his gait and showed very human anxiety to get out of reach of the changeful mind. I dragged on wearily, heartlessly.

"Ye're safe, man," I said, in answer to his protest against my laggard steps; "safe as a petticoat can make ye."

Roderick stopped and looked at me in his thick-headed way. I sat down on a mossy rock. I must have seemed forlorn, for the man softened a bit.

"Rorie Maclean," said Roderick, "I thought sure ye were a traitor, but I will now be thinking ye have gone daft!"

"Very near," I said.

"What for did ye do 't?"

"Roderick," and I mind well how hard it was to speak, "ye'll go back to the Campbells and say that word for me — that I offered myself to the hanging."

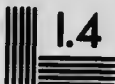
"I will that, Rorie, but —"

"Ay, *but!*" I cried. "All the words in the Bible, and all the oaths in hell, if I swore them, wouldna change your *but!* Fine I ken, Roderick.



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But ye can tell the Campbells for Rorie Maclean, that if it was to do again, I would do it."

I am not sure, considering all the circumstances of Twelfth-night, that I would have warned the Macdonalds again; indeed, I am certain of the contrary; but I was arguing my purpose, not its unhappy result.

"I never thought it of ye, Rorie," said Roderick sorrowfully. "I thought ye were a true man."

"Do ye stand there and say I am not?" I said. I would have welcomed any chance to vent my rage, if even on a fool like Roderick. "Is it a true man that asks his brother to dinner and puts a knife in his belly? Is it a true man who stands by and sees it done? Answer me, Roderick Dow?"

"They killed Black Jamie," said Roderick.

"Ye took the head of the Macdonald!" I retorted.

"They murdered Alan Urquhart," was the sullen grumble.

"A lie! He was murdered in his own boat, by Black Archibald. I was there."

Roderick Dow turned a pale face upon me. His eyes were wide open, as was his mouth.

"And ask young Jamie who killed Auld Leezie!" I said, speaking for the first time of things that spelled silence in Kilellan. "Roderick Dow, if the men in your clachan had bowels, they would spike their master's head on a pole as the Macdonalds did his father's. Ask them — man by man — was it in their hearts to do that thing they planned?"

As there is a God in heaven, Roderick, are we made in His likeness to nurse a hate from the womb of the mother that greets to the grave where the bairns wail? Look at yon farm of mine—a hundred years of toil—the sweat of my father's father and his son's son, and all ended in a night. Ye have but left the dead of the Macdonalds and heard the greetin' o' the women, and ye will gang ower to Kilellan to the dead o' the Campbells and hear the women greetin'. And ye will smell the burnt timber on my mother's grave. Ay, and ye will comfort your own wife, Roderick, that's greetin' that Roderick's dead—you, Roderick—*dead!*—hanging on that rowan-tree in the glen. Can ye see the difference, ye fool?"

I was startled at my own vehemence, but more at its effect upon Roderick Dow. The man seemed to be stricken with the thought that it was by a mere chance that he was alive. The thought of his wife and bairns weeping, while he dangled on the Macdonalds' rowan-tree, hit him between the eyes.

"R-Rorie!" he stammered, by way of argument. "Ye are not a fighting man."

"No?" I said. "If ye say another word like that, I will crack ye over my knee."

He made no reply, but wiped his dry eyes, wrung his hands, and waved his arms like a daft man.

"Ye are right, Rorie. Ye are right!" he half sobbed. "Come on." And he gripped me by the arm. "We'll go back together." He pulled at

my arm, but I did not move. "Come on, man! Dinna be a fool. There's not a man'll lay hands on ye when I tell them — tell them — what ye said."

"Ye must go alone, Roderick," I said bitterly. "I'll come back to Kilellan when ye have ta'en the rubbish off my father's grave and made the roses to grow on my mother's. And mark ye, Roderick Dow, when young Jamie is dead — and I'm not saying *I* will kill him — Rorie Maclean will be laird of Kilellan, and I'll hang every man that hasna an acre and a cow to his name!"

With which paradoxical peace promise — uttered in a white rage, with my fist within an inch of Roderick's face — I turned back up the glen to the Macdonald's village. I was quite done with earthly feelings, once my rare outburst had passed, so that when I came to the cup of the hill and began my descent to the clachan, I was on that dangerous verge where a desperate man wants to lie down and laugh. When I suddenly came upon Ronald of the Kyles standing behind a whin-bush with his arm around Mariposa's waist, I sat down behind a rock with a smile and prepared to enjoy a comedy.

"Ye will marry me," said the Macdonald.

"No," said Mariposa, but with no trace of anger.

"Ye must!" said the chieftain, pushing his face close to hers.

There was a long silence. I could not see Mariposa's face, only her back and the great, hairy, red

hand, spread like talons in the hollow of her splendid form. Then came a long, shrill peal of laughter, and Mariposa said:

"Well, an' I must, I must; so no more of it."

The other talon encircled her, and he bent to kiss her. She wriggled out of his embrace like an eel.

"No," she said, with the same laughter.

"Marry me first."

He moved toward her, his shoulders bent and his head protruding like a beast about to spring.

"Ay, lass — when? Now? 't his night? Well, the morn?"

"Next day," said Mariposa, with her head bent.

"And the Campbell — Rorie?" he whispered, so that I hardly caught the words.

"Oh, Rorie," said she with a queer catch in her voice. "He — he's a fool!"

It is a strange thing to write, but I was so convulsed with laughter that, had Mariposa not gone off in one of her merry peals, I must have been overheard.

The chieftain was standing beside her with a very red face. He seemed to feel that he was being laughed at, and was on the verge of losing his temper when Mariposa suddenly became serious. Presently the two of them went down the hill to the village, walking close together, and acting as people in their situation are supposed to do.

I sat by the rock, and watched them with a stupid stare, until the water came into my eyes. Then I

winked, and, like a flash, the trance was gone, and I became aware that not only had Ronald Macdonald won Mariposa — but I had lost her. It had come too suddenly to convey any great sense of reality. Surely it was a trick, if not of my own brain, at least of Mariposa's. She had said no, and then yielded to force. She had laughed, and promised to marry him "next day," whenever that was. She would not allow him to touch her lips until they were married. Yes, it was a trick — a move to gain time, for she had been defenseless when those talons encircled her. And I was a coward to have sat there and —

Then all my belief toppled like a hastily built sand-castle. I remembered, in the millionth part of a moment, her pleasure at the picturesque savage's attentions; how she had avoided me, and how she had allowed me to go without a word. Now I was gone — gone with Roderick, of course — and, whether she was glad or sorry, she had promised herself to the chieftain of the Kyles.

One trait of her character which I thought I knew, was her fondness for a new face and her aspirations to something better, something braver in appearance, than Rorie Maclean — "grasshopper." She was, after all, like the women of her mother's race — lovers of the picturesque in heroism; and like the women of her father's race — as false as they are fair. She was, for that matter,

like all the women of my knowledge — saving my mother.

I knew but one book at this time — the Bible — and it had been our way to picture me as Adam and Mariposa as Eve. We used to laugh over the fuss made about the serpent — until young Jamie came. Then we did not speak of the serpent again.

I forgot, in that moment, all the sweet of life and Mariposa's love, and remembered only the amazing number of Eves there are in the Bible, and how Mariposa had deserted me for young Jamie. I remembered, too, how she had flushed up when Bordeaux first called her Lady Mariposa, and I was sure that, as she had thus swiftly transferred her affections to the picturesque savage, she would have turned as readily to the smooth-tongued, accomplished Bordeaux.

I began to be amused again — in a bitter way. It was the cry of the corn-crake over again. I began to feel sorry for the Macdonald. She would marry him, and when she tired the corn-crake would cry for him. Hers was the love of the bee for the flower — a wooing and winning, and away again.

The idea pleased me, and I fell asleep over it, dreaming of the daisies in the Long Pasture at Kilellan; the summer noon, the whir of the flying cushats, and the singing of the bee among the dandelions. And the sting of the bee awoke me where I lay by the rock under the clear stars. I was

shivering with cold, and miserable in my thoughts, but my mind was clear once more. Only one impression was left, that Mariposa loved, not me, but Ronald Macdonald. She had a right to love as she pleased; and, indeed, as the world's estimate goes in these times, the chieftain of the Kyles was a grand man and a braw match.

I picked myself up and went toward the clachan. It had been in my mind that, as a free man, I would go away while the chance offered. There was nothing now to detain me, save a sense of a lingering duty. Fate and Don John had appointed me her guardian. I realized what the word meant for the first time. I would stay and see her married, and shake the Macdonald by the hand.

Besides, I wanted to look into Mariposa's eyes.

CHAPTER XIII

MARIPOSA CHOOSES

But it was a different story in the morning. After a sleepless night, tossing from side to side, as when the mind seeks refuge, morning found me sullen, dejected, and savage by turns. I was dourly jealous one moment, the next pitifully forlorn, when I remembered my lost happiness. Again, I was vindictively determined to murder the chieftain of the Kyles, and possess myself of Mariposa, whether she willed or not.

The brisk air in my lungs and the cold sunshine brought me to my senses, however. I had a duty to perform; a duty to Mariposa and to my own self-respect. When the hour had grown timely enough for human affairs, I went to the Macdonald's door and knocked. It was opened by an old woman, whose head was so wrapped up in a shawl that I could see nothing of her face but a pair of gray eyebrows, almost wholly sunk over rheumy eyes.

Whether she knew me or not, I do not know; but she giggled in a distressing way, and turned her back on me. She left the door open, from which I believed that I might enter. The room

was like most Highland kitchens. The floor was of chalked stone, the tables and chairs polished white. A bed, still warm of its late occupant, let into the wall; and there was a great fireplace, where the old woman had apparently been building a fire. As I entered, she got down on her knees before the hearth, leaving me standing in the middle of the room, and went on with her employ. When I was tired of waiting for her to speak, I said I had come to see the Macdonald, whereat she looked around, still keeping on her skinny hands and knees, and, like a strange beast, peered at me from among her clouts. Presently she uttered that distressing giggle, and began blowing at the tiny blaze among the peats.

In a little while, however, I heard some one moving ben the house, and before long I heard a step, and there was the chieftain of the Kyles, standing in the doorway that led to the back room. He stopped there a moment with an astonished look; then he said:

“Hey, Campbell! So ye came back?”

“Ay.”

“Y’are a fool.”

“If it was not a seeming truth,” I said, “I might dislike the word.”

He smiled, then laughed. The old woman giggled, and blew the fire with slack cheeks.

“Bring a dram, woman!” said the Macdonald

to her, harshly. "My mother," he added, almost in apology. The old body scrambled to her feet in a great hurry and shuffled into the house. "What would ye be for saying, Campbell?" the Macdonald asked. "Ye rise early."

"Having slept little," I said. "I would have gone yesternight, Macdonald, but that there is a lass in the clachan who claims my protection."

"Eh-hay!" said the Macdonald. The old woman laid a bottle and cups on the table and sniggered. There was something so disconcerting about the sound that it was a moment or two before I could continue what I had come to say. During the pause the Macdonald stood erect, eyeing me as if he was greatly amused at my confusion.

"Coming ower the hill," I said. "I saw you and Mistress Mariposa —" I could not put it in words. He chuckled and nodded his head. "It is a matter of importance to me," I went on. "Ronald Macdonald, aside from it that I loved yon lass as I will never love another woman, and that I had in mind for a bit while that she loved me — aside from that, I say — and as a man who has sworn in his heart to protect her — for she is a motherless bairn — I was wi' her father when the Black slew him — I ask ye, Macdonald —"

The old woman burst out in a nerve-racking giggle, as if to her slow-moving, cracked brain some fine jest had penetrated. It came upon my difficult

utterance and straining heart like the mocking sneer of a soulless fiend. The Macdonald turned and cursed her from the room.

"It's just my mother," he explained. "She's daft, ye ken, syne that night the Campbells took away my father's head. We brought her the head o' the Black, as ye ken, but it'll no bring her mind back. She has it wrapped in an auld clout, and sniggers —"

"Enough, man!" I cried, my blood turning hot and cold at the barbarity of it. But it loosened my tongue and temper.

"And so, Macdonald," I said, "ye would marry Mariposa, ye great, head-lobbing, blood-stinking murderer! Ye —" His hand fell to his leg, and whipped out his dirk. My own was handy, but handier was the heavy chair against which I stood. As he crouched to spring at me, I swung this monstrous club above my head. "Put away that dirk!" I said.

"Have done wi' words," he sneered; but for all that he returned the dirk to its sheath. I put down the chair. "Listen to me, Campbell." At his first words the cold blade of truth pierced me to the vital raw, and left me sick and downcast.

"Come here wi' some fine sayings," he jeered; "but what ye should say is: 'I'm a jealous man.' Hoot, Campbell, I dinna blame ye. She's a braw heifer. She would do service to a king."

He said no more. I remember my muscles strain-

ing as I swung the chair. There was a crash and a splintering of the table edge. The Macdonald, unhurt, sprang upon me with an uplifted blade. I do not know how I missed, or how I escaped his dirk; but when the fog of rage cleared from my eyes, I had him on the floor, and my hand was on his throat.

"I would kill the king first!" I whispered and sank my fingers into his thrapple.

I felt him writhe beneath me. I watched his face turn red — crimson — purple — and then — The old horror of murder, of violence, gripped me, and seemed to strangle me with shame. I loosened my hold, and I mind well how it relieved me to see the natural colour return to his face.

He lay still, but breathed heavily. By and by he opened his eyes and looked at me curiously, sullenly, suspiciously. I kept my knee on his legs and my hands on his arms.

"What would you have done to *me*, Macdonald?" I asked.

He made no answer, only looked at me — looked at me as if to say, with his eyes:

"You fool!"

"I want you to swear," I said, "that you will not force that girl to marriage, for she is in your power, and force it is. Swear it!"

"A fine place to swear," he said, "lying on your back with a hand to your thrapple."

"Get up and swear it."

He struggled to his feet when I released him, and stood for a minute or two, stretching his legs, easing his neck, and eying me in a queer way.

"I swear it," he said suddenly. "If I had taken oath on the floor there, I'd ha' broken it."

"I believe it," I said, with scorn.

He laughed.

"By your own teaching," he said, "'twould ha' been force — as wi' the lass."

I felt somewhat abashed at this. He saw it and went on.

"But ye forget the lass. Has she no word to this?"

My heart leaped and sank in the same moment, as it had quieted and raced and burned and chilled between faith and doubt through the sleepless night.

"Let's hear her," was all I could say.

The Macdonald called to the old woman and ordered her to go to the house where Mariposa was lodged and fetch her. The crazy old body obeyed, leaving the Macdonald and me standing, one on each side of the table, in silence. It was only a few minutes before she came, but to me it was an hour of passion. The peat sputtered, burning and gushing like my heart; my breath drew out and in, like the pendulum of life and death; a sun-ray, glancing down the glen, shot through the open door and silvered a shaft of airy dust; a sheep-dog by the hearth arose repeatedly and turned around, vainly

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I had him on the floor, and my hand was on his throat

seeking comfort in its lay. By and by came footsteps — a shuffling and a giggling; a firm, light tread, and a voice humming a careless air.

Mariposa stood in the sun-ray, and the airy dust-shaft vanished. I could not see her, but, by the sharp stop, I knew that she had seen me and was astonished. It was only for a moment; then she stepped into the kitchen, and, rubbing her hands before the peat fire, said:

“It is a braw morning.”

Then she turned and faced us both. Her eyes were bright — very bright — and hard. Her face, too, was set and cold. She looked at me with a quick, expressionless glance, then smiled at Ronald of the Kyles.

“Mistress Mariposa,” said he, “this gentleman would ask ye a question.”

“Mariposa,” I said, “I hear that you have promised yourself to this man. Of what matter your heart is made, I ken not, but I ask now, and I ask ye for the truth. Is your promise to this man because ye are forced to’t, or —”

She interrupted me. Her face turned deathly white — with fear, I thought, but it was anger.

“Force! Force?” she cried. “Rorie Maclean, you are a fool!”

I had no answer to that, nor anything more to say.

“Let us ha’n end to this,” said the Macdonald

sharply. "Mistress Mariposa, I have sworn not to marry ye if it be against your will. Make answer now. Will ye wed this man, or me?"

I glanced at Mariposa's face. It was very pale, and her teeth were set together, with what emotion I could only hope. Some great struggle was going on in her mind. Finally she burst out — in a rage!

"Will I marry him, or you?" she cried to the chieftain. "Ye have promised not to marry me if I would marry him? What lover is this that I give my hand to — that will give it up to the first asking? And I said I would marry him, are ye so kind, Macdonald, that ye would put my hand in his and set us off with a pipe-march? Answer me, Macdonald!"

"By Heaven, no!" thundered the Macdonald. "Y'are mine, Mariposa."

"I thought so," said Mariposa coolly. Then, as if she thought the matter was not quite disposed of, she said lightly: "I'll marry this — this" — she groped for a word — "this *clodhopper* — when he can write his name."

I was about to retort indignantly that it was I who had taught her to write hers, when the childish idiocy of it checked my tongue. I looked straight at her, however, and said:

"Mistress Mariposa, if any man had told me that a woman could live seventeen years and be as honest as she was fair, and in the eighteenth be as faithless as she was pure, I would say he lied! If

any man had told me that such a creature could be born of the sweetest woman God ever made — your mother — and the finest gentleman that ever wore a sword — your father — I should have struck him!”

Mariposa's eyes filled with tears, although I could see her striving to force them back. Exultantly I raved on.

“Would I had let him die at the claymore of this man's father — Ronald of the Kyles. Would I had never led Mistress Mary to the cave. Tear that locket from your throat, woman. Spit on it! Trample on it! Curse it! You could no more shame it than you have done.”

She suddenly flung herself, sobbing, face downward on the table, with her hands clenched over her head.

“Stop him! Stop him!” she cried.

“Enough, Campbell!” cried the Macdonald furiously.

“For a man,” was my last shot, directed at the chieftain, “you have listened well. Give you good day!”

With that I left them. I walked into the cold air of that bright winter morning and stood for a while, dazed with reaction and the sudden sunshine. While I was yet trying to collect my scattered wits and decide upon my next move, something white flew from a crag that jutted over the clachan and fell at my feet. It was some time before I realized

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that it was a piece of paper wrapped around a stone. Still confused in mind, I picked it up and was astonished to find that it was addressed in a scholarly hand of write:

Thes: to Mistress Mariposa.

There was some writing on the inner side of the paper, which was torn at one side. I paused ere I began to read; but only for a moment, my wonder — and, perhaps, my jealousy — overcoming my brief scruple. This is what was written on the paper:

Oh, bid me leape — rather than marrie Paris --
From off the battlements of yonder tower,
Or chaine me to some steeple mountaine top
Where roaring beares and sauage lions are,
Or shut me nightly in a charnell-house
With reekie shankes and yellow chaples skulls,
Or lay me in a tombe with one new dead —
Things that to heare them named have made
me tremble.

And I will doo it without feare or doubt
To keep myself a faithful unstaind wife
To my deere Lord, my deerest *Romeo*.

WILL SHAXPER.

If I had been dazed before, I was doubtful of my sight and sanity when I read this. I knew no one of the name of Shaxper; but that he knew Mariposa and of my situation I could not doubt. Perhaps — then it was clear to me; and, although I could not understand why he should have used that

name, I found some comfort in the knowledge that that strange man, Bordeaux, had kept his promise.

The queer wording of the thing, meeting as it did the very sentiment which my poor speech failed in expressing, filled me with a fierce satisfaction. I turned to the door of the Macdonald's cottage and, entering, flung the paper on the table, where Mariposa lay bowed in her distress.

I did not wait to see the effect of its reading, but walked straight to the rude cottage where I had been lodging. It was my intention to leave the clachan at once and seek out Bordeaux. Why, having no belongings to collect, I should have gone to the cottage, I do not know, save that it is the habit of a man who is about to make a journey. By that instinctive return to the cottage I think the rest of my life was cast, as from a water-shed. Had I not gone there, my story — of Mariposa, at least — would end here. It is probable that I should never have seen her again.

As things turned out, I was no sooner in the cottage than the Macdonald and several of his men were at my heels. The chieftain of the Kyles was in a great rage, and I suspected the reason lay in the paper which he carried in his hand.

"Is this your hand of write?" he roared.

"No."

"Read it!" he cried, shoving the paper into my hands.

"How shall a man read who cannot write his name?" I sneered.

"Ay, fine ye can read," said the Macdonald. "She told me ye could. I will ken what devil's work is in that word, for it has set Mistress Mariposa greetin'."

Mariposa weeping over it? How strange seemed the ways of a woman at that moment. I read the paper aloud to the Macdonald, who listened with his head cocked suspiciously to one side. But my voice choked over the last lines, for a great tear — and it was not mine — had blurred a part of the words, "to keep — faithful."

"And who will this Shaxper be?" the Macdonald demanded.

"I ken no more than yourself," I said.

"Do ye speak truth, Campbell?" he cried furiously. "Take care, sirrah. Is't not some whelp of a Campbell spyin' in the glen? Shaxper or no Shaxper, if my men lay hands on him he'll swing on yon rowan!"

I quake with merriment now, when I remember how serious the hanging of William Shakespeare appeared to me. But I could honestly answer at that time that I knew not the man by name or fame, good or ill repute. My answer only angered the Macdonald more. He was angry, with the jealousy of a man who feels that his ignorance is being played upon.

"And who will this *Romeo* be?" he snarled.

"Has yon heifer a drove o' bulls after her?"

"Macdonald," I said, "ye make me sorry I didna sink my nails deeper in your foul thrapple."

"Seize him!" bellowed the chieftain of the Kyles. "Lock him up! Lock him up!"

His followers fell upon me with hardly any warning. Struggle, bite and tear as I did, I was overpowered and led from the cottage. In the centre of the clachan was a big house, in which it was the custom of the Macdonalds to hold their court of justice, prayer-meetings, feasts, and other gatherings. Beneath it, at the bottom of a flight of stairs, was a prison vault, whose last tenant had been Roderick Dow. Into this I was pitched headlong. I received a smash on the head which leaves a mark to this day, and rendered me unconscious for many hours after I got it.

When I came to I knew it only because I could feel blood on my face and a violent throbbing in my head. Otherwise it was as dark as the grave before my eyes. I sat nursing my pains for a while, listening to a continuous shuffling of feet overhead and the sound of many voices. Once or twice I thought I heard the shrill, cruel laughter of a woman, against whom my heart was beginning to burn with the desire of murder. To add to my growing rage, the air became charged with the odour of hot, savoury meats, and from the activity in the big meeting-house overhead I could readily guess to what purpose all this was designed.

I got to my feet and felt my way to the wall. It was of rough, unhewn stones. I felt my way along it until I was stopped by a corner where the wall stuck out at a square. Then I felt along the whole length of the meeting-house, which, I discovered, was a great oblong. Everywhere my hands touched stone until I found the only door. It was of wood, but of what thickness and how heavily barred I could not guess, for it was immovable in its frame.

During my wanderings in the dark I came to one spot where a ray of lamp-light struck through a crack in the flooring overhead. By this I judged that it was night. Finding no other break in the darkness to cheer me, I presently began to grope back to this thread of light.

It is a thing I remember, with painful distinctness, that it was hours before I found it again. As I felt my way about that mirk pit, with my eyes turned to the roof — and it seemed that I had lost all sense of location — that missing thread of light became as precious as a bar of gold. When I ultimately found it, I could have wept at the pitiable importance of the thing.

I lay there for hours with my eyes on the shimmering thread, watching the shadows pass over it, and listening to the merry voices of those who were preparing Mariposa's wedding-feast. Often I heard her voice among others; and from the words I caught, and the repeated dirls of laughter

that greeted her witty talk, I could only believe that her grief was forgotten, and that she was heart and soul wrapped in her coming pleasure.

It may have been any hour of the night — but it must have been late — when the activity ceased, and presently the light was carried away. I could hardly believe it at first, for I had stared at the crack in the roof so long that my eye saw the thread of light for some time after it was gone. Wherever I looked in the blackness a horizontal streak of yellow split my darkness. But in a little while it faded, and the blackness was everywhere.

That night was one of horror. I found myself, in imagination, falling — falling — through that awful gloom. I put my hands before my eyes. I could feel their damp warmth, but see them I could not. Then a kind of childish terror assailed me, and the darkness became peopled with movings, whisperings, and gentle breathings. I tried to sleep, but the moment I closed my eyes the gloom was twisted into a million dazzling, squirming tarantulas, and I was sinking through eternity.

I spent most of that night sitting on the damp floor, with my hands spread out on each side to keep me steady. When daylight came the horrible feeling passed, for my eyes suddenly fastened on four silver lines around the door. These lines brightened and gave off a furry haze as the sun arose.

It was Mariposa's wedding-day.

CHAPTER XIV

FAITH AND THE FOOL

How the first part of that terrible day passed with me I cannot bring myself to write. My heart's blood has tipped this quill long enough. When the hour of Mariposa's wedding arrived, I was as docile as a madman whose cunning only awaits the opportunity to flare up in demoniac fury. I was a starving wild beast, for not a morsel of food nor a drop of drink had been given me since my imprisonment; indeed, the bolts and bars of that dungeon had not been moved in their grooves.

Most of the day I tramped up and down in the dark, with my eyes fixed on that door, ready at a bound to do — what? Only one idea was clear in my mind, and that was the smooth, ivory-white of Mistress Mariposa's throat.

It was late in the afternoon when the ceremonials began. The pipes chanted. The population of the clachan marched with the Macdonald and his bride to the burn that flowed in the glen. There, as I have learned, the ice crust was broken, and over the black, gurgling waters the Macdonald and Mariposa joined hands and went through some barbarous mockery. Then the pipes skirled joyously, and

presently the flooring above my head thundered beneath the tread of the wedding-guests. Mariposa was married!

Thereafter was a great speech-making. Everybody who could make a speech, spoke; and every word blared through my brain and seared in my soul. Mariposa was married, the bonny lass! It was a proud day for the Macdonald, and a braw day for posterity — at which witticism there was much open laughter. The Macdonald himself attested that he would sleep with his skian-dhu under his pillow, and woe be to any indiscreet vassal who disturbed his rest. For the present, however, they would feast, and they would drink, moreover, and the grand occasion would be graced by the bride herself — the lady of the Kyles.

Whereupon they fell to, and the air of my dungeon reeked of hot meat and entrails, whisky and humanity. Food! What if I were starving? My stomach sickened at the thought of it, if ever I gave it a thought. No, my mind was a blank, save for that one great idea — the smooth, ivory-white of Mistress Mariposa's throat.

Up to then — and it was only then that I realized it — there had been in my mind some vague belief in the faith of Mariposa — a remote idea that it was all a trick to deceive the Macdonald and effect our escape. But that hope, that belief, was destroyed. She was married — *married!* Even as I stared before me in the black dungeon, I could

hear her sweet, musical voice in courteous solicitation of her guests, or raised in merry banter.

Yes, Mariposa was married, and seemingly happy, and Rorie — You remember Rorie Maclean, of Kilellan? — Rorie was poorer than Lazarus — not even a crumb from the table. But, out of the kindness of her great womanly heart, he was allowed to hear the marriage laughter and smell the marriage-meats. Lazarus! Rather was I Dives in Hell, crying to Lazarus to wet his finger.

The pipes screamed above my head. It was the wassail. Now, there would be more speeches. Ay! And then my name was mentioned. There was a cursed Campbell in the prison below, and even the cursed Campbell would be permitted to drink to the honour and glory and pride and beauty of the lady of the Kyles. A boon to Dives in Hell! Then the voice of Mariposa crying piteously:

“No, no! Not that!”

“Ay, by Heaven, ay!” It was the Macdonald, her drunken master already.

A little wicket in the door suddenly opened and a hand, bearing a cup, appeared dimly in the place.

“Here, Campbell. Take off your dram to the leddy. Hoot, man, it will give ye heart!”

The wicket snapped into its socket, and I was standing under the illumined crack in the flooring with the goblet in my hand. All at once I burst out in laughter — laughter so wild and strange that I was startled myself. A hush fell upon the mar-

riage-feast. They had heard me. I raised the goblet under the crack in the flooring and cried at the pitch of my voice:

“To the wife of the Macdonald!”

I heard a voice — her voice — cry out as if from mortal pain. Then it seemed to my disordered, frenzied brain that the gloom of my prison became suffused with light, and before me stood a figure, tall and lightly swaying.

“*Don John!*” I screamed. And the cup fell from my nerveless hand.

I have no knowledge of what happened after that, save that after a certain time I awoke, covered with a cold sweat. Above me the sounds of merriment had changed to maudlin singing. Was it all over? Was she gone with her brutal husband? My heart sickened, then gave a leap.

I heard her voice above me, singing softly — so softly — a familiar lilt that brought remembrance of my recent strange vision. And there were other sounds — as of women weeping, or scolding, while men answered in sleepy, drunken tones.

What did it all mean? I turned from the crack in the flooring and stared around the vault. What night of mysteries was this! The door of the prison stood wide open and the cold moonlight flooded in. At once the savage blood in me leaped through my veins. I whipped the dirk from my leg and crept toward the door.

The way was clear, save for a dark object with a gleaming yellow eye, which lay prone in the middle of the stone steps. I advanced quietly with my dirk in readiness. It was the prostrate figure of a man, and the gleaming yellow eye was the moonlight touching a cairngorm stone in his shoulder-brooch. He breathed heavily and smelled of whisky.

I slipped past him and gained the open. More mystery. Highlanders lay about me, all seemingly overcome by liquor. Their women were cursing and wailing while trying to get the men on their feet. Others of the Macdonalds were staggering toward their cottages, whining mawkish ballads to the moon.

Although I little feared discovery or its results, I slipped along the shadowed side of the meeting-house. I had no desire on earth beyond meeting Mariposa. The window-ledges of the building were not much higher than an ordinary tall man, so that by standing on tiptoe I was able to look inside the meeting-house. The scene that met my eyes is stamped until death upon my brain.

The great hall was decked with dry brackens and thistles. Around the tables sprawled scores of Highlanders, most of them in the last stages of intoxication. There were few women present, but these lay, dishevelled and disgusting, in the arms of the men, shrieking lewd songs. The floor was

strewn with broken dishes, goblets, fragments of meat, and human beings.

But the first sight my eyes sought, found, and lingered upon, was the Macdonald and his wife. He could hardly hold up his head or sit upright in his chair; yet he still endeavored to smile on the fair bride, with a mouth that dripped as it slackened, while his head swung heavily from side to side. She had a shapely arm flung around his shoulders, and she smiled down into his dim, drunken eyes as upon a lord, master, and god, the while she hummed the old Spanish lilt I had first heard from the lips of her father.

My teeth came together, and my fingers tightened over the handle of my dirk. It was in my mind to leap through the window and fall upon her and her drunken master there and then. But the time was not ripe.

There was no need for hurry. At this rate, there would not be a conscious man in the clachan in another hour. In the meantime, I would go back to the vault and close the door without barring it. There I would await until the way was clear. I blush for shame as I write; but upon the top of all I had undergone I was ready to chuckle with myself when I anticipated the interview with Mistress Mariposa.

I had not long to wait in the dungeon which had so recently been my torture-chamber. And yet my

impatience made thirty years of as many minutes, during which the sounds of brawling became less and less. I could keep still no longer. Had one of my enemies passed by with a clear brain and eye, he would have found Rorie Maclean, dirk in hand, peering over the stone steps. But the first to come there was Mariposa herself.

She came out of the big door of the meeting-house and stood perfectly still for a minute, with her face turned up to the moon. Then, as two women staggered past, supporting a gigantic Highlander, she flung at them some careless quip and laughed. I slipped from my refuge and, keeping in the shadow of the wall, crept toward her. At the same time she herself stepped from the moonlight and came swiftly toward me. What did this mean? I stopped short, too astonished to move. But she could not have seen me, for she uttered a little cry of fear when I suddenly confronted her and seized her by the wrist.

“Ah, my sweet lady of the Kyles!” I said.

“Oh, Rorie — thank God — quick!” she whispered.

“A word with ye first —”

Then I stopped. Like a hunted roe, she looked into my face, her eyes brimming with the softest tears ever shed.

“Rorie — Rorie!” she sobbed. Then she swallowed hard and looked swiftly along the wall.

"Come now," she whispered quickly, "to the hills — anywhere! Oh, ay — I ken — I ken, lad. Dinna stop now. I — I did it all for you, Rorie — for you, lad. *I've poisoned the whole clan!*"

I remember feeling as if a spear had gone right through me. My scalp crept, and my tongue was cleaving to the roof of my mouth. I stood there, looking down into a face that was lit up with a sheen of unearthly love, passion, and sacrifice.

The next thing which I can write in plain words is that I was running, clawing, and clambering along a steep mountainside at the heels of a lithe figure, which paused not to look back, but sped with the grace of an arrow until the crest of the hill was reached. There, behind a boulder, she flung herself upon her knees and burst into wild sobbing.

"Oh, God, Mariposa!" I groaned. "What have ye done?"

"N — nothing, Rorie — nothing. I swear it — I swear it!" Her hand fell upon the golden locket on her tempest-tossed bosom. "I never loved him — anybody but you. Forgive me, lad — forgive me — forgive me! It was for you —"

"Mariposa —"

But she crept forward and clung to my knees.

"Dinna ye understand, Rorie? Oh, lad, ye have hurt me sore. Why did ye call his name from that mirk pit? John-John! John-John!"

My knees shook and gave way beneath me. I

gathered her in my arms, there on the chilly mountain-top, under the quiet moon that fell over valley and crag and trailed upon the far sea.

"Hush — hush, Mariposa. I was mad. This is a fearful thing ye ha' done. Five hundred o' them, Mariposa!"

She suddenly looked up at me with knitted brows. It was clear she did not catch my meaning, or thought little of murdering five hundred souls in cold blood. But she suddenly said, with a kind of relieved gulp:

"It's nothing. That's nothing. It was Daft Leez'e showed me. It was in my mind for Twelfth-night, but I couldna get to the wassail. They will sleep sound and be none the waur in the morning."

There was a long silence after that. The magnificence of this woman's love, the ferocity of it!

"Rorie," she whispered, cooing doon beside me and stroking my shoulders with her hands in a strange, subtle way. "Say ye forgive me. Ye dinna have to forgive me, but just *say* ye do, lad — just say ye do. It was hard — oh, that hard — but I had to hurt you, dear, to save ye. Ye dinna ken all that happened. He swore he would have me, and would have hanged ye in the morning. I never kissed him, Rorie — never even a kiss. It was me opened the prison-door, Rorie! Dinna — oh, dinna look like that. Rorie, Rorie! Are ye not well, lad?"

I had sunk my head on my breast, and was looking down through tears of shame upon the dirk, which was still in my hand.

“Rorie, lad, look at me!” Her voice had turned from tender pleading to the command of womanly solicitude. “Ye will be hungry. Here.” She pulled two great oat bannocks from under her plaid. “I had them ready for ye all the time I was being marri’t.”

I flung the dirk away from me. I heard it ring and clatter as it fell from the crag. Then, unashamed of my shame, I bowed my head over her sweet, brave hands and wept.

CHAPTER XV

THE CHASE BEGINS

Behind the peat-hags we knelt together, in silence. Mariposa's arms clung around my neck with a gentle, forgiving pressure, and her wet cheek lay against mine. I was less ashamed of my tears than of my jealous stupidity. I could have hidden my feelings — ay, even the dirk — but the matter of the bannocks was too much for me. Like a flash, the heart of the woman stood naked before me; a thing of sweet calm, yet moving like the waters of a deep pool; vibrating with strange things, and full to overflowing.

By and by I looked up over the peat-hags, for as yet my shame feared her eyes. The cold, clear winter moon threw a pure light upon the world, and a gem-like flashing upon the ripples of the Kyles and the distant Firth. A light but keen breeze moved out of the starry north, but where we sat the sheltering hags gave off, like living things, a sweet, warm breath. In the valley behind and below us, the Macdonald clachan lay, sharply defined in silvered walls and bluish shadows. We could hear the voices of the people but faintly, for

the breeze was against the sound. But the same invisible current brought clearly to our ears the sonorous bell-note of St. Cuthbert's chapel on the Bute shore. Some good monk was tolling the first hour. I looked into Mariposa's eyes.

"My lass!" was all I said.

"My lad!" she whispered. Then she closed her eyes and sank into my arms like a sleepy child, saying: "I'm so tired — so tired!"

I sat down on the peat and drew her back, until she lay across my knees, and her head was cradled in the hollow of my left arm. She looked up at me and smiled contentedly.

"I'll ne'er distrust ye again, lass," I said.

She drew my face down to hers, and presently she whispered:

"Poor Rorie!"

A shadow fell across the moonlight, and a tall figure, seeming to tower right into the sky, arose upon the nearest peat-hag.

"All's well that ends well," said the voice of Bordeaux; "but the end is not yet. 'Tis a good sixty miles away."

At the first alarm we sprang to our feet. For a time we had forgotten Bordeaux, as the strange man called himself. Indeed, we had forgotten everything but the happiness of our reunderstanding. The sight of a friendly face, however, quickened our remembrance of the dangers we had

passed through, and of those which undoubtedly remained.

"Come!" said Bordeaux. "You are not out of the devil's clutches till you cross water. The boat is ready, if we can but win to it."

Without more ado he sprang from the peat-hag, and would have led the way toward the shoulder of the hills where, you will remember, the glen led down to the landing-place of the Macdonalds. I asked no questions, but at the time I wondered if the man had coolly beached his sailboat there; for I knew that for miles on each side of the spot the mountains dipped straight into the sea.

"Come, lass," I said to Mariposa. But she did not move. "I ken ye're tired, but —"

"I'm no tired," she said sharply; "but listen!"

From the clachan below came the hysterical screaming of a woman in rage. I could only distinguish a few words of fierce invective; but Mariposa seemed to understand it all.

"Thankee — thankee — thankee!" said she at intervals. Then she turned to me with a startled look. "Come on, Rorie," she said, rising swiftly to her feet. "We maun run for't. They ken who's back of it. They're sending word to the boatmen on the shore. We maun get there first!"

This she gasped out as we ran, stumbling and sliding, down the mountainside, for at the very first word she had led the way. When we were about half-way toward the shoulder of the hills

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"My lad!" she whispered. "I'm so tired—so tired!"



she suddenly stooped and picked up something that had been shining in the moonlight.

"Here's your dirk, lad," she said, and was off again before I could even kiss — as I tried to — the hand that gave me back that symbol of forgiveness.

We won the race to the glen-head by not over much. / ready we could hear the jabbering of the infuriated women and the panting of young lads, who had been sent as messengers to have us headed off at the boats; and we could see them toiling up the slope from the clachan. Once we struck the downward path in the glen, we widened the space between us to a more comfortable distance. Before we reached the boats, however, they were over the hill, and their cries echoed through the glen in the sharp air.

Had we been a minute sooner we could have been through the little shore village and in Bordeaux's boat, wherever it was; but already the alarm had spread to the fisher-huts, and tallow-dips were moving behind the windows. We knew that the enemy would be few in number, nearly all having gone to the wedding; but even one or two might delay us until the women came up. From the latter, we — especially Mariposa — could expect less mercy than the clansmen might offer us.

Bordeaux led the way. His tall, graceful figure strode on so swiftly that Mariposa was forced into a run to keep up with him. I remember wondering

at the change in the man. I could not reconcile him in my mind with the amusing, bombastic, voluble fellow of the island, or the writer of the poetic charge to Mariposa. I had looked upon him at first as a besotted lunatic, then as a romantic dreamer; but now he impressed me as a real man of action.

These were the flashings of momentary impression, for anxiety overcame all definite thought as we came into the village. At our appearance on the beach, a man who had been standing listening to the cries up the glen looked around and saw us. He was carrying a lantern.

“Stop!” he roared. And, as he advanced upon us, he cried at the top of his lungs: “Hay, Dugald! Iain! Donald —”

That was as many as he summoned to his help, for I felled him to the gravel with my fist.

“Good!” said Bordeaux. “Come on!”

He broke into a long trot, and swung away to the left, with Mariposa and me at his heels. The bit of beach abruptly ended in a pile of barren rocks. Over these we scrambled, and found ourselves clawing our way along a precipitous mountain, with the waters of the strait gurgling and washing a few feet below us.

But where were we going? It seemed as if we had failed to reach the sailboat, which I supposed must have been beached at the landing-place, and that we were again running for our lives on the dreary, barren mountains. My heart bled to hear

the painful sobbing of my poor lass's breath as she strove to keep the pace. I flung an arm around her, meaning to help, but she threw it off impatiently.

"Na! It hinders!" she gasped.

And, in sooth, it would have done so, for so steep was the decline of the mountain that I could hardly keep my feet, let alone help Mariposa. One needed plenty of room to claw and grab, and, linked together, we might have fallen into the water with the loosened stones that clattered down and sank into the depths.

Presently we came to the base of a deep furrow that ran from between two peaks to the sea, ending in a waterfall, which had worn a miniature cove in the steep coast. We had approached it at the only accessible point, where the hillside shelved inward to the ice-fringed verge. On the other side the fall had undermined the earth, until repeated landslides had left only a sheer precipice of scaly stone. The waterfall itself was frozen nearly solid. I remember how the rigid foam of it seemed carved out of snow, through which the unfrozen water ran, bubbling and hissing, lighting and changing into beautiful colours as the moonlight touched it.

But more beautiful than natural wonders, at that moment, was Bordeaux's sailboat. There it lay, as still on the black water as if it had been frozen, and moored by a hoar-painted rope to a glistening boulder.

"Quick!" said Bordeaux, pointing to the boat.

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"Cast off. Draw her in. Lady get in and put oars in rowlocks."

I did as he said. The rope was so stiff that it creaked and wheezed as I pulled and bent it behind me. Mariposa leaped into the little craft, crawled to the stern, and there flung herself, panting, upon the seat. I got in after her, found the rowlock pins, adjusted the oars, and turned to look at Bordeaux. He was lying full length on the shelving of the cove, and peering along the hillside. He had a huge pistol in his hand.

"Ready!" I cried.

"Not o'ersoon," he said, springing up and toward the boat.

As we pushed off, the cries of our pursuers came closer and closer. Indeed, we were hardly two boat-lengths from the cove when it seemed as if the hillside was alive with men and women — mostly women. The air shook with their wild curses, most of which were heaped upon Mariposa's head. She was a witch, a devil's bairn, and other horrible, if more earthly, things. I looked at her face, and it was overwhelmed with confusion, her eyelids and the corners of her mouth drooped in sorrow and shame. I leaned across my oar and kissed her hand. She took my meaning, and gave me a slow, grateful smile.

As for Bordeaux, the odd side of the man suddenly reappeared. He stood up, straight as a rush, beside his oar, and in the most doleful tones ad-

dressed the discomfited Macdonalds in words so irrelevant that they are still in my memory. In a voice choked with emotion, he cried:

Clouds of sorrow pass me.
Flashes of passionate lightning split the air.
Echoes of angry thunder crash and die.
Then blessed rain falls there. A pent-up grief
Bursts from the heavens in torrents of reproach
And vain recalling

How much more of it there might have been, I know not, for the explosion of a pistol drowned the next words. A bullet whizzed past the orator's head, and went into the strait with a noise like a wasp. Bordeaux raised his own pistol, but lowered it almost immediately.

"I might kill a woman," he grumbled, and sat down to his oar.

"Which way?" I asked.

There was a strait on each side of Bute Island, each leading to the firth. We were in the upper part of the western strait. The outlet of this was much nearer than by the eastern strait; but, although the north wind was favourable to the shorter route, it would have brought us out too near the open sea for our frail craft. The alternative was to row around the northwest end of Bute, among the islands where we had first encountered Bordeaux, and similarly sail down the eastern passage with the wind. The distance to the fork of the straits was not more than a mile.

While we were still considering the course, Mariposa cried out and pointed to the landing-beach, which was now in full view. A score of women were launching a boat. Bordeaux uttered an exclamation, half annoyed.

“What, pray,” said he, “is a gentleman to do when pursued by infuriated ladies?”

He answered his own question by setting a lusty oar-stroke. The north wind sang a biting air around our ears as the boat shot the strait. But it was not women who were about to pursue us. Four men, all more or less under the influence of Mariposa’s herb skill, got into the boat, and, after much drunken argument and confusion about seating and adjusting the oars, came after us at top speed.

Four oars to our two was a point against us; but one in favour of us was that they had no helmsman; and as the Macdonalds’ was a two-seated boat, with a pair of rowers at each place, the boat was badly trimmed — up in the stern and down in the bow — while the narrow beam of the craft caused each pair of rowers to bump their shoulders together as they pulled. But she was a lighter boat than Bordeaux’s masted craft, and what with the drunken frenzy of the rowers, it soon became apparent that we must be overhauled before we could make the other strait and get under sail. Strain at the oars though we did, the Macdonalds crept up on us, a boat-length in every twelve.

Mariposa sat in the stern, glancing anxiously from the pursuers to the islands ahead, and then back at the Macdonalds. Suddenly she turned and looked at Bordeaux, who was rowing behind me. I could see by her face that she had something to say to him, but was unable to find words. I know now that she simply had forgotten his name. Finally she said to me, with a petulant frown on her face:

“Tell that man to give me his pistol!”

Bordeaux shoved the pistol over my shoulder. Mariposa took it as if it were some poisonous snake.

“Is it loaded?” she asked.

“Ay, madam!” gasped Bordeaux from his oar. “Just pull the trigger, and you will find it so.”

While we rowed for life and freedom, my lass settled herself in the stern of the boat with the pistol, ready primed, held carefully away from herself and us. I have not forgotten how little her hand looked against the butt of the enormous weapon. I wondered how, if it became necessary, that little forefinger was ever going to reach the trigger.

The time for pistol action came presently; but, although Mariposa raised the weapon to aim at the Macdonalds' boat — which was now only a length behind us — she had no need to fire. Fortune again sided with us. One of the stern rowers was struck in the back by the oar of one of the bowmen. The blade of the latter's oar caught in the

water as he turned to curse his clumsy companion. Such was the impetus of the boat that the oar was whisked through the rowlock and lost before he realized what had happened. The two men involved in the maudlin dispute that followed ceased rowing, while the other two rowed more lustily, shouting upon the others to do the like. In a moment the craft had circled around in little more than its own length.

Seeing what their folly had brought them to, the men ceased quarreling and recovered the oar; not, however, without some difficulty and delay. Then the pursuit was resumed; but we had gained considerably in the meantime; indeed, had it not been for an unlooked-for misfortune, we should have escaped easily. We were fifty boat-lengths ahead of them when we rounded Bordeaux's island and shipped our oars.

"Now!" cried Bordeaux. "Up wi' the sail."

The Macdonalds, seeing our purpose, bent themselves to their blades with hoarse shouts. Bordeaux laid his hand on the sail-rope and at once uttered a curse.

"Help me here!" he said, wrathfully.

Together, we pulled at the rope. It was hard and cold as steel in our hands, while the sail arose only a few inches, and with a dismal wheeze.

"Frozen!" yelled Bordeaux furiously, laying hold of the sail with his hands. "Pull for your life. I'll lift!"

The sound of the rigid gear yielding to our efforts was like our own muscles cracking. Bit by bit the hoared sail went up, every fold resisting our effort to flatten it out.

"Ready to fire, madam?" asked Bordeaux, as he tugged at the sheet.

"Ay, ay!" said Mariposa, with a queer catch in her voice.

The swash of the other boat cleaving the water warned us that we were doomed to trouble before we escaped, if, indeed, we were to get away at all. During our struggles with the frozen sail, our craft had drifted close to the islet, and there was the added danger of grounding.

It was in my mind to suggest that we go ashore and fight it out there; but there was no time to speak of the plan even, for in that moment the Macdonalds' boat ran alongside, and between us and the shore. At the same time, Mariposa stood up in the boat. I saw the movement out of the side of my eye, but before I could turn around there came a bright flash, a loud explosion, and a cloud of smoke.

We heard the Macdonalds shouting and cursing, but when the smoke cleared the four of them were standing up in the boat, seemingly unharmed.

"Oh, I missed!" cried Mariposa. "*Thank God, I missed!*"

Then she sat down in the stern of the boat and covered her face with her plaid. Bordeaux, long

of arm and oar, brought the great wooden blade down upon the head of the man in the bow. He uttered not a sound, but clapped his hands to his head and fell overboard. The second man gripped the gunwale of our craft and pulled the two boats together. Next moment he leaped among us, using Mariposa's shoulder as a crutch.

I heard her cry out under his great weight. I whipped out my dirk and drove at him. He parried the blow and received me in his arms as I lurched forward. Bordeaux was engaged with the other two, swinging the long oar as they attempted to board us, so that I was left to manage my man alone. I remember that he was a short man, heavily bearded and with an abnormal shoulder breadth. His arms were around my middle, and he bent me backward until I thought I felt my bones crack. We both fell athwart the gunwale, and my head trailed in the water, while the boat lurched horribly. It would have swamped, or upset, had not Bordeaux and Mariposa been on the other side.

Suddenly my antagonist released the hold on one of my arms. His purpose, I suppose, was to get at my throat. But by this move I regained the use of my left arm, which, like my right, had been pinioned to my side. It was an instant's action to change the dirk from the right to the left hand, and, like a flash, I drove the blade upward. It entered his throat. I remember with a shudder how

the hot blood streamed down over my face. He tried to get on his feet; but I had struck a vital spot, and he rolled over on his side with a strange gurgling noise.

Throughout this terrible episode I had heard, in a half-conscious way, Mariposa calling my name. Presently, when I recovered from the sick feeling of having slain a human being, I found her trying to drag me back into the boat. This was not a difficult matter, as my feet, jammed under one of the seats of the boat, gave me the leverage necessary to help myself a bit. The moment I was safe in the boat again, I heard Bordeaux utter a shout of triumph.

"Mistress Mariposa," he cried, "ye made no miss!"

I heard a loud splashing and cursing in the Macdonalds' boat. I looked up in time to see the craft, filled with water, in the act of sinking. Mariposa's bullet seemed to have ploughed a hole through her. The two surviving Macdonalds sprang into the water. To our great surprise — and to theirs, I am sure — it came no higher than their waists. As they started to wade ashore, Bordeaux tilted my late enemy overboard and cried:

"There! Give him good burial. *He* was no coward!"

But they made no effort to recover the body, or that of the man whom Bordeaux had felled with his oar. My companion sprang to the helm as the

Macdonalds began to hurl great stones at us, and brought the half-lifted sail before the breeze. We glided slowly away from the islet.

"We are safe! We are free, Rorie!" Mariposa whispered in my ear. But I made no reply. I was thinking of the man down there among the moving inshore waters, and I could not look into Mariposa's eyes. But Bordeaux was laughing and hurling ironic speeches at the Macdonalds, who were left wet and shivering on that frozen islet. Suddenly he turned to my lass and removed his bonnet with fine courtesy.

"Mistress Mariposa," he said, "I must ever honour a lady who holds a pistol with one hand, pulls the trigger with the other, and sinks the ship!"

CHAPTER XVI

THE QUEST OF BORDEAUX

The dawn was lifting away at the head of the Firth of Clyde when our little boat came out of the strait into the wide estuary. Here the north wind played with greater freedom in our frozen sail, and the boat, leaning over on its side, spurned the cold foam before her.

Bordeaux and I sat in the stern; he with the tiller in his hand, and I holding the sail-rope, which was given a turn around the cleek. Bordeaux was steering across the wind to the Cloch Ferry Inn on the Lowland shore, where we expected that all our immediate troubles would be at an end and we would enjoy a fair meal and sleep.

In the bow of the small craft we had rigged a couch of Bordeaux's books and clothes for Mari-
posa. Over the prow, and canoping her little nest, we had spread a bit of canvas. Although the boat was pitching violently, my lass lay in her snug corner, sound asleep. As the daylight brightened I could see her bonny face in the tent-light under the canvas, and it was as if her dreams were not unpleasant, for her lips were parted in a smile, and the

white mist of her breath showed off a touch of crimson on her cheeks.

Kilellan lay about a mile to the left of us, the houses more clear to my eye because they were familiar. The castle peered through a break in the trees, its grey walls and smokeless chimneys lending a haunted air to it in that frosty dawn. I wondered if, indeed, the castle was as tenantless as it looked.

Black Archibald was dead, and Aundra was dead, and it would be strange if young Jamie, with his fine clothes and manners and fondness for town life, stayed long in that ghoulish-whispering place. But, despite all that, it was home to me, and fine would I have liked to be going there; but for one thing. About a quarter of a mile to the left of the castle, set amid green fields with a backing of brown fir, was a gaunt black thing, charred and melancholy.

"The play's the thing!" said Bordeaux suddenly. He had hardly spoken until the open firth was reached, and the dawn relieved the tension. "Speak of it, man. Let me not burst in ignorance."

I stared at him. He laughed and said:

"Behold a man and a maid in a boat, and the lights of home beckoning in vain. The man rescues the maid, or the maid rescues the man, from the enemy of the enemy. Can both be enemies? I am curious."

As the boat dirled along through the stinging salt, I was glad to unload my heart to this impartial stranger. I told him all that led to our captivity among the Macdonalds, sparing nothing that touched myself. He listened with interest and, I think, a kindly approval. But there was a twinkle in his eyes when he spoke at the end.

"You did right, sir, but you acted more like a martyr than a warrior. So with many a buried hero!" His voice took on the declamatory tone of banter. "He meant well: he deserved to be deserving, but, like Burbage when he tripped upon a nail, his best scene was turned to bathos." He saw my irritation, for he added: "You are less of a savage than I have met in the Hiellands as yet. But you have not told me what I most desire to know." He nodded toward the canopied nest in the bow. "Who is that?" he asked, abruptly.

"I am glad ye asked," I said, "for it brings me to a question of my own. For what did ye seek the Spanish ship, La Trinidad? This lass is a daughter o' the Armada."

Bordeaux did not answer for some time. After the prolonged silence, I turned to look at him. He was staring at me, his face shining with surprise and anticipation.

"To be precise," he said, "she is the daughter of Don John of Murcia. Am I right?"

"Ay! Ye have it right," I said, wondering

what was coming next. "Was it him ye sought in La Trinidad?"

"Ay, or news of him."

"He died seventeen year ago."

"Then he is, indeed, quite dead," said Bordeaux, gravely. "And this is his daughter," he added, musingly. "Was her mother — you will pardon me, and the lady sleeps — was her mother, by any chance, in the holy bond of wedlock?"

I paused, then answered firmly:

"Mistress Mary's wedlock was as holy as his own mother's." For I seemed to hear a voice out of the past, whispering: "So shall no man speak ill —"

At that Bordeaux became very serious and turned his eyes toward the little tent in the bow, where Mariposa — whose whole future might be in the balance — slept on, her bosom rising and falling in regular swell, as if to rebuke the noisier seas.

"Tell me," I said hoarsely. "Who is yon lass?"

He smiled a little at my eagerness, but never moved his eyes from that sleeping face. A sudden terror gripped at my heart. It was as if a hand was reaching over my lass, ready to snatch her away from me. Even as I looked, it seemed to me that her nostrils curved proudly, her brow lifted grandly and the black curls fell upon her neck with a queenly grace.

"Who is she? Speak, man!"

"It means," said Bordeaux slowly, "a hundred golden guineas to me. What it means to her — and to you — I do not know. But methinks this lass is no Hieland savage, but — and who shall say but Macmurtrie — a lady of high degree, a Spanish princess, perchance. My friend," said he, turning an earnest eye upon me, "there are more things under heaven and earth —"

"Tell me all ye ken," I interrupted.

And he told me, while the north wind stung our cheeks, and the girning seas snarled viciously underneath, and the little boat dashed on with the sleeping girl in the bows.

"Macmurtrie — Alexander Macmurtrie — is the man to tell the tale," said Bordeaux. "For myself, I can only say that I was given a boat and a promise of a hundred guineas if I found Don John of Murcia, or authentic news as to his fate.

"Being by education a man of studious habits, and by birth a creature addicted to the pursuit of whatever geese the gods blew across my path, I sailed from the port of Glasgow seven months ago, my staunch argosy laden with oat-meal, whisky, and the published works of my late friend, Mr. Marlowe, and my present acquaintances, Will Shakespeare and Ben MacJonson. My destination was the Unfortunate Isles of the Spanish Armada where, an report speaks true, many a great galleon foundered in a storm."

At this point my odd friend drew a flask of

whisky from his pocket, and, having watched me take a nip of the stimulant, he drank a large quantity himself.

“And now,” he continued, “without knowing why I sought this man, save for the golden lucre of some bleeding heart, picture me landing on desert islands, among savages. It rained upon those desert islands — always rained. The savages, having no use for the published works of Marlowe, Shakespeare, Ben MacJonson, and others of the noble company, contented themselves with being suspicious of my guileless self, and refusing all information upon any point, save when influenced by usquebagh — mine; and a song — also mine! Pardon my tardy hospitality,” he said, gravely, producing the flask again, much to my amazement. Despite my refusal to share with him, he again helped himself in a way that nigh emptied the flask.

“She sleeps,” he remarked. Presently his eyes brightened and sparkled mischievously as he proceeded with the story.

“I spoke of a song. In the company of the bards and the birds of the Mermaid, I am a modest chanticleer; but given the time and the place — such as the stormy seas and a sweet maid — a Spanish princess, shall we say — slumbering in the boat, and even the fishes might pause while I tune my merry note. But for present and practical purposes, let us consider me in a thatched hut, surrounded by savages. Outside the Atlantic roars

and howls, and the sleet patters through the chinks, and sputters in the peat fire, whence arises smoke which mingles with the reek from the drying garments of the savages. Loth to prolong my sojourn while there is comparative comfort in an open boat on the tempestuous ocean, I ask after the unhappy ship and the unhappy man.

“Now, experience teaches even the wisely minded, and presently I perceived that the silence which greeted my inquiries after the Spanish ship was due to a commendable delicacy. For, mark ye, it is pain to a bad conscience to speak of that which causes it, and I observed that many eyes were wont to glance uneasily at bits of tapestry, cupboards of Spanish teak, and candlesticks of odd design, whose dips illumined the scene which I am describing.

“Pained in no small measure by the aversion of those savages, whose denial that the ship’s name was La Trinidad I was moved to disbelieve, I presently discovered that to eke knowledge of the Hieland savage, one must not put a question, but rather encourage the savage to speak of himself; than which he loves nothing better, he being an honest man. Then, when true industry has kindled honour’s fire, he will tell you the story of his life and ancestry, beginning with the flood and the clan’s escape in its own boat, and so by patience the attentive listener may arrive at the era whereat he would drive his petard.

"Behold me, then," continued Bordeaux, as he returned the empty flask to his pocket, "disguised as a traveler; fond o' a dram and a bit of song; as a listener, a person of innate genius. The trap was well laid, and there was hardly a savage but ultimately remembered a dark night when a great ship was battered to pieces on the reef. But ever it was the Corpus Christi, or the Sanctus Spiritus, or the Holy Mother, or the Host of Martyrs; but never La Trinidad.

"No, sirrah!" he suddenly declaimed. "What shall man avail against the goddess of chance? Look you, friend. Seven long months of travail and failure for a hundred miserable guineas, as I have spent in a single night; and lo! the phantom of the past walks upon a barren islet; and behold!" He waved a dramatic hand toward Mariposa, "all that is left of Don John of Murcia, all that is left of the Invincible Armada—a girl asleep in a frozen boat. But soft! What light?"

The daughter of the Armada stirred and opened her eyes, so putting an end to Bordeaux's harangue.

CHAPTER XVII

THE LAND OF MILK AND HONEY

When the boat grated on the beach below the Cloch Ferry Inn, my mind was full of Bordeaux's story. Was there a word of truth in it? There was about it the same air of fantasy which was characteristic of Bordeaux himself. Yet, I knew Mariposa was the daughter of Don John, and he had been the first to utter the name. And had I not met the man on a barren islet, and had he not spoken of La Trinidad, and of Mr. Macmurtrie, who had been our own family adviser for thirty years? I was glad that I had not spoken of our intimacy with Macmurtrie, for there lay my chance to test the truth of the strange narrative.

If it should be true, and if Mariposa was indeed a lady of high degree, would she forget Rorie of the kilt? Would she forget the cows and the milk-pails and the bannocks under her plaid, and all that we suffered together? Something told me no — her cold, little fingers snuggling in the palm of my hand as I helped her to the Lowland shore. If I was in doubt of anybody, it was of Rorie Maclean, for I am come of a proud, dour people, and the thought that I might have nothing to match with

her station stirred a stupid feeling of jealous resentment.

But the joy of being free and having Mariposa safe once more, soon chased away my gloom, although from that hour Mariposa became something of a stranger to me — a woman with whom I was not very long acquainted and was beginning to love in a distant way. Bordeaux, too, behaved toward her in a manner that made her open her eyes very wide and, on one occasion, laugh outright.

When he addressed her, his bonnet eye swept his feet, no longer with that mocking air of his, but with a grave smile. And by and by Mariposa fell in with his manner quite naturally and accepted his courteous attentions with the same calm possession of herself. I noticed this with deepening awe, because neither Bordeaux nor I had as much as hinted about Mr. Macmurtrie and the quest.

The Lowland shore of the Firth of Clyde is very different to the Highland side. On the south the hills are lower, softer in contour and more wooded. The people are different, too, and just about this time Glasgow's trade was beginning to stir. After so many religious and regal troubles, the sort of union of the two countries under King Jamie was bringing about a fine commercial activity. Twice a day the carriers passed the Cloch Ferry Inn on the road to and from the Ayr ports, among which Irvine was the big town's trade mart. The Cloch Ferry, too, was doing a fine business with the west-

ern Highlands, although old Dalgleish, whose ancestors had run it for two centuries, declared that Scotland and all therein had been sold to the cursed Sassenach.

But this man was a gloomy coward, as we presently found. He helped us beach the argosy, with his dirty white apron tucked around his waist and his face perspiring with excitement, despite the cold.

"It wass a praw day, whateffer!" he cried. "But ye hae cam' nane ower soon, she'll be thinkin'. It's in for a fearfu' storrum. Ta snaw has been cloot-in' ower Penmore sin' yestertay an' ta moon las' nicht was gey uncanny. Come awa' pen ta hoose, ma freens. Ta door's aye on ta sneck for ta honest peoples from ta Hielan's. Ah'm a Hielanman massel', ye ken," he added with a silly grin.

He led us to the kitchen of the inn—a great clean chamber, with a crackling fire roaring under an enormous chimney. As a lad I had often gazed across the firth at this "other side" and imagined that it was that part of the world which was peopled with all the creatures that did not exist in Cowal. Mariposa and I had often fancied it as the land of milk and honey, and the firth as the Red Sea which the Israelites crossed.

Although we had grown out of such childish beliefs, I am sure both of us felt a little of the old enchantment of youth at finding ourselves there. I looked across the table at Mariposa, and by the

pleasure and excitement in her face, I am sure she thought with me that the food tasted better, and the milk had honey in it; and presently there would be a shower of magic manna. This is a childish thing to set down, perhaps, but those who, as children, have gazed and speculated on a distant shore and at last set foot on it, will enter into the spirit of it.

The host helped enliven the place with a certain romance. There was a great door between the kitchen and ben the house, and when he drew our attention to it we could see daylight through it in a dozen places, where it was bored with bullets, or cracked with battering.

Here, old Dalgleish told us, Ronald Macdonald, chieftain of the Kyles, who was afterwards "fowell murdered by a heathen blackamoor," fought with six men at his back and only the door between him and seventeen of Earl Murray's men. That was after Langside, when the Macdonald, who had fought with Mary, was flying to the mountains with the pack at his heels.

"Ta poat wass retty!" cried the host, wringing his hands and prancing around the table, demonstrating every action of the tale, which he told in his strange Highland English. "Ta chief she wass takkin' a dram when ta regent's men purst in. Tay got pehind ta toor, which is always on ta sneck for ta honest peoples from ta Hielands, and tay shot ta polt. Ta regent's men fired piss-tils troo ta toor,

and bashed it wiss ta table, but she wass a coot polt which cost my father, Tuncan Talgleish, more tan a saxpence, an' tay coot not preak it town. So ta leader of ta regent's men catch me, Tuncan Talgleish, py ta throat, an' swear by ta top of Penmore he would haff my plood if I do not show her ta other way intil ta room. But"—and Duncan Dalgleish appealed to us with outspread hands—"how coot I petray my own peoples? For if she tid, ta Macdonald cry troo ta keyhole he would stick his skian dhu troo my powells next time he haff ta pleisure to be meeting me."

"The merciless Macdonwald," murmured Bordeaux, passing another slice of bacon to Mariposa. "And then, good host?"

"And t'en," gasped Dalgleish, wiping the perspiration from his fat face, "tay let me go, and she swear to herself she woot never again haf a fugitive peoples in my house any more. And py tiss time ta Macdonald's men haf ta boat out at ta pack toor, juist as ta regent's men preak ta fine polt for which my father, Tuncan Talgleish, paid more tan saxpence. But ta Macdonalds wass all gone but for ta chief himself, an' he stood in ta toor wiss his claymore and his teeth skin't like a mat tog. And he kil't seven of ta regent's men and got away in ta smoke. And when ta regent's men wake up, ta Macdonalds was half-way ofer ta firth to Pute."

"And did Pharaoh not go after them?" I asked, amused at the man's antics. Dalgleish stopped as

if he had been stuck by the Macdonald's skian dhu.

"Who ta tevil was Pharaoh?" he sputtered, very red in the face.

Mariposa burst out in her old, wild peal of rippling laughter, and I joined in her merriment with many a childish shriek, while Bordeaux and the host solemnly stared from each other to us.

"Ta peds will pe ready," said the offended Dalgleish, stiffly.

So you can picture us presently all asleep, as only happy, tired people can sleep after a good meal. Mariposa was given the room ben the house, while Bordeaux and I occupied the big bed set back in the kitchen wall.

It had not been our intention to remain long at the Ferry Inn. The place was the inevitable landing-place of possible pursuers, and our hope was to reach Glasgow that night, if the wind held out of the north. Our brief stay was cut shorter, however, by my own unhappy notoriety. It will be remembered that there had always been a ferry between the Cloch and Kilellan.

I was awakened by a voice saying, "Ay, that will be Rorie Maclean," and a sense of some one standing over me. I opened my eyes and looked up into the face of Roderick Dow, whom I had last seen after Mariposa procured his safety from the rope and the rowan-tree.

"Hay, Rorie," said he, in a kindly way, "will it

be yourself? And how did ye get away? And where will the braw lass be?"

I told him briefly. The open-mouthed silence with which he listened to my story was suddenly broken by the crash of a man's fist on the kitchen-table and the voice of Dalgleish raised in a howl like that of a dog in pain.

"She will not have it! She will not have it!" he bellowed. "Get awa' oot o' ma hoose — every mon an' wumman o' ye!"

I was out of bed by this time, but, at the noise, Mariposa appeared, fresh from sleep, in the doorway, while Bordeaux, suddenly awakened, sprang out at Dalgleish and thrust the coward into a chair.

"What have we here: ' he snarled fiercely. "What has happened, Maclean?"

"Ah would hae a word," put in Roderick Dow. "Ah'm the ferryman tae Kilellan an' Ah'm a freen' o' Rorie an' yon braw lass. If a' he tells me is true — an', mind, Ah'm no dootin' his word — ye'd best no dander here. Yon man, the Macdonald, 'll be on yer heels this minnit, or Ah ken naething o' the blaggard and his ilk. He'll no let ye gang easy for the trick ye played him."

"The mon's richt! The mon's richt!" whined Dalgleish. "I will pe pegging ye to leave tiss hoose. I will haff nae mair piss-til shootin' here. I peg ye to go, guid peoples. It will pe pad eneuch. He will tak' me py ta t'roat as ta regent's men tid and —"

"Silence!" said Bordeaux, giving the coward a shake. There was quiet for a moment or two. Then our strange champion looked quickly at me and said:

"Let us go."

I nodded my head. Even though we had some hours' start of the Macdonalds, and making every allowance for the fumes in the chieftain's head, it would never do for us to be closely pursued while we were still thirty miles from the comparative safety of the town of Glasgow. In a few minutes all was ready. Roderick walked to the boat with us.

"It will snow," he whispered to me in Gaelic. "Where would ye be going?" I only half trusted the man. He saw it, I think, for he added: "Ye need not be sweirt to tell me. Ye helped me, Rorie, an' I would help the lass. But if ye are not for Kilellan, what for no, man? The clachan's turned in favour of ye. The women have suffered, and half of the place is burned. Aundra's dead, and the laird, as ye would ken; and young Jamie will not have been seen since that night. He either ran away, or was killed in the fight, but his body was not found."

"Then who is the master at Kilellan?" I asked.

"There it is," said Roderick significantly. "There is no laird, the next of kin being absent." There was a moment's silence. Then he said sincerely: "Come back with me, Rorie. We are for

no more fighting, but if the Macdonald comes after ye and the lass, the clan will stand to your heel."

"The Macdonald and I will fight this alone," I said. "My hope, Roderick — and if, indeed, I am now laird of Kilellan, you can bear this word to my people — my hope is, that there will be an end to this murder and fighting. Ye can say I have gone to Glasgow to speak with Alexander Macmurtrie, our man of affairs in law, and that I shall act on his word thereafter, as I hope thereafter the Campbells will act on mine."

I was rather proud of that speech, but the moment *was* a proud one, and I observed that it had its effect upon Roderick Dow, for as I was speaking, he took his bonnet from his head, and stood lowly in the presence of the person whom he believed to be his chieftain.

CHAPTER XVIII

AT NINIAN'S TAVERN

The north wind held steady, and when we had rounded the tail of Renfrew's broad peninsula and come into the river's mouth, our little boat turned her stern to the breeze and dashed along in a way that cheered us greatly. At this rate we would surely reach Glasgow by nightfall.

But it was too much to hope that the weather would hold true to our purpose. Even for small craft, the river above Grianeg* is full of treacherous sand-banks. And it was into one of these, opposite the high rock of Dumbarton, that we drove our boat while she was tearing up the water so merrily.

The sense of the soft but sudden impact was as if a giant had quietly reached up a hand from the river's bottom and caught hold of our boat. Bordeaux and I were flung forward, and the sail-rope slipped from my hand. Mariposa, crawling out of her snug berth to inquire as to the sudden shock, beheld the waters swirling around us on the sand-bank and the loose sheet snapping and crackling in the breeze.

* Now called Greenock.

The incident filled us with alarm for a few minutes; but, once we had lowered the sail, we saw the nature of our difficulty and looked to how we could best free ourselves. Bordeaux and I took an oar each and tried to push the boat backward, but so great had been our speed that the bows were sunk deeply and firmly. The tide, however, was turning, and we had little fear that we would be captive long.

When we realized that for the present we must be patient, Bordeaux stood up in the boat and scanned the Renfrew shore to the southwest. There we could see the white, ribbon-like road waving among the bare trees and gray meadows. There was a haze over all, and I think Bordeaux's apparent anxiety was for the coming snow.

"It will no be a hurt to us," I said, "unless there's a wind wi' it."

"Wind?" echoed Bordeaux absently. "Oh — the snow. More likely the wind'll drop, and then — but, as Will says: 'What Fate imposes men must need abide.'"

With that he sat down and began one of his long gabbles, full of queer sayings and eloquence. He soon had us laughing, and even when the snow began to fall and the waters around us became black and calm, he talked on with fancy gestures and bright eyes. But, despite his liveliness, I observed him once or twice look long and anxiously at the farthest visible point of the shore road.

And he would pause in his babble as his eyes traced the highway through wood and meadow.

By and by, Mariposa, tired of brushing the snow from her bonnet and hair, crawled back into her shelter and, I suppose, fell asleep again. Then Bordeaux's gabble ceased, and he scanned the coast road in silence, with his hands over his eyes to ward off the great, feathery flakes.

"An honest mind and plain," said he, after a while, "I must speak truth. The Macdonald is after ye."

I could hardly believe it to be true — so soon.

"Ye were drinking to the lady with your eyes when we rounded the point," said Bordeaux, "or you might have seen a boat on the long reach from the Kyles to the Cloch. However," he added cheerily, seeing the anxiety in my face, "there were a good seven miles to the inn, and the Dalgleish will take an hour to feed and inform them."

I sprang to my feet and seized an oar. At the first push the boat yielded. The tide was flooding. Bordeaux helped me, and presently, to our relief, we were free. But, as my companion had prophesied, the wind had dropped, lulled to sleep by the soft downfall. My heart sank, then leaped, for it flashed into my mind that if we were becalmed, so, too, would be the Macdonald.

"But they were rowing," said Bordeaux, fitting his ash into the rowlock. I did the same and set a lusty stroke.

"Easy, lad — easy," said my companion, rowing as if he were sailing after fish. "Let us pray that the merciless Macdonwald is close upon our heels."

I stopped rowing, and only the close presence of *Mariposa* stayed my angry tongue.

"If the Macdonald reached the inn before the wind fell," said Bordeaux gravely, "he would hope to reach Glasgow before us, by chaise from the Cloch. If he knew we were becalmed less than two hours' sail up the river, he would come after us with his rowers. Let us hope it is a post-chaise."

"And why, man?"

"The snow!" Bordeaux laughed. "There's many a braw fire in many a cozy tavern by the way. If the Macdonald wins past Grianeg as the weather holds, it'll be that they couldna thaw the whusky. Hoot, mon!" he cried, jocularly. "Talkers are no good doers. Fall to't, Rorie, but steady. Fourteen miles, and the tide with us."

Whether there was any real ground for my fears, we won the race to the fishing village of Govan, which is three or four miles this side of Glasgow. When we arrived at that part of the river, it was late in the afternoon, yet one might well have thought it late evening, for the snow fell so thickly that we could barely see the shore on either side, narrow as the river is thereabout. We could see, however, the lights of Ninian's tavern by the water-side. Coming warm and yellow through the snow-

fog, that beacon spoke of a crackling fire and hot bacon and mulled ale and a cozy blanket.

If Bordeaux was as tired as I, he must have been glad to ship his oar and beach the little argosy which had been so faithful a friend. Mariposa was only half awake when we pounded at the door of Ninian's. Ringan Scouler, the host, started back as if he had received a visitation of ghosts when the broad shaft of light from the opened door fell upon our snow-swathed figures.

"Guid forgie us!" he gasped. "Wha's yon?" Then, remembering his business, he added quickly: "Come awa' in. The fire's burnin' cheery an'—losh, but ane o' ye's a lass!"

"And a right bonny one at that," said a tall man in long, knitted hose and black coat, rising from a stool by the hearth.

"Ay, ay," said another, more somberly garbed. "A braw bit lass and a guid ane, I'll wager."

Mariposa coloured up and bowed, the movement dislodging a lump of half-thawed snow from her bonnet.

"Hoot toot!" said Worsted Hose. "Come tae the fire, lass. Here, curate, get aff that stool."

"Ay, ay!" said the curate, jumping up so hurriedly that he upset his tankard of ale. "I was ower throng wi' the lady's face to mind my manners. Make yoursel's at hame by the fire, freends. Hay, Ringan, bring mair stools an'—man, dominiel!" he cried humorously to Worsted Hose,

"dinna start flirtin' wi' the lass. Get up, ye auld sinner, and let the veesitors hae a keek at the fire."

We had landed in homely company — the dominie and the curate, the learning of Govan. They tell me that you cannot go there after a certain hour of the evening without finding these two worthies sitting by the fire with their mulled ale, deep in some learned lore, the discussion of which ends in a quarrel and an oath on either side never to address another word to the other.

They tell a good story of the dominie and the curate and King Jamie the Third, who, as the "Gude Man o' Ballinbreigh," used to frequent countryside inns and pass himself off as a jolly traveler. The story tells how the dominie said some very hard things about the king, and the curate criticized the archbishop, and, as I remember it, the pair of them fought over who was to have the privilege of paying for the king's dram, the honour eventually falling to the curate. The king, disguised as a shabby peddler, was for paying for it himself, but the generous curate, with a glance at the darned hose, said:

"Na, na, freend. Mebbe ye can ill afford it!"

You can imagine how the dominie and the curate and Ringan Scouler felt when they came to know that it was the king who had been listening to their gabble; and it was always a delicate thing to speak of in Ninian's kitchen.*

* This story is also told, with amusing detail by one, Alexander Campbell, in *Wilson's Tales of the Borders*.— S. C.

But the tavern had stories to spare. It was set down by the water's edge, near the coast road, and its white walls and gables and high thatched roofs made of it a picturesque spot for travellers and for Glasgow people of a Sunday afternoon. There was a ferry-boat to Partick, across the river, and, a few chains higher up, the Kelvin flowed sleepily to join the greater flood of the Clyde. It was thus a place for many currents of travel.

Neither the landlord nor his nightly guests betrayed any curiosity as to our identity or hailing. Strange things happened in that tavern while, and it was not always wise to concern oneself overmuch with the comings and goings. It was enough that people paid their bills, that there was good horseflesh in the stables, and ready post-boys, and that Ringan Scouler could brander a salmon steak to please, and serve cheese and toast fit for the king, who had often partaken of it.

After supper, Mariposa went to bed, for it was our purpose to be up and off at the break of day. Bordeaux and I sat around the hearth with the dominie and the curate, while the smiling Ringan Scouler loomed in the background, keeping our pots well plenished with the mulled ale.

The curate and the dominie, of course, waxed eloquent and discursive, and it amused me greatly to watch their faces and Bordeaux's eyes — for I will confess that at that time my learning was not comprehensive of theirs. I am sure to this day

that the dominie never heard a word the curate said, or the curate a word of the dominie's. Each sat there, impatient and ready tongued, waiting until the other paused long enough to allow him a chance to discourse. Finally they grew angry at each other's interruptions, and both appealed to Bordeaux, who, with a fine sense of humour, started off on a discourse of his own that fairly staggered the dominie and the curate.

His speech bristled with poetry and references to Will and Ben and the late lamented Kit. Bordeaux was that kind of speaker who must act what he would explain. He stood up, pushed his stool away, and, coming back every minute for a mouthful of ale, he walked about the floor, waving his arms — gracefully, I must say — and talking so fast, with his face so radiant, that the dominie and the curate sat in open-mouthed, enthusiastic thrall-dom. Then Bordeaux, realizing suddenly that he was doing all the talking, became very solemn and a bit confused, and said quite abruptly:

“But, there! I'll sing a song!”

It was the first time I had been out of the rough Highlands and privileged to hear men of learning speak of the outside world. I am sure I could have sat there all night, with the ale soothing my mind and the warm fire my body, and Bordeaux's entertaining eloquence passing the time so pleasantly. But while the curate and the dominie were joining in the chorus of some old drinking-song,

Bordeaux whispered in my ear that I had best be gone to bed.

“What if the merciless Macdonwald opened that door and walked in?” said he.

So I went to bed, but I lay half asleep for hours, thinking of the new life that was opening for me — the world of art and learning, strangely enough, for it seemed quite natural that my steps should follow in that path. I was to be laird of Kilellan and my lady a Spanish princess; and Bordeaux and the curate and the dominie and Will and Ben ran in my head. And the mulled ale was in it, also, to the tune that came from the big blazing room down-stairs:

Back and side go bare, go bare,
Both foot and hand grow cold,
But belly God send good ale enow,
Whether it be new or old.

I cannot eat but little meat;
My stomach is not good,
But I do think that I can drink
With him that wears a hood.

Bordeaux's voice rose clear, rich, manly and refined, and at the end of each verse the curate and the dominie — hoary old rascals — joined in with a lusty roar, the while they tapped the table with their tankards.

I have never forgotten Ninian's tavern.

CHAPTER XIX

THE CHASE RENEWED

Just as daylight was struggling over a dreary landscape of snow, I was awakened by a soft, significant tap on the door of my room. I lay still for a moment, thinking that I had dreamed the sound, but to my awaking senses there came the voice of a man raised in furious anger. The speaker was in the lower part of the house — in the tap-room, I now know — and although his voice came indistinctly to my ears, I recognized the author at once. It was the Macdonald.

Again came the tap at the door. I cautiously withdrew the bolt and peeped out before I admitted Bordeaux and Mariposa. She was fully dressed and she slipped a trembling arm into mine in the half-darkness of the room.

“After last night’s fitful fever you slept well,” said Bordeaux. “Here have we been hoisting pe-tards at your door a full half-hour, and the Mac-donald screaming like a Hieland eagle for your life’s liver and his wife’s blood. Now, friend Rorie, what is to be done?”

There was a curious tremour in Bordeaux’s voice, but the careless smile on his lips belied alarm.

His paleness was due to a sleepless night, at the end of which he had seen the curate and the domine stagger off through the snow. It angered me in that moment of peril to think that the man had debauched himself to this condition.

While we three stood there — Mariposa trembling with cold, Bordeaux sunk in the dregs of liquor, and I flashing hot and cold with anger, fear, determination, and excitement — from the tap-room arose the bull voice of the chieftain of the Kyles, bellowing for Mariposa. His language was a wild commingling of Gaelic and broken English, profanity, and pitiful, maudlin appeal. Me, he painted in fearful words as a traitor, a seducer, a thief; but when he called Mariposa his “wife,” and flung upon her the greatest insult to a wife, I sprang toward the door. Bordeaux leaped forward and stood between me and my purpose.

“Hold your temper, Rorie,” said he, with a hysterical catch in his throat. I could see the man’s master-mind battling against the liquor. “Leave this to me. Let me think. Let me think.”

“Let me pass!” I cried. “Let me get at yon man’s throat. It has to come, now or syne. Let me pass.”

Bordeaux moved his hand irritably, and shot the bolt in the door.

“Mind the lady,” said he, not unkindly. Mariposa pressed my arm in gentle rebuke and assurance.

Bordeaux stepped quickly to one of the windows of the room. It overlooked the stable-yard. Another window, set at right angles, commanded a view of the coast road to Glasgow, running through a country so flat that meadow and highway were as one under the pall of snow.

"The only way," said Bordeaux, pointing to the latter window. "If you cross the river, and win to the streets of Glasgow, y'are safe."

It was unnecessary for him to tell me that we could not cross the river at Govan, for the front of Ninian's commanded a full view of the stream for hundreds of yards up and down. A glance through the window, overlooking the stable-yard, showed us a post-chaise, not yet unhitched from the horses, which were reeking in the cold air.

"No," I said, thinking of Mariposa and the long road. "I'll fight him."

"Y'are a fool," said Bordeaux, impatiently. "Swallow your Hieland pride and run for't. Ye owe it to Macmurtrie and the lass. The man has the law on his side." He pulled the warm blanket from his bed. "Do as I bid you, sirrah! I'll hold him back, or trick him — ay, maim him, if need be!"

He flung the window open and, with a word to me to follow, dropped to the ground below — a distance of fifteen feet. I saw his plan in a moment.

"Mariposa, you must jump," I said, as a stamp-

ing of feet came nearer, on the stairs. "Dinna fear, lass. We'll hold the blanket."

In a second I was through the window, and on the snow. Swiftly, Bordeaux and I spread the blanket, and when we gave the word Mariposa gathered her plaid around her knees and leaped.

Now, although Mariposa was as bonny as God ever made a woman, she was no feather in weight. By that I mean to say that she was as solid as a fine lass of seventeen ought to be. She dropped fair in the center of the blanket, and although we felt the shock in the blanket corners between our fingers, we managed to hold tight. But the great misfortune lay in Ringan Scouler's blanket. One of Mariposa's feet shot right through it, and the ground took a good bit of her weight. She gave a cry, as if she had hurt herself, but when I sprang to her help, she laughed and blushed and made both of us turn away while she got herself out of the tangle.

"Now!" whispered Bordeaux, fearful that the post-boys had heard our bustle. "Be off with you."

But the post-boys had heard, and there they were standing in a knot by the house-corner, grinning mightily, but in quite a friendly way.

"All the world loves a lover," I heard Bordeaux say to them, as we ran off through the snow. And I am sure the post-boys thought we were just a loving pair hunting for a minister, and that the

noisy man in the tap-room was Mariposa's father. Certain it is, that the lads offered no unsought information when Ringan Scouler, pursuing his sorrowful duty, led the Macdonald to the room where I had lately slept.

Bordeaux half promised to write this part of the story, but he never even half fulfilled his promise. As far as I have since gathered, he went back to the tap-room, being in much need of a dram, and there found the Macdonald roaring like a bereaved lion. Bordeaux offered him his deepest sympathy and, indeed, offered to help the outraged chieftain to recover his erring wife and run the dastard me to earth. At that, the Macdonald, who had been drinking as freely as Bordeaux, burst into whisky tears and fell upon our friend's neck. Bordeaux, of course, cautioned the chieftain against precipitation, quoting, I have no doubt, many eminent poets in support of his advice.

The end of it was that, by the time those two worthies had assuaged their thirst, pledged each other "once more," had the horses changed and the chaise prepared for renewed pursuit, Mariposa and I had passed over one of the three miles to the town of Glasgow.

The first part of the road we traversed was as level as a table, and unfenced, so that for a while we could not tell whether we were on the highway or in the fields. Soon, however, we caught sight of a gate and a toll-house about half a mile

ahead of us; and then, while we had a definite point to aim at, I was assailed by a new terror—the worst that can strike at the heart of a man when he is playing knight-errant. I had no money to pay the toll.

As we approached the gate, at which point the Govan road is joined by the highway from Paisley, I was turning over in mind what I should do. Difficulties began to swarm upon me as they always do when a man has enough trouble as it is. Turning to look back, I thought I saw a chaise glide rapidly across the landscape and become lost in a belt of fir-trees. At the same time Mariposa began to limp. I said nothing to my lass, either about the chaise or the toll, hoping against hope that we might pass through unchallenged. I could see nobody about the gate, and the little toll-house seemed frozen and uninhabited. To the left and right of it a line of paling stretched from a fir plantation to the black waters of the Clyde.

But the moment I laid hands on the gate a little shutter opened in the toll-house, a head swathed in clouts popped out, and a voice whined:

“Twa bawbees!”

“Sirrah!” I cried desperately. “I have not a bawbee in the world.”

“Then gang awa’ wi’ ye!” whined the voice.

The man was about to clap the shutter to, when Mariposa said, with sweet, innocent genius:

“Puir man. Have ye got the toothache?”

"Ay, ay," girmed the toll-keeper; "a wranglin' tithick, dingin' in ma heid like a blacksmith's shop. Gie's for bawbees and pass. I'm fear'd o' the cauld. Ah had a kizzen yinst that ketched cauld in his arm, an' he dee'd in fearfu' ag'ny — fearfu' ag'ny."

"Ay?" said Mariposa. "It's awfu' cauld oot for puir bodies. Will ye no let's through, sir? We hae freends in Glesca."

I looked at Mariposa, a little taken aback by her cleverness, and was smitten almost to tears myself to see two big freezing drops on her pink cheeks.

"Let's through, man," I cried angrily, meaning to go through, even if I killed the churl.

"Tee-hee-hee!" he giggled. "Was ye gaun t' be marri't? Tee-hee-hee! Is yon chaise aifter ye? Tee-hee-hee!"

I was about to spring at the gate, or at the man, for out of the corner of my eye I saw the post-chaise about half a mile behind us; but suddenly and mysteriously the toll-gate swung open and the clouted person cried:

"Rin, lass, rin! An' here's luck tae ye!"

We ran like racers at the Highland games. The gate slammed behind us, and the feeble tee-hee-hee! of the man with the toothache rang not unpleasantly in our ears. A more distant sound was the loud shouting of voices, one of which, to my great astonishment, I recognized as Bordeaux's.

What was he doing in that chaise? Was the

man mad, or a malicious jester, thus to aid in the pursuit of the friends whom he had already aided? At that time I had no full understanding of this Bordeaux. Indeed, I have yet to get to the very depths of the man's cunning and his exquisite humour.

"Come on, lass," I whispered, taking Mariposa's arm, for she was limping more and more, and panting painfully. "We're gaun t'be marri't."

"Don't, don't, Rorie!" she sobbed. "I—I'm marri't already."

Indeed, it occurred to me forcibly, for the first time, that she was really wedded to the Macdonald, as our Scots law goes. And what was I doing? Running on the king's highway with another man's wife, and the husband—the chieftain of the Kyles—roaring at our heels.

But I knew in my heart that the marriage was wrong, and such was my faith in Alexander Macmurtrie to put all things right that I had no other thought than to win to Glasgow and take the notary's word in the matter. If I lost the race now, I knew that by the nine-tenths law of possession, and the other tenth in the Macdonald's favor, I should lose Mariposa forever.

"Come on, lass!" I whispered, and her answer was a sob, nipped off between her teeth.

CHAPTER XX

THE MILK OF HUMAN KINDNESS

Glancing back on the road, I observed that the chaise had reached the toll-house. The vehicle should have been through, but that the gate barred progress more unflinchingly than it had blocked ours. Surely the Macdonald had two bawbees, for I had an idea that Bordeaux would pretend he had none.

As I looked back, without stopping, I could see both the Macdonald and Bordeaux standing in the snow, apparently protesting, and that volubly, to judge by our queer friend's gesticulations. I would — while I would not — have given more than two bawbees to have overheard that passage between our pursuers and the toll-keeper. Bordeaux has since told me something of it, and the remembrance of his story ever revives my faith in human kindness.

When the Macdonald saw us stopped by the gate, he cried to the post-boy to speed the horses. Faster still he made him drive when the gate opened to us, for, despite our passage through, victory seemed assured to the Macdonald. When his chaise reached the toll-gate, only a poor quarter-mile lay

between him and his absconding lady. But the toll-keeper was to be reckoned with. That man, having lost sleep through toothache, or believing that one passage was enough traffic for one day, had apparently shut up shop and gone to bed. Roar as the Macdonald did, spout philosophy as Bordeaux might, and hurry as the post-boy pretended, the clouted individual could not be aroused.

Finally, the post-boy dismounted and thundered on the door of the toll-house. The toll-keeper, ingloriously swathed in clouts, appeared presently and explained, with many a girn, that he had a "wrangle in his heid like a weaver's loom."

"Mad," said Bordeaux, with sympathy.

"Open yon gate!" bellowed the Macdonald.

"It is the cauld Ah'm fear't for," whined Clouts.

"Ah had a kizzen yinst that ketched cauld in his gum, an' he dee'd in fearfu' ag'ny — fearfu' ag'ny."

"Open ycn gate!" screamed the chieftain.

"What wad ye be speirin'?" asked the toll-keeper, clapping a hand to the clouts that covered his ears. "Ah'm a wee dull o' hearin'. It's the cauld. It gets intil the ears, ye ken. That's hoo it tuk ma kizzen, an' in twa days he was —"

"Open ta gate, or I wull thraw yer Lawland neck!" shrieked the chieftain of the Kyles.

"Ay, ay," said the toll-keeper pleasantly. "The weather, as ye say, is gey hard for travel — hard on man and beast. I hae nae doot the snaw was gey bad in the Hielands. Mebbe ye would be from

the Hiellands yersel'? But it'll haud up noo, I'm thinkin'. It's aye this way at this seas'n o' the year, an' we maun expec' a thaw by an' by."

The Macdonald fell back in the chaise, overcome with fury. Bordeaux alighted and began a lengthy oration on the evils of the toll-system as an infringement upon the rights of individuals, save, as in some cases, where the toll fees were outlayed for the improvement of the highways upon which a private tax was placed. He challenged the right of the toll-keeper, however, to delay equestrians, pedestrians, post-boys, passengers, horseflesh, and vehicles upon any pretense, and challenged the private individual who, having such lien upon the highway as empowered him to levy toll, so abused his fortune as to employ menials who were either deaf, dumb, scurried or scurrilous!

"What would the man be saying?" asked the toll-keeper of the post-boy.

"Words, words, words!" cried Bordeaux. A light dawned upon the clouded one's face.

"Oh, ay! Oh, ay!" said he. "It would be as ye say, sir. The law governin' the consumption o' coos or sheep that hae dee'd a nat'ral death is iniquitous heavy on the poor. But it will not be observit north o' the Clyde, where they tell me braxy is the mainstay o' the Hiellan'man during the cauld months. I hae never tastit braxy masel', but —"

"Braxy be *tammed!*" howled the Macdonald,

leaping from the post-chaise, purple with cold, whisky, and wrath, and flourishing his dirk. He gripped the toll-keeper by the shoulder and thundered upon him to open the gate.

"Oh!" cried Clouts, with his mouth a little round hole and his chin in the air. "O-o-o-oh! Ye wad be wantin' tae pass through the gate. Hech, ay. It'll be three bawbees, and three for the cairt. Tee-hee-hee!"

By the time the chaise passed through the toll-gate, Mariposa and I were within half a mile of the scattered cottages that mark the outskirts of Glasgow. Between these fishing cottages and the town proper, there was the river; so that we were still a bit way from safety. Our start was good, but after the trouble at the gate, Macdonald must have been in a bonny rage, and the chaise was on our track at great speed, the horses dashing up snow-foam, and the post-boy's whipping-arm rising and falling like a flail. Besides that, poor Mariposa was in great pain. She never said a word, but I knew by the way she breathed through her teeth as she stumbled along, leaning the weak side on my arm.

By the time we reached the first cottages, the chaise was so close behind us that we could hear the dull purring of the wheels in the snow and the snoring of the horses. Mariposa gathered herself together for a last effort. We had only a few hundred yards to go to reach the ferry-landing. It seemed that we could never do it; but I was de-

terminated to win, or kill the Macdonald, rather than give my lass into his hands again.

Through the street we ran, stumbling and panting. The salmon-fishers came out of their cottages and called to their wives to come and see the sport. The men looked on and grinned, as if they, too, believed we were fleeing from an angry father. Several of them cried us a word of cheer and encouragement, but none stirred until the women raised their tongues. Then there was a protesting gabble, for all the world like the clucking of hens when there is a fox in the roost.

“It’s a black, burnin’ shame!” cried a shrill voice. “Chasin’ a puir lassie like a rabbit. Erchie! Neil! Ye big lumps! What are ye standin’ there for, grinnin’? Losh, if Ah was a man —”

And in the middle of it all I heard a sudden shout. Looking back, I saw a sturdy young fisherman dragging along in the snow, both of his hands clutching the post-boy’s reins. The chaise slowed up, the post-boy fearing to hurt the man, or glad of a subterfuge to help us, and in that moment, encouraged by the “On! On! Dinna stop!” of the fisherwives, Mariposa and I dashed — or rather slid — down the bank to the ferry-landing.

The ferryman was just pushing off on his first trip across the river. I gave a hoarse cry — it was all I could do — to attract his attention. He looked up, and — of course he must have seen that some-

thing urgent was afoot — backed his boat, stern first, into the slip. Mariposa flung herself headlong into the craft and lay almost inanimate, save for the deep, quick convulsions of her breathing. I helped the boat off with a hind kick and dropped down beside her.

“Row, ferryman, row!” was all I could say.

The ferryman obeyed. At the same time, there came a scurrying of feet in the snow about the river-bank. The Macdonald and Bordeaux had leaped from the arrested chaise and footed after us. As they came tumbling down the bank, the chieftain yelled:

“Stop! Stop ta poat!”

The ferryman hung on his oars.

“An’ what will this be?” said he, astonished.

“Wha’s yon?”

“Oh, dinna let him get me!” Mariposa panted, lifting a flushed, tearful face.

“Eh, but Ah maun ken wha’s wha’ an’ whit’s whit,” said the boatman. “Which o’ yon men’s yer faither, lass?”

“She’s ma lawfu’ wife!” the Macdonald shouted from the bank, and his voice was loud above Bordeaux’s tirade against the rights of watermen to conduct public traffic at will.

“His wife!” said the boatman, looking suspiciously at me. “Na, na. Ah’ll hae nae dealin’s wi’ this. Back ye go!” And he started to back

water toward the danger shore. I pulled my dirk from my stocking and held it under the gunwale of the boat, close to the man's stomach.

"If ye back another stroke, I'll bury it!" I said, with as much horrible earnestness as I could command.

The boatman hung on his oars again, and at that, Bordeaux, as if he had suddenly lost patience, hurled the most horrible threats at the ferryman.

"If ever I lay my hands on ye," he shouted, "I'll pull your Hieland neck from your body. I'll flay the skin off your face and paint you with vinegar, ye miserable, Scotch bawbee!"

That decided the ferryman, and a few minutes later we were on the Glasgow side, with the Macdonald hurling curses across the water and Bordeaux most fervently excelling him in devil's rhetoric. Mariposa struggled to her feet and blew a kiss to our odd friend. At that, Bordeaux gave the Macdonald a hearty thwack on the back and waved his hat to us with a merry, reckless laugh.

But although we were in Glasgow we were not quite at the end of our journey. Besides, I had to pay the ferryman for his very valuable services, and that was a difficult matter when I had no money. This was overcome, however, by my giving him the dirk as good faith that I would redeem it. Mariposa's face did the rest. Anyway, the ferryman took the weapon and laughed as he said:

"Ye'll not need it in the job ye're after. Forbye, I'd rather hae't in ma nief than in ma stamack. It'll cost ye a groat to get it back, though."

Then, having learned from him that Alexander Macmurtrie's place of business was somewhere near the tron gate, we set off, tired but lighter of heart. We plunged into the crooked streets of Glasgow. I know now that from the landing-place at the ferry to the tron was a short walk, with scarce a turning; but I had never been in Glasgow before that time. Besides, I felt that the more we puzzled ourselves about our whereabouts, the more baffled would be the Macdonald if he continued the chase.

So we wandered aimlessly for a while, enjoying the newness of the busy streets, and the enchantment of the squeezed, gabled houses, deciding that after a bit we would ask our way to the tron. The Macdonald had no notion that we were bound for Macmurtrie's, even if, as I much doubted, he had ever heard of the lawyer. Bordeaux, of course, knew, but I was sure now that that singular person had been helping us while he pretended to help the Macdonald. Mariposa and I laughed a good deal over that business, though we had been nigh crying a while before.

But we soon wearied of trudging around. Mariposa's ankle, which she must have hurt quite badly when she jumped from the window at Ninian's, was now paining her so that she could hardly set it on

the ground. We were faint with hunger, neither of us having eaten a bite since supper at Ringan Scouler's on the previous night. So we presently started for the tron gate.

It was easy enough to ask the way and be directed, but it was another thing to follow the directions. We must go through such-and-such a street and, when half-way down, turn into somebody's lane which would fetch us to another street, and after going along that for a bit, we would come to a close at the end of which we would be able to see the tron gate with our own eyes!

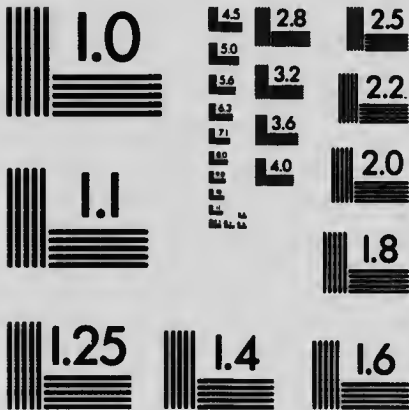
I am sure we were full two hours getting to the tron, for the street names would not agree with the names we had in mind. And sometimes our travels would bring us up at the end of a blind alley, and we would have to go back and begin all over again, or ask instructions anew. When we finally reached the tron and climbed a flight of wooden stairs to the office of Alexander Macmurtrie, poor Mariposa had to hold back the tears when we found that our gentleman had gone home for the day.

"Beez'ness bein' slack," sing-songed a melancholy, skinny lad, who was writing with a quill and pausing every few moments to wipe his nose with a grimy clout. This lad always reminds me of a worm that has aye lived in dark places. He was long, lank, and languid, pallid with town life and writing in musty books. I never knew him without



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a cold. If he was free from one, the habit had grown on him so much that he was forever mopping his nose.

"Ye canna see 'm afore the mornin's mornin'," he whined, his voice drawling up and down like a saw going through a log. "He stops oot by Glesca Gre-e-n, though," he added, and in the horrible silence that followed, his hand crawled into his pouch for the clout. I asked him where Glasgow Green might be, and he gave us a long, dismal tune on the subject. I never noticed a word of it, for I was sort of dazed by the way he sang, and the manner in which his hand kept crawling from his pouch to his nose and back again.

Once out in the street, we resumed the weary search for Macmurtrie. We had little difficulty in finding Glasgow Green, but it was not so easy to find the notary's house among the many that semi-circled the wide common, which was skirted on the south by the river. We wandered along, footsore, faint, and heartsick, asking passers-by where Alexander Macmurtrie lived. Many of them were churls who passed us indifferently; thinking, I have no doubt, that we were beggars. It was after one such encounter, when a gruff brute glared at us as we approached him and snarled, "Get awa' wi' ye!" that Mariposa sat down in the snow and began to sob.

Poor lass! She had suffered and endured much. I tried to comfort her, but there was little cheer in

my own heart. But, presently, as we lingered there — a pathetic pair, you will agree — I saw a man who looked to be a kindly chiel plodding across the Green. I was about to run forward and desperately sue for help when he looked across and saw us.

“Guid bless m’ soul!” he cried, and, turning at right angle in his course, he came straight toward us.

He was a short, fat man with a big red face and a humorous wart on the left side of a beefy nose. He was well-wrapped against the weather, with flappers over his ears, a big white muffler wound twice around his neck and his hands buried in the folds of a heavy cloak. As he came up to us, his rosy face and little eyes were alight with concern, while he blew steamy clouds of indignation from his mouth.

“Hoot toot!” he cried. “Is’t as bad’s a’ that? Wha’s the lass? What may yer name be, lad? Where d’ye come frae? And how did ye come to this?”

“The lass is tired and hungry,” I said. “We have come frae the Hielands, and sair distressed hae we been. My name, sir, is Maclean — Rorie Maclean, o’ Kilellan, in Argyll. If ye could tell me where to find one, Alexander Macmurtrie, a notary —”

“Bless m’ soul! Bless m’ soul!” the cheery body interrupted. “Is’t as bad as a’ that? Rorie Maclean — hey? O’Kilellan — hey? Son o’ An-

gus Maclean, like enough. Hoo's a' wi' ye, Rorie?"

"Maybe," I ventured, "ye will be Alexander Macmurtrie yerself?"

"Mebbe ay. Mebbe no," was the odd response. "D'ye tak' snuff, Rorie?" And he pulled a big horn snuff-box from his pouch and dexterously opened the lid with the same hand in which he held the box. When I told him that snuff was a thing I did not know the use of, he said:

"Imphm? Mebbe ye prefer the rappee. I'm pairtia to the Broon Cannel masel'. Hoot toot!" said he, as I turned impatiently to Mariposa. "Let her greet it oot. It's what the lassie needs — a guid greet! I hae daughters masel'. They're a' that way. Imphm! An' so y'are Rorie Maclean, are ye? Ah mind ye when ye were a bit lad." And this deliberate man crammed his nostrils full of snuff, poked it in with a fat thumb and then wobbled his great nose, the while he snorted like a bull and peered at me with his little, twinkling gray eyes.

"Ay, ay," said he at length. "Ah'm Macmurtrie — an auld freen o' yer faither, Rorie. An' who will the lass be?" he added, dropping abruptly into the Gaelic.

"The lass," I echoed a bit confused. "'Deed, sir, it's yourself that maybe can tell me. Her name's Mariposa —"

"Mary what?"

"Mari-posa," I repeated.

"Eh-hay!" he chuckled. "A bonny name. And I will suppose, Rorie, ye'd marry 'Posa — hey?"

"Mister Macmurtrie," I said stiffly, "Mistress Mariposa is the daughter of Don John of Murcia, in Spain, a gentleman of some birth —"

"Eh!" snapped Macmurtrie, and his rosy face turned almost pale with shock. "Say that again, lad."

I repeated my little speech, which I had rehearsed in my mind a good deal.

"Guid bless my soul!" cried Macmurtrie, in English, looking at my poor lass. "Hay, come awa', lass! Stop greetin', my dearie. Don John's daughter!" He glanced around at me and whispered in Gaelic. "He will be dead, I'm thinking? Hech, ay! La-a-amentable. La-a-amentable! But this is a braw day for the lass, and business is no as slack as 'twas. Come awa', lass, and you, Rorie. The house will be but a step, and there's a braw fire burning, and Mistress Macmurtrie will hae a hot scone for tea and —"

Then he stopped and shot his little gray eyes at me, with what I took to be a frown. He did not speak again, save in half-muttered ejaculations, until we came to the door of a fine two-story house with a lamp hanging over the front door. The whole premises were set in the middle of a half-flower, half-kail garden. As he slipped a big key into the

lock, Macmurtrie turned to me and said mysteriously :

“ Rorie, I will be having a bit surprise for you, I’m thinking. It may not be a pleasant one, but, between me and you and the door, it is no a pleasant business from start to hinder. But, hoot toot ! Come awa’ ben. It’s no as bad’s a’ that. Come awa’ ben the hoose, freends.”

He led us into the parlour, a bright room with the lamp already lit — for it was a gloomy day — and a cheery fire burning on the hearth. There were four persons in the room, and at sight of one of them my heart stood still, as I have no doubt Mariposa’s did.

“ Mistress Macmurtrie,” said the man of law ; “ Maggie — Janet — here’s the Spanish princess ye ha’ made the fash about. . . . Rorie,” he added, a bit awkwardly and speaking over his shoulder, “ here’s your kinsman, young Jamie ! ”

The laird of Kilellan arose from a chair by the spinet where one of Macmurtrie’s daughters had been playing. And as my enemy faced me with an ironic bow, I noticed that the mark of Twelfth-night and my fist was still on his brow.

CHAPTER XXI

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

The ladies swooped down upon Mariposa. In spite of her bravery among men, she burst into tears the moment she found herself with her own sex. So exhausted and in such pain was she, that my lass just dropped into Mistress Macmurtrie's arms and fairly broke down. The lawyer, glad to leave young Jamie and me to our own affairs, hovered around the pathetic group with many a "hoot toot" and "bless me! Is't as bad's a' that?"

I was thankful for this circumstance for the moment. The unexpected resurrection of young Jamie had so floored me, that I doubt if I could have gone through any ceremonial without appearing, just then, a greater gawk than I was. All I could do was to stand up there and stare at my cousin of Kilellan.

It could not have been more than five seconds before he spoke; but in that brief interval I perceived the full significance of the man's living presence. The death-blow to my future as laird of Kilellan struck harder because I felt that all Mariposa's troubles were at an end. Bordeaux's hints, Macmurtrie's words, and the welcome accorded her by

the women of the lawyer's household, convinced me of that. It was only for her sake that I had hoped to be laird. Now the ground was swept from under me, and as if to hurl me deeper into the pit, they spoke of my lass as a "Spanish princess."

You should remember, too, that in the cheery, well-furnished room, among those fine ladies, with the prosperous Macmurtrie and the polished young Jamie, I had not even the advantage of being decently clad. I wore the same kilt, sporran, shoon, and coat in which I fled from Kilellan on Twelfth-night; and if you will cast your mind back through a month of terrible hardship, you may imagine how I looked when I entered Macmurtrie's parlor, with the thawing snow dripping all around me.

"And so?" said young Jamie softly. "Is it you? I take it you have not forgotten where we last saw each other?"

A kind of fury at the disadvantage of my position swept through me. I retorted with some warmth:

"I do have mind o't, for I recognize ye as one o' the cattle I branded."

The scar on his brow turned purple amid the flush of the rest of his face; but, mastering himself, he sneered:

"I take it you have not been back to Kilellan since that night?"

"Like yourself," I said, something giving my tongue the joy of the battle. "'Tis better to run

away for fear of my own people, than for fear of the enemy."

"Pray tell me," said he sweetly, "who is the enemy that you speak of?"

"The Macdonalds," I answered stoutly, "for I was speaking of you. As for me, I shall make myself the enemy of you and your ilk, so long as an assassin lives to stain the honour of my people. And more!" I went on, my voice rising with my anger. "If you do not swallow your cowardice and go back to Kilellan and do your duty, I shall go myself as they have asked me, and you will meet my sword-point at the castle door, if the husbandless women, fatherless bairns, and homeless men do not tear ye limb from limb before ye have left the ferry-boat. James Black, ye are a coward. Your father was a murderer. Your grandfather was a blo' 'thirsty —"

"Rorie," interrupted Macmurtrie quietly, "do ye tak 'snuff? No? Mebbe ye prefer the rappee? Ah'm pairtial to the Broon Cannel masel'."

"You traitor!" said young Jamie with scorn.

It was on my tongue to continue my lively speech; but Mr. Macmurtrie turned around, and while busily engaged stuffing his nose with snuff, he said calmly:

"Hay, Jamie — *snff-snff* — if ye're 110 gentleman enough to choose yer remarkks" — here he wobbled his nose with a fat finger — "be guid enough to mind that" — with a great sneeze —

“ye’re in a gentleman’s hoose. D’ye tak’ snuff?”

At this comical but neat rebuke, young Jamie turned his back upon me, Macmurtrie and the proffered snuff-box. Macmurtrie’s eyes twinkled, but he snapped the lid of the box with an air of decision and spun around upon me. I fancied that it was my turn now, for, indeed, it was I who was the more deserving of censure. But the lawyer spoke with perfect good humour, although there was an anxious note in his voice.

“As I was saying,” he said, “there’s no room in the house for more than the extras. Forbye, it’s time you and the lass were separated. You’ve been defying the laws of propriety overlong as ’tis. Now she’s settled and to be cared for, you will put on your muffler like a good lad, and I will be showing you to your bed.”

He gave me a gentle shove out of the room. Before I realized that I had left Maria in the hands of the enemy — as it seemed to me — we were out in the snow and trudging back to town, Macmurtrie blowing clouds of steam in the cold air and talking rapidly in his Glasgow English.

“Hoot toot!” said he. “Is’t as bad ’s a’ that? I kenned it had been an unpleasant beez’ness; but that ye should be for bluidyin’ up Mistress Macmurtrie’s carpet was la-amentable — la-amentable! This’ll tak’ a lot of sortin’. There’s mair trouble comes oot o’ the Hielan’s than a’ the Hielan’s are worth. Ae day comes Macdonald o’ Glencoe wi’ a

fash about sheep. The morn comes Stuart of Appin in a ginn about lands; an' the next day comes the Campb li o' Kilellan wi' a roar about murder; an' on his heels comes the Macdonalds and the Stuarts and the Grants and the Macleans and the Maclungs an' the Macloots and the ither Macmischiefs, till ma offis is mair like lions in a Daniel's den than a peaceable corner for the transaction o' legeetimate law beez'ness. An' if ye favour one mair than the other, ye have the whole jing-bang about yer ears like bees buzzin' in a bottle."

Here Alexander Macmurtrie gave an excellent imitation of bees buzzing in a bottle.

"The best way to do wi' you Hieland cattle," he continued, "is to send the whole pack o' ye back to yer braxy and catmeal, an' let ye fecht it oot in yer ain fashion. Ye're a barb'rous lot, Rorie — ba-arb'rous — ba-arb'rous!"

"That's the very point I make, sir," I said. "On Twelfth-night —"

"Hoot toot!" he interrupted testily. "There ye go. Didn't Ah tell ye? And he'll mak' his point; an' the pair o' ye'll buzz like bees in a bottle, or ba-a-a like sheep in the rain, till Ah'm fair deaved. Not a word, sirrah! Ye'll come to ma offis the morn's mornin', an' Ah'll hear your end o' 't. But, fegs! it's a la-a-mentable beez'ness! Yer faither, Angus, was a sensible man, but here's the laird, sir — the laird!" He stopped suddenly by the entrance to a narrow, dark, draughty close. "Ye're

shair ye dinna tak' snuff?" he added, with comical anxiety.

When I said "No, thank ye, kindly," he led me into the close and up a flight of rickety wooden stairs, all the while muttering that snuff was a braw thing to prevent colds and drown distastefu' odours, o' which there were a whéen in the warld. Most men preferred the rappee, it seemed, but the kind known as Broon Cannel was Macmurtrie's favourite.

He presently knocked at a door, which was visible in the gloom only by a dim eye-like keyhole, beyond which a light was burning. The door was opened by a stout, careworn, but kindly-faced woman, who immediately stepped to one side with a curtsy.

"An' is it yoursel', factor?" she said. "Come awa' ben. Ma man's no sleepin'. He's been ly'in' awake a' day; though wakin' an' sleepin's much the same to a blin' man. Hay, John, it's Mister Macmurtrie, an' he has brought a young freend."

The man on the bed in the corner of the room smiled happily—the soft smile of the blind. He reached out a hand and groped for that of the lawyer, who was also, it seemed, a property factor. I was beginning to learn something of the doughty little man, and to see how beloved he was by all classes. The look on the blind man's face was a tribute beyond the worth of gold.

Blind Johnny, as they called old Thornton, had

always been blind. His wife, a woman of strong maternal instinct, had married him as, I might say, a hen adopts and mothers an alien progeny. Their only child, a son, could see at birth; but before he was ten years old, the long night closed in upon an inherited weakness of the eyes. The double calamity only softened the woman's heart, while it hardened her mouth-corners.

For years Blind Johnny had supported his family by playing the fiddle at festive parties. His earnings were small, but his wife managed — somehow. To be truthful and exact, she did washing for the neighbours. Johnny, being blind, only wondered why she scrubbed his clothes so much. He was happy in his ignorance to think that, blind as he was, he could still work for his Janet's living.

As the blind boy grew up, he too, learned to play the fiddle; so that when old Johnny took to his bed for the last, long time, Blind Willie took his place at the festive parties.

Before that, there had been five years of success for the family. That was when father and son were hired as one and inseparable. Then it was a quaint and pathetic sight the watchmen saw of a cold, frosty morning, when, wrapped up in their knitted mufflers, their fiddles tucked under linked arms, the blind led the blind through the crooked streets of Glasgow.

They played together with the perfect accord, mutual understanding, and sympathy of the sensitive

blind. Often the dancers would pause to gaze, not upon the sightless eyes, but at the two loving chins tucking the fiddles close, the side-flung, smiling faces and the twin-like sweep of the bow-arms.

Blind Willie, the son, was out that evening when Macmurtrie and I paid our visit. The old man was patiently awaiting his return, when he would hear the gossip of that higher world into which they were permitted a hireling's glance. But never again would Blind Johnny sweep his bow to the patter of feet and the chatter of voices. The old fiddle lay on the bed, the bow beside it.

To me it was not so sad. It was the beautiful in life. To think of these three brave people hanging together by a fate which was common to two of them, and weighing upon the third; to see that smiling face with the blank, blue eyes; to watch the shy hands reaching out for the beloved instrument and drawing back, ashamed — of what? To hear that soft, sweet-faced woman defer to her blind, helpless lord and master, careful of every word, and cheerful in his presence; and to think, last of all, of the son tapping his long stick through the silent streets for the sake of the dying father and the angelic mother — It was beautiful!

It was easy to see that Macmurtrie was a welcome visitor. The blind man held the lawyer's hand for a minute, stroking it gently, and smiling with child-like pleasure. There was that about Alexander Macmurtrie which made comfort in his

neighbourhood. There was cheer in his voice and a certain air of stability in his presence. Blind Johnny never knew that the factor had often paid the rent out of his own pocket, so that his love for the man was surely heart-drawn.

No sooner had Macmurtrie introduced me as "a lodger for a wee while," than the blind man said: "Hech, aye. Janet'll mak' him at hame." Then he drew Macmurtrie close down and whispered:

"Ask him if he minds the fiddle."

"Hoot toot!" said the lawyer, surprised. "Rorie's a man o' sensibilities an' fine he likes the fiddle; eh, Rorie?"

Now, I had never heard of, let alone heard, a fiddle in my life, so that when Macmurtrie appealed to me for confirmation of my own tastes, I was a bit floundered for an answer. But I caught Mistress Thornton's pleading eyes and she nodded her head in such a way that I said — what was really the truth — that I had been wishing to hear the fiddle ever since I came in.

The way that blind old man's face lit up was music in itself, but when he drew the bow across the strings I was startled. I heard a sound that thrilled me to my very soul.

Remember — you, who smile — that I had never heard any music save that of the pipes and the old spinet, and these drawn-out sounds from Blind Johnny's fiddle were to me like that human voice which we feel rather than hear — the voice that is

in dreams and in Nature, as when the wind washes the leaves, or the river runs through the woods, or the storm roars up from the Atlantic. I know now that what I felt then, in the sounds of Blind Johnny's playing, was the first call of that world of ideals which I have hungrily pursued in books, pictures, and in Nature.

Before that time I had never thought of the world, the skies, the stars, the storms, the seasons, and so forth; at least as anything to wonder at — seeing I had come into the world to find it all so. I had cried over Don John and Mistress Mary, shuddered over blood and rapine, and sighed over Mariposa in much the same unthinking way.

But at the first, low murmur of the fiddle-string, a curtain seemed to part in my brain. I heard, read, and understood, all at once, if not the epic of all life, at least the meaning of the emotions that had touched my own. Every stroke of the bow stirred old memories and bathed them in a glamour of idealism. I saw now, as I had never seen before, the sadness, the human loveliness, the awe-inspiring tenderness of Don John and Mistress Mary; the clashing, clamorous horror of those ghouls of Kilellan Castle; and, like the beginning and ending, the cause and effect of the music, arose Mariposa — tender, brave, beautiful and pure.

This wonderful sound-burst suddenly awoke me to a knowledge of the world and myself, and to

the wonder of the human heart — its pains, its pleasures, its passions.

When it was done, I became aware that a hot, salt drop had trickled into my mouth-corner. The blind man had laid aside his fiddle and the blank, blue eyes were shining wet. Mistress Thornton had vanished. Macmurtrie's cheery face was beaming with pleasure and tears, and he wagged his head from side to side. He glanced at me just as I glanced at him. Ashamed of his emotion — as I was, in a way, of mine — he suddenly delved into his pocket and produced the inevitable sneezing-mill. In his agitation he forgot to offer me any, or to make his accustomed remarks, but proceeded to cram his nose full of Broon Cannel.

"B-Blin' J-Johnny," said he, "you're an old rascal, sir!"

The blind man laughed. "I like fine when you come, Alexander," said he. "I can feel ye when I play. Your freen', too. I had the feel o' him. Sometimes I play an' the feel comes back, like — like a short echo. That's when they are na carin' much for the fiddle. But ither times, the feel comes like a long echo. That's when it's bein' liked and listen't to. Would ye be for' off, Alexander?" he added, as Macmurtrie scrambled to his feet.

"Ay, ay!" said the factor. "My guid wife, ye ken. But ye maun play him cheery tunes, Johnny." added Macmurtrie, looking at me. "He's one o'

they melancholy Hielan'men, an' he's been settin' here greetin' like a bairn, ever since ye startit playin'. Ah, weel, guid nicht, Mistress Thornton. Be guid to Rorie. I kened his faither, Angus — a fine man. Rorie, ye'll come to my offis in the mornin' and you and me'll hae a crack. Ye've been a brave lad," said he, with twinkling eyes, "but it's nae credit to ye, for yer faither was a fine man afore ye. Guid nicht, Johnny. Guid nicht, Mistress Thornton. Sleep ticht, Rorie!"

And off he went down the stairs into the snow, and in fancy I could see him puffing and blowing toward the fine house with the hanging lantern over the front door, the cheery parlour, the laughing Macmurtrie girls, and Mariposa — in borrowed gewgaws, most likely — and young Jamie.

After a hearty supper of porridge, bread, and kippered salmon, I told kind Mistress Thornton that I was tired and would like to go to sleep. Before she showed me my room, I shook hands with the blind man and told him again how I enjoyed his music.

"Thankee, lad," said he. "I was playin' for you. Ye're unhappy, lad? I had the feel of it the minute ye cam' in wi' Alexander. But it's because ye're tired. Gang to bed, lad — to bed."

I lay awake for a long time that first night in Glasgow. What with the sudden strangeness of my surroundings, the parting with Mariposa, the

meeting with young Jamie, the music and the pathos of Blind Johnny and his family, my heart was soft and heavy.

All our dangers were past — Mariposa's and mine, ours together — but I felt that she was lost to me. It was selfish, I know, but I wished now that we were back in the farm-kitchen reading out of the Bible about Pharaoh and the Egyptians, instead of being in Glasgow, with Mariposa in security and touching her rank, and I — an outcast on both sides of the quarrel — penniless, nameless, and homeless — with my face turned to the wide world.

She would be too great a lady for me now. Or, rather, it was time for me to relieve her of my lowly presence, to take the initiative and go away — somewhere. I was in Mariposa's way. I was in young Jamie's way. I was in Macmurtrie's way. I had no claim on any, save Mariposa, but such was the altered position of my lass to me that I could claim no more of her than a grateful memory.

Hours later I was still thinking bitterly of my misfortune, when I heard a tapping on the wooden stairs. It was the blind son come home to his blind father after fiddling for the merry. I heard the door open and the tender mother and father greet the poor lad. I was immediately filled with shame at the beautiful patience of these people. What was I? What were my troubles that I should

lie snarling in the next room to them? I was free. I was strong. I could *see!* Nothing was impossible — name, fame, and Mariposa.

Presently I heard Mistress Thornton reading in a voice low and tremulous. I could not see them, but I knew how the picture looked; the old man on the bed with his hand in his good wife's, the blind son leaning by the pillow, and the mother reading from the Book, so rare at the time.

I caught one passage which haunted me all through that night in my dreams. For it seemed to me that Mariposa came and came again. She was dressed like a Spanish princess, but her hands were always outstretched to me, and she said:

“Entreat me not to leave thee, for whither thou goest, I will go; thy people shall be my people.”

CHAPTER XXII

MACMURTRIE PONDERS THE PROBLEM

"And, now!" said Alexander Macmurtrie, when I was settled in a chair in his office, all my melancholy of the previous night gone and my outlook on life as it should be of a sunny morning. "Let's have the story."

And the little, stout lawyer, having crammed his nose full of snuff, rubbed his hands together and settled himself in his armchair, beaming with expectation. Previously he had sent Sniffles, as he called the droning clerk, on some errand, so we were alone.

I told my story from the coming of Don John to our coming to Glasgow. Macmurtrie's face was a thing to marvel at. He was now the astute counselor. As he sat there, listening, with his hand set cup-like against a big ear, nodding his head and grunting an occasional "hoot toot," his face became shrewd, merry, frowning, and astonished, by turns. So rapid were these changes that it was impossible to mark just what impression my tale made upon him, or if the frowns and grimaces were not all put on.

But when I came to the part about Mariposa's

wedding with the Macdonald, his interest was no longer doubtful. for he leaned forward to catch every word, cautioning me at intervals to "tak' time, tak' time." And when I spoke of Mariposa's husband as the "Chieftain of the Kyles" he stopped me by flinging his arms in the air and crying:

"What was I telling you? I'm the Macdonald's man-o'-law, an' 's sure as porridge is meal he'll be here in a wink. This'lli tak' a lot o' sorting, Rorie, for the marriage is binding — binding. Scots marriage!"

When I told him how Mariposa had nearly poisoned the whole clan, his eyes twinkled and he chuckled:

"What a blessing if she'd done it, or Heaven had sunk their boat at the flood. And what next?"

"We ran away that night as hard as we could go," I continued. "We escaped and took to the hills, and —"

"Eh?" he almost shouted. "Right after the wedding? Before —" He began to shake in his chair. He was laughing at the Macdonald's discomfiture, I thought; but he suddenly whipped around with a kind of inspired blaze in his face.

"Look here, Rorie," he said. Then he bent forward and whispered in my ear. I know the blood rushed to my face, for I had tried not to think of the possibility of what he asked about. I was trying

to frame a reply, when a great voice boomed up the outer stairway.

"Is tiss ta offis of Mister Macmurtrie, the man-of-law?"

"I ken't it!" gasped the lawyer, dropping from the Gaelic. "Hay, Rorie — get on Sniffles's stool an' keep yer back t' 'im. No a word, or there'll be bluidshed."

I lost not a moment, for I, too, had recognized the voice. It was the Macdonald. In a second I had climbed on Sniffles' empty stool and, quill in hand, I began to scratch aimlessly in a big, open book. Feeling that my disguise was nothing if not perfect, I pulled a clout from my pocket and at regular intervals I sniffed and mopped my nose.

The Macdonald entered like a thunderbolt and dropped heavily into a seat.

"D'ye tak' snuff?" was the way the lawyer opened the conversation.

"I want my wife!" bellowed the Macdonald.

"Hoot toot! I didna ken ye were marri't," said Macmurtrie coolly. "Is't as bad as a' that?"

"Ye ken. Ye ken fine!" roared the Macdonald.

"Whisht!" said the lawyer, and I could feel that he was nodding toward me. "Let us speak the Gaelic." Then he added in that language: "The clerk will have ears."

The fact that the lawyer had led the other into the language which was clearest to me, appealed to

me quite strongly; and only the clout smothered an explosion of nasal mirth.

"He will be having a cold?" said the Macdonald suspiciously.

"He will," said Macmurtrie. "And now, Macdonald — speak out."

Thereat the chieftain of the Kyles told his tale of disappointed love, adorning the story with fearful oaths of vengeance. Had he known that the object of his wrath was sniffing on a stool not three yards away, how much of this tale would have been written?

When his story was ended, the chief brought down his fist with a bang that made little Mr. Macmurtrie jump a foot from his chair.

"And, now, sirrah, as a man of law, you know my rights!" cried the Macdonald.

"I do," said the lawyer, "to a hair."

"Then, where is my wife?"

"I never saw the fair lady in my life," said the doughty little man, coolly.

"What! By the head of my father —"

"Probably a cooler head than yours," was the retort. "Listen to me, Macdonald. If it is Mistress Mariposa you speak of, she is where you will never be and where you cannot get her. She is not your wife, for the marriage was not consummated, as the Scots law in this case would require. You have the right to take her if you can find her

— so, find her! Until then, she is only your betrothed wife.”

“ And you call yourself my man-o’-law ? ”

“ As you please,” said Macmurtrie. “ A lawyer cannot be on two sides of a case, and the side of Mariposa retained me first. As for being your man of law — Sniffles ! ” cried Macmurtrie to me, much to my fright, “ you will be pleased to let Mister Macdonald hae his bill for legal services in the past, includin’ sax-shillin’s an’ eightpence for — ”

But that was as far as he had to go. At the first hint of a bill the Macdonald arose in indignant wrath and fear, and with a “ Macmurtrie, ye will no have heard the last o’ this ! ” he made a hasty retreat from the office.

“ Sniffles, be seated,” said the lawyer, with a chuckle. “ I never kenned a Hielan’man yet that could face a bill for law. And, now,” he added, resuming the Gaelic, “ where were we ? ”

I rapidly told him the rest of the story of our adventures, which had latterly much to do with the man Bordeaux.

“ A strange man, as you say yourself,” said Macmurtrie. “ I owe him a balance of fifty guineas, and they’re well earned, though he did not earn them, save by luck.”

“ But who is Bordeaux ? ” I asked, full of curiosity.

“ Heaven, and maybe a few others, knows,” said

the lawyer. "I do not. I sometimes think he's some gentlemen — cast off — and whiles I would be sure he is an actor, for he makes more fash about poetry and the ilk than is seemly in an honest man. Whiles he gets a letter from London town, which comes from a brother of mine in the legal profession. More than that I know not. It is neither your business nor mine, my bit bill being paid by the said brother in the legal profession. But he's an airy lad, this Bordeaux, and a lamentable example. A vagabond the day, a gentleman the morrow. Trunk and hose, ruffles and silk this week, and next week his own mother would ken him from a lum-sweep in worsted and bauchles. A strange man, but a la-amentable example. And now for you, Rorie."

I was to hear my own fate! What did this astute little man, who seemed the calm centre of every storm, plan for poor Rorie?

"Yer faither, Angus," said he, jumping from the Gaelic to the vernacular in his queer way, "was a braw man an' deservin'. But yer mither was Black Jamie's sister. If some obleegin' Macdonald had rammed a skian-dhu into this young popinjay's parritch-pot, you, Rorie Maclean, would ha' been laird o' Kilellan, by the grace o' Argyll and the permission o' his gracious majesty the king, on whose head be blessings. This lass o' yours minds me o' Mary," added Macmurtrie, lowering his voice.

The talkative little man suddenly became silent and deliberately helped himself to snuff.

"It was just back o' here," he whispered. "— Langside. We could hear the clamour and clash o' 't. . . . Poor Mary!"

He closed the snuff-box and the subject of the unfortunate Queen of Scots with a decisive snap.

"As I was saying, the ways of Heaven are inscrutable. With this popinjay alive and quartered in my house, where the weemen-folk buzz around him like bees in a bottle, Rorie Maclean is landless. Therefore, I advise the said Rorie Maclean to live at Blind Johnny Thornton's, gather a sound beez'ness learning on a lawyer's stool — to wit, mine — at four shillin a week, an' await the next turn o' the wheel."

"You mean that I must not go back to Kilellan farm?" I said.

"Just what I say, lad," he said, suddenly grave. "Ye have a' made a braw mess o' 't — though I'm no sayin' ye didna do mair than Heaven has a right to expect o' a man — but it wad be neither bonny nor wise for ye to go back the noo. I'll this day awa' mase' to Kilellan, an' if I dinna ding shame an' sense into their lungs for the ba-arb'rous lot they are, ma name's no Alexander Macmurtrie."

"Ah'll set things straight, an' as factor Ah'll send young Jamie a bill for it that will raise a corpse. But here you stay, lad. A wee bit book-learnin'

'll no hurt, an' ye'll get the thistle-bloom out o' yer towsy heid. An' whiles ye'll see Mariposa, though Ah'll hae neither you nor young Jamie coortin' her till she is taken off my hands.

"Noo, there!" he concluded, triumphantly, "that's a guid mornin's beez'ness done. Ah'm awa' tae the courts o' law."

"But there's one thing ye havena told me," I said, and my heart was going like a twig on a windy day.

"Ay, ay?" queried Macmurtrie, regarding me with twinkling eyes. "Who is this Mariposa — hay? Hoot toot!" he chuckled, seeing the eagerness in my eyes. "Is't as bad as a' that, lad?"

"Who is she?" I almost pleaded.

"Her grandfather," he said solemnly, "is — as far as I know — Don Alvar y This Place y That Place and y the Next Place. His son was Don John y All the Other Places. It was this son that was to be found, or his sad fate determined. It seems, Rorie, there's a when o' sillar, besides the y places for somebody. As far as I know — though there was no thought of his being married and father of descendants — your Mistress Mariposa has more y's and sillar to her name than it is fair to expect a girl of her years to carry.

"But," and here the pawky little man filled his nose with snuff till the cheery ornament was like to burst, "if she is the lass I take her to be, she will be thinking none the less of her Rorie on that

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account. Now," he added in his Glasgow tongue, "rin awa' oot tae Glesca Green an' mak' yer bow t' the leddies."

And with no more ado, Alexander Macmurtrie snatched up a bag full of books and papers and dashed away to the courts of law and justice, leaving Rorie Maclean with the fiddles of his heart tuned up to a cheery pitch.

CHAPTER XXIII

I ENTER SOCIETY

One of the first things Alexander Macmurtrie did that morning was to give me a letter to one Mackinnon, who made a business in the town of making a gentleman by attire.

"Ye maun get rid o' the kilt," said the lawyer to me. "Then the thistle-bloom will no be so much in evidence."

My first errand then, after leaving the law-office, was to call upon this Mackinnon, who proved to be a weazened little man who wrung his hands together, so that you would have thought he was divided between a bad conscience and a longing to finger somebody's money.

I had no money; but because I was Alexander Macmurtrie's friend he nigh fell upon my neck after reading the letter. Then he called around him — and me — about a dozen vassals of his own ilk, who attacked me bodily with measures and rules. They would have torn my kilt off had I not offered to defend my modesty with my hands. Finally, they would have had me set out in doublet and hose and trunk, with a gay-feathered bonnet, had I not refused to shed my manhood, even

for Alexander Macmurtrie. At my stubbornness, Mackinnon looked to be on the point of tears.

At last I proposed a compromise of knitted worsted hose, such as became a man of my habits and station. This was agreed to and I was temporarily fitted, while another attack was made with the measures for a permanent attire. The soutar was called in, and he provided me with a pair of boots which some gallant gentleman had ordered and rejected as unfit. Then came a talkative creature with a pair of shears. He clipped my hair and beard.

The last piece of adornment offered me was a light rapier — what old Black Jamie would have called a “preen.” This I refused as being out of keeping with my general appearance. I told the heart-broken Mackinnon that a stout staff would be more to my liking; and, being determined, I got the staff.

When I had had a good look at myself, I am sure I must have blushed like a girl; though, indeed, I was quite flattered with my appearance. It was the first time I had deserted my kilt — or my kilt had deserted me — and I was conscious of a sense of nakedness in thus displaying my legs.

When I at last escaped from Mackinnon and his cringing people, I firmly believed that every public eye was turned upon me and that all Glasgow was grinning at Rorie Maclean in breeks. As I walked toward the house in Glasgow Green my self-con-

sciousness increased, for I was yet to face Mariposa and the other ladies in this unaccustomed attire.

It was Mariposa herself who opened the door to let me in, and I am sure I do not know which of us was the more confused. The Macmurtrie girls, you see, had been putting dainty hands on her. There she stood in the doorway, as sweet a thing as God ever made, in her gewgaws and ribbons, and neatly coiled hair — blushing and blushing, with big expectant eyes and a tremulous smile on her lips. I do not think she was more than conscious at first of the change in my appearance; but presently, as we looked over each other, we both burst out laughing.

“Oh, you bonny lass!” I cried.

“Oh, Rorie!” was all she said, but a light of satisfaction danced in her eyes. “Come away ben.”

As we entered the parlour, both of us very red in the face after the moment in the hall, the Macmurtrie girls greeted us with a great clapping of hands.

“Mister Maclean,” said the elder, Janet, “you will be feeling cold without your kilt.”

“No,” said I; “but, certes, I would be feeling more comfortable with it.” At that they laughed until they had to run out of the parlour.

Mariposa and I were left together. She stood in the middle of the floor, with her hands clasped demurely in front of her.

“You are not to mind them, Rorie,” said she,

"for they have been very kind to me." And her eyes filled with moisture.

"No, lass," said I, taking her hand and bending over it — I wonder do clothes make the man? "If they have been good to you, they have been more than good to me."

She let her hand lie in mine for a while, then she looked up and said:

"And our troubles are overpast."

"Yours are, lass. Ah, but you are the grand lady now."

She slipped her arms around my neck and drew my ear close to her lips. She whispered:

"Ay, but I have wrapped up my plaid and bonnet and I will keep them safe, for they are dear to me — and to you, lad?"

"Ay, lass. And when you are the grand lady you will give them to me — to keep — for what else can poor Rorie have of Mariposa?"

I will not set down what her answer was to this, nor how we passed the five minutes. It could not have been five minutes for back came the Macmurtrie girls, and with them their mother. The elder lady glanced swiftly from me to Mariposa. My lass and I were sitting at separate corners of the hearth. Mistress Macmurtrie smiled at me and said:

"And now, Maclean," settling herself for a crack, "and how would you be liking Glasgow?"

"Why, madam," I said, "I have seen but little

of it — that is to say,” for I felt that I had made a bad start, “having seen the best of it, I must confess myself well content with it.”

I accompanied this surprising — for me — speech with a bow to the ladies. The girls immediately applauded, but were silenced by Mistress Macmurtrie’s disapproving finger.

“And when will you be leaving Glasgow?” asked the dame.

I was only able to say that I was indeed sorry they should be anxious to hear when I must depart. This remark did not seem to please the young ladies, but Mistress Macmurtrie began to chuckle hugely.

“Hoot toot!” she said, in a manner so like her husband’s that I expected her to produce a snuff-box.

When she had got over her fit of chuckling she turned to Janet, the elder of the two girls, and commanded her to play for “Mister Maclean.” Janet, like a well-trained daughter, obeyed without hesitation. She played with a great deal of accomplishment — at least, so it seemed to me — and afterward she sang a love-song which, I have since learned, was written by the king himself. I have heard Mariposa sing it, but all I can remember of it is:

Worship, O ye that lovers be, this May,
For of your bliss the calends are begun.*

* Rorie confuses James I of England and Scotland with James I of Scotland, by whom this song was written. S. C.

It was very fine, but in my heart the spirit and the singer more awakened a memory of Kilellan farm-kitchen. I looked at Mariposa, and I know that she was thinking of it, too, for she suddenly dropped her eyes before mine. Mistress Macmurtrie, shrewd old lady, was quick to divine, for she immediately raised a commanding forefinger and said:

"Now it will be your turn, Mariposa. Go to the spinet and sing me that song. Hoot toot!" she added, as Mariposa protested, "I heard ye soothin' to yourself at the spinet this morning."

Mariposa glanced at me and something decided her, for she presently went to the instrument and began one of those half-barbaric songs with which she used to soothe my nights at Kilellan farm.

She had not gone far with her song before I found myself looking into the fire, gloaming over one of the tenderest memories of my life. When it was done, there was silence in the room. I glanced at the others. Mariposa was looking steadfastly at a picture on the wall. The Macmurtrie girls were ogling one another with ill-concealed mirth. But the old dame's eyes were filled with tears.

"Wha taught ye that sang, lass?" she asked, in broad, country Scots.

"She made it hersel'," I put in, "an' bonny it is."

"Bonny?" echoed Mistress Macmurtrie. "I'm of the Hielan's masel', and it minded me —"

She stopped again. The awkward pause was

broken by Mariposa, who suddenly turned to me and said in her most mischievous way:

"Rorie, tell them how the Israelites escaped frae Black Jamie?"

To make a short matter of it, so great was the amusement promised the Macmurtries in this challenge, that I had to tell that story forthwith. I told them — with many corrections from Mariposa — that we had a Bible at Kilellan, and not being very good at the reading of big words and the understanding of some parts, we had agreed to substitute people we knew for Pharaoh and Moses, and places we knew for the Nile and the Red Sea, and so forth.

Thus Black Jamie was the wicked Pharaoh, and Mistress Mary was Pharaoh's daughter, and I was Moses — and how they laughed at that! Then, the characters and places explained, I began our version of the Exodus.

Well, I had got as far as the Lord having sent a plague of frogs upon Kilellan Castle, where all the Egyptians were, and the Macmurtries were still shrieking over it, when who should walk into our little company but young Jamie — Pharaoh's grandson! Of course, I stopped short, but not knowing how close to the raw some of my similes were, the ladies, all except Mariposa, insisted that I go on.

I was quite dumfounded for a minute, especially as a silence of expectation fell upon the company. Young Jamie stood there, glaring suspiciously at

me, as if he knew that the merriment was about something touching him. Then it struck me that what I was not ashamed to say behind his back, I should not be afraid to say in his presence.

So I bravely proceeded with the plague of fleas which presently fell upon Black Jamie and the Egyptians. I had got as far as the plague of chilblains when young Jamie, who had been gradually picking up the thread of the narrative, jumped up and said:

“Sirrah, your bad taste is equalled only by your bad manners!”

“Ay, ay, Jamie,” I said pleasantly, “but I havena come to the state where I’d mention such failings in the presence o’ ladies.”

“Sir!” said he, laying a hand on his sword.

“Jamie,” I said, and I could see him writhe under the patronizing familiarity, “I’ll be thinking the house will not be big enough for the two of us, so, with the ladies’ leave, I’ll be off. . . . And, Jamie,” I added, after I had shaken hands with Mistress Macmurtrie and her two daughters, “if ever ye should feel tired of your own company, ye maun come and teach me good taste and better manners.”

With that I turned to Mariposa, and as much to her surprise as to the amazement of the others, I deliberately kissed her on the cheek and marched off the field, carrying with me, if not the honours, most of the glory and everybody’s breath.

The last glimpse I had of the picture, the two Macmurtric girls were aghast with simulated horror, the old dame was wiping tears of laughter out of her eyes; Mariposa was sitting with a half-demure, half-defiant look on her face, and young Jamie was standing in the middle of the room, green with rage and jealousy.

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CHAPTER XXIV

BORDEAUX — GENTLEMAN

After my encounter with young Jamie, I walked out of Glasgow Green toward the tron gate, highly elate with the consciousness of success in my first social battle, happy as a lover should be who has found his mistress loving, and chucklingly well-pleased with myself generally.

The snow-storm of yesterday had abated, and all the town wore a sparkling white under the clear winter sunshine. As I walked I kicked up fine showers of shimmering snow, and elation planted my staff firmly in the crunching ground.

I am afraid that I was so filled with myself that I did not look where I was walking. I had no sooner passed through the tron than I collided with a fine gallant who was coming from the town. Without paying particular attention to the man's face, I expressed sorrow at my clumsiness and would have passed on, had he not arrested me with a speech.

"Sirrah!" he cried, with great indignation, "let me recall to thy mind, if a mind thou hast and

there be anything in it to recall, the words of the lamented Spenser: 'For man by nothing is so well bewrayed as by his manners.' "

Oh, my poor manners! But I knew the voice and the grandiloquence at once. He was in fine attire, half covered by a richly laced coat, from under which peeped the handle and point of a rapier, and he wore a gay-feathered bonnet. I could hardly believe that this was the scaramouche of the Kyles of Bute, the besotted creature of Ninian's Tavern.

"Bordeaux!" I gasped.

"Sirrah!" said he loftily, and with a whisk of his coat-tails he marched off, leaving me staring stupidly after him. He had given no sign of recognition, and had it not been for the ready quotation from one of his favourites, I should have been ready to believe that it was not Bordeaux at all, but some gay gallant of the town. His carriage and appearance were those of a prince. But perhaps he had not recognized me. I remembered suddenly that I had been very much changed by Mackinnon. I called after him, and he must have heard me; but he walked on, seemingly deaf to my shouts.

I could explain it in no way, save, as Macmurtrie had agreed with me, that Bordeaux was a strange man. Where did he get the clothes? Was it, as the lawyer had suggested, that he was some high-born scapegrace who returned to his station during intervals of remorse? Or was he merely some strolling player, full of borrowed raiment and

speeches, and playing a dozen parts in as many days?

But my spirits were too cheerful just then to be damped by the coldness of a doubtful acquaintance, or even a second gibe at my manners. Whistling away any momentary depression, I climbed the stairway to the lawyer's office. Macmurtrie had not returned^d but Sniffles had, and again he was perched alo.

"What, ho! Sniffles," I hailed, slapping him on the back.

He climbed down from the stool, looking greatly grieved.

"Ma na-a-name's no Sniffles," he sing-songed. "Ma na-a-ame's Wully Mactigg, an' ma faither was a go-o-o-old-smith." Having delivered this impressive information, his face slowly broke into the most inane smile I ever saw in a human being's face. "Read me this riddle," he whined. "When is a coo no a coo?"

"When 'tis a bull," I answered, taken aback.

"Aw," said he, intensely disappointed, "somebody must ha' telled ye. Read me anither: What's the do-o-or on when it's no on the la-atch?"

That one I gave up, whereat Sniffles went off in repeated fits of silly laughter. After he had wiped his eyes and nose, he said, "'Tis on its hi-i-inges!" and collapsed.

I was surprised that as clever a man as Alexander Macmurtrie should have an apparent fool in his

office; but when I angrily informed Sniffles that I had come to clerk and not to read him riddles, he developed a talent which, Macmurtrie afterward assured me, amounted almost to genius.

He produced numerous books and papers, and explained his system of keeping the office records. I could not follow any part of the explanation, but Sniffles went over the business so deliberately, so easily, and with such apparent indifference, that it was easy to see the habit of keeping accounts had developed into an instinct.

I was so maddened at my own stupidity and his monotonous tale of musty things, that I hated the whole business there and then. Till my dying day, accounts will be associated in my mind with mustiness, colds in the head, and problems, not the least of which are Sniffles' ire-kindling riddles.

We were still at the books when a post-chaise drove up, piled with articles for a journey. Presently, Alexander Macmurtrie, who had gone direct from the law-court to the house in Glasgow Green, bustled in. At the first glance I knew that something was wrong.

"Ye're a ba-arb'rous lot!" he said testily. "I'll be glad to see the last o' this beez'ness. For the guid Lord's sake, man," he cried, "could ye no hae kept the peace for a minute wi' yon man! Here am Ah, off to the Hielan's t' make peace, an' leavin' the twa preincipals bluidyin' up Mistress Macmur-

trie's carpet. Hoot, toot, man! There maun be an end t'it! Rorie, the leddies will be pleased to see ye whiles, but Ah canna hae't in ma absence. Ye'll set right doon here t' beez'ness till Ah come back. Ah'll na nae naair riots in ma hoose."

I heard this with a sinking heart. Then I would not see Mariposa, and young Jamie would be left cock of the roost? But I had enough sense to know that the lawyer was right, and although it was a dreary prospect, I could only say as much to Mr. Macmurtrie and hope that he would make a speedy return.

"There was a man in t' see ye," said Sniffles, as the lawyer prepared to depart. "The lang-leggit yin that ye sent tae the Hie-e-elan's."

"Sober or drunk?" asked Macmurtrie sharply.

"Ah didna smell his breath, but he lo-o-ok't sober," was the solemn answer.

"Then pay him feefy geenies an' get a receipt for't. Ah'ma awa' to the Hielan's masel'. Keep awa' frae young Jamie, Rorie. An', Sniffles, mind the receipt."

Then off went Macmurtrie for Cowal. I wondered what would come of his visit, although I had little hope that it would bring advantage to myself.

Sniffles and I were at the books once more, when the door opened to admit Bordeaux. He recognized me this time, and I wondered if the recognition was due to the fact that he had again descended from his lofty estate. He expressed no surprise

at seeing me there; but abruptly demanded fifty guineas of the lawyer's clerk.

The clerk unlocked a desk, but suddenly locked it again.

"Ye've been haein' a dra-a-m!" he singsonged, triumphantly.

"Thou liest, knave!" cried Bordeaux. "What means this stain upo' m' fame — this blemish upo' m' escutcheon. A dram! Sirrah! Between the tron and the salt-market I have had *seven* drams!"

"Then Ah'll no gie the money till ye're so-o-ober!" cried Sniffles.

"As William saith," said Bordeaux, turning with appalling solemnity upon me. "The first thing we do, let's kill all lawyers."

"Then," said I, "ye'll be for killing me, for the good Macmurtrie would make a lawyer of me."

"A lawyer!" shouted Bordeaux. "A lawyer!" And he went off in boisterous laughter. But his merriment ceased abruptly. Suddenly solemn as a hangman, he laid a hand on my arm and said sepulchrally: "A lawyer, Rorie. I have seen William play the ghost, and in the fifth act, the grave-digger. But be warned, rash youth. What matter if lawyer or good fellow when the clown comes with his spade and pick and says: This will have been Rorie. That be the skull of a lawyer. This fellow might be in's time a great buyer of land, with his statutes, his recognizances, his fines, his double-vouchers, his recoveries — Bah! Rorie. Is this the fine of his

finer to have his fine pate full of fine dirt? Nay, lad, come live with me and be my love, and we will all its pleasures prove. Thou unfed lawyer!" he shouted, turning ferociously upon the stupefied Sniffles. "Pay me fifty guineas."

Sniffles, dazed by the outburst of legal eloquence, handed over the money without further protest.

"Rorie, a word with you," said Bordeaux, when he had pocketed the money. "This day have I seen the beauteous Mariposa. Ah, lad, when I said I would die a bachelor, I did not think I would live until I were married. Here," he cried, picking up my bonnet and affectionately cramming it over my ears, "away with laws and books. Where is the author in the world teaches such learning as a woman's eyes! Come! I have much to tell you."

For I was well aware of it, I was out in the street with Bordeaux. As we started to walk, a window was flung open above our heads and a forlorn voice was crying:

"Ye forgo-o-ot to make me a rece-e-eipt! Ye forgo-o-ot to make me a — a — a —" The appeal ended in a series of violent sneezes. Then the window shut.

"To the Sign of the Thistle!" cried Bordeaux. And next moment we were trudging through the snow, arm in arm, recounting our adventures as we went.

CHAPTER XXV

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW

It will not be my purpose to set forth all my doings in Glasgow. Some of them I would as lief forget. While Bordeaux was a good friend to me, his fantastic manners and polished wit gathered around him, at the Sign of the Thistle, a company which sent me home to Blind Johnny's, many a time, a little merrier than I should have been.

For all that, he was a help to me in these days. He it was who introduced me to that world of books, the study of which has enabled me to write this history. The further I read into the works of Christopher Marlowe, Sir Philip Sydney, William Shakespeare, Sir Walter Raleigh, and Ben Jonson, the more I seemed to understand Bordeaux.

Many a saying in these books would suddenly stir up a memory of something my odd friend had said, until I was sure that his peculiar manner of speech was but the outcome of much reading. I grew to learn, also, that books were not his only advantage, for often, when he would utter a wise saying and I would ask him from what book he culled it, he would answer:

"None, but from the lips of fat Ben," or Will,

or Kit Marlowe, as the case might be. From this I judged that Bordeaux had such personal intimacy with these great men, that he was privileged to hear their works ere ever they were sent to the printer. I know now that such was the case, for in the new books which I have hastened to purchase as they came from London, I have discovered sentences which Bordeaux had uttered months — ay, even years before.

In truth, the more I learned of the man the less I knew him. Most of the time he was a hare-brained fellow, full of witty sayings and wise orations; but there were whiles when he would be the very imp of mischief. He would set Glasgow by the ears with his conduct. Sometimes he would turn town-crier and, ringing a bell to attract the attention of the good people, he would parade the streets, announcing amazing disasters or issuing ludicrous proclamations.

I remember one time that he appeared in the town with a cartload of carrots, which he distributed free to the housewives, who were less amazed by his generosity than by the gallant speech which accompanied each gift. On such occasions his garb would be that of a tinker, and none ever recognized in him the gentleman who would presently strut the streets, sworded, laced, and feathered.

But one thing he did was nigh to the undoing of him. The plague had appeared again in London, and the people of Glasgow were in a bonny fright

over it. What should Bordeaux do but proclaim through the town that "by order of the king" each and all should cut off their beards and "wear sackcloth for a week," that the plague might be taken away. So great at that time was the fear of James turning Catholic, and so great the Glasgow antipathy to his Episcopal tendency, that Bordeaux's proclamation, believed to be with authority, left the town in an uproar of indignation.

I do not know what the upshot might have been, for the craftsmen gave orders for the apprehension of Bordeaux. But that strange fellow attired himself as a gentleman, and, suddenly appearing in a post-chaise — from Edinburgh, he said — denounced the proclamation as a Papist movement and the person known as Bordeaux as a French spy.

Thereafter, for a week, Bordeaux, the scaramouche, was absent, and my "Lord Matlock, from Edinburgh," paraded the streets with his nose in the air. That may have been his name — although Macmurtrie told me that it was not the name by which "the Lunnon brither o' the legal profession" addressed his letters.

Despite his failings, there were times when the real man shone out in Bordeaux. In the privacy of his room at the Sign of the Thistle, he was a grave person with, now and then, an air of despondency or anxiety. His room was littered with books and fine clothes. When I was privileged to visit him there, he would receive me with quiet courtesy and

offer me his hospitality with the manners of a modest prince.

These visits were a source of much benefit to me, for already the fever to learn was strong upon me, and it was a delight to note how gravely, yet kindly, he would listen to my opinions of such books as he had loaned me to read. He would correct me often and show me a deeper view of a thing. Sometimes he would laugh at a moment when I was speaking most seriously. Then he would quickly crave my pardon and say that he laughed to think that I should prove such an apt pupil and earnest reader.

In these days Bordeaux became a frequent visitor at the house in Glasgow Green. It was through him alone that I heard of Mariposa. She often sent me a word, which Bordeaux magnified into volumes of love's eloquence, if he did not deny, out of mischief, that she had mentioned my name at all. But as the days went on I heard no more of Mariposa, and a silence fell upon my usually voluble friend. It puzzled me. I could not help thinking that he, too, had fallen under the spell. But my doubts were removed when one evening he turned upon me and said:

"Friend Rorie, it behooves you to be on your guard, if you would wed Mariposa. I do love, myself, and it hath taught me to rhyme and be melancholy; but there is worse in store for you. Twice have I seen the merciless Macdonwald; and such be Hieland pride, that the rebel will not leave Glasgow

until he has his wife in his arms or his arms upon you. Mark me well, friend. Thrice is he armed who hath his quarrel just. Where love is great the littlest doubts are fears, and I fear me young Jamie has cast a spell upon the lass."

"I will not believe it!" I said stoutly, remembering the brave, faithful lass that she was.

"Believe it or no," said Bordeaux. "Doubt that the stars are fire, an' ye will, but a woman is a woman, and were all men absent but one, she would only be less satisfied. Nay, scowl not, lad; I would not say that Mariposa is inconstant, but thy presence is. Good night! Sleep rock thy brain, and never come mischance between us twain."

I lay awake that night, listening to my own troubled spirit in the sobbing of Blind Johnny's fiddle. The old man had been growing rapidly worse of late and the leech who came at intervals wagged his head in decisive doubt. Old Johnny did not seem to know he was dying, for his delight in the fiddle increased day by day. It seemed as if his spirit had already left his body and was singing from the strings. But at night he must have Blind Willie, the son, rehearse all the gossip of the merry-makers for whom he had played that evening. It was on the very night of my converse with Bordeaux that I heard the name of Mistress Mariposa on the blind fiddler's lips.

A friend of Alexander Macmurtrie's family, she was, and a braw lass, they said, but if she was as

bonny as her voice, said the blind lad, she must indeed be an angel. They said she was the sweetest maid of the company, and Blind Willie was sure of this, for he had heard other women declare that she was of ignoble birth—a blackamoor and a Papist. I could hear old Blind Johnny chuckling over this. But for all that, Mistress Mariposa held her own and danced the minuet with the laird of Kilellan, who afterward brought the lady to him—Blind Willie—and she had thanked the poor lad for his stately measure.

It all sank into my heart like a poison-tipped barb. So she was indeed the fine lady. Forgetting my own endeavours in the world of books, I found myself holding her in contempt, that she should so swiftly learn to dance the minuet. Presently they would be speaking of her beauty all over Glasgow, and somehow the thought did not stir my pride in her.

Before going to Macmurtrie's office in the morning, I betook me to Glasgow Green. I walked past the Macmurtrie's house several times, in the expectation of seeing her. I do not know to this day why I went to the Green at all, save that I was drawn by the fear of seeing her in young Jamie's company.

I do know that when some time had passed, I suddenly became angry at myself and at my unreasonable jealousy and marched up to the door of the house. I gave the door-knocker a stiff rattle.

and while I waited for a response I was tempted to take to my heels. Why had I come here? What did I want?

Before I could make off, the door was opened by Mistress Macmurtrie herself. I could see at a glance that she was ill-pleased by my visit.

"What! Mister Maclean?" she cried.

"I have come to see Mistress Mariposa," I said sheepishly.

"Hoot toot!" said Mistress Macmurtrie testily. "She will be abed."

"Abed?" I echoed, for it was by that nine of the clock. "Abed? Will she be ailing?"

"Ailin' yoursel'," said the dame. "The lass is haein' her beauty sleep for the losses o' the ball. Forbye, Rorie," she added in a kindlier tone, "the maister will be away on your business and he'll not be taking it kindly that ye —"

"I ken, I ken," I said drearily. "I will be saying good day, Mistress Macmurtrie. And if you will forget that I forgot, ye will favour me much."

"That I will, lad," she said, making to shut the door.

"And when Mistress Mariposa awakes will ye say that Rorie hopes that she is well — and happy."

"Will that be forgetting, Maister Rorie?" asked the dame, with a twinkle.

"Ask that of Mariposa," I said, and walked away, angry — at myself, most likely.

Nevertheless, I kept a lookout for my lass these

days, and my thoughts were not sweetened by the discovery, in a book of travel, that "Mariposa," in the language of her Spanish fathers, means "butterfly." I was rewarded for espionage — as espionage deserved — by one sight of her. It was on a frosty morning. She was mounted on a black horse, cantering into the town, with young Jamie riding close by her bridle. He did not see me, but Mariposa did. It was only a glance, but I saw in her eyes a start of recognition, which as quickly died out. Then she turned her head and said something to young Jamie, which made him lean toward her and smile.

I watched them, with Heaven only knows what pain in my heart, until the horses had borne them out of sight. Then I turned toward Macmurtree's office. The miserable person who called himself William Mactigg turned languidly on his stool and smiled idiotically.

"Ah was thinkin' ye was la-ate," he droned. "Ah mindit a guid yin Ah wantit ye tae re-e-ead me. When is a man no a man?"

"When he is a fool!" I answered, with sudden rage. With that I flung the detested account books off the desk, kicked the stool from under the unfortunate Sniffles and was out in the street before I knew that a fool had asked me the riddle of myself and a fool had answered it. I realized, too, that I had completely forfeited the sympathy of the Macmurtrees.

With no plan in my mind save to put some distance between me and Glasgow, I betook me to the Thistle in search of Bordeaux. Not finding him there, I sullenly went to my lodgings at Blind Johnny's.

As I climbed the stairs, I heard the voice of the fiddle singing in a strange, unearthly manner. The moment I entered the house I knew that something was amiss. I shall never forget the picture of that room.

Mistress Thornton, patient, sorrowful, but dry-eyed, stood at the foot of the bed, looking at her man. Old Johnny lay with the fiddle lying loosely adown his breast, and one feeble arm was drawing the bow slowly back and forth. The vague, faint melody that he drew from the strings seemed strangely in keeping with the light in the man's face. His eyes were open and they were of a deep blue, as if the power of sight had come to replace the usual blank stare. By the side of the bed, with his head in his arms, knelt the blind son.

I stood in the middle of the room, ashamed of my late childishness; ashamed to speak in the presence of death; ashamed that I should be there at all. But Mistress Thornton laid a hand on my arm.

"My man's by wi't," she said simply. "I am glad ye have come. Ye will be a help to me."

"Ay. Heaven helping me," I said.

Blind Willie arose to his feet and groped for me.

When I went to him he held both my hands and his sightless eyes seemed to look deep into mine.

"You have eyes," he said. "You will help my mither."

I was deeply stirred. I answered — I forget what. We sat by the bed in silence. By and by the old man said:

"Ah'm on the Lang Road, Janet. Sooth me the psaulm."

There a moment's silence. I heard Mistress Thornton swallow hard. Then she said: "Ay, John," and presently her thin voice was the only sound in the room.

Yea, though I walk,
 In dale of deadly shade,
 I'll fear none ill,
 For with me Thou wilt be:
 Thy rod, Thy staff
 Eke they shall comfort me.

From the New Testament Mistress Thornton presently read of the two blind men who received their sight. Then the blind boy played for the dying fiddler. It was humanly pathetic to observe the smile on the old man's face when the son made a slip with the bow, although the error was born of emotion.

"Ah could play it better masel'," said Blind Johnny quaintly. "But there," he added earnestly, turning his blue eyes in my direction, "Ah'li have had mair experience wi' the fiddle. Is it no a great

peety that we canna leave ahint us the things we hae learn't in life? But mebbe the Lord requires our works of us. Does the Book no say something like that? Whaur's ma fiddle?"

We sat there for hours, most of the time listening to the fluttering notes of the dying man's instrument. It had been dark some time when we heard the watch crying in the street:

"Eicht by the clock, an' a cauld, starry ni-i-icht!"

Blind Willie started and looked at his mother.

"It is time," he said. She only bowed her head.

"Surely," I said, "you will not be going out the night." He was winding his muffler about his neck.

"Sssh!" he cautioned, motioning toward the bed.

"He doesna ken. I maun go. The gentlefolk wad no forgie me that a blin' man dee'd. But ye will stay, freend Rorie?"

"Ay, lad," I said, choked.

"And now," said the lad, in the quiet, resigned voice of the blind and the noble brave, "I will be saying guid nicht — to faither."

I turned and walked into the little room which had been given over to me. I could not have borne the sight of that "guid nicht." It was only when I heard the tapping of Blind Willie's stick on the stairs that I dared go back to old Johnny's side.

It was about midnight when the end came. He had been lying still for some time, with the fiddle on his breast. All at once he turned his eyes toward his wife and said, with great wonder:

“Janet — d’ye ken — Ah can see ye.”

When we looked closer, we found that he had gone away from us.

Then — and only for a moment — did the angelic woman, who had tended through years a blind husband and a blind son, give way to tears. I left her to her grief, with the word that I was going to bring Blind Willie home. She managed to tell me where the lad was jiggling for the merry, and close upon one of the morning I came to the place. The dancers were leaving, and I found myself among a motley crew of bedizened women, haughty gentlemen, and gorgeous serving-men.

Forgetting my own humble appearance, I pushed my way through the crowd. Presently I became aware that I was face to face with my lady Mariposa. I hardly recognized her for a moment, so attired was she in splendour. At sight of me she coloured up and said quickly:

“Why are you here?”

“I came not to seek you, Mistress Mariposa,” I said coldly, “but to bring home to his dead father the blind lad who has fiddled for you and yours with a breaking heart.”

I saw her lip suddenly quiver, and she became deathly pale. She turned away and slipped her arm into that of young Jamie, who had momentarily lost her in the crush. At the same moment a huge serving-man pushed me backward with a cry of, “Way! Make way!”

I obeyed, too dazed with pain, anger and remorse to resent anything. I had done wrong, I knew. I had hurt my little lady cruelly. I had seen it in her face. But her thought that I followed her there had stirred my anger to the depths; and even as I stood, the memory of whence and why I had come, and the thought of her in her silken fineries, still urged me to a hatred of her vanity.

But presently I heard the tapping of Blind Willie's stick; and in the presence of his great sorrow, my petty grievance vanished from my heart.

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CHAPTER XXVI

FOUR MEN AND ONE WOMAN

Two weeks had gone by, and yet Alexander Macmurtrie had not returned from Kilellan. The sobering influence of Blind Johnny's death had brought me to my senses. Before resolving upon any course of action touching my future, I decided to await the lawyer's home-coming, when I would thank him for his kindnesses and explain that I had taken the direction of my life into my own hands.

The death and burial of Blind Johnny was excuse enough during the first few days of my absence from the law office. The funeral was touching in its simplicity. We carried the coffin shoulder high to the kirkyard — that is, some of the neighbors and I did. Blind Willie walked in the sixth man's place, with his left hand on the coffin and his right groping ahead with the stick. The old man's fiddle, too valuable to be buried with its master, was laid on the coffin-top, and removed only after the body had been lowered into the grave. After all had departed but Blind Willie and me, the poor lad put the fiddle under his chin and played a sad little air over the fresh grave, much to the horror of the sexton. Then we went home.

Leaving the lad with his mother, I went to the Sign of the Thistle in search of Bordeaux. I wished to tell my friend of my proposed departure from Glasgow when Macmurtrie should come back. The landlord of the Thistle told me that he had gone out, and bade me be seated against his return. It was while I was sitting by the hearth, drinking ale and curiously watching a man who was breathing smoke from a long pipe — an amazing performance, I thought at the time, although I have since taken to the weed quite kindly — when the tavern-door opened and in stepped Ronald Macdonald, chieftain of the Kyles!

He saw me as soon as I saw him. His face flamed so fiercely that I waited to see his beard take fire, but he quickly recovered and advanced upon me with a calm but ferocious smile. I was unarmed, save for my staff. But I did not let the Macdonald think I was afraid. I kept my seat, wishing that I, too, had a pipe to breathe smoke from — to show the Macdonald what a spitfire I was.

“Hech, ay!” chuckled the chieftain, taking a stool opposite me. “It will be a braw day, Cam’ell.”

“It will,” I agreed; “but I’m thinking it will be a thaw before night-come.”

“Ay!” he said savagely. “It will be in the air.”

“Let us speak the Gaelic,” I said in that tongue.

"Ay, ay," said he. "It will better express my opinion of you."

"And mine of you."

There was a pause. The man was taken aback by my apparent ease.

"Where is my wife?" he asked suddenly.

"I have not seen her of late, save in the company of the laird of Kilellan," I said, significantly.

"Eh?" he gasped, turning pale. "You will be speaking of my wife."

"I will be speaking of Mistress Mariposa."

His red face became pink, then took on a livid hue. His under lip shook, and he was seized with a fit of trembling. I felt a twinge of pity. Was it possible that this brute loved her in his way? Were these the symptoms of genuine heart-pain, or merely of sheer animal jealousy?

"Will she have jilted you?" he stammered.

"Ay, this week past," I said, not knowing whether I meant what I said.

"Then, by Heaven!" the Macdonald screamed, drawing his rapier in a fit of passion, "I will kill him. I will thraw his neck! I will tear his bowels from him! I will rip her thrapple with my teeth! I will—"

His eyes fell on me, and, in the fury of the moment, he slashed at me with the rapier, forgetting that it was not a claymore. I parried the blow with my staff.

Then began the strangest battle the Thistle's walls

had ever witnessed. So unused was the chieftain to the delicate weapon with which he had late adorned him, that I had little difficulty in beating off the light blows which he showered in my direction. His thrusts, accidental at first, I parried; but as he awoke to his errors, I found it harder to defend myself, and was forced from one place to another.

Out of the corner of my eye I saw, as I fought, the man with the pipe draw his chair back and linger in his queer employ to watch us. The landlord hovered around with his hands in the air, appealing to us to have done. But the Macdonald's fury was in the ascendant, and I was too busily engaged to pay much heed to interference.

Up to now I had been defending myself with might and main, and hard work it was. Presently, when I was sure that my end was approaching, I grew desperate. Suddenly losing my temper, I flung strength into my staff and beat down the Macdonald's rapier with a mighty blow. Before he could recover, I had brought down my staff upon the chieftain's head with such force that it broke in the middle. I mean the staff, though I should not have been surprised if the Macdonald's head had split, too.

He reeled about the room like a drunken man, then leaned heavily against a table and glowered stupidly at me. As I looked at the colour of his face, it came back to me that my hands had once

been at this man's throat and that I had spared him. The same fear of killing my fellow rushed back upon me. It was with a sense of relief that I saw him scratch his head and heard him mutter:

"Cam'ell, ye have a mighty arm."

"I have, Macdonald," I said; "but I would as lief employ it in better work."

I had meant only to express my dislike of such brutal fighting, but he took my words in insult. Dazed as he was, he again levelled his weapon and crept stealthily upon me, his parched lips peeled over his teeth. But at the first lunge the door of the tavern flung open and a pair of arms encircled me and sent me flying across the room.

"Aroint thee!" cried Bordeaux, drawing his blade. "Ha! Merciless Macdonwald. Come! Let burnt sack be the issue. Fools! Flying at each other for a maid who will have none of you — nor even me, though I bent my knee and swore by all the gods, things base and vile Love can transpose to form and dignity. A truce! A truce, I say! Strange as't may seem," he said, as the Macdonald paused and lowered his weapon, "we are well met."

"Have ye found her?" cried the Macdonald.

"Ay, this very hour," said Bordeaux, "but — Pah! 'Stay me with flagons. Comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love.' Ho! good host. Bring the peace-pot."

Carried away by our lack of understanding, neither the Macdonald nor I were much surprised

to find ourselves seated together in perfect amity and with Bordeaux pouring a strange tale into our ears.

“To-night,” quoth Bordeaux, “I, who am despised, thou, who art jilted, and thou, who art husband — to say no more — or less — will be horned cattle ’less we stay this murtherous thing. She hath given her heart to the laird of Kilellan.”

“Then, ’tis true?” said the Macdonald.

Bordeaux seemed a little taken aback. He glanced quickly at me, and there was a signal in his eyes.

“Ay,” said he to the chieftain, “as friend Rorie may have said out of the bitter lees of his love: ‘’Tis true; ’tis true ’tis pity, and pity ’tis ’tis true.’”

“How ken ye ’tis?” I put in, sullenly.

“By the sensible and true avouch of mine own ears,” said my friend glibly. Dropping his voice and his fantastic manner all at once, he said: “To-night the gay Mistress Mariposa attends with her lord the craftsmen’s ball. The chaise that shall await her will bear her — homeward? Ay, but farther — to Edinburgh! The witch had bewitched young Jamie, who hath bewitched her, and, lo! as the divine Spenser hath it — ‘lovely concord and most sacred peace.’”

“Ay?” said the Macdonald fiercely; but I was too heart-sick to utter a sound.

“By the elms beyond the Green do you await

them, sword in hand and pistol primed. Fall to, and may the best man win."

"I will kill him!" roared the Macdonald.

"Nay," said I; "he is mine."

"Then he is to one of you," chuckled Bordeaux.

"And the maid?"

"She is mine!" said the chieftain.

It was on my tongue to say, "So be it, and may you have joy of her," but the thought came to me that it was all a lie. It could not be true. Yet, had she not loved young Jamie but a year ago? Was not her weakness the love of finery and a name? Had the embers of that old love been fanned aglow? Or were they the embers of my old jealousy?

Heaven knows I was a jealous fool; but the memory of young Jamie, and what I had suffered for her sake, and the thought of her smile as she lay in the arms of this drunken chieftain — all spoke of the fickle actress who could be as loyal to others in my absence as she was to me in my presence. Yet it was hard to believe that the lass of the bannocks could be such a serpent.

I said nothing in protest against the chieftain's claim. But I would be there by the elms, trusting to Heaven and my manhood to acquit me in the right. If I could speak with her for a moment I would know, as I had always known, whether she was true or false. Yet, would her word cure this poison-bite, when the very cure was the poison it-

self? No, I would be by the elms at the appointed time, and if she came — with him — then I would know —

“I will be there, Macdonald,” I said. “Heaven knows it is not in my heart to kill him, nor yet to begrudge you the killing; but I would first know if this thing be true.”

With that, I arose and walked to the tavern-door.

“I will be here at the Thistle,” I said.

Over my shoulder, as I spoke, I saw a look, half of pity, half amusement, on the face of Bordeaux. It enraged me beyond all things that another should so see into my mind. I flung myself into the street and began to walk aimlessly, tortured by rage and love and jealousy.

I hated her. I loved her. I despised her. I worshipped her. And out of the tangle of emotions came a great gnawing, uncomprehending pain. I felt that young Jamie was more worthy of her, for so one feels of him who wins the love one coveted. No longer did I love Bordeaux. He was not my friend, but a sneering onlooker. The Macdonald I pitied, as I pitied myself, and I loved him almost with a feeling of kinship.

I remember giving two groats to the ferryman at the riverside, and recovering the dirk which I had once vowed to sink in her throat. I know not why I wished to have it now, save that having it, the white-heat of my heart slowly dulled into a hard coldness and indifference.

Hours later, when the bluish, wintry dusk was upon the town, I returned to my lodging. The Thorntons' sorrow seemed only a fitting part of the curse that had fallen upon me and all that surrounded me. I went to my little room, and there I found, lying on my bed, a sealed letter.

It was addressed to me in the straggly letters which Mariposa and I had learned out of the old Bible. The sight, succeeding the memory, stirred all my love again, and I came as near to tears as befits a man. It was some time before I dared break the seal and read the letter, for something told me that the whole of my life and love hung by it. This is what it contained, although written in Gaelic:

RORIE:

You have hurt me sore, and my love is as a stricken thing. How was I to know you had come from the house of death? How was I to know that the lad who fiddled had a breaking heart? Would you blame me that I like to be admired in my new gowns? for this is what makes you angry. You would take all of me and you would have me perfect, when I am but a poor thing of vanity. When I wanted you I found you in anger, and my trouble I could not share with you, who should have helped me. But I have found a true friend who will help me.

MARIPOSA.

I flung the letter from me. And so, for the matter of a moment's anger — and I was willing to admit to myself that I had done wrong in so speaking to her the night of the fiddler's death — but for

this little thing, she had found another friend to help her in her trouble, whatever that was. Her trouble! What trouble could she have, save that of a persistent and welcome cavalier?

Yet I was not satisfied. There was that about the communication which was not of accusation, or of spite, or, saving the last sentence, of finality. It was more the reproach of a woman whose love could not scold. Oh, if only the appointed hour would come and I could find that Bordeaux had lied.

Perhaps he was the friend, not young Jamie, as I had naturally supposed. I knew that she had admired Bordeaux; and, as I was beginning to learn, it is the man of his type and tongue who is the forbidden apple among the daughters of Eve.

Bordeaux!

CHAPTER XXVII

THE STRUGGLE BY THE ELMS

It was past eleven of the clock that night when I returned to the Sign of the Thistle. The Macdonald was there, restlessly pacing up and down. At the sight of me, he approached and whispered fiercely:

"For the hour, Cam'll, y'are my friend in a common cause. But I ha' been thinking, and I warn you, sirrah, that you and I will settle our quarrel when the common foe is no more. Will you drink with me?"

"No," I said stolidly.

"As you will," he sneered; "but your bravery may need tickling, whatever."

"It may," I returned. "Seems to me yours is already tickled to the point of courage."

I sat down at the hearth and awaited his next move. But he continued walking, to the nervous distress of the host, who, I have no doubt, expected us to fly at each other's throat any moment. I fancied the Macdonald was awaiting some development, and in this I was right, for he cheered up readily when Bordeaux, aflame with excitement, entered upon us.

"Ha!" he said, drawing us together. "All's well, friends. The post-boy is mine, and hath his instructions top o' the laird's. Away with you to the elms, and be surprised at nothing. Who will challenge him?" he asked, looking from me to the Macdonald with ill-concealed amusement in his eyes.

"He's mine, I tell you!" said the Macdonald, glaring at me.

"Good," chuckled Bordeaux. "Rorie, you will see fair play by your kinsman. Now, be off with you."

He himself accompanied us a part of the way. His manner was strange, and several times I caught him looking curiously — almost mockingly — at me. At the tron gate he left us, wishing "all honor to the best man."

Crossing the Green, my heart began to warm to the adventure, and for more reasons than one. I was tired of this plunging from the heaven of love to the hell of jealousy. She had played with me often enough, Heaven knows. Whether or no I had been deceived by her protestations and acts of seeming faith, the time was come when my doubts would be set at rest and my future ordered accordingly.

I fear now that my inclinations were to the wrong side, for I had already decided that she was false. The thought that she might not be in the chaise with young Jamie gave me a pang of disap-

pointment. Her presence with him on the road to Edinburgh would be a surety of her intentions, while her possible absence would leave me in doubt as to what her intention had been.

But there was this consolation, that if the chaise came at all, young Jamie would not be in it if the object of his far travel was not with him, so that the coming of the vehicle itself presently became fraught with much importance.

It was dreary waiting under the bare elms that night. There had been a fresh fall of snow, followed by a biting frost. The cold was intense; and, while the Macdonald was well fortified by rage and whisky, I was chilled to the marrow with the air and heart-sickness.

The road across the Green was barely perceptible, save for the ploughed lines of vehicle-wheels in the snow. At times we could hear the cries of the watch, but no other sound came, save for the snapping of snow-laden, frozen twigs overhead, and the sough of the wind in the elms.

The midnight had not long passed when my heart leaped and stood still. A chaise had suddenly dashed out from the shadow of the tron gate. It had four horses to it, and I could see, by the motions of the rider, that they were travelling fast.

My hand closed firmly over the handle of my staff, the only weapon besides the dirk with which I had armed myself. I could hear the hard breath-

ing of the Macdonald, and see the white vapour shooting from his nostrils ever harder as the chaise came on. He had a naked sword in his right hand.

“Do you leap for the leaders,” he whispered, “while I drag the thief from the chaise.”

Without caring much about the upshot, I prepared to do as he commanded. I was greatly surprised when the post-boy suddenly brought the leaders to a standstill, directly in front of our hiding-place.

“Come on, Macduff!” shouted the post-boy, in whom I at once recognized that amazing fellow, Bordeaux.

“What means this?” cried the voice of young Jamie from the chaise. Then his voice dropped to a whisper, which said: “Patience, sweet. It is nothing.” That was enough for me, but it incensed the Macdonald to great wrath. While I merely stepped out of the shadows, and prepared to watch the play with cynical indifference, the chieftain of the Kyles sprang to the door of the chaise. Before he could lay hands upon any one inside, young Jamie pushed him back and sprang to the snow, with his rapier bare in his right hand.

“Ho! A trick!” he cried. Then seeing his antagonist’s face, he added with a note of astonishment: “The Macdonald! How is this?”

As they fell to with their blades, I heard Mariposa’s cry from the chaise. It was a long-drawn wail of anguish. I could only distinguish the word: “Macdonald!”

"Quick, Rorie!" cried Bordeaux, who had never moved from the back of the leader. "Get into the chaise. She's yours!"

I saw in a moment the trick he had played. In some manner he had supplanted the post-boy and now it was his intention that I should leave my two enemies in deadly combat and fly with Mistress Mariposa. But I had my own view of the plan and the lady at stake.

"Mine?" I laughed. "She's anybody's."

"Then, by Heaven!" shouted Bordeaux in sudden anger, "myself will take her for my pains."

He brought down the lash upon the off-leader. Before I could perceive his meaning, the chaise with Mariposa in it, was a diminishing blot on the road to Edinburgh.

It was all like a hideous dream to me — a dream of snow, dazzling in whiteness against the sombre elms, the dark figures of the drama, the sobs of the woman, the angry words of Bordeaux, the vanishing chaise, and my own idiotic laughter over the clashing of the combatant's swords.

But it ended with a cry of human agony. As the mist cleared from my brain I saw the Macdonald writhing in the snow with a dark blot spreading beside him. Young Jamie, blade in hand, was standing over him, muttering fiercely. He seemed quite unaware of my presence.

"That!" he roared, "for your interference. This! for the head of my father, Archibald." And

with inhuman deliberateness, he slowly thrust his weapon into the Macdonald's breast.

"Don't!" I cried, all the horror of the act finding an echo in my voice. "For the good God's sake — stop!"

Young Jamie, startled in his cowardly work, flung himself back, leaving the sword upright in the chieftain's body.

"James Black!" I cried. "Is there to be any end to this, or will the Macdonalds avenge and the Campbells avenge until the judgment trumpet cries, 'Enough!' Oh, man, have the people not wept and bled enough for the crimes of your grandfather and the crimes of your father, that you should have done this? What if the Macdonald's grandfather slew your grandfather? What if this man cut the head from your father? Must his and yours cry blood! blood! blood! unto all eternity for the sins of their cutthroat chieftains? Jamie, I did not love this man —"

"No, friend Sheepsblood," interrupted young Jamie in a sneering way, "and you would have slain him for the same petticoat as I have. Mark me, my preacher. I hated my grandfather. I hated my father as I hate a viper. I hate myself for the cursed blood that is in me. And you? I hate you for a milk-sucking yokel who would sit in my chair with a —"

I was at him before the word was full past his

lips. He saw the movement and sprang to the rapier, which rose up like a cross over the dead Macdonald. I struck my cousin full in the face with my right hand. As he staggered back I wrenched the blade from the dead man and pitched it from me with all the force of my shoulder. Then I closed with my kinsman, each of us armed only with the weapons nature had given us, for I had no thought or memory of the dirk.

Down we went in the snow, locked in each other's arms. His fingers presently closed around my throat, while my left hand showered blows upon his face, until I could feel the hot blood trickling around my wrists. But still he held to my throat. I could feel his nails sinking into my thrapple. My temples seemed to be filling out and my skin burning and stretching over my cheek-bones.

With a mighty wrench I freed myself and staggered to my feet. He was up as soon as I, and with a shriek of maniacal rage he bore down upon me, his hands open and stretching out like talons, his face smeared with red and his whole aspect that of a maddened wild beast.

Half-blinded as I was with suffocation, I was still ready for him. As he would have closed with me I struck out with my right arm. The blow, which split my own knuckles, caught him on the point of the chin. His teeth, which had been bared like a wolf's, clashed together. He spun around on his

tangled legs and collapsed across the body of the man he had slain.

As he fell and lay still, such a silence fell upon the world which, a moment before had been clamorous with battle, that I fell into a state of stupid unbelief.

I left them lying there in the snow, weltering in each other's blood. I staggered away over the Glasgow Green to the tron gate, my whole being filled with a new sensation. I was gay! I had slain mine enemy at last, and the savage blood of my people was tingling in my veins and reddening my sight with riotous triumph. I had forgotten the source of the enmity which had ended thus bloodily. Love was — Pah! War! War! was my creed. *War! WAR!*

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CHAPTER XXVIII

DAWN COMES

I had taken little note of the passage of time, but it must have been after three of the morning when I threw myself, fully dressed, on my bed at Mistress Thornton's. Whatever time it was, I had hardly fallen into a restless sleep before I was aroused by a messenger from Alexander Macmurtrie, commanding my immediate presence in the house on Glasgow Green.

Not thinking or caring what the summons might mean — although I dimly supposed that the lawyer had returned from the Highlands and had news of importance to communicate, or wished to rate me for my behaviour — I followed Macmurtrie's man into the street.

It was still dark, but as we passed through the iron gate the gray winter dawn began to spread in the east and light up the ghostly gables of the houses. The big lantern over Macmurtrie's door was swinging alight in the breeze and there were lights in some of the windows of the house. The lawyer's servant opened the door with a key and led me straight to the parlour.

There I found the little man in his nightshirt, sit-

ting before the blazing hearth. He made an amusing picture with his fat toes spread pinkly against the fire, the toorie of his nightcap dangling over his nose, and a glass of steaming toddy within reach. As he saw me, he flung up his chin with a jerk that sent the tassel flying over his left ear. At a glance I knew that Rorie Maclean had trouble in store.

"Hech, ay!" began the lawyer, surveying me fiercely. "Fine doin's, I'm hearin'. Ye're as barbourous as ye're useless. But ye are not worthy of conseederation at this meenit. The question afore the court is: where is Mistress Mariposa?"

If he had asked me where the moon was I could not have been less ready to give a definite answer.

"Where is the lass?" thundered Macmurtrie, jumping to his feet, in sudden alarm at my silence. "Dinna stand there like the gawp ye are. Are ye deaf, or dour, or just stupit? Answer my question, or I'll clap the whole Gallic brood o' ye in the lockup. Where is she?"

"Mariposa?" was all I could say at first. Then, as remembrance struggled into my stupefied brain, I burst out in a way that astonished me no less than it did Macmurtrie. In a minute the story of the night was out — the killing of the Macdonald, the fight with young Jamie, the disappearance of the post-chaise, and — and —

"Good Heavens!" I cried, clutching my head in anger. "Bordeaux has tricked us all. He said

he'd take her for himself — said I was a fool. I remember it now — I see it now — I —”

“A fool ye are!” snapped Macmurtrie, looking very pale. “Heaven preserve us! Is't as bad's a' that? Where's my — my —”

He darted out of the parlour in great agitation, but returned in a moment with the snuff-box in his hand and cramming Broon Cannel into his excited nostrils.

“Now!” said he, snapping the lid of the box. “Let us look at this thing rightly. Tell me that story again.”

I began at the point where I encountered the Macdonald in the Thistle Tavern, told him of the fight, of Bordeaux's interference and of Bordeaux's story of the proposed elopement of young Jamie and Mariposa.

“Stop a wee!” cried the lawyer, with his forefinger on his nose and one eye closed. “Who told ye that? Bordeaux? How did he know of it?”

“I know not,” said I. “It must have been part of his trick.”

“Mmmm!” hummed Macmurtrie, applying snuff.

“But what for would young Jamie be in the chaise if it was a trick?” I protested, against my own reasoning.

“Mmmm!” came from the little lawyer, louder than before. I continued my story. Snap went the snuff-box lid and he interrupted with:

“Never mind the Macdonald. He's deid. If

he's no, let's hope he's dyin'. It clears the situation. What did the lass say? What did Bordeaux say? What did you say?"

I told him as clearly as I could from a confused memory of it.

"Never mind young Jamie," said Macmurtrie sharply. "Let's hope he's deid, too. The less Hie-lan' trash in this the better. Hoot toot!" he snorted, as I grew hot at the insinuation. "Hae some snuff."

He pushed me into a seat and began pacing up and down the room with his hands behind his back, his fat, bare feet padding softly on the carpet, and the tassel of his nightcap whisking at every turn of the promenade.

At first he looked tremendously angry, then very puzzled, then he fell to chuckling and snuffing. Finally he stood up with his back to the fire, his hands behind him and the tassel dangling over his red nose.

"Rorie," said he, and I could not tell whether he was angry or not. "This is a very strange tale. For the murder of the Macdonald, I care not *that!*" snapping the snuff-box lid. "For what you may have done to young Jamie, I care less. Nothing could have happened better for you, but I feel sorry that I ever moved myself in your behalf. Ye have a la-amentable faculty for doin' the wrong thing at the wrong time, and if ye had had the brains of a — a — But, there! That's done. The thing is:

Mariposa's run off wi' the best of the four, the man that saved her, and the only one that seemed to want her. If she has any sense — which I have nae doot she has — she'll marry him by the first meenister, and the mornin's mornin' we'll tak' aff our dram to Sir Ralph and — that is to say, to Mister and Mistress Bordeaux, for I have nae doot Mistress Macmurtrie will bar the door to them if they come unmarri't. As for you —"

He was interrupted by a sharp knock on the front door. I heard Macmurtrie's man turn the lock. Then there were footsteps in the hall. I looked at the lawyer. His face was a marvel of many expressions, but his eyes were fixed steadily on the parlour door. It opened and Bordeaux entered, leading Mariposa by the hand.

Neither of them seemed much perturbed, at first. Mariposa looked at me and smiled mischievously, then she glanced at Alexander Macmurtrie. At once her face crimsoned and her eyes sought the carpet. At the same time, Bordeaux, who had opened his mouth to speak, stopped and chuckled.

"Are ye — as ye ought to be — marri't?" demanded the lawyer sternly.

"As you say yourself," said Bordeaux, "we ought to be, especially the lady, who, even if she were married, would feel commendable embarrassment on beholding a man of parts attired —"

"Guid forgi'e me!" howled Macmurtrie, suddenly remembering his nightshirt. He bolted from

the room. And so, I was left alone with Mariposa and Bordeaux.

She looked at me with an earnest, inquiring gaze, which I confess I did not understand at the time. I answered, I suppose, with a look of sullen anger, or resentful reproach. All at once she tossed her chin in the air and marched out. Bordeaux chuckled.

“‘I would have my love angry sometimes,’” quoth he, “‘to sweeten off the rest of her behavior.’”

“It needs sweetening,” I retorted, “but not by her anger.”

“Rorie, ’twould be but sweets to the sweet. Farewell!” he added, with maddening mummery. “I hop’d thou shouldst have been my *Hamlet’s* wife.”

“Enough of it!” I cried, my blood boiling. “Ye dare come to me with your madness after —”

“I dare do all that does become a man,” he interrupted sternly. “Listen to me, lad,” he added, laying his hands on my shoulders, though I tried to shake them off. “‘Where love is great the littlest doubts are fears’; but, ah! Rorie, ’tis a greater love that has neither doubts nor fears.”

To my great astonishment, tears suddenly filled Bordeaux’s eyes.

“I never saw a lass I loved so well,” he said simply. “But where is the lass who, loving me to-day, could love me to-morrow? Thank the gods,

Rorie, that you are not as I am. I love you, lad, and I will tell you, for that love, that I love the lass. It was never in my mind to take her from you." He laughed through his tears. "I find I could not; for when I spurred away —

"She wanted you, lad. She was in trouble. The young laird importuned her every hour of the day. On the very night when you turned from her, he asked her to fly with him to Edinburgh. She said nay, but he would not listen. Fearing that he would carry out his plan whether she willed or no, she appealed to me — only, lad, because you were not there."

"Then you were the *friend* she spoke of," I said, filled with a sudden love toward Bordeaux.

"Most like, Rorie," he said. "It was not difficult to pay the post-boy and to fill him with jolly good ale and old. All went well until you spoke —"

"I understand," I said, dropping my eyes in shame.

"And I loved the lass," he almost stammered. "The fiend — the fiend — of Bordeaux — seized me. Ere I knew it, Rorie — I meant no evil — we were on the road to Edinburgh. When far enough, I dismounted and — I will not tell you, Rorie. You will not ask me?"

I looked into his eyes. I saw there the question he had asked Mariposa and her answer to it.

"No, I will not ask," I said, "neither you nor her." And I have kept that promise, though some-

times I have been very curious about what happened on the Edinburgh road.

"That's all, lad," said he briskly. "I turned the chaise, and — Here is your Mariposa, as true as my tale, as pure as my love. Give me your hand, lad."

We shook hands, long and firmly. Upon this silent seal of our mutual understanding came Macmurtrie, not wholly dressed, but respectably enough for our company. He paused a moment as he saw us in our silent compact, then he advanced with his hand outstretched.

"Sir Ralph," said he, "I wish —"

Bordeaux held up a warning finger and said something about an onion by any name being a cause of much grief.

"Hoot toot!" said Macmurtrie, glancing quickly at me. "D'ye tak' snuff? A'm pairtial to the Broon Cannel masel'. Mebbe ye prefer the rappee. But, as Ah was sayin', I hae heard the upshot o't, and as I am *in loco parentis*, it is my preevilege and pleasure to offer ye thanks for —"

"Quite right! Quite right!" interrupted Bordeaux solemnly. "As Spenser hath it: 'Due praise, that is the spur of doing well.'"

"Ay, ay," said the lawyer pawkily, "but Spenser had nae beez'ness tae say it, he not being *locum tenens* in the case. Ay, ay!" he chuckled, looking at me. "A braw ending to her troubles, and a fine beginnin' o' yours, yer lairdship."

"My what?" I gasped.

"Hoot toot! D'ye tak' snuff? Na? Then awa' wi' ye — both o' ye — till Ah hae comb't ma hair, an' put on ma hose an' had ma parritch. Then ye'll come to ma offis by the tron gate, where Ah'm thinkin' there'll be a wheen o' beez'ness this day. Now, off wi' ye!"

And he bundled Bordeaux and me through the front door with so little ceremony that we did not know whether to laugh or be angry. But we decided to laugh.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE COMING OF DON ALVAR

Bordeaux and I wandered about the streets for hours before we went to Macmurtrie's office. After the brief melancholy following upon his confession of love for Mariposa, my good friend became as merry a madcap as ever. As for me, I felt as if my heart had taken a new hold on life. A new love had come into it, or I should say that my love for Mariposa had undergone a change which is not as mysterious to me now as it was then.

I think that where a grown-up love springs out of an inseparable childhood, it is either a very satisfactory affection or a very disappointing one. A smooth love from childhood ends in the man — I cannot speak of the woman — becoming so used to having all of her, that there is either nothing new to know or have, or he looks upon discoveries as irritating developments in her character.

But, as in my case — and you have seen how many "irritating" faults I found in Mariposa — when a man has to fight at every step for what he has come to regard as his, and if his lady's ways are ever teaching him that he knows nothing about

her, then one day he may awake, as I did, to fall in love with her all over again, on the understanding that he must not only do his wooing like a stranger, but keep on wooing if he would keep the lass.

It has been a sore task to write these pages, for I realize that mainly I appear as a fool — and a jealous fool at that. I have read many books since then and I know that nobody likes a fool, and most people despise a jealous fool. But this is not a matter of likes or dislikes. It is just the truth I have set down, although Mariposa says she could not have loved me as much if I had been as bad as I have painted myself.

But, anyway, my life seemed different that morning, and, despite my swollen knuckles and aching head, I was happy and full of this new tenderness and respect for the lady called Mariposa.

I was full of curiosity, too, about Alexander Macmurtrie and his words. When Bordeaux and I, after a meal at the Sign of the Thistle, climbed the stairs to the lawyer's office, we found Macmurtrie there before us. He had a pile of papers spread before him and wore an air of great importance. Sniffles was at his accustomed place and at his accustomed employ. The moment we were seated, the lawyer drew a long face and said:

“Will ye have heard that a man was found dead not a stone's throw from my house this morning? No? Hoot toot! We live in a troublous time, and it is fair la-amentable the number that hae met their

dooms by yon elms. None kenned him, puir man — excep' masel', maybe, an' Ah wadnae mention his name for worlds. It's la-amentable, la-amentable!"

Macmurtrie wiggled his fat nose viciously, gave a great snort, snapped the lid of the snuff-box, and said briskly:

"But I didna ask ye here to speak of highway robberies and the like, but to ask if ye hae seen anything o' young Jamie, who was by heritage Laird o' Kilellan, of Cowal, in Argyll. Na? Neither have I, but I was thinkin' that if he was to come here I might show him a bloody sword that would fit his empty sheath. That is to say, the Toon Craftsmen might, and they're gey an' eager to put a rope aroond the neck o' yon varlet wha has pestered the king's highway for a twal-month. He'd be mair useful danglin' on the elms than sittin' at the fit, wi' a primed pistol an' malice aforethought. But I hae nae doot, if he's a sensible man, he'll cross the border. There's a braw outlook for rogues in the new India Company. A handy man wi' a length o' sword an' a short conscience can mak' a when o' sillar they days.

"Hech, ay!" sighed the lawyer. "But — d'ye tak' snuff, Sir — Bordeaux? Na? Weel, Rorie," he added abruptly, "I hae seen Kilellan."

I started. The lawyer was regarding me with his little shrewd eyes. I nodded my head.

"An' it's in a bonny mess. The coos are roostin' in the castle ha' an' there's no a thing worth the

pickin'. If it was no for a fair bit o' herrin' noo an' then, yer people would starve. Are ye no' ashamed o' yourself, sir?"

I could only stare at him.

"Ay, ye may sit dumb," said Macmurtrie sternly. "Ye would not dare to answer. It was only four days gone by that I spoke to the Earl himself. 'What, sirrah!' quo' he. An' I quite agreed wi' him. It's fair la-amentable. An' it's no for want o' claimants. Here's the auld laird's grandson stravagin' the country, playing highwayman maist like; and the auld laird's nephew rantin' after led-dies an' princesses in distress an' the ilk; an' the auld laird's granddaughter bein' carried off, like Mary, by Bothwells and Darnleys and—Hoot toot! But ye're a ba-arb'rous lot, I'm tellin' ye.

"'Where's the younger James?' says Argyll; an' when I told him what a pack o' plottin', murther-in' heathen ye were, he fair threw up his hands in disgust. And when I came to't that James the younger was a blackguard and there was none left but a heathen lass, the Earl scratched his chin. She'd mak' a braw chieftain, but seein' she's no' half the size o' a claymore it's no verra practical. An' the Earl was that way o' thinkin', too. Then I mentioned Rorie, who is by way o' bein' a grand-nephew to Argyll on the Campbell side, and besides young Jamie and the lass, the hereditary Chieftain o' Kilellan. 'Could ye not marry them, Macmurtrie?' says the Earl. But I told him that I feared

Rorie would not marry the lass, for that she was a Papist.

“Now,” chuckled Macmurtrie, “that was touchin’ a tender spot in Argyll himself, for he and his fathers have been sword-dancin’ ’atween the Pope and the crown for a hunder’ years. ‘Macmurtrie,’ says he, an’ I could see a twinkle in his e’e, ‘it is my wish that ye marry them, for if he canna make a Protestant o’ her, she’ll make a Papist o’ him!’

“So there ye are, Rorie!” concluded the lawyer triumphantly. “Laird o’ Kilellan, in Cowal, by the grace o’ Argyll and the king’s favour. An’ yer people will be glad to see a sane man at the heid o’ their sept. As for young Jamie and the Macdonald — leave that to Alexander Macmurtrie.”

Before I could express myself fittingly, the door opened and Macmurtrie’s man — the same who had brought me from bed that morning — handed the lawyer a paper. Macmurtrie glanced over its contents and leaped from his chair. He seized his bonnet, and, flinging on his coat, made a dash for the door. Then he suddenly remembered us. Turning around he frantically waved the paper and shouted:

“Sir Ralph! — Rorie! — my lord — Bordeaux — Oh, both o’ ye — come awa’! Come awa’!”

In another minute we were running toward the tron gate, little Alexander Macmurtrie trotting ahead, puffing and exclaiming. Bordeaux and I came after him, my friend ejaculating and laughing.

I too dazed between one thing and other to do aught but follow. The lawyer was almost dead with exhaustion when we came to the house in Glasgow Green. At the door he stopped and faced us.

"What a thing!" he gasped. "Who'd 'a' thought! The Lord's ways — inscrutable. Guid forgie us — maist amazin'!"

Then, what with haste and an over-application of snuff, he fell into a most violent sneezing. When he had recovered his self-possession, he turned to me, his little eyes large with astonishment.

"Rorie!" he said, with ludicrous solemnity, "he's come!"

"Who's come?" I cried, with the fear that I was not yet done with young Jamie.

"Don Alvar — Don John's father — Mistress Mariposa's grandfather — Don Alvar de la Murcia y This y That and — *why everything!* Lord — bless — my soul!"

With that, he flung open the door and led us into the parlour. We were no sooner in, than we wished we were out again. We had stumbled upon one of those sacred moments in human life. Mariposa was on her knees and her face was held close in the slender, delicate hands of the grandest old gentleman I had ever seen. He was Don John come to life; or, rather, as if he had been alive all these years and had turned white with age. He was looking down into the eyes of my love.

Alexander Macmurtrie was quick to observe and

to act. He pulled Bordeaux to one side. I heard him offer snuff. I heard Bordeaux decline. I heard Macmurtrie suggest that perhaps Bordeaux preferred the rappee. He — Macmurtrie — was partial to the "Broom Cannel." I heard all this, but vaguely. My eyes were dwelling on a vision of the past.

Had all those years really passed, or was it all a dream? Was this not Mistress Mary, and was not that Don John? Presently he would whistle his lilt and — laugh — that careless laugh.

It had all passed in a second — a lifetime in a flash; and here we were at the end of the chapter, with Mariposa on her knees before this grand old gentleman, who looked as if in his happiness he could sing, like the old man in the Bible:

Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace!

The picture was blurred in a mist of emotion, through which presently came Mariposa. Her face was aglow with an almost holy loveliness. It may have been the tears in my eyes; but hers seemed to swim in a halo of tenderness.

"Rorie," she whispered, laying her hand on my arm. "He is Don John's father — my grandfather. He would speak with — you."

Her voice broke in a happy little quaver, and she led me forward. I saw Don John's face, Don John's eyes and Don John's smile lift to me.

"Ah, Rorie," said Don John's voice, but fainter

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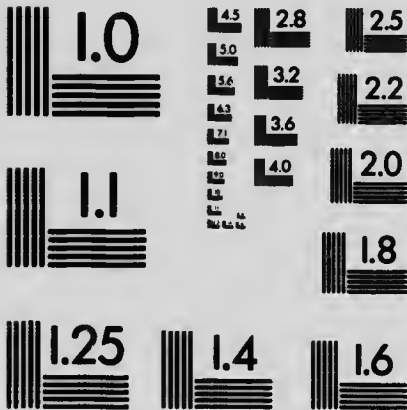
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and less merry, and with a strange foreign turn to it, "I have found my son's self in her, and in you I have found my son's friend. I know not how I should call you, nor how I should thank you.
. . . Rorie, my son, give me your hand."



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CHAPTER XXX

THE LAST OF THE ARMADA

That was a great day for Mariposa and me, and I am sure it brought much happiness to the grand old gentleman who had travelled out of Spain for love of that son who, he now knew, was no more. It seemed as if Heaven, in giving Mariposa a name, had consoled me with one, too; and the same God who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb had poured balm upon the wound of Don John's death, by giving the old man Don John's child.

His coming was a wondrous surprise to all of us. Even Macmurtrie, who had a complete understanding of his presence, was taken aback. Our lawyer had acted in the search for the Spanish *don* at the behest of "the Lunnon brither o' the legal profession," who in turn had acted at the behest of others in the employ of the Spanish grandee.

Here was the power of rank and unlimited wealth demonstrated to us, but the greater power of human love was clear to us in the pathetic bravery of this old man. In the winter of his years, he had come out of Spain, into a country where he or his kind could hope to find few friends in these days — in the almost vain hope of finding alive that brave

lad who had sailed with the Invincible, yet vanquished, Armada.

Don Alvar had not heard of Bordeaux's mission, or the result of it. It had been his wish that no means in human power be left unemployed to determine his son's fate, for, as I have since learned, the hero of my childhood was an only son, and by his life or death also hung the overlordship of almost an entire province of Spain. But love was Don Alvar's own motive, and if his hope was slain the moment he saw the locket on Mariposa's neck and heard the tale of it, a new hope sprang with the new love for his child's child.

Don Alvar's ship lay at Leith, whence it had sailed from London. The moment I heard of this ship, my heart sank, for I believed that it was destined to bear Mariposa away from me to her own people. But when I spoke of it to her, she shook her head.

"Some day, Rorie, I will go to Spain, but not before I have seen Kilellan again — with you." She had not heard of my good fortune yet. "You have been my friend since I was a baby, and now that I have a name and fortune, would it be fair like, Rorie, to leave you?"

"Thank you, lass," I could only say. "It is more than I deserve." Which indeed it was.

"Tell me, lad," she whispered. "Was Don John — my father — like Don Alvar — my grandfather?"

"Lass, I could almost think he is your father grown old."

"Oh!" she breathed, with a strange awe.

"And you," I whispered passionately, catching her to me and looking down into her suddenly solemn eyes, "you are so like Mistress Mary to-day. If we could only love one another as they did."

"We do," she said simply. "But you must not doubt me again, Rorie. It makes you so unhappy. I think — I think I —"

"Well?" I said, for she had grown terribly solemn.

"I think I had better marry you," she said quite seriously. "Then you will know that I cannot run away from you again, even if I ever wished to."

"You dear, dear lass," I whispered, and she gave me the first great kiss of our life and grown-up love.

It was a great day for us all. We gathered in Mistress Macmurtrie's parlour for a grand story-telling. Don Alvar sat by one side of the cheery hearth with Mariposa at his feet. Alexander Macmurtrie and his good wife were at the other side. In the corner seat of the room sat Bordeaux, a gallant figure, between the delighted Macmurtrie girls. I, as chief story-teller, sat in the middle of the room, facing everybody.

It was, as you know, a long story to tell, beginning with the coming of the Spanish ship and my meeting with Don John. You may be sure there

were many parts I left out, for it was not my purpose to hurt the old gentleman more than was necessary to an understanding of the history, and there were bits in which I did not figure well myself. As to that, Bordeaux came to the rescue when the story had progressed as far as Mariposa's capture by the Macdonald.

It was fine to hear Bordeaux's eloquence ring out. He had a wonderful gift of telling a tale, but although everybody was spellbound, my foolish heart was pleased to note how he praised me, and how Mariposa would glance up at her grandfather, as if to seek his approval of me.

Amid an exciting whirl of events, Bordeaux carried us into Glasgow. Then Alexander Macmurtrie, filling his nose with snuff, took up the history in a more prosaic fashion. He explained all about my family and my rights, and delved into Highland laws and customs which nobody understood aright. It was only clear that my people of Kilellan were a sept of the Campbell clan, of which the Earl of Argyll was the grand chieftain. It was clear, too, that young Jamie had abandoned his people, and that Mariposa and I were second cousins.

"So, between the twa of them," said Macmurtrie in his best lowland English, "they are by heritage the heids o' the Kilellan sept. Of course, there canna be twa heids, though twa heids is sometimes better than one. Yet the twa heids in this case are that often thegither, that, wi' yer lordship's permeession,

there would be worse things than following the Earl's advice and marrying the twa. It's been a busy day," added Macmurtrie, by way of apology, "but Ah'm a man that likes to make a clean swoop o' a day's wark."

The climax of this great story-telling was finely received by everybody present. True, Mariposa buried her face between her grandfather's knees, and I wished the floor could swallow me, but I took courage from old Don Alvar's face. He nodded and beamed and held out his hand to me.

"My son," he said in that simple, grand way of his, "it would, indeed, be strange if one who has received such blessings of Heaven should say nay to any of these things, which are the manifest workings of a greater hand than ours. I have foreseen this with but one fear—that our religious ways differ somewhat. But let us leave those things for our kings to settle. When the king calls, let us arm; but when the heart calls, let us answer, too. Rorie, my son," said he huskily, "it is not for me to tell you, who have seen what a holy troth is love. And if Heaven so blessed my poor son's troth as to leave me this sweet maid, surely Heaven does not frown upon your country's usages. I have come from Spain," he added with a smile, "to dance at the wedding of my grandchildren."

Oh, what a day that was! And what days followed! Bordeaux and I were chased from the house in Glasgow Green, where such preparations

were being made. I saw Mariposa but once, and that was when Don Alvar and she came to the door to chase me off; for, as the old gentleman said, there were but few days left until I should have her forever, and it was but meet that he should have his granddaughter to himself.

Alexander Macmurtrie was busy, too. As he always said, my affairs cost more time than I was worth. A messenger had to be sent to Kilellan, telling of my approaching marriage and return.

"And certes," said Macmurtrie, "if they dinna like it, they can lump it, for Argyll is oot o' patience wi' them. But hoot toot! They'll be glad to see ye, lad. I gied them a harangue that'll ding in their ears after they're deid. I tell't them ye were the only sens'ble man in Cowal — Guid forgie me for the lee — and struck a peace wi' the Macdonalds, so there's an end to 't."

"How did ye make the peace?" asked.

"How?" chuckled Macmurtrie. "Ah'm their man o' law, an' breakin' the rules for once, I played twa sides o' the game."

The Macdonald's which troubled me little, and I am sure it was a relief to the lawyer.

"A heathen beast," was his opinion. "Though Guid forgie me, he's deid, puir man! Keep your tongue still, lad. He's gone to his grave an' none but you and young Jamie kens it, an' if that rapscallant comes here — Hech, sirs, ye're a ba-arb'rous lot!"

Young Jamie did come. It was on the day before the wedding. I met him as he came out of Macmurtrie's office. What passed between the lawyer and my kinsman I do not know, except that to-day James Black, or Campbell, is in the fighting service of the East India Company, which was chartered not so long ago. Between one thing and another, young Jamie made a prickly bed for himself. Indeed, I sometimes feel sorry for him.

As I say, I met him at the door of the lawyer's office. At first I hardly recognized him, so cruelly had I beaten him. I held out my hand.

"James," I said, "I am sorry."

"Ye can afford to be!" he snarled, and, knocking my hand to one side, he marched away. I let him go.

If I were to tell you of our wedding and return to Kilellan, I should be tempted to go on writing forever. Shall I ever forget that morning when the post-boys changed the horses at Ninian's t... Govan, when Bordeaux and Don Alvar and Macmurtrie and fat Ringan Scouler and the curate and the dominie stood up and drank to our happiness? Shall I ever forget the back of the post-boy bobbing over the leaders, while Mariposa and I, inseparable at last, cooied blissfully in the chaise. Ahead of us raced another chaise with Don Alvar and Bordeaux, while Alexander completely occupied another

behind us, armed with his precious snuff-box and volumes of legal instruments.

For we were all going back to Kilellan, and I can think of no regret, no cloud, no doubt, which marred our happiness that day. At the Cloch Ferry the boats awaited with pipers in the bows, and when we reached Kilellan Bay my heart swelled and my eyes filled to see my people waiting for me and my bride. A score of the men rushed waist-deep in the cold sea to bring us to land. A hundred claymores rose and two hundred voices shouted the hail: then the pipes shrieked in triumph. Roderick Dow seized my hand and wrung it hard. And I knew then that he had been a good friend to me, as he had promised that day in the glen.

It is nearly two years since I began writing this book, but as I said in the beginning I am not yet free with the Sassenach. And while my slow pen has been writing, such mischievous things as Time, Love, and Mariposa have been adding to my task.

As I said somewhere on the way, Bordeaux and Mariposa both promised to help me, but they have pestered me instead. True, Bordeaux wrote a bit, but it was so strangely worded that I begged of him to leave it out. Mariposa would aye promise to write the next chapter if I let her read the last; but she would find so many faults with what I had to say of myself that whiles we came nigh quarrel-

ing. Once, indeed, she showed me in a few pages how she thought the story should be written, but I grew so angry over the things she said of herself that she has never offered to help me with the book again.

But for all that it has been a sweet task. "There were times when my heart bled, times when my blood chilled at remembrance, and times when the tears of my shame fell upon the pages. At the end of the chapter — that one about the dirk and the bannocks — I could not see what I was writing. The very dirk, you see, was lying on the table by my hand; and Mariposa, whom I had meant to kill with it, was sitting by the castle hearth, sewing away for a little man who was to be called John Alvar.

For, as I said at the beginning — which is so long ago that you have probably forgotten — a peace has come upon Kilellan Castle. We have lived in such quiet happiness ever since that morning, when, after the great feast, Bordeaux and Macmurtrie left us. I can still see these two friends as they were helped into the boat. I can see the little lawyer solemnly offering snuff to our serving-man, Roderick, and I can see Bordeaux standing erect — but a little unsteadily — waving his bonnet and crying:

"Ah, 'parting is such sweet sorrow!'"

I have not seen him since and am not able to say who he is, save that I believe his real name is "Sir

Ralph." Sir Ralph What or what Sir Ralph, I know not, but Macmurtrie swears he is "Sir Ralph the Deevil." Player, sage, knave, or fool, he at 'east was our good friend, and there is ever a welcome for him in Kilellan Castle.

Of our enemies, too, we have seen no more. Young Jamie is in India and like to stay there. The Macdonalds have kept the peace, and, indeed, after the chieftain's death "at the hands of a murtherous robber in Glasgow," the small sept scattered and became lost among the Glencoe and Appin peoples. So that the cattle thrive in Cowal and we are sure to reap our own oats.

Don Alvar stayed with us at Kilellan Castle for many months. He wished us to return to Spain with him, but such was the nature of Mariposa's desire to stay at Kilellan for a time, that our grandfather decided to wait, too. I remember, when little John Alvar had learned to smile at the approach of his great-grandfather's footsteps, the old man said it was time for him to return to Spain, if ever he was to return at all. We strove to keep him with us, but he smiled and said no.

"I grow old," were his words, "and there is much to be done for my great-grandson."

His ship was sailed around from Leith to Kilellan Bay. It struck me strangely that the Spanish ship should have followed the old wake of the fated Armada. On the day before his departure, Don Alvar said:

"Rorie, my son, let us go to the cave. And," he added, drawing his frail figure erect, "you will bring my granddaughter and my great-grandson, Don John."

So we went to the cave, and over the two graves beneath the hollow oak, the old gentleman knelt and prayed. And over the two graves Don Alvar took the little lad in his arms.

"Rorie, my son," said he, "when he is a year older, and when Mariposa wills, you will bring her and my great-grandson, Don John Alvar, to Murcia. And, Rorie, when you come to Spain, you will tell them"—his eyes twinkled moistly—"you will tell them you met Don John!"

It was in the dusk of the next day that we watched the sails of Don Alvar's ship sink beyond Ailsa Craig. A summer haze was upon the Firth and the hills of Bute and Cowal were purple with heather. Mariposa and I stood together at a window of the castle, watching the Spanish sails deepen from gray to blue, from blue to brown, and finally merge with the sea and sky.

It was like the vanishing of the last of the vanquished Armada, but where the ship went down a great, clear star rose out of the sea. Mariposa saw it, too, for our eyes were fixed on the point where we had last seen the ship. And we both had the same thought. As I turned to look at her, she lifted her eyes and our lips met.

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