GEORGE MACDONALD

THE MARQUIS OF LOSSIE

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CHAPTER I: THE STABLE YARD

It was one of those exquisite days that come in every winter, in which it seems no longer the dead body, but the lovely ghost of summer. Such a day bears to its sister of the happier time something of the relation the marble statue bears to the living form; the sense it awakes of beauty is more abstract, more ethereal; it lifts the soul into a higher region than will summer day of lordliest splendour. It is like the love that loss has purified.

Such, however, were not the thoughts that at the moment occupied the mind of Malcolm Colonsay. Indeed, the loveliness of the morning was but partially visible from the spot where he stood – the stable yard of Lossie House, ancient and roughly paved. It was a hundred years since the stones had been last relaid and levelled: none of the horses of the late Marquis minded it but one – her whom the young man in Highland dress was now grooming – and she would have fidgeted had it been an oak floor. The yard was a long and wide space, with two storied buildings on all sides of it. In the centre of one of them rose the clock, and the morning sun shone red on its tarnished gold. It was an ancient clock, but still capable of keeping good time – good enough, at

least, for all the requirements of the house, even when the family was at home, seeing it never stopped, and the church clock was always ordered by it.

It not only set the time, but seemed also to set the fashion of the place, for the whole aspect of it was one of wholesome, weather beaten, time worn existence. One of the good things that accompany good blood is that its possessor does not much mind a shabby coat. Tarnish and lichens and water wearing, a wavy house ridge, and a few families of worms in the wainscot do not annoy the marquis as they do the city man who has just bought a little place in the country. When an old family ceases to go lovingly with nature, I see no reason why it should go any longer. An old tree is venerable, and an old picture precious to the soul, but an old house, on which has been laid none but loving and respectful hands, is dear to the very heart. Even an old barn door, with the carved initials of hinds and maidens of vanished centuries, has a place of honour in the cabinet of the poet's brain. It was centuries since Lossie House had begun to grow shabby – and beautiful; and he to whom it now belonged was not one to discard the reverend for the neat, or let the vanity of possession interfere with the grandeur of inheritance.

Beneath the tarnished gold of the clock, flushed with the red winter sun, he was at this moment grooming the coat of a powerful black mare. That he had not been brought up a groom was pretty evident from the fact that he was not hissing; but that he was Marquis of Lossie there was nothing about him to

show. The mare looked dangerous. Every now and then she cast back a white glance of the one visible eye. But the youth was on his guard, and as wary as fearless in his handling of her. When at length he had finished the toilet which her restlessness – for her four feet were never all still at once upon the stones – had considerably protracted, he took from his pocket a lump of sugar, and held it for her to bite at with her angry looking teeth.

It was a keen frost, but in the sun the icicles had begun to drop. The roofs in the shadow were covered with hoar frost; wherever there was shadow there was whiteness. But for all the cold, there was keen life in the air, and yet keener life in the two animals, biped and quadruped.

As they thus stood, the one trying to sweeten the other's relation to himself, if he could not hope much for her general temper, a man, who looked half farmer, half lawyer, appeared on the opposite side of the court in the shadow.

"You are spoiling that mare, MacPhail," he cried.

"I canna weel du that, sir; she canna be muckle waur," said the youth.

"It's whip and spur she wants, not sugar."

"She has had, and sail have baith, time aboot (in turn); and I houp they'll du something for her in time, sir."

"Her time shall be short here, anyhow. She's not worth the sugar you give her."

"Eh, sir! luik at her," said Malcolm, in a tone of expostulation, as he stepped back a few paces and regarded her with admiring

eyes. "Saw ye ever sic legs? an' sic a neck? an' sic a heid? an' sic fore an' hin' quarters? She's a' bonny but the temper o' her, an' that she canna help like the likes o' you an me."

"She'll be the death o' somebody some day. The sooner we get rid of her the better. Just look at that," he added, as the mare laid back her ears and made a vicious snap at nothing in particular.

"She was a favourite o' my – maister, the marquis," returned the youth, "an' I wad ill like to pairt wi' her."

"I'll take any offer in reason for her," said the factor. "You'll just ride her to Forres market next week, and see what you can get for her. I do think she's quieter since you took her in hand."

"I'm sure she is – but it winna laist a day. The moment I lea' her, she'll be as ill's ever," said the youth. "She has a kin' a likin' to me, 'cause I gi'e her sugar, an' she canna cast me; but she's no a bit better i' the hert o' her yet. She's an oonsanctifeed brute. I cudna think o' sellin' her like this."

"Lat them 'at buys tak' tent (beware)," said the factor.

"Ow ay! lat them; I dinna objec'; gien only they ken what she's like afore they buy her," rejoined Malcolm.

The factor burst out laughing. To his judgment the youth had spoken like an idiot.

"We'll not send you to sell," he said. "Stoat shall go with you, and you shall have nothing to do but hold the mare and your own tongue."

"Sir," said Malcolm, seriously, "ye dinna mean what ye say? Ye said yersel' she wad be the deith o' somebody, an' to sell her

ohn tell't what she's like wad be to caw the saxt comman'ment clean to shivers."

"That may be good doctrine i' the kirk, my lad, but it's pure heresy i' the horse market. No, no! You buy a horse as you take a wife – for better for worse, as the case may be. A woman's not bound to tell her faults when a man wants to marry her. If she keeps off the worst of them afterwards, it's all he has a right to look for."

"Hoot, sir! there's no a pair o' parallel lines in a' the compairison," returned Malcolm. "Mistress Kelpie here 's e'en ower ready to confess her fauts, an' that by giein' a taste o' them; she winna bide to be speired; but for haudin' aff o' them efter the bargain's made – ye ken she's no even responsible for the bargain. An' gien ye expec' me to haud my tongue aboot them – faith, Maister Crathie, I wad as sune think o' sellin' a rotten boat to Blue Peter. Gien the man 'at has her to see tilt dinna ken to luik oot for a storm o' iron shune or lang teeth ony moment, his wife may be a widow that same market nicht: An' forbye, it's again' the aucht comman'ment as weel's the saxt. There's nae exception there in regaird o' horse flesh. We maun be honest i' that as weel's i' corn or herrin', or onything ither 'at 's coft an' sell't atween man an' his neibor."

"There's one commandment, my lad," said Mr Crathie, with the dignity of intended rebuke, "you seem to find hard to learn, and that is, to mind your own business."

"Gien ye mean catchin' the herrin', maybe ye're richt," said

the youth. "I ken muir aboot that nor the horse coupin', and it's full cleaner."

"None of your impudence!" returned the factor. "The marquis is not here to uphold you in your follies. That they amused him is no reason why I should put up with them. So keep your tongue between your teeth, or you'll find it the worse for you."

The youth smiled a little oddly, and held his peace.

"You're here to do what I tell you, and make no remarks," added the factor.

"I'm awaur o' that, sir – within certain leemits," returned Malcolm.

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean within the leemits o' duin' by yer neibor as ye wad ha'e yer neibor du by you – that's what I mean, sir."

"I've told you already that doesn't apply in horse dealing. Every man has to take care of himself in the horse market: that's understood. If you had been brought up amongst horses instead of herring, you would have known that as well as any other man."

"I doobt I'll ha'e to gang back to the herrin' than, sir, for they're like to pruv' the honester o' the twa; But there's nae hypocrisy in Kelpie, an' she maun ha'e her day's denner, come o' the morn's what may."

At the word hypocrisy, Mr Crathie's face grew red as the sun in a fog. He was an elder of the kirk, and had family worship every night as regularly as his toddy. So the word was as offensive and insolent as it was foolish and inapplicable. He would have

turned Malcolm adrift on the spot, but that he remembered – not the favour of the late marquis for the lad – that was nothing to the factor now: his lord under the mould was to him as if he had never been above it – but the favour of the present marchioness, for all in the house knew that she was interested in him. Choking down therefore his rage and indignation, he said sternly;

"Malcolm, you have two enemies – a long tongue, and a strong conceit. You have little enough to be proud of, my man, and the less said the better. I advise you to mind what you're about, and show suitable respect to your superiors, or as sure as judgment you'll go back to fish guts."

While he spoke, Malcolm had been smoothing Kelpie all over with his palms; the moment the factor ceased talking, he ceased stroking, and with one arm thrown over the mare's back, looked him full in the face.

"Gien ye imaigine, Maister Crathie," he said, "'at I coont it ony rise i' the warl' 'at brings me un'er the orders o' a man less honest than he micht be, ye're mista'en. I dinna think it's pride this time; I wad ile Blue Peter's lang butes till him, but I winna lee for ony factor atween this an' Davy Jones."

It was too much. Mr Crathie's feelings overcame him, and he was a wrathful man to see, as he strode up to the youth with clenched fist.

"Haud frae the mere, for God's sake, Maister Crathie," cried Malcolm. But even as he spoke, two reversed Moorish arches of gleaming iron opened on the terror quickened imagination of the

factor a threatened descent from which his most potent instinct, that of self preservation, shrank in horror. He started back white with dismay, having by a bare inch of space and a bare moment of time, escaped what he called Eternity. Dazed with fear he turned and had staggered halfway across the yard, as if going home, before he recovered himself. Then he turned again, and with what dignity he could scrape together said – "MacPhail, you go about your business."

In his foolish heart he believed Malcolm had made the brute strike out.

"I canna weel gang till Stoat comes hame," answered Malcolm.

"If I see you about the place after sunset, I'll horsewhip you," said the factor, and walked away, showing the crown of his hat.

Malcolm again smiled oddly, but made no reply. He undid the mare's halter, and took her into the stable. There he fed her, standing by her all the time she ate, and not once taking his eyes off her. His father, the late marquis, had bought her at the sale of the stud of a neighbouring laird, whose whole being had been devoted to horses, till the pale one came to fetch himself: the men about the stable had drugged her, and, taken with the splendid lines of the animal, nor seeing cause to doubt her temper as she quietly obeyed the halter, he had bid for her, and, as he thought, had her a great bargain. The accident that finally caused his death followed immediately after, and while he was ill no one cared to vex him by saying what she had turned out. But Malcolm

had even then taken her in hand in the hope of taming her a little before his master, who often spoke of his latest purchase, should see her again. In this he had very partially succeeded; but if only for the sake of him whom he now knew for his father, nothing would have made him part with the animal. Besides, he had been compelled to use her with so much severity at times that he had grown attached to her from the reaction of pity as well as from admiration of her physical qualities, and the habitude of ministering to her wants and comforts. The factor, who knew Malcolm only as a servant, had afterwards allowed her to remain in his charge, merely in the hope, through his treatment, of by and by selling her, as she had been bought, for a faultless animal, but at a far better price.

CHAPTER II: THE LIBRARY

When she had finished her oats, Malcolm left her busy with her hay, for she was a huge eater, and went into the house, passing through the kitchen and ascending a spiral stone stair to the library – the only room not now dismantled. As he went along the narrow passage on the second floor leading to it from the head of the stair, the housekeeper, Mrs Courthope, peeped after him from one of the many bedrooms opening upon it, and watched him as he went, nodding her head two or three times with decision: he reminded her so strongly – not of his father, the last marquis, but the brother who had preceded him, that she felt all but certain, whoever might be his mother, he had as much of the Colonsay blood in his veins as any marquis of them all. It was in consideration of this likeness that Mr Crathie had permitted the youth, when his services were not required, to read in the library.

Malcolm went straight to a certain corner, and from amongst a dingy set of old classics took down a small Greek book, in large type. It was the manual of that slave among slaves, that noble among the free, Epictetus. He was no great Greek scholar, but, with the help of the Latin translation, and the gloss of his own rath experience, he could lay hold of the mind of that slave of a slave, whose very slavery was his slave to carry him to the heights of freedom. It was not Greek he cared for, but Epictetus. It was

but little he read, however, for the occurrence of the morning demanded, compelled thought. Mr Crathie's behaviour caused him neither anger nor uneasiness, but it rendered necessary some decision with regard to the ordering of his future.

I can hardly say he recalled how, on his deathbed, the late marquis, about three months before, having, with all needful observances, acknowledged him his son, had committed to his trust the welfare of his sister; for the memory of this charge was never absent from his feeling even when not immediately present to his thought. But although a charge which he would have taken upon him all the same had his father not committed it to him, it was none the less a source of perplexity upon which as yet all his thinking had let in but little light. For to appear as Marquis of Lossie was not merely to take from his sister the title she supposed her own, but to declare her illegitimate, seeing that, unknown to the marquis, the youth's mother, his first wife, was still alive when Florimel was born. How to act so that as little evil as possible might befall the favourite of his father, and one whom he had himself loved with the devotion almost of a dog, before he knew she was his sister, was the main problem.

For himself, he had had a rough education, and had enjoyed it: his thoughts were not troubled about his own prospects. Mysteriously committed to the care of a poor blind Highland piper, a stranger from inland regions, settled amongst a fishing people, he had, as he grew up, naturally fallen into their ways of life and labour, and but lately abandoned the calling of a

fisherman to take charge of the marquis's yacht, whence, by degrees, he had, in his helpfulness, grown indispensable to him and his daughter, and had come to live in the house of Lossie as a privileged servant. His book education, which he owed mainly to the friendship of the parish schoolmaster, although nothing marvellous, or in Scotland very peculiar, had opened for him in all directions doors of thought and inquiry, but the desire of knowledge was in his case, again through the influences of Mr Graham, subservient to an almost restless yearning after the truth of things, a passion so rare that the ordinary mind can hardly master even the fact of its existence.

The Marchioness of Lossie, as she was now called, for the family was one of the two or three in Scotland in which the title descends to an heiress, had left Lossie House almost immediately upon her father's death, under the guardianship of a certain dowager countess. Lady Bellair had taken her first to Edinburgh, and then to London. Tidings of her Malcolm occasionally received through Mr Soutar of Duff Harbour, the lawyer the marquis had employed to draw up the papers substantiating the youth's claim. The last amounted to this, that, as rapidly as the proprieties of mourning would permit, she was circling the vortex of the London season; and Malcolm was now almost in despair of ever being of the least service to her as a brother to whom as a servant he had seemed at one time of daily necessity. If he might but once be her skipper, her groom, her attendant, he might then at least learn how to discover to her the bond between

them, without breaking it in the very act, and so ruining the hope of service to follow.

CHAPTER III: MISS HORN

The door opened, and in walked a tall, gaunt, hard featured woman, in a huge bonnet, trimmed with black ribbons, and a long black net veil, worked over with sprigs, coming down almost to her waist. She looked stern, determined, almost fierce, shook hands with a sort of loose dissatisfaction, and dropped into one of the easy chairs in which the library abounded. With the act the question seemed shot from her – "Duv ye ca' yersel' an honest man, noo, Ma'colm?"

"I ca' myself naething," answered the youth; "but I wad fain be what ye say, Miss Horn."

"Ow! I dinna doobt ye wadna steal, nor yet tell lees aboot a horse: I ha'e jist come frae a sair waggin' o' tongues about ye. Mistress Crathie tells me her man's in a sair vex 'at ye winna tell a wordless lee aboot the black mere: that's what I ca't – no her. But lee it wad be, an' dinna ye aither wag or haud a leein' tongue. A gentleman maunna lee, no even by sayin' naething – na, no gien 't war to win intill the kingdom. But, Guid be thankit, that's whaur leears never come. Maybe ye're thinkin' I ha'e sma' occasion to say sic like to yersel'. An' yet what's yer life but a lee, Ma'colm? You 'at's the honest Marquis o' Lossie to waur yer time an' the stren'th o' yer boady an' the micht o' yer sowl tyauvin' (wrestling) wi' a deevil o' a she horse, whan there's that half sister o' yer' ain gauin' to the verra deevil o' perdition himsel' amang the godless

gentry o' Lon'on!"

"What wad ye ha'e me un'erstan' by that, Miss Horn?" returned Malcolm. "I hear no ill o' her. I daursay she's no jist a sa'nt yet, but that's no to be luiked for in ane o' the breed: they maun a' try the warl' first ony gait. There's a heap o' fowk – an' no aye the warst, maybe," continued Malcolm, thinking of his father, "'at wull ha'e their bite o' the aipple afore they spite it oot. But for my leddy sister, she's owre prood ever to disgrace hersel'."

"Weel, maybe, gien she bena misguidit by them she's wi'. But I'm no sae muckle concernt aboot her. Only it's plain 'at ye ha'e no richt to lead her intill temptation."

"Hoo am I temptin' at her, mem?"

"That's plain to half an e'e. Ir ye no lattin' her live believin' a lee? Ir ye no allooin' her to gang on as gien she was somebody mair nor mortal, when ye ken she's nae mair Marchioness o' Lossie nor ye're the son o' auld Duncan MacPhail? Faith, ye ha'e lost trowth gien ye ha'e gaint the warl' i' the cheenge o' forbeirs!"

"Mint at naething again the deid, mem. My father's gane till's accoont; an it's weel for him he has his father an' no his sister to pronoonce upo' him."

"'Deed ye're right there, laddie," said Miss Horn, in a subdued tone.

"He's made it up wi' my mither afore noo, I'm thinkin'; an' ony gait he confesst her his wife an' me her son afore he dee'd, an' what mair had he time to du?"

"It's fac'," returned Miss Horn. "An' noo luik at yersel': what yer father confesst wi' the verra deid thraw o' a labourin' speerit, to the whilk naething cud ha'e broucht him but the deid thraws (death struggles) o' the bodily natur' an' the fear o' hell, that same confession ye row up again i' the cloot o' secrecy, in place o' dightin' wi' 't the blot frae the memory o' ane wha I believe I lo'ed mair as my third cousin nor ye du as yer ain mither!"

"There's no blot upo' her memory, mem," returned the youth, "or I wad be markis the morn. There's never a sowl kens she was mither but kens she was wife – ay, an' whase wife, tu."

Miss Horn had neither wish nor power to reply, and changed her front.

"An' sae, Ma'colm Colonsay," she said, "ye ha'e no less nor made up yer min' to pass yer days in yer ain stable, neither better nor waur than an ostler at the Lossie Airms, an' that efter a' 'at I ha'e borne an' dune to mak a gentleman o' ye, bairdin' yer father here like a verra lion in 's den, an' garrin' him confess the thing again' ilka hair upon the stiff neck o' 'im? Losh, laddie! it was a pictur' to see him stan'in wi' 's back to the door like a camstairy (obstinate) bullock!"

"Haud yer tongue, mem, gien ye please. I canna bide to hear my father spoken o' like that. For ye see I lo'ed him afore I kent he was ony drap 's blude to me."

"Weel, that's verra weel; but father an' mither's man and wife, an' ye camna o' a father alane."

"That's true, mem, an' it canna be I sud ever forget yon face

ye shawed me i' the coffin, the bonniest, sairest sicht I ever saw," returned Malcolm, with a quaver in his voice.

"But what for cairry yer thouchts to the deid face o' her? Ye kent the leevin' ane weel," objected Miss Horn.

"That's true, mem; but the deid face maist blottit the leevin' oot o' my brain."

"I'm sorry for that. – Eh, laddie, but she was bonny to see!"

"I aye thoucht her the bonniest leddy I ever set e'e upo'. An' dinna think, mem, I'm gaein to forget the deid, 'cause I'm mair concemt aboot the leevin'. I tell ye I jist dinna ken what to du. What wi' my father's deein' words committin' her to my chairge, an' the more than regaird I ha'e to Leddy Florimel hersel', I'm jist whiles driven to ane mair. Hoo can I tak the verra sunsheen oot o' her life 'at I lo'ed afore I kent she was my ain sister, an' jist thoucht lang to win near eneuch till to du her ony guid turn worth duin? An' here I am, her ane half brither, wi' naething i' my pooer but to scaud the hert o' her, or else lee! Supposin' she was weel merried first, hoo wad she stan' wi' her man whan he cam to ken 'at she was nae marchioness – hed no lawfu' richt to ony name but her mither's? An' afore that, what richt cud I ha'e to alloo ony man to merry her ohn kent the trowth aboot her? Faith, it wad be a fine chance though for the fin'in' oot whether or no the man was worthy o' her! But, ye see that micht be to make a playock o' her hert. Puir thing, she luiks doon upo' me frae the tap o' her bonny neck, as frae a h'avenly heicht; but I s' lat her ken yet, gien only I can win at the gait o' 't, that I ha'ena

come nigh her for naething."

He gave a sigh with the words, and a pause followed.

"The trowth's the trowth," resumed Miss Horn, "neither mair nor less."

"Ay," responded Malcolm; "but there's a richt an' a wrang time for the telling' o' 't. It's no as gien I had had han' or tongue in ony foregane lee. It was naething o' my duin', as ye ken, mem. To mysel', I was never onything but a fisherman born. I confess 'at whiles, when we wad be lyin' i' the lee o' the nets, tethered to them like, wi' the win' blawin' strong 'an steady, I ha'e thocht wi' mysel' 'at I kent naething aboot my father, an' what gien it sud turn oot 'at I was the son o' somebody – what wad I du wi' my siller?"

"An' what thoucht ye ye wad du, laddie?" asked Miss Horn gently.

"What but bigg a harbour at Scaurnose for the puir fisher fowk 'at was like my ain flesh and blude!"

"Weel," rejoined Miss Horn eagerly, "div ye no look upo' that as a voo to the Almichty – a voo 'at ye're bun' to pay, noo 'at ye ha'e yer wuss? An' it's no merely 'at ye ha'e the means, but there's no anither that has the richt; for they're yer ain fowk, 'at ye gaither rent frae, an 'at's been for mony a generation sattlet upo' yer lan' – though for the maitter o' the lan', they ha'e had little mair o' that than the birds o' the rock ha'e ohn feued – an' them honest fowks wi' wives an' sowls o' their ain! Hoo upo' airth are ye to du yer duty by them, an' render yer accoont at the last, gien

ye dinna tak till ye yer pooer an' reign? Ilk man 'at 's in ony sense a king o' men is bun' to reign ower them in that sense. I ken little aboot things mysel', an' I ha'e no feelin's to guide me, but I ha'e a wheen cowmon sense, an' that maun jist stan' for the lave."

A silence followed.

"What for speak na ye, Ma'colm?" said Miss Horn, at length.

"I was jist tryin'," he answered, "to min' upon a twa lines 'at I cam' upo' the ither day in a buik 'at Maister Graham gied me afore he gaed awa – 'cause I reckon he kent them a' by hert. They say jist sic like's ye been sayin', mem – gien I cud but min' upo' them. They're aboot a man 'at aye does the richt gait – made by ane they ca' Wordsworth."

"I ken naething aboot him," said Miss Horn, with emphasized indifference.

"An' I ken but little: I s' ken mair or lang though. This is hoo the piece begins:

> Who is the happy warrior? Who is he
> That every Man in arms should wish to be? –
> It is the generous Spirit, who, when brought
> Among the tasks of real life, hath wrought
> Upon the plan that pleased his childish thought.

-– There! that's what ye wad hae o' me, mem!"

"Hear till him!" cried Miss Horn. "The man's i' the richt, though naebody never h'ard o' 'im. Haud ye by that, Ma'colm, an' dinna ye rist till ye ha'e biggit a harbour to the men an' women o'

Scaurnose. Wha kens hoo mony may gang to the boddom afore it be dune, jist for the want o' 't?"

"The fundation maun be laid in richteousness, though, mem, else – what gien 't war to save lives better lost?"

"That belangs to the Michty," said Miss Horn.

"Ay, but the layin' o' the fundation belangs to me. An' I'll no du't till I can du't ohn ruint my sister."

"Weel, there's ae thing clear: ye'll never ken what to do sae lang's ye hing on aboot a stable, fu' o' fower fittet animals wantin' sense – an' some twa fittet 'at has less."

"I doobt ye're richt there, mem; and gien I cud but tak puir Kelpie awa' wi' me –"

"Hoots! I'm affrontit wi ye. Kelpie – quo he! Preserve's a'! The laad 'ill lat his ain sister gang, an' bide at hame wi' a mere!"

Malcolm held his peace.

"Ay, I'm thinkin' I maun gang," he said at length.

"Whaur till, than?" asked Miss Horn.

"Ow! to Lon'on – whaur ither?"

"And what'll yer lordship du there?"

"Dinna say lordship to me, mem, or I'll think ye're jeerin' at me. What wad the caterpillar say," he added, with a laugh, "gien ye ca'd her my leddie Psyche?"

Malcolm of course pronounced the Greek word in Scotch fashion.

"I ken naething aboot yer Seechies or yer Sukies," rejoined Miss Horn. "I ken 'at ye're bun' to be a lord and no a stableman,

an' I s' no lat ye rist till ye up an' say what neist?"

"It's what I ha'e been sayin' for the last three month," said Malcolm.

"Ay, I daursay; but ye ha'e been sayin' 't upo' the braid o' yer back, and I wad ha'e ye up an' sayin' 't."

"Gien I but kent what to du!" said Malcolm, for the thousandth time.

"Ye can at least gang whaur ye ha'e a chance o' learnin'," returned his friend. – "Come an' tak yer supper wi' me the nicht – a rizzart haddie an' an egg, an' I'll tell ye mair aboot yer mither."

But Malcolm avoided a promise, lest it should interfere with what he might find best to do.

CHAPTER IV: KELPIE'S AIRING

When Miss Horn left him – with a farewell kindlier than her greeting – rendered yet more restless by her talk, he went back to the stable, saddled Kelpie, and took her out for an airing.

As he passed the factor's house, Mrs Crathie saw him from the window. Her colour rose. She arose herself also, and looked after him from the door – a proud and peevish woman, jealous of her husband's dignity, still more jealous of her own.

"The verra image o' the auld markis!" she said to herself; for in the recesses of her bosom she spoke the Scotch she scorned to utter aloud; "and sits jist like himsel', wi' a wee stoop i' the saiddle, and ilka noo an' than a swing o' his haill boady back, as gien some thoucht had set him straught. – Gien the fractious brute wad but brak a bane or twa o' him!" she went on in growing anger. "The impidence o' the fallow! He has his leave: what for disna he tak' it an' gang? But oot o' this gang he sail. To ca' a man like mine a heepocreet 'cause he wadna procleem till a haul market ilka secret fau't o' the horse he had to sell! Haith, he cam' upo' the wrang side o' the sheet to play the lord and maister here! and that I can tell him!"

The mare was fresh, and the roads through the policy hard both by nature and by frost, so that he could not let her go, and had enough to do with her. He turned, therefore, towards the sea gate, and soon reached the shore. There, westward of the Seaton,

where the fisher folk lived, the sand lay smooth, flat, and wet along the edge of the receding tide: he gave Kelpie the rein, and she sprang into a wild gallop, every now and then flinging her heels as high as her rider's head. But finding, as they approached the stony part from which rose the great rock called the Bored Craig, that he could not pull her up in time, he turned her head towards the long dune of sand which, a little beyond the tide, ran parallel with the shore. It was dry and loose, and the ascent steep. Kelpie's hoofs sank at every step, and when she reached the top, with wide spread struggling haunches, and "nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim," he had her in hand. She stood panting, yet pawing and dancing, and making the sand fly in all directions.

Suddenly a woman with a child in her arms rose, as it seemed to Malcolm, under Kelpie's very head. She wheeled and reared, and, in wrath or in terror, strained every nerve to unseat her rider, while, whether from faith or despair, the woman stood still as a statue, staring at the struggle.

"Haud awa' a bit, Lizzy," cried Malcolm. "She's a mad brute, an' I mayna be able to haud her. Ye ha'e the bairnie, ye see!"

She was a young woman, with a sad white face. To what Malcolm said she paid no heed, but stood with her child in her arms and gazed at Kelpie as she went on plunging and kicking about on the top of the dune.

"I reckon ye wadna care though the she deevil knockit oot yer harns; but ye ha'e the bairn, woman! Ha'e mercy on the bairn, an' rin to the boddom."

"I want to speak to ye, Ma'colm MacPhail," she said, in a tone whose very stillness revealed a depth of trouble.

"I doobt I canna hearken to ye richt the noo," said Malcolm. "But bide a wee." He swung himself from Kelpie's back, and, hanging hard on the bit with one hand, searched with the other in the pocket of his coat, saying, as he did so – "Sugar, Kelpie! sugar!"

The animal gave an eager snort, settled on her feet, and began snuffing about him. He made haste, for, if her eagerness should turn to impatience, she would do her endeavour to bite him. After crunching three or four lumps, she stood pretty quiet, and Malcolm must make the best of what time she would give him.

"Noo, Lizzy!" he said hurriedly. "Speyk while ye can."

"Ma'colm," said the girl, and looked him full in the face for a moment, for agony had overcome shame; then her gaze sought the far horizon, which to seafaring people is as the hills whence cometh their aid to the people who dwell among mountains; "– Ma'colm, he's gaein' to merry Leddy Florimel."

Malcolm started. Could the girl have learned more concerning his sister than had yet reached himself? A fine watching over her was his, truly! But who was this he?

Lizzy had never uttered the name of the father of her child, and all her people knew was that he could not be a fisherman, for then he would have married her before the child was born. But Malcolm had had a suspicion from the first, and now her words all but confirmed it. – And was that fellow going to marry his

sister? He turned white with dismay – then red with anger, and stood speechless.

But he was quickly brought to himself by a sharp pinch under the shoulder blade from Kelpie's long teeth: he had forgotten her, and she had taken the advantage.

"Wha tellt ye that, Lizzy?" he said.

"I'm no at leeberty to say, Ma'colm, but I'm sure it's true, an' my hert's like to brak."

"Puir lassie!" said Malcolm, whose own trouble had never at any time rendered him insensible to that of others. "But is't onybody 'at kens what he says?" he pursued.

"Weel, I dinna jist richtly ken gien she kens, but I think she maun ha'e gude rizzon, or she wadna say as she says. Oh me! me! my bairnie 'ill be scornin' me sair whan he comes to ken. Ma'colm, ye're the only ane 'at disna luik doon upo' me, an whan ye cam' ower the tap o' the Boar's Tail, it was like an angel in a fire flaucht, an' something inside me said – Tell 'im; tell 'im; an' sae I bude to tell ye."

Malcolm was even too simple to feel flattered by the girl's confidence, though to be trusted is a greater compliment than to be loved.

"Hearken, Lizzy!" he said. "I canna e'en think, wi' this brute ready ilka meenute to ate me up. I maun tak' her hame. Efter that, gien ye wad like to tell me onything, I s' be at yer service. Bide aboot here – or, luik ye: here's the key o' yon door; come throu' that intil the park – throu' aneth the toll ro'd, ye ken. There ye'll

get into the lythe (lee) wi' the bairnie; an' I'll be wi' ye in a quarter o' an hoor. It'll tak' me but twa meenutes to gang hame. Stoat 'ill put up the mere, and I'll be back – I can du't in ten meenutes."

"Eh! dinna hurry for me, Ma'colm: I'm no worth it," said Lizzy.

But Malcolm was already at full speed along the top of the dune.

"Lord preserve 's!" cried Lizzy, when she saw him clear the brass swivel. "Sic a laad as that is! Eh, he maun ha'e a richt lass to lo'e him some day! It's a' ane to him, boat or beast. He wadna turn frae the deil himsel'. An syne he's jist as saft's a deuk's neck when he speyks till a wuman or a bairn – ay, or an auld man aither!"

And full of trouble as it was about another, Lizzy's heart yet ached at the thought that she should be so unworthy of one like him.

CHAPTER V: LIZZY FINDLAY

From the sands she saw him gain the turnpike road with a bound and a scramble. Crossing it he entered the park by the sea gate; she had to enter it by the tunnel that passed under the same road. She approached the grated door, unlocked it, and looked in with a shudder. It was dark, the other end of it being obscured by trees, and the roots of the hill on whose top stood the temple of the winds. Through the tunnel blew what seemed quite another wind – one of death, from regions beneath. She drew her shawl, one end of which was rolled about her baby, closer around them both ere she entered. Never before had she set foot within the place, and a strange horror of it filled her: she did not know that by that passage, on a certain lovely summer night, Lord Meikleham had issued to meet her on the sands under the moon. The sea was not terrible to her; she knew all its ways nearly as well as Malcolm knew the moods of Kelpie; but the earth and its ways were less known to her, and to turn her face towards it and enter by a little door into its bosom was like a visit to her grave. But she gathered her strength, entered with a shudder, passed in growing hope and final safety through it, and at the other end came out again into the light, only the cold of its death seemed to cling to her still. But the day had grown colder; the clouds that, seen or unseen, ever haunt the winter sun, had at length caught and shrouded him, and through the gathering vapours he

looked ghastly. The wind blew from the sea. The tide was going down. There was snow in the air. The thin leafless trees were all bending away from the shore, and the wind went sighing, hissing, and almost wailing through their bare boughs and budless twigs. There would be a storm, she thought, ere the morning, but none of their people were out.

Had there been – well, she had almost ceased to care about anything, and her own life was so little to her now, that she had become less able to value that of other people. To this had the ignis fatuus of a false love brought her! She had dreamed heedlessly, to awake sorrowfully. But not until she heard he was going to be married, had she come right awake, and now she could dream no more. Alas! alas! what claim had she upon him? How could she tell, since such he was, what poor girl like herself she might not have robbed of her part in him?

Yet even in the midst of her misery and despair, it was some consolation to think that Malcolm was her friend.

Not knowing that he had already suffered from the blame of her fault, or the risk at which he met her, she would have gone towards the house to meet him the sooner, had not this been a part of the grounds where she knew Mr Crathie tolerated no one without express leave given. The fisher folk in particular must keep to the road by the other side of the burn, to which the sea gate admitted them. Lizzy therefore lingered near the tunnel, afraid of being seen.

Mr Crathie was a man who did well under authority, but

upon the top of it was consequential, overbearing, and far more exacting than the marquis. Full of his employer's importance when he was present, and of his own when he was absent, he was yet in the latter circumstances so doubtful of its adequate recognition by those under him, that he had grown very imperious, and resented with indignation the slightest breach of his orders. Hence he was in no great favour with the fishers.

Now all the day he had been fuming over Malcolm's behaviour to him in the morning, and when he went home and learned that his wife had seen him upon Kelpie, as if nothing had happened, he became furious, and, in this possession of the devil, was at the present moment wandering about the grounds, brooding on the words Malcolm had spoken. He could not get rid of them. They caused an acrid burning in his bosom, for they had in them truth, like which no poison stings.

Malcolm, having crossed by the great bridge at the house, hurried down the western side of the burn to find Lizzy, and soon came upon her, walking up and down.

"Eh, lassie, ye maun be cauld!" he said.

"No that cauld," she answered, and with the words burst into tears: "But naebody says a kin' word to me noo," she said in excuse, "an' I canna weel bide the soun' o' ane when it comes; I'm no used till 't."

"Naebody?" exclaimed Malcolm.

"Na, naebody," she answered. "My mither winna, my father daurna, an' the bairnie canna, an I gang near naebody forbye."

"Weel, we maunna stan' oot here i' the cauld: come this gait," said Malcolm. "The bairnie 'll get its deid."

"There wadna be mony to greit at that," returned Lizzy, and pressed the child closer to her bosom.

Malcolm led the way to the little chamber contrived under the temple in the heart of the hill, and unlocking the door made her enter. There he seated her in a comfortable chair, and wrapped her in the plaid he had brought for the purpose. It was all he could do to keep from taking her in his arms for very pity, for, both body and soul, she seemed too frozen to shiver. He shut the door, sat down on the table near her, and said:

"There's naebody to disturb 's here, Lizzy: what wad ye say to me noo?"

The sun was nearly down, and its light already almost smothered in clouds, so that the little chamber, whose door and window were in the deep shadow of the hill, was nearly dark.

"I wadna hae ye tell me onything ye promised no to tell," resumed Malcolm, finding she did not reply, "but I wad like to hear as muckle as ye can say."

"I hae naething to tell ye, Ma'colm, but jist 'at my leddy Florimel's gauin' to be merried upo' Lord Meikleham – Lord Liftore, they ca' him noo. Hech me!"

"God forbid she sud be merried upon ony sic a bla'guard!" cried Malcolm.

"Dinna ca' 'im ill names, Ma'colm. I canna bide it, though I hae no richt to tak up the stick for him."

"I wadna say a word 'at micht fa' sair on a sair hert," he returned; "but gien ye kent a', ye wad ken I hed a gey sized craw to pluck wi' 's lordship mysel'."

The girl gave a low cry.

"Ye wadna hurt 'im, Ma'colm?" she said, in terror at the thought of the elegant youth in the clutches of an angry fisherman, even if he were the generous Malcolm MacPhail himself.

"I wad raither not," he replied, "but we maun see hoo he cairries himsel'."

"Du naething till 'im for my sake, Ma'colm. Ye can hae naething again' him yersel'."

It was too dark for Malcolm to see the keen look of wistful regret with which Lizzy tried to pierce the gloom and read his face: for a moment the poor girl thought he meant he had loved her himself. But far other thoughts were in Malcolm's mind: one was that her whom, as a scarce approachable goddess, he had loved before he knew her of his own blood, he would rather see married to an honest fisherman in the Seaton of Portlossie, than to such a lord as Meikleham. He had seen enough of him at Lossie House to know what he was, and puritanical fish catching Malcolm had ideas above those of most marquises of his day: the thought of the alliance was horrible to him. It was possibly not inevitable, however; only what could he do, and at the same time avoid grievous hurt?

"I dinna think he'll ever merry my leddy," he said.

"What gars ye say that, Ma'colm?" returned Lizzy, with eagerness.

"I canna tell ye jist i' the noo; but ye ken a body canna weel be aye aboot a place ohn seein things. I'll tell ye something o' mair consequence hooever," he continued. . "Some fowk say there's a God, an' some say there's nane, an' I ha'e no richt to preach to ye, Lizzy; but I maun jist tell ye this – 'at gien God dinna help them 'at cry till 'im i' the warst o' tribles, they micht jist as weel ha'e nae God at a'. For my ain pairt I ha'e been helpit, an' I think it was him intil 't. Wi' his help, a man may warstle throu' onything. I say I think it was himsel' tuik me throu' 't, an' here I stan' afore ye, ready for the neist trible, an' the help 'at 'll come wi' 't. What it may be, God only knows!"

CHAPTER VI: MR CRATHIE

He was interrupted by the sudden opening of the door, and the voice of the factor in exultant wrath.

"MacPhail!" it cried. "Come out with you. Don't think to sneak there. I know you. What right have you to be on the premises? Didn't I send you about your business this morning?"

"Ay, sir, but ye didna pay me my wages," said Malcolm, who had sprung to the door and now stood holding it half shut, while Mr Crathie pushed it half open.

"No matter. You're nothing better than a housebreaker if you enter any building about the place."

"I brak nae lock," returned Malcolm. "I ha'e the key my lord gae me to ilka place 'ithin the wa's excep' the strong room."

"Give it me directly. I'm master here now."

"'Deed, I s' du nae sic thing, sir. What he gae me I'll keep."

"Give up that key, or I'll go at once and get a warrant against you for theft."

"Weel, we s' refar't to Maister Soutar."

"Damn your impudence – 'at I sud say't! – what has he to do with my affairs? Come out of that directly."

"Huly, huly, sir!" returned Malcolm, in terror lest he should discover who was with him.

"You low bred rascal! Who have you there with you?"

As he spoke Mr Crathie would have forced his way into

the dusky chamber, where he could just perceive a motionless undefined form. But stiff as a statue Malcolm kept his stand, and the door was immovable. Mr Crathie gave a second and angrier push, but the youth's corporeal as well as his mental equilibrium was hard to upset, and his enemy drew back in mounting fury.

"Get out of there," he cried, "or I'll horsewhip you for a damned blackguard."

"Whup awa'," said Malcolm, "but in here ye s' no come the nicht."

The factor rushed at him, his heavy whip upheaved – and the same moment found himself, not in the room, but lying on the flower bed in front of it. Malcolm instantly stepped out, locked the door, put the key in his pocket, and turned to assist him. But he was up already, and busy with words unbefitting the mouth of an elder of the kirk.

"Didna I say 'at ye sudna come in, sir? What for wull fowk no tak' a tellin'?" expostulated Malcolm.

But the factor was far beyond force of logic or illumination of reason. He raved and swore.

"Get oot o' my sicht," he cried, "or I'll shot ye like a tyke."

"Gang an' fess yer gun," said Malcolm, "an' gien ye fin' me waitin' for ye, ye can lat at me."

The factor uttered a horrible imprecation on himself if he did not make him pay dearly for his behaviour.

"Hoots, sir! Be asham't o' yersel'. Gang hame to the mistress, an' I s' be up the morn's mornin' for my wages."

"If ye set foot on the grounds again, I'll set every dog in the place upon you."

Malcolm laughed.

"Gien I was to turn the order the ither gait, wad they min' you or me, div ye think, Maister Crathie?"

"Give me that key, and go about your business."

"Na, na, sir! What my lord gae me I s' keep – for a' the factors atween this an' the Land's En'," returned Malcolm. "An' for lea'in' the place, gien I be na in your service, Maister Crathie, I'm nae un'er your orders. I'll gang whan it shuits me. An' mair yet, ye s' gang oot o' this first, or I s' gar ye, an that ye'll see:'

It was a violent proceeding, but for a matter of manners he was not going to risk what of her good name poor Lizzy had left: like the books of the Sibyl, that grew in value. He made, however, but one threatful stride towards the factor, for the great man turned and fled.

The moment he was out of sight, Malcolm unlocked the door, led Lizzy out, and brought her through the tunnel to the sands. There he left her, and set out for Scaurnose.

CHAPTER VII: BLUE PETER

The door of Blue Peter's cottage was opened by his sister. Not much at home in the summer, when she carried fish to the country, she was very little absent in the winter, and as there was but one room for all uses, except the closet bedroom and the garret at the top of the ladder, Malcolm, instead of going in, called to his friend, whom he saw by the fire with his little Phemy upon his knee, to come out and speak to him.

Blue Peter at once obeyed the summons.

"There's naething wrang, I houp, Ma'colm?" he said, as he closed the door behind him.

"Maister Graham wad say," returned Malcolm, "naething ever was wrang but what ye did wrang yersel', or wadna pit richt whan ye had a chance. I ha'e him nae mair to gang till, Joseph, an' sae I'm come to you. Come doon by, an' i' the scoug o' a rock, I'll tell ye a' aboot it."

"Ye wadna ha'e the mistress no ken o' 't?" said his friend. "I dinna jist like haein' secrets frae her."

"Ye sall jeedge for yersel', man, an' tell her or no just as ye like. Only she maun haud her tongue, or the black dog 'll ha'e a' the butter."

"She can haud her tongue like the tae stane o' a grave," said Peter.

As they spoke they reached the cliff that hung over the

shattered shore. It was a clear, cold night. Snow, the remnants of the last storm, which frost had preserved in every shadowy spot, lay all about them. The sky was clear, and full of stars, for the wind that blew cold from the northwest had dispelled the snowy clouds. The waves rushed into countless gulfs and crannies and straits on the ruggedest of shores, and the sounds of waves and wind kept calling like voices from the unseen. By a path, seemingly fitter for goats than men, they descended halfway to the beach, and under a great projection of rock stood sheltered from the wind. Then Malcolm turned to Joseph Mair, commonly called Blue Peter, because he had been a man of war's man, and laying his hand on his arm said:

"Blue Peter, did ever I tell ye a lee?"

"No, never," answered Peter. "What gars ye speir sic a thing?"

"Cause I want ye to believe me noo, an' it winna be easy."

"I'll believe onything ye tell me – 'at can be believed."

"Weel, I ha'e come to the knowledge 'at my name's no MacPhail: it's Colonsay. Man, I'm the Markis o' Lossie."

Without a moment's hesitation, without a single stare of unbelief or even astonishment, Blue Peter pulled off his bonnet, and stood bareheaded before the companion of his toils.

"Peter!" cried Malcolm, "dinna brak my hert: put on yer bonnet."

"The Lord o' lords be thankit, my lord!" said Blue Peter: "the puir man has a freen' this day."

Then replacing his bonnet he said – "An' what'll be yer

lordship's wull?"

"First and foremost, Peter, that my best freen', efter my auld daddy and the schulemaister, 's no to turn again' me 'cause I hed a markis an' neither piper nor fisher to my father."

"It's no like it, my lord," returned Blue Peter, "whan the first thing I say is – what wad ye ha'e o' me? Here I am – no speirin' a queston!"

"Weel, I wad ha'e ye hear the story o' 't a'."

"Say on, my lord," said Peter.

But Malcolm was silent for a few moments.

"I was thinkin', Peter," he said at last, "whether I cud bide to hear you say my lord to me. Dootless, as it 'll ha'e to come to that, it wad be better to grow used till 't while we're thegither, sae 'at whan it maun be, it mayna ha'e the luik o' cheenge until it, for cheenge is jist the thing I canna bide. I' the meantime, hooever, we canna gi'e in till 't, 'cause it wad set fowk jaloosin'. But I wad be obleeged till ye, Peter, gien you wad say my lord whiles, whan we're oor lanes, for I wad fain grow sae used till't 'at I never kent ye said it, for 'atween you an' me I dinna like it. An' noo I s' tell ye a' 'at I ken."

When he had ended the tale of what had come to his knowledge, and how it had come, and paused:

"Gie's a grup o' yer han', my lord," said Blue Peter, "an' may God haud ye lang in life an' honour to reule ower us. Noo, gien ye please, what are ye gauin' to du?"

"Tell ye me, Peter, what ye think I oucht to du."

"That wad tak a heap o' thinkin'," returned the fisherman; "but ae thing seems aboot plain: ye ha'e no richt to lat yer sister gang exposed to temptations ye cud haud frae her. That's no, as ye promised, to be kin' till her. I canna believe that's hoo yer father expeckit o' ye. I ken weel 'at fowk in his poseetion ha'ena the preevileeges o' the like o' hiz – they ha'ena the win, an' the watter, an' whiles a lee shore to gar them know they are but men, an' sen' them rattling at the wicket of h'aven; but still I dinna think, by yer ain accoont, specially noo 'at I houp he's forgi'en an' latten in – God grant it! – I div not think he wad like my leddy Florimel to be oon'er the influences o' sic a ane as that Leddy Bellair. Ye maun gang till her. Ye ha'e nae ch'ice, my lord."

"But what am I to do, whan I div gang?"

"That's what ye hev to gang an' see."

"An' that's what I ha'e been tellin' mysel', an' what Miss Horn's been tellin' me tu. But it's a gran' thing to get yer ain thouchts corroborat. Ye see I'm feart for wrangin' her for pride, and bringin' her doon to set mysel' up."

"My lord," said Blue Peter, solemnly, "ye ken the life o' puir fisher fowk; ye ken hoo it micht be lichtened, sae lang as it laists, an' mony a hole steikit 'at the cauld deith creeps in at the noo: coont ye them naething, my lord? Coont ye the wull o' Providence, 'at sets ye ower them, naething? What for could the Lord ha'e gie ye sic an upbringin' as no markis' son ever hed afore ye, or maybe ever wull ha'e efter ye, gien it bena 'at ye sud tak them in han' to du yer pairt by them? Gien ye forsak them

noo, ye'll be forgettin' him 'at made them an' you, an' the sea, an' the herrin' to be taen intil 't. Gien ye forget them, there's nae houp for them, but the same deith 'ill keep on swallowin' at them upo' sea an' shore."

"Ye speyk the trowth as I ha'e spoken't till mysel', Peter. Noo, hearken: will ye sail wi' me the nicht for Lon'on toon?" The fisherman was silent a moment – then answered, "I wull, my lord; but I maun tell my wife."

"Rin, an' fess her here than, for I'm fleyed at yer sister, honest wuman, an' little Phemy. It wad blaud a' thing gien I was hurried to du something afore I kenned what."

"I s' ha'e her oot in a meenute," said Joseph, and scrambled up the cliff.

CHAPTER VIII:
VOYAGE TO LONDON

For a few minutes Malcolm stood alone in the dim starlight of winter, looking out on the dusky sea, dark as his own future, into which the wind now blowing behind him would soon begin to carry him. He anticipated its difficulties, but never thought of perils: it was seldom anything oppressed him but the doubt of what he ought to do. This was ever the cold mist that swallowed the airy castles he built and peopled with all the friends and acquaintances of his youth. But the very first step towards action is the death warrant of doubt, and the tide of Malcolm's being ran higher that night, as he stood thus alone under the stars, than he had ever yet known it run. With all his common sense, and the abundance of his philosophy, which the much leisure belonging to certain phases of his life had combined with the slow strength of his intellect to render somewhat long winded in utterance, there was yet room in Malcolm's bonnet for a bee above the ordinary size, and if it buzzed a little too romantically for the taste of the nineteenth century, about disguises and surprises and bounty and plots and rescues and such like, something must be pardoned to one whose experience had already been so greatly out of the common, and whose nature was far too childlike and poetic, and developed in far too simple a surrounding of labour

and success, difficulty and conquest, danger and deliverance, not to have more than the usual amount of what is called the romantic in its composition.

The buzzing of his bee was for the present interrupted by the return of Blue Peter with his wife. She threw her arms round Malcolm's neck, and burst into tears.

"Hoots, my woman!" said her husband, "what are ye greitin' at?"

"Eh, Peter!" she answered, "I canna help it. It's jist like a deith. He's gauin' to lea' us a', an' gang hame till 's ain, an' I canna bide 'at he sud grow strange-like to hiz 'at ha'e kenned him sae lang."

"It'll be an ill day," returned Malcolm, "whan I grow strange to ony freen'. I'll ha'e to gang far down the laich (low) ro'd afore that be poassible. I mayna aye be able to du jist what ye wad like; but lippen ye to me: I s' be fair to ye. An' noo I want Blue Peter to gang wi' me, an' help me to what I ha'e to du – gien ye ha'e nae objection to lat him."

"Na, nane ha'e I. I wad gang mysel' gien I cud be ony use," answered Mrs Mair; "but women are i' the gait whiles."

"Weel, I'll no even say thank ye; I'll be awin' ye that as weel's the lave. But gien I dinna du weel, it winna be the fau't o' ane or the ither o' you twa freen's. Noo, Peter, we maun be aff."

"No the nicht, surely?" said Mrs Mair, a little taken by surprise.

"The suner the better, lass," replied her husband. "An' we cudna ha'e a better win'. Jist rin ye hame, an' get some vicktooals

thegither, an' come efter hiz to Portlossie."

"But hoo 'ill ye get the boat to the watter ohn mair han's? I'll need to come mysel' an' fess Jean."

"Na, na; let Jean sit. There's plenty i' the Seaton to help. We're gauin' to tak' the markis's cutter. She's a heap easier to lainch, an' she'll sail a heap fester."

"But what'll Maister Crathie say?"

"We maun tak' oor chance o' that," answered her husband, with a smile of confidence; and thereupon he and Malcolm set out for the Seaton, while Mrs Mair went home to get ready some provisions for the voyage, consisting chiefly of oatcakes.

The prejudice against Malcolm from his imagined behaviour to Lizzy Findlay, had by this time, partly through the assurances of Peter, partly through the power of the youth's innocent presence, almost died out, and when the two men reached the Seaton, they found plenty of hands ready to help them to reach the little sloop. Malcolm said he was going to take her to Peterhead, and they asked no questions but such as he contrived to answer with truth, or to leave unanswered. Once afloat, there was very little to be done to her, for she had been laid up in perfect condition, and as soon as Mrs Mair appeared with her basket, and they had put that, a keg of water, some fishing lines, and a pan of mussels for bait, on board, they were ready to sail, and wished their friends a light goodbye, leaving them to imagine they were gone but for a day or two, probably on some business of Mr Crathie's.

With the wind from the northwest, they soon reached Duff Harbour, where Malcolm went on shore and saw Mr Soutar. He, with a landsman's prejudice, made strenuous objections to such a mad prank as sailing to London at that time of the year, but in vain. Malcolm saw nothing mad in it, and the lawyer had to admit he ought to know best. He brought on board with him a lad of Peter's acquaintance, and now fully manned, they set sail again, and by the time the sun appeared were not far from Peterhead.

Malcolm's spirits kept rising as they bowled along over the bright cold waters. He never felt so capable as when at sea. His energies had been first called out in combat with the elements, and hence he always felt strongest, most at home, and surest of himself on the water. Young as he was, however, such had been his training under Mr Graham, that a large part of this elevation of spirit was owing to an unreasoned sense of being there more immediately in the hands of God. Later in life, he interpreted the mental condition thus – that of course he was always and in every place equally in God's hands, but that at sea he felt the truth more keenly. Where a man has nothing firm under him, where his life depends on winds invisible and waters unstable, where a single movement may be death, he learns to feel what is at the same time just as true every night he spends asleep in the bed in which generations have slept before him, or any sunny hour he spends walking over ancestral acres.

They put in at Peterhead, purchased a few provisions, and again set sail.

And now it seemed to Malcolm that he must soon come to a conclusion as to the steps he must take when he reached London. But think as he would, he could plan nothing beyond finding out where his sister lived, going to look at the house, and getting into it if he might. Nor could his companion help him with any suggestions, and indeed he could not talk much with him because of the presence of Davy, a rough, round eyed, red haired young Scot, of the dull invaluable class that can only do what they are told, but do that to the extent of their faculty.

They knew all the coast as far as the Frith of Forth; after that they had to be more careful. They had no charts on board, nor could have made much use of any. But the wind continued favourable, and the weather cold, bright, and full of life. They spoke many coasters on their way, and received many directions.

Off the Nore they had rough weather, and had to stand off and on for a day and a night till it moderated. Then they spoke a fishing boat, took a pilot on board, and were soon in smooth water. More and more they wondered as the channel narrowed, and ended their voyage at length below London Bridge, in a very jungle of masts.

CHAPTER IX: LONDON STREETS

Leaving Davy to keep the sloop, the two fishermen went on shore. Passing from the narrow precincts of the river, they found themselves at once in the roar of London city. Stunned at first, then excited, then bewildered, then dazed, without plan to guide their steps, they wandered about until, unused to the hard stones, their feet ached. It was a dull day in March. A keen wind blew round the corners of the streets. They wished themselves at sea again.

"Sic a sicht o' fowk!" said Blue Peter.

"It's hard to think," rejoined Malcolm, "what w'y the God 'at made them can luik efter them a' in sic a tumult. But they say even the sheep dog kens ilk sheep i' the flock 'at 's gien him in chairge."

"Ay, but ye see," said Blue Peter, "they're mair like a shoal o' herrin' nor a flock o' sheep."

"It's no the num'er o' them 'at plagues me," said Malcolm. "The gran' diffeeculty is hoo He can lat ilk ane tak' his ain gait an' yet luik efter them a'. But gien He does't, it stan's to rizzon it maun be in some w'y 'at them 'at's sae luikit efter canna by ony possibeelity un'erstan'."

"That's trowth, I'm thinkin'. We maun jist gi'e up an' confess there's things abune a' human comprehension."

"Wha kens but that maybe 'cause i' their verra natur' they're

ower semple for cr'aturs like hiz 'at's made sae mixed-like, an' see sae little intill the hert o' things?"

"Ye're ayont me there," said Blue Peter, and a silence followed.

It was a conversation very unsuitable to London Streets – but then these were raw Scotch fisherman, who had not yet learned how absurd it is to suppose ourselves come from anything greater than ourselves, and had no conception of the liberty it confers on a man to know that he is the child of a protoplasm, or something still more beautifully small.

At length a policeman directed them to a Scotch eating house, where they fared after their country's fashions, and from the landlady gathered directions by which to guide themselves towards Curzon Street, a certain number in which Mr Soutar had given Malcolm as Lady Bellair's address.

The door was opened to Malcolm's knock by a slatternly charwoman, who, unable to understand a word he said, would, but for its fine frank expression, have shut the door in his face. From the expression of hers, however, Malcolm suddenly remembered that he must speak English, and having a plentiful store of the book sort, he at once made himself intelligible in spite of tone and accent. It was, however, only a shifting of the difficulty, for he now found it nearly impossible to understand her. But by repeated questioning and hard listening he learnt at last that Lady Bellair had removed her establishment to Lady Lossie's house in Portland Place.

After many curious perplexities, odd blunders, and vain endeavours to understand shop signs and notices in the windows; after they had again and again imagined themselves back at a place they had left miles away; after many a useless effort to lay hold of directions given so rapidly that the very sense could not gather the sounds, they at length stood – not in Portland Place, but in front of Westminster Abbey. Inquiring what it was, and finding they could go in, they entered.

For some moments not a word was spoken between them, but when they had walked slowly halfway up the nave Malcolm turned and said, "Eh, Peter! sic a blessin'!" and Peter replied, "There canna be muckle o' this i' the warl'!"

Comparing impressions afterwards, Peter said that the moment he stepped in, he heard the rush of the tide on the rocks of Scaurnose; and Malcolm declared he felt as if he had stepped out of the world into the regions of eternal silence.

"What a mercy it maun be," he went on, "to mony a cratur', in sic a whummle an' a rum'le an' a remish as this Lon'on, to ken 'at there is sic a cave howkit oot o' the din, 'at he can gang intill an' say his prayers intill! Man, Peter! I'm jist some feared whiles 'at the verra din i' my lugs mayna 'maist drive the thoucht o' God oot o' me."

At length they found their way into Regent Street, and leaving its mean assertion behind, reached the stately modesty of Portland Place; and Malcolm was pleased to think the house he sought was one of those he now saw.

It was one of the largest in the Place. He would not, however, yield to the temptation to have a good look at it, for fear of attracting attention from its windows and being recognised. They turned therefore aside into some of the smaller thoroughfares lying between Portland Place and Great Portland Street, where searching about, they came upon a decent looking public house and inquired after lodgings. They were directed to a woman in the neighbourhood, who kept a dingy little curiosity shop. On payment of a week's rent in advance, she allowed them a small bedroom. But Malcolm did not want Peter with him that night; he wished to be perfectly free; and besides it was more than desirable that Peter should go and look after the boat and the boy.

Left alone he fell once more to his hitherto futile scheming: How was he to get near his sister? To the whitest of lies he had insuperable objection, and if he appeared before her with no reason to give, would she not be far too offended with his presumption to retain him in her service? And except he could be near her as her servant, he did not see a chance of doing anything for her without disclosing facts which might make all such service as he would most gladly render her impossible, by causing her to hate the very sight of him. Plan after plan rose and passed from his mind rejected, and the only resolution he could come to was to write to Mr Soutar, to whom he had committed the protection of Kelpie, to send her up by the first smack from Aberdeen. He did so, and wrote also to Miss Horn, telling her where he was, then went out, and made his way back to Portland Place.

Night had closed in, and thick vapours hid the moon, but lamps and lighted windows illuminated the wide street. Presently it began to snow. But through the snow and the night went carriages in all directions, with great lamps that turned the flakes into white stars for a moment as they gleamed past. The hoofs of the horses echoed hard from the firm road.

Could that house really belong to him? It did, yet he dared not enter it. That which was dear and precious to him was in the house, and just because of that he could not call it his own. There was less light in it than in any other within his range. He walked up and down the opposite side of the street its whole length some fifty times, but saw no sign of vitality about the house. At length a brougham stopped at the door, and a man got out and knocked. Malcolm instantly crossed, but could not see his face. The door opened, and he entered. The brougham waited. After about a quarter of an hour he came out again, accompanied by two ladies, one of whom he judged by her figure to be Florimel. They all got into the carriage, and Malcolm braced himself for a terrible run. But the coachman drove carefully, the snow lay a few inches deep, and he found no difficulty in keeping near them, following with fleet foot and husbanded breath.

They stopped at the doors of a large dark looking building in a narrow street He thought it was a church, and wondered that so his sister should be going there on a week night. Nor did the aspect of the entrance hall, into which he followed them, undeceive him. It was more showy, certainly, than the vestibule

of any church he had ever been in before, but what might not churches be in London? They went up a great flight of stairs – to reach the gallery, as he thought, and still he went after them. When he reached the top, they were just vanishing round a curve, and his advance was checked: a man came up to him, said he could not come there, and gruffly requested him to show his ticket.

"I haven't got one. What is this place?" said Malcolm, whom the aspect of the man had suddenly rendered doubtful, mouthing his English with Scotch deliberation. The man gave him a look of contemptuous surprise, and turning to another who lounged behind him with his hands in his pockets, said – "Tom, here's a gentleman as wants to know where he is: can you tell him?" The person addressed laughed, and gave Malcolm a queer look.

"Every cock crows on his own midden," said Malcolm, "but if I were on mine, I would try to be civil."

"You go down there, and pay for a pit ticket, and you'll soon know where you are, mate," said Tom.

He obeyed, and after a few inquiries, and the outlay of two shillings, found himself in the pit of one of the largest of the London theatres.

CHAPTER X: THE TEMPEST

The play was begun, and the stage was the centre of light. Thither Malcolm's eyes were drawn the instant he entered. He was all but unaware of the multitude of faces about him, and his attention was at once fascinated by the lovely show revealed in soft radiance. But surely he had seen the vision before! One long moment its effect upon him was as real as if he had been actually deceived as to its nature: was it not the shore between Scaurnose and Portlossie, betwixt the Boar's Tail and the sea? and was not that the marquis, his father, in his dressing gown, pacing to and fro upon the sands? He yielded himself to illusion – abandoned himself to the wonderful, and looked only for what would come next.

A lovely lady entered: to his excited fancy it was Florimel. A moment more and she spoke.

> If by your art, my dearest father, you have
> Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them.

Then first he understood that before him rose in wondrous realization the play of Shakspere he knew best – the first he had ever read: The Tempest, hitherto a lovely phantom for the mind's eye, now embodied to the enraptured sense. During the whole of the first act he never thought either of Miranda or Florimel apart.

At the same time so taken was he with the princely carriage and utterance of Ferdinand that, though with a sigh, he consented he should have his sister.

The drop scene had fallen for a minute or two before he began to look around him. A moment more and he had commenced a thorough search for his sister amongst the ladies in the boxes. But when at length he found her, he dared not fix his eyes upon her lest his gaze should make her look at him, and she should recognise him. Alas, her eyes might have rested on him twenty times without his face once rousing in her mind the thought of the fisher lad of Portlossie! All that had passed between them in the days already old was virtually forgotten.

By degrees he gathered courage, and soon began to feel that there was small chance indeed of her eyes alighting upon him for the briefest of moments. Then he looked more closely, and felt through rather than saw with his eyes that some sort of change had already passed upon her. It was Florimel, yet not the very Florimel he had known. Already something had begun to supplant the girl freedom that had formerly in every look and motion asserted itself. She was more beautiful, but not so lovely in his eyes; much of what had charmed him had vanished. She was more stately, but the stateliness had a little hardness mingled with it: and could it be that the first of a cloud had already gathered on her forehead? Surely she was not so happy as she had been at Lossie House. She was dressed in black, with a white flower in her hair.

Beside her sat the bold faced countess, and behind them her nephew, Lord Meikleham that was now Lord Liftore. A fierce indignation seized the heart of Malcolm at the sight. Behind the form of the earl, his mind's eye saw that of Lizzy, out in the wind on the Boar's Tail, her old shawl wrapped about herself and the child of the man who sat there so composed and comfortable. His features were fine and clear cut, his shoulders broad, and his head well set: he had much improved since Malcolm offered to fight him with one hand in the dining room of Lossie House. Every now and then he leaned forward between his aunt and Florimel, and spoke to the latter. To Malcolm's eyes she seemed to listen with some haughtiness. Now and then she cast him an indifferent glance. Malcolm was pleased: Lord Liftore was anything but the Ferdinand to whom he could consent to yield his Miranda. They would make a fine couple certainly, but for any other fitness, knowing what he did, Malcolm was glad to perceive none. The more annoyed was he when once or twice he fancied he caught a look between them that indicated more than acquaintanceship – some sort of intimacy at least. But he reflected that in the relation in which they stood to Lady Bellair it could hardly be otherwise.

The play was tolerably well put upon the stage, and free of the absurdities attendant upon too ambitious an endeavour to represent to the sense things which Shakspere and the dramatists of his period freely committed to their best and most powerful ally, the willing imagination of the spectators. The opening of the last scene, where Ferdinand and Miranda are discovered at

chess, was none the less effective for its simplicity, and Malcolm was turning from a delighted gaze at its loveliness to glance at his sister and her companions, when his eyes fell on a face near him in the pit which had fixed an absorbed regard in the same direction. It was that of a man a few years older than himself, with irregular features, but a fine mouth, large chin; and great forehead. Under the peculiarly prominent eyebrows shone dark eyes of wondrous brilliancy and seeming penetration. Malcolm could not but suspect that his gaze was upon his sister, but as they were a long way from the boxes, he could not be certain. Once he thought he saw her look at him, but of that also he could be in no wise certain.

He knew the play so well that he rose just in time to reach the pit door ere exit should be impeded with the outcomers, and thence with some difficulty he found his way to the foot of the stair up which those he watched had gone. There he had stood but a little while, when he saw in front of him, almost within reach of an outstretched hand, the same young man waiting also. After what seemed a long time, he saw his sister and her two companions come slowly down the stair in the descending crowd. Her eyes seemed searching amongst the multitude that filled the lobby. Presently an indubitable glance of still recognition passed between them, and by a slight movement the young man placed himself so that she must pass next him in the crowd. Malcolm got one place nearer in the change, and thought they grasped hands. She turned her head slightly back, and seemed

to put a question – with her lips only. He replied in the same manner. A light rushed into her face and vanished. But not a feature moved and not a word had been spoken. Neither of her companions had seen the dumb show, and her friend stood where he was till they had left the house. Malcolm stood also, much inclined to follow him when he went, but, his attention having been attracted for a moment in another direction, when he looked again he had disappeared. He sought him where he fancied he saw the movement of his vanishing, but was soon convinced of the uselessness of the attempt, and walked home.

Before he reached his lodging, he had resolved on making trial of a plan which had more than once occurred to him, but had as often been rejected as too full of the risk of repulse.

CHAPTER XI: DEMON AND THE PIPES

His plan was to watch the house until he saw some entertainment going on, then present himself as if he had but just arrived from her ladyship's country seat. At such a time no one would acquaint her with his appearance, and he would, as if it were but a matter of course, at once take his share in waiting on the guests. By this means he might perhaps get her a little accustomed to his presence before she could be at leisure to challenge it.

When he put Kelpie in her stall the last time for a season, and ran into the house to get his plaid for Lizzy, who was waiting him near the tunnel, he bethought himself that he had better take with him also what other of his personal requirements he could carry. He looked about therefore, and finding a large carpet bag in one of the garret rooms, hurried into it some of his clothes – amongst them the Highland dress he had worn as henchman to the marquis, and added the great Lossie pipes his father had given to old Duncan as well, but which the piper had not taken with him when he left Lossie House. The said Highland dress he now resolved to put on, as that in which latterly Florimel had been most used to see him: in it he would watch his opportunity of gaining admission to the house.

The next morning Blue Peter made his appearance early. They went out together, spent the day in sightseeing, and, on Malcolm's part chiefly, in learning the topography of London.

In Hyde Park Malcolm told his friend that he had sent for Kelpie.

"She'll be the deid o' ye i' thae streets, as fu' o' wheels as the sea o' fish: twize I've been 'maist gr'un to poother o' my ro'd here," said Peter.

"Ay, but ye see, oot here amo' the gentry it's no freely sae ill, an' the ro'ds are no a' stane; an' here, ye see, 's the place whaur they come, leddies an' a', to ha'e their rides thegither. What I'm fleyt for is 'at she'll be brackin' legs wi' her deevilich kickin'."

"Haud her upo' dry strae an' watter for a whilie, till her banes begin to cry oot for something to hap them frae the cauld: that'll quaiet her a bit," said Peter.

"It's a' ye ken!" returned Malcolm. "She's aye the wau natur'd, the less she has to ate. Na, na; she maun be weel lined. The deevil in her maun lie warm, or she'll be neither to haud nor bin'. There's nae doobt she's waur to haud in whan she's in guid condeetion; but she's nane sae like to tak' a body by the sma' o' the back, an' shak the inside oot o' 'im, as she maist did ae day to the herd laddie at the ferm, only he had an auld girth aboot the mids o' 'im for a belt, an' he tuik the less scaith."

"Cudna we gang an' see the maister the day?" said Blue Peter, changing the subject.

He meant Mr Graham, the late schoolmaster of Portlossie,

whom the charge of heretical teaching had driven from the place.

"We canna weel du that till we hear whaur he is. The last time Miss Horn h'ard frae him, he was changin' his lodgin's, an' ye see the kin' o' a place this Lon'on is," answered Malcolm.

As soon as Peter was gone, to return to the boat, Malcolm dressed himself in his kilt and its belongings, and when it was fairly dusk, took his pipes under his arm, and set out for Portland Place. He had the better hope of speedy success to his plan, that he fancied he had read on his sister's lips, in the silent communication that passed between her and her friend in the crowd, the words come and tomorrow. It might have been the merest imagination, yet it was something: how often have we not to be grateful for shadows! Up and down the street he walked a long time, without seeing a sign of life about the house. But at length the hall was lighted. Then the door opened, and a servant rolled out a carpet over the wide pavement, which the snow had left wet and miry – a signal for the street children, ever on the outlook for sights, to gather. Before the first carriage arrived, there was already a little crowd of humble watchers and waiters about the gutter and curb stone. But they were not destined to much amusement that evening, the visitors amounting only to a small dinner party. Still they had the pleasure of seeing a few grand ladies issue from their carriages, cross the stage of their Epiphany, the pavement, and vanish in the paradise of the shining hall, with its ascent of gorgeous stairs. No broken steps, no missing balusters there! And they have the show all

for nothing! It is one of the perquisites of street service. What one would give to see the shapes glide over the field of those camerae obscurae, the hearts of the street Arabs! once to gaze on the jewelled beauties through the eyes of those shocked haired girls! I fancy they do not often begrudge them what they possess, except perhaps when feature or hair or motion chances to remind them of some one of their own people, and they feel wronged and indignant that size should flaunt in such splendour, "when our Sally would set off grand clothes so much better!" It is neither the wealth nor the general consequence it confers that they envy, but, as I imagine, the power of making a show – of living in the eyes and knowledge of neighbours for a few radiant moments: nothing is so pleasant to ordinary human nature as to know itself by its reflection from others. When it turns from these warped and broken mirrors to seek its reflection in the divine thought, then it is redeemed; then it beholds itself in the perfect law of liberty.

Before he became himself an object of curious interest to the crowd he was watching, Malcolm had come to the same conclusion with many a philosopher and observer of humanity before him – that on the whole the rags are inhabited by the easier hearts; and he would have arrived at the conclusion with more certainty but for the high training that cuts off intercourse between heart and face.

When some time had elapsed, and no more carriages appeared, Malcolm, judging the dinner must now be in full

vortex, rang the bell of the front door. It was opened by a huge footman, whose head was so small in proportion that his body seemed to have absorbed it. Malcolm would have stepped in at once, and told what of his tale he chose at his leisure; but the servant, who had never seen the dress Malcolm wore, except on street beggars, with the instinct his class shares with watchdogs, quickly closed the door. Ere it reached the post, however, it found Malcolm's foot between.

"Go along, Scotchy. You're not wanted here," said the man, pushing the door hard. "Police is round the corner."

Now one of the weaknesses Malcolm owed to his Celtic blood was an utter impatience of rudeness. In his own nature entirely courteous, he was wrathful even to absurdity at the slightest suspicion of insult. But that, in part through the influence of Mr Graham, the schoolmaster, he had learned to keep a firm hold on the reins of action, this foolish feeling would not unfrequently have hurried him into conduct undignified. On the present occasion, I fear the main part of his answer, but for the shield of the door, would have been a blow to fell a bigger man than the one that now glared at him through the shoe broad opening. As it was, his words were fierce with suppressed wrath.

"Open the door, an' lat me in," was, however, all he said.

"What's your business?" asked the man, on whom his tone had its effect.

"My business is with my Lady Lossie," said Malcolm, recovering his English, which was one step towards mastering, if

not recovering, his temper.

"You can't see her. She's at dinner."

"Let me in, and I'll wait. I come from Lossie House."

"Take away your foot and I'll go and see," said the man.

"No. You open the door," returned Malcolm.

The man's answer was an attempt to kick his foot out of the doorway. If he were to let in a tramp, what would the butler say?

But thereupon Malcolm set his port vent to his mouth, rapidly filled his bag, while the man stared as if it were a petard with which he was about to blow the door to shivers, and then sent from the instrument such a shriek, as it galloped off into the Lossie Gathering, that involuntarily his adversary pressed both hands to his ears. With a sudden application of his knee Malcolm sent the door wide, and entered the hall, with his pipes in full cry. The house resounded with their yell – but only for one moment. For down the stair, like bolt from catapult, came Demon, Florimel's huge Irish staghound, and springing on Malcolm, put an instant end to his music. The footman laughed with exultation, expecting to see him torn to pieces. But when instead he saw the fierce animal, a foot on each of his shoulders, licking Malcolm's face with long fiery tongue, he began to doubt.

"The dog knows you," he said sulkily.

"So shall you, before long," returned Malcolm. "Was it my fault that I made the mistake of looking for civility from you? One word to the dog, and he has you by the throat."

"I'll go and fetch Wallis," said the man, and closing the door,

left the hall.

Now this Wallis had been a fellow servant of Malcolm's at Lossie House, but he did not know that he had gone with Lady Bellair when she took Florimel away: almost everyone had left at the same time. He was now glad indeed to learn that there was one amongst the servants who knew him.

Wallis presently made his appearance, with a dish in his hands, on his way to the dining room, from which came the confused noises of the feast.

"You'll be come up to wait on Lady Lossie," he said. "I haven't a moment to speak to you now, for we're at dinner, and there's a party."

"Never mind me. Give me that dish; I'll take it in: you can go for another," said Malcolm, laying his pipes in a safe spot.

"You can't go into the dining room that figure," said Wallis, who was in the Bellair livery.

"This is how I waited on my lord," returned Malcolm, "and this is how I'll wait on my lady."

Wallis hesitated. But there was that about the fisher fellow was too much for him. As he spoke, Malcolm took the dish from his hands, and with it walked into the dining room.

There one reconnoitring glance was sufficient. The butler was at the sideboard opening a champagne bottle. He had cut wire and strings, and had his hand on the cork as Malcolm walked up to him. It was a critical moment, yet he stopped in the very article, and stared at the apparition.

"I'm Lady Lossie's man from Lossie House. I'll help you to wait," said Malcolm.

To the eyes of the butler he looked a savage. But there he was in the room with the dish in his hands, and speaking at least intelligibly; the cork of the champagne bottle was pushing hard against his palm, and he had no time to question. He peeped into Malcolm's dish.

"Take it round, then," he said. So Malcolm settled into the business of the hour.

It was some time, after he knew where she was, before he ventured to look at his sister: he would have her already familiarised with his presence before their eyes met. That crisis did not arrive during dinner.

Lord Liftore was one of the company, and so, to Malcolm's pleasure, for he felt in him an ally against the earl, was Florimel's mysterious friend.

CHAPTER XII: A NEW LIVERY

Scarcely had the ladies gone to the drawing room, when Florimel's maid, who knew Malcolm, came in quest of him. Lady Lossie desired to see him.

"What is the meaning of this, MacPhail?" she said, when he entered the room where she sat alone. "I did not send for you. Indeed, I thought you had been dismissed with the rest of the servants."

How differently she spoke! And she used to call him Malcolm! The girl Florimel was gone, and there sat – the marchioness, was it? – or some phase of riper womanhood only? It mattered little to Malcolm. He was no curious student of man or woman. He loved his kind too well to study it. But one thing seemed plain: she had forgotten the half friendship and whole service that had had place betwixt them, and it made him feel as if the soul of man no less than his life were but as a vapour that appeareth for a little and then vanisheth away.

But Florimel had not so entirely forgotten the past as Malcolm thought – not so entirely at least but that his appearance, and certain difficulties in which she had begun to find herself, brought something of it again to her mind.

"I thought," said Malcolm, assuming his best English, "your ladyship might not choose to part with an old servant at the will of a factor, and so took upon me to appeal to your ladyship to

decide the question."

"But how is that? Did you not return to your fishing when the household was broken up?"

"No, my lady. Mr Crathie kept me to help Stoat, and do odd jobs about the place."

"And now he wants to discharge you?"

Then Malcolm told her the whole story, in which he gave such a description of Kelpie, that her owner, as she imagined herself, expressed a strong wish to see her; for Florimel was almost passionately fond of horses.

"You may soon do that, my lady," said Malcolm. "Mr Soutar, not being of the same mind as Mr Crathie, is going to send her up. It will be but the cost of the passage from Aberdeen, and she will fetch a better price here if your ladyship should resolve to part with her. She won't fetch the third of her value anywhere, though, on account of her bad temper and ugly tricks."

"But as to yourself, MacPhail – where are you going to go?" said Florimel. "I don't like to send you away, but, if I keep you, I don't know what to do with you. No doubt you could serve in the house, but that would not be suitable at all to your education and previous life."

"A body wad tak' you for a granny grown!" said Malcolm to himself. But to Florimel he replied – "If your ladyship should wish to keep Kelpie, you will have to keep me too, for not a creature else will she let near her."

"And pray tell me what use then can I make of such an

animal," said Florimel.

"Your ladyship, I should imagine, will want a groom to attend you when you are out on horseback, and the groom will want a horse – and here am I and Kelpie!" answered Malcolm.

Florimel laughed.

"I see," she said. "You contrive I shall have a horse nobody can manage but yourself."

She rather liked the idea of a groom so mounted, and had too much well justified faith in Malcolm to anticipate dangerous results.

"My lady," said Malcolm, appealing to her knowledge of his character to secure credit, for he was about to use his last means of persuasion, and as he spoke, in his eagerness he relapsed into his mother tongue, – "My lady, did I ever tell ye a lee?"

"Certainly not, Malcolm, so far as I know. Indeed I am sure you never did," answered Florimel, looking up at him in a dominant yet kindly way.

"Then," continued Malcolm, "I'll tell your ladyship something you may find hard to believe, and yet is as true as that I loved your ladyship's father. – Your ladyship knows he had a kindness for me."

"I do know it," answered Florimel gently, moved by the tone of Malcolm's voice, and the expression of his countenance.

"Then I make bold to tell your ladyship that on his deathbed your father desired me to do my best for you – took my word that I would be your ladyship's true servant."

"Is it so, indeed, Malcolm?" returned Florimel, with a serious wonder in her tone, and looked him in the face with an earnest gaze. She had loved her father, and it sounded in her ears almost like a message from the tomb.

"It's as true as I stan' here, my leddy," said Malcolm.

Florimel was silent for a moment. Then she said, "How is it that only now you come to tell me?"

"Your father never desired me to tell you, my lady – only he never imagined you would want to part with me, I suppose. But when you did not care to keep me, and never said a word to me when you went away, I could not tell how to do as I had promised him. It wasn't that one hour I forgot his wish, but that I feared to presume; for if I should displease your ladyship my chance was gone. So I kept about Lossie House as long as I could, hoping to see my way to some plan or other. But when at length Mr Crathie turned me away, what was I to do but come to your ladyship? And if your ladyship will let things be as before in the way of service, I mean – I canna doot, my leddy, but it'll be pleesant i' the sicht o' yer father, whanever he may come to ken o' 't, my lady."

Florimel gave him a strange, half startled look. Hardly more than once since her father's funeral had she heard him alluded to, and now this fisher lad spoke of him as if he were still at Lossie House.

Malcolm understood the look.

"Ye mean, my leddy – I ken what ye mean," he said. "I canna help it. For to lo'e onything is to ken't immortal. He's livin' to

me, my lady."

Florimel continued staring, and still said nothing.

I sometimes think that the present belief in mortality is nothing but the almost universal although unsuspected unbelief in immortality grown vocal and articulate.

But Malcolm gathered courage and went on,

"An' what for no, my leddy?" he said, floundering no more in attempted English, but soaring on the clumsy wings of his mother dialect. "Didna he turn his face to the licht afore he dee'd? an' him 'at rase frae the deid said 'at whaever believed in him sud never dee. Sae we maun believe 'at he's livin', for gien we dinna believe what he says, what are we to believe, my leddy?"

Florimel continued yet a moment looking him fixedly in the face. The thought did arise that perhaps he had lost his reason, but she could not look at him thus and even imagine it. She remembered how strange he had always been, and for a moment had a glimmering idea that in this young man's friendship she possessed an incorruptible treasure. The calm, truthful, believing, almost for the moment enthusiastic, expression of the young fisherman's face wrought upon her with a strangely quieting influence. It was as if one spoke to her out of a region of existence of which she had never even heard, but in whose reality she was compelled to believe because of the sound of the voice that came from it.

Malcolm seldom made the mistake of stamping into the earth any seeds of truth he might cast on it: he knew when to say no

more, and for a time neither spoke. But now for all the coolness of her upper crust, Lady Florimel's heart glowed – not indeed with the power of the shining truth Malcolm had uttered, but with the light of gladness in the possession of such a strong, devoted, disinterested squire.

"I wish you to understand," she said at length, "that I am not at present mistress of this house, although it belongs to me. I am but the guest of Lady Bellair who has rented it of my guardians. I cannot therefore arrange for you to be here. But you can find accommodation in the neighbourhood, and come to me every day for orders. Let me know when your mare arrives: I shall not want you till then. You will find room for her in the stables. You had better consult the butler about your groom's livery."

Malcolm was astonished at the womanly sufficiency with which she gave her orders. He left her with the gladness of one who has had his righteous desire, held consultation with the butler on the matter of the livery, and went home to his lodging. There he sat down and meditated.

A strange new yearning pity rose in his heart as he thought about his sister and the sad facts of her lonely condition. He feared much that her stately composure was built mainly on her imagined position in society, and was not the outcome of her character. Would it be cruelty to destroy that false foundation, hardly the more false as a foundation for composure that beneath it lay a mistake? – or was it not rather a justice which her deeper and truer self had a right to demand of him? At present, however,

he need not attempt to answer the question. Communication even such as a trusted groom might have with her, and familiarity with her surroundings, would probably reveal much. Meantime it was enough that he would now be so near her that no important change of which others might be aware, could well approach her without his knowledge, or anything take place without his being able to interfere if necessary.

CHAPTER XIII: TWO CONVERSATIONS

The next day Wallis came to see Malcolm and take him to the tailor's. They talked about the guests of the previous evening.

"There's a great change on Lord Meikleham," said Malcolm.

"There is that," said Wallis. "I consider him much improved. But you see he's succeeded; he's the earl now, and Lord Liftore – and a menseful, broad shouldered man to the boot of the bargain. He used to be such a windle straw!"

In order to speak good English, Wallis now and then, like some Scotch people of better education, anglicized a word ludicrously.

"Is there no news of his marriage?" asked Malcolm, adding, "they say he has great property."

"My love she's but a lassie yet," said Wallis, "– though she too has changed quite as much as my lord."

"Who are you speaking of?" asked Malcolm, anxious to hear the talk of the household on the matter.

"Why, Lady Lossie, of course. Anybody with half an eye can see as much as that."

"Is it settled then?"

"That would be hard to say. Her ladyship is too like her father: no one can tell what may be her mind the next minute. But, as I say, she's young, and ought to have her fling first – so far, that

is, as we can permit it to a woman of her rank. Still, as I say, anybody with half an eye can see the end of it all: he's for ever hovering about her. My lady, too, has set her mind on it, and for my part I can't see what better she can do. I must say I approve of the match. I can see no possible objection to it."

"We used to think he drank too much," suggested Malcolm.

"Claret," said Wallis, in a tone that seemed to imply no one could drink too much of that.

"No, not claret only. I've seen the whisky follow the claret."

"Well, he don't now – not whisky at least. He don't drink too much – not much too much – not more than a gentleman should. He don't look like it – does he now? A good wife, such as my Lady Lossie will make him, will soon set him all right. I think of taking a similar protection myself, one of these days."

"He is not worthy of her," said Malcolm.

"Well, I confess his family won't compare with hers. There's a grandfather in it somewhere that was a banker or a brewer or a soap boiler, or something of the sort, and she and her people have been earls and marquises ever since they walked arm in arm out of the ark. But, bless you! all that's been changed since I came to town. So long as there's plenty of money and the mind to spend it, we have learned not to be exclusive. It's selfish that. It's not Christian. Everything lies in the mind to spend it though. Mrs Tredger – that's our lady's maid – only this is a secret – says it's all settled – she knows it for certain fact – only there's nothing to be said about it yet – she's so young, you know."

"Who was the man that sat nearly opposite my lady, on the other side of the table?" asked Malcolm.

"I know who you mean. Didn't look as if he'd got any business there – not like the rest of them, did he? No, they never do. Odd and end sort of people like he is, never do look the right thing – let them try ever so hard. How can they when they ain't it? That's a fellow that's painting Lady Lossie's portrait! Why he should be asked to dinner for that, I'm sure I can't tell. He ain't paid for it in victuals, is he? I never saw such land leapers let into Lossie House, I know! But London's an awful place. There's no such a thing as respect of persons here. Here you meet the butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker, any night in my lady's drawing room. I declare to you, Mawlcolm MacPhail, it makes me quite uncomfortable at times to think who I may have been waiting upon without knowing it. For that painter fellow, Lenorme they call him, I could knock him on the teeth with the dish every time I hold it to him. And to see him stare at Lady Lossie as he does!"

"A painter must want to get a right good hold of the face he's got to paint," said Malcolm. "Is he here often?"

"He's been here five or six times already," answered Wallis, "and how many times more I may have to fill his glass, I don't know. I always give him second best sherry, I know. I'm sure the time that pictur' 's been on hand! He ought to be ashamed of himself. If she's been once to his studio, she's been twenty times – to give him sittings as they call it. He's making a pretty penny of it, I'll be bound! I wonder he has the cheek to show himself

when my lady treats him so haughtily. But those sort of people have no proper feelin's, you see: it's not to be expected of such."

Wallis liked the sound of his own sentences, and a great deal more talk of similar character followed before they got back from the tailor's. Malcolm was tired enough of him, and never felt the difference between man and man more strongly than when, after leaving him, he set out for a walk with Blue Peter, whom he found waiting him at his lodging. On this same Blue Peter, however, Wallis would have looked down from the height of his share of the marquisate as one of the lower orders – ignorant, vulgar, even dirty.

They had already gazed together upon not a few of the marvels of London, but nothing had hitherto moved or drawn them so much as the ordinary flow of the currents of life through the huge city. Upon Malcolm, however, this had now begun to pall, while Peter already found it worse than irksome, and longed for Scaurnose. At the same time loyalty to Malcolm kept him from uttering a whisper of his homesickness. It was yet but the fourth day they had been in London.

"Eh, my lord!" said Blue Peter, when by chance they found themselves in the lull of a little quiet court, somewhere about Gray's Inn, with the roar of Holborn in their ears, "it's like a month sin' I was at the kirk. I'm feart the din's gotten into my heid, an' I'll never get it out again. I cud maist wuss I was a mackerel, for they tell me the fish hears naething. I ken weel noo what ye meant, my lord, whan ye said ye dreidit the din micht

gar ye forget yer Macker."

"I hae been wussin' sair mysel', this last twa days," responded Malcolm, "'at I cud get ae sicht o' the jaws clashin' upo' the Scaurnose, or rowin up upo' the edge o' the links. The din o' natur' never troubles the guid thouchts in ye. I reckon it's 'cause it's a kin' o' a harmony in 'tsel', an' a harmony's jist, as the maister used to say, a higher kin' o' a peace. Yon organ 'at we hearkent till ae day ootside the kirk, ye min' – man, it was a quaietness in 'tsel', and cam' throu' the din like a bonny silence – like a lull i' the win' o' this warl'! It wasna a din at a', but a gran' repose like. But this noise tumultuous o' human strife, this din' o' iron shune an' iron wheels, this whurr and whuzz o' buyin' an' sellin' an' gettin' gain – it disna help a body to their prayers."

"Eh, na, my lord! Jist think o' the preevilege – I never saw nor thoucht o' 't afore – o' haein' 't i' yer pooer, ony nicht 'at ye're no efter the fish, to stap oot at yer ain door, an' be in the mids o' the temple! Be 't licht or dark, be 't foul or fair, the sea sleepin' or ragin', ye ha'e aye room, an' naething atween ye an' the throne o' the Almichty, to the whilk yer prayers ken the gait, as weel 's the herrin' to the shores o' Scotlan': ye ha'e but to lat them flee, an' they gang straucht there. But here ye ha'e aye to luik sae gleg efter yer boady, 'at, as ye say, my lord, yer sowl's like to come aff the waur, gien it binna clean forgotten."

"I doobt there's something no richt aboot it, Peter," returned Malcolm.

"There maun be a heap no richt aboot it," answered Peter.

"Ay, but I'm no meanin' 't jist as ye du. I had the haill thing throu' my heid last nicht, an' I canna but think there's something wrang wi' a man gien he canna hear the word o' God as weel i' the mids o' a multitude no man can number, a' made ilk ane i' the image o' the Father – as weel, I say, as i' the hert o' win' an' watter an' the lift an' the starns an' a'. Ye canna say 'at thae things are a' made i' the image o' God, in the same w'y, at least, 'at ye can say 't o' the body an' face o' a man, for throu' them the God o' the whole earth revealed Himsel' in Christ."

"Ow, weel, I wad alloo what ye say, gien they war a' to be considered Christians."

"Ow, I grant we canna weel du that i' the full sense, but I doobt, gien they bena a' Christians 'at ca's themsel's that, there's a heap mair Christianity nor get's the credit o' its ain name. I min' weel hoo Maister Graham said to me ance 'at hoo there was something o' Him 'at made him luikin' oot o' the een o' ilka man 'at he had made; an' what wad ye ca' that but a scart or a straik o' Christianity."

"Weel, I kenna; but ony gait I canna think it can be again' the trowth o' the gospel to wuss yersel' mair alane wi' yer God nor ye ever can be in sic an awfu' Babylon o' a place as this."

"Na, na, Peter; I'm no sayin' that. I ken weel we're to gang intill the closet and shut to the door. I'm only afeart 'at there be something wrang in mysel' 'at tak's 't ill to be amon' sae mony neibors. I'm thinkin' 'at, gien a' was richt 'ithin me, gien I lo'ed my neibor as the Lord wad hae them 'at lo'ed Him lo'e ilk ane

his brither, I micht be better able to pray amang them – ay, i' the verra face o' the bargainin' an' leein' a' aboot me."

"An' min' ye," said Peter, pursuing the train of his own thoughts, and heedless of Malcolm's, "'at oor Lord himsel' bude whiles to win awa', even frae his dissiples, to be him lane wi' the Father o' 'im."

"Ay, ye're richt there, Peter," answered Malcolm, "but there's ae p'int in 't ye maunna forget – and that is 'at it was never i' the day-time – sae far's I min' – 'at he did sae. The lee lang day he was among 's fowk – workin' his michty wark. Whan the nicht cam', in which no man could wark, he gaed hame till 's Father, as 't war. Eh me! but it's weel to ha'e a man like the schuilmaister to put trowth intill ye. I kenna what comes o' them 'at ha'e drucken maisters, or sic as cares for naething but coontin' an Laitin, an' the likes o' that!"

CHAPTER XIV: FLORIMEL

That night Florimel had her thoughts as well as Malcolm. Already life was not what it had been to her, and the feeling of a difference is often what sets one a-thinking first. While her father lived, and the sureness of his love overarched her consciousness with a heaven of safety, the physical harmony of her nature had supplied her with a more than sufficient sense of well being. Since his death, too, there had been times when she even fancied an enlargement of life in the sense of freedom and power which came with the knowledge of being a great lady, possessed of the rare privilege of an ancient title and an inheritance which seemed to her a yet greater wealth than it was. But she had soon found that, as to freedom, she had less of that than before – less of the feeling of it within her: not much freedom of any sort is to be had without fighting for it, and she had yet to discover that the only freedom worth the name – that of heart, and soul, and mind – is not to be gained except through the hardest of battles. She was very lonely, too. Lady Bellair had never assumed with her any authority, and had always been kind even to petting, but there was nothing about her to make a home for the girl's heart. She felt in her no superiority, and for a spiritual home that is essential. As she learned to know her better, this sense of loneliness went on deepening, for she felt more and more that her guardian was not one in whom she could place genuine confidence, while yet her

power over her was greater than she knew. The innocent nature of the girl had begun to recoil from what she saw in the woman of the world, and yet she had in herself worldliness enough to render her fully susceptible of her influences. Notwithstanding her fine health and natural spirits, Florimel had begun to know what it is to wake suddenly of a morning between three and four, and lie for a long weary time, sleepless. In youth bodily fatigue ensures falling asleep, but as soon as the body is tolerably rested, if there be unrest in the mind, that wakes it, and consciousness returns in the shape of a dull misgiving like the far echo of the approaching trump of the archangel. Indeed, those hours are as a vestibule to the great hall of judgment, and to such as, without rendering it absolute obedience, yet care to keep on some sort of terms with their conscience, is a time of anything but comfort. Nor does the court in those hours sitting, concern itself only with heavy questions of right or wrong, but whoever loves and cares himself for his appearance before the eyes of men, finds himself accused of paltry follies, stupidities, and indiscretions, and punished with paltry mortifications, chagrins, and anxieties. From such arraignment no man is free but him who walks in the perfect law of liberty – that is, the will of the Perfect – which alone is peace.

On the morning after she had thus taken Malcolm again into her service, Florimel had one of these experiences – a foretaste of the Valley of the Shadow: she awoke in the hour when judgment sits upon the hearts of men. Or is it not rather the hour for which

a legion of gracious spirits are on the watch – when, fresh raised from the death of sleep, cleansed a little from the past and its evils by the gift of God, the heart and brain are most capable of their influences? – the hour when, besides, there is no refuge of external things wherein the man may shelter himself from the truths they would so gladly send conquering into the citadel of his nature, – no world of the senses to rampart the soul from thought, when the eye and the ear are as if they were not, and the soul lies naked before the infinite of reality. This live hour of the morning is the most real hour of the day, the hour of the motions of a prisoned and persecuted life, of its effort to break through and breathe. A good man then finds his refuge in the heart of the Purifying Fire; the bad man curses the swarms of Beelzebub that settle upon every sore spot in his conscious being.

But it was not the general sense of unfitness in the conditions of her life, neither was it dissatisfaction with Lady Bellair, or the want of the pressure of authority upon her unstable being; it was not the sense of loneliness and unshelteredness in the sterile waste of fashionable life, neither was it weariness with the same and its shows, or all these things together, that could have waked the youth of Florimel and kept it awake at this hour of the night – for night that hour is, however near the morning.

Some few weeks agone, she had accompanied to the study of a certain painter, a friend who was then sitting to him for her portrait. The moment she entered, the appearance of the man and his surroundings laid hold of her imagination. Although on

the very verge of popularity, he was young – not more than five and twenty. His face, far from what is called handsome, had a certain almost grandeur in it, owed mainly to the dominant forehead, and the regnant life in the eyes. To this the rest of the countenance was submissive. The mouth was sweet yet strong, seeming to derive its strength from the will that towered above and overhung it, throned on the crags of those eyebrows. The nose was rather short, not unpleasantly so, and had mass enough. In figure he was scarcely above the usual height, but well formed. To a first glance even, the careless yet graceful freedom of his movements was remarkable, while his address was manly, and altogether devoid of self recommendation. Confident modesty and unobtrusive ease distinguished his demeanour. His father, Arnold Lenorme, descended from an old Norman family, had given him the Christian name of Raoul, which, although outlandish, tolerably fitted the surname, notwithstanding the contiguous l's, objectionable to the fastidious ear of their owner. The earlier and more important part of his education, the beginnings, namely, of everything he afterwards further followed, his mother herself gave him, partly because she was both poor and capable, and partly because she was more anxious than most mothers for his best welfare. The poverty they had crept through, as those that strive after better things always will, one way or another, with immeasurable advantage, and before the time came when he must leave home, her influence had armed him in adamant – a service which alas! few mothers seem

capable of rendering the knights whom they send out into the battlefield of the world. Most of them give their children the best they have; but how shall a foolish woman ever be a wise mother? The result in his case was, that reverence for her as the type of womanhood, working along with a natural instinct for refinement, a keen feeling of the incompatibility with art of anything in itself low or unclean, and a healthful and successful activity of mind, had rendered him so far upright and honourable that he had never yet done that in one mood which in another he had looked back upon with loathing. As yet he had withstood the temptations belonging to his youth and his profession – in great measure also the temptations belonging to success; he had not yet been tried with disappointment, or sorrow, or failure.

As to the environment in which Florimel found him, it was to her a region of confused and broken colour and form – a kind of chaos out of which beauty was ever ready to start. Pictures stood on easels, leaned against chair backs, glowed from the wall – each contributing to the atmosphere of solved rainbow that seemed to fill the space. Lenorme was seated – not at his easel, but at a grand piano, which stood away, half hidden in a corner, as if it knew itself there on sufferance, with pictures all about the legs of it. For they had walked straight in without giving his servant time to announce them. A bar of a song, in a fine tenor voice, broke as they opened the door; and the painter came to meet them from the farther end of the study. He shook hands with Florimel's friend, and turned with a bow to her. At the first glance

the eyes of both fell. Raised the same instant, they encountered each other point blank, and then the eloquent blood had its turn at betrayal. What the moment meant, Florimel did not understand; but it seemed as if Raoul and she had met somewhere long ago, were presumed not to know it, but could not help remembering it, and agreeing to recognise it as a fact. A strange pleasure filled her heart. While Mrs Barnardiston sat she flitted about the room like a butterfly, looking at one thing after another, and asking now the most ignorant, now the most penetrative question, disturbing not a little the work, but sweetening the temper of the painter, as he went on with his study of the mask and helmet into which the Gorgon stare of the Unideal had petrified the face and head of his sitter. He found the situation trying nevertheless. It was as if Cupid had been set by Jupiter to take a portrait of Io in her stall, while evermore he heard his Psyche fluttering about among the peacocks in the yard. For the girl had bewitched him at first sight. He thought it was only as an artist, though to be sure a certain throb, almost of pain, in the region of the heart, when first his eyes fell before hers, might have warned, and perhaps did in vain warn him otherwise. Sooner than usual he professed himself content with the sitting, and then proceeded to show the ladies some of his sketches and pictures. Florimel asked to see one standing as in disgrace with its front to the wall. He put it, half reluctantly, on an easel, and said it was meant for the unveiling of Isis, as presented in a maehrchen of Novalis, introduced in Die Lehrlinge zu Sais, in which the goddess of Nature reveals

to the eager and anxious gaze of the beholder the person of his Rosenbluethchen, whom he had left behind him when he set out to visit the temple of the divinity. But on the great pedestal where should have sat the goddess there was no gracious form visible. That part of the picture was a blank. The youth stood below, gazing enraptured with parted lips and outstretched arms, as if he had already begun' to suspect what had begun to dawn through the slowly thinning veil – but to the eye of the beholder he gazed as yet only on vacancy, and the picture had not reached an attempt at self explanation. Florimel asked why he had left it so long unfinished, for the dust was thick on the back of the canvas.

"Because I have never seen the face or figure," the painter answered, "either in eye of mind or of body, that claimed the position."

As he spoke, his eyes seemed to Florimel to lighten strangely, and as if by common consent they turned away, and looked at something else. Presently Mrs Barnardiston, who cared more for sound than form or colour, because she could herself sing a little, began to glance over some music on the piano, curious to find what the young man had been singing, whereupon Lenorme said to Florimel hurriedly, and almost in a whisper, with a sort of hesitating assurance,

"If you would give me a sitting or two – I know I am presumptuous, but if you would – I – I should send the picture to the Academy in a week."

"I will," replied Florimel, flushing like a wild poppy, and as she said it, she looked up in his face and smiled.

"It would have been selfish," she said to herself as they drove away, "to refuse him."

This first interview, and all the interviews that had followed, now passed through her mind as she lay awake in the darkness preceding the dawn, and she reviewed them not without self reproach. But for some of my readers it will be hard to believe that one of the feelings that now tormented the girl was a sense of lowered dignity because of the relation in which she stood to the painter – seeing there was little or no ground for moral compunction, and the feeling had its root merely in the fact that he was a painter fellow, and she a marchioness. Her rank had already grown to seem to her so identified with herself that she was hardly any longer capable of the analysis that should show it distinct from her being. As to any duty arising from her position, she had never heard the word used except as representing something owing to, not owed by rank. Social standing in the eyes of the super excellent few of fashion was the Satan of unrighteousness worshipped around her. And the precepts of this worship fell upon soil prepared for it. For with all the simplicity of her nature, there was in it an inborn sense of rank, of elevation in the order of the universe above most others of the children of men – of greater intrinsic worth therefore in herself. How could it be otherwise with the offspring of generations of pride and falsely conscious superiority? Hence, as

things were going now with the mere human part of her, some commotion, if not earthquake indeed, was imminent. Nay the commotion had already begun, as manifest in her sleeplessness and the thoughts that occupied it.

Rightly to understand the sense of shame and degradation she had not unfrequently felt of late, we must remember that in the circle in which she moved she heard professions, arts, and trades alluded to with the same unuttered, but the more strongly implied contempt – a contempt indeed regarded as so much a matter of course, so thoroughly understood, so reasonable in its nature, so absolute in its degree, that to utter it would have been bad taste from very superfluity. Yet she never entered the painter's study but with trembling heart, uncertain foot, and fluttering breath, as of one stepping within the gates of an enchanted paradise, whose joy is too much for the material weight of humanity to ballast even to the steadying of the bodily step, and the outward calm of the bodily carriage. How far things had gone between them we shall be able to judge by and by; it will be enough at present to add that it was this relation and the inward strife arising from it that had not only prematurely, but over rapidly ripened the girl into the woman.

This my disclosure of her condition, however, has not yet uncovered the sorest spot upon which the flies of Beelzebub settled in the darkness of this torture hour of the human clock. Although still the same lively, self operative nature she had been in other circumstances, she was so far from being insensible

or indifferent to the opinions of others, that she had not even strength enough to keep a foreign will off the beam of her choice: the will of another, in no way directly brought to bear on hers, would yet weigh to her encouragement where her wish was doubtful, or to her restraint where impulse was strong; it would even move her towards a line of conduct whose anticipated results were distasteful to her. Ever and anon her pride would rise armed against the consciousness of slavery, but its armour was too weak either for defence or for deliverance. She knew that the heart of Lady Bellair, what of heart she had, was set upon her marriage with her nephew, Lord Liftore. Now she recoiled from the idea of marriage, and dismissed it into a future of indefinite removal; she had no special desire to please Lady Bellair from the point of gratitude, for she was perfectly aware that her relation to herself was far from being without advantage to that lady's position as well as means: a whisper or two that had reached her had been enough to enlighten her in that direction; neither could she persuade herself that Lord Liftore was at all the sort of man she could become proud of as a husband; and yet she felt destined to be his wife. On the other hand she had no dislike to him: he was handsome, well informed, capable – a gentleman, she thought, of good regard in the circles in which they moved, and one who would not in any manner disgrace her, although to be sure he was her inferior in rank, and she would rather have married a duke. At the same time, to confess all the truth, she was by no means indifferent to the advantages of having for a husband a man

with money enough to restore the somewhat tarnished prestige of her own family to its pristine brilliancy. She had never said a word to encourage the scheming of Lady Bellair; neither, on the other hand, had she ever said a word to discourage her hopes, or give her ground for doubting the acceptableness of her cherished project. Hence Lady Bellair had naturally come to regard the two as almost affianced. But Florimel's aversion to the idea of marriage, and her horror at the thought of the slightest whisper of what was between her and Lenorme, increased together.

There were times too when she asked herself in anxious discomfort whether she was not possibly a transgressor against a deeper and simpler law than that of station – whether she was altogether maidenly in the encouragement she had given and was giving to the painter. It must not be imagined that she had once visited him without a companion, though that companion was indeed sometimes only her maid – her real object being covered by the true pretext of sitting for her portrait, which Lady Bellair pleased herself with imagining would one day be presented to Lord Liftore. But she could not, upon such occasions of morning judgment as this, fail to doubt sorely whether the visits she paid him, and the liberties which upon fortunate occasions she allowed him, were such as could be justified on any ground other than that she was prepared to give him all. All, however, she was by no means prepared to give him: that involved consequences far too terrible to be contemplated even as possibilities.

With such causes for disquiet in her young heart and brain,

it is not then wonderful that she should sometimes be unable to slip across this troubled region of the night in the boat of her dreams, but should suffer shipwreck on the waking coast, and have to encounter the staring and questioning eyes of more than one importunate truth. Nor is it any wonder either that, to such an inexperienced and so troubled a heart, the assurance of one absolutely devoted friend should come with healing and hope – even if that friend should be but a groom, altogether incapable of understanding her position, or perceiving the phantoms that crowded about her, threatening to embody themselves in her ruin. A clumsy, ridiculous fellow, she said to herself, from whose person she could never dissociate the smell of fish, who talked a horrible jargon called Scotch, and who could not be prevented from uttering unpalatable truths at uncomfortable moments; yet whose thoughts were as chivalrous as his person was powerful, and whose countenance was pleasing if only for the triumph of honesty therein: she actually felt stronger and safer to know he was near, and at her beck and call.

CHAPTER XV: PORTLOSSIE

Mr Crathie, seeing nothing more of Malcolm, believed himself at last well rid of him; but it was days before his wrath ceased to flame, and then it went on smouldering. Nothing occurred to take him to the Seaton, and no business brought any of the fisher people to his office during that time. Hence he heard nothing of the mode of Malcolm's departure. When at length in the course of ordinary undulatory propagation the news reached him that Malcolm had taken the yacht with him, he was enraged beyond measure at the impudence of the theft, as he called it, and ran to the Seaton in a fury. He had this consolation, however: the man who had accused him of dishonesty and hypocrisy had proved but a thief.

He found the boathouse indeed empty, and went storming from cottage to cottage, but came upon no one from whom his anger could draw nourishment, not to say gain satisfaction. At length he reached the Partan's, found him at home, and commenced, at haphazard, abusing him as an aider and abettor of the felony. But Meg Partan was at home also, as Mr Crathie soon learned to his cost; for, hearing him usurp her unique privilege of falling out upon her husband, she stole from the ben end, and having stood for a moment silent in the doorway, listening for comprehension, rushed out in a storm of tongue.

"An' what for sudna my man," she cried, at full height of her

screeching voice, "lay tu his han' wi' ither honest fowk to du for the boat what him 'at was weel kent for the captain o' her, sin' ever she was a boat, wantit dune? Wad ye tak the comman' o' the boat, sir, as weel's o' a' thing ither aboot the place?"

"Hold your tongue, woman," said the factor; "I have nothing to say to you."

"Aigh, sirs! but it's a peety ye wasna foreordeent to be markis yersel'! It maun be a sair vex to ye 'at ye're naething but the factor."

"If ye don't mind your manners, Mistress Fin'lay," said Mr Crathie in glowing indignation, "perhaps you'll find that the factor is as much as the marquis, when he's all there is for one."

"Lord safe 's hear till 'im !" cried the Partaness. "Wha wad hae thoucht it o' 'im? There's fowk 'at it sets weel to tak upo' them! His father, honest man, wad ne'er hae spoken like that to Meg Partan; but syne he was an honest man, though he was but the heid shepherd upo' the estate. Man, I micht hae been yer mither – gien I had been auld eneuch for 's first wife, for he wad fain hae had me for 's second."

"I've a great mind to take out a warrant against you, John Fin'lay, otherwise called the Partan, as airt an' pairt in the stealing of the Marchioness of Lossie's pleasure boat," said the factor. "And for you, Mistress Fin'lay, I would have you please to remember that this house, as far at least as you are concerned, is mine, although I am but the factor, and not the marquis; and if you don't keep that unruly tongue of yours a little quieter in your

head, I'll set you in the street the next quarter day but one, as sure's ever you gutted a herring, and then you may bid goodbye to Portlossie, for there's not a house, as you very well know, in all the Seaton, that belongs to another than her ladyship."

"'Deed, Mr Crathie," returned Meg Partan, a little sobered by the threat, "ye wad hae mair sense nor rin the risk o' an uprisin' o' the fisher fowk. They wad ill stan' to see my auld man an' me misused, no to say 'at her leddyship hersel' wad see ony o' her ain fowk turned oot o' hoose an' haudin' for naething ava."

"Her ladyship wad gi'e hersel' sma' concern gien the haill bilin' o' ye war whaur ye cam frae," returned the factor. "An' for the toon here, the fowk kens the guid o' a quaiet caus'ay ower weel to lament the loss o' ye."

"The deil's i' the man!" cried the Partaness in high scorn. "He wad threip upo' me 'at I was ane o' thae lang tongued limmers 'at maks themsel's h'ard frae ae toon's en' to the tither! But I s' gar him priv 's words yet!"

"Ye see, sir," interposed the mild Partan, anxious to shove extremities aside, "we didna ken 'at there was onything intill't by ord'nar. Gien we had but kent 'at he was oot o' your guid graces,"

"Haud yer tongue afore ye lee, man," interrupted his wife. "Ye ken weel eneuch ye wad du what Ma'colm MacPhail wad hae ye du, for ony factor in braid Scotlan'."

"You must have known," said the factor to the Partan, apparently heedless of this last outbreak of the generous evil temper, and laying a cunning trap for the information he sorely

wanted, but had as yet failed in procuring – "else why was it that not a soul went with him? He could ill manage the boat alone."

"What put sic buff an' styte i' yer heid, sir?" rejoined Meg; defiant of the hints her husband sought to convey to her. "There's mony ane wad hae been ready to gang, only wha sud gang but him 'at gaed wi' him an' 's lordship frae the first?"

"And who was that?" asked Mr Crathie.

"Ow! wha but Blue Peter?" answered Meg.

"Hm!" said the factor, in a tone that for almost the first time in her life made the woman regret that she had spoken, and therewith he rose and left the cottage.

"Eh, mither!" cried Lizzy, in her turn appearing from the ben end, with her child in her arms, "ye hae wroucht ruin i' the earth! He'll hae Peter an' Annie an' a' oot o' hoose an' ha', come midsummer."

"I daur him till't!" cried her mother, in the impotence and self despite of a mortifying blunder; "I'll raise the toon upon 'im."

"What wad that du, mither?" returned Lizzy, in distress about her friends. "It wad but mak' ill waur."

"An' wha are ye to oppen yer mou' sae wide to yer mither?" burst forth Meg Partan, glad of an object upon which the chagrin that consumed her might issue in flame. "Ye havena luikit to yer ain gait sae weel 'at ye can thriep to set richt them 'at broucht ye forth. – Wha are ye, I say?" she repeated in rage.

"Ane 'at folly's made wiser, maybe, mither," answered Lizzie sadly, and proceeded to take her shawl from behind the door: she

would go to her friends at Scaurnose, and communicate her fears for their warning. But her words smote the mother within the mother, and she turned and looked at her daughter with more of the woman and less of the Partan in her rugged countenance than had been visible there since the first week of her married life. She had been greatly injured by the gaining of too easy a conquest and resultant supremacy over her husband, whence she had ever after revelled in a rule too absolute for good to any concerned. As she was turning away, her daughter caught a glimpse of her softened eyes, and went out of the house with more comfort in her heart than she had felt ever since first she had given her conscience cause to speak daggers to her.

The factor kept raging to himself all the way home, flung himself trembling on his horse, vouchsafing his anxious wife scarce any answer to her anxious enquiries, and galloped to Duff Harbour to Mr Soutar.

I will not occupy my tale with their interview. Suffice it to say that the lawyer succeeded at last in convincing the demented factor that it would be but prudent to delay measures for the recovery of the yacht and the arrest and punishment of its abductors, until he knew what Lady Lossie would say to the affair. She had always had a liking for the lad, Mr Soutar said, and he would not be in the least surprised to hear that Malcolm had gone straight to her ladyship and put himself under her protection. No doubt by this time the cutter was at its owner's disposal: it would be just like the fellow! He always went the

nearest road anywhere. And to prosecute him for a thief would in any case but bring down the ridicule of the whole coast upon the factor, and breed him endless annoyance in the getting in of his rents – especially among the fishermen. The result was that Mr Crathie went home – not indeed a humbler or wiser man than he had gone, but a thwarted man, and therefore the more dangerous in the channels left open to the outrush of his angry power.

When Lizzy reached Scaurnose, her account of the factor's behaviour, to her surprise, did not take much effect upon Mrs Mair: a queer little smile broke over her countenance, and vanished. An enforced gravity succeeded, however, and she began to take counsel with Lizzy as to what they could do, or where they could go, should the worst come to the worst, and the doors, not only of her own house, but of Scaurnose and Portlossie as well, be shut against them. But through it all reigned a calm regard and fearlessness of the future which, to Lizzy's roused and apprehensive imagination, was strangely inexplicable. Annie Mair seemed possessed of some hidden and upholding assurance that raised her above the fear of man or what he could do to her. The girl concluded it must be the knowledge of God, and prayed more earnestly that night than she had prayed since the night on which Malcolm had talked to her so earnestly before he left. I must add this much, that she was not altogether astray: God was in Malcolm, giving new hope to his fisher folk.

CHAPTER XVI: ST JAMES THE APOSTLE

When Malcolm left his sister, he had a dim sense of having lapsed into Scotch, and set about buttressing and strengthening his determination to get rid of all unconscious and unintended use of the northern dialect, not only that, in his attendance upon Florimel, he might be neither offensive nor ridiculous, but that, when the time should come in which he must appear what he was, it might be less of an annoyance to her to yield the marquisate to one who could speak like a gentleman and one of the family. But not the less did he love the tongue he had spoken from his childhood, and in which were on record so many precious ballads and songs, old and new; and he resolved that, when he came out as a marquis, he would at Lossie House indemnify himself for the constraint of London. He would not have an English servant there except Mrs Courthope: he would not have the natural country speech corrupted with cockneyisms, and his people taught to speak like Wallis! To his old friends the fishers and their families, he would never utter a sentence but in the old tongue, haunted with all the memories of relations that were never to be obliterated or forgotten, its very tones reminding him and them of hardships together endured, pleasures shared, and help willingly given. At night, notwithstanding, he found that in

talking with Blue Peter, he had forgotten all about his resolve, and it vexed him with himself not a little. He now saw that if he could but get into the way of speaking English to him, the victory would be gained, for with no one else would he find any difficulty then.

The next morning he went down to the stairs at London Bridge, and took a boat to the yacht. He had to cross several vessels to reach it. When at length he looked down from the last of them on the deck of the little cutter, he saw Blue Peter sitting on the coamings of the hatch, his feet hanging down within. He was lost in the book he was reading. Curious to see, without disturbing him, what it was that so absorbed him, Malcolm dropped quietly on the tiller, and thence on the deck, and approaching softly peeped over his shoulder. He was reading the epistle of James the apostle. Malcolm fell a-thinking. From Peter's thumbed bible his eyes went wandering through the thicket of masts, in which moved so many busy seafarers, and then turned to the docks and wharfs and huge warehouses lining the shores; and while they scanned the marvellous vision, the thoughts that arose and passed through his brain were like these: "What are ye duin' here, Jeames the Just? Ye was naething but a fisher body upon a sma' watter i' the hert o' the hills, 'at wasna even saut; an' what can the thochts that gaed throu' your fish catchin' brain hae to du wi' sic a sicht 's this? I won'er gien at this moment there be anither man in a' Lon'on sittin' readin' that epistle o' yours but Blue Peter here? He thinks there's naething

o' mair importance, 'cep' maybe some ither pairts o' the same buik; but syne he's but a puir fisher body himsel', an' what kens he o' the wisdom an' riches an' pooer o' this michty queen o' the nations, thron't aboot him? – Is't possible the auld body kent something 'at was jist as necessar' to ilka man, the busiest in this croodit mairt, to ken an' gang by, as it was to Jeames an' the lave o' the michty apostles themsel's? For me, I dinna doobt it – but hoo it sud ever be onything but an auld warld story to the new warld o' Lon'on, I think it wad bleck Maister Graham himsel' til imaigine."

Before this, Blue Peter had become aware that some one was near him, but, intent on the words of his brother fisher of the old time, had half unconsciously put off looking up to see who was behind him. When now he did so, and saw Malcolm, he rose and touched his bonnet.

"It was jist i' my heid, my lord," he said, without any preamble, "sic a kin' o' a h'avenly Jacobin as this same Jacobus was! He's sic a leveller as was feow afore 'im, I doobt, wi' his gowd ringt man, an' his cloot cled brither! He pat me in twa min's, my lord, whan I got up, whether I wad touch my bonnet to yer lordship or no."

Malcolm laughed with hearty appreciation.

"When I am king of Lossie," he said, "be it known to all whom it may concern, that it is and shall be the right of Blue Peter, and all his descendants, to the end of time, to stand with bonneted heads in the presence of Lord or – no, not Lady, Peter – of the house of Lossie."

"Ay, but ye see, Ma'colm," said Peter, forgetting his address, and his eye twinkling in the humour of the moment, "it's no by your leave, or ony man's leave; it's the richt o' the thing; an' that I maun think aboot, an' see whether I be at leeberty to ca' ye my lord or no."

"Meantime, don't do it," said Malcolm, "lest you should have to change afterwards. You might find it difficult."

"Ye're cheengt a'ready," said Blue Peter, looking up at him sharply. "I ne'er h'ard ye speyk like that afore."

"Make nothing of it," returned Malcolm. "I am only airing my English on you; I have made up my mind to learn to speak in London as London people do, and so, even to you, in the meantime only, I am going to speak as good English as I can. – It's nothing between you and me, Peter and you must not mind it," he added, seeing a slight cloud come over the fisherman's face.

Blue Peter turned away with a sigh. The sounds of English speech from the lips of Malcolm addressed to himself, seemed vaguely to indicate the opening of a gulf between them, destined ere long to widen to the whole social width between a fisherman and a marquis, swallowing up in it not only all old memories, but all later friendship and confidence. A shadow of bitterness crossed the poor fellow's mind, and in it the seed of distrust began to strike root, and all because a newer had been substituted for an older form of the same speech and language. Truly man's heart is a delicate piece of work, and takes gentle handling or hurt. But that the pain was not all of innocence is revealed in the

strange fact, afterwards disclosed by the repentant Peter himself, that, in that same moment, what had just passed his mouth as a joke, put on an important, serious look, and appeared to involve a matter of doubtful duty: was it really right of one man to say my lord to another? Thus the fisherman, and not the marquis, was the first to sin against the other because of altered fortune. Distrust awoke pride in the heart of Blue Pete; and he erred in the lack of the charity that thinketh no evil.

But the lack and the doubt made little show as yet. The two men rowed in the dinghy down the river to the Aberdeen wharf to make arrangements about Kelpie, whose arrival Malcolm expected the following Monday, then dined together, and after that had a long row up the river.

CHAPTER XVII: A DIFFERENCE

Notwithstanding his keenness of judgment and sobriety in action, Malcolm had yet a certain love for effect, a delight, that is, in the show of concentrated results, which, as I believe I have elsewhere remarked, belongs especially to the Celtic nature, and is one form in which the poetic element vaguely embodies itself. Hence arose the temptation to try on Blue Peter the effect of a literally theatrical surprise. He knew well the prejudices of the greater portion of the Scots people against every possible form of artistic, most of all, dramatic representation. He knew, therefore, also, that Peter would never be persuaded to go with him to the theatre: to invite him would be like asking him to call upon Beelzebub; but as this feeling was cherished in utter ignorance of its object, he judged he would be doing him no wrong if he made experiment how the thing itself would affect the heart and judgment of the unsophisticated fisherman.

Finding that The Tempest was still the play represented, he contrived, as they walked together, so to direct their course that they should be near Drury Lane towards the hour of commencement. He did not want to take him in much before the time: he would not give him scope for thought, doubt, suspicion, discovery.

When they came in front of the theatre, people were crowding in, and carriages setting down their occupants. Blue Peter gave

a glance at the building.

"This'll be ane o' the Lon'on kirks, I'm thinkin'?" he said. "It's a muckle place; an' there maun be a heap o' guid fowk in Lon'on, for as ill's it's ca'd, to see sae mony, an' i' their cairritches, comin' to the kirk – on a Setterday nicht tu. It maun be some kin' o' a prayer meetin', I'm thinkin'."

Malcolm said nothing, but led the way to the pit entrance.

"That's no an ill w'y o' getherin' the baubees," said Peter, seeing how the incomers paid their money. "I hae h'ard o' the plate bein' robbit in a muckle toon afore noo."

When at length they were seated, and he had time to glance reverently around him, he was a little staggered at sight of the decorations; and the thought crossed his mind of the pictures and statues he had heard of in catholic churches; but he remembered Westminster Abbey, its windows and monuments, and returned to his belief that he was, if in an episcopal, yet in a protestant church. But he could not help the thought that the galleries were a little too gaudily painted, while the high pews in them astonished him. Peter's nature, however, was one of those calm, slow ones which, when occupied by an idea or a belief, are by no means ready to doubt its correctness, and are even ingenious in reducing all apparent contradictions to theoretic harmony with it – whence it came that to him all this was only part of the church furniture according to the taste and magnificence of London. He sat quite tranquil, therefore, until the curtain rose, revealing the ship's company in all the confusion of the wildest of sea storms.

Malcolm watched him narrowly. But Peter was first so taken by surprise, and then so carried away with the interest of what he saw, that thinking had ceased in him utterly, and imagination lay passive as a mirror to the representation. Nor did the sudden change from the first to the second scene rouse him, for before his thinking machinery could be set in motion, the delight of the new show had again caught him in its meshes. For to him, as it had been to Malcolm, it was the shore at Portlossie, while the cave that opened behind was the Bailie's Barn, where his friends the fishers might at that moment, if it were a fine night, be holding one of their prayer meetings. The mood lasted all through the talk of Prospero and Miranda; but when Ariel entered there came a snap, and the spell was broken. With a look in which doubt wrestled with horror, Blue Peter turned to Malcolm, and whispered with bated breath – "I'm jaloosin' – it canna be – it's no a playhoose, this?"

Malcolm merely nodded, but from the nod Peter understood that he had had no discovery to make as to the character of the place they were in.

"Eh!" he groaned, overcome with dismay. Then rising suddenly – "Guid nicht to ye, my lord," he said, with indignation, and rudely forced his way from the crowded house.

Malcolm followed in his wake, but said nothing till they were in the street. Then, forgetting utterly his resolves concerning English in the distress of having given his friend ground to complain of his conduct towards him, he laid his hand on Blue

Peter's arm, and stopped him in the middle of the narrow street.

"I but thoucht, Peter," he said, "to get ye to see wi' yer ain een, an' hear wi' yer ain ears, afore ye passed jeedgment; but ye're jist like the lave."

"An' what for sudna I be jist like the lave?" returned Peter, fiercely.

"'Cause it's no fair to set doon a' thing for wrang 'at ye ha'e been i' the w'y o' hearing aboot by them 'at kens as little aboot them as yersel'. I cam here mysel', ohn kent whaur I was gaein', the ither nicht, for the first time i' my life; but I wasna fleyt like you, 'cause I kent frae the buik a' 'at was comin'. I hae h'ard in a kirk in ae ten meenutes jist a sicht o' what maun ha'e been sair displeasin' to the hert a' the maister a' 's a'; but that nicht I saw nae ill an' h'ard nae ill, but was weel peyed back upo' them 'at did it an' said it afore the business was ower, an' that's mair nor ye'll see i' the streets o' Portlossie ilka day. The playhoose is whaur ye gang to see what comes o' things 'at ye canna follow oot in ordinar' life."

Whether Malcolm, after a year's theatre going, would have said precisely the same is hardly doubtful. He spoke of the ideal theatre to which Shakspere is true, and in regard to that he spoke rightly.

"Ye decoy't me intill the hoose o' ineequity!" was Peter's indignant reply; "an' it 's no what ye ever ga'e me cause to expec' o' ye, sae 'at I micht ha'e ta'en tent o' ye."

"I thoucht nae ill o' 't," returned Malcolm.

"Weel, I div," retorted Peter.

"Then perhaps you are wrong," said Malcolm, "for charity thinketh no evil. You wouldn't stay to see the thing out."

"There ye are at yer English again! an' misgugglin' Scriptur' wi' 't an' a' this upo' Setterday nicht – maist the Sawbath day! Weel, I ha'e aye h'ard 'at Lon'on was an awfu' place, but I little thoucht the verra air o' 't wad sae sune turn an honest laad like Ma'colm MacPhail intill a scoffer. But maybe it's the markis o' 'im, an' no the muckle toon 'at's made the differ. Ony gait, I'm thinkin' it'll be aboot time for me to be gauin' hame."

Malcolm was vexed with himself, and both disappointed and troubled at the change which had come over his friend, and threatened to destroy the lifelong relation between them; his feelings therefore held him silent. Peter concluded that the marquis was displeased, and it clenched his resolve to go.

"What w'y am I to win hame, my lord?" he said, when they had walked some distance without word spoken.

"By the Aberdeen smack," returned Malcolm. "She sails on Tuesday. I will see you on board. You must take young Davy with you, for I wouldn't have him here after you are gone. There will be nothing for him to do."

"Ye're unco ready to pairt wi' 's noo 'at ye ha'e nae mair use for 's," said Peter.

"No sae ready as ye seem to pairt wi' yer chairity," said Malcolm, now angry too.

"Ye see Annie 'ill be thinkin' lang," said Peter, softening a

little.

No more angry words passed between them, but neither did any thoroughly cordial ones, and they parted at the stairs in mutual, though, with such men, it could not be more than superficial estrangement.

CHAPTER XVIII: LORD LIFTORE

The chief cause of Malcolm's anxiety had been, and perhaps still was, Lord Liftore. In his ignorance of Mr Lenorme there might lie equal cause with him, but he knew such evil of the other that his whole nature revolted against the thought of his marrying his sister. At Lossie he had made himself agreeable to her, and now, if not actually living in the same house, he was there at all hours of the day.

It took nothing from his anxiety to see that his lordship was greatly improved. Not only had the lanky youth passed into a well formed man, but in countenance, whether as regarded expression, complexion, or feature, he was not merely a handsomer but looked in every way a healthier and better man. Whether it was from some reviving sense of duty, or that, in his attachment to Florimel, he had begun to cherish a desire of being worthy of her, I cannot tell; but he looked altogether more of a man than the time that had elapsed would have given ground to expect, even had he then seemed on the mend, and indeed promised to become a really fine looking fellow. His features were far more regular if less informed than those of the painter and his carriage prouder if less graceful and energetic. His admiration of and consequent attachment to Florimel had been growing ever since his visit to Lossie House the preceding summer, and if he had said nothing quite definite,

it was only because his aunt represented the impolicy of declaring himself just yet: she was too young. She judged thus, attributing her evident indifference to an incapacity as yet for falling in love. Hence, beyond paying her all sorts of attentions and what compliments he was capable of constructing, Lord Liftore had not gone far towards making himself understood – at least, not until just before Malcolm's arrival, when his behaviour had certainly grown warmer and more confidential.

All the time she had been under his aunt's care he had had abundant opportunity for recommending himself, and he had made use of the privilege. For one thing, credibly assured that he looked well in the saddle, he had constantly encouraged Florimel's love of riding and desire to become a thorough horse woman, and they had ridden a good deal together in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh. This practice they continued as much as possible after they came to London early in the spring; but the weather of late had not been favourable, and Florimel had been very little out with him.

For a long time Lady Bellair had had her mind set on a match between the daughter of her old friend the Marquis of Lossie and her nephew, and it was with this in view that, when invited to Lossie House, she had begged leave to bring Lord Meikleham with her. The young man was from the first sufficiently taken with the beautiful girl to satisfy his aunt, and would even then have shown greater fervour in his attentions, had he not met Lizzy Findlay at the wedding of Joseph Mair's sister, and found

her more than pleasing. I will not say that from the first he purposed wrong to her: he was too inexperienced in the ways of evil for that; but even when he saw plainly enough to what their mutual attraction was tending, he gave himself no trouble to resist it; and through the whole unhappy affair had not had one smallest struggle with himself for the girl's sake. To himself he was all in all as yet, and such was his opinion of his own precious being, that, had he thought about it, he would have considered the honour of his attentions far more than sufficient to make up to any girl in such a position for whatever mishap his acquaintance might bring upon her. What were the grief and mortification of parents to put in the balance against his condescension? what the shame and the humiliation of the girl herself compared with the honour of having been shone upon for a period, however brief, by his enamoured countenance? Must not even the sorrow attendant upon her loss be rendered more than endurable – be radiantly consoled by the memory that she had held such a demigod in her arms? When he left her at last, with many promises, not one of which he ever had the intention of fulfilling, he did purpose sending her a present. But at that time he was poor – dependent, indeed, for his pocket money upon his aunt; and, up to this hour, he had never since his departure from Lossie House taken the least notice of her either by gift or letter. He had taken care also that it should not be in her power to write to him, and now he did not even know that he was a father. Once or twice the possibility of such being the case occurred to him, and he

thought within himself that if he were, and it should come to be talked of, it might, in respect of his present hopes, be awkward and disagreeable; for, although such a predicament was nowise unusual, in this instance the circumstances were. More than one of his bachelor friends had a small family even, but then it was in the regular way of an open and understood secret: the fox had his nest in some pleasant nook, adroitly masked, where lay his vixen and her brood; one day he would abandon them for ever, and, with such gathered store of experience, set up for a respectable family man. A few tears, a neat legal arrangement, and all would be as it had never been, only that the blood of the Montmorencies or Cliffords would meander unclaimed in this or that obscure channel, beautifying the race, and rousing England to noble deeds! But in his case it would be unpleasant – a little – that every one of his future tenantry should know the relation in which he stood to a woman of the fisher people. He did not fear any resentment – not that he would have cared a straw for it, on such trifling grounds, but people in their low condition never thought anything of such slips on the part of their women especially where a great man was concerned. What he did fear was that the immediate relations of the woman – that was how he spoke of Lizzy to himself – might presume upon the honour he had done them. Lizzy, however, was a good girl, and had promised to keep the matter secret until she heard from him, whatever might be the consequences; and surely there was fascination enough in the holding of a secret with such as he to

enable her to keep her promise. She must be perfectly aware, however appearances might be against him, that he was not one to fail in appreciation of her conduct, however easy and natural all that he required of her might be. He would requite her royally when he was Lord of Lossie. Meantime, although it was even now in his power to make her rich amends, he would prudently leave things as they were, and not run the risk that must lie in opening communications.

And so the young earl held his head high, looked as innocent as may be desirable for a gentleman, had many a fair clean hand laid in his, and many a maiden waist yielded to his arm, while "the woman" flitted about half an alien amongst her own, with his child wound in her old shawl of Lossie tartan; wandering not seldom in the gloaming when her little one slept, along the top of the dune, with the wind blowing keen upon her from the regions of eternal ice, sometimes the snow settling softly on her hair, sometimes the hailstones nestling in its meshes; the skies growing blacker about her, and the sea stormier, while hope retreated so far into the heavenly regions, that hope and heaven both were lost to her view. Thus, alas! the things in which he was superior to her, most of all that he was a gentleman, while she was but a peasant girl – the things whose witchery drew her to his will, he made the means of casting her down from the place of her excellency into the mire of shame and loss. The only love worthy of the name ever and always uplifts.

Of the people belonging to the upper town of Portlossie,

which raised itself high above the sea town in other respects besides the topical, there were none who did not make poor Lizzy feel they were aware of her disgrace, and but one man who made her feel it by being kinder than before. That man, strange to say, was the factor. With all his faults he had some chivalry, and he showed it to the fisher girl. Nor did he alter his manner to her because of the rudeness with which her mother had taken Malcolm's part.

It was a sore proof to Mr Crathie that his discharged servant was in favour with the marchioness when the order came from Mr Soutar to send up Kelpie. She had written to himself when she wanted her own horse; now she sent for this brute through her lawyer. It was plain that Malcolm had been speaking against him; and he was the more embittered therefore against his friends.

Since his departure he had been twice on the point of poisoning the mare.

It was with difficulty he found two men to take her to Aberdeen. There they had an arduous job to get her on board and secure her. But it had been done, and all the Monday night Malcolm was waiting her arrival at the wharf – alone, for after what had passed between them, he would not ask Peter to go with him, and besides he was no use with horses. At length, in the grey of a gurly dawn, the smack came alongside. They had had a rough passage, and the mare was considerably subdued by sickness, so that there was less difficulty in getting her ashore, and she paced for a little while in tolerable quietness. But with every step on

dry land, the evil spirit in her awoke, and soon Malcolm had to dismount and lead her. The morning was little advanced, and few vehicles were about, otherwise he could hardly have got her home uninjured, notwithstanding the sugar with which he had filled a pocket. Before he reached the mews he was very near wishing he had never seen her. But when he led her into the stable, he was a little encouraged as well as surprised to find that she had not forgotten Florimel's horse. They had always been a little friendly, and now they greeted each other with an affectionate neigh; after which, with the help of all she could devour, the demoness was quieter.

CHAPTER XIX:
KELPIE IN LONDON

Before noon Lord Liftore came round to the mews: his riding horses were there. Malcolm was not at the moment in the stable.

"What animal is that?" he asked of his own groom, catching sight of Kelpie in her loose box.

"One just come up from Scotland for Lady Lossie, my lord," answered the man.

"She looks a clipper! Lead her out, and let me see her."

"She's not sound in the temper, my lord, the groom that brought her says. He told me on no account to go near her till she got used to the sight of me."

"Oh! you're afraid, are you?" said his lordship, whose breeding had not taught him courtesy to his inferiors.

At the word the man walked into her box. As he did so he looked out for her hoofs, but his circumspection was in vain: in a moment she had wheeled, jammed him against the wall, and taken his shoulder in her teeth. He gave a yell of pain. His lordship caught up a stable broom, and attacked the mare with it over the door; but it flew from his hand to the other end of the stable, and the partition began to go after it. But she still kept her hold of the man. Happily, however, Malcolm was not far off and hearing the noise, rushed in. He was just in time to save the

groom's life. Clearing the stall partition, and seizing the mare by the nose with a mighty grasp, he inserted a forefinger behind her tusk, for she was one of the few mares tusked like a horse, and soon compelled her to open her mouth. The groom staggered and would have fallen, so cruelly had she mauled him, but Malcolm's voice roused him.

"For God's sake gang oot, as lang's there twa limbs o' ye stickin' thegither."

The poor fellow just managed to open the door, and fell senseless on the stones. Lord Liftore called for help, and they carried him into the saddle room, while one ran for the nearest surgeon.

Meantime Malcolm was putting a muzzle on Kelpie, which he believed she understood as a punishment, and while he was thus occupied, his lordship came from the saddle room and approached the box.

"Who are you?" he said. "I think I have seen you before."

"I was servant to the late Marquis of Lossie, my lord, and now I am groom to her ladyship."

"What a fury you've brought up with you! She'll never do for London."

"I told the man not to go near her, my lord."

"What's the use of her if no one can go near her?"

"I can, my lord."

"By Jove, she's a splendid creature to look at! but I don't know what you can do with her here, my man. She's fit to go double

with Satan himself."

"She'll do for me to ride after my lady well enough. If only I had room to exercise her a bit!"

"Take her into the park early in the morning, and gallop her round. Only mind she don't break your neck. What can have made Lady Lossie send for such a devil as that!"

Malcolm held his peace.

"I'll try her myself some morning," said his lordship, who thought himself a better horseman than he was.

"I wouldn't advise you, my lord."

"Who the devil asked your advice?"

"Ten to one she'll kill you, my lord."

"That's my look out," said Liftore, and went into the house.

As soon as he had done with Kelpie, Malcolm dressed himself in his new livery, and went to tell his mistress of her arrival. She sent him orders to bring the mare round in half an hour. He went back to her, took off her muzzle, fed her, and while she ate her corn, put on the spurs he had prepared expressly for her use – a spike without a rowel, rather blunt, but sharp indeed when sharply used – like those of the Gauchos of the Pampas. Then he saddled her, and rode her round.

Having had her fit of temper, she was, to all appearance, going to be fairly good for the rest of the day, and looked splendid. She was a large mare, nearly thoroughbred, but with more bone than usual for her breeding, which she carried triumphantly – an animal most men would have been pleased to possess – and proud

to ride. Florimel came to the door to see her, accompanied by Liftore, and was so delighted with the very sight of her that she sent at once to the stables for her own horse, that she might ride out attended by Malcolm. His lordship also ordered his horse.

They went straight to Rotten Row for a little gallop, and Kelpie was behaving very well for her.

"What did you have two such savages, horse and groom both, up from Scotland for, Florimel?" asked his lordship, as they cantered gently along the Row, Kelpie coming sideways after them, as if she would fain alter the pairing of her legs..

Florimel turned and cast an admiring glance on the two.

"Do you know I am rather proud of them," she said.

"He's a clumsy fellow, the groom; and for the mare, she's downright wicked," said Liftore.

"At least neither is a hypocrite," returned Florimel, with Malcolm's account of his quarrel with the factor in her mind. "The mare is just as wicked as she looks, and the man as good. Believe me, my lord, that man you call a savage never told a lie in his life!"

As she spoke she looked him hard in the face – with her father in her eyes.

Liftore could not return the look with equal steadiness. It seemed for the moment to be inquiring too curiously.

"I know what you mean," he said. "You don't believe my professions."

As he spoke he edged his horse close up to hers.

"But," he went on, "if I know that I speak the truth when I swear that I love every breath of wind that has but touched your dress as it passed, that I would die gladly for one loving touch of your hand – why should you not let me ease my heart by saying so? Florimel, my life has been a different thing from the moment I saw you first. It has grown precious to me since I saw that it might be – Confound the fellow! what's he about now with his horse devil?"

For at that moment his lordship's horse, a high bred but timid animal, sprang away from the side of Florimel's, and there stood Kelpie on her hind legs, pawing the air between him and his lady, and Florimel, whose old confidence in Malcolm was now more than revived, was laughing merrily at the discomfiture of his attempt at love making. Her behaviour and his own frustration put him in such a rage that, wheeling quickly round, he struck Kelpie, just as she dropped on all fours, a great cut with his whip across the haunches. She plunged and kicked violently, came within an inch of breaking his horse's leg, and flew across the rail into the park. Nothing could have suited Malcolm better. He did not punish her as he would have done had she been to blame, for he was always just to lower as well as higher animals, but he took her a great round at racing speed, while his mistress and her companion looked on, and everyone in the Row stopped and stared. Finally, he hopped her over the rail again, and brought her up dripping and foaming to his mistress. Florimel's eyes were flashing, and Liftore looked still angry.

"Dinna du that again, my lord," said Malcolm. "Ye're no my maister; an' gien ye war, ye wad hae no richt to brak my neck."

"No fear of that! That's not how your neck will be broken, my man," said his lordship, with an attempted laugh; for though he was all the angrier that he was ashamed of what he had done, he dared not further wrong the servant before his mistress.

A policeman came up and laid his hand on Kelpie's bridle.

"Take care what you're about," said Malcolm; "the mare's not safe. – There's my mistress, the Marchioness of Lossie."

The man saw an ugly look in Kelpie's eye, withdrew his hand, and turned to Florimel.

"My groom is not to blame," said she. "Lord Liftore struck his mare, and she became ungovernable."

The man gave a look at Liftore, seemed to take his likeness, touched his hat, and withdrew.

"You'd better ride the jade home," said Liftore.

Malcolm only looked at his mistress. She moved on, and he followed.

He was not so innocent in the affair as he had seemed. The expression of Liftore's face as he drew nearer to Florimel, was to him so hateful, that he interfered in a very literal fashion: Kelpie had been doing no more than he had made her until the earl struck her.

"Let us ride to Richmond tomorrow," said Florimel, "and have a good gallop in the park. Did you ever see a finer sight than that animal on the grass?"

"The fellow's too heavy for her," said Liftore. "I should very much like to try her myself."

Florimel pulled up, and turned to Malcolm.

"MacPhail," she said, "have that mare of yours ready whenever Lord Liftore chooses to ride her."

"I beg your pardon, my lady," returned Malcolm, "but would your ladyship make a condition with my lord that he shall not mount her anywhere on the stones."

"By Jove!" said Liftore scornfully. "You fancy yourself the only man that can ride!"

"It's nothing to me, my lord, if you break your neck; but I am bound to tell you I do not think your lordship will sit my mare. Stoat can't; and I can only because I know her as well as my own palm."

The young earl made no answer and they rode on – Malcolm nearer than his lordship liked.

"I can't think, Florimel," he said, "why you should want that fellow about you again. He is not only very awkward, but insolent as well."

"I should call it straightforward," returned Florimel.

"My dear Lady Lossie! See how close he is riding to us now."

"He is anxious, I daresay, as to your Lordship's behaviour. He is like some dogs that are a little too careful of their mistresses – touchy as to how they are addressed – not a bad fault in dog – or groom either. He saved my life once, and he was a great favourite with my father: I won't hear anything against him."

"But for your own sake – just consider: – what will people say if you show any preference for a man like that?" said Liftore, who had already become jealous of the man who in his heart he feared could ride better than himself.

"My lord!" exclaimed Florimel, with a mingling of surprise and indignation in her voice, and suddenly quickening her pace, dropped him behind.

Malcolm was after her so instantly that it brought him abreast of Liftore.

"Keep your own place," said his lordship, with stern rebuke.

"I keep my place to my mistress," returned Malcolm.

Liftore looked at him as it he would strike him. But he thought better of it apparently, and rode after Florimel.

CHAPTER XX: BLUE PETER

By the time he had put up Kelpie, Malcolm found that his only chance of seeing Blue Peter before he left London, lay in going direct to the wharf. On his road he reflected on what had just passed, and was not altogether pleased with himself. He had nearly lost his temper with Liftore; and if he should act in any way unbefitting the position he had assumed, from the duties of which he was in no degree exonerated by the fact that he had assumed it for a purpose, it would not only be a failure in himself, but an impediment perhaps insurmountable in the path of his service. To attract attention was almost to insure frustration. When he reached the wharf he found they had nearly got her freight on board the smack. Blue Peter stood on the forecastle. He went to him and explained how it was that he had been unable to join him sooner.

"I didna ken ye," said Blue Peter, "in sic playactor kin' o' claes."

"Nobody in London would look at me twice now. But you remember how we were stared at when first we came," said Malcolm.

"Ow ay!" returned Peter with almost a groan; "there's a sair cheenge past upo' you, but I'm gauin' hame to the auld w'y o' things. The herrin' 'll be aye to the fore, I'm thinkin'; an' gien we getna a harbour we'll get a h'aven."

Judging it better to take no notice of this pretty strong expression of distrust and disappointment, Malcolm led him aside, and putting a few sovereigns in his hand, said,

"Here, Peter, that will take you home."

"It's ower muckle – a heap ower muckle. I'll tak naething frae ye but what'll pay my w'y."

"And what is such a trifle between friends?"

"There was a time, Ma'colm, whan what was mine was yours, an' what was yours was mine, but that time's gane."

"I'm sorry to hear that, Peter; but still I owe you as much as that for bare wages."

"There was no word o' wages when ye said, Peter, come to Lon'on wi' me. – Davie there – he maun hae his wauges."

"Weel," said Malcolm, thinking it better to give way, "I'm no abune bein' obleeged to ye, Peter. I maun bide my time, I see, for ye winna lippen till me. Eh man! your faith's sune at the wa'."

"Faith! what faith?" returned Peter, almost fiercely. "We're tauld to put no faith in man; an' gien I bena come to that yet freely, I'm nearer till't nor ever I was afore."

"Weel, Peter, a' 'at I can say is, I ken my ain hert, an' ye dinna ken't."

"Daur ye tell me!" cried Peter. "Disna the Scriptur' itsel' say the hert o' man is deceitfu' an' despratly wickit: who can know it?"

"Peter," said Malcolm, and he spoke very gently, for he understood that love and not hate was at the root of his friend's

anger and injustice, "gien ye winna lippen to me, there's naething for't but I maun lippen to you. Gang hame to yer wife, an' gi'e her my compliments, an' tell her a' 'at's past atween you an' me, as near, word for word, as ye can tell the same; an' say till her, I pray her to judge atween you an' me – an' to mak the best o' me to ye 'at she can, for I wad ill thole to loss yer freenship, Peter."

The same moment came the command for all but passengers to go ashore. The men grasped each other's hand, looked each other in the eyes with something of mutual reproach, and parted – Blue Peter down the river to Scaurnose and Annie, Malcolm to the yacht lying still in the Upper Pool.

He saw it taken properly in charge, and arranged for having it towed up the river and anchored in the Chelsea Reach.

When Blue Peter found himself once more safe out at sea, with twelve hundred yards of canvas spread above him in one mighty wing betwixt boom and gaff; and the wind blowing half a gale, the weather inside him began to change a little. He began to see that he had not been behaving altogether as a friend ought. It was not that he saw reason for being better satisfied with Malcolm or his conduct, but reason for being worse satisfied with himself; and the consequence was that he grew still angrier with Malcolm, and the wrong he had done him seemed more and more an unpardonable one.

When he was at length seated on the top of the coach running betwixt Aberdeen and Fochabers, which would set him down as near Scaurnose as coach could go, he began to be doubtful how

Annie, formally retained on Malcolm's side by the message he had to give her, would judge in the question between them; for what did she know of theatres and such places? And the doubt strengthened as he neared home. The consequence was that he felt in no haste to execute Malcolm's commission; and hence, the delights of greeting over, Annie was the first to open her bag of troubles: Mr Crathie had given them notice to quit at Midsummer.

"Jist what I micht hae expeckit!" cried Blue Peter, starting up. "Woe be to the man 'at puts his trust in princes! I luikit till him to save the fisher fowk, an' no to the Lord; an' the tooer o' Siloam 's fa'en upo' my heid: – what does he, the first thing, but turn his ain auld freen's oot o' the sma beild they had! That his father nor his gran'father, 'at was naither o' them God fearin' men, wad never hae put their han' till. Eh, wuman! but my hert's sair 'ithin me. To think o' Ma'colm MacPhail turnin' his back upo' them 'at's been freens wi' 'im sin ever he was a wee loonie, rinnin' aboot in coaties!"

"Hoot, man! what's gotten intill yer heid?" returned his wife. "It's no Ma'colm; it's the illwully factor. Bide ye till he comes till 's ain, an' Maister Crathie 'll hae to lauch o' the wrang side o' 's mou'."

But thereupon Peter began his tale of how he had fared in London, and in the excitement of keenly anticipated evil, and with his recollection of events wrapped in the mist of a displeasure which had deepened during his journey, he so

clothed the facts of Malcolm's conduct in the garments of his own feelings that the mind of Annie Mair also became speedily possessed with the fancy that their friend's good fortune had upset his moral equilibrium, and that he had not only behaved to her husband with pride and arrogance, breaking all the ancient bonds of friendship between them, but had tried to seduce him from the ways of righteousness by inveigling him into a playhouse, where marvels of wickedness were going on at the very time. She wept a few bitter tears of disappointment, dried them hastily, lifted her head high, and proceeded to set her affairs in order as if death were at the door.

For indeed it was to them as a death to leave Scaurnose. True, Annie came from inland, and was not of the fisher race, but this part of the coast she had known from childhood, and in this cottage all her married years had been spent, while banishment of the sort involved banishment from every place they knew, for all the neighbourhood was equally under the power of the factor. And poor as their accommodation here was, they had plenty of open air and land room; whereas if they should be compelled to go to any of the larger ports, it would be to circumstances greatly inferior, and a neighbourhood in all probability very undesirable for their children.

CHAPTER XXI: MR GRAHAM

When Malcolm at length reached his lodging, he found there a letter from Miss Horn, containing the much desired information as to where the schoolmaster was to be found in the London wilderness. It was now getting rather late, and the dusk of a spring night had begun to gather; but little more than the breadth of the Regent's Park lay between him and his best friend – his only one in London – and he set out immediately for Camden Town.

The relation between him and his late schoolmaster was indeed of the strongest and closest. Long before Malcolm was born, and ever since, had Alexander Graham loved Malcolm's mother; but not until within the last few months had he learned that Malcolm was the son of Griselda Campbell. The discovery was to the schoolmaster like the bursting out of a known flower on an unknown plant. He knew then, not why he had loved the boy, for he loved every one of his pupils more or less, but why he had loved him with such a peculiar tone of affection.

It was a lovely evening. There had been rain in the afternoon as Malcolm walked home from the Pool, but before the sun set it had cleared up; and as he went through the park towards the dingy suburb, the first heralds of the returning youth of the year met him from all sides in the guise of odours – not yet those of flowers, but the more ethereal if less sweet, scents of buds and grass, and ever pure earth moistened with the waters of heaven.

And to his surprise he found that his sojourn in a great city, although as yet so brief, had already made the open earth with its corn and grass more dear to him and wonderful. But when he left the park, and crossed the Hampstead Road into a dreary region of dwellings crowded and commonplace as the thoughts of a worshipper of Mammon, houses upon houses, here and there shepherded by a tall spire, it was hard to believe that the spring was indeed coming slowly up this way.

After not a few inquiries, he found himself at a stationer's shop, a poor little place, and learned that Mr Graham lodged over it, and was then at home.

He was shown up into a shabby room, with an iron bedstead, a chest of drawers daubed with sickly paint, a table with a stained red cover, a few bookshelves in a recess over the washstand, and two chairs seated with haircloth. On one of these, by the side of a small fire in a neglected grate, sat the schoolmaster reading his Plato. On the table beside him lay his Greek New Testament, and an old edition of George Herbert. He looked up as the door opened, and, notwithstanding his strange dress, recognising at once his friend and pupil, rose hastily, and welcomed him with hand and eyes, and countenance, but without word spoken. For a few moments the two stood silent, holding each the other's hand, and gazing each in the other's eyes, then sat down, still speechless, one on each side of the fire.

They looked at each other and smiled, and again a minute passed. Then the schoolmaster rose, rang the bell, and when it

was answered by a rather careworn young woman, requested her to bring tea.

"I'm sorry I cannot give you cakes or fresh butter, my lord," he said with a smile, and they were the first words spoken. "The former is not to be had, and the latter is beyond my means. But what I have will content one who is able to count that abundance which many would count privation."

He spoke in the choice word, measured phrase, and stately speech which Wordsworth says "grave livers do in Scotland use," but under it all rang a tone of humour, as if he knew the form of his utterance too important for the subject matter of it, and would gently amuse with it both his visitor and himself.

He was a man of middle height, but so thin that notwithstanding a slight stoop in the shoulders, he looked rather tall; much on the young side of fifty, but apparently a good way on the other, partly from the little hair he had being grey. He had sandy coloured whiskers, and a shaven chin. Except his large sweetly closed mouth, and rather long upper lip, there was nothing very notable in his features. At ordinary moments, indeed, there was nothing in his appearance other than insignificant to the ordinary observer. His eyes were of a pale quiet blue, but when he smiled they sparkled and throbbed with light. He wore the same old black tailcoat he had worn last in his school at Portlossie, but the white neckcloth he had always been seen in there had given place to a black one: that was the sole change in the aspect of the man.

About Portlossie he had been greatly respected, notwithstanding the rumour that he was a "stickit minister," that is, one who had failed in the attempt to preach; and when the presbytery dismissed him on the charge of heresy, there had been many tears on the part of his pupils, and much childish defiance of his unenviable successor.

Few words passed between the two men until they had had their tea, and then followed a long talk, Malcolm first explaining his present position, and then answering many questions of the master as to how things had gone since he left. Next followed anxious questions on Malcolm's side as to how his friend found himself in the prison of London.

"I do miss the air, and the laverocks (skylarks), and the gowans," he confessed; "but I have them all in my mind, and at my age a man ought to be able to satisfy himself with the idea of a thing in his soul. Of outer things that have contributed to his inward growth, the memory alone may then well be enough. The sights which, when I lie down to sleep, rise before that inward eye Wordsworth calls the bliss of solitude, have upon me power almost of a spiritual vision, so purely radiant are they of that which dwells in them, the divine thought which is their substance, their hypostasis. My boy! I doubt if you can tell what it is to know the presence of the living God in and about you."

"I houp I hae a bit notion o' 't, sir," said Malcolm.

"But believe me that in any case, however much a man may have of it, he may have it endlessly more. Since I left the cottage

where I hoped to end my days under the shadow of the house of your ancestors, since I came into this region of bricks and smoke, and the crowded tokens too plain of want and care, I have found a reality in the things I had been trying to teach you at Portlossie, such as I had before imagined only in my best moments. And more still: I am now far better able to understand how it must have been with our Lord when he was trying to teach the men and women of Palestine to have faith in God. Depend upon it, we get our best use of life in learning by the facts of its ebb and flow to understand the Son of Man. And again, when we understand Him, then only do we understand our life and ourselves. Never can we know the majesty of the will of God concerning us except by understanding Jesus and the work the Father gave Him to do. Now, nothing is of a more heavenly delight than to enter into a dusky room in the house of your friend, and there, with a blow of the heavenly rod, draw light from the dark wall – open a window, a fountain of the eternal light, and let in the truth which is the life of the world. Joyously would a man spend his life, right joyously even if the road led to the gallows, in showing the grandest he sees – the splendid purities of the divine religion – the mountain top up to which the voice of God is ever calling his children. Yes, I can understand even how a man might live, like the good hermits of old, in triumphant meditation upon such all satisfying truths, and let the waves of the world's time wash by him in unheeded flow until his cell changed to his tomb, and his spirit soared free. But to spend your time in giving little lessons when you

have great ones to give; in teaching the multiplication table the morning after you made at midnight a grand discovery upon the very summits of the moonlit mountain range of the mathematics; in enforcing the old law, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself when you know in your own heart that not a soul can ever learn to keep it without first learning to fulfil an infinitely greater one – to love his neighbour even as Christ hath loved him – then indeed one may well grow disheartened, and feel as if he were not in the place prepared for, and at the work required of him. But it is just then that he must go back to school himself and learn not only the patience of God who keeps the whole dull obstinate world alive, while generation after generation is born and vanishes, and of the mighty multitude only one here and there rises up from the fetters of humanity into the freedom of the sons of God – and yet goes on teaching the whole, and bringing every man who will but turn his ear a little towards the voice that calls him, nearer and nearer to the second birth – of sonship and liberty – not only this divine patience must he learn, but the divine insight as well, which in every form spies the reflex of the truth it cannot contain, and in every lowliest lesson sees the highest drawn nearer, and the soul growing alive unto God."

CHAPTER XXII:
RICHMOND PARK

The next day at noon, mounted on Kelpie, Malcolm was in attendance upon his mistress, who was eager after a gallop in Richmond Park. Lord Liftore, who had intended to accompany her, had not made his appearance yet, but Florimel did not seem the less desirous of setting out at the time she had appointed Malcolm. The fact was she had said one o'clock to Liftore, intending twelve, that she might get away without him. Kelpie seemed on her good behaviour, and they started quietly enough. By the time they had got out of the park upon the Kensington Road, however, the evil spirit had begun to wake in her. But even when she was quietest, she was nothing to be trusted, and about London Malcolm found he dared never let his thoughts go, or take his attention quite off her ears. They got to Kew Bridge in safety nevertheless, though whether they were to get safely across was doubtful all the time they were upon it, for again and again she seemed on the very point of clearing the stone balustrade, but for the terrible bit and chain without which Malcolm never dared ride her. Still, whatever her caracoles or escapades, they caused Florimel nothing but amusement, for her confidence in Malcolm – that he could do whatever he believed he could – was unbounded. They got through Richmond – with

some trouble, but hardly were they well into the park, when Lord Liftore, followed by his groom, came suddenly up behind them at such a rate as quite destroyed the small stock of equanimity Kelpie had to go upon. She bolted.

Florimel was a good rider, and knew herself quite mistress of her horse, and if she now followed, it was at her own will, and with a design; she wanted to make the horses behind her bolt also if she could. His lordship came flying after her, and his groom after him, but she kept increasing her pace until they were all at full stretch, thundering over the grass – upon which Malcolm had at once turned Kelpie, giving her little rein and plenty of spur. Gradually Florimel slackened speed, and at last pulled up suddenly. Liftore and his groom went past her like the wind. She turned at right angles and galloped back to the road. There, on a gaunt thoroughbred, with a furnace of old life in him yet, sat Lenorme, whom she had already passed and signalled to remain thereabout. They drew alongside of each other, but they did not shake hands; they only looked each in the other's eyes, and for a few moments neither spoke. The three riders were now far away over the park, and still Kelpie held on and the other horses after her. "I little expected such a pleasure," said Lenorme.

"I meant to give it you, though," said Florimel, with a merry laugh. "Bravo, Kelpie! take them with you," she cried, looking after the still retreating horsemen. "I have got a familiar since I saw you last, Raoul," she went on. "See if I don't get some good for us out of him! – We'll move gently along the road here, and

by the time Liftore's horse is spent, we shall be ready for a good gallop. I want to tell you all about it. I did not mean Liftore to be here when I sent you word, but he has been too much for me."

Lenorme replied with a look of gratitude; and as they walked their horses along, she told him all concerning Malcolm and Kelpie.

"Liftore hates him already," she said, "and I can hardly wonder; but you must not, for you will find him useful. He is one I can depend upon. You should have seen the look Liftore gave him when he told him he could not sit his mare! It would have been worth gold to you."

Lenorme winced a little.

"He thinks no end of his riding," Florimel continued; "but if it were not so improper to have secrets with another gentleman, I would tell you that he rides – just pretty well."

Lenorme's great brow gloomed over his eyes like the Eiger in a mist, but he said nothing yet.

"He wants to ride Kelpie, and I have told my groom to let him have her. Perhaps she'll break his neck."

Lenorme smiled grimly.

"You wouldn't mind, would you, Raoul?" added Florimel, with a roguish look.

"Would you mind telling me, Florimel, what you mean by the impropriety of having secrets with another gentleman? Am I the other gentleman?"

"Why, of course! You know Liftore imagined he has only to

name the day."

"And you allow an idiot like that to cherish such a degrading idea of you."

"Why, Raoul! what does it matter what a fool like him thinks?"

"If you don't mind it, I do. I feel it an insult to me that he should dare think of you like that."

"I don't know. I suppose I shall have to marry him some day."

"Lady Lossie, do you want to make me hate you?"

"Don't be foolish, Raoul. It won't be tomorrow – nor the next day. Freuet euch des Lebens!"

"0 Florimel! what is to come of this? Do you want to break my heart? – I hate to talk rubbish. You won't kill me – you will only ruin my work, and possibly drive me mad."

Florimel drew close to his side, laid her hand on his arm, and looked in his face with a witching entreaty.

"We have the present, Raoul," she said.

"So has the butterfly," answered Lenorme; "but I had rather be the caterpillar with a future. – Why don't you put a stop to the man's lovemaking? He can't love you or any woman. He does not know what love means. It makes me ill to hear him when he thinks he is paying you irresistible compliments. They are so silly! so mawkish! Good heavens, Florimel! can you imagine that smile every day and always? Like the rest of his class he seems to think himself perfectly justified in making fools of women. I want to help you to grow as beautiful as God meant you to be

when he thought of you first. I want you to be my embodied vision of life, that I may for ever worship at your feet – live in you, die with you: such bliss, even were there nothing beyond, would be enough for the heart of a God to bestow."

"Stop, stop, Raoul; I'm not worthy of such love," said Florimel, again laying her hand on his arm. "I do wish for your sake I had been born a village girl."

"If you had been, then I might have wished for your sake that I had been born a marquis. As it is I would rather be a painter than any nobleman in Europe – that is, with you to love me. Your love is my patent of nobility. But I may glorify what you love – and tell you that I can confer something on you also – what none of your noble admirers can. – God forgive me! you will make me hate them all!"

"Raoul, this won't do at all," said Florimel, with the authority that should belong only to the one in the right. And indeed for the moment she felt the dignity of restraining a too impetuous passion. "You will spoil everything. I dare not come to your studio if you are going to behave like this. It would be very wrong of me. And if I am never to come and see you, I shall die – I know I shall."

The girl was so full of the delight of the secret love between them, that she cared only to live in the present as if there were no future beyond: Lenorme wanted to make that future like but better than the present. The word marriage put Florimel in a rage. She thought herself superior to Lenorme, because he, in

the dread of losing her, would have her marry him at once, while she was more than content with the bliss of seeing him now and then. Often and often her foolish talk stung him with bitter pain – worst of all when it compelled him to doubt whether there was that in her to be loved as he was capable of loving. Yet always the conviction that there was a deep root of nobleness in her nature again got uppermost; and, had it not been so, I fear he would, nevertheless, have continued to prove her irresistible as often as she chose to exercise upon him the full might of her witcheries. At one moment she would reveal herself in such a sudden rush of tenderness as seemed possible only to one ready to become his altogether and for ever; the next she would start away as if she had never meant anything, and talk as if not a thought were in her mind beyond the cultivation of a pleasant acquaintance doomed to pass with the season, if not with the final touches to her portrait. Or she would fall to singing some song he had taught her, more likely a certain one he had written in a passionate mood of bitter tenderness, with the hope of stinging her love to some show of deeper life; but would, while she sang, look with merry defiance in his face, as if she adopted in seriousness what he had written in loving and sorrowful satire.

They rode in silence for some hundred yards. At length he spoke, replying to her last asseveration. "Then what can you gain, child," he said –

"Will you dare to call me child – a marchioness in my own right!" she cried, playfully threatening him with uplifted whip,

in the handle of which the little jewels sparkled.

"What, then, can you gain, my lady marchioness," he resumed, with soft seriousness, and a sad smile, "by marrying one of your own rank? – I should lay new honour and consideration at your feet. I am young. I have done fairly well already. But I have done nothing to what I could do now, if only my heart lay safe in the port of peace: – you know where alone that is for me my – lady marchioness. And you know too that the names of great painters go down with honour from generation to generation, when my lord this or my lord that is remembered only as a label to the picture that makes the painter famous. I am not a great painter yet, but I will be one if you will be good to me. And men shall say, when they look on your portrait, in ages to come: No wonder he was such a painter when he had such a woman to paint."

He spoke the words with a certain tone of dignified playfulness.

"When shall the woman sit to you again, painter?" said Florimel – sole reply to his rhapsody.

The painter thought a little. Then he said:

"I don't like that tire woman of yours. She has two evil eyes – one for each of us. I have again and again caught their expression when they were upon us, and she thought none were upon her: I can see without lifting my head when I am painting, and my art has made me quick at catching expressions, and, I hope, at interpreting them."

"I don't altogether like her myself," said Florimel. "Of late I

am not so sure of her as I used to be. But what can I do? I must have somebody with me, you know. – A thought strikes me. Yes. I won't say now what it is lest I should disappoint my – painter; but – yes – you shall see what I will dare for you, faithless man!"

She set off at a canter, turned on to the grass, and rode to meet Liftore, whom she saw in the distance returning, followed by the two grooms.

"Come on, Raoul," she cried, looking back; "I must account for you. He sees I have not been alone."

Lenorme joined her, and they rode along side by side.

The earl and the painter knew each other: as they drew near, the painter lifted his hat, and the earl nodded.

"You owe Mr Lenorme some acknowledgment, my lord, for taking charge of me after your sudden desertion," said Florimel. "Why did you gallop off in such a mad fashion?"

"I am sorry," began Liftore a little embarrassed.

"Oh! don't trouble yourself to apologise," said Florimel. "I have always understood that great horsemen find a horse more interesting than a lady. It is a mark of their breed, I am told."

She knew that Liftore would not be ready to confess he could not hold his hack.

"If it hadn't been for Mr Lenorme," she added, "I should have been left without a squire, subject to any whim of my four footed servant here."

As she spoke she patted the neck of her horse. The earl, on his side, had been looking the painter's horse up and down with

a would be humorous expression of criticism.

"I beg your pardon, marchioness," he replied; "but you pulled up so quickly that we shot past you. I thought you were close behind, and preferred following. – Seen his best days, eh, Lenorme?" he concluded, willing to change the subject.

"I fancy he doesn't think so," returned the painter. "I bought him out of a butterman's cart, three months ago. He's been coming to himself ever since. Look at his eye, my lord."

"Are you knowing in horses, then?"

"I can't say I am, beyond knowing how to treat them something like human beings."

"That's no ill," said Malcolm to himself. He was just near enough, on the pawing and foaming Kelpie, to catch what was passing. – "The fallow 'll du. He's worth a score o' sic yerls as yon."

"Ha! ha!" said his lordship; "I don't know about that – He's not the best of tempers, I can see. But look at that demon of Lady Lossie's – that black mare there! I wish you could teach her some of your humanity.

"– By the way, Florimel, I think now we are upon the grass," – he said it loftily, as if submitting to an injustice – "I will presume to mount the reprobate."

The gallop had communicated itself to Liftore's blood, and, besides, he thought after such a run Kelpie would be less extravagant in her behaviour.

"She is at your service," said Florimel.

He dismounted, his groom rode up, he threw him the reins, and called Malcolm.

"Bring your mare here, my man," he said.

Malcolm rode her up half way, and dismounted.

"If your lordship is going to ride her," he said, "will you please get on her here. I would rather not take her near the other horses."

"Well, you know her better than I do. – You and I must ride about the same length, I think."

So saying his lordship carelessly measured the stirrup leather against his arm, and took the reins.

"Stand well forward, my lord. Don't mind turning your back to her head: I'll look after her teeth; you mind her hind hoof," said Malcolm, with her head in one hand and the stirrup in the other.

Kelpie stood rigid as a rock, and the earl swung himself up cleverly enough. But hardly was he in the saddle, and Malcolm had just let her go, when she plunged and lashed out; then, having failed to unseat her rider, stood straight up on her hind legs.

"Give her her head, my lord," cried Malcolm.

She stood swaying in the air, Liftore's now frightened face half hid in her mane, and his spurs stuck in her flanks.

"Come off her, my lord, for God's sake. Off with you!" cried Malcolm, as he leaped at her head. "She'll be on her back in a moment."

Liftore only clung the harder. Malcolm caught her head – just in time: she was already falling backwards.

"Let all go, my lord. Throw yourself off."

He swung her towards him with all his strength, and just as his lordship fell off behind her, she fell sideways to Malcolm, and clear of Liftore.

Malcolm was on the side away from the little group, and their own horses were excited, those who had looked breathless on at the struggle could not tell how he had managed it, but when they expected to see the groom writhing under the weight of the demoness, there he was with his knee upon her head – while Liftore was gathering himself up from the ground, only just beyond the reach of her iron shod hoofs.

"Thank God!" said Florimel, "there is no harm done. – Well, have you had enough of her yet, Liftore?"

"Pretty nearly, I think," said his lordship, with an attempt at a laugh, as he walked rather feebly and foolishly towards his horse. He mounted with some difficulty, and looked very pale.

"I hope you're not much hurt," said Florimel kindly, as she moved alongside of him.

"Not in the least – only disgraced," he answered, almost angrily. "The brute's a perfect Satan. You must part with her. With such a horse and such a groom you'll get yourself talked of all over London. I believe the fellow himself was at the bottom of it. You really must sell her."

"I would, my lord, if you were my groom," answered Florimel, whom his accusation of Malcolm had filled with angry contempt; and she moved away towards the still prostrate mare.

Malcolm was quietly seated on her head. She had ceased

sprawling, and lay nearly motionless, but for the heaving of her sides with her huge inhalations. She knew from experience that struggling was useless.

"I beg your pardon, my lady," said Malcolm, "but I daren't get up."

"How long do you mean to sit there then?" she asked.

"If your ladyship wouldn't mind riding home without me, I would give her a good half hour of it. I always do when she throws herself over like that. – I've gat my Epictetus?" he asked himself feeling in his coat pocket.

"Do as you please," answered his mistress. "Let me see you when you get home. I should like to know you are safe."

"Thank you, my lady; there's little fear of that," said Malcolm.

Florimel returned to the gentlemen, and they rode homewards. On the way she said suddenly to the earl,

"Can you tell me, Liftore, who Epictetus was?"

"I'm sure I don't know," answered his lordship. "One of the old fellows."

She turned to Lenorme. Happily the Christian heathen was not altogether unknown to the painter.

"May I inquire why your ladyship asks?" he said, when he had told all he could at the moment recollect.

"Because," she answered, "I left my groom sitting on his horse's head reading Epictetus."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Liftore. "Ha! ha! ha! In the original, I suppose!"

"I don't doubt it," said Florimel.

In about two hours Malcolm reported himself. Lord Liftore had gone home, they told him. The painter fellow, as Wallis called him, had stayed to lunch, but was now gone also, and Lady Lossie was alone in the drawing room.

She sent for him.

"I am glad to see you safe, MacPhail," she said. "It is clear your Kelpie – don't be alarmed; I am not going to make you part with her – but it is clear she won't always do for you to attend me upon. Suppose now I wanted to dismount and make a call, or go into a shop?"

"There's a sort of a friendship between your Abbot and her, my lady; she would stand all the better if I had him to hold."

"Well, but how would you put me up again?"

"I never thought of that, my lady. Of course I daren't let you come near Kelpie."

"Could you trust yourself to buy another horse to ride after me about town?"

"No, my lady, not without a ten days' trial. If lies stuck like London mud, there's many a horse would never be seen again. But there's Mr Lenorme! If he would go with me, I fancy between us we could do pretty well."

"Ah! a good idea," returned his mistress. "But what makes you think of him?" she added, willing enough to talk about him.

"The look of the gentleman and his horse together, and what I heard him say," answered Malcolm.

"What did you hear him say?"

"That he knew he had to treat horses something like human beings. I've often fancied, within the last few months, that God does with some people something like as I do with Kelpie."

"I know nothing about theology."

"I don't fancy you do, my lady; but this concerns biography rather than theology. No one could tell what I meant except he had watched his own history, and that of people he knew."

"And horses too?"

"It's hard to get at their insides, my lady, but I suspect it must be so. I'll ask Mr Graham."

"What Mr Graham?"

"The schoolmaster of Portlossie."

"Is he in London, then?"

"Yes, my lady. He believed too much to please the presbytery, and they turned him out."

"I should like to see him. He was very attentive to my father on his death bed."

"Your ladyship will never know till you are dead yourself what Mr Graham did for my lord."

"What do you mean? What could he do for him?"

"He helped him through sore trouble of mind, my lady."

Florimel was silent for a little, then repeated, "I should like to see him. I ought to pay him some attention. Couldn't I make them give him his school again?"

"I don't know about that, my lady; but I am sure he would not

take it against the will of the presbytery."

"I should like to do something for him. Ask him to call."

"If your ladyship lays your commands upon me," answered Malcolm; "otherwise I would rather not."

"Why so, pray?"

"Because, except he can be of any use to you, he will not come."

"But I want to be of use to him."

"How, if I may ask, my lady?"

"That I can't exactly say on the spur of the moment. I must know the man first – especially if you are right in supposing he would not enjoy a victory over the presbytery. I should. He wouldn't take money, I fear."

"Except it came of love or work, he would put it from him as he would brush the dust from his coat."

"I could introduce him to good society. That is no small privilege to one of his station."

"He has more of that and better than your ladyship could give him. He holds company with Socrates and St. Paul, and greater still."

"But they're not like living people."

"Very like them, my lady – only far better company in general. But Mr Graham would leave Plato himself – yes, or St. Paul either, though he were sitting beside him in the flesh, to go and help any old washerwoman that wanted him."

"Then I want him."

"No, my lady, you don't want him."

"How dare you say so?"

"If you did, you would go to him."

Florimel's eyes flashed, and her pretty lip curled. She turned to her writing table, annoyed with herself that she could not find a fitting word wherewith to rebuke his presumption – rudeness, was it not? – and a feeling of angry shame arose in her, that she, the Marchioness of Lossie, had not dignity enough to prevent her own groom from treating her like a child. But he was far too valuable to quarrel with.

She sat down and wrote a note.

"There," she said, "take that note to Mr Lenorme. I have asked him to help you in the choice of a horse."

"What price would you be willing to go to, my lady?"

"I leave that to Mr Lenorme's judgment – and your own," she added.

"Thank you, my lady," said Malcolm, and was leaving the room, when Florimel called him back.

"Next time you see Mr Graham," she said, "give him my compliments, and ask him if I can be of any service to him."

"I'll do that, my lady. I am sure he will take it very kindly."

Florimel made no answer, and Malcolm went to find the painter.

CHAPTER XXIII:
PAINTER AND GROOM

The address upon the note Malcolm had to deliver took him to a house in Chelsea – one of a row of beautiful old houses fronting the Thames, with little gardens between them and the road. The one he sought was overgrown with creepers, most of them now covered with fresh spring buds. The afternoon had turned cloudy, and a cold east wind came up the river, which, as the tide was falling, raised little waves on its surface and made Malcolm think of the herring. Somehow, as he went up to the door, a new chapter of his life seemed about to commence.

The servant who took the note, returned immediately, and showed him up to the study, a large back room, looking over a good sized garden, with stables on one side. There Lenorme sat at his easel.

"Ah!" he said, "I'm glad to see that wild animal has not quite torn you to pieces. Take a chair. What on earth made you bring such an incarnate fury to London?"

"I see well enough now, sir, she's not exactly the one for London use, but if you had once ridden her, you would never quite enjoy another between your knees."

"She's such an infernal brute!"

"You can't say too ill of her. But I fancy a gaol chaplain

sometimes takes the most interest in the worst villain under his charge. I should be a proud man to make her fit to live with decent people."

"I'm afraid she'll be too much for you. At last you'll have to part with her, I fear."

"If she had bitten you as often as she has me, sir, you wouldn't part with her. Besides, it would be wrong to sell her. She would only be worse with anyone else. But, indeed, though you will hardly believe it, she is better than she was."

"Then what must she have been!"

"You may well say that, sir!"

"Here your mistress tells me you want my assistance in choosing another horse."

"Yes, sir – to attend upon her in London."

"I don't profess to be knowing in horses: what made you think of me?"

"I saw how you sat your own horse, sir, and I heard you say you bought him out of a butterman's cart, and treated him like a human being: that was enough for me, sir. I've long had the notion that the beasts, poor things, have a half sleeping, half waking human soul in them, and it was a great pleasure to hear you say something of the same sort. 'That gentleman,' I said to myself, '– he and I would understand one another.'"

"I am glad you think so," said Lenorme, with entire courtesy. – It was not merely that the very doubtful recognition of his profession by society had tended to keep him clear of his

prejudices, but both as a painter and a man he found the young fellow exceedingly attractive; – as a painter from the rare combination of such strength with such beauty, and as a man from a certain yet rarer clarity of nature which to the vulgar observer seems fatuity until he has to encounter it in action, when the contrast is like meeting a thunderbolt. Naturally the dishonest takes the honest for a fool. Beyond his understanding, he imagines him beneath it. But Lenorme, although so much more a man of the world, was able in a measure to look into Malcolm and appreciate him. His nature and his art combined in enabling him to do this.

"You see, sir," Malcolm went on, encouraged by the simplicity of Lenorme's manner, "if they were nothing like us, how should we be able to get on with them at all, teach them anything, or come a hair nearer them, do what we might? For all her wickedness I firmly believe Kelpie has a sort of regard for me – I won't call it affection, but perhaps it comes as near that as may be possible in the time to one of her temper."

"Now I hope you will permit me, Mr MacPhail," said Lenorme, who had been paying more attention to Malcolm than to his words, "to give a violent wrench to the conversation, and turn it upon yourself. You can't be surprised, and I hope you will not be annoyed, if I say you strike one as not altogether like your calling. No London groom I have ever spoken to, in the least resembles you. How is it?"

"I hope you don't mean to imply, sir, that I don't know my

business," returned Malcolm, laughing.

"Anything but that! It were nearer the thing to say, that for all I know you may understand mine as well."

"I wish I did, sir. Except the pictures at Lossie House and those in Portland Place, I've never seen one in my life. About most of them I must say I find it hard to imagine what better the world is for them. Mr Graham says that no work that doesn't tend to make the world better makes it richer. If he were a heathen, he says, he would build a temple to Ses, the sister of Psyche."

"Ses? – I don't remember her," said Lenorme.

"The moth, sir; – 'the moth and the rust,' you know."

"Yes, yes; now I know! Capital! Only more things may tend to make the world better than some people think. – Who is this Mr Graham of yours? He must be no common man."

"You are right there, sir; there is not another like him in the whole world, I believe."

And thereupon Malcolm set himself to give the painter an idea of the schoolmaster.

When they had talked about him for a little while,

"Well, all this accounts for your being a scholar," said Lenorme; "but –"

"I am little enough of that, sir," interrupted Malcolm. "Any Scotch boy that likes to learn finds the way open to him."

"I am aware of that. But were you really reading Epictetus when we left you in the park this morning?"

"Yes, sir: why not?"

"In the original?"

"Yes, sir; but not very readily. I am a poor Greek scholar. But my copy has a rough Latin translation on the opposite page, and that helps me out. It's not difficult. You would think nothing of it if it had been Cornelius Nepos, or Cordery's Colloquies. It's only a better, not a more difficult book."

"I don't know about that. It's not every one who can read Greek that can understand Epictetus. Tell me what you have learned from him?"

"That would be hard to do. A man is very ready to forget how he came first to think of the things he loves best. You see they are as much a necessity of your being as they are of the man's who thought them first. I can no more do without the truth than Plato. It is as much my needful food and as fully mine to possess as his. His having it, Mr Graham says, was for my sake as well as his own. – It's just like what Sir Thomas Browne says about the faces of those we love – that we cannot retain the idea of them because they are ourselves. Those that help the world must be served like their master and a good deal forgotten, I fancy. Of course they don't mind it. – I remember another passage I think says something to the same purpose – one in Epictetus himself," continued Malcolm, drawing the little book from his pocket and turning over the leaves, while Lenorme sat waiting, wondering, and careful not to interrupt him.

He turned to the forty-second chapter, and began to read from the Greek.

"I've forgotten all the Greek I ever had," said Lenorme.

Then Malcolm turned to the opposite page and began to read the Latin.

"Tut! tut!" said Lenorme, "I can't follow your Scotch pronunciation."

"That's a pity," said Malcolm: "it's the right way."

"I don't doubt it. You Scotch are always in the right! But just read it off in English – will you?"

Thus adjured, Malcolm read slowly and with choice of word and phrase

"'And if any one shall say unto thee, that thou knowest nothing, notwithstanding thou must not be vexed: then know thou that thou hast begun thy work.' – That is," explained Malcolm, "when you keep silence about principles in the presence of those that are incapable of understanding them. – 'For the sheep also do not manifest to the shepherds how much they have eaten, by producing fodder; but, inwardly digesting their food, they produce outwardly wool and milk. And thou therefore set not forth principles before the unthinking, but the actions that result from the digestion of them.' – That last is not quite literal, but I think it's about right," concluded Malcolm, putting the book again in the breast pocket of his silver buttoned coat. "– That's the passage I thought of, but I see now it won't apply. He speaks of not saying what you know; I spoke of forgetting where you got it."

"Come now," said Lenorme, growing more and more

interested in his new acquaintance, "tell me something about your life. Account for yourself. – If you will make a friendship of it, you must do that."

"I will, sir," said Malcolm, and with the word began to tell him most things he could think of as bearing upon his mental history up to and after the time also when his birth was disclosed to him. In omitting that disclosure he believed he had without it quite accounted for himself. Through the whole recital he dwelt chiefly on the lessons and influences of the schoolmaster.

"Well, I must admit," said Lenorme when he had ended, "that you are no longer unintelligible, not to say incredible. You have had a splendid education, in which I hope you give the herring and Kelpie their due share."

He sat silently regarding him for a few moments. Then he said:

"I'll tell you what now: if I help you to buy a horse, you must help me to paint a picture."

"I don't know how I'm to do that," said Malcolm, "but if you do, that's enough. I shall only be too happy to do what I can."

"Then I'll tell you. – But you're not to tell anybody: it's a secret. – I have discovered that there is no suitable portrait of Lady Lossie's father. It is a great pity. His brother and his father and grandfather are all in Portland Place, in Highland costume, as chiefs of their clan; his place only is vacant. Lady Lossie, however, has in her possession one or two miniatures of him, which, although badly painted, I should think may give the outlines of his face and head with tolerable correctness. From

the portraits of his predecessors, and from Lady Lossie herself, I gain some knowledge of what is common to the family; and from all together I hope to gather and paint what will be recognizable by her as a likeness of her father – which afterwards I hope to better by her remarks. These remarks I hope to get first from her feelings unadulterated by criticism, through the surprise of coming upon the picture suddenly; afterwards from her judgment at its leisure. Now I remember seeing you wait at table – the first time I saw you – in the Highland dress: will you come to me so dressed, and let me paint from you?"

"I'll do better than that, sir," cried Malcolm, eagerly. "I'll get up from Lossie Home my lord's very dress that he wore when he went to court – his jewelled dirk, and Andrew Ferrara broadsword with the hilt of real silver. That'll greatly help your design upon my lady, for he dressed up in them all more than once just to please her."

"Thank you," said Lenorme very heartily; "that will be of immense advantage. Write at once."

"I will, sir. – Only I'm a bigger man than my – late master, and you must mind that."

"I'll see to it. You get the clothes, and all the rest of the accoutrements – rich with barbaric gems and gold, and"

"Neither gems nor gold, sir; – honest Scotch cairngorms and plain silver," said Malcolm.

"I only quoted Milton," returned Lenorme.

"Then you should have quoted correctly, sir. – 'Showers on

her kings barbaric pearl and gold,' – that's the line, and you can't better it. Mr Graham always pulled me up if I didn't quote correctly. – By the bye, sir, some say it's kings barbaric, but there's barbaric gold in Virgil."

"I dare say you are right," said Lenorme. "But you're far too learned for me."

"Don't make game of me, sir. I know two or three books pretty well, and when I get a chance I can't help talking about them. It's so seldom now I can get a mouthful of Milton. There's no cave here to go into, and roll the mimic thunder in your mouth. If the people here heard me reading loud out, they would call me mad. It's a mercy in this London, if a working man get loneliness enough to say his prayers in!"

"You do say your prayers then?" asked Lenorme, looking at him curiously.

"Yes; don't you, sir? You had so much sense about the beasts I thought you must be a man that said his prayers."

Lenorme was silent. He was not altogether innocent of saying prayers; but of late years it had grown a more formal and gradually a rarer thing. One reason of this was that it had never come into his head that God cared about pictures, or had the slightest interest whether he painted well or ill. If a man's earnest calling, to which of necessity the greater part of his thought is given, is altogether dissociated in his mind from his religion, it is not wonderful that his prayers should by degrees wither and die. The question is whether they ever had much vitality. But

one mighty negative was yet true of Lenorme: he had not got in his head, still less had he ever cherished in his heart, the thought that there was anything fine in disbelieving in a God, or anything contemptible in imagining communication with a being of grander essence than himself. That in which Socrates rejoiced with exultant humility, many a youth nowadays thinks himself a fine fellow for casting from him with ignorant scorn.

A true conception of the conversation above recorded can hardly be had except my reader will take the trouble to imagine the contrast between the Scotch accent and inflection, the largeness and prolongation of vowel sounds, and, above all, the Scotch tone of Malcolm, and the pure, clear articulation, and decided utterance of the perfect London speech of Lenorme. It was something like the difference between the blank verse of Young and the prose of Burke.

The silence endured so long that Malcolm began to fear he had hurt his new friend, and thought it better to take his leave.

"I'll go and write to Mrs Courthope – that's the housekeeper, tonight, to send up the things at once. When would it be convenient for you to go and look at some horses with me, Mr Lenorme?" he said.

"I shall be at home all tomorrow," answered the painter, "and ready to go with you any time you like to come for me."

As he spoke he held out his hand, and they parted like old friends.

CHAPTER XXIV: A LADY

The next morning, Malcolm took Kelpie into the park, and gave her a good breathing. He had thought to jump the rails, and let her have her head, but he found there were too many park keepers and police about: he saw he could do little for her that way. He was turning home with her again when one of her evil fits came upon her, this time taking its first form in a sudden stiffening of every muscle: she stood stock still with flaming eyes. I suspect we human beings know but little of the fierceness with which the vortices of passion rage in the more purely animal natures. This beginning he knew well would end in a wild paroxysm of rearing and plunging. He had more than once tried the exorcism of patience, sitting sedate upon her back until she chose to move; but on these occasions the tempest that followed had been of the very worst description; so that he had concluded it better to bring on the crisis, thereby sure at least to save time; and after he had adopted this mode with her, attacks of the sort, if no less violent, had certainly become fewer. The moment therefore that symptoms of an approaching fit showed themselves, he used his spiked heels with vigour. Upon this occasion he had a stiff tussle with her, but as usual gained the victory, and was riding slowly along the Row, Kelpie tossing up now her head now her heels in indignant protest against obedience in general and enforced obedience in particular, when

a lady on horseback, who had come galloping from the opposite direction, with her groom behind her, pulled up, and lifted her hand with imperative grace: she had seen something of what had been going on. Malcolm reined in. But Kelpie, after her nature, was now as unwilling to stop as she had been before to proceed, and the fight began again, with some difference of movement and aspect, but the spurs once more playing a free part.

"Man! man!" cried the lady, in most musical reproof, "do you know what you are about?"

"It would be a bad job for her and me too if I did not, my lady," said Malcolm, whom her appearance and manner impressed with a conviction of rank, and as he spoke he smiled in the midst of the struggle: he seldom got angry with Kelpie. But the smile instead of taking from the apparent roughness of his speech, only made his conduct appear in the lady's eyes more cruel.

"How is it possible you can treat the poor animal so unkindly – and in cold blood too?" she said, and an indescribable tone of pleading ran through the rebuke. "Why, her poor sides are actually –" A shudder, and look of personal distress completed the sentence.

"You don't know what she is, my lady, or you would not think it necessary to intercede for her."

"But if she is naughty, is that any reason why you should be cruel?"

"No, my lady; but it is the best reason why I should try to make her good."

"You will never make her good that way."

"Improvement gives ground for hope," said Malcolm.

"But you must not treat a poor dumb animal as you would a responsible human being."

"She's not so very poor, my lady. She has all she wants, and does nothing to earn it – nothing to speak of; and nothing at all with good will. For her dumbness, that's a mercy. If she could speak she wouldn't be fit to live among decent people. But for that matter, if some one hadn't taken her in hand, dumb as she is, she would have been shot long ago."

"Better that than live with such usage."

"I don't think she would agree with you, my lady. My fear is that, for as cruel as it looks to your ladyship, take it altogether, she enjoys the fight. In any case, I am certain she has more regard for me than any other being in the universe."

"Who can have any regard for you," said the lady very gently, in utter mistake of his meaning, "if you have no command of your temper? You must learn to rule yourself first."

"That's true, my lady; and so long as my mare is not able to be a law to herself, I must be a law to her too."

"But have you never heard of the law of kindness? You could do so much more without the severity."

"With some natures I grant you, my lady, but not with such as she. Horse or man – they never show kindness till they have learned fear. Kelpie would have torn me to pieces before now if I had taken your way with her. But except I can do a great deal

more with her yet she will be nothing better than a natural brute beast made to be taken and destroyed."

"The Bible again!" murmured the lady to herself. "Of how much cruelty has not that book to bear the blame!"

All this time Kelpie was trying hard to get at the lady's horse to bite him. But she did not see that. She was much too distressed – and was growing more and more so.

"I wish you would let my groom try her," she said, after a pitiful pause. "He's an older and more experienced man than you. He has children. He would show you what can be done by gentleness."

From Malcolm's words she had scarcely gathered even a false meaning – not a glimmer of his nature – not even a suspicion that he meant something. To her he was but a handsome, brutal young groom. From the world of thought and reasoning that lay behind his words, not an echo had reached her.

"It would be a great satisfaction to my old Adam to let him try her," said Malcolm.

"The Bible again!" said the lady to herself.

"But it would be murder," he added, "not knowing myself what experience he has had."

"I see," said the lady to herself; but loud enough for Malcolm to hear, for her tender heartedness had made her both angry and unjust, "his self conceit is equal to his cruelty – just what I might have expected!"

With the words she turned her horse's head and rode away,

leaving a lump in Malcolm's throat.

"I wuss fowk" – he still spoke in Scotch in his own chamber – "wad du as they're tell't, an' no jeedge ane anither. I'm sure it's Kelpie's best chance o' salvation 'at I gang on wi' her. Stable men wad ha'e had her brocken doon a'thegither by this time; an' life wad ha'e had little relish left."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.