

GAVIN DOUGLAS

John Sillars





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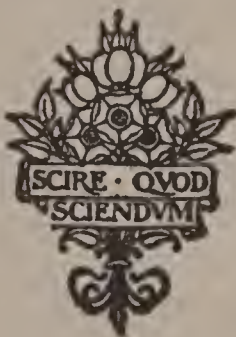
GAVIN DOUGLAS

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BY

JOHN SILLARS

AUTHOR OF "THE McBRIDES"



BOSTON

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PUBLISHERS

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CHARLES BURNS
JUNIOR

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BOOK I.

GAVIN DOUGLAS.

CHAPTER I.

THE BOY.

DR. LUDOVIC CAMPBELL shook hands with his friend, pulled a great leather chair close to the fire, and sat down.

“Well, James,” said he, “it’s ill talking between a full man and a fasting—not that you are precisely full, but it’s entirely evident that you’ve dined well.”

The dark man at the other side of the fire smiled a grim smile, disdaining to answer. He was a keen dark-visaged man with eyes slanting upwards a little, as you will have seen in old Stuart portraits: a thin beak of a nose, a long close-lipped rather brutal mouth, and a bold chin. He was James Douglas, K.C.

“I wish you to examine my son,” said he, and pressed the bell.

“Is Gavin ailing?” said Campbell quickly, as a nurse entered, leading a sleepy, cross, boy of four years, who came shyly forward and stood at his father’s knee.

“No,” said Douglas, when the nurse had left the

room. "No, but is he fit to bear wind and rain, storm and calm, hardship and toil, for that will be his rearing?"

The doctor smiled.

"Poor boy! Come here till I see if your conscience is sound—a namesake of your own found one once that clattered. What is your name, wee man?" said he.

"Gavin Sholto Alexander William James Archibald Douglas."

"Good boy, splendid! Behold a troop cometh . . . Well, you can bring the nurse back and send the boy to bed. He's as sound as a bell; he needs no examination."

In a moment the nurse stood at the door, one white hand outstretched, and at sight of her the child straightened himself and his face flushed dark red.

"Abay you go!" he cried through clenched teeth. "Abay you go; I don't mant you!" and he stamped his foot at her.

"Bless my soul!" said the doctor, "there's fire for you!"

"Gavin!"

At his father's word the boy turned. There were tears all aglisten on his long lashes, and his eyes sparkled.

"I *mant* my mam, oh, I mant my mam," and then, without another word, he ran from the room.

The doctor poured a stiff glass and handed it to Douglas.

"Drink that," said he, "and don't sit there like an iron man."

A cinder fell noisily in the grate, a clock struck remorselessly. There came that silence which is more

than silence, that silence that fidgets a nervous man and makes a woman become uneasy; but these two sat on, disdainful as rocks on a shore with the waves hurling and seething round them.

“Ay,” said Douglas, “and that’s what it is to be married.”

“I suppose you expected more—you, James Douglas,—well, well, maybe you could not help it. We are as we are made, but I’m thinking this, when you look on that boy of yours, your name and your blood, you might take shame to think ill of his mother, and that’s what I never will do. Divorced or not, I’ll think no ill of Janet Erskine.”

“Do not mention her name,” said Douglas through his teeth. “I am *bye* with that woman,” and he gazed into the fire, his chin sunk on his chest. “Oh, man, my house is fallen about me. Firstly there’s my brother Sholto’s death—Sholto is killed on a hunting trip in Africa,—and then there is the scandal anent his wife—it’s well that he never lived to learn her carry on,—and now my very wife is false. I tried, man, to keep my name from the gutter—begged for an explanation,—but all she would say was, ‘Can ye not trust me?’ Trust her, and her very servants telling of her trafficking with a man—here and there—trust her! No, I’ll trust no women, and I’ll rear my son to hate them—trust her . . . !”

“But you did not—pride, James, pride. You are worse than the poor woman in the Scriptures that suffered from the bloody flux. That at least, and with no thought of blasphemy, was amenable to treatment, but you suffer from the Bleeding Heart,¹ and that’s clean outwith the field of medicine. I’ve

¹ Douglas Crest.

observed it, man, on your shalt in the park. There, in thought, you rode in martial gear, like your ancestor of old, with twelve hunner horsemen at your tail, and the Tower of London might have been blown up for all you noticed. In your moments of leisure, you are nothing but an interesting relic of 'old, forgotten, far-off things and battles long ago.' "

"Man, I wonder to hear you talk like that, Ludovic Campbell. I could make your red Campbell blood work like barm. Glencoe, man, clean (and dirty) Campbell business yon—deid weans in the snaw, and barefit women with their throats cut and worse. Me for the winning side, says the crook-mouthed Campbell. It's a far cry to Loch Awe, but a full sporrان makes the road light. You and your Lord John of Battles! You and your Maccallum Mhor!—out on your snivelling Whigs! The pity of it is that the tribe was not smitten out at Inverlochy." There was a mocking gleam in the lawyer's eyes, there was a snarl in his voice; but the Campbell sat at ease, albeit the colour in his cheek was high and his eyelid had a droop in keeping with his bitter smile.

"Have ye done?" said he. "Your history is like your breed—it's treacherous in places. I'll admit you've made me thrill. Many a swanky, yauld lad lay stark on the heather for less. Snicker man, snicker away. They were great folk, the Douglas. They only differ from my clan in that your treachery was black, and red, both. You can tell me of the good Lord James and his seventy-two encounters—as a Scot I'm proud of him,—but can you tell me whatna pitched battle brought forth his son, the Black Knight of Liddesdale, with a bar sinister? Bell the Cat, Tineman, and Gross James, I ken them

a', but the dead Douglas o' Otterburn was the bonniest—and bonnier for that he was deid."

"Ay, Ludovic, we're like bairns, blethering and havoring on old forgotten far-off things, and getting heated over battles long ago—forgot and better forgot maybe. Well, I'm for the North, and you are coming with me."

"The North," said the doctor; "what talk is this? You are not letting go the trams because of this flagarie? There's politics, man, if you're tired of the law—you're a young man,—the ball is still at your foot."

"I'm tired, man, tired. I want to be in the open, to feel the rain, to hear the splash of oars. I'm for the Rock, and you are coming with me."

"It's the first I've heard of it. Who'll educate Gavin on the Rock?"

"Listen, man," said Douglas; "it's long since you were for retiring. Sell the practice and live with Gavin and me. Ludovic, we'll make a man of him—a Norseman, a bowman, a horseman, a knight, and never a woman near him, except Mairi on the Rock."

"But his mother will have to visit the boy. I think that his mother would be the last to let the boy out of her sight."

"That has been arranged," said Douglas with a sigh. "'She'll come,' she says, 'when we find that we need her, and not before.' She is very bitter."

"And I do not wonder either. A woman's life wasted on the evidence of hirelings! You will have no women about him, you say?"

"There will be no women about us, except Pate's wife."

"Ay, well, Mairi's a sensible body. I would rather

no women than a bad one. That's where I differ from the lave. And I will say this, and then have done. I ken the breed of Janet Erskine, your wife—your divorced wife,—and there was no crookedness in that stock. You will find that out or all's done. It does not take a Philadelphia lawyer to see that. Let me hear your plans for the life on the Rock."

While Douglas spoke the doctor rolled himself a cigarette, a frown on his brow.

"What was the scandal about Sholto's wife?" said he. "I remember the case——" and he lit his cigarette and waited.

"Sholto was soldiering in India," said Douglas impatiently, "and his wife gadding here in London, and folk talking. There was a man, of course. Then the man was found dead on his own hearth."

"Heart failure," said the doctor.

"Sholto's wife had been in his rooms that day," said Douglas, "but at the inquest she could give no evidence. She was deranged. Then came the word of Sholto's death."

"Are you sure that Sholto's dead?" Campbell's face was pale.

"Sure, man? His effects are hame—it would make ye greet,—and the residue of his estate to pass to Gavin. He has spent a lot of money, too, for all that's left, but he was aye wild for horses and racing. Aye, he's deid."

Douglas groaned. His clenched fist smashed down on the table.

"Damn women! Damn them! Let me rear the boy away from them, for the boy is all that I have left."

CHAPTER II.

ON THE ROCK.

THUS it was that on a summer day—a real summer day, with a sparkling, and winking, and glittering, on the sea, and a merry little plout and splash of waves on the gravelly shore of the Rock,—thus it was, that on such a day, you might have seen three figures crawling slowly in the drills of young turnips. A humbling job, with the hot sun burning the back of the neck, and blistering the arms—a job requiring an infinite deal of patience, crawling on sack-covered itching knees, from head-rig to head-rig.

The boy we saw in London gave promise of wide shoulders and a lean flank. He moved like a young savage, swift, and sudden, and graceful. His association with adults had given him an air of gravity foreign to his years; his talk was man's talk, with few childish mannerisms at all. He was then in the throes of becoming an archer—a bowman,—and, in the early mornings, you might see two grave men in bathing suits walking across the short, crisp, salt turf to the sea, and the little bare figure skipping between them, with a wisp of a shirt in his hand. Never a towel did his skin know, but after his leaping, and splashing, and valiant attempts at swimming, he would run on the grass by the shore, in wind or

rain or shine, and his skin was become a warm, beautiful brown, like silk. There was no method of exercises, although the doctor strove with Muller's in snow and rain, and felt better, as he said, when he got his clothes on again.

After these early morning rites, Gavin mounted guard. He shot at a target with a real bow and arrow, pulling the arrow to his ear and letting the winged shaft fly. Stern were the orders regarding target practice. They began in this wise: "Only in exceptional circumstances shall a hen constitute a target, and then only with special permission." Dogs, cows, and sheep were strictly taboo, but there were occasional crows, gulls, wild duck, and sea-fowl, for skilful stalking, on shore, and hill, and rock.

It was Douglas's special duty to keep the archer in stock of arrows and bows and cords, and there were special tests all prepared for the future—shooting at the ring, and the great endurance test of standing from sunrise to sunset with the arrow poised for flight. This was a terrible ordeal—to stand aiming at a target moment after moment, motionless, when every nerve sang, "Let loose!" Only one hour at the best could Gavin do yet, which disappointed him much, as the sun had not even thought of going down. Still, if his menfolk said "Stand fast!" he would stand fast—yes, till the Day of Pentecost, whatever that might be.

In the long winter, there were mornings at the books, interspersed with the setting of traps, and the laying of snares, relieved by the baiting of long lines, the digging of cockles and log-worms for bait, the rowing in the jabble and glunk of a winter sea, when he would sit in the stern of the skiff, well oil-skinned

and happed from cold, yet laughing when a splash of salt water from an oar stung his face.

The long evenings were the best, sitting on a stool before the driftwood fire, listening starry-eyed, and with flushed face, to the deeds of the Norsemen, who had dropped anchor just outside the window, as it were, in the very water that he bathed in. The hills round the bay had looked on the black-prowed ships, the rocks had heard the surge of their oars, the very foot-soles of the rovers had been on this Rock: the marks of their hands were strange dumb messages of high adventure.

Over there among the trees above Brodick came Bruce, hunted and hunting, winding his horn, and following the red deer—Bruce, the great resplendent figure, that stood out like a tower; Bruce of the Axe, the Spider, the Brooch of Lorne; Bruce that came later in his galley, splendid like a king indeed, in the calm autumn of his life. James, the good Lord, valiant in arms and merry, skilled in joyous music and old-time pranks, he with Boyd strode in yon heather, and from the very Point¹ the great king sailed his galleys to Turnberry, where always now the light twinkled, and went out, all through the night. In this strange mixture of tasks and tales, Gavin was left in a quandary. Certain he was that another king ruled the land, and yet he would be in no surprise to meet King Robert round any corner on the rocks, or to see Lord James himself scrambling after goats. For days he lived in a dazed splendour of the past. But there were days of turnip-thinning as on this day, when the creeping things of the earth were of greater moment.

¹ King's Cross Point.

At midday on this day of turnip-thinning, Gavin was hoisted on to the back of Sal, the little mare, his bare toes digging into her moist warm sides, for all morning she had been grubbing with Pate Dol at the stilts, and no sooner had the sun touched the meridian than a great "Hoy, Gavin" resounded and re-echoed, for it was Gavin's right to ride homewards.

After Pate and Gavin came Douglas and Campbell, walking slowly, and with a great kicking from the knees to restore the circulation, and Douglas turned to the doctor.

"There's a cruelty inherent in that boy," said he.

"Cruelty? Rubbish! There's no inherent cruelty in the boy. Never mind the cockfights, or the crabs' carnage—just boyish spirits. Think of Long John, the hen with the cork leg. There was a boy for you—fitted a cork leg on to Long John, after she was in the rat-trap and lost half of hers—fitted it on, and put a boot-nail in the sole of it,—and there she's high-stepping around with her chickens this very day."

The doctor did not add that the nail was his idea, Gavin having preferred two hooks.

"Oh," he had cried, "she would have been a terror to fight with the fish-hooks, uncle!"

At the stable, Gavin held earnest confab with Pate Dol.

"Has he sterted ye on Letin roots?" said Pate, dipping the feed-dish in the corn-kist and chewing thoughtfully at a seed. "Boy, if I had the Letin roots, I would have explored the hivins! An' talkin' of these celestial bodies, I wance saw the moon through a spyglass—terrible plain, Gavin, aye, jist

like a sheep's inside. If I had had the Letin to fathom yon, it's no' feedin' horse ye would be finding Pate at the day—no!"

Gavin stood amaze, and then his eyes lit up.

"Pate," said he, "tell me, did ever ye see two horses fighting?"

"Fight? Aye, fifty times! Up on the hin' leg and battering wi' the fore, the manes flying like rain clouds, the teeth flashing in the sun, then about ship and let go aft—a bonny sight, mind ye. Ay, an' the wee horse went round the big one like a cooper at a cask."

There came the clangour of a bell.

"It's time ye were prepared for the dinner," said Pate, "for there's Mairi Voullie Vhor at the bell hall."

"It's the hall bell, Pate—bell hall is not grammar."

"Hoots! Pate will never be a grammar anyway, my bonny boy."

Left alone, Pate closed the corn-kist and lit his pipe. He was a thin wiry man, deep-chested and broad-backed, and maybe fifty years. His teeth were as white as a nut, his upper lip shaven, and he wore a full beard. Sailor he had been, fisherman and smackman, knowing the West Coast as he knew his palm; deer-watcher, wandering the roads and the parks all night long. Handy among sheep, and knowing the work on a croft, he yet maintained a simple belief in the wee folks, the bawkins, the spunkies, and those dread forms that come up out of the sea.

His wife, Mairi Voullie Vhor, was older. She had the name of good looks once, but now only her eyes

remained strangely blue, and young, and kind. One long eye-tooth alone remained, and, did she laugh, which was seldom, one would see the tip of her tongue and the great yellow tooth.

Knowing these, you have the society of the Rock.

CHAPTER III.

KATHERINE.

PATE DOL was in good fettle—his voice was raised in song, a high trembling voice, but hearty, for the thinning of the turnips was over. He had a short hoe braced against the corn-kist in the stable, and as he filed and sharpened the edge so that the earth would not clag, he kept time with a song, and Gavin lent a shrill treble.

“My hert’s in the Highlands, my hert is not here,
My hert’s in the Highlands, following the deer.
Chasing the wild deer and following the roe,
My hert’s in the Highlands wherever I go.”

“Is that not the song of songs?” said Pate, and shouldering his hoe, he took Gavin’s hand in his and set off along the shore for the other side of the island, where there were here and there little patches of potatoes, for Ludovic Campbell had a mania for making land neatly. Where Douglas would be toiling with boulders, draining heather and skaling lime, the doctor would get a spade and dig little parks, like gardens, close to the sea, where the wrack was easy to gather. And at the lambing, he would caper like

a boy to see the ewes in the little green patches, where before had been stones and bracken. It was to such a patch that Gavin and Pate made their way this morning. Possibly no child of like age ever discussed more diverse subjects than Gavin Douglas, and this morning Pate listened to a sketchy lecture on the molecular theory.

“I am not believing about these Molly Cules,” said Pate. “It’s better to leave them things be—they’re not *for* us, and there’s another thing I’m not for. The doctor told me that it was his opinion that plants could see. Tatties hiv eyes in a wey o’ speaking, but I’ll tell you what he said. ‘It may be,’ says he to me, ‘it may be that at the great Day of Judgment a breckan bush will rise up and confound ye, or the leaves o’ a tree.’ ‘I would make short work o’ it gin it tried,’ says I, and that nailed him. Mind you, Gavin, there are wonders ye know not. I wance kent a man that had the bird language—there would be off an’ on of fourteen books of it, which is no’ to be wondered at, for ye’ll have heard a lark filling a song-book—the words and the music—many’s the time, but this man told me ye worked up from the coo-koo, which had just two words and a spit (for rearing young clegs). I heard him mysel’ whistlin’ to a crow to go to the bad place, and it was that like it I understood him at wance, but the crow didna go till he told him repeatedly.’”

Gavin was paying but little attention, for an ocean liner was passing, her brass-work aglitter, and the throb of her engines like a great heart.

“There she goes,” cried Pate, and broke into “Shenandoah.” “Away we’re bound, away—across the wide Missouri.”

But before she surges onwards and away, we will look for a little on her decks, and leave Pate and Gavin watching from the little green potato-patch.

In the blaze of sunlight on the promenade deck of the liner, deck-chairs were already occupied, and in one of these, John Savage, the lumber king, sprawled at ease—a pleasant, strong, brown-faced man; still there were lines here and there, that might indicate to the thoughtful observer the Mr. J. Sanguinary Savage of the West. Mr. Savage was not averse to the *nom-de-guerre* of his youth.

“I guess it’s like the light of other days, that ol’ name,” he opined; “there’s something upliftin’ in that sobriquet; there’s precedent—the bloody Ledger, the bloody Jeffreys, the bloody Balfour, but bloody Savage has them whipped—yes, sir,—whipped front and rear. Things were a bit hurried in London, else I’d ha’ had a portrait of The Bloody Savage—after a famous artist, maybe.”

It will be seen that Mr. Savage had a grim humour. These pleasant day-dreams were shattered by a dainty little brown hand on his shoulder.

“Have the steamer stopped, please,” came the quietest, most musical voice, from the quietest of thin little persons—little brown persons—imaginable.

John Savage put his great arm round the little brown girl and smiled.

“I guess that’s not possible, Indian Famine,” said he.

The proud little head was raised, the brown eyes met his, level and fearless, the long thin neck arched.

“I guess ’tis—if I *say* stop, it *is* stop.” There was no shrillness in the voice, no raised tone, but there

was that timbre, that quality, that implies obedience. It was easy to see why her father called Irene Savage "Indian Famine," easy for any one who has ever seen those horrible pictures in 'Missionary Records,' pictures of children with long thin legs, long thin feet and hands, long necks and straight black hair; but there was health abounding in this child, glowing darkly in her cheeks and shining in her eyes. She reminded one of a thoroughbred foal, leggy and angular, yet full of grace.

"Tell the man to turn the steering-wheel and let me play in that place we're coming to."

"I'll arrange to have that little island taken across some other time maybe. I guess we can fix a railing round it, and you can keep your pets there all right, but some other time. We would require to notify the Northern Lights Commission, and the Feudal Baron, and both Governments, before removing that landmark, so it'll take time."

"Stop!" Irene's white teeth shut, her little hand clenched, her red lips lost their curves. There was a storm coming. Savage was ready.

"Take the little girl, Miss Sheppard," said he. "There now, Honey, run along and play with your kiddies."

"Miss Sheppard" was governess—Miss Prim Sheppard, and surely were her sponsors specially gifted, for Miss Sheppard was prim indeed—the manner of holding her head a little to one side, with eyes modestly lowered, was prim; her little mouth made prim movements; her whole person was so precise, so just so, that the only word to describe her is "per-jink." There were, however, people of no account in the kitchen of the Savage mansion in N'York, who

held the opinion that Miss Sheppard might yet, as it were, turn the Savage ensemble into a sheepfold.

Miss Sheppard advanced timidly, smiling her sweet, prim smile; in her arms she carried a large doll, a wonderful doll, a doll to send little girls into ecstasies of potential motherhood, and possibly her childhood still lingered in the governess, so coy was she before John Savage.

“Come, Irene dear, and nurse Baby Kate.”

Irene turned from her father with never a word. She was ominously calm; her hands did tremble a little as she held them out for Baby Kate. And then a tornado descended, a fury—shaking, tearing, and twisting,—swift, and silent, and sudden, and even as John Savage leapt from his chair to prevent it, Baby Kate went sailing over the rails—and the sea took her.

For a second—a moment—the prim look vanished from Miss Sheppard’s face; a look of honest temper clouded those down-looking eyes.

“I guess she needs a mother,” said the millionaire, and the heart of the governess missed a beat. She looked up swiftly, and then lowered her eyes.

“Dear little Irene,” she whispered.

“I guess a mother would be the correct person to handle this squall, Miss Sheppard, but I’ll do my best.”

Irene put her hand in her father’s without a word, and they walked calmly from the deck.

In their state-room, Indian Famine clung to her father, arms and legs and soul and body—great sobs shook her. Savage patted her gently.

“I guess, Honey, you are a Savage—we’re both Savages; but I’ll tell you some day why it was

mighty foolish to sling poor Kate overboard, Indian Famine dear.”

“I-I-I-I I-loved Baby Kate,” whispered Irene; “it was Miss Sheppard I-I wanted to kill, for s-smiling.”

Pate Dol and Gavin were wending homewards. It was evening, the sea calm, and gannets diving noisily. The mainland looked hazily blue. There were small boats anchored on the big bank, their varnished sides glittered in the sun; sheep were grazing in the high hefts. Now and then came the heartbroken plaintive ba-aa-aa of a lamb. Gavin stopped.

“Pate,” he whispered, “there’s a droll wee thing with long yellow hair lying on the rocks.”

“God look on us!” said Pate. “Is it brute or human?”

“If it’s neither brute nor human, it’s a gull—that’s poetry, but yon is no gull.”

Gavin ran forward, unheeding the cries of his companion. He peered at the object, touched it with a finger, and then, emboldened, lifted it by the feet and carried it head down to Pate.

“It’s got capital K on its clothes,” said he. “Oh, what is it, what is it?”

Pate put his brown hand under the down-hanging head and lifted the body gently. Suddenly, with a sharp click, two blue eyes stared at him. Pate staggered.

“It’s a Click-ma-doodle,” said he. “Put it away.”

There is no saying what might have happened to the ocean-born princess among dolls, for there was a light in the eye of Pate Dol, a light that boded not well for graven images, but round the north end of the shore came Mairi Voullie Vhor, searching.

“What have ye there?” she skraked, for her voice had a peculiar quality, a bleating harshness very bitter in anger, an intolerant lingual ægophony.

“Ye tr-a-ash,” said she to Pate, “will ye keep that lamb stervin’ the livelong d-a-ay, an’ you at your bawdy sangs! Whose aucht that wean—a wandered gentry wean—some raking Ranterpike’s mischance, with the dregs of the measles on it to smit my lamb.”

“Woman,” said Pate, “this is nae wean; this is a Click-ma-doodle. I know them of old—she winks the eye.”

“It is your eye will be winkin’ when I get ye hame. There will be brimstane burned the night before ye lay side to a bed. You and your Click-ma-doodle; it’s a wean’s playock, and nae poor wean’s either. This will be company for ye, Gavin, my hero, when I have put her to right with a guff of brimstane. The arm o’ her broken, too, an’ hangin’. If this is not a judgment on that stiff-necked man the father o’ ye. Katherine Douglas she’ll be, Kate Barlass wi’ the broken arm. Give her to me, my pet, and come away, for your pancakes are spoiled.”

There was war with the coming of Katherine, for Mairi Voullie Vhor, casting, as it were, all dregs of measles, and kindred gentry ailments, from her wash-tub, presented Katherine, clothed in her splendour, to Gavin in his night gear.

You see the old woman bending over the narrow white bed in the bare room. You hear the wonderful change of tone in her voice, that she had for weak things and Gavin only.

“Put your arms round her, little darling,” she

crooned. "There now, Katherine is lonesome for wee Gavin."

"Is she?" said Douglas from the bedroom door in a cold voice; "long may she weary. There goes no swaddling doll to bed with Gavin Douglas."

The old woman came round slowly; her face reddened.

"James Douglas," said she, "ye'll let that innocent lamb have his playock or ye'll rue it." Her voice was a gage of battle, vituperative, venomous.

Ludovic, at the doorway, nodded to himself and winked.

"I'll back the Voullie Vhor," says he, in to himself.

"You understand my wishes, of course," says Douglas; "no softness, no women-coddling and twaddling about the boy. I had thought that you would be the last to indulge in this nonsense."

"Me the last—finely I ken what your meaning is—ye cold hard man; ye mean that I'm *he* enough to look at, with hair on my face and cabbach teeth; but, thank my Maker, I have not a stane in my hert. What are ye doing to the wean? He's not like a wean. When did ye hear him laughing? No' since the day he pit a dart into the thick o' Pate Dol's leg and garred him loup, and rin, and claw himsel'. The dear lamb, did it not do my hert good to hear him laughing, and the tears rinnin' on his cheeks. Ay' an' it soupled Pate Dol. . . . But here are ye with your sweeming, and rinnin', and jumping, and bows and arrows, makin' a trade o' joy. What herm is in an innocent doll?"

"She may be above suspicion, like Cæsar's wife."

"I carena what Cæsar's wife was above. If she wasna above takin' that Nerra the fiddler, I'm thinkin'

she would be like Jean M'Crae, and *she* was like ither folk. If I'm to be here, that wean will be a wean sometimes, or I'll let ye ken it. Ye wid not rear a horse like that, and break him in. Ye'll let him run with colts and fillies, till he comes to himsel' and kens his place, but Gavin, your ain flesh and blood, ye'll turn loose in a world o' lone weemen. Hech, is it a doll you're scared o'? It's the innocent lamb I'm feart for. God send I'll see him as well bedded when he's wan and twenty. Mora, it's little ye ken o' weemen—that I should say it! Man and master as ye are, if ye lay a finger on that doll, I'll set a lowe in the stacks. I'll brust ye wi' saltpetre in your broth, or salts o' sorrel."

"God forbid," cried the doctor. "I'll no' be poisoned at my time o' life. You're beat, James."

The old woman was trembling, still ready for defiance, but fearful of her powers after all.

"Mairi," said Douglas, and patted her on the back, "the pity is there are not more like you. Let him keep the doll if he likes. Go you to bed!"

"Oh, man, I'll put ye before the Throne," said Mairi. "Poor man, poor man, ye had a hert once."

CHAPTER IV.

DUNGANNON.

IF the Spartan training made Gavin's body brown, and lean, and hard, surely the coming of Katherine brought to him a new world of beautiful dreams, like the sound of a melody floating and drifting over the sea, on a still night of moonlight. To her he unfolded all the wonders of his cloud images, the great castles of burnished silver, the fury of battle when knights, with plumes waving, rushed to the onset, the monstrous wild and changing beasts that hunted in the heavens—Katherine's blue eyes beheld, and Katherine understood. At the bedding there was a solemn routine.

“Can I come in, Katherine?” Gavin would whisper, standing barefooted in his night gear.

“Yes,” would Katherine reply, with the tremulousness befitting the occasion, the tremulousness that might have seemed a little like Mairi's ægophony. Then all the adventures were related—the leaping of fish, the finding of the hive of wild bees, the secret place where the wild duck reared her brood. The blue eyes of Katherine never ceased to wonder, never became clouded or tired.

Pate Dol shook his head at all this.

“Gavin, Gavin,” he would say, “I am the sorrowful man to hear that you have given up your freedom to the Long-Haired One. Oh, man, the *splores* and the *shoosts* that you’ll miss, and her waiting up for ye. It is not weel managed. There’s nothing so wise in these affairs as the eider-drake—a wee while does him, and then away to sea goes the lad, out in the drift and the storm wi’ his mates. Ha, he’s the boy.”

Pate’s daily salutation was always the same.

“I am hoping that the Long-Haired One is well.” But, alas! there came a day when Gavin had to confess that things were not well.

“She was on the floor this morning, Pate, and her eyes shut,” said Gavin.

“Clean stunned,” said Pate; “did she speak when she came round?”

A doleful shake of the head.

“This is ferocious bad—the one thing to do is apollochise. If it was a leeberty ye had taken, it’s me would be the very last to apollochise, but——”

“What is a leeberty?”

“Well, now, a leeberty would be the like of fetching up alongside of her and cleeking. Sure and certain, Gavin, that would be a leeberty. When the long-haired ones get to the cleeking, Gavin, then is the time for the linkin’ lad to stand to sea; but I’m thinking there’s nothing for it but apollochising. ‘Mem,’ says you, ‘last night it was you was on the floor, and this night it will be me.’ That is the apollochising of a hero, and well to win’ward, too, for she will never be hearing tell of it.”

But the apology would not work—Katherine was dumb with anger.

“It is this way, Gavin,” said Mairi; “she is hurt at you, poor Katherine. Ye were not nice to her, and here you are standing looking at her and talkin’, and doin’ more harm.”

“But I *wish* she was better,” said Gavin, near to tears.

“Put your arms round her, my lad; she’ll listen better that wey even if she wrastles a wee,” said Mairi, with a gleam of memories in her eyes. “That’s the fine fellow now,” and, laughing at her ploy, Mairi made her great error, and awakened a deadly pride.

To his trembling words Katherine gave no trembling reply. No voice announced Katherine’s forgiveness, no voice painted Katherine’s tears, only blue reproachful eyes stared. For a moment there was unbelief, amazement, and horror in Gavin’s face, then rage surged through him; his eyes shone, the red blood rose, flooding his neck and face and brow.

“Take her away,” he stormed; “I can do without her. I don’t want her. Take her away.”

“Guid guide us, what have I done!” cried Mairi, coming to herself; but it was vain for Katherine to speak now, vain her tears—her reign was over, and Gavin was rubbing his guernsey sleeves in a frenzy where they had touched her. He was shivering.

His father laughed grimly. “That was my brave son,” said he. Ludovic Campbell mused, but old Mairi Voullie Vhor watched from then onwards.

“There’s a man here growin’,” said she.

There is a thing now I will tell you that few of ye will ever behold. When the day was new, with the dews of sleep still resting, and only the voices of the

birds awake, and summer hasting to her bridal, came old Mairi to the bedside of Gavin.

“Come, my darling,” said she, “haste ye fast,” and she took him by the hand and out of the house to the shore. The glory of that morning was with Gavin afterwards for ever, the sun shining on the cold blue morning sea, the soft mist rising against the green of the trees below Alasdair’s birch wood, and a great sailing-ship breaking out her sails.

Across the little way of sea from shore to ship came voices mellowed, and the tramping of feet. Sea-gulls wheeled and screamed in the air, blue smoke hung over the houses across the bay.

“There’s tears and devilment in their sangs, dearie,” cried Mairi, who looked strangely uplifted and gallant, “tears and devilment and the gladness of the great hearts.”

“Sing, my lads, sing and make God glad. Oh, the sea and the ships and the sailors singing!”

Now little ripples broke away from the bows of the sailing-ship, came a swirling weaving of waters in her wake; round she bore gallantly for the south entrance, and sail after sail broke, and fluttered, and swelled into place.

Gavin trotted along the shore, his soul filled with the beauty and the wonder of the sight, and a yearning sank on him as the ship squared away in the Firth, away out of his life into some other world; and then sadly he made his road homewards, this time on the track, on the raised beach above the shore. Where now there is an old broken stone dyke half-buried in heather, there was a man dancing, naked to the waist, his hair on end, and fiddling his own music.

“Ach, will ye be watching me?” he cried, and swayed this way and that, and threw his legs till the steam was rising from them. His clothes lay spread on the heather, and beside them a black oil-skin bag.

“D’ye know the name of that chune, child av the light?” he cried. “‘Nor never heard tell of it,’ says you, little Fin Maccoul, and that’s M’Pherson’s rant. List till it now!” Again the bow tore the heart from the violin. “The glory av it, the bravery, and it’s me will be tellin’ ye where it was now that M’Pherson captured that one. Below the ghallows, child av the day, below the bloody ghallows, and God lookin’ down on him, dancing his road to purgathory. Oh, it’s the pity would be in the Shining Front, pity for the hot blood av the brave boy, that craved only the grip av a sword. List now, till ye hear the little thought in it for the auld mother, an’ then the leaping pride of a bold man, that was fearless in life and after.

“All the chunes av all the lands it’s Pathrick Dunghannon has them.”

“How did ye come here, Patrick Dungannon, with pictures on your bare feet?” said Gavin (for, indeed, on the bare feet were wonderful pictures in tattooing); “and what will ye do?”

“D’ye see yon lady av the sea yonder? it is from her I came, for that is the way av it with me; when I am at the wan thing there is another crying to me. . . . There we were lying in the bay for seven days, and me the happiest wid the fiddle in the fo’c’sle and the hornpipes going. Soul o’ me, and every day when I would be with a kyar broom scrubbin’ the decks, was I not seein’ the goats coming tripping down the rocks, hop and skip an’ lep, wid a shake av an auld

billy's head and the smell av him in my nose. Glory to God, did I not travel the country wid them bastes, and sorrow and throuble was the price av them, but I would be looking at the seams on the deck, and thinking av the doldrums wid the pitch crawling out in slabbers, and then back to the hillside and the goats leppin', and I put the fiddle in her bag and slipped away on the soles av my feet, in the dew av the deck.

“Like a seal I came and lay all night in the gorse till she went proudly out like a young queen to her hunting, and then, to kill the sadness av her going I laid the bow on the strings, and M'Pherson called the chune. It is the hay and the corn I will work at, and maybe the handlin' av a bit av a horse. Sorrow on the hay av this counthry, it has not the swate smell av the hay in my place yonder—and where are the threes that should be? In the vale av Avoca ye would walk for miles on the threes, so thick they are. It's you will be spakin' a word for me now, for Pathrick is without a cowrie.”

So came Patrick Dungannon to the Rock, with his red hair and droll ferntickled face, his love of strange lands—“Astralya an' 'Frisco an' the Roarin' Forties,” a kind man, full of laughter and sudden blazing angers, childish anger, that would drive him to the fiddle, but the drollest thing to Gavin was his tattooed feet.

“He's not all there,” said Pate Dol. “Did I not find him on God's day sitting with his fiddle in the heck of Sal's stall, and playing chunes that would be tearing the hert's bluid out of a man? ‘I would not sit in the manger,’ says he, ‘for there was the Holy Child laid, but I will be spaking to the horses, and

giving them the music from the heck, for there may be a great one imprisoned in a horse for a punishment.' ”

“The devil will come for us—the hale o’ us,” said Mairi.

“I left him that the dogs would not lick his blood, Mairi Voullie Vhor,” said Pate. “Hold your peace, woman, for the devil is not to be spoken of. He was wance the Star of the Morning, most glorious. Where under the divine canopy is there the match of that? Hold your peace, woman, and be humble.”

“If I was at your lug with the beatle, Pate Dol, there would be more stars than wan in your mind,” cried Mairi, and at that Pate went from her.

“Is she not enough to bring a judgment?” said he.

Ludovic Cambell kept his scholar hard to the task—from the dark of the winter mornings till mid-day. Gavin would race from the sea in the winter, feeling the sting of the driving rain and spray, and Mairi scolding morning after morning, until a sort of tremendous pride came over her, and “hero” would be the least of her names for him.

“The little folk will have him,” Dungannon would whisper. “Have I not seen them after him, laughing and waving, in their little green surtous? but I will put the Cross on him.”

Douglas was become a stern, silent, brooding man, except in the night, before the fire, with the maps and the books of history before him—the battles, and the castles, and the deeds of arms. Then his gloom lifted, his voice would thrill and rouse his young son. He saw visions, horses rearing, mail flashing in the moonlight. Great voices rose in the gale, there was clashing of arms, and armies with banners.

But with Pate and Dungannon sometimes there were wonderful stories of houses not of this world, built maybe in a hill; there were flat rocks where fairies danced; there were dread ships that sailed against wind and tide, when islesmen strained for port. Dungannon would so move the boy with his weird playing that tears would stand in his eyes. So it was that while his body was like that of a young god, with long rippling muscles under a silken skin, the one part of his mind was of war and strife, and feats of strength, of running and hammer-throwing, of archery, and the joy of the sea; the other part was of dreams of unnamed creatures, beautiful as clouds, or the evening star in a pale sky. And Mairi, that old wise woman, saw that her error was overcome, the hardness that Katherine wrought was forgotten, she thought, for Katherine was now only a doll, an example, as Ludovic Campbell said, of the female child, having clothing befitting the mind that clothed her, having universal joints, possibly, and a certain trick of working the eyes, common to the species.

Dungannon had all the Irishman's love of horse—the lore of horse—the wise things to be knowing, the lucky colours, the cure of ailments, the secret of the glossy skin and the silken mane, and Gavin treasured his lore, and remembered. I think that he never forgot a horse, having once looked him over, in his manhood.

But Pate Dol was the one who had the great notions. There was, in the centre of the hill, a little lake, very small and shallow, and whiles maybe you would see wild duck there, and the feathers of sea-fowl floating upturned. On Saturdays they made

great work, Pate and Gavin and Dungannon, and whiles Douglas and Campbell, and between them they made a great fine pond, having cunning little islands of rocks, and rushes, and plenty of water, and there Gavin put tame ducks, building shelters for them, and feeding them, and from the shore and the rocks came all manner of birds as to a refuge; and it was Dungannon who looked with Gavin at these wild duck, and heard far above the honk of geese flying in a V for the Urie Loch.

“Would I not like to be where them fellows lighted down now!” said the Irishman.

“Ye would be far from home, lad,” said Pate.

Dungannon turned his eyes on him.

“Have I ever been *annyything* else?” said he, and that night his fiddle went wailing like a spirit, till Pate, moved in some way he knew not, cried to Mairi Voullie Vhor—

“The Letin root of this music is unknown.”

CHAPTER V.

THE WILDERNESS.

INTENT on his archery, Gavin would often stand with the bowstring taut and gaze at a white house on the opposite shore. Whiles he would aim his arrow at the brown door of it, or at the sparkle of light from a window. He made fine stories to himself about this empty white house, in the little time between wakefulness and sleep, and he christened it "The Wilderness," and peopled its empty rooms with smugglers, and the terrible folk of Dungannon's tales, for he was always at the telling of weird stories.

One dreadful creature, that haunted dangerous places (where boys must not climb), had his home in the white house. Gavin only dared whisper that fearful name in an ecstasy of terror, "Raw Head and Bloody Bones," dreadful even in daylight. The Blind Tup that came for sleepy boys grazed in the grass there.

And even in his games Gavin would stop and look long at the place, for there is something about a house—something indefinite, that yet can be felt. Why otherwise will one house look cheerful and another sad? "A creepy place," you will hear people say,

usually in the gloaming, when trees are silent and dogs howl. Such a place was the Wilderness. Its windows had a hungry look, although the glass was usually intact, except at such times as boys will try their slings, but the paint was blistered on the door, blistered and peeled. Little grasses grew between the flag-stones that formed the steps—grasses that grew and withered, and in winter days rustled and bent with the wind, as though they would eventually force their way into the house and grow on the very hearth. The walls were whitewashed in the clean old-fashioned manner, but somehow there seemed always a stain of green fungus streaming downwards, as from wet thatch. The broad path that led from the shore to the front door had once been white, but now stout, sturdy, deep-rooting grasses had all but covered it, a miserable path in rain. The surrounding wall was of that kind known as a dry-stone dyke, but stones had fallen here and there; trees grew raggedly, being not large enough to be picturesque, even in their wildness. Neither flower nor fruit was there, but only a miserable cut of weeds and useless grass, that might, if well saved, be good bedding for beasts.

Enough of the Wilderness as it was—an eerie place with its dim white walls on a winter's night, and the sea fretting, and splashing, among the rocks and wrack, which all but concealed what was once a little port, for a rowing skiff belike.

From the windows of the Wilderness, looking across two miles of ever-changing water, one would see the lights in the windows of the house on the Rock. On calm summer days one might hear the kye routing and roaring, or the bleating of the lambs at the time

of their weaning. Then of a sudden came a change—workmen appeared, and horses carting. There was bustle and liveliness. Bent walls were straightened, and the old rusty iron gate was set at a new angle, so that it swung on its hinges without describing a half-circle on the path. Hedges were sawn ruthlessly, leaving that droll look one will associate with hair-cutting. There came vegetable plots and lawns, and plots for flowers, raised in circles, and ovals, and half-moons of rich earth. Turf was laid and flattened down. The wide path was white as new linen, with the marking of the rake always there. Great wide windows replaced the old hungry windows, and there was altogether an air of cheerfulness, and wellbeing, about the place, as in the blooming of the wilderness.

Gavin found Mairi with the old telescope balanced on the dyke-top, and on her knees, spying at these new wonders as they appeared.

“Yon place will let like fifty,” said she, with a nod of her head. “That’s what it is to have a little money behind your hand.”

“But why will it let like *fifty*?” asked the boy.

“Because they’ll be asking the like of that an’ more for the two middle months, and good folk will come there, the kind that leaves scented soap at the end o’ the month—*rale gentry*, Gavin. If that Pate Dol had any smeddum in him, he would ken who is peying the piper for this improvement,” and with that, the old woman snapped home the glass and went back to the kitchen.

But Pate Dol was not without news. “There is a lady staying yonder,” said he, “a big woman and a slow speaker, wi’ a kind of an English twang. She’s out in all kinds o’ weather pottering about the

garden, delving wi' a wee spade, and planting prim-roses and bluebells in neuks. They say she has a fine reading-lamp on a stand, that she can schlew fore and aft, to suit wherever she's sitting at the time, and she'll be feeding birds and speaking to them, an' I h'ard tell of her speaking to a geranium that she found in bloom early, as if she was terrible pleased. She'll likely not be all there."

"And how did ye come to be gossiping about a strange woman ye ken naething about, ye useless cratur?" cried Mairi.

"Far be it from me to be relating gossip, Mairi," said Pate, and turned to leave her.

Seeing herself on the wrong tack, Mairi "put about," as it were. "Who was tellin' ye?" said she. "Ye were keen enough to crack wi' me wance on a time, my man."

"That was afore ye caught me, Mairi. I've seldom opened my mouth since."

"Caught ye! Ye gied me neither peace nor rest, day nor night, till I was forced tae mairry ye, for a rest and naething else!"

"Mairi," said Pate, "ye're a terrible leear!" He put his great hard hand on her shoulder and looked at her.

"Well, maybe I am, Pate; but tell me your news."

"Oh, it was Jimmie the shepherd was telling me; he's very frien'ly with wan of the lady's bleachers¹—an English lass wi' a tongue like the clappers of a bean mill."

"Gosh guide us! And what was she haverin' about?"

"She says (the shepherd telt me) that when she's

¹ Bleacher=domestic servant.

no writing letters, yon woman's for ever watching the Rock."

"I kent it," said Mairi, and drew a long breath; "I've felt her eye on me time and again. I've burned scones, and thraved the wrang hen's neck——"

"Ye aye burned an odd scone, woman," said Pate. "I kent that when I marrit ye. It was wi' reading history."

"It was good o' ye no tae say a cheep about it, Pate; go on wi' your news." Mairi plainly refused battle.

"It is not you the leddy is watching," said Pate in a solemn voice; "it is Gavin."

"Will she steal the wean?" Mairi's face flamed red, her lips moved for words, her hand groped in the air. She was afraid.

"There's nae thocht of stealing the boy," said Pate. "The shepherd thocht she might just be a wanter,¹ and the bleacher says her mistress is never so happy as when she's watching Gavin through the glass."

"The poor soul, Pate; maybe she was like us—maybe she lost a boy."

"She has no man seemingly."

"But for a' that, Pate—I wonder if her gless² is good. I'll need to dress Gavin. . . . Did the lass tell Jimmie any mair?"

"Aye, she had a screed o' her mistress's business."

"Was she not the clutch!³ And what was the ither business?"

"The leddy has a wee table at the side of her bed, with a great dollop o' flowers on it——"

¹ Wanter = woman unmarried.

² Gless = spyglass, telescope.

³ Clutch = trollop.

“Is she not the genteel one now?”

“Will ye let me speak?”

“Speak, man; am I not trying to make ye speak, and it’s like drawing the teeth from a cat! I might as weel be mairrit on a dummy——”

“Well, on the table with the flowers there is a man’s likeness,¹ every day and every night.”

“Imphm! A likeness—well, go on.”

“That’s a’ I ken,” said Pate, and went outside.

Mairi smiled at his back—had it not been Mairi, it might have seemed to be a very tender smile.

“The very same old dour devil’s in ye yet that I couldna cow when I was in my teens. Ye’ll go sparking off, like a cat’s back, as if ye were twinty, Pate, my man, but I’ll manage ye.”

The old body moved briskly from shelf to press, and from the press to the fire. There came a tremendous aroma of cooking, and a tremendous sizzling and sputtering and frying. The canary commenced to sing madly to drown this all-pervading noise. With her table set, Mairi went to the door. It was raining and cold. Pate was at a potato-pit, his hands glabbery, his boots and leggings muddy.

“Hoy, Pate!” cried Mairi from the door, and beckoned with a crooked finger to her man.

Pate straightened his back, took off his cap and shook the rain from it, and came slowly towards her. When he was in the kitchen, Mairi was not visible, but suddenly she came from behind a press door, with a glass in her hand.

“It’s caul’ nesty wark dressin’ tatties,” said she. “Drink this! It’ll put hert in ye!”

Pate dried his hands and took the glass.

¹ Likeness=photograph.

“Well, here’s luck to you, Mairi; there’s times when you’re very pleasant.” He laughed suddenly and drank half of his dram. “It’s a peety you are so often cross.”

Is it pleasant or pitiful to see old people coy? Old Mairi’s eyes fell—she was shy.

“Oh, Pate,” she said, “I was never cross to you, lad. Sit doon to your supper—it’s fried ham and eggs.”

Pate was filling his pipe; his boots were off, his grey-stockinged feet were on the hob. His wife was knitting with a quiet clicking of wires.

“I was wondering,” said she, “why that woman is always looking at Gavin. What right has she to be looking at Gavin? It is not nice.”

Pate rolled tobacco in the palm of his hand.

“That is not what you were wondering,” said he. “Ye were wondering whose is the likeness on the wee table with the flowers on it.”

“I was wondering that too.”

“Well, *ask*,” said Pate.

“Tell me.”

“It is the likeness of Gavin’s father.”

“I kent it, ye sumph,” said Mairi. “And the lady is Gavin’s mother. . . . I’m glad she’s so near.”

“Near or far, what odds does it make?—she’ll never come here.”

“If Gavin was to take the hives, ye would see if she would or no!”

“Hives,” said her husband; “willink¹ ’ll cure the hives. There’s nae cure for divorce.”

“Is there no’?” said Mairi. “Take your feet off

¹ Willink=a herb of medical properties (*Veronica beca-bunga*).

that hob. I kent I could wheedle anything out of ye."

But after this Mairi watched the white house across the bay, watched the comings and goings of folk, and when the smoke went up in the mornings. And it was she who saw that every night, when Gavin's light was put out, a light went out in the Wilderness.

"It is the mother of him waving good-night," she told Pate and Dungannon, "the fond foolish woman."

CHAPTER VI.

IN WHICH DUNGANNON VISITS THE WILDERNESS.

FOR long Patrick Dungannon worked, and never left the isle. When Pate set sail in the skiff and sailed across to the village on the other side for "messages" and provisions, and with letters, Dungannon watched him longingly from the shore, but refused to sail across.

"The Good Powers know if ever I would be coming back, if I was wance gone on my travels. I will stop in this pleasant place," said he.

But on a morning in the late summer, Dungannon came from the stable and looked across the water, and was lost. The little punt was on the shore at anchor, oars and rowlocks aboard of her. Gavin was at his books, having bathed and capered an hour in the early light, and stood with his drawn bow. Pate Dol and Douglas were on the other side of the island at work on a broken dyke, and Mairi was at her baking.

"There's the roads to be cutting in the corn, the round av the little field," said Patrick. "Sure, now, it's me could pull over beyant and be back, and none av them the wiser, and no harm done at all, at all—just wan little bottle now to quench a year's drout."

He walked slowly to the shore—he stood long looking at the punt. He turned and commenced to walk back—he stood—he looked again—and then he waded to the little boat. Then he was rowing like a madman, forcing the bluff bows half under with his strokes, and looking, from time to time, over his shoulder, until he beached on the east side of the old stone pier, put the rowlocks below the floorboards, and left the oars tied to the thwart. He took a look at the Rock, and then walked quickly to the little inn.

“Sure, now,” thought he, “it is a pleasant place, with the shamrock growing wonderful green and strong in a pot on the counter. (‘That will be their Luck,’ said he.) Queer fine pictures av racehorses on the walls there were, and a goat too—a billy—in a picture in a corner. It was pleasant to see the barrels, and the little spigots, and the bottles glittering, and all thim copper joogs up beyant, below the clock. Sure, now, and the drop av drink was fine on the tongue, and rollin’ it in the mouth, and it was fine to hear the strange talk about him. A quiet decent dram was harmin’ no one at all.” Then he went out and bought himself tobacco and half a dozen clay pipes, and a pound of cheese and two haddocks, and peppermints for the boy, and candles. “Sure, there was never a swate over the mouth av that boy.” He left his purchases in the boat, and wandered along past the coastguard station and the school and the church, wondering and admiring “the green av the lawns” before the houses, and along till he was come to the whitewashed house, “where the light did go out av an evening.”

Dungannon stood and looked at the house. It

was a pretty white place, and neatly kept, and a maid endeavouring to keep the grass down with a mowing machine—and a lady by her.

“Madam,” said the Irishman, “it would be more for the likes av me to be keeping that fellow going, for it’s waiting for the tide I am, to go beyant to the Rock, where I belong.”

“Do you live on the Rock?” said the lady, who had looked a little alarmed at sight of the red freckled face; “tell me quickly, man?”

“Shure, now, madam, I’m after tellin’ ye. It’s Patrick Dungannon is become a monk yonder for long.”

“Cut the lawn, good man,” said the lady, “and then come to me,” and she went to a chair and sat down a little hurriedly.

Dungannon kept going steadily; the sweat poured from him. “’Tis the spirit going from me,” says he, wiping his brow. “The devil’s own contraption this mower is for a man to be behind av.”

When he finished his task, he was on fire to be away. Was it not a day wasted and the last drop of spirit sweated out of him? But a servant came and bade him come to a meal in the kitchen, and after that the lady sent for him.

She was seated at a great desk littered with papers. There were flowers everywhere; great masses of sweet peas lay on a table; the smell of honey was in the room. The lady was very stately and grand, and her voice low and kindly. She motioned Dungannon to a chair, where he sat with his cap at his feet, and waited.

“There is a little boy on the Rock, Mr. Dungannon, is there not?”

“Little, now, lady; the greatest boy between this and Black Head, a joy to be seeing, and him living. D’ye know that boy would swim all day belike, and bate the goats on the rocks for leppin’. The skin of him does be glowing like a blown fire, and his teeth like the ivory. There’s a song now that will fit him, lady, and this is it, saving yer presence:—

“His teeth were like the ivory, and his hair was auburn brown,
And oh! the lovely ringlets on his shoulders hanging down;
His skin is fine as roses, an’ his eyes as blue’s the sea,
Och, he’ll break the heart av all the girls wherever he do be.”

The lady’s eyes were shining strangely.

“And is he happy, the little dar—the wild little boy?”

“Shure, now, ma’am, as for happy, has he not the sun to be playin’ in, and the waves o’ the sea? The wild birds on the hill are his friends, and at night the father of him telling him the old battles. Happy, lady; do the birds be happy now?”

“And his father?”

“A dark sorrowful man, lady! There’s a powerful sorrow on that man, and the son is the apple av his eye.”

When Dungannon left the Wilderness, he held his hand over his inside pocket, and even in the little bar with the twinkling copper jugs, and the shining barrels, his hand would go back to that pocket, to the little picture the lady had given him.

With the dusk he launched his punt, and pulled back slowly to the Rock.

And at the beach Pate met him.

“Welcome, Royal Cherlie!” he cried; “have ye so much as a grain left in the bottle? Haddies, and

tobacco, and pipes, and cheese, and candles! Man, ye have the great notions! Ye're the decent man!"

But Dungannon was in disgrace. Mairi passed him, as Pate said, "breenging and flourishing, and cleaning terrible, about the place."

"What do ye think of the rascal that goes off in a boat," she would ask the ducks—"the trash—drinking?"

But Pate was kind. Silently he brought to the barn the black bag, and Dungannon seized it and ran. He made his way to the little cave, the entrance hidden by a bush and heather, and crawled inside and lighted his candle. On the rock beside him were crosses carved deep, where of old a saint had lain in days of spiritual anguish. His Irish imagination pictured the man, clad in the skins of animals maybe, naked maybe, lashing himself with cords and scourging the proud flesh until the blood streamed. He saw the saint, in travail, carve his cross deep in the rock, saw him writhe in fear in that hollow place, peopled with devils and tempters, and with only the little cross to cling to. In the half-glow of the candle he drew out his violin, bowed his head over it, and played—painted in music his vision—his shame. And Gavin in bed heard the wild notes like threads of silver long drawn and quivering. Faintly, faintly they came, but his young ears heard, and silently he rose, dressed hurriedly, noiselessly, and barefooted sped across the grass, plashing with dew, until the elfish light shone on the hillside, and he climbed in beside the fiddler.

"Glory, oh, glory to see you between the eyes again, and me in purgathory, and not fit to be holding my head up at all."

“Are you daft, Patrick, fiddling here in the night and everybody sleeping? Come back to your bed,” said Gavin.

“The bed is not for the like of me this night, with the jumping in my limbs. If the Divine Being will send the daylight, it’s me will be at the cutting av the roads in the corn, and the scythe waiting for me yonder in a tree. It’s the creatur here and me will be weeping this night for the things that do be, and the things av long ago.

“Here, now,” says Patrick, diving a hand into his pocket and bringing out a white poke. “What is this but the foinest of peppermint jub-jubs! Soul o’ me, the joy that’s before you, child av the light, wid this bag o’ peppermint. To be ate,” says he, “yis, shure, ate—sucked and swallowed iviry wan. ’Tis not in Dungannon to forget the child even when my weakness is on me, and a greater gift have I than peppermint. Listen, now, Gavin Douglas, dear.

“There was an angel av Hivin yonder did make me drive a devil’s contraption for clipping grass—the start and the fright to a man’s nerves when the chuckie-stones do be pingin’ and whizzing aff the blades! The worst punishment in the hereafter will be a lawn-mower to be driving in long grass and the heat blistering. And the angel that set me the task tould me to attend her in a grand room. The like of that room is beyond tellin’—swate pays on a table like the bedding av a horse, and roses in glass pihoyes, and a fire—d’ye mind?—av turf.

“ ‘Mr. Dungannon,’ says she, ‘phwat is the little boy on the Rock? Is he happy?’

“ ‘Happy as the young calves on a sunny day,’ says I.

“ ‘And phwat does he look like,’ says she, ‘and how do the days go with him? Does he cry ever, and is there some one to see about his clothes, and his bed, and his stockings?’ ”

“ ‘Shure, now, ma’am,’ says I, ‘Mairi Voullie Vhor would not let the mother of him cast her shadow on him, lest she blot out the sun from the darling.’ ”

“ ‘She does be watching you with the spy-glasses at the bow and arrows. ‘Oh, cruel!’ she cries, and in the spring when the sea is lashing in, ‘Oh, madness!’ she cries; ‘can this Mairi—can she not keep him from the water—keep him out of the sea?’ ”

“ ‘The sea is there for the lad’s pleasure, lady,’ says I; ‘that is the thought of Mairi.’ ”

“ ‘Will you guard him, the little boy—the wild little boy?’ says she. ”

“ ‘Gyard him, lady; he’ll guard himself this day.’ ”

“ ‘And then says she, ‘He has no mother, poor little boy.’ ” ”

“ ‘I’m not poor,’ ” cried Gavin, speaking for the first time. “ ‘I’m not a little boy—I need no women.’ ”

“ ‘Sorrow now, a mother is not a woman, boy; a mother is wan av the greater angels that we men never rightly onderstand. ‘And,’ says the lady, ‘*Mr. Dungannon*’—she puts the Mr. on me,—‘you will give the wild little boy this from me to look at sometimes; and hide it well,’ said she, ‘if so be he will not look at it; only the little boy must see it,’ and I promised. ‘The little boy and no other, lest harm come,’ and I promised again for you. ”

“ ‘Give me your word—a man’s word, Gavin—that no other will look on this, and I’ll show ye——’ ”

Gavin’s face reddened with anger. “ ‘No, I will not,’ ” he cried. “ ‘This is like plotting in the history; ”

this is not clean. Tell my father," said he in a blaze of rage, for he was devoured with curiosity, and his training warred with his inclination, and defeated it.

"Shure, now, and was not that the foine tale I was making, and ye spoiled it entirely with your rampaging, for the sorrow the bit av it was true, now, except the lawn-mower that I showed for a divershin, till such times as the tide would be serving. Scud along wid ye, for the light will be coming soon, and then it's Patrick for the scythe," and quietly they made for the house.

But in his room above the stable Patrick Dungannon took a little silver frame from his pocket, and looked at the face smiling within. Below him a mare screamed and flung at her neighbour, rats squeaked somewhere, there was the rattling of horse chains. Listening without thinking at all of these things, Dungannon looked at the face.

"I knowed you were the mother of him, even when I had drink taken, but how you knowed he would not have the gift bates me. But, lady," said he, cocking his head to one side, "thrust Dungannon."

CHAPTER VII.

GAVIN BUILDS THE LOOK-OUT.

I THINK that the cave-man phase is common to every boy in the country. Why else does one find huts built of stones and clods in hidden places, in the bend of a stream, or in the heart of a wood, or under a cliff? You will see that the situation of these huts is cunningly considered, having due regard for defence and attack. It may be that Dungannon's habit of crawling into the little cave, and by the dim light of a candle, sitting a-playing on his violin, and letting his mind wander away and away, back into the mist of time—it may be that that first roused Gavin to build the Look-out—that and the story of the blind woman of Lagavile. Carefully, cunningly as an Indian, he set about his task, when he was a well-grown powerful boy of fifteen years. All to the Firth side of the Rock he traversed, searching for the place that he had in the eye of his mind. There must be a rock for the back wall of his hidden retreat; there must be danger in approaching for the unwary; the place must be easy of concealment. Such a place he found at last, near a glissade of flat stones (like an arrested avalanche)—stones that whiles go rattling and roaring down like a river, with metallic splinter-

ing, and the smoky smell of powder; stones that the goats trod daintily, and that a boy might skip across, scarcely resting his weight, but leaping with half-fearful joyous cries, and listening to the gathering rattle behind each step, as the stones started to slither. Below was sheer, almost sheer, slope, with heather growing long and straggling, having been burned but seldom. But here the bare ribs of the Rock showed through the scant soil in a perpendicular slab, and at the base of it was a flat place, covered with a green plant like the lily-of-the-valley, and with little white flowers hardly to be distinguished from white heather from a little distance. Here was the home of a white goat, a spot sacred to the leader, and here Gavin stood and surveyed. On his right, away down the Firth, an Irish schooner was abreast of the Craig; below him a little coaster plunged her nose into the swell—it was as though he could fling a stone on to her decks. Here he could see all the great liners coming and going on their sea trafficking—here was the place. In the winter, the rain would flood it—that was the first thing to be thought of, and to think with Gavin was to act. With a pick and a spade taken from the steading in the early morning, when he alone was abroad, he started the building. Sore, sore was the labour, for mostly hard rock met the pick, but bit by bit he finished the task.

Often from the little path far below he surveyed his work, and altered it until he was satisfied that none should detect it. From the glissade of stones he builded his side walls, for the stones were flat and easily handled. It was the best part of a year's work before he had the floor paved with flat stones, and a fireplace built, with a chimney of stone and clay.

A spring that trickled through his wall he led in a little gutter of stone into an old iron feeding-trough that had lain in the stackyard for years, and long he worked before the overflow was drained away below the floor, by a corner. He had built a little stone platform for the trough, and round this he planted hart's-tongues, and droll little shy ferns that loved damp dark crannies, and always there was a little tinkling of water, like the laughter of fairies. His walls completed, he dugged holes and erected wooden uprights taken from the shore, toiling "round about" with these great beams that had drifted to the shore of the Rock from the shipyard on the mainland.

For a while Gavin would leap down into the hut, but afterwards he made a ladder and set it below the doorway, which was in the roof.

Here, then, was his stronghold made, and no one knowing, yet seldom did he approach it by the same path lest he make a track, that his father, or his uncle, or the men, might wonder at. Seldom, indeed, did he even light the fire, but kept dry peat lying there, and on days when he could be away, he built himself a couch, or rather a rude bench, and a table. He covered his window-place with canvas, leaving only a little space for light to his ferns; and from the path the canvas looked like grey rock, and no one would ever think of climbing among loose stones to look closer.

Indeed, sometimes sitting in his Look-out, watching great black-backed gulls swoop down with a "whooping" sound of wings to join their fellows in the sea below, he would hear the phit and snort of goats at their grazing, climbing about his nest, all unconscious, seemingly, of his presence.

Here at peace Gavin lived his dreams. Sometimes, watching the ships sailing below him, he was a cunning pirate, waiting and watching till the treasure-laden galleons hove in view, and his swarthy crew would be around him, waiting his word to go on board his hooker and give battle.

Whiles he was a wrecker, living again all the tales of shipwreck that Dungannon had told him, showing his fatal light to draw stout ships off their course, and carrying rich booty to store in his secret stronghold, by the ruddy light of blazing torches.

Often this was Castle Dangerous (in sooth it was), and he was Douglas creeping stealthily in the dusk to the attack. Sometimes lying on the rude bench, he was the Bruce watching the spider spinning her web from beam to beam. All the tremendous joys of boyhood—a lonely boyhood in that he had no companions and made his own pageants—were in this place. Mairi Voullie Vhor missed eggs, and cheese, and bread, and made mystic signs old as the hills, and the wee folk that dwell therein. Cups and plates, and knives and forks, vanished mysteriously in the night, and (most horrible of all), the kitchen bellows were not.

Gavin was slowly furnishing the Look-out; a dressed sheepskin rug went next, and a tartan train-rug and a little pan.

So bitterly did Mairi lament the loss of her skillet that Gavin took it back, and put it into the corn-kist, where Pate found it, and his wife thereupon blamed him for everything.

“Ye jeckdaw, Pate Dol,” she would cry, “bring me back my good spoons!”

In the Look-out Gavin made a great bow, and hung it on the wall with a belt and arrows. He made a

great Viking head-dress, polishing for days at the horns of a slaughtered bull that Pate Dol got for him, and fitting them to an iron band. This helmet also he hung on the wall, and a belt and short sword that Campbell had provided. All his treasures, even Katherine, were taken away and stored carefully in the Look-out, and on Sundays after the morning prayers he would be away most of the day. The boy was in love with his own handiwork.

CHAPTER VIII.

MAIRI VOULLIE VHOR ON HISTORY.

As like as not, with Gavin in bed, his guardians would draw a little table closer to the fire and turn the lamp down, while the flickering and blinking of the burning wood cast grotesque lights and shadows, like phantoms dancing. There in silence they would sit until the doctor touched the lawyer with his foot and nodded at the decanter. Silently and solemnly Douglas would pour drinks, and then both men would sit back in silence until the lawyer performed the same mysterious kick and side look, and at that the doctor would operate.

On such an occasion, after the second glass, Douglas spoke.

“I will put him into the army, Ludovic Campbell.”

“Ye will give him a spell at a Scots University, James, and maybe a while in France—man, ye learned things there—bad useful things. I wish I were young again. Sodgering is a fine life if ye have the gift of it, and at least he would not be a slave. In medicine a man is the slave of a bell. A doctor hasn’t even the time to be ill. The time will come—I can see it coming—when a doctor will travel the roads in a kert, like the butchers and bakers. ‘Any weans to

tak' hame? Any bruises to mend, any coughs to cure?' Pamper up the folk, till it pays them to be ill, and what will ye find? Truculence and arrogance on the top of the educated ignorance of the lave, and the dacent folk ashamed. That's what comes o' letting lawyers fouter with medicine."

"Aye, James, the lawyers will put the doctors in a cart, wi' a wheen halfin politicians to help hoist them in."

"I'll tell you what we'll do the night—we'll ring for Mairi and ask her opinion."

Both men rose when the old lady entered, her knitting with her, and a black kitten frolicking with her wool.

"Sit down, Mairi," said the doctor, "and I'll mix ye a little whisky-and-water, and that will do your cough a heap of good."

"Screw up the lamp till I see what I'm getting," said Mairi.

"We have been thinking of what to do with Gavin," said Douglas, turning the wick higher. "What would be the best for him—the law, or the doctoring, or the army, now?"

"The law!" said Mairi, and her voice became vehement with scorn. "Is it the la'? I would never make him a lawyer—I *would not show a lawyer a bird's nest!* As for doctoring, seeing folk at their poorest—and life's a sair trauchle at the best,—Gavin would not stand that. He would take to drink.

"As for sodgerin', he would make a bonny sodger—ay, or sailor either; but na, na, put away from ye the gallant sight of him in a rid coat, and make a minister o' him."

Campbell started. "A minister! If ye want to

spoil a man make him a minister! What good is a minister—a minister!”

“It’s th’ old Scots notion, Ludovic,” cried Douglas, but Mairi stopped him.

“Ay, and it’s Scotland I’m thinking o’, gentlemen,” she said. “What kind of Scotland have we now—steamers tearin’ about Sunday and Seterday alike, golf, and kick-ba’, and theatres, halls o’ music, and magic lanterns day and night—the churches empty, and the jiles fu’. There’s bonny Scotland for ye! Weans reading trash in newspapers would dirty fish to row them in. Drink was bad and weemen was bad, but this slavering after pleasure is worse than baith—it’s dementing a nation, it’s making men like weemen, and weemen like hameless spirits, without peace or rest. There’s them that blame the weemen, but I warrant I blame the men. The men are not strong enough to keep the weemen in order; they’re feart if a lass greets. It’s a daft kindness to give in to a woman too much; it goes to her heid and unsettles her.”

“Aye, but days are changed and women with them,” said Ludovic.

“Don’t tell me that weemen have changed; weemen havena changed since Eve was in the gairden, when she his the right man. Was Black Agnes that ye talk aboot—was she not a managin’ twa-handed lass that defied an army, and dusted the walls o’ Dunbar Castle, when the cannon ba’s stotted off it?—there was spirit for ye and fire, and d’ye ken why she did it? Because her man would kiss her when he cam’ back and ca’ her a brave lass. That’s what she was looking for—that’s what they’re a’ looking for—the right man to praise them.”

“Mary Queen o’ Scots had men a-plenty, Mairi,” said Douglas, his eyes beginning to twinkle, “and she made a bonny business o’ it.”

“And Queen Elizabeth had nane, and was a brilliant success, Mairi,” cried the doctor.

“Poor bonny Mary, it was the want o’ a man ruined her, for if a’ her braw wooers had been rolled into wan, they would not have made the douce, *quiet*, strong lad she was needing—a strong lad that could skelp her, or pet her, as he pleased; and laugh at her, —wi’ enough o’ the deil in him to gar her feel fine and frightened—to keep the nobles in their biss wi’ a glower from his e’e, and his hand at his belt, as her faither would ’a done, and no ashamed to tak’ his cap off to his Maker. Aye, the kind o’ man a woman wearies for to come hame; the pity of it is they’re maistly away—with *other* weemen. And as for that Elizabeth woman, I never could thole her a’ my days, and I do not believe she was half as good as she let on. She has a sly face, yon one. Yon lady was hiding something.”

“Likely it would be a minister,” says the doctor quietly.

“Aye, but she would not have hidden Jone Knox—there was a man she would have feared. She didna daunt on the Bauld Buccleuch nane, and Jone Knox would have garred her sniff brimstane. If Mary had ta’en Jone Knox, beard and all, there would not have been a heided woman in Fotheringay.”

“It’s another John Knox you think Scotland needs then?”

“Aye, that, if Gavin would be that! A man that grown men would respect and reverence, that men grown old in wickedness could not sneer down or

laugh away. A man that would stand before the people and point the way; a man that would bring back the fear o' God to the nation; a man scorning money, and finery, and kerriges, and fearing only the face of his Maker."

"Bravo, Mairi," cried the doctor; "it's the like of you that should be in the College."

"Here are the young lads frae the collidge," cried the old woman, "full o' the love of the Divine Being, with His name on their lips continually! and the fine clever things they are saying in their minds, quibbling with the Bible, believing here and doubting there the truth that's in it—for that's the truth. If Gavin could stand with richeous anger in his heart, nae pity—Scots folk don't want pity,—man, but they thrived on brimstone and the burning lake——"

"D'ye think folk would stand that now?" said Douglas. "It was that talk that drowned the laughter of Scotland. Look at the difference between Scotland and Ireland."

"Aye, look—Ireland will laugh herself to hell, and then greet because she laughed, and it was the Forbes M'Kenzie Act that quietened Scotland; but, gentlemen, the foik would be glad o' a leader this day. The devil will aye fight, but a real leader would cow him, and there would be a different race o' bairns growing up. Let folk be as wild as they like through the week, but the Sundays are a scandal in Scotland, there's nae discipline, the weans are ruling the homes, and nane daur lift a hand. Gavin has the gift. He has the fire of the eye, and the leaping words of flame. He can recite, and it would terrify ye. Man, I'm hankering to hear him in a pulpit preaching the Word, and putting up a prayer. There

are men lost. I've heard Pate Dol in his young days putting up a prayer that would move the heart of a stane, but he hadna the Letin roots, and I took him wanting them."

"Well, we'll make Gavin a minister," said the doctor, "and he'll finish a bishop."

"Whatna bishop—the English Church, wi' its curates in the newspapers. I would rather see him digging drains," cried Mairi.

"It's a fine Church," said Douglas; "Cromwell was of the English Church."

"Yon bleck, that kilt kings"—grudgingly,—"a fine stern man he was bound to be, if all they say is true, but he was a Puritan, as well ye ken. It's a Cromwell in the kirk that Scotland needs. Make ye Gavin that, and the Lord will reward ye."

"I'm thinking Gavin would have something to say," said Douglas, "but I think, Mairi, you are right in some ways. We are all at sixes and sevens; politics in the pulpit and war in the homes; pleasures that bring no joy, and the clergy too broadminded for the most part—not of experience, but of expediency."

"Broadminded! What is it, this broadmindedness—a snare, the open gate to the Pleasant road, the weel-keepit road that leads to the Bog of Doubt; there's nae broad road tae the mountain-top where the air is clean. Na, na, it's climb and wrastle, loup boulders and skirt cliffs, till the end o' the journey. But on the broad road it's slither and slide, lie awhile on the roadside and smile to the passengers, drifting and slithering downhill. There were stout men of old that had weemen for a pastime, as I should say it, and bauld men that loved good horse, and delighted in

strong drink—these were kind o' *he* failings—a body could understand them, aye, and dancing as weel, real dancing—wae's me, what is a dance noo but the start of a fine Ladida? Aye, laugh, but if that's not true there is something wrong in the manheid o' Scotland, there's a saftness crept intae the old oak. It's bad enough to sin, but lamentable no' to be able."

"Come back," cried Douglas, "come back to Gavin."

"Ye've reared the lad wrang, gentlemen. Whitna women does he ken but bygone queens and the like o' that, an' I can mind of a batch of them in Tome 1 of the History, and maistly bad, aither mairrit or widowed, and the historians—wrinkled auld carles that should hae kent better—gloating ower their pranks as if it was just something oot o' the ordinar', and not a caper that's as common as dirt. And for menfolk he has kings and knights, as wild a cleckin' as any woman would want to see, wi' their fights and follies in two or three shires. Ye'll see! I'm auld, but I ken. Gavin will loup the dyke like his forebears. I'm sair feart, bless him, and that would mak' a grand bizz in a kirk choir.

"Aye, laugh, doctor; there are some acts better said with modesty."

"But, Mairi, women are different nowadays—as good as men."

"They were aye *that!*" says Mairi. "Nae woman ever denied that, but she never *let on.*"

"Good comrades, clean-minded," continued the doctor.

"Gosh guide me," cried the old woman, "I never thocht there was anything no' clean in catching a bonny man."

“In a word, Mairi, women are emancipated.”

“Did ever, doctor! Weel, I kent there was something wrang wi’ them. It sounds gey bad, and a man in the middle of it, as usual.”

“So it would seem that the Kirk is not for Gavin,” said Douglas. “Well, I’m glad of it. A man without a call from the Almighty is little use in a pulpit.”

“Time will tell, and the frost will try the tatties, gentlemen. There never was a kinder lad than Gavin. Here he is on this Rock year in, year out, with folk not of his years, and maistly dull as ditch-water, and never a girn from him. There he’ll swim like a pelach,¹ or bend a bow as thick as a broom-shaft; sail in the skiff when the spindrift is white in the loch, and a’ the time ta’en on with archers and vikings, wi’ horns on their heids, proging into ither folks’ business, and lifting anything not too het or too heavy. To see the lad work wi’ a spade or a graip gars me laugh. It’s like a table-fork in his hands, and him singing at the work, and Pate Dol and that Dungannon body potterin’ beside him. He’s drained and he’s wrought till the Rock is changed, and him a boy just, and thrang at his sword-play, and single-stick, when a strong man would lie doon. I’m gieing him sulphur and treacle every morning to keep him weak, and he’ll tak’ it like a lamb; and you’re gien’ him dreams oot o’ aul’ books, and hard work, and harder play, and it’s likely the first lass he sees will spoil the ploy.”

“Ah,” said Cambell, “well, now, we’ll make him a knight, and make women creatures of divine clay, to be worshipped from afar—the farther the better. He will wait at the table of King Arthur of Camelon,

¹ Porpoise.

with Sir Lancelot of the Lake and divers other knights. The Holy Grail and the Crusaders' Cross, the making of his armour, and the riding in the desert with the Earl of Huntington—we'll wrap him up in a new flame, and, Mairi, your bogies will be laid to rest, your ladies will not trouble him."

"Man, ye mak' me laugh—weemen trouble him? Na, na, but I'll warrant he'll trouble them."

So it was that Gavin fashioned his spear and beat out his lance-head, while Campbell gave cunning advice. The squire must be master of his horse, must groom and comb, must embellish his harness, must be able to ride full gallop at a little peg in the ground, and bear it aloft on his lance-head. Many times did Gavin fly from horseback and measure his length on the turf, while his horse bounded free, but bit by bit the art came. The sure eye and the perfectly controlled muscles were his. He had found his seat long syne, having never used a saddle, and you would hear his wild shout as he bore the peg aloft. Dungannon was subtle with horses.

"Me gran'father was a sergeant in the Inniskilling Dragoons, and he would be giving his horse a taste of the powder—saltpetre—for the gloss on the skin."

Gavin delighted in his horse, oiling hoofs, combing and bedecking the mane, constructing droll knots in the long tail, and garnishing these with polished ornaments. Cunningly, cunningly, the doctor led the way from history to romance, to high emprise, to valiant deeds. Prints and pictures appeared, gleaming armour, and goffered reins, and wonderful housing for horse. Sir David Lindsay charged on London Bridge,

Cœur de Lion thundered at the walls of Jerusalem, while the broom shone in his helm like fire celestial. All of the old heroes were not forgotten, but given new rôles. Fingal and Coulin hunted and warred, Bruce and Douglas were but new names. The game was always there—life, and song, and laughter, and horses, and death a friend at the end of all.

Thus at the anvil you would hear the clank of the hammer and see the flying of sparks. Heavens! what a task for a young hero to beat out his own armour, beat it out from worn horse-shoes, heated and reheated; from old rusty iron shods of long-forgotten wheels. Days of studying at pictures, strivings after knowledge. Heartrending failures, pitiful successes, but now and then, something evolved, that lying by the anvil caused a thrill—something that might have covered a gallant breast, something that might have taken a stern dint.

In the Look-out Gavin would sit thinking some way of jointing, and hinging, and lacing, filing and polishing the while at his shield, the first success. For days, then, never did the hammer call him. After his books, the farm-work was toward—there were the plough stilts, the broken fence, the seed-time, and the harvest. But always, always away down, his brain was thinking of some means of evolving boots of iron, and gauntlets.

Such a suit of mail was never seen since Tubal Cain fashioned the first spear-head. Some pieces were light, some ponderous, but the armour was evolved. It worked—it more than worked,—it worked loose, its hinges broke. Pate Dol was in raptures. Gavin was doubtful. Douglas and Campbell told of

heroes who leapt to horse in full war gear. Gavin essayed that feat.

“By my soul,” said Dungannon, “the baste was powerful moved wid the sight av the child like an ironclad, and clankin’ like a smiddy. I held on to his head, and gave the boy the reins. Soul o’ me, he can lep, wid all that metal on him, but nothing to the lep av the black horse when Gavin landed on him. He bounded like a billy. They took the fence there like the noise av a train dishaster I was in wance——”

That night came Mairi to the room where Gavin slept: bruised, battered, and triumphant he lay, and the old woman massaged and rubbed him with hen’s grease. Gavin’s laugh would go booming through the house at her talk.

“Ye might as weel loup aboot in the roasting jeck, with the griddle for a targe, black and blue and bliddin’ like a sheep. Ye’ll let me put a het brick to your feet—it draws the inflammation.”

For long Gavin exercised himself in all knightly pranks; the clatter of his armour lessened, and the fear of the horse subsided, and then Campbell sprang the final test, and little did he know how final. Gavin was to watch his armour on the Saints Stone all night, from dark to sunrise. The date was fixed, the armour was furbished, when coming forth one morning to bathe, there was a red cloth on the ground and on it, glinting and glittering, lay a suit of chain-mail, a great gleaming helmet with a flowing plume of horse-hair, a straight Crusader’s sword and burnished shield. That day Mairi walked after the hero—at a little distance. His plume waved in the breeze.

“Oh, my boy, my boy, ye are just a fallen angel.

I wonder who'll mairry ye? *God scatters men droll;*
it will likely be some wee bit shilpet creature, wi' a
turned-up nose."

But at night the doctor looked at Douglas.

"I wonder," said he, "where that armour came
from. It would cost a pretty penny."

"I knew this morning," said Douglas. "Ludovic,
that's Janet Erskine—Janet, the mother of Gavin.
She is not far away."

CHAPTER IX.

HOW IRENE LANDED ON THE ROCK.

AND at the time when Gavin was all engrossed in the making of his armour, studying old prints of knights and Crusaders, Irene Savage returned from the seminary for young ladies to her father's home in New York. The angular little girl was grown into a gracious young woman, with a fine notion of her own importance, as chatelaine in her father's home. Warm-hearted and impulsive, having many friends, there was yet a flightiness, as it were, in her, so that she never remained constant to any one thing for long. To her, music was delightful—she had dreams of being a great violinist in some hazy future,—yet the drudgery of scales and exercises disgusted her; she left them to play by ear, smiling away the gruffness and anger of her German teacher. Often she would light candles in her music-room and stand before a long mirror enraptured at her own beauty, her white gleaming arms, her dark hair, and the heavy black polished furniture reflecting the candle-light, the rich colour of her violin, the dark flush on her cheek. All her life there were people to do things for her. Since her cradle days Prim Sheppard had watched over her; her food had been specially

prepared for her, under Miss Sheppard's own eyes; the wind was not allowed to blow roughly on her; a scratch of her hand was a tragedy; a childish ailment spread a stillness over the great house. Even John Savage, boisterous and merry, was afraid to romp with this little girl; also he was very often absent from home, so that until Irene left for school she was spoiled, killed with kindness, a kindness that expected no thanks, and received none. In school she naturally occupied a like position: there were people ready to serve her as at her home; other girls willingly paid her deference, for she was kind and thoughtful, yet could be a little fury on occasion, as when a mistress dared to make fun of her. She could not bear to be laughed at. There was no littleness about her; she was not mean or jealous of another's success. Generous to a fault and truthful, she had no knowledge of fear. This may have been her misfortune—that she did things too easily, was impatient of sustained effort; yet she was loved for herself—her low laughter would set a roomful of girls a-laughing. She was a leader in every college activity, a fearless rider, and tireless at games.

Her father's friends treated Irene with an old-world deference: she was such a dignified, calm little hostess, anxious, indeed, that everything should be correct, but showing no anxiety, and Prim Sheppard was always there to tell her how excellently well she had played hostess. There came, of course, many young men, brothers of her school friends, sons of her father's friends, and these kept her on the accustomed pedestal, that had not yet become tiresome. It was a pleasure for young men to do anything for Miss Savage, a pleasure to wait in rain, or wind, if Miss Savage so

desired it—not that she delighted in wielding her sceptre of power in this fashion, but still—— These exceedingly well-groomed young men, who looked so strong and handsome, with straight black hair and brown faces, these young men of old families were already bowing the knee before her throne. And yet, except that they were fine companions across country, when the sap was beginning to move in the trees, when a new life seemed to have entered the woods, when birds sang, these young men were seldom in the mind of Irene. They were to her just so many kind folks who wished to do her pleasure. It was perhaps natural that her tones could be, and were, a little imperious, that she could be, and was, a little haughty. These were surely little faults in so excellent a young lady as Irene Savage.

To do her justice, Prim Sheppard tried hard to eradicate these failings, pleaded hard that Irene should treat her male friends with a little more gentleness; but Irene could be very much the grande dame on such occasions, until poor Miss Sheppard, looking into the fearless smiling eyes of her young mistress, felt that her great hope, the secret love that she had cherished for years, was plain as print, and that what the burly father had never seen, the daughter knew, and ridiculed with a smile.

“Why should I think of marriage, Prim, when I am but newly out? I will wait for years and years with my father. You would not have me leave my father to *strangers*,” and Irene would smile, and Miss Sheppard find some ladylike task where she could be alone.

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Irene's first dance was a triumph. Elderly matrons

with handsome sons were motherly to her. Elderly beaux paid her extravagant compliments; young men were strangely shy and deferential, young ladies too affable. Irene took all such homage as her due.

On her return home on that night, she had come to her father in his study and stood before his great chair, adorably flushed, and yet a little wearied. She unfastened the rope of pearls at her throat and laid them down carelessly.

“And,” said she, smiling, “you promised to tell me a story.” She pulled a cushion to his feet and sat down in the firelight waiting.

Savage put his hand on his daughter’s hair. “And so I will,” said he, smiling, “so I will, Indian Famine.”

“Once upon a time there was a man who had a little girl, and the man loved the little girl very much because she was all that was left for him to love.”

“Wait a minute,” said Irene, turning round and looking up. “What was the little girl’s name?”

“Her name was Indian Famine.”

“That’s all right,” said the girl.

“And,” continued Savage, “the man was in a great town in England, and his little girl with him, and he wondered what he would buy for her, so that she would always know that her father loved her, and he bought her a great rope of pearls, that had a deal of not very nice history attached to them, especially to seven that were greater by far, in size and lustre, than the others. These seven were the most beautiful of all, but the little girl wanted a great big doll, for she didn’t care anything about pearls. And the man I am telling you of had the seven pearls taken from the necklace and re-strung, and put them into a little case, and hid

them inside the great big doll. The girl knew nothing about it, for this was to be a great surprise to her some day; and every day she would be playing with her doll, and every night she would sleep with it, until the man went away to a big town in the North, where men build great ships, and set sail from that town for his home in New York."

Irene sat up. "And I—I threw the doll overboard," she cried. "Oh, father! And the seven pearls inside of her."

"That is so," said Savage; "these pearls here that you wore to-night were the others; the seven big ones went back to the sea, to look for their oysters, at the back of an island called the Rock."

"But maybe the doll would float to the shore," said Irene.

"I think the propellers got her," said her father. "I looked—the shore wasn't very far away either."

Irene sat silent for a long time, gazing into the fire.

"When will you go to Europe again?" said she at last. "For a pleasure cruise, I mean."

"Oh, sometime, Irene; I am getting to like being at home."

"Well," said Irene, rising to her feet, "we'll go and look for that doll when we go. Maybe a fisherman's little girl would find it. I'll take a little tent with me and I'll look, and that will be a great adventure. Better than dancing," laughed Irene; "like Treasure Island, only safer."

And so it came about that Irene had her way; because that always whatever she wished for had happened, so it was that her father's steam yacht bade farewell to the statue of Liberty, and sailed eastward.

Savage had business to do, of course, but Irene's whim was the power that drove the noiseless turbines. Irene's whim had provided the little tent, with all the appliances that townsfolk think are required; the little useless folding-chair, that folded always at the wrong time; the little bed that let down in sections, and was dangerous for strangers to sit on; the little washstand with its canvas basin, not unlike a bag for straining jelly. Irene had the greatest delight in all of these, but Miss Sheppard, looking on, was if anything more prim than ever.

After two months on the English coast, the *White Lady* sailed north and dropped anchor in the bay, a little way from Lewis's Port, and in the afternoon Irene had her tent erected on the Rock and commenced her search. But there were miles of rocks, with holes and crannies also, and eerie birds splashing. Her little dinghy was drawn up on the beach. She sat long wondering whether or no to row back, and watched the lights come out in little white houses across the bay, saw the riding light of the yacht, and the lights from the open port-holes. She longed to be beside her father in the well-lit saloon. To search first, and then to meet some old man who would tell her that a wonderful doll had floated to the shore, years and years ago, had been her thought. But now with the shadows falling, a kind of dimness seemed to settle on her very mind. She felt alone, and vexed for something she knew not. The waves seemed great mysterious forces that were conscious of her presence, the great rocks were menacing, the hill gloomed above her. She had come back hurriedly to her tent, after hours of hard scrambling, for one could not call it walk-

ing, had set about making tea, and had known even then, in the daylight, that to spend the night here would be dreadful, with the loneliness and stillness like a heavy hand pressing. For the first time in her life Irene knew fear. It had been childish, this futile dream. In the morning she would row back to the yacht and forget it. She could hear the gramophone playing, and wished she had taken Prim Sheppard that she might have felt less alone. She did not wish to undress; she felt afraid of the open tent flap, that seemed to be an open door into the dark. It was worse than darkness, this dim light that made ordinary objects grotesque and fearsome, but she was more afraid to shut herself in. Her lantern at least made the darkness visible, yet she waited for things to come into the circle of light; she felt and was glad that she had taken a little gun from her father's room. It was loaded, and slipping it into her pocket, Irene left the tent. The night was still, and a terrible loneliness seized her. She fought it, walking up and down, up and down, afraid to rest lest some one should come on her in her sleep.

“Is this pitiful frightened thing the real me?” she whispered. “Is this the only time I have been tested? She resolved to fight this fear, her lips tight, her heart beating. Always she felt that some one was near her. Up and down, up and down she marched, refusing to look behind her, tight drawn with fear, afraid of the very noise that her shoes made, lest it drown some other stealthy sound. There was a white farmhouse on the island. Surely she would waken some one there, and with that thought she started to walk towards it, having blown out her light. There was a little

path, rocks became more clearly defined, the moon was risen. Surely the night was almost past. Her pulse became quieter, her heart ceased to thud. She felt less the sport of unreasoning fear; to-morrow her father would laugh at all this. She looked round her, forcing herself to be normal for her very pride's sake. Suddenly, towering up from a rock, between her and the sky, she saw an enormous figure, like a statue. Her heart beat in her throat; for her there was no turning back to her tent, she must go onwards. Afraid to breathe, she crept stealthily on, never lifting her eyes from the menacing figure. There seemed a light to play around it, as on burnished silver, like something not of this world. With that came terror. Against her will she cried out, and ran wild-eyed and unseeing. Her foot caught, and she fell; the stars seemed to leap in the heavens; she remembered no more.

CHAPTER X.

GAVIN WATCHES HIS ARMOUR.

AWAY and away back, when the graves were young in Iona, there lived a saint on the Rock, Molaise men called him. He dwelt in a cave where a little clear stream trickles to the sea. Red sandstone was his roof, and his resting-place a cold slab. Above his doorway he carved a deep cross which endureth. Set in front of his dwelling is a great stone, the top of which is flat like a table. There are steps in the stone, leading upwards, so worn now with time and weather that nature might have left them there. The little brook trickles by many boulders set curiously. On these sat scholars and listened, gazing at the great gaunt man standing on the flat stone. The wide-sweeping swing of his arm was his diocese, the hills were his vineyard. Wild, and leaping like flame were his words. Little children were brought to him, and he baptized them, as John in the desert baptized, with the water from the brook. I think that in his agony he cowered in that other little cave, on bleeding knees, crying on his God for aid, when he saw across the bay the smoke of ruin, and foray, rise in menace; when the children he had once blessed, stabbed and slew, and Argyllshire raiders went roaring to the sea,

singing the songs of blood madness; when driven cattle bellowed, and the face of God was hidden from the West. Something of this was in the night wind, when Dungannon played. There are men wise in letters, and in the hearts of men, who hold that Molaise gave his name to the Rock, the isle of Molios—Illmolas,—and somehow, in the droll way of words, the little village (that for the most part snuggled in the birch-trees at the foot of the Urie) was called of men Lam-lash. But sure as I am that the peace of the saint still rests on the Rock, making all days feel like a Sabbath to the thoughtful, still it runs in my mind that the bay brought the name—the bay that is calm and sheltered with any wind, the safe anchorage, the calm water. I can see the little skiffs running before a southerly gale. I can hear the helmsmen cry in the night, in the smother of driving spindrift, “Loch an eilan, lum luish”—the bay of the island, the calm water. What boots it?

On the flat stone whereon of old the saint stood before his people, on this holy stone was Gavin to watch his armour. There he came at the sun-setting on a night when the wind moved round with the sun, a night soft and cool, with little waves fretting among the pebbles. On the flat rock he laid his armour, and his shield, and kneeled in the dimness. For long came the sound of music from a white yacht, music that yet did not banish a silence, a stillness that was a thing apart, not to be broken. A heron cried loudly, suddenly, and flapped past on beating wings. “The worst of the night is past,” said Gavin, voicing an old superstition. A little way from the shore a porpoise school rose, and breathed, and plunged onwards. Behind the watcher were grey rocks and dark shadows,

and yet—did the shadows conceal?—were there weird whisperings in the night?—did the wind go chill?—was there something at his back, something that might touch him? Silence and night. The stories of Pate Dol and Dungannon came to Gavin, dreadful stories, and yet he never turned his head, never made the sign with his fingers that keeps away the evil spirits, and the evil wishes. With his hands on the hilt of his sword, he kneeled, and the light in the sky travelled round towards the east. How near to the heart is the old dread of darkness, of the unseen; how cold cometh the hand of fear in the silent places. Strange images rose before him; wild men, broad-chested and bare of arm, leapt from their galleys and swam and waded to the shore. He bent his ear to their chanting, he saw the gleam of their swords. These men were of his folk—of these he had no fear. Did a giant form stand before him on the stone, looking upon him with stern awful face? There was a light about him—his armour gleamed. Was it only the late rising moon?

With the coming of the moon, Gavin rose and shook himself as a horse shakes. He leaned on his great sword and abode his watch anew. In the Firth a great liner's engines throbbed like a stout heart, steady and true, her lights came into his field, his thoughts went with her. Away there led the path to the world, the strange new world of adventure and toil, of cities and people. Soon he would lay his armour beside his other treasures and go out into that world—to some task that should be set him.

In the chill wind before the dawn you see him, his face grey and stern, staring into the void of the

world. He heard a sharp cry of fear swiftly stilled. Never a muscle twitched—on his left hand something moved,—he saw the white blur of a face; came a rustling like a breeze in a flapping sail, then a little sobbing cry and silence. Gavin abode his watch.

Suddenly, from near at hand a corncrake cried; there came a great crying of gulls; little birds twittered; a lark went soaring; cattle lowed. Gavin donned his chain-mail, raised his sword to the east, and kissed the blade. It was dawn. And then, with the night over, came a little voice—a wondering little voice,—a voice with a joy in it somewhere. And at the first words Gavin leapt like a startled horse.

“Maryland, my Maryland,” said the voice. “I guess you’re only a man.”

Something rose in the boy’s throat. He had never heard a voice like that, soft, and yet clear and fearless. His body tingled, his face burned. He had never dreamed of such a being as this, for seated a little way from him, wrapped in a cloak, was the most wonderful being. Pictures of women he knew; he had seen women often, in little rowing-boats, but never near, for no one landed ever on the Rock, yet here before him sat a woman. He looked at her hands—such little brown hands,—at her hair falling, at her red lips, her white teeth. He noted the look of wonder in her eyes—such great eyes,—and the little ridiculous line of doubt in the low forehead. He came beside her, fearing that she might vanish. Here was the answer to the cry in the night, when he had been in a world of ghosts. His heart thumped against his ribs; he felt himself monstrous big beside this little woman.

In a moment he felt his hand grasped; the girl stood beside him, and then a little hand clasped her head, and she would have tumbled, but Gavin caught her.

She smiled a little. "I fell—I am hurt—my head," and then she swayed against him, and slowly he put an arm round her. Her hair blew across his breast, and he looked down. Then came a wonderful tenderness; his arm tightened; he patted, as old Mairi would pat. He was holding her gently, tenderly, and then, at her fear, his arms went round her.

Under scowling brows, his eyes glanced to right and left. He threw his head up, as in challenge, and the wind blew in the long plume, and then upwards he strode on the hillside, the girl still at his breast, her eyes closed. A little trickle of blood oozed in her black hair, her brown hand beat at his chest, and then fell weakly. Straight as the flight of his own arrow, Gavin came to the Look-out and laid his burden on the rude bench, and looked at her: she breathed. Suddenly he knew that she was a weak thing like a lamb. In his sea-chest was a flask of whisky, left since the time of snow in April. He hauled out Katherine the doll, who opened and shut her eyes repeatedly, in protest; he found and unscrewed the flask, and put it to the girl's lips. The captive fluttered—her eyes opened and shut like Katherine's, but faster,—her hands pushed at the flask, her feet kicked, she choked, her face twisted, she shook her head, her lips tight closed. Gavin, looking on, suddenly laughed. He had a tremendous laugh. He leaned against the wooden upright in the dugout, and the walls trembled. The girl sat up suddenly; she rubbed her face vigorously, and looked at Gavin under her

brows quickly, searchingly—the sweeping plume touching the roof, the chain-armour, the bigness of him, standing laughing down at her. Her eyes sparkled, her lips curved; she must laugh with him, gently at first.

“Oh,” she cried, “I’m crazy. I’ve gone cr-r-azy at char-a-des.” She could not stop laughing. There was something in her laughter that hurt Gavin. He became grave. Not so the girl; she took a great gulp of a breath, and laughed, and laughed. Tears came to her eyes, and she dabbed pathetically, and then she saw the viking helmet, and off she went again to her laughing.

Gavin put his helmet on the bench, and kneeled before her.

“Oh, I’m quite, quite mad,” laughed the girl in gasps. “Daddy says bughouse—bug-h-house . . . oh!”

“I do not know bughouse,” said Gavin.

“No, no; they never d-d-do.”

Quickly he came beside her. He put his arms round her. She held on to him first, then tried to put him away.

“Oh, go away; go away and leave me.”

“I will,” said Gavin.

“No, no, not in this cellar—not in this place. Where is this place? Don’t leave me, don’t leave me. I’ll *die* if you leave me here.”

Gavin remembered the trickle of blood, and wetted her handkerchief and bathed the bruise. He petted the patient the while, as he was wont to pet his dog in like circumstances. Under his administrations, the laughter ceased, but little sobs came now and then. The girl was trembling.

“There now, there now,” said he, dabbing cold water on the wound, “you’ll soon be better,” and without knowing, without thinking, his fingers caught her ear even as they would catch his dog’s in play. Irene looked up, startled, her eyes wide and dark, her lips parted. Gavin saw the tears glistening on her lashes, the soft colour in her cheeks, and suddenly, swiftly, he bent his face to hers upturned. He wanted to press his face to hers; he wanted to be gentle with his hands touching her hair; he felt tremendous strength in his body. His hand pressed her cheek again. Irene made a queer crooning sound—all his body thrilled to it, then his lips met her soft red lips. A wild thrill like fire went through him, as he felt the little pressure of her lips, a little soft moving under his. Her eyes, looking up, met his, wild and hungry, with half-closed drooping lids, and with her look his face changed; the vicious fierceness left it, a radiant boyish smile took its place. The blue eyes became wide open and merry. He gave her a little shake, his lips curved, and then she too smiled; her eyelids fluttered, her lips moved tremblingly, like a little boy’s awaking from sleep, then her arms tightened round his neck. She looked up again suddenly, her lips pouted, then with a little soft sound she drew his head down.

In a little time Gavin felt her hand on his hair; she was looking at him starry-eyed.

“My father says folks have a name to suit them somewhere. I never knew that it was so before,” whispered Irene Savage, with a splendid colour in her face. “My father’s name is Savage.”

“I have a lot of names,” said Gavin, looking at her with wondering eyes.

“There’s lots of room for names about you, but tell me all of them.”

“Gavin Sholto Alexander William James Archibald Douglas.”

“That sounds like the roll-call at college,” said Irene. “I’ll call you plain James—Jim maybe if you’re good, and don’t look at me any more—like that.”

“But I want to look,” said Gavin. “I love to look. I never saw anything like you before in all my life.”

“How many girls have you told that little story?”

“I never knew girls. You see, I never spoke before to a lady, except old Mairi. I never—saw one near enough to touch.”

“But, oh, have you never been to assemblies—dances—with crowds of pretty girls all dolled up?”

Gavin shook his head. “I can dance the sword-dance and the Highland Fling, but no girls’ dances.”

“H-have you never kiss-kissed anybody b-but m-me?”

“I never learned kissing,” said Gavin, “till just now.”

Miss Savage stood up and looked long into his eyes.

“You’re sure—sure—sure,” she whispered.

Gavin nodded.

“It seemed like that,” said she. “N-neither did I—not properly.”

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE LOOK-OUT.

“DID you build this place?” said Irene, looking from one strange trophy to another with a puzzled little frown, and to Gavin her voice was like strange half-forgotten music, soft and clear and wonderful.

He felt a thrilling in his limbs, he felt his heart pounding against his ribs, and could find no words at first, to answer. He opened the canvas screen of the window. Away below, the girl saw great black cormorants on the rocks, and splashing into the sea. Gulls were swimming a little way off-shore. Anon there came wild crying, and she saw the fluttering of white wings—a little flurry of wings away below.

“Sometimes,” said Gavin, “when I was not very big, I would come away here and lie in the heather, and look down on that great wide sea, until I felt fear near to me—I was not very big. . . .” He looked at the girl and she nodded.

“The rocks, away, away above me—the tremendous black hill all silent, and away down below, the sea spreading for ever and ever, and I would hold to the heather to keep from running down home, to hear *known* voices. Lying on the open hillside I would feel that everything I thought was known, and that

things saw everything I did. If I threw a stone, if I found a nest in the heather, *things* knew. When a great gull cried, it was like dreadful laughing. . . .”

“I know!” cried Irene. “Was it a bird? I heard it—but go on, tell me.”

“You see, I had no other boy to tell things to or play games with, and I knew that down there all the great fleets of all the world nearly, had sailed. The Norse ships swept out of the bay like black sea-snakes—long, and deadly, and black. Olaf the Red and Hako had looked on the very rocks that I crouched among. King Robert of Scotland and his men had seen the black loom of the Rock as they sailed for the beacon on Turnberry. The battered hulls of the Spanish Armada had been tossed and slashed by the same waves and spindrift, and—and it was easy to make stories about all those things, when the very rocks and the seas were just the same, you see, and I built this place to be away by myself with my stories.”

“Was Paul Jones’ ship ever down there?” said Irene, and pointed a slim forefinger.

Gavin looked puzzled—he did not know of Paul Jones. He shook his head.

“Well,” said Irene, “if that’s not *too* mean! But I know,” she said, nodding her head gravely—“I know that he was off the Old Head of Kinsale in the *Ranger*—an American warship,—because I’ve heard the sailors singing. . . .”

“And was it always men and ships you played at? Were there no beautiful ladies on desert islands, to be rescued . . . ?”

Gavin flushed darkly.

“I did not learn very much about ladies,” said he,

for he could not tell this beautiful girl that women were merely objects of scorn for the most part, and beneath a man's notice.

"I liked Katherine Douglas," said he, feeling himself a traitor. "She was so very brave, thrusting her arm through the staple of the door; but all the Douglases were brave," said he. "And Mary Queen of Scots—I think I would have loved to serve her."

Irene made a little moue.

"Well, Sir Knight," said she, "I do wish you would serve me, for I am very hungry, and I am not brave like Katherine Douglas. Was her arm fractured?"

Gavin laughed.

"I'll show you another Katherine Douglas," said he. "She's in that chest; her eyes open and shut, and she's got universal joints."

Gavin opened his sea-chest.

Irene's eyes opened very widely. She clasped her hands and bent over the doll with a little cry of pleasure.

"Where did you find her?" she cried. "This is my doll. Sh—she fell into the sea years ago."

"Well, I found her," said Gavin. "You can keep her to play with if you like." He wanted to give this wonderful being everything.

Irene sat with the doll in her lap. She was all happy. In a little while she would row back to her father and hold Katherine aloft like a trophy. Suddenly, at thought of his amazement she laughed aloud, and Gavin, watching her in wonder, laughed with her.

She liked the smiling in his eyes, and resolved to wait a little in the strange retreat.

"Well, I'm hungry, sir," said Irene, and at that Gavin divested himself of his armour.

Mairi Voullie Vhor's treasures appeared—knives and spoons, and cups and saucers.

“Just wait a little and I will soon get you something to eat,” said Gavin, and disappeared from the trap-door of the Look-out. In a while he returned, and set before her bread, and butter, and honey. He lit the fire and made coffee, and now Irene was thoroughly enjoying herself. This was a kind of picnic with a wild man—a really nice wild man.

She asked endless questions of his life and his games, nodding her little head with an air of grave wisdom. She gave advice—her brow furrowed.

“I think you might earn a competence on the stage,” said she at last.

“I don't want a competence,” said Gavin; “I want you.”

“Well, I'm really afraid that cannot be. You see, while you're doing all these things, I'll be looking around for a suitable husband; but I'll promise to take an interest in your lifework, and all that, if you come to America.”

“America! But you are not going to America!”

“I think yes—eventually I'll go back there.”

“No,” said Gavin, “you will stay here with me. I want you with me. I like doing things for you. I like looking at you.”

Irene laughed happily like a boy.

“Why, that is very nice of you,” said she; “but I think now it is time to be going.”

“You are not going—I found you. I will keep you!”

“This is rather tiresome, don't you think?”

“No-o, I think this is fine; I like this. I've never liked anything like this before.”

“Shall we go now? You, I presume, don’t intend to keep me a prisoner, do you?”

“Do you want to go?”

“My good sir, don’t be ridiculous. If you will row me over to the white steam yacht in the bay, I promise you my father will reward you suitably. It will be the beginning of your fortune perhaps—if you are diligent and sober. I think perhaps you might be a success—on the stage,—and with a little money to start you, you may become a stage favourite; I believe there are very lucrative positions.” Irene was still enjoying herself. She had the situation well in hand. The strange young man was following her every word, as she thought. Still he had such a peculiar look, she felt as though she might be speaking to a mountain. Should she allow it, she might feel herself very small and futile.

“I want to kiss you again,” said Gavin, and put his hand on her shoulder. Her words had amused him. He enjoyed looking at her, felt a tremendous tenderness for her. Irene’s heart started to beat. Was this a madman? Her hand closed round her little pistol, her face flushed with shame; the fool who could not know that her kiss was half thankfulness and half hysteria—was he a madman?

“Mr. Douglas,” said she, trembling a little, “take your hand from my shoulder, please. If I am a prisoner, I presume you will have a bigger ransom if I am returned to my father with a story of good treatment. You might perhaps make your bargain. I have something of value with me.” Irene sat down. Her tongue was like a lash. Her knees were trembling. Gavin looked at her in amazement. There was ill-temper in his look. He did not understand.

“Listen,” said he, “I do not want money; I want you. I don’t know your father. I would be gentle with him for your sake. I have never spoken to a woman before but our old housekeeper. I have never kissed before till I kissed you. I do not know the ways of the world very well, but surely a man takes what he wants. Well, I want you.”

He seated himself quite calmly beside her, his breathing calm as a child’s. He put his arm round her very tenderly. He bent his face close to hers, looking at her eyes.

“Please don’t,” she said very quietly; “please don’t. I want to tell you something.”

Gavin frowned. “Must you always talk?” said he with a little smile.

“I think,” said Miss Savage, looking very like her name, “I think you are not a bad man—a vile man. I think you might almost be a gentleman. Give me that doll, please, and your pocket-knife,” but even then she was thinking of those young men who were so unlike her captor.

In some wonder Gavin handed over Katherine and his knife. Her head bent over her doll, Irene spoke slowly. “My father is a very fond parent,” said she, “and I am his only child. Years ago we were in Europe and he bought a necklace, a very valuable necklace; in it there were seven famous pearls. They were called the seven sisters, and were unique. Wishing to keep them until I came out—till I grew up,—he amused himself by trying to cheat the Customs of America. He took those seven from the necklace and put them inside this doll, so that I might be interested, when he should rediscover them for me. I threw the doll overboard, sailing past here ten years ago.”

“Why did you pitch your doll overboard?” said Gavin.

“I wished to play on the island, I think.”

“It was a very good wish. Well, you are on the island now, and you have the doll and everything is all right.”

Irene cut into Katherine without speaking, and after a time drew out a little flat case, silk-wrapped and sealed, and opened it.

Gavin took up Katherine and drew the cut edges together ruefully. Irene gave a little gasp of pleasure. Gavin still pressed the edges of the wound together, and then turned Katherine back. “Her eyes still open and shut,” said he, and then the longing came over him that he must press against his breast this strange, soft, beautiful girl. His heart began to thump. His mouth felt dry. There was a strange trembling in his limbs. He put one arm round Irene’s shoulders and forced her back gently, and wondered at the fear in her eyes. There was a white circle round her lips.

“Don’t be frightened,” he whispered, and put his hand under her chin.

Irene’s eyes met his doubtfully—wondering, troubled.

“Mr. Douglas,” said she, “I think if you knew how wrong it is to do this, you would not do it; but take those—they are valuable—and let me free. You will be quite safe. I promise I will say nothing to any one.”

Gavin took the pearls in his hand.

“They are very beautiful,” said he. “Is this not for a lady’s pleasure?” and held them against her white throat, and looked at her.

“Now,” said he, smiling his patient smile, “have

I not waited a long time? I'm wearying to kiss you, and I don't want to kiss you roughly, because you are so very little and helpless."

"I am not helpless," said Irene. "You coward. I have begged for freedom. I have bribed you to let me out of this miserable place. I don't know what you mean, or if you are a madman, but I am not helpless. I am not helpless—you appalling coward."

"I am not a coward, I think," said Gavin, and pulled her very gently towards him.

Irene took her hand from her pocket. She pushed the muzzle of her little gun against Gavin.

"Look!" she cried, "look! Leave me or I'll pull the trigger."

"You have a beautiful mouth," said Gavin. "I'm glad you——"

The noise deafened her.

Gavin straightened, looking into her eyes. She could not take her eyes from his. She saw the colour leave his face, saw his hand grasp his chest, saw him try to fall away from her, and slowly, slowly, still looking, bend over and over until his head was on her lap, and then a great heave of his body, and he was lying at her feet. She was free.

She looked at the door; she stepped over the fallen man and came to the foot of the ladder. A great red splash was forming.

"Oh, my God!" she cried, and came back swiftly and kneeled, tearing at his jacket and vest. He was breathing. She got the whisky flask and put it to his lips, her shaking hands spilling the spirit. She wiped it from his face. She tore her skirts and tried to staunch the wound. There was another in his

side. Frantically she tried to lift him, to put a bandage below that other wound.

“I’m too heavy,” said Gavin.

“Don’t die, oh, don’t die, please. Don’t die!” Her face was all broken. She cried with difficulty, like a man.

She felt his hand on her wrist. “Don’t go away,” said Gavin. “You’re mine. I want you. I’m going to keep you now. Listen! I, Gavin Douglas, take you, Irene Savage, for my wife. That’s *handfasting*. Will that do?”

“You can’t, you can’t!” she cried. “You need ministers, and lawyers, and witnesses, and a ring.” His hand released its grip, his eyes closed. She saw him set his teeth, and felt his grasp tighten as he held her again. With wide eyes she watched the blood ooze through her silly bandage and run thickly on his swarthy skin; she wondered why his skin should be brown, and felt a burning shame.

“Say I, Irene Savage, take Gavin Douglas to be—to be my——”

“Husband,” she gasped, and then, “I do, oh, I do—anything, but don’t die. Tell me where I can get help.”

“If you’ll help me to my feet, I’ll get you help. I’m all right. I won’t die. I’ll soon be better.”

Before she could help, he got on his knees and pulled himself to his feet, holding to the table. She took one arm.

“Lean heavy—oh, I’m sorry—oh, it’s bleeding again.”

Gavin got to the ladder.

“Give me that whisky, please, Irene.” She jumped. Like a flash she put it into his hand. There

was something akin to relief, to joy, in doing anything for him. He took a long drink, and another, and went up the ladder and flung the heavy hatch open.

Irene steadied him as he half lay on the roof. Then he put his lips into a droll shape, and gave a long piercing whistle, so loud that her ears buzzed. Again and again he whistled, and waited, and then he nodded.

“You’ll have help soon,” said he, and smiled to her, “for I’m bringing witnesses.”

“Witnesses!”

He nodded his head.

“You wanted witnesses; you forget we’re married, you and I?”

“Oh, that,” said Irene, and reddened, her fingers at her lips.

Two figures appeared on the shoulder of the hill. Gavin whistled and whistled, until they saw him. Then, when the figures were out of sight in a hollow, he hauled himself from the hatchway, and Irene followed and helped to close the door.

“We might want the place yet,” said he.

Irene had no answer. She was weeping. “It just went off,” she whispered, and threw the little gun from her.

.
Pate Dol was in the act of handing over the letters when he heard Gavin whistle. “There’s maybe a young beast gaun ower the rocks,” said he, and cried to Dungannon. As they hurried upward, Douglas stood at the door bareheaded. He held a letter in his hand, and the hand trembled.

“It canna be Sholto’s writing,” said he. “Sholto’s

dead in Africa; Sholto was killed by an elephant the year Janet and me fell out."

Sholto had been his younger brother, a brilliant soldier, a man who had done great work. Yet all his effects had been sent home years ago. . . .

"Open the letter," said Campbell. "I want to get to my cauliflowers." Together they entered the house.

.
As they climbed up the path above the house, listening now and then, and answering Gavin's whistle, Dungannon drew his breath for a moment and looked back over the bay. Below him cattle were grazing peacefully, the air was cool, the Ayrshire coast seemed very near. There were long ribbons of calmness stretching across the ruffled waters of the bay, like rivers.

"This place has been the making of me," said Dungannon. "I have boots, and suits, and shirts, and money laid by—have I not kept away from the drink for months and years? I would not be leaving the Rock for a fortune, for it is in the heart of me to be a runagate on the face of the earth."

"Och, I don't know," said Pate; "the jumping-jake and the grasshopper see a lot of new ground, and it's likely they will enjoy the louping well enough."

"Well, it's thanking the Holy Mother I am that the wandering spirit is gone from me; it's steadying to be going into a *made bed* every night, not but the back of a dyke was rare and pleasant too."

"Yon's a fine yacht," said Pate, pointing. "The price of the painting on her would keep a family for a long spell."

Dungannon looked at the yacht a long time, turn-

ing now and then as he walked up the hill. At his heart was a strange longing. He was seeing in his mind the clean feather at her forefoot, and hearing the laughing of seas thrust from her bows; the night whine of the rigging was in his ears, and like a vision, he saw a velvet-dark sky and the stars signalling, the one to the other. . . .

“Holy Mother!” he whispered, his hands clenched, “do not be letting her put the spell on me again—the grey cold sea. . . .”

“Yon lady will rowl in a beam sea,” said he sneering. “I would not be aboard her for six pounds a month and all found,” and he turned to look at her again.

Pate was paying little heed to the Irishman. “I am not missing any of the beasts,” said he; “they’re all yonder.” With that Gavin’s whistle came again, and Pate saw him, and stopped.

“He has a lass,” says he; “but that’s no’ likely to make him whistle. Is it not wonderful how young folk will come thegither?”

“The girl is waving,” said Dungannon, and commenced to run. “The boy is not himself, to be half-lying and half-sitting, like yon.”

When the henchmen reached Gavin he had a smile for them, but his face was white.

“This lady is my wife,” said he, bringing them up with a round turn. “She wished witnesses. Dungannon, you will take her to her tent, and row out to that white yacht in the bay, and then wait and take her back. Is that right?” He turned to Irene. She nodded her head, for so she had promised, wishing only to get away. “Pate, you will give me a hand. I had an accident with my little pistol, but

I'll be able to walk down. Come soon," said he, smiling to Irene; "I'll be wearying for you."

Irene looked at the little jewel-case in her hand. "These—these are yours," she whispered, putting the case into his hand. He would have refused, but, "Keep them till I come for them," she whispered.

"We'll be putting in a step," said Pate, looking at the lady. "I would not like another accident," and Gavin put his arm round the hardy old man. A little way down the hillside he turned and waved back.

"I did it; I shot him," Irene whispered to Dunggannon. "Will he die on the way?"

CHAPTER II.

IN WHICH DUNGANNON GETS A HAND'S JOB BEFORE THE MAST.

FOR a while Irene watched the two figures descend the hill, and waved a frantic hand as the wounded man turned.

“Will he die on the way?” she cried, and made as if to follow.

“Is it die, Mistress Douglas?” said Dungannon, “him die! D’ye think, now, ye would shoot an elephant av a man with that little skooter,” and he pointed to the wicked-looking little gun glinting in the heather. “Ye’ve no more than let the blood out av him. The doctor will put him to rights wid stickin’ plaster. If I could be getting the bullet now, ye would be wearing it for a charm—your first gift to your man. Ye’re the lucky lady.”

“Will you take me down, please,” for the two figures had disappeared. “I did not mean to shoot. I was afraid. He’s not my man—I’m not his wife. I-I’m n-not Mistress Anybody—I-I’m——”

“For the love av mercy now, do not be crying for a thrifle like that. If ye’re not his wife, who should be knowing it better than yourself? By my soul,

but it won't be easy to explain why ye shot a man that was not your own property to do wid what ye liked. Have ye thought av that?"

"I-I would never s-shoot anybody." The words came back to Dungannon like a wail.

"Not complete," said the Irishman; "enough maybe to take the pith out av him. Is that your little white tent above the rocks yonder?"

"Oh yes, yes," cried the girl, and started almost to run. Somehow she felt if only she could be among things she knew she would become sane—would cease to be a murderess, for all she knew; she would awake and find herself looking at the little ventilator at the top of the tent pole; she would see the little contrivance the carpenter had fitted on the pole, for "hanging things up on." If she could splash herself with water and put on white cool things, she would be all right and sane, and oh! everything.

"Don't hurry, mistress—miss, I mane. Ye've a lifetime before ye. . . ."

Irene gained the tent. Her little varnished punt was drawn up on the beach—everything was untouched, and yet she felt that she had been absent a long age. She sat on her camp-chair, very straight and severe.

"Do you see that steam yacht?" said she.

"I do, now," said Dungannon; "a beauty she is. Ain't thim little tents most salubrious now?"

"Will you take the tent down—strike it, I mean, and row to that yacht?"

"Anything to oblige ye, lady. Will ye be for off and leaving him to welter in his blood?" Dungannon was in fear of the white steam yacht.

“You said—you said he wouldn’t die; but I must go—I must go.”

“Well, now, it wouldn’t be very pleasant if Mairi came on ye here—if ye’ve shpoiled the young man.”

“Who is Mairi?”

“An old termagant, saving your presence, an old lady that can fly at a body. She’s had most av the rearin’ av the man ye say is not your husband.”

“Oh—old!”

“Auld as Dooley’s ass, but as sound as the bells o’ Armagh!”

“Has he got any mother?”

Dungannon gasped. “Misthress,” says he, “*that’s where the boat left ye*. I’ve misremembered a thing. I cannot lave that boy.”

“Will you row me to the yacht, please?”

“Sure, now, miss, can ye think av leaving him?—bathed in gore as he will be. Ye’ll go far afore ye’ll meet the like av him.”

“I do hope so,” formed in the girl’s brain; but her lips were silent, lest he might now be dying.

“He has arms on him would crush the life out av a man easy. He’s the greatest man wid a horse, an’ him a boy, and the skin av him like milk for whiteness.”

“Brown,” said Irene into space, and twisted her hands together.

“I misremembered, *misthress*—brown as a brama-pootra egg, and that’s a beautiful brown.”

Irene rose and stood at the tent guys.

“You are an Irishman—will you help me?”

“Well, now, av ye put it that way——” Dungannon bent to the task, dexterous as a sailor. He spoke on at intervals. “Could ye get me a hand’s

job afore the mast? I can steer and splice. There's a fiddle av mine beyant there, and there's the picture av a lady in a silver frame, and a dollop of coin," said he. "Could you be at peace in the little boat now, av I was to go for them?"

"Can you not leave them until you return from the *White Lady*—the yacht yonder?"

"*White Lady* is it? I'll never return. I might have knowed it," said he softly. "Ye are not onderstanding the Black Gentleman you did not marry—the little boy that cherished me, and laughed at the pictures on my feet, and comforted me when the longing was on me for the fine places on the other side av the hills. The battles and the histories he would be reading, misthress, and me telling him the stories, and Pate Dol as well, the swimming and the sailing in the skiff, and the making av his armour. I'm laving him, misthress, for what I am not knowing; but it is murther in here," said he, striking his breast, "murther and tears in the heart av Dunggannon; and if I went back widout ye, he would draw the one leg av me through the other."

He launched the punt, put the tent aboard, and left Irene with the oars, paddling till he returned. She saw him coming running, with now and then a look over his shoulder. He carried a black bag in his hand.

Without a word he took the oars, rowing sullenly. Irene was afraid to speak.

"He's yonder on the broad av his back, and the doctor with him. The bullet went round his ribs, and came out at the back av him."

"Did he speak?" said Irene.

"He did, now. Says he, in a little voice, 'Where

is the lady?' says he, and behind him the old doctor tapped his head like he was wandering in his wits. 'She's making ready to come,' says I. May the saints forgive me the lie! And he smiled and closed his eyes peaceable."

"And the old woman—his nurse—Mairi?"

"Huddled in a corner like an old she-cat—spitting and a-tremble av fear that he'll slip away among their fingers. They are not knowing how he was shot, for Pate Dol told me he *dared* him to say but just he did have an accident wid his own pistol, and never to say a word about you, in case he—he slipped away. Pate Dol was telling the doctor that tale when I came away."

The girl's face was drawn with fear. "Will he die?" she whispered. She would go back—she would *not* run away—surely she was blameless.

"Miss," said Dungannon, "if a little lady the like av you, now, was created to bring down and kill that great fine boy, they had little to do that planned it, except that he would be more at home among the old heroes wherever they do be gathered *on the other side*."

"Do you mean America?" said Irene, too shaken to think.

"I do not," said Dungannon; "at least I never seen anny av them there."

.
What passed between John Savage and Irene I know not, only this, that when Irene was asleep with a wet bandage on her brow and Miss Sheppard seated as prim as ever at her bedside, her father came on deck and looked long at the white house on the Rock.

"The blinds are still up," said he. "I expect the

little girl just splores a bit—a dying man cannot walk a mile or two and smile at the end of it—I guess not. He'll be feeling pretty blue, I reckon, poor gink; butted into the wrong sort altogether. Should have been a boy, little Indian Famine," said he, and went below.

In the evening he came into Irene's state-room.

"Well, honey," said he, "are you feeling pretty fit now? Your friend hasn't shuffled off yet—window-blinds still up, and that's a sure sign in these parts. Don't come to dinner if you would rather not. Miss Sheppard can fix something for you."

Irene lay thinking. Now and then a gull cried, and there came the little plout-plop of waves. The setting sun shone through the open porthole; she heard laughter from little pleasure rowing-boats. There was a horrible lump in her throat. She swallowed and swallowed, but still—she was unhappy—she put her head against her sleeve.

"Oh, I was a beast—a beast; a vulgar common creature—worse than that."

Into her mind's vision came the swarthy scowling face, the half-closed lids, the fierce grip of his hand, and then—then she shut her eyes. Why—why—why had she done it? What made her do it? Amazed, she felt herself begin to tremble—her whole body shook. She saw herself, Irene Savage, haughty, proud, and cold—Irene Savage, with her arms round a man's neck, drawing his face down, down, down—oh, Heavens! If she could run somewhere, run—run away and hide—hide herself from that picture, blot out the thought of the smiling face above hers, forget the hands that shook her—shook her, that touched her ears. At that a tremor went over

her to her finger-tips, like reading a ballad of great deeds. . . .

She heard his voice again—"I want you"—the drawl, the patience, the sureness of it. "I never learned kissing," and then she knew. "I never learned kissing." Nobody but a boy could say that. She felt herself become happy—of course, it was because he was only a boy—or was it—was it because—because he had never learned?

Well, she would make him kiss some one. Her mind pictured girls, Molly Stuvesant—her dark eyes, her curly hair, her red lips, her white teeth. She saw Gavin, his outrageous helmet sweeping the rafters, heard his laugh; suddenly she knew that she had loved to be laughed at for the first time in her life, and then she pictured Molly with him laughing too, with her crushed red lips pouting, made for kisses—no, no, no—a thousand times no. She pictured herself at his bedside, his brown arms on the white coverlet. Was he in pain? this boy that never learned kissing, Gavin Sholto Alexander William James Douglas—Jim, her—her *man*.

"Misthress Douglas," she whispered, like Dunggannon. What were Scots marriages? Was she really married? Her heart gave a tremendous leap. "This lady is my wife." Again she heard his voice, saw Pate and Dunggannon with their bonnets off.

"God bless me, is that so, ma'am?" from Pate; "pleased indeed."

"Good luck to ye, Misthress Douglas," from Dunggannon.

No, no, not really and truly married. It was all wrong. Still she could not tell her father that part—nor Miss Sheppard.

Irene turned her face to the pillow, buried it deep, deep down.

At dusk came softly a weird minor melody, a crying for the moon, for the lands beyond the sunset, the melody of a god wandering among strange stars, seeking the path again where was the laughter of comrades and the sounds of friends' footsteps—but in vain, in vain.

Her father came to see her again after dinner. "Has that queer fellow's music been annoying you?—a bit eerie, I think. He started after another old shellback put his truck aboard. The knight fellow is all right, and the skipper says the fiddler is a sailor man. He can do with another hand—I went across in the launch,—fine old fellow the doctor. He was amazed that I knew of the accident. The boy's father seems to be a queer cuss. Well, I suppose this finishes your little escapades, Indian Famine. Better begin thinking seriously about marriage."

"All right, father," said Irene, "I will."

As he kissed her good-night, "You're a nice little miss—did you know," said he; "your cheeks have plenty colour?"

"Put out the light, please," said Irene very softly.

And now we must return to James Douglas as he stood in front of his door gazing at the letter in his hand, and with Dr. Ludovic urging him to open and read.

Douglas broke the seal and looked at the end of the letter. "Aye, it's Sholto," said he, and read aloud.

CHAPTER III.

TELLS HOW WORD CAME FROM THE EAST.

“DEAR ‘JIMMIE’”—Douglas read aloud, his chest heaving strangely,—“Don’t you be vexed when you read this. I will be only a wee bit on the road in front of you, having met the end, as our forebears were wont, with my face to the foe and my sword red. I’m lying at all ease, well served, and yet all my desire is to lie flat and drink my fill at Baldy Mhor’s spoot, yonder where the water-cress all but chokes the cold spring. I feel that one long, long draught would make me well, and yet can water heal a sword-thrust? No, it is youth calling—home calling—what a bitch is this English, it’s hame crying in me, Jimmie. I’m hame-sick. You will have been thinking me dead this long while, but I’m lying here sore stricken at El Amara. The stars are close above me, wee fires glow and fade bonnily, the jackals yowl, and stallions (what bonny horse) are restive in the night. Man, it’s sair to die alone, but this is like speaking to you.

“Jimmie, would ye like to hear tell of a story? The last word ye heard from me was when I was with the regiment in India, and I got leave to shoot game in Africa—a year’s leave. Ye mind my wife, Jimmie

—the poor thing. May be I was overbearing and careless, but man, James, never knowingly, and yet word came to me that she had forgotten me in London, and then I went on leave. Africa never saw me. I came to London to see for myself. Nobody knew in the bearded hunter the man that was brevet-colonel, and then I looked and I saw. He was a poor man that my wife preferred—a vaunter, an immaculate fellow, with coarse hands for a thoroughbred. He would not have looked a man, on the hill, on a wet day. I think he would be a town man. I shaved my beard off and called at his flat, and found my lady wife there—the poor soft thing. It was not hard I struck him (on his own mat), just the flat of my hand on his dirty mouth, and the man went down gasping like a trout, and his eyes goggling. It takes heart to meddle with a man's wife, and he had nane. He died gasping, and that poor useless woman, slobbering and fainting. I took her to her home and left her, and leaving the door, walked into Janet your wife. She kent. I would have passed her, but she kent.

“ ‘I saw it in your eyes,’ she said. I was not heeding for capture. What did I care then after that woman's lamentations for the petty thing she thought a man, but Janet was of a different breed. Man, I can see her fine lips curl in scorn now.

“ ‘They would hang you,’ said she, and I kind of saw all the little rabbits of men sitting round and making little rules to save their dirty little lives, and I laughed. She could make you laugh, that tremendous woman. The law!—there is no pack law until the pack is a pack of cowards. The race to the swift, and the battle to the strong. Yes, that is law, but that man was not swift—he was fast. He was not

stronger in battle—his heart failed him. How she twisted and played with words! She painted pictures—you, Jimmie, a K.C., and me a prisoner to be gaped at in a stuffy court, and that poor silly woman that was my wife, with her tears and her tawdry appeal. Cannot you hear the twaddle, the story of soul-hunger and soul-mates, as if that kind were ever anything but half-souled. Whiles I hid in your own house, until I was again the hunter. You were busy with your cases. You were a keeper of the law, and you we could not tell. Often Janet would tell me of you, and once I saw you in court, and London was buzzing with yon man's death. When the time was ripe, I sailed, with only Janet Erskine, that fine woman your wife, to bid me God-speed, she, and your boy and his nurse—a sneaking kind of woman with a roving eye, I thought. I ken what has happened. Man, Jimmie, think shame! It was my fault; I should never have heeded Janet, but I was weary for a friend's face, and never kent the minute when these sterilised ferrets of the law, these ferrets of the borough, would come creeping up and put bracelets on your father's son. It were too long a tale to tell how I came to the desert or how I *died*. Long ago, I aye had a great love for Ishmael and Esau, these men of wide spaces, smelling of the flocks, hard lean men, loving horses and women—flock-masters. On the desert were men of that breed, dignified, calm-eyed, arrogant, fierce, and vindictive, yet simple and hospitable, calling a spade a spade (like the Old Testament). They have simple words for the restless wife who turns to another, no blethers of soul-mates and mutual attraction, and all that vocabulary of weakness that seeks to hide lust. 'She played the

harlot,' they will say. Simple and direct, is it not? That should be the heading of most divorces—that or the male equivalent. It would be honest at least, and sell the papers too. Well, well, in the desert I found a kind of peace—a man cannot do much with these people except he be a great prophet who can move their blood and shape a path for their feet, but the sand covers a path in the night. I have cavalry here, the finest horsed cavalry in the world, and men picked as you would pick a choice wine. I loved the training of these sons of the wide spaces—I loved to teach them to be clean—to think cleanly. I think somehow that only new peoples are clean and simple and frugal. They have droll notions of fighting, skirling, and showing off and gun-play, advance and retire as in an old dance, and whirling like the Circassian Circle. If I could put good Scotch dourness into them—but, man, we did wonders under the sun on the burning sands with me busy translating “Cavalry Training” into shrill Arab yells—there was no need of riding schools—they ride as birds fly, only that there are many tribes a-warring, that know nothing of shock action. Still, when we advanced, we advanced like a wave, on and on and on, and curled over and swamped the enemy. It was not always war. There were horses and sheep and goats, and camels and asses, like the flocks of Jacob. There were new wells to be digged and grain to be garnered—a bonny how-do-ye-do for a brevet-colonel! I think maybe this land was in my blood from some old Crusader in the North who sleeps somewhere in a little church cross-legged, awaiting the bugle to rise again in harness.

“Sometimes in the night I think of that poor

woman, (that was once my wife), who thought in terms of servants and crushes, in stuffy towns, but not often. There was one here of the desert fine as silk, tempered like Toledo steel—she, with eyes like a dove, and teeth like the sheep going up from the shearing; she could cool the hottest breath of the desert wind with her little hand. Her voice brought peace like a rilling brook. I have dreamed of a son that would know these people from his mother's blood, a leader with the caution of the North, the far-sightedness of a Scot; one who would battle long and endure, who would wield these people and lead a nation of proud and valiant men—a Scot and an Arab—but how do our dreams fade. I have no son, but a daughter—wild and wilful and loving, ruling her servants with a look, and her father with a laugh. Some day I think that there will come men from her house that will rule men and love horses, like that old Duke of Albany in far Scotland long ago. I think soon I will be back among you when Allah snaps the little chain that binds me to this life. We are scattered wide, but I dream of a great battalion of Douglas that will one day rise in another place; and when the battalion is sized and in line, we will not be so far apart, and friends will be about us. This word will come to you—it is well.—Penned by my own hand, in camp by the oasis at El Amara, and signed in deep affection,

“SHOLTO DOUGLAS.”

James Douglas set down the letter.

“Ludovic,” he cried, “think of poor Sholto.”

“I never met a family like yours for thinking of each other—think of Janet Erskine.”

“Man, I am by with thinking—I’ve thought on her this twenty year, and now it’s finished. Now I can fathom her smile, proud and scornful, and yet pitiful. She would never sully her son’s name, not even to keep her man’s love—no, nor her man for that matter. Well, she was right. I was not worth keeping. I was the clever fellow—the know-all—the blasé—and oh! what was I to that woman when her eyes smiled at me, but a poor thing, fearing scorn from the world—fearing the sly smile, the nod in the clubs, and there she stood in that place and smiled. I know now what the smile meant. *You* are the father of *my son*. That was her meaning. And yet a word, Ludovic—she might have given me a word. Oh, Sholto, ye kent her better than me, and I think shame that our folk should take service like this, and so ill requite it.”

“Well, well,” said the doctor, “the thing is finished. Janet knew you to a hair. Do you think, as Sholto says, that you, a keeper of the law, would have shielded Sholto, your brother, a murderer (which he never was)? But that’s neither here nor there. He would have hanged for all that. I think that you would have taken a savage delight in upholding the law—ay, if it were killing you, either that or thrown it up altogether. You would have botched it some way.”

“And Janet, where is Janet?” cried Douglas.
“Oh, man, what can I say to Janet?”

“You will say what comes to you to say, and I think, that if you took Gavin by the hand and said, ‘Janet, woman, here is a son worthy of his mother,’ I think, man, that she would forgive you.”

“Ay,” said Douglas, with his hand at his forehead.
“There’s Gavin; there’s aye Gavin.”

At that Mairi Voullie Vhor hurled herself into the room.

“*Gavin’s shot deid!*” she screamed. “*Gavin’s shot deid!* Come and see your deid son! Deid, deid, deid, and me living—He has ta’en awa’ the young.”

The doctor ran without a word, and Douglas staggered up, his eyes staring. He caught at things blindly. They were carrying Gavin into his room, Pate Dol and Ludovic.

“Dead be damned,” said the doctor. “Tell that old wife to stop her howling.” It was only when greatly moved that Campbell swore. They put Gavin to his bed, and the doctor issued his orders like a martinet. There was a stillness in the house that made strange and loud the ticking of clocks, and the noise of fowl. Campbell at last gave Gavin a draught.

“Go you to sleep,” said he. “What string of beads is this at your pillow?”

“That’s my wife’s beads,” said Gavin. “She’s coming here soon.”

“Of course she is,” said the doctor; “but sleep you before she arrives. I’ll waken you to receive her.” Then turning to Pate Dol, “Come you,” said he, “and explain this shooting.”

Douglas sat down heavily at his son’s bedside. In a while he saw Dungannon run along the shore with his fiddle in the black bag, but never thought about it. He saw Pate put off in the little punt with dunnage aboard; but his brain did not react—it conveyed nothing—it mattered nothing. He was bowed and broken and ashamed.

“Pate’s last word to Dungannon was droll too. “Good-bye, ‘Grasshopper,’ ” said he; “ye’ll be singing soon.”

CHAPTER IV.

TELLS HOW PATE DOL PUT GAVIN TO SLEEP AND IRENE LANDED ON THE ROCK THE SECOND TIME.

GAVIN awoke and pulled himself upright in his bed.

“Send me Pate Dol,” said he.

“Pate is away in the skiff,” said his father. “My boy, there is something I want to tell you——”

“I don’t want to hear anything, father,” said Gavin. “See if Pate is coming back yet.”

Douglas rose and looked across the bay. “I think I see the skiff. Don’t talk any more, Gavin, or your uncle will be rampaging in among us for talking like a pair of sweetie wives.”

“All right, I will be quiet; but go and tell Pate to come and sit here, and you take a turn round and see if everything is all right.”

In a while Pate came into the room, turning his bonnet nervously in his hand.

“Take that big chair, Pate, and sit here,” said Gavin. “My father is wearying for the air.”

When Douglas left the room, Gavin spoke.

“Where is Dungannon? Why does not Dungannon bring Irene—bring my wife that I found—here?”

“It is likely that your wife will be away for her

clothes—women are devils for clothes, and worse wanting them. They've a terrible hankering for cloth of all descriptions. Will I read you a chapter from the Book, or can you be tholing without it, seeing it's not the Sabbath?"

"When will my wife have all her clothes?"

"Maybe by the morn's afternoon, seeing she'll naturally be in a hurry back to you. Be easy, Gavin; you'll have enough of wives before long. I'm mairrit, and I know. Listen you till I put ye to sleep, Gavin."

"There was a time I was at the fishing, Gavin, and there used to be terrible fine lassies would come in droves to gut the fish. Some of them would be a little coarse, just like the herring, and others terrible fine beings. Well, when I was a young man, before Mairi Voullie Vhor put the tether on me, I was a fair devil for the women—sure and certain, Gavin. God forgive me! I wish I was young again. But anyway at this place where all the lassies were gutting the fish, the diversions we would be having in the evening! We would have a good taste and be in fine trim for the dancing, an' wan night we were hard at it, with the fiddles going here and there, and melodeons and mouth-organs—Guid kens how we could make a job of it wi' all that music playing different sets. It was moonlight, and us all dancing and hooching, and there was wan lassie wis the queen of all the lassies, one of these dour surly kind that seldom spoke, and man, even to hear her curse was nice. In among us she comes, swaying this way and that way from her hips, her lips curling and her teeth shining. I tell you, Gavin, she was raised, and when they are raised, the surly kind are hard to beat. God! the

laughing of her at our dancing! 'Dance!' she cried; 'do ye call this dancing? I'll show ye dancing,' and with that she louped over the dyke and stripped herself, oh, sure and certain. She came back over the dyke like a white statue, and the moon was all that was on her. I never was much set up wi' naked statues, but I mind I thought her terrible bonny and raised-like. 'I'll show ye dancing,' she cries, and flings her hair behind her with a toss of her head, curling and glittering it was in the light. I've mind of the dancing yet, Gavin. The other lassies stood still and silent, and shamed and angry, but the fiddlers kept on. It was just a dream, the arms and the legs and the body of her, and the long mane flying, her cheeks red-like, and her teeth white. At the end of her dance, she gave a wee low laugh, and turned and ran. Man, the fiddles were flung down and the melodeons, and we were all after her—after yon wee low laugh; but, man, we never cotech her."

"Was she so bonny, Pate?"

"Bonny was the word, Gavin, but she looked mair than bonny. She looked brave, like a skiff close hauled, and she was the bonniest runner for a lass that ever I mind. Nae wichle wauchle the way the best o' women run, but away with her, lifting her legs like a boy, as bonny as the flight o' a gull. Could ye sleep noo, Gavin?"

"No, nor sleep. Tell me some more stories. Your own or the old tales that Hacko loved, the old tales of the North." Pate sat thinking.

"Look out of the window and tell me what you see, Pate," said Gavin.

"High water and very calm."

“Is there no sign of Dungannon, Pate?”

“There is no sign of him, Gavin; there is nothing but a porthole light shining from the white yacht. Somebody has slept and forgot the light, but no sign of Dungannon, not so much as the wail of his fiddle.”

“I have thought I was hearing his fiddle sometimes, Pate.”

“It would be the wind in the trees. Can ye not sleep now, Gavin?”

“Did you tell the doctor that I fell and shot myself?”

“These would be my very words, and I said that Dungannon went across to the village in the lighthouse boat, that he had left us in a turravee. Your father is a troubled man, Gavin. Could ye not sleep?”

“I’ll sleep now. Is there no sign?”

“Just the light shining on the water. Sleep, lad, sleep, the light’s out.”

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It was then that Irene curled herself up in the snug darkness of a summer’s night and began to think seriously of marriage. From the dark porthole she looked across to Gavin’s light and thought of him. This audacious boy to play with, with his straight look, the size of him. Marriage would not be such a trial with that boy to spoil and be spoiled by, to quarrel with, and make it up again. But that was all quite, quite impossible. There was some one moving above her. She could hear the shuffling of bare feet, and quickly she dressed and made her way on deck. Dungannon was pulling gently the painter of the little row-boat. She laid a white hand on his sleeve.

“Where are you going now, man?” said she.

“Misthress, it has come over me to go back yonder,” said he, and his face was white and shining; “I cannot abide it, and the light from his room yonder glittering on the sea like a track to heaven over the waters.”

“Row me with you then, Dungannon,” said she, and softly these two climbed aboard, but Dungannon had not his fiddle.

“The old woman will be sitting with Gavin,” said he, “the old one that rules the Rock and all that’s on it, barring the lighthouse. The door will be open and the dogs quiet, misthress, and maybe we’ll be seeing the young man.”

Gently they entered the house like thieves. Irene was all a-tremble with excitement at the adventure, and the fear in her heart. The stairs creaked below their feet, a dog growled, and was silent again at Dungannon’s whisper. They came to the door of Gavin’s room and looked inside. Huddled in her chair was the old woman. Her bright eyes met theirs. Irene went forward and stood by the bedside. Gavin slept. His face was pale—his arms bare to the elbow, his brown throat and chest lay bare. Her pearls were at his pillow.

“You have come for your beads,” said Mairi. There was a world of scorn in her bitter whisper. Irene drew away and looked incredibly startled.

“My beads,” said she. “No. Is he better? I-I—am a friend of Mr. Douglas.”

“He’s sleeping, misthress. The doctor made him sleep with a pouter. So you’re a friend—he was bletherin’ of a wife. What kind of a wife would ye

make for Gavin with your wee hands and feet, and your rings and laces? Gavin will take handling that's not in you."

"I'm very glad the gentleman is better," said Irene. "You talk in riddles. Your patient is no concern of mine."

"Ye've ta'en a fine hour tae come an' tell me that, mistress—at the deid o' night and dacent folk bedded. If ye were his wife, I would be leaving you to him—poor lad, it's not much harm that's left in him—a wife would bless me for the chance of easing his head, and lifting his arms round her. She would count the hours till the daylight, that his eyes would open and see her beside him; but it is not in you, wife or not. Well, *go*, mistress. Pate Dol telled me he ca'd a lass his wife on the hill—a bonny-like wife without a minister. I kent ye the minute that numskull Dunggannon put his face in at the door. If ye are his wife, *there's* your place. When he rises and finds you have left him, he'll forget you. He did when he was a wean to a doll, and he'll do it to you, and then the world will be bitter in your mouth; for all your beauty, you'll never buy such another."

Irene had come to this meeting in a wondrous soft mood; her very knees had been trembling, and her hands. She had been afraid to trust her voice even, and her lips quivered in some new involuntary movement all strange to her, yet still delightful, but with the old woman's talk her mood changed. Who was this old creature to speak to her, this ridiculous old woman with her strange talk of buying? She drew herself up proudly, her face dark, her eyes smouldering with rage.

"Look at me, woman," she whispered, bending a

little as she spoke. "Look at me, with your strange talk of buying. I think I am not for sale——"

"It's likely your bargain is made," said Mairi drily. "Ye'll be sold whatever!"

Can there be jealousy between age and youth, an eternal strife—who knows? Mairi's voice was like an east wind for bitterness.

"You!" said she, in a whisper, with a little snicker of laughter, "you to haud Gavin Douglas, to buy Gavin Dauglas." Her hand lifted, she rocked with laughter—bitter, low laughing. "You're the first lass he's ever seen, and he's new-fangled with you. I'll tell ye, mistress, what ye've done—ye've spoiled a man for other women. As for you," and she looked Irene from head to foot, "as for you, he would not have you now in a gift."

At that Irene laughed joyously, softly. "I know," she cried, "I know I've spoiled him for ever for other women; and look, old woman, look, I'll spoil him some more." She came to the bedside and bent over Gavin gently—ever so gently she slipped her white arms under his shoulder. Her eyes were like stars, her breast tumultuous. For long she gazed at him, her face all smiling and soft, then all a-quiver she drew him to her and kissed him on the mouth. "Tell him that," she cried; "tell him when he wakes that I came back to him—oh! tell him everything!"

Dungannon came softly to the bedside, and Mairi's eyes never left him. He took a silver frame from his pocket, looked at it long, and with a sigh placed it on the little table.

"If ye should ever meet her," he whispered huskily, pointing to the photograph, "tell her I did my best endeavours—my best endeavours——"

Mairi never spoke a word. Irene looked at the smiling face of Janet Erskine in the silver frame and smiled on Gavin, and turned and went out softly. Dungannon sighed and followed her, his head bowed.

“God help ye, Patrick,” whispered the old woman gently. She watched the two figures walk to the shore, and listened to the scrunch of the keel as the little row-boat was pulled over the stones.

“There goes a fine lass,” she whispered, “when she grows, and a kindly dreamer of an Irishman; and I wish that I had timmed that pouter of the doctor’s into the sea, and let Gavin have his head. Well, my lass, I’ll do my best for you; there’s smiddum in ye, and ye’re clean to the bone; but if you’re not colonel, ye’ll be no sodger, or I’m sair cheated.”

CHAPTER V.

TELLS HOW THE LOCH WAS EMPTY.

GAVIN rose from his bed stiff and weak. "What a poor thing is a man," said he, feeling his knees not strong. "A dog would have licked a wound like that and trailed himself to a burn to drink, and there was I lying like a sick cow in a biss—with covers over me too. It is time I was in the sea again. He walked to the shore and looked over the bay. From point to point the bay was empty. His mouth became harder, his lips met more firmly, their corners drooping. Suddenly his head went up. "We will have a change, I think," said he; "it is banking up away there to the su'thard," and with that he turned and came slowly back to the house.

"Well, Gavin," cried the doctor, "do your legs feel droll at the walking?"

"They are not very good," said Gavin. "I think I could not sit on a horse."

"Your uncle was a great man for a horse," said Douglas. "I wanted to tell you about him the other day, but you would not listen."

"I was not very well, sir, and I had a queer notion in my head at the time. Fire away now, if you like."

Douglas gave him Sholto's letter, and Gavin read it in silence.

"I thought that my mother was dead," said he; and then, "I would like to see these horses that Sholto Douglas is telling of in that letter. It is a wee place this rock to live in—a man should be doing things."

"The fool's eyes are on the end of the earth," said the doctor drily.

"He will not be a fool if he takes his body to the ends of the earth. He will know things and see things. I think it would be wise to be such a fool." Gavin rose and left the room.

"The ploy's finished," said Campbell. "The play begins."

Gavin made his way to the kitchen. Mairi was baking.

"I'll give ye a wee bit of dough, and ye'll make wee scones beside me here, the way that ye used to when ye were wee."

"I've been making wee scones ower long, Mairi," says Gavin; "are ye fond of beads?"

"I never had a bead in my life except maybe for a day at Brodick Fair. My neck is not for beads now, for it's as yellow as a duck's foot."

"Your neck is beautiful for beads. There's seven of them, and that's a lucky number, being the years that Jacob served for Rachel."

"And got Leah," says Mairi. "I never saw much luck in that," and she turned her griddle. "D'ye ken what I would do if I was you, Gavin?" says the old one.

"No, I do not."

“I would go and launch a boat and row ower to the village, and tak’ a look about.”

“And what would I see?”

“Weemen,” said Mairi, and closed her mouth like a little trap.

“Umph! I canna speak to women.”

“There’s naething bates a trial—an’ ye’re a leear as weel. The night ye were not well and me sitting beside ye—ye were bletherin’ about a lass that ye found, and ye were telling the truth.”

“It was a droll notion I had. The doctor cured it with a night’s sleep.”

“Did he? Ye’ll maybe explain why a lady—to give her her due—cam’ creeping to your room at Guid kens the time, and that Dungannon wi’ her—a bold besom she was!”

“What?”

“Aye, whit!—this droll notion o’ yours—a strumpet I’m doubtin’, Gavin, from her behaviour—clean scandalous! I’ll haud nae tongue, seeing ye never kent her, but I’m telling ye I had all I could do to keep her in her place. She would have turned me out of your room, if she had had the pith to do it. ‘Tell him I came back,’ she says, as bold as brass. ‘For your beads?’ says I. She let on she clean forgot the beads, and the goings on after that was not dacent.”

“A fine make-up,” said Gavin. “Ye must have led Pate Dol a fine dance in your day.”

“I only tried that wance, Gavin dear, and Pate danced so bonny I near lost him; but you’re well rid o’ yon lass—a wee bit black-lookin’ body that gied hersel’ the airs o’ a six-fitter.”

“Pate Dol is a clype,” said Gavin. “I’m bye wi’ him.”

“No, nor clype,” cried the old woman, her face flaming red; “no’ even when I showed him your ain wee pistol on the hook did he tell me who shot ye. I saw her in the wee varnished boat wi’ Dungannon, through the spyglass; and I’ll tell ye mair, Gavin Douglas, that’s bye wi’ my man—I’ll tell ye this—this leddy that cam’ gaddin’ into a man’s room took one of her beads. She thought maybe ye could sell the rest, as a kind o’ payment for the hurt she gien ye—now count the beads.” There were only six.

The ghost of a smile came on the boy’s face. “She was very kind, Mairi. I am sorry I doubted Pate,” and he turned and walked away.

Mairi stood for a moment—her temper had beaten her. “I could not throle to have Pate miscalled,” she whispered. “I was trying to mak’ him turn to the lass. I was making her out a fine, brave, dauntless lass till he said he was bye wi’ Pate.”

Suddenly she hurried after her hero.

“Gavin, Gavin” she cried. “I lied to ye, Gavin. Ye’ll not heed an aul’ wife’s havers. She took it for a keepsake.”

“Are ye all liars, then?” said Gavin, and left her standing.

The *White Lady* was heading south. Already the sun seemed nearer, seemed more friendly. The white deck was pleasantly warm, the cool sea was a fine think to be looking at. Irene sat in a long deck-chair and mused with closed eyes, one brown hand at her throat, twisting and turning a thin little chain.

“Where did you get that pearl?” said her father.

“I don’t remember that one.”

“It came from an oyster,” said his daughter, “and the oyster was *awful* close.”

“Does it never speak at all?” said Savage, with a lazy smile.

“Sometimes, oh yes, sometimes. It doesn’t speak, but it whispers—in the dark.”

CHAPTER VI.

TELLS HOW GAVIN'S MOTHER CAME FROM THE WILDERNESS.

“THERE was something came ower me that night,” Mairi Voullie Vhor would say afterwards; “maybe it would be wi’ lying ma lane, for Pate went to Lanerick wi’ the lambs. Whatever it was, I never closed an eye. Gavin had a cah on his face—not a sneer, but the mark of a sneer,—and his father was in the doldrums, and the doctor had not a word to say about his gairden, or a friendly curse for the dog, and that is a bad sign. Well, I swithered long and long, until the day was beginning to grey in the east, and then I rose and tidied my hair and put my things on me. Good or bad, the house was too much for wan old woman.

“It was many a year since I had row’d in a wee boat, and there was oftener dough than blisters on my hands. Mind you, a lass wi’ a blistered hand is gey often a fine lass at something, but I sprauchled into the punt and took the oars. There was a little haze, with east wind, and the jelly-fish floating. It’s whiles awesome to be alone in a wee boat in the half-light, for a body never kens what the sea is thinking; but I just rowed and rowed till she slithered in

through the long wrack on the shore below the Wilderness, and I put the graplin' over her bows and left her, and went up the fine white walk. I've mind there were bees among the blossoms, and the apples were a good size in the wee trees.

“Half-way to the door, all the fine things I had been considering to say left me, and I was weak with nerves, but I would go to no back-door. I had aye enough pride to keep me out of the gutter, and I pulled the bell. The noise went clangin' and janglin' through the house, and I leaned against the door-post.

“A window was opened above me, and I saw a woman's bonny face. Mind you, in the morning that is not common with folk that have to be working.

“‘I will be down in a moment,’ said the lady; ‘rest you on the seat,’—and it is droll I never saw the seat till then, although I can mind the pattern of the wallpaper through the window, and the droll shape o' the Rock.

“She came out to me in a little, with a wonderful lot of good clothes on her.

“‘Is it father or son?’ said she in a low voice, and calmly.

“‘Your son is *shot*,’ said I, and she ga'ed a stotter and a whimper, and I got her slithered on to the seat; but no, she came to her feet.

“‘Take me to him,’ she says, ‘take me to my little boy,’ and her face twisted and twisted, and her chin moved like a wean's.

“She took the after oar and me the bow, and now and then her shoulders would be giving a jerk that wasna wi' the rowing. Once she turned to see the road, and her face was a' begratten, and my heart

went out to the woman when she took a stroke wi' her sleeve at her eyes, and rowed on, for I aye liked bravery in a woman.

“James Douglas met us at the landing-place.

“The lady threw down the oar and sprang into his arms.

“‘Oh, Jimmie,’ she cried, ‘what’s wrong with the baby?’—and as for me, I missed my foot and fell into the water and skinned my knee, but they never noticed that, or it’s likely they might have given me a hand ashore. I was as good as them anyway. Now, it is usual that when folk are happy without knowing it that they will forget their meat, but when the happiness grows until they become aware of it, they will sit down and eat and drink, trying to prolong their pleasure. Well, well, I put a wet rag on my knee and made a breakfast and set the table, but there came nobody to eat. But in a while the doctor came to the kitchen.

“‘This is a great day,’ said he; ‘this is one of the greatest days that ever you will see. Come with me, and you will be seeing why.’ So he led me by the arm into the room, and there was the lady sitting with her man on the one side of her, and her son on the other.

“She had a wonderful quick way with her, and she took me by the hands, laughin’ and greetin’.

“‘Thank you,’ said she, ‘for looking after these men of mine,’ and she turned and smiled to her man, as if she was saying, ‘Do you hear that?’—and James Douglas had a hair fankled in a jacket button; but it was Gavin’s face I did not like, for it was hard as a millstone. There was nothing that you could see if you did not know him. He would smile so genteel

and let his mother take his hand, and whiles indeed there was a kind of wonder in his eyes, but I kent he was tired of all the laughing and excitement. He was so polite—so polite I could have skelped him for it.

“Janet Erskine had Sholto Douglas’s letter in her hand. ‘Poor brave Sholto,’ she would say; ‘there he was, Jimmie, eating his heart out for a word from his ain folk, and forced to hide and creep in the darkness, without a word to you. You would not have had me betray my man’s brother even to keep my man, and you had always droll hard notions of duty. And maybe, Jimmie, I was a little hurt that you were so cold and hard, and so ready to think ill of me. Sometimes I’ve thought I was not very kind, or wise, in those far-away days, but I never lost hope. I had always hope like an anchor to cling to.’

“Gavin looked like a man that is showing his good manners, the kind of good manners that a well-brought-up man will show to a guest that is not very welcome. The mother turned to him, and, ‘Did the armour fit you?’ said she. ‘You are such a great fellow. I thought perhaps it would be too late.’

“‘Yes,’ says Gavin, ‘oh yes, it was very beautiful armour, but I think it was too late by three hundred years. I have been very daft, I think.’

“‘No, no, dear, the world has need of knights—knights and real chivalry.’

“‘I think that it will only be in books that these things are likeable; in everyday life it seems that it is a childish prank and daft.’ There was bitter scorn in Gavin’s voice.

“Janet Erskine rose. ‘It is time to be going now, James,’—her voice trembled,—‘will you row me

across?" She came to her son and put her arms round him, and stood waiting, and looking with all her heart in her eyes.

"'Kiss me, dear,' she said; 'kiss me, Gavin.'

"'Gavin's face became white. 'I never learned kissing,' said he.'"

In the little boat Douglas was elated, like a boy with his first sweetheart. The sea was very beautiful, the little fluffy bits of thistledown floating on the water, a thing to give pleasure—a bee heavily laden, landed on his oar-blade, and he carefully rescued it and put it in a sunny corner on the thwart to dry its wings. His wife sat silent in the stern.

"James," she whispered, "will we—are we——" her hands clasped, "are we to start all over again?"

"No, dear," said Douglas. "Can you let me make you forget that this has ever happened—let me join up our lives again with so much of happiness, and peace, and trust, that these bad years will be forgotten? I thought, Janet, if I came to you, with your boy and mine, that you might forgive me for his sake."

"Oh, Jimmie, for your own sake. I have remembered all the good days we ever had—the years of good days—in the hills, on the seas; and that's how I remembered you always, Jimmie dear—for your own sake—for I am afraid of Gavin. You were never hard, and cold, and stern, like Gavin, never for long."

"I think Gavin has your ways, Janet. He is steady; as Pate says, 'he keeps the furrow.' But if you will come back to me, we can put brightness, and beauty, and softness, into his life."

Janet Erskine smiled and blushed.

“We’ll have another wedding and a secret honeymoon, Jimmie, away from every one, just my own Jimmie back again. Do you know, I’ve whispered that to you every night, for long and long, after the first anger left me? I whispered that, and kissed the place where your ring would go again, every night, Jimmie.”

“We’ll let Gavin have a year to himself. Maybe he would like to take classes, or agricultural lectures, or travel, and Dr. Campbell can take all his books and his microscope, and his slides and bugs, to the Wilderness. . . .” So these two rattled on, Douglas rowing very slowly. There were all sorts of things to be settled.

Dr. Campbell and Gavin watched the skiff row away from the Rock, into the sunlight on the water. The doctor was smoking, and waved his hand to the little boat.

“It’s droll,” says he, “the way a boat will come to port after a long voyage and many storms and worse calms.”

He turned to Gavin. “And here you are on fire to be away on your first voyage. Well, come into the house and we’ll talk.”

The two men walked slowly, Gavin towering above the doctor, whose hand was on his arm.

“Aye,” said he again, “on fire to be away. Man, can you not think a little of your mother? Your father gave her a when sleepless nights. Mind you, I can see his point too; and now, when things have righted themselves, when the boat is in port, and your mother thinking of pleasant days with her man and her son, off you must go. The Rock is not big

enough for you; the horses and the kye are just beasts in wee parks wi' stane dykes round them; the sheep are silly beasts with liver-fluke and foot-rot, and the very potatoes are mere food. Well, well, and what will ye do?"

"Should I not have been trained to do something?" said Gavin. "I could take a fee on a farm."

"Take a devil!" cried the doctor; "much good ye would do on a farm. Make a mess of your hands for another man, and likely a worse mess if the man had women about the place. Keep you out of the red earth—if ye mean to travel—and travel alone if ye mean to get anywhere.

"Well, Gavin, there's few fathers can talk to their sons, but I'll talk to you, and you will be diligent and remember. There are few things worth having in this world, but one of them is the memory of having made folk happy, and, man, it's easy. There's nothing so good for the inside of a man as the outside of a horse. I'm a doctor, and I know. I've taught ye to drink like a gentleman, but mind, through all your life drink slow—drink damn slow. You'll find the wisdom in that yet. A drunk man is always tumbling into a hole somewhere, and mind, it's often the best and the most likeable that get drunk. As for women, boy, there's overmuch made of women nowadays—just be nice and respectful. There's no use for me to be telling you—your mother would have done it better. I made a fool of myself, and was none the worse. These are just off-hand remarks, my boy. The one thing necessary in this world is money. Money covers a multitude of sins and buys a multitude of virtues. A man's worth is the worth of his bank account. You can get everything in the

world—if ye have money enough—but contentment, and for contentment try digging with a spade—unless you are ill. Remember that it's a doctor's business to cure ailments. You would not ask a tailor to shoe your horse, and a doctor should be like a wary pilot at the helm, scanning the grey seas, knowing the reefs and the quicksands; through spindrift and hail, his hand is on the tiller, until he bring the battered barque of humanity into the desired haven of health."

The doctor paused a little as if for the expected applause, and then——

"But to come back to the money: ye'll not go like a tinker at all events, for there's none to come after me, and my will is made lang syne, and there's been money lying in the bank for you since you learned to thin turnips and put wooden legs on hens. Some of it was mine and some of it your father's, and now it's yours. Don't send it an ill gait, Gavin, for many a careful body gave it to us, on matters o' life and limb. Hooch, don't begin with your thanks. Am I not paid this many years just looking at ye growing straight like a tree? Take a turn abroad; take classes here and there in the Universities; aye be learning something till ye ken that folk are wearying to see ye hame. God bless ye, my boy. I have not talked so much since I harangued a clinique of boys," and the doctor blew his nose and cursed a dog vigorously.

To Douglas—busy with his plans for the future, the future that was to obliterate the lost years—came his friend.

"So you and Janet have made it up, it seems.

Well, Mairi will be the happy woman, for she was just the means under God (to quote herself) of bringing this about. Ye'll not forget her, I hope."

"Would I be like to forget the old woman that looked after Gavin so well! Janet says——"

"Oh, Gavin! It's news to me that Mairi looked after him; it would have been better an she had. Man, Gavin is for off."

"Off where, Ludovic?"

"Och, just off to see the world for himself. He's well fitted for the ways o' the world. We should ken, for we trained him. Man, where's Gavin's place here? D'ye think Gavin will be coddled by his mother? It's a wonder, and a grace in him, that he doesn't girn at her."

"I'll forbid him to go," said Douglas.

"Is it there ye are, man? I kent ye would be at the ordering and forbidding, and all ye would get is that you would make him surly. Let him go. There's more than his mother in his head. He's sense enough and money enough and man enough; let him reenge till he's tried, and then he'll come back. And as for telling his mother, I think she kent when she saw him. Let you Janet Erskine alone to handle your son. She has experience, ye see, of your folk that you never kent until lately."

CHAPTER VII.

TELLS HOW GAVIN LEAVES THE ROCK.

It is not an easy thing for a young man to leave his home for the first time—inanimate objects assume living attributes; trees look sad, bare rocks forlorn, the very fields take on a new friendliness. Then there are clothes to be measured and fitted and pinned and stitched. Shirts must be marked (as though a man would not know his own shirt), socks and collars and handkerchiefs become newly important. Women revel in this business of packing and stowing. Mairi was for days in a litter of tissue-paper.

Much good advice she gave to Gavin, pausing in the act of folding away some valued article of apparel. She was oftenest on the subject of her own sex.

“Do not you be setting overmuch store on any single lass, and for mercy’s sake, give the married ones a wide berth. I’m tellin’ ye, Gavin, I’m feart when I think o’ ye. It must be a sair trade to be a mother of lusty sons.” And again, on other days, she would be on the other tack. “I would not just like you to see them greetin’ if a little touslin’ would set them right. Take your fun, my lad, an’ keep quate aboot it, but don’t think of merryin’.”

“I’m sure,” says Gavin, “you’re worrying your-

self about nothing. There's millions of men besides me in the world."

"There's never millions o' men, Gavin, with a woman. It's like fishing—wan at a time, and the million does not count. Don't you be anybody's special. Take your pleasures with the crowd."

When the clothes were packed at last, the activities of Mairi took a new turn. Now she must feed him extraordinarily well. He must take switched eggs and milk at unchancy times in the forenoon and afternoon; he must take beef-tea, or hough soup, as though he were being fattened for a show.

"There's a lot of devilment in an egg, Gavin, and a man without devilment is as wersh as water."

Gavin spent long days in the Look-out, stowing carefully his old-time treasures, cementing crannies, cleaning the drains, making all weather-proof. He carved his name deeply in the rough bench-like table, and looking at his work, "You'll be there till I come back," said he, and came away feeling very down-cast. He looked at the calves, and wondered how many calves they should beget before he returned, like M'Crimmin of Skye. But his mind was steadfast. He would go to the East, where his uncle had found work and peace. It might be that his uncle still lived. Well, he would go to Alexandria, for that had been the postmark, and he would say nothing to his father, or Ludovic Campbell, or his mother. It might be that he should find work that he could do among horses and fighting clans—work that would make him forget that he had been a fool, that the very dogs would laugh at, did they but know. But the dogs were fond of slinking at heel instead of reenging on ahead, waiting for a whistle or a wave

of the arm to "Kep that" or "Come away with that." And the East was away and away from America. He hated the name of the great Republic—a burning shame kept him from thinking of Irene. He flung the thought of her from his mind and turned his back on it—that he should plead for any woman's kisses, that he should suffer because a woman lied to him. "Let her go," he snarled to himself; "am I not a man to be doing things and forgetting that ever I spoke to her?" In the night he could see her again, feel again the little soft moving of her lips under his, and old Mairi would whiles wonder what made her boy restless in his sleep, for his very body strained back from these midnight caressings. She would rise slowly in the dark and light a candle, and come to his room, the strings of her nightcap untied, her hand that held the brass candlestick shaking, her eyes peering over the light, her face in half-shadow, the firm mouth and strong chin made manifest.

She had a red coverlet round her, and looked very old and fierce, like a mother in the tribes, Gavin thought on waking.

"A bonny to-do—to lose sleep for a het-tempered lass," she whispered. "Man, where's your pride? A plooman's son could gie ye lessons."

"In drawing a straight furrow," says Gavin.

"Aye, a straucht fur against the hill. Man, it was only your pride was hurted, Gavin, a nesty cankerous thing to heal—pride—but time'll do it. Did she shoot ye before or after?"

"I don't know."

"Do ye ken, Mr. Douglas, what for she shot ye?"

"She did not want me."

“She would be the wan to ken that, but what did she not want about ye?”

“She did not want me to kiss her.”

“Tae kiss her! Ye blockhead! She never shot ye for kissin’ her. If a’ this bother has been ower a kiss, I’m for my bed. I would as soon quarrel about a poke o’ sweeties. I though in my innocence ye had meddled wi’ the lass. A kiss! Humph! It minds me o’ the shot the Dutchman fired at the diamond on the Craigan Laig.”

“What was it?” said Gavin.

“Ye ken the Craigan Laig up there past the Rhu’bhan?”

“Fine,” said Gavin, glad of any respite from that violent tongue.

“Well, there was once a big diamond glittered at night on the face o’ the Rock, and the glow of it so bright that the folk at the Point could shear their corn in the light of it. That was their words—‘shear their corn in the light of it,’—and many’s the body tried to get the diamond, but in daylight they would never find it, till a Dutchman lying at anchor in the bay played crack at it wi’ a chalk bullet and marked the place, and sailed away with the diamond to Amsterdam.”

“That would be why they called the Rock ‘the Isle of the flame’,” said Gavin, laughing.

“Maybe, but I was not just telling ye history in my bare feet either. Yon lass did want ye, my lad, or what gar’d her come to your bedside in the deid o’ the night—tell me that, and her shot was just the Dutchman’s chalk bullet to mark you. She’ll sail away with you yet,” and the red-robed old lady left him. But that was the overcome of it after that.

“Yon clipper will sail away with you yet, Gavin Douglas. Aye keep your weather eye open, and you’ll see who will be right.”

Whatever Douglas or Campbell may have suspected, Gavin never heard. His lie held. He had had an accident, and Dungannon had left as he would leave everything he set his hand to, grasping the shadow for the substance, and being pleasant to all men till the end of the chapter. He had shipped on the white yacht, bound across the Western ocean, and there was an end of him, for Mairi had never told of that midnight watching to any one save Pate Dol. But Janet Erskine had her photograph again, and often when her glance lighted on the silver frame, she could spare a smile for poor Dungannon. Gavin would be often with his mother, but there was a restraint between them, a shyness on the son’s part and a pride on the mother’s. She would not force his love. She taught him botany, telling him the why and the wherefore of the grasses, the action of lime on bacteria, the secret at the root of the clover; common everyday knowledge she clothed in wonderful words, making a little miracle out of a little chemistry. There was a daintiness about her, a fastidiousness that attracted Gavin; but his training had left him bitter, for although the twenty years of contempt for women had gone by the board at the first encounter, yet afterwards the feeling returned a hundredfold and hardened. Little did he know the long hours that his mother spent in thought and in silent communings, smiling her patient proud smile, but James Douglas saw and writhed. Truly he was beaten with his own stripes like the anchorite of old. He wished to be happy, that Janet should be happy,

yet twenty years of silence and stern teaching warred against it. Gavin would throw off the unnatural veneer in time, in the big world of men, but time is an ill present to give a woman, who has been starved of love in the past. Douglas and Janet were to be married again, and it says much for Ludovic Campbell that his smile had no malice.

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It was a wet day, a calm wet day, that Gavin bade good-bye to the Rock. They were all very merry, talking like all that and laughing at very poor jokes, until it was time to set the sail in the skiff and watch the Rock recede into its hazy rain mist. Then Gavin knew how well he loved that place, how dear to him were the very stunted birch-trees, and the waves that broke on the shores of it. A tremendous longing assailed him to go back, to work on the hill, to toil in the fields, to come in hungry and sit in his accustomed place, to talk to that gracious lady who was his mother, and the cultured old gentleman, the doctor, whose rough exterior concealed a heart brimming over with affection, to be a son to his father. He felt that he was doing a weak thing to be leaving because a girl had hurt his pride. Why had he not laughed, instead of playing at heroics? Suddenly he thought again of his mother, that smiling gentle creature who could suffer and smile for twenty years, knowing herself wronged, yet not parading her grief, or holding herself up as a mirror of resignation under affliction.

But there came other thoughts crowding in. If it were wrong to leave, surely it would be childish to go back. He was a man now; the world was calling. He would come back, having proved him-

self—at what he cared not, only that he must return with flags flying on a sunshiny day, when people would be proud of him.

He looked at Pate—old, weather-beaten, his eye keen as ever looking under the sail, his old hard hand on the tiller.

“Ye are in good time, Gavin, my boy,” said Pate, at the steamer’s gangway. “Ye’ll excuse me hurrying back. The mistress, Mairi Voullie Vhor, is not so very well the day.” He came closer to Gavin and whispered, “Mind the click-ma-doodles,” and hurried from the pier, and Gavin saw that he was old and bent, that his hands were listless, and his grey hair rain-sodden.

In the train he sat alone in a compartment, that had rice and confetti on the floor, and a peculiar odour of scent. He never smelt patchouli afterwards but he felt vaguely sad. It was autumn; the year was dying, and he was away from the folk that he knew. He had his baggage taken to his hotel, and wondered if he were doing everything quietly, as the doctor would have him.

Later he found a door labelled “Writing Room,” and entered a large carpeted room, where men seemed very busy writing endless letters. He wrote to his father, a long long letter, with all his sadness in it, then rereading it, called himself a baby, and tore it into shreds. But he felt better, and wired that he had arrived all right, and went in search of food. The streets were thronged with passengers hurrying God knows whither, and they were cheerful.

In bed that night he lay wide-awake, listening to the loud hissings and powerful snortings of the trains that seemed to run all night. Next door to him, a

young wife talked merrily to her husband. They had come from a theatre, and she seemed elated with her evening. Gavin thought it droll to hear their voices and laughter. They would know to keep out of each other's way like ferrets in a box. He discovered a new fact about the wallpaper on his bedroom wall. Gazing steadily at the little festoons of roses arranged in lines like a draughtboard, he saw suddenly that a girl's face was peering from among the rosebuds: from every little festoon the same face peered at him. Nay, indeed, the roses themselves formed curling hair and big wide eyes. He tried to change the features, but always one face smiled down at him, and in his heart he knew the face.

In the morning, in the cold clear light, there were no little faces, but only festoons of blue roses, and not very like roses either. That day Gavin went to the market, wandering from pen to pen, appraising the value of sheep, noting a good horse, many good horses, wondering at the farmers and where their homes would be. He could tell the type of man that would have binders and tractors. There was something about the set of their overcoats, and their hats, and their boots. He amused himself putting names on outstanding figures, the names they might have had, had they lived four hundred years ago. In the afternoon he walked in the streets, pleased with the hurrying crowds. For a long time he stood watching a repair gang resetting a roadway. It was a fine thing to know how a road should be made, that it might last, that troops might march on it, and merchandise be conveyed on it (on great two-horsed lorries), that water might not lodge on it. He heard the tongues of the men that worked with the

picks and the crowbars. He saw the hard faces of them, and the great tar-stained hands. The picks struck rhythmically almost, and a rhyme formed in his brain, standing there looking—

“Pick, pick, picking up a living,
To be throwing down a drink;
Sending this week’s wages after last . . .”

And he always remembered one of the navvies straightening his back, and rubbing the back of his hand over his mouth, “I cud be doing wid a big dhirty pint.” He remembered the laughing voice of the man.

The docks also were a new playground for Gavin. He spent days looking from the quay-wall at the trim little schooners; the very *James and Annie*, that he knew well, was discharging. Her figurehead was grimy. The face had a sickly look, as though the very soul of the ship was a-weary for the cold spray lashing. He laughed to think that his hand had rested on the very cut-water, for he had swum round her often in the bay. He felt friendship and warmness for the little ship. A great four-masted sailing-ship held him spellbound. There was a boy seated on the end of the royal yard, his feet dangling in space, and dirty seagulls, that fed on broken crusts from tenements, flying under him. The great liners, that suffered in a good humour the fussing of towboats at bow and stern, the staunch coasters slipping down-river in the evenings, all were a joy to him. He would have loved to ship on board a great ship and live for himself the sea tales of Dungannon.

He booked a passage to Egypt, admiring much

the polished counters of the shipping-office and the fine models of fine ships placed here and there. Well-dressed clerks, immaculately collared and groomed, wrote and blotted, and wrote and blotted, with a grave and important air, as though there were no sea and no ships, no hills and no fields, no fish to catch, and no horses to ride, in a great wide world outside.

“I think God never meant men to stand under a lamp all day, with a ledger to write in,” said he, forgetting that there was love and women, music and children, and gardening and football, when the offices were closed.

Then on another day he boarded a train and travelled to the little church where the good Lord James sleeps in his own place, among his kindred. He stood long beside the sarcophagus that holds all that remains of the fiery Douglas.

“First in the love of woman,
First in the field of fight,
First in the death that a man should die—
Such is the Douglas right.”

His very blood leapt to the pride of it. He felt ready for great deeds. . . .

For a man that had been reared on an island, unacquainted with many things familiar to the weans of cities, Gavin had done well. He had neither blown out the gas, nor run helter-skelter across a street, in front of tram-cars. He had neither overtipped servants, nor displayed gaucherie in a crowded dining-room.

Yet he was glad when the day came to sail, enjoy-

ing the hurry and the noise of hammers in the shipyards, where men were toiling.

In the dark he sailed past the Rock, and long he gazed at it. The revolving light on the lighthouse was sweeping round the hill and on out to sea.

“That is my life,” said Gavin; “a wee while on the hill, and then away and away.”

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

TELLS HOW GAVIN MET LA BELLE GRECQUE.

GAVIN made few friends among his fellow-passengers.

He would listen to the tales of the quartermasters, and the strange tales of wizened sailor-men, with the names of long-ago sailing-ships on their tongues lovingly, and the prowess of fast clippers pictured in their speech, proudly. He sat in the sun and marvelled at the blueness of the Mediterranean, marvelled that the spray from the bows should break in milky whiteness.

Long he gazed at far white towers, and peopled them with Saracen and Moor, or the swarthy cut-throat crews of pirate sloops. At Alexandria his search for adventure would commence in earnest. And yet when he left the ship, that town looked unpromising enough, for the daylight in an Eastern city is not so good. Then one sees the filth and squalor, the clouds of flies, swarming and buzzing in the shop of the meat-seller, the flies clotted in the corners of the eyes of the children in the street. One sees the men concerned in business hurrying like daft-like boys, and knowing, seemingly, all the other hurrying figures, stopping to jest and hurrying on. But in the night-time with lights everywhere, lights and music and laughter; the night that throws a

glamour over the East, like a dark veil a-glitter with sequins, the night of mysterious noises, then is the time to see the East the first time—for remembering. There will be dim figures on balconies, and low voices above one in the street. There will be horses trotting past, with strange veiled occupants in little carriages. Then is the time for imagination to run riot. To Gavin, fresh from the steamer, it was enough to sit and watch the dignified figures pass before him, to hear the strangeness of new tongues, to wonder at the life behind the shuttered windows. He had watched for long the scurrying and running of droll singing lumpers who coaled the ships; a breathless haste seemed to consume them, and yet they found time and breath to sing a strange chant, and moved like moving ants in the dark. Boys had dived for coins, rising from the deep with money in their mouths and grime of coal-dust on their shoulders. Police-boats, with white-uniformed police, gave chase, to the amusement of passengers and divers alike.

Gavin remembered the advice of Ludovic, his uncle, and chose the best hotel. Here were all manner of folk speaking many tongues: Frenchmen, vivacious and full of gesture; Jews engrossed in some secret business of money-getting; Greeks who looked like shop-helpers, and dressed like broken actors. Their boots were not proper boots, and looked like paper—which indeed they probably were. Here and there were groups of sedate folk that were British, dressed in tussore silk, loose and yet well-fitting. They laughed after low whisperings, laughed with that heartiness that sailors and wanderers have.

Seated over from Gavin, alone, sat the most interesting of all—an Arab sheikh possibly. His eyes,

black and cold, glanced always this way and that. There was an air of cool insolence about him. Gavin's gorge rose at the man.

"This is to be a boy," said he, and yet felt a burning anger within him at the very sureness of the man. He seemed not conscious that servants attended him, deft and soft-footed, and yet, when in fear one of them clattered a tray noisily, such a cold overbearing glance came into the sheikh's eyes, that the servant shivered, his mouth opened, his knees trembled within his long cloth robe. With the coming of coffee, the Arab leaned back and smoked, and often his eyes were on Gavin—a quick measuring glance that shifted before the Scot's. "We are like two dogs at a fair," thought Gavin, "snarling and circling and *not* fighting; but I think I could hate that man," and then, seemingly, he forgot him.

Behind him were lights and mirrors and the music of dancing. There were little coteries of folk, happy folk who laughed easily, "folk," thought Gavin, "homing like pigeons to the northland, from the far East—from the lands afar." Ever and anon came the brash of curling waves breaking in foam. There was a fresh breeze and the scent of roses in it. Gavin sat watching, not seeming to notice, and yet retaining every new thing and strange that he saw. There were swarthy, sturdy vendors of canes, with a night to spend seemingly, over the sale of one switch. Sellers of sweetmeats wandered past, and grown men who juggled and brought forth chickens from the pockets of respectable people, with no knowledge of poultry-rearing. With great laughter and much wild shouting there went past speedily a bridal party, a long string of little carriages bedecked

with small lamps in many colours, a circle of little lights being about the withers of the leading pair. There was a musical clashing of little bells. In the first carirage, under the blaze of light, there would be a little veiled figure, shrinking belike into her corner and taking quick secret glances at her companion. Henna-stained her palms would be and her heart a turmoil. Away onwards went the little leaf from the 'Arabian Nights,' the mean little lights making a brave show. Pedestrians laughed, showing white square teeth, and none wondered if under the collars there were raw wounds, or why a little horse went lamely, nodding his head with every step, in the way of horses.

Unnoticed, a figure was on his knees at Gavin's side. He felt his hand touched, and looked down at two pleading black eyes and that smile of a cowed nature, craving pity and indulgence.

Gavin shook his head.

"Go away," said he, "and ply your trade on women or weans."

"I will tell the future to the great one, without the hand, without the cards, without the crystal. He has come from the sea—always the sea break near him, and ships are friends, ships and horses and many games, and only one woman. Give me the hand now, Sar."

"Run away man—go," said Gavin, "and here's for your lucky guess," said he, and gave the cowering figure a silver shilling. But the Arab was persistent. "Another come," said he, "another woman come—maybe to-night—I take mister see ladies dance—I very good guide too—mister take me——"

"Perhaps you would care to have me for a guide."

It was the sheikh who spoke. He spat a word at the crouching fortune-teller, and the humble seer slunk away, with many "Effendis."

"I do not come here often," continued the Arab, smiling, "and less often have I been a guide, yet if monsieur would care——" He waved his hand in an eloquent gesture. Gavin noted the smallness of the hand, and the strength of it.

"It would give me great pleasure," said he, in halting French, being not sure to trust himself in a foreign tongue; but the doctor's days had been so ill-spent in the happy Paris of his early clinics, that his pupil's accent was passable. It seemed, then, that everywhere in the darkness there were servants awaiting. A little carriage pulled up in front of the hotel. Gavin noted the sleekness of the horses, and even in the lamplight saw that they were well-shod, and that the harness was sound and good. He understood no word of his companion's quick commands, but found himself driving through lighted squares, by dim side-streets, until at last the horses were pulled up on their haunches, before a brilliantly lighted entrance, where many congregated, talking shrilly. He followed his guide through many lighted corridors; he was conscious of the smell of humanity mingling with the scents of flowers, violets and roses, and a droll heavy scent which he always associated with his first railway compartment. He was aware of many mirrors, and many reflected lights, of seeing himself, as he felt, lumbering beside his silent companion, who seemed to move rapidly without appearance of haste, soft striding like a cat. Presently he was seated in a box facing the lighted stage. He heard great gusts of laughter, the strange

laughter of a foreign people. He saw below him rows and rows of Arabs, noticed the gleam of white teeth and the whiteness of eyes in eloquent glances. Frenchmen and their wives sat in front of these, the men boisterous, the women with heads lowered under broad-brimmed hats, yet smiling quietly; and now and then a young woman laughed a shrill, shamed, and quickly smothered laugh, and then heads were turned, and amused glances passed, and men nudged the one the other. In boxes opposite were men, intent seemingly on wine-bibbing and in close confab with women, who seemed to Gavin, lean, and lithe, and vicious, like clean-boned, bad-tempered thoroughbreds. These paid no attention to the stage, and having looked, Gavin little wondered. An enormous woman stood statue-like close to the footlights and listened unmoved to the eloquent pleadings of a dwarf, a wee poor creature who seemed the victim of a dreadful passion. He was in torment, weeping, pleading, clawing with his beastly thick-fingered hands round the knees of the giantess, who stood smiling a horrible smile. Gavin thought of a cat with a mouse. The little man ran off the stage suddenly, and returned with a step-ladder. A gale of laughter greeted him. All his digits made eloquent gestures; the giantess, stormed by this grinning, devilish-figured little escaladier, capitulated after a short and passive resistance, which seemed only to change the meaning of her smile. She fled, holding her scanty torn garments carelessly, paused for a second, and disappeared, pursued by the little galloping atom in high glee, still carrying his ladder. There was a look of savage scorn on the Arab's face. Yet he had laughed heartily at the dwarf's antics.

“What a cow,” said he, when the shameless woman vanished; “yet she has mothered sons, they say.” He shrugged eloquent shoulders and blew smoke rings. Over and over again Gavin found himself muttering, “Male and female created He them, male and female created He them.” He was sick. Flower-vendors entered the box, offering roses, wet and heavy-smelling and beautiful, yet they seemed foul things, foul growths in foul air, fit only to be thrown to the stage in derision, or offered with many fine phrases to itinerant women parading from box to box, intent on selling sweet champagne and counting brass counters. Many women entered the box. They had cold calculating eyes; they were adepts at make-believe; their bosoms heaved to a look; their eyelids wavered and fluttered down, modest as doves; their hands were intimate but clean, with polished nails. To the young women the Arab was sweet as honey; his eyes seemed to burn, and yet the women turned from him to Gavin, intent on the stage. They seemed all to talk Arabic. To the elderly women, ghastly under a smear of powder, their eyes a-glitter and terrible, the sheikh used brutal laughter. It was as though some dreadful grave-digger had raised the dead, dressed in pitiful rags of finery, to the pitiless gaze of a highway. A great pity was born in Gavin for these dreadful, brave creatures, the butt and laughing-stock of an Arab, these women who at some time must have been young and innocent, long ago. He was young. How pitiful a worn-out, tired old woman, masquerading as a youthful folly, a brave light o’ love! He gave them money, and they grabbed with avaricious fingers like claws, glad of easy money, and yet half-inclined to be affronted

that their charms be overlooked. But now there came a new blinking of coloured lights on the stage, strange fires leaped in dim braziers, and from somewhere music sounded like a low moaning over a desolate rush-grown shore. Sounded ever and ever a harsher brazen note, like a second drone. It was wrong; the little melody would have been beautiful without it, yet always one waited for that harsh note, again and again. The Arab leaned forward in his seat, his eyes fixed on the wings, his face a cruel mask. From far away, mingling with the music, there came the little clank of cymbals, the little ringing of anklets. With the harsh snarling note the dancer came. As she stood till the shrill cries and the loud applause died away, as she stood smiling, sure of welcome, careless of welcome, her bare foot tapped to the beat of the hidden violins, her dark smiling eyes roved round from box to box. Gavin saw her smile to his companion.

“It is not for nothing the gled whistles,” thought he, but his brain was afire with admiration. There was something almost martial about the gallant little dancer, the great embossed and jewel-encrusted breast-plate, with golden chains and pearls looped. Round her hips there was rolled tightly a cloth of broken colours, her legs and feet were bare, and on her arms great clanking golden bracelets. With every movement of her limbs there came that faint ringing sound from beaten anklets. There was something uplifting to Gavin in the sound. He saw knights in armour, heard the shouts of combat, great gallant pictures drifted before him as he watched. He knew the woman was beautiful. He knew not what she danced, nor why the theatre seemed to cease to breathe, that men’s

souls looked from their eyes, ugly swinish eyes, gleaming in dim light. Suddenly Gavin looked at the Arab; his fingers were curved, his mouth a little open, a flush on his dark cheek. He had forgotten the Scot, forgotten everything but the figure moving in the dim flares from leaping braziers. His face had the same look as a hunting cat—keen, cruel, lustful. The dance finished; lights went up; people breathed and talked and cheered. But the darkness had been the time for unknown thoughts, for blood a-riot, for cruelty, for lust to romp unchained, in the dark all unknown to one's self, nearly. Men cried the dancer's name, "La Grecque! La belle Grecque!" and again she danced, this time some light and airy dream, with no dark shadows. There was no jarring harsh note, but little ripples of music, like laughter, but I think men did not like this dance so well as the dance in the darkness, with the flares from the brazier leaping higher and higher, and a fire burning in the eyes of men.

Gavin never remembered what turn came after La Grecque, for in a little time, when ribbons seemed to be drifting from floor to ceiling and the interior a maze of laughing faces, a little figure came into the box. This time the sheikh rose, but the lady sat down beside Gavin. She was breathless with laughter and haste. She drank a glass of wine, with a droll mocking glance at the Mohammedan, and then her gallant little face turned to Gavin.

"Que vous êtes gentil," said she, and raised her glass to him, exactly like a boy, but that there was softness in her dark eyes. "I spik English," she said; "you English?"

"Scots," said Gavin, feeling clumsy.

“Jusque la même, n'est-ce pas?” said she. “Where do I dance? Oh, Constan., Budapest, Salonique, Le Caire, always dance. Is it not so, Barbe Noire?” The Arab endeavoured to clasp her hand. “Mais non,” she cried, laughing, and touched his wrist with her burning cigarette, laughing, with smoke curling in a cloud round her lips and oozing between her white teeth. “Restez tranquille—alors! What you think, my silent friend?”

“I think you are very brave,” said Gavin.

“Brave!” she cried. “What use to be brave? I have many men to be brave for me, lovers, friends,—brave, I do not want to be brave, I want to be beautiful! To dance the beautiful dance, and hear the women mutter because they are afraid and angry, to see the eyes of men, even the old men, bestial old men, and your eyes too, my friend—just now. Is it because I am brave you look like that? Non, non, voilà! Ali bin Ali. He is a brave garçon noir. Oh yes, plenty women love this bête noire.” Again the Arab put his lean brown fingers over the dancer's little broad-palmed brown hand. Laughingly she protested, and then her voice changed to that note of anger, that women have, who have known no fear of men since childhood. The Arab's eyes fell. “Come,” cried La belle Grecque, “it is a night to drive under the stars.”

The Arab rose to accompany them, but the woman was unforgiving. Gavin laughed at her resolute little mouth, at the fire in her dark eyes and the quiet voice stinging with scorn. Under the lash the Arab's temper frayed. To this he was not used. He raised a threatening hand, and at that a droll thrill went through Gavin's frame. He put the little dancer

aside, failing to see the smile of triumph on her face, and put his open hand on the Arab's shoulder.

“Stay here,” said he; “the lady wishes it.”

Very, very slowly the Arab bent below the hand on his shoulder, his lean strong fingers grasped at the wrist above him, but the terrible grip on his shoulder did not relax. He looked into two eyes, blazing and dancing with leaping lights above him. He saw that La Grecque was trembling with excitement. He forgot the stage, the audience, everything but that at his heart was his long hafted knife. As the snake strikes, so struck the Arab, but he found his knife-hand in a grip of steel; his tendons cracked, a pain like a flame burned at his collar-bone, and suddenly he sat down. He heard a sharp crack, and saw his guest break the long blade in his hands. The hilt was thrust towards him.

“You are but half a man,” said Gavin; “keep half a blade,” and from the corridor there came the cruel laughter of a woman who has looked on a man's shame.

It was long after midnight. In Gavin's hotel the lights were low in the lounge. La Grecque leant forward among her cushions, her eyes languorous. She touched Gavin with her foot; her laughter was low and joyous, her throat rippled with it, and anon it stopped suddenly on a half-drawn breath. She held one of Gavin's hands, and after a long quick sentence she would raise it and look at it, or sometimes fondle it against her cheek.

“After I have finished this coffee,” said she slowly, her eyes almost closed, “I will retire, you understand”—*numero sept*—then come you and knock low,

like that, and after a moment (perhaps two moments, monsieur) I will open the door." She glanced around, and her arms went round Gavin's neck crushingly. He vaguely wondered at her strength; he felt her lips on his cheeks, on his lips, and her voice at his ear, "Et alors c'est fait accompli," and she left him.

Gavin felt very much alone. "And that," says he, "is what Mairi would call the de'il in the hedge." He was trembling, his heart was thumping, and yet he must appear cool and collected to be like an ordinary man.

From a distant corner a bell tinkled; a tall man rose and stretched himself.

"Will you join me, my boy?" said he. "I must have been asleep."

"Indeed I will," said Gavin; "I had forgotten all about drink."

The two men looked on each other, and in the older man's face Gavin was tracing familiar lines.

"The worst of a *fait accompli*," said the stranger, "is that God Himself cannot see His way to undo it."

"I would not trouble God," said Gavin quickly, a cold stare in his eyes, for he feared that here was one come to take care of him like a lassie.

The elder man splashed soda-water into his tumbler. There was a droll smile on his face.

"Sit down, my boy; you will forgive an old man's whim."

Gavin smiled and sat down, wondering where he had seen this man before—or one like him.

"I take it you are a Scot."

"Yes," said Gavin.

“Ye remember Flodden and James IV. and the wrinkled auld carle in a chariot?”

“Well?”

“And that old historian who thought that meddling with women was not just the best way to start a campaign.”

“But here’s no campaign,” said Gavin, “here’s no campaign, *Sholto Douglas*,” and he held out his hand.

The dark-faced man gripped his hand fiercely.

“The campaign’s waiting,” said he. “Did ye ken me on your father? But Stuart is the name I use now.”

“I think it was the history,” said Gavin. “But is there a chance of being a solider?”

“So you want to be first in the field of fight?” said Sholto. “For a little I thought the first line was troubling you—

“‘First in the love of woman.’

My man, you would not be the ninety-first—with La belle Grecque.”

Therein he erred.

CHAPTER II.

TELLS HOW GAVIN JOURNEYS WITH SHOLTO DOUGLAS
AND MEETS ONE TERRIBLE BONNY AND RAISED-
LIKE.

THE two men sat far into the night, the exile drinking in the news from home.

“I’ve made a bonny mess of life,” said he. “James, your father, grown into a crank, and you a wanderer that should be in the King’s coat, and Janet Erskine bearing the brunt of my weakness. God, but I made a bonny mess of it, but I’ll say this. Yon letter took me long to write, for a man can come by his death handy in the desert, and it was a near thing with me—near as ninepence, Gavin Douglas,—and, man, I should be a Lieutenant-General.”

There was a great sorrow in the speaker’s voice. His hair, close-cropped, was grizzled, his moustache white. He was tall and lithe, with a wide shoulder, and carried himself with the bearing of a cavalryman. He looked aye a soldier, Gavin thought, standing or seated, but always there was a sadness in the face, as though life had cheated him. Gavin thought that would be with the thought of a man’s death on his mind, and—

“Uncle,” said he, a little shyly, “Ludovic Camp-

bell says you never killed the man, although he died——”

“Killed him, damn him! Would he lightly me or mine! I *would* have killed him, then. I would kill him now, but to leave my men that loved me, to miss the wars on the frontier, to drop out of the game before the game was played to a finish—that was the hell of it. But you,” says he, “why are you stravaiging at your age? You’re too young for a woman to hurt—what sent you wandering?”

“I wanted to see your horses,” said Gavin, “and your men—picked as you would choose a choice wine.”

“And you shall! I’m glad you came. I’m getting old and stiff for the rough work. I can only plan and think out schemes. I need you, but I’ve no room for dancing-girls in my bivouac.”

“Nor I,” said Gavin; “I was only being polite and respectful. I relieved the lady from the attentions of an Arab sheikh. I think I broke his collarbone. Ali bin Ali was his name.”

“You’ve started well,” said Douglas, “for that is the start of it. The pity of it is you did not break his neck. You will live to regret that, maybe. You will meet him again. But the horses—are you fond of horse? But I need not ask ye that; there never yet was Douglas that had not love for horse.”

In the days that followed Gavin found that his uncle lived for horses and war. Flocks were for a man’s pleasure and profit, camels to be sold—nasty, roaring, snarling brutes,—but the Arab horse was a gift from God, to be cherished with care and jealously guarded. He knew every famous breed in Arabia, and the tribes that kept the finest mares. Nay, he

could tell offhand when Arab blood had been infused into other equine races. He spoke wisely of glands peculiar to the Arab horse.

From Alexandria uncle and nephew took train for Cairo, and there Sholto showed Gavin old straight swords—swords patterned like Crusaders' swords. They watched Egyptian troops at drill, visited the Pyramids, and spoke of Napoleon's battles—always war and horses. Gavin longed to leave the cities, to start for his uncle's home in the far desert. And on that route at last, he learned much of the history of Palestine. He remembered always the surprise that he felt, when Sholto Douglas would point to a far village with clustering palms.

“There is the village where Judah went up to the sheep-shearing with his friend the Hittite,” or, “Yonder is Gath, where Goliath lived.”

They lay a night in Gaza, where Samson carried off the gates, passing through rich corn-lands, seeing many cattle, and the hills and trees like the hills in every land. The hills of Judah were like the hills of home in the dim light, but in the day there were gardens of olive-trees, here and there on the terraced slopes. There were gardens with orange groves, gardens with tall black trees like cypress, and broken walls, and stones lying, and dust everywhere.

Through Jerusalem to the flinty lands of Edom Gavin journeyed, day after day, from Cairo through the wilderness, through cultivated lands, then away beyond Jordan out into the wilderness again for many days. When at last they were nearing the end of their journey, at a little oasis, there met them a band of men with led horses—lean Arabs riding

mares. They were well-armed with rifles of modern make.

“Here be some of my men assembled to do you honour,” cried Sholto Douglas, and smiled. But from the approaching horsemen a rider spurred. He was a tall man, riding a beautiful chestnut mare. There seemed something massive about him—a man of tremendous will, of a slow smile, and heavy-lidded eyes.

“This is my brother’s son,” said Douglas to the stranger. The Arab bowed. “And, Gavin, this is the Amir Abdul, whom good men are proud to serve.”

Gavin bowed, and watched the two men talk long and earnestly. Then the Amir bounded away on the chestnut mare, his young men with him, and Douglas came back to Gavin, who sat his horse a little away from his uncle’s tribesmen.

“Do you remember the Bonny Prince Charlie?” said Sholto. “Well, yonder goes the Prince Charlie of the desert, but them that live longest will see most. Ay, and yet I think they’ll see yon man a king. Harried from post to pillar, from wealth to the face of the desert, never sure that the night will not bring death, yet there he rides on a king’s horse, and there lives not a man in the desert that will ride him down; gentle with the humble, arrogant to the oppressor, he has lived his youthful years. Men have sworn to take his life. Long has he been hunted by his father’s foes and his—Mohammed the Usurper, that old lion, and the Turk in Constantinople. Often has he hidden with me, often come in secret for counsel. Yon is more than a desert chief concerned with petty strife—yon lad plays for a kingdom. . . .”

At midnight, below a great clear moon, Gavin first saw his uncle's home. In the shadows it had the look of an ancient castle, but that there were no turrets. A great white wall surrounded the place and enclosed a garden of tall dark trees. The windows were barred with iron—afterwards he found that Douglas had bought the ruins of an ancient building and had all but rebuilt it. Still there were here and there arches of stone (where a horse could be stabled) and droll outlandish flat roofs, with no way to get at them seemingly. But there was water plashing in a fountain in the courtyard, and many trees, and the scent of flowers. There came men to take the horses, bare-footed, with lean muscular limbs, their teeth white in their lean swarthy faces. Gavin followed his uncle through an oaken doorway, carved, and with the heads of great iron nails in it. "The place would stand a siege," thought he.

There was a great stone fireplace in the hall, and many chairs set by the wall—old chairs of black wood and with armorial bearings on the back of them. The floor was paved neatly with square flagstones, and on the walls were swords crossed, and the heads of animals. A great broad stairway of stone led upwards. It was such a hall as one might find in Scotland.

Douglas welcomed his nephew to his house and smiled at him.

"It's a sore trade to be an exile," said he. "I've made this place to look like home, for it's the last place a man leaves, and the first place he returns to; and here's a lass should be in her bed——" and looking to the stairway, Gavin saw Marjory Douglas descending, her face eager, and the gladness of wel-

come over it. She paused for a moment on seeing a stranger, then came slowly on. Her face was dark, but it was as though the warm blood was a dark wine. There was a faint far-away hint of hauteur about her—about the red mouth, as though the chiselled lips pouted, in the poise of the beautiful head, in the straight fearless look from her great dark eyes. She kissed her father, and Gavin remembered always the long delicate hands clinging, and the sweeping black lashes; and in the daft-like way that a vagrant thought will come, he minded Pate Dol, “I thought her terrible bonny and raised-like.”

“This long-legged lad is your cousin,” said Douglas, “my brother’s son, Marjory, and you know the Arab law.”

“Am I Bedouin, then,” said Marjory, “that you threaten marriage on a guest?” And she smiled to Gavin, who did not know the inner meaning of their talk.

That night he listened to father and daughter, the girl eager, her voice low and beautiful, anxious if her father were well, “for his letters forgot about his health.” Of strangers who sought the hospitality of the house, of distant flocks and favourite horses, they talked. They were served by a venerable-looking old man, white-bearded and tall, in white robes, who had charge of his master’s household in his absence. The old man craved leave to speak, bowing before Douglas.

“Two days, Effendi, two days the dog Ali bin Ali—whom may Allah smite—two days have passed since this eater of dirt fell on thy servants returning with corn and oil, and smote them, taking many camels and their loads.”

Douglas turned to Gavin.

“And that’s the second act,” says he, and turned again to Ishmael. “I’ve paid dearly for his broken collar-bone.”

“The Amir Abdul recovered the booty by the sword,” continued the old man, “and rested in the heat of the day, but Ali bin Ali and his young men escaped.”

Douglas was thoughtful.

“A neighbourly act,” said he. “He told me that he and his people had rested, and yet said no word of the caravan.”

“Effendi, seeing your mark on the camels, he ‘smote the Jackal of the mountains so that he and his people fled’; these were the words of my Lord Abdul.”

So Gavin began the new life, riding with Douglas to far grazings by the banks of river-beds (wadies, Sholto named them), with steep banks, and stones and gravel in the heart of them. To Douglas, men had come in his exile—for he was a Bedouin in dress and speech in the desert,—many men had come, and made their abiding-place under the shadow of his walls, using his wells and becoming his men, his herdsmen and horsemen. Gavin entered the new life like the building of his Look-out. He was eager for morning and evening, that he could work; and even in the heat of the day he would strive against the sun, wearing a droll Bedouin head-dress, and to look at him, he might have been born to that life, for he was long-striding in his gait, and with a dignity about him not unlike those bred in the desert. But also there was a difference—whereas those of the

sands were content to take good or ill as Allah willed, Gavin was for ever striving to make the ill better. The wells that had served their fathers were without doubt good enough for the children of the sands, but a well to Gavin was something to be cared for like a child, the water was there to be saved, to be used to the last drop. If two date-palms could grow where before one flourished, two must grow. In place of the *laissez-faire* of the East, he strove unknowingly to establish the efficiency of the West. He would have light broad-wheeled wains for carrying crops; he would have reaping-machines. He would farm in the East as he had farmed in the cold West Coast, and the children of the East laughed at him, quoting many proverbs.

He read books on irrigation, striving against the thirsty sand, planting hedges of camel-thorn, with broad prickly leaves; leading new channels of water, like a boy at a game; laughing when Douglas told him of the contempt of the Bedouin for the settled Arab.

“They will not give their daughters to wife to such as these,” said Douglas.

“No,” said Gavin, “but they will learn, and a man must make a start somewhere.” He rode with Douglas to visit the great desert chiefs, men of flocks and herds, dwelling in tents with their families and kindred round them. Hundreds of tents there were on the grazing, wherever the flocks lead, and an old man mayhap with his hounds and his hawks by him, and all that passed in the compass of his herds told him by day and by night, giving gifts of apparel to the stranger within his gate, showing the hospitality of his kindred. The eternal drinking of coffee was a

grave trial to Gavin on these occasions, and yet at the coffee-drinking all news circulated, from the cities on the fringe of the wilderness, from the outside world. Of all the Eastern folks, these desert chiefs were best. And I think that it was because of his Old Testament reading that that was so. Sholto Douglas had taken care of the children of his people, so that there were few among them with tender eyes; and his work made Gavin's easier, although the desert men thought little of the new plough that he brought. If they ploughed, they would plough as did their fathers, in the flinty lands of Edom, else would the grain fail, or a murrain come on the cattle. How Pate Dol would have laughed at his little sheep of droll colours like calves; how would Mairi have scorned the little milch cows, black mostly, and lean as Hunger's mother. Much of his crops he lost, because that the Bedouin grazed their mares on his standing grain, claiming the half of his harvest as desert mail. These Bedouins, Arabs of the blood, lean men and lithe, lived by the sword; riders who beset the straight ways to cut out and drive off a booty. "Wa Allah," said his herdsmen, "such as these would violate the stranger within his gates."

"Live by the sword," said Gavin, "live by the rusty old matchlock, tinkered through three generations."

A leader of such as these was Ali bin Ali. But of Ali bin Ali later. The grass was more to Gavin than that lean warrior, who had taken all the vice of the gaiour to add to his native devilry, for the grass in the river-beds would grow three feet in height. His uncle's herdsmen, grave bearded men, were pleased as children at his praise, men who (de-

spite the dreadful form of Afrit, the bogle, and Ghoul with a hoof and a claw and a horrible beak) were faithful shepherds, who marvelled much at their master's night wanderings, knowing little of his apprenticeship in the handling of things not of this world, as Raw Head and Bloody Bones, and the Blind Tup of Dungannon's tales.

For such as the master, the wallow of the wild boar was treasure, the Bedouin rider with his rusty flintlock was but a playock for children. But of his work, the greatest pleasure was the choosing, and mating, of the horses that Sholto had for his pastime in the long years of his exile. The Arab mares, full of fire, yet to be ridden with a silken thread; the great stallions that the Arabs use cruelly, using a brutal bit, and not refraining from beating them on the head with the butt of a spear; these were his joys.

He laughed that the desert men, though sitting loosely in the saddle, could carry a spear between the leg and the droll patched saddle of the sands.

In the evenings Gavin went to school again, as he said. Marjory Douglas, with a square blackboard and a grave air of a professor, taught him the language of his new country. A wonderfully well-attended school it was, and sometimes a pupil who was not very quick, for there were times when Gavin would lead his teacher away from the verbs and nouns, to the stories of the people, or the poems of the desert song-makers. And often it would be the great deeds of the Amir Abdul that would move the teacher to forgetfulness. Gavin, wishing always for companionship so long denied him, listened to these tales, noting the sparkle in the dark eye of his companion, and the leaping pride in her voice, as she told of

Abdul's deeds. She was afire for bravery, for great deeds, and from her Gavin found that Ali bin Ali was the enemy of the Amir, and friend to the Turk, that his people were to the south in the desert. He learned also that this desert raider had all but carried Marjory from her father's arms. Sholto Douglas, intent on the literature of the Arab horse, studying often their pedigrees, in circles of neat Arab writing, was content that Gavin should be in his place, in the field and in the hall.

In the walled garden Marjory would walk in the evening, when the darkness came down quickly among the trees, and oftentimes Gavin would be by her side, and always they would talk in Arabic, for that was the rule of Marjory. In the cool night with the scent of roses, he would tell her of his home and of his people, who were hers also, talking slowly and waiting for a word, or he would listen to her tales of the constellations luminous above them. On such a night, being a little late, having talked with Sholto, Gavin walked in the darkness of the garden in search of Marjory.

To him she came quickly and put her hand on his arm, and he could feel her tremble, but it was with anger. He heard the thundering of a horse in head-long gallop.

“Will you cut him down?” Marjory was shaking his arm; “beat him, kill him, make his house a weeping-place, and his heritage a waste; Ali bin Ali, that jackal, that devourer of the offal of cities. He came by the wall, standing in his stirrups; he spoke to me, he dared to speak to me, to threaten me. The words of his mouth were a defilement——”

Gavin held her by the shoulder. “Listen, little

soldier," said he, "we will meet him, you and I and none others; long or short, the time will come, and this I will promise—he will go home a hale man—*wanting the head*. Such was the deed of a Douglas. We will hold to the old customs, since he is the enemy of the Amir Abdul," said Gavin.

"Sir," said Marjory, "is it nothing to you that he would have used me basely?"

CHAPTER III.

THE DESERT DUEL.

“THERE are two things I love in this life,” said Marjory, “the evening and the morning.”

“And the evening and the morning were the first day,” replied Gavin.

“And behold, it is always the first day here,” she answered, “the first day for ever and ever. The morning star burning low in the sky, close to the Arabs, for I think that the stars are the night friends of the desert folks, the sure friends of the caravan leader, watchful in the night, with only the snarling and bubbling of the camels and the fretting of the horses, the distant screaming of beasts of prey in his ears, and away, away, behind him, the winding train moving slowly; the camel-drivers in their blue robes, with the long staff for comfort, when bare bones shine white by the way, where long ago a tired beast lay down and awaited release from his burden, waited barracked for days, until he laid down his head on the sands, and the wild dogs yelped for food—and lacked it not.”

“And what of the evening?” said Gavin.

“Ah,” she cried, “all the day the sun is burning, or the sand is blowing—first in little trickles that

hardly cover the hoof-marks of a horse, but growing and growing, until great clouds, blowing, rush onwards; the heaven and the earth are sand and a burning wind—hour after hour, sand clinging to the eyelashes like a white powder, sand gritting on the teeth, and the oasis far ahead—no cool breath and no distant palms—anger and fear in the hearts of men, and a prayer for evening—for the calming of the wind, for a long cool breath of sweet air, for the coming of the first star—the lamp of the waste—the camp—the odour of cooking—the noise of beasts feeding, the song of the young men a-busied with horses—the dark-boled palms upright—or perhaps the silver moon with a bent palm black across it—the moon and the star of the Turk—the camels wandering in the camel-thorn—the blue shadow from the prophet's tomb, and the dark shadows on far mountains.”

It was morning. Gavin and Marjory watched an Arab drawing water for his little flock. There was a primitive derrick. On an upright post a little way from the well, a long slender pole like a fishing-rod, but stouter, was balanced; and from the slender end a bucket depended over the water, hung by a rope. A great weight at the butt helped to lift the full bucket to the top, and the cold brackish water was slashed into the troughs, and the beasts drank long and thirstily.

“I think before Ishmael so they drew water,” said Marjory, and the shepherd stood with bowed head. Their horses walked daintily, the long pasterns yielding and their round hoofs bounding from the sand; the lines of muscles showing, the upthrown heads tossing the long manes; the beautifully arched tail, the air of pride and beauty and power, the sidling

play to a careless caress—there is nothing so proud as a desert horse.

“There is a beautiful story that when Ishmael went from his father’s house, he and his mother Hagar, fleeing from the unholy wrath of a righteous wife, to perish miserably for aught *she* cared, and the boy Ishmael lay a-dying of thirst—the waters of Mara are not so bitter as a woman’s righteousness,—then the angel appeared, and behold! a well of springing water and a great blessing, and the first-fruits of the blessing grew in the far desert, and they were the first Arab horses.”

Gavin smiled at the story. He loved such details. “But,” said he, “I was thinking of the Knight of the Leopard riding his heavy-boned war-horse on these soft sands, mail-clad horse and man, with armour, and housings, in the heat of the day; and his adversary, moving swift as a bog-trooper, on a pure-bred Arab, and yet the Scot fared none so ill.”

They had left the palms and the long low white house. Before them for miles stretched the desert, trackless as an ocean, yet, like a sea, having many routes. Once away in front, a fast-trotting camel bore its rider to some refuge close to water, where fig-trees and date-palms grew, and where beautiful children awaited the father’s coming, among dogs and little heat-demented fowls. As always, the long curved sword was strapped tight between the girth and surcingle of Gavin’s horse, the hilt at his knee. Now the horses swept along at a stretch gallop, and the keen morning air rushed past. Marjory’s face was wind-whipped, her eyes sparkled. She laughed aloud to feel her horse leap sideways from some little rodent, searching hidden grain. Once they passed

an Arab village with mud-built walls. Lean mares and foals grazing the scanty herbage neighed and wheeled to the shrill whinnying of Gavin's stallion. There, also, were great pits with mouths unprotected and flush with the sands, in which grain could be stored and hidden. They were well built of dressed stone and very deep.

"In such as these," cried Marjory, "they cast Joseph, because that he dreamed a dream."

"Some day, Marjory, they may cast me in also, for I too have dreamed."

"Your dreams are of war," she cried, "of the press of horses and men, or of water flowing in dry wadies, and bringing fruit and trees and green fields and grain and horses. There would be no more miles of sand, but water creeping into the dust, of always more water, and the dry lands drinking it, and sending up an offering of flowers; but all the wild lone desert rides would be over, and the earth would send a wet breath to the morning sun."

"But there would be great flocks and herds, and cattle and horses, and food and riches, and the people would grow great."

"The lean desert men would wax fat," said Marjory, "and the horses also, and the railways would come, and distance would spread her wings."

They were now come to rough broken hills, with treacherous foothold. Beyond was level plain. The horses climbed upwards, leaping cleverly like cats. Suddenly the stillness was shattered and a leaden bullet went whizzing and singing past Gavin's head; a great grey horse leaped from behind a hillock, and his rider waved his long-barrelled gun high above his head.

Ali bin Ali, jackal of the mountain, barred the way. His grey steed plunged and reared, the white foam spattering his front like cream. Again and again he neighed, afire for battle.

Gavin laughed aloud.

“‘Ha’ doon, ha’ doon,’ cried good Lord James.

‘Ha’ doon into the plain.

We’ll let the Scottish Lion loose

Within the hills o’ Spain,’”

and he circled his horse across Marjory’s path so that she was hidden. “Is not that the song of songs?” he cried, and handed her a long vicious Colt. “If I am killed,” said he, “hide this till ’bin Ali puts his arms about you, then put the muzzle against his heart and blow him into hell. Then ride, ‘to flee or follow, there’s not *his* marrow in braid Scotland,’” and he patted her horse’s neck. Marjory’s face was white with anger, her eyes blazed, her lips curved.

“Bend,” she cried, “bend,” and almost had he done it, when he saw the purpose in her eyes.

“Ye canna shoot at sitting game,” he cried, and wheeled his horse. The long curved sword glittered like an arc of light, and the black horse leaped to meet the grey.

“Ali bin Ali, to-morrow’s sun will see the wild dogs batten on your lean flesh. To-morrow, ’bin Ali”—the blades met with a long hissing schliver,—“to-morrow will I ride and see the little white nerves hang from your back-bone like white strings, and the vulture will whet his beak on your breast-bone.”

The horses reared and screamed with rage. Gavin’s voice was full of devilish joy; his eyes were cold fury.

“Who learned ye the sword?” he crooned, “who learned ye to dance? A bonny stroke, O son of Ali—a near thing.”

The Arab fought like a fiend, his face was black with sweat and wrath. There was blood on his curling beard. He spat oaths.

“How will ye have it?” Gavin’s voice was roaring. “‘A clout athwart the chats’ would redden that daft-like beard. Will I cut off your bridle hand?” And then the voice changed, like a bitter east wind. “Fight, man, fight, for there’s death at your elbow.” At that his spurs bit to the rowels, the black reared up and forwards with a wicked scream, his teeth met in the grey’s withers. Gavin was high in the stirrups, and his sword hand raised. The Arab looked up, his lean hairy throat bare, but his upflung guard came too late. Gavin’s curved blade shore through skin and muscle and bone. Ali, son of Ali, swayed gently from the saddle, as though his knees were loath to loosen their hold, a great upthrust of blood spouted from his throat, and splattered thickly on his horse’s mane. The beast wheeled and galloped in mad fear of the fluttering clinging thing at his side; the all but severed head stotted and bounded like a ball.

“Hanging by a hair,” said Gavin. “Gallop on, man, gallop on; it’s no great harm, ye have a bonny son to ride the grey.”

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The great black horse, irked by the spur stroke, still plunged and reared when Marjory rode near. Tight-lipped, she had watched the combat, until the last tremendous cleaving sweep, when a tingling sensation leapt to her feet and fingers, as though all her being had signalled joy. Now she was all timid,

a new shyness assailed her, lest the turmoil in her blood be betrayed by speech or look. Unknown feelings frightened her. She wished to weep, yet felt like laughter. With difficulty she raised her eyes, afraid of what they might reveal, and the very deliberation of her glance accentuated the long curling lashes, the liquid loveliness of her eyes, the dark flush on her cheeks.

“Oh, Gavin,” she whispered, “I am altogether wicked. There is only joy here”—she placed her hand on her breast,—“and I know that to-night the prowlers in the dark will give tongue on a bloody spoor. The women in Ali’s hold will beat their breasts and loosen their hair; the children, the little brown babes, will sob in the night, and the gallant grey will cower and look round with great eyes to his near side, and snort in terror in the dark, when dogs will howl without.”

There was a strange timbre in Gavin’s voice as he answered. So had she heard her father speak when deeply moved.

“Aye,” said he, “and these are very fine feelings for a lass, but for a man that has seen so very little, I am glad that yon head that stotted on the sand was not mine, and that yon leaden slug went singing by me.”

“The dog,” she cried, her voice a-tremble, “the treacherous dog. I should have shot him down, but you were wrong in one thing. Had you died, I should have died also, without waiting to send that man to hell. Oh, Gavin, I loved the sureness of you. ‘Wait,’ said you, ‘with your gun hidden until he takes you in his arms, put the muzzle to his heart and blow him to hell.’ Where did you learn such a very woman’s trick?”

“Once long ago,” said Gavin, “a little lady taught it me,” and he laughed.

Marjory looked at him a long time. At a little broken well, where still a few palms straggled and fig bushes clustered, Gavin dismounted, and Marjory held the horses until he had cleared away the silted sand, and filled a water-bottle; then he loosened the girths quickly and slipped the bits. They watched the horses drink, not great greedy draughts, but sipping, and raising their heads often, and looking away ahead, with water dripping from their wet muzzles. In a little, the horses stood, now and then swishing their tails, now and then tossing their heads and sending little showers of yellow tibbin to their feet. Marjory sat a little way off, close to the well, her feet gathered under her, and leaning on one arm. She had taken fruit from her saddle-bag—dates and great yellow oranges,—and as Gavin washed his hands, she spoke to him.

“I could read your thoughts, Gavin,” said she, looking at him and smiling, her face a little wrinkled by reason of the sunlight.

“Guess away,” said Gavin.

“See yonder Scot eating his own blood,” said Marjory. “You remember Bruce in the pavilion of Edwardus Rex Malleus Scotorum?”

“That was near enough,” said Gavin; “but the blood is not my own, and see, my hands are clean; but I was thinking—I was thinking you were like Edith Plantagenet—tall and dignified and talking little, like a man, not like Berengaria.”

“Berengaria—that fluffy fool!” There was a world of scorn in Marjory’s voice. “Berengaria is the woman of to-day—a wife, and yet with a mad-

ness in her blood for pleasure—a sheep, yet skipping like a lamb—Berengaria!”

Gavin held a little drinking-cup in his hand and filled it from the water-bottle, and watched Marjory drink, the moving of her throat, the little moistness of her red lips; and then refilling the cup, he raised it, and “*beux yeux Edith,*” said he, looking into her eyes with a friendly smile. Marjory lowered her head, and then with a little impatient gesture—

“But I know,” she said, “that men prefer them fluffy and nearly fat, and soft like kittens.” She sat silent, with a grave face, but Gavin’s laughter made her smile, even against her will. “But I know they do. My father has told me all these things, and my father was of your cold land.”

On the homeward trail Marjory talked. Her eyes were sweeping each new rise, a long far-seeing gaze: the very little dust-devils did not escape her. The droll-pictured mirage of trees and water she scanned long, as though some rider might be approaching unseen. But for Gavin, there was a strangeness on him, a feeling of wellbeing, of having proved himself a man in the affairs of men. He hummed to himself, sitting easily in his saddle, some old, old forgotten ballad of a man whose hands could keep his head. Then suddenly he turned to Marjory.

“I thought I was a man. I have been thinking I was maybe a man, but this minute I know I am more like a lass with a new frock, taken on with myself like a bairn. Why do you not laugh at me—”

Marjory smiled.

“—and bring me back to earth? James Douglas that fought seventy-two battles was neither elated

overmuch with victory nor cast down with defeat, and here's me singing because I cut down a man. I would not be crowing sae crouse had he given me an elder brother's blow, I warrant—I would like to be that kind of man that could laugh at defeat.”

Marjory reined in her horse to walking pace.

“Gavin,” she whispered, “I am not brave like you—somewhere there is a softness in my blood; often in the long weary afternoons I would be seeking a cool shade by a window with the noise of water plashing and the pleasant sounds of a homestead, and I would be making dreams for myself, and being wondrous brave, and doing fine deeds that poets would be singing of, and maybe mothers telling to their little ones. I would be leading armies with great words on my lips like Napoleon at the Pyramids, and seeing the people casting flowers in my path, in the path my horse would be treading; and sometimes I would be leading a charge, but now I know that I am not fit to be—to be”—she hesitated for a word—“of a warlike folk. I am only a baby, only a play-actress, as my father sometimes says. I can hear still your words in my ears, and my flesh thrills to the devilish cruelty and the joy of them. I tell you I understood that feeling—it was in me to do that thing, but afterwards, Gavin, I felt afraid,—that great grey horse galloping—the poor faithful brute—in terror of what came with him; and oh, I saw myself among the women that waited, Gavin, and it might have been you, my kinsman, that came leaving that horrible track beside the hoof-marks.”

“Well, and so it might,” said Gavin, “and a very good ending too, Marjory. . . .”

“But—but,” she cried, “you had no such thoughts.

Gavin, it was the first time, I think, that I saw you all happy. So have I heard my father sing often after little battles—sing and carry me on his shoulder and talk to me, as old warriors talk to their young sons. I remember once he buckled his great sword to me, and stood me in front of him. ‘Could you back a staunch horse?’ he cried, and lifted me up, and it was then I felt brave and daring, and the thought of weeping was not near me, but to-day I was afraid.”

“It is the finest time to be afraid—afterwards,” he told her. “You were not afraid when yon bullet went whistling between us, and I never noticed any fear when you told me to ‘bend’; and as for being afeared now, that’s like an old fellow that I kent. He told me that once he went to a neighbouring farmer for the loan of a horse, and the farmer took down the bridle and handed it to him. ‘She’s grazing in the stackyard,’ said the farmer, ‘catch her yourself.’ ‘She came at me with her mouth open and her forefeet in the air,’ said my friend, ‘and d’ye ken, Gavin, if it hadna been that the gentry was looking, I would have run, but I made a breenge and got the bit into her mouth all the easier that it was open. A man canna be a coward before folk,’ said he, and that was how it was with me, Marjory—it was just you being there that put me on my mettle.”

For a long while they rode in silence, and often Marjory was as if about to speak, and as often she refrained, till at last, when the white house, set amid dark trees and rough-built stone dykes (where yet the stones stood neatly in place, and not like the tumble-down dykes in Eastern cities), was plain before them, Marjory took her horse close to Gavin’s.

“Was she very beautiful, Gavin?” said she, “the little lady that taught you yon trick with the pistol?”

“She was very beautiful, Marjory,” said he, “she was indeed, and I think she would be very beautiful to be receiving a man’s guests, and very gracious behind tea-cups at the head of a table; but she will have forgotten me long syne, or maybe looking for me in the theatres.”

“Theatres?”

“You see, she thought me a kind of play-actor too.”

“I think she was a fool.”

“No, but I’ve been thinking that I was the fool.”

“And I am very glad that she thought that of you,” said Marjory, after a long silence, when the white-walled house was near, “for now I know that she never could have known you—not properly,” said she.

“There’s a kind of sameness about nice lassies,” said Gavin, but he said it to himself.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW DUNGANNON'S LONGING CAME OVER HIM AGAIN,
AND HOW PATE DOL SAID SOMETHING CLEVER.

WHEN Gavin was in the wilderness, a man among grave men and elders, a hero to the herdsmen and dealers with horse and cattle, riding often with Marjory Douglas, for there was great friendship between these two, and listening always to Sholto, her father's dreams of a great war, a war in Europe that would light up the ends of the world in its blaze, Irene Savage waited.

She had many suitors, for she did everything well; and were not the Society journals for ever singing her praises, for ever lauding her beauty in a town of beautiful women? John Savage, a man of few words, wondered that his daughter was content to remain under his roof when there were many other homes for her acceptance. But of late there had come over her a passion for wandering. The fashionable resorts of their kind were become anathema to her; she craved for hunting trips in the Far West, in the Rocky Mountains. She would think out her costumes for these trips, dressing herself like a heroine in a picture film, being very brave in her bearing, and assuming an air of the experienced hunter, the woman

inured to hardship, the helpmate for a man. But it was also as though the fight against her feminine instincts made her the more feminine. In her heart she hated rough tweeds, except on a golf course or on a moor. She looked with distaste on hunting-boots and cord breeches, and little, round, smart hats. She hated killing things, but made herself an efficient shot. She was grown more beautiful, more tireless, and yet there was in her face the look of one searching. Mairi Voullie Vhor might have told her what ailed her. She would sit on a little artist's chair with her water-colours, gazing at gaunt cliffs and black trees and rushing rivers; and often there would come into her eyes a far-away look, and on her face a softness as of remembrance, and then, with a little sigh, Irene would come back to earth again and her painting.

And at one time, sitting in her little sanctum, Prim Sheppard came upon her with a rough drawing before her. There was a dark sea with the first light on it wanly, and a great rock and a figure in armour towering thereon, and Irene was working at the face of the knight. She left her work with a sigh and a smile.

"I can never, never, never, get the face," said Irene. "There should be a smile and a frown and a wonder in the face, and a fierceness and a tenderness. There should be everything in the face, but I'll never get it."

But after that, when Irene would be alone, Prim Sheppard would find her with her man in armour, as she called the picture.

"But no," said Irene, "he is only a boy in armour," and she would play with her fingers at the single

pearl at her throat and gaze for long at nothing. The missing face intrigued Prim Sheppard. She studied illustrated papers, looking for a face that would fit, as it were, the picture. She scanned the faces of tanned young men, she borrowed Irene's dreams and came to her with many photographs, but her mistress only smiled.

"I'll never, never get that face."

And then sitting before her fire, dressed altogether as a girl should be dressed, with soft laces and silks, her silken hose gleaming in the firelight, Prim Sheppard came to her a-flutter.

"I've found it, and he's an Arab chief," she cried, "dark and fierce and with drooping eyelids, and he has a short beard, but you could take that away," and she produced her find.

Have you ever walked in a street and there passed you some one resembling a friend, but you know that you are making believe, and suddenly, while still thinking, the very friend hails you from the other side?

Irene took up the paper with a smile. "Where?" said she, and read "*Coup d'état* in the Desert." Followed a graphic description of a wild night ride, of a small band scaling a palace wall, and of an Amir's banner floating over the home of his fathers. There were then some details of the Amir Abdul's life, and below a picture of a group of men and horses, and in the foreground, the Amir.

Irene looked at the face, the sadness, the nobility of it; noted the Semitic cast of feature, the grace of his bearing in the saddle; but she knew that that face would never complete her picture. She could visualise the face of her picture in her mind, but always it

escaped her when she tried to draw it. She kept the paper in her hand on her lap, looking into the fire. Was this another foolishness like looking for her lost pearls? She smiled at that, fingering her little chain; her eyes sought the photograph again, and *he* was looking at her. She took the paper nearer fearfully, afraid to lift her eyes lest this be some trick of vision, lest never again would she catch that look. It might be the firelight, the curve of the paper—anything! But no! In the full blaze of electric light, the face looked at her—a tall man he must be, riding a chestnut horse with a white blaze, an Arab, darker than the Amir, leaner of feature, more hawk-like. She took a glass for magnifying little specimens, sent Miss Sheppard away on some pretence, and sat down to examine the picture anew.

With the door shut she rose and locked it. Her heart was beating, her hands shaking; she could hardly see. Then she forced calmness on herself, and focussed the glass. But she knew—she knew that she could not be mistaken; the face was Jim's.

Then bit by bit she reasoned. The Amir was bearded, moustache and beard met round his mouth, leaving the lips unconcealed. There were others so bearded, but by the Arab's bridle hand the other face, Jim's face, clean-shaven, lean, eager, yet strong and massive.

A tremendous happiness assailed her. She whispered to herself, afraid afterwards to remember what she whispered. She laughed happily. Deriding herself, she rose and looked at her reflection in a mirror.

What kind of man was he now? Had he learned kissing? Would women matter anything to such as he? There seemed no softness about the face. She

tried to make it smile, but no trick of the magnifying-glass could aid her. But that night she slept with the picture under her pillow, a common trick with foolish women.

Her happiness remained with her on waking. She propped the periodical against her knees, and gazed at it while she drank tea, but no one saw that. She visited a photographer, and came back home singing.

She got an enlargement of the photograph, with the other figures blocked out. She smiled to the face, kissed it, and shook it, looking down at it. Then she got her violin, and told him things. And with the violin, there came the thought of Dungannon. She sent for him and waited, her eyes sparkling.

“Do you remember faces, Patrick?” she asked, holding the photograph behind her. “Do you remember faces at all, Patrick?”

“Sure, ma’am,” said Dungannon.

“Then who is that, Dungannon, who is that?” said Irene.

“Oh, by me soul, misthress, by me soul, it’s himself an’ no other. It’s himself, the saints preserve ye, an’ sore changed. Where is the smile that should be, and the roses in his cheeks, and soul phwat kin’ av a clout has he got until his head? and av all the horse ever I seed, that’s the best and the proudest—a mare by the head av her! Oh, Saint, would not I love to be by his stirrup, little Fin M’Coul that cherished me. I wonder av his mother has the like av this likeness, or Pate Dol and Mairi? Misthress,” said he, looking up, “there is not the greenness and freshness in this land that they have over yonder.” Dungannon was like a boy getting round his mother. “The way the water comes splashing down the hill-

side, mistress, in the winter after rain, and the sparkle of rain on the leaves of grass. I am thinking that some day it will come over me to go back yonder. If a man could be living for ever, mistress, the places he could be visiting before he died."

Irene sat down. "Tell me," she said, in a little voice, "tell me again about him when he was a little boy, playing——"

"Misthress, why will ye vex yourself to be bringing the past before ye, or bringing the future to your hand? The past has a glamour over it and the future a haze, and the haze will become the glamour, but our lives will have passed with the changing. If I could do things well in the present, without past and future, I think that I would be happy. And that," says Dungannon, "was the way with Gavin Douglas. He had all the past before him, the battles, the kings and queens, and the warriors; but if there was a hen-house to be built, he would build it, like a hungry man at a meal. If there was a drain to be delved, he digged it to marching songs and the spade working in time with the chune. He saw his work finished before he began to it, and then he worked to that end, never halting."

"And how was it with you, Patrick?" said Irene, for she must speak to some one who had known Jim, some one who believed that dreams could come true.

"I would be thinking of the fine things I would be to do next," said Patrick, "the things that would be making a fortune for me to be giving away among the poor, and me maybe away in a win'jammer—a sailing-ship, saving your presence."

"And will you never go home?"

"I could not bear to go back to my place yonder

without I had the coin. They do be proud folk yonder, wid little time for a dreamer.’’

And that made Irene think. Was she only a dreamer, seeking a distant happiness that might never come? Her friends were married, had little children, had new interests in their lives, new work and play. Should she burn the photograph, watch the flame lick through the pasteboard, and forget everything—marry and have a home and children? and then, then she thought, then I would meet him, and everything would be wrong. No, there was still the future, but how much her decision was biassed by the thought of the burning photograph, she did not think. There came other thoughts. He might be married, have forgotten her long ago. She was sad at that, but surely married men did not ride with Arabian Amirs, except maybe they were Government officials, and Government officials would be in some kind of uniform. Jim, her Jim, was in Arab dress.

“Besides,” said Irene, “he must be quite young—just a boy.’’

And there was another thing which Irene would have died rather than tell to her dearest friend. Often at night, after a function, she would sit with a writing-block on her knees and write to him, telling him how she wearied for him, telling him how he had spoiled everything for Irene, because that she could not hear him laugh at her, or see him frown in impatience; because that she could not touch him with her hands, or caress him with a look. Did she see his photograph, she made a little kissing mouth to it. She became wondrous soft and less imperious; she took delight in her friends’ babies, loving their little clinging hands.

Young mothers laughed the one to the other. Irene would marry, Irene the haughty, Irene the proud, with little children about her! Well, that was the weather-vane. Matrimony was indicated. They made little private bets with their husbands; they quizzed Irene, but got only a soft little smile, whereas they expected a scornful laugh, or a careless shrug.

But Irene was thinking, since Dungannon's talk. Was she letting things drift?—like the Arab who trusted that Allah would find the strayed camels, instead of himself searching. If she were really the woman she had tried to become, the efficient woman, the reasoning woman, what course would she pursue now? Would she go somewhere nearer where her man was? No place was very far away now, if one had money. Her father would enjoy sailing anywhere. The voyage could be easily arranged. Was that what the efficient woman would do? She thought of all the little letters she had written to Gavin, and burned. Might not she have written long ago?—but she had not wished to write long ago. She had not known this craving until she had seen the Arab Amir. She had been content to dream, to make herself a fit mate for such a man as her boy in armour; but now this longing assailed her like a hunger. Then she wrote a line and sealed the envelope hurriedly, her face very dark. "His father on the Rock must know where to direct his letters," said Irene, and posted her letter herself lest some ill-luck befall it.

But long she waited for an answer.

James Douglas lifted that letter again and reread the address aloud to his wife.

“My dear,” said he, “who will that be from?” and he handed Janet Erskine Irene’s letter.

“A young lady’s writing, James,” said she, “and from America. I wonder if Gavin is on his road home, and the letter here before him.”

Douglas smiled. “I think not,” said he. “Why ‘please redirect’?”

“Well,” said Janet, “we’ll leave it till the doctor comes, for he will be over this fine calm day—a pet day,” for it was winter, and fine calm days are not very common on the West Coast.

“Well,” said Douglas, “we will go down to the jetty, for I think Pate will soon be back with the paper,” and they left the house and walked over the short turf, where the white frost had not melted, to the shore.

The doctor was on the jetty already. He waved, and then—

“I’ve been to the town,” he cried heartily. “What do you two love-birds think of that? Has he stopped flirting with you?” said he to Janet.

“Now, doctor,” said Janet, “we’re sedate settled-down people for years and years. Come to the house and see a letter that’s come for Gavin, and then tell me what took you to the town.”

“The law took me,” said the doctor, “that ass, the law, waled me out from among my chrysanthemum cuttings and my dahlia roots, and my cold frames and my potato-beds, and my books and my slides, and made me sit on a jury, or forfeit one hundred marks Scots.”

“Dear me,” said Janet; “and how much is that in real money, as the American lady said? And

talking of American ladies, show Ludovic Gavin's letter, James."

The doctor looked at the letter, turned it over and examined the seal, examined the postmark, and put it down.

"Well," said he, turning to Douglas, "this will be from the lass that Mairi always told us would coup the creel."

"But where will we send it?" said Douglas. "We've had one telegram from Gavin since he left us four years ago."

"We'll send it to Gavin," said Campbell. "Listen," said he, and rolled himself a cigarette. "I visited every shipping firm in the city with boats sailing for the East—there aren't so many. Well, Gavin Douglas sailed for the East on the 17th of October, four years ago."

"For the East?" said Douglas.

"For Alexandria, to be precise. Sholto's letter was posted in Alexandria, and that's why I tried the East. That's just the daft plan that any boy would have made, with Gavin's romantic schooling—be off to get Sholto."

"But this letter is from America," said Janet; "what does than mean, doctor? If he went to Alexandria, who would know him in America? Of course, of course," she cried, "there would be hundreds to know him—tourists."

"And when I found what ship he sailed in, I began to be a detective in earnest. I know his bankers."

"Bankers?"

"For a trifling expenditure, I found out that also. Gavin Sholto Alexander William James Archibald has an account with Messrs. Thomas & Sons, Cairo,

and branches. Well, we'll send his letter there. Is it not reasonable to expect that they will know where to forward it to? And," said he, "there are two things I would like to know. First is, what is in that letter? and the second is, if Gavin found Sholto, for I think that he did."

"Well, we'll all write to him for luck, and maybe a letter to Sholto could go under cover of his, for whatever Sholto may be, he cannot be using that name."

"I think, Ludovic, that you must have been a very sound doctor."

"I've been thinking that myself lately," said Campbell, "and I think that Mairi Voullie Vhor is a wonderful liar. Have her in, the old besom," said he, "and Pate with her."

"Mairi," says the doctor, "what became of Gavin's beads, and where did they come from?"

"They came from the inside of the doll Katherine," said Mairi; "that's what Gavin told Pate—and he has them with him. It it not true, Pate?"

"These were his words," said Pate.

"Ah!" said the doctor, "I had forgotten Katherine—association of ideas or something. You remember he talked of his wife's beads, Mairi?"

"Yes," said Mairi; "but I never saw his wife. No!"

Pate Dol stooped and tied his shoe.

"What makes you ask these questions, sir?" said he, with a certain dignity. "Do you think that we made away with the beads?" and he put his hand on Mairi's shoulder.

"And that's the last thing I would ever think of Pate Dol," said Ludovic; "but I met the lighthouse

keeper, and we talked of Dungannon, and he told me that Dungannon never left the Rock in the light-house boat. Now, how did he cross?"

"I never saw him cross," said Pate, a little huskily. "I took his dunnage to a yacht that he had signed on before the mast. He might have hailed a visitor's pleasure boat."

"Was there a girl on the yacht?" said the doctor. "You remember the gentleman that came after the accident to ask how Gavin did?"—this to Douglas.

Pate paused a moment, and then—

"If Mairi saw no wife," said he, "I saw no girl, but only Dungannon and the American gentleman and the sailors——"

"Well, well," said Douglas, "we must just wait till Gavin thinks to let us know."

In the kitchen Mairi came close to Pate.

"He'll never cast up clype to us," said she. "I wonder if yon girl was his wife."

"And," says Pate, "I'm wondering if a married wife is a girl. I doubt Mairi, we're both liars," said he.

"If we're the liars, we're no the makers," said she. "God, but Pate, you're clever. I was waiting for you to say something clever, but you were by-ordinar'."

CHAPTER V.

TELLS OF A WILD NIGHT RIDE AND TWO WOMEN.

OFTEN the Amir Abdul would be with Sholto Douglas, always awaiting news of his old foe Mohammed the Usurper, who had cast him from his inheritance and ruled in his father's place. And Gavin began to look for his coming, and to know his limber figure afar off, for the Amir Abdul was tall like his race—tall and graceful and slow-moving. His features had a Semitic cast, a little heavier than the thinly-chiselled Bedouin face, but on it was strength and stability and resolution portrayed, as well as the fire and patience of the desert riders. This man would never grow gross and unwieldy, though dignity and breath of age would come, but the Prince would die a limber man and a horseman. Watching him gazing with something of the dreamer in his eye, gazing across the red sands as Ishmael may have gazed at the setting of the sun, Gavin remembered all the stories that Sholto Douglas had told him of this man. Born to greatness, he had been cast out like Ishmael in his tender years, cast out by the ruthless power of that fierce usurper Mohammed who now lay sick unto death, with his sons round him—a stricken lion that had left no cub fit to batten on his kill, fit to hurl his roaring challenge across the plain: there was in Gavin a pity for that

brave old man holding death at bay, listening with a sneering smile to the wiles of his women, for their sons' advancement. Of all his sons, was there none to leap to saddle and raise his father's sword. Bah, he had no son, but the whelps of tame hounds, with fear in their blood for the lash of the master's voice, with cunning words, and cloying dreams of women on hot nights, weaklings and sick around him; and in the desert somewhere, a lean hard man, hard as the rocks, and patient as death, with the power of leading men to splendid deeds. Sometimes, Sholto had said, sometimes in the night, the speed only of his horse had saved Abdul, the splendid speed of the horses of Nedj, the Arab of Arabs. With distant tribes in the Syrian desert, he had lived hard, sleeping on bare ground, his followers few, his friends afraid, and always, always the one idea—onward to his father's hold. The Turk had given presents to Mohammed his oppressor, presents and power. The nations were cold to the young Amir. How easy to become a Pretender, the romantic head of a lost cause; how easy and how pleasant, the lingering romance of a splendid failure. Poets would sing of it, women dream long dreams. There were women in the Amir's life, women of proud clans, ancient as his was ancient, powerful as allies, yet always he rode alone. His hand was readier on the haft of his spear than on the head of a maid; his knees yearned more for the quick bound of a steed, than for the soft hands of a mother and child. So had he lived, seeking always the hour of weakness in his old enemy, storming into the caravans like a bitter wind, maiming and hacking and riding off with booty, besetting the straight ways, lying like an adder in Mohammed's path, watchful in

the night, knowing always that his hour would come, believing always that in that hour he would conquer.

“I think,” said Gavin, “that your Amir is like Judah. There is something solid and manly and human about Judah, but yet there is a kind of listlessness in him whiles. I like not his way of sagging in cushions like a maid with the green-sickness.”

Douglas laughed. “The desert has its mark on you already,” said he, “and that man is of the desert two thousand years. Judge not till you see him fight. They’ll travel fast, that ride with the Prince. Wealth did not spoil the lad, nor disaster embitter the man. There goes victory where he rides, and yon long-limbed horseman could break ye with his hands.”

Never before had Gavin heard his uncle speak in such a tone of bitterness. He flushed darkly, his eyes sparkled with quick anger, and Douglas saw his long hands clench, and laughed in his heart.

“I think perhaps he could,” said Gavin, “but my poor strength is at his service,” and he bowed very slightly, but his uncle held out his hand.

“And that is how a Douglas should answer,” said he. “The Prince is no more weight than Ali bin Ali, and you sent him home wanting the head, and you could break yon lad across your knees, like a faggot; but man, it does me good to stir up the old blood, and see a man bridle his anger with courtly pride. Abdul is the hope of the desert,” said he, “the one man fit to rule a kingdom, the man that the dwellers in villages will acclaim, the man that the desert-born will hail as king. The Turk has guile and the German has gold, but neither guile nor gold will turn the sword of Abdul. There are railways in the game, and Jews, and bankers in Europe, and

British prestige, for Britain has lighted these coasts and policed these shores for long, and the Prince leans to Britain; but he'll prove himself a man before the nations, and before long, and all because of one idea, 'onward, and my father's throne.' "

The three men would sit far into the night, Gavin a little apart, listening to his uncle's scheming, marveling at his knowledge of distant tribes—of the moving of flocks, of the flooding of dry wadies, of the towns on the fringe of the desert where the flock-masters and wandering herdsmen did their business of trading; for there is this similarity between Jew and Arab, that both love lucrative trading, that similarity and many others, and looking at the dark eyes of the Amir, Gavin was struck with the sadness in them and the longing. He remembered that the old Stuart kings had that sadness in their eyes, that bound man to their cause till all was lost, and after. And this night Sholto Douglas was on his hobby and riding hell for leather. Europe was a stack of powder—some fool would drop a match, or some knave would tell the fool to strike a match, to see into the dark. He cried havoc and let loose the dogs of war in Belgium, he moved armies and drew great battles. There was a light in his eyes that reminded Gavin of his father (sitting before the driftwood fire with the books of history by him, and the maps and plans of battles), and always Sholto conjured up a new kingdom in Arabia, free from the shackles of the Turk. He harped on light cavalry, in the greatest of all cavalry countries; of camel convoys carrying water for the fiery Arab mares, for hidden water could be found by boring, and great

wells made; of wood and canvas they should be made, with guards on duty by day and night. Had not Abdul cavalry as efficient as the light horsemen of the border, fleeting like the morning mists, eating little and seldom, carrying three days' food? There were beautiful rifles in the black tents, stout square boxes of ammunition below the sanded floors, and stories in hidden pits. All night the Amir sat on his cushions listening, smiling his slow smile, a slow tired smile, and when the Scotsmen rose to leave him, he bowed to Gavin.

“To-morrow I will see your troops,” said he, “and you, my hard-bitten friends of the saddle. My people have a proverb, ‘Starve your dog and he will follow, feed and he will bite you.’ It is true, I think—to-morrow we shall see.” He rose and bowed gravely, touching his forehead, and his breast, but Gavin saw that when he mentioned his hard-bitten friends of the saddle, his hand closed round the hilt of his dagger and the blade gleamed, and in that moment something of the driving power of the man seemed for a little to manifest itself, as though a leopard had ceased its long striding and unsheathed its claws.

On the morrow, with the sun yet low and his rays level, Gavin led his cavalry past a saluting base, for to Douglas, such a parade was meat and drink. There was a tremendous joy in dressing his troops, in seeing rider and horse sway in unison, the men sure of themselves and prideful of efficiency, the horses a fire of restrained impatience. At the walk, at the trot, he swept by the Amir, who gravely saluted, unmoved by the shrill cries of his followers, by the plunging of his mare. As the cavalry advanced again in line, at the gallop, knee to knee, the horses scream-

ing and the men silent, Gavin's sword flashed in the sun. Then the great roar of his men caused the horses of the Amir's followers to leap wildly, but it was as though the battle-shout galvanised their leader. His mare leapt forward to meet the charge. The Arab sat like a prince, like a warrior, like a leader of warriors. Gavin halted his troop, and rode up, and saluted. He noted the sparkle in the Amir's eye, the flush on his cheek, the joy in his voice.

"When I ride into my father's hold, by Allah you shall ride at my bridle hand," said he, then slowly he dismounted from his beautiful chestnut mare. "Take this gift from my hand," said he, and fondled the mare's head as she nuzzled him; "her race has carried kings since the days that our father Ishmael warred; her Hujja is more ancient than the most noble of the families in Europe."

As Gavin bowed his thanks for the gift, the Amir sprang to a waiting horse with a shrill cry. His followers closed round him. Then the wild powder-play began—a game for horsemen, for skilful riding, when horses are maddened and leaping wildly, and the ease of the rider is the pledge of his horsemanship,—noise and clamour and horses rearing and leaping, mimic charge and ragged volleying—a play of battle, a game for warriors fit to ride in battle; and Gavin, watching, knew not that his eye had noted every rise that would cover dismounted men, every hillock that would screen his cavalry.

"I could crush him like an orange in my hand," he whispered, and then, "it's a good thing I'm on his side."

And that day, with the sinking sun, came a rider on a white camel, a fast beast, wearied with long

travel, and with sweat stains showing. His rider had no more than dismounted, when the poor beast balked, seeking neither food nor water. The Amir received the messenger, his lips smiled, his eyes lit up, and yet the warrior first gave thanks to Allah.

The hour was come: Mohammed, the tyrant, was dead among his women, and a Vice-Regent ruled in his stead.

“To-night,” said Sholto Douglas, “to-night you ride for your father’s hold.”

“To-night,” said the Amir, and his eyes were no longer dreaming, “to-night I ride under the guns of the British fleet. I will wash my charger’s feet in the sea that breaks on the shores of the sands, and then Britain will know that I am a man and deal with me as a man.”

In the darkness, lit only by a half-moon, Abdul paraded his men. Here was no time for a great battle—hours were precious. He would ride, ride, ride—spur and spare not, into Reyad, where lay the dead Mohammed. With one hundred men ready to die, the Amir would be in his father’s keep by the dawn. There would be the noise of music, and the singing of maidens in the tents of the Anazol, in the Syrian desert—Bedouin poets would sing of this wild night ride; but that was for dreams. The Amir was become a new man. He leaned forward in the saddle; he rallied his men. To Gavin he was just the joy of daring, a wild flame leaping on. There were riders on the flank and in front, eyes in the night for an enemy, but unheeding, the Amir swept on, his eyes burning.

The riders spoke not, except a harsh word to their horses; jackals fled from bleached bones scattered on the white sand, the horses’ necks were outstretched,

the reins loose. In the dark shadow of a deep wadi, where still a little water remained, the troop halted. The Amir, unable to stand still, burning for action, strode up and down on the shingly sand by the water. The horses drank a little, the men stood in groups by them, watching their chief, watching Gavin, who stood on the farther bank, black against the light, towering beside his horse, black, silent, still, his eye on the road that he should ride. His own men smiled the one to the other. You see him there, beside a dry wadi, black in white moonlight, the bare sands stretching away and away at his feet. In the darkness of the river-bed, the little group of men and horses rested, and the Amir strode up and down by the water, that broke into little points of light as it might be the jewels of a crown. Came also the vision of a woman, a woman of the Bedouin, no dweller in cities, but of the wild lawless folk, sprung from kings, fit to bear princes. The Amir stopped his march, his eyes rested long on the black towering figure by the farther bank.

“His sword is at my bridle hand—yet he could claim his father’s brother’s child without dowry.” Such was the law. Having seen the men, let us look for a moment at the women.

.
In her bare room, by an open window, Marjory Douglas gazed over the desert, over the trail the night raiders rode. She saw the Amir, lean and hard, holding his restraint with an iron hand, steadying himself that his men keep cool till the hour came to strike; a man with one aim, a man of many victories, whose name was sung in the tents of the Syrian desert, proud as Lucifer, a horseman, a poet,

a dreamer, a warrior. Surely a man that woman would love to honour. And at his bridle arm, still like a tower, buttressed about with strength, that other of her father's house. There would be a song at his lips, and his eyes dancing, and oh! he would hurl himself into battle like a thunderbolt, overbearing, laughing, over-riding his enemy, his voice raised, and after—after, gentle again and smiling. Long she sat with two men in her vision, till the moon sank. In her garden were little noises among the acacias and the cactuses, only these little stirrings, and the silence of the sands.

.
In far New York the people came in great concourse in aid of charity—a charity bazaar. Millionaires, looking humble and drab beside their resplendent women, moved this way and that, smiling a fixed smile, and lavished money, that the little children of squalid slums might see the sun without the shadows of crowded buildings, without the smoke-pall from the steel-works of millionaires, without smelling the black smoke from the automobiles of the rich. There is a place set apart, a place of mystery, a place with carpets hanging and shaded lights, a place smelling of myrrh and anbar—there is low barbaric music, and the nervous laughing of women, afraid of what the future may reveal, but daring all under a mask of unbelief. And within the hanging mats, and eastern rugs, a bored woman, dark-eyed and observant, rakes in money “for the dirty little urchins that must, forsooth, see the sun. And in this laughing throng moves Irene Savage, fresh as a rose with the dew of morning on it, with laughter ready for her kind, a petted child of

fortune, taking everything as her right with charming grace, attended by many, young and old, and one little women like a bird born in a cage, always near her. To Irene came Molly Stuvesant, laughing, red-lipped, with white teeth flashing, with hair still ready for rebellion, Molly Stuvesant, now a young matron, but joyous as of old.

“Do have your fortune told,” she cried, and whispered amidst her laughing to Irene, and slipped her marriage-ring from her finger. And Irene encircled her finger with the ring, smiling to the young men, with a touch of coquetry, and then approached the tent of the sorceress, and laughing, extended her hand and asked of her husband. These are the women.

Before the first flush of dawn the horsemen ride to the city on the desert fringe, a city of wailing for the dead Lion, Mohammed, a city of speedy messengers going and coming, a city of intrigue and dagger-work, an Eastern city. At the gateway Turk and Arab are on guard. The Amir’s scouts rejoin the main body, and report that the gate is guarded. The Amir halts, cursing the delay, but Gavin rides on in the darkness. At the mud and stone wall of the city he is busied for a little. In the darkness at his feet, the little red stars of a burning fuse leap up and die. His work over, Gavin gallops back to his troop.

“Allah will open a gate,” so he speaks to the Amir, and gathers his men round him; and then, with the crash of the blasting, and the red glare of light, he launches himself at the main gate, his own troopers with him.

“Allah has opened your gate,” he cries; “I go to open mine.”

There is a startled guard standing to arms, terror-struck with the roar of the explosion. At them Gavin leads his men, roaring; no time for nice work with a sword, with ragged volleys at close range. He is swallowed up in battle, as a ship is closed around with storm. Hacking, and hewing, and slaying; his horse falls under him, but his long sword mows like a reaper's hook. The guard flees and rallies doggedly, and flees again—broken. Lights are flashing in Mohammed's palace. The divided bands join, Gavin on a trooper's horse at the Amir's bridle-rein. In the courtyard soldiers rally to the voice of the Vice-Regent, and into them Gavin thunders, his sword high.

"Your day is done," he cries, and thrusts the Vice-Regent through the throat. . . .

The Amir Abdul's flag blows out bravely on a spear on the topmost tower. Below, beside the body of Mohammed, the Amir stands, with hate in his eyes, and his hand on his sword. Gavin wonders will he strike the dead.

"Ye cast me into the wilderness athirst for my blood. My father ye made homeless, seeking refuge from friends;" and then, with a great salute from his curved red sword, "by Allah, I pray my son be such as wert thou," said the Amir Abdul.

"And that was right and decent," says Gavin.

.
News spreads quickly, and from the sands came the comrades of the Amir, thronging the city of the palm gardens. Sheikhs and their followers came to renew friendships made in the days of adversity. It was a keen pleasure to Gavin to watch the Amir, the tireless rider, the leader of guerilla troops, the smiter of caravans (having proclaimed his accession), become

the crafty statesman. There were sheikhs with whom Gavin had fought, that looked but coldly on him, yet the Amir turned their scowls to smiles with his tales of the fight by the gateway, of the fight in the courtyard, and the scaling of the palace walls. He had every sheikh's wish, every sheikh's ambition in his mind. He played them one against the other, and Sholto Douglas came later ready as ever with cunning advice. "Where peace would breed jealousy and dissensions, war, red war, would weld the tribes together."

On the south of the city was a plain of scanty grass, and there in early morning Gavin drilled his troops, extended his band with men of dignity, sons of sheikhs, and the Amir would ride there often with a small guard, and with his smile and kingly bearing, draw the hearts of men to him. The days of peace were fast cloying on the desert warrior. His hatred of the Turk was too bitter. The province of Hasa was under his sword. He would drive the Turk from keep after keep. Victory would be with him, and Gavin would be the tower of strength; the men rallied to him, in fight; he would be the driving force.

And then started the years that Gavin Douglas lived in the saddle: his cavalry appeared at dawn, and at midday the smoke of his burning blotted out the sun. Bitter was his fighting, bitter and ruthless as the Amir himself. When horsemen were useless, he attacked with infantry. Night attack or night march, victory went with him, and while the Amir's personality held the tribes together, surer than any law of force, the herdsmen at their noonday rest told the great deeds of the Amir's leader, who feared

not the darkness, neither gave place to any man in battle. The Amir stormed into the province of Hasa that had been the patrimony of his people, and drove the weak garrisons out, established his rule to the shores of the sea, as he had promised, while the Turk in Constantinople wondered that there were none of the breed of the old Lion, Mohammed, to stay his power. But while the Lion's cubs snarled and fought among themselves, the lean desert man, the man who had tasted bitter fortune and defeat, who knew the joys of wealth and victory, listened to that wise old smeller of battles, Sholto Douglas. The Amir Abdul's caravans were in the desert, seven hundred camels strong, carrying corn and oil, and wine and robes, from the towns to the palace. There were guests always to be entertained, there were horses to ride. Abdul might dwell with his people in peace, if he listed, but Europe was ready for a match. The dogs of war were snarling and straining at their chains. The Turk would ally himself with the German, and that would force the hands of Britain. There would come war in the Near East. Egypt would swarm with troops. Surely there was a chance for a man. A free Arab State—pan-Arabia,—and the Amir would listen, speaking seldom, smiling his slow smile.

“When will the Bedouin call the city-dwellers brothers? Would my kinsman in the desert with his people round him in tenscore tents widely scattered, his young men and his old men, his men-servants and his women-servants, his greyhounds and his hawks, would he, the patriarch, having flocks and herds, and camels and asses, more than men could number, would he own allegiance to any? Would

the Bedouin rider give his daughter in marriage to the Arabs by the rivers of Iraq, to the tillers of soil?—but pan-Arabia, it was a great thought, if the leader were man enough to hold the scattered tribes and the dwellers in cities.

“I would take your daughter in marriage,” said the Amir, “for my heart turns to her more than any other, and my house is builded again. Yet there should be many sons before a man is too old to lead the lads in the ways of the desert.”

“Have you spoken to my daughter?” said Douglas, “spoken of love or marriage?”

The Amir smiled. “When I was an exile, so would you not have spoken, my friend. I have eaten your salt. Shall I then look about secretly to do ye an ill? Nay, but I waited, thinking your brother’s son might take her to wife, but he is wedded to his sword.”

“To your sword, surely,” said Douglas. “Let us speak no more of this until I have spoken to the maid.”

Alone the old soldier thought bitter thoughts. Marjory, his daughter, flesh of his flesh, to wed an Arab—Amir or no,—yet always that had been in his mind until Gavin came, Gavin that he loved as a son, Gavin always in the forefront of battle when battle was toward—no David had set him there; that was his birthright, the heritage of his blood and name. Would Gavin always remain here in the desert, or would the cold North call, as it had called the outcast on hot nights? Would Gavin be content to give his life in another’s service, to build new roads, to conquer the sands, striving to stamp the stable North on the shifting sands, to bring water

from hidden depths, that flocks might not wander from pasture to pasture, but remain in green fields, even if the hedges should be camel-thorn? Would the wild desert riders ever become stolid farmers, giving up their tents for houses builded of brick, and set among gardens of palms, watered from rivers or from deep wells?

And Gavin, camped at an oasis close to the shore, led his Arabs to the sea. A little way from his men, he stripped, and the wind blew the sand over his clothes in little trickles. First of his troop, he sped into the water, plunging forward to meet the great breakers, and on the shore the Arabs stripped less quickly, with much laughter. Their bodies were scarred with wounds, but powerful, with rippling muscles. They loved the water. Suddenly the white man left his swimming hurriedly; his soldiers were shaving the hair from their bodies. He knew that such their religion demanded, but a feeling of loathing came over him. To bathe with such men—horrible! He dressed hurriedly, hating the soft sand that clung everywhere, that had covered his heap of clothing in this little while. He had been too long in the desert; his manhood clamoured for white folk to see, to move among. At the head of his troop, he thought suddenly of home, of the cold sea splashing on the shore of the Rock, of the pleasant days of rain, rain that never fell here for months and months, rain that washed the very green leaves and brought new beauties to the hills. He had been in the Amir's service for years, and he felt that he had grown old. There was nothing worth while. Cities had lost their old-time interest—Baghdad,

Damascus, the market cities of the sheikhs were alike distasteful. His flocks were not real beasts at all—the sheep were not like the old sheep on the Rock, the cattle were not like the old cattle. He wondered why he was in this land at all, if he were in this land at all, or if he dreamed? He girmed at himself and fought with his horse.

CHAPTER VI.

TELLS HOW GAVIN GREW HOMESICK.

THE Amir leaned over an open map, his face grave, but Gavin strode back and forward, back and forward, his hands clasped behind his back, a frown on his brow.

“Where there is a weak garrison,” said he, “smite there.”

The Amir smiled. “Be calm, be calm; so have we smitten.”

“There will be a reckoning,” said Gavin. “The Turk will bolster up your enemies. Now is the time to strike, before the Turk marches against you. Break your enemy, and Constantinople will lavish gifts on you, for peace’ sake. I hate to swither,” said he aloud.

“The Turk seeks to weaken the Arab,” said the Amir, “to breed strife, to break confederacies in the desert. Britain will move soon,” said he. “Britain cannot always remain aloof, for my horses have splashed on the shores, and Britain stands at the ends of the seas.”

The guerilla leader was become politician. His mind was occupied with the future—his dark eyes dreamy,—but Gavin was concerned with the present.

Kingdoms come and go, but horses must have forage, men must have food. No detail was too trivial for him: a lame horse was of greater moment than a dream of future power. His force must be perfect; the horses must be groomed; the armed tribesmen drilled.

With Sholto Douglas he schemed, using all his cunning, all the old-time tricks of war, modelling his force on Sholto's word of what a British force was in the old days. Himself, he would have chosen Cromwell for a model, but the wild Arab could not go into action with a psalm on his lips and death in his hands. The scattered volley, the wild charge at dawn, in these the Amir delighted; but Gavin wanted order—even in battle,—the plan worked out before hand, and always, always the happy chance for a daring coup.

Speed and secrecy—these were his watchwords, and for that horses were essential. There was long riding in the night and hidden camps, supplied by fast camels. The sheikhs were with them, the great camel breeders, using the Amir as the adder in the path of the Turk. These lent them aid, the more readily when victory after victory fell to Abdul. Round camp-fires, on the green uplands of Syria, the fame of Abdul was noised, and always at his bridle hand the stranger who battled with joy in his countenance, and swift death in his blade—the cunning one—he who would creep up at night, and storm a garrison in the dark.

Gavin was a communer with spirits in secret ways, riding with only a servant to visit the places of tombs, or the ruins of forgotten castles. The tales went sounding through the forbidding lands. In the

streets of Damascus, merchants cursed their slaves by the wrath of the stranger. By the shores of the Red Sea his fame was known, and eastward even to Baghdad.

But there came a new factor into his life. Suddenly it came, as a cloud over the sun, and leaving a dimness. For years he had lived in the saddle, slept hard and ridden long, glorying in conflict, for years since the night ride and the capture of Reyad. Now camped by an oasis, the horses settled, the guards posted, he sat alone. Again he thought of the bathing—and grued.

Without a clear moon rode in the heavens, the sands were white. At no great distance there were a mare and foal grazing in the night. Gavin looked at the slender beauty of the foal, heard the talking of his men, listened to a weird song of a watcher in the lines, a weird song and mournful. Little lights lit up straggling low fig-trees, making a beautiful tracery. His chestnut mare was lying down, her head stretched out, her lips a little open, showing her teeth. He looked round his tent and summoned a servant to bring coffee. He felt desperately lonely. He looked at his Arab clothes, at the carpets in his tent. He wanted speech with some one, not his smiling obsequious servant, not the Amir, some one who could speak English. What was he doing in this wilderness, this place of unending strife? Again he wondered if he really was here in the desert, away from his people: his people—his home seemed away and away, and he knew not the homeward path.

Then he had his mare saddled, and galloped headlong through the night. Was this the sickness for home, the sickness of the exile? He cursed his self-

pity, his weakness—a child crying for the moon,—but all that night he lay thinking of his home on the Rock. Did Pate Dol miss him? Did old Mairi weary, and sigh by the fire in the kitchen? Did his father look wistfully at the old books of his schooling? Did Ludovic dig his little parks as of yore? His mother—was she well and happy, with her books?

In the morning he rose ill-tempered, with anger held down with difficulty. Well for Gavin that that day the Amir rode fast and far. He felt himself imprisoned, he that had thought himself free as the birds. He was chained to this land, and he hated it—the sand, and the heat, and the fever, the brackish water of desert wells, and the flat bread.

The mood passed with action, but Gavin waited, afraid of its return. Was this Dungannon's curse? he wondered. The Amir Abdul noted the black frown on the brow of his lieutenant, heard the impatient snarl in his voice to horse and man.

“Here is a man sick of the desert,” said he, and summoned Gavin to his guest tent.

“The spring stirs in your blood, my friend. The dry lands become abhorrent. Go, then, to the household of your father's brother for a little space, and tarry ye there until the spring be past.”

Gavin would have spoken, but the Amir raised his delicate hand.

“I know also the turmoil of young blood at the time of the mating of birds,” said he with a smile, and then his lean jaw went forward, “and I stilled the turmoil in the sands.”

And, looking at the Arab, tall and wide-shouldered, the bold-featured aquiline face, the prominent lips,

Gavin knew that here was a man who had mastered himself, had cast from him all weakness, all vain longings, and yet a man who, in leisure, could still dream.

“Is there no one of your father’s blood to quell the spring awakening?” said the Amir, and at that Gavin saw the Arab and not the man.

“There is that gathering in the North will quell any turmoil,” said Gavin. Nevertheless he journeyed to the white house among the palm-trees, and felt that it was homecoming.

And Marjory was full of laughter to have him back, full of little tales of horses and children. Her dark lips smiling, she questioned him of the beautiful women of his campaigning, “for there must have been beautiful women,” said Marjory.

“None so fair as you,” said Gavin, smiling back to the joyous girl.

“None so dark, Gavin,” but Marjory was smiling.

And Sholto Douglas looked on content. There had been offshoots of the Douglas line before: there were Douglasses established in Italy, and noble, before the Bleeding Heart had been added to the shield—they were the Scoti of Italy. There were Douglasses in Dantzic, there was a Douglas Gate in Dantzic, why not—why not a Douglas branch in the desert? The children would be reared in the desert, would be horsemen and leaders, commanding men from their youth. They would go to Scotland for their education, and return to develop their estates—warriors and breeders of horses. What of cousinship? The Arab blood of Marjory would only darken the old stream, and there would be Black Douglasses again, nobles and princes in the land. Their seed might

spread far—a peerless beautiful race, marrying always the most beautiful women. . . .

“Are we not to walk under the trees?” said Marjory, for she felt a restraint indoors. She was afraid of long silence.

“Away with you, then,” said Douglas, “a high moon and high spirits. Go out and enjoy the caller air.”

And they walked in the garden, Marjory and Gavin, their shadows black on the bath before them. Marjory put her hand on Gavin’s arm timidly—of yore she was wont to cling to his arm laughing, but there was a certain shyness now.

“Tell me,” she said, “what you thought about when you were away. Were your dreams of war and more wars? Had you forgotten the horses and the herdsmen and—me, Gavin?”

She looked up at him then; her voice was very deep.

“I used to lie awake,” said Gavin, “and think how many horses were sick, or galled, or wounded, or how many men were unfit for duty, or if there would be enough water at the watering. And sometimes there would be pictures in my mind of an attack in the chill dawn and the look of fear on the face of a sentry . . .”

“War and horses and men, Gavin! Had you no thought of home?”

And Gavin remembered his homesickness.

“There was one night, Marjory, one horrible night of longing—the Amir called it a turmoil of the spring. Would you like to come home, Marjory, to be with my father and my mother?”

“I would not leave my father, Gavin, ever. You

would not ask me to leave my father, but," said she, "would you like to come home with me, Gavin, and be with my father and me?"

"But," said Gavin, "I *am* there—this is home. I felt content when I was back here again and heard you speak."

She pressed his arm against her side.

"Did you, Gavin—well, I'm glad, and I think I like you when you are a baby, and I think that you were wearying for the sea."

"Sometimes," said Gavin, "I will say to myself—the sea is yonder, away on the verge of the skyline, and I will be making myself see the crests of white breakers."

"Well, and that is what I like about you—a great burly man, with kind, soft thoughts, like a lass. And for me, Gavin, I cannot come at these thoughts—as my father would say."

"And where," says he, "is the lass that told me there was a softness in her after Ali bin Ali got his brose?"

"But I know that now," she whispered; "I thought, and I thought, about that strange feeling new to me, and it was because of you—because that you were in danger. Had I fought, my finger had been steady on the trigger," and at her words, Gavin felt a thrill, as it had been a bugle blast.

"Ente walid wali Bint," said he—"art thou lad or lass?"

Marjory laughed happily. "Well, I know that too," she cried, "and I know it best when you are at home, Gavin. I feel like a little soft *Bint* then, but when you are away, I am a great mannish creature. I'm far too strong. Look!" she cried, stretch-

ing out an arm. "Do you think that that would go through the staple on a door?"

"Aye," said Gavin, "I think that it would—if the king were a man like James Stuart—a fighter with faithful friends, like Abdul."

"You think much of the Amir."

"A man," said Gavin, "a strong man who will hold the mesh of the tribes together—a Prince who will bring his house to new and greater honour—a dreamer who will make his dreams come true, kind and brave, courteous and just—who is there to think ill of him? and do you know," said Gavin, "I have palm gardens, and corn lands, from him, for payment—he was pleased to call it a gift."

And Sholto Douglas was grave when Marjory and Gavin came in. He had maps and papers before him.

"I think," said he, looking up, "that the Amir will have won his Bannockburn in a month or two, or met his Waterloo. Look," said he, "out of the bickering and quarrelling in old Mohammed's House—and that's the finest way I know of bringing down a house—rises the leader, a wild unbroken boy of eighteen, unheeding counsel, scorning caution, and the Ottoman Government still playing the old game. A boy mad to win his spurs, and a Government behind with troops and money—aye, the Turk's troops are massing in the North. It will be boot in saddle for ye soon, Gavin, and there will be a battle. This will be nae doon wi' the Whigamores; this will be a fight for superiority of fire, and cavalry on the flanks girning at each other—you'll have your work with this."

"Have you not had war enough?" said Marjory, and her eyes were very wide and dark. "I wish

that something would happen that would prevent your riding away," but the men were leaning over the squared map.

"The choice of ground should be with us if the Amir moves first," said Gavin. "How many men can they muster?"

Marjory sat, her chin in her hand, her eyes fixed on the two men, but as though she did not see them. Absorbed in their speculations, they did not see the trembling on her face, or the look of resolve that replaced it.

"We go riding at sunrise?" she questioned, and rose, "and I will leave you to your battles."

For a long time that night Marjory sat thinking, listening to her menfolk's talking. Now and then she would hear Gavin laugh, and some little movement would come to her; her hands would clasp, she would half-rise, a little smile would come on her face. And this boy that had made life a thing of quiet joy, of new pleasure, this boy whose face could harden into a stern mask, whose face would smile with friendship when he but looked at her, this boy would ride away again. Could she but ride with him by his side—as servant or groom, to be near him in danger, to lie at night by the door of his bivouac, to cherish him in sickness, if only he would be sick. Marjory's eyes were very soft, her mouth very tender. She had seen Gavin sick, had seen him battle with ill-temper, and she loved this weakness in him secretly. She had laughed in her heart at his flushed face, at the anger in his eyes, while her father had treated him for some obscure pyrexia.

"If my leg were broken," Gavin had said then, "I could thole it fine; but to lie here, with this tout

that Mairi at home would cure with a jelly drink," and then through his teeth, "out of a rosy jug from the high shelf."

She remembered him then and his words.

"Laugh away, Gipsy, laugh away," and she had laughed in sheer happiness.

"If my leg were broken"—if his leg were broken. Then he would not ride away, taking the sunshine with him, leaving her to stand at barred windows with only sadness for company, sadness and emptiness. If only his leg were broken!

.
Now there are in horses as many different humours and foibles and tricks, as there are in man—there are those that will fight the spur, and those that bound from it in terror; those that will kick at the stirrup, and those that will sidle away on approach, or spin round and round, or rear up. Every rider knows of those tricks, and many more, and the likes and dislikes of his horse.

And there is another trick with some horses that is whiles comical, and whiles tragic. Touch such a horse behind the saddle, between the cantle and the croup, and he will lash out with his heels quick as a reflex. With some a loose strap-end playing on the back will set them off; with others the light pressure of the finger. This is a fine trick for clearing crowds.

Marjory was mounted when Gavin joined her the next morning. Her face was pale, her eyes dark-ringed as though she had had a sleepless night. She did not look at him after the first low greeting. Gavin's servant, Mahmud, stood at his chestnut's head.

Gavin took the reins, and Mahmud stood aside.

"I think my mare is lame," said Marjory, and set her mount fidgeting. She was measuring the distance. Gavin stood square by his mare's head; his glove fell, but he did not stoop to pick it up. He was looking at Marjory's beast.

"Steady her a little and walk," said he, and at that Marjory half-turned in her saddle and touched her mount with her open hand, behind the saddle.

And then there was a wild scream. Gavin's mare bounded aside, her head high.

Mahmud lay groaning. He had stooped to recover his master's glove when the mare lashed out. His ribs were broken; his master unhurt.

Gavin carried his servant to the house and left him with Sholto Douglas. Mahmud was weeping loudly. Marjory could hear the high raised voice.

"Oh, mis quies, mis quies; body mafeesch, body mafeesch."

"Come on, Marjory," said Gavin, "Mahmud will be all right. Don't greet over spilt milk."

"If it had been you," she said in a low voice; "if it had been you!"

"Well," said Gavin, "a miss is as good as a mile."

"Or as *bad*," said Marjory, but Gavin would never understand that remark in his lifetime.

But Marjory became low in her spirit, so that her father rallied her.

"Let us go down into Egypt," said he, "we three and the Amir also, and see white folk and think of home."

CHAPTER VII.

THE AMIR ABDUL AND MARJORY DOUGLAS.

AND while Gavin and Marjory stayed in Cairo, there came word that the Amir Abdul sought speech with Sholto, and these two were long talking together; and that evening Sholto Douglas led the Amir to Marjory's couch. She rose to receive him, and bowed to his greeting.

“Here is a man to do you honour,” said the exile. “He will say what is fitting for a man to say, and you will listen if you would pleasure your father.”

The Amir took Marjory's hand.

“Maiden,” said he slowly, “you are more fair to me than the sunrise, more sweet than water springing from a rock, beautiful as the rose of Sharon; such as you will be the mother of warriors. Beloved, let your heart incline to me to wed me, for without you the world is desolate as the lands of the Cities of the Plain.”

Marjory stood very still.

“I thank you,” said she in a low deep voice. “I thank you for this honour; but think well—you have retrieved your inheritance, you have rebuilt your father's house; but there are women of your

kin more fitting—a man is wise who holds his kinsmen about him.”

The Amir clenched his thin hand.

“In blood and fire I saw my father’s house go down, and what were kinsmen then? In the heart of the desert I found shelter, in the black tents of strangers—shall I belittle the stranger that he housed me in a tent when my kinsmen’s palaces were closed against me, or opened fearfully in secret?”

Marjory, watching the swarthy face, saw the slow sweet smile fade and grim resolve replace it.

“Here is the man,” she thought.

“In blood and fire I took revenge. Where was my resting-place, where were my piquet lines—the neigh of a horse in the black night were easier to trace. Was your father a kinsman that he sheltered me and succoured me—he, a stranger, not of my faith, that he schooled me in war?”

“But my mother was of your house,” said Marjory.

“And does her daughter turn from her mother’s kindred?”

Marjory smiled.

“In one breath,” said she, “your kindred are less to be considered than strangers; in the next I must cleave to my mother’s kindred.”

“So does your cousin in a hard fight,” said the Amir. “When one road is barred, he opens another.”

“Gavin,” said Marjory.

The Amir looked long into her eyes.

“I have watched,” said he, “I have waited in silence. The spring came and the summer, the time for mating and the time for love. He is in your father’s house—always near you, and yet was love

awakened in his heart? What were his thoughts but war and more war—yet had he no house to build, no heritage to secure. Maiden, I fought, I rode far, I schemed—but you were with me. Nay, I told him I buried my love in the sands, yet in the night secretly I watered that love, that it might blossom. I guarded it that none should trample it underfoot—until he came, the son of your father's brother, that could take you to wife with little dowry; and yet he but loved you like a brother—with laughter and joyousness, but not with the love that a woman craves."

"I force no love," said Marjory, her face dark.

"Nor only you," said the Amir; "we have smitten many garrisons, we have taken many booties. There were slaves fair as the snows on Lebanon, there were captives in many cities, and he was young, and fair to fill a woman's eyes, yet did he scorn women, as of no account, loving more the welfare of his horses, or the comforts of his men. There is but one answer to the riddle—somewhere there is a woman fairer than all of these."

"What have I to do with my cousin's life?" said Marjory, "or his loves? Methinks he earned praise because of his care of horse and man—and praise is comely in a leader."

"Praise! Have I withheld anything from him that he desires? Nay, he has the half of mine honour—yet we waste time. So I am not accustomed to plead."

"I am at a loss to find your meaning," said Marjory.

There was no slow smile on the Amir's face; now he was become the horseman, the daring rider.

"In deference to your race," said he, "I bowed before ye, seeking love. All my life I have loved you,

and all my life I have taken what I desired. It were easy for me to carry you off on my saddle-bow, and stay your cries with kisses.”

“Even so,” said Marjory, “even so I understand, even so I would be loved.”

There was a fire burning in the Amir’s dark eyes. His lean brown hand would have drawn her to his breast, but the girl stayed him.

“Listen,” she said; “where is the time now for lovers’ dalliance, for womanly dreams of leisure and red lips athirst for love? Nay, but hear me. Throw off allegiance to the Turk; send forth couriers to the desert sheikhs; raise men and horses, and ride for a kingdom. My son, if Allah grant a son to me—my son shall be a prince.”

There was a wild exultation in her tones, yet they were not raised, but, as it were, intensified. All her father’s stories of the great Douglas house had raised a fire in her blood. She believed herself come of kings,—at that moment, she was royal.

“Shall the sire be unworthy of the son?” said she, mocking.

Abdul held himself with an iron hand. Did he touch her now, did he but breathe passion, she had scorned him.

He bowed low before her. “Has my blade grown rusty then in the scabbard? Men say I am wedded to war—that war was my first love, that I was suckled in strife. They knew me not. Remember when you wake in the night, remember, that when I could have taken thee in my hands—I suffered thee to go free. Judge then the Arab and the man. Yet this I swear, that never will ye lie in another’s arms. All the world could not hide him from me.”

His passion came near to overmastering the man, yet Marjory stood still, her gaze level.

“Do you covet lovers’ dalliance?” said she. “Behold, there are many maidens awaiting. Surely Abdul can have the most rare, the most beautiful,” and then in that quiet rousing voice, “but my son shall be born a prince.”

Marjory saw the Amir’s mouth become hard, saw also the slow smile in his eyes looking at her.

“I will go,” said he, “at least having loved long and well . . .”

Then came a softening of her features.

“Know this,” she whispered, “know this, leaving me, that never will I give my love, where love is not . . .”

“By Allah,” said the Arab,” “your son shall be a prince,” and left her.

Who knows what thoughts consumed Marjory Douglas, pacing her room, restless, with lips compressed? Did she dream of Gavin a conqueror? Did she visualise again the fight with Ali bin Ali on the great grey horse? Did she see the Amir Abdul reel in the saddle? Did she dream like a very woman, making impossibilities become real? Was she East or West?

She drove with Gavin in the city, drove to the gardens, and sat beside a little lake where water-birds swam, and fed noisily on the scraps flung from tables. She talked like a boy of horses, of veiled women, of racing. Her laughter was ready at her lips, and often Gavin found her eyes meeting his with a long searching look.

“Are you troubled with future greatness?” said he—for she had told him something of the Amir’s words,—and flung scraps to the water-fowl, laughing. “Will you have time for a poor kinsman without the palace, or will it be permitted that I see you sometimes, little Gipsy?”

“Surely a kinsman may see a—kinswoman,” said Marjory; “always a kinswoman, Gavin. But you will not stay in this country; there is no bond to hold you.”

“A bond?” said Gavin. “I’ll stay if you require me, Gipsy; and speaking of bonds,” said he, “I must visit my bankers to-day. Will you drive with me, or would you rather rest in the shade of a balcony like the Eastern ladies—behind little carved fretwork lattices?”

“I will drive with you,” said Marjory, laughing. “Am I not nearly as good a man as you?—you tell me that often.”

“And so you are,” said Gavin, “the finest little soldier that a man could have for a comrade.”

Marjory was looking at all the Europeans. Sometimes she would touch Gavin, and he would answer the touch with, “Yes, that’s a Scot,” or maybe hazard a guess at a man’s name—this was a game with them, and always Gavin setting out for a drive would question Marjory, “Are we playing to-day?” and sometimes Marjory would be playing, and sometimes she would tell Gavin that he was only a baby; but often after refusing to play, she would touch him, or look at him, and he knew then that the little game was toward, and laugh, and then Marjory would become happy.

They drove from the shady garden into the city, and then Gavin bethought him of the bazaar. He was never tired of the bazaars.

“It’s like a picture in my school-books,” said he, as the driver turned into the narrow thronged streets. There seemed a great mob of people running; there was noise and shouting and shrill laughter. Suddenly Gavin saw the reason of the terror in men’s faces. There came an Arab, his beard flecked with foam, his eyes rolling. In his hand he brandished a long thin knife, and already the blade was red. The madman left the mob at sight of the little carriage, and with a wild cry leapt at the driver.

As Gavin sprang from beside Marjory, the driver took leg-bail, and the little horses stopped, and backed, snapping against their bits, and swishing their long tails. Gavin seized the madman in his arms, and yet felt a horror of squeezing him, of putting forth his strength. There was a spiked railing over a window. The white-uniformed police were hurrying to the scene. Up went the madman; his knife clattered on the pavement. He cried loudly on Allah, but was left hooked to the spikes, limp and weeping. Gavin returned to Marjory. He was in great humour that day.

“A body’s not safe with these street Arabs,” said he, and laughed. “D’ye know, I used to think a street Arab was an old horse.”

Marjory looked at him and sighed happily.

“I’ve won the game,” said she. “There was another great big Scot that you did not see. When you lifted that one whom Allah has smitten, and left him quite safe and unhurt, this great man cried to his friends—tired-looking ladies—‘By the holy sailor,

that Arab's a Scotsman,' and who," said she, "was the holy sailor?"

"Well, and that was a good guess," said Gavin; "but the game is not finished," said he, looking round him in the thronged street. "The game's not finished, for the fair is not by yet."

"But the game is finished," said Marjory, "because I won't play any more," and Gavin never knew that the stranger that cried "That Arab's a Scotsman" had revealed him to Marjory—a stranger, a Scot—a man of the West who would surely return to his own people. When the little carriage pulled up before the bank, Gavin sprang out and would have helped her descend.

"No, I will wait," said Marjory aloud, and then to herself, "The game is finished," she whispered; "that Arab's a Scot."

Sholto Douglas was waiting on their return. He was smiling, yet there seemed something of scorn in his face. He took them to his sitting-room, and turned to Gavin eagerly.

"Look!" said he, "have you read the papers? Do you never read the papers? I tell you it's come," he cried. "A fool has struck a match at last. In a week Europe will be afire." His eyes were shining, his body straight and limber, his voice was the low carrying voice of an officer, steady and convincing.

"The great game begins, Gavin, and I—I should be a Lieutenant-General."

Marjory laughed aloud.

"You're wrong, father," she cried, "you're all wrong. The game is finished, and I—I am just a little lonely Arab Bint."

But Douglas hardly heard her; he was talking rapidly.

“This will drive Abdul, whether he will or no; this will sweep him into the game he can play—there is none to play like him, except it be you, Gavin.”

“But what does it mean?” said Gavin.

“It means the mailed fist of Germany raised against the breast of the world. Oh, William Hohenzollern, you should have remained the play-actor, rattling your sabre at Agadir, parading your pomp in the streets of Jerusalem, charging in mimic battle. All the world loves an actor—on the boards, but ha! by God, the rutted field will rust your irons, the tired horse will resist against the spur.”

“Must Britain fight?” said Gavin.

“Fight! Fight for her life. Give her room,” cried the soldier, “give her room, and watch her teach the world. You will hear the challenge of the shrill French cock; you will hear the growl of the Russian bear. Then, God! wait for the lion’s roar! they would lightly the lion! Too long have they tweaked the lion’s tail. Watch the lion and his cubs leap to battle.”

He strode up and down the apartment, brooking no interference. His moustache seemed to bristle.

“I tell you the heather’s on fire. They’re sounding the gathering in Scotland now.” The tremendous pride of his country sounded in his voice; there was a rousing note, a challenge sounding.

Marjory sat silent. Gavin felt strange thrills.

“Ah, Gavin, my boy,” cried the exile,

“‘Tis something still to tell,
That no Scottish foot went backward,
When the Royal Lion fell.’

Nor will there. The Royal Scots are dirling out 'Scotland the Brave,' the Argyll and Sutherlands, the Camerons, the Gay Gordons, the Seaforths, the Black Watch, the Highland Light Infantry, the Cameronians—I tell you they are marshalled this moment in feir of war—'on the borough muir in feir of war,' and that reminds me of the Borderers. That's what William of Hohenzollern has forgotten."

"But there's England," said Gavin; "England."

"England could always wauchle through. There's nae fear o' England, but I'm a Scot. I'm telling ye the regiments that will make war a flaming glory. England! All the Empire is England but Scotland, and Scotland is the heart o' the Empire. Aye," said he, "and the heart is moved, the heart is moved."

Later that night came the Amir. He listened to the old soldier. Armies were formed, and moved, in Europe. New wars started like fire in the grass, little wars that joined up and became part of the dreadful fire that was to purge the world. There would come war in the sands. From Egypt to the frontier of Persia there would be troops. Now was the time for strong men to seize hold. The Turk was with Germany, and Germany would have Britain to face. The day had come.

Douglas and Marjory must return to Egypt again, having set their house in order, but the Amir and Gavin were strong men, and strong men go forth to battle.

In the chill dawn Gavin bade farewell to Marjory.

"Au revoir, little Gipsy," said he; "the game is not finished yet, it seems."

"Oh, play well, Gavin," she cried, and clung to

him, "play well, my kinsman; and remember—remember I will be thinking of the lines you taught me of the Douglas."

"'First in the field of fight,'" said Gavin.

"Yes," she cried, and laughed near to tears, "that, of course, you baby," and kissed his hand.

"What a brave lass it is," said Gavin. "I wish, Marjory, you were coming with me."

"Only an Arab maiden could do that," said she.

"Well," said Gavin, "and am I not an Arab?"

"Yon Arab was a Scotsman," said Marjory; "but oh, play well, Gavin, play well for my sake, for sometimes I am thinking I am a Scot too."

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

OF HOW THE DOCTOR HEARS OF GAVIN.

DR. LUDOVIC CAMPBELL stood for a moment to get his bearings. The streets were thronged with hurrying folks, neatly shod girls tripped past him; he caught glimpses of flashing white teeth, of warm furs, of little gloved hands. There was happiness in the air. Shops were bedecked with holly; there seemed a tremendous number of game-dealers' stores with strings of white hares, limp rabbits, and pathetic pigeons. Great cars purred past him dignified like battleships; tram-cars clanged and slid on to some far terminus. Everywhere there was life and laughter and music. Then his gaze fixed on a figure in rough tweeds—a towering figure, with great wide shoulders conspicuous, for the young men were mostly in uniform.

“That’s a sailor,” said he, noting how the tweed-clad pedestrian gave to a rise in the pavement as though it were a deck rising. Unconscious of many admiring glances, of many frank stares, the sailor held his course. What a fine thing it was to be back in this town that he knew so well. He remembered the first time, when he had thought that the railway station was some huge house, and well lighted. That

was before he had been bundled into a cab and dumped on board the old *Loch Ryan*, 'prentice on a windjammer—blamed old lime-juicer. The doctor stepped on to the pavement.

“Kestrel!” said he.

The sailor gave a quick look, then he stopped and came round in a wide circle. He spoke in loud expletives: “Heavens! Think of it, doctor . . .” He crushed the doctor’s hand in his; his voice boomed. “Here was I, not knowin’ a soul,” said he, “an’ dying for a drink, and you turn up. That’s the finger of the Almighty Providence—always had luck in darkness. Do you remember translating ‘Lux in tenebris’ for me once over the door of the big house. Only dam’ Latin I ever remembered! Luck’s in darkness, and so it is for me always—always risk my luck in the dark and never missed.”

“Come and feed somewhere.” The doctor led the way into a restaurant. His eyes were sparkling, his voice low-pitched but keen; there was a little malor flush on his cheek, as he would term it.

“D’ye mind your advice to me before I left on my first trip, doctor?” the great voice boomed round the room. Men looked up and looked away; ladies looked up, and looked again.

“I don’t remember,” said Campbell.

The sailor touched the bell. “Drink dam’ slow,” said he, with a great laugh. “I minded that too.”

“But your Latin isn’t right,” said Campbell. “It was ‘Light in darkness.’”

“That sounds daft, doctor. There’s no light in darkness,” and then suddenly the seafarer laughed. “Here’s me hangin’ on to that Latin proverb for years—faith—by Jove!—if I had waited for light in

darkness, I would be in the Hooglie by this time." He was unconscious that people listened, that little dapper men gave themselves an extra importance, because of him, or perhaps in spite of him.

"I have been told, captain, that you were the strongest man east of Suez," said the doctor. "Well, ye look it."

The captain smiled. "It takes strong men to live east of Suez. There's a fair rugg of strength in me yet, but nothing extra. I'll tell you something about strength, though. Coming home this time, we went to Cairo—a fine town, by Gad!—gamble, racecourse, tennis, everything a man wants to do. They understand how to concoct a man's drinks there, and you drink and let the tribes wander by; see great fellahs in from the desert with the plaits of camel-hair in their heads, wearing long burnous affairs, maybe yellow, or maybe green, or maybe blue. Camels come wandering in with about a ton of stones in rope-carriers—dam' rotten beasts, camels—frothing through rope-muzzles, and lookin' contemptuous. The Arabs say the camel looks down its nose yon way because the Prophet was out meeting Allah in the desert and listening to the hundred names of God, seated on his barracked camel. Mahomet sneezed, and never heard the hundredth name, but the camel, being farther ahead owing to his build, got the hundredth name, and he's looked down on men ever since. I could tell ye a lot more about the camel, doctor. Anyway, we took the ladies round all the mosques in Cairo, and showed 'em the mark of Mahomet's feet on a stone somewhere and two pillars set close together for trying criminals; looked from the citadel and saw the Roman aqueduct straddling against the fire of the desert sun like a

shadow of the past; saw the mosque where old Napoleon stabled his horses—great business stabling horses in the kirks—I expect it'll be the stalls that do it; and anyway, up on the walls ye can see the cannonballs where the French gunners got the target, and the cracks in the masonry like houses in a mining village; went out to the pyramids and saw the Sphinx. I mind I had a drink at the Sphinx, and I aye thought I understood her better after that. Well, that sort of gives you a general idea of being in Cairo with ladies to convoy on the way. I'm coming to the bazaars—just like Arabian nights with wonderful jewels, and carpets, and shawls, and scarves, and heaven knows what, worked by the ladies of the harem—saucerfuls of diamonds and opals, amber beads and beaten copper, anbar cigarettes and carpets, sabres belonging to the Shah of Persia, and God knows what more—mixed all up with camels and wee double machines—nice wee horses—go like blazes if ye shout Arab curses or anything else like that—a most wonderful place. Well, we had looked at carpets, drunk wee cups of coffee, and read all the letters that all the aristocracy of this country send to these Gippo shopkeepers, and we intended walking back to Shephard's, when down the street came the rebel tread, as somebody says somewhere; but this rebel made no noise with his tread, only the folk scurried into holes and corners, like chickens in long grass—macnoon, I assure you—a great buck of a fellow looking ugly, and carrying on a masterpiece, biting and spitting and foaming and jabbing peaceful folk with a gully, like that fellow who raised his hand against every man—Moses, was it?"

“Ishmael!”

“Ishmael—oh aye! Ishmael doesn’t matter a dam’—chum of Moses anyway. Into this mess came a wee double machine, and a devil of a pot sitting in it, looking as calm as a millpond, or the Sphinx herself—a pukka Arab—but about the finest-looking fellah ye would see in a day’s journey. The mad fellow left off harrying the rear of the mob, and came at the carriage like a mad dog, and the driver hooked it—bolted like a rabbit. Well, at that the Arab came into action. He seemed amused too. There was a cheval-de-frise—y’ know, a spiked iron railing—at the corner of the street; don’t know yet what it would be for, but it was about five feet off the ground over a window. I saw that Arab shoot out his hand—his left hand, mind—and take a fistful of the madman’s burnous, and slowly, quite slowly, the madman rose into the air, clawing and yelling and his feet kicking. I mind his shin-bones and the froth at his mouth. Up he went, his knife clattering there in the gutter, and he stopped, hooked to the railing by his middle, between heaven and earth like Mahomet’s coffin, and then the droll thing happened. The Arab stepped back a pace, and looked up at his friend. There was a kind of likeable grin on the young fellow’s face, too, and then says he, ‘Ye’re sold, my Arab steed,’ and went back to his seat. Was that not dam’ strange? D’ye mind Pate Dol used to sing that when he got a taste on a fair night? I would have spoken to that fellow, but he gave a yap at his driver—sounded as bitter as gall,—and away he went without a backward look, and I don’t blame him either.”

“Why would ye not?”

“Man, sitting beside him in that double machine was the finest woman I ever saw, and I’ve moved around and seen some. There are bonny wee black girls, with red flowers in their hair, a man meets whiles—shy wee things really, and fond of stroking a man, and making nuzzling kind of crooning noises; and there’s Spaniards that dance—because they must—gay flashing belles that wither in the sun. There’s beauties from Russia—one, I mind, was branded on her near shoulder—a hell of a scar on the white satin of her skin. One moves around and remembers, from the Port of London to the South Seas, but never a woman did I see like that woman. Ye’ve seen Venus de Milo? Well, like that, but alive, doctor, with the red blood coursing under her skin, leaving it like wine, dark like honey. There’s no word for it. Her hands were like some long flower. At first she looked cold as frozen marble; her eyes may have seen the people and the street and the shops, but they never showed it—great dark eyes. Her mouth looked as it might have been chiselled, so firm it was and beautiful. I tell you that woman’s face was pride, and bravery, and mystery,—Eve, and Cleopatra, and Mary Queen of Scots. Burns might have described her. Man, when the madman struggled with her friend her face changed—the weariness, the coldness, the hauteur left it. She stood up like a very woman. I mind her hands clenched, the wrists turned back. I think all hell burned in her eyes, her white teeth were clenched, and her lips turned down. That for a moment, then a little smile came over her, her lips pouted like a young girl’s moved with music, her hands clasped at her bosom, and then she sat down and waited, listless, cold, haughty. I don’t think she spoke to

the hefty lad that hooked up the madman like a side of beef. Gad, but her face gave her away, betrayed her, eh! I would be remarkably sorry for the dame that came between yon pair.”

“Not boiling oil?” says the doctor.

“Boiling oil’s cheap—sounds like a paint shop. No, no, wild horses—Mazeppa business, or snakes, or devils—slow music and the lights jumping from hidden corners, and the Witch of Endor to give the orders. Have a drink, doctor. I could frighten myself thinking of it.”

The doctor sat long before his bedroom fire; the “Kestrel” was long since asleep. He hated strange bedrooms, hotel bedrooms especially, where people chalked unlucky numbers on the soles of his boots. He thought of all the people who might have slept there, might have sat gazing into the fire as he sat gazing. The streets were empty; footsteps echoed in the emptiness; belated taxis whizzed past, taking roysterers homewards. If he looked out of his window he would see cats treading their way daintily over the pavements, investigating buckets of refuse before shops. In a little, carts and motors would arrive in some dark alley-way, and men with candles in their hats would clamber into refuse-pits, and speak loudly to their horses—then likely it would rain. He felt miserable.

“It couldn’t be Gavin,” said he aloud; “it surely couldn’t be Gavin driving round with a sort of tiger-lily. I wonder what Mairi would say to that; she’ll need to be a wonder before Mairi ’ll be pleased.”

“Yon Arab was a Scotsman.” That was the captain’s word. Still, Scots were wanderers. Who was

it from home sailed into the Arctic Circle and boarded a sailing schooner? Well, never mind. The skipper was wearing a bowler hat; they were fishing for walrus, and, by God, the skipper was from Loch Ranza, and his name—but no, no, Gavin would be in France fighting, or in Germany a prisoner. The East was hateful to the doctor. It was a place of manifold diseases, and curiously he had that horror of diseases that is typical of Celtic folk. He had droll unformed notions of wicked women and rascally men living in sin in obscure places, of vices he knew little of. Gavin was still a boy to the hard old man, who knew the world, and all that night he lay a-fidget in his bed, worrying about his pupil; “as hard as an oak physically, but too trusting,” he would mutter, “too trusting, and only a boy as green as leeks. The first glee woman he meets with . . .” He thought of his voyages as M.O. to the East, but that brought him no comfort. “I kent Paris outside and inside by then. I was salted, but Gavin . . .” Then who was the woman he drove with? Maybe she had a husband somewhere, maybe Gavin would be footering with married women, and that’s no canny in a warm climate. He’ll maybe get ground glass in his mess o’ pottage, or a knife in the back, and a splash into the Nile from a houseboat . . . He had horrible visions all night, and rose in the morning—a foggy morning with frost, miserable weather, and miserable folk hurrying in the dimness. But for all that he had made up his mind. Douglas and Janet Erskine would not hear of this.

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In the spring, Pate came to dig in the garden with him at the Wilderness. The days went in quicker, with

a new little corner finished every day, and drills appearing, and little cabbages being dibbled, and taking root, and growing. And the doctor would mow the grass on his lawn, and dig deep trenches for his sweet peas, for in country places the folk have great contests with potatoes, and cabbage, and simple products of the red earth, and have great pleasure in green things growing. Pate would rest whiles, or maybe the doctor would give him a cry, and take him close to the house to a little table with a large jug of beer on it, and then they discussed many things, from cabbages to genealogies. On such a day, the doctor lit a cigarette thoughtfully.

“Did Gavin ever learn much poetry, Pate?”

“He had all the battles nearly in poetry, but nae love-poems,” said Pate. “He couldna thole love-songs, but he was keen on horse. Ye mind, ‘I galloped, Dick galloped, we galloped all three,’ and the like of that.”

“Imphm, Pate! Was he good at any more?”

“His favourites were the battles except ‘My beautiful, My beautiful.’ Man, I had him perfect in ‘My beautiful, My beautiful.’ God bless me, at yon bit where the bargain was closed he could spit on his haun’ and give it to the life, and him only a wean. ‘Ye’re sold,’ he would say, and spit, ‘ye’re sold, my Arab steed.’ ”

Late that night the doctor rose and took his way slowly upstairs. Half-way up he halted, the brass candlestick shaking in his hand. “God grant the lad will die in uniform,” said he, “if die he must.”

CHAPTER II.

HOW IRENE SAILED FOR THE EAST.

I THINK that, as the years went on, Irene Savage almost forgot, when no letter came to answer her letter. She wished that she had never written. She wondered often about that letter—where was it lying? Why had it never returned?

She would look at Gavin's photograph, speak to it softly. She would blush as she regarded the pictured face, for always she took that photograph, and looked at it before she slept. She became aware that this routine was impossible to break. And sometimes she would try hard to let Gavin lie in his secret drawer, but then there would come no sleep until she had spoken to him. There came a fear that if she forgot this little play something evil might happen to Gavin; then Irene would rise hurriedly and, barefooted, go quietly to her hiding-place. And she scorned herself—held herself up to the ridicule of her friends (did they but know), the proud Irene pressing a pasteboard to her heart, speaking to the image of a man she hardly knew. Yet she was become a gentle girl, a more thoughtful girl, a more beautiful girl.

John Savage began to think that his daughter was in ill-health. Irene laughed at him, and then a pro-

ject formed in her brain. She approached Prim Sheppard.

“I think—I really think, Prim, that this American climate does not suit me,” said Irene.

“My dear,” said Miss Sheppard, “there cannot possibly be anything wrong with the climate of America. Look at your father, so strong, and brown, and young-looking.”

Irene smiled.

“Yes, I *know*,” she said, “but if you would only look at me”—her voice became so pathetic that Miss Sheppard was startled—“look at me a little more,” said Irene, making herself look as though she were hollow-chested, and becoming more and more sorry for herself.

“My dear, you look beautiful,” said Miss Sheppard, “and I’m sure all the young eligibles think you do; but you are so—so unfeeling——”

“I’m like my father,” said Irene sadly. “We never show our feelings, dear, and I think if you call young men ‘eligibles’ again, I think I’ll bite you, or them—eligibles—it’s like vegetables. Here,” said she, “is a row of early eligibles. And I’m sure it’s—it’s bad for me to be put into a pet. My heart is not strong—I know my heart is not strong, and what my lungs must be like——” Irene essayed a hacking cough, which, being laughter converted into a new channel, sounded very dreadful indeed. “I’m sure my lungs need tapping, and my heart pressing, or—or something.”

Miss Sheppard left her in alarm.

“I think,” said she to John Savage, “I think that Miss Irene should see a specialist.”

Savage laid down his paper hurriedly. “A special-

ist! What is wrong? Why am I kept in ignorance? I keep telling you that girl is in decline or something—why, she gets thinner than a rake. A specialist! She'll see ten specialists. She gets more like Indian Famine every day. Her mother said that name would bring no luck—but what's a name got to do with it?"

"Nothing, dear," said Irene, "and I don't want any old specialist, if you'll be good and bring the doctor to see me. I expect really I need a tonic, or a change of air, or something."

Savage looked at his daughter.

"Say, honey, you don't look ill," said he anxiously.

"I'm not *ill*, but I might be, so it's best to send for the doctor."

"There's another fellow mooning around and not up to his feed," said Savage, "and that's your pet Irishman, Dungannon."

"Poor Patrick!" said Irene. "I wonder if the same tonic would cure us both?"

"Lord knows what will cure Dungannon. I've thought that maid of yours——"

"Kitty," said Irene, "my maid Kitty. Why, she's only from Ireland!"

"What's the matter with Ireland?"

"It would be all right if they would only take the Ire out of it," said Irene.

"Well, I want to keep the Ire in you," said her father. "You've got no go—no pep—no sting."

Irene was not listening; there was a smile in her eyes.

"Father," she said, "wasn't that cute about the Ire in Ireland?"

"Why, yes, it was," said Savage, "but my come-back was cute too, and slick. What's got you now?"

“I was just thinking,” said Irene, “it’s wonderful what you can do manœuvring with words. Listen. If they took the Ire out of Ireland, what would she do?”

“Oh, I dunno,” said Savage.

“She would come back to Erin,” said Irene, and laughed so that her father laughed with her.

“That doesn’t sound much like lung trouble to me,” said he. “Come back to Erin. Well, Dunggannon will be with you there. But see a doctor you shall.”

And the old doctor was no fool. He regarded Irene over his glasses with a quizzical smile.

“Well,” said he, “what treatment is required, Miss Savage?”

“Good treatment, doctor,” said Irene.

“Change of air, change of scene, change of environment.”

Irene was nodding her head.

“Quite right every time, doctor, and listen, I’m becoming fearfully clever. Listen, I only do it with words. I want you to take the ‘men’ out of my environment.”

“It’s a pity, Miss Savage, you don’t know Latin,” said he.

“Why, doctor?”

“Even if I take away the men from your environment, there would be a man left Mr. Vir—a Latin gentleman.”

“Well,” said Irene, “I think that that is a sign—surely Italy would do me good, would it not?”

“Italy would do anyone good—but why Italy?”

“Oh, it is in the Mediterranean, and that’s the highway to the East. I think Italy would be the very

best treatment, doctor, and my father is rusting—no, it's only steel magnates that rust; father is vegetating . . .”

“I'll do what I can,” said the doctor. “Some day, perhaps, you'll tell me if I helped you. In the meantime, Miss Savage,” said he in his professional voice, “you must endeavour to keep from punning. It has a curiously irritating effect on the auricular apparatus. In fact,” said the doctor, “in your ear, it's a sin that is its own punishment. *Good-morning.*”

Irene's spirits improved daily. She would be singing softly to herself in a kind of ecstasy as though some great good-fortune should attend her—was just awaiting her coming. Dungannon was in his element for the time being.

“There looks like to be trouble in Europe,” said Savage. “Europe hasn't got past the days of battle yet,” said he. “They've a hankering for more dates in their histories to teach children 'stead of teaching 'em business. Well, I guess while they make history, America will make money; and money talks loudest.”

“Europe is an old-established date firm, isn't it?” said Irene; “men of war supplied since away before 1066.”

“I reckon we can sail to-morrow,” said Savage; “we're under 'Old Glory.' Paul Jones sailed under the same flag. I reckon it's good enough for us.”

“Well, he was a Scotsman,” said Irene, “if he were our first admiral.” She delighted in rousing her father.

“Sailed the *Ranger*, honey. American ship under the Stars and Bars. Can you beat it?”

“America's famous for its stars and bars even

now," said Irene, "cinema stars and American bars."

"Say, you're more'n half-British, Irene Savage. Take my advice, the British are fine fellows to keep clear of. You get to like 'em, when you know 'em. It's dangerous."

"I know," cried the girl, "you get to like 'em before you know 'em properly; it's sure dangerous, daddy."

"Now you're beyond me, Famine; I'm lost now."

"Never mind, daddy, I'm lost myself sometimes," said Irene.

"I tell you they were great fellows, these Britishers. It's not so long, not so very long, honey, since every ship that sailed lowered her topsail in salute to the British flag. 'Old Glory' is a fine flag, but, Irene, there's something about the White Ensign that makes one feel proud—proud and sad—the White Ensign blowing out stiff from the gaff—the white of it like the salt from the seven seas, and the red like the blood of the sailors who died under it."

In mid-Atlantic, the captain of the *White Lady* mused on the sparks that flitted and sparkled from the wireless apparatus.

"Going off," said he to his officer, "like little jokes all by themselves . . ."

And as he spoke, the wireless operator approached him hurriedly, a report form in his hand and a smile on his boyish face.

"Anything good?" said the captain.

"Pretty fair, sir, I guess—Britain's at war with Germany."

It was after midnight, but the captain came to the owner's state-room. Savage read the report.

“Bully for Britain,” said he, “bully for Britain. I guess she couldn’t just keep out of it.”

“Have you any orders, sir?” said the captain.

“None, captain. I guess we’ll be spectators in this show. I thought it would have fizzled out. Well, it may be awkward at Gib., but we’ll not cross any bridges till we come to them. Good-night.”

“Good-night, sir.”

The captain turned to leave.

“Well,” said Savage, “I guess Wall Street will be humming to-morrow.”

At Gibraltar, Irene stood with her father on deck. There were ships converging to the Straits on port and starboard. The captain had his glasses on a string of flags on shore.

Close by a Dane, black, and trim, and smart, sailed by. A little British ship came fussing out, her halyards a string of bunting. The Dane sailed on.

“That fellow ’ll get his in a minute,” said the captain to Savage. He pointed to the string of flags on the little vessel. “In easy language that means ‘Put them up; I’ve got the drop on you.’ Guess the Dane means to call the Britisher’s bluff.”

The yacht was abreast of the tow-boat. There came a crack of a cannon, and at the Dane’s bows a splash of white water leapt up. Irene ran to her father, speaking quickly.

The captain spoke a word to Dungannon at the wheel, and joined his employer.

“The Dane’s stopped,” said he. “There will be a polite officer in the skipper’s cabin in a minute, saying nasty things with a baby smile. I bet the

skipper's mad," said he. "A shot across his hawse, and fetched up with a round turn."

Ashore a new string of bunting fluttered out. The second officer turned leaves rapidly and interpreted.

"Reduce speed—dead slow."

The captain pushed the indicator over; there came a tinkling of bells from the engine-room.

"Say," said Savage, "you got no topsail handy, sir."

"No, sir," said he; "we're flying a very good ensign."

That first night in Gibraltar there was no moon. Irene walked the deck alone, awaiting her father's return from shore, listening to the strange noises: the little sputtering exhaust from motor launches, the strange voices of men singing, the echoing roar of a bosun's mate aboard a British warship, the piercing note of bugles, and yet with all these sounds there was silence, she felt—silence and secrecy. The great Rock loomed darkly, like a crouching lion. Something like that other Rock. Beyond the Straits, she thought of ships creeping stealthily, showing no lights. On the Spanish coast shone the flare of a lighthouse—the only light over all the black oily sea—and grim-faced sailor men, thought Irene, would sleep soundly only under the loom of that dark Rock, for the sea-leopard was abroad hunting.

When Savage returned, he was very silent, and sat smoking a long time. Irene coiled herself on a settee and awaited his story. She had gone on too many hunting trips with him to attempt to break his silence. At last—

"Would you mind very much," said he, "if we missed out this trip to Italy?"

“No,” said Irene, “if you think that would be best.”

“I can’t see where this war will end—everybody has declared war on everybody else. Russia is marching on Germany, Germany is marching through Belgium on France, Britain is pouring troops across the Channel. The Grand Fleet is in the North Sea. Bulgaria, Servia, Austria are snarling like wolves, and Italy is at present in a state of armed neutrality. I’ve been in many States, but armed neutrality doesn’t sound good to me. I tell you, honey, Europe is mad. I listened to-night to well-bred gentlemen talking of *causus belli*, benevolent neutrality, brigades, battalions, destroyers, and Uhlans until I felt bughouse—er—mad.”

“Well,” said Irene, “I hope Britain will win. She has nearly always won, hasn’t she? It would be wrong to think she could lose, with Gibraltar above us.”

“We licked ’em,” said Savage. “Britain licked the world, and we licked the British.”

“I expect we licked ’em when they were busy lickin’ the world,” said Irene.

“Licked ’em on land and sea,” said Savage.

“Oh, daddy, daddy, what an old fire-eater—on land and sea.”

Suddenly, still looking at her father, and with a merry smile, Irene rose and stood before him, her chin tilted.

“Listen, you dear old Yankee,” she cried, and sang softly, but with great spirit—

“Brave Broke he waved his sword,
Cried, ‘Britons, let us board,
And we’ll make them dance to
Yanky Doodle Dandy Oh!’”

John Savage put his arm round her shoulders.

“You dear little rebel,” said he, and shook her gently. “You might be in love with a Britisher to hear you.”

“In love,” said Irene, “in love—with a Britisher . . .”

“Well, don’t be vexed,” said Savage, for Irene’s face was very dark, and her eyes downcast. “I think we will meander along the coast of Africa—isn’t that high Barbary, where the trees grow on high hills, and white castles show, here and there? And then we might make Malta and then Alexandria. I don’t like the idea of scurrying back across the Atlantic because Europe is at war. How would that do?”

“I think that would do very well; but in those papers you bought, ladies, women—mothers, sisters, and wives of soldiers are doing things—nursing, working, and oh, everything. Is there nothing I could do?”

“Do! Why, yes, you’ve got to get well.”

“I was never ill,” said Irene, “and to be pleasure cruising when the world is burning—is wicked as Nero.”

“Well, we’ll see what can be done when we reach Alexandria,” said Savage, “if it’s only applying the balm of Gilead to the corn of Egypt.”

The months went slowly by for Marjory. She felt like a caged bird—she longed for freedom. Sholto, her father, had made what arrangements he could anent the disposal of his horse and cattle. The Amir had need of these; the best of his flock were driven far distances to safety, with sheikhs whose grazings

lay far from the march of an enemy. His young men were with Gavin and the Amir, the old men and the women still dwelt by the house set amidst the palms. War took no count of such as these—the maidens might hide themselves in cunning places. His treasures were buried, such as could not be taken to his house in Cairo. Arabs were pressed into service with the Turk—the Turk who for years innumerable had been master of the Arab.

“If the house be burned and cast down,” said the exile, “in the track of war, when the war ends we will build ourselves another and a better. There is grain stored against famine, and secret caves for hiding known to Ishmael; it may be that war will pass us by.”

Father and daughter would drive in the early morning, but now Marjory did not play at any little games, but often there was a look of expectancy on her face, as she watched soldiers marching, or on leave, and her thoughts were on the desert.

Sholto Douglas read papers, endless papers, and now and then in his reading he would stop and tell his daughter of some soldier who was “junior to me long ago,” and he would sigh and bid Marjory sing to him—sad songs of the cold North,—and whiles then they would sit and talk in the warm evenings, and aye their talk would be of Gavin and the Amir.

But after two years of silence, Mahmud, the servant of Gavin, came into the courtyard with the setting sun, bringing letters, or rather a sort of diary of events, for the edification of Sholto, and then the brief curt phrases would give place to a more genial and descriptive style for Marjory’s benefit. It was

a long, long letter, and hardly decipherable in places, but father and daughter pored over it long after bedtime.

On a certain date there would be an entry, "Wells at ——— poisoned, forced march to Wady ———, horses very worn, no good water for days," and then, "We dug for water at the Wady ———, and, Marjory, you would have loved to see the horses, the poor creatures straining to relieve their thirst, pawing and looking round with great eyes questioning, and then in their eagerness kneeling on their knees by the water-holes. My little chestnut mare is wonderful."

Again, "The Turks had taken up a position at ———, and, fearing cavalry attacks, dugged pits on their front, three rows like large deep basins too wide to leap horses over. These pits were very beautifully made, and would have served a good purpose, but the artillery rendered them useless. I thought of the story of the pits at Bannockburn, with brushwood covers, and calthrops of iron, and it seemed as though war had always been the same in essentials, only that the cannon had improved. You should try to invent a noiseless rifle; it would so much increase the element of surprise.

"Aeroplanes are wonderful. I think for bombing enemy towns I would have an aeroplane with a revolving bomb platform capable of being lowered loaded while the machine is in the air, so that it would clear the wheel base. The platform might be shaped like a section of a cone, and the bombs would be discharged at an angle while the platform revolves rapidly. Instead of bomb-dropping in direct succession, a considerable number might be dropped at once in varying circles from a central bomb."

“Does Gavin love this horrible killing?” said she, turning another page.

“I think that I have been of some service to the agents of Great Britain, but cannot say anything here; these stories will keep. There is a droll thing I remember. We were playing the old Scots game, hanging on the flanks of the Turk, striking whenever a chance came, breaking their sleep by night, fraying their temper by day. I was in country new to me, and I saw Ayrshire cattle—Ayrshire cattle—from whence to where. It went against the grain to slay them; they looked like friends. Mahmud will wait with you for seven days, and then return to me; he has his orders. I will write as often as I can to Messrs. Thomas & Son, so that if you go from Cairo to Alexandria, to the sea, you will still get letters. I enclose a field postcard which I got from a British officer. It is addressed to Mairi on the Rock. You might post it.” Then there followed praise for the military skill and leadership of Abdul. The very Arab serving with the Turks, and wounded, will ask if all is well with the Amir, with their last breath—“this we have from prisoners. I think that the desert beholds her king.”

Mahmud had long vague stories of always riding—“many Turks die,” said he, and told of the sands where yet the arms of Turks, and the legs, festered in the sun.

“And,” said Douglas, “I think that Gavin has been with the Intelligence Department, for Mahmud told of work done among hostile people, and indeed refused to tell how he had come to Cairo, or where he had left his master.”

And Marjory read and reread Gavin’s diary,

searching for the smallest message, if it were only a phrase that she might have used in conversation. There breathed friendship in the pages; all that might interest her was described, as an elder might describe to a favourite younger brother, wishing to give him pleasure. She wrote a long letter, but felt in reading it that all she had described were the little petty rounds of her days—a letter she thought that a husband might want, but not the letter she wished to send to Gavin. From his servant she knew that he was well, but might he not be wounded, or killed, and never know what was in her heart? She wrote then a wildly passionate letter like a poem of love.

“I am as the trees in winter in the cold lands, sad that the sun is hidden. My tears fall like rain from bare boughs, bringing no joy. Return, oh sun, with gladness, then will my limbs be decked with blossoms for your delight, and then will my tears be bright as laughter, comforting as dew on roses in the night. The sun sinks red in the desert, and still places menace me, for that thou art absent. Awaking after sleep, my heart is chill with fear in the new day, for my love is in peril. My lips are athirst for love, in the darkness I stretch out bare arms . . .”

With many seals Marjory closed her letter, and carried it all day close to her heart; but before Mahmud took his departure, she held the envelope to a flame, until black ash and sputtering wax alone remained.

“Gavin would hate that weakness,” she whispered, “he would scorn these cloying words”; but she became tired of Cairo and wearied for Alexandria, where there was sea—there is something cold

and brave in the sea winds, something akin to her cousin from the North.

During the long train journey she watched from her carriage windows always, speaking to her father seldom—watched the workers in the little fields with straight drains of irrigation—watched always the bullocks turning in slow blundering circles, so that water might be drawn up to fill the thirsty muddy drains, that the dry land might bear yet more bounteous harvest.

There were mud villages with places of tombs at haphazard. Dogs and children, sheep and cattle, lay together in the shade; the fertile lands teemed with people who crowded hurrying on little beaten footpaths between their crops, hurrying to the shade of mud villages.

The train stopped at little stations with well-built offices, and looking from the window Marjory called her father's attention to a flock of little hens scratching where grain had been spilled, or where maybe an orderly had fed his horse—hot dusty little fowl toiling in the sun. Sholto's face had an amused look.

"Gavin's old Mairi had a saying about hens," said he, "but I forget it."

"There never was a hen lived that did not die in debt, was that it?" said Marjory.

"That was it, but I think she would have made an exception of our friends at their scratching in the heat. You have a fine memory, Marjory."

"I never forget Gavin's stories of his boyhood," said she. "After he told me about Mairi's hens, he said to me, 'Was it not kind of droll?' Do you know what we will do in Alexandria the first thing?"

Douglas shook his head and smiled. "No," said he.

“We’ll see if there are any letters from Gavin, for he will have written again.”

But many times Douglas and Marjory drove from the Hotel Majestic in Alexandria to the offices of Messrs. Thomas & Sons, seeking letters, and always Douglas would have the same comfort for his daughter.

“Never mind, Marjory,” he would say, “there is another day coming.”

And in safe anchorage in Alexandria, where Scots soldiers talked learnedly about the Pharos, the *White Lady* lay, bearing a red cross on her white side—the *White Lady* was become a hospital ship, and John Savage noted with grim satisfaction that Irene’s little foibles and whims were laid aside. She rose early and worked late, seeking little rest, that her patients might have such tireless care as a mother would have bestowed. She received the thanks of grave-faced medical officers with so much of humbleness and gladness that her father laughed, and yet he knew his daughter too well to believe that she was acting a new part. The rôle had been too long sustained for that. It was perhaps that her real nature manifested itself. Yet there was something unknown to him. Alone in the night, Irene would gaze always at the same star that burned low in the east—her hands clenched—there were no words at all on her lips; but, unknown to God even, she made a bargain. If she could save the lives of men, however hard the toil, however long the fight—surely her man would come through this alive,—that was all that she asked, of some deity beyond the star that burned low in the east.

But John Savage wearied. There were few men of

his age, of his kind, of his language. He was sure now that America should be in the war. Roosevelt urged his nation to grander ideals; the best men in his nation saw the path to honour clearly, yet the nation held back. He was impatient that his country should despise her birthright. These were his thoughts, sitting in the afternoon in the lounge of the Majestic, discarded paper's round his cane chair, the fresh breeze lightly moving his white hair. On the little cold glass-covered table a long thin tumbler invited investigation.

At the same table in the lounge of the Majestic sat Sholto Douglas. Marjory disliked public rooms, but insisted that her father smoke and read among his kind, whilst she dreamed her dreams.

The men's eyes met often; the band on the piazza struck up a rollicking marching air. Both men lifted their glasses, and then bowed slightly and drank.

"I guess, sir, we might almost understand one another in the vernacular," said Savage.

"Aye, aye," said Sholto.

And after that every afternoon these two would meet in the lounge to discuss world problems, to forget that the bitterness of age was on them, and that the youth warred. Thus it was that Marjory Douglas, coming from Messrs. Thomas & Sons with news of Gavin—Marjory darkly flushed with happiness, hastening to her father who awaited her, saw him speaking to a stranger, and was greatly taken with the manners of the American gentleman who stood in the sunlight bareheaded.

"I have a daughter, Miss Stuart, who would be proud to know you," said he, little knowing.

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But that evening at dinner, Savage caused a mild flutter in the heart of Prim Sheppard.

“Irene,” said he, “if I were to marry again, I guess I could give you the initial letter of the maiden’s surname.”

“Well, that’s easy,” cried Irene; “so could I—it’s ‘S’ of course.”

Miss Sheppard bridled and looked primly down.

“Why, so it is,” said Savage. “Miss Stuart—I met her this afternoon with her pa. I tell you, honey, she’d make swell folk look common. You’ll see,” said he, “for I’ve asked them to dine on board to-morrow.”

But Prim Sheppard refused to meet Irene’s eyes.

CHAPTER III.

HOW GAVIN HEARS FROM HOME.

AFTER the first pleasant little dinner on board the yacht, Irene and her father stood at the gangway and watched their guests row ashore. Marjory turned in the stern sheets of the row-boat and waved, and Savage smiled to Irene.

“Well,” said he, “is that not the most beautiful creature you’ve ever seen?”

“She’s very nice,” said Irene. “I like her father—he knows about things, treaties and policies, and soldiers and horses, and old wars, but his daughter reminds me of something, some wild fierce thing in a cage,” and Irene went down to her wards.

But after that there were many meetings, and Marjory would ask Irene of the life in Europe, the life among white people, who lived in crowded thoroughfares, with no flocks and herds, no cattle and horses. How did the days go past—what was there to do from sunrise to sunset? and Irene would tell of people who never dreamed of retiring to rest at sunset—nay, of people who only rose when the sun was long past the meridian, and Marjory would try to understand.

“But now,” said Irene, “all that is changed. The

men are away—the men may never return, and the women work, and work, and work, so that they may sleep in the night, and not think any more . . .”

Marjory was looking at her intently.

“Is there some one for whom you work, Irene?” said she, “some one absent, who sends thoughts to you in the night?”

“There are many; my country is now at war. The boys that I knew are in uniform, and a uniform seems like grave-clothes to me.”

“But is there no one man?” said Marjory.

“There is one man,” said Irene, pulling at the lace of a handkerchief, “but I do not know if he is in this war. I do not know where he may be, alive or dead I do not know, only”—Irene put her hand to her heart, her eyes were very large and bright,—“only I feel in here that he is fighting, and laughing, and that he has forgotten me.”

“But no man would forget you, Irene; you are so white and beautiful, and Western women never grow old. In the East, the women wither in the sun.”

And Irene that night looked at her boy in armour. Many times had she thought to show Marjory her hero, but always something held her hand, something deep down and inexplicable, like an instinct; and Marjory had Gavin's letters with her always, and yet she would sit and talk, and sometimes even touch them to make sure they were safe, but these were not to be talked of.

And Gavin about this time received his first home mail. There were from home four letters, and these had many blue pencil marks on the envelope, with

cryptic remarks to "try" here and try there, until eventually they reached their destination. Gavin felt a desire to be alone to read these first letters. He picked out Marjory's and read them first, long and yet businesslike, with no words wasted, no news of battle, no rumours of new assaults, but simple everyday duties and happenings anent her father and herself, and a brief little warning at the end that Gavin be not over-rash. There was a long description of her friends on board the white yacht, of how she was pleased that her father was not wearying so much now. For herself, she had learned much from Western ladies. Marjory was impressed with the tireless energy of Western ladies. "All day they can work with their hands, doing menial tasks joyfully, and looking in the evening cool and white, like flowers in the dusk." There was no word in any of her letters about the Amir.

After Marjory's letter, Gavin opened Mairi Voullie Vhor's, and he could trace the shaking of her hand in the characters. Her letter was most difficult to read, for that she, having finished a sheet of paper, continued to write across what was already written.

"MY DEAR LAD,

"I'm writing to you, and I don't know where you are, but wherever you are, you will be in God's keeping. Your mother has written and your father, when they got your address, and we got a postcard saying ye were everything but kilt, which is the main thing. Ye have been away a long time, and the world is upside down since then, and boys that were running messages for their mothers yesterday are sodgers the morn. Ye would not ken the

bay for big ships painted like rainbows. I've been mindin' a lot of stories I forgot to tell ye when ye were wee. I wish to God ye were wee yet, Gavin. Peter Dol goes for the letters every day, and he's able to take his dram, *without water*, and that's a good sign . . ." There were here and there additions to Mairi's letter, little scraps in Pate's hand. "The brown mare had a clinker"—this would be a foal, or "We got —— for the wool," and "I put a new plank in the skiff," and there was a small folded scrap well fastened with stamp edge, and inside, "Mind the click-ma-doodles," Pate had written.

His mother's letter and his father's made him feel sad, but Mairi's made him lonely, desperately lonely.

There was one more letter, and he opened it and unfolded the sheet. There was a single line written years ago.

"Oh, Jim, we've wasted an awful lot of time: Irene," and Gavin read and reread these ten words over and over, as if they contained or might contain some deep secret if he but searched long enough. He remembered his anger, his hurt pride, his scorn, but now he felt none of these. What a soft little lass, with her little shy brave line! Why, she should never have remembered him at all, with his boyish greatness! What a fool she must have thought him! Gavin's tanned face burned at the thought of it. How could he ever speak to that girl again? He scorned himself as he had been, but he kept Irene's line, and often he would look at it.

But there was little time for reading or writing. The Amir was an ally of Britain; his cavalry operated with the dashing Light Horse of Australia, his camelmen with the Camel Corps. Jerusalem was fallen.

There were troops marching north at Jaffa, troops in the hills of Judea, troops beyond Jordon. The Turk was falling back. Day after day the hurrying was plain to see—bullocks left dying in their yoke; shells, shells everywhere in heaps by the wayside; dead horses swelled in the sun, their legs sticking stiffly upwards; camels lying awaiting death.

The Amir was in the council of the British General, Gavin was in British uniform. The end was not yet, but the end was not afar off, when the Amir called Gavin to his quarters.

“We go to Europe,” said he. “I am a stranger to the West, to everything but the thoughts of the West, and you will be a guide to me in those things that a man should do,” and Gavin grinned at that. “I have seen the British might in Mesopotamia, in Arabia, in Palestine. It may be that the old man, my father, will be a king of a new country, or it may be that I shall be a king. God will decide, but it is the will of the Allies that I should travel to London and there hear certain things, and to Paris. There are competent leaders to set my troops in array for battle. You have taught many the art of fraying a retreating army. We will be in Cairo in seven days from now. We will see the sweet water of the canal brought for mile on mile over desert sand. We will see the railway, mile on mile of new railway. We have watched a soldier make war, sparing no effort, neither wasting life recklessly, solving his problems with masterly skill, appraising everything, forgetting nothing; but you, who have been my right hand, my tower of strength, my wild flame leading on, you will come with me, that the strangers of your blood may do you honour.”

And Gavin was in Cairo before Marjory got his hurried letter. Douglas met Savage then with news of departure—a friend would be in Cairo; it was imperative that he be there to receive him, and John Savage was loath to part with his friend.

“I think,” said he to Irene, “that we will forget sickness and sorrow and death for a little, and the madness of the world, and go for a little to live where there is music and laughter.”

Irene smiled. “And that means . . .”

“That means that my friend, who calls himself Stuart, and your friend, his daughter, intend packing back to Cairo. I like Cairo and you’ll like it, and I think we might travel together and see Coptic churches, and mosques, and bazaars, and have dinner on the spacious balconies of famous hotels, and watch the world going by.”

And Irene was glad to think of a respite for a little, and ashamed to be glad.

“I think it is wrong to be happy now. I feel that there should be nothing but sternness, and duty, and God, in the hearts of people who have only to work and wait while men are slaying men, and God is gone a-hunting in other worlds.”

Savage stared at his daughter.

“Do you know,” said he, “that is the first time I have ever heard you speak of relig—of the Almighty?”

“I know,” cried his daughter. “All my life I have cried, and got my plaything. I have taken service as my right. I have done nothing, nothing, nothing. I have sent no man to fight for God and the King——”

“There is no king in the United States,” said Savage, but his daughter was unheeding.

“—— knowing that if die he must, there will be one to venerate his memory. I have not been one of those great women who have loved freedom and right so well that they could bear the torture of absence, the fear of death, hour by hour, day by day, for months, for years, dreading a postal messenger.”

“You must not think like that, Irene. I am old, I have given money, but you are young and you have given service; you have saved many men for other brave women——”

“I wanted—I wanted to save one for myself,” said Irene, and laughed through tears.

“Persevere, my dear; but a little while out of harness will refresh you, like a colt roaming in grass land for a little.”

So Irene and her father travelled to Cairo with Sholto and Marjory—a Marjory that Irene had never known, a girl who could laugh so softly, so happily, that Irene was amazed.

“I am glad, glad, glad,” she whispered to Irene, “for a friend is come safe from battle, and I will hear the ring of his spurs, and the tones of his voice.”

“I have no such friend,” said Irene softly, “no friend but hard work and duty, and I think rest.”

And in her hotel Irene kept her room for two days, content to rest. She listened often with a smile to the bantering of Kitty, her maid, with Dungannon. She would have no advice from Prim Sheppard. All she wanted was rest.

Her father sat with her and petted her. “I knew, honey, that you were tired out. It is only at the halt you find how tiresome and weary was the march.

The march is the main thing, but take you the advantage of the halt."

On another day, after Irene had driven with him in the city, Savage came to her room.

"We've to dine with our friends to-night," said he, "if you feel fit. I've seen Marjory's friend. If I had had a son, he might have been like him. There's a dance of sorts in the hotel to-night. That should do you good too."

"I'd like to see Marjory happy," said Irene. "Please accept the invitation, and go away and smoke now, for I know you want to; and I'll think of what to wear, and then you'll be proud of your little girl, even if she isn't a boy, and I've lots of letters to write till it's time to dress."

"In a little time she heard Dungannon's voice, and smiled to hear Kitty tell him the mistress was lying down with a headache.

"I've news will make her sit up wid a heartache," said the Irishman.

And when he stood before her, his eyes were shining strangely.

"What is it, Patrick?" said Irene.

"It's your husband, ma'am, the wan ye did not marry, he's after having speech wi' me. He's for home," said Patrick.

I think that Irene knew that that evening she should meet him. She took infinite pains with her dressing, noting that her colour was high, and her eyes bright. There was a pleasant trembling in her limbs. She saw her lips moving, and laughed to know that already she was rehearsing how this meeting should go. Jim would meet her face to face in

a corridor, or she would see him seated on the balcony, but Marjory was not once in her thoughts at all.

There were many people gathered to dine, officers on leave, staff officers, boys bronzed with the desert sun; there were beautiful women gathered, and yet many eyes were turned on Irene when she entered the dining-room with her father. Her eyes scanned different groups swiftly, but she saw no one resembling her boy in armour, and then Marjory was welcoming her, and she heard herself being introduced to Colonel Douglas. She saw the swarthy soldier bow slightly, met his steady blue eyes, and smiled, knowing that the room was growing dark before her, that her lips could utter no sound, knowing that Marjory's friend, who had come safely from battle, was her boy in armour. And as Gavin sat, Irene saw a dull red creep beneath his tan, but knew not that the man was holding himself to ridicule—he, a hobbledehoy, to talk of marriage to this lady, to force his silly love—to plead for kisses. What excuse was boyhood, or a daft training, for such ill-breeding, such unspeakable impertinence?

She must be nauseated still at the recollection, thought Gavin, and bowed his head in shame. And then he remembered her little letter. He looked at Irene's hands; he visualised the white figure writing hurriedly. He was not conscious that Marjory was puzzled at his silence. Irene seemed to listen, but she was thinking, trying to count on what should be happening an hour hence. She saw Marjory look at Gavin and answer eagerly—did he question her? And to this day she has not any idea of what she ate.

The meal finished, they made their way to a lounge, and again Irene watched Gavin and Marjory talk

and laugh like comrades. She felt lonely suddenly, as though all her life had been futile. She had no comrade, and yet she felt Gavin's eyes on her.

Then Savage proposed a turn to the ballroom. Marjory came near to Irene.

"I will not dance," said she, "but perhaps you will come to me after you have danced a little."

Sholto and Savage walked with Marjory between them up the wide carpeted stairway. Irene remembered always a bronze female statuette holding a lamp, and Marjory walking slowly upstairs with never a backward look.

She felt her hand on Gavin's arm, heard his voice speaking, and was suddenly afraid—afraid that she should not be able to speak at all. They glided away in a waltz, and once Irene looked quickly up at her partner and hurriedly looked away. She felt gauche; she wanted to talk, but could find no beginning of words.

"I am afraid I do not dance very well," said Gavin. "I have *wasted an awful lot of time.*"

Irene looked at him, her mind a riot of thoughts. She felt afraid. She wanted to run away from him, and Gavin Douglas felt clumsy beside this shy little lady.

"I will go to see Marjory, please," said she, and bowed, and Gavin led her to her father, and took farewell of her.

CHAPTER IV.

IRENE AND MARJORY.

AND Marjory waited, motionless, on piled silken cushions, waited, patient as the East, but at her throat a little pulse throbbed, so that her silver scarf, shimmering, and heavy, and clinging, moved with a soft rustling. Through the open window a dim light, red-shaded, flooded the leaves of a palm; there came from far away the insistent tuck of a little drum and a voice singing. "How many days, how many nights?"—the cry of a wanderer. Beyond a heavy curtain her white narrow bed showed, cold and white like a vestal couch, and at the foot thereof a little Arab maiden lay as though asleep, a red rose at her feet. Dull silver gleamed at her waist, a broad belt, embossed and chased and carved, with all manner of little chains rustling with the gauzy black gown, in black and silver like a Queen of Night she waited. In her hair a diamond star glowed with primeval fires.

So Irene found her—Irene a shimmer of white, her eyes wide, her cheeks red with mantling blood, her white bosom rebellious—Irene glowing with pride in her beauty.

Through long dim corridors she had come; cor-

ridors with red granite pillars, deep windowed, with couches in secret places; corridors where white-clad servants moved silently, like flitting ghosts in dim spaces—the music was rioting in her blood. She came armed in beauty, the West awake.

Marjory Douglas bowed, as a palm-tree sways to the desert wind.

“You have come,” said she; “welcome!” and her voice was deep and soft like music. She clapped her hands gently. A silent-footed servant entered, bearing a silver tray and frosted glasses.

“Something of coldness we know in these hot lands, yet have we not the clear cold streams of the North, where the stars are cold, and the sun afar off.”

“Some day, perhaps, you will come *home*,” said Irene, her lips moist, the frosted glass poised in her hand. “Come home and see the cool streams, and the flowers, and—and everything.”

“What is there for me in that cold land, thronged with women—women striving with men, with no wide spaces, but paved ways everywhere, and no great desert winds onrushing, but cold blasts blowing in straight streets, and rain beating—what is there for me in that place?” Here was a new Marjory.

“Why, there are millions of things to see—beautiful gowns, beautiful women, great buildings, great ships, wonderful shops, a paradise for women, dances——” Irene was breathless.

“Ah!” said Marjory, “dances. Do you know of dancing in the West? I will dance some day when I am not any more a maid, dance as Miriam danced.” Her slow smile hovered, her eyes narrowed. “See,” she whispered, “you strange maiden, come from a man’s arm who is not your lord, see,” and she kicked

off her little shoes. There came a low murmur of music, wild and barbaric . . .

“You are a girl, you are a girl, sure,” said Irene. “I loved you taking off your stockings,” for Marjory had done that, “and he is my lord, I think.”

A sort of wildness came into Marjory’s face.

“A Western woman’s lord—what is he—what would you of him? To stand silent while you speak to other men, to open doors, to be always a slave? Do you take him, the lion of the desert, back to these little things?” Her body swayed a little. Her voice was low like a whisper.

“See in the night, unknown, I have ridden in his train. I have heard his voice calm a great war steed. I have loved the anger and the patience in it. I have seen the curving of his stern lips in my dreams—that stern mouth. I have seen his sword like the flaming brand of Michael, I have heard his voice in song in the thick of fight. Ah, well the Bedouin knew his gleaming brand. In single combat I saw him slay a man, a bearded man of power——” Her eyes were lit up, her lips smiled. “What do you know of such as he? Have you seen horses rearing, with gleaming teeth—great gleaming teeth a lather of bloody foam? Have you seen a horse borne back on his haunches, with little leaps, and the red sand trampled? Have you seen a warrior rise in his irons, and the bright blade sheer home? Have you seen him spring to horse when my father’s household—desert born—would fain have slept? What have you for such as he?”

I think that Irene was afraid. Her words would not come—she was breathless and yet without exertion.

“I have myself—my—my body, and my soul, and my love,” said she, and she looked at Marjory as a child looks being questioned, and yet not sure.

“The beauty of your body to delight him—you have that. Your soul! I knew not that women had souls—and your love! You strange woman, what do you know of love? Love to you is the homage of a man, the envy of women, the delight of dressing, the power over other men, the withholding of the so beautiful body. Love!” she whispered, and was still. “Love to me is giving—the beauty of my body, does it pleasure my lord? It is well. Can my hands over his heart bring him joy? Can his head find rest on my heart? Is he restless in the night, does he dream of war? Ah, then, to be awake to hold him, to whisper peace, to lie in the bend of his arm, to lay an arm gently on the arch of his chest and look at him, to walk on burning sands that he may ride, to labour with my hands that he may rest in shade. Love! this is my love,” and gently she moved, with eyes afraid to look up, trembling like a bride newly wed, her hands a-flutter; then in a little, looking upwards, one hand at her heart—how the music throbbed—backwards she trod slowly, slowly, a smiling in her eyes growing and growing. Her lips parted, slowly her hands moved to her hair, the jewelled star was withdrawn, and Marjory held a long thin dagger in her hand. Her hair fell around her like a night cloud, and the proud little head shook it back—a very girl’s ploy—oh so bravely, then the arms outstretched wide, wide; the dagger fell from her hand. Her eyes were soft, and looking upwards. Irene pressed hard against the wall. Her teeth were clenched; all unheeded the

tears clung to her long lashes; but in her heart, in the very elements of her being, there was hate. Marjory swayed forwards, her hands trembling at the clasps of her silver girdle—the heavy scarf was fallen—her eyes were aflame with love—the music was a madness of abandon.

“I kissed him, kissed him—hard.” Her own voice frightened Irene. “Kissed his stern mouth—it is mine—he is mine—he is all mine.”

A sort of tremor shook the dancer, between her brows a line formed, the blood ebbed from her face and bosom, her hand groped for the dagger. She was the East afire. Before Irene she came, her little laugh was joyous, was full of pride.

“For a moment—for a moment I would have slain thee, but is there woman born of woman could say *no* to my lord to be? Go, woman, go and speak to him among strange men, you that had, yet could not hold. A boy’s kiss—see, I take it back,” and lightly her lips touched Irene’s mouth. “Some day, ah, one day my lord will kiss my feet. You know,” she whispered, “you know. A boy’s kiss,” and again came her low laughter. “In the streets, in many cities he is known; behind closed shutters women whisper his name, Assyrian beauties dream long behind their veils; my little slave will whine the Gaiour’s name asleep across my feet. Go, go to him—so will not I—yet will the desert fight for me—the call of the sands is in his heart, and I am of the sands—*we are birds of the mountain!* For you there is the lights of cities, the throng of people, the admiration of men, but oh, one day my lord will kiss my feet, and his son’s hand lie like a flower at my throat.”

Suddenly she clasped Irene in her arms and kissed her fiercely on the lips, again and again. "Go," she whispered, "go quickly."

Again sat Marjory alone, her little brown hand at her brow; then slowly she moved to a writing-table.

"Sit down," said she, and smiled, "sit down and write swiftly." There seemed a fierceness of resolve on her dark face.

In neat Arab writing she penned her message to the Amir Abdul.

"The war is blown by in the desert, and I will return to my father's house, and gather together again our people. When he returns from his journey in cold Western lands, my lord will doubtless rest his horses under the shadow of our walls, and suffer his handmaiden to bring water for his feet, and a change of raiment . . .

"May Allah, the all-powerful, be thy strength."

With much care she sealed her note and summoned a man-servant.

"Deliver this to the hand of the Lord Abdul, and fetch me from the bazaar perfume—and from without the city, a little sand," and to the little maid who lay in the inner room awaiting her—

"Thou heardest," said she. "See, then, that Mahmud be given money that he fetch to-day a tunic of his master's, that I may work a charm, for luck against his far journey."

The little maid bowed and retired, and her mistress sat alone.

CHAPTER V.

IRENE AND GAVIN.

IRENE flung herself on her bed, her eyes wide, the pupils dilated. Ever and anon her lips quivered, her chin moved like a vexed child's. When stinging tears came to her, she shook her little head as though to stay them. Her hands were clenched on her bosom. Did she close her eyes, she could see again the dark beauty of Marjory, the slim graceful limbs moving, the sheer loveliness of her face and throat—"a bird of the mountain," she whispered, "wild and free, and fierce to love or hate." She saw the rich dark mass of her hair, saw again the long fingers pluck blindly at the silver girdle, the eyes with love no longer languorous, but ablaze to meet love. Then she knew in a flash, what before she had known but dimly. It had been a bridal dance. A little low cry left Irene's lips, a long shudder went over her. What did she know of love? All her life she had had deference—except—except from her boy in armour. Now she knew that she craved more, craved to be desired, to be taken, to be held to a man's heart, to wind her arms round him, to give herself up soul and body.

Her father's words flashed into her mind. "Had

you had a brother, honey, he might ha' been like that." She saw again the wistful look in his eyes, the look of the man with no son and no grandson. Listlessly she rose and slowly undressed, moving silently. She would bathe and then lie in the hot darkness, wide-eyed, and dream—all her life now she must dream. If only anger would come or pride to her aid, but she could not deceive herself any more. She wanted the great dark man to love her and be gentle. She felt wee, and soft and babyish, when she thought of that other woman, so splendidly brave. She saw herself in her long mirror and smiled wanly—so white she looked, with her eyes dark-shadowed. Again there came that other, with long hands fluttering blindly at her virgin girdle. And then—then a great wave of colour rose to her very brow, her lips parted, her eyes became shamed, she leaned a little forward, her open hands pressing her throat.

Quietly she turned the taps for her bath, bare-footed she sped to her task. She twisted up her hair like a thick rope, she poured eau-de-Cologne into the water, and she laved herself, her face burning . . .

Before her mirror again she stood, a little lace cap on her hair, her feet in little slippers. Over shimmering silk she drew a great kimono. "He is my man," she whispered to her image. "He is my man, and I will go to him. . . . I am white like milk," she whispered, "and fragrant with perfume to go to my love." Then, strangest of all, she kneeled beside her bed, her arms outstretched on the coverlet, and rose, and with never another look, walked softly to the door.

She saw his great riding-boots and spurs before

his door. She must hurry lest people come—if the door were locked—if—if there should be any one with him. Then again, “He is my man.” At her door she stood. “No,” she whispered, “no, I will not do this shameful thing. I will not live to scorn my father’s daughter.” For a little while she would stand and look out over the dark city. Suddenly a door opened wide, and Gavin stood before her.

Her hands stretched towards him, she tottered forward.

“I’m not wicked, Jim—oh, I’m not a wicked girl,” she whispered, her trampled resolve still in her mind, and she clung to his tunic in a passion of weeping. She felt herself gathered into his arms. She breathed in short gasps. Against her side she could feel the beat of his heart. His hand lifted her head till her eyes were looking at his, his face seemed cruel and scornful. She could not keep her eyes open, but let the eyelids flutter down. If only he would speak! And yet she was afraid of what he might say. His eyes were burning down into hers, his mouth was close above hers. What would Marjory do? Well, she cared not. She was in the arms of her man.

“I am a good girl,” she whispered, “I am only yours,” and there came a little smile to her face, as his face came nearer. She was lifted off her feet. His lips were burning, his hands gripping her cruelly, but she cared not. She clung to him, her lips answering kiss with kiss. She was conscious of the length of his limbs, of the tremendous girth of him, for her arms could not go round him. Her hair was falling round her, and she knew by his glance that he loved it. Why should she have shame? He was her man. What were father and country now? She

thought of herself as of a stream wandering amidst forgotten meadows, by far inland bridges, in far still backwaters, its destination unknown, its destiny unfulfilled, and then seething and onrushing, leaping in love to the sea. He set her on a couch, and looking at him, she saw that he was angry. There was a scowl on his brow, and with a new vision, she knew that she had aroused all the evil in his nature. Passion and anger are twin brothers in the household of Hate and Love. She knew that love must war with evil, and she feared not. The man who could calm a great war steed would put a bridle of iron on himself. Yet after passion, there might come tenderness, if he loved her; but if he had no love, might not he turn from her, drive her from his side? Might not he keep her here, then cast her aside like a soiled glove after—after . . . and return to that desert woman?

“Oh, Jim,” she cried, “do you love her?” Her eyes met his bravely and refused to be looked down.

“I don’t know love,” said he in a snarl, but she felt his hand tighten on her shoulder, and with his words she clung to him, pressed herself to him.

“Well, know it soon, my dear, know it soon,” her voice broke pitifully, “for I—I—c-can’t bear much more.”

“Have you a revolver hidden about you?” he sneered at her, but she only smiled.

“Where have you jumped to now?” she whispered softly. She lifted his hand and put it at her cheek, and rubbed her cheek against it. “I was keeping myself for my man—for you,” said Irene. “You will not be angry for that.” She could not look away from him—wave after wave of love surged

through her. She must hold him in her arms—she wanted to hurt him, that her own pent-up feelings might be let loose. Her little slippers had fallen, her feet were bare.

“Ah, one day,” she whispered, “my love will kiss my feet.” She saw Marjory as in a vision, and leaped to her feet and stood back from Gavin, her eyes afire, her bosom rising and falling. “Tell me you love me,” she said in a low whisper, fierce like a hot wind. “Tell me—tell me . . .” He was coming nearer to her, but she beat him off. “Tell me,” she panted, “tell me.” She felt herself swept off her feet, into his arms, like a child. He was kissing her lips, her eyes, her chin, her throat.

“No,” he said, “no, I will not tell you; but, by God, you will tell me instead!”

“You know,” she whispered, “you know. Look at me. I love you—love you—love you more than heaven and earth. I have been cold to the world, cold and proud and haughty in the day before the world, but at night—at night I have lain with my arms wide for my husband, that loved me once long ago . . .”

“You little lass,” said Gavin, “you brave little lass! . . .”

“And—and when I found you, you were cold. I might have been a chair, or a table, and that—that woman—I hate her! I tell you I hate her, for she said you were not mine—you did not love me—that other women loved you—oh, horrible!”

“And are you my wife truly?” said Gavin, and she saw him smiling. She could not speak at first, but she nodded her head like a child. “Oh yes,” she sobbed, “oh yes, I must be . . .”

He mocked her then. "All mine! Will I brand you as I brand my horses, with a bleeding heart?"

"My darling," she cried, "oh! you have—you have already—feel here!" She held his hand to her breast. "Do you feel your brand," she whispered, "aching and burning?"

He put her back from him a little. "Stand up," he said, "like a brave lass. You would not be shy before your man"—for her eyes were pleading.

"Ah, do not be cruel any more!" she whispered. "Do not make me stand away from you and look at me."

"No, but stand!" said he. "I love you to stand. Now," said he, "I never loved till I met you, when I was a daft boy. I have never loved but you, in all my life. Horses and cattle and men I have dealt with and found peace, but always, when I thought of you, I knew that I had missed the greatest thing."

Suddenly he drew her towards him. "Do you know," he whispered, "do you know that to-night when you sat opposite me, I never heard one word, but your words? To-night I could have come to you and carried you off and made you love me—do you hear?—made you love me, but for shame of that other time long ago!"

"But I did love you, darling." She patted him and pulled his head down till her lips were at his ear. "I prayed for you to come," said she, and buried her face against him. "Sure you are my husband, darling—sure yes?" said Irene.

"Do you know," said Gavin, "that I think yon marriage was not right? You had not been domiciled in Scotland . . ."

Irene's head bent lower. "I know," she whis-

pered, "I know, but—but if you like I-I'll risk it. Oh don't, dear," she whispered, "don't!" for Gavin's laughter filled the dim corridor, and always she must laugh when he laughed. So had he laughed at her in the Look-Out. Then in a little she lay against his heart. "I'm glad you met me first," said Irene, with a little air of wisdom. "I am not beautiful like that—like Marjory, and she loves you, Jim; I know she loves you."

She saw an impatient frown gather on his brow, for she was watching like a jealous woman, and said she, "I will never speak of her again—never—never!"

"And that would be a pity too," said Gavin, "for Marjory is a very fine lass and brave, and she will grace an Arab's tent, and maybe—maybe if things would go right—Marjory might yet be a princess, and maybe—but," said he, "a bird of the air shall carry the matter. Are you a little spy, darling . . . ?"

"I think that I must be a little beast, but I hate that woman. Do you love her?" said she.

Gavin smiled.

"Did you ever love her?"

It was droll to think that Irene had beaten her pride to the ground, had humbled herself, forgotten her imperiousness, her hauteur, forgotten everything but her love, and yet when she said, "Did you *ever* love her?" her tone was haughty, her eyes sparkled. But she had her master, and I think that she knew it.

"My dear," said Gavin, and his voice was stern, "If I loved her, do you think that *you* would be here?"

At that answer Irene quivered a little.

"I'll go," came to her tongue, but she stopped in

time. "He might let me," she thought, and laughed away down in her heart, that wisdom had come to her. She lay silent in his arms, in a little bay of a window, in her heart a great thankfulness that she had weathered the storm, for she knew that he loved her. She had been—was his to take. She had thought when he had swept her up into his arms, that on the morrow she might be neither maid nor wife—but now—now she knew that passion could not have satisfied her. She must have love, and she loved to lie in his arms, but with that came other thoughts. Had any other lain there? Could she always keep him? And then she resolved that she would take him from this land. He must have hard work and hard play, and she would be always sweet and fragrant, listening to his plans. She almost slept, her arms around him, her head on his breast.

She wakened with his lips on hers. The day was breaking.

"Hurry," said he, "we must have something to remember this day. In seven minutes," said he, "I'll be waiting for you, to drive you to the desert."

"Oh, Jim!" she whispered, and then, "Well, kiss me," and she sped to her door. She dressed with care, she must be *nice*, and then she stood with a wrap on her arm waiting. He came to her, long striding, smiling like a boy. The streets were all but deserted. As the great car started, Irene looked back at the hotel, but there was a glamour around her and she did not see a dark face gazing with unseeing eyes over the sleeping city.

The air was cool, the gardens exhaled beautiful perfume of wet flowers. There passed them long

convoys of camels carrying loads of yellow stone, old men seated on donkeys, and black-veiled women walking barefoot. Here and there groups of people still slept by the wayside under trees. She saw great black birds like crows sleeping in the crannies of houses. A little way from the Pyramids they left the car and walked. The sand was trampled with innumerable footprints. There seemed also a white ghostly mist clinging. The stillness was broken by the snarling of barracked camels. Low down in the heavens there were long bars of dark cloud; the Sphinx was a great dim mass. On the desert they stood beside some fallen stones.

“Look!” said Gavin, and pointed to the east.

Irene leaned against him, his arm round her shoulders.

“Look, my love,” said he, “the new day dawns for the East,” and in the new morning, when the sands were flooded with the red light, beneath the shadow of the great silent tombs of effort—sign manual in stone of a past power—Gavin Douglas took Irene Savage in his arms gently, as a man takes a maid, and kissed her lips, and she knew herself beloved.

The dark leaden bars of cloud were lighted up, the edges burnished and glorious. Fluffy little clouds were ablaze like fire. Away across the sand were black shadows of moving camels; the drivers were singing. Gavin looked at the Pyramids, and Napoleon’s words came to him, “Soldiers, remember that from these Pyramids forty centuries watch your deeds.” He mused on the Pharaohs, the Israelites; he visualised naked men working, building and hewing, and singing as they dragged a great

stone into position. "Forty centuries watch your deeds."

"I wonder if they noticed the soldier who knocked the nose from the Sphinx," said Irene.

"That," said Gavin, "is the remark of Mairi Voullie Vhor . . ."

"Have you written always since—since you came away from the Rock?"

"I sent a Service postcard."

"Well," said Irene, "to-day you will send a long telegram." Suddenly she came closer to him and whispered, "Thanks, thanks, thanks, for this bright morning, but last night—last night I must speak to you or die."

Bright and early came Patrick Dungannon to Irene's door and knocked. A low singing came from inside.

"Sure," says Dungannon, "phwat's Kitty singing for this morning?"

The maid came to the door smiling.

"The misthress is not awake," said she. "We won't require you to-day. Lave off wid ye," says she, for Dungannon's hand had clasped her waist.

"The day might come, Kitty darlin', and ye want-ing me, and I might be gone on my travels again. I slep' last night alongside av a boy from Mullingar, and he told me he had gone through the gates av Gaza. Could ye imagine it?"

"I could not now," said Kitty; "and I wouldn't av I could. Gid away wid ye, alongside av a boy from Mullingar indade. Ye're ondacent."

"Kitty asthore, ye wouldn't lave me like the boy from Cushendun?"

“I never knowed him, Pat,” said Kitty; “but I would leave you like a knotless thread for all that.”

“Well now. ‘The boy from Cushendun turned his face another road, and whatever luck has followed him was never rightly knowed,’ and that’s what will become av me. Av I had been born rich, it’s a ganius I wud av bin.”

“It’s a bla’guard ye wud av bin, ye mane,” said Kitty. “Quit foolin’,” says she, with a droll American twang on her soft Irish brogue, “for I’ve lost a pair av boots wid white uppers, and tassels on the laces av them.”

“Maybe the misthress is slapin’ in them,” said Dungannon hopefully. Kitty gave him a look.

“Slapin’ your grandmother—and she was Docherty.”

“Soul, and that reminds me av my ould mother in Avoca, Kitty. She told me the curse av Reuben would be on me till I found a lass that would lift it. I never knowed Reuben, but he was a powerful curser, for have I not wandered on the face av the green earth since I was eleven years old?”

“I wish ye would wander away from here, Patrick,” said Kitty, and came nearer. “Does your mother be in Avoca now?”

“She does,” said Dungannon. “Will ye be so good now as to look afther her boy. I’m a thrifle dry in the hide wid this hot weather, but soul I’m good for another forty years.”

“Has she a bit av a place?” says Kitty, and this time she stood closer yet.

“I’ve houked praties yonder, Kitty, wid open your eyes, ‘white rocks’ and ‘champions,’ darling—and cruffles.”

“Well, then,” says Kitty, “I’ll take ye, Pat, if you’ll be good . . .”

Dungannon was in the act of paying some tender respects to his Kitty, and indeed she seemed to be expecting that same, for her eyes were on his face, and he looking suddenly saw her mouth open. She was looking over his shoulder. Dungannon spun round, and there was Gavin’s servant.

“Phwat the devil d’ye want, Mahmud?” says he, loosing his belt.

“Ashpan would be more like it,” says Kitty. “Batter him, Pat dear.”

But Mahmud retired to the door of Gavin’s room. “Effendi no’ sleep,” said he; “Effendi no’ sleep. Boots no’ got—everything have got, boots *no’* got,” and he grinned.

Kitty’s face changed. She darted to her mistress’s door and opened it. The bed had not been slept in.

“Dungannon,” she cried, quickly folding garments silk and gauzy and foamy with lace, “Dungannon, the mistress was not in her bed last night.” Kitty began to tremble. “Who is this for an Effendi that’s across the corridor?”

Dungannon seemed strangely moved. “I would rather not say, Kitty darlint, but the finest boy of boys between this and the Cove av Cork. I wance worked till his father.”

“Is it the powerful tall boy wid the proud set to his head, and dark in the complexion?”

“Ye have him, Kitty.”

“If the misthress has him, it will be the less matter,” said Kitty, and sat down.

“I’ll tell you a secret,” says Dungannon. “There should be none between us now. I was a witness at

their weddin' sivin year ago till a day, and begob, Kitty, the first sivin's the worst, they do be sayin'."

Kitty was smiling and singing about the room all that morning after her mistress returned radiant as dawn. Dungannon was smarter in his uniform than usual, if that were possible. Miss Sheppard could not understand. She wearied to get back to Alexandria, where at least there was a sea. All her prim world had tumbled about her ears. She might never see America again, never again sail past the statue of Liberty. Her thoughts were rudely shattered. Irene entered her room—a changed Irene—a soft radiant creature, smiling often, full of eagerness.

"I have invited Colonel Douglas to lunch," said she. "Will you be very kind and leave them afterwards, my father and he . . ."

Miss Sheppard rose slowly; she looked at Irene. "How long have you known him?" said she.

"Seven years and one day," said Irene.

At lunch Savage was keen, like an old war-horse. He talked brilliantly. Irene wondered, and was pleased to sit silent and listen. She wanted to touch Gavin with her foot, just to let him know that she was loving him. She could not eat; her mind was picturing the night before.

Gavin talked of his life in the desert, of the tremendous wealth yet to be garnered, in dates, copper, salt, oil, and grain. He painted a glowing picture of a new kingdom, of nomads changing to dwellers in great cities, of new peace and safety for the children of the desert. He talked best of his horses, talked as a lover of horses. Savage thought of a son.

Here was a man who would go far—already he had put his money on a wise road. This was a man after his own heart.

Her father's voice roused her.

“Where were you born, Colonel?” said Savage.

“London,” said Gavin, “but I spent my life on an island on the West Coast of Scotland—the Rock it is called.”

Irene laughed. For the life of her she could not refrain from laughing. Her father looked at her, then at Douglas.

“Say,” said he, “you're not the boy my daughter shot?”

“Well, I think I am,” said Gavin; “she brought me down very well too.”

“For keeps, it seems,” said the millionaire.

CHAPTER VI.

DUNGANNON'S LETTER.

IN these days the hearts of the people were changed, the petty troubles were forgotten, the youth was in the tented field, the men of years and women called on God. Mairi on the lonely Rock would hear the chime of the kirk bell at midday, and always her prayer was the same, "God put the shot by Gavin. Bless our ain lads, and pit smiddum into the English." No matter her task, that was always her prayer. "But och, Pate," she would say, "I turn to the East like a heathen, and try to send word to him, but a' the length I get is just Ardrossan. I canna go past Ardrossan except I hiv the big Bible with the pictures o' Apollyon chained to the chariot, and no' such an ill-looking man either, chained or no'."

The loch was changed. Across the south entrance was a great net of wire ropes and a little drifter swinging like a doorway.

"Never would I hiv believed it," said Pate; "many's the time I h'ard tell of a great chain that was across the south entrance, and a windlass for lowering and raising it for vessels, at the Point, close to the Vikings' graves and the old round tower, but

never did I believe it till the now. And what's more," said he, "here are we chained in wi' booms across the north and south entrance, and the bay fu' o' great ships like the old sailing days, and ye can whistle for a' the wrack that'll come in here, for it's just chained out with the submarines. Blow high, blow low, there will be nae wrack for early tatties."

Daily he rowed across for the papers, and on one such day he pulled up the skiff and ran to the house.

"God be praised!" cried Mairi, "Pate Dol is ringing; the war must be bye."

"Do ye ken whit I hiv here?" cried Pate.

"Aye, ye hiv a letter, Pate; is it frae Gavin, or your mother's uncle that went to foreign parts?"

"My mother's uncle's dust in foreign parts for a' I ken. This is a letter. It's mair than that; it's an epistle as long," said he, "as the 119th Psalm, and it's frae Dungannon. Come ben the house. Listen!" said he. "This is how he starts . . .

"When we sailed away from ye that night, we laid a course for the western ocean, and she was the dirty devil to rowl yon yat, but a fine meal of meat aboard of her, and grog for the asking. The young misthress that said she was not Gavin's spouse was a bonny sailor, and soul o' me! it's me that would be tellin' her the tales, me wi' a guernsey with white letters on my chest like the sternboard of a pleasure boat, and a round kep, and a white top until it. It is a droll thing to me that them great folk with lashing of coin, must be for ever on the go, from wan house to another house, and shoals of claes, split new the ouldest of them, every wan."

"He's across," said Mairi.

“Aye, to America; but listen, woman,” and Pate read on—

“When it was not digging I would be at, or raking walks and sweeping leaves, it would be a hunting trip in the West, with double-lined tents and waterproof sheets—soul, it was a warning if I had knowed it, the tents and sheets,—but always on the go, and no staying in wan place to get acquaint with the trees of it, let alone the people. But the money was good, and the warmest sate in the kitchen for Dungannon, even if I would be working in the stokehold av the houses to raise the heat for them. There are no rale fires in all this place, but what they will be naming a central heating, and that’s a poor thing to draw up your chair to. Whiles I would be looking after luggage and guns, and travelling in trains, and whiles I would have a horse to strap; but no matter, I was always with the big folk, and the young misthress often listening to the fiddle, especially M’Pherson’s Rant, for that was the wan that I played on the Rock when I cam’ ashore from the *Port Errol* and met Gavin, and him a child, and many’s the young fellow would be paying her court, but no wan especially, and she would be whiles chief with wan and whiles another, but at night she would be for the fiddle and her eyes looking back o’ beyond. The auld fellow, her father—trog and a lad too—would be here and there. ‘Tall hair’ and ‘queer fellow,’ he would call me and MacGinnis, and the war found us in the Mediterranean. I saw a stout ship brought to at Gibraltar with a little shell across her hawse, brought to rightly, and I knowed that the English were in earnest.

“‘What was that?’ cried the young misthress.

“ ‘That,’ said the father of her, ‘was the birthday gun av a new race av argentocracy. That,’ says he, ‘was the last volley over the grave av the ancient ordher, but what ancient ordher it would be I cannot come at.’ I saw the Pharos at Alexandria and a dead mule in the wan glance—a dead mule floating out to sea and a seagull on it. I was thinking it was like Peter’s cow—it had altered most terrible to be letting a bird roost on it. They turned the yacht into a hospital, and they made me what they call an ortherly, and by me soul the barnacles on her keel will be a fut thick and the weed like an old man’s beard. The young misthress has a uniform on her, and doctors come here and nurses to attend the bhoys lying white. It’s the ortherly that has to listen to them crying out in the night with thick voices. Did not wan Irish bhoy cry aloud for a glass av butthermilk? Oh, Jesus, think av it, an’ all I had was a skush out of a gas-engine.

“I was for a trip to a place they call Cairo, a wonderful fine place, and the first sight that I rightly remember was in a public pleasure garden at the dusk, and on a sate there was a sodger and a wild west hat on him, smoking on a bench, and a little bit of a girl with a white veil below her eyes, and her smoking too, and his arm round her. They were not speaking much, and says I till him, for I was an ortherly, says I, ‘What wey will ye manage?’ and he said, ‘Rightly, rightly,’ says he; ‘skidoo, daddy, it’s a great war,’ but I liked the little wan that was smoking . . .”

“The devil mend him; I warrant ye he wad that—him and his smoking weemen.”

“Are ye talking?” said Pate; “there’s weemen smoking here.”

“Aye, and they’ll smoke hereafter,” snapped Mairi; “go on wi’ the body’s clatter.”

“The great thing the gentry do here is to go round mosques, wid goloshes on their feet that niggers put on till them at the door, like a public bowling-green, and hordes of beggars sitting airing their blemishes; but for me I would be watching the merchants playing at a game like a cross between dominoes and tiddley-winks, and them grave grown men, or else sitting by the roadside smoking a pipe like the sign in a chemist’s window—begob, whiles I would be on the racecourse, and it’s easy money, if ye have an eye for an Arab horse. They sell ye the devil’s own muck for dhrinks in the street, clinking their brass cups like the bells o’ Armagh. Well, wan day when the mistress was at a mosque or a museum, or seeing where Moses came out av the rushes, I disremember, I was wandering about and looking at a quare fine statue of a man on horseback in the middle av a square, when I h’ard a terrible piping and crying, and along comes a funeral wid ten Egyptians in trousers and red tarbrushes playing the bagpipes, and making terrible work o’ the Barren Rocks. Astern av them came a mob av wimen and their hair flying and their bodices improper, and throwing dhust and ashes on the heads of the spectators and crying dolefully, like a keening long ago. Their faces were scratched and wee kind o’ thimbles stuck ontill their noses, but I have no knowledge how they are to be made fast there. Well, with this and with that I disremember the distance I followed, but I was lookin’ up at a window where a woman was raisin’ a wail, and trying to fling herself on to the stones below.

“ ‘Yon will be the widow, the poor creature,’ says I to myself, and a hand fell on me and sphun me round like a peerie, and God save ye! Gavin Douglas was looking down at me.”

“Ah ha!” says Mairi in her most bitter tones, “that would waken him, as Johnnie M’Dougal said to the coo when he cut her throt.”

Pate gave her a look and continued.

“I stepped back three paces and saluted. ‘It came over me to go away yon time, sir,’ said I. ‘I could not help myself.’

“Faith, his eyes were blazing blue wid a droop at the corners av the lid, and little white lines where another man has wrinkles. That would be wid the glare av the sun, and the face of him like the colour av saddle leather, and him moulded into his uniform. ‘My ortherly will take you to me, Dungannon,’ says he in a queer voice. ‘I’m glad to see the face av a man I know,’ and he talked to his ortherly and left us. The ortherly was as black as your hat, with white teeth and a nate little duck tattooed at the corner av his eye, and the marks av a camel’s teeth on his cheek.

“ ‘Kom, Misther Soldier,’ says he, ‘me bloody good guide.’ ‘And that is a very good start,’ says I. ‘Guide me to the officer.’

“ ‘Yes, a’ right,’ says he, and grins.

“Mahmud he called himself, and sowl, here he leads me to the very hotel where the misthress is wid her father. I took a pair av white boots in me hand, and I goes to her door, for I’m a batman when I’m not an ortherly, and I knocked.

“Her little maid comes sniffing at the pipe-clayed shoes like there might be all the plagues o’ Egypt

on them. 'You cannot see Miss Irene,' says she; 'she's lying down with the headache.'

"'Faith,' says I, 'Kitty, I've news 'll make her sit up wid a heartache.'

"She was a little wan and tired-looking when I got to her, but smiled for all that.

"'What is it now, Dungannon?' says she.

"'It's your husband, ma'am,' says I; 'he's living three doors along from ye in this house, and he wants speech with me.'

"'Jim!' It was a great cry, and 'Oh, at last!' and then she flopped down and lay as white and cold as a snowdrop in an ash-heap . . .

"This is all at present from

"P. DUNGANNON."

Pate took off his glasses and rubbed his eyes.

"It's good," says he, "that they are all quite well."

"Quite well!" said Mairi, "and the lass left lying on a divan! The devil mend this Dungannon, he never kent where to stop. But give me the letter for the mistress, for she's been praying for the like o' this."

But when Mairi had gone hurrying with the letter, coughing an important cough, and moving her feet in a fashion she had, when there was something of moment to tell to her employers—when she had done this, her husband winked to himself, and put his hand to his pocket and took therefrom a further portion of Dungannon's letter. Pate Dol, that good old man, touched his temple with his forefinger, "I have it here," said he in a mysterious manner, which might indicate that his brains were in no wise im-

paired in the lifelong battle of his married life. He betook himself to the shelter of the ruined pier, and seating himself comfortably, produced his spectacles from beneath his cap and read as follows:—

“Pate Dol—strictly private.

“Well, Pate, I hope ye’ll keep your thumb on this letter from the old woman Mairi, for I think she could hoodoo the devil—saving his presence—let alone Dunggannon. Things have progressed, as Peter said when the second twin was born, and I believe it’s me has progressed them—at all events, Gavin is to be married on his first wife, the girl I rowed to the white yacht, here in Cairo, and his relatives will be gone back to the desert on the other side of Jordan, as the hymn says, as pleasant a place as Fiddler’s Green where the sailor man goes till, and that’s seven miles on the other side of h— Maybe it will be that I’ll even manage to come back to the Rock; but if ye tell Mairi this she’ll prevent it some ways—bad cess to the dear sowl. The yacht and the young lady’s father and a lady governess ’ll be coming subsequently, I understand (but I have doubts, that the lady-companion will twist it otherwise). Sowl and Gavin and the young mistress will be in London, and Paris, and the Good Powers know where, with the Prince av the desert, till such times as he learns all the ins and outs of European ways. Belike, Gavin or the mistress will write and tell all this to his father, but ye’ll give them the word not to tell Mairi until maybe we’re clear of the submarines, for it’s my belief she’ll never can forgive me except I was coming on her sudden.

“I’m wearing for the sight of grass. It was my

grandfather did tell me that in his day all the neighbours—the decent people—did be helping each other, and they would put up a house in a day, and the night my grandmother—rest her sowl—went a bride to his house, the grass was growing green below the bed. The yearning for grass is in me strong.

“So keep your weather eye lifting for

“P. DUNGANNON.”

CHAPTER VII.

THE END.

“PATE,” said Mairi, “was it not a merciful dispensation that God took our wean?”

“Wheesht, Mairi,” said her man; “what makes ye talk like that?”

“I’ve been reading the newspapers and listening to the talk in the countryside. It is the law that a sodger must be kilt sober, but if he daur take a dram on leave, he’s a degrading sight tae the good folk that bide at hame.”

“They’re sorry, Mairi, to see a lad send his siller sic an ill gait—fine young lads gaun wrang.”

“They’re not; they’re hypocrites and Pharisees, the maist o’ the complainers. If ye had been in hell, Pate Dol, and got out, what would ye make for first?”

“A drink,” said Pate, thinking of the rich man.

“Aye, a when drinks; and if ye were to go back again, what would be your words to them that denied you a stirrup-cup?”

“I would send them to the place I came from,” said Pate.

“Ay, but to hear the talk now, ye would think that a mother should be shamed to hear her son’s

step with a swing in it. God, there are thousands o' mothers would give a' they have to hear their boy's step—if it was staggering—and they'll no'."

"The sodgers noo," said Pate, "are more the boys about the doors—dacent lads."

"Aye, the dacent lads are the sodgers that keep the doors about us, and the walls, and the roofs ower us, but the war will not be by a year when ye'll hear well-fed hearty men crying sodgers doon for drunken wasters."

"What's wrong wi' ye, lass?" said Pate.

"Just the thought of a sodger wi' a dram and the canty folks jeering. I hear the clip of rollocks," said Mairi; "put the kettle on the fire."

"It's near ten," said Pate; "how would ye hear rollocks at this time?"

"I hear the sound of a keel—listen!"

Pate opened the door.

"Not a sound," said he, "but the waves breaking—not a light to nor'ard or suthard," and he listened again. "It was like the sound o' a keel on the stones too."

"I'll put a gravat on me," said he, "for the wind's bitter at the North En'. It's time I was at the watching."¹ And the old folk went outside.

"I hear voices," whispered Mairi in the darkness, and put her hand on Pate's arm.

"It's the droll sounds in the wind and water you are hearing. Go back to a lighted room and the Book."

"No, but I am hearing voices. It's a coorse night—the steamer did not venture across."

¹ Coast watching.

“No, but there was a drifter came over from Ardrossan. I heard her screw.”

As Pate and his wife stood at the gate into the yard, there came a lively ranting air on the wind, and now and then the loup of a breaking sea would drown the sound, and again in a lown spell they would pick up the air, and the same thought was with both.

“What is it o'clock?” said Mairi, in a voice scarce above a whisper.

“About ten and flood-tide,” said Pate. “Poor Dungannon is going out with the ebb.”

“Did ye hear it, Pate? He would be thinking on this place, the pleasant cheerful soul.”

“I hear it now,” said Pate. “I hear it—and coming nearer.”

“It's M'Pherson's Rant. Go you back to a lighted room.”

“Heaven is round about us,” said Mairi.

“But for all that, we might be in hell any moment,” said Pate, “as the lad said, coming down the Ross and the near rein broken.”

“Come in and read a chapter, Pate; it will maybe help the soul to pass.”

“I'll give him a hail,” said Pate. “Patrick Dungannon,” he cried aloud, “are ye out there in the dark?”

“I am, and bogfoundered wid it. Who keeps the house, for the son av the house is on the shore. It is me was sent to warn ye.”

“Are ye in the body, in God's name?” said Pate.

“Did ever ye hear a spirit playing a fiddle?” said Mairi with bitter scorn, and ran seaward, crying in the darkness—

“Gavin, Gavin, are ye there, Gavin?” she cried,

her voice wailing in the night, like a mother searching for a lost child. "Are ye there, Gavin—Gavin?" she whimpered; "oh, Gavin!"

"I'm glaming for you, Mairi," said Gavin, and there came loud cries in Gaelic.

"I'll no' rage on ye, dear," said the old woman. "I'll no' rage on you. Come hame, my love, come hame," so she used to cry when Gavin played truant.

Gavin held her in the dark. She was whispering.

"He pít the shot by ye—he took ye from the dreadful pit, and took ye hame."

"And a wife hame with me," said Gavin, in no very matter-of-fact tone.

"And that's the least of his mercies," said Mairi, and her tone made Irene put her head back and laugh.

"Well," said she, "and that is what my father would call gall."

"Come in," cried Mairi, "come in. Are ye cold, mistress? There's fine wood fires to heat ye, an' middling peats."

And with that there came Janet Erskine hurrying, a lamp in her hand and her eyes wide.

"Is this dainty little lady my daughter, Gavin, the daughter you have brought me?"

"Take her in, mistress, for I have sheets to air. It will only be the one bed. Gavin will be wanting his ain room, it's likely."

And by some queer chance Irene's little soft hand caught Mairi's old and twisted and work-hardened, and squeezed it unseen in the dark of the porch, while the mother and son met, and by that free-masonry of women they were friends there in the dark.

Mairi took Irene's coat and held the fur against her face—there was a faint perfume clinging to the garment, a something that almost visualised the delicacy and fragrance of the wearer. The old woman patted the coat gently.

“And she's a right lass,” said she to herself, “and that's better to sleep wi' than a long pedigree.”

And Janet led Irene to Gavin's father, who had a great chair ready for her, pulled close in to the blaze of the fire, where she could warm her feet, for even the most beautiful of girls can have cold feet, and Janet Erskine ran for her own little fur-lined slippers, and Gavin knew that this was no make-believe welcome, for there are folk that take not kindly to strangers, however their good manners would try to hide it. Then they were all at the questioning.

How did they come across and no steamer, and where did they come from? And Janet Douglas went into the kitchen and welcomed Dungannon, who was the fine fellow, and Pate was putting fine split logs on fires in every end of the house, and Dungannon telling Mairi of the fine harbours in the Grecian islands, “as safe as if ye were to come to anchor in a wash-hand basin,” “and in trops I saw a ship and her half in and half out av the sea, and a couple av sloops av war staming along abreast av us. The Lord save ye, it must have been a pleasure to be at sea when there were lights in lighthouses, and sailing lights for vessels, and sowl, we thocht we were living a dog's life too.”

And later in Gavin's room, with a great fire burning, Irene sat with Janet Douglas, and there seemed more of complete understanding between these two, than between mother and son.

Janet was sitting before the blaze and Irene on a white rug at her feet, her face turned to the elder woman, whose white hand was on her hair, and there was in the eyes of the mother a look of pride and love as she looked down on the dark little head.

“I must tell you,” said Irene, “there was his cousin Marjory. I thought he loved Marjory; I don’t know why he didn’t even yet . . .”

Janet smiled. “There’s a mirror behind you, my dear,” said she.

Irene waved her hand. “No,” she whispered, “I could never be so beautiful as Marjory or so graceful,—she made people look common, and she could do everything. I was afraid that Gavin must see—he thought that she was like a boy—a good comrade, a horse-master, never tired, but I knew—oh, Gavin’s mother, I knew—I saw her dance. I heard her speak of him. When she called him ‘kinsman,’ it was a caress. Oh, I hated her. I hate her, but Gavin loved her like a brother. If she had had any women’s tricks, if she could have fainted, or screamed, or been afraid and Gavin with her, he must have known, but she was too—too noble. When she looked at me, I felt like—like *two cents*—very mean and pitiful—and I’m not like that,” said Irene.

“No, dear, no, you are not like that; you are my little girl . . .”

“I want to be,” said Irene. “I am a girl. I hate mannish women, but Gavin didn’t know. She was more womanly than I—only I had all the little catty tricks, but Marjory thought he should surely know. It was terrible—like a beautiful woman speaking on her fingers clumsily.”

“But,” said Janet, “it’s all past now,” and she

rose and the two women stood in the firelight, in the light that showed Janet's hair snow-white, for white hair was a plentiful crop in the war years.

"But," said Irene, "she said 'the desert sands will call to him, and I am of the sands. We are birds of the mountain.'"

"Did Marjory resemble Gavin?" said Janet.

"In everything. They loved the same things; they talked of books like the characters in books; they would think the same things at the same time. Even there was a family likeness, but Gavin always loved Marjory like a boy. He never knew—if—if ever he were to know I would be afraid. I want him away from the East. Do you know," said Irene, with a little laugh, "they agreed about horses."

With that Mairi came with her aired sheets. There was a twinkle in her eyes, a kind of keen old sparkle.

"Gavin and his father will be wearying," said Janet; "come down, dear, when you are ready . . ."

Mairi went on with her duties, just waiting to be spoken to, but "kenning her place."

Irene looked at her with smiling eyes. To the old woman this wife of Gavin's looked very young, for all her beauty and brave attire.

Irene came close to her.

"Do you think that I have spoiled him for other women?" she whispered—"spoiled him good and proper? Do you remember, Mairi?"

"I was only an old wife doing my best for the lad," said Mairi, "but, my dearie, I think that you are fit for it. If any lass could keep her lad it will be you. But make him work hard," said she, "and sleep sound. You will be able to trust him when he's sleeping."

And that was not altogether a nice thing to be telling a young wife, but I think that at first Mairi was a little jealous. She said that at all events, and she said it for some reason, for she was very wise.

“And now,” said she, “there’s your place,” and Irene blushed.

And when Gavin and James Douglas were alone, they talked much of Sholto the exile—the man whose punishment, for all his bravery, was more than he could bear.

“It was a sore parting,” said Gavin. “‘We’ll go back to the desert to wait for your coming again, Marjory and I,’ said he, and Marjory stood smiling, saying nothing.

“His dreams,” said Gavin, “are always at home. He will tell you the colour that the gates were painted when he was a boy, and where there were crops in fields that have been heather for thirty years. I think,” said Gavin, “that when Marjory has sons,” and at that he stopped suddenly and stood up.

Irene sat listening, and often she looked at her husband. There was a far-away look in his eyes, as though he were thinking . . .

Janet Erskine had sewing in her lap, though she did not sew much, but sat with the needle stuck into the white fabric; and after some little time of silence, Irene lifted the sewing and looked at it wisely, and smoothed and patted it, and fitted a thimble to her finger, and made very little stitches—the most beautiful little picture that a man could see.

“Did Marjory sew, Gavin?” said Janet.

Gavin laughed. “Marjory sew! I never saw Marjory with a needle in my life,” said he, and smiled at his wife sitting with her head bent over the

stitches—and there are men who think themselves clever.

But Irene looked up. “She was a beautiful sewer,” said she.

“How on earth do you know that?” said Gavin.

“I’ve looked at the monogram on your hankies,” said Irene, and Janet Erskine petted her and made much of her for a clever domesticated little wife, just as, I am sure, Rebecca would do long ago with her gentle kinswomen in the presence of the daughters of the desert, who were the wives of her wild son Esau.

And in the kitchen Dungannon told Pate and Mairi of the fine girl Kitty.

“My sang,” said Mairi, “she’s not wanting in courage the lass that will take you, Dungannon, with your touring round the world, and up and down in it, and wearying always for the fine things ye left behind.”

Dungannon smiled gently.

“Sowl, she has the word to stop them manœuvres,” said he; “whenever I do be thinking like that, Kitty stamps her foot at me. ‘Quit it,’ she says, and d’ye know, av I had knowed that word twenty years ago I would be in my mother’s place yonder beside a turf fire.”

“Ouch,” said Pate, “I aye think the grasshopper and the jumping-jack enjoy the change o’ scenery with every hop.”

“Pate is getting old,” said Mairi to Dungannon; “I whiles think his head is not just what it was.”

And Pate turned to his wife with the look of a man whose wife has a sharp tongue, and who, by his gentleness and quiet strength, has calmed many

storms. "You had aye the head, Mairi," said he, but Dungannon caught his wink for all that—and there are women who think themselves clever.

.
In the grey day Gavin lifted the arm of his wife from his shoulder very gently to rise, but Irene was awake at his first movement, and her eyes questioning.

"I would like to try the sea again," said he. "Stay you where you are till the day is aired—you look like a kitten."

Irene raised herself on her elbow. "Well, I'm coming too," said she, "if you must leave me, Gavin—in the middle of the night." Irene pouted, looking very beautiful, with sleep yet hazy about her.

"If I must leave you," Gavin mocked, "you soft little baby. Do you think I would have you shivering? Stay you here till I come back for you, with fine cold hands."

"Well, I want you to do something for me," said Irene; "I want you to take me to the Look-Out, Jim. I think I want to tell you a secret there—now," said she, "go away and bathe."

.
In the clear sunlight of a frosty morning in winter Gavin and Irene walked slowly over the shoulder of the hill, and came to the pond where of yore the wild duck gathered, and on past the little stunted bushes, upwards to the Look-Out; and below them in the firth, grey and raking and sinister, two destroyers returned from convoy duty, and the salt was white on their smoke-stalks. But for them on the wide sea nothing moved.

After a little searching Gavin found the iron ring,

black and rust-pitted, and with a great heave he opened the trap-door and went down, and held up his arms for his wife.

And there was green lichen growing on the old chest, and the canvas windows were ragged and tattered, like an Irishman's pennant, and there was on the sill of the window a bird's nest crumbling. And on the horns of the viking helmet there was a bluish hairy mould growing, but the ferns were grown very large, and the air of the place was fresh but for a little dampness.

Gavin turned to his wife.

"Do you remember, dear," said he, "how you called this place a cellar? Lord, the dreams I dreamed here—and you were the best of all."

But Irene was gazing on the floor, at the place where Gavin had fallen, and the great red pool had formed, for there was a little circle of toad-stools growing on the spot.

They opened the chest and took out Katherine, like a little mummy in her wrappings, and Irene moved her in her hands and laughed.

"Her eyes still open and shut," said she, and hugged the doll, and looked at her man under her long lashes; but Gavin was spreading the white sheepskin rug on the bench and gathering old Mairi's lost gear as though he had it in his mind to return them, but Irene put her hand on his and made him leave them be.

"Do you remember a girl kissed you, Jim—in here it was—before you had learned kissing?" and she pulled him gently beside her on the bench. "Do you think she was a very bold—not at all a nice girl?"

“I remember,” said Gavin, “her lips made a little soft moving under mine. She hadn’t learned kissing either, not properly, but she was the most beautiful little soft woman in all the world.”

“I’m glad,” cried the girl, “I’m glad you thought she was beautiful, but she doesn’t get much practice in kissing—not very much—and I’m sure she would be an apt pupil; but wait a moment—well, that will do for a minute, Gavin—do you remember telling me we might want this place again?”

Gavin nodded.

“Well, I think we will not take back these old spoons and things, because this would be a very nice place to come to—just ourselves—if we wished to be very young and silly; and when you go away to the Army and forget me, I think I will want to come here all by myself—and cry sometimes—and write to you, and—and there’s something I want to tell you, but you must look away the other way, sweetheart, and not into my eyes any more—well, not very much more,” and Irene put her head against her husband’s breast and snuggled close to him. And then her little nostrils moved. “You have perfume on this tunic,” she said, drawing a little away from him.

“Perfume?” said Gavin. “I haven’t worn this tunic since the morning we went to the Pyramids. It must be your perfume. I remember your hair.”

“That isn’t my perfume,” said Irene, “that’s—that’s Ma——” Suddenly she opened the button on the tunic pocket and thrust in her hand. Her face was a little bleak; with her hand still in the pocket, she looked at Gavin. “Bend,” she whispered—“closer yet,” said Irene. Her foot moving

crushed the toad-stools on the floor, but Gavin gathered her into his arms.

“And you wanted the Look-Out for *him*,” said he.

“I would like him to be a bird of the mountains,” said Irene, and took her hand from the tunic pocket and sprinkled a little sand on the crushed toad-stools—perfumed sand.

“And that’s the last of the desert,” said Gavin, looking at his wife as she wished to be looked at.

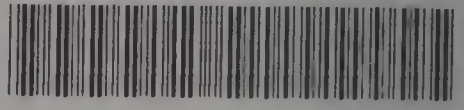
“Come,” said Irene, “for Dr. Campbell will be waiting for us,” and then, “they’re full of *tricks* these Eastern—people.”

And when they came above the whitewashed house and looked down into the bay, a great convoy of ships was sailing for the entrance and the sun shining bravely, and on the green turf close to the sea a man was waving, and with him James Douglas and Janet Erskine.

“Yonder’s the doctor,” said Gavin; “come and meet him, but on your life, Irene, on your life, do not mention the massacre of Glencoe.”

THE END

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