ï»¿Kirstie was now over fifty, and might have sat to a sculptor. Long of limb, and still ligh
of foot, deep-breasted, robust-loined, her golden hair not yet mingled with any trace of silv
the years had but caressed and embellished her. By the lines of a rich and vigorous matern
she seemed destined to be the bride of heroes and the mother of their children; and beho
by the iniquity of fate, she had passed through her youth alone, and drew near to the confi
of age, a childless woman. The tender ambitions that she had received at birth had been,
ime and disappointment, diverted into a certain barren zeal of industry and fury of interfere
She carried her thwarted ardours into housework, she washed floors with her empty heart
she could not win the love of one with love, she must dominate all by her temper. Hasty, wo
and wrathful, she had a drawn quarrel with most of her neighbours, and with the others n
uch more than armed neutrality. The grieve's wife had been "sneisty"; the sister of the gard
who kept house for him had shown herself "upsitten"; and she wrote to Lord Hermiston ab
nce a year demanding the discharge of the offenders, and justifying the demand by much v
of detail. For it must not be supposed that the quarrel rested with the wife and did not tak
in the husband also--or with the gardener's sister, and did not speedily include the garden
himself. As the upshot of all this petty quarrelling and intemperate speech, she was practic
excluded (like a lightkeeper on his tower) from the comforts of human association; except v
her own indoor drudge, who, being but a lassie and entirely at her mercy, must submit to
shifty weather of "the mistress's" moods without complaint, and be willing to take buffets
or caresses according to the temper of the hour. To Kirstie, thus situate and in the India
summer of her heart, which was slow to submit to age, the gods sent this equivocal good th
Archie's presence. She had known him in the cradle and paddled him when he misbehave
yet, as she had not so much as set eyes on him since he was eleven and had his last seri
llness, the tall, slender, refined, and rather melancholy young gentleman of twenty came u
her with the shock of a new acquaintance. He was "Young Hermiston," "the laird himsel'":
had an air of distinctive superiority, a cold straight glance of his black eyes, that abashe

e woman's tantrums in the beginning, and therefore the possibility of any quarrel was excl
e was new, and therefore immediately aroused her curiosity; he was reticent, and kept it a
And lastly he was dark and she fair, and he was male and she female, the everlasting foun
of interest.

Her feeling partook of the loyalty of a clanswoman, the hero-worship of a maiden aunt, a
the idolatry due to a god. No matter what he had asked of her, ridiculous or tragic, she wo
have done it and joyed to do it. Her passion, for it was nothing less, entirely filled her.
It was a rich physical pleasure to make his bed or light his lamp for him when he was abse
to pull off his wet boots or wait on him at dinner when he returned. A young man who sho
have so doted on the idea, moral and physical, of any woman, might be properly describe
eing in love, head and heels, and would have behaved himself accordingly. But Kirstie--th
r heart leaped at his coming footsteps--though, when he patted her shoulder, her face brig
for the day--had not a hope or thought beyond the present moment and its perpetuation to
nd of time. Till the end of time she would have had nothing altered, but still continue deligh
to serve her idol, and be repaid (say twice in the month) with a clap on the shoulder.

I have said her heart leaped--it is the accepted phrase. But rather, when she was alone
ny chamber of the house, and heard his foot passing on the corridors, something in her bo
rose slowly until her breath was suspended, and as slowly fell again with a deep sigh, wh
he steps had passed and she was disappointed of her eyes' desire. This perpetual hunger
thirst of his presence kept her all day on the alert. When he went forth at morning, she wo
stand and follow him with admiring looks. As it grew late and drew to the time of his retur
she would steal forth to a corner of the policy wall and be seen standing there sometimes
the hour together, gazing with shaded eyes, waiting the exquisite and barren pleasure of
view a mile off on the mountains. When at night she had trimmed and gathered the fire, tur

down his bed, and laid out his night-gear--when there was no more to be done for the kin
easure, but to remember him fervently in her usually very tepid prayers, and go to bed bro
on his perfections, his future career, and what she should give him the next day for dinner-
ll remained before her one more opportunity; she was still to take in the tray and say good-
metimes Archie would glance up from his book with a preoccupied nod and a perfunctory sa
hich was in truth a dismissal; sometimes--and by degrees more often--the volume would b
aside, he would meet her coming with a look of relief; and the conversation would be engag
last out the supper, and be prolonged till the small hours by the waning fire. It was no won
that Archie was fond of company after his solitary days; and Kirstie, upon her side, exerte
all the arts of her vigorous nature to ensnare his attention. She would keep back some pie
of news during dinner to be fired off with the entrance of the supper tray, and form as it
were the lever de rideau of the evening's entertainment. Once he had heard her tongue w
she made sure of the result. From one subject to another she moved by insidious transitio
fearing the least silence, fearing almost to give him time for an answer lest it should slip
into a hint of separation. Like so many people of her class, she was a brave narrator; he
place was on the hearthrug and she made it a rostrum, miming her stories as she told the
fitting them with vital detail, spinning them out with endless "quo' he's" and "quo' she's,"
her voice sinking into a whisper over the supernatural or the horrific; until she would sudde
spring up in affected surprise, and pointing to the clock, "Mercy, Mr. Archie!" she would sa
"whatten a time o' night is this of it! God forgive me for a daft wife!" So it befell, by gooc
anagement, that she was not only the first to begin these nocturnal conversations, but inva
the first to break them off; so she managed to retire and not to be dismissed.

3. A Border Family

uch an unequal intimacy has never been uncommon in Scotland, where the clan spirit surv

where the servant tends to spend her life in the same service, a help-meet at first, then tyrant, and at last a pensioner; where, besides, she is not necessarily destitute of the pric of birth, but is, perhaps, like Kirstie, a connection of her master's, and at least knows the legend of her own family, and may count kinship with some illustrious dead. For that is th mark of the Scot of all classes: that he stands in an attitude towards the past unthinkabl Englishmen, and remembers and cherishes the memory of his forebears, good or bad; and burns alive in him a sense of identity with the dead even to the twentieth generation. No m characteristic instance could be found than in the family of Kirstie Elliott. They were all, and Kirstie the first of all, ready and eager to pour forth the particulars of their genealogy embellished with every detail that memory had handed down or fancy fabricated; and, beh from every ramification of that tree there dangled a halter. The Elliotts themselves have h a chequered history; but these Elliotts deduced, besides, from three of the most unfortuna of the border clans--the Nicksons, the Ellwalds, and the Crozers. One ancestor after anoth might be seen appearing a moment out of the rain and the hill mist upon his furtive busine speeding home, perhaps, with a paltry booty of lame horses and lean kine, or squealing a dealing death in some moorland feud of the ferrets and the wild cats. One after another clo his obscure adventures in mid-air, triced up to the arm of the royal gibbet or the Baron's dule-tree. For the rusty blunderbuss of Scots criminal justice, which usually hurt nobody b jurymen, became a weapon of precision for the Nicksons, the Ellwalds, and the Crozers. T exhilaration of their exploits seemed to haunt the memories of their descendants alone, a he shame to be forgotten. Pride glowed in their bosoms to publish their relationship to "And Ellwald of the Laverockstanes, called 'Unchancy Dand,' who was justifeed wi' seeven mai the same name at Jeddart in the days of King James the Sax." In all this tissue of crime a misfortune, the Elliotts of Cauldstaneslap had one boast which must appear legitimate: th males were gallows-birds, born outlaws, petty thieves, and deadly brawlers; but, accordi to the same tradition, the females were all chaste and faithful. The power of ancestry on t

character is not limited to the inheritance of cells. If I buy ancestors by the gross from the benevolence of Lyon King of Arms, my grandson (if he is Scottish) will feel a quickeni emulation of their deeds. The men of the Elliotts were proud, lawless, violent as of right herishing and prolonging a tradition. In like manner with the women. And the woman, esse passionate and reckless, who crouched on the rug, in the shine of the peat fire, telling the tales, had cherished through life a wild integrity of virtue.

Her father Gilbert had been deeply pious, a savage disciplinarian in the antique style, an withal a notorious smuggler. "I mind when I was a bairn getting mony a skelp and being sh to bed like pou'try," she would say. "That would be when the lads and their bit kegs were the road. We've had the riffraff of two-three counties in our kitchen, mony's the time, betw the twelve and the three; and their lanterns would be standing in the forecourt, ay, a sco o' them at once. But there was nae ungodly talk permitted at Cauldstaneslap; my faither w a consistent man in walk and conversation; just let slip an aith, and there was the door t ye! He had that zeal for the Lord, it was a fair wonder to hear him pray, but the faim'ly ha aye had a gift that way." This father was twice married, once to a dark woman of the old Ell stock, by whom he had Gilbert, presently of Cauldstaneslap; and, secondly, to the mother irstie. "He was an auld man when he married her, a fell auld man wi' a muckle voice--you c hear him rowting from the top o' the Kye-skairs," she said; "but for her, it appears she wa a perfit wonder. It was gentle blood she had, Mr. Archie, for it was your ain. The country-s gaed gyte about her and her gowden hair. Mines is no to be mentioned wi' it, and there's f weemen has mair hair than what I have, or yet a bonnier colour. Often would I tell my de Miss Jeannie--that was your mother, dear, she was cruel ta'en up about her hair, it was un tender, ye see--'Hoots, Miss Jeannie,' I would say, 'just fling your washes and your Frenc dentifrishes in the back o' the fire, for that's the place for them; and awa' down to a burn side, and wash yersel' in cauld hill water, and dry your bonny hair in the caller wind o' th

muirs, the way that my mother aye washed hers, and that I have aye made it a practice to h
wishen mines--just you do what I tell ye, my dear, and ye'll give me news of it! Ye'll have
hair, and routh of hair, a pigtail as thick's my arm,' I said, 'and the bonniest colour like
the clear gowden guineas, so as the lads in kirk'll no can keep their eyes off it!' Weel, it
lasted out her time, puir thing! I cuttit a lock of it upon her corp that was lying there sae
cauld. I'll show it ye some of thir days if ye're good. But, as I was sayin', my mither----"

On the death of the father there remained golden-haired Kirstie, who took service with h
distant kinsfolk, the Rutherfords, and black-a-vised Gilbert, twenty years older, who farme
he Cauldstaneslap, married, and begot four sons between 1773 and 1784, and a daughter
a postscript, in '97, the year of Camperdown and Cape St. Vincent. It seemed it was a trad
in the family to wind up with a belated girl. In 1804, at the age of sixty, Gilbert met an
end that might be called heroic. He was due home from market any time from eight at nigh
e in the morning, and in any condition from the quarrelsome to the speechless, for he main
to that age the goodly customs of the Scots farmer. It was known on this occasion that he
a good bit of money to bring home; the word had gone round loosely. The laird had shown
guineas, and if anybody had but noticed it, there was an ill-looking, vagabond crew, the sc
Edinburgh, that drew out of the market long ere it was dusk and took the hill-road by Herm
where it was not to be believed that they had lawful business. One of the country-side, or
Dickieson, they took with them to be their guide, and dear he paid for it! Of a sudden, in
the ford of the Broken Dykes, this vermin clan fell on the laird, six to one, and him three
parts asleep, having drunk hard. But it is ill to catch an Elliott. For a while, in the night
and the black water that was deep as to his saddle-girths, he wrought with his staff like a
smith at his stithy, and great was the sound of oaths and blows. With that the ambuscade w
burst, and he rode for home with a pistol-ball in him, three knife wounds, the loss of his
front teeth, a broken rib and bridle, and a dying horse. That was a race with death that th

laird rode. In the mirk night, with his broken bridle and his head swimming, he dug his spu
to the rowels in the horse's side, and the horse, that was even worse off than himself, th
poor creature! screamed out like a person as he went, so that the hills echoed with it, an
the folks at Cauldstaneslap got to their feet about the table and looked at each other wit
white faces. The horse fell dead at the yard gate, the laird won the length of the house ar
fell there on the threshold. To the son that raised him he gave the bag of money. "Hae," s
he. All the way up the thieves had seemed to him to be at his heels, but now the hallucina
eft him--he saw them again in the place of the ambuscade--and the thirst of vengeance se
on his dying mind. Raising himself and pointing with an imperious finger into the black nig
rom which he had come, he uttered the single command, "Brocken Dykes," and fainted. He
never been loved, but he had been feared in honour. At that sight, at that word, gasped o
at them from a toothless and bleeding mouth, the old Elliott spirit awoke with a shout in th
four sons. "Wanting the hat," continues my author, Kirstie, whom I but haltingly follow, fo
she told this tale like one inspired, "wanting guns, for there wasna twa grains o' pouder i
the house, wi' nae mair weepons than their sticks into their hands, the fower o' them too
the road. Only Hob, and that was the eldest, hunkered at the door-sill where the blood ha
rin, fyled his hand wi' it, and haddit it up to Heeven in the way o' the auld Border aith.
'Hell shall have her ain again this nicht!' he raired, and rode forth upon his earrand." It
as three miles to Broken Dykes, down hill, and a sore road. Kirstie had seen men from Edin
dismounting there in plain day to lead their horses. But the four brothers rode it as if Aul
ornie were behind and Heaven in front. Come to the ford, and there was Dickieson. By all
he was not dead, but breathed and reared upon his elbow, and cried out to them for help
was at a graceless face that he asked mercy. As soon as Hob saw, by the glint of the lante
the eyes shining and the whiteness of the teeth in the man's face, "Damn you!" says he; "
hae your teeth, hae ye?" and rode his horse to and fro upon that human remnant. Beyond
andie must dismount with the lantern to be their guide; he was the youngest son, scarce tw

at the time. "A' nicht long they gaed in the wet heath and jennipers, and whaur they gaed t
neither knew nor cared, but just followed the bluid-stains and the footprints o' their faithe
murderers. And a' nicht Dandie had his nose to the grund like a tyke, and the ithers follow
and spak' naething, neither black nor white. There was nae noise to be heard, but just th
sough of the swalled burns, and Hob, the dour yin, risping his teeth as he gaed." With th
first glint of the morning they saw they were on the drove-road, and at that the four stopp
and had a dram to their breakfasts, for they knew that Dand must have guided them right,
the rogues could be but little ahead, hot foot for Edinburgh by the way of the Pentland Hil
By eight o'clock they had word of them--a shepherd had seen four men "uncoly mishandled
by in the last hour. "That's yin a piece," says Clem, and swung his cudgel. "Five o' them
says Hob. "God's death, but the faither was a man! And him drunk!" And then there befell t
my author termed "a sair misbegowk," for they were overtaken by a posse of mounted nei
come to aid in the pursuit. Four sour faces looked on the reinforcement. "The Deil's brough
ou!" said Clem, and they rode thenceforward in the rear of the party with hanging heads. B
ten they had found and secured the rogues, and by three of the afternoon, as they rode up
Vennel with their prisoners, they were aware of a concourse of people bearing in their mi
something that dripped. "For the boady of the saxt," pursued Kirstie, "wi' his head smash
like a hazel-nit, had been a' that nicht in the chairge o' Hermiston Water, and it dunting
n on the stanes, and grunding it on the shallows, and flinging the deid thing heels-ower-hu
at the Fa's o' Spango; and in the first o' the day, Tweed had got a hold o' him and carrie
him off like a wind, for it was uncoly swalled, and raced wi' him, bobbing under braeside
and was long playing with the creature in the drumlie lynns under the castle, and at the hin
end of all cuist him up on the sterling of Crossmichael brig. Sae there they were a'thegith
t last (for Dickieson had been brought in on a cart long syne), and folk could see what mai
man my brither had been that had held his head again sax and saved the siller, and him d
Thus died of honourable injuries and in the savour of fame Gilbert Elliott of the Cauldstane

but his sons had scarce less glory out of the business. Their savage haste, the skill with which Dand had found and followed the trail, the barbarity to the wounded Dickieson (whi was like an open secret in the county), and the doom which it was currently supposed they intended for the others, struck and stirred popular imagination. Some century earlier the la of the minstrels might have fashioned the last of the ballads out of that Homeric fight an chase; but the spirit was dead, or had been reincarnated already in Mr. Sheriff Scott, an the degenerate moorsmen must be content to tell the tale in prose, and to make of the "Fo Black Brothers" a unit after the fashion of the "Twelve Apostles" or the "Three Musketeers

Robert, Gilbert, Clement, and Andrew--in the proper Border diminutives, Hob, Gib, Clem, a Dand Elliott--these ballad heroes, had much in common; in particular, their high sense of t family and the family honour; but they went diverse ways, and prospered and failed in diffe businesses. According to Kirstie, "they had a' bees in their bonnets but Hob." Hob the lai was, indeed, essentially a decent man. An elder of the Kirk, nobody had heard an oath up his lips, save, perhaps, thrice or so at the sheep-washing, since the chase of his father's murderers. The figure he had shown on that eventful night disappeared as if swallowed by p. He who had ecstatically dipped his hand in the red blood, he who had ridden down Dick became, from that moment on, a stiff and rather graceless model of the rustic proprieties cannily profiting by the high war prices, and yearly stowing away a little nest-egg in the ank against calamity; approved of and sometimes consulted by the greater lairds for the ma and placid sense of what he said, when he could be induced to say anything; and particula valued by the minister, Mr. Torrance, as a right-hand man in the parish, and a model to pare transfiguration had been for the moment only; some Barbarossa, some old Adam of our an sleeps in all of us till the fit circumstance shall call it into action; and, for as sober as he now seemed, Hob had given once for all the measure of the devil that haunted him. was married, and, by reason of the effulgence of that legendary night, was adored by his w

He had a mob of little lusty, barefoot children who marched in a caravan the long miles t school, the stages of whose pilgrimage were marked by acts of spoliation and mischief, a who were qualified in the country-side as "fair pests." But in the house, if "faither was in, they were quiet as mice. In short, Hob moved through life in a great peace--the reward of a one who shall have killed his man, with any formidable and figurative circumstance, in th midst of a country gagged and swaddled with civilisation.

It was a current remark that the Elliotts were "guid and bad, like sanguishes"; and certain there was a curious distinction, the men of business coming alternately with the dreamer he second brother, Gib, was a weaver by trade, had gone out early into the world to Edinb and come home again with his wings singed. There was an exaltation in his nature which l ed him to embrace with enthusiasm the principles of the French Revolution, and had ende bringing him under the hawse of my Lord Hermiston in that furious onslaught of his upon t iberals, which sent Muir and Palmer into exile and dashed the party into chaff. It was whisp that my lord, in his great scorn for the movement, and prevailed upon a little by a sense eighbourliness, had given Gib a hint. Meeting him one day in the Potterrow, my lord had sto in front of him: "Gib, ye eediot," he had said, "what's this I hear of you? Poalitics, poalitic poalitics, weaver's poalitics, is the way of it, I hear. If ye arena a'thegither dozened with eediocy, ye'll gang your ways back to Cauldstaneslap, and ca' your loom, and ca' your loo an!" And Gilbert had taken him at the word and returned, with an expedition almost to be c flight, to the house of his father. The clearest of his inheritance was that family gift of prayer of which Kirstie had boasted; and the baffled politician now turned his attention t religious matters--or, as others said, to heresy and schism. Every Sunday morning he was Crossmichael, where he had gathered together, one by one, a sect of about a dozen perso who called themselves "God's Remnant of the True Faithful," or, for short, "God's Remna To the profane they were known as "Gib's Deils." Bailie Sweedie, a noted humorist in the to

wed that the proceedings always opened to the tune of "The Deil Fly Away with the Excise
and that the sacrament was dispensed in the form of hot whisky-toddy; both wicked hits at
evangelist, who had been suspected of smuggling in his youth, and had been overtaken (as
hrase went) on the streets of Crossmichael one Fair day. It was known that every Sunday
yed for a blessing on the arms of Buonaparte. For this, "God's Remnant," as they were "sk
from the cottage that did duty for a temple, had been repeatedly stoned by the bairns, an
Gib himself hooted by a squadron of Border volunteers in which his own brother, Dand, ro
n a uniform and with a drawn sword. The "Remnant" were believed, besides, to be "antinom
in principle," which might otherwise have been a serious charge, but the way public opinio
then blew it was quite swallowed up and forgotten in the scandal about Buonaparte. For t
st, Gilbert had set up his loom in an outhouse at Cauldstaneslap, where he laboured assidu
six days of the week. His brothers, appalled by his political opinions, and willing to avoid
dissension in the household, spoke but little to him; he less to them, remaining absorbed
study of the Bible and almost constant prayer. The gaunt weaver was dry-nurse at Cauldsta
and the bairns loved him dearly. Except when he was carrying an infant in his arms, he w
rarely seen to smile--as, indeed, there were few smilers in that family. When his sister-in-l
rallied him, and proposed that he should get a wife and bairns of his own, since he was s
fond of them, "I have no clearness of mind upon that point," he would reply. If nobody call
n in to dinner, he stayed out. Mrs. Hob, a hard, unsympathetic woman, once tried the exper
He went without food all day, but at dusk, as the light began to fail him, he came into the
house of his own accord, looking puzzled. "I've had a great gale of prayer upon my speer
said he. "I canna mind sae muckle's what I had for denner." The creed of God's Remnant w
justified in the life of its founder. "And yet I dinna ken," said Kirstie. "He's maybe no more
stock-fish than his neeghbours! He rode wi' the rest o' them, and had a good stamach to t
work, by a' that I hear! God's Remnant! The deil's clavers! There wasna muckle Christian
in the way Hob guided Johnny Dickieson, at the least of it; but Guid kens! Is he a Christia

even? He might be a Mahommedan or a Deevil or a Fireworshipper, for what I ken."

The third brother had his name on a door-plate, no less, in the city of Glasgow, "Mr. Clem Elliott," as long as your arm. In this case, that spirit of innovation which had shown itsel timidly in the case of Hob by the admission of new manures, and which had run to waste w Gilbert in subversive politics and heretical religions, bore useful fruit in many ingenious echanical improvements. In boyhood, from his addiction to strange devices of sticks and s he had been counted the most eccentric of the family. But that was all by now; and he wa partner of his firm, and looked to die a bailie. He too had married, and was rearing a plent amily in the smoke and din of Glasgow; he was wealthy, and could have bought out his bro the cock-laird, six times over, it was whispered; and when he slipped away to Cauldstanes for a well-earned holiday, which he did as often as he was able, he astonished the neighbo with his broadcloth, his beaver hat, and the ample plies of his neckcloth. Though an emine solid man at bottom, after the pattern of Hob, he had contracted a certain Glasgow briskn and aplomb which set him off. All the other Elliotts were as lean as a rake, but Clement w laying on fat, and he panted sorely when he must get into his boots. Dand said, chucklin "Ay, Clem has the elements of a corporation." "A provost and corporation," returned Clem. his readiness was much admired.

The fourth brother, Dand, was a shepherd to his trade, and by starts, when he could bring mind to it, excelled in the business. Nobody could train a dog like Dandie; nobody, throug the peril of great storms in the winter time, could do more gallantly. But if his dexterity were exquisite, his diligence was but fitful; and he served his brother for bed and board and a trifle of pocket-money when he asked for it. He loved money well enough, knew very to spend it, and could make a shrewd bargain when he liked. But he preferred a vague kn that he was well to windward to any counted coins in the pocket; he felt himself richer so

Hob would expostulate: "I'm an amature herd." Dand would reply, "I'll keep your sheep to y when I'm so minded, but I'll keep my liberty too. Thir's no man can coandescend on what orth." Clem would expound to him the miraculous results of compound interest, and recom nvestments. "Ay, man?" Dand would say; "and do you think, if I took Hob's siller, that I wou drink it or wear it on the lassies? And, anyway, my kingdom is no of this world. Either I'm a poet or else I'm nothing." Clem would remind him of old age. "I'll die young, like Robbi Burns," he would say stoutly. No question but he had a certain accomplishment in minor ve His "Hermiston Burn," with its pretty refrain--

"I love to gang thinking whaur ye gang linking,
Hermiston burn, in the howe";

his "Auld, auld Elliotts, clay-cauld Elliotts, dour, bauld Elliotts of auld," and his really fascinating piece about the Praying Weaver's Stone, had gained him in the neighbourhood reputation, still possible in Scotland, of a local bard; and, though not printed himself, he s recognised by others who were and who had become famous. Walter Scott owed to Dan of the "Raid of Wearie" in the "Minstrelsy"; and made him welcome at his house, and appr his talents, such as they were, with all his usual generosity. The Ettrick Shepherd was h sworn crony; they would meet, drink to excess, roar out their lyrics in each other's faces and quarrel and make it up again till bedtime. And besides these recognitions, almost to l called official, Dandie was made welcome for the sake of his gift through the farmhouses everal contiguous dales, and was thus exposed to manifold temptations which he rather so than fled. He had figured on the stool of repentance, for once fulfilling to the letter the dition of his hero and model. His humorous verses to Mr. Torrance on that occasion--"Kens here my lane I stand"--unfortunately too indelicate for further citation, ran through the coun like a fiery cross; they were recited, quoted, paraphrased, and laughed over as far away

Dumfries on the one hand and Dunbar on the other.

These four brothers were united by a close bond, the bond of that mutual admiration--or ra
utual hero-worship--which is so strong among the members of secluded families who have
ability and little culture. Even the extremes admired each other. Hob, who had as much po
as the tongs, professed to find pleasure in Dand's verses; Clem, who had no more religion
Claverhouse, nourished a heartfelt, at least an open-mouthed, admiration of Gib's prayer
and Dandie followed with relish the rise of Clem's fortunes. Indulgence followed hard on t
heels of admiration. The laird, Clem, and Dand, who were Tories and patriots of the hotte
uality, excused to themselves, with a certain bashfulness, the radical and revolutionary her
f Gib. By another division of the family, the laird, Clem, and Gib, who were men exactly virt
swallowed the dose of Dand's irregularities as a kind of clog or drawback in the mysterio
providence of God affixed to bards, and distinctly probative of poetical genius. To appreci
the simplicity of their mutual admiration it was necessary to hear Clem, arrived upon one
his visits, and dealing in a spirit of continuous irony with the affairs and personalities
of that great city of Glasgow where he lived and transacted business. The various persona
nisters of the church, municipal officers, mercantile big-wigs, whom he had occasion to intr
were all alike denigrated, all served but as reflectors to cast back a flattering side-light
the house of Cauldstaneslap. The Provost, for whom Clem by exception entertained a me
of respect, he would liken to Hob. "He minds me o' the laird there," he would say. "He ha
ome of Hob's grand, whunstane sense, and the same way with him of steiking his mouth w
he's no very pleased." And Hob, all unconscious, would draw down his upper lip and produ
as if for comparison, the formidable grimace referred to. The unsatisfactory incumbent of
Enoch's Kirk was thus briefly dismissed: "If he had but twa fingers o' Gib's, he would wak
em up." And Gib, honest man! would look down and secretly smile. Clem was a spy whom
ad sent out into the world of men. He had come back with the good news that there was no

to compare with the Four Black Brothers, no position that they would not adorn, no offici
that it would not be well they should replace, no interest of mankind, secular or spiritual
which would not immediately bloom under their supervision. The excuse of their folly is i
two words: scarce the breadth of a hair divided them from the peasantry. The measure of t
sense is this: that these symposia of rustic vanity were kept entirely within the family, lik
some secret ancestral practice. To the world their serious faces were never deformed by
spicion of any simper of self-contentment. Yet it was known. "They hae a guid pride o' them
was the word in the country-side.

Lastly, in a Border story, there should be added their "two-names." Hob was The Laird. "R
ne puis, prince ne daigne"; he was the laird of Cauldstaneslap--say fifty acres--ipsissimu
Clement was Mr. Elliott, as upon his door-plate, the earlier Dafty having been discarded a
o longer applicable, and indeed only a reminder of misjudgment and the imbecility of the p
the youngest, in honour of his perpetual wanderings, was known by the sobriquet of Rand

It will be understood that not all this information was communicated by the aunt, who had
much of the family failing herself to appreciate it thoroughly in others. But as time went
on, Archie began to observe an omission in the family chronicle.

"Is there not a girl too?" he asked.

"Ay: Kirstie. She was named for me, or my grandmother at least--it's the same thing," retur
e aunt, and went on again about Dand, whom she secretly preferred by reason of his galla

"But what is your niece like?" said Archie at the next opportunity.

Her? As black's your hat! But I dinna suppose she would maybe be what you would ca' ill-lo
a'thegither. Na, she's a kind of a handsome jaud--a kind o' gipsy," said the aunt, who ha
two sets of scales for men and women--or perhaps it would be more fair to say that she h
three, and the third and the most loaded was for girls.

"How comes it that I never see her in church?" said Archie.

"'Deed, and I believe she's in Glesgie with Clem and his wife. A heap good she's like to g
of it! I dinna say for men folk, but where weemen folk are born, there let them bide. Glor
to God, I was never far'er from here than Crossmichael."

In the meanwhile it began to strike Archie as strange, that while she thus sang the praise
of her kinsfolk, and manifestly relished their virtues and (I may say) their vices like a thin
creditable to herself, there should appear not the least sign of cordiality between the hou
f Hermiston and that of Cauldstaneslap. Going to church of a Sunday, as the lady housek
stepped with her skirts kilted, three tucks of her white petticoat showing below, and her b
dia shawl upon her back (if the day were fine) in a pattern of radiant dyes, she would some
overtake her relatives preceding her more leisurely in the same direction. Gib of course w
absent: by skreigh of day he had been gone to Crossmichael and his fellow-heretics; but
of the family would be seen marching in open order: Hob and Dand, stiff-necked, straight-
six-footers, with severe dark faces, and their plaids about their shoulders; the convoy o
children scattering (in a state of high polish) on the wayside, and every now and again colle
y the shrill summons of the mother; and the mother herself, by a suggestive circumstance
might have afforded matter of thought to a more experienced observer than Archie, wrappe
a shawl nearly identical with Kirstie's, but a thought more gaudy and conspicuously newe
At the sight, Kirstie grew more tall--Kirstie showed her classical profile, nose in air and

nostril spread, the pure blood came in her cheek evenly in a delicate living pink.

"A braw day to ye, Mistress Elliott," said she, and hostility and gentility were nicely mingle
n her tones. "A fine day, mem," the laird's wife would reply with a miraculous curtsey, sprea
the while her plumage--setting off, in other words, and with arts unknown to the mere ma
the pattern of her India shawl. Behind her, the whole Cauldstaneslap contingent marched
closer order, and with an indescribable air of being in the presence of the foe; and while
Dandie saluted his aunt with a certain familiarity as of one who was well in court, Hob marc
in awful immobility. There appeared upon the face of this attitude in the family the consequ
f some dreadful feud. Presumably the two women had been principals in the original encou
and the laird had probably been drawn into the quarrel by the ears, too late to be include
in the present skin-deep reconciliation.

"Kirstie," said Archie one day, "what is this you have against your family?"

"I dinna complean," said Kirstie, with a flush. "I say naething."

"I see you do not--not even good-day to your own nephew," said he.

"I hae naething to be ashamed of," said she. "I can say the Lord's Prayer with a good gra
If Hob was ill, or in preeson or poverty, I would see to him blithely. But for curtchying an
complimenting and colloguing, thank ye kindly!"

Archie had a bit of a smile: he leaned back in his chair. "I think you and Mrs. Robert are
not very good friends," says he slily, "when you have your India shawls on?"

She looked upon him in silence, with a sparkling eye but an indecipherable expression; a
that was all that Archie was ever destined to learn of the battle of the India shawls.

"Do none of them ever come here to see you?" he inquired.

"Mr. Archie," said she, "I hope that I ken my place better. It would be a queer thing, I thin
if I was to clamjamfry up your faither's house--that I should say it!--wi' a dirty, black-a-vise
an, no ane o' them it was worth while to mar soap upon but just mysel'! Na, they're all dam
wi' the black Ellwalds. I have nae patience wi' black folk." Then, with a sudden consciousn
of the case of Archie, "No that it maitters for men sae muckle," she made haste to add, "b
ere's naebody can deny that it's unwomanly. Long hair is the ornament o' woman ony way;
warrandise for that--it's in the Bible--and wha can doubt that the Apostle had some gowde
lassie in his mind--Apostle and all, for what was he but just a man like yersel'?"

CHAPTER VI

A LEAF FROM CHRISTINA'S PSALM-BOOK

Archie was sedulous at church. Sunday after Sunday he sat down and stood up with that s
company, heard the voice of Mr. Torrance leaping like an ill-played clarionet from key to k
nd had an opportunity to study his moth-eaten gown and the black thread mittens that he j
together in prayer, and lifted up with a reverent solemnity in the act of benediction. Hermis
pew was a little square box, dwarfish in proportion with the kirk itself, and enclosing a tab
not much bigger than a footstool. There sat Archie, an apparent prince, the only undeniab
gentleman and the only great heritor in the parish, taking his ease in the only pew, for n
ther in the kirk had doors. Thence he might command an undisturbed view of that congreg

solid plaided men, strapping wives and daughters, oppressed children, and uneasy sheep-
It was strange how Archie missed the look of race; except the dogs, with their refined fox
faces and inimitably curling tails, there was no one present with the least claim to gentilit
Cauldstaneslap party was scarcely an exception; Dandie perhaps, as he amused himself
verses through the interminable burden of the service, stood out a little by the glow in hi
eye and a certain superior animation of face and alertness of body; but even Dandie slouc
like a rustic. The rest of the congregation, like so many sheep, oppressed him with a sen
of hob-nailed routine, day following day--of physical labour in the open air, oatmeal porrid
peas bannock, the somnolent fireside in the evening, and the night-long nasal slumbers i
-bed. Yet he knew many of them to be shrewd and humorous, men of character, notable w
making a bustle in the world and radiating an influence from their low-browed doors. He kn
esides they were like other men; below the crust of custom, rapture found a way; he had h
em beat the timbrel before Bacchus--had heard them shout and carouse over their whisky-
nd not the most Dutch-bottomed and severe faces among them all, not even the solemn e
themselves, but were capable of singular gambols at the voice of love. Men drawing near
an end of life's adventurous journey--maids thrilling with fear and curiosity on the thresho
entrance--women who had borne and perhaps buried children, who could remember the cl
of the small dead hands and the patter of the little feet now silent--he marvelled that amo
all those faces there should be no face of expectation, none that was mobile, none into wh
the rhythm and poetry of life had entered. "O for a live face," he thought; and at times he
had a memory of Lady Flora; and at times he would study the living gallery before him wi
despair, and would see himself go on to waste his days in that joyless, pastoral place, an
death come to him, and his grave be dug under the rowans, and the Spirit of the Earth lau
out in a thunder-peal at the huge fiasco.

On this particular Sunday, there was no doubt but that the spring had come at last. It wa

warm, with a latent shiver in the air that made the warmth only the more welcome. The shal of the stream glittered and tinkled among bunches of primrose. Vagrant scents of the ear arrested Archie by the way with moments of ethereal intoxication. The grey, Quakerish da was still only awakened in places and patches from the sobriety of its winter colouring; ar he wondered at its beauty; an essential beauty of the old earth it seemed to him, not resid in particulars but breathing to him from the whole. He surprised himself by a sudden impu to write poetry--he did so sometimes, loose, galloping octosyllabics in the vein of Scott--a when he had taken his place on a boulder, near some fairy falls and shaded by a whip of a that was already radiant with new leaves, it still more surprised him that he should find noth to write. His heart perhaps beat in time to some vast indwelling rhythm of the universe. B the time he came to a corner of the valley and could see the kirk, he had so lingered by th way that the first psalm was finishing. The nasal psalmody, full of turns and trills and grace graces, seemed the essential voice of the kirk itself upraised in thanksgiving. "Everything alive," he said; and again cries it aloud, "thank God, everything's alive!" He lingered yet a while in the kirkyard. A tuft of primroses was blooming hard by the leg of an old, black able tombstone, and he stopped to contemplate the random apologue. They stood forth on cold earth with a trenchancy of contrast; and he was struck with a sense of incompletene in the day, the season, and the beauty that surrounded him--the chill there was in the warm he gross black clods about the opening primroses, the damp earthy smell that was everyw intermingled with the scents. The voice of the aged Torrance within rose in an ecstasy. A he wondered if Torrance also felt in his old bones the joyous influence of the spring morni Torrance, or the shadow of what once was Torrance, that must come so soon to lie outside the sun and rain with all his rheumatisms, while a new minister stood in his room and thun from his own familiar pulpit? The pity of it, and something of the chill of the grave, shook him for a moment as he made haste to enter.

He went up the aisle reverently, and took his place in the pew with lowered eyes, for he fea
he had already offended the kind old gentleman in the pulpit, and was sedulous to offend
further. He could not follow the prayer, not even the heads of it. Brightnesses of azure, clo
of fragrance, a tinkle of falling water and singing birds, rose like exhalations from some
deeper, aboriginal memory, that was not his, but belonged to the flesh on his bones. His b
membered; and it seemed to him that his body was in no way gross, but ethereal and peris
like a strain of music; and he felt for it an exquisite tenderness as for a child, an innocen
full of beautiful instincts and destined to an early death. And he felt for old Torrance--of
the many supplications, of the few days--a pity that was near to tears. The prayer ended. R
over him was a tablet in the wall, the only ornament in the roughly masoned chapel--for
was no more; the tablet commemorated, I was about to say the virtues, but rather the existe
of a former Rutherford of Hermiston; and Archie, under that trophy of his long descent ar
ocal greatness, leaned back in the pew and contemplated vacancy with the shadow of a s
between playful and sad, that became him strangely. Dandie's sister, sitting by the side
Clem in her new Glasgow finery, chose that moment to observe the young laird. Aware of
stir of his entrance, the little formalist had kept her eyes fastened and her face prettily
composed during the prayer. It was not hypocrisy, there was no one further from a hypocr
The girl had been taught to behave: to look up, to look down, to look unconscious, to loo
seriously impressed in church, and in every conjuncture to look her best. That was the ga
f female life, and she played it frankly. Archie was the one person in church who was of int
who was somebody new, reputed eccentric, known to be young, and a laird, and still unsee
Christina. Small wonder that, as she stood there in her attitude of pretty decency, her mi
ould run upon him! If he spared a glance in her direction, he should know she was a well-be
oung lady who had been to Glasgow. In reason he must admire her clothes, and it was pos
that he should think her pretty. At that her heart beat the least thing in the world; and sh
proceeded, by way of a corrective, to call up and dismiss a series of fancied pictures of t

young man who should now, by rights, be looking at her. She settled on the plainest of ther pink short young man with a dish face and no figure, at whose admiration she could afford smile; but for all that, the consciousness of his gaze (which was really fixed on Torrance and his mittens) kept her in something of a flutter till the word Amen. Even then, she wa r too well-bred to gratify her curiosity with any impatience. She resumed her seat languidly as a Glasgow touch--she composed her dress, rearranged her nosegay of primroses, looke in front, then behind upon the other side, and at last allowed her eyes to move, without hu in the direction of the Hermiston pew. For a moment they were riveted. Next she had pluck her gaze home again like a tame bird who should have meditated flight. Possibilities crowd on her; she hung over the future and grew dizzy; the image of this young man, slim, grace dark, with the inscrutable half-smile, attracted and repelled her like a chasm. "I wonder will I have met my fate?" she thought, and her heart swelled.

Torrance was got some way into his first exposition, positing a deep layer of texts as he w along, laying the foundations of his discourse, which was to deal with a nice point in divin before Archie suffered his eyes to wander. They fell first of all on Clem, looking insupporta prosperous, and patronising Torrance with the favour of a modified attention, as of one w was used to better things in Glasgow. Though he had never before set eyes on him, Archie no difficulty in identifying him, and no hesitation in pronouncing him vulgar, the worst of the family. Clem was leaning lazily forward when Archie first saw him. Presently he leane nonchalantly back; and that deadly instrument, the maiden, was suddenly unmasked in pro gh not quite in the front of the fashion (had anybody cared!), certain artful Glasgow mantua nd her own inherent taste, had arrayed her to great advantage. Her accoutrement was, ind a cause of heart-burning, and almost of scandal, in that infinitesimal kirk company. Mrs. H had said her say at Cauldstaneslap. "Daftlike!" she had pronounced it. "A jaiket that'll no meet! Whaur's the sense of a jaiket that'll no button upon you, if it should come to be wee

What do ye ca' thir things? Demmy brokens, d'ye say? They'll be brokens wi' a vengeance ye can win back! Weel, I have naething to do wi' it--it's no good taste." Clem, whose purs ad thus metamorphosed his sister, and who was not insensible to the advertisement, had c to the rescue with a "Hoot, woman! What do you ken of good taste that has never been to ceety?" And Hob, looking on the girl with pleased smiles, as she timidly displayed her fine in the midst of the dark kitchen, had thus ended the dispute: "The cutty looks weel," he ha said, "and it's no very like rain. Wear them the day, hizzie; but it's no a thing to make a practice o'." In the breasts of her rivals, coming to the kirk very conscious of white under-lin and their faces splendid with much soap, the sight of the toilet had raised a storm of varyi emotion, from the mere unenvious admiration that was expressed in a long-drawn "Eh!" to angrier feeling that found vent in an emphatic "Set her up!" Her frock was of straw-colour aconet muslin, cut low at the bosom and short at the ankle, so as to display her demi-broq of Regency violet, crossing with many straps upon a yellow cobweb stocking. According to pretty fashion in which our grandmothers did not hesitate to appear, and our great-aunts w forth armed for the pursuit and capture of our great-uncles, the dress was drawn up so as mould the contour of both breasts, and in the nook between, a cairngorm brooch maintaine Here, too, surely in a very enviable position, trembled the nosegay of primroses. She wo on her shoulders--or rather, on her back and not her shoulders, which it scarcely passed- French coat of sarsenet, tied in front with Margate braces, and of the same colour with h violet shoes. About her face clustered a disorder of dark ringlets, a little garland of yellow ench roses surmounted her brow, and the whole was crowned by a village hat of chipped s Amongst all the rosy and all the weathered faces that surrounded her in church, she glow like an open flower--girl and raiment, and the cairngorm that caught the daylight and return it in a fiery flash, and the threads of bronze and gold that played in her hair.

Archie was attracted by the bright thing like a child. He looked at her again and yet again

and their looks crossed. The lip was lifted from her little teeth. He saw the red blood wor
vividly under her tawny skin. Her eye, which was great as a stag's, struck and held his ga
He knew who she must be--Kirstie, she of the harsh diminutive, his housekeeper's niece,
sister of the rustic prophet, Gib--and he found in her the answer to his wishes.

Christina felt the shock of their encountering glances, and seemed to rise, clothed in smil
into a region of the vague and bright. But the gratification was not more exquisite than i
as brief. She looked away abruptly, and immediately began to blame herself for that abrupt
e knew what she should have done, too late--turned slowly with her nose in the air. And me
his look was not removed, but continued to play upon her like a battery of cannon constan
aimed, and now seemed to isolate her alone with him, and now seemed to uplift her, as o
pillory, before the congregation. For Archie continued to drink her in with his eyes, ever
as a wayfarer comes to a well-head on a mountain, and stoops his face, and drinks with th
unassuageable. In the cleft of her little breasts the fiery eye of the topaz and the pale flore
of primrose fascinated him. He saw the breasts heave, and the flowers shake with the heav
marvelled what should so much discompose the girl. And Christina was conscious of his ga
perhaps, with the dainty plaything of an ear that peeped among her ringlets; she was cons
hanging colour, conscious of her unsteady breath. Like a creature tracked, run down, surro
she sought in a dozen ways to give herself a countenance. She used her handkerchief--it w
a really fine one--then she desisted in a panic: "He would only think I was too warm." Sh
took to reading in the metrical psalms, and then remembered it was sermon-time. Last she
"sugar-bool" in her mouth, and the next moment repented of the step. It was such a homel
thing! Mr. Archie would never be eating sweeties in kirk; and, with a palpable effort, she
swallowed it whole, and her colour flamed high. At this signal of distress Archie awoke t
a sense of his ill-behaviour. What had he been doing? He had been exquisitely rude in chu
to the niece of his housekeeper; he had stared like a lackey and a libertine at a beautifu

and modest girl. It was possible, it was even likely, he would be presented to her after serv
the kirkyard, and then how was he to look? And there was no excuse. He had marked the
of her shame, of her increasing indignation, and he was such a fool that he had not unders
them. Shame bowed him down, and he looked resolutely at Mr. Torrance: who little suppos
ood, worthy man, as he continued to expound justification by faith, what was his true busi
to play the part of derivative to a pair of children at the old game of falling in love.

Christina was greatly relieved at first. It seemed to her that she was clothed again. She loo
back on what had passed. All would have been right if she had not blushed, a silly fool! Th
was nothing to blush at, if she had taken a sugar-bool. Mrs. MacTaggart, the elder's wife
St. Enoch's, took them often. And if he had looked at her, what was more natural than th
a young gentleman should look at the best-dressed girl in church? And at the same time,
new far otherwise, she knew there was nothing casual or ordinary in the look, and valued h
on its memory like a decoration. Well, it was a blessing he had found something else to lo
at! And presently she began to have other thoughts. It was necessary, she fancied, that s
should put herself right by a repetition of the incident, better managed. If the wish was fat
to the thought, she did not know or she would not recognise it. It was simply as a manoeu
of propriety, as something called for to lessen the significance of what had gone before, t
she should a second time meet his eyes, and this time without blushing. And at the memor
e blush, she blushed again, and became one general blush burning from head to foot. Was
nything so indelicate, so forward, done by a girl before? And here she was, making an exhi
of herself before the congregation about nothing! She stole a glance upon her neighbours,
behold! they were steadily indifferent, and Clem had gone to sleep. And still the one ide
s becoming more and more potent with her, that in common prudence she must look again
the service ended. Something of the same sort was going forward in the mind of Archie, as
struggled with the load of penitence. So it chanced that, in the flutter of the moment whe

ast psalm was given out, and Torrance was reading the verse, and the leaves of every psa
in church were rustling under busy fingers, two stealthy glances were sent out like antenn
among the pews and on the indifferent and absorbed occupants, and drew timidly nearer to
straight line between Archie and Christina. They met, they lingered together for the leas
fraction of time, and that was enough. A charge as of electricity passed through Christina
and behold! the leaf of her psalm-book was torn across.

chie was outside by the gate of the graveyard, conversing with Hob and the minister and sl
hands all round with the scattering congregation, when Clem and Christina were brought u
be presented. The laird took off his hat and bowed to her with grace and respect. Christi
her Glasgow curtsey to the laird, and went on again up the road for Hermiston and Caulds
walking fast, breathing hurriedly with a heightened colour, and in this strange frame of mi
when she was alone she seemed in high happiness, and when any one addressed her she
it like a contradiction. A part of the way she had the company of some neighbour girls an
utish young man; never had they seemed so insipid, never had she made herself so disagr
But these struck aside to their various destinations or were out-walked and left behind; a
en she had driven off with sharp words the proffered convoy of some of her nephews and
he was free to go on alone up Hermiston brae, walking on air, dwelling intoxicated among c
of happiness. Near to the summit she heard steps behind her, a man's steps, light and ve
rapid. She knew the foot at once and walked the faster. "If it's me he's wanting, he can ru
for it," she thought, smiling.

Archie overtook her like a man whose mind was made up.

"Miss Kirstie," he began.

"Miss Christina, if you please, Mr. Weir," she interrupted. "I canna bear the contraction."

"You forget it has a friendly sound for me. Your aunt is an old friend of mine, and a very good one. I hope we shall see much of you at Hermiston?"

"My aunt and my sister-in-law doesna agree very well. Not that I have much ado with it. E when I'm stopping in the house, if I was to be visiting my aunt, it would not look considerat

"I am sorry," said Archie.

"I thank you kindly, Mr. Weir," she said. "I whiles think myself it's a great peety."

"Ah, I am sure your voice would always be for peace!" he cried.

"I wouldna be too sure of that," she said. "I have my days like other folk, I suppose."

o you know, in our old kirk, among our good old grey dames, you made an effect like suns

"Ah, but that would be my Glasgow clothes!"

"I did not think I was so much under the influence of pretty frocks."

She smiled with a half look at him. "There's more than you!" she said. "But you see I'm or Cinderella. I'll have to put all these things by in my trunk; next Sunday I'll be as grey as the rest. They're Glasgow clothes, you see, and it would never do to make a practice of It would seem terrible conspicuous."

y that they were come to the place where their ways severed. The old grey moors were all
them; in the midst a few sheep wandered; and they could see on the one hand the straggl
caravan scaling the braes in front of them for Cauldstaneslap, and on the other, the contin
from Hermiston bending off and beginning to disappear by detachments into the policy ga

It was in these circumstances that they turned to say farewell, and deliberately exchange
a glance as they shook hands. All passed as it should, genteelly; and in Christina's mind
s she mounted the first steep ascent for Cauldstaneslap, a gratifying sense of triumph prev
over the recollection of minor lapses and mistakes. She had kilted her gown, as she did usu
at that rugged pass; but when she spied Archie still standing and gazing after her, the ski
ame down again as if by enchantment. Here was a piece of nicety for that upland parish, w

the matrons marched with their coats kilted in the rain, and the lasses walked barefoot t
kirk through the dust of summer, and went bravely down by the burn-side, and sat on ston
to make a public toilet before entering! It was perhaps an air wafted from Glasgow; or perh

it marked a stage of that dizziness of gratified vanity, in which the instinctive act passed
unperceived. He was looking after! She unloaded her bosom of a prodigious sigh that was
pleasure, and betook herself to run. When she had overtaken the stragglers of her family,
aught up the niece whom she had so recently repulsed, and kissed and slapped her, and c
her away again, and ran after her with pretty cries and laughter. Perhaps she thought the l
ight still be looking! But it chanced the little scene came under the view of eyes less favour

for she overtook Mrs. Hob marching with Clem and Dand.

"You're shÃ¼rely fey, lass!" quoth Dandie.

"Think shame to yersel', miss!" said the strident Mrs. Hob. "Is this the gait to guide yerse
n the way hame frae kirk? You're shÃ¼rely no sponsible the day! And anyway I would min

guid claes."

"Hoot!" said Christina, and went on before them, head in air, treading the rough track wit the tread of a wild doe.

She was in love with herself, her destiny, the air of the hills, the benediction of the sun. All the way home, she continued under the intoxication of these sky-scraping spirits. At ta she could talk freely of young Hermiston; gave her opinion of him off-hand and with a lou voice, that he was a handsome young gentleman, real well-mannered and sensible-like, b s a pity he looked doleful. Only--the moment after--a memory of his eyes in church embarr her. But for this inconsiderable check, all through meal-time she had a good appetite, an she kept them laughing at table, until Gib (who had returned before them from Crossmich and his separative worship) reproved the whole of them for their levity.

Singing "in to herself" as she went, her mind still in the turmoil of a glad confusion, she rose and tripped upstairs to a little loft, lighted by four panes in the gable, where she slep with one of her nieces. The niece, who followed her, presuming on "Auntie's" high spirits was flounced out of the apartment with small ceremony, and retired, smarting and half tea to bury her woes in the byre among the hay. Still humming, Christina divested herself of h finery, and put her treasures one by one in her great green trunk. The last of these was th psalm-book; it was a fine piece, the gift of Mistress Clem, in distinct old-faced type, on paper that had begun to grow foxy in the warehouse--not by service--and she was used to w it in a handkerchief every Sunday after its period of service was over, and bury it end-wis at the head of her trunk. As she now took it in hand the book fell open where the leaf wa orn, and she stood and gazed upon that evidence of her bygone discomposure. There retu again the vision of the two brown eyes staring at her, intent and bright, out of that dark

corner of the kirk. The whole appearance and attitude, the smile, the suggested gesture
young Hermiston came before her in a flash at the sight of the torn page. "I was surely fe
she said, echoing the words of Dandie, and at the suggested doom her high spirits desert
her. She flung herself prone upon the bed, and lay there, holding the psalm-book in her ha
for hours, for the more part in a mere stupor of unconsenting pleasure and unreasoning fe
The fear was superstitious; there came up again and again in her memory Dandie's ill-ome
s, and a hundred grisly and black tales out of the immediate neighbourhood read her a con
on their force. The pleasure was never realised. You might say the joints of her body thou
emembered, and were gladdened, but her essential self, in the immediate theatre of consc
talked feverishly of something else, like a nervous person at a fire. The image that she m
nplacently dwelt on was that of Miss Christina in her character of the Fair Lass of Cauldsta
carrying all before her in the straw-coloured frock, the violet mantle, and the yellow cobw
stockings. Archie's image, on the other hand, when it presented itself was never welcomed
less welcomed with any ardour, and it was exposed at times to merciless criticism. In the l
vague dialogues she held in her mind, often with imaginary, often with unrealised interlocut
Archie, if he were referred to at all, came in for savage handling. He was described as "loo
like a stirk," "staring like a caulf," "a face like a ghaist's." "Do you call that manners?"
she said; or, "I soon put him in his place." "'Miss Christina, if you please, Mr. Weir!' says
I, and just flyped up my skirt tails." With gabble like this she would entertain herself long
whiles together, and then her eye would perhaps fall on the torn leaf, and the eyes of Arch
would appear again from the darkness of the wall, and the voluble words deserted her, and
would lie still and stupid, and think upon nothing with devotion, and be sometimes raised
a quiet sigh. Had a doctor of medicine come into that loft, he would have diagnosed a heal
well-developed, eminently vivacious lass lying on her face in a fit of the sulks; not one wh
had just contracted, or was just contracting, a mortal sickness of the mind which should y
carry her towards death and despair. Had it been a doctor of psychology, he might have b

pardoned for divining in the girl a passion of childish vanity, self-love in excelsis, and
no more. It is to be understood that I have been painting chaos and describing the inarticul
ery lineament that appears is too precise, almost every word used too strong. Take a finge
in the mountains on a day of rolling mists; I have but copied the names that appear upon
inters, the names of definite and famous cities far distant, and now perhaps basking in sun
but Christina remained all these hours, as it were, at the foot of the post itself, not movin
and enveloped in mutable and blinding wreaths of haze.

day was growing late and the sunbeams long and level, when she sat suddenly up, and w
in its handkerchief and put by that psalm-book which had already played a part so decisi
in the first chapter of her love-story. In the absence of the mesmerist's eye, we are told
nowadays that the head of a bright nail may fill his place, if it be steadfastly regarded.
So that torn page had riveted her attention on what might else have been but little, and perh
on forgotten; while the ominous words of Dandie--heard, not heeded, and still remembered
lent to her thoughts, or rather to her mood, a cast of solemnity, and that idea of Fate--a
an Fate, uncontrolled by any Christian deity, obscure, lawless, and august--moving undissu
in the affairs of Christian men. Thus even that phenomenon of love at first sight, which i
so rare and seems so simple and violent, like a disruption of life's tissue, may be decompo
into a sequence of accidents happily concurring.

She put on a grey frock and a pink kerchief, looked at herself a moment with approval in t
small square of glass that served her for a toilet mirror, and went softly downstairs throug
the sleeping house that resounded with the sound of afternoon snoring. Just outside the d
Dandie was sitting with a book in his hand, not reading, only honouring the Sabbath by a sa
vacancy of mind. She came near him and stood still.

"I'm for off up the muirs, Dandie," she said.

here was something unusually soft in her tones that made him look up. She was pale, her dark and bright; no trace remained of the levity of the morning.

"Ay, lass? Ye'll have yer ups and downs like me, I'm thinkin'," he observed.

"What for do ye say that?" she asked.

"O, for naething," says Dand. "Only I think ye're mair like me than the lave of them. Ye'v mair of the poetic temper, tho' Guid kens little enough of the poetic taalent. It's an ill gift at the best. Look at yoursel'. At denner you were all sunshine and flowers and laughte and now you're like the star of evening on a lake."

She drank in this hackneyed compliment like wine, and it glowed in her veins.

"But I'm saying, Dand"--she came nearer him--"I'm for the muirs. I must have a braith of a If Clem was to be speiring for me, try and quaiet him, will ye no?"

"What way?" said Dandie. "I ken but the ae way, and that's leein'. I'll say ye had a sair he if ye like."

"But I havena," she objected.

"I daursay no," he returned. "I said I would say ye had; and if ye like to nay-say me whe ye come back, it'll no mateerially maitter, for my chara'ter's clean gane a'ready past reca

"O, Dand, are ye a leear?" she asked, lingering.

"Folks say sae," replied the bard.

"Wha says sae?" she pursued.

"Them that should ken the best," he responded. "The lassies, for ane."

"But, Dand, you would never lee to me?" she asked.

"I'll leave that for your pairt of it, ye girzie," said he. "Ye'll lee to me fast eneuch, when ye hae gotten a jo. I'm tellin' ye and it's true; when you have a jo, Miss Kirstie, it'll be for guid and ill. I ken: I was made that way mysel', but the deil was in my luck! Here, gan awa' wi' ye to your muirs, and let me be; I'm in an hour of inspiraution, ye upsetting tawpi

But she clung to her brother's neighbourhood, she knew not why.

"Will ye no gie's a kiss, Dand?" she said. "I aye likit ye fine."

He kissed her and considered her a moment; he found something strange in her. But he w libertine through and through, nourished equal contempt and suspicion of all womankind, a paid his way among them habitually with idle compliments.

"Gae wa' wi' ye!" said he. "Ye're a dentie baby, and be content wi' that!"

That was Dandie's way; a kiss and a comfit to Jenny--a bawbee and my blessing to Jill--a
ood-night to the whole clan of ye, my dears! When anything approached the serious, it bec
matter for men, he both thought and said. Women, when they did not absorb, were only ch
o be shoo'd away. Merely in his character of connoisseur, however, Dandle glanced carele
after his sister as she crossed the meadow. "The brat's no that bad!" he thought with surpr
for though he had just been paying her compliments, he had not really looked at her. "He
what's yon?" For the grey dress was cut with short sleeves and skirts, and displayed her t
ong legs clad in pink stockings of the same shade as the kerchief she wore round her shou
d that shimmered as she went. This was not her way in undress; he knew her ways and the
of the whole sex in the country-side, no one better; when they did not go barefoot, they w
tout "rig and furrow" woollen hose of an invisible blue mostly, when they were not black out
and Dandie, at sight of this daintiness, put two and two together. It was a silk handkerchi
then they would be silken hose; they matched--then the whole outfit was a present of Cler
a costly present, and not something to be worn through bog and briar, or on a late afterno
f Sunday. He whistled. "My denty May, either your heid's fair turned, or there's some ongoi
he observed, and dismissed the subject.

She went slowly at first, but ever straighter and faster for the Cauldstaneslap, a pass amo
he hills to which the farm owed its name. The Slap opened like a doorway between two rou
hillocks; and through this ran the short cut to Hermiston. Immediately on the other side i
vent down through the Deil's Hags, a considerable marshy hollow of the hill tops, full of spr
nd crouching junipers, and pools where the black peat-water slumbered. There was no view
ere. A man might have sat upon the Praying Weaver's Stone a half-century, and seen non
the Cauldstaneslap children twice in the twenty-four hours on their way to the school and b
again, an occasional shepherd, the irruption of a clan of sheep, or the birds who haunted a
the springs, drinking and shrilly piping. So, when she had once passed the Slap, Kirstie w

received into seclusion. She looked back a last time at the farm. It still lay deserted exce
for the figure of Dandie, who was now seen to be scribbling in his lap, the hour of expect
spiration having come to him at last. Thence she passed rapidly through the morass, and
the farther end of it, where a sluggish burn discharges, and the path for Hermiston accomp
it on the beginning of its downward way. From this corner a wide view was opened to her
the whole stretch of braes upon the other side, still sallow and in places rusty with the win
with the path marked boldly, here and there by the burn-side a tuft of birches, and--two mi
off as the crow flies--from its enclosures and young plantations, the windows of Hermisto
glittering in the western sun.

Here she sat down and waited, and looked for a long time at these far-away bright panes
glass. It amused her to have so extended a view, she thought. It amused her to see the ho
Hermiston--to see "folk"; and there was an indistinguishable human unit, perhaps the gard
visibly sauntering on the gravel paths.

By the time the sun was down and all the easterly braes lay plunged in clear shadow, she
ware of another figure coming up the path at a most unequal rate of approach, now half run
ow pausing and seeming to hesitate. She watched him at first with a total suspension of tho
She held her thought as a person holds his breathing. Then she consented to recognise h
"He'll no be coming here, he canna be; it's no possible." And there began to grow upon h
a subdued choking suspense. He was coming; his hesitations had quite ceased, his step g
firm and swift; no doubt remained; and the question loomed up before her instant: what w
she to do? It was all very well to say that her brother was a laird himself; it was all very
ell to speak of casual intermarriages and to count cousinship, like Auntie Kirstie. The differ
in their social station was trenchant; propriety, prudence, all that she had ever learned,
all that she knew, bade her flee. But on the other hand the cup of life now offered to her

s too enchanting. For one moment, she saw the question clearly, and definitely made her c
She stood up and showed herself an instant in the gap relieved upon the sky line; and the r
ed trembling and sat down glowing with excitement on the Weaver's Stone. She shut her e
eeking, praying for composure. Her hand shook in her lap, and her mind was full of incongr
and futile speeches. What was there to make a work about? She could take care of herself,
supposed! There was no harm in seeing the laird. It was the best thing that could happen.
would mark a proper distance to him once and for all. Gradually the wheels of her nature ce
to go round so madly, and she sat in passive expectation, a quiet, solitary figure in the mi
of the grey moss. I have said she was no hypocrite, but here I am at fault. She never admi
to herself that she had come up the hill to look for Archie. And perhaps after all she did
not know, perhaps came as a stone falls. For the steps of love in the young, and especia
in girls, are instinctive and unconscious.

In the meantime Archie was drawing rapidly near, and he at least was consciously seeking
eighbourhood. The afternoon had turned to ashes in his mouth; the memory of the girl had
him from reading and drawn him as with cords; and at last, as the cool of the evening beg
to come on, he had taken his hat and set forth, with a smothered ejaculation, by the moor p
to Cauldstaneslap. He had no hope to find her, he took the off chance without expectation
result and to relieve his uneasiness. The greater was his surprise, as he surmounted the sl
and came into the hollow of the Deil's Hags, to see there, like an answer to his wishes, th
little womanly figure in the grey dress and the pink kerchief sitting little, and low, and
lost, and acutely solitary, in these desolate surroundings and on the weather-beaten ston
of the dead weaver. Those things that still smacked of winter were all rusty about her, an
those things that already relished of the spring had put forth the tender and lively colour
of the season. Even in the unchanging face of the death-stone, changes were to be remark
d in the channeled lettering, the moss began to renew itself in jewels of green. By an afterth

that was a stroke of art, she had turned up over her head the back of the kerchief; so tha
now framed becomingly her vivacious and yet pensive face. Her feet were gathered unde
on the one side, and she leaned on her bare arm, which showed out strong and round, tap
to a slim wrist, and shimmered in the fading light.

Young Hermiston was struck with a certain chill. He was reminded that he now dealt in ser
ers of life and death. This was a grown woman he was approaching, endowed with her my
potencies and attractions, the treasury of the continued race, and he was neither better n
worse than the average of his sex and age. He had a certain delicacy which had preserved
erto unspotted, and which (had either of them guessed it) made him a more dangerous con
when his heart should be really stirred. His throat was dry as he came near; but the appea
sweetness of her smile stood between them like a guardian angel.

For she turned to him and smiled, though without rising. There was a shade in this cavali
reeting that neither of them perceived; neither he, who simply thought it gracious and char
as herself; nor yet she, who did not observe (quick as she was) the difference between ris
to meet the laird, and remaining seated to receive the expected admirer.

"Are ye stepping west, Hermiston?" said she, giving him his territorial name after the fash
of the countryside.

"I was," said he, a little hoarsely, "but I think I will be about the end of my stroll now.
Are you like me, Miss Christina? The house would not hold me. I came here seeking air

He took his seat at the other end of the tombstone and studied her, wondering what was s
There was infinite import in the question alike for her and him.

"Ay," said she. "I couldna bear the roof either. It's a habit of mine to come up here abou the gloaming when it's quaiet and caller."

"It was a habit of my mother's also," he said gravely. The recollection half startled him a he expressed it. He looked around. "I have scarce been here since. It's peaceful," he sai with a long breath.

"It's no like Glasgow," she replied. "A weary place, yon Glasgow! But what a day have I h for my hame-coming, and what a bonny evening!"

"Indeed, it was a wonderful day," said Archie. "I think I will remember it years and years until I come to die. On days like this--I do not know if you feel as I do--but everything appe so brief, and fragile, and exquisite, that I am afraid to touch life. We are here for so shor me; and all the old people before us--Rutherfords of Hermiston, Elliotts of the Cauldstanesl ere here but a while since riding about and keeping up a great noise in this quiet corner--m love too, and marrying--why, where are they now? It's deadly commonplace, but, after all, commonplaces are the great poetic truths."

He was sounding her, semi-consciously, to see if she could understand him; to learn if sh were only an animal the colour of flowers, or had a soul in her to keep her sweet. She, o her part, her means well in hand, watched, woman-like, for any opportunity to shine, to abo in his humour, whatever that might be. The dramatic artist, that lies dormant or only hal awake in most human beings, had in her sprung to his feet in a divine fury, and chance h served her well. She looked upon him with a subdued twilight look that became the hour of day and the train of thought; earnestness shone through her like stars in the purple wes

and from the great but controlled upheaval of her whole nature there passed into her voic and ran in her lightest words, a thrill of emotion.

'Have you mind of Dand's song?" she answered. "I think he'll have been trying to say what have been thinking."

"No, I never heard it," he said. "Repeat it to me, can you?"

"It's nothing wanting the tune," said Kirstie.

"Then sing it me," said he.

"On the Lord's Day? That would never do, Mr. Weir!"

"I am afraid I am not so strict a keeper of the Sabbath, and there is no one in this place to hear us unless the poor old ancient under the stone."

"No that I'm thinking that really," she said. "By my way of thinking, it's just as serious as a psalm. Will I sooth it to ye, then?"

"If you please," said he, and, drawing near to her on the tombstone, prepared to listen.

She sat up as if to sing. "I'll only can sooth it to ye," she explained. "I wouldna like to sing out loud on the Sabbath. I think the birds would carry news of it to Gilbert," and she smiled. "It's about the Elliotts," she continued, "and I think there's few bonnier bits in the book-poets, though Dand has never got printed yet."

And she began, in the low, clear tones of her half voice, now sinking almost to a whispe
now rising to a particular note which was her best, and which Archie learned to wait for w
growing emotion:--

"O they rade in the rain, in the days that are gane,
In the rain and the wind and the lave,
They shoutit in the ha' and they routit on the hill,
But they're a' quaitit noo in the grave.

All the time she sang she looked steadfastly before her, her knees straight, her hands up
knee, head cast back and up. The expression was admirable throughout, for had she not l
from the lips and under the criticism of the author? When it was done, she turned upon Ar
a face softly bright, and eyes gently suffused and shining in the twilight, and his heart ros
and went out to her with boundless pity and sympathy. His question was answered. She wa
human being tuned to a sense of the tragedy of life; there were pathos and music and a gr
heart in the girl.

He arose instinctively, she also; for she saw she had gained a point, and scored the impres
deeper, and she had wit enough left to flee upon a victory. They were but commonplaces t
mained to be exchanged, but the low, moved voices in which they passed made them sac
the memory. In the falling greyness of the evening he watched her figure winding through
horass, saw it turn a last time and wave a hand, and then pass through the Slap; and it see
o him as if something went along with her out of the deepest of his heart. And something s
d come, and come to dwell there. He had retained from childhood a picture, now half oblite
by the passage of time and the multitude of fresh impressions, of his mother telling him, w

the fluttered earnestness of her voice, and often with dropping tears, the tale of the "Prayi
eaver," on the very scene of his brief tragedy and long repose. And now there was a comp
piece; and he beheld, and he should behold for ever, Christina perched on the same tomb
the grey colours of the evening, gracious, dainty, perfect as a flower, and she also singing

"Of old, unhappy far off things,
And battles long ago,"

of their common ancestors now dead, of their rude wars composed, their weapons buried w
hem, and of these strange changelings, their descendants, who lingered a little in their pla
and would soon be gone also, and perhaps sung of by others at the gloaming hour. By one
e unconscious arts of tenderness the two women were enshrined together in his memory. T
in that hour of sensibility, came into his eyes indifferently at the thought of either; and
he girl, from being something merely bright and shapely, was caught up into the zone of th
serious as life and death and his dead mother. So that in all ways and on either side, Fat
played his game artfully with this poor pair of children. The generations were prepared, th
pangs were made ready, before the curtain rose on the dark drama.

In the same moment of time that she disappeared from Archie, there opened before Kirsti
eyes the cup-like hollow in which the farm lay. She saw, some five hundred feet below he
the house making itself bright with candles, and this was a broad hint to her to hurry. Fo
they were only kindled on a Sabbath night with a view to that family worship which round
in the incomparable tedium of the day and brought on the relaxation of supper. Already s
knew that Robert must be withinsides at the head of the table, "waling the portions"; for
was Robert in his quality of family priest and judge, not the gifted Gilbert, who officiated
he made good time accordingly down the steep ascent, and came up to the door panting a

three younger brothers, all roused at last from slumber, stood together in the cool and th
dark of the evening with a fry of nephews and nieces about them, chatting and awaiting t
expected signal. She stood back; she had no mind to direct attention to her late arrival o
to her labouring breath.

"Kirstie, ye have shaved it this time, my lass," said Clem. "Whaur were ye?"

"O, just taking a dander by mysel'," said Kirstie.

And the talk continued on the subject of the American War, without further reference to th
truant who stood by them in the covert of the dusk, thrilling with happiness and the sens
of guilt.

The signal was given, and the brothers began to go in one after another, amid the jostle a
throng of Hob's children.

Only Dandie, waiting till the last, caught Kirstie by the arm. "When did ye begin to dande
in pink hosen, Mistress Elliott?" he whispered slily.

e looked down; she was one blush. "I maun have forgotten to change them," said she; and
n to prayers in her turn with a troubled mind, between anxiety as to whether Dand should h
observed her yellow stockings at church, and should thus detect her in a palpable falseho
nd shame that she had already made good his prophecy. She remembered the words of it
it was to be when she had gotten a jo, and that that would be for good and evil. "Will I ha
gotten my jo now?" she thought with a secret rapture.

And all through prayers, where it was her principal business to conceal the pink stocking
rom the eyes of the indifferent Mrs. Hob--and all through supper, as she made a feint of ea
and sat at the table radiant and constrained--and again when she had left them and come
her chamber, and was alone with her sleeping niece, and could at last lay aside the armo
f society--the same words sounded within her, the same profound note of happiness, of a w
all changed and renewed, of a day that had been passed in Paradise, and of a night that w
o be heaven opened. All night she seemed to be conveyed smoothly upon a shallow strea
sleep and waking, and through the bowers of Beulah; all night she cherished to her heart t
quisite hope; and if, towards morning, she forgot it a while in a more profound unconscious
it was to catch again the rainbow thought with her first moment of awaking.

CHAPTER VII

ENTER MEPHISTOPHELES

Two days later a gig from Crossmichael deposited Frank Innes at the doors of Hermiston. C
in a way, during the past winter, Archie, in some acute phase of boredom, had written him
r. It had contained something in the nature of an invitation, or a reference to an invitation--p
at, neither of them now remembered. When Innes had received it, there had been nothing
om his mind than to bury himself in the moors with Archie; but not even the most acute po
heads are guided through the steps of life with unerring directness. That would require a g
of prophecy which has been denied to man. For instance, who could have imagined that, n
month after he had received the letter, and turned it into mockery, and put off answering
nd in the end lost it, misfortunes of a gloomy cast should begin to thicken over Frank's car
His case may be briefly stated. His father, a small Morayshire laird with a large family, beca
recalcitrant and cut off the supplies; he had fitted himself out with the beginnings of quite

a good law library, which, upon some sudden losses on the turf, he had been obliged to s
before they were paid for; and his bookseller, hearing some rumour of the event, took ou
warrant for his arrest. Innes had early word of it, and was able to take precautions. In thi
immediate welter of his affairs, with an unpleasant charge hanging over him, he had judg
it the part of prudence to be off instantly, had written a fervid letter to his father at Inverau
and put himself in the coach for Crossmichael. Any port in a storm! He was manfully turni
his back on the Parliament House and its gay babble, on porter and oysters, the racecour
and the ring; and manfully prepared, until these clouds should have blown by, to share a li
grave with Archie Weir at Hermiston.

To do him justice, he was no less surprised to be going than Archie was to see him come;
he carried off his wonder with an infinitely better grace.

"Well, here I am!" said he, as he alighted. "Pylades has come to Orestes at last. By the w
d you get my answer? No? How very provoking! Well, here I am to answer for myself, and
better still."

"I am very glad to see you, of course," said Archie. "I make you heartily welcome, of cours
But you surely have not come to stay, with the Courts still sitting; is that not most unwise

"Damn the Courts!" says Frank. "What are the Courts to friendship and a little fishing?"

And so it was agreed that he was to stay, with no term to the visit but the term which he h
privily set to it himself--the day, namely, when his father should have come down with th
dust, and he should be able to pacify the bookseller. On such vague conditions there beg
for these two young men (who were not even friends) a life of great familiarity and, as th

days drew on, less and less intimacy. They were together at meal-times, together o' nigh
when the hour had come for whisky-toddy; but it might have been noticed (had there been
ne to pay heed) that they were rarely so much together by day. Archie had Hermiston to a
to, multifarious activities in the hills, in which he did not require, and had even refused,
k's escort. He would be off sometimes in the morning and leave only a note on the breakfa
to announce the fact; and sometimes with no notice at all, he would not return for dinner u
the hour was long past. Innes groaned under these desertions; it required all his philosop
to sit down to a solitary breakfast with composure and all his unaffected good-nature to b
able to greet Archie with friendliness on the more rare occasions when he came home late
dinner.

"I wonder what on earth he finds to do, Mrs. Elliott?" said he one morning, after he had ju
read the hasty billet and sat down to table.

"I suppose it will be business, sir," replied the housekeeper drily, measuring his distance
off to him by an indicated curtsey.

"But I can't imagine what business!" he reiterated.

"I suppose it will be his business," retorted the austere Kirstie.

He turned to her with that happy brightness that made the charm of his disposition, and br
into a peal of healthy and natural laughter.

"Well played, Mrs. Elliott!" he cried; and the housekeeper's face relaxed into the shadow
an iron smile. "Well played indeed!" said he. "But you must not be making a stranger of m

e that. Why, Archie and I were at the High School together, and we've been to College tog
and we were going to the Bar together, when--you know! Dear, dear me! what a pity that w
A life spoiled, a fine young fellow as good as buried here in the wilderness with rustics;
and all for what? A frolic, silly, if you like, but no more. God, how good your scones are
Mrs. Elliott!"

"They're no mines, it was the lassie made them," said Kirstie; "and, saving your presenc
there's little sense in taking the Lord's name in vain about idle vivers that you fill your
kyte wi'."

"I daresay you're perfectly right, ma'am," quoth the imperturbable Frank. "But as I was say
this is a pitiable business, this about poor Archie; and you and I might do worse than pu
our heads together, like a couple of sensible people, and bring it to an end. Let me tell yo
ma'am, that Archie is really quite a promising young man, and in my opinion he would do v
at the Bar. As for his father, no one can deny his ability, and I don't fancy any one would
care to deny that he has the deil's own temper----"

"If you'll excuse me, Mr. Innes, I think the lass is crying on me," said Kirstie, and flounce
from the room.

"The damned, cross-grained, old broom-stick!" ejaculated Innes.

In the meantime, Kirstie had escaped into the kitchen, and before her vassal gave vent to
feelings.

"Here, ettercap! Ye'll have to wait on yon Innes! I canna hand myself in. 'Puir Erchie!' I'd

'puir Erchie' him, if I had my way! And Hermiston with the deil's ain temper! God, let him take Hermiston's scones out of his mouth first. There's no a hair on ayther o' the Weirs th hasna mair spunk and dirdum to it than what he has in his hale dwaibly body! Settin' up h snash to me! Let him gang to the black toon where he's mebbe wantit--birling on a curricle matum on his heid--making a mess o' himsel' wi' nesty hizzies--a fair disgrace!" It was impo to hear without admiration Kirstie's graduated disgust, as she brought forth, one after anot se somewhat baseless charges. Then she remembered her immediate purpose, and turne on her fascinated auditor. "Do ye no hear me, tawpie? Do ye no hear what I'm tellin' ye? V I have to shoo ye into him? If I come to attend to ye, mistress!" And the maid fled the kitch which had become practically dangerous, to attend on Innes's wants in the front parlour

antaene irae? Has the reader perceived the reason? Since Frank's coming there were no rs of gossip over the supper-tray! All his blandishments were in vain; he had started handi on the race for Mrs. Elliott's favour.

But it was a strange thing how misfortune dogged him in his efforts to be genial. I must gu the reader against accepting Kirstie's epithets as evidence; she was more concerned for t vigour than for their accuracy. Dwaibly, for instance; nothing could be more calumnious. Fr was the very picture of good looks, good humour, and manly youth. He had bright eyes wi sparkle and a dance to them, curly hair, a charming smile, brilliant teeth, an admirable carr of the head, the look of a gentleman, the address of one accustomed to please at first sig and to improve the impression. And with all these advantages, he failed with every one ab Hermiston; with the silent shepherd, with the obsequious grieve, with the groom who was a he ploughman, with the gardener and the gardener's sister--a pious, down-hearted woman a shawl over her ears--he failed equally and flatly. They did not like him, and they showe it. The little maid, indeed, was an exception; she admired him devoutly, probably dreamed

him in her private hours; but she was accustomed to play the part of silent auditor to Kirsti
tirades and silent recipient of Kirstie's buffets, and she had learned not only to be a very
capable girl of her years, but a very secret and prudent one besides. Frank was thus conso
t he had one ally and sympathiser in the midst of that general union of disfavour that surro
watched, and waited on him in the house of Hermiston; but he had little comfort or socie
from that alliance, and the demure little maid (twelve on her last birthday) preserved he
n counsel, and tripped on his service, brisk, dumbly responsive, but inexorably unconversa
the others, they were beyond hope and beyond endurance. Never had a young Apollo be
among such rustic barbarians. But perhaps the cause of his ill-success lay in one trait wh
as habitual and unconscious with him, yet diagnostic of the man. It was his practice to app
any one person at the expense of some one else. He offered you an alliance against the s
one else; he flattered you by slighting him; you were drawn into a small intrigue against h
before you knew how. Wonderful are the virtues of this process generally; but Frank's mist
was in the choice of the some one else. He was not politic in that; he listened to the voic
of irritation. Archie had offended him at first by what he had felt to be rather a dry recepti
had offended him since by his frequent absences. He was besides the one figure continua
present in Frank's eye; and it was to his immediate dependants that Frank could offer the s
of his sympathy. Now the truth is that the Weirs, father and son, were surrounded by a po
of strenuous loyalists. Of my lord they were vastly proud. It was a distinction in itself to
be one of the vassals of the "Hanging Judge," and his gross, formidable joviality was far fr
popular in the neighbourhood of his home. For Archie they had, one and all, a sensitive aff
and respect which recoiled from a word of belittlement.

Nor was Frank more successful when he went farther afield. To the Four Black Brothers,
nstance, he was antipathetic in the highest degree. Hob thought him too light, Gib too prof
em, who saw him but for a day or two before he went to Glasgow, wanted to know what the

siness was, and whether he meant to stay here all session time! "Yon's a drone," he prono

As for Dand, it will be enough to describe their first meeting, when Frank had been whippi
a river and the rustic celebrity chanced to come along the path.

"I'm told you're quite a poet," Frank had said.

"Wha tell't ye that, mannie?" had been the unconciliating answer.

"O, everybody!" says Frank.

"God! Here's fame!" said the sardonic poet, and he had passed on his way.

Come to think of it, we have here perhaps a truer explanation of Frank's failures. Had he r
r. Sheriff Scott, he could have turned a neater compliment, because Mr. Scott would have
a friend worth making. Dand, on the other hand, he did not value sixpence, and he showe
even while he tried to flatter. Condescension is an excellent thing, but it is strange how
e-sided the pleasure of it is! He who goes fishing among the Scots peasantry with condesc
for a bait will have an empty basket by evening.

In proof of this theory Frank made a great success of it at the Crossmichael Club, to whic
Archie took him immediately on his arrival; his own last appearance on that scene of gaie
Frank was made welcome there at once, continued to go regularly, and had attended a me
as the members ever after loved to tell) on the evening before his death. Young Hay and y
Pringle appeared again. There was another supper at Windielaws, another dinner at Driff
and it resulted in Frank being taken to the bosom of the county people as unreservedly as
had been repudiated by the country folk. He occupied Hermiston after the manner of an inv

in a conquered capital. He was perpetually issuing from it, as from a base, to toddy partie fishing parties, and dinner parties, to which Archie was not invited, or to which Archie wou ot go. It was now that the name of The Recluse became general for the young man. Some that Innes invented it; Innes, at least, spread it abroad.

"How's all with your Recluse to-day?" people would ask.

"O, reclusing away!" Innes would declare, with his bright air of saying something witty; an immediately interrupt the general laughter which he had provoked much more by his air th his words, "Mind you, it's all very well laughing, but I'm not very well pleased. Poor Archi is a good fellow, an excellent fellow, a fellow I always liked. I think it small of him to take his little disgrace so hard and shut himself up. 'Grant that it is a ridiculous story, painfully ridiculous,' I keep telling him. 'Be a man! Live it down, man!' But not he. Of cours it's just solitude, and shame, and all that. But I confess I'm beginning to fear the result. It would be all the pities in the world if a really promising fellow like Weir was to end ill. I'm seriously tempted to write to Lord Hermiston, and put it plainly to him."

"I would if I were you," some of his auditors would say, shaking the head, sitting bewilder and confused at this new view of the matter, so deftly indicated by a single word. "A capit idea!" they would add, and wonder at the aplomb and position of this young man, who talk as a matter of course of writing to Hermiston and correcting him upon his private affairs

And Frank would proceed, sweetly confidential: "I'll give you an idea, now. He's actually so about the way that I'm received and he's left out in the county--actually jealous and sore I've rallied him and I've reasoned with him, told him that every one was most kindly inclin towards him, told him even that I was received merely because I was his guest. But it's n

use. He will neither accept the invitations he gets, nor stop brooding about the ones whe he's left out. What I'm afraid of is that the wound's ulcerating. He had always one of thos dark, secret, angry natures--a little underhand and plenty of bile--you know the sort. He m e inherited it from the Weirs, whom I suspect to have been a worthy family of weavers som what's the cant phrase?--sedentary occupation. It's precisely the kind of character to go wr in a false position like what his father's made for him, or he's making for himself, whichev you like to call it. And for my part, I think it a disgrace," Frank would say generously.

Presently the sorrow and anxiety of this disinterested friend took shape. He began in priva in conversations of two, to talk vaguely of bad habits and low habits. "I must say I'm afra he's going wrong altogether," he would say. "I'll tell you plainly, and between ourselves I scarcely like to stay there any longer; only, man, I'm positively afraid to leave him alone You'll see, I shall be blamed for it later on. I'm staying at a great sacrifice. I'm hindering my chances at the Bar, and I can't blind my eyes to it. And what I'm afraid of is, that I'm going to get kicked for it all round before all's done. You see, nobody believes in friendsh nowadays."

"Well, Innes," his interlocutor would reply, "it's very good of you, I must say that. If there' any blame going, you'll always be sure of my good word, for one thing."

"Well," Frank would continue, "candidly, I don't say it's pleasant. He has a very rough wa with him; his father's son, you know. I don't say he's rude--of course, I couldn't be expect to stand that--but he steers very near the wind. No, it's not pleasant; but I tell ye, man, in conscience I don't think it would be fair to leave him. Mind you, I don't say there's anyth actually wrong. What I say is that I don't like the looks of it, man!" and he would press th arm of his momentary confidant.

n the early stages I am persuaded there was no malice. He talked but for the pleasure of a himself. He was essentially glib, as becomes the young advocate, and essentially careless e truth, which is the mark of the young ass; and so he talked at random. There was no part bias, but that one which is indigenous and universal, to flatter himself and to please and interest the present friend. And by thus milling air out of his mouth, he had presently bui p a presentation of Archie which was known and talked of in all corners of the county. Whe there was a residential house and a walled garden, wherever there was a dwarfish castle a a park, wherever a quadruple cottage by the ruins of a peel-tower showed an old family go wn, and wherever a handsome villa with a carriage approach and a shrubbery marked the p of a new one--probably on the wheels of machinery--Archie began to be regarded in the of a dark, perhaps a vicious mystery, and the future developments of his career to be look for with uneasiness and confidential whispering. He had done something disgraceful, my d What, was not precisely known, and that good kind young man, Mr. Innes, did his best to m light of it. But there it was. And Mr. Innes was very anxious about him now; he was reall neasy, my dear; he was positively wrecking his own prospects because he dared not leave alone. How wholly we all lie at the mercy of a single prater, not needfully with any malig purpose! And if a man but talks of himself in the right spirit, refers to his virtuous actions by the way, and never applies to them the name of virtue, how easily his evidence is accep in the court of public opinion!

ll this while, however, there was a more poisonous ferment at work between the two lads, v came late indeed to the surface, but had modified and magnified their dissensions from th irst. To an idle, shallow, easy-going customer like Frank, the smell of a mystery was attrac It gave his mind something to play with, like a new toy to a child; and it took him on the eak side, for like many young men coming to the Bar, and before they have been tried and

wanting, he flattered himself he was a fellow of unusual quickness and penetration. They k
nothing of Sherlock Holmes in those days, but there was a good deal said of Talleyrand. A
if you could have caught Frank off his guard, he would have confessed with a smirk that,
he resembled any one, it was the Marquis de Talleyrand-PÃ©rigord. It was on the occasio
Archie's first absence that this interest took root. It was vastly deepened when Kirstie reser
is curiosity at breakfast, and that same afternoon there occurred another scene which clin
he business. He was fishing Swingleburn, Archie accompanying him, when the latter looke
his watch.

"Well, good-bye," said he. "I have something to do. See you at dinner."

"Don't be in such a hurry," cries Frank. "Hold on till I get my rod up. I'll go with you; I'm
sick of flogging this ditch."

And he began to reel up his line.

Archie stood speechless. He took a long while to recover his wits under this direct attack
by the time he was ready with his answer, and the angle was almost packed up, he had b
mpletely Weir, and the hanging face gloomed on his young shoulders. He spoke with a lab
composure, a laboured kindness even; but a child could see that his mind was made up

"I beg your pardon, Innes; I don't want to be disagreeable, but let us understand one anot
from the beginning. When I want your company, I'll let you know."

"O!" cries Frank, "you don't want my company, don't you?"

pparently not just now," replied Archie. "I even indicated to you when I did, if you'll remembe
that was at dinner. If we two fellows are to live together pleasantly--and I see no reason
why we should not--it can only be by respecting each other's privacy. If we begin intruding

"O, come! I'll take this at no man's hands. Is this the way you treat a guest and an old frien
cried Innes.

ust go home and think over what I said by yourself," continued Archie, "whether it's reason
r whether it's really offensive or not; and let's meet at dinner as though nothing had happe
I'll put it this way, if you like--that I know my own character, that I'm looking forward (witl
great pleasure, I assure you) to a long visit from you, and that I'm taking precautions at
the first. I see the thing that we--that I, if you like--might fall out upon, and I step in
and obsto principiis. I wager you five pounds you'll end by seeing that I mean friendlines
and I assure you, Francie, I do," he added, relenting.

rsting with anger, but incapable of speech, Innes shouldered his rod, made a gesture of fa
and strode off down the burn-side. Archie watched him go without moving. He was sorry,
quite unashamed. He hated to be inhospitable, but in one thing he was his father's son. H
ad a strong sense that his house was his own and no man else's; and to, lie at a guest's m
was what he refused. He hated to seem harsh. But that was Frank's look-out. If Frank had l
mmonly discreet, he would have been decently courteous. And there was another conside
e secret he was protecting was not his own merely; it was hers: it belonged to that inexpre
she who was fast taking possession of his soul, and whom he would soon have defended a
ost of burning cities. By the time he had watched Frank as far as the Swingleburnfoot, appe
and disappearing in the tarnished heather, still stalking at a fierce gait, but already dwindl
n the distance into less than the smallness of Lilliput, he could afford to smile at the occurre

Either Frank would go, and that would be a relief--or he would continue to stay, and his h
must continue to endure him. And Archie was now free--by devious paths, behind hillocks
in the hollow of burns--to make for the trysting-place where Kirstie, cried about by the curl
and the plover, waited and burned for his coming by the Covenanter's Stone.

Innes went off down-hill in a passion of resentment, easy to be understood, but which yiel
progressively to the needs of his situation. He cursed Archie for a cold-hearted, unfriendl
rude, rude dog; and himself still more passionately for a fool in having come to Hermisto
when he might have sought refuge in almost any other house in Scotland. But the step, or
aken, was practically irretrievable. He had no more ready money to go anywhere else; he w
have to borrow from Archie the next club-night; and ill as he thought of his host's manner
was sure of his practical generosity. Frank's resemblance to Talleyrand strikes me as imag
but at least not Talleyrand himself could have more obediently taken his lesson from the fa
He met Archie at dinner without resentment, almost with cordiality. You must take your frie
ou find them, he would have said. Archie couldn't help being his father's son, or his grandf
e hypothetical weaver's, grandson. The son of a hunks, he was still a hunks at heart, incap
of true generosity and consideration: but he had other qualities with which Frank could div
mself in the meanwhile, and to enjoy which it was necessary that Frank should keep his te

So excellently was it controlled that he awoke next morning with his head full of a differen
ugh a cognate subject. What was Archie's little game? Why did he shun Frank's company?
as he keeping secret? Was he keeping tryst with somebody, and was it a woman? It woul
a good joke and a fair revenge to discover. To that task he set himself with a great deal
patience, which might have surprised his friends, for he had been always credited not wi
patience so much as brilliancy; and little by little, from one point to another, he at last
succeeded in piecing out the situation. First he remarked that, although Archie set out i

the directions of the compass, he always came home again from some point between the
and west. From the study of a map, and in consideration of the great expanse of untenan
moorland running in that direction towards the sources of the Clyde, he laid his finger o
Cauldstaneslap and two other neighbouring farms, Kingsmuirs and Polintarf. But it was diff
to advance farther. With his rod for a pretext, he vainly visited each of them in turn; nothi
was to be seen suspicious about this trinity of moorland settlements. He would have tried
follow Archie, had it been the least possible, but the nature of the land precluded the ide
He did the next best, ensconced himself in a quiet corner, and pursued his movements wi
telescope. It was equally in vain, and he soon wearied of his futile vigilance, left the telesc
at home, and had almost given the matter up in despair, when, on the twenty-seventh day
his visit, he was suddenly confronted with the person whom he sought. The first Sunday Ki
managed to stay away from kirk on some pretext of indisposition, which was more truly m
the pleasure of beholding Archie seeming too sacred, too vivid for that public place. On t
wo following, Frank had himself been absent on some of his excursions among the neighbo
families. It was not until the fourth, accordingly, that Frank had occasion to set eyes on
the enchantress. With the first look, all hesitation was over. She came with the Cauldstane
party; then she lived at Cauldstaneslap. Here was Archie's secret, here was the woman, a
more than that--though I have need here of every manageable attenuation of language--wit
first look, he had already entered himself as rival. It was a good deal in pique, it was a
little in revenge, it was much in genuine admiration: the devil may decide the proportions
I cannot, and it is very likely that Frank could not.

"Mighty attractive milkmaid," he observed, on the way home.

"Who?" said Archie.

"O, the girl you're looking at--aren't you? Forward there on the road. She came attended
the rustic bard; presumably, therefore, belongs to his exalted family. The single objectio
for the Four Black Brothers are awkward customers. If anything were to go wrong, Gib wo
gibber, and Clem would prove inclement; and Dand fly in danders, and Hob blow up in gob
It would be a Helliott of a business!"

"Very humorous, I am sure," said Archie.

"Well, I am trying to be so," said Frank. "It's none too easy in this place, and with your
solemn society, my dear fellow. But confess that the milkmaid has found favour in your ey
or resign all claim to be a man of taste."

"It is no matter," returned Archie.

But the other continued to look at him, steadily and quizzically, and his colour slowly ros
d deepened under the glance, until not impudence itself could have denied that he was blu
And at this Archie lost some of his control. He changed his stick from one hand to the oth
and--"O, for God's sake, don't be an ass!" he cried.

Ass? That's the retort delicate without doubt," says Frank. "Beware of the home-spun broth
dear. If they come into the dance, you'll see who's an ass. Think now, if they only applie
(say) a quarter as much talent as I have applied to the question of what Mr. Archie does w
his evening hours, and why he is so unaffectedly nasty when the subject's touched on---

"You are touching on it now," interrupted Archie, with a wince.

"Thank you. That was all I wanted, an articulate confession," said Frank.

"I beg to remind you----" began Archie.

But he was interrupted in turn. "My dear fellow, don't. It's quite needless. The subject's dead and buried."

And Frank began to talk hastily on other matters, an art in which he was an adept, for it w his gift to be fluent on anything or nothing. But although Archie had the grace or the timid to suffer him to rattle on, he was by no means done with the subject. When he came home nner he was greeted with a sly demand, how things were looking "Cauldstaneslap ways." took his first glass of port out after dinner to the toast of Kirstie, and later in the evening he returned to the charge again.

"I say, Weir, you'll excuse me for returning again to this affair. I've been thinking it over and I wish to beg you very seriously to be more careful. It's not a safe business. Not safe my boy," said he.

"What?" said Archie.

"Well, it's your own fault if I must put a name on the thing; but really, as a friend, I canno stand by and see you rushing head down into these dangers. My dear boy," said he, holdin a warning cigar, "consider! What is to be the end of it?"

'The end of what?"--Archie, helpless with irritation, persisted in this dangerous and ungrac guard.

"Well, the end of the milkmaid; or, to speak more by the card, the end of Miss Christina El
of the Cauldstaneslap."

"I assure you," Archie broke out, "this is all a figment of your imagination. There is nothin
be said against that young lady; you have no right to introduce her name into the conversa

"I'll make a note of it," said Frank. "She shall henceforth be nameless, nameless, namele
Gregarach! I make a note besides of your valuable testimony to her character. I only want
look at this thing as a man of the world. Admitted she's an angel--but, my good fellow, is
she a lady?"

his was torture to Archie. "I beg your pardon," he said, struggling to be composed, "but bec
you have wormed yourself into my confidence----"

, come!" cried Frank. "Your confidence? It was rosy but unconsenting. Your confidence, in
Now, look! This is what I must say, Weir, for it concerns your safety and good character, a
therefore my honour as your friend. You say I wormed myself into your confidence. Worme
good. But what have I done? I have put two and two together, just as the parish will be do
to-morrow, and the whole of Tweeddale in two weeks, and the Black Brothers--well, I won't
a date on that; it will be a dark and stormy morning! Your secret, in other words, is poor
Poll's. And I want to ask of you as a friend whether you like the prospect? There are two ho
to your dilemma, and I must say for myself I should look mighty ruefully on either. Do yo
e yourself explaining to the Four Black Brothers? or do you see yourself presenting the mil
to papa as the future lady of Hermiston? Do you? I tell you plainly, I don't!"

Archie rose. "I will hear no more of this," he said, in a trembling voice.

But Frank again held up his cigar. "Tell me one thing first. Tell me if this is not a friend's part that I am playing?"

"I believe you think it so," replied Archie. "I can go as far as that. I can do so much justic to your motives. But I will hear no more of it. I am going to bed."

"That's right, Weir," said Frank heartily. "Go to bed and think over it; and I say, man, don forget your prayers! I don't often do the moral--don't go in for that sort of thing--but when I do, there's one thing sure, that I mean it."

So Archie marched off to bed, and Frank sat alone by the table for another hour or so, smi to himself richly. There was nothing vindictive in his nature; but, if revenge came in his way, it might as well be good, and the thought of Archie's pillow reflections that night wa indescribably sweet to him. He felt a pleasant sense of power. He looked down on Archie on a very little boy whose strings he pulled--as on a horse whom he had backed and bridl by sheer power of intelligence, and whom he might ride to glory or the grave at pleasure. W was it to be? He lingered long, relishing the details of schemes that he was too idle to purs Poor cork upon a torrent, he tasted that night the sweets of omnipotence, and brooded li a deity over the strands of that intrigue which was to shatter him before the summer wane

CHAPTER VIII

A NOCTURNAL VISIT

Kirstie had many causes of distress. More and more as we grow old--and yet more and mo
e grow old and are women, frozen by the fear of age--we come to rely on the voice as the
outlet of the soul. Only thus, in the curtailment of our means, can we relieve the straitene
cry of the passion within us; only thus, in the bitter and sensitive shyness of advancing yea
can we maintain relations with those vivacious figures of the young that still show before
us and tend daily to become no more than the moving wall-paper of life. Talk is the last li
the last relation. But with the end of the conversation, when the voice stops and the brigh
face of the listener is turned away, solitude falls again on the bruised heart. Kirstie had
lost her "cannie hour at e'en"; she could no more wander with Archie, a ghost if you will
but a happy ghost, in fields Elysian. And to her it was as if the whole world had fallen sile
him, but an unremarkable change of amusements. And she raged to know it. The efferves
of her passionate and irritable nature rose within her at times to bursting point.

This is the price paid by age for unseasonable ardours of feeling. It must have been so f
Kirstie at any time when the occasion chanced; but it so fell out that she was deprived o
this delight in the hour when she had most need of it, when she had most to say, most to a
and when she trembled to recognise her sovereignty not merely in abeyance but annulled.
h the clairvoyance of a genuine love, she had pierced the mystery that had so long embarr
Frank. She was conscious, even before it was carried out, even on that Sunday night whe
began, of an invasion of her rights; and a voice told her the invader's name. Since then, l
arts, by accident, by small things observed, and by the general drift of Archie's humour, s
had passed beyond all possibility of doubt. With a sense of justice that Lord Hermiston mi
have envied, she had that day in church considered and admitted the attractions of the you
Kirstie; and with the profound humanity and sentimentality of her nature, she had recognis
e coming of fate. Not thus would she have chosen. She had seen, in imagination, Archie w
to some tall, powerful, and rosy heroine of the golden locks, made in her own image, for wh

would have strewed the bride-bed with delight; and now she could have wept to see the a
falsified. But the gods had pronounced, and her doom was otherwise.

he lay tossing in bed that night, besieged with feverish thoughts. There were dangerous m
pending, a battle was toward, over the fate of which she hung in jealousy, sympathy, fea
and alternate loyalty and disloyalty to either side. Now she was reincarnated in her niece
and now in Archie. Now she saw, through the girl's eyes, the youth on his knees to her, he
s persuasive instances with a deadly weakness, and received his overmastering caresses.
with a revulsion, her temper raged to see such utmost favours of fortune and love squande
on a brat of a girl, one of her own house, using her own name--a deadly ingredient--and t
"didna ken her ain mind an' was as black's your hat." Now she trembled lest her deity sho
plead in vain, loving the idea of success for him like a triumph of nature; anon, with return
loyalty to her own family and sex, she trembled for Kirstie and the credit of the Elliotts.
And again she had a vision of herself, the day over for her old-world tales and local goss
bidding farewell to her last link with life and brightness and love; and behind and beyond
she saw but the blank butt-end where she must crawl to die. Had she then come to the lee
she, so great, so beautiful, with a heart as fresh as a girl's and strong as womanhood? I
could not be, and yet it was so; and for a moment her bed was horrible to her as the side
of the grave. And she looked forward over a waste of hours, and saw herself go on to rag
and tremble, and be softened, and rage again, until the day came and the labours of the d
must be renewed.

Suddenly she heard feet on the stairs--his feet, and soon after the sound of a window-sa
flung open. She sat up with her heart beating. He had gone to his room alone, and he had
gone to bed. She might again have one of her night cracks; and at the entrancing prospe
a change came over her mind; with the approach of this hope of pleasure, all the baser m

became immediately obliterated from her thoughts. She rose, all woman, and all the best
woman, tender, pitiful, hating the wrong, loyal to her own sex--and all the weakest of tha
dear miscellany, nourishing, cherishing next her soft heart, voicelessly flattering, hopes
that she would have died sooner than have acknowledged. She tore off her nightcap, and
hair fell about her shoulders in profusion. Undying coquetry awoke. By the faint light of h
nocturnal rush, she stood before the looking-glass, carried her shapely arms above her he
and gathered up the treasures of her tresses. She was never backward to admire herself;
kind of modesty was a stranger to her nature; and she paused, struck with a pleased won
at the sight. "Ye daft auld wife!" she said, answering a thought that was not; and she blush
with the innocent consciousness of a child. Hastily she did up the massive and shining co
hastily donned a wrapper, and with the rushlight in her hand, stole into the hall. Below sta
she heard the clock ticking the deliberate seconds, and Frank jingling with the decanters
he dining-room. Aversion rose in her, bitter and momentary. "Nesty tippling puggy!" she tho
and the next moment she had knocked guardedly at Archie's door and was bidden ente

Archie had been looking out into the ancient blackness, pierced here and there with a rayl
star; taking the sweet air of the moors and the night into his bosom deeply; seeking, perha
finding, peace after the manner of the unhappy. He turned round as she came in, and show
her a pale face against the window-frame.

"Is that you, Kirstie?" he asked. "Come in!"

"It's unco late, my dear," said Kirstie, affecting unwillingness.

"No, no," he answered, "not at all. Come in, if you want a crack. I am not sleepy, God know

She advanced, took a chair by the toilet-table and the candle, and set the rushlight at he foot. Something--it might be in the comparative disorder of her dress, it might be the emot hat now welled in her bosom--had touched her with a wand of transformation, and she see young with the youth of goddesses.

"Mr. Erchie," she began, "what's this that's come to ye?"

"I am not aware of anything that has come," said Archie, and blushed, and repented bitte that he had let her in.

"O, my dear, that'll no dae!" said Kirstie. "It's ill to blend the eyes of love. O, Mr. Erchie, tak' a thocht ere it's ower late. Ye shouldna be impatient o' the braws o' life, they'll a' come in their saison, like the sun and the rain. Ye're young yet; ye've mony cantie years a ye. See and dinna wreck yersel' at the outset like sae mony ithers! Hae patience--they tel me aye that was the owercome o' life--hae patience, there's a braw day coming yet. Gude l it never cam' to me; and here I am, wi' nayther man nor bairn to ca' my ain, wearying a' fo wi' my ill tongue, and you just the first, Mr. Erchie!"

"I have a difficulty in knowing what you mean," said Archie.

"Weel, and I'll tell ye," she said. "It's just this, that I'm feared. I'm feared for ye, my ar. Remember, your faither is a hard man, reaping where he hasna sowed and gaithering he hasna strawed. It's easy speakin', but mind! Ye'll have to look in the gurley face o'm where it's ill to look, and vain to look for mercy. Ye mind me o' a bonny ship pitten oot int the black and gowsty seas--ye're a' safe still, sittin' quait and crackin' wi' Kirstie in your lown chalmer; but whaur will ye be the morn, and in whatten horror o' the fearsome tempe

cryin' on the hills to cover ye?"

"Why, Kirstie, you're very enigmatical to-night--and very eloquent," Archie put in.

And, my dear Mr. Erchie," she continued, with a change of voice, "ye maunna think that I c
sympathise wi' ye. Ye maunna think that I havena been young mysel'. Lang syne, when I w
bit lassie, no twenty yet----" She paused and sighed. "Clean and caller, wi' a fit like the
hinney bee," she continued. "I was aye big and buirdly, ye maun understand; a bonny figu
o' a woman, though I say it that suldna--built to rear bairns--braw bairns they suld hae bee
and grand I would hae likit it! But I was young, dear, wi' the bonny glint o' youth in my e'e
and little I dreamed I'd ever be tellin' ye this, an auld, lanely, rudas wife! Weel, Mr. Erchi
here was a lad cam' courtin' me, as was but naetural. Mony had come before, and I would
o' them. But this yin had a tongue to wile the birds frae the lift and the bees frae the foxglo
bells. Deary me, but it's lang syne. Folk have dee'd sinsyne and been buried, and are forgo
nd bairns been born and got merrit and got bairns o' their ain. Sinsyne woods have been p
d have grawn up and are bonny trees, and the joes sit in their shadow; and sinsyne auld e
have changed hands, and there have been wars and rumours of wars on the face of the ea
And here I'm still--like an auld droopit craw--lookin' on and craikin'! But, Mr. Erchie, do
ye no think that I have mind o' it a' still? I was dwalling then in my faither's house; and
it's a curious thing that we were whiles trysted in the Deil's Hags. And do ye no think tha
I have mind of the bonny simmer days, the lang miles o' the bluid-red heather, the cryin'
the whaups, and the lad and the lassie that was trysted? Do ye no think that I mind how t
hilly sweetness ran about my hairt? Ay, Mr. Erchie, I ken the way o' it--fine do I ken the
way--how the grace o' God takes them, like Paul of Tarsus, when they think it least, and dr
the pair o' them into a land which is like a dream, and the world and the folks in 't are na
mair than clouds to the puir lassie, and heeven nae mair than windle-straes, if she can b

bleesure him! Until Tam dee'd--that was my story," she broke off to say, "he dee'd, and I wa at the buryin'. But while he was here, I could take care o' mysel'. And can yon puir lassie

Kirstie, her eyes shining with unshed tears, stretched out her hand towards him appealing the bright and the dull gold of her hair flashed and smouldered in the coils behind her com head, like the rays of an eternal youth; the pure colour had risen in her face; and Archie was abashed alike by her beauty and her story. He came towards her slowly from the wind took up her hand in his and kissed it.

"Kirstie," he said hoarsely, "you have misjudged me sorely. I have always thought of her wouldna harm her for the universe, my woman!"

"Eh, lad, and that's easy sayin'," cried Kirstie, "but it's nane sae easy doin'! Man, do ye o comprehend that it's God's wull we should be blendit and glamoured, and have nae comm over our ain members at a time like that? My bairn," she cried, still holding his hand, "thin o' the puir lass! have pity upon her, Erchie! and O, be wise for twa! Think o' the risk she rins! I have seen ye, and what's to prevent ithers? I saw ye once in the Hags, in my ain ho and I was wae to see ye there--in pairt for the omen, for I think there's a weird on the place- in pairt for pure nakit envy and bitterness o' hairt. It's strange ye should forgather there tae! God! but yon puir, thrawn, auld Covenanter's seen a heap o' human natur' since he lo his last on the musket-barrels, if he never saw nane afore," she added, with a kind of won in her eyes.

"I swear by my honour I have done her no wrong," said Archie. "I swear by my honour and redemption of my soul that there shall none be done her. I have heard of this before. I ha been foolish, Kirstie, but not unkind, and, above all, not base."

"There's my bairn!" said Kirstie, rising. "I'll can trust ye noo, I'll can gang to my bed wi' easy hairt." And then she saw in a flash how barren had been her triumph. Archie had pro to spare the girl, and he would keep it; but who had promised to spare Archie? What was be the end of it? Over a maze of difficulties she glanced, and saw, at the end of every pass the flinty countenance of Hermiston. And a kind of horror fell upon her at what she had do She wore a tragic mask. "Erchie, the Lord peety you dear, and peety me! I have buildit on foundation"--laying her hand heavily on his shoulder--"and buildit hie, and pit my hairt in the buildin' of it. If the hale hypothec were to fa', I think, laddie, I would dee! Excuse a daft wife that loves ye, and that kenned your mither. And for His name's sake keep yers frae inordinate desires; hand your heart in baith your hands, carry it canny and laigh; dinn send it up like a bairn's kite into the collieshangie o' the wunds! Mind, Maister Erchie dea that this life's a' disappointment, and a mouthfu' o' mools is the appointed end."

Ay, but Kirstie, my woman, you're asking me ower much at last," said Archie, profoundly mo and lapsing into the broad Scots. "Ye're asking what nae man can grant ye, what only the L of heaven can grant ye if He see fit. Ay! And can even He? I can promise ye what I shall d and you can depend on that. But how I shall feel--my woman, that is long past thinking o

were both standing by now opposite each other. The face of Archie wore the wretched se of a smile; hers was convulsed for a moment.

Promise me ae thing," she cried, in a sharp voice. "Promise me ye'll never do naething wit telling me."

"No, Kirstie, I canna promise ye that," he replied. "I have promised enough, God kens!"

"May the blessing of God lift and rest upon ye, dear!" she said.

"God bless ye, my old friend," said he.

CHAPTER IX

AT THE WEAVER'S STONE

It was late in the afternoon when Archie drew near by the hill path to the Praying Weaver Stone. The Hags were in shadow. But still, through the gate of the Slap, the sun shot a la arrow, which sped far and straight across the surface of the moss, here and there touchi and shining on a tussock, and lighted at length on the gravestone and the small figure awa him there. The emptiness and solitude of the great moors seemed to be concentred there, Kirstie pointed out by that finger of sunshine for the only inhabitant. His first sight of her was thus excruciatingly sad, like a glimpse of a world from which all light, comfort, ar society were on the point of vanishing. And the next moment, when she had turned her fac him and the quick smile had enlightened it, the whole face of nature smiled upon him in h smile of welcome. Archie's slow pace was quickened; his legs hasted to her though his he was hanging back. The girl, upon her side, drew herself together slowly and stood up, expe she was all languor, her face was gone white; her arms ached for him, her soul was on tip-t But he deceived her, pausing a few steps away, not less white than herself, and holding his hand with a gesture of denial.

"No, Christina, not to-day," he said. "To-day I have to talk to you seriously. Sit ye down please, there where you were. Please!" he repeated.

The revulsion of feeling in Christina's heart was violent. To have longed and waited thes
veary hours for him, rehearsing her endearments--to have seen him at last come--to have l
ready there, breathless, wholly passive, his to do what he would with--and suddenly to ha
found herself confronted with a grey-faced, harsh schoolmaster--it was too rude a shock. S
ould have wept, but pride withheld her. She sat down on the stone, from which she had ar
part with the instinct of obedience, part as though she had been thrust there. What was th
y was she rejected? Had she ceased to please? She stood here offering her wares, and he
none of them! And yet they were all his! His to take and keep, not his to refuse though! I
her quick petulant nature, a moment ago on fire with hope, thwarted love and wounded va
wrought. The schoolmaster that there is in all men, to the despair of all girls and most wom
s now completely in possession of Archie. He had passed a night of sermons, a day of refl
he had come wound up to do his duty; and the set mouth, which in him only betrayed the e
his will, to her seemed the expression of an averted heart. It was the same with his constr
voice and embarrassed utterance; and if so--if it was all over--the pang of the thought too
away from her the power of thinking.

He stood before her some way off. "Kirstie, there's been too much of this. We've seen too m
of each other." She looked up quickly and her eyes contracted. "There's no good ever com
of these secret meetings. They're not frank, not honest truly, and I ought to have seen it
People have begun to talk; and it's not right of me. Do you see?"

"I see somebody will have been talking to ye," she said sullenly.

"They have--more than one of them," replied Archie.

"And whae were they?" she cried. "And what kind o' love do ye ca' that, that's ready to ga round like a whirligig at folk talking? Do ye think they havena talked to me?"

"Have they indeed?" said Archie, with a quick breath. "That is what I feared. Who were the Who has dare----?"

Archie was on the point of losing his temper.

As a matter of fact, not any one had talked to Christina on the matter; and she strenuous repeated her own first question in a panic of self-defence.

"Ah, well! what does it matter?" he said. "They were good folk that wished well to us, an the great affair is that there are people talking. My dear girl, we have to be wise. We mus ot wreck our lives at the outset. They may be long and happy yet, and we must see to it, K like God's rational creatures and not like fool children. There is one thing we must see t before all. You're worth waiting for, Kirstie! worth waiting for a generation; it would be gh reward."--And here he remembered the schoolmaster again, and very unwisely took to wisdom. "The first thing that we must see to is that there shall be no scandal about for m father's sake. That would ruin all; do ye no see that?"

Kirstie was a little pleased, there had been some show of warmth of sentiment in what Arc had said last. But the dull irritation still persisted in her bosom; with the aboriginal instinc having suffered herself, she wished to make Archie suffer.

nd besides, there had come out the word she had always feared to hear from his lips, the n of his father. It is not to be supposed that, during so many days with a love avowed betwe

them, some reference had not been made to their conjoint future. It had in fact been ofte
touched upon, and from the first had been the sore point. Kirstie had wilfully closed the e
of thought; she would not argue even with herself; gallant, desperate little heart, she ha
accepted the command of that supreme attraction like the call of fate, and marched blindf
n her doom. But Archie, with his masculine sense of responsibility, must reason; he must
on some future good, when the present good was all in all to Kirstie; he must talk--and ta
mely, as necessity drove him--of what was to be. Again and again he had touched on mar
gain and again been driven back into indistinctness by a memory of Lord Hermiston. And K
had been swift to understand and quick to choke down and smother the understanding; sw
leap up in flame at a mention of that hope, which spoke volumes to her vanity and her lov
that she might one day be Mrs. Weir of Hermiston; swift, also, to recognise in his stumbli
or throttled utterance the death-knell of these expectations, and constant, poor girl! in he
ge-minded madness, to go on and to reck nothing of the future. But these unfinished refere
these blinks in which his heart spoke, and his memory and reason rose up to silence it bef
he words were well uttered, gave her unqualifiable agony. She was raised up and dashed
again bleeding. The recurrence of the subject forced her, for however short a time, to ope
er eyes on what she did not wish to see; and it had invariably ended in another disappointm
So now again, at the mere wind of its coming, at the mere mention of his father's name--w
ight seem indeed to have accompanied them in their whole moorland courtship, an awful f
in a wig with an ironical and bitter smile, present to guilty consciousness--she fled from
it head down.

"Ye havena told me yet," she said, "who was it spoke?"

"Your aunt for one," said Archie.

"Auntie Kirstie?" she cried. "And what do I care for my Auntie Kirstie?"

"She cares a great deal for her niece," replied Archie, in kind reproof.

"Troth, and it's the first I've heard of it," retorted the girl.

"The question here is not who it is, but what they say, what they have noticed," pursued t
lucid schoolmaster. "That is what we have to think of in self-defence."

"Auntie Kirstie, indeed! A bitter, thrawn auld maid that's fomented trouble in the country
before I was born, and will be doing it still, I daur say, when I'm deid! It's in her nature;
it's as natural for her as it's for a sheep to eat."

"Pardon me, Kirstie, she was not the only one," interposed Archie. "I had two warnings, tw
sermons, last night, both most kind and considerate. Had you been there, I promise you y
would have grat, my dear! And they opened my eyes. I saw we were going a wrong way

"Who was the other one?" Kirstie demanded.

By this time Archie was in the condition of a hunted beast. He had come, braced and resol
he was to trace out a line of conduct for the pair of them in a few cold, convincing sentenc
had now been there some time, and he was still staggering round the outworks and under
what he felt to be a savage cross-examination.

"Mr. Frank!" she cried. "What nex', I would like to ken?"

"He spoke most kindly and truly."

"What like did he say?"

"I am not going to tell you; you have nothing to do with that," cried Archie, startled to find he had admitted so much.

"O, I have naething to do with it!" she repeated, springing to her feet. "A'body at Hermiston free to pass their opinions upon me, but I have naething to do wi' it! Was this at prayers like? Did ye ca' the grieve into the consultation? Little wonder if a'body's talking, when ye make a'body yer confidants! But as you say, Mr. Weir, most kindly, most considerately, truly, I'm sure--I have naething to do with it. And I think I'll better be going. I'll be wishing you good evening, Mr. Weir." And she made him a stately curtsey, shaking as she did so from head to foot, with the barren ecstasy of temper.

Archie stood dumbfounded. She had moved some steps away from him before he recovered gift of articulate speech.

"Kirstie!" he cried. "O, Kirstie woman!"

There was in his voice a ring of appeal, a clang of mere astonishment that showed the school was vanquished.

She turned round on him. "What do ye Kirstie me for?" she retorted. "What have ye to do me? Gang to your ain freends and deave them!"

He could only repeat the appealing "Kirstie!"

"Kirstie, indeed!" cried the girl, her eyes blazing in her white face. "My name is Miss Christ Elliott, I would have ye to ken, and I daur ye to ca' me out of it. If I canna get love, I'll have respect, Mr. Weir. I'm come of decent people, and I'll have respect. What have I do hat ye should lightly me? What have I done? What have I done? O, what have I done?" an voice rose upon the third repetition. "I thocht--I thocht--I thocht I was sae happy!" and th first sob broke from her like the paroxysm of some mortal sickness.

Archie ran to her. He took the poor child in his arms, and she nestled to his breast as to mother's, and clasped him in hands that were strong like vices. He felt her whole body sh by the throes of distress, and had pity upon her beyond speech. Pity, and at the same tim a bewildered fear of this explosive engine in his arms, whose works he did not understan and yet had been tampering with. There arose from before him the curtains of boyhood, an saw for the first time the ambiguous face of woman as she is. In vain he looked back over nterview; he saw not where he had offended. It seemed unprovoked, a wilful convulsion of nature....

SIR SIDNEY COLVIN'S NOTE

With the words last printed, "a wilful convulsion of brute nature," the romance of "Weir o Hermiston" breaks off. They were dictated, I believe, on the very morning of the writer's suc izure and death. "Weir of Hermiston" thus remains in the work of Stevenson what "Edwin D is in the work of Dickens or "Denis Duval" in that of Thackeray: or rather it remains relativ more, for if each of those fragments holds an honourable place among its author's writing among Stevenson's the fragment of "Weir" holds, at least to my mind, certainly the highe

Readers may be divided in opinion on the question whether they would or they would not w
to hear more of the intended course of the story and destinies of the characters. To som
ilence may seem best, and that the mind should be left to its own conjectures as to the se
with the help of such indications as the text affords. I confess that this is the view which
has my sympathy. But since others, and those almost certainly a majority, are anxious to
old all they can, and since editors and publishers join in the request, I can scarce do other
than comply. The intended argument, then, so far as it was known at the time of the write
death to his step-daughter and devoted amanuensis, Mrs. Strong, was nearly as follows:

* * * * *

rchie persists in his good resolution of avoiding further conduct compromising to young Kir
good name. Taking advantage of the situation thus created, and of the girl's unhappiness a
wounded vanity, Frank Innes pursues his purpose of seduction; and Kirstie, though still ca
for Archie in her heart, allows herself to become Frank's victim. Old Kirstie is the first
to perceive something amiss with her, and believing Archie to be the culprit, accuses him
hus making him aware for the first time that mischief has happened. He does not at once c
the charge, but seeks out and questions young Kirstie, who confesses the truth to him; a
he, still loving her, promises to protect and defend her in her trouble. He then has an interv
with Frank Innes on the moor, which ends in a quarrel, and in Archie killing Frank beside t
aver's Stone. Meanwhile the Four Black Brothers, having become aware of their sister's be
e bent on vengeance against Archie as her supposed seducer. But their vengeance is fores
by his arrest for the murder of Frank. He is tried before his own father, the Lord Justice-Cl
ound guilty, and condemned to death. Meanwhile the elder Kirstie, having discovered from
girl how matters really stand, informs her nephews of the truth; and they, in a great revuls

of feeling in Archie's favour, determine on an action after the ancient manner of their hous
They gather a following, and after a great fight break the prison where Archie lies confine
and rescue him. He and young Kirstie thereafter escape to America. But the ordeal of tak
part in the trial of his own son has been too much for the Lord Justice-Clerk, who dies o
e shock. "I do not know," adds the amanuensis, "what becomes of old Kirstie, but that cha
grew and strengthened so in the writing that I am sure he had some dramatic destiny for h

* * * * *

The plan of every imaginative work is subject, of course, to change under the artist's han
as he carries it out; and not merely the character of the elder Kirstie, but other elements
of the design no less, might well have deviated from the lines originally traced. It seems
certain, however, that the next stage in the relations of Archie and the younger Kirstie wo
have been as above foreshadowed; and this conception of the lover's unconventional chiv
and unshaken devotion to his mistress after her fault is very characteristic of the writer's
mind. The vengeance to be taken on the seducer beside the Weaver's Stone is prepared fo
he first words of the Introduction; and in the spring of 1894 the author rehearsed in convers
with a visitor (Mr. Sidney Lysaght) a scene where the girl was to confess to her lover in pri
hat she was with child by the man he had killed. The situation and fate of the judge, confro
like a Brutus, but unable to survive, the duty of sending his own son to the gallows, seem
clearly to have been destined to furnish the climax and essential tragedy of the tale.

How this last circumstance was to have been brought about, within the limits of legal usa
and possibility, seems hard to conjecture; but it was a point to which the author had evide
given careful consideration. Mrs. Strong says simply that the Lord Justice-Clerk, like an o
Roman, condemns his son to death; but I am assured on the best legal authority of Scotla

that no judge, however powerful either by character or office, could have insisted on presi
at the trial of a near kinsman of his own. The Lord Justice-Clerk was head of the crimina
justiciary of the country; he might have insisted on his right of being present on the benc
when his son was tried; but he would never have been allowed to preside or to pass sente
Now in a letter of Stevenson's to Mr. Baxter, of October 1892, I find him asking for materi
in terms which seem to indicate that he knew this quite well:--"I wish Pitcairn's 'Crimina
Trials,' quam primum. Also an absolutely correct text of the Scots judiciary oath. Also, i
case Pitcairn does not come down late enough, I wish as full a report as possible of a Sc
murder trial between 1790-1820. Understand, the fullest possible. Is there any book which
guide me to the following facts? The Justice-Clerk tries some people capitally on circuit
Certain evidence cropping up, the charge is transferred to the Justice-Clerk's own son.
course in the next trial the Justice-Clerk is excluded, and the case is called before the Lo
Justice-General. Where would this trial have to be? I fear in Edinburgh, which would not s
view. Could it be again at the circuit town?" The point was referred to a quondam fellow-m
Stevenson of the Edinburgh Speculative Society, Mr. Graham Murray, the present Lord A
for Scotland, whose reply was to the effect that there would be no difficulty in making th
new trial take place at the circuit town; that it would have to be held there in spring or
autumn, before two Lords of Justiciary; and that the Lord Justice-General would have noth
to do with it, this title being at the date in question only a nominal one held by a layman
(which is no longer the case). On this Stevenson writes, "Graham Murray's note re the ver
was highly satisfactory, and did me all the good in the world." The terms of his inquiry imp
clearly that he intended other persons before Archie to have fallen under suspicion of th
murder (what other persons?); and also--doubtless in order to make the rescue by the Bla
Brothers possible--that he wanted Archie to be imprisoned not in Edinburgh but in the circ
town. Can it have been that Lord Hermiston's part was to have been limited to presiding
the first trial, where the persons wrongly suspected were to have been judged, and to direc

that the law should take its course when evidence incriminating his own son was unexpect brought forward?

Whether the final escape and union of Archie and Christina would have proved equally esse to the plot may perhaps to most readers seem questionable. They may rather feel that a tr stiny is foreshadowed from the beginning for all concerned, and is inherent in the very con of the tale. But on this point, and other matters of general criticism connected with it, I find an interesting discussion by the author himself in his correspondence. Writing to Mr J. M. Barrie, under date November 1, 1892, and criticising that author's famous story of "T Little Minister," Stevenson says:--

"Your descriptions of your dealings with Lord Rintoul are frightfully unconscientious.... 'Th Little Minister' ought to have ended badly; we all know it did, and we are infinitely gratefu to you for the grace and good feeling with which you have lied about it. If you had told th truth, I for one could never have forgiven you. As you had conceived and written the earli parts, the truth about the end, though indisputably true to fact, would have been a lie, o what is worse, a discord, in art. If you are going to make a book end badly, it must end ba from the beginning. Now, your book began to end well. You let yourself fall in love with, a ondle, and smile at your puppets. Once you had done that, your honour was committed: a cost of truth to life you were bound to save them. It is the blot on 'Richard Feverel,' for instance, that it begins to end well; and then tricks you and ends ill. But in this case, ther is worse behind, for the ill ending does not inherently issue from the plot--the story had in fact, ended well after the great last interview between Richard and Lucy--and the blin illogical bullet which smashes all has no more to do between the boards than a fly has to ith a room into whose open window it comes buzzing. It might have so happened; it neede unless needs must, we have no right to pain our readers. I have had a heavy case of cons

of the same kind about my Braxfield story. Braxfield--only his name is Hermiston--has a s
who is condemned to death; plainly there is a fine tempting fitness about this; and I mea
was to hang. But on considering my minor characters, I saw there were five people who w
sense, who must--break prison and attempt his rescue. They are capable hardy folks too,
ght very well succeed. Why should they not then? Why should not young Hermiston escap
out of the country? and be happy, if he could, with his--but soft! I will not betray my secr
nor my heroine...."

pass, now, from the question how the story would have ended to the question how it origi
d grew in the writer's mind. The character of the hero, Weir of Hermiston, is avowedly sug
by the historical personality of Robert Macqueen, Lord Braxfield. This famous judge has b
r generations the subject of a hundred Edinburgh tales and anecdotes. Readers of Steven
essay on the Raeburn exhibition, in "Virginibus Puerisque," will remember how he is fascin
by Raeburn's portrait of Braxfield, even as Lockhart had been fascinated by a different por
of the same worthy sixty years before (see "Peter's Letters to His Kinsfolk"); nor did his
interest in the character diminish in later life.

Again, the case of a judge involved by the exigencies of his office in a strong conflict betw
ublic duty and private interest or affection, was one which had always attracted and exerc
Stevenson's imagination. In the days when he and Mr. Henley were collaborating with a v
to the stage, Mr. Henley once proposed a plot founded on the story of Mr. Justice Harbot
in Sheridan Le Fanu's "In a Glass Darkly," in which the wicked judge goes headlong per f
t nefas to his object of getting the husband of his mistress hanged. Some time later Steve
and his wife together drafted a play called The Hanging Judge. In this, the title characte
is tempted for the first time in his life to tamper with the course of justice, in order to
ield his wife from persecution by a former husband who reappears after being supposed

Bulwer's novel of "Paul Clifford," with its final situation of the worldly-minded judge, Sir William Brandon, learning that the highwayman whom he is in the act of sentencing is his son, and dying of the knowledge, was also well known to Stevenson, and probably counted something in the suggestion of the present story.

Once more, the difficulties often attending the relation of father and son in actual life had essed heavily on Stevenson's mind and conscience from the days of his youth, when in ob the law of his own nature he had been constrained to disappoint, distress, and for a time much misunderstood by, a father whom he justly loved and admired with all his heart. Diffi of this kind he had already handled in a lighter vein once or twice in fiction--as for instanc in "The Story of a Lie," "The Misadventures of John Nicholson," and "The Wrecker"--before grappled with them in the acute and tragic phase in which they occur in the present story

These three elements, then, the interest of the historical personality of Lord Braxfield, th problems and emotions arising from a violent conflict between duty and nature in a judge, the difficulties due to incompatibility and misunderstanding between father and son, lie a the foundations of the present story. To touch on minor matters, it is perhaps worth notic as Mr. Henley reminds me, that the name of Weir had from of old a special significance f Stevenson's imagination, from the horrible and true tale of the burning in Edinburgh of Ma Weir, the warlock, and his sister. Another name, that of the episodical personage of Mr. Torr minister, is borrowed direct from life, as indeed are the whole figure and its surroundings--k kirk, and manse--down even to the black thread mittens: witness the following passage fr a letter of the early seventies:--"I've been to church and am not depressed--a great step It was at that beautiful church" [of Glencorse in the Pentlands, three miles from his father country house at Swanston]. "It is a little cruciform place, with a steep slate roof. The sma kyard is full of old gravestones; one of a Frenchman from Dunkerque, I suppose he died pr

the military prison hard by. And one, the most pathetic memorial I ever saw: a poor school
in a wooden frame, with the inscription cut into it evidently by the father's own hand. In
church, old Mr. Torrance preached, over eighty and a relic of times forgotten, with his bla
thread gloves and mild old face." A side hint for a particular trait in the character of Mrs
Weir we can trace in some family traditions concerning the writer's own grandmother, who
reported to have valued piety much more than efficiency in her domestic servants. I know
no original for that new and admirable incarnation of the eternal feminine in the elder Kirs
The little that Stevenson says about her himself is in a letter written a few days before hi
death to Mr. Gosse. The allusions are to the various views and attitudes of people in rega
to middle age, and are suggested by Mr. Gosse's volume of poems, "In Russet and Silver.
seems rather funny," he writes, "that this matter should come up just now, as I am at pres
engaged in treating a severe case of middle age in one of my stories, 'The Justice-Clerk
The case is that of a woman, and I think I am doing her justice. You will be interested, I
believe, to see the difference in our treatments. 'Secreta Vitae' [the title of one of Mr.
Gosse's poems] comes nearer to the case of my poor Kirstie." From the quality of the midn
cene between her and Archie, we may judge what we have lost in those later scenes where
was to have taxed him with the fault that was not his--to have presently learned his innoce
from the lips of his supposed victim--to have then vindicated him to her kinsmen and fire
them to the action of his rescue. The scene of the prison-breaking here planned by Steven
would have gained interest (as will already have occurred to readers) from comparison w
the two famous precedents in Scott, the Porteous mob and the breaking of Portanferry ga

The best account of Stevenson's methods of imaginative work is in the following sentences
a letter of his own to Mr. W. Craibe Angus of Glasgow:--"I am still 'a slow study,' and sit
for a long while silent on my eggs. Unconscious thought, there is the only method: macera
your subject, let it boil slow, then take the lid off and look in--and there your stuff is--goo

r bad." The several elements above noted having been left to work for many years in his m
it was in the autumn of 1892 that he was moved to "take the lid off and look in,"--under th
influence, it would seem, of a special and overmastering wave of that feeling for the roma
of Scottish scenery and character which was at all times so strong in him, and which his e
did so much to intensify. I quote again from his letter to Mr. Barrie on November 1st in th
year:--"It is a singular thing that I should live here in the South Seas under conditions so
new and so striking, and yet my imagination so continually inhabit the cold old huddle of g
hills from which we come. I have finished 'David Balfour,' I have another book on the stoc
'The Young Chevalier,' which is to be part in France and part in Scotland, and to deal wi
Prince Charlie about the year 1749; and now what have I done but begun a third, which is
be all moorland together, and is to have for a centre-piece a figure that I think you will
appreciate--that of the immortal Braxfield. Braxfield himself is my grand premier--or sinc
you are so much involved in the British drama, let me say my heavy lead."

Writing to me at the same date he makes the same announcement more briefly, with a lis
the characters and an indication of the scene and date of the story. To Mr. Baxter he writ
a month later, "I have a novel on the stocks to be called 'The Justice-Clerk.' It is pretty
cotch; the grand premier is taken from Braxfield (O, by the by, send me Cockburn's 'Memo
nd some of the story is, well, queer. The heroine is seduced by one man, and finally disap
ith the other man who shot him.... Mind you, I expect 'The Justice-Clerk' to be my masterp
My Braxfield is already a thing of beauty and a joy for ever, and so far as he has gone fa
my best character." From the last extract it appears that he had already at this date draft
ome of the earlier chapters of the book. He also about the same time composed the dedic
to his wife, who found it pinned to her bed-curtains one morning on awaking. It was alwa
his habit to keep several books in progress at the same time, turning from one to another
the fancy took him, and finding relief in the change of labour; and for many months after t

date of this letter, first illness,--then a voyage to Auckland,--then work on "The Ebb-Tide on a new tale called "St. Ives," which was begun during an attack of influenza, and on hi projected book of family history,--prevented his making any continuous progress with "We In August 1893 he says he has been recasting the beginning. A year later, still only the fi four or five chapters had been drafted. Then, in the last weeks of his life, he attacked th task again, in a sudden heat of inspiration, and worked at it ardently and without interrupti until the end came. No wonder if during these weeks he was sometimes aware of a tensio the spirit difficult to sustain. "How can I keep this pitch?" he is reported to have said afte finishing one of the chapters; and all the world knows how that frail organism, overtaxed long, in fact betrayed him in mid effort.

With reference to the speech and manners of the Hanging Judge himself: that they are no whit exaggerated, in comparison with what is recorded of his historic prototype, Lord Braxf is certain. The locus classicus in regard to this personage is in Lord Cockburn's "Memoria of his Time." "Strong built and dark, with rough eyebrows, powerful eyes, threatening lips and a low growling voice, he was like a formidable blacksmith. His accent and dialect we exaggerated Scotch; his language, like his thoughts, short, strong, and conclusive. Illitera and without any taste for any refined enjoyment, strength of understanding, which gave h power without cultivation, only encouraged him to a more contemptuous disdain of all natu coarse than his own. It may be doubted if he was ever so much in his element as when ta repelling the last despairing claim of a wretched culprit, and sending him to Botany Bay the gallows with an insulting jest. Yet this was not from cruelty, for which he was too stro nd too jovial, but from cherished coarseness." Readers, nevertheless, who are at all acqua with the social history of Scotland will hardly have failed to make the observation that Braxfi extreme case of eighteenth-century manners, as he himself was an eighteenth-century pe (he died in 1799, in his seventy-eighth year); and that for the date in which the story is

ast (1814) such manners are somewhat of an anachronism. During the generation contemp
with the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars--or, to put it another way, the genera
hat elapsed between the days when Scott roamed the country as a High School and Unive
student and those when he settled in the fulness of fame and prosperity at Abbotsford,--
again (the allusions will appeal to readers of the admirable Galt) during the interval betwe
the first and the last provostry of Bailie Pawkie in the borough of Gudetown, or between t
earlier and final ministrations of Mr. Balwhidder in the parish of Dalmailing,--during this
period a great softening had taken place in Scottish manners generally, and in those of t
Bar and Bench not least. "Since the death of Lord Justice-Clerk Macqueen of Braxfield," s
Lockhart, writing about 1817, "the whole exterior of judicial deportment has been quite alte
A similar criticism may probably hold good on the picture of border life contained in the cha
concerning the Four Black Brothers of Cauldstaneslap, namely, that it rather suggests the v
of an earlier generation; nor have I any clue to the reasons which led Stevenson to choos
this particular date, in the year preceding Waterloo, for a story which, in regard to some
of its features at least, might seem more naturally placed some quarter or even half a cent
earlier.