

"SKIPPER"



Gilbert
Watson

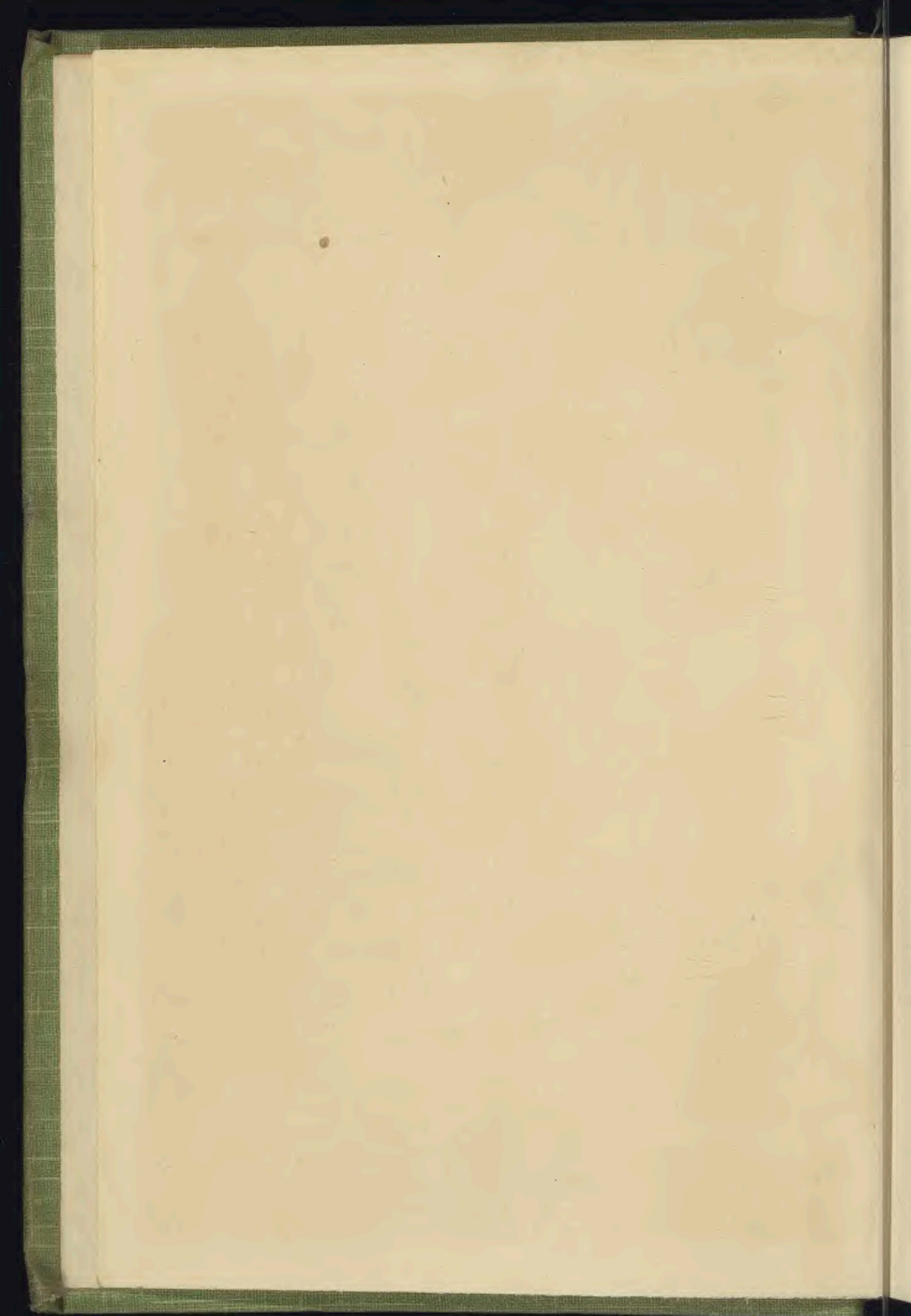
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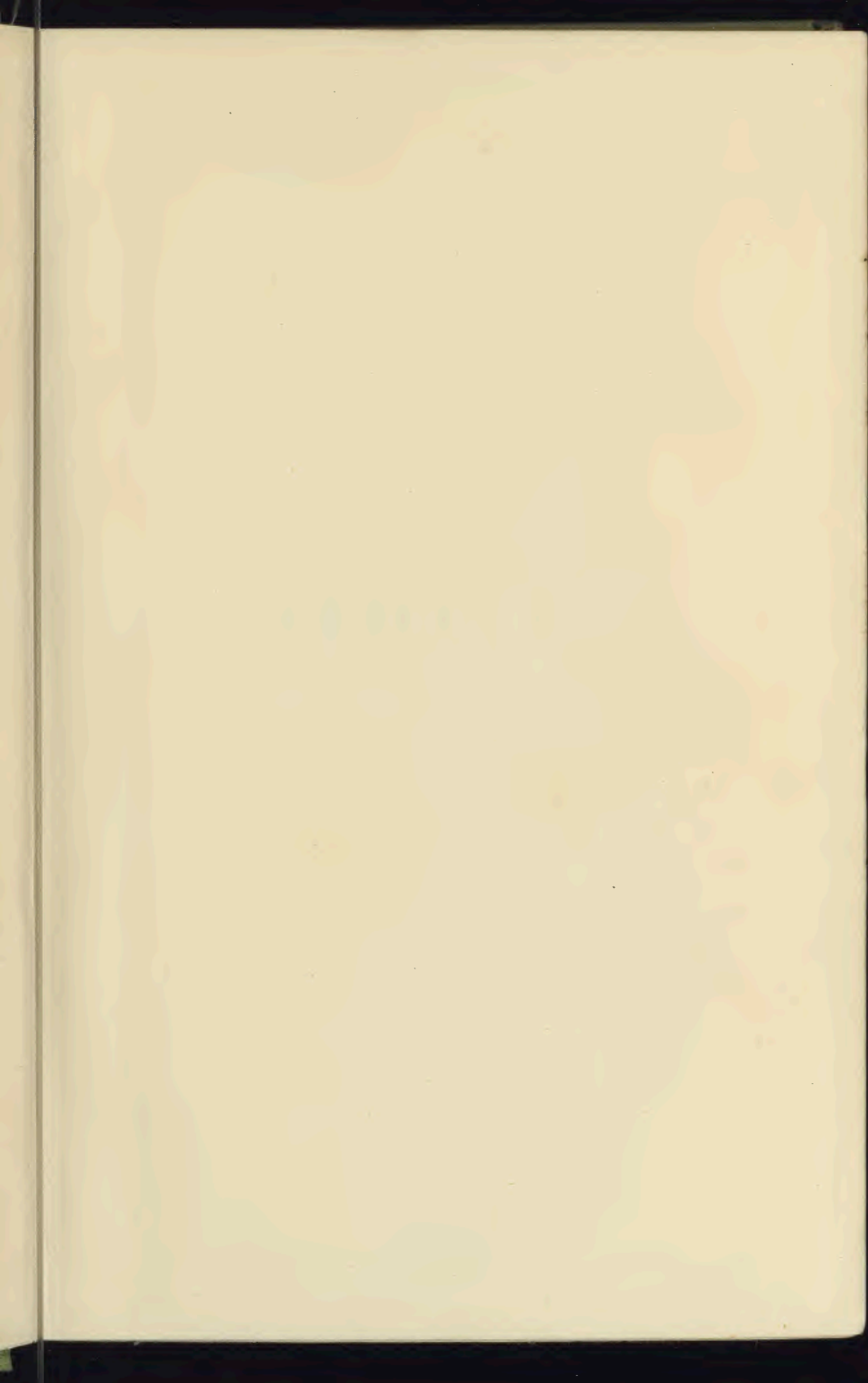
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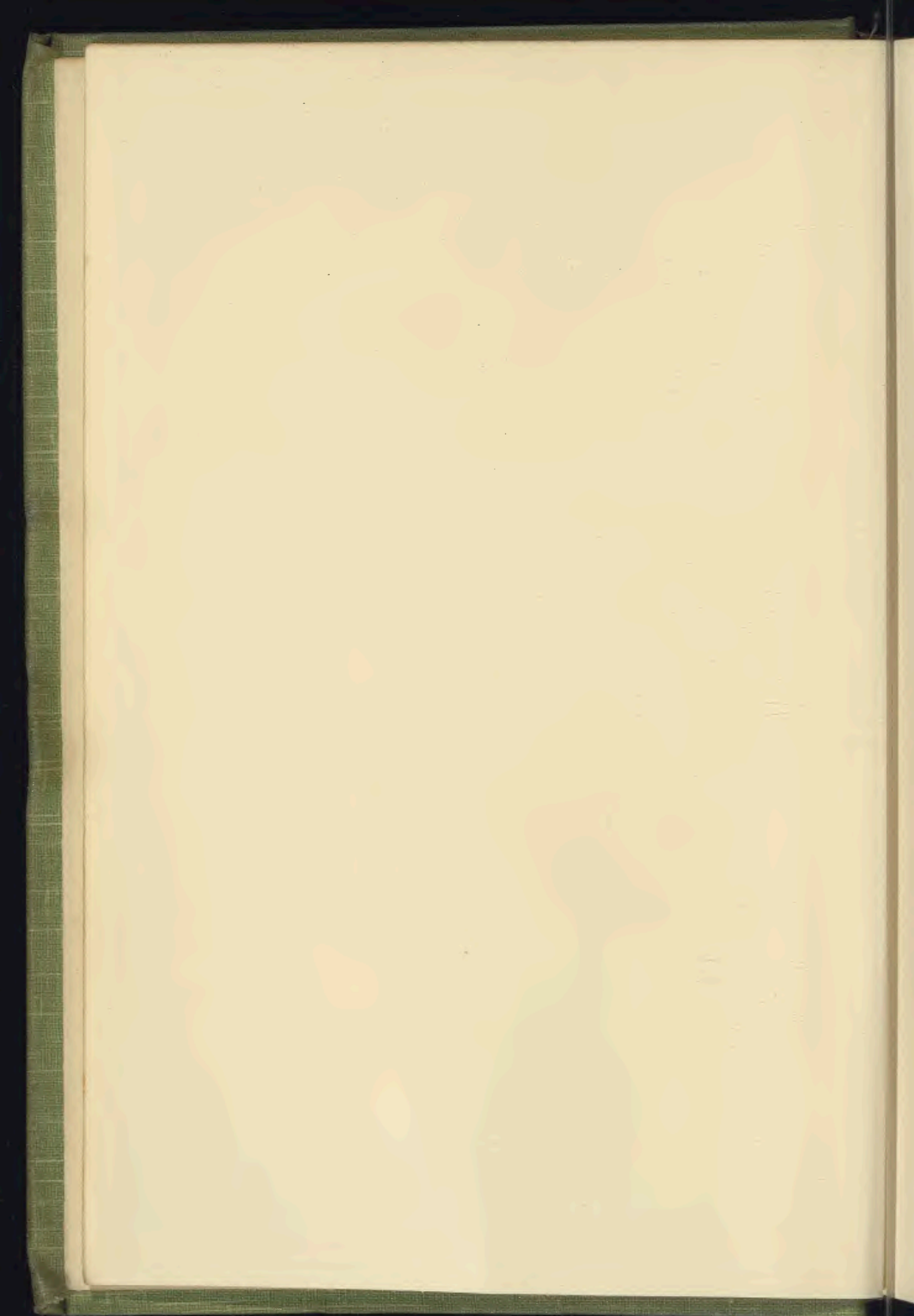


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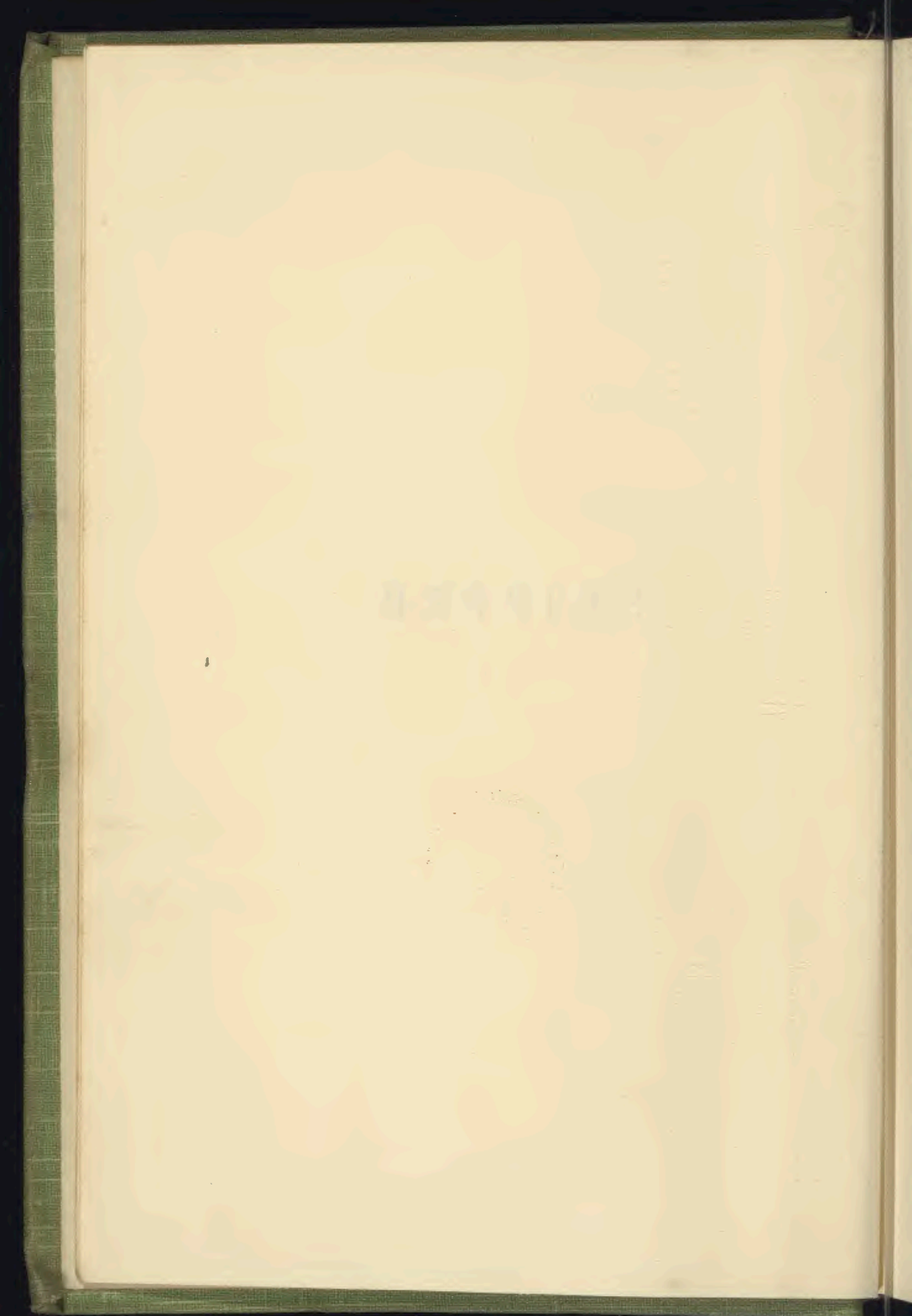






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SKIPPER



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BY

GILBERT WATSON

AUTHOR OF

'THE VOICE OF THE SOUTH,'

'THREE ROLLING STONES OF JAPAN,' ETC.



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NOTE.

FOR many of the authentic details concerning the treasure, still being searched for in the Cathedral ruins of St Andrews, I am indebted to the kindness of Mr W. T. Linskill.

SKIPPER.

CHAPTER I.

A SMALL knot of men stood in the shelter of the clubhouse. The day was cold, the easterly wind having brought the damp clinging haze known as the "haar" from out the desolate spaces of sea. The lee side of the building afforded a partial protection from the inclemencies of the weather, and it was here that the disengaged caddies were in the habit of congregating.

There was something pathetic in their appearance, seen thus through the grey mist-laden atmosphere. The majority of them were well advanced in years: grizzled hair and bent figures aroused pity. A certain smack of the sea still clung to most of them, noticeable in sou'-westers, sea-boots, jerseys, and more particularly in weather-beaten faces that bore the impress of a lifelong exposure to the elements.

The sea is a fine calling. There is something stirring and all but heroic in a vocation that necessitates strength, endurance, and courage. But the life of the links calls upon no such manly virtues; it turns a human being into a machine—an unreliable mechanism, that goes the one day and comes to a standstill the

next, according as the supply meets or overtops the demand. And the pathos of the situation lay in the fact that these fishermen of bygone years seemed to be conscious of their downfall.

Not that all the caddies had followed the sea. Here and there the eyes rested upon an individual who, from his appearance, had never been afloat in his life,—a consumptive baker, it might be, who, when questioned, would relate how baking had undermined his health; or a stone-mason out of work; or a man from a livery stable who had been injured by a kick from a horse.

But one and all—fishermen and landsmen alike—bore the marks of failure; of men who had met the world and had been worsted in the encounter.

Some there were in the group who seemed to suffer from the cold; for now and again one of their number would beat his arms against his sides—as cabmen do to restore the circulation—or would breathe for long intervals upon his purple fingers. The old fishermen were the least affected by the weather. The superfluity of clothing which they wore may have been answerable for this, as much as the fact that from boyhood upwards they had become inured to cold and damp. Beneath the coat there would be a waistcoat; beneath that a jersey; beneath that a flannel shirt; beneath that,—but who shall say what layers of raiment lay concealed beneath the shirt!—clothing rarely removed, and become by right of long familiarity as essential a part of the natural man as fur to the seal or feathers to the gull.

They had a certain air of hopeless anticipation that, seen by the dismal light, was full of melancholy. Even in the midst of a remark one of them would stop to cast a glance at the shelter, where the caddie-master sat in his box-office, or to peer wistfully up the deserted

road whence no one came. The drip, drip, drip from the eaves overhead filled in the pauses in the conversation. The town behind them seemed dead—wrapped in a winding-sheet of mist. Not a sound came from its thoroughfares. The row of houses that adjoined the links loomed like phantoms out of the obscurity. No one came or went. To seaward nothing could be distinguished; the murmur of the waves was all but inaudible. Were it not for the touch of brine upon the lips it would have been impossible to realise that out there—at the distance only of fifty yards—lay the North Sea.

The eyes, sated with the melancholy of the scene, returned always to the little company of derelicts huddling together under the lee of the grey building, as cattle huddle under a hillside when the night thickens and snow-flakes begin to fall.

But they were not all disconsolate. There was one notable exception. One there was among them whose voice and attitude betrayed interest in life—nay, even enthusiasm. With a mashie grasped firmly in his coarse and knotted hands, he was deep in the demonstration of some particular shot connected with the game of golf. His short and stout legs, clad in dilapidated trousers that terminated in worn-out tennis-shoes, were carefully posed in the position that every true votary of the pastime would recognise as being inseparable from the “approach shot.” His friends watched him with dejected attention.

“Ye see,” he cried earnestly,—and his voice came hoarse in a deep-sea note, used aforetime to pit its strength against the elements—“ye see, this was the way wi’ it. ‘Be up, sir,’ says I; ‘for it’s God’s truth that for every wan that’s up, there’s sax short.’ That’s whit I said.”

"And was he up, Skipper?" inquired Black, a sad-faced little man. He asked the question with feigned interest, yet with the mild good-nature that manufactures conversation out of a desire to be amiable.

"No, Tam; he was not," rejoined Skipper sternly.

"Ah, he should hae been up; but that's often the way."

"Whit did it matter? ye got yer pay," growled M'Phee, a giant in sea-boots and a tattered jersey.

"Pay!" roared Skipper. "An' was I thinkin' o' my *pay*! No' me! We were fower doon an' five tae play. It was nae time to think o' siller. Man, I'm tellin' ye, there's a wheen gentry I'd carry for fer naethin',—jest for the plesure o' the game an' their company, ye may say; and there's ithers—weel," he spat contemplatively, "weel, I wouldna be seen deid wi' them."

"Or drunk," remarked the consumptive baker.

"Or drunk, baker," assented Skipper.

Having delivered himself of this confession, Skipper blew his red nose with much decision, then lovingly began to polish his mashie.

"Whit's the use o' *that*?" questioned one of the group as he endeavoured to wring the moisture from his cap.

"Of whit?"

"That mashie o' yours; I never see ye play."

Skipper looked up from his employment. He eyed his interlocutor with disapproval.

"It's weel seen ye've nae soul for the game, M'Clure. D'ye no' ken that tae carry a mashie o' yer ain in the bag gies the gentleman confidence in ye? Says he tae himsel', 'A mashie! ay, ay; he must be a player,' and when ye gie advice he listens tae ye wi' proper respect'. I wouldna be wi'oot that mashie for onythin'; it's whit ye might ca' ma badge o' office."

"Here's a man!" ejaculated M'Phee, who had been watching the road. The others turned in time to observe a solitary figure emerge from the obscurity.

"That's Dr Brodie," whispered the man from the stable. "He's no' wantin' a caddie. He set ma leg; ay, an' never charged a penny. Guid-day tae ye, Doctor."

"Good-day," responded the Doctor, peering intently at the misty group. Passing on, he disappeared into the club-house. M'Phee swore under his breath. Skipper continued to polish his mashie.

"Ye keep it bright, Skipper," commented Tam, with chattering teeth.

"Ye think sae, Tam?"

"I dae indeed. I can see ma face in it."

Skipper hung over the winking steel, then nodded his head.

"It's no' sae bad," he assented modestly, "but it's awfu' deeficult tae polish it this weather. It's a braw wee mashie, is it no'? I wouldna part wi' it for ten shullings."

A sceptical grunt came from M'Clure.

Tam, however, gazed into his friend's face with wondering admiration.

"Ten shullings is an awfu' money, Skipper."

"It is that, Tam; it would keep me fine for a week." He passed his tongue across his lips, and a twinkle came into his eyes. "No' tae mention three shullings ower for whusky."

"It would buy me an overcoat," said Tam Black wistfully. "There's a bonnie wan I ken o' marked ten shullings. It's very little worn—just a wee thin, ye may say. Ma word! I wish fine I had ten shullings, Skipper."

The sad-faced little man sighed, and drew his thread-bare jacket round him with a shiver.

The afternoon wore slowly towards night. The mist,

like a vast sea-shroud, continued to envelop the links in its folds. It was with difficulty that one could distinguish the houses on the Scores, situated though they were on an eminence commanding the bay. Only from the club-house windows streamed a mellow glow, telling of warmth and comfort within.

A silence fell on the group, broken at intervals by M'Phee striking a light for a pipe that would not remain lit, and by the coughing of Black,—a pitiful noise that seemed to tear at his lungs. Then the sound of a closing door caught the ear. It was Paterson, the caddie-master, shutting up his box-office for the night. The scrunch of his boots on the wet gravel was followed by the sound of his voice hailing Braid, the starter. The burly figure of the latter joined him on the top of the steps that led to the links, and after a moment's conversation the two men sauntered slowly off in the direction of the town.

Their departure extinguished the last ray of hope.

"There'll be nae mair play the day," yawned M'Phee. "I'm fair soaked. I'm aff hame; are ye comin', M'Clure?"

The men prepared to disperse, but before they had time to separate, the sound of nearing voices attracted their attention. Two golfers, driven homeward by the weather, were returning disconsolately. Four figures loomed through the shift and veer of the sea-fog. Two of them entered the main building; the others joined the group of caddies, who with one accord adjourned to the shelter,—a wooden structure erected within a dozen yards of the club-house.

"Ye didna win roond?" questioned Skipper.

"No fear," answered one of the men with an oath. "I kent fine whit it was goin' tae dae, but they wouldna heed me. He's English, yon."

"Whit d'ye ca' him?" put in the mild voice of Black.
"Murdoch."

"A guid Scots name," remarked M'Phee.

"Oh ay, the name's weel enough. It's the man I canna thole."¹

"How's that?"

"Och, he's a bletherin' eediot!"

There was a general laugh.

"Whit d'ye think," continued the caddie, encouraged by approval. "When he wanted the wan club, he chucket doon the ither at ma feet,—there's manners for ye! We lost four ba's, sliced intil the whins, and dandered aboot for an 'oor lookin' for them. 'Ye're damned useless, ma man,' says he. 'Like yer driver,' says I, keepin' very solemn. He glowered at me gey and queer like, and then brocht oot anither ba'. Haw! haw! an' the best of it was that I heard the muckle cawf tell his freend that they Scots bodies canna see a joke."

His companion joined in his laughter.

"Here, pass the sand, Robb," he cried; "ye're keepin' it ower lang."

Robb complied with the request: a box of sand changed hands, and the two men set to work to clean the clubs.

Again Robb burst forth, gesticulating with a cleek—

"It's a pair life this," he snarled, addressing the group collectively. "Wet through the wan day, and starved the next. And thae gentlemen in the clubhouse yonder wi' full bellies, wha need never take thocht o' where the next day's food is to come frae. It's no' fair."

"It's the way o' the world," commented Skipper philosophically.

¹ Bear.

"Warld!" sneered Robb. "I wish I was oot o' the warld, if it's like this. Look here!" All eyes turned to him. Robb pointed to his red hands. "I can feel cold as much as they can," he went on with growing indignation; "an' look at them the noo in their braw club-hoose, toastin' thirselves at fires fit to roast a bullock. A-a-h!" he snarled, "I'd like fine to bring it doon aboot their heids."

"Man, ye're a fair nihilist!" gasped Black, shocked out of all reticence.

"An' whit for no'?" retorted Robb. "A bomb's a fine argument, when a man's puir an' starvin'."

The others shook their heads. Robb's attitude disconcerted them. A grumble they understood and appreciated, but a bomb! No; they were God-fearing Scots, and no' "Roosians wi' nasty underhaund ways o' killin' folk." They refrained from argument, however. Robb was "a dour lad wi' an evil tongue, and ye did best to let him be." Skipper, however, had the courage of his opinions.

"Hoots!" he cried cheerily, "I'd be awfu' sorry to see them hurlin' through the air. There's mony a kind man inside o' that hoose. An' after a', whit does it matter? It's a' in the game o' life, ye may say. It's like missin' or holein' a lang putt. It's naethin' but a fluke whether ye're born a club member or a caddie. Haw! haw!"

He chuckled merrily, much pleased with the aptness of the simile. "It came wi'oot thinkin'," he confided to Tam Black, who questioned him later as to how he managed to think "o' sich queer things to say."

But Robb was not to be silenced. He glared vindictively at Skipper for a moment, then turned to the others.

"Here, you, M'Phee!" he said roughly, "whit have ye made the week, answer me that?"

M'Phee finding himself conspicuous, shifted his position.

"Wan-and-saxpence," he muttered. In his heart he resented this intrusion into his private affairs.

Robb laughed ironically.

"And this Wednesday! and you wi' twa mitherless bairns! Man, I congratulate ye! Ye'll dee rich."

He turned to Black.

"And you—have ye eaten ony denner the day?"

"No, Robb; no," replied the little man, in an agony of self-consciousness.

"And why not?" pursued his questioner relentlessly.

Black concealed his tattered personality behind Skipper's burly form.

"I—I wasna exactly what ye would ca' hungry," he stammered.

Robb gave vent to a snort.

"Ye're leein', man; ye ken fine ye're leein'. I ken better. Ye hae yer rent to pay, and when ye canna get yer twa roonds ye dae wi'oot yer denner. Speak up, man! Oh, ye are a puir feckless doon-trodden bodie! Ye've nae spunk in ye! Ye——"

"Haud yer tongue," blurted Skipper. "Whit way tae talk is that? Blaack's a better man nor you ony day."

"Whit's that ye say?" roared the insulted Robb. "Here! say that again if ye daur."

Skipper, nowise loath, repeated the assertion; and upon his adversary transfixing him with small and bloodshot eyes, he fell to caressing his grizzled whiskers with a fine affectation of indifference.

For a moment there was an ominous silence. M'Phee

dug Sandy M'Clure in the ribs, upon which Sandy M'Clure uttered a guffaw.

Then Robb made up his mind to speak.

"See here, Skipper,"—and his tone was full of an awful solemnity,—“see here, if it wasna sae wet, Dod! I'd tak aff ma coat and learn ye manners.”

Skipper gave vent to a contemptuous chuckle. M'Clure and M'Phee shook their heads. There was to be no fight that day.

CHAPTER II.

FEW passers-by were to be met in the benighted streets when Geordie Greig—more familiarly known as “Skipper”—turned his steps homewards. The “haar” had partially cleared, but a fine penetrating rain fell persistently. Skipper, blissfully unconscious of the weather, pursued his uneven way. The rain saturated his cap, tartan muffler, green coat that had known grey days, short baggy trousers, and down-trodden tennis-shoes. With the latter, indeed, the water played strange pranks, ebbing and flowing through gaping seams with a pitiful squelch at every onward step. It trickled down the weather-beaten face; it hung in dewdrops from the grizzled eyebrows and scrubby whiskers; and finally it winked at the occasional lamplight from the point of the bibulous nose and square bristle-covered chin. But Skipper did not care.

He walked cautiously, keeping ever within reach of the railings, as became a gentleman of discretion returning from a wine-party. An odour of inferior whisky permeated his immediate surroundings.

As he walked, his thoughts reverted to the scene in which he had so recently taken part—to the snug bar of the “Far and Sure”; to the warmth and light so alluring to men who had waited long in the cold and darkness; to his comrades; and to the memory of many a welcome drink. Old Donald had “stood

treat." But when his money gave out, Skipper had not hesitated to produce eighteenpence, his earnings for the day.

The memory of Donald's generosity glowed warm within him: his own share towards the festivities passed from his mind. Skipper had much in common with Donald. The roving disposition of the old man chimed with his own adventurous spirit. True, Donald's heart yearned only for the sea, a condition of things with which Skipper had little sympathy; but there was an unconscious pathos in his attitude that never failed to interest. Donald spent his days in regretting that he was now too old to go out in the boats when they set sail for the herring-fisheries. All his spare time was passed rambling about the little harbour, snuffing at the tar, the brine, the fish, and all the odours that recalled the life that had forsaken him for ever. Somewhat of this passed through Skipper's mind, but mistily, and as faces behind a veil. Still, it was sufficient to colour the thoughts that vented themselves audibly in such expressions as—"Braw lad, auld Donald; ye canna help feelin' sorry for him." "Aye aff-haund wi' his siller; it's a peety he's aye hankerin' after the sea." "A fish is a fish; a' verra weel in its ain place, but no' to be compared tae a gowf-ba'. Oh no! oh no!"

All at once he began to sing. It was a snatch of a song which big M'Phee had roared out to the uproarious accompaniment of sea-boots beating time on the sanded floor. But it was more than doubtful if M'Phee would have recognised it as performed by Skipper, for with the greatest goodwill in the world, backed by a stentorian voice, Skipper had but little ear for a tune.

The song confessed, with a delightful naïveté, the singer's admiration for love and liquid refreshment.

And more especially did it confess a weakness for a young person called "Polly," who, it appeared, was willing to supply deserving mariners with one or the other as fancy took them.

Skipper growled it out in long-drawn husky notes. It was a melancholy performance. Reaching a more than usually amorous passage, Skipper broke off, and shaking his head, laughed shamefacedly at a lamp-post.

A dog on the far side of the railings, judging this to be suspicious, barked savagely. The sudden and unexpected noise startled Skipper. He came to a stand-still, and, grasping the railings with both hands, peered into the darkness. The animal, goaded into fury by this mysterious inspection, barked more fiercely than ever. Skipper could distinguish it backing apprehensively into the bushes.

"Here, wee doggie," he said coaxingly, eager to overcome hostility with kindness. The animal, however, filled with suspicious fear, howled disapproval. Skipper shook his head. He liked dogs almost as much as he liked children. When a strange dog admitted him to the inner circle of friendship, he rejoiced; but when an indiscriminating cur refused acquaintanceship, he felt rebuffed. He eyed the dog wistfully. "There must be somethin' queer aboot me the nicht," he thought, and shaking his head again, he continued on his way.

The incident effectually banished the drinking-song from Skipper's mind. His thoughts groped into the immediate future. In a dazed but still sufficiently intelligent manner he pictured to himself the homecoming and his probable reception by his daughter Devina. His surroundings—the silent streets with their pools of water; the encompassing night, starless, fearsome in its winding-sheet of mist; the voice of the sea, which moaned to him at certain turnings of the road,—all

pressed but lightly on his consciousness. They clothed themselves in unreality; even he—Skipper—a person with whom he had cause to be familiar, appeared but as a dream moving in an atmosphere of dreams. But with Devina it was otherwise. She was painfully real. The handsome face, the scowl upon the brows, the black eyes that rarely softened into feminine sympathy, the fine upstanding figure—he saw them all.

He began to muse. Devina would be waiting for him as usual, her arms akimbo, her eyes fixed on the door. The tea would be ready, the brown teapot, the bread-and-butter, and perhaps a kipper or two, or, as the boats were in, a slice of cod. The familiar little room would look both warm and cosy,—a tired man's paradise, were it not for the reproaches which he knew of old to be the invariable accompaniment of such a return as this. Skipper dreaded these reproaches. The consciousness of having deserved them but rendered anticipation more objectionable.

As he mused, a course of action dawned upon him. With the courage engendered by drink he fanned anxiety into indignation, and, as was his wont, set himself to rehearse the part which he would soon be called upon to play in his domestic circle. To make matters more intelligible he spoke aloud, gesticulating freely with his left hand—his right being employed in clasping his mashie beneath the folds of his jacket.

"I'll no' stand it," he muttered as he splashed through an unexpected puddle; "I'll let her see wha I am. *Me!* Her ain faither! Dod! it's disrespectfu'! that's what it is. 'Devina,' I'll say, 'keep a ceevil tongue in yer heid, or I'll tak ma mashie tae ye.' She'll be fair astonished. 'Faither,' she'll say, 'hoo daur ye?' 'Daur,' says I, pittin' oot ma chest,—'I daur onythin' that a man may daur. Na, na, Devina, ye needna'

glower at me. Ye hussie! I'll learn ye wha's maister in this hoose.' And then" — Skipper chuckled deep in his throat—"then Devina will be a' dumfoondered, bunkered ye may say, and I'll kick ma bunnet intil a corner and just set doon tae ma tea."

But an uneasy presentiment that gave the lie to these rosy anticipations stifled the chuckle, and Skipper relapsed into silence.

CHAPTER III.

THE house in which Skipper dwelt was to be found in a narrow lane, called Castle Street, that ran from the precincts of the ruined Cathedral to the cliffs that overhung the sea. It was but one of many such houses, populous with the poor, differing in no respect from its neighbours save that the portion of it occupied by Skipper and his daughter was remarkable for a quite unusual cleanliness.

Castle Street was far from being an unpleasant locality. Unlike city lanes, its low-roofed buildings did not preclude the light, and the rare sunshine was free to visit it at will.

All day the noise of children's voices rang out, but of an evening, when the little ones were abed, the place was singularly peaceful, haunted only by the sound of waves and the restless sighing of the wind.

Skipper was well known to his neighbours. He bore the character of "a weel-spoken bodie," for even in his cups he never lost a certain air of bland geniality that charmed young and old alike. Here had he lived for thirty years, ever since he had wooed and won bonnie Jean Robertson, the fisher lass who now slept peacefully beneath a wooden cross in a secluded corner of the churchyard.

With the children Skipper was an especial favourite. Many things had helped to build up his popularity.

He was known on one memorable occasion to have picked up a screaming infant and to have restored it to smiles by the insertion of a sweetie into an astonished mouth—a fact that caused the trouser-pocket whence the sweetie had been extracted to be ever afterwards regarded with feelings of yearning anticipation. And even as the best reputations owe a debt to mystery, so the reputation of Skipper lost nothing by a tale told by wee Maggie M'Gregor,—how the “maan” had “awfu’ queer things ben the hoose,” which queer things wee Maggie and he had inspected hand in hand during the temporary absence of Devina. Then, too, the possession of a mashie stood him in good stead. A man who invariably carried a mashie was a power to be reckoned with in St Andrews. It was rumoured that he could “hole oot at fifty yairds — true as daith.” And then the consequential gravity of the man! Would he not stand, with his sturdy legs stretched to their widest, watching the progress of some juvenile pastime with such an expression of knowing interest that not a child present but felt convinced that he must be a past master at “chuckie-stanes,” or “bulls,” or “palal,” and was only restrained from showing his skill by the remembrance of his whiskers and fifty odd years? And lastly, he had been shipwrecked. Not a child old enough to master its mother-tongue but had heard the tale of how on one dark winter’s night two fishing-smacks had collisioned in the bay; of how all but Skipper had been drowned; and of how he had lain unconscious for nine anxious hours, an awful knowingness imprinted on his homely face, as though desirous of impressing on the spectators that even death, the arch-secret, was no longer a secret to him.

But the youthful and appreciative world had vanished from the street when Skipper rolled pensively over the

benighted cobble-stones. It was not altogether dark, for the blackness was combated by lights streaming from many a lower window. Among them he recognised that from his home. It shone from behind a red blind. Its angry and ominous stare gave Skipper the uneasy feeling of being watched by a bloodshot eye. He frowned at it in retaliation. Reaching the low door, he paused for a moment to listen furtively, his heart within his ears, but no sound came from within.

"Noo's the time!" he muttered hoarsely to himself; "I maun be firm with her. Here's for it!" But even as he spoke he realised that courage was deserting him. With a trembling hand he pressed the latch and went in.

The kitchen was empty. Skipper drew a breath of relief. There was his tea awaiting him on the deal-table in the middle of the room. From the opposite corner a tall wooden clock ticked a dignified welcome. A fire glowed in the tiny black fireplace flanked by the two horse-hair armchairs. Behind the curtain that covered a portion of the whitewashed wall he knew that his box-bed was lurking. A kettle singing on the hob and a cheap metal lamp burning in the deep window-sill added the last touches of cosiness. Skipper's heart warmed to it. Closing the door softly, he stole forward, moving noiselessly over the uneven brick floor.

Where was Devina? The flicker of a candle burning in an inner room answered the question. Skipper's heart fell.

"Devina, are ye there?" he called faintly.

The door opened suddenly, thrust outward by a strong hand, and Devina Greig stalked into the room.

She was all, and more than all, that Skipper's timorous fancy had painted her. This was a woman to dominate others—a strong personality. More than half

a head taller than her father, she appeared to tower above him physically as well as morally. There was a force in her that cried for expression—a sombre fire that consumed itself in silence.

He stood before her, swaying slightly, longing for her to speak, yet dreading what she might say. The water dripping from his clothing formed a little pool on the brick floor. For a while he forced himself to return the contemptuous stare of her black eyes, but finding the effort distasteful he averted his gaze and smiled vacantly at the clock.

"It's an awfu' saft nicht, Devina," he ventured shakily.

She ignored the remark. At length she spoke.

"Ye're drunk again; think shame o' yersel'."

Her voice was deep. Its tones gave the listener the impression of anger under strong restraint.

"Na, na, Devina," he cried earnestly; "ye maunna say that. I hae ma faults. I'm no' denyin' it, but praise be to the Lorrd the drink isna one o' them. A glass, or maybe twa, jest tae keep the cauld oot, but no——"

"Gie me yer cap," she interrupted shortly.

Now was the occasion for Skipper to assert himself, but no thought of self-assertion rose within him. His one desire was to conciliate this big masterful woman who stood with outstretched hand expecting—nay, demanding—obedience. He passed her his cap without a word.

"Take aff yer shoes," was her next command, and the helpless Skipper obeyed it like a man who never had had a will of his own.

Dry-shod, however, and clad in an old dressing-gown that had belonged to a former patron, he felt more at his ease. Again he ventured to start the ball of conversation.

"These are braw wee whitin'," he said with tentative

cheerfulness, as he inspected the plate of boiled fish which she set before him.

She did not answer.

"Whit did they cost ye, Devina?"

"Naethin'."

"Ye didna catch them yersel', did ye?"

The idea of Devina pulling in the lines on a heaving boat tickled him. He chuckled. But his merriment died a sudden death as he encountered his daughter's eye.

"I got them frae Jock Simpson's wife"—and again the listener would have been struck with the ominous quality in her voice. It was almost as though the thick roughly-spoken words were the inevitable prelude to a blow. But Skipper did not notice it.

"They're rale guid—maist tender," he mumbled, with his mouth full.

Devina took her seat in one of the arm-chairs and resumed her interrupted work—the darning of one of Skipper's socks. The fire made a cheerful splutter in the little lamp-lit room. A modest array of pots and pans stood in an open cupboard. Everything betrayed the careful housewife—everything was spotlessly clean. The polished case of the clock, the woodwork of the cupboard, the brown teapot, the metal handle of a frying-pan suspended on the whitewashed wall,—all winked in the light. From time to time Skipper paused with a morsel half-way to his open mouth and glanced furtively at his daughter; but finding her apparently deep in thought, he nodded his head and philosophically resumed operations against the whiting. As he drank deep draughts of the strong black tea the world ceased to be nebulous, his head cleared, and his appetite returned with a keener edge.

"Nellie Stuart's engaged to be mairrett," said Devina suddenly. She spoke slowly, her eyes fixed on the fire,

not as though the news were in itself worthy of interest, but as though it opened doors to speculation.

"Is that a fac'," commented her father. He nodded meditatively, poured himself out another cup of tea, then asked, the teapot still in the air—

"Hoo auld is she?"

"Nineteen, come Martinmas."

"Ay, ay." Then, as a thought struck him: "And hoo auld are you, Devina?"

"Twenty-fower."

The answer had no sooner left her lips than she glanced up at him suspiciously from under lowering brows.

"Whit made ye speir¹ that?" she demanded.

The question was unexpected. Skipper was taken aback. He laughed nervously to conceal his agitation.

"Oh, naethin'—naethin' ava', Devina."

The lines about her mouth hardened; her black eyes, raised to his, flamed resentment. Skipper wriggled in his seat. In a sudden flash of thought he recalled Nancy Lee and Molly Todd, girls he had known, and felt aggrieved that Devina should be so different.

"It *was* somethin'," she said thickly. "Ye're leein' tae me. I see fine whit ye're after. Ye thocht——"

But what he thought remained unspoken, for conquering herself with a violent effort, she relapsed into silence.

Skipper resumed his interrupted meal. He took elaborate precautions not to make a noise, and once when his fork rattled against his plate he paused and glanced at her with anxious eyes.

Tea finished, he crept to the vacant arm-chair, while his daughter washed the tea-things. With his short sturdy legs stretched to the blaze and a pipe between his teeth, he gave himself up to the joys of the fireside.

¹ Ask.

Even the presence of Devina could not altogether damp his contentment. The cold, the mist, the rain, the hardships and uncertainties of a caddie's life, even Tam Black, his cronie, swung back into insignificance. He thought of them—if he thought of them at all—but as something outside his life, something too vague to affect him, Skipper, sitting there in the old dressing-gown, toasting his battered little body before the comforting glow of the fire.

His eyes slowly closed. With drowsy satisfaction he sketched what would happen when he rose to the rank of first professional. Those would be fine days! He would speak on terms of equality with members of the Club. When he condescended to give a lesson he would impart instruction in the contemptuous bullying tone which the great ones of St Andrews considered necessary to impress the tyro with a due sense of their importance. How he would come swaggering down the steps to the first tee, testing the shaft of his driver, full of confidence and the very best whisky!—how he would fling a new ball carelessly on the ground and tell his caddie to tee it (*his* caddie! the idea thrilled him). Yes, to possess a caddie, that would be grandest of all; but he would speak to him kindly, for he knew—none better—how bitterly a caddie can resent the insolence of an employer. How Douglas and Logan, and other self-made pillars of the noble game, who had hitherto ignored his very existence, would hold their breath in anticipation of his drive! how he would step forward, quite at his ease, and, putting forth his strength, drive his ball, not a paltry two hundred yards, no, but *over the Burn!* while a low gasp of admiration arose from the awestruck gallery. Ay, those would be fine days indeed. And best of all, Devina would respect him. She would say carelessly, but with a

proud swelling of the heart, "*Ma* faither, Mr Greig—the *professional*!" She would never presume to interfere, or even to speak till spoken to. She——

"Here, wake up; I've somethin' tae tell ye."

The interruption was as unpleasant as it was unexpected. Skipper started violently. His fancies dissolved themselves into thin air. There sat Devina in the opposite chair, frowning at him: how different from the respectful daughter of his dreams! She awed him.

"Ay, ay, Devina; ye were sayin'?" he faltered.

"I've got a place," she announced sternly.

Skipper's jaw fell. He was genuinely astonished. And yet, how like Devina to keep the most important news to the last.

"As cook?" he ejaculated.

"Of coorse; that's whit I am."

"Ou, ay, a guid plain cook," assented Skipper with admiration. His blue eyes twinkled; his red face glowed; he was very pleased.

"I'm real glad on it, Devina," he said heartily, rubbing his hands together. "It's whit ye've been hankerin' after this lang while. Ye can gie up the washin' noo—a damp soap-suddy job. And whit wage d'ye get?"

"Twenty pund a-year."

"And aw found? no' sae bad. Whit like's the leddie?"

"Oh, she's an English bodie, a wee bit thing wi' broon hair and een, and a queer-lookin' blue hat wi' a green parrot sittin' on it."

"A green parrot, d'ye say?" repeated Skipper in amazement.

"Juist that," assented Devina, continuing the inventory in a gloomy voice. "And her fit is as wee as ma haund, and she wears shiney shoes—patent leather they

ca' it—and open-wark stockings, and a blue silk petticoat, no less; I caught a keek o' it when I went in, for she had her back tae the fire wi' her dress up—a maist unseemly poseetion."

Devina frowned darkly at what she considered the shortcomings of the upper classes.

"Whit did she say tae ye?" asked Skipper, leaning forward, his hands on his knees.

"Oh, the ordinar questions. She speired if I could dae pastry and sichlike fal-lals, and hoo lang I was in ma last place and a' that. And then"—her brows met and her lips pursed themselves in disapproval—"she said a queer thing."

"Ay, ay?" murmured her father sympathetically.

"'Whit's yer name?' says she in her fancy English. 'Devina,' says I. 'An odd name,' says she; 'whit does it mean?' 'Oh, it's just the female o' David,' says I. 'And whaur is David?' says she. 'Hoo should I ken,' says I, glowerin' at her, for she had a queer smile in her een that I didna like. 'And, mum, if ye don't like Devina, call me Vinnie; whiles I'm called Vinnie for short.'"

"But naebody ca's ye Vinnie!" cried Skipper, the bald truth blurting from his lips.

A curious change passed over her face. For a moment the light in her eyes softened and grew far-off—wistful; the lips became tremulous. Skipper, still leaning forward with his hands on his knees, gazed at her open-mouthed. "Ma word, but she's bonnie!" he thought. Then in sudden shame, as though caught in the act of self-glorification, he frowned at the fire, and leaning back in his chair, puffed furiously at his pipe.

CHAPTER IV.

DESPITE the easy-going philosophy with which Skipper faced life, there was that in him which occasionally rose in rebellion. Much as he was devoted to "gowf," and all the vicissitudes that for ever dance attendance on that most alluring of games, yet the daily rounds, trudging at an employer's heels, did by no means sum up for him the alpha and omega of existence. No; he longed for things other than these. The sight of any object that smacked of distant countries awoke the demon of unrest within him. Even a skye-terrier had the power to make him impatient of the narrowness of his life. Where was Skye? he questioned indignantly. And how came it that this dog—"a puir ignorant beastie that canna tell wan club frae anither"—had known it, while he had not? Skipper was a man of imagination. His fancy depicted a far-off land populous with terriers—a land of promise, fascinating because unknown. "Queer things, nae doot, happen tae ye there," he muttered as he followed the unconscious animal with eyes of envy.

But more especially did anything Oriental stir him into wonder and curiosity. Strange it may appear, but within his matter-of-fact Scottish heart there lurked the love of bright colour. Whence had it come? Who can tell? Perchance in the remote past one of his forebears had visited the Orient and had brought away

with him some desire for the South that, skipping many generations, had thrilled again in the blood of a humble caddie. Be that as it may, the seed lay dormant during long periods, lulled to sleep by the grey monotony of his life and the grey monotony of his surroundings; but should some suggestion of bluer skies and more generous sunshine—some glint of vivid and unfamiliar colour—come to him, it vibrated into pleasurable sensation that seemed to have its being within the past. The red cloaks of the students seen in the grey of the streets at winter-time warmed him into vague emotion. He thought them “real bonnie.” The trailed smoke of a steamer hull-down on the horizon was to him full of suggestion. It might be outward-bound! Skipper would watch it disappear with wistful eyes, his hands clasped behind his back, his feet, planted on the sand, heedless of incoming waves. Palm-trees and camels—all that he associated with the world beyond the sea—rose before him; and as they passed in a Noah’s-ark procession through his mind, he would shake his head and sigh, full of pity for his uneventful fate.

It was as if a voice cried within him—an imperative voice that would not be stilled. All that he could do to satisfy this voice he did. His Sunday tie was of the most unmitigated scarlet; it focussed attention; you could see it from one end of Castle Street to the other. His tartan muffler, too, had been chosen carefully. With all the tartans of Scotland to choose from, Skipper had selected the brightest, the gayest, the most uncompromising. Its variegated glory touched the high-water mark of his admiration, and it was not without a tightening of the heart-strings that he watched it fade to a mere nondescript imitation of its once radiant self. He had even gone the length of purchasing a cheap

oleograph at an auction with four shillings borrowed from Black. It depicted an Arab saying his prayers in the desert. It radiated impossible colours. Its splendour was incontestable. Black had been obliged to bid the final sixpence that brought down the auctioneer's hammer, for the mouth of his friend had been dry and inarticulate as a sand-bunker. With what joy had he hurried homewards, his treasure clasped to his grey-green breast, burning with impatience to see how it would look hung up beside the clock. But Devina would have none of it. She showed a strange want of sympathy for Arabs engaged in their devotions.

"Fower shullings for *that*! whit a waste o' money!" she ejaculated—for the hapless Skipper had been forced to confess his extravagance. He eyed her in voiceless anxiety, fully aware of the importance of her decision. For a time she turned the picture about in her rough hands, frowning the while upon the brilliant worshipper with gloomy disapproval.

"It's irreleegious," she said shortly.

"But—he is sayin' his *prayers*, Devina!" remonstrated Skipper, with a sudden sinking of the heart.

"Ay, maybe!" retorted Devina in deep irony. "But wha is he prayin' to? answer me that if ye can."

"The Lord?" hazarded Skipper doubtfully.

Devina's scorn knew no bounds. Her voice rose.

"And him a heathen? no fear! He's worshipping' idols, the cannibal! nae doot he's got one nearby keekin' oot o' the sand; or maybe it's that wee palm-tree yonder. Na, na, it mustna bide here; it's no' fit to be seen in a God-fearing hoose."

And so the work of art had been consigned to the inner darkness of the cupboard,—where pots and pans alone ran the risk of evil-communication,—to be taken out surreptitiously by its possessor when Devina was

from home, and he could feast his eyes upon it in safety.

Hand in hand with the love of colour, a thirst for adventure lurked in Skipper's heart. His fishing life behind him, he had entered on the customary servitude of the links as perhaps the nearest realisation of his dreams. The fascination of golf held him in its toils. No caddie in all St Andrews bore such a character for keenness and judgment as he. He was a familiar figure in every noteworthy competition. Yet it is to be doubted if his employers, when they praised his unerring instinct for discovering lost balls, and for offering them the one and only club essential for a stroke, were aware of the feelings of the shabby little man lurching in their rear. For it was not the game alone that he loved—it was the ever-present sense of danger. The holes that crossed were his special delight. The whizz of a ball flying in dangerous proximity to his head was as music to his soul. Other caddies ducked to the unexpected yell of "fore"; not so Skipper. He would stand erect, facing the danger, glorying in his power to see the nearing globe, with a thrill of excitement running riot in his whisky-loving heart.

"Ma word! but ye were nearly plunket that time," the other caddie would gasp in consternation.

"Hoots, no!" Skipper would laugh; "the gowf-ba's no' made that'll kill me. Man! I like fine tae hear them singin' by ma heid. It's an adventure!"

But though hungering for a full meal of the eventful, Skipper was by no means ungrateful for the crumbs that had already fallen to his share. His shipwreck furnished him with a golden halo of romance, under which he lunched, not quite as other men. It provided him with an inexhaustible store of small-change in the matter of hints, allusions, fragments of a superi-

ority not accorded to all. True, he did not often mention it directly; that would have robbed it of its mystery, and perhaps to a certain extent of its terror, but there was nothing to prevent his playing round the subject. It was a unique shipwreck, divinely planned with an eye to fiction. Skipper was the only survivor.

Then, too, these nine hours when he had lain as one dead caused him to be regarded as a traveller from a far country. Although his friends would have considered it profane to have mentioned it, yet in their secret hearts they placed Skipper almost upon a plane with Lazarus and other characters in Holy Writ who had returned from the Land of Shadows. He had been so *nearly* dead! They all had seen him as he lay on the pier with that indescribable look on his face. It had impressed them deeply; they would never forget it.

"Whit like did ye feel, Skipper?" questioned Black's awestruck voice on one occasion. The others gathered round, open-mouthed, anticipating news from beyond the tomb. There was silence in the "Far and Sure."

"Queer," replied Skipper, with awful solemnity. "Queer," he repeated, frowning at his glass of whisky-and-water as though he were defying the liquid elements to contradict him. His tone implied volumes of adventure in the fearsome Valley of the Shadow; terrors unmentionable, embodied forth in that one simple word. A shudder ran round the bar. "Queer"—that was all; all, but it sufficed.

But although sympathetic enough in matters pertaining to the perils of the sea,—did not the subject touch on the individual experience of every man present?—his associates turned a deaf ear to problematical adventures connected with the future. What wonder, poor souls! They were old; their lives were

nothing but a long struggle for daily bread; the fetters of precarious existence bound them fast to the Jugger-naut of the present. What was this thirst of adventure to them. "A' havers."¹ They had other things to think of. Was not the probability of their names being called out first by the caddie-master, when he started to work off his list of a morning, adventure enough for them? Their lives were rounded by endless games of golf, stretching on and on from year to year, till Death, the great opponent, laid them, an unplayable stymie, at the last. And yet they had their interests. Matters that seemed insignificant enough to an outsider were sufficient to provide them with conversation by the hour. The state of the caddie-master's eye—he had been struck by an insubordinate caddie, and the orb in question now peered at them from the box-window, a cheerful study in blues and greens; the price of cod; the death of Sandy Stuart's wife; the chances of rain; the new minister; the news that Jock M'Coll had been presented with a pair of cast-off shoes by a wealthy American,—these were indeed topics of importance

¹ All nonsense.

CHAPTER V.

ONE, however, there was among the caddies ever ready to listen to the outpourings of Skipper. There are some people so constituted that they seem to have been created on purpose to receive confidences. That they have hopes and fears of their own is not for the moment apparent, their unfailing current of sympathy enabling them to become without an effort a receptacle for the hopes and fears of others. Such an one was Tam Black. This quality was not appreciated by every one: Skipper alone had discovered it. Black soothed him—unconsciously flattered him. Before Black he unpacked his heart with as careless an abandon as though the appreciative little man were a favourite dog. And indeed there was much of the faithfulness, the devotion, and the blind admiration of the dog in Black's disposition.

With others, Tam was a nonentity. If circumstances forced them to refer to him, they did so with indifference or contempt, according to their natures. "It's only Tam," they would say; "naebody considers him."

Thus they ordered him about, bullied him, laughed at him (in the absence of Skipper, be it understood), and Tam submitted to it all with gentle long-suffering patience. Nay, when they were not too caustic, he even joined in the laugh raised at his expense, with a pathetic belief that by so doing he would ingratiate himself with his tormentors. Needless to relate, this concili-

atory attitude was invariably misunderstood by his comrades.

Alone with Skipper, however, Tam became a different being. Skipper befriended him, patronised him, protected him, confided in him; and in return Tam worshipped the very ground consecrated by Skipper's dilapidated tennis-shoes. It was pleasant to see the miracle that a little kindness could perform. His down-trodden nature raised its head. It put forth leaves of unaccustomed individuality. For the time being he became a man. He even aired opinions of his own—timorous views of life lured into expression by the sympathy of his friend.

No two men could differ more completely, either in appearance or in disposition, than did these two cronies. The one, burly, red-faced, independent, full of enthusiasm, stirred by the lust of adventure. The other, meagre, pale, sad-faced, wistful-eyed, seeking ever to efface himself, to creep through life on tiptoe, as though by so doing he could avert the many evils that lurked about his path.

The remembrance of his sea-life was to Tam a fearsome nightmare. The sea was so cruel. In his own words, "It was aye hungerin' after ye." The perils of the deep; the bitter nights when a man's hands were blue and his feet like ice; the jibes of his fellows when there had been no "Skipper" to take his part,—one and all still haunted him in sleep. He was glad that the "Lord" had restored him to firm ground, and that never again need he set foot upon a boat.

Like others he had drifted to the links, but the exchange had not brought him happiness. His life as a caddie presented but little interest in his eyes. It was a wearisome means of keeping body and soul together—that was all. He feared the flying golf-balls that

delighted Skipper's heart. The competition and struggle for existence appalled him. He wondered how he managed to face it. It was an undying anxiety waiting by his pillow to greet him the moment he opened his eyes.

Of the game itself Tam could tell you but little, for he was incapable of giving a lesson. There were eighteen holes, he knew, some of them a weary way apart, and the bag of clubs was heavy. As a caddie he was painfully unsatisfactory. Golfers swore at him when he absent-mindedly presented a brassie for a short approach. And when, covered with confusion, and but dimly aware of what he did, he timidly substituted a driver, their language was not fit to be recorded. He had also an aggravating habit of offering up thanks for imaginary favours. "Thank ye, sir," would he murmur when a patron returned a club. This brought him into constant trouble, for, as all golfers know, little is needed to jar the nerves of the player. "Damn it! man, don't keep on thanking me," exclaimed a testy employer upon one occasion (he had lost the preceding hole, and was on the point of descending into a bunker). "If I think fit to thank *you*, which, by Jove! is not likely, seeing that you've lost two balls already, that's another matter; but I'm hanged if I'm going to be thanked every time I fizzle a shot into a bunker!" "Thank ye, sir," acquiesced Tam, as he politely offered the niblick.

Tam was a bachelor. Marriage seemed too perilous an affair to recommend itself to him. In order to marry it was necessary to ask a woman to be your wife, and Tam was certain that never, never would he have the courage to do that.

But although convinced of his personal unfitness for matrimony, he admired those for whom it had no fears. Skipper, for example, had rushed in where he had feared

to tread, and by so doing had earned a full share of his admiration. Couples who "walked oot" were full of mystery to him. He watched them from a safe distance, and wondered what they could find to say to each other. Women filled him with awe. He did not understand them, and he was convinced that they took no interest in him.

And yet—there had been a girl once, the daughter of a shoemaker. The episode had happened long ago, when Tam was young. He remembered her rosy face, her bright eyes, and her laugh—yes, particularly her laugh. She had worn white cotton gloves on Sundays, and the neatest and smallest shoes from her father's shop. Tam had worshipped them from a distance. With a woman's intuition she had been aware of his adoration, and when she met him her eyes rested kindly on his. "She's settin' her cap at ye," a neighbour had chuckled on one occasion. "Na, na!" Tam had cried, much shocked. The idea of marriage with so perfect a being had never occurred to him.

Perhaps—had he spoken—who knows? But he never spoke. Shortly afterwards she married a plumber, who took her to live in Dundee. Tam never forgot her. Her memory was with him during many a lonely hour, and often in the solitary little kitchen which he called "hame" he would imagine her there, smiling at him from the other side of the fire.

The experience, slight though it may appear, had left its mark on his character. For her sake his thoughts of women were invariably tinged with a gentle chivalry that saw only the beautiful and the true. It was his one dream, and he cherished it in the secret places of his heart—told to none, not even to Skipper.

CHAPTER VI.

It was towards the home of his friend Black that Skipper made his way one late afternoon in November. Ever since midday the rain had fallen with a dogged persistence that put an end to all hopes of a second round. Skipper proceeded up the hill that leads from the club-house, and along the Scores in full view of the sea. Wind and rain fell upon him, buffeted him, pelted him to their hearts' content. But Skipper's spirits rose superior to bad weather. Had he not eighteenpence in a trouser-pocket and a courageous heart beneath his saturated jacket? At times he even gloried in this battle with the elements—as, for example, at the treacherous turning where Murray Park joins the Scores. There the wind, hoping to find him off his guard, fell upon him with a howl, as though it were a highwayman requesting him to choose between eighteenpence and his life. Firmly planting his legs an amazing distance apart (he scorned to cling to the railings), Skipper boldly defied it, and even bade it come on and do its worst; upon hearing which it turned front, like the poltroon it was, and shrieking an inarticulate apology, vanished round the corner.

And yet it was a day not only to damp, but to extinguish the spirits of any but a Scotsman. Black sagging clouds lay flat along the roof of the world. To seaward, through a blur of falling rain, one could dis-

tinguish the dreary waste of waters. In colour it was a livid grey, like a thing long dead. And yet it was full of uneasy restless movement. Over its agitated surface innumerable waves, hounded by the wind, showed their teeth. A blackness far out to sea gloomed ominous. It seemed as though a storm were imminent.

Tam had not put in an appearance at the links that morning, and Skipper was on his way to see what was the matter.

Reaching his destination, he entered without knocking. The tiny kitchen might have passed as the twin brother of Skipper's own living-room, save that it was smaller. The air of neatness, dependent upon a woman's supervision, was also lacking. On a table by the bed stood unwashed tea-things side by side with a bottle labelled cough mixture and a tattered copy of the 'Sunday at Home.' No fire burned in the grate; the ashes that choked it gave an air of abandonment. Articles of clothing were to be seen in unexpected places—a much-darned pair of trousers hung on the clock, a couple of socks decorated the back of the one arm-chair. A mouse scampered over the floor.

At the sound of the closing door the curtain that concealed the box-bed opened suddenly, and Tam's head made its appearance.

"Wha's that?" exclaimed his quavering voice, drowsy yet startled.

"It's masel," replied Skipper's gruffer tones. The streaming little man beamed on Tam's red night-cap. Its colour pleased him. It made him think of the "South" and of his Sunday tie.

Inquiries were made and answered. It appeared that Tam's cold was worse; he had judged it prudent to remain in bed. Skipper expressed no sympathy, but set to work to render the place more cheerful. In ten

minutes a fire was crackling merrily; the tea-things were transferred to the sink; a bottle, providentially containing a little whisky, was discovered; and the two men settled themselves for a chat.

"Wha was ye carryin' for the morn?" inquired Tam with interest.

"For Morgan. It was a three-ba' match,—a fine match it was tae: we licked them baith easy."

"Ye're awfu' wet; see tae yer jaicket. Man, Skipper, it's like as if ye'd been in the sea."

Skipper squeezed the water out of his sleeve.

"I'm makin' a mess on yer floor," he apologised.

"Hoots, never heed that—it's you I was thinkin' o'; it's no' healthy tae sit in damp claes. Hang them up by the fire; ye'll find ma blacks in yon press; I'll be proud tae see ye wearin' them."

After some demur Skipper made the necessary change, and, clad in dry garments, seated himself once more by the bedside.

From time to time Tam cleared his throat with obvious difficulty.

"Whit a day!" he murmured huskily, as the rain pattered sharply on the window-pane. "I'm glad I'm no' carryin' the day," he added in an undertone.

"Ye've lost the money, though."

"That's true. I'll hae tae gang oot the morn in ony case. It's a weary life, Skipper, when a man canna be ill in peace. Gowf just drives ye; it winna let ye be. Whiles I dream o' carryin'. The ither nicht I thoct I was deid, and had an awfu' bother tae reach heaven. Weel, Skipper, nae sooner had I pit ma fit intil it than they cried on me tae start the carryin' at once, just like here in St Andrews. Man, Skipper, I was disappointed. I tried tae say 'God's wull be done,' but, sure as daith, the words stuck in ma throat."

Skipper, who had been listening with open mouth and twinkling eyes, indulged in a prolonged chuckle.

"Had ye wings?" he cried eagerly.

"I canna mind; I only ken that I was weary, and wanted tae sit doon."

"Ye're no' verra partial tae the carryin', Tam," mused Skipper, after a pause. Tam stifled a cough, eyed his friend with the fixed stare of one who debates a point, then suddenly leaning forward, whispered—

"I'll tell ye a secret."

"Ay?"

"It's—it's a sort o' painful secret; ye'll no' tell ony one?"

"Noo, Tam! is it likely that——"

"Na, na; of course not. I said that wi'oot thinkin'. Weel, I've found oot that I'm no' a guid caddie."

"Oh, ye surprise me!" cried Skipper with well-simulated astonishment. But Tam shook his head slowly and impressively.

"Since ma dream, an' bein' in bed and lonesome like, I've thoct a deal aboot it, Skipper; ay, an' I heard a queer thing the ither day that keeps botherin' me."

"Whit's that?"

"Weel, twa o' the committee, Collet and Balliston, were talkin' thegither; says Collet tae Balliston, 'Ye're in the richt,' says he, 'a guid caddie is born, not made.' Ay, those were his verra words—'Born, not made.'"

Skipper listened with raised eyebrows.

"Is that no' a queer speech?" continued Tam. "Whit does it mean, think ye?"

Skipper opened his mouth to explain, but bethinking him that he could offer no plausible explanation, he reluctantly closed it again. Tam lay back in the bed in order to think the better.

"Born, not made?" His mild voice could be heard sunk to a pensive whisper. Nothing, however, but the tip of his nose could be seen. "I aye thocht that we was a' born, Skipper?"

"That's a fac', Tam; and yet, ye'll mind, the Lord made us."

"So He did. Ma word! it's puzzlin'."

For a while no one spoke.

"Nae doot," observed Tam solemnly, "we was a' born once; ay, and some on us even twice."

"*Twice!*" remonstrated Skipper.

"Ay," continued the voice of his friend, tuned to tones of piety. "'Born again,' as the Gospel says."

This unforeseen solution of the mystery deprived Skipper of the power of speech. With tightly closed lips and a thoughtful frown upon his brow he sat staring fixedly at the tip of Tam's nose.

"And so," pursued the hushed voice, "I'm of opeenion that tae dae yer duty weel in any walk o' life—ay, even tae be a guid caddie—a man must be born again."

CHAPTER VII.

SKIPPER poured himself out a glass of whisky, drank it in a gulp, smacked his lips, wiped them on his coat-sleeve, produced his short clay pipe, and prepared to smoke. Tam, raising himself on his elbow, watched him contentedly. It was "gey kind" of him, he thought; "just whit ye might expect." In his gratitude he ransacked his brains for an agreeable subject of conversation.

"And so Devina has got a place," he said at length.

"Ay, Tam—that's—so," assented Skipper between puffs.

A feeling of compassion for his friend flitted across Tam's innocent mind.

"Ye'll miss her sairly," he said.

A grim contortion of Skipper's facial muscles was the only reply.

"I've heard," pursued Tam, "that a wuman is a wellspring o' joy in a hoose—or is it a babby?" he added doubtfully. "Ma heid feels awfu' weak the nicht."

"A wuman's a' verra weel in her way." Skipper spoke with lofty condescension. "I'm no' denyin' that they have their uses; but och! they're puir feckless creatures,—wobbly, Tam, like a mashie in a loose grip. A firm haund, that's whit they need."

"Like yours," said his friend, with deep admiration.

"Weel, weel," murmured Skipper, with conscious modesty.

"I canna say I'm deeply versed on the subject masel'," sighed Tam; "weemen folk have no' come ma way, and I havena had a wife, as ye ken; but it does seem tae me at times that I've missed a great deal. A wuman's an experience, Skipper."

"Maybe."

"Whit does it feel like tae have a wife?"

Skipper smoked thoughtfully, "Puff, puff, puff." At length, having solved the problem satisfactorily in his own mind, he took his pipe from between his lips and spoke thus—

"It feels as if ye're carryin' for some Glasgie bodie. Ye've teed his ba'; and ye stand back tae watch his drive. Ye canna weel say if it'll gang tae the left, or if it'll gang tae the richt, or indeed if it'll gang at a'. But in ony case ye've got tae follow."

"Ay, even intil the whins," assented Tam mournfully.

He lay back in the bed with a weary sigh.

"The world's a terrible place," he murmured.

"Hoo's that, Tam?"

"It's that big, and cruel forby. It makes ye feel lonesome."

"Hoots, no! It's just like this" (Skipper's horny hand described a circle in the air; Tam watched him with lustreless eyes),—"just like this—ye see—a circle. If ye gang doon the wan side, why, ye come up the ither. Whichever way ye gang, it aye brings ye hame."

The idea was new to Tam. He gazed at Skipper in admiration.

"I'd like fine tae see furrin parts; ay, and blackamoors," sighed Skipper, balancing himself on the back legs of his chair. His thoughts turned to his oleograph, banished by Devina. "Folk pray in a queer way oot yonder," he added pensively.

"Aw, aw?" ejaculated Tam. There was a blend of

curiosity and astonishment in the sound that appealed to Skipper. It was worth while, he thought, to tell things to Tam. He was "no' verra quick at the uptake, but he took some beatin' for civeelity, and he was aye pleased tae hear ye speak." Skipper nodded graciously.

"Ye'll have forgotten ma oleograph?" he questioned.

"No fear, Skipper. Did I no' lend ye fower shullings tae buy it at Gourley's auction?"

Skipper frowned.

"Weel, weel. No need tae mention that. I'll pay ye back. It hasna escaped me."

"Man, Skipper, I wasna meanin' that ava." Tam's voice trembled with earnestness. "Ye ken that I'd gie ye onythin' I have in the warld. Not that it is ower muckle,"—his eyes strayed to the disreputable trousers festooning the clock,—“but it would be a plesure tae gie them awa’,” he added cheerfully; “it would indeed.”

"I believe ye," said Skipper gratefully.

"It's a peety the oleograph seems tae weary ye," remarked Tam, resettling himself on the pillow.

"*Weary* me!" cried Skipper indignantly, thumping the table with his fist. "Why, man, it's the wan thing that——" He broke off abruptly, a suspicious look came into his face, he pursed his lips as though defying them to continue the subject, then remarked with feigned indifference, "Whit made ye say that, Tam?"

"Because ye put it intil the press," explained his friend. "Tae ma mind a press is nae place for a bonnie oleograph. There's naebody tae see it in there. I'm fair astonished. Not but what ye'll hae yer reasons," he added hastily.

"Ay," muttered Skipper, suppressing a sigh. "Nae doot I hae ma reasons."

Tam gave vent to a crow of triumph.

"I was certain o' it. I kenned weel that a man like you never did onythin' wi'oot a reason. Noo, I dinna want tae seem curious, but I'd like fine tae hear yer reason, if it's no' botherin' ye."

Skipper examined his fingers.

"Weel," he said at length, speaking slowly and as if each word were the outcome of serious thought, "an oleograph is peeculiar. It's no' just like ither pictures."

"Aw, aw?"

"Na; it's a wheen mair chancy. I didna think tae tell ye this, for it's a sort o' secret, so dinna mention it tae the folk in St Andrews. Will ye sweer to that, Tam?"

"I wull that," cried Tam, with immense earnestness.

"Weel," continued Skipper, leaning forward and speaking in a hoarse whisper, "an oleograph canna stand the licht. It melts up in the sun like—like a lump o' butter."

"Ma word, Skipper!"

"Ay," cried Skipper, warming to his subject with characteristic enthusiasm, "here the day and gone the morn."

"Think o' that!"

"And," concluded Skipper sadly, "that's ma reason for keepin' that bonnie picture in the press."

A silence ensued. Dusk had fallen, but the gloom without served to emphasise the warmth within. Skipper sat frowning at the bed-curtains. Conscience began to reproach him. He pictured to himself the recording angel—a personage of distressingly businesslike habits—engaged in writing down the many pleasing fictions of which he—Skipper—had been guilty. "It'll a' gae doon in black and white," he mused grimly. "And mair black than white," he added, not without a gleam

of dismal humour. Shutting his eyes, he prayed—"Oh, Lord, forgie me; but ye ken as weel as I dae that it was Devina. Blot it oot frae the book and I'll never lee again, sure as daith."

"Skipper," came a mild voice from the bed.

"Ay," cried Skipper, opening his eyes.

"Devina must have been sair disappointed."

The unfortunate Skipper groaned aloud. Tam eyed him from between the bed-curtains with the utmost solicitude.

"Ye're feelin' bad?" he inquired anxiously.

"Na, na," growled the sufferer; "I never felt better in ma life. But—but whit made ye say that aboot Devina?"

"Oh, I ken a wee thing or twa!" pursued Tam, mildly proud of his knowledge of human nature, and quite unconscious of the pain he was inflicting. "I've ob-sairved that weemen are aye fond of pictures."

"Have ye! A lot *you* ken aboot weemen! An auld wife like you!"

The sarcasm in his friend's voice roused Tam's long-suffering nature.

"I ken mair than ye think," he observed with dignity; "I had a mither." He waited for a confutation of this statement; none, however, being forthcoming, he added with unusual feeling, "We was awfu' intimate once."

Skipper laughed scornfully.

"It's a fac'," cried Tam, waxing indignant. "And I'm tellin' ye that she liked a picture fine. She didna aspire tae oleographs, but she cuttit a bonnie picture oot o' 'The Graphic' every Christmas. Na, na, Skipper; ye canna deceive me. Devina must ha' been sair disappointed, puir lassie."

Then it was that Skipper succumbed to temptation. By feigning to agree he saw a prop to support the

ruins of his self-respect. And yet—and herein lay the rub—so vivid was his imagination, that from the very moment he decided to deceive Tam he deceived himself also. Devina and he changed places in the twinkling of an eye.

“She was that, Tam,” he burst forth; “you’ve said the verra word—‘sair disappointed’! I mind fine the nicht I brocht it hame. She glowered at it wi’ pleasure. ‘Whit a braw picture!’ says she, claspin’ her haunds. ‘Hang it up beside the clock—there’s a fine place for it there.’ ‘Na, na, ma lassie,’ says I, ‘ma mind is made up; intil the press it gangs this verra meenute.’ ‘Faither,’ says she, ‘dinna be cruel. Let it bide whaur we can see its bonnie colours. It’ll dae us guid tae see that man prayin’ tae the wee paum-tree wi’ such perseverance. It’ll be an example tae us.’ These were her verra words, Tam. But I was firm. Ye mind whit I said? It’s the only way tae manage a wuman; a firm haund—a firm haund.”

Skipper’s face glowed with the remembrance of victory. Tam laughed softly to himself.

“I kenned fine I’d get the truth oot o’ ye,” he chuckled with great contentment.

CHAPTER VIII.

SKIPPER sat on the caddies' bench. The golfing day had just begun, and the crowd of expectant caddies was in full force. Some sat beside Skipper, others loafed nearby in groups, or leaned over the wooden railings that separated their enclosure from the eighteenth green. It was a dull morning; a chill breeze blew from the sea; the air was laden with salt. The head of Paterson, the caddie-master, could be seen in his box-office. At times he peered at the caddies, and once he opened his window and looked upwards at the sky. The pale watery expanse did not seem to please him, for he shook his head like a man fully aware of the dilapidated state of his shoes.

"Haw! haw!" laughed Robb the socialist. He was a powerful bull-necked man, with a red ill-tempered face. Report said that he kicked his wife. It was his boast that he could carry more whisky than any one in St Andrews. "Ay," he chuckled, continuing a story that appeared to give him infinite amusement, "I downed him, that I did. He's no' likely to ask anither."

"Wha, Robb?" inquired Skipper, whose attention had been taken up with lighting his pipe.

"Yon meenister chap; him wi' the pasty face and the backlane I could brake ower ma knee."

"Oh, whit was he daein'?"

"Weel, me and Gourley was playin' a match. We

had a shullin' on it. At the tenth green the meenister bodie danders up. I winks to Gourley. Says I, 'I'll gie him wan.' 'D'ye ken onythin' aboot gowf?' asks I, ceevil-like. Man, ye should have seen the way he grinned—pleased, ye ken; he thoct I was gaein' tae consult him. 'Oh yes,' says he, 'I know golf very well.' 'Then,' says I, glowerin' at him, 'why the h—l don't ye take yer shadow aff the hole.' Haw! haw! he crumpled up; he didna bother us again, I'm tellin' ye."

Robb's coarse laugh rang out. Several of his friends joined in his mirth, but feebly, and without amusement. Skipper frowned.

"Is that a joke, Robb?" he inquired innocently.

Robb glared at him with low-browed suspicion. He was often at a loss as to how to take Skipper.

"It is," he said sternly. "A guid joke too."

"Thankee, Robb. I was just speirin' for information."

Not a shadow of recognisable expression betrayed itself on Skipper's face. He puffed at his short black pipe. A chuckle went round. Robb flushed in sudden anger. He felt that somehow or another Skipper had turned the laugh against him. Yet his dull heavy nature knew not how to resent it. The solemn-faced little man sitting there with eyes fixed placidly on the club-house seemed beyond his reach. Inwardly vowing revenge, he kicked viciously at the gravel.

Peace-loving Tam made a diversion.

"I found a bonnie ba' in the whins yesterday," he said pleasantly, producing the article in question. His friends inspected it with interest.

"No' sae bad," commented big M'Phee.

"A wee thing dunted," observed Donald.

"Nae doot ye stole it," sneered Robb, whose temper had not recovered.

"Na, na," cried Tam; "I wouldna dae that. It was lyin' in the whins near the ninth green. I steppit on it accidental-like."

"I'll gie ye fowerpence for it, Tam," said Saunders, an ancient mariner in a jersey and sea-boots. Tam wavered.

"Dae nae sic thing, Tam," advised Skipper, turning it over with the air of an expert. "It's a rubber core, an' verra little used. It's weel worth a shullin'."

"A shullin'!" echoed Tam in delight.

"Gie him wan, then," said Saunders sulkily.

"It is that," continued Skipper, ignoring the last remark. "I sold wan tae a young swell for a shullin' no' sae lang syne." He took the clay from his lips and spat thoughtfully. "I aye keep ma e'en open for ba's; it's time weel spent. There's monie a wan lost, and there's monie a wan tae be found. In the whin, in the burn, on the line, I gie them a' a keek¹ as I go by. Think, Tam, hoo monie a wee impident ba' is cowerin' doon lauchin' at ye as ye tramp by wi' yer bag o' clubs. Ma word! it's money oot o' yer pooch; it's fair preposterous!"

The others laughed, but Tam gazed at his friend in solemn admiration. "Whit a fancy he has!" thought he. "Whit a superior man! Hoo does he dae it? Nae sic things come intil ma heid." He scratched the offending part, sadly conscious of inferiority.

The Club members began to arrive. One by one they were recognised and commented upon by the caddies.

"There's Smith," grunted Skipper, as the individual in question disappeared within the swing-doors.

"Wha will he rook² the day, think ye?" questioned Robb.

"Ay," assented M'Phee, "a roond means hauf-a-croon

¹ Glance.

² Fleece.

tae him. I'd like fine tae get the money he makes oot o' it."

Skipper snorted with much scorn.

"No' me," he retorted. "I like money fine, nane better—ye canna win on withoot it; but I canna thole a man wha disna play the game for itself. A bonnie game like gowf, too." He snorted again.

"Ah, but he's clever," sighed Donald, with admiration. "I believe he's got a kind o' system."

"Ay," growled Skipper, "his system is tae bide till ye're aff yer game. Oh, I ken him! 'Knight,' says he the ither day, 'come on, we'll hae a roond.' 'I'm no' in form,' says Knight; 'I ocht tae practise.' 'Hoots, no!' says Smith, very friendly-like, 'a game is better for ye; come on.' Doon they gang tae the tee. Smith drives—ye a' ken it—a fine low, straight ba'. 'The usual hauf-croon?' says he. Knight disna like to say no, and aff they gang. But it's sax up and fower tae play, and hauf-a-croon oot o' Knight's pooch."

"Is that no' young Hockin' wi' Grannie?" inquired Saunders, in tones of deep interest. "Whit is he daein' wi' her?"

The others gazed at a lady who, accompanied by a slim youth, was making her way in the direction of the first tee.

"It'll be a fine thing for yon Grannie if he marries her," commented Skipper. "She's gettin' auld."

"Hoo auld is she, Skipper?" asked Tam deferentially.

Skipper, put upon his metal, considered deeply.

"I mind her playin' aboot wi' a baffy and a feather ba'," he said at length. "But losh me! they're no' goin' tae start wi'oot caddies?"

"It's a fac'," growled Saunders. The others groaned in chorus.

"M'Phee!" roared Paterson from his box-window.

The giant rolled away. Again Paterson raised his voice.

"Gourley!" he shouted.

Gourley moved slowly towards the club-house, talking over his shoulder as he went to lame Todd. One by one all the caddies were summoned. At length only Skipper, Tam, and a few boys were left. The two men sat on the bench, dignified and patient. The boys hung about the office eagerly soliciting custom. When a player climbed the steps that led to the box, they shouted "Me, Paterson! me!" each striving to drown the voices of the others.

"Whit a way tae carry on," commented Tam, eyeing the youngsters with mild disapproval. Skipper jerked one shoulder.

"Whit can ye expect?" he growled. "A wheen schule bairns wi' badges that ocht tae be kept for men like me and you, Tam. They're nae proper caddies. Man, I'm tellin' ye, mony o' them canna tell a mashie frae a niblick."

"Skipper!" shouted Paterson.

Tam groaned.

"I'm clean forgotten," he said dolefully. "I can see fine that I'll no' get a roond the day, and the rent's due the morn, an' I canna pay it."

His shrivelled little body trembled; there was a suspicious break in his voice. Skipper was seized with an awful fear that Tam would disgrace himself by crying.

"Whisht, Tam! whisht!" he whispered hoarsely; "it's a' richt, man! You gang instead o' me. I'll bide ma chance."

"Hurry up, Skipper; dinna keep the Professor waitin'," cried Paterson.

Tam swallowed his emotion.

"Na, na, Skipper," he protested; "that wouldna dae at a'. I'll get on fine. I'm a' richt. Gang on, man; they're waitin' on ye."

Skipper looked down at him. The eyes that lurked beneath the bushy eyebrows twinkled pleasantly, but their thoughts remained unspoken. With a jerk of his head he turned abruptly on his heel and joined the Professor.

CHAPTER IX.

SKIPPER took charge of the Professor's bag of clubs, and, after a rapid and critical inspection, began to polish a rusty mashie. He worked energetically, making use of a wisp of sand-paper fished from one of the pockets of his grey-green coat. "He's been oot in the rain, and his caddie's pit them awa' wi'oot dryin' them—careless deevil," he thought as he rubbed at the steel.

The Professor—a stout little man with a closely-cropped black beard—observed this attention with satisfaction.

"Whit number have we, Professor?" inquired Skipper.

"Eighteen."

"And wha are we playin' wi'?"

"With Mr Guthrie."

Skipper's eyes rested on a tall man who was swinging his driver with considerable skill. He grunted thoughtfully.

"Ay, ay, and hoo much does he gie us, Professor?"

"Well, he gave me a half last time."

"Did he bate ye?"

"Y-e-s," confessed the Professor with reluctance, adding hurriedly, "I wasn't in form. I should have holed four putts. I ought to have beaten him quite easily. I was two up at the tenth green, and if it hadn't been for bad luck—eh?" The Professor turned indignantly

on his caddie. "What are you laughing at?" he inquired.

Skipper drew down his upper lip with an effort.

"Weel, Professor, ye see, it's like this—I never knew a match yit but it was lost by bad luck. Ye never speak o' bad luck when ye talk o' the ither side—it's bad play there. Human nature, ye may say; oh ay."

The Professor's frown relaxed.

"You're a philosopher, Skipper."

"Eh? Whit's that, Professor?"

"Oh, well, it's an observer of life."

"Is that so? Weel, ye canna help noticin' it on the links. But here's yer driver, Professor; tak the stiffness oot o' yer airms."

Two by two the players drove from the tee. The crowd watched them in silence. The stentorian voice of the starter bellowed the names of those whose turn it was to play, and after they had driven he leaned out of his box and changed the number on his board. When a figure was descried on the road that crossed the links he upraised his voice, and the hoarse shout of "Fore!" was wafted down the wind.

Skipper, a pinch of sand in his horny palm, stood in readiness to make the tee. The crowd of players, the shout of the starter, the sound of the driven balls, the sensation of the bag upon his shoulder—all were familiar to him. They had become like an easy-fitting shoe, a part of himself, a thing that called for no comment. He exchanged a whispered aside with Cuthbert, who was carrying for Colonel Salt. "Mind ye keep his score"—this with a near approach to a wink. Cuthbert grinned, and shouldering his clubs, followed the inaccurate colonel. Happening to cast a glance at the caddies' enclosure, Skipper's face fell. There stood Tam, still leaning on the railings watching the players with dismal

interest. The sight touched Skipper. He reflected, then approaching the Professor's adversary, said—

"Whaur's yer caddie, sir?"

"I carry my own clubs," replied the tall man.

"Carry yer ain clubs!" ejaculated Skipper. No words are strong enough to paint his tone of reproach.

"It saves eighteenpence," exclaimed the other confidentially.

"Aughteenpence!" blurted Skipper, with the utmost scorn. "And would ye tak the bread oot o' the mouth o' an honest man for the sake o' a lot o' durty pennies? Na, na, sir; it's no' worthy o' ye. Get yersel' a caddie; it's money weel spent. Ye've just got the time; oor names are no' called yet."

Mr Guthrie smiled, and decided to humour him.

"And, sir," added Skipper, catching at his sleeve and speaking in a hoarse whisper, "ask for Black—Tam Black, the wee man yonder. He's no' much tae look at, but he is a rale guid caddie—nane better on the links."

Having perjured himself to this extent, Skipper returned to his post. His attention was now drawn to the Professor. Driver in hand, his employer was to be seen intently addressing a dandelion. How the plant came to be there was a mystery. It was a poor stunted thing, bitterly conscious of a blighted existence. Time and again nailed boots had crushed it, and time and again had it courageously raised its head. Fully convinced that its last moment had arrived, it winced at each flicker of the club. But no; the Professor merely threatened it playfully, as a cat does a mouse. He meant to have its head, but later, when his aim was more perfect. In the meantime his club rose slowly shoulder-high, then gently descended to the first position.

"Hit it, sir, hit it; aff wi' its heid!"

The Professor looked up to find Skipper watching him eagerly.

"I—I don't know that I can," he said doubtfully, eyeing the weed.

"Hoots, ye never can tell till ye try. Pit yer left fit a wee thing back yet. There—that 'ull dae. Noo, canny; no' sae fast. That's better; ye werena better than an inch above it that time. We'll mak a player o' ye yet, Professor, never fear."

"I wish I could think so, Skipper. Look here, is this right?"

"Na, na, let yer aims oot—like this." Skipper demonstrated with his mashie. "I can see it's gey deeficult for ye, Professor; yer stomach aye gets in the way."

The Professor was more than half inclined to resent this. He eyed Skipper coldly, but his reproving glance encountering the genial and wholly unabashed blue of his caddie's eyes, he changed his mind.

"I can't help that," he said argumentatively.

"That's whit I say, it's yer misfortune; some folk hae ower much stomach, and ithers ower little. It depends hoo much ye have tae pit intil it. I've never been able tae graw one masel'; it's a rich man's luxury, ye may say, Professor."

"Play away," prompted the starter.

Obedient to the cry, the tall man drove. Skipper grunted his admiration. Teeing the Professor's ball, he turned to find him still addressing the dandelion.

"Play away," urged the starter.

"Come on, sir; they're waitin' on ye," remonstrated Skipper.

Carefully planting his feet at a considerable distance apart—his plump figure rigid as a pointer in the vicinity of game—the Professor caused the head of his driver to

perform a series of mystic passes over the top of his ball. Back and forward, back and forward it swung.

Skipper watched him anxiously. A good caddie invariably identifies himself with his employer. They are for the moment one. They have taken each other for better and for worse, and "our hole," "our ball," "our match," become the order of the day. Skipper felt his reputation to be at stake.

"Play away," reiterated Braid. Then, as no click of a driven ball met his ear, he thrust his head and shoulders out of the box.

"Why don't you make him play?" he asked sternly, addressing Skipper.

The injured little man jumped with indignation—and not with indignation only, but with morbid self-consciousness. All eyes were fixed on him. An unmistakable titter arose. He was being made conspicuous.

"Hoo can *I* mak him play?" he retorted thickly. "I've done ma best. Have I no' teed his ba'? Hoots, ye can bring a Professor tae the tee, but ye canna mak him drive."

The laughter became general.

"Oh, play away!" roared the now incensed Braid. "Ye're keeping the whole green back. Smith and Cawder!" he bellowed, leaning forward to change the number.

Finding the ground cut from beneath his feet in this unexpected manner, the Professor smote at his ball,—a wonderfully successful drive. Then having watched its flight with admiring eyes, he set out to follow. Skipper, the bag of clubs on his shoulder, trudged in his wake.

It was a beautiful scene. To the right curved the sweep of the bay, the yellow sands fringed with the whiteness of foam, above which a flock of sea-birds rose and fell. Far off the line of sand-dunes melted

imperceptibly into the grey-blue that lay like a gauze veil over distant land and sea. Behind them the old city of St Andrews—a mass of grey with one red note showing prominent—stretched from the low-lying links to the cliffs that upbore the Castle. It was an ideal day for golf. Skipper's spirits rose.

"And hoo's Mary gettin' on?" he inquired genially, keeping pace with the Professor.

"Mary? What Mary?"

"Oh, just Mary; ye're writin' a book aboot her, ye ken."

The Professor's soul was not proof against flattery. This unfeigned interest in his work caused him to smile. He looked at the eager face of his caddie with approval.

"So you have heard of Queen Mary, Skipper?"

"*Heard* of her, sir? Ma word! ye may say that. Has she no' got a hoose in South Street?"

His tone implied lifelong intimacy. The Professor's smile deepened.

"Here's yer ba'," cried Skipper,—“a bad lie.” He inspected the bag of clubs with critical attention.

"Wull ye tak the alumeenium, sir?"

"Or the cleek?"

"Na, na, ye're useless wi' the cleek; the alumeenium's the club for you."

A hastily - played shot resulted in the ball being topped along the ground.

"I didn't get it away," apologised the Professor, noting Skipper's contemptuous eye.

"Ye never told me hoo Mary was gettin' on?" said his caddie, pointedly changing the subject.

"How did you know I was writing about her?"

"Hoo did I ken? It's weel kenned in St Andrews. We've nout else to dae here but talk aboot silly things

—it keeps us frae wearyin'. Let me see,"—he held his head on one side and closed an eye,—“it was three year syne I heard o' it first. It was Paiterson telt me. I was standin' him a drink, and he was maist uncommon ceevil. 'Skipper,' says he, 'yon Professor's writing a book.' 'Is that hoo he wastes his time?' says I; 'he'd dae better tae practise his approach shots.' 'Ah,' says he, 'he gets *money* for a book. I hear it's a' about Queen Mary.' 'Oh,' says I, 'her that's got a hoose in South Street?' 'That's her,' says he, and when I gied him anither drink he telt me a' about her. Dod! I liked fine tae hear it."

His employer watched his animated face with amusement.

"Whit wull ye ca' the book, Professor?"

"'The Truth about Mary Queen of Scots.'"

Skipper received the information with open mouth.

"Ah, it's a fine thing the truth!" he cried, with deep admiration; "I'm reel glad ye've discovered it, Professor. Whit a peety Mary is no' here tae thank ye. She would be gratefu', puir lassie. Ma word! 'The Truth about Mary!'—and tae think that a' the ither books hae been leein'."

"It's been a vexed question," assented the Professor.

"*Vexed!*" ejaculated Skipper hotly. "She would be mair than vexed. They have taken awa' her character. And her that bonnie!" he added, with great affection.

At this moment the opponent played his third. Skipper watched it with envious eyes. "Deid in three!" he ejaculated. "*He* can play! Ye'll hae tae gang for it, Professor; the drivin' mashie 'ull dae it—here y'are."

A topped ball was the result. Skipper eyed his patron with grim dissatisfaction.

"I didn't get down to it," excused the defaulter. "It wasn't a good lie."

"Hoots!" growled Skipper with uncompromising veracity, "the lie was a' richt."

They walked on.

"I'm glad you take an interest in literature, Skipper."

"In whit?"

"In Queen Mary, I mean."

"And wha wouldna?" exclaimed Skipper in surprise. "Since Paiterson telt me, I've asked a power o' questions about her frae mony a Club member. Some on them are awfu' ignorant, nae doot; Mary just maks them laugh, that's a'; but there's ithers that can tell ye her news. Man, Professor, sure as daith, the mair I hear about Mary the fonder o' her I get."

"Really?"

Skipper came nearer.

"She was an awfu' one for adventures."

His voice sank to a whisper of admiration in which there was a touch of envy.

"Adventures!" he continued hoarsely. "Mary was aye shuttit up in some auld castle, and gettin' oot by pretendin' tae keep company wi' her jailor. Whit an excitin' situation! And then tae have her heid chappit aff her! Man, whit an adventure that was!"

"Hurry up!" shouted an impatient voice from the green.

"Fore!" yelled voices from behind.

"We are forgetting the game, I fear," said the Professor hurriedly. Skipper assented, struck with sudden shame.

"Here, tak' yer mashie," he cried, shoving the club into his employer's hands. "Na; a hauf shot," he ejaculated in alarm as the Professor's arms swung back. "Ye've just got tae carry the burn; twenty yairds 'ull dae it fine."

The Professor succeeded in topping his ball into the hazard.

"Drop anither, sir," whispered Skipper, in utter shame. "I'll get it oot aifter ye've played."

Again the mashie rose, and again the ball fell into the water.

"Come on; give it up!" roared the opponent.

"Fore!" bellowed the now infuriated Smith and Cawder.

A ball whizzed over the Professor's head.

"Where on earth does that come from?" he gasped.

"It's the folk behind," growled Skipper, extended on his stomach by the burn-side. "Go on, Professor; gie up the hole."

Another ball whizzed by, struck a stone, and fell into the water.

A smile appeared on the Professor's face.

"Multa cadunt inter calicem supremaque labra," he quoted philosophically, and, sustained by the immortal classics, cheerfully crossed the burn.

CHAPTER X.

THE short November afternoon was drawing to a close. In the streets, that seemed more than ever cold and cheerless and inhospitable, the glimmering twilight showed meagre and wan. Some children were engaged in wheeling a barrow over the cobble-stones: the noise of their shrill voices could be heard above the discordant rattle, now in youthful glee, now in sudden altercation. At the corner of Castle Street sat Jock Simpson on a three-legged stool. Jock had been employed in mending a net, but the light giving out, he allowed his work to lie neglected on his knees while, with head resting against the wall, he took a genial interest in his surroundings. A barrow-load of mussels lay beside him,—a dark object, half blocking the roadway. Upon the walls hung rows of small whiting, split open, salted, and threaded on yard-long wires. Women stood in the doorways and conversed, regardless of intervening distance.

The cessation from labour that marks the twilight hour was everywhere apparent. There was something pleasing and primitive about this fisher quarter, something very different from the fashionable lower end of the town with its big hotels and lodgings let to English visitors. Weeds, grasses, and even stunted little sea-flowers, led a precarious existence between the cobble-stones. Many of the houses were entered by the aid of outside staircases, some of stone, others of dark

wood, whose tarry surface emitted odours that recalled ships and the life of the sea. Permeating all, and lending as it were a distinctive atmosphere to these humble homes, was a faint smell of fish, blending with that of soap-suds, tar, seaweed, and the strong free savour of brine.

A woman's figure hurried past the neighbours without salutation and halted before Skipper's door. It was Devina. Pressing down the latch, she entered in haste, but came to a sudden standstill in the middle of the room. Skipper had not yet returned. A feeling of disappointment came over her. She entered the tiny bedroom which had been hers. The dying light struggled in through the low window. She could dimly make out the bed; the illuminated text "God is love" hung where she could see it when she opened her eyes of a morning, and the photographs upon the shelf above the little painted chest of drawers. Divesting herself of her hat and jacket, she laid them on the bed and re-entered the kitchen. Having lighted the lamp, she gazed around her with the eyes of one who expects, yet is fully prepared to condemn, innovations. Nor was she disappointed.

The air of feminine neatness which had previously characterised the kitchen had given place to the untidy haphazard condition that stamps the living-room of a not too particular man. A dirty frying-pan stood on the table; a collection of ashes, knocked from Skipper's pipe, made a little grey pile on the seat of a chair. The bed was unmade, the curtains were undrawn. The blankets, pillow, and even the patchwork counterpane of which she had always been so careful, folding it up nightly before retiring to rest — all were tossed aside, betraying in their disorder the haste with which Skipper had rolled from them that morning.

Devina's brow darkened. Vigorously she set to work

to render the place habitable. Gradually things found their proper places, a fire was lighted, the table laid for tea, and an air of cosiness once more took possession of the room.

No one could see her as she moved to and fro in the lamplight without being struck with her appearance. The ill-fitting dress of dark coarse material, made with extreme simplicity, set off a figure that had in it something of the statuesque—large, deep-chested, mature. Her movements were unexpectedly abrupt, and gave the impression of being unpremeditated. There was that in her face which repelled sympathy. That she was handsome did not admit of a doubt; yet so accustomed was she to frown that two deep perpendicular indentations had stamped themselves between her eyebrows. The set of the jaw was sullen. The lips betrayed sensitiveness exaggerated to morbidity. But it was in the eyes that the surest indication of character was to be read. Their habitual expression was not exactly furtive, for they looked one full in the face, yet within them lurked suspicion. They sought to conceal, and in the effort to conceal, revealed. In them you read of an upright self-relying nature at war with the world, of an affectionate disposition sternly repressed, of hopes and fears, strong passions, and a true woman's craving for love and comprehension thrust back remorselessly into the inarticulate dungeons of her soul.

As she worked, her thoughts dwelt upon her father. They had little in common. His weaknesses awoke only her indignation and contempt. His love of drink, his untidiness, his habit of exaggeration—she knew them all, despite his efforts to keep them from her. Yet deep in her heart lay much real affection for the easy-going little man who invariably treated her with kindness. She even envied him the bland good-nature

which came without an effort, and which caused every one to like him. In her eyes he was only fit to be treated as an irresponsible child, to be brought up in the good old Scottish way; to be sternly shown but the black side of his moral signboard; to be driven along the straight path by scoldings and by a wholesome fear of hell.

"Poor faither!" she murmured to herself, with an ominous shake of the head. Yet she put his pipe where he could conveniently find it when he had finished his tea, and even inserted a marker in his book before placing it on the dresser.

A sudden knock at the door broke the silence, and Mrs Auchterlonie, a neighbour—a pale, untidy woman,—appeared on the threshold with a baby in her arms.

"I'm sorry tae bother ye," she began. Her manner was timid: she visibly feared a rebuff.

"Whit is it?" demanded Devina sourly.

"I'm sorry tae bother ye," she began again, evidently the first sentence of a prepared speech: the rest had escaped her. "Devina," she burst forth, taking the bull by the horns, "there's naeboddy in the hoose, and I've got tae veesit ma mither: she's ill, ye ken, and needs me sairly, but I canna leave the babby a' by his lane,¹ he's such an observin' bairn, aye tastin' everythin' he can lay his haunds on."

"Weel?" said Devina grimly.

Mrs Auchterlonie gave a nervous laugh.

"Weel, Devina, ye see, I thocht, if it didna bother ye, ye micht let him bide wi' you. He'll no' fash ye. He'll just set on the floor as guid as gold. Will ye no', ma doo?" she added, addressing the baby with all a mother's worship.

A look of concentration overspread the baby's face.

¹ Alone.

Leaning forward, he made a clutch at her hair, and having imprisoned a tress, tugged lustily. A cry arose from his victim—a mother's protest, in which pain was combated by admiration.

Devina surveyed them in sombre silence. Her first impulse had been to refuse. She was in the habit of saying that she did not like babies, and having said so, she felt strongly that she ought to make her actions consistent with her opinions. But at the very moment when "No" trembled in the air, the little one looked at her. Their eyes met.

"Let it bide," she said ungraciously; "I'll see to it."

The grateful mother overflowed with thanks. But before the final farewell could take place many injunctions had to be given. Devina listened with the air of one who takes no interest in the matter. From her expression you would have imagined that it was an affair of no importance if the youthful visitor fell into the fire, or committed suicide by rolling off the table. Once only she interrupted—

"Is it a lassie?" she inquired gloomily.

Mrs Auchterlonie cried out in shrill reproach. For some time she spoke volubly. "An' him a laddie!" she wound up,— "the verra leevin' image o' his faither."

With a final embrace she hurried away. Devina seized the frying-pan, but barely had she time to scrape it when the mother was back again, standing in the doorway, her untidy hair streaming in the wind.

"Oh, I clean forgot tae tell ye, Devina," she burst out. "Dod! it's a fortunate thing that I remembered afore it was too late; but if he gets onythin' intil his mouth that's likely tae choke him, take it oot wi' yer finger—it's the only way."

Again she vanished, and again Devina was left alone with the baby.

CHAPTER XI.

THE baby sat where his mother had left him and smiled at the door. His expression was full of pleasing anticipation. Her last unexpected entry convinced him that she was playing "bo-peep," a game he knew well, and which never failed to make him laugh. But as the moments passed and she did not reappear, the smile became tremulous, and finally ceased to exist.

He looked a lonely and pathetic little figure sitting on the brick floor with his legs forming a right angle. A sense of desertion troubled him. Where was his mother? Why had she left him in this strange place, with this big woman whom he did not know? His heart sank; the corners of his mouth began to go down; his eyes filled with tears.

Opening his mouth to its widest, he held his breath. But at the very moment when a noise of terrific volume might have been expected, his mouth closed, his tears vanished, and the smile miraculously reappeared. For this joyous change the kitchen poker was alone responsible. With a gurgling sound the baby stretched out a chubby hand and tried to grasp it. Alas! five yards of brick floor intervened. The tiny fingers closed on air. Covetously he gazed at the poker. Catching the fire-light, it gleamed in a quite irresistible manner. A thoughtful pucker wrinkled his brow. This must be one of those bright things pointed out to him at bed-

time by his mother when she stood with him in her arms at the open door.

He reflected a long time, quite ten seconds, then suddenly, and without warning, he flung himself on his back and began to roll towards it.

This was a new feat, and Auchterlonie minor was at some pains to inform the world that he was proud of it. He had discovered it entirely by himself, much to the wondering admiration of his parents. Auchterlonie major in particular thought it "awfu' clever," and even offered prizes of sugar to be rolled for daily over a given course.

It was a remarkable performance. He propelled himself chiefly by means of his head, worming himself along the floor after the manner of reptiles. Every inch of his two-foot body worked strenuously. He wriggled, now on his stomach, now on his back, his small naked toes seeking for interstices between the bricks, by aid of which he might lever himself forward.

Every time the serious little face appeared, the eyes sought Devina. In them was to be read desire for admiration. Her stern look became a smile. Silently she watched him.

Within two rolls of his goal, on the very eve of victory, a strange thing came to pass. Sitting up to reconnoitre, Auchterlonie minor caught sight of the frying-pan in Devina's lap. His eyes brightened, his mouth opened, and the poker passed completely from his mind. Holding out his arms, he gurgled rapturously.

Devina was touched. Unaware of the rivalry of the frying-pan, she imagined that the baby was attracted by herself alone. Seated on the cane chair, leaning forward, a hand on either knee, she gave herself up to thought.

The baby grew impatient. The big dark woman

sitting before him, unaccountably silent, with her eyes fixed upon him, evidently wanted the frying-pan for herself. Unaccustomed to this in his obliging circle, he resented it bitterly. He struggled to express his feelings. To his parents the meaning of his indignant gurgles would have been clear, but to Devina they conveyed only a direct appeal to her affections.

Awaking from her dreams, she cast a furtive glance around the kitchen. It was reassuringly empty. For a moment she hesitated, then drawn by the little figure as by a magnet, she strode forward, seized the infant, and retreated hastily to the arm-chair.

Incredible as it may sound, this was the first time in her life that Devina had been left alone with a baby. She had seen babies often,—they were fairly numerous in Castle Street,—but the presence of their parents had always prevented her taking notice of them. Her character for “dourness,” and her feigned antipathy towards children, had left her stranded upon the rock of supposed callousness. Had she lived in Italy, she would have been known to possess the “evil eye.” As it was, the elder children made a mock of her from a safe distance; the younger stumbled out of her way in wide-eyed anxiety; and mothers had been known to still their offspring by the threat, “Here, haud yer whisht; none o’ thae capers, or I’ll ca’ Devina Greig tae tak’ ye awa’!”

Devina knew this and resented it bitterly—all the more bitterly for having to lock it up in the recesses of her heart. It had made her hard and uncharitable. She knew, too, that the need of help must have been imperative before Mary Auchterlonie would have come to her for assistance.

She held the baby in the awkward manner of one unused to children. Her touch was at once too rough

and too tender. She felt excited and quite ridiculously happy. Her only fear was that some one might disturb her; but as the moments passed and all remained quiet, the outside world faded completely from her mind. The veil of morbid self-consciousness which she habitually wore dropped from her. The little one seated on her knee was too young to be prejudiced. Devina felt this. A wave of gratitude caused her to press the baby to her bosom, while her lips smiled tremulously. Not one among her neighbours, seeing her at that moment, would have recognised her. Within her eyes shone an unaccustomed light.

She fell to examining his clothes,—touching them with awkward gentleness; wondering how they were made; how much they cost; recognising with a thrill of satisfaction that she could have made them herself quite easily. Catching the child's eye in the midst of her investigations, she smiled.

The little one was not impressed. He was accustomed to smiles and kisses: they were the atmosphere in which he existed, and, truth to tell, they occasionally bored him. Devina's hair as she bent over him looked inviting. Eagerly he grabbed at it. Devina, taken by surprise, uttered a low cry, and sought to open his fingers.

"Na, na, ma wee hen," she murmured; "dinna hurt Vinnie."

Despite the tremor of her feelings, her voice had not lost all its accustomed "dourness." The baby recognised it as the voice of one who must be obeyed. His face fell. Devina, acting on a sudden impulse, stooped and kissed him. Her lips, pressed upon his soft neck, tickled him. He laughed aloud—the most rollicking laugh that can be imagined. Then, becoming serious with awful suddenness, he demanded a repetition. Devina complied

with the request. He was delighted. Flinging himself backward with astounding recklessness, he gave full vent to his glee. Devina, laughing merrily, pursued him with kisses.

In the midst of this joyous pastime — while the kitchen resounded to their merriment—a cold current of air made itself felt. Turning suddenly, Devina became rigid. The door stood open. Upon the threshold she saw her father and, staring over his shoulder, Mrs Auchterlonie. On both faces she read signs of unfeigned and prodigious astonishment. A flush of shame dyed her face and neck. Starting to her feet, she plumped the infant roughly into the arm-chair, and, turning to the fireplace, feigned to be engrossed with the kettle. The little one, abandoned in this uncere-monious manner, uttered a roar of indignation. Skipper and the mother exchanged glances.

“Thank ye, Devina,” cried Mrs Auchterlonie gratefully; “it’s weel seen ye’re fond o’ bairns.”

“Ay, ay, maist affectionate,” corroborated Skipper, highly delighted.

But Devina, her back towards them, vouchsafed no reply. The gurgling of the baby—now restored to his mother’s arms—was the only sound in the kitchen. Then Skipper, frowning mysteriously, jerked his thumb at the door, and Mrs Auchterlonie, with a smile hovering about her weary mouth, betook herself homeward.

CHAPTER XII.

SUNDAY was a day much looked forward to by the caddies. Whatever their differences of opinion, they one and all, from M'Clure the "Roman" to Robb the atheist, were thankful when the advent of the Seventh Day set them free from servitude. None of them, with the exception of Skipper, felt any affection for the links. To the majority it was but a species of treadmill, upon which they were forced to keep eternally moving. Once freed from its thralldom, they turned their backs upon it with satisfaction, and from Saturday night to Monday morning the long stretch of turf knew them no more.

Skipper was no exception to this rule. More fortunate than his comrades, he could interest himself in the game to which he was bound, yet his mind, like theirs, was full of memories which he delighted to review. Skipper was not what his friends would term "releegious." The Sabbath was prized by him more on account of the physical relaxation it brought with it, than for the moral responsibilities it entailed. The leisurely consumption of the late breakfast, the wearing of his "blacks," the "crack" with his friends between services, the time passed in solemnly watching the sea and fashioning therefrom adventures innumerable,—these to him were moments of unalloyed pleasure.

Yet religion had played no insignificant part in his life. He was a regular attendant at the Free Kirk in

North Street, where his red face and hearty unmusical voice were well known to the congregation. His fellow-worshippers would have missed the sight of his grizzled head, with its one bald spot, side by side with Devina's severe black bonnet; bowed in prayer or raised in praise, it had become almost as familiar an object as the pewter plate, flanked by two observant elders, that met their gaze as they streamed in at the open doors.

And yet Skipper was no willing worshipper. The sacred edifice was ugly in his eyes. Church music left him cold—unmoved. The set faces of the congregation oppressed him with a sense of restraint. He yawned frequently, and would have slept through the long sermon if Devina had permitted. His thoughts, too, wandered sadly. When he should have been enthralled by the "seventhly and lastly," he was away on the high seas, on board the good ship *Adventure*. When he should have been groaning over the moral degeneration of the "heathen," he was enjoying himself hugely with those genial savages on some tropical island in the Pacific.

Sad to relate, the moral obligations of church-going failed to come home to the degenerate Skipper. Force of habit, public opinion, and, more than either of these, fear of Devina, drove him churchward. But his spirit rebelled. The melancholy droning of paraphrases and the hair-splitting discourses of the Rev. Henry Jonas did not seem to him exactly the right way to praise God. A thankful heart and a genial consideration for others were to his blinded eyes more truly indicative of Christianity. Within four walls his whole inner being seemed cramped; he found it impossible to raise his thoughts to Deity. But restored to the sun and the breeze, to the sea and the clouds, Skipper's heart swelled within him, and with nothing but thankfulness and a

wish to praise the Great Giver of all good, he muttered hoarsely, "O Lord, it is guid fer me tae be here."

The church bells raised their discordant voices. The whole town resounded with their clamour. Castle Street had donned its usual Sunday face—clean, grey, gloomy, characterised by an expression of stern and uncompromising piety. The houses frowned in stony silence, and as if they were shocked at the wind for whistling on the "Lord's Day." The very sparrows seemed depressed. Only the bells rang out in professional importance, swayed equally by business and religion,—rang out in brazen invitation, brazen reminder, brazen warning.

Skipper stood within his little kitchen and listened to them. They had interrupted him in the midst of an exciting passage in 'Ali Baba.' Steered over the sea of print by the point of a stumpy forefinger, Skipper had been engaged in laboriously spelling out the episode that relates how the lovely Morgiana poured boiling oil over the thieves; but as the bells clashed out he had started guiltily, and made haste to conceal the profane volume beneath the 'Sunday at Home.' He had always disliked their voices. He resented their obtrusive interest in his private affairs. They reminded him of Devina.

Skipper was dressed in the full respectability of his Sabbath suit. The creases where Devina had folded it were very apparent, as was its somewhat musty smell. His red tie glowed conspicuous. His face shone with the weekly application of yellow soap.

It was high time to start for the kirk. Skipper knew it, yet hesitated. A thought, awful in its boldness, flashed to his mind. What if he did not go! Devina was from home, doubtless engaged in cooking a

Sunday dinner. She would never find out. It was the first time that such a temptation had assailed him. The wickedness and delight of it deprived him of breath. There he stood in the middle of his kitchen, as hard beset as was Christian in *Vanity Fair*—nay, harder, for no Faithful was at his elbow to talk him back into the narrow path.

A ray of sunshine streamed through the window and fell upon the brick floor. It was the devil—a wicked devil, for his long golden eye was full of motes innumerable. The bells jangled in the air. Their voices were raised in command—metallic, loud, clamorous. The kitchen resounded to their outcries. They defied the sunshine. It was a duel. “Come to me, Skipper,” smiled the sunshine. “Come to us, Skipper,” clashed the bells.

Skipper groaned aloud. They began again.

“Think of the sea, of the fresh air, of the bench that I have warmed for you beneath the Cathedral wall,” coaxed the sunshine. “Think of your neighbours, of your pew, of the fires of hell,” thundered the bells.

It was taking a mean advantage over an imaginative man. From a smiling recollection of his favourite bench, Skipper’s face contracted with imaginary pain at the thought of the fires that never went out. He could almost feel the heat. He was distracted beyond words. At times he listened to the bells, and his face fell; and at times he glanced at the sunshine, and his face brightened.

“Make haste; you’ll be late,” scolded the bells with an unmistakable Scotch accent. “No hurry; Devina is away,” soothed the sunshine with southern sweetness.

That did it! At the identical moment that the absence of Devina flashed to his mind, his castle of good resolutions tumbled like a card house about his ears.

"I'm d—d if I'll gang!" blurted Skipper.

At the oath the sunshine winked complacently; but the bells, raising their horror-struck voices, screamed, "Lost! lost! lost!" until it seemed to Skipper that not a soul in St Andrews but would hear of his downfall.

There were still difficulties to be overcome. Through his little window he took a fearful pleasure in watching the neighbours issue from their dwellings and move slowly in the direction of the kirk. The danger lay in seeing without being seen. Skipper threw himself into the situation with characteristic gusto. It was almost an adventure! The arm-chair, dragged forward for that purpose, made an effective ambuscade. Had any one peeped in at the window he would have been astonished to see the upper half of Skipper's face rising like a guilty moon above a horizon of horse-hair, the eyes twinkling with excitement, yet not without an awful sense of the error of their ways.

"There goes Herd!" murmured the truant hoarsely. Mr Herd, dressed from head to foot in gloomy but appropriate black, accompanied by Mrs Herd and preceded by three little Herds, moved slowly across the plane of vision. On the faces of all five was stamped a peculiar expression of sombre but conscious virtue. If Skipper had opened the window and stretched out his arm, he could have seized Miss Herd No. 3 by her flaxen pigtail. It was terribly exciting!

"Here's auld Thoms!" ejaculated the spy, adding with unfeigned dismay, "Dod, he's forgotten his tie!"

Skipper was genuinely upset. His kindly heart regretted the absence of Mr Thoms' tie almost as much as if it had been his own. He liked Thoms. He would not willingly have allowed him to face the criticisms of the congregation, and yet to point out his shortcomings

was to court disaster. While he mused, Thoms tottered slowly out of sight.

At last the stream ceased to flow; the street lay empty; Skipper drew a deep breath. Moving stealthily, and as though he still feared discovery, he sought his hat, crept to the door, and let himself out into the sunshine.

Making his way to the cliffs, he found the bench which the tempter had promised him. It stood beneath the Cathedral wall. In front of it there ran a road some ten feet wide, bounded by an iron railing. Immediately beyond this barrier the cliff face descended in sheer declivities to the sea. The view was superb. Far below lay the great plain of water, never for an hour the same—now calm as a lake, now ruffled by winds, now angered by storms. To the left, and at a lower altitude, the ruined castle dominated its wave-worn promontory. To the right, and beyond the primitive little harbour, diminishing in the distance, stretched the breezy headlands of Fife.

Skipper loved it all. It was home to him. Not a trend of the bay, scarce a stone on the cliffs, but he was familiar with it. He could point out the corks, invisible to a landman's eye, that, rising and falling with the tide, sustained the nets. He could reveal the birth of the winds, and wax garrulous, losing himself in reminiscence. He could indicate the rocks responsible for wrecks time out of mind, and spin many a yarn of the ill-fated vessels that had come ashore in the gales of winter.

Nothing, however, could be more peaceful than the scene that met the eye on that calm Sunday morning. The sea glittered in the sunlight, colourful as the scales of a mackerel; the winds were all asleep; the coastline melted far off into the blue of the sky.

Skipper seated himself and thoughtfully lit his pipe.

Puff! puff! puff! Skipper thought the tobacco tasted unusually good. The light wreaths of smoke curled upwards but to lose themselves in the salt air. He watched them regretfully. They seemed to him the visible signs of an unfamiliar pleasure, and it saddened him to see them vanish so soon. He even puffed one cloud denser than the others in the hope that it would last a little longer; but no! the sea-air touched it, and it too became invisible. Skipper sighed, and wiped his mouth on the back of his hand.

"Here the day and gone the morn," he moralised, with a sententious shake of the head. It was by no means the truthful reflection of his thoughts, for at that moment he felt unusually contented and happy, fit not only to survive, but even to enjoy any number of to-morrows. But Skipper was Scotch; the day was the Sabbath. It was, moreover, the one quotation he knew by heart; it was a sop to the spirit of the bells; and deep in his heart he hoped that should it be overheard by a responsible angel, it might be accounted as the birth of better things to come.

A sudden step interrupted his meditations. With consternation he recognised the newcomer, and with guilty haste thrust his pipe into his pocket.

CHAPTER XIII.

It was Donald, big melancholy-faced Donald, dressed likewise in his Sabbath suit. Slowly he approached, his eyes fixed on the sea, unconscious of inspection. Skipper averted his gaze and feigned to be engrossed with his boots. Some two paces distant, Donald came to a sudden halt.

"Skipper!" he ejaculated loudly, "is that you?"

Skipper started. It was emotion over-acted.

"Donald!" he cried. "Weel, weel, only tae think o' that!"

"Hoo is it that ye're no' in the kirk?" questioned Donald, with the air of a man who obstinately refuses to believe his own eyes.

"Which is just the verra question I was minded tae speir of you," cried Skipper, with great volubility.

Donald seated himself slowly.

"I'm ailin' the day," he said shortly.

"Is that so, Donald?" cried Skipper, with eager sympathy. "Dod! but that's gey queer. I'm ailin' masel'."

Donald turned a critical eye upon him.

"Whit's wrang wi' *you*?" he inquired sceptically.

Skipper reflected.

"Weel," he said at length, "I feel queer; there's no' denyin' it,—uncommon queer. I'm cauld like all ower. Whiles it's as if——" He frowned, deep in

thought; then, with sudden inspiration, "Man! it's as if ye were rubbin' haundfuls of snaw up and doon ma spine."

Donald cried out in astonishment.

"Ay," continued Skipper, highly delighted with the impression he was making, "it hurts something terrible. Whiles it makes me sweer—no' willingly, ye onderstand, but just, as ye may say, tae relieve the feelin's. Why, this verra mornin' I let oot a 'Damn!' Is that no' terrible? Ye see, Donald, I'm no' fit tae gang tae the kirk."

"I'm sorry for ye," said the big man slowly. "And you such a reg'lar attendant. Ye must miss it sairly."

Skipper sighed.

"It's a preevation," he said simply.

The two men sat and gazed at the sea. They had the place to themselves. All at once Donald sat up and sniffed suspiciously.

"Whit's the matter?" questioned Skipper.

"There's a queer smell of smoke; d'ye no' feel it?"

"No, Donald."

"It smells awfu'," continued Donald. Then, with a cry of alarm, "Man, Skipper, it's *you*!—ye're burnin'!"

Skipper's conscience smote him. For one awful moment the lurid prophecy of the bells sprang to his mind. At the next, he breathed freely. A thin but steady stream of smoke ascended from his pocket. A circular black hole with fiery edges was visible in the cloth. Skipper swore lustily. Donald eyed him in grave suspicion. "He canna surely be cauld the noo!" he thought to himself. But aloud he only said—

"Whit is it, Skipper?"

Extinguishing the ignited garment, Skipper reluctantly produced the pipe. Donald groaned.

"Ye've been smokin' in kirk time," he said reproachfully.

"And tae think," murmured the hypocrite, eyeing the

pipe with innocent wonder,—“tae think that it has been gangin’ on like that a’ nicht!”

“A’ nicht!” echoed Donald incredulously.

“Ay, ye’re fair astonished, I can see. Dod! I can scarcely believe it masel’; yet I mind fine havin’ a wee pipe last nicht afore I jumped intil ma bed. Ma word! it’s a dangerous thing smokin’, Donald.”

“It is,” replied Donald drily.

Skipper had a fine ear for shades of expression: he changed the subject. Knocking out the ashes, and returning the miraculous pipe to his pocket, he blandly approved of the weather.

“It’s a braw day for the fishin’,” assented Donald.

“The boats are in?” questioned Skipper, with the air of one deferring to the opinion of an expert.

“Ay, they came in afore breakfast.”

“Ye take an awfu’ interest in thae boats, Donald.”

“Ay, I like them fine.”

The old man spoke wistfully. His eyes rested on the sea. “Ay,” he repeated softly, “I doot I’ll never be on it again. The boats are ower big and the work is ower heavy. Sixty ton now, Skipper—ay, and they take twa hundred cran¹ of fish. An engine to dae the pullin’, no less! Whit is it a’ comin’ tae?”

“Times are changed,” assented Skipper, shaking his head.

“They are that,” cried Donald warmly. “They have nae use for an auld man like me. And yet”—he sighed, and his voice grew sad and low—“and yet I canna keep awa’. Every time the boats pit oot, doon I gang tae the pier. I aye say tae masel’, ‘They’ll want ye some day, Donald; some day they’ll be short-handed frae illness or accident, and they’ll ask ye tae gang wi’ them oot intil the bonnie sea.’ That’s whit

¹ One cran = 4 cwt.

I say tae masel'; but they never want me, Skipper; na, na, they never want me."

He remained for a moment in dejected silence, then suddenly turning upon Skipper, cried querulously, "And yet I'm strong; I can pull a rope wi' ony man. Here, feel this,"—he grasped Skipper's arm with his skinny old hand,—“does that no' hurt, eh? Man, I could scrunch ye tae naethin'!”

Skipper winced complacently.

“That's naething tae whit I could dae if I had a mind,” explained Donald cheerily.

The conversation then turned upon matters connected with the fishing. Skipper lured the old man into the past by feigning to have forgotten sundry details of a storm in which Donald and his shipmates had lost nets to the value of a hundred pounds. “I canna precisely mind the year,” he concluded.

“It was in 'Seeventy-sax,” replied Donald solemnly; and then with great inward content he embarked upon the tale. He had at that time made one of the crew of the *Four Brothers*, a smack of fifteen tons burden. While fishing some fifty miles from Lowestoft a storm from the north fell upon them. For two days they struggled with the gale. All their nets were out trawling, heavy with herring, and as they wallowed in the trough, and rode high upon the summit of the seas, they were powerless to pull them in. Donald's friend Wilson was standing by his side straining at the tangled ropes that supported their threatened property. All at once, on the shoulder of a mighty billow, the boat rolled gunwale under, and Wilson, losing his balance, lurched headlong into the abyss. He was out of sight in the twinkling of an eye, but at the next moment reappeared astern.

“Could he no' swim?” interrupted Skipper hoarsely.

Donald shook his head.

"Na," he replied; "whit use in that sea? Wilson was a fine swimmer, nane better, but he didna try. He just threw up his twa arms and gied a terrible shout, like as if he was in awfu' fear. Man, Skipper! I wisht I could forget his face and the look he gied me as we sooped by."

"Ye didna save him?"

"Na; there was nae time. He was awa' doon the wan side o' the hill while we was up the ither. Ye're no' tae think that we didna dae oor best. The verra meenute he went ower I sprang for the starn, catchin' up the pole o' a landin'-net as I ran. 'Geordie!' screams I, like wan demented. But the wind knocked the word clean doon ma gullet; the only answer I got was a roar frae the sea, and whaur he had been there was nout but a tum'le o' spray, awfu' white-like again' the black o' the sky."

"He didna win up again, Donald?"

"Na, Skipper; the sea kept him. He owed me fower shullings and saxpence, and he had ma knife in his haund when he went overboard." Donald sighed. "A braw knife it was tae," he added regretfully, "wi' three blades and a maist usefu' corkscrew. But, hoots! I never pit in a claim for it: he left a widdy and five wee bairns."

Neither spoke for several minutes. Donald sat hunched against the wall watching the sea where it laughed in the sun.

Skipper, too, watched it. His eyes betrayed eagerness. A trail of smoke rested upon the horizon. His thoughts rushed after the steamer whence it came.

Breaking upon the quiet came the sound of voices. They started.

"The kirk 'll be scalin',"¹ said Donald hurriedly.

¹ Coming out.

"Ay," assented Skipper, casting an uneasy glance over his shoulder.

"I was just thinkin' o' slippin' awa' hame," observed Donald in a studiously indifferent voice.

A distant connection of a wink trembled in Skipper's eye. Donald intercepted it. "Ye see," he added severely, "it's no' that I mind being seen, but — I hae ma duties."

"Oh ay," assented Skipper eagerly; "I quite agree wi' you, Donald; duties canna be neglected. I was thinkin' o' slippin' awa' hame masel'."

The voices sounded nearer, but before the newcomers could reach the bench it stood unoccupied, and nothing but the wind and the sunshine were there to receive them.

CHAPTER XIV.

SKIPPER betook himself homeward by a certain unfrequented "close" which he knew would bring him almost to his very door. Despite the perturbed look on his face, his heart was overflowing with unholy satisfaction. He had proved not only how easy, but also how pleasant it was to stray from the conventional path. "Ye've naethin' tae dae but tae bide awa'," he explained to a recumbent dog who opened one eye at the sound of his footsteps. The animal slowly reclosed his eye. It was his nearest approach to a wink. Skipper burst into a laugh and strode away, smacking his leg.

He relapsed into serious thought. The thing must be kept a profound secret. Weekly colds, caught with unfailing regularity on Saturday nights, would serve his purpose. The neighbours might marvel at this deplorable change in his health; Devina might become anxious; but Skipper determined to take all risks. Donald was an ally to be trusted, for was he not tarred with the same brush? Now that he came to think of it, Donald's corner in the kirk had been vacant for weeks. The remembrance caused him to frown, and he addressed a few muttered remarks to Donald that savoured of righteous indignation. It was as if Nansen should discover the North Pole only to find Lieutenant Peary seated comfortably at the top.

Turning into Castle Street, Skipper stopped to survey

his little house before he opened the door. Satisfaction warmed him through and through. To be the sole occupant of his home, to be accountable to no one for his movements, struck him as singularly pleasant. His face expanded into a smile. But happening to raise his eyes, the smile faded. Smoke issued from his chimney. He stared at it in bewilderment. Hurriedly he strode forward, pressed down the latch, and, gazing anxiously within, found his worst fears confirmed. Bending over the fire, with her back turned to him, stood Devina.

She was dressed in her "blacks," or "braws," as the neighbours called them indiscriminately; but she had donned a coarse brown apron and had rolled the sleeves of her dress elbow-high. Her eyes, coldly critical as usual, ran over Skipper's Sunday suit as though they sought only grease spots and absent buttons. Skipper's heart fell, yet he found voice to say faintly—

"I—I wasna expectin' ye, Devina."

"Maybe I'm no' wanted," she retorted, quick to take offence.

"Na, na, Devina; ye mustna think that. It's awfu' pleasant tae see ye."

"I got the day oot," she explained more amiably, turning again to the fire, "so I thocht I would mak' ye some broth."

Skipper seated himself beside the table and fell to examining his finger-nails. They had been cut that morning. Skipper admired them immensely. He thought them "awfu' genteel."

It was both cosy and warm in the little kitchen.

"The kirk is surely oot early the day?" Devina's voice broke upon the peaceful current of his thoughts. Her back was still turned to him.

"Na," murmured Skipper; "aboot the usual. But

whit a fine smell that broth has. Ma word! it maks yer mouth water." He smacked his lips.

"I wisht I had been there," continued Devina in her gruff thick voice.

"Ay, ay," acquiesced her parent indulgently.

"Whit like was the sermon?"

Skipper moved uneasily in his chair. "Oh, a fine extemporaneous discoorse, Devina. But when did ye say the broth would be ready?"

"In a wee while. Whit was the text?"

Skipper suppressed a groan.

"Weel," questioned his daughter, surprised at his silence, "hae ye forgotten?"

He laughed nervously. "Oh no, Devina. Forgotten? No' likely! Fancy me forgettin', an' me just oot o' the kirk this verra meenute, ye may say! Let me see; it had seeven heids. Oh ay, maist eedifyin'."

"Whit was the text?" persisted Devina.

Skipper drew a deep breath. "Here the day and gone the morn," he replied, with nervous glibness. Once delivered from the difficulty, however, self-satisfaction seized him. The quotation was above suspicion.

The fire spluttered sympathetically, the old clock ticked approval; even the sunlight, regretting its inability to be present, sent bright congratulations from the opposite wall.

"Whit did Mistress Melville wear the day?" demanded Devina unexpectedly, a note of anticipatory disapproval in her voice. (Mrs Melville, as a person addicted to garments of inappropriate cheerfulness, was the *bête noire* of the female portion of the congregation.)

Skipper's teeth closed on his lip.

"Ay?" prompted Devina, open-mouthed.

Skipper cudgelled his brains to recollect even one costume of the notorious Mrs Melville. In vain. Only her white stockings, seen one rainy day in their shame-

less entirety, recurred to his mind. The truant hailed their memory with a crow, instantly suppressed: Devina was watching him.

"It seems tae amuse ye? Whit was it like?" she cried with eagerness.

"She was a' blue and red," blurted Skipper recklessly.

Devina's eyes expanded: a scandalised light shone from them.

"Save us a'!" she ejaculated.

Skipper nodded composedly.

"Whit was blue, and whit was red?" she gasped.

He turned reflective eyes to the ceiling, but inspiration was not to be found there.

"Reely, Devina," he said with mild reproach, "ye speir ower mony questions. Parteeculars aboot wemen's claes are awfu' deeficult for a male bodie tae answer. But as far as I mind——"

"Go on," urged Devina, keenly interested.

"As far as I mind," continued her father with great caution, "if ye looked at her the wan side she was blue, and if ye looked at her the ither she was red."

Devina transfixed him with indignant eyes, then uttering an exclamation of utter scorn, turned again to the broth.

"And she carried on somethin' scandalous," groaned the artful Skipper, wagging his head with great though veiled enjoyment. "In the prayer time tae, suckin' peppermints, and cockin' her feathers, and keekin' at a' the men, and——"

"Hoo did *you* see that?" flashed Devina.

Skipper caught at his breath. "Eh, eh—it was Tam Black telt me," he said nervously. "Tam aye prays wi' his e'en open. He tells me he likes tae watch the meenister's face," he added, plunging deeper and ever deeper into the mire.

"He's an ungodly man!" cried Devina hotly.

"Na, na, Devina," objected Skipper with great blandness, "we maunna say that. Tam's no' as particular in releigious obsairvances as I would like tae see him. I canna deny it. But, Lord! it's no' given tae every wan tae be godly. Some hae wee motes in their e'en, and some puir bodies hae beams——" He paused to rub his right eye sympathetically, then, "It's a painful poseetion for us a', I'm thinkin'."

The broth being ready, Devina poured it into the thick plates, and the two sat down to their dinner, Skipper by special request having droned grace in unctuous tones. For some time nothing was to be heard save the audible consumption of soup. But at the very moment when the broth had warmed them into a sympathetic glow, the door of the cottage flew open and Tam Black burst upon them.

"Tam!" cried Skipper, much astonished.

"Skipper!" cried Tam, apparently in equal astonishment. Then after a pause, during which he continued to stare at his friend with affectionate anxiety, "Man! I'm rale glad tae find ye up; I feared ye'd be in yer bed."

"Why should he be in his bed?" demanded Devina.

"Ay, Tam, why should I be in my bed?" echoed Skipper bravely; but his heart sank, and he held his breath, fearful of revelations.

"I met Donald——" began Tam, then broke off abruptly, for Skipper was winking at him with a face of awful mystery.

"Weel, whit has Donald to dae with ma faither's bed?" questioned the mystified Devina.

"He—telt—me—Skipper—was—ailin'," whispered Tam, his eyes fixed on the invalid.

"He's haverin'!"¹ retorted Skipper fiercely.

¹ Talking nonsense.

"I'm glad o' that," cried Tam, with great relief. "I was afeared it might be the effec' o' the snaw on yer spine. Oh ay," he continued with a pleasant laugh, "Donald telt me a' aboot it. He canna keep a secret, ye ken. But he was troubled about ye; he was indeed. He said ye should see a doctor. We a' missed ye sairly. Ye're *sich* a favourite!"

There was a horrible pause.

"It seems *I'm* no' in the secret," said Devina grimly.

"Weel, ye see, Devina," began Skipper, with a piteous smile, "I'm no' wan tae make the most o' a passin' seeckness." He waited for a contradiction, but as none came his courage returned. "Ye see, I'd a wee cauld in ma heid, and Donald—a rale thoughtfu', trustworthy man, Donald—in his anxiety for ma health has nae doot exaggerated it a wee bittie tae Tam here. But, losh me! whit's a cauld? A mere stoppage, ye may say; here the day an' gone the morn."

The irresponsibility of his tone inflamed Devina's wrath.

"A' verra weel," she burst out, "but it's no' reverent tae apply Screepture tae a cauld in the heid. Think shame o' yersel'! the verra words ye heard in the kirk the day too."

A low chuckle caused her to turn indignantly upon Tam.

"Heard in the kirk the day!" ejaculated that individual, with an air of great amusement.

"Ay, Tam," gasped the unfortunate Skipper, fixing him with imploring eyes.

"Heard in the kirk *the day*?" repeated Tam.

"And was he *no*' in the kirk the day?" burst out Devina.

Skipper, desperate and driven to bay, caught Tam's arm in a vice-like grip.

"Ye'll hae forgotten the text," he muttered.

Tam cried out, but Skipper swept on.

"And whit's the guid o' *you* attendin' the kirk, Tammas Black, if a' the meenister tells ye gangs intil the wan ear an' oot o' the ither? Whaur were yer irroleigious thochts? Wi' auld Thoms, maybe, wi'oot his tie? or wi' Mistress Melville an' her brows? Tam! Tam!" he shook the limp figure in sorrowful reproach, "I'm surprised at ye! I am indeed. Tae gang oot o' yer way tae bother honest folk wi' yer forgetfu'ness. Losh me! but it's an awfu' guid thing that ma memory's no' difeecient. Man! it's no' only the simple text that I mind—*no!* if it was necessary, I dae believe I could repeat the hale sermon word for word."

A glow of honest pride suffused his face. As for Tam, he was far beyond speech. Petrified with amazement, he sat huddled upon his chair, his protruding eyes fixed upon his friend.

"Weel! weel!" concluded Skipper, with returning geniality, "aifter a', ye canna help yer shortcomings, Tam; so we'll say nae mair aboot it. But," turning to the interrupted dinner, "wull ye no' join us in a sup o' broth?"

An inarticulate noise issuing from Tam's throat was accepted as expressing his inability to partake of soup. Skipper nodded comprehension; then, with regret on his lips but relief in his heart, he conducted Tam to the door, and watched him wander aimlessly away into the sunshine.

CHAPTER XV.

DEVINA was returning to her master's house. Her pace, as usual, was rapid. As she traversed the streets with long masculine strides, her behaviour was characterised by none of the open desire for admiration, nor the tell-tale affectation of indifference to be seen in other young women on a Sunday night. The knots of men loafing at the corners had no fascination for her. She swung past them all with a defiant flap of petticoats — as who should say, "I see ye fine; but I'm no' mindin' ye. I'm Devina Greig,—speak to me if ye daur."

Not that she ran any danger from uncourteous salutations. She was too well known for that. The misadventure of a certain Joe Saunders was a matter of history in St Andrews, which, although received with laughter, yet discouraged imitation. Joe having drunk himself into the condition of the maudlin and amorous, had met Devina upon one winter's night and, emboldened by the darkness, had attempted to kiss her. Luckless Joe! Devina had boxed his ears with such muscular chastity that the resounding slaps were audible afar. He never molested her again.

When her tall black figure came into sight, men nudged each other, or exchanged a surreptitious wink, but they spoke not; or if one, presuming upon his friendship with her father, dared to raise his voice, it was only to utter a respectful "Guid nicht." To which

Devina, her eyes upon the pavement, would respond curtly, and the incident would pass off with the greatest decorum.

But upon this particular Sunday night an eventful encounter took place. Turning the corner into North Street with characteristic abruptness, Devina came face to face with a man who was proceeding in the opposite direction. She would not have noticed him had it not been that she was all but upon him before she was aware of his presence. A neighbouring gas-lamp lent its light to the meeting.

Devina, brought to a sudden standstill, stared at the wayfarer; then as her eyes rested upon him, something within her leaped impulsively.

"Erichie!" she cried.

There is that in the unpremeditated utterance of a name that reveals more than would hours of familiar conversation. It is as though the heart, taken by surprise, had no time to close the gates of reticence. Audible in Devina's voice was a ring of glad amazement. It passed on the instant, and was followed by a sense of shame. The fear that he might notice her happiness beset her.

"Ye've got back," she said gruffly.

"Ay," he repeated, "I've got back." Then, continuing to gaze at her, "Are ye no' glad tae see me, Devina?"

She laughed nervously. "Oh ay," she answered, with an obvious affectation of indifference, "nae doot we're a' glad. Ye've been fechtin' for yer country in Afriky; we that can only bide at hame ocht to be gratefu'."

"It's no' gratitude I'm wantin'," said Archie.

Ignoring this remark, Devina asked hurriedly, "Ye—ye didna get yersel' wounded, did ye?"

Her eyes were averted, yet she listened for his reply.

"Naethin' tae speak o', Devina; I've been verra lucky."

He paused to look with admiration into her face. Aware of his gaze, she felt herself flushing, yet strove to conceal the trouble in her eyes.

"It's real guid tae see ye," he burst out. "Ma word! it's queer you and me meetin' here, for I was thinkin' of you as I came by."

"Was ye?" were the words she tried to utter, but her lips were dry and no sound would come.

"Ay," he continued. Then in a fit of sudden and unexpected shyness he laughed softly, and fell to examining the head of his cane with exaggerated attention.

Devina, lured by his silence, ventured to raise her eyes, and finding that he was no longer looking at her, held him with a steady gaze. Every sense in her body seemed to be concentrated for the moment into the one sense of vision: she felt as though she could not see enough. The lamp-light cast the shadow of his cap in a dark line across his eyes. There was something strongly masculine about him that attracted her powerfully. She admired the breadth of his shoulders, defined under the new but ill-fitting black coat. She thought that the tie of blue silk, fastened in a sailor's knot around the low, turned-down collar, set off the strength of his neck. The gleam of a silver watch-chain, and the noticeable brightness of a rose in his button-hole, essayed to lure her attention, but she swept them aside: it was the face that fascinated her.

"Ye're brown," she said. The words left her lips before she was aware of them. Having spoken them, she wished them back. "Whit will he think o' me?" she thought fiercely, and at the thought she blushed.

But Archie laughed again, and this time there was a note of complacency in his merriment that was spon-

taneous. He tucked the cane under his arm and turned his eyes to hers.

"It'll wear aff," he said; "but tell us aboot yersel'. Hoo's yer faither?"

"He's verra weel."

"And are ye still stoppin' in Castle Street?"

In a few words she informed him that she now occupied the position of cook in a villa adjoining the links, and that she was returning to her master's house after a day spent with her father.

"Ay, ay," he repeated at intervals, nodding his head sympathetically. But all the time she was talking he never ceased to look at her thoughtfully, as though he were debating some question of importance within his mind, wholly unconnected with her words.

Then he, too, in answer to her questions, related somewhat of his immediate past,—how, his regiment disbanded, he had accepted a post as green-keeper to a newly-formed golf-club; how, one way and another, he had picked up a considerable sum of money; how he had returned home and found, to his satisfaction, that Mr Henderson, the golf-club maker, his previous employer, had kept his place open for him, and that he could at once recommence the work to which he had been accustomed to look for a livelihood.

All this and much more was elicited in dribblets as they walked slowly side by side in the direction of the links. Devina's questions were terse and abrupt, prompted not only by interest, but also—although she was scarce aware of it herself—by the pleasure she took in listening to the sound of his voice. For his part, he was glad to talk about himself, less perhaps on account of natural egoism than on account of the assumption that she was interested in his affairs.

Archie Garvie was on the outlook for a wife. He

had attained the age when men—not previously in love—debate within themselves the advisability of matrimony. He was of opinion that, given certain qualifications, he was capable of loving any woman. Nor had his friends been backward in bringing the step to his notice. “It’s high time for ye tae mairry; ye’re grawin’ auld,” said one. “Whit think ye o’ Bessie Brown, Erchie? She’d mak ye a braw wife,” suggested another. “Wee Jeanie Mason’s the lassie tae suit you,” confided a third. And so it went on. Archie had listened to them all with complacent good-nature. “Maybe,” he had said; “maybe.” But to himself he added, “Let them talk; I’m in nae hurry. I’ll just look afore I leap,” and agreeable to this commendable resolution, he cast his eyes around him.

Foremost on the list of his women acquaintances stood Devina. He had known her for many years. He had even paid her a cautious attention, but lightly, and with no undercurrent of deeper feeling. There was much in her that he admired—her severe beauty, her fine figure, her stand-offish ways with men. He felt instinctively that she would make him a good wife—a thrifty, capable, managing wife, who would keep his house as the house of Mr Archie Garvie deserved to be kept. He had told her the truth when he confessed that he had been thinking of her. His return to his native town after long absence had predisposed his mind to sentiment, and what more likely than that, taking into consideration his new-born resolution, this vague emotion should centre itself upon a woman.

His present state of mind took him by surprise. When alone he had summed up the necessary qualifications of a wife with the equanimity of a dealer expatiating upon the points of a horse; but face to face with Devina, unconsciously influenced by the magnetism that

radiated from her person, he felt his breath desert him. "I'm by wi' it," he thought; "I'm in love." Then, alarmed at the unusual symptoms, he added, "Gosh, I must be cautious!"

The woman by his side was in a state of strange exhilaration. She felt uplifted as on wings into a region of sunshine and shadowless hours. She trod on air. The encompassing night seemed to her a beautiful atmosphere, created on purpose to bring them together. The unlovely streets, the benighted lanes, the very cobble-stones underfoot—all became transfigured in her eyes, steeped in unaccustomed significance; familiar, yet unfamiliar. Vaguely she marvelled at their beauty. As her gaze rested upon them, a veil seemed to drop from her, and a thrill of exquisite pleasure trembled from her heart to the remotest confines of her being.

Side by side they sauntered on. When they were come to Kirk Place, they turned to the right and proceeded slowly in the direction of the sea. This was to wander completely out of their way, but Devina did not notice it.

Archie had ceased to speak, but the tones of his voice still vibrated in her heart, and all unconsciously she moved to the memory of the sound. It was as though she marched to the music of the Pied Piper—almost as though she were again a little child. Happiness, like strong wine, rioted in her veins; it shone in her eyes; it lent a radiance to the tender agitation of her thoughts, even as the stars lend their light to the purple tumult of the sea.

This love of hers had been no plant of miraculous growth. As a girl she had been flattered by his attentions, although openly affecting to be indifferent to them. When the Yeomanry regiment to which he belonged received orders to embark for Africa, she had experienced

a severe shock, but even then the full knowledge of all that he was to become to her did not break upon her soul. Absence and suspense did much, but although they pushed her towards the abyss, they were powerless to open her eyes. It was not until he came again into her life, until she saw him standing before her in the yellow gaslight, that with a tremendous upheaval of her nature she realised that he and none other was her fate.

She was happy—happier than she had ever been before, save, perhaps, on one occasion, now long ago, when he had taken her to the annual fair, and under cover of the dreary revelry of the band had whispered to her that she “looked bonnie.”

And yet, warring against this turbulent gladness were impulses engendered by lifelong habits of pride and reticence and dourness. Her sterner self, clamorous within her heart, cried to her aloud, “Devina, whit’s this come ower ye? Have ye no shame? Whaur is yer self-respec’? For God’s dear sake, dinna show this man that ye love him! He doesna care for ye. He’ll only mak’ a boast o’ it, so he will; and whaur will ye be then, ye puir misguided wuman?”

As she became conscious of this voice, misgiving oppressed her. It was but a momentary disquietude, however, though destined to return; for in a glad torrent her joy swung back, and like a cork upon rushing waters she was carried irresistibly along.

CHAPTER XVI.

SLOWLY they neared the sea. The club-house, ablaze with lights, animated with figures coming and going through its swing-doors, was left behind. Traversing the plot of reclaimed land, they reached the rocks that terminated in the ugly sea-wall.

"Shall we sit doon here?" said Archie.

As he spoke, he indicated a bench scarce visible in the darkness. Devina seated herself without a word.

For some time they kept silent. The night was dark. If Devina had looked at her companion, it is doubtful if she could have distinguished his face; but she did not look. Her eyes were fixed absently upon the blackness in front, which was the sea. A light which straggled from the neighbouring club-house, and paled long before it reached them, cast their shadows mistily towards this obscurity.

Periodically, but at uncertain intervals, a wavering something, which was a seventh wave, broke against the rocks. Then a momentary light, too faint to call a gleam, ran along the near foreground, making itself audible in a soft swish of sound.

Devina watched and waited for this effect. It even assumed an exaggerated importance in her mind, as though it were in some vague and undefined way connected with her fate. It was by no means her habit to indulge in these fanciful ideas, for she was not

superstitious; but the agitation of her nervous system imparted a like abnormality to her brain. And yet that which she saw was as nothing compared with that which she felt. For the moment her whole sentient being was concentrating its energy upon the man who sat beside her, unseen, but intensely realised in spite of the enshrouding darkness of night.

He began to speak. At the sound of his voice Devina pressed her hands tightly together.

"It's quait here."

The words sounded dry and husky. Archie was audibly discomposed. The loneliness of the spot, the darkness, and, above all, the physical proximity of the woman, deprived him of thought. Her silence, too, added not a little to this effect. If she would only speak or laugh—but no! not a sound. He strained his eyes towards her, but the motionless outline of her figure told him nothing. He wondered what she was thinking of.

"Have ye sat here before, Devina?" he asked at length.

"No."

At the answer he took heart, and moved a little nearer.

"Neether have I; I'll no' forget it in a hurry." He looked around, then added, "It's a graund place fer keepin' company."

The significance of the words struck him the moment he had uttered them. He feared that he had said too much. He did not wish to compromise himself until he had thoroughly made up his mind. Nervously he awaited a reply, but none came.

"Ay," he continued, with a vague feeling of relief,—
"ay, we've the place tae oorsels, just you an' me. This is whit I've been longin' for. I've thoct aboot ye mony a time, Devina."

The tone in which he spoke the latter words called for comment. Devina roused herself.

"Have ye?" she murmured. Her voice sounded far off and unfamiliar.

"Ay, I have that." He coughed nervously, then, "Ye havena got a man already, have ye?"

"No," she whispered.

He edged still closer.

"I'm glad," he said.

In the darkness one of his hands sought and found hers. A delicious tremble ran through her; and yet she felt strangely perturbed. "Ma God!" she thought breathlessly, "whit will he dae next?"

"Ay," he went on, pressing the hand that abandoned itself to him, "I'm glad." Then, after a tremulous pause, "Vinnie," he whispered, "*Ma* Vinnie."

The diminutive was sweet as music to her ears. It was the first time that he had used it. Love and gratitude blossomed in her heart. This was what she had been waiting for all her days. Life was smiling on her at last.

The tide was coming in. Mystery and solitude brooded over the waters. The sky had cleared; the stars beckoned from the blue vault of night. The rocks showed indistinguishably black, like the forms of strange animals half-submerged. The eternal plaint of the waves, as they wooed the beach beyond, formed a subdued accompaniment to the dying lap and gurgle that rose from the semi-darkness at their feet. There was something infinitely soothing in the sound. Devina gave herself up to it. Her mood had changed. Something of her father's imaginative nature descended upon her. She did not want to speak, nor even to hear Archie speak, but only to listen—to listen to the sea that sang this wonderful new song within her ears.

Of what good were clumsy human words? Just to hold his hand, to know that he was there, to know herself happy in this thing that had come upon her—surely that was enough. And that was what the sea was repeating to her over and over and over again. At times her bosom was raised by a quiet sigh, but otherwise she sat motionless.

But Archie was not satisfied. The contact of her hand, whose warmth could distinctly be felt through the thin glove, stirred him strangely. His disengaged arm stole round her waist, his shoulder leaned against hers, and hot upon her cheek she felt his breath.

Presently, as though it acted upon the spur of sudden inclination, the hand that held hers was withdrawn, and, ere she had time to wonder at the change, she became conscious of it pressing her bosom.

With a gasp she pushed it from her.

The motion was instinctive—the sudden movement of one repelling a mysterious danger. No sooner, however, had she made it than the significance of his action caused her to become one burning blush, and to tremble from fear and offended modesty.

If, instead of the liberty he had taken, he had offered to kiss her, she would, despite the tremor of her feelings have been as wax within his hands. Some vague anticipation that he might wish to do so had lurked in her heart, and, though dimly realised, had thrilled her with unimaginable longings, but that he should treat her with so scant a respect shocked her beyond words.

Within Archie's mind surprise held first place. He had but little knowledge of women. The few whom he had known intimately had not impressed him with the delicacy of their feelings. Insight into character had been denied him. Accustomed to dogmatise, he was in the habit of advancing statements based upon



personal observation of the most erroneous nature. "Weemen are a' alike," he confided to a friend. "When once they're saft on ye, man! ye can dae onythin' wi' them!" Having spoken thus, he had bestowed a complacent glance upon Mr Archie Garvie, seen to much advantage in a convenient mirror.

Perplexity set him on the trail of an explanation.

"She canna mean it," he pondered. "She must ha' done that tae draw me on." Under this impression, he hazarded a playful remonstrance, received by Devina in silence. For some time he mused darkly. By degrees it dawned upon him that she was in earnest. The thought took several minutes to penetrate through his hide of self-satisfaction. Once accepted, however, it inflamed his mind into a dull heat of resentment. He felt angry, not with himself, but with Devina. That she had deceived him, he thought, was evident. For some time he stared furtively at her with eyes from which all the light of love had vanished. There was something ominous in her motionless figure, seen dimly in the darkness—something powerful and impressive in her silence. No yearning towards reconciliation lurked within his heart. She had rebuffed him, made him feel small; he longed to make her suffer.

"Why don't ye speak?" he said.

There was no reply.

"Oh, I'll leave ye alane!" he burst out, speaking thickly, and falling into a coarseness of accent that was not habitual to him. "I've made a mistake. I can see that. I thoct you loved me." He paused to gulp down his anger, then continued, "An' *me*, wha thoct o' you a' thae years, and noo that I've come hame ye canna find a ceevil word tae tell me ye're glad. But much I care! There's mair fish in the sea—that's tellin' ye! Ay, and mair nor that; when I'm meanin'

nae harm, but just tae be affectionate-like, ye push me awa' as if—as if I was a puddock!¹ God! it wantit but that.”

Still Devina remained silent.

“Can ye no' speak?” he vociferated.

She moved uneasily.

“I—I have naethin' tae say.”

“Nae doot, nae doot; that's because ye dinna care.”

She shook her head. Her indignation had vanished. Had Archie asked her forgiveness, had he but spoken tenderly, how gladly would she have assured him that all was well! But the rudeness of his manner—exaggerated by wounded vanity into a heat wholly disproportionate to the cause—sealed up the channel of her speech.

He edged farther away.

“Ye're indifferent,” he cried. “It's easy seen ye canna feel. Ay, that's why the men leave ye alane. Ay,”—his voice sank to a whisper more impressive by far than the former loudness of his tone,—“ay,” he repeated, “ye have nae heart.”

The injustice of the accusation struck her like a blow. She felt herself quivering. Her eyes filled with tears.

“Weel, can ye no' speak *noo*?” he taunted, with all a stupid man's love of repetition.

“I canna talk aboot ma feelin's, Erchie,” she said humbly.

“That's because ye have nane,” he retorted; and they relapsed into silence.

The sea still sang to the night—but how different everything had become! A depth of despair had opened suddenly in this woman's heart; she feared to look into it, lest self-control should abandon her. Somewhat of the blackness of night passed into her spirit. Yet pride kept her from tears.

¹ Frog.

A distant clock chimed eleven. Its solemn tones reached them, faintly audible above the sound of the sea. Archie rose to his feet.

"I must be gettin' back," he announced curtly.

Devina awoke as if from a trance. The world that she had forgotten had claims upon her too, but she swept them recklessly aside.

"Erichie!" she cried.

There was that in her voice that forced him to stand.

"Weel?" he inquired.

But at the very moment when her whole soul was straining towards him, when every drop of blood in her body was yearning for his love, words refused to come to her assistance.

"It's naethin'," she said hopelessly.

Her companion shrugged his shoulders; then, side by side, in silence, they wended their way towards the town.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE excitement entailed by his deception, or it might be the day-long society of Devina—for not only had she dragged him off to afternoon service, but had even invited herself to tea—told on Skipper's nerves. The moment Devina had stalked out of the house feigned regret had changed swiftly to unfeigned relief, the years dropped off him, the sorrowing parent became the released schoolboy. Following his daughter to the door, he closed it softly behind her, shot the bolt, gave ear to the sound of her retreating footsteps, then as they died away, murmured, "Thank the Lord!" The words fell from him in all good faith. No suspicion of irreverence dawned upon his mind. He was accustomed to thank God for the presence of his dinner, why not then for the absence of his daughter?

His first move was to look in the cupboard for whisky, but the bottle in which it was usually kept stood empty.

This refreshment denied him, he solaced himself with a meditative pipe. A curious little figure he looked, lost in the horse-hair embraces of his big arm-chair. He frowned at the glowing embers. No child, however timid, would have felt the least alarm at Skipper's frown; quite the contrary, it had something taking about it, something positively endearing; it expressed nothing but a whimsical, good-natured perplexity.

Time and again he shook his grizzled head, and more

than once taking the clay from his lips, he spat absent-mindedly into the fire.

"Ay," he said at last, taking the coals into his confidence,—“ay, it's a queer thing, life! A wee babby that ye could skelp wi' twa fingers graws intil a wuman that puts the fear o' death on ye. Ma word! it doesna seem naitural.”

The fire spluttered in a sudden heat of sympathy, whereupon Skipper, slightly consoled, resumed his pipe.

As he mused, Ali Babi recurred to his mind. The memory of the forty thieves, whom he had left in agony, and whose probable decease he had desired to verify, swept across him. Acting on impulse, he half rose to his feet, but, changing his mind, sank again into his chair. No! his own grievances were enough; why bother about those of other people? He seemed somehow or other to have lost interest in bloodshed; boiling oil, even, left him cold—indifferent. Besides, there was really no hurry. They could wait. Their situation held out no hope of escape.

“I'll keek in on them in the mornin’,” said Skipper.

The tall clock in the corner made a wheezy, preliminary noise that sounded ridiculously like an old man clearing his throat. Then, very leisurely, but pointedly, it began to give advice. Skipper listened to its eleven suggestions of bedtime with reluctant attention. He did not feel sleepy; he would *not* go to bed! He wished clocks would mind their own business. They had quite enough to do, he considered, attending to compulsory arithmetic without interfering with their betters. Every one tried to interfere with him. It was a shame! As he fumed, the fire suddenly collapsed into ashes, still ruddy, but unpleasantly significant of coldness to come. His obstinacy melting before

these united assaults, he undressed sulkily, blew out the lamp, and tumbled into bed.

But alas for his hopes of quiet slumber! His brain was restless. A nightmare sat upon his chest and suggested thoughts terrifying in their disordered irrationality.

The Arab stole from the cupboard and sat in Skipper's arm-chair with Devina on his knee. They partook of light refreshment, consisting of golf-balls and empty bottles; they announced with chuckles of inhuman glee their fixed intention of making Skipper a boarder at the kirk, where he would be forced to listen to sermons for the rest of his natural life; and finally, starting up, they began to dance a reel, with shrill whoops of excitement. It was a fearsome nightmare. The sweat poured down Skipper's face: the pillow was wet with it. He struggled to cry out, but not a sound could he make. Devina had kilted up her skirts in the manner of Nannie in "Tam o' Shanter": Skipper fairly gasped at the exposure. The kirk bells, entering hurriedly, arranged themselves in a row upon the table, and sang psalms to waltz time. Nearer and nearer came the dancers. Skipper cowered beneath the bedclothes. He could see the whites of the Arab's eyes blazing with unnatural excitement, while the wind raised by Devina's petticoats stirred the very hair upon his head. A moment more and they were upon him! But at that instant—the bed transforming itself into the mouth of hell—Skipper fell headlong through darkness lit with sulphureous flame. Down, down, down, till, just as he had given up hope of ever reaching the bottom, he awoke to find the grey light of dawn stealing into the room.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FURTHER sleep was out of the question. Skipper feared that should he again close his eyes he would be recaptured by his tormentor. He determined to get up. The little room looked cheerless in the wan light. The dawn touched various white objects, causing certain among them to stand forth with a noticeable trenchancy of contrast. It was bitterly cold; Skipper's breath rose visibly. The world seemed frozen—dead. As he peered through the frosted window-panes he could see the street, strangely silent, strangely still, glimmering in the ghostly grey of dawn. A faint mist obscured the more distant houses.

Skipper dressed as speedily as possible, for his fingers were numb and all but useless. Crossing to the dresser, he poured a little water into a basin. No sooner had he done so, however, than he repented of the act. He looked at the yellow soap reposing in a broken saucer, then at the water, then at his blue and, it must be confessed, grimy hands, then again at the water, hesitated, shivered, and finally shook his head.

Buttoning his coat to his chin, putting on his cap, and taking his mashie with him for company's sake, he quitted the house. Leaving the fisher quarter behind him, he made for the line of cliffs that overlook the eastern sands. He walked quickly, feeling the need of exertion, prompted also by the desire to work off

the effects of his dream. Skirting the sands, he began to climb the little path that mounts to the cliffs, and having reached the summit, paused awhile to regain breath.

The view before him was familiar, yet he looked at it with unusual attention. Upon his left the little city slept as though under a sea spell. A haze lay over it. Skipper could see the mist streamers—white as driven snow, nebulous as gossamers—veiling the streets. The houses were submerged. Details were obliterated: grey wall and crumbling ruin alike melted into obscurity. Only upon the imminent verge of the cliff the Cathedral towers stood visible—dark, isolated, fragmentary, bequeathing somewhat of the mystery and pathos of the past to the little town slumbering beneath them.

Skipper drew in his breath. The element of romance presented by this unusual aspect appealed to him. It stirred him into vague yet pleasurable emotion. His eyes glistened. His expression was that of a child listening to a fairy-tale.

Slowly he turned towards the more immediate landscape. Below him the rocks stretched, naked, save for pools forgotten of the sea. Weed and tangle and derelict wrack of the waves lay strewn around, interspersed with the gleam of arrested water and tawny spaces of sea-ribbed sand. The rocks trooped seawards, like cattle, in diminishing companies, wading ever deeper, till at length the fringe of advancing foam met above their backs. The sea shone in dull lights, livid and grey, cold as naked steel. The mists that enveloped the town brooded also over the waters, sponging out the horizon. They imparted an air of mystery, almost of secrecy, to the mirror-like expanse,—an effect heightened by the silence which the faint sound of waves was powerless to dissipate.

Skipper shook his head. "Ay," he murmured, pursing his lips after the word, "it bates a'; there's nae doot the sea makes ye feel queer at times. The day noo, it's as if—as if she had a secret for ye behind her back."

He continued his walk. The path led him along the edge of the cliff, then descended steeply, and anon rose again, till after a considerable time Skipper came within sight of the Spindle Rock. This slender and isolated pinnacle formed an objective for the town folk on Sunday afternoons. Even in broad daylight, with well-dressed humanity promenading around it, it struck the eye as singular; but seen as Skipper saw it,—the one salient landmark on a desolate coast at dawn,—it stood forth imperiously exacting attention. Its dark perpendicular form loomed against the shifting background of vapour. Its sides, covered with the droppings of sea-birds, rose sheer to its inaccessible summit. Sea-flowers and grasses, nourished by the salt airs and blown upon by every wind of heaven, grew thick as hair upon its head. Beneath it stretched flat rocks encircling a tranquil pool.

Skipper paused on the grassy slope that dominated the scene from landward. He frowned upon the strange rock thoughtfully. He was calculating its distance. Then unconsciously he assumed the attitude of one who plays an approach shot, and mechanically his mashie rose and fell.

"I believe I could dae it," he murmured, as he paused with his club in the air. Then surveying the patch of level turf upon which he stood with unfeigned admiration in his eyes, he burst out, "Ma word! this would mak' a bonnie tee. Whit a peety I couldna pit it doon by the sixth green; it would show the committee whit guid turf is like. Noo, let me see"—he gazed to seaward—

"a guid drive ocht tae carry yon black rock; it might even reach the sea. Dod! I can hear the ba' whustlin' ower thae pools."

Skipper's red face beamed; seating himself upon a stone, he prepared to light his pipe.

A change came over the scene. The mists shredded out, smoking from off the oily surface of the water. Through the vanishing films the horizon emerged anew. Slowly and with imperceptible transitions the sky lightened. All at once, hull down on the verge of waters, the sun appeared like unto a ship on fire. Skipper watched the lambent flame with satisfaction. It made him feel important. He was the one spectator at the play.

But as the great orb rose into being, a gasp broke from his lips. His pipe, falling from his open mouth, rolled unheeded on the turf. His eyes protruded from their sockets, for on the rocks below stood an Arab, his face turned to the East, intent on his devotions!

CHAPTER XIX.

"MA oleograph!" gasped Skipper.

And indeed the resemblance was striking. The palm-tree was absent, the sea of sand had become a sea of water; but otherwise the picture before him might have been a reproduction of the famous work of art, for the same sun soared into the sky, and there, on the flat rock, the same Arab offered up the same prayer. There could be no mistake. Skipper would have recognised him among a multitude. He was enveloped from shoulders to knees in the familiar blue cloak. Upon his head he wore the scarlet something, which Skipper was in the habit of referring to as his night-cap, on account of its resemblance to Tam Black's nocturnal head-gear. The thin naked legs awoke a glow of affectionate recollection. He could not see the sandals,—the distance was too great for that,—but he knew that they were there, and took pleasure in the knowledge. The face likewise was concealed from view, the back being turned; but the legs, arms, and neck were visible, and Skipper noted with a glow of satisfaction that they were all as black as the oleograph had painted them.

"A blackamoor," thought Skipper, and thrilled with excitement. To Skipper's simple mind all shades of men, from lemon-yellow to coal-black, were classed under this comprehensive term. On one occasion he had even called a Spaniard a blackamoor, much to the scorn

of big M'Phee, who had been to Cadiz on a tramp-steamer. But in his most secret heart the real, the only authentic, blackamoor *was* black, as black as Devina's Sunday bonnet, and the complexion of the stranger was the nearest approach to that sombre decoration that Skipper had yet seen. Scarce daring to breathe, he watched the blackamoor with open mouth.

A pathway of gold led from the rim of the horizon to the Arab. Within its brightness he prostrated himself, sending his supplications eastwards along the glittering tract. His figure stood out dark against the light in the sea; yet it was surrounded by a halo that caused his blue cloak to glow, and his scarlet cap to appear as if edged with fire. His every motion reproduced itself with marvellous exactitude in the pool of still water that lay immediately behind him, so that you might almost say two Arabs rose and stooped at the same time. Towering above him, soared the solitary fragment of cliff; around, extended the desolate coast, overhead, stretched the empty sky.

Skipper sat like one petrified. His pipe lay where it had fallen. His eyes devoured every movement of the stranger. His thoughts were in a whirl. Wonder and curiosity held prominent places, but fascination predominated. Irresistibly he felt himself drawn towards this picturesque unknown, even as he had felt himself drawn towards the oleograph at Gourley's sale. If this lonely beach had been an auction-room, the sun an auctioneer, the rocks his rivals, each one determined to possess the interesting "Oriental lot" now offered for sale, Skipper would have outbid them all. Everything he had would have been thrown recklessly into the scale; he would have stopped at no sacrifice.

All his days he had longed for something "queer" to happen—something adventurous, something out of

the common. Here it was at last. An Arab! Alone, far out on the coast! Apparently belonging to no man. Dropped from the kindly clouds! The wonder of it held him speechless. At that instant the seed of the South, that lurked always in Skipper's heart, blossomed. It became a tropical flower. Its colour and perfume intoxicated him. The agitated little man fairly overflowed with gratitude. He blessed the sun, the sea, the nightmare,—he blessed everything! His treasure-trove awoke in him a wave of affectionate possession. It was his. *He* had discovered it. No one should wrest it from him.

His one fear was lest the whole thing might prove illusion. The worshipper, down there, still praying, might be an Oriental apparition, might vanish in a flame, might even disappear into a bottle! Skipper had read of such things in the 'Arabian Nights.' He believed them implicitly. Racked by apprehension, he watched the stranger with a jealous eye.

As he gazed, the Arab, rising once more to his full height, turned and caught sight of him. An inarticulate noise broke from Skipper's throat. Scrambling to his feet, he began at once to plunge down the steep incline, his pipe forgotten, but his mashie still within his grasp. In another moment he had reached the rocks, and, hurrying across the intervening space, came face to face with the Oriental.

Nor did disappointment await him. The Arab suggested much. He more than fulfilled expectation. Tall, and graceful of carriage, he overtopped Skipper by at least a head. From out of the dark inscrutable face, the deep-set eyes gleamed black and restless. Great hollows lay beneath them. The lips were thin and bloodless. The head, unusually small, summoned to Skipper's recollection a vulture he once had seen in a

travelling show. There was the same fierce untamed animosity to be read in the countenances of both bird and man. Gaunt to emaciation, the stranger appeared to be suffering from the effects of prolonged exposure. His clothing was sadly the worse for wear. Upon nearer inspection the blue cloak showed rents clumsily darned with pieces of twine. Bleached by sun and stained by salt water, it was evidently but the wreck of the garment it once had been.

For a moment the caddie and the Arab faced each other in silence. Their mental attitude towards each other formed a strong contrast. It became visible in their expressions. Skipper, all eager interest, excitement, curiosity. The stranger, impassive, yet alert, for suspicion revealed in the furtive eyes, alarm in the distended nostrils. The gulf between them was never more apparent than at that first moment of meeting. Skipper was only conscious of it in so far as it lent an added mystery, an added charm, to their intercourse. The Arab recognised its presence in an immense contempt, an arrogant superiority, an insuperable aversion—feelings by no means lessened by the knowledge that Fate was forcing him to become dependent on this Nazarene.

Resentment, too, burned hot within him. He had been interrupted at his devotions. And yet so unstrung was he with all the hardships he had undergone that, as his haggard eyes met those of Skipper, his lips trembled.

Skipper feasted his eyes. His tongue was tied. The presence of this strange figure upon the familiar Fifeshire coast held him as with a spell. More than ever before was he persuaded that this was at last an answer to his prayers. The repellent and almost sinister appearance of the Oriental did not occur to him. He saw only the

picturesque, the unusual. No premonition of impending doom clouded his mind; yet the meeting was pregnant with vague possibilities of disaster. His sensations were gay and untroubled as the sunlight that flashed from the pool at their feet and deluged them both with its radiance.

Yet Fate was at work. Out of the desolate sea she had brought the one; out of an ocean of dreams she had brought the other. Henceforward they were destined to tread the same path, bound by the chain that binds both Life and Death, whose links are forged in darkness and whose end no man knoweth.

At length Skipper made up his mind to speak.

"Whaur d'ye come frae?" he demanded.

The question, spoken in the broad Fifeshire dialect, fell upon bewildered ears. The stranger muttered a few broken words, accompanied by a negative movement of the head. The words were English, but so deep and strange that Skipper failed to identify them. He repeated his question, raising his voice to its loudest. The Arab again shook his head. Then suddenly stretching out his hand, he began to speak. Never before had Skipper listened to such an outburst. A stream of guttural, fierce, and ominous sounds issued from the pale lips. They shook the emaciated frame. The furtive eyes blazed in sudden animation.

"He's angry!" thought Skipper. But ere the thought had time to pass from his mind, a swift change was observable in the stranger. His face lost its ferocity, he pointed with a trembling hand to the sea, and as his eyes rested upon its gently heaving expanse, they became sad—sad as it is given to few eyes to become.

Skipper scratched his whiskers. As he pondered, an idea occurred to him. Perhaps it was but the "braid Scots" that the stranger failed to understand.

"You speak English?" he roared with a fine fancy accent, that would have earned for him the jeers of his friends could they but have heard him. A gleam of comprehension flashed to the stranger's eyes. Again he spoke, this time in the outlandish English of dark-skinned races. Skipper, devouring the words, learned that he had come in a boat, that there had been a tragedy, that some one or some people were dead.

This much he told, evidently against his will, relating the incidents in the grudging manner of one who resents the necessity for explanation. No sooner had he made an end of speaking than, with an eager, famished gesture, he craved something to eat.

"Man, but I'm sorry!" said Skipper; "I've naethin' here. Bide a wee and I'll get ye somethin' soon. But tell me, wha is't that's deid?"

The Arab made no reply. Turning slowly, and motioning to Skipper to follow, he began to climb with difficulty over the slippery rocks that lay between them and the sea. Skipper stumbled after him like a man in a dream.

Slowly they neared the surf. When they were come within a dozen yards of it, Skipper caught sight of a boat riding in a creek. Curiosity prompted him to quicken his steps: the Arab and he reached it at the same moment.

She was a small craft of clumsy build, such as is usually carried by sailing-ships. Skipper's practised eye ran over her with avidity. The sun gleamed from the metal of the rowlocks: Skipper noted the parts where the friction of the oars had polished them into brightness. It shone, too, from the steel point of a boat-hook that lay athwart the stern. Amidships were a small water-keg, a broken box, and a seaman's jersey. Two stout oars lay along the seats. Her side was grazed

with rubbing against the rocks. But that which arrested Skipper's attention was the fact that a name had been obliterated from her bows. It had been done hastily, and as though the person whose interest it was to erase it had been interrupted at his work, for the eye could still trace a capital *S*, and, farther on, the suspicion of a *d*.

Skipper stared at the broken inscription, conjecture running riot. He raised his eyes to the sea, lying mute in the light of the sun. Then slowly, and as if impelled to do so, he turned to the Arab, silent upon the rock by his side. No clue to the mystery was to be read in any one of the three—least of all perhaps in the stranger, who with folded arms stood motionless, his eyes fixed on the boat. The ominous suggestion of death recurred again and again to Skipper's mind. *Who* were dead? *How* had they died? How many of *them* had there been? What had become of these dead men, who perhaps had pulled at these oars, sat upon these seats, stared their last at this sea? And above all, how came it that this mysterious stranger should be the sole survivor?

In a moment the joy of adventure was swept from Skipper's mind by a wave of horror. He gripped the stranger's arm. Flourishing his mashie with his disengaged hand, he cried hoarsely—

"Man, whit d'ye mean? Whaur are the ithers? Whit boat is this? Why are ye a' by yer lane? Was it a wreck? God! can ye no' speak, man? Dinna stand there like a stane! The verra waves are cryin' on ye!"

In his excitement he gesticulated towards the sea.

An evil light flashed from the Oriental eyes. Flinging Skipper's hand from him in sudden anger, the Arab stepped hastily backwards and came near to falling on

the treacherous weed. Freed from Skipper's grasp, however, his indignation died like the flame of a burned-out candle. Seating himself wearily on the ledge of rock, like one who had no longer strength to stand, and covering his face with his hands, he sank into stupor. Skipper, standing behind him, watched him anxiously. "He's forgotten me," he murmured to himself. "Man! but he's weary."

Moved alike by curiosity and by sympathy he stole nearer, the seaweed muffling his footsteps, until he could see the Arab's face. As he watched, he became aware of something that trickled from beneath the dark fingers, down the unshaven chin, and fell on the blue cloak. It was a full minute before he could convince himself that it was a tear. The sight of a grown man shedding tears filled him with astonishment. He had not believed it possible. He began to make allowances.

"He isna verra weel," he mused apologetically; "he's no' whit ye would ca' responsible for his actions. Man, he's sair upset! Tam 'll never believe it. It disna matter for the noo wha's deid; but, ma word! he must ha' been awfu' fond o' them. Skipper, ye auld fule, whit sort o' conduct is this—tae tease a puir blackamoor till he greets? An' him shipwrecked tae. Have ye no peety, you that's been shipwrecked yersel'? Auld beast that ye are!"

Filled with contrition, he bent forward and touched the blue shoulder.

"You just come awa' hame wi' me," he said coaxingly, taking pains to pronounce the words with what he flattered himself was an English accent. The stranger raised his head and turned longing eyes towards the town, now shimmering in the distance. He seemed glad to accept the invitation, for he made as if to rise, but, before gaining his feet, he hesitated.

"The boat," he muttered.

Skipper nodded comprehension. "We'll take it wi' us," he said. "I understand fine; hae nae fear. I'll row ye hame masel'. Jump in, man; mind ye dinna fall—seaweed is slithery stuff. Noo then, are ye ready? Sit in the middle, and as quait as ye can. Dod! but it's a wee boat this; it's a mercy for ye the sea was no' big—ay, a fair providence, ye may say. Ay, ay!"

Talking cheerily, and as one who makes conversation to comfort an unhappy child, Skipper seized the oars—the Arab huddled in the stern sheets—and the boat, propelled by lusty strokes, glided out to sea.

CHAPTER XX.

"ALLAH!" ejaculated the Arab in a thick tone of satisfaction.

Near to the fireplace he squatted, sitting on his heels, filled to the point of inconvenience with fish, bread, and coffee. With his beak-like nose and haggard frame he looked for all the world like a bird of prey gorged with an unexpected meal. From time to time he stroked the full stomach beneath the blue cloak, and politely gave utterance to his repletion.

"Man, but he looks queer in ma kitchen!" thought Skipper, with a hug of self-congratulation. His brain, still bewildered by the surprises of the morning, refused to give complete credence to the sight. The homely appearance of the room, its familiar details, its very smell, gave the lie to the Oriental figure sitting motionless in the light of the fire. Skipper rubbed his eyes, surveyed the stranger anxiously, rubbed them again. It made no difference. A grin emphasised the wrinkles on his weather-beaten face. "He's real," he mused with great contentment; "ye canna rub him awa'. He's better nor an oleograph. He can dae ither things than the prayin'. And then, ye see," he chuckled, "he's bigger; Devina canna pit him intil the press."

Many times that morning had Skipper occasion to rub his eyes, for the conduct of his guest had been "queer" past all comprehension. He had refused tea: Skipper

had been obliged to beg coffee from a neighbour, from which the Arab himself had concocted a satisfactory brew. He had grown indignant at the mere hint of bacon. He had declined to eat with his host. He had performed mysterious ablutions at the sink. He had scorned the convenience of the table, preferring to squat by the fireplace, where he had devoured an amazing quantity of food with the rapacity of a starving wolf. And lastly, the meal finished, he had produced a metal box from somewhere beneath the blue cloak, and rolling himself a cigarette between deft fingers, had proceeded to smoke, inhaling deeply,—his eyeballs, fixed on the fire, motionless between semi-closed lids.

Skipper sat at the table enjoying his share of the breakfast, watching his guest between every mouthful, tasting to the full the delights of realisation. Once only did his thoughts revert to his vocation. The clock striking eleven, he recognised that it was too late to hope for a morning round. He consoled himself, however, by the reflection that the afternoon was still before him.

"Hi, mister!" ejaculated Skipper genially. The Arab looked up. His eyes suddenly expanded, their whites gleamed in the firelight.

"You and me has got to have a talk," continued Skipper, nodding his head. "Now, first of all, tell me about the wreck."

A scowl gathered on the dark face; the eyes rested on Skipper with unmistakable suspicion. The little man was quick to notice it.

"Ye're no' to think that I didna feel for ye," he cried hastily, leaning forward as he spoke and stretching out an appealing hand. "Man! I've been shipwrecked masel'. I ken fine whit ye're feelin'—the deeficulty o' speaking, and the horror that just grups ye by the

throat. Folk used to speir—ask questions, I mean,—silly questions they were tae. ‘How did ye feel?’ says one. ‘Was the water cauld?’ says anither. ‘Did yer sins veesit ye?’ says a third. ‘Did ye drink much o’ it?’ says a fourth. Eediots! when a man’s strugglin’ wi’ daith he has nae time to think o’ a wheen sins, and hoo much he’s drinkin’.” Skipper’s face glowed with indignation, he smote the table with a horny fist, then, growing calmer, continued: “Ay, they fashed me—angered me, I mean; I just made a face at them, a sulky face, like yours, and in the end they learnt tae let me be. Now, see here. I’d like fine to save you a’ this bother. Folk are sure to deave you with questions, too—there’s Robb, and M’Phee, and Simpson. Simpson’s an awful one for questions! he sits and unhankles the lines and asks silly questions—that’s a’ he does. Noo, if ye tell me just a wee thing or twa aboot the wreck, I’ll shut their mouths—I wull indeed.”

The Arab listened, his brows contracted in a hopeless effort to understand this jargon of English interlarded with Scottish dialect. One thing, however, struggled clear—the little man before him was fully determined to elicit the story of his adventures.

“Whit’s yer name?” questioned Skipper in tones of encouragement.

“Ali Mohammed Ben Mustapha,” replied the Arab hoarsely.

“Alley!” cried Skipper in delighted recognition. “Why, I ken an Alley! I was readin’ aboot him yesterday. He slew forty black thieves. Alley Baba, that’s him. Dod! *he* was the one for adventures. They happened tae him every day: he just couldna help hisself. Some folk are that lucky! Alley? ay, ay, tae think o’ that. And whit relation will he be, think ye?”

Ali Mohammed shook his head. Skipper’s face fell

in disappointment. But only for a moment, for at the next he burst out afresh—

“Weel, Alley, fair exchange is nae robbery, they say. Ma name is Greig—Geordie Greig, that’s me—but everybody ca’s me Skipper. Ay, just that,” he cried, as his guest made ineffectual efforts to pronounce the name. “It’s short and easy tae say. Ca’ me Skipper, Alley. And noo for yer story.” And the little host tilted himself backward and beamed in pleasant anticipation.

His companion remained for some time plunged in thought. His averted eyes rested on the fire with a crafty light. All at once he spoke.

“I—a prince in Africa.”

Skipper, listening attentively, his imagination on tip-toe, was prepared for the marvellous; but when he heard that the ragged figure crouching by his fireside was of noble descent—a prince—he cried aloud in the extremity of amazement.

“*Prince!*” the word broke from his lips in a tremble of incredulity, mingled with consternation. His chair finding its four legs with a jerk, he sat speechless, staring at his visitor. In his eyes the stranger seemed to grow in importance. There was something, he thought, positively noble in his aspect: Skipper reproached himself that he had not noticed it before.

“And *me* that ca’d you Alley! *Oh, Prince!*”

The Arab raised his hand as though condoning the liberty with condescension. Then in a hoarse voice, and with many gestures, he embarked upon the tale. He looked more like a strange bird of prey than ever, huddling close to the warmth of the fire. But if he suggested this simile to Skipper’s mind, it was in no derogatory sense, but accompanied by a succession of images—mere impressions, vague, fugitive, incomplete, yet which had the power to thrill him with all the

mystery and fascination of the unknown. Nor were the words to which he gave ear calculated to drive such impressions from his mind. True, they were broken, the sentences disjointed, the verbs oftentimes omitted; they fell from the bloodless lips with obvious difficulty, extracted with the aid of violent gesticulations; yet their broken character gave them something of the abrupt and appropriate, something in common with disaster, while their very incompleteness cried for assistance to the imagination.

Skipper sat like a man under a spell.

The story to which he listened sounded like a fairy-tale—one of the “queer” things out of his well-thumbed ‘Arabian Nights.’ Barely could he believe his ears when he heard that *his* guest was the greatest of great ones in a white city “bigger nor St Andrews”; that he possessed flocks and herds “just like the folk in the Bible”; camels too, more than Skipper could count in a summer day; date-palms also, forests of them; that when he went for a walk the neighbours—“a’ blackamoors like hisself”—ran to kiss his clothes, to praise him for his regularity at the kirk, to call down the blessings of the Lord upon his head.

As the recital proceeded, Skipper’s eyes became amazingly prominent. The camels in especial moved him deeply. At the mention of their numbers an irrepressible cry broke from him. He had seen a camel once—in a travelling menagerie—and had been so fascinated by its Oriental appearance that not only had he spent every penny he could borrow upon repeated visits to the show, but had even followed it to the neighbouring town of Cupar, in the hope of seeing it again. And if one camel had the power to enthrall him, what might be expected from thousands? Shutting his eyes, he tried to picture an Eastern landscape, bright as an

oleograph, covered with camels. But the effort was beyond him.

Ali Mohammed continued. He told of a visit to England,—the reason whereof was left to Skipper's imagination,—of disgust at the cold and the damp, of his intention to return speedily to the lands of sunshine. He spoke of a ship,—Skipper opened his eyes, his attention, if possible, redoubled,—a vessel chartered, it would appear, on purpose to convey him from our inhospitable shores.

"Whit was she called?" cried Skipper, unable to keep silence.

"*Maree-Ann*," replied the narrator glibly.

For the first time a shade of doubt darkened Skipper's eyes. He opened his mouth to speak, but changing his mind, signed to the Arab to continue. Ali Mohammed again took up the tale. He hinted at disaster,—a black night, a sudden awakening, a stampede upon deck, sea and sky in possession of evil spirits. The word "Allah" occurred at frequent intervals.

"Alla?" questioned Skipper. "D'ye mean Alley? Are ye speakin' of yersel'?"

Ali Mohammed cried out in horror. "No, no!" he gesticulated, his eyes flashing with disdain; "Allah is God." Then in swift Arabic, and under his breath, "May thy religion perish utterly!"

"Oh, certainly! certainly!" acquiesced Skipper, with a smile. "But whit happened? Was it a wreck?"

The narrator betrayed annoyance. He became agitated; his hands fluttered. Glaring at his auditor, he muttered more fierce and incomprehensible words.

"But you must tell me that, Prince," implored Skipper. "It's for yer ain sake. D'ye see, ye canna just have a wreck happen affhand like, fer nae obvious reason, like a sliced drive. Man, Prince, folk will

want tae ken, and whit the Providence am I tae tell them?"

His guest gazed at him blankly.

"Maybe it was rocks?" prompted Skipper.

"Yes—rocks."

"Noo ye're talkin'," cried Skipper, rubbing his hands. "Rocks, oh ay; we can a' understand that. Naisty things they are tae; aye lyin' in wait for ye like a bunker."

Upon this point both men were agreed. Ali Mohammed became almost enthusiastic. The Divine Power was cordially invited to blast all rocks.

"Heer, heer!" applauded Skipper. "Blast? that's a guid word! I wisht He would. It would be a convenience. Ma word!"—he gave vent to his irrepressible chuckle—"that would keep Him busy. But go on, Prince; I'm interruptin' ye."

The story of the wreck proceeded. Every one, it appeared, had fought for the boats. The Prince had performed prodigies of valour. Despite his efforts, however, not a soul but he had escaped—a fact which he attributed solely to evil spirits, whose wings, he averred, had darkened the face of the waters. For five days he had drifted in an open boat: Skipper had seen it, and could bear witness to his sufferings. (This part of the tale was described with a wealth of circumstantial evidence denied to other portions of the narrative.) At length, when on the point of abandoning hope, he had sighted land; and as the dawn of the sixth day glimmered in the east, had come to shore beneath the Spindle Rock.

The broken voice ceased. Within the little kitchen naught was to be heard save the solemn ticking of the clock and the faint sounds of life that reached them from the street.

Skipper sat long motionless, plunged in thought, a frown of perplexity stamped upon his forehead.

"Prince," said he at length, "did I hear ye say the name o' the ship was the *Mary-Ann*?"

"Yes."

Skipper passed a hand across his eyes. "I—I fear I'm awfu' slow o' comprehension," he continued humbly, "but I didna see hoo her name was *Mary-Ann* when it begins wi' an *S*."

The stranger started.

"Ay," went on Skipper, nodding gravely. "Just that. I seed a bit o' a name rubbed oot on her bows—a big *S* and a wee *d*."

A gleam sprang to the Oriental eyes. They looked at Skipper with admiration. A man of such penetration merited approval. A smile that was all but pleasant hovered round his mouth.

In a few words he explained that the boat belonged in reality to a ship named *Sea - Bird*, but that having been lent to the captain of the *Mary-Ann*, it had been inadvertently carried off when they set sail. The explanation came glibly from his lips: it was almost as if he had foreseen the objection. No such suspicion, however, crossed Skipper's mind.

Yet he was not wholly satisfied. Clearing his throat, he turned on the crouching figure a meditative eye.

The stranger yawned loudly, disclosing a cavernous mouth and two rows of perfect teeth; but out of the corners of his narrow eyes he shot a swift and calculating glance at his host. It was but for an instant, however, for at the next he feigned interest in his cloak, gathering its folds around him with nervous fingers, shivering slightly, for the fire had burned low and had ceased to give out heat. The faded scarlet fez, still

perched upon his shaven head, alone caught the light, and made a faint glow of colour within the room. Below it, on either side, his ears stood out like two misshapen handles.

"There is just the wan thing, Prince," began Skipper, in tones that were softly apologetic. The Arab stopped him with a gesture. Harshly he forbade Skipper to make use of his title, mysteriously hinting at enemies and the necessity for secrecy as long as he remained on British soil. Growing less peremptory as he noted the sympathy of his auditor, he added that for the present his name was Ali, and that Skipper was at liberty to make use of it.

"Oh, Prince—I mean Alley!" blurted Skipper. "It's awfu' guid o' you tae trust me like this—an' me only a caddie. But whit I was minded tae speir is—hoo is it that you, a Prince, wi' a' thae camels at yer back, are no' better dressed? Man, that's a puir coat for a Prince—a wheen rags!"

Then did Ali Mohammed explain that the coat in question belonged to his servant, who had perished in the wreck; that countless garments of price, along with gold, jewels, and other valuables, all belonging to him, had gone down with the vessel.

Skipper sprang to his feet.

"Alley!" he cried, "say nae mair. Ye're heapin' coals o' fire on ma heid. I'm fair ashamed. I'm grawin' auld, d'ye see,—age is a fearfu' thing for makin' a man suspicious. Instead o' just bein' glad tae see ye, whit must I dae but think it queer that the name was rubbit aff the bows, and that yer coat was shabby. Dod! I'm a disgrace tae Scotland. I'd make a puir appearance in a parable. You lyin' helpless on the wan side, an' me sneekin' by on the ither. Ye maun forgie me. Man! it's God's truth I'm tellin' ye when I say that it's just

graund tae have ye here. The bit kitchen looks anither place. It does! it does!" He broke off abruptly, an indescribable expression in his face. "Prince!" he cried, and impulsively he stretched out a hand. "Prince, me and you has just *got* tae be freends—here's ma haund on it."

The stranger listened to this outburst in silence. He gazed at the proffered hand with a suspicion which he was at no pains to conceal. There was a moment of hesitation, then slowly and very reluctantly he placed his dark finger-tips within it.

CHAPTER XXI.

ALI MOHAMMED was alone in the kitchen. With patience he waited till the sound of receding footsteps could no longer be heard, then he rose to his feet. Above the usual height, he looked a man of some forty years of age. A scanty beard clothed his chin, and a light down covered his upper lip. His features were unusually good, even for an Arab, but failed to please on account of his expression, which was furtive and sly. As he stood there listening, he made a singular object compared with the homely little kitchen. He looked around him. His air of contemptuous disapproval was combated by a certain inquisitiveness that stood revealed within his eyes. Moving softly, he inspected various objects that attracted his attention. His motions were graceful. The unrestraint of his draperies imparted a statuesque effect to his tall and emaciated figure. The swishing sound of sandals trailed over the brick floor mingled with the ticking of the clock. As he moved, the reproduction of his movements in the looking-glass on the dresser caught his eye. He approached it stealthily, and, bending down, looked into it. At the sight of his own black face he grinned complacently, then leisurely examined his teeth.

A photograph of Skipper's deceased wife upon the high mantel-shelf caused him to frown. A suspicious object, shameless in its unveiled indecency, it awoke his

indignation. Then as he scowled at it, he remembered that the Franks were Infidels, who made unto themselves pictures and other iniquitous objects expressly forbidden by the Prophet. Ay, and had he not heard that in their mosques they even worshipped such abominations, bowing down before them as though they were from heaven! "It is his God!" he muttered in Arabic, then spat with disdain upon the floor.

The drawers of the kitchen-table were next examined. Half a dozen pieces of sugar, found in one corner, were appropriated and concealed within his clothing—they might prove useful; otherwise the contents were useless, and even incomprehensible. This was a disappointment: he had hoped to find money.

The box-bed, however, went far to console him. It was a marvel. Squatting on his heels before it, he uttered loud ejaculations of amazement. Never had he seen its like, neither on the floating house that vomited black smoke, nor in the great ugly city in which he had passed a weary time of exile. It was so broad and soft. And how curious to conceal a bed within a wall, as though it were some great treasure! With inquisitive black fingers he felt the sheets, the curtains, the pillow, uttering again and again his first exclamation of "*Ma sh'Allah!*"

Becoming aware from the coldness of the room that the fire had sunk low, he piled on coals with a lavish hand, expending in one moment all the little store of fuel that Skipper had fondly trusted would last until the morrow. Then, as the eager flames waxed momentarily, he basked in their warmth and gave himself up to thought. His arms were twined around his knees. His long and slender fingers—the hands of a nervous and imaginative man—were twisted together. His head, bent forward in a reflective attitude, revealed the neck

and part of the shaven skull. Upon the latter bristled a newly-grown crop of stiff black hairs. Around his bunched figure his blue cloak fell in folds that would have delighted a sculptor's eye. Topping all was the faded scarlet fez, not of the lofty Turkish shape worn by great ones, but the low round tarbûsh of the common man.

As his eyes gleamed in the light of the fire they suddenly expanded, and a smile of self-congratulation bared his white teeth. "By the Korán!" he mused, "that was well done. For a Fellah to exalt himself to the rank of an Emir is a great deed, and worthy of praise. To bewail misfortune is ever the custom of the foolish, and rightly despised. Wah!"

He heaved a complacent sigh, then sank into a brown study.

How eagerly the credulous little Frank had listened to his tale. At the memory a contemptuous sneer curled his lips, expanding again into a grin as he reflected upon the advantages of the situation. There was doubtless store of piastres to be gained. All Nazarenes were wealthy—"May their religion perish!"—although they evidently concealed their ill-gotten wealth in some cunning place. He turned a greedy eye on the worn bricks that composed the floor, promising himself an exhaustive search on some future occasion.

The memory of his exile, and his disastrous attempt to regain his native land, appeared to him as an evil dream. Doubtless some powerful jinni had thwarted him. At the thought he glanced nervously over first one shoulder, then the other, to exorcise any evil spirit who might be present. He believed implicitly in the race of Jan. Were they not fallen angels dwelling on earth? Did they not share equally with men the chance of salvation? And, moreover, had not a terrible

jinni appeared on one occasion to his grandfather, when the worthy man—Allah rest his soul!—was on a far journey to the Sunset Land, taking unto itself the likeness of a cow, with eyes of flame and breath of smoke—a horror not to be thought of without fear.

Again he muttered low—a potent spell, taught him long ago by his mother, to propitiate the mighty ones of the air.

Gradually his thoughts drifted to his native town. It rose up before him, white-walled, luminous, under a dome of untroubled blue. By Allah, a goodly place of habitation! Even at that moment the waves were washing its foundations, as he had seen them times without number. Even as he sat there—an alien in the accursed home of an Infidel—men were buying and selling, cheating each other, gaining good money, growing rich and honoured under the protective sanctity of El Islam. At the certainty he uttered a groan of impatience.

With something of affection and a softening of his nature, he recalled his house, or rather hovel, hard by a ruined wall. It had but a single room, dirty beyond words, the haunt of many ancient smells, a litter of refuse, but in his new mood he exalted it to a palace. He knew every inch of its surroundings. His little garden-patch, his one fig-tree, the feathery tamarisks overtopping his neighbour's house, the white city behind, the sunlit sea in front. It was all dear to him. Even the memory of the dead donkey gnawed by dogs, that he had seen hard by his garden fence upon the last morning, imparted a familiar feeling of home and of the shiftless life he loved so well.

His little stall, too, in the crowded Sok (where he was wont to sit puffing at his narghileh waiting for customers, indolently flapping at the myriad flies, shaded by

the tattered awning, watching through semi-closed lids the rainbow crowd ebbing and flowing in the fierce sunlight) was beloved. By his beard, why had he left it? The question was answered by the recollection of the accursed antique vase which he had discovered while digging in his garden; of the spy Cassim, his neighbour, who had given information to the Basha; of the awakened avarice of the great one; of the summons to appear before the court; of the fear of imprisonment—ay, and even of torture—that drove him into exile over the blue sea into the hated lands of the Nazarenes.

Again and again he groaned, showing his fangs like a dog that is angered.

"May the grave of his mother be defiled!" he snarled in fierce Arabic. "May his religion perish utterly!"

He would be revenged. The Basha was old, his days were numbered. Even now he might have departed to the hell which the Prophet in his infinite mercy had prepared for the unjust. A return was possible—soon! The day would surely dawn when he, Ali Mohammed the oppressed, would take Cassim the pig by his two ears and spit upon his face—ay, and crush him utterly, body as well as soul. With money all was possible. Wah! for the good yellow pieces that shone bright within the hand! But how to get money? That was it, how to get money. He knitted his brows and frowned in stern concentration.

An idea flashed to his mind; he smiled.

Was not the little Frank, his host, strongly impressed with a due sense of his guest's importance? He drew himself up and smoothed the folds of his burnouse with complacent fingers. By his beard, he would treat this wretched little Nazarene as a clever man treats a fool, as a Believer treats an Infidel! He would play with

him artfully, flatter his fancies, pick his brains, suck him dry, trample him under foot, then—then—(he tossed his thin arms on high; a fierce light shot from his eyes)—then the reward of Allah would be his—fame, honour, revenge, money; ay, above all things, *money!*

Meanwhile Skipper, blissfully unconscious of the meditations of his guest, pursued his way towards the links. His thoughts danced around a maypole of satisfaction. Their glad exhilaration rendered him unobservant of his surroundings, and even of fellow-mortals encountered in his walk. By good fortune every turning—nay, almost every stone—in the grey streets was familiar to him: he could have found his way blindfold. In his avoidance of pedestrians, however, he was less fortunate. Thus, he upset Mrs Herd's last baby, and not only omitted to restore it to its feet, but actually left it lying in the gutter speechless with astonishment. He collided also with paralytic Mrs Beg, and picking up the crutch which was her one means of support, carried it off until brought to a standstill by her outcries.

"Hi! Skipper, hi! bide a wee," roared a familiar voice when our hero had reached the end of Castle Street. Skipper, starting from his dreams, recognised Simpson, and groaned inwardly. That individual overtook him at a run.

"Whit's this I hear about ye, Skipper?" he shouted while yet distant.

"I wonder," commented Skipper, with a humorous twitch of his eyebrows.

"It was Herd told me," pursued Simpson breathlessly. "He got it frae Mistress M'Clure, and she got it frae wan o' Auchterlonie's bairns, who was keekin' oot o' the window."

"Oh?" exclaimed Skipper, with exaggerated interest.

"Ay, they tell me you was seen wi' a black man. Not that I believe it; oh no! 'A' havers,' says I. 'There's no black man in St Andrews, and if there was, why should Skipper walk wi' him?'"

"Ay, ay, Simpson, did ye say that?"

"I did indeed, Skipper; those were ma verra words."

"Weel, if onybody speirs at ye——"

"Ay, Skipper," cried Simpson, devoured with curiosity.

"Say them again."

Simpson stared after his retreating figure. Amazement struggled with indignation.

Skipper's thoughts reverted to his secret. He chuckled softly. Seldom had he felt so happy. This strange thing that had come upon him coloured his life. It recalled to mind supreme moments in his existence,—when his wife had accepted him, when he had holed the ninth hole in one, when old Dr M'Tavish had announced that Devina was a girl. It showed up his home in an entirely different light. No longer merely a kitchen and a bedroom,—a place convenient to sleep in but expensive to keep up,—it now beckoned from the lands of allurements. The home-coming seemed tediously distant, the intervening hours interminably slow; Skipper wondered if they would ever pass.

Upon reaching the club-house he was at once engaged for a round. Well was it for him that Brandscome—his new employer—was essentially a kind-hearted man, for such was the preoccupation of his thoughts that he was in no fit state to carry golf-clubs. Brandscome, however, had much fellow-feeling for Skipper. Himself an enthusiast, he stood out from the common ruck of golfers by reason of a soul that saw in life interests other than the pursuit of the elusive ball from green to green.

"He kens every stane in the Castle," Skipper had

whispered to Tam upon one occasion when the two caddies were waiting on the first tee.

"No, Skipper!" Tam had exclaimed, with the abiding astonishment that endeared him to Skipper's heart.

"He does, Tam; and to hear him talk o' the Cathedral, ye would think he had knocked it doon himsel'." Tam had stared in great admiration at the unconscious antiquarian, who was swinging his driver with enthusiasm.

"Ay," Skipper had continued, "I hear he can sing tae, better nor M'Phee. Robb telt me he heard him wan nicht as he was gangin' hame; the window was open and Robb heard the verra words o' the song; and whit d'ye think it was? It was aboot an oyster that walked upstairs, and Robb sweers that he was walkin' aboot among the leddies on his haunds and knees a' the time he was singin'!"

"It's no' possible, Skipper!"

"And then, Tam, he writes things fer the papers."

'Are they prentit, Skipper?'

"Better nor that, Tam, they're read. And then he's on the Town Council,—there's honour for ye! Man, he can just dae onythin' he likes wi' the water-supply. No' that I care much aboot water myself,—wi'oot whusky, I mean,—but some o' the English veesiters waste an awfu' lot over the washin', they tell me; a bath every day, Tam, think o' that! Nae wonder there's a scarcity noo and then."

Tam had cried out at the extravagance, and the conversation had come to a close.

Brandscome strode in front; Skipper, marching to the gladness of his thoughts as to stirring music, lurched behind. The short turf beneath his feet; the breeze that stirred his grey hair, softly caressing it with cold invisible fingers; the pale-blue sky, luminous with meagre sunlight, that smiled on him like a great

kindly eye,—all were dear to him. Now and again, prompted by the spur of his inclinations, he turned and gazed at the grey houses dominating the grey cliffs. They, too, shared his happiness. *He* was there! At the recollection he squeezed the bag of golf-clubs under his arm, moved thereto by an imperative need of expression.

"What shall I take, Skipper?" questioned Brandscome, when they reached the ball.

"A Prince," murmured Skipper.

"What?" exclaimed Brandscome.

"The brassie," corrected Skipper, with confusion. Brandscome eyed him thoughtfully. The second drive was sliced. Much time was lost in looking for the ball among the whins.

"You should have kept your eye on it, Skipper," said his employer testily. "This is very unlike you. I don't think it came as far as this. I wonder where the devil it is."

"Somewhere in Afriky, I'm thinkin'," mused Skipper.

Brandscome stared at him with genuine anxiety. Skipper beamed at a bunker.

"Are you sure you are well, Skipper?"

The attention pleased Skipper. The temptation to pose slightly as an invalid beset him. He coughed tentatively.

"Are you ill?" persisted his employer.

"No' exactly whit you would ca' ill, Maister Brandscome, but there's no' denyin' that I've had a stroke."

"Paralysis!" gasped Brandscome.

"Na, na, sir; a stroke o' guid fortune."

Fierce cries of "Fore!" interrupted them, and abandoning the ball, they hastened to the third tee.

The round over, Skipper pocketed his eighteenpence with happy indifference. This conduct struck Brands-

come as being so foreign to Scottish character that his suspicions were more than confirmed.

"D—d queer!" he ejaculated.

"What's queer?" questioned his opponent.

"It's Skipper. Didn't you notice how funny he was this afternoon?"

"No; he seemed all right. He gave you the right clubs, didn't he?"

"Oh yes; he does that even when he's drunk. He carried for me once when he could barely stagger, and never made a single mistake. I'd prefer him drunk, if it wasn't for the reek of inferior whisky. That's not what I mean. It's his conversation. I'm hanged if I can fathom it. He said all sorts of queer things,—called me a shipwreck at the seventeenth hole."

His friend laughed. "He was about right, old chap; you took eight to hole out."

Brandscome, however, shook his head, and the two men entered the club-house.

CHAPTER XXII.

Joy and disappointment left their mark on Devina. Her nature had been shaken to its depths. Fate had opened unexpected doors but to close them again in her face. But the glimpse she had obtained, momentary though it was, had had time to work its effect. It was as though a revolution had taken place in the unfamiliar regions of her heart, obliterating landmarks, breaking down barriers, paving the way for that which was to come.

And yet for her it was all a mystery. She felt in the dark; she could not go back; she knew not what lay ahead.

There were times when she relapsed into a moroseness of manner that was pitiable to witness,—it was as though the inward ache, that never ceased, had cowed her into sullen and distasteful submission; times, too, when no longer morose, but bewildered as a dumb animal by a pain it cannot understand. She gazed at life through eyes whose every look was a wordless reproach.

Yet, with it all, the experience softened her. It showed her not herself alone, but others in a new light. The knowledge that others too had suffered and were suffering attuned her mind to gentler thoughts. Had hers been a narrower, smaller nature, suffering would but have bound her to herself, but, being what she was, it gave her the world. Had she been a girl in her teens,

love would have come to her lightly,—as it comes to all young things,—but as she was a woman grown, the assured fact that she loved came as a mortal sickness beyond hope of recovery.

Yet though inwardly shaken to her foundations, the change in her might well have escaped detection. Her voice was almost as gruff, her manner almost as “dour,” as ever. Ellen, her fellow-servant, however, being of a sympathetic nature, noted the change and wondered.

“Whit’s wrang wi’ ye, Devina?” she questioned.

“Naethin’,” replied Devina.

The two women were seated at the kitchen-table; their evening meal, consisting of tea, bread-and-butter, and a cold pie, lay before them. The fire burned brightly, and the gaslight shone upon the whitewashed walls and polished utensils with cheerful effect.

In spite of the denial, Ellen looked at her companion closely. She was toying listlessly with her bread-and-butter. She looked ill.

“Ye look queer,” continued Ellen. “Ye’re starvin’ yersel’, and I heard ye tossing something awfu’ last nicht. And I saw ye the day keekin’ oot o’ the window as if ye was expectin’ somebody. It’s no’ naitural.” She paused, then suddenly, with a laugh of good-natured banter, “Devina, I believe ye’re in love.”

Devina flushed, her teeth closed upon her under lip until it was bloodless; she shook her head.

“Hoots, dinna deny it. It’s naethin’ to think shame of. I’m in love masel’.”

“Ah, but you’re engaged to be marriet.” There was a wistfulness in the words, even though they were gruffly spoken, that touched Ellen’s heart.

“Ay,” she said softly. “Jock and me will be settin’ up hoose thegether in the spring. I’m glad Jock’s a shoemaker.”

"How's that, Ellen?"

"For the shoes, of course. I'll mak him gie me a real bonnie pair whenever I like. Will that no' be grand? Jock will dae onythin' in the worrld I like. I've just got to ask him."

There was no reply. Ellen drank her tea and munched her bread-and-butter with healthy appetite. Devina watched her with an indescribable expression in her eyes.

Ellen was a large, plump, fair girl of twenty-two years of age, of but little strength of character and no originality, with a skin of milk and roses, liquid eyes, and a certain air of placid sleekness. Devina dominated her, and Ellen, unconsciously recognising superiority, deferred to her in all things.

Devina wondered vaguely. Ellen and she seemed to have changed places. She suppressed a sigh, but not successfully. Again Ellen laughed, this time in triumph.

"Ye *are* in love, Devina! Oh, I see it fine! That's just the verra way I used to sigh masel' afore ma Jock speired at me to marry him. Noo, Devina, wha is't? Whit's he called?"

A sudden and imperative longing for sympathy came to Devina. Her nature, softened by the trouble in her heart, craved for comprehension. Ellen's good-natured face smiling at her with an air of kindly patronage made confidence possible. They had much in common. Both were subject to this strange inexplicable sickness called love. Both were banded together by the ties of sex—fighting in the dark against the troubling magnetism of man. The strong nature felt its strength evaporating—it longed for an arm upon which to lean. A moment of conflict, then pride and reticence crumbled into ruin.

"It's Erchie," she whispered brokenly.

Ellen set down her cup with a clatter; her pale-blue eyes opened to their widest.

"Erchie Garvie, him that's been in South Afriky?" she inquired eagerly. Devina, with averted face, gave a sign of assent. Ellen smiled with all a woman's appreciation of a budding romance.

"I mind you and him were always freends," she said thoughtfully. "He's a steady lad yon; no nonsense about him. You mind he kept his auld mither upon his wages till she died of a stroke. And does he love ye, Devina?"

Devina stirred uneasily in her chair. The frown between her eyes deepened. She looked at Ellen,—a swift glance, full of an uncomfortable resentment. She regretted having taken her into her confidence. There was that in the bald interrogation that repelled her, she knew not why. Her innate sense of delicacy was shocked. The flower of her love was too fragile and precious, too wonderful a thing, to be subjected to the roughness of Ellen's touch. Had she spoken, she knew that she would have spoken roughly, so she kept silent, though it cost her an effort. Ellen made no attempt to conceal her surprise.

"Weel, can ye no' speak?" she cried.

With a pang Devina recognised the identical words that Archie had used. The whole world seemed banded against her, and silence was her only weapon. A dull heat of resentment burned in her heart.

"Ye needna tell me unless ye have a mind," continued Ellen, more than half inclined to take offence. Still there was no answer.

"Only see here," pursued Ellen, pushing back her chair angrily, "the next time ye've a mind to ask for advice, ye needna come to me."

Devina stretched out a hand.

"Stop!" she said, speaking with difficulty. "I dinna want to fash ye, Ellen, but there are things I canna speak aboot. Oh, it's easy for some folk—they're just a wheen words; but I'm no' like that. I canna think whit made me tell ye his name. It was daft o' me."

Ellen's annoyance evaporated. "Hoots no!" she said cheerily; "I would tell ye onything about Jock ye like."

A shadow darkened Devina's face: it deepened the lines on her forehead.

"Ye would be tellin' him maybe whit I say?"

"Tellin' Jock, ye mean?"

"Ay."

Ellen laughed. "No fear," she said. "It's nane o' his business. It doesna dae to tell the men folk every-thing. Nae doot they've mony a secret from us. Noo see here, Devina; ye're sensible, but och ye're awfu' ignorant aboot men. You tell me whit ye can aboot you and Erchie, and I'll dae whit I can to help ye."

But Devina did not reply. With arms outstretched upon her knees, and fingers twisting themselves together, she sat, her eyes fixed upon the fire. The sensitiveness in her face was almost painful to witness. For a reason which she was unable to fathom, one part of her nature seemed forcing her to speak, although the other part cried out against the indiscretion.

Ellen noted her trouble. With unusual tact she feigned interest in an illustrated paper that had drifted from the drawing-room.

"Ye met him the ither nicht?" she inquired, her eyes fixed upon the print.

"Ay, the ither nicht——" Devina's words came suddenly. Then in a broken voice and hurriedly, as one who wishes to rid herself of a burden, she told the story of their meeting. Much was omitted,—her own

feelings, the watchful stars, the wordless sympathy of the sea, all that lifted the incident into the region of poetry; but despite its incompleteness it touched Ellen, who sat with elbows resting on the table, her eyes fixed upon the dark handsome face that flushed and grew pale in the firelight.

"Is that a'?" she inquired in a low voice as Devina ceased suddenly. The elder woman muttered an inarticulate assent.

"Ma word!" exclaimed Ellen, sweeping crumbs from the table with an indignant hand, "I thoct better of him nor that. A puir creature, that doesna ken his ain mind! A feckless——"

"Ellen!" Devina's voice rang stern. Ellen, cut short in mid-sentence, paused with open mouth. "Me and you will quarrel if you say onything against ma Erchie."

Ellen tossed her head: her colour flamed high.

"It's true," she cried. "Ma Jock wouldna have behaved like that."

A pain shot through Devina's heart. For a moment her mouth quivered, but she repressed emotion sternly. "Men are different," she muttered.

The two women sat silent. A rumble of wheels from Gibson Place and, later, the shriek of a nearing train broke upon the stillness, but these sounds died away.

Ellen, who was poring over the illustrated paper, suddenly uttered an exclamation of disapproval.

"Aw, Devina, see that! 'Dinner gown,' it says; fancy eatin' yer denner squeezed in like that. I canna see hoo they dae it, there's no room for the food tae gang doon. And aw! see to her shoulders, and—and—ma word! naked and no' ashamed. Devina, I do believe it would kill me if ma Jock saw *me* like that."

But Devina turned from it with a sigh. At another time it would have aroused her indignation also, but now

it seemed trivial—unworthy of attention. Ellen's animated face caused her a pang of envy.

"You're bonnie," she said. The words slipped from her unawares.

Ellen flushed at the unexpected praise; the illustrated fell from her lap. "No!" she remonstrated, but the remonstrance was three parts approval. "I'm just ordinar; I'm no' near sae handsome as you."

Devina laughed mirthlessly.

"Handsome! *Me* handsome!" she exclaimed bitterly. "Ma face is a curse. D'ye ken whit the mistress said tae me yesterday?"

Ellen expressed ignorance.

"She says to me, 'Devina, are ye unhappy here?' 'No,' says I. 'But whit made you speir that?' 'It's yer face,' says she. 'When you answer the front door the very veesiters remark on it, it's that gloomy.' That was the word she used—'gloomy'! Oh, Ellen," Devina's voice shook, "d'ye think that's whit offended Erchie the ither nicht?"

"No," said Ellen stoutly. "If I was a man I'd like fine to kiss it. There's no' denyin' that whiles it's a wee—serious like; but hoots! that's naethin' again' ye, and when ye smile it's just real bonnie—bonnier far than mine's. But it's a peety, Devina, that ye dinna smile oftener. Men like smiles."

"Do they, Ellen?"

Ellen smiled. "They do," she murmured contentedly. "Jock tells me my smiles makes him think o' sunshine."

"O' sunshine," echoed Devina softly. Her eyes glistened. Her thoughts flew to Archie.

"Ay," continued Ellen. "There's nae doot that Erchie's deeficult. He's got a queer temper. Hoots! dinna glower at me, Devina; ye canna deny it. Oh,

he's got his guid points like the lave,¹ but he needs managin'. From whit you tell me, he expectet you to talk aboot yer feelin's. It was silly o' him, nae doot, but yet it was naitural. Some folk like to be met half way, and ithers just do it a' by themselves. Noo, see here, Devina, the next time he's grumpy, you try smilin' at him. It's wonderful whit an effect it has on the men. It just brings them tae yer feet, as the books say."

Devina listened eagerly, devouring Ellen's words as though they were an infallible remedy for the ache at her heart. For one moment the clouds appeared to lift and Archie drew near to her, but at the next, misgivings gathered. Her inner nature shrank and drew back. The remnants of her pride and her deep-rooted instinct of self-respect rose in rebellion. Her love, great as it was, felt itself unable to quell the revolt. She yearned for love and all that love brings to a woman—yearned vaguely, tremblingly, passionately; yet though this was to her heart a hunger and a thirst, she felt that she could not purchase them even at the price of a smile. No! if he wanted her, let him ask her without the aid of allurements; and if he wanted her not—— The sentence was never completed, but, as her thoughts faltered on the last word, the light faded from her eyes and the future became a horrible void into which she dared not look.

¹ Rest.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE advent of the Arab created quite a stir in the neighbourhood of Castle Street. The news that Skipper had got "a queer-lookin' black man stoppin' wi' him" was soon in the possession of every man, woman, and child. The children, indeed, took a peculiarly lively interest in the affair—an interest which the popularity of Skipper but served to intensify. They assembled in crowds, they peered in at the little windows, they ran away upon the slightest suspicion of danger, they re-assembled with a praiseworthy determination to probe the mystery to its depths.

"He's lyin' on the floor!" whispered Jimmy Herd, hoarse with excitement, his nose flattened against the window-pane.

"Whit's he like?" whispered Aggie Simpson, aged seven. The latest Simpson arrival in her arms, Aggie judged it wiser to hover on the outskirts of the crowd. The others held their breath.

"I canna see verra weel; it's that dark. Oh, I see him noo; he's crouchin'."

"Let *me* see, Jimmy," entreated wee Davie Grieve, tugging at Jimmy's jacket. "I'd like fine to see him crouchin'."

But Jimmy, holding his ground, continued to impart information.

"I can see his teeth," he cried, with a fine appreciation of the dramatic side of the spectacle.

A chorus of "Aw!" greeted the news.

"An' a red thing aboot his heid," continued Jimmy.

"That'll be his tongue, maybe?" hazarded a youthful bystander.

Jimmy laughed him to scorn. "It's his bunnet," he explained severely. The bystander effaced himself. Jimmy resumed his post.

"He's yawnin' again," he announced triumphantly. Then in shrill alarm, "Oh, he's seein' me! He's gettin' up! He'll catch ye! Come on!"

And Jimmy tore up the street, followed closely by the crowd.

Nor were the elders behind in the interest they exhibited. They gathered in groups to discuss the event. These groups were very characteristic of Castle Street. Composed of two or three women seated around a large heap of mussels, and of an equal number of men in lazy attitudes, they were sufficiently picturesque. The men were for the most part fishermen, although occasionally an elderly caddie, who had the *entrée* to fisher society by reason of many years spent at sea, was to be found among them. The latter took their ease like lords, smoking, with hands in pockets, while the women worked as though their lives depended upon their exertions. No feeling of compunction at the seemingly unfair division of labour troubled either sex. The men had earned their right to rest; it was the part of the women to labour now.

"It's no' safe," ejaculated Mrs Weir in tones of disapproval. While she spoke she worked, opening mussel after mussel with the rapidity that comes of long practice: her short-bladed knife found the crack, parted the shells, scooped out the contents, which fell into a bucket, all

apparently in one deft turn of the wrist. "It's no' safe," she repeated. "A blackamoor's a heathen, an' a heathen's a cannibal; he'll eat onythin'. Come here, Mary." She raised her voice to recall a flaxen-haired infant who had toddled from her side.

"But how did Skipper come at him? that's whit I want to ken," said Turpie, a burly man. He stood in the middle of the road with his legs apart. His short greasy trousers were buttoned over his blue jersey. The absence of coat and waistcoat left his braces visible. He had the air of being padded.

"D'ye no' ken *that!*" struck in Simpson with superiority. "I thoct everybody kenned that. Skipper saw him clingin' on to a mast that was stickin' oot o' the water."

"Havers!" snorted Herd, who was lolling against the wall. "The man just tramped over from Crail wi' a bundle o' carpets and buttons and whit not. He's black, but whit about that? We canna a' be white. And it's naethin' so unusual; we've had a black man here afore."

"Is that so?" said Turpie.

"Ay," continued Herd, "I mind him fine. He sold the wife here a tidy—ye mind it, mither?—it's the blue wan that ye always say is ower bonnie to use. She keeps it aye in the same folds at the bottom o' a chest," he explained to the others complacently. Mrs Herd's worn face grew pleasant at the recollection. Mrs Simpson, who had been on the watch for an opportunity to recount her experiences, broke in eagerly.

"Ay, he come speirin' at oor door too. Wee Jeanie yonder was a babby. My word! she was frecht at him. I couldna get her to stop greetin'. I was at the washin', I mind, and he stood at the door and showed me his braws. I got a shawl aff him. Ye

a' ken it; it's the black wan that I aye wear at the kirk. He wantet fifteen shullings fer it, and I got it for sax. Eh, whit d'ye say to that? *He* said he was ruined."

She flashed a glance of triumph at the group.

"Ah, *she's* clever!" murmured Simpson, digging Herd in the ribs with an air of proud proprietorship.

"Black men are a' leers," growled Herd.

The Simpsons, man and wife, flushed with annoyance. Both opened their mouths to retort, but the husband, noting that his better half had cleared for action, withdrew modestly from the contest.

For a full minute Mrs Simpson gave the company the benefit of an acidulous tongue and an exhaustive knowledge of the Herd family. Yet not for a moment did she cease work. Her knife attacked mussel after mussel with as burning a zeal as though every individual shell-fish were full of Herd frailties, and she, Mary Simpson, were exposing them to the world. Turpie, being a peace-loving man, threw himself into the breach, and was requested by one and all to mind his own business. Persevering, however, he succeeded in restoring a semblance of peace.

"Skipper never met that pedlar man?" he asked, tactfully changing the subject.

"No," growled Herd; "he was ailin' that day. Skipper's awfu' queer aboot blacks. Ye mind his buyin' that picture at Gourley's auction?"

A murmur of assent arose.

"Whit will Devina be sayin' to this?" said Mrs Weir, with a chuckle of pleasurable anticipation. "I'd like fine to see her face when she sets eyes on him."

"He's sleepin' in her bed," gurgled Simpson.

There was a general laugh; the voices of the women rose shrill above those of the men.

"Serve her right," snapped Mrs Simpson spitefully: her temper still suffered from the insult to her shawl. "She's a dour thing," she continued; "aye glowerin' at ye. I canna stand her."

"It's a judgment, nae doot," assented her husband, wagging his head.

"How long will he stop wi' Skipper, think ye?" questioned Turpie.

Herd took the pipe from his lips and spat thoughtfully.

"Wi' onybody else I would prophesy a day," he said slowly. "But Skipper's different. Ye canna answer fer him. He might keep yon black man a week—ay, or even a fortnicht."

The others cried out at this unnatural conduct, and, work being finished, the meeting broke up.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AS was to be expected, Skipper was forced to run the gauntlet of the inquisitive. Whenever the familiar little figure with its shabby clothes and genial red face was to be seen approaching, a neighbour would hail it, and the two would plunge into animated conversation. It was, "Here Skipper; you're the verra man I was lookin' for," or, "Mornin' to ye, Skipper; here, bide a wee, I've somethin' tae ask ye."

Our hero thoroughly enjoyed the position of importance to which he found himself elevated. It gave him unique opportunities. To do him justice, he fully intended to adhere to the truth, but circumstances and force of habit were too much for him. It was the fault of the truth, not of Skipper. How willingly would he have borne witness to it, had it but given him the chance! Alas! instead of springing to his lips with alacrity, it lagged, it showed a reprehensible indifference to be spoken at all; and, while it was hesitating, a picturesque falsehood gaily made its appearance. The fault lay also with his interrogators. So visibly delighted were they with Skipper's misstatements and prevarications—nay more, so anxious were they that he should adopt *their* views of the matter—that he humoured them out of pure good-nature. Who was he that he should nip a harmless inaccuracy in the bud? Moreover, such a course of

conduct relieved him of responsibility; it soothed his sense of honour, for in a vague and undefined way he felt that to mislead others was an act of delicate loyalty to the Prince, for only by so doing could he assist his guest to preserve his incognito.

This latter task, however, was no light matter. Commander Carey, R.N., of the St Andrews Coast-Guard, had a keen eye for wreckage, and had been the first to interview Skipper and his dusky *protégé*. The possession of the boat with the obliterated name was a suspicious circumstance, in the opinion of the authorities. The wreck, too, was enveloped in mystery. The *Mary-Ann* appeared to be a phantom ship; no sailing list contained her name, neither did any account of her loss appear in the papers. Yet the Arab adhered to his version of the catastrophe. The *Sea-Bird*, on the contrary, was well known. She had sailed from Leith on the previous week with a mixed cargo for Mediterranean ports, and as she had been sighted in mid-Channel there was no reason to doubt her safety. Whether the boat belonged to her or to the ill-fated *Mary-Ann* was a matter for speculation. When questioned upon this point the stranger grew confused and sought refuge in Arabic. His anxiety, however, to be allowed to retain possession of the little craft, backed by Skipper's entreaties, moved Captain Carey to unaccustomed leniency.

"Well," he had said with a smile, "you know well enough that it's my duty to take charge both of wreckage and shipwrecked sailors. However, as nothing can be done about the boat till the return of the *Sea-Bird*, and that may be months, and as I can't pay this fellow's return passage, seeing that he's got a pretty hazy notion of where he wants to go, I don't mind leaving them both in your charge. Only, look here, you're responsible for their safe-keeping."

"Oh ay, ye can trust me, Captain," assented Skipper joyously. And there, for the moment, the matter rested.

With the non-official world no such painful accuracy was necessary, and Skipper rejoiced at being free to roam in the fields of fiction. There was a hazardous excitement in listening to details of the wreck as described by Simpson, and the next moment being buttonholed by Herd and supplied with information concerning the carpets: that was welcome as whisky to Skipper's heart. He would pay them both the compliment of undivided attention, nodding and winking mysteriously, punctuating their statements with ejaculations such as, "Oh?" or "Ay, ay," or "Just think o' that!" until the narrator flushed with pride and self-complacency at having, as he imagined, got the better of his rivals. Skipper was fully aware that the moment his back was turned Simpson and Herd would compare notes, and, finding how they had been tricked, would be sure to seek him in indignation. Far from acting as a deterrent, this knowledge imparted a delightful sense of danger to the situation.

From some among his fellow-caddies he had to put up with innumerable questions, others took but little interest in the matter, while others again, like Robb, saw in the incident nothing but food for coarse humour, which, had Skipper been less good-natured, would have left ill-feeling behind it.

Upon one occasion only did he lose his temper. It was on the second day after the arrival of the Arab. Several of the caddies were drinking at the "Far and Sure"—Skipper and Robb among the number. Skipper was comparatively sober. He had had but three glasses of whisky, two of which had been purchased with the money paid him for a couple of rubber-cored golf-balls found

in the heather that morning, and which he had sold to Lonie the club-maker for fourpence apiece; the remaining glass had been a free drink presented by M'Phee. Within his trouser-pocket was the sum of three shillings, his earnings for the day, which he was taking home untouched—had not he a Prince dependent upon his hospitality? Robb, on the other hand, had spent a shilling of his own and a borrowed fourpence on liquid refreshment, and had begun to show signs of intoxication.

The difference between the two men was in nothing more apparent than in their behaviour when under the influence of liquor. Robb grew morose, coarse, abusive; his speech came thick; he smote the counter, while his small bloodshot eyes glared at first one and then another of his companions, seeking grounds for quarrel. Skipper, on the other hand, became blandly garrulous, cheerful to the point of jocularity. Drink stimulated his imagination: he surpassed himself in his favourite occupation of adorning fact with fiction. He patted his friends affectionately on their shoulders. He smiled often, and if his smile was somewhat meaningless, yet so full was it of the milk of human kindness that even Robb had been known to soften under its influence.

To be called "a d—d fule" or "a muckle ass" for harbouring an impecunious foreigner were comments to be expected, and Skipper listened to them with good-natured indifference; but when Robb, secretly annoyed in that he had failed to rouse an old adversary, proceeded to insult the Prince, Skipper's smile vanished.

"Whit's that?" he asked. There was a sternness in his voice and a glitter in his eyes that spoke for themselves, but Robb was too far gone in his cups to practise discretion. He repeated the insult, aggravating the offence with a coarse laugh, intended to be ironical.

Skipper measured him for a moment in silence, then twitched a shoulder—

“Hoots!” he said, half turning his back, “you’re drunk.”

“Drunk!” roared Robb, his face on fire. “Goad! I’ll teach ye wha’s drunk,” and thereupon proceeded to blurt forth a foul and lurid slander. The little company of men held their breath. For a moment there was an ominous silence, then Skipper, roaring as a bulldog roars in the hour of battle, was upon him, and the two men went down with a crash on the sanded floor.

Considerable difficulty was experienced in inducing Skipper to quit his grip. The lust of fighting was upon him. He felt equal to a dozen Robbs. His brain, stimulated by whisky and incensed by the insults to his Prince, insisted in presenting Robb as a foul traitor whom it was his duty to strangle thoroughly while he was about it. At length the united efforts of big M’Phee and his cronie Todd succeeded in separating the combatants. Robb, black in the face and cowed as a beaten dog, staggered home speechless. Skipper, breathless, dishevelled, but triumphant, received the congratulations of his friends with satisfaction, not unmixed with a vague wonder as to what had really taken place.

The incident was not without its effect. For the future the Arab was tacitly recognised as a subject forbidden in Skipper’s presence; or if it was found absolutely necessary to refer to him, he was spoken of with caution and laboured politeness, as an honour to the town of St Andrews.

But alone with Tam Black, Skipper unbosomed himself freely. Tam was no one of importance; Tam was all sympathy and astonishment; Tam was safe as the Bank of Scotland.

One day Skipper and Tam were standing together near the club-house. Their morning round was finished: a couple of hours intervened before they need start again. In a moment of expansion Skipper clapped Tam on the back, thereby causing the insignificant little man to long for more bystanders to bear witness to the honour.

"Come on, Tam; we'll hae a crack," said Skipper.

"Whaur will we gang—it's that crowded in the shelter?" questioned Tam.

"Come doon by the sea," said Skipper, and the cronies sauntered off side by side.

By a coincidence the two men seated themselves upon the bench that had witnessed the interview between Devina and Archie. Skipper drew from an inner pocket a parcel which, being opened, was seen to contain two thick slices of bread with a herring between them. Upon this he fell ravenously. Tam feigned to be unconscious of the performance.

"Eat yer piece, Tam," mumbled Skipper, with his mouth full.

Tam's tongue moistened his under lip, but he turned his head resolutely away. "No' the noo," he said faintly.

"Whit for no?" demanded his friend.

"I—I'm no' hungry."

Skipper suspended operations. He eyed his companion sternly.

"Tam Black!" he said. Tam quailed beneath his stare. "Look at me!"

Tam's bashful nature rebelled, yet there was a magnetism about his friend that forced him to obey.

"Tam," continued the accuser, frowning heavily, yet with a kindly light ambushed within his eyes,—“Tam, ye're leein' to me.”

Tam opened his mouth to protest, but his conscience closed it again.

"Ye ken fine ye're hungry," went on Skipper, "and I can see ye've got nae piece to eat the day. Hoots, man! ye canna come ower me; I ken ye had only the wan round yesterday, and ye're keepin' the siller for the rent. Oh ay!"

Tam sat speechless. Skipper, secretly pleased at his own cleverness, continued to frown. For a moment neither spoke; then Skipper, shaking his head in mournful reproach, continued—

"Oh, Tam, Tam, I wouldna have believed it o' ye. To lee to me, yer auld freend! Man! why didna ye tell me? Did ye think I could eat ma bit piece wi' you settin' there starvin'? It wasna kind o' ye, Tam. Here,"—his voice rang sterner than ever,—"take this; and if ye dae it again, I'll——"

Leaving the threat unspoken, Skipper broke the herring into two pieces, chose the larger morsel, and thrust it, along with a slice of bread, into Tam's agitated hands.

The two men ate in silence. A keen wind from the north-east buffeted them, causing Tam to button his threadbare coat more tightly around him. The angry waves raced shorewards, white against a sombre sky. Occasionally one more bold than its companions smacked the sea-wall with a resounding blow, sending the spray in showers to their feet. Tam's meagre anatomy shrank under this rough treatment. The wind seemed to blow through it. When his eyes rested on the sea an apprehensive light was to be marked within them. Now and again he coughed.

"I'm glad I'm no' on it the day, Skipper," he said, indicating the turmoil of waters with a gesture.

"How's that, Tam?"

"I'd be awfu' seeck."

Skipper laughed.

"An' forby, it's fearsome."

"It doesna frecht *you*," continued Tam, with melancholy admiration. "You've been oot in the lifeboat, an' you've been wrecked; but wi' me it's different. I never did onythin' brave in ma life. I never want to dae onythin' brave eether—I just want folk to let me be. But, man, I often wish there was no more sea."

"Hoots, Tam, whit would the fishes dae then?"

Tam scratched his head in an effort to solve this problem, but in vain.

"I was readin' ma Bible last nicht," he began again.

"Ay, ay," murmured Skipper, sinking his voice reverently.

"An' I couldna find ony mention o' the sea in the Garden o' Eden."

"Did ye find ony mention o' caddies?" asked Skipper in genial irony.

"No, Skipper!" ejaculated Tam in great surprise.

Skipper laughed, but his voice was carried away by the wind.

"Tam, ye auld eediot!" he roared, "we canna win on wi'oot the sea. It's meat an' drink, daith an' burial, tae a lot o' men. The Lord kenned fine whit He was aboot when He made the sea; oh, ay! He kenned He couldna mak a guid gowf-links wi'oot it. Whaur would ye get yer bonnie sand-bunkers from if it wasna for the sea? Tell me that if ye can. Man!"—Skipper waxed indignant—"ye would change the verra face o' nature. Ye would make St Andrews an inland coorse. Think shame o' yersel'!"

"Oh, Skipper!" cried Tam, horror-struck, "I never meant that."

"Weel, weel," said his friend, with gruff forgiveness,

"if ye didna mean it, we'll say nae mair aboot it; but, Tam, ye maunna rin doon the sea. It brocht me guid fortune, onyway."

"Ye mean yon black man?"

"Ay, Tam, just him."

"Whit will ye dae wi' him, Skipper?"

Skipper reflected. "Weel," he said at length, "I've no' just made up ma mind. I canna bear the thocht o' partin' wi' him. I feel as if he was sent on purpose like—a sort o' answer to prayer—a beginnin', ye may say."

Tam listened attentively, with a puzzled look on his face. Skipper, after having lighted his pipe with difficulty, continued.

"Life's queer," he said pensively. "It's like gowf; ye carry every day, but there's never twa days alike."

"That's true," assented Tam, to fill up a pause in the conversation.

"An' look at the weather," pursued the philosopher.

Tam cast a furtive glance at the waves.

"Whiles it blows—mind the spray, Tam; it came awfu' near ye that time—and whiles the sun shines. Tam"—Skipper turned to his admirer impulsively—"the sun's shinin' on me the noo. Man, I feel warmed through and through."

Tam's eyes opened to their widest.

"I dae indeed," persisted Skipper, nodding his head. "To ken that he's there—in ma kitchen—warms me like—like a glass o' whusky. An' then he's that releegious."

"*Him* releegious!" cried Tam incredulously.

"Ay," assented Skipper, with deep admiration. "He prays somethin' powerfu', gettin' up and lyin' doon a' the time. Man! he fairly wrestles wi' the Lord. I wish ye could see him; it would impress ye."

"Aw!" ejaculated Tam, impressed already; "an' can he talk to ye, Skipper?"

"No' verra weel; his talk is gey queer; but, hoots! him and me understand each ither fine."

"But has he ony money?" questioned Tam cautiously.

Skipper shook his head. "No; I'm keepin' him for the present. It's expensive, I'm no' denyin' it; but och! it's an honour."

"He'll ruin ye," cried Tam, aghast; "ye're ower generous. It's no' practical. Ye ken trade's bad the noo: if snaw comes, and ye canna get on the links, whit will ye dae then?"

"Money's a fair curse," cried Skipper, indignantly kicking at the bench.

"It's the want o' it," corrected Tam.

Skipper grunted. "I wish at times I'd been brocht up to a trade," he said discontentedly. "Carryin' clubs keeps a man in poverty, ye may say."

"We're fit for naethin' else in this warld, you and me," said Tam dolefully.

"Havers!" snorted Skipper, expanding his shoulders; "I'm strong. I could dae onythin'. Ye're no' to think, either, that I'm wearyin' o' the gowf. No; I like it fine. It's no masel' I was thinkin' o'—it's *him*." Skipper jerked his thumb backwards. "He's thin, Tam," he added,—*"somethin' peetiful."*

Tam cudgelled his brains. His face brightened.

"There's Devina," he cried. "You'll have forgotten her. Man, Skipper, she's earnin' a guid wage; will she no' help ye?"

But at the mention of Devina's name the look of self-confidence faded from Skipper's face. He stroked his chin.

Tam noted the change.

'Does she ken?' he inquired.

Skipper laughed to conceal nervousness. "No' yet," he replied.

"Oh!" said Tam in surprise. "Ye maun tell her. It's no' fair to keep the guid news from the lassie. Ma word! she *will* be pleased. Ye mind hoo weel she liket the paintet blackamoor in yon picture? Dod! a real blackamoor will just be a treat to her. Eh, Skipper?"

But Skipper was engaged in relighting his pipe.

Tam's thoughts still bracketed Devina and the Arab.

"When will ye tell her, Skipper?" he continued, after a pause.

Skipper puffed impatiently. "Auld eediot!" he thought. "Whit does he want tae bother me for?"

"I would like fine tae be there when ye tell her," pursued Tam wistfully.

Skipper took the pipe from his lips. For a moment he eyed Tam in silence, struck by sudden thought.

"Ye mean it, Tam?"

"I dae indeed, Skipper; I aye like tae watch folk, weemen and bairns especially, when they're happy."

"Oh!" grunted Skipper, and relapsed into thought. Tam watched him expectantly.

"Man," said Skipper suddenly, "would ye like tae tell her yersel'?"

"*Me!*"

"Ay, just you."

A rare smile shone from Tam's eyes: it was, however, short-lived.

"Na, na," he said reluctantly.

"Whit for no'?"

"*You* want tae tell her, Skipper. You've been savin' it up for a surprise. Oh! I ken ye fine. But I'm no' the wan tae take advantage o' yer kindness. Oh no!"

Skipper's conscience reproached him. "Tam," he

began hurriedly, "ye dinna understand. Man, I'm no' daein' *you* a kindness: it's you that'll be daein' *me* wan."

Tam laughed incredulously.

"It's true," cried Skipper hoarsely. "If you tell her, Tam, it'll just tak a load aff ma back. D'ye see, Devina's queer. There's nae tellin' hoo she'll tak the news."

"Oh!" said Tam. "Ye think maybe that it'll be ower much for her?"

"Ay," acquiesced Skipper grimly.

"Weel, weel," mused Tam, "I never thocht o' that; but you ken the weemen folk better nor I dae." He racked his brains; then in sudden excitement, "I hae it, Skipper—we'll tell her thegither. Oh, ye needna be feared; we'll break it gently. But when'll we dae it?"

Skipper frowned.

"Oh! whit d'ye think—naixt week?" he hazarded.

Tam scoffed at the delay. "We'll tell her the nicht," he chuckled, rubbing his hands.

"Na, na," cried Skipper hastily; "I—I promised I would gang hame the nicht."

"The morn then, when oor wark's feenished?"

"As ye like," sighed Skipper, and the two men returned to the links.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE days passed slowly for Devina. She lived through them in a state of semi-consciousness, as though they were asleep and her desires stretched forward to the waking. Her work was not neglected. Under no circumstances could Devina have done her duty carelessly. She still scrubbed floors, dusted furniture, cooked dinners; yet her inner self was all but unconscious of these occupations. The ache at her heart seemed to augment rather than to diminish. She existed in a state of wistful anticipation. A knock at the kitchen-door had the power to arrest every drop of blood in her body.

Her work finished, she would sit painfully brooding, or would move aimlessly about, devoured by a restlessness of the mind. At such times she would arrange and rearrange objects on the kitchen table or dresser—touching them, looking at them, yet all the while profoundly unconscious of their existence.

Her thoughts turned often to the interview by the sea. She would repeat the conversation that had taken place—repeat it jealously word for word, recalling his presence and the treasured inflexions of his voice. She clung to these memories with a tenderness that was all but passionate. The fear lest they might elude recollection was ever with her. They were all she had, yet they did not bring her peace. Self-reproach tortured

memory. If only she had said this or done that, how different it might have been.

Yet bright among much that was dark shone the certainty that he had held her hand. Nothing could take that from her. It was the first time that a man had touched her save in salutation, and the thought of it, sweeping over her in a wave of emotion, caused the hot colour to inundate her face. She looked at her hand—the hand Archie had held. Its hard, work-worn aspect was forgotten; she gazed at it wonderingly, almost incredulously, and as though it were some new and sacred thing. Finding herself alone upon one occasion, and scarce aware of what she did, she raised it swiftly to her lips; then, as the significance of the act flashed across her, her colour again flamed high and she frowned in stern self-condemnation.

Her attitude towards Ellen underwent another change. The moment of weakness in which she had betrayed her secret reproached her continually. She thought of it bitterly, and of herself contemptuously. In her mind it became exaggerated not only into an act of disloyalty, but even into a madness of indiscretion of which no sane woman would have been capable.

With the uncompromising sternness of character inherited from Scottish forebears she longed to punish herself for the offence, unaware that her tortured heart was in itself punishment sufficient. Self-dissatisfaction made her unusually morose and gruff; suspicion emphasised it. Her behaviour became "dour" to the verge of rudeness. And yet, such was the contradictory tumult of her thoughts, after a more than usually rough speech, a sudden terror that Ellen might betray her confidence would fall upon her, prompting her to an act of conciliation—a word it might be—so unexpected in its gentleness that Ellen would stare at her in surprise.

And yet, transient against a sombre background, there trembled at times the rainbow of hope. Devina put it into no words. Her thoughts dwelt upon the past with a morbid capacity for self-torture; yet although her heart was full of trouble, hope was there too. It came and went when least she expected it. Through the visionary lands of sleep she and Archie walked hand in hand, in an atmosphere of perfect comprehension. Even as she slept she knew it was but a dream, and strove with all her might to postpone the waking. Starting from slumber, she would become conscious of Ellen's breathing from the little bed near by; and as she gave ear to it, realities would rush back, and again would her soul be tossed in a vortex of doubt. Oftentimes would the encompassing night seem to her less black than the blackness within her heart, oftentimes would her pillow be wet with tears.

CHAPTER XXVI.

DUSK had fallen when Skipper and Tam, their duties for the day performed, set out to visit Devina.

The moment when day merges into night is one of the most impressive in St Andrews. The glory of the sunset still lingers in the west, and reflects itself in a glory scarcely less bright upon the sands. Nowhere are sunsets more beautiful. Unobstructed by salient objects, the vision is at liberty to revel in the brightness overhead. The spaces of land and sea recede into mystery. The grey houses and venerable towers, that seem as though they had been hewn out of the solid rock upon which they stand, grow dim and indistinct. From the links comes the sound of distant voices or the click of a smitten ball; but these die away, and the light from the large window in the club-house streams out upon a deserted green. The light fades; the stars appear. All is still. Only from seaward, rendered more impressive by the silence and the night, steals the murmurous sound of waves.

Skipper paid no heed to his surroundings. Even the rose in the sky, that came so near being his favourite colour, failed to attract his attention. His thoughts were fully occupied with rehearsing the probable parts destined to be played by Tam, Devina, and himself within the next half hour. From the maze of "says Tam tae Devina," and "says I tae Tam," and "says

Devina tae me," however, he extracted but little consolation. Tam would always say the wrong thing; he himself stood speechless; and as for Devina, he could not even imagine her language when she discovered that a black man was sleeping in her bed.

Skipper stole a glance at Tam. That individual had undergone a change. By the aid of a gas-lamp Skipper could see that his pale face was unwontedly flushed, and that he carried his meagre personality with an air of self-assurance quite ridiculous in a man of his retiring habits.

"Whit are ye smilin' at?" he questioned gruffly.

"Was I smilin'?" asked Tam naïvely.

"Ye was." This with awful severity.

"I—I didn't mean it, Skipper. I'm sorry if ye dinna like it. I'll try no' tae dae it again."

Skipper grunted disapproval. Tam cast an agitated glance at him, then came to a sudden halt.

"Ah!" he cried, "*I* see whit it is; ye're sorry that it's me tae tell her. Man, Skipper, I was feared ye would regret it; it's a disappointment to ye; it's verra naitural; you her ain faither tae! Weel, you tell her, Skipper; dinna think I mind—na, na. I aye thocht it was ower muckle tae expec'; but I'm gratefu' tae ye a' the same."

"Hoots no, Tam," broke in Skipper hastily. "Dinna say that; dinna heed me; I'm bothered the nicht."

"Whit's botherin' ye?"

But Skipper declined to enter into details.

At the corner of Gibson Place Tam halted again. They were immediately opposite their destination—a semi-detached villa situated at a little distance from the road. For the first time Tam showed signs of nervousness.

"Bide a wee till I get ma breath," he faltered.

Skipper eyed him anxiously: their pace had been of the slowest.

"That'll be the hoose," continued Tam in a low voice, "and that'll be the parlour." He pointed to a lower window from which light was streaming. "It's Maister Wilson's hoose, is it no', Skipper?"

"Ay, Tam; ye needna be feared o' him—ye've carried for him often. I was oot wi' him masel' yesterday; he's a guid driver, I canna deny it, but och! he's unco weak wi' his approach shots."

"That's a fac'," assented Tam, much relieved. "An' he's ceevil tae ye. He gied me the verra shoes I've on the noo; they've but the wan hole in them, an' it's no' easy observed if ye dinna ken whaur it is. But, Skipper——"

"Weel, Tam?"

"They tell me he's marriet."

"He's nane the waur o' that."

"Na, na; but she nicht come ben the kitchen. Am I tidy, think ye?"

"Och, ye'll dae fine; naebody 'll look at *you*," said Skipper gruffly. "Losh me, whit's this?" As he uttered the exclamation he all but fell over a dark object that lay in the middle of the road.

"It's a coal," he announced, triumphantly rubbing his ankle.

"E-h-h! so it is," corroborated Tam, his hands on his knees. "It's fallen oot o' a cairt. Dod, it's a big bit!—you're aye lucky, Skipper!"

Tam suppressed an envious sigh. Skipper looked up.

"You take it, Tam," he said.

Tam shook his head.

"We nicht hauf it, maybe?" suggested Skipper doubtfully.

"It would be deeficult," said Tam in a resigned voice. "Coals are no' easy tae hauf."

"That's true," agreed Skipper, with relief. "Ye'll no' mind me takin' it, Tam. Ye see, it's for *him*; he's aye cauld; he just hankers after a guid fire, an' I canna always gie him wan, coals are that dear."

Skipper's jacket refusing to button over the find, he made shift to carry it in his arms. In this manner the two friends reached the kitchen-door.

"I'll knock, but you gang in first," whispered Tam.

Skipper backed precipitately. Tam caught him by the arm.

"Ye're no' gaein' to desert me noo?" he implored.

"I'm gaein' to bide oot here," growled Skipper; "I've got tae mind ma coal. See tae ma haunds, they're black; they're no' fit for company."

"But I canna——" began Tam in an agony of shyness.

"Hoots, ye can fine," interrupted the unfeeling Skipper. "Ye're a' richt. Gang on, man; I'll no' rin awa'. I'll just set on ma bit coal at the door. I'll be as near ye as if I was in the kitchen."

The decision in his voice warned Tam that further argument would be time wasted. His heart sank, but Skipper had already knocked. A voice from within bade him enter. Gulping down his fear, he complied with the request.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE two women were seated at the kitchen-table, Ellen darning stockings, Devina gazing into the fire. Skipper's knock had disturbed them.

"Come in!" cried Ellen again.

Devina's eyes, fixed on the door, told of hope dulled by disappointment. As Tam's head apologetically made its appearance, her face clouded, the light within her heart went out, and she turned again to the fire. Ellen also suffered disappointment: she had hoped that it might be Jock.

Tam gazed from one to the other, but found no words to say. His eyes, accustomed to the darkness, blinked in the gaslight. Were it not that he knew Skipper's burly form to be barring the doorway, he would have beaten a retreat; as it was, he retained possession of the door-handle, ready for any emergency. Remembering the cap still upon his head, he doffed it hurriedly and essayed to smile.

"Guid evenin'," hazarded Tam, in a voice which he intended to be confident.

"Guid evenin'," responded Ellen.

"Ma name's Black," continued Tam timidly; "Devina kens me fine." He cast a glance at Devina, seeking corroboration.

"Ay, he's a neebur—a freend o' faither's," assented

Devina indifferently. "Whit d'ye want?" she added, turning upon him with a frown.

Tam twirled his cap nervously, then as the acceptable character of his embassy flashed to his mind, he raised his eyes to Devina with a smile. "I've come to see ye; I've a sort o' message, ye may ca' it."

Devina continued to gaze at him.

"And yet it's no' preceesly whit ye would ca' a message eether. Na, it's mair a bit o' news—o' guid news," he added hastily. Then as he read faint interest in her face, he continued with a laugh, "Ay, Devina, it'll please ye fine; but ye canna guess whit it is yet—oh no!"

"Wull ye no' take a seat, Maister Black," suggested Ellen; "it's weary work the standing."

Tam accepted the proffered chair, moving with precaution, and carefully depositing his cap within convenient reach upon the floor. He sat on the extreme edge, his hands upon his knees, looking from one to the other with the air of a man who is in possession of a delightful secret, yet is extremely puzzled as how best to impart it. All at once, calling to mind the ambushed Skipper, he became suddenly grave, and cast a nervous glance over his shoulder at the door.

"Ye're feelin' the draught," said Ellen. "Ye micht shut the door."

"Na, na," cried Tam hastily; "I'm a' richt. I like air fine; its unco warm here."

"Whit's yer news?" demanded Devina. She spoke gruffly.

"It richtly belongs tae Skipper, yer faither. I would say he ocht to hae telt ye himsel'—that's whit I telt him; but"—he hesitated, then with a sudden burst of enthusiasm—"but we a' ken hoo kind he is."

Devina eyed him suspiciously, but Tam heeded her not. Launched upon his favourite theme, and wholly

oblivious of the open door, he warmed into unwonted eloquence. "Ay," he cried, his pale face flushing with earnestness, "there's naeboddy like Skipper—aye thochtfu' for ithers. It's a preeviledge tae carry in his company. Mind ye, I wouldna praise him tae his face. Oh no! but——"

A suspicious noise that sounded like a remonstrance cut him short in mid-sentence. With open mouth he stared at the door. The two women turned questioning eyes upon each other.

"Did ye speak?" whispered Ellen to Devina.

"Na; I thocht it was you."

"No," replied Ellen in an awestruck voice, "it wasna me; it sounded like a man. Devina! I—I dae believe it came frae the door!"

Tam, listening guiltily, grew hot all over.

"It was me," he blurted mendaciously.

They turned on him with incredulity.

"*You!*" ejaculated Ellen. "Why, you was talkin' at the time."

"Ay," assented Tam hoarsely, secretly marvelling at himself. "Ay, just that; it's a queer noise I whiles make when I'm talkin'. But whit I was minded tae speir o' Devina is—wha d'ye think is stoppin' wi' yer faither?"

Devina shook her head.

"It's a sort o' freend o' yours," continued Tam, in tones of encouragement. "We a' ken ye're fond o' him; indeed, ye've got a picter o' him that's gey like pit awa' safely in yer house. Eh, Devina! can ye no' guess noo?"

The hot colour rushed to Devina's face. Her thoughts flew to a daguerreotype of Archie taken at the fair. Wrapped in pink wadding within a jeweller's box, it lay concealed in a corner of her chest of drawers. No one

save Archie knew of its existence, and even he had probably forgotten it years ago. Her mind was in a turmoil. Incredulity combated astonishment. And yet it was characteristic of Devina that at the very moment when hope smiled upon her, her whole inner nature was shaken with a fierce resentment that her secret should be thus brutally made public. Tam, watching her with eager and hopeful anticipation, was filled with amazement. "Eh, but she's upset!" he mused. "Pleasure grips ye in queer ways at times." "Ay," he continued aloud, "him an' yer faither are awfu' intimate. He's sleepin' in yer bed, Devina; there's kindness for ye!"

"But wha is it?" demanded Ellen, devoured by curiosity.

Tam paused artfully to increase the effect; slowly he passed his tongue across his lips, savouring the good news. Then, with a smile that would not be repressed—

"He's a black man," he announced triumphantly.

"Black!" ejaculated Ellen, letting fall her work.

"Ay," continued Tam, wagging his head; "just that. I've no' richtly seen him masel', except the wance, keekin' through the window; but Skipper tells me he's as black as ony blackamoor. He found him on the rocks—shipwrecked, ye ken—and whit must he dae but bring him hame, like the guid Samaritan or the prodigal son. Ah, that's Skipper all ower; it's whit I—but whit's wrang? Whit have I said?" He broke off suddenly to stare at Devina.

Ellen turned quickly. Devina's face had grown pale; there was that in its expression that awed her companions into silence. Disappointment swept over her. For the time being everything, save a sense of immediate loss, became insignificant—even the indignation which

she felt at the desecration of her room. Her sensations in that moment of intense perception were curiously complex. Through the bitterness of disappointment she was aware—but dimly—of a thrill of satisfaction in that her secret was still unguessed of Tam; and that again was counteracted by an irrepressible shudder at the thought of how near she had been to betraying it herself.

The fixed gaze of Ellen and Tam disconcerted her terribly. The necessity for self-control was forced upon her. Silently, desperately, she strove to stem the tide of tears that rose from her heart. But despite her utmost efforts, the kitchen and its occupants swam before her eyes. Her mouth trembled. Fearing to speak lest she should altogether break down, she rose to her feet and hastened from the room.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"THERE! ye see whit ye've done," denounced Ellen. Her voice expressed the most poignant reproach. Tam sat aghast. His eyes wandered from the door through which Devina had disappeared, to Ellen, and from Ellen back again to the door. Amazement writ itself large upon his face; for the moment it even deprived him of speech.

Ellen, spurred to fresh exertions by his guilty attitude, continued, "She's sair upset, puir lassie. I've never seen her like that before; and nae wonder. It's a' *your* work; d'ye ca' yersel' a man?"

Tam, bewildered by the abrupt interrogation, shook his head.

"I—I fear me it was too suddent," he stammered.

"Too suddent!" she ejaculated in scorn.

"Ay, I've heard o' weemen folk that canna stand it verra weel; it grips them—so I've heard. I see it noo: it was ma faut. Dod! I'm awfu' vexed. I was lookin' forward wi' plesure tae tellin' her. Says I tae Skipper, 'Let me tell her,' says I; 'I'd like fine tae see her happy face.'"

"*Happy face!*" snorted Ellen in utter contempt.

"Ay, that's whit I said. 'Break it gently,' says he. But I was too rash—foolhardy, ye may say. 'Skipper,' says I in ma pride, 'ye can trust me; I'll tell her the guid news——'"

An ironical laugh from Ellen interrupted him.

"And was it no'?" cried Tam, roused into mild indignation. "Whit lassie wouldna be pleased to dae a kindness tae a puir shipwrecked man, lettin' alane him having the misfortune tae be black! I ken she just dotes on blacks. It's a queer taste," he added pensively, "but nae doot she gets it frae her faither."

Ellen gazed at him in blank astonishment, uncertain whether to laugh or scold. For a moment the thought that he might be jesting at her expense occurred to her, but to be banished instantly from her mind by the intense seriousness of the man. Then in a returning wave of sympathy for Devina, she burst forth—

"Of all the fules in St Andrews, there's nane tae beat you, Tammis Black. Umph! I see that fine. You're a sort o' cat's-paw, that's a' *you* are! And as for that Skipper, as ye ca' him——"

"Whisht! whisht!" implored Tam, his eyes fixed on the door.

"I wull *not* whisht!" cried the now incensed Ellen. "He's just a hertless auld bellum—a drunken auld reprobate—that's whit he is. Ay, and ye can tell him that it's me, Ellen Weir, wha says it."

There was a dreadful pause. Tam continued to stare at the door in horrible anticipation. He expected something terrible to happen, he knew not what. But as the moments passed and the door remained precisely as it had been, he slowly drew in his breath with a shudder.

"Ay," continued Ellen, who had been preparing for a fresh onslaught; "and as for that black man that's sleepin' in Devina's bed, it's a fair disgrace tae a Christian land. Ma word! I'd like tae see him try sleepin' in ma bed. I'd take a bessom tae him; a naisty, durty—— Sakes alive!"

The exclamation ended in a gasp, for the door opening suddenly, revealed Skipper standing on the threshold.

Upon his face were imprinted signs of dire displeasure. The frown between his brows, and the indignation in his eyes, reminded Ellen of Devina. She quailed before them. Tam remained dumb. Slowly Skipper advanced into the middle of the room.

"I'll thank ye no' to speak ill o' him in ma hearin'," he said, addressing the apprehensive Ellen with laboured politeness.

"I didna ken ye were there, Maister Greig," she faltered.

"I was in the yaird takin' the air," responded Skipper loftily.

"Ay, he was sittin' on his coal," whispered Tam in eager corroboration; but Ellen flashed an indignant glance at him.

"Have you seen him?" inquired Skipper sternly.

"Seen wha?" she asked in surprise.

"*Him*, of course; him wha's stoppin' wi' me."

Ellen shook her head.

"Ah, I thocht not." Skipper nodded emphatically, as one whose opinions are confirmed. Then, losing much of his gruffness, "He would interest ye, Ellen, he's that queer. He's no' naisty a bit, and as for durt, ye never notice it, he's that black."

The conversation turned upon Devina.

It was of interest to observe the change in Ellen's attitude. From marked hostility it gradually thawed until it warmed into positive partisanship. Skipper had a way of taking his auditors into his confidence, of appealing to them by name that was distinctly engaging. It was, "See here, Ellen, ma lassie," or "Whit think ye, Ellen?" or "Mind ye, this is between me and you, Ellen," until she fell a willing captive to sympathy.

Tam stood by listening to Skipper's eloquence with open-mouthed admiration, nodding his head at intervals.

"Ye'll pit in a guid word for him, wull ye no', Ellen?" concluded Skipper coaxingly.

She looked grave. "I'd like fine tae help ye, Maister Greig," she said doubtfully. "But it's no' sae easy. You've made a rare hash o' it between ye, that's a fac'. I daursay Devina canna stand blacks—I canna stand them masel', they gie me the creeps—and it wasna verra nice pittin' him intil her bed."

Skipper smiled apologetically. Tam coughed to fill in an awkward pause.

"Nae doot she gies ye some o' her wages?" hazarded Ellen at length.

"When she's in sairvice she aye gies me ten shullings a-month," groaned the now conscience-stricken Skipper. "She's been a guid dochter tae me, Ellen," he added in self-reproach.

"I can see that," she assented. "Mind ye, I didna think muckle o' her masel' at first—she's dour; but when ye live wi' a bodie ye find them oot. I respect her noo."

"Whit would ye advise?" questioned Skipper. "I want tae dae the richt thing by Devina, but I canna gie up the man. And whit's mair, I will nut," he added stubbornly.

"I'll speak tae her, Maister Greig, an' tell her ye're awfu' set on him. She's a kind hert, but it's no' easy gettin' at. Howsomever, you leave it tae me and I'll dae my best."

"Thank ye, Ellen. I'll no' forget this in a hurry, and when ye mairry——"

"Hoots, Maister Greig!"

"Ah," gurgled Skipper appreciatively, "ye're ower bonnie no' tae mairry. If I wasna that auld masel'——"

"Nane o' yer capers!" she cried, secretly delighted.

"It's a fac'. See here, Ellen, I'm puir, I canna gie ye a present, but, when ye mairry, Tam and me'll come and drink yer health. Wull we no', Tam?" he cried, turning vehemently to his friend.

Tam started; then, realising what was expected of him, a smile flickered over his face.

"We wull that, Skipper," he echoed with corresponding emotion.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE short winter days passed uneventfully in St Andrews. The little grey city fronting the eastern sea retired, as was her wont, into self-contained and picturesque solitude. No English visitors or excursionists from other Scottish towns crowded the links or imparted a stir of animation to the streets. The band ceased to bray "harsh discords and unpleasing sharps" from the new and unsightly stand. The abortion of a sea-wall, that blotted out the beautiful sweep of shingle, became a thing deserted of men, given over to the sea-birds and the spray.

Winter drew her shroud of mist around the old town, softening salient landmarks, obliterating here a spire, there a ruined tower, withdrawing the grey streets into depths of mysterious shadow, barred by shafts of unexpected sunshine.

It was a severe winter. No snow had as yet fallen, but a black frost bit into the land and held all things in its grip. The cold was intense. Life on the links went on as usual. There were many enthusiasts resident in St Andrews whose every thought was associated with the classic game, and whose whole existence was a solemn preparation for a golfing hereafter. Their number had diminished, the cold had thinned them out; but the survivors were staunch spirits who feared neither storm nor frost, and who, if the worst came to the worst,

and the links became snow-bound, were prepared to do or die in defence of sport, made possible by scarlet balls warmly manifest against a world of white.

Well was it for Skipper that he was sought after by his patrons, for during these days of winter by no means all among the caddies found employment. Many there were who came hopeful day after day to the links, stood for long hours shivering and wistful-eyed, and returned dejected at nightfall to their cheerless homes.

"Paiterson ocht tae help ye," growled Skipper to Tam, indicating the caddie-master with an indignant jerk of his head. "I'll jest speak to him," he added menacingly.

"Na, na," replied Tam, with a despondent shake of the head. "It would dae nae guid. He does his best for us a'. It's no' his faut."

"But it's his business——" began Skipper warmly.

Tam laid a hand upon his arm. "It's like this," he said. "Ye ken as weel as I dae that the gentlemen can speir for wha they please. Yesterday Cornal Gillan steppit up tae the office and pits doon his half-croon. 'A caddie, Paiterson,' says he. I heard him fine, for I was standin' ahint the box. 'Ay, Cornal,' says Paiterson, giein' him his cheque. Then he keeks oot o' his wee window and peers at a' the caddies,—there were about seven o' us there. I was awfu' feared he would forget me, yet I didna like tae speak. 'Tam,' says he, turning suddent-like tae me,—'Tam, were ye oot yesterday?' 'No, Paiterson,' says I. 'Gang on then,' says he. Man, Skipper, I was near smiling. 'Here, hold on!' cries the Cornal, 'I don't want *him*; gie me Skipper.' Ye were comin' doon the brae, Skipper, verra late, and I had been waitin' the maist part o' an oor; but Paiterson roars oot, 'Skipper!' and away ye went wi' the Cornal's bag, and I jest creepit intil the shelter."

"Tam!" cried Skipper, his voice harsh with self-reproach.

"Never heed me, Skipper," said Tam hastily. "Mind ye, I'm no' complainin'; but it's whit I telt ye lang syne—the warld's a terrible place for a caddie like me. Whiles I wish I was deid!"

But Skipper's professional life, full of interest though it was, was but a nebulous background to the hours spent under his own roof. When he neared home of a night, he invariably quickened his steps. His thoughts—already with his guest—became visible in smiles. He would expend part of his earnings for the day in flour, fish, coffee, rice, or any other viand for which the stranger had expressed a preference. Laden with these purchases, he would hurry along the twilight streets, avoiding sociability with as much eagerness as he had formerly sought it, aware that to be stopped by a neighbour would entail five minutes subtracted from a pleasant evening.

As a rule he found Ali Mohammed awaiting him. In the gathering dusk, with the familiar details of the room blurring into indistinctness, Skipper experienced some difficulty in making out the strange figure. Huddling in a dark mass in close proximity to the fireplace, it sat waiting in apathetic patience for whatever fate had in store.

So motionless, indeed, did it appear that Skipper oftentimes came near to doubting its existence.

"Are ye there, Alley?" he would cry, and the responding grunt invariably brought relief to his mind. Tossing his parcels on to the table, he would hasten to strike a match, and, shading it with his hand, would peer with eagerness at his guest. The gleam of the Oriental eyes blinking at the light, and the red and blue of the outlandish costume, never failed to send a thrill through

Skipper's heart. He hailed them with a chuckle. And yet it was not so much the man that captivated him, although he firmly believed the Prince to have claims on his gratitude and respect, as the world unknown which he represented.

"Tae see him cowerin' by ma fire," he confided to Tam upon one occasion,—“tae see his rid cap and black face, maks me think o' camels. Ay,” he continued with deep conviction, as Tam looked incredulous, “wee palm-trees tae, stickin' oot o' the sand, and a' the bonnie queer things ye meet wi' in furrin pairts. Hoo can I tell ye, Tam? I see fine ye think I'm haverin'. But it's God's truth; he's the verra leevin' image o' the Arabian Nicht's entertainment — that's whit he is tae me.”

Occasionally the kitchen would be empty upon Skipper's return. The Arab would be gone upon a solitary ramble. For some time after his arrival, Ali Mohammed avoided his fellow-men. He courted secrecy. He lived under the shadow of some vague but imminent fear. He came and went silent as a ghost, a strange figure in the grey streets. Nothing would induce him, for instance, to accompany Skipper for a walk — a decision that in reality brought relief to Skipper's mind, for he felt that to be seen with a black prince in the neighbourhood of South Street would be “awfu' conspeccuous.”

As time passed, however, and nothing occurred to break the peaceful current of their lives, his suspicions were allayed, his vigilance relaxed, and he moved with more freedom among the neighbours. But, to his annoyance, the feelings he excited were the reverse of respectful. The pale-faced Nazarenes stared at him with bold curiosity. In many eyes he read distrust; in some he noted a sort of good-natured superiority,

as though he were a deformity and unworthy to be classed with other men. Occasionally his coming was the signal for laughter, and although it died as he approached, he knew that he was the butt of their merriment. How he hated them! Not only were they unbelievers, the enemies of his religion, but their manners, and even their appearance, was hateful in his sight. Their want of dignity, of repose, of all that goes to build up the Oriental ideal of manhood, awoke his contempt. He was fully conscious of their ridicule, although he feigned to be unobservant of it. What! they *dared* to laugh at him! he afforded them amusement! By Allah, he longed to see them dead, so that he might have the pleasure of defiling their graves! With a hell of fury gnawing at his heart, he strode by them with downcast eyes, grinding his teeth, graceful, with the swish and movement of draperies.

The women were as bad as the men. Their behaviour was senseless. His mental attitude towards them was curiously complex. At first, worn with exhaustion, his fancy did not dwell on dalliance. But as he recovered strength his unbridled inclinations turned with more and more persistence to dreams connected with the fair sex. He feasted his eyes on matron and maid—but warily, for he knew not how far it was safe to indulge his desires. These dogs of Infidels might be jealous. His expression became frankly animal: he licked his thin lips, and a hot light glowed in his eyes. These strong robust women, with bold manners and shameless uncovered faces, would fall an easy prey to his charms; they looked at him, the eyes within the eyes, even as though it were an invitation. He tingled at the thought. By the beard of the Prophet, it were a worthy deed to force some young maid among them to bear a child who would grow into a true Believer, for the glory of the Faith.

Finding himself alone one night at dusk with a young woman, he addressed her with words of love. The place of meeting was propitious—the road was solitary. At first she giggled, but as he followed, wooing her passionately, fear came upon her. Terror made her bold. Turning upon him, she struck him on the face, then took to her heels. He stood bewildered, his cheek blanched with the marks of her fingers, gazing after her; then tears of mingled rage and pain flowed from his eyes.

With the children it was even worse, for Ali Mohammed liked children. He recalled how, in his native town, he had oftentimes taken little ones on his knee and told them fabulous tales of Jan and Afrit, how they had listened with eagerness, and had ever clamoured for more. The memory softened him. In his loneliness he sought to make advances, but they were rudely rebuffed. These Infidel children were devils. They fled his approach. When a little one had fallen into the gutter, he had made haste to pick it up; but the mother had rushed forward, and, snatching it from him, had said angry words, as though, forsooth, he were an eater of human flesh. They assembled in the distance and dogged his steps, but should he face them they disappeared as if by magic into dark entries, only to issue forth and recommence their attacks the moment his back was turned. Sometimes they even threw stones, on which he would round upon them with a snarl, showing white eyes and teeth.

Gradually the last germs of goodwill died within him, and the children too became included in his hatred.

More and more morose in his avoidance of all humanity, he acquired the habit of leaving the house only at dusk. His favourite walk was towards the Spindle Rock. It is a lonely and breaker-beaten coast, guarded by rocks and shoals. Here, in the dying sunlight, some solitary

fisherman laying his nets would descry him, a desolate figure making strange genuflections, or standing motionless on some outlying rock, dark against the toss and tumble of the sea.

On the occasions of his guest's absence, Skipper would set briskly about the preparation of the evening meal—lighting the fire, laying the table, boiling the coffee, pausing at intervals to listen for the swish of the nearing sandals, an expectant smile pleasantly visible within his eyes.

But it was not until the tea-things had been cleared away, and Skipper and his guest were engaged, the one with his pipe, the other with his cigarette, that from the host's point of view the real enjoyment of the night began. Then was it that question and answer, tale, anecdote, and reminiscence, all combined to form an enchanted carpet upon which the enraptured Skipper flew in hot haste to the South. The little kitchen had heard nothing like it before. The kettle hissed astonishment, the clock ticked surprise, and as for the copper saucepan, so overcome was it with the account of marvels oversea that it could do nothing but wink in ecstasy at the fire.

Ali Mohammed lent himself with much apparent condescension to the *rôle* of story-teller. Yet a close observer would have gathered that his good-nature was feigned—was, in fact, but one phase of the part he had set himself to play. By no means secure in his own mind as to the permanency of his position in Skipper's household, he judged it diplomatic to strengthen it by at least one act of ingratiation. It demanded no slight effort. To rouse himself from the sluggish condition of body and mind engendered by a full stomach and the genial heat of the fire necessitated much strength of will. This was not wanting. He would look up at

his host, who, leaning forwards in his arm-chair and with face aflame, awaited the promised tale with joyous anticipation. An inward struggle would take place. For a moment it was a question whether to curse or comply. Then inhaling deeply, and sending the smoke in thin streams from his dilated nostrils, he would reluctantly embark upon the sea of fiction.

Once started, however, the words flowed easily, for being gifted with imagination, his personal interest was soon aroused. He even took pleasure in weaving fantasies around scenes he remembered so well: they wooed him from much that was hateful in the land of his exile. Then, too, he would have been less than human had not the eager interest of his host flattered unconsciously, causing him almost as much satisfaction as though he were amusing a child.

What mattered it that his speech was broken, struggling with the difficulties of a foreign language, —had not the halting phrases Skipper's imagination for ally? And, moreover, were they not assisted by a pantomime of descriptive gesture such as Skipper had never before seen?

The tales were many and varied. Ali Mohammed would tell of his native city and its manifold delights. "By Allah, a city of enchantment; nought like it in the world" (thus would he cry in Arabic). Then would he tell of the long-roofed bazaars overflowing with merchandise; of the crowded ways where the sun blinds the eyes; of the cool cloistered courts of the mosques and private dwellings, the former resonant with the murmur of prayers, the latter musical with the plash of falling water; of the iced drinks to be purchased for the fraction of a copper coin; of the high latticed windows, barred and mysterious, whence bright eyes follow the stranger with looks of longing and of love,

—until Skipper, carried away by his enthusiasm, came near to fancying himself one of the thrice to be envied inhabitants.

And through all this bewildering concerto of sound-pictures rang the note Ali Mohammed. He was ever the central figure. By the aid of subtle suggestion he was presented in many aspects, so that, though not directly mentioned, the listener felt that he it was whom men honoured in the bazaars, esteemed for his piety among the worshippers, envied for his success among the gazelle-eyed beauties of the harim.

At times the mood of the narrator would change. A sterner note became audible. Then would he speak of fights among wild desert tribes, when a man rode back with more than one human head dripping from his saddle-bow; of night journeys on racing camels, when the wind whistled shrill in his ears and the never-ending leagues of sand—a mystery in the darkness—passed him by like visions in a dream; of intrigues, of assassinations, of love, lust, and rapine, when he who would save his own life must wade deep in the life-blood of others.

Upon one occasion he reached the high-water mark of dramatic narrative. Some raid of more than usually sanguinary nature was toward. Its memory turned the sluggish blood to fire; never before had Skipper seen his guest so excited.

Drawing the keen bright knife which he habitually carried within his clothing, he flashed it before Skipper's eyes. And as the breathless words broke from his lips, telling of blood spilt like hot water upon the sand, the knife accounted for every death with swift passes that, catching the firelight, caused the polished surface of the dresser to blink again.

And yet it was a notable fact that, as he told the

tale, the knife was as nothing, either in keenness or in cruelty, to his face.

Skipper, his arms extended, his hands gripping both sides of the kitchen-table, devoured every word.

"Alley!" he shouted hoarsely, "I'm wi' ye! Count on me! I can see fine that your country is the wan place in the warld for adventures. Tae think that I've been wastin' ma time here carryin' a wheen clubs when I micht ha' been cuttin' aff heids in Afriky! Dod, it's fair preposterous! Alley, ma man! say the word; when wull we make a start?"

But Ali Mohammed was inclined to throw cold water upon this enthusiasm. His expression became crafty. Money, he pointed out, was an essential. Without money to purchase slaves, fine raiment, and brave steeds, no consideration could be looked for from the great ones of his city. And moreover, he shrewdly inquired, how were they to get there without money?

"I ken the captain o' a tramp-steamer, Alley," volunteered Skipper after a pause. "Bob Duff, that's him; and the *Red Dawn*, that's the name o' his ship. D'ye ken him, Alley?"

"No; I not know him," replied the stranger, combing his thin beard with his fingers.

"That's queer," commented Skipper. "He trades frae here tae Afriky. But as I was sayin', him an' me are auld cronies; he'd gie us a passage verra cheap. But he's no' been here this while back, an' I dinna ken whaur he is the noo."

There was a pause. Then Skipper, in a flash of inspiration, cried, "I've got it: let's ship as stowaways, Alley!"

But to this proposal his companion proved so unexpectedly hostile that Skipper withdrew it at once.

One night—and the instance in question was but one among many—Skipper had gone to bed, but not

to sleep. His brain, excited by the tales to which he had listened, was far too restless to abandon itself to oblivion.

Foreign scenes rose before him,—blue seas and yellow sands, with the roar of tropical surf dinning the ears; lines of palm-trees, too, receding into the distance; a lonely coast like the coast of Fife, but far hotter and brighter, for sunshine was upon it all day long. Skipper saw it distinctly, and yearned to explore it, for he felt certain that strange adventures awaited him there.

Behind the line of palm-trees stretched a desert. Skipper knew it for a desert at once, for it was as flat as the kitchen-table and, moreover, it was all sand. He looked at it for a long time; then suddenly he began to map out a golf-course. He saw himself—accompanied by the Prince, in his capacity as president, and several enthusiastic blackamoors, representing the green committee—measuring distances, planning holes, deciding upon bunkers. The latter troubled him not a little, they were so numerous. It would be necessary, he decided, to play exclusively with niblicks. The greens, however, could be turfed: he saw no difficulty in that. There would, of course, be a club-house; and, suitable to his dignity as solitary professional and greenkeeper, he would possess a cottage near the first tee. Hard by there would be a cosy little public-house, a glorified "Far and Sure." The whisky would be of the best; he would send for Tam; there would be no Devina.

Lulled by these soothing thoughts, he drifted into sleep.

CHAPTER XXX.

"HAVE ye heard the news?" said M'Phee.

"Whit news?" asked lame Todd, looking up from the mashie he was polishing. His tone implied that it was not worth knowing.

"Oh, have ye not heard?" ejaculated M'Phee, slightly nettled, and with an air of conscious superiority. "I thoct a' the toon was talkin' about it."

"Gie him a bash in the ribs, Robb; you're settin' next him. He makes me seeck wi' his airs. It 'ull be some daft auld wife's tale he's picked oot o' the gutter."

"It's naethin' o' the sort," cried M'Phee angrily, as Robb administered the "bash." "Wha are ye shovin'? I've a guid mind no' tae tell ye."

"Gang on, and dinna be a fule, M'Phee," grunted Gourley.

M'Phee paused to light his pipe. The tobacco in full glow, he cast a sly look out of the corner of his eye at the men in the shelter. He plainly longed to communicate the news, but by feigning reluctance he hoped to enhance its value.

"Aweel," he began slowly, after waiting in vain for further entreaty, "Brandscome has startet to dig in the Cathedral."

He paused, with his pipe in the air, anticipating astonishment.

"Is that a' yer news!" scoffed Robb. "Goad! I could

ha' telt ye somethin' better nor that—Tam's cat has gotten kittens."

There was a general laugh—feebly echoed by Tam, who stood near the door. M'Phee flushed angrily.

"Whit the h—l are *you* lauchin' at?" he cried, glaring at Tam with a ferocity which he felt it would be unwise to bestow upon Robb. The forced smile died upon Tam's face.

"It—it wasna preceesly whit ye micht ca' a lauch, M'Phee," he began, with a timorous effort at conciliation. "Ye see, Robb here made a sort o' joke—at least, that is tae say, I thocht he meant it for a joke, seein' as I havena got a cat. But I'm sorry if the idea o' kittens bothers ye," he added warmly.

The laughter increased.

"Whits a' this aboot?" cried a hoarse voice. Tam's face brightened. Skipper, accompanied by red-haired Saunders—Red Jimmy was the name to which he usually answered—entered the shelter. The new-comers started at once to clean the steel clubs of their employers with wisps of sandpaper.

"It's Tam," gurgled Todd. "Whit think ye, Skipper,—he's gone an' made a joke!"

"Tam!" ejaculated the astounded Skipper.

"No, Skipper; no, no!" denied Tam, highly scandalised.

"A wheen foolishness," growled M'Phee. "I telt them a bit o' news, and they a' startet bletherin' like schule-bairns."

"Whit was yer news, M'Phee?"

M'Phee repeated his information.

"Ay," commented Skipper. "And whit might *he* be diggin' for?"

"Ye'll never guess," chuckled the now delighted M'Phee.

"It canna be a grave," murmured Skipper, wiping a niblick. "Ye canna pit a corp in there noo, it's ower fu'. Maybe it was a skeleton he's after—eh?"

M'Phee shook a gratified head.

"Och! come on, tell us wi'oot mair ado; whit's he lookin' for?" demanded Todd impatiently.

M'Phee eyed him in contemptuous silence, then turned to Skipper.

"Treesure!" he announced triumphantly.

"Whit?" ejaculated Skipper.

"Treesure!" repeated M'Phee.

"Is that so?" commented Skipper cautiously.
"Dear me!"

"Ay," continued M'Phee in an impressive voice; "I got it frae auld M'Pherson—his son Rab is diggin' for Maister Brandscome. Guid wage, tae—three shullin's a-day."

"But whit sort o' treesure? And hoo deep wull it be? And hoo dae they ken it's there? And whit will they dae wi' it when they've got it?"

M'Phee raised a protesting hand.

"Hoots, hoots, sic a lot o' questions! Never speir at me, Skipper, for I've telt ye a' I ken. It's verra interestin' news, and the man wha brings sic news is worthy o' respect." He frowned meaningly at Tam, who, taken by surprise, murmured, "Ay, ay, M'Phee," under his breath.

"Yon Brandscome's a daft-like man," observed Todd.

"Ye're richt, Todd; I whiles think he's got a bee in his bunnet," assented M'Clure.

"Ay," continued Todd, "I've seen him lookin' for shells just like a bairn. I believe he keeps them in a box."

"It's a peety for his family," said Saunders.

"I can tell ye a queerer thing nor that," cried M'Clure.

"Oh," said Todd coldly.

"Ay; I was carryin' for him wance—in the summer it was; we came tae his ba', and I gied him his brassie. Whit think ye he did?"

No one ventured a remark.

"He just chucked it awa', like as it was dirt; ay, and doon he went on his haunds an' knees and began howkin' up a stane."

There was a general chorus of astonishment.

"Ay," continued M'Clure, flushing with satisfaction. "He seemed awfu' taken wi' it; he pit it intil his pooch. A dirty stane it was, tae, but it micht hae been a haskel by the way he carried on. I've never seen a man mair pleased; he gied me saxpence tae masel'."

All present, with the exception of Skipper and Tam, wagged their heads and prophesied evil.

"There's nae doot he's an oreeginal," commented Tam gently. He eyed the other men as he spoke in evident anxiety to keep in touch with popular opinion.

"Hoots!" exclaimed Skipper bluffly, "the warld would be nane the waur o' mair oreeginals like him. He's clever."

"*Him* clever!" sneered Robb.

"Ay, he kens whit he's daein'. I like him fine." Skipper turned on his companions, frowning darkly, as though challenging contradiction; but no one venturing to disagree, he continued, "I've carried for him mony a day, and when ye're wi' him ye forget that he's the gentleman an' you the caddie; ye're just twa freends,—he pits ye at yer ease. But whit dog wull that be?"

"He's just a dog," said M'Clure, eyeing a mongrel that stood apprehensively in the doorway. "I seed him chasin' sheep when we was on the tenth green."

"Eh, but he's thin!" commented Skipper. "Puir beastie, ye canna wonder that he chases the sheep."

Gosh! I'd chase them masel' if I was starvin', so I would."

"Watch here; I'll learn him a lesson." Robb caught up a stone, but Skipper knocked it from his grasp. The dog disappeared.

"Let him be," growled Skipper, meeting Robb's eyes with perfect equanimity. "He's no' daein' *you* ony harm. Tam, ye auld deevil, are ye ready for a dander?"

"Ay, Skipper," cried Tam eagerly.

"Come on, then."

And the two friends started for their customary stroll.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A SOMEWHAT exciting afternoon's round banished M'Phee's news from Skipper's mind.

The players were two Club members as to whose respective skill in the noble game Skipper and Red Jimmy were at variance. Each caddie backed his employer. The morning round had been halved, and at the eighteenth tee Skipper's patron found himself one up on his opponent. Skipper teed the ball with unusual care, patting the ground lovingly and removing microscopic obstacles with a jealous hand. "A wee thing tae the left," he advised, as he stood back to watch the drive.

Both players reached the green in two, and laid their balls fairly dead in three.

"Ye've this for the hole—and match," whispered Skipper, as his employer measured the distance before the last putt. Then his excitement getting the better of him, he added hoarsely, "For ony sake be careful now, sir; there's *money* on it!"

The golfer looked at him in surprise; but Skipper, repenting of his emotion, was frowning darkly at the club-house.

As might be expected after such an interruption, the putt was missed, the hole lost, and the match halved.

Skipper jerked his shoulder and accepted his cheque—representing his payment for the day—with resigna-

tion. His employer, however, good-naturedly regretting the incident, said—

“I’m sorry I missed that putt, Skipper. You must let me make it up to you.”

“Och, never mind, sir,” returned Skipper magnanimously. “It was only a penny.”

It was not until he was on his homeward way that, fingering the half-crown in his trousers’ pocket, Skipper recalled the treasure. The sun had not yet set; there would be ample time, he reflected, to stroll round by the ruins and “just see whit they’re daein’.”

Continuing along the Scores, he entered the Cathedral grounds by the little wooden door that faced the sea. A group of men standing among the tombstones attracted his attention. They seemed for the most part onlookers, and were peering into a deep hole from which rose the sound of a voice. Nearing them, Skipper recognised Brandscome.

“Now then, M’Pherson,” he was exclaiming impatiently, “under that stone. Don’t fall asleep, man! Give him a hand, Kermath; I didn’t hire you to sit there and look on. Up with it! Look out for yourselves above there!”

The level sunlight, streaming over the city roofs, rested upon the ruined fragments of the Cathedral towers, causing them to stand forth with a certain glory of desolation. A few clouds, rose-tinted, floated lazily in the sky. The little group among the tombs was plunged in shadow.

Skipper elbowed his way through the crowd till he could look into the excavation. For some time he eyed the workers with open-mouthed interest, expecting some unknown wonder to be unearthed every time they raised a stone or cast up a shovelful of soil. The smell of the brown mould spoke to his senses. The thought that

soon he would lie under it came to him, and vaguely he wondered if he would smell it when dead. It was only for a moment, however, for at the next the interest of the proceedings claimed his whole attention.

M'Pherson annoyed him. "Ye would think he was diggin' his ain grave," he growled to Hutton the school-master, who was watching operations with a sceptical eye. Neither did Kermath meet with his approval.

"See till him," he ejaculated in scorn; "three shullings a-day for *that*! There's no three shullings worth o' backbane in his hale body. See till him playin' himsel' wi' that spade! Losh me, I could dae mair work wi' ma mashie!"

Brandscome, however, made up for all deficiencies. Encouraging his subordinates with voice, gesture, and example,—handling now a spade, now a pick,—he was worth a score of lazy assistants. Skipper's heart warmed to him.

Work finished for the day, he waylaid him at the Cathedral gate.

"Maister Brandscome," he began; then hesitated, at a loss how best to broach the subject.

"Hullo, Skipper! is that you? What are you doing here?"

"Watching you, sir. I heard o' your idea this afternoon, and I thocht I would gie ye a keek as I gaed by."

"Very friendly of you, Skipper."

"Oh, sir!" burst out Skipper, encouraged by the kindly tones, "I ken weel ye're awfu' busy, and hae nae time tae waste wi' an auld gommeril like masel'; but if you would tell me aboot this treesure o' yours, I'd be awfu' obleeged tae ye, I—I would indeed."

Brandscome smiled. He looked down good-naturedly into Skipper's red and excited face. The eager interest of the little man flattered him.

"You're keen," he commented. "Faith, I wish my men had half your keenness, Skipper; we'd get on as fast again."

Skipper nodded unqualified approval.

Brandscome reflected, then suddenly made up his mind.

"Why not come to my house now?" he said; "I've got an engagement at seven o'clock, but we will have plenty of time for a talk before that. Does that suit you, eh?"

The memory of the Prince sprang to Skipper's mind, but faded upon the reflection that seven o'clock would not be too late for tea.

"Thank ye kindly, sir," he cried. Then with his head held high, and wishing with all his heart that the neighbours could see him in such distinguished company, he lurched proudly away side by side with the antiquarian.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"AND is the treesure really there, think ye, Maister Brandscome?"

Skipper, seated on the extreme edge of a rush-bottomed chair,—one of a set of six that furnished Brandscome's dining-room,—put the question in the low genteel tones which he judged compatible with the unwonted grandeur of his surroundings. His horny hands, resting on his well-worn trouser-knees, still clutched his shabby cap.

Brandscome, from the depths of an arm-chair, nodded genially.

"I've not a doubt of it," said he.

Skipper's eyes dwelt respectfully on the brass fender, wandered to the incandescent gas overhead, wandered still farther to the large mirror reflecting the well-stocked bookcase at the opposite end of the room, then returned, much impressed, to the face of his host.

"Ma word!" he remarked.

"Yes," continued Brandscome, sucking at his pipe. "Dr Anderson, formerly head mathematical master of the Madras College, saw in the year 1840 a very narrow spiral staircase near the site of the high altar."

"Oh!" commented Skipper.

"Yes; it led deep down into the earth—no doubt to the crypt or treasury."

Skipper longed to inquire what a crypt might be, but refrained, through fear of interrupting. Brandscome continued.

"Old Armet—you must remember Armet, Skipper?"

"Would that be Tammas Armet, sir?"

"Yes."

"Oh ay, I mind him. But he's no' been in St Andrews this whilie back."

"No; he lives in Pittenweems now. Well, he remembers the stair too. He told me that he lit balls of shavings and threw them down to test the air; but no one ventured to descend. I got him over here last week and made him show me the place; we're digging there now, but we've come to nothing. He's a very old man; it's just possible that he may be out a yard or two—perhaps more," he added, half to himself.

"Whit did they dae wi' it, sir?"

"They filled it up again."

"Whit! wi'oot findin' whit was in it?"

"It appears so."

"Oh, the muckle fules!"

Brandscome smiled. "They certainly hadn't much curiosity," he assented. Then, his brows puckering, "I've had a lot of difficulty over the business, Skipper."

"Have ye, sir?"

"Yes; I had to get the permission of the Board of Works. And then the necessary funds—you can't do anything without money, you know!"

"Verra true, sir."

"It's all right for the present; but if it hadn't been for the kindness of the Marquis of St Regulus and others, I doubt if I could have made a start at all. But look here, I'm forgetting—what will you drink?"

A gratified smile stole over Skipper's face. "Weel,

weel, if ye are sae kind," he murmured, "an' if it's nae trouble, an' if ye'll join me in a taste——"

"Out with it, Skipper. Is it to be Scotch?"

"Just that, sir."

A decanter and glasses being found, the two men pledged each other.

"Here's luck, Skipper."

"An' treesure, Maister Brandscome."

The whisky—he took it neat—warmed Skipper into a glow of cheerful sociability. Settling himself more comfortably in his chair, he asked—

"An' noo, sir, if ye'll be sae guid, whit *is* this treesure?"

"What is it? Why, man, it's the finest treasure in the world. The Cathedral was rich in ornaments and plate and cloth of gold. Part of it is bound to be very old. It's my opinion that there will be found not only the ornaments presented by the Bishop Fothadus, including the Gospels in a magnificent silver case, but also the great and rich gifts of chalices, basins, the image of Christ in gold and of the Twelve Apostles in silver, and a case of solid wrought gold for preserving the holy relics of St Andrew,—all of which, Skipper, were bestowed upon the Church of St Rule by Hungus, King of the Picts, about the year 750 A.D."

"Fancy that!" ejaculated his auditor.

"And *more* than that," cried Brandscome, warming as he proceeded. "The Cathedral was wonderfully rich in adorned altars,—they are mentioned by Anastasius as being the gifts of the Popes,—covered with pure silver, ay, and sometimes with beaten gold. Then the high altar would be furnished with a crucifix, a tabernacle for the sacrament, a lectern, candlesticks, taper-stands, chalices, patens, cruets, ciborium, and a monstrance, in addition to a pyx and—ah—other accessories."

As this startling and wholly incomprehensible in-

ventory proceeded, Skipper's eyes became more and more prominent. Reaching out a hand, but still gazing at his host, he groped for and found a glass, then absent-mindedly draining its contents, replaced it with a sigh of satisfaction. Brandscome was speaking again.

"There would be other things too. Before each altar would hang a handsome lamp. Then there would be the "Douglas Lady," the image of the Virgin, to which Archibald, Earl of Douglas, gave two marks yearly, so that a light might be kept burning always before it. Ay, and there must have been an organ, and a rood-screen and rood-loft, in which would be placed the statues of the Saints. And vestments too, for the Cathedral was enriched with the spoils of Bannockburn: wealth of tapestry, of plate, of cloth-of-gold—gorgeous! gorgeous!"

His chin had sunk to his hand, the firelight danced upon his face. It reflected itself in his eyes, already bright with dreaming enthusiasm. He had forgotten Skipper, forgotten his surroundings. His mind visualised the past.

The Cathedral was more than his hobby,—it was his friend. Its every stone was familiar. He could reconstruct it at will with the accuracy of the expert and the ardour of the enthusiast; and as he walked among or pondered over the grey and crumbling ruins, they rose around him till his inner vision saw nothing but the glories of the past.

For him, as he dwelt ardently upon the supposed treasure, the great building in which it had been housed stood out with an exactitude, an accuracy of detail, little short of marvellous. It became to him more real than the chair upon which he sat, or the fire into which he gazed. He peered up the long aisles, dim with religious light; he marked the golden glow of chalice and

vestment, the suspended lamp, the light burning ever before the pure white face of the Virgin; he heard the soft rustle of attendant priests, the tinkle of the bell, the solemn voice of the organ; he even became conscious of the faint aromatic scent of incense, as the soft blue clouds rose from the swinging censers.

Skipper, too, was lost in thought. His imagination had been roused—perhaps almost as powerfully as it was in the habit of being stirred by the barbaric stories of the Arab. The enthusiasm of his host was contagious—and when had Skipper ever been known to resist enthusiasm? Yet his mind was in a state of bewilderment. The long list of ecclesiastical adornments held no significance for him. But what he succeeded in grasping was that these queer Romanish things were made of gold and silver, and his breath came short as he pictured to himself how they must look at that moment lying in piles somewhere within the earth.

When Brandscome enlarged upon the past glories of the Cathedral, Skipper became more puzzled than ever. A lamp, he thought, was meant to stand upon a table—a kitchen-table for choice. “Whit would it be daein’ hangin’ up in a kirk?” He frowned deeply with the effort to see the treasure littered about the only church with which he was familiar—the little unadorned Free Kirk in North Street; but the mere notion of gold, silver, and fine raiment within that unpretentious edifice caused him to shake his head.

His eyes wandered to the decanter standing within reach: it was more than half full. Skipper sighed thoughtfully.

“An’ where d’ye think a’ thae bonnie things are, Maister Brandscome?” he hazarded at length. The antiquary started.

“I told you before, Skipper,—in the crypt, of course.”

"Ay, sir; but—eh, whit is a crypt?"

Brandscome made an impatient gesture. "A crypt," he explained, "is an underground cell or chapel used for burial purposes, or as a place of concealment. Of course crypts vary in size; generally the roof is constructed with heavy stones; the groins are diagonal."

"Oh," mused Skipper, scratching his whiskers.

"Yes," continued the expert, now mounted upon his hobby. "You see, Skipper, the question is, *What* became of the large quantity of heavy and valuable church plate? No doubt the priests' first idea would be to conceal it in a capacious hiding-place, and the short notice they had of the approach of the mob—from Crail, you remember—would necessitate a speedy removal from the Cathedral."

"I see that fine."

"Well, now, think for yourself. The priests and monks could scarcely have contemplated so immediate and total a destruction of their grand metropolitan church, and with it the complete overthrow of their religion. No, they would merely expect the affair to be a passing tumult; therefore, mark you—are you listening?"

"I am, sir, indeed. Go on."

"Well, their object would be to stow all their valuables in a temporary place of safety, the entrance to which—and here is an important point—would be *well concealed*. Why, it's as plain as daylight!" He paused to blow his nose indignantly, then continued. "The very short notice would prevent them from shipping the treasure off to France. And not only that, but the whole coast-line at that time was guarded by the Protestants in the Castle. Eh, have I made that plain?"

"It's as easy as—as drinkin', sir," quoth Skipper, with an absent-minded glance at the decanter.

Brandscome beamed approval. "Now," he said, "we come to another point. Crypts have been discovered under many other churches and cathedrals,—why not here? I ask you, as a sensible man, *why* should not the Cathedral of St Andrews possess a crypt?"

Finding himself directly appealed to, Skipper frowned darkly, with the air of a man who gives the matter his serious consideration.

"It simply *must* be there," cried the antiquary, striking one hand within the other; "we've only got to find it."

"That's all, sir," assented Skipper, with sympathetic heat.

"Look at the crypt at Hexham!" continued Brandscome, waving his hand indignantly towards the coal-scuttle. Skipper transfixed that article of furniture with a bewildered eye.

"It was found in the year 1762 by a workman while digging for the foundation of a buttress."

"It's no' possible!" ejaculated Skipper, still gazing at the coal-scuttle. But the antiquary swept on.

"Look at Melrose Abbey! A spacious and secret subterranean vault was discovered at the foot of a winding stair near to the old wax-cellar in which the altar candles were kept: that was in 1730. Consider the crypt below St Paul's Church at Oxford, never unearthed until 1862! Skipper!"—he wheeled upon his breathless auditor,—“Skipper!” he reiterated, smiting the table with his fist until the glasses jumped again, “the crypt *is* there—the treasure too—and, damn it! I've just *got* to find them.”

For a moment Skipper gasped under the oath, then the fire of enthusiasm leaped to his heart.

"Ye'll dae it, sir," he shouted. "Ye'll dae it! If

there was wan man born into this warld tae gie St Andrews a crypt, it's *you!* Whit!'—he slapped his leg with indignation,—“tae think we hae done wi'oot oor crypt a' thae years. Ma word! it's—it's fair preposterous! that's whit it is.”

CHAPTER XXXIII.

MANY weeks had passed since the interview upon the sands, yet Devina had not ceased to think of Archie. His memory was with her continually. From pondering upon it, she had come to endow it with a complete set of moral and physical virtues to which it could lay no claim. To see another man was to compare him to this fanciful portrait—much, it need hardly be said, to the disadvantage of the stranger. When Ellen enlarged, as was her wont, upon the good qualities of Jock, Devina listened in silence, frowning darkly, her mind full of a wonder that verged upon incredulity. "Hoo can she talk in sic a daft-like way when she kens ma Erchie?" she asked herself. "*Ma Erchie!*" The words came to her so spontaneously that the irony of the pronoun never struck her.

Her very habit of silence, of reticence, of brooding, thrust her back relentlessly upon herself. It fanned the fire of love till the smouldering embers leaped into inextinguishable flame.

A mason, hired to adjust some fire-bricks in the kitchen-grate, attracted by the full curves of her figure, and taking advantage of her back being turned, slipped his arm round her waist. Devina gave him one look, and the man, with a muttered apology, bent low over his work.

No "variableness, neither shadow of turning," came

to her. She belonged to Archie. She had given herself to him. Accept her or reject her as he might, she was still his, and his alone. And although the darkness of misunderstanding overshadowed her thoughts, and the "pity of it" came home to her with many a pang, yet the gift of herself seemed natural in her sight—a thing foreordained, like the first primrose, or the light of a May morning.

Once, and sometimes twice, a-week Jock visited Ellen. Sometimes he took her for a walk; sometimes he sat an hour talking in the kitchen. These visits were at once a pain and a pleasure to Devina. Leaving the lovers to themselves, and hurrying to her bedroom, she would sit long brooding in the dark, picturing Archie in the place of Jock and herself in the place of Ellen, until some unexpected noise—some cart rumbling along Gibson Place, it might be—would recall her to the world of reality. With a sigh, sternly suppressed, she would rise to her feet, light the gas, frown at herself in the little mirror, and then, reassured as to her appearance, would descend to the kitchen.

She struggled to be brave: the effort was subconscious, and part of the inherent strength of her nature. After the one outburst of confidence—how bitterly regretted!—no word of repining passed her lips. Her duties were punctiliously performed. Nor were her recreations, such as they were, abandoned. She continued to read extracts from the daily papers aloud to Ellen, who, seated at the kitchen-table, at work upon a comforter destined for Jock, listened with preoccupied attention.

On every alternate Sunday she accompanied her father to the kirk, no longer calling for him at his home, on account of the Arab, whose presence she resented, but awaiting him at the kirk door, so that they might enter the building together. She listened with devout atten-

tion to the sermon, found "the places" for her father, presented to the world a stern tranquillity of feature, and if, during the prayer,—when with bowed head she withdrew for a little space into a more secluded privacy,—her lips trembled and her thoughts flew to Archie, who shall blame her?

The one pleasure to which she clung was an evening walk. Recognising this, Ellen would oftentimes relinquish her claim to the outing. It seemed to Devina that under the darkness and cover of night she could more effectually conceal her secret from others.

It became her habit to wander by the sea, returning always, as though under the spell of some charm, to the vicinity of the seat upon which she and Archie had sat that fateful evening many weeks ago. She took a fruitless and unavailing pleasure in recalling insignificant details connected with his appearance, certain lines in his face, and a trick of manner which became noticeable in him when under excitement.

The precise place associated with her one hour of happiness became inexpressibly dear to her. And yet, so complex are the workings of the human soul, when she neared it she was aware of an added sense of desolation: her eyes filled with tears, which she did not attempt to repress, and which, trickling down her cheeks, fell one by one upon her cloth jacket, unseen beneath the kindly veil of night.

Standing there alone, with her back to the bench, the voice of the sea whispered to her plaintively, wailing in the night as though it, too, had a grief that refused to find its way into words. Devina listened. Something of its greatness passed into her soul; her tears ceased to flow; she felt almost comforted, she knew not why.

Never for a moment during these solitary outings did Devina cease to hope that she might see Archie. His

evenings, she knew, were free; it was possible that he, too, might seek the same spot, drawn towards it by some reflection of the desire that so powerfully influenced her. Her eyes, ever on the watch, sought to pierce the darkness. When some shadowy figure emerged from the obscurity and advanced towards her, black against the light that streamed from the Club windows, she would stand riveted to the ground. Upon a nearer approach she would recognise that it was not the man she sought. Then hope would burn low, but to rise again, and yet again to dwindle, until ten o'clock rang from the College tower, and with a pang in her heart she reluctantly admitted to herself that it was now too late to expect him. Slowly, and with many a backward glance, hoping against hope, she would cross the links and disappear in the direction of her home.

But one evening came—one evening never to be forgotten—when, upon nearing the bench, Devina became conscious of a figure seated upon it. Many a time had she seen other couples sitting there, as she and Archie had sat, but never since she had haunted the place had she seen it occupied by a single figure. Gazing at it, seeking to distinguish details in the gloom, she felt the blood rush to her face. Timidly she approached, with little nervous steps, full of breathless anticipation. But disappointment fell swiftly upon her. The figure was that of a woman.

The night was one of those still wintry nights when the heavens are ablaze with stars, and the sea—a shrouded mystery—seems to be whispering in its sleep. From time to time a crescent moon sailed serenely from behind a cloud, and the beach, the white foam, the seawall, and the distant houses, stood revealed.

By the aid of its light Devina recognised the woman to be Jessie Bell.

One of three sisters who carried on a fruiterer's business in Church Street, Jessie had earned for herself no enviable reputation. Pretty, young, and spoiled by the assiduous attention of the sterner sex, she was in the habit of "keepin' company" with whichever of her admirers was for the moment in favour. She had been seen among the sand-dunes on many a Sunday night at hours when girls with due regard for respectability would be, if not abed, at least safe in their own homes. Devina knew her by sight and by reputation. Ellen—an inveterate gossip—had enlarged upon the girl's shortcomings, and Devina had listened with no inattentive ear.

To see this girl, whom she regarded as "nae better nor she should be," sitting upon the bench endeared to her by Archie's memory, pained and angered her beyond expression. She felt strongly tempted to stride forward and, thrusting her away, tell her to go elsewhere with her light loves and vulgar assignations. For a moment her eyes flashed and her hands clenched, but at the next, the folly of such a step coming home to her, she turned away with a toss of her head, and eventually seated herself at the farther end of the sea-wall. From this position she could command the seat, the immediate stretch of links, and the road that led past the clubhouse to the town.

The minutes dragged. The moonlight alternately came and went. The stars waxed and waned. The faint breeze fluttered into life, and anon was dead. On the sea remained the same,—a soft, monotonous, yet soothing sound, entering into the dreams of the woman who waited and hoped and feared, with pain gnawing ceaselessly at her heart-strings.

Jessie was evidently growing impatient: she fell to examining her watch by the light of the moon. Devina

could see her over her shoulder, from out of the corner of her eye. The girl tapped the ground with the end of her umbrella,—the sharp sound of the ferule meeting a stone came distinctly to Devina's ears. Once Jessie rose and, standing with her back to the sea, gazed for long in the direction of the town. Devina noted her large black hat with its ostrich feather, and frowned upon it disapprovingly. "Her and her braws!" she muttered, with the contempt of a self-respecting woman who spends but little upon personal adornment.

The survey appeared to afford Jessie but little relief. Reseating herself abruptly, she fell to tapping the ground with renewed impatience.

Of a sudden Devina became conscious that the light from the club-house was obscured by an approaching figure. Jessie, too, had heard the nearing feet. She rose to greet the new-comer.

The conversation which followed, and to which Devina was unavoidably a listener, remained in her memory for the rest of her days as though seared thereon with a red-hot iron.

"I'm late," said Archie's voice.

"I should think ye are; I've been waitin' on ye half an oor."

"I'm sorry; I couldna get awa'. I had tae see a large consignment o' clubs aff by the late train. I was longin' tae be with ye all the time. Ye believe me, Jessie?"

"That's as it may be; ye're like the ithers."

"Whit ithers?"

"The men, I mean. Oh, yes; ye're all alike—aye plausible. I'm verra sorry I came."

"Jessie, dear, dinna say that; ye ken fine I love ye. Ye're the only girl——"

"Hoots, ye've said that mony a time, nae doot,"

"Maybe I have, but I never meant it before."

"Hoo dae I ken ye mean it noo?"

"Because I—— Ma God! I wish ye could see intil ma hert; it's just aching for ye, dear. Jessie, speak tae me."

"Whisht!" She laid her hand upon his lips. "Dinna raise yer voice like that; there's somebody ower there."

"Wha is't?"

"I dinna ken. It's cowerin' ahint the wall. See, there! it moved; it's awfu' like a wuman."

"Weel, let her be; she's naethin' tae us. Dearie, gie me a kiss."

"Hear till him! Whit d'ye take me for? It's no' a lassie's place tae kiss a man. It's for a man tae kiss—oh! ye're crushin' ma flowers! Oh!"

In the agony of the moment Devina pressed heavily upon a large stone that lay half embedded by her side. With a crash it toppled downwards into the sea.

The man took his lips from those of the girl, and stood, his arms still around her, listening.

"Whit's that?" he whispered.

"It's yon wuman," she replied in the same voice. "Let's gang awa', the sand-hills are quaiter; come, dearie."

With his arm still around her waist, they passed slowly from sight.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"It was a guid sermon the day, Tam."

"It was that, Skipper."

"Sound doctrine—it fairly smelt o' the pit; an' yet there were pairts that gied us advice. Did ye see Devina's face?"

"Na; I observed that she was wi' ye the day, but I didna see her face. I was that taken up wi' the discourse."

"Weel, I keeked at her when the meenister ca'd the heathen oor brethren. Thinks I, ma lassie, ye've got a black brither in oor hoose, an' ye never come nigh him. Dod! I was near disgracin' masel' wi' a smile."

"She helps ye tae keep him, though."

"She does, Tam; she pays me reg'lar. It grieves me tae tak' it frae the lassie. I wish I could dae wi'oot it, but I canna."

The two men sat in silence and looked at the sea.

"They were braw words the meenister finished up wi'; ye mind them, Tam?"

"Ay; but I'd like fine tae hear you repeat them, Skipper."

Skipper pondered long. "It's hard tae mind the words," he sighed at length. "I mind the sense o' them fine, but I hae nae memory for ither folks' words."

"Say them in yer ain; they'll be just as bonnie."

Skipper frowned at the sea. "Yon 'ull be a cor-

morant," he said abruptly. Tam followed the stumpy forefinger.

Over the level plains of water that stretched below a great sea-bird sped on flashing wings. The ocean—luminous as a milky opal—turned now to sunshine, now to shadow, as the fugitive clouds alternately screened and unmasked the face of the sun. The bird flew with plodding and unwearying urgency, keeping ever the same insignificant distance above the surface of the water. Its shadow could be seen flitting under it. Smaller and yet smaller it grew.

"It kens it's the Sabbath as weel as a Christian," commented Skipper. "It minds me o' a burd I saw wanst when I was oot wi' the boats."

"Ye're forgettin' the sermon," said Tam.

"So I am. Whit a heid I have! Let me see—oh ay, I hae it noo. The meenister telt us tae dae oor duty in this warld,—'Ay,' says he, 'even unto death.' I wondered at the time why he said that: we're no' called upon tae dee for oor releegious opinions nooadays like Wishart and a' thae martyr bodies that were burned on the Scores yonder. Whit think ye he meant, Tam?"

Tam's pale face shone with pleasure at being asked to propound the Scriptures.

"He meant, Skipper, that whiles it's as hard as daith tae dae oor duty, but for a' that nae man must step aside frae the straight and narrow path."

Skipper groaned. "I wisht I was a better man, Tam."

"*You!*" ejaculated Tam. "Why, Skipper, I wisht we was a' like you."

"It would be a queer world, I'm thinkin'," said Skipper, with a twinkle.

"It would be a better wan," said Tam, with conviction.

"Hoots, man," expostulated the abashed Skipper, "ye're

ower partial. Ye dinna ken hoo wicked I am. The day even, when the meenister was tellin' us that all flesh was as grass, ma conscience up and says, 'Skipper,' says it, 'have ye paid Tam the fower shullings ye owe him?' 'Hoots! there's na hurry,' says I; '*you* dinna ken Tam Black; he doesna mind waitin'.' 'There is hurry,' says ma conscience. 'Ye're naethin' but a wheen grass; man, ye micht be mown the nicht.' Tam, sure as daith, it gied me a turn. I thocht it had forgotten Gourley's auction. I can see that I'll have tae pay ye soon."

Tam's face as he listened to this dialogue was a study in emotions.

"I'm a worthless bodie," continued Skipper after an interval. "Ye mind whit Ellen ca'd me the other nicht? 'A drunken auld reprobate,' says she, and ma word! she wasna far wrang; and yet—I'd like fine tae dae ma duty, if I could only see it clear like."

There was an unconscious wistfulness in the muttered words that went straight to Tam's heart.

"And so ye wull, Skipper," he cried, with unusual decision. Skipper gazed at him in surprise. "And so ye wull!" reiterated Tam, actually gesticulating with his fist. "Hoots, man! I ken ye better than ye ken yersel'. Make nae mistake. You'll dae yer duty in this warld, cost whit it may, and it's me, Tammas Black, that says it o' ye."

Avoiding each other's eyes, they relapsed into silence.

For a long time no one spoke; then after a preliminary remark of a non-committal nature, Skipper turned the conversation into unemotional channels.

"It's queer to think whit's ahint oor backs," he mused.

"Ahint oor backs!" ejaculated Tam, turning hastily. "It's—it's a wall, Skipper; there's naethin' queer aboot a wall."

Skipper chuckled. "I meant on the ither side o' it. I was thinkin' o' the treesure."

"Oh," murmured Tam indifferently.

"Ye dinna believe in it?"

"I canna say I dae; it would be a daft-like thing tae pit a treesure in the earth."

"But it's no' whit you would ca' exactly in the earth eether."

"Whaur is it, then?"

"It's in a—— Bide a wee—I've forgotten the name o' it. Oh ay, it's in a crypt."

"Whit's that?"

"Weel, I'm no' verra clear on it masel'; but as far as I can make oot, it's a kind o' box, like—like a coal-scuttle, only bigger."

"Oh, Skipper!"

"Ay; a' the toons are supplied wi' them. It seems we had wan in St Andrews lang syne, but auld Armet of Pittenweems chucket lighted schavin's intil it, and then buried it again. A daft-like thing tae dae, but I never trusted that man since he sold me a cleek that broke a' tae pieces in twa days."

Still the unbelieving Tam continued to shake his head.

"It's weel seen yer name's Tammass," growled Skipper.

"Weel, Skipper, it doesna seem naitural tae me."

"Why nut? Alley believed it at wanst."

"Wha's Alley?"

"Ma black man."

"Oh, ye tell *him* a' yer secrets noo, dae ye?"

"Hoots! it's nae secret; an' if it was, whit for should I no' tell him?"

"Oh, certainly; it's nane o' *my* business."

Skipper frowned at Tam in surprise. There was an uncomfortable pause.

"I would never trust a black man," continued Tam in

a studiously dispassionate voice. His eyes were fixed on the sea.

"Why not?" blurted Skipper, with some heat. "The man canna help being black."

"But he *is* black; and hoo d'ye ken he's respectable? Ye just picked him oot o' the sea."

"Respectable!" cried out Skipper in swift indignation. "He's mair nor respectable—he's a Prin——"

Conscience struck off the latter end of the title. Skipper, with open mouth, eyed Tam in suspense.

"Prin?" repeated Tam; "whit's that?" He gave vent to a forced laugh that could have deceived no one who marked the mental suffering in his eyes. But Skipper did not see.

"Ay," continued Tam in a low constrained voice; "if you think a prin is respectable, I'm no' of your opeenion. I dinna hold wi' a man wha neglects his auld freends for a wheen durt; I tell——"

An inarticulate gasp cut him short. Skipper had started to his feet.

"Tammass Black!" he cried, his voice shaking with uncontrollable indignation, "ye've said enough; ay, and mair than enough. Him wha insults him, insults me. Dinna speak tae me again. I've done wi' you for guid an' a'. Good-day tae you, Tammass Black.

Seated speechless on the bench, with an awful sinking in his heart, Tam watched his best friend disappear into the distance.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE snow came at last. All night long great flakes had been falling slowly but continuously, until day revealed the roofs of the little city, white under a leaden sky.

When Skipper awoke he became conscious of the change, for the kitchen was filled with a wan reflected light cast inwards from the street. Tumbling out of bed, he set about the preparation of breakfast. The fire took long to light: the wood was damp, and refused to kindle. Patience and perseverance, however, succeeded at last.

A curious little figure he looked, stooping low over the fire, anathematising the pieces of coal that would not stay in their places, dressed only in a much-mended shirt of coarse grey flannel, that revealed his broad chest and muscular legs, the light alternately coming and going upon his weather-beaten face, disclosing its whimsical impatience, its preoccupation, and, finally, its triumph.

"That'll dae noo," he muttered, rubbing his hands and standing back to view the effect. "It's wee, but it's growin'. Dod, but it's cauld the morn!" He cast a glance as he spoke around the cheerless kitchen. Unwashed tea-things from the night before stood upon the table; sundry articles of clothing littered the floor. An air of dreary disorder made itself felt. Skipper shook his head, then chuckled softly.

"Whit would Devina say?" he murmured. "Ma word, it's a guid thing she's no' here!"

Dressing expeditiously, he approached the door of the inner room.

"Alley!" he cried hoarsely. He was under the impression that he was whispering; but at the startling sound the Arab, who had been asleep, sat erect.

"Guid day, Alley," continued Skipper genially. "I kent fine ye were awake. It's gettin' late; the sun wull be up verra soon noo, and ye've got tae say yer prayers tae him, ye ken. The parritch wull be ready by the time ye've done. Whit's that ye say? Coffee? Oh, ay; ye're an awfu' wan for the coffee. But I'll manage a cup for ye, I daursay."

Breakfast finished, he left the house, full of secret forebodings.

"Ye see," he confided to Herd, who hailed him at the end of Castle Street, "the auld coorse is tae be closed for a fortnicht, and whit wi' the snaw and the prejudice o' the members, there's bound tae be verra little daein' on the new."

"Ay, it came doon heavy a' nicht," assented Herd, kicking the cakes of snow from his sea-boots. "An' there's mair comin' yet," he added, with an upward glance at the sky.

"Wull the boats be gangin' oot?" questioned Skipper.

"Oh, we'll get awa' by the afternoon, I'm thinkin'."

There was a pause, during which Herd lit his pipe.

"Whit's yer black man daein' the day, Skipper?" he asked between dense puffs.

"Oh, he's just takin' his ease: he was smokin' a cigarette when I left him the noo. Ye see, Herd, he's no' verra strong."

"It's queer we've never heard a word o' the *Mary-Ann*," mused Herd, casting a sly glance at Skipper as he spoke.

"D'ye think sae?"

"Ay; the neebours are a' of ma opeenion. Simpson,—a canny man, Simpson, an' I'm not but sayin' that he's in the richt,—weel, he says that black men have nae respec' for the truth."

"There are mair leers in the warld than Simpson," assented Skipper genially. "But I've nae time tae waste here. Guid day tae ye, Herd."

Herd watched him depart with a humorous grimace.

"Ay," he confided to Simpson later on in the day, "Skipper's as daft as ever. Yon black man's still stoppin' wi' him. It bates comprehension. Man, Simpson, I just mentioned the *Mary-Ann*—ye mind the ship the black man said had gone doon—and aff he gangs wi' his heid in the air. It's a peety of him. Pride's a sure bait to catch the ungodly. But, Simpson, you mark ma words, nae guid wull come o' it. Oh no! oh no!"

But the hardened Skipper cared nothing at all for public opinion. The interview with Herd faded from his mind before he was out of sight.

As he passed Brandscome's house a tap on the window caused him to look up. There stood Brandscome, beckoning him into the dining-room. Skipper complied with the request. The two men talked long and earnestly. Then Skipper, smiling to himself, continued his walk towards the links.

"Have ye seen Tam Black?" he shouted to old Donald, who was standing in the door of the shelter.

"Na, Skipper. But whit a day! whit a day! Three couple oot; that's only sax caddies oot o' forty. Dear me! it's fair ruination."

"I saw him, Skipper," volunteeed M'Clure from within the shelter.

"Whaur?"

"Weel, he was here no' sae lang syne. He didna get engaged, ye see. After a wee bittie I seed him walkin' doon by the sea, wi' a spade and a tin can."

"It'll be bait he's after," mused Skipper.

"Just that. God! it's an ill look-oot for a hearty man tae be forced tae hunt worms."

"Weel, it's fair," assented Donald, with a melancholy shake of his head; "they'll hunt us wan day."

At this grim joke a mirthless laugh went round the shelter.

Leaving them abruptly, Skipper proceeded towards the sea. He paused where the reclaimed ground terminated in the sands. At his feet was a sharp descent, composed of rubbish tilted intermittently by carts—an eyesore when visible, but now rendered inoffensive by a covering of snow. To the right rose the fragment of sea-wall, with the waves lapping its base, and sea-birds and crows disputing the flotsam and jetsam with shrill and discordant cries. To the left extended the long line of sand-dunes, gnawed by the winds, sprinkled with snow, sketched in faint white touches against the neutral-tinted sky. Before him swept the sands, a vast and desolate expanse, for the tide was out, and near half a mile separated the sand-dunes from the sea.

Upon this level space he spied Tam. The figure was far distant, and but a blur upon the dun monotony. As Skipper gazed, the snow began again to fall. The slow reluctant flakes, eddying hither and thither, whitely relieved against the sombre sky, were in themselves beautiful, yet they imparted an added melancholy to the scene. Tam's figure, dimly discerned through this falling veil, appeared more than ever lonely; it shrank into insignificance; it became of no account, like a stone or fragment of wreck blending insensibly into the desolation of its surroundings.

Skipper hitched his trousers, turned a thoughtful eye seaward, then gazed in Tam's direction.

"It's wet work yon," he growled to himself; then calling to mind Tam's cough, "Auld eediot!" he added fiercely.

Plunging down the incline, he strode quickly over the wet sand.

As he approached, he watched the meagre figure dig laboriously, stoop over the hole, transfer something from the excavation to a small tin can that stood at its feet, wander slowly onwards, with bent back and eyes fixed on the sand, then, coming to a sudden standstill, dig again. This incident repeated itself many times.

It was not till Skipper had come within a distance of a dozen yards that Tam recognised his friend. Swiftly consternation fell upon him. The hand that groped for the worms trembled visibly. Yet he did not raise his eyes. On the contrary, he feigned a more complete absorption in his work. Skipper neared him slowly, cudgelling his brains as to what he would say. His resentment had died long ago. Skipper never could succeed in "nursing his wrath to keep it warm." The mere recollection of Tam's despairing face had cooled his indignation within an hour.

Tam, digging and stooping alternately, stood in a semi-liquid consistency of sand and water. One side of his bent little body was thickly powdered with snow. His hands were blue, a drop trembled from the point of his pinched nose, and from time to time he winked to keep the snow-flakes from his eyes. But despite the cold, the damp, and his cough—which he struggled vainly to repress—he was shaken with a tremulous gladness that, for the moment, beat down words.

At length Skipper came to a halt. Within an arm's-length of his friend's back he stood, watching him

anxiously. Tam, his eyes still glued to the sand, continued to delve with desperation. Not a word passed.

The hole completed, the two men gazed into it simultaneously. But Tam could not see. An unusual moisture filled his eyes. Rubbing them with his blue knuckles, he only succeeded in leaving a streak of sand upon his pale face. Overcome with embarrassment, he coughed.

"There, Tam! *There!*" cried Skipper, pointing with eagerness.

"Thank ye, Skipper," said Tam humbly; and, groping in the hole, he found and drew out the worm.

"Man, it's a wee yin!" exclaimed Skipper, carried away by criticism.

"Ay, they're no' big the day, and verra deep forby. Ye see, it's the frost sends them doon; one canna blame them, it's gey cauld on the tap. See tae the worm-casts, hoo wee they are: it's no' worth while, I'm thinkin'. Ye wouldna think I had been twa 'oors and a hauf fillin' that wee bit can, would ye now, Skipper?"

Tam spoke hurriedly and at unusual length, his eyes fixed on the sand.

"Whit wull ye get for that job?" questioned Skipper.

Tam straightened himself with an effort, then brushed the snow-flakes from his jacket.

"I dinna ken, Skipper. I'm daein' it for Simpson; he's awfu' bad, puir man, wi' the rheumatics. Maybe he'll gie me a fish—if he manages to catch wan," he added doubtfully.

Skipper grunted.

"Tam," he cried suddenly, "I've got a notion in ma heid."

"I canna say I'm surprised," cried Tam warmly, eyeing his friend with unaffected admiration.

"Ay," continued Skipper, laying his hand on Tam's

shoulder; "I see ye can dig fine. Man! ye handle the spade like—like a grave-digger."

Tam glowed, as much at the unaccustomed demonstration as at the praise; yet he thought fit to murmur, "Na, na, Skipper, ye canna mean it."

But Skipper nodded vigorously.

"I've got a job for us baith, Tam—a likely job, too, seein' as hoo we canna get on the links." Then with sudden enthusiasm, "Tam, hoo would ye like tae dig for treesure?"

"For treesure!"

"Ay, just that. Ye see, I met Maister Brandscome the morn. We had a bit crack—weel, the upshot o' it is that he's offered tae take on you and me at three shullings a-day. Eh, ma lad, whit think ye?"

But Tam could only stare.

"Ye'll like it fine wance ye're startet; it's excitin', I'm tellin' ye. We may howk oot a corp or twa. Brandscome's awfu' set on corps, an' the aulder they are the better he likes them. *Three* shullings, Tam; think on it! Wull ye come?"

"Wull I come! Oh, Skipper!"

"That's a' richt," interrupted Skipper gruffly.

"But I *must* thank ye," broke in Tam. "I ken fine he didna want me. It was *you* he was wantin'; ay, an' you've done it a'; it's——"

"Hoots, ye're haverin'!" blurted Skipper. Then as Tam attempted to speak, "Noo, say nae mair. Come on; gie me the worms. He's waitin' for us in the kirkyard. Losh me! whit ails the man?"

Tam had caught him by the arm, his face full of forebodings.

"I canna dae it, Skipper."

"Whit the deevil——"

"It wouldna be honest."

"Honest! Whit next!"

"Na, na; it's like this, ye see—I mean—— Och, Skipper, I dinna want to fash ye, but I canna say I believe in the treesure, and tae dig for a treesure ye dinna believe in, is no' honest."

Skipper eyed Tam's anxious face, then burst into stentorian laughter.

"Tam, Tam!" he cried, wiping his eyes with the back of his hand, "ye'll be the daith o' me! Ye muckle gommeril!¹ is that a' yer objections?"

"And is it no' enough?"

"Man, it's sheer nonsense. Here, wull ye believe in it when ye see it?"

Tam scratched his head. "I wouldna just like to say," he faltered. "Maybe, Skipper; maybe," he added hopefully.

"Come on, then; we've wasted an awfu' time. Here, gie me the spade; keep yer haunds in yer claes. It's no' job for you this. Come on."

Tam obeyed gratefully, and side by side the two friends set out briskly for the town.

¹ Stupid.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE snow had come to stay. Day after day it fell, and when it ceased falling and a reasonable hope of a thaw arose, a bitter frost set in that turned every drop of water into ice. Golf was all but dead. The links, a sad sheet of white, with here and there a patch of wind-blown green, were all but deserted. Curling and skating indulged in wintry rivalry. The musical tinkle of skates echoed down the grey streets; and muffled figures in felt shoes, with brooms tucked under their arms, were to be seen making their way towards the little pond that lies hard by the railway.

But if the town were metamorphosed into something unusually silent and strange, in the vicinity of the clubhouse the change was even more apparent. True, the life of the members went on much as usual; the swing-doors opened and closed upon the same comfortably clad figures; the shining plate-glass windows still sent their glow out through the twilight to flush the trodden snow. But all that told of caddie life had passed away. The starter's box stood empty—a mere blot on the desolate whiteness. The caddie-master's office was likewise deserted, as was the caddie shelter. Even the enclosure and the bench now showed forlorn,—a mere storage-ground for the accumulation of snow, with drifts knee-deep piled high in secluded corners.

For a sight of the caddies themselves one would have

had to wander far, for they had been driven to seek employment in all sorts of unexpected places. Thus big M'Phee might have been seen tramping from door to door, ringing the bell with a respectful hand, and sending a message to the lady—"Wull she no' need the snaw sweepet fra the door tae the road?" M'Clure was to be found at the skating-pond, entreating small gentlemen and ladies with, "Here, bide a wee till I pit on yer bit skates fer ye," touching his ragged cap with ill-concealed delight at the proffered penny.

But not all among them found employment. At the corners of the streets in the poorer quarters of the town, leaning against the wall that tops the cliff, or loafing around the little harbour, disconsolate figures were to be seen, now looking hopelessly at the leaden sky, and anon wistfully into men's faces.

Most pathetic of all was old Donald. Filled with an incurable love of the sea and the life of the boats, the old man had continued to haunt the little harbour, anticipating the arrival and departure of the fishermen with an exactitude born of enthusiasm. The cessation of work upon the links came to him as a something not to be regretted, in that it enabled him to devote more time to the sea. Employment offered him by a kindly neighbour within the town he declined, contenting himself with odd jobs in the immediate vicinity of the harbour. A penny here, and a penny there, with the gift of a fish when the boats came in,—for Donald was known and liked by every fisherman and lad in St Andrews,—sufficed to keep body and soul together.

"I'm gey auld," he would explain in his piping old man's voice, "I dinna need much tae eat"; and then he would break away from his would-be sympathiser without excuse, for he had spied the dark sail climbing up the mast, and wished, as was his wont, to proffer his

services before the *Four Brothers* or the *Saucy Lass* put out to sea.

But no one wanted him. The work of the boats necessitated younger and stronger men. What would they do with Donald, an old and enfeebled man whom the sea had discarded long ago, and who had already spent many a year upon the links? He would be worse than useless. His pertinacity amused the inhabitants of the fisher quarter, while his enthusiasm remained incomprehensible to them. His name became a jest among the burly fellows in oilskins and sou'-westers, a synonym for folly.

Yet they were never rude to the old man. On the contrary, they patronised him with rough yet unflinching kindness. His ardent interest in their occupations, his willingness to wash decks, to pack fish, to do anything and everything, however menial, that lay within his power, influenced them in his favour. Often would he listen to their conversations, their tales of the sea, hovering on the outskirts of the party like one who longed, yet feared, to count himself one of its members, drinking in their words with a diffident eagerness that was touching to witness. He rarely summoned up courage to speak unless spoken to, yet should one of the group appeal to him as an authority on bygone fishing, his pride and pleasure knew no bounds. He became as a man transfigured: the bent shoulders straightened, the dull eyes brightened, the voice assumed the deep-sea note, and old Donald embarked upon the sea of experience—the only ocean whose waters he still was permitted to navigate.

But most pathetic of all was it to observe him when a boat put out to sea. For long before the hour of departure he would be a prey to a painful restlessness of expectation. Six out of the seven men that formed

the crew would have assembled. Donald would count them with nervous laboriousness, filled with a great hope that the seventh man would not arrive in time. Then would he gaze anxiously up the steep hill that led to the town, then at the boat floating alongside the pier, then into the faces of the fishermen.

At length, unable any longer to keep silence, he would approach the edge of the quay, bend down, and timidly inquire—

“Ye’re waitin’ for Gourley? Maybe he’s no’ comin’ the day. His wife’s aillin’.”

“Oh, he’ll come a’ richt,” one of the men would respond, adding cheerily, “Whit did I tell ye? Here he comes.”

And with the arrival of the loiterer, hope would die its daily death in Donald’s heart.

Still, there remained always his absorbing interest in the boat. This was a something impersonal that rose superior to mere selfish considerations. He would accompany it step by step as it crept outwards,—it below, in the narrow passage, sheltered by the green seaweed-decked wall; he above, keeping pace, proceeding slowly towards the end of the pier. Then when he could go no farther, he would stand motionless on the extreme verge, many feet above the waves. There would he remain watching, while the little craft beneath him gathered way, responsive to the long oars, or moved by the gentle influence of the wind. Little by little it would be taken from him. Yet all would not be over. Still would he stand, and still would he watch, shading his aged eyes with his hand, fancying that he saw it again, drifting and dwindling, floating out into the light, disappearing gradually into the glories of the sunrise.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

WELL was it for Skipper and Tam that they had found an occupation during these winter days. Others might suffer hunger, and be forced to seek employment in uncongenial ways, but they were cheered on each succeeding morning by the certainty of steady work, and of a kindly master who never drove them too hard.

M'Pherson and Kermath had been discharged as incompetent, and, for the time being, Brandscome, Skipper, and Tam formed the full complement of treasure-seekers.

The enthusiasm of Brandscome was only surpassed by that of Skipper, and so sanguine and full of zeal were these two optimists that at the beginning even the tepid blood of Tam warmed into animation. How was it possible otherwise? To see Skipper handling pick and spade as though attacking a deadly foe; to hear his excited grunts and breathless ejaculations; to see his face shining with hope and perspiration; and, finally, to listen to his firm conviction that the treasure would be discovered in two minutes, at the very latest, was to be swept off your unbelieving feet and to become for the moment as confident as himself. Never in the course of his life had Tam Black worked so hard. He laboured till his back ached, and his face grew yet paler from over-exertion.

"Tak' it easy, Tam," grunted Skipper, pausing to survey his friend.

"Hoots, no; we'll be on it verra soon, wull we no', Skipper?"

"In twa meenutes, Tam; the wee crypt's just waitin' for us, ye may say. Mind yersel'!" And up went a shovelful of soil.

"Under that stone!" shouted Brandscome from above.

"Ay, ay, sir," cried Skipper, flinging down the spade, seizing the pick, spitting on his hands, then sending the steel point deep under the stone in question.

"Is it there, think ye?" piped Tam, with hands on knees, watching the superhuman exertions of his friend.

"Oot o' the way, man," gasped Skipper, and the big stone was heaved upwards from its bed.

Leaping down into the excavation, Brandscome examined the find attentively.

"Part of the foundations," he announced. "See, here are the chisel marks. It seems to me——" He relapsed into thought.

Tam seated himself on a stone with a suppressed sigh of relief. Skipper stood by, mopping his face with his tartan muffler.

Above them, the grand fragments of the eastern window, with its two dark towers, snow-bespattered, frowned down upon the scene. The old ruin seemed to resent this determined effort to wrest its secrets from it. It had guarded them so long. Centuries had rolled past, and generations of men had come and gone, of no deeper import to these crumbling stones than the fugitive birds that nested and flew away, or the ephemeral clouds that passed unwearyingly overhead, and still the hiding-place of the monks remained unguessed. And now this little company of mortals assailed the sanctity of its long repose with transient

bustle, with rude voices and yet ruder deeds, delving among the quiet graves and soiling the spotless mantle of snow with which kindly winter had decked it.

"We've got too deep," said Brandscome suddenly, waking from his calculations. "We had better try a little more to the west. But first we must fill this up."

"A' richt, sir," cried Skipper cheerily. "Come on, Tam; in wi' them stanes again."

But Tam stood bewildered.

Where was the treasure that was to have been unearthed in precisely two minutes? Why were they to fill the hole up?—a hole so large and deep, and which had cost him personally such weary, back-aching labour? He could not understand. The learned enthusiasm of Brandscome, the indomitable optimism of Skipper, were beyond him. *They* might go on like this, he reflected dolefully, for months, making holes and filling them up again. There was no sense in it. Call it digging for three shillings a-day,—that he understood; that was legitimate, and deceived no one; but for the Lord's sake have done with all labour carried on at high pressure that only drained bodies of their strength and hearts of their hope.

"In wi' it, Tam," shouted Skipper, wielding a zealous spade.

"A little faster, Black," remonstrated Brandscome.

Tam suppressed a sigh, and reluctantly resumed work.

But how different was the spirit that animated Skipper. Not only did he believe implicitly in the treasure, but the labour of each succeeding day caused it to assume a greater reality within his mind. Every hour brought him nearer to it; every stone heaved upwards might be the mask to the vault; every succeeding two minutes might be the time appointed. Disappointment did not discourage him; he cared nothing for it; it was not

disappointment, but a slight error in the calculations, of no importance whatever, save in so far as it enhanced the excitement of the ultimate discovery. The thought of the treasure dominated him. The element of romance, so long denied him, glowed hot within his veins. He lived in crypts and ate off golden plate. True, some of the items confused him sadly. A reference to chalices caused him to frown heavily, and the mere mention of a ciborium taxed his brain like a Chinese puzzle. Even the golden altars weighed upon his mind.

"I canna see them," he confided to Tam; "but," he added more hopefully, "I mind that the Children of Israel cairted them aboot the desert for nigh on forty year, so ye may tak yer aith, Tam, that thae things cost an awfu' money."

His dreams about this time were peopled with Oriental personages conveying something that glittered from the desert of Sinai to the Cathedral of St Andrews. He never grew weary of hearing Brandscome enlarge upon the details of the possible treasure; until, by dint of listening attentively and repeating the story to Tam, Skipper became as great an authority as the antiquarian himself.

And another influence which, more than aught else, served to inflame his enthusiasm was the sympathetic attitude of the Prince. The Arab proved so staunch a believer in the possibility of buried treasure—he threw himself with so deep, so satisfactory, ay, and so unexpected an enthusiasm into the matter—that Skipper beamed upon him with the utmost approval.

Many a talk had these strangely assorted house-mates in the little kitchen, when the tea-things stood upon the table, and the winter's night froze hard without. For the time being their places were reversed: Skipper it was who narrated, the Arab who listened. All Brands-

come's information, reinforced by sundry picturesque details invented on the spur of the moment,—golden truths and golden falsehoods,—glittered brightly in the story. With his horny hands, begrimed with churchyard mould, he thumped the table in proof of his assertions.

"Think, Alley," he cried one night, "the great big kirk was gangin' on that mornin' just like ordinar'. The priest-bodies were a' prayin', and the organs skirlin', and a' the gold and silver plate, and jools, Alley, mair than ye could count, and altars, and graund claes, and mony anither bonnie thing that I've clean forgotten the names o', were a' winkin' in the sunshine. Man! it must hae been fine!" Skipper sighed rapturously; then, "Weel, the mob came marchin' along. They'd be warm and gey thirsty, nae doot, but there was nae time for drinkin', they were that daft wi' excitement. The folk behind were shovin' on the folk in front, and they were a' shoutin', and thick wi' dust, and, nae doot, quarrlin' like deevils among thirsels. Can ye see them, Alley?"

A grunt of acquiescence came from the fireplace.

"That's richt; so can I. Weel, they creepit roond the kirk, and I canna doot but the organ stopped, and the puir priest-bodies glowered oot o' the kirk windows wi' white faces. It was a maist hopeless poseetion. They were like a lot o' silly fish in a net. Ma word! I dinna hold wi' the Romans, yet I canna help feelin' awfu' sorry for them."

Skipper paused to stroke his chin with a pensive air.

"Alley," he went on with gruff enthusiasm, "whit think ye they did? Why, man, it's as clear as day tae ony sensible man." (This was pure plagiarism from Brandscome.) "They just ran this way and that, tearin' doon lamps, and makin' a pile o' the gold and silver

plate; ay, and collectin' the apostles,—ye see, there's twelve o' them doon there, verra bonnie they are tae, a' covered wi' precious stanes; then they opened the door tae the wee stair that takes ye doon tae the crypt—that's whit we are seekin' the noo, Alley,—and they hid a' thae fine things there, and shuttit up the entrance. Ay, it was the last time they feasted their e'en on the treasure, for they never won back; the kirk was tumbled doon aboot their heids, while the mob was yellin' thirsels hoarse, fair drunk wi' blood and destruction."

The Arab listened with eagerness. Within the Oriental eyes shone a hard avaricious light, and at the mention of blood the thin lips straightened.

"Think on it, Alley!" cried Skipper hoarsely, gripping the table in his excitement. "Think on it, man! They're a' there *still*—waitin' on us. They've never seen the bonnie licht o' day for thousands o' years. Think on it! Doon a wee windin' stair—under the snaw—in the blackness—at this verra meenute—gold and silver, the wan on the tap o' the other, like thae plates on the dresser yonder—thick wi' dust and cobwebs. Man! it just grips ye—it does—it does!"

A hoarse and inarticulate noise broke from the Arab's throat. No less moved than was his little host, he, too, gloated over the recital.

Silence fell. The clock ticked, the fire spluttered, but the two men remained speechless, each engrossed in thought.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

TAM BLACK was strolling leisurely towards the links. The snow had taken its departure, and the sun was shining. A premature touch of spring was in the air,—a mere suggestion of warmth and awakening from wintry spells, as yet far off, but dawning within the soul of nature. Tam appeared not unconscious of this subtle influence, for his expression was peaceful, and once, as he looked upwards at the sunshine, he hummed a fragment of a tune. It was a portion of a hymn, and was instantly suppressed; yet the fact that the little quavering air had issued from between Tam's anæmic lips was sufficiently remarkable.

Nothing speaks more clearly of a man than his manner of walking. Not only does it reveal age, but temperament also is to be read in the mere mechanical raising and putting down of the feet. Thus, for example, Skipper had a bluff, hearty walk; he reminded one of a stout little merchantman rolling to the seas. His shoulders squared, his head carried high, looking life straight in the face, he lurched confidently upon his way. But Tam crept along a street as though his one desire was to avoid observation. It was his invariable habit to choose the inner side of the pavement: in his eyes it seemed safer and less conspicuous than the outside, and Tam felt vaguely that, if the worst came to the

worst, he would, at all events, possess the firm support of the railings.

All at once he halted, and, finding himself alone, produced something from his pocket. He held it carefully in the hollow of his palm, and stood for long gazing at it with incredulous admiration. The sunshine catching it caused it to glitter brightly, upon which it stood revealed as a gold ten-shilling piece. A sudden step upon the pavement behind him made him restore it hastily to his pocket, and turn a furtive eye upon the new-comer.

"Devina!" he ejaculated. "Whit are ye daein' here?"

"I came oot tae post a letter, Maister Black. It's a braw day."

Contentment roused Tam to unaccustomed bravery. "It is that," he responded cheerfully. "I'll just walk tae the hoose wi' ye, if ye've nae objection."

"Ye're verra welcome," she said; upon which they proceeded slowly towards Gibson Place.

"Hoo is it ye're no' at the diggin'?" she inquired.

Tam smiled. "That's a' by wi', Devina."

"Oh?"

"Ay; it's whit I thocht. But can ye keep a secret?"

She eyed him disapprovingly. "I dinna like ither folk's secrets," she said curtly.

"Na, na," expostulated Tam, with great earnestness; "it's no' precisely whit you would ca' a secret, eether. It's just this, ye see,"—he edged nearer to her,—"*I* kenned it a' the time."

He flung back his head and gazed at her in triumph.

"Whit?"

"Oh, that there was naethin' there."

"Whaur you was diggin', ye mean?"

"Ay, just that."

"But whit was it ye expectet tae find?"

Tam laughed in gentle irony.

"Oh, a wheen plates, and claes, and whit not, buried by the priest-bodies lang syne."

She frowned thoughtfully.

"The claes would be fair ruined by the damp," she said at length.

Tam gazed at her in sudden admiration.

"So they would!" he ejaculated. "Ma word, whit a heid ye have, Devina! It takes a wuman tae think o' these things; we men bodies never thocht o' that wance."

A faint smile passed over her face.

"It's whit I was tellin' ye," went on Tam, with modest pride. "I kenned it a' the time; but Skipper—ye'll excuse me callin' yer faither Skipper, Devina; it comes sae naitural."

"Go on."

"Weel, he was like a bairn—aye fu' o' hope and speerits. Losh me!"—Tam raised his hands—"we made an awfu' sight o' holes,—ye should ha' seen them,—but never found naethin'—except a coffin or twa," he added with a laudable desire for accuracy.

"Coffin!" she cried in horror.

"Ay, the place is fair hotchin' wi' them. But we pit them back, Devina," he added hastily, as he noted her expression. "The skeletons were verra little damaged: they'll never ken they've been meddled wi' on the Day o' Judgment—oh no."

But her indignation overflowed.

"It's a sin!" she cried hotly, "tae meddle wi' the deid; tae seek for earthly braws in a kirkyaird is—is a sin. Ma faither, as ye say, is just a bairn; he never thinks; he doesna mean ony hairm. But you, Tammas Black, are different. Your ain words condemn ye. 'I kenned it a' the time,' says you. Oh, it's easy seen it's *you* that's just been misleadin' him!"

"*Me!*" ejaculated Tam, utterly taken aback.

But Devina's unaccustomed eloquence had exhausted her store of words. She did not reply. They strolled on for a few paces in silence.

"Maybe I'd better say 'guid day,'" began Tam, in a voice that he vainly tried to render composed. Devina eyed him sternly.

"Maister Black," said she abruptly.

"Ay, Devina?"

For a moment she hesitated; then—

"Ye mustna mind whit I said the noo. I—I was fashed. I canna hear o' sic ungodly work wi' ony pleasure."

Tam's face brightened.

"It's whit I think masel'," he cried eagerly.

"Why did ye dae it, then?"

"Oh, ye see, there was nae ither work tae be had; and there's nae denyin' that Maister Brandscome was verra kind. Whit think ye he did? He gied Skipper an' me ten shullings extra the morn oot o' his ain purse. Ay, baith on us. Would ye like tae see mine? Oh, it's nae trouble! I hae it here in ma pooch. There! —whit think ye; is that no' bonnie?"

"It's verra bright," she commented grudgingly. "Whit will ye dae wi' it?"

Tam restored it carefully to its hiding-place. His face assumed an expression of great importance.

"It's a' decided," he said, in the eager yet guarded manner of one who imparts a secret. "For years I've had an awfu' hankerin' for an overcoat. It's a presumption for the likes o' me, ye may say,"—he eyed her questioningly, and gave utterance to a low apologetic laugh,—"*but*," he continued with more enthusiasm, "it would be graund tae feel warm in the winter."

Devina's eyes rested on him.

"Weel?" she said, with unusual gentleness.

"Weel, Devina," he continued eagerly, "there's a bonnie coat I ken of tae be had for ten shullings. Ay, and it'll be mine the nicht — *the nicht!* Think o' that!"

A rare smile lighted his face; softly he rubbed his hands together.

They halted under the garden-wall of their destination.

"Ye'll no' be diggin' again, eh?" she inquired, relapsing into gruffness.

"Na, na; that's a' by wi'. Ye see, there's nae mair money. It's a kind o' queer society for seekin' plates and auld claes, and Maister Brandscome is the treesurer. But it doesna matter tae us. The snaw is aff the links. Maybe I'll get a roond this afternoon."

"Faither wull be disappointet, nae doot," she mused.

Tam uttered the ghost of a chuckle.

"*Him!*" he cried. "No fear! He's amazin', Devina; that's whit he is. He takes the verra breath oot o' ye. 'Ye'll have tae stop the day, Skipper,' says Brandscome, verra sad-like; there's nae mair money tae pay ye.' 'Money!' roars Skipper, cockin' his heid oot o' the hole; 'wha wants money? Tam Black,' says he, turnin' on me sudden like, 'dae *you* want money?' 'No, no, Skipper,' says I; for ye see, Devina, I was taken aback. 'I kenned it fine,' says he. 'Maister Brandscome, ye hear whit Tam says. It's no' money he's after; it's treesure. It canna be far aff noo; we'll find it for ye in twa meenutes. Come on, Tam.' That's whit he said; but Maister Brandscome paid us aff the morn, and, as I was tellin' ye, Devina, there wull be nae mair diggin' for the present."

"Whit did faither dae wi' the extra money?" she inquired.

"There!" burst out Tam. "There it is again. Whit a man! Nae wonder ye're proud of him, Devina. See tae me, aye thinkin' o' masel' and the coat I've been hankerin' after. But not him. Ye'll no' find him thinkin' o' himsel'. Oh no! 'Tam,' says he, 'I'll buy a red shawl!'"

"Shawl!" ejaculated Devina.

"Ay, ye're astonished? Sae was I. It seemed tae me a daft-like thing for a caddie tae buy." He paused, then continued triumphantly, "Yet there's reason in it, Devina. Skipper always has a reason. It's a grand red Paisley shawl; he's seen it hangin' up in a shop. And wha dae ye think it's for?"

She reflected; then a pleasant light came into her eyes.

"It's no' for me, is it?" she inquired.

Tam stroked his chin.

"N-a-a," he said reluctantly, "it's no' for you *this* time, Devina; it's for yon black——"

"Guid day," she interrupted. "I've been here ower lang. Guid day." She turned abruptly from him, and passing through the wooden gate that led into the yard, disappeared from sight.

Tam stood speechless for a full minute, gazing vacantly at the door; then shaking his head like one face to face with an insoluble mystery, turned slowly away. Barely, however, had he proceeded a few yards than he heard her voice recalling him. Quickly he retraced his steps. There she stood, frowning, in the doorway. Her black dress revealed the outlines of her figure, and, seen against the light beyond, her face looked strangely handsome. But that which attracted Tam was the expression in her eyes.

"It was that kind," he informed Skipper later. "Man! it pit me in mind o' ma mither."

"Whit colour is yer coat?" she demanded.

"Coat? Oh, ay, the new coat, ye mean? Weel, it's—let me think—it's a sort o' grey, Devina; that's tae say, it was grey wance," he added, with a gratified smile.

"Have ye gotten a muffler?"

Tam's ejaculation cried out against the extravagance.

"Weel, I'll make ye a grey muffler tae weer wi' yer new coat."

She was gone before he could find words to thank her; but the memory of the unexpected kindness accompanied him to the links, and was with him through the afternoon—a comforting glow within his heart.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

BUT the disappearance of the snow did not bring happiness to Skipper. His heart had been in the search for the crypt, and he chafed against the necessity for abandoning the quest. In vain he pleaded to be permitted to dig without reward. Brandscome held his ground; he counselled patience; funds would come in time, but for the present he refused to employ labour for which he could not pay.

Other reasons, too, conspired to make Skipper unhappy. While the snow had lasted the weather had been fine, but the moment it vanished the bitter easterly gales began again, and the cold became intense. Not that Skipper personally was affected by weather. Snow, frost, rain, storms,—he took them all with cheerful equanimity, and, in fact, wore the same clothing both summer and winter. His unhappiness lay deeper than that—his Prince was ill. Yes, Ali Mohammed had begun to droop. A severe cold had settled finally upon his lungs, and his fits of coughing racked Skipper's heart. Yet his malady was partly of the mind. Home-sickness had seized him. The lonely sands and desolate cliffs knew him no more. For several weeks he had not crossed the threshold. Hour by hour, during the entire day, would he remain squatting on his heels near the fire, swathed from neck to feet in the red shawl. Sickness preyed upon him; he had become more emaciated

than ever; his beak-like nose appeared devoid of flesh; his deep-set eyes had grown listless, yet, if roused, were still capable of strange expression—furtive or fierce, bold or reserved by turns.

For long periods he would remain motionless, his claw-like hands clasped beneath his draperies, watching the flames with a dull apathy of indifference that was scarcely human. Formerly he had devoured food, tearing it to pieces with impatient fingers, stuffing his mouth, chewing noisily, the veins on his forehead swollen and working, his eyes already anticipating the next bite. But, health gone, his appetite failed. Little that was solid passed his lips; yet he never lost his love of coffee. He would watch its preparation greedily, seize the cup from Skipper's hands with no word of thanks, and swallow the steaming contents hastily, with gulps and gaspings for breath.

The meal finished, he would again sink into torpor, broken only by occasional fits of coughing. Despite the unlovableness of his character, he awoke pity. A bird of prey pining in its cage never fails to arouse compassion. The mind cannot help associating it with freedom, with sunlight, and the full command of its natural instincts—with all, in fact, that it lacks during captivity. A dull and sombre anger burned in his heart. It waxed and waned according as it was fanned or neglected by resentful thoughts. With all his Oriental apathy of feeling, a sense of injury and an immense self-pity filled him to the lips. His thoughts continually reverted to the past. Never before had his hovel, hard by the ruined wall, seemed more distant. He wondered if it had ever existed at all, or if his past life were a vision sent him by some evil spirit. He recalled the faces of those he had formerly known. They stared at him from the leaping flames—sometimes in anger, some-

times with scorn, sometimes mockingly, but always with hostility. The face of Cassim appeared more often than the others. It leered exultingly. At times he struck at it with the poker.

He felt utterly miserable and ill. The northern winter had sucked the vitality from his bones. The cold lay like a blight upon his limbs. He feared he must be bewitched, and tried to recall dim incantations learned in his youth. His lips would move at such moments, but no sound escaped them. Occasionally he fell asleep, only to waken, after fitful slumber, with a terrible sense of depression. At first he gazed around him stupidly, unable to recall his surroundings; then into his haggard eyes would come a gleam of recognition, and he would curse the very moment of his birth.

The impossibility of doing anything to alleviate this depression weighed like a nightmare upon his host. All that Skipper could do, he did. His own meals, scanty though they habitually were, he reduced to a minimum in order that Ali Mohammed might have the consolation of a fire. He bought him cigarettes. He waited on him with a patient consideration that would have earned the gratitude of the veriest misanthrope. But Ali Mohammed took it all for granted, accepting it in morose silence, oftentimes turning his back without a word.

The return of Skipper of an evening made but little difference to his guest. With semiclosed lids he would follow his host moving to and fro in the kitchen, but to genial inquiries he would vouchsafe only a grunt—the inarticulate protest of a man who wishes to be left alone.

The stories had come to an abrupt termination. This was a great disappointment to Skipper, yet he concealed it gallantly.

“Weel, weel, Alley,” he said soothingly one evening,

when his efforts had met with nothing but ungracious refusal, "never heed me. Ye ken I'm daft aboot stories. Ye needna bother tae talk; I see fine hoo it is—ye're just pinin' for the bonnie sunshine and a' thae camels. Ay, ay, I can understand that. Dod, I'm longin' for them masel'! I dream aboot them, but the want o' them doesna make me ill." He frowned in self-dissatisfaction. "I'm just terrible healthy," he apologised, with a whimsical glance towards his guest. There was no reply. Ali Mohammed, doubled upon himself, continued to stare at the fire; it was doubtful if he had heard.

Skipper eyed him sadly, shook his head, hitched one of his sturdy little legs over the other, then began to smoke. In the absence of superior fiction, his thoughts turned for consolation to the desert links beyond the palm-trees, hard by the white-walled town. The excitement of arranging an exhibition game, in which he—Skipper, first and only professional—should break the record and win a purse of fifty camels, successfully wooed him from the sadness of his surroundings.

The abandonment of the treasure-hunt meant more to Skipper than at first sight would appear. It was the one subject during those weary days of ill-health capable of arousing his companion from lethargy. Why this was so is not difficult to determine. Credulity as well as suspicion shaped the thoughts of Ali Mohammed. For him the marvellous soared always in an atmosphere of possibility. A bank, as a recipient for wealth, he would have scoffed at; but a hole in the ground, *that* he understood. That seemed to him not only a probable, but even a natural, place of concealment. Had not he himself hidden a small store of copper coins in the mud-wall of his own house?

Thus the mere enumeration of gold, silver, and jewels

was sufficient to cause his eyes to glitter, and a greedy expression to creep into his face. It went far to console him for the disappointment he had experienced when repeated search had failed to bring to light the secret hoard of his host. With him imagination and avarice went hand in hand. The red-hot zeal of Skipper found a fitting ally in the ill-restrained lust of his companion. Both were swayed equally by the desire to discover, but the motives that influenced them were diametrically opposed.

But upon the day when Skipper returned with the news that the excavating was at an end, a marked change for the worse became apparent in Ali Mohammed. He lost all interest in life. Hope flickered and went out. His enmity to his host increased. He longed to curse him openly, to spit upon his face—yet dared not. A man who is both hostile and dependent is a pitiable object. The situation breeds meanness, hypocrisy, dissimulation; and yet the victim is powerless to help himself. He must go on, even unto the end. To long fiercely, impotently, to bite the hand that feeds you—could anything be more agonising? Yet that is what Ali Mohammed suffered daily.

And yet other symptoms were developed. He fell a prey to extreme nervousness. He plainly feared something. This something would occasionally belong to the unseen world, for, fixing protruding eyes on a dark corner of the kitchen, he would shudder and sweat by the hour.

It was with a commiseration that was very genuine that Skipper observed this change in his guest. He saw him tremble at a sound; he saw him even struggle to keep back the cough that was shaking him while passing footsteps clattered loud on the cobbles without. Yet he could do nothing.

And if Ali Mohammed's waking moments were troubled, his sleep was not less so. Skipper knew nothing of the dread phantoms that hounded him through the blackness of night. He was conscious only of their effect. Often would he be awakened by strange sounds issuing from the adjacent bedroom—interminable mutterings, or occasionally a sharp cry that cut the darkness like a lash.

Once, unable to endure it longer, Skipper sprang from his bed, lighted a candle, and stood watching the sleeper from the doorway. In the disarray of the clothing the emaciated hand grasped a knife. The blade flashed keen in the light of the candle. The words that issued from the thin lips were thick and strange, as the ravings of one in delirium. They came in broken gasps, as though they were the utterance of a man fleeing for his life. The dark skin of the face and neck shone in wet lights; the lips, drawn back, revealed the glitter of white teeth; the motions of the hands and arms were galvanic in their irrationality.

Fearing that he might do himself an injury, Skipper approached and gently sought to dispossess him of the weapon. But at the first touch the sleeper awoke with a scream. There was something so unexpectedly horrible in the sound, something so blood-curdling and uncanny, that Skipper stood unnerved, the candlestick shaking in his hand.

For a breathless moment the two men remained motionless, staring into each other's eyes as if fascinated. Then, with an angry grunt, Ali Mohammed rolled over upon his side, and Skipper, full of melancholy forebodings, returned to his bed.

CHAPTER XL.

"AN' so ye think I'd better veesit her again, Tam?"

"Ay, Skipper; it's daft-like me tellin' ye whit to dae and you sae kind a faither, but the lassie is sae proud o' ye that it seems a peety tae me that she doesna see ye oftener."

"Play away!" roared Braid, the starter, from his box. Four balls were driven from the first tee.

"See tae that," ejaculated Skipper, pointing with scorn to the receding back of the last player. "That's an Edinbro' man. He hasna reached the road. He's nae richt tae play in a fower-ba' match."

"Ay, ay," murmured Tam, with indifference; then, gazing at his friend, "Wull ye no' gang, Skipper?"

"Whaur?"

"Tae see Devina."

Skipper impatiently shifted the bag on his shoulder.

"I can see her the Sabbath."

"Ay, but that's only at the kirk, whaur ye canna talk. She never gangs tae yer hoose noo, and that's no' naitural. It bothers me, Skipper—it does indeed."

Skipper's eyebrows twitched humorously, yet his eyes revealed some deeper, more kindly, feeling that caused Tam to become hopeful.

"Wull ye promise?" he persisted.

"Ye're a fair bully," growled his friend, with a twinkle.

"But pit yer mind at ease; I'll gang the nicht."

Another match started upon the round.

"Hae ye heard that auld Armet o' Pittenweems died yesterday?" remarked Tam.

"Deid! Auld Armet deid!"

"Ay, that's naethin' tae be astonished at: we maun a' dee wan day, and ye'll mind he was gey auld."

"Na, na, it's no' that, Tam; but Maister Brandscome wull be sair afflicted. Ye see, auld Armet was the only leevin' man that could ca' tae mind the wee stair leadin' doon tae the crypt."

"Eh, but that's a fac', Skipper."

"It is, Tam. He's shown nae conseederation for us that's left. He's ta'en his secret wi' him; an' mair nor that, if he was oot a yaird or twa, why, he kens a' aboot it noo. It's maist upsettin'."

"There wull be nae mair diggin'," said Tam, with a melancholy drawl, out of consideration for Skipper's feelings.

"Whit's that ye say! Nae mair diggin'! Ma word! if Maister Brandscome doesna start the diggin' in anither month, he isna the man I tak' him for; an' if he gies it up,—sure as daith, I'll get a spade an' dae the job wi' ma ain twa haunds. Nae mair diggin'! Tammas Black, I'm surprised at ye; I am indeed!"

Skipper's voice had risen in indignation. The altercation began to afford the bystanders amusement. A player, about to drive, paused in the act of addressing his ball to eye the friends testily. Braid, leaning out of his window, gave them some advice upon the advisability of silence, so terse, scathing, and damaging to character that Tam quailed before it. But Skipper glared at Braid, as who should say, "Come on; wha's afeared? Dinna think ye can down me, ma mannie!" In his heart, however, hatred of publicity was as deeply rooted as in that of Tam, so with a frown of much dignity he

swaggered slowly behind the starting-box, where Tam had already sought shelter.

"Gowf's a fearfu' thing for the temper," whispered Tam.

Skipper assented gruffly.

"I mind Braid when he was a laddie at the schule, an' I mind him at the burial o' his mither, but I never thocht tae hear him use that talk tae me."

"Set him up!" growled Skipper. "I've a guid mind tae cowp¹ him an' his bit box. I could dae it easy."

Tam's mind still ran upon human frailties.

"That was a peetiful exhibeetion o' Captain Smith's the ither day."

"Ay, Tam; the man's like a fusee,—a rub on the green sets him in a blaze. The only difference is that ye hae tae strike the wan, and the ither strikes you. Haw! haw!"

Tam forced a polite but puzzled smile. Skipper continued—

"An' see tae Macdermot—he's no' in the airmy, sae there's nae excuse for the likes o' him; an' yet did he no' take his clubs hame and saw aff their heids, fair daft wi' temper."

"He did that, Skipper; I mind the story weel."

"An' whit aboot Collet—him that's on the committee? Have ye no' seen him kickin' his putter like a bairn when he canna hole a wee putt?"

"Ay, that's a fac'."

"There's mony a drawback tae bein' a gentleman, Tam; fine claes covers an awfu' temper at times. The warld sees the outside, but it's you an' me that sees the inside. It's—'Tam, whit club shall I take?' 'The brassie, sir,' says you. Weel, he takes it, an' tops his

¹ Upset.

ba' intil a bunker, 'Whit the deevil did you gie me that club for?' says he, glowerin' at you; and then ye hear him tellin' the ither gentlemen that he'd have laid it deid at the hole side if it hadna been for his fule o' a caddie."

Tam gazed at his friend with open-mouthed wonder.

"Man, Skipper!" he cried, "have you found that tae?"

Skipper snorted loudly.

"Mony a time, Tam. See til Swift—I carry for him often. Weel, he startet gowf ower late: he'll never steady doon. Whiles he fozzles his drive. 'Keep yer heid doon,' says I, wi' mony anither word o' guid advice. An' does he feel gratefu'? No fear! If I wink accidental-like on the green, man! he fair murders me with wan glower, and says, in his awfu' quait voice that's waur than ony sweer, 'Skipper, ye're movin' again.' *Again!* mind ye, Tam; an' me standin' as still as the club-hoose."

"Wha are ye carryin' for the day?" inquired Tam, after a pause.

"For Cornal Lochhead; we're number saxteen."

"Wull his wife gang roond wi' him the day, think ye?"

"She kens better, Tam. Ma word! he'd just pickle her wi' his tongue. I mind wance I was carryin' in a match between Wilson and the Cornal, an' afore we startet Wilson up and says, 'Lochhead,' says he, 'd'ye mind if I ask a lady freend o' mine tae walk roond wi' us?' Ye should hae seen the auld Cornal stiffen! 'Damn it! sir,' says he, 'ye may bring the hale brass band o' St Andrews, for ocht I care.'"

"Sweerins a bad habit, Skipper."

"That's a', Tam; it's like toppin' yer ba' at gowf. It's a daft-like way tae talk, for it doesna hurt the

ither man. Dod, I mind it as little as this brassie; it rins aff me like——”

“Damn you, Skipper! what are you doing with that club? Do you think I pay you half-a-crown to soil my handles?”

Skipper started. A tall elderly man of military carriage was striding towards him.

“A’ richt, Cornal,” he cried genially; “I’m just takin’ the stiffness oot o’ it. Here’s yer driver, sir. Oor number’s next.”

CHAPTER XLI.

"WILL ye no' sit doon?" said Devina.

"Thank ye kindly," returned Skipper.

He seated himself on the cane-chair and stared around him, obviously ill at ease. The kitchen was a model of all that a kitchen should be. The covers of the dishes, the range, the white unvarnished furniture—all shone with evidence of much polish; the very floor was spotless and bright as a new-made pin. This obtrusive cleanliness depressed Skipper. He looked from an immaculate object hanging on the wall to his hands. Things had come to a pretty pass when a plated dish-cover could give lessons in cleanliness.

"Would ye like a cup o' tea?" questioned Devina.

Skipper's eyes ranged the dresser in one swift and expectant glance, but no signs of more congenial refreshment were forthcoming.

"If it's nae trouble," he answered with resignation.

Devina bestirred herself to some purpose. Not only did a teapot make its appearance, but a loaf of bread, a plate of butter, and a pot of jam speedily decorated the table. Skipper set to work on them with avidity. He welcomed the meal, not only because he was hungry, but also because it helped to relieve the sense of restraint that yawned like a gulf between his daughter and himself.

Nothing but the exhortations of Tam could have per-

suaded him to the interview. It had cost him an effort to keep his promise; indeed, he had hesitated long at the gate, more than half inclined to run away.

"Take some mair jam," said Devina.

She pushed the pot nearer to him as she spoke. Skipper helped himself with careful and genteel moderation, painfully aware that his actions were under observation. She spoke again.

"Take anither spoonfu'; it'll no' dae ye ony hairm."

He looked at her in swift suspicion. No shade of irony, however, was observable in her face. The eyes that met his were grave, even to sadness; but the light within them was not hostile. Skipper jerked his head and followed her advice without a word.

The meal finished, she rose to her feet, took a box of matches from the high mantelpiece, and laid it beside him on the table.

"Ye can smoke," she said.

He lighted his pipe in a sort of dumb amazement. Producing some knitting from a drawer, she drew her chair nearer to the fire. As she bent over her work the light of the flames danced upon her face and across the plain black bands of her hair. From time to time Skipper eyed her furtively under cover of the smoke. He did not trust this new attitude; he feared it might lead to something unpleasant. Instinctively he scanned various portions of his disreputable person, wondering vaguely which she would select for criticism. The gaping hole in one shoe seemed a vulnerable point; very cautiously, and with his eyes fixed on his daughter, he covered the defaulter with its fellow.

All at once their eyes met. Skipper's withdrew modestly from the encounter.

"Ye got your twa roonds the day?" she questioned. Her voice was gruff, yet betrayed interest. One half

of Skipper's mind counselled wariness, the other smiled satisfaction. His affirmative steered a safe course. She nodded sympathetically.

"It's a hard life for ye at times, nae doot?"

His gesture protested affably.

She did not speak again. Skipper, too, remained silent.

The click of the knitting-needles continued without intermission. It was cosy in the kitchen: the contrast with the cold and gloom without was very welcome. In a high state of enjoyment, Skipper lolled in the arm-chair—smoked, and basked, and finally grew pleasantly drowsy in the genial warmth. Steam rose lightly from his damp feet, observing which, he held them yet closer to the fire. The movement aroused his daughter's attention.

"Whit shoes are thae?" she inquired, denouncing them with a glance.

With swift modesty the articles in question sought refuge beneath their possessor's chair.

"I canna help it, Devina," he pleaded. "I ken weel enough they're no' respectable for a veesit o' this sort. But whit can I dae? Them are the wan pair I hae—for week-days, that is."

"Oh, *I* mind a black pair ye had."

"Ay, wi' toe-caps; oh ay!"

"Weel, whit did ye dae wi' them?"

He moved uneasily, and sought by dint of frowning to extract inspiration from the kettle.

"They were ower big for me," he began pensively. "I had tae pit on three pairs o' socks, for they was awfu' wobbly. Weel, Donald came in wan day. Hae ye noticed Donald's feet, Devina?" He turned to her with eagerness.

"No," she said gruffly.

"Weel, they're a sort o' disease; he canna get second-hand boots near big enough, so ye see——"

"Say nae mair; I see it fine. An' noo ye've only thae rags tae yer feet."

He surveyed them with commiseration.

"Dinna say that. Ye dinna ken hoo comfortable they are. Maybe they're no verra graund tae look at; but och! they're fine and easy tae wear. Ye see, Devina, the links are fair soaked the noo. If ye wear a guid pair, ye feel annoyed when the damp comes in, but wi' thae shoes ye just expec' it tae happen at wance." He sat erect, gesticulating with much animation. "Tae *ma* mind," he added earnestly, "it's a sort o' pleesure tae hear the water squeakin' in and oot."

A smile lighted her eyes, causing her to look singularly pleasant.

Again Skipper was seized with astonishment. He wondered vaguely. His thoughts reviewed the past. Could it be, he asked himself, that *this* was the true Devina?—that he, her own father, had never done her justice? But no signs of perplexity appeared in his face.

Again no one spoke. Indolently Skipper began to draw comparisons between this kitchen and his own. This train of thought led him unconsciously to Ali Mohammed. With a pang of self-reproach he recollected that his guest was ill and alone.

"Whit's wrang wi' ye?" demanded his daughter.

"Why?" he asked gruffly.

"Ye gave a groan. It's no' a pain, is it?"

"Na; no' a bodily pain, ye micht say. I was thinkin'."

She waited patiently, but he volunteered no further information.

"Somethin's botherin' ye?" she inquired.

The unusual gentleness in her voice goaded Skipper into a sort of desperation. He felt as though a trap

were being baited for him, into which he would be forced to fall sooner or later. The desire to face the worst nerved him.

"I'm bothered aboot ma black man," he blurted.

Her features grew stern, her brows met. Skipper recognised her at last. The weight of uncertainty was lifted from his mind. Plunging his hands deep into his trousers' pockets, he forced himself to return her stare.

"Ay," he thought bitterly, "I micht hae known it; she was only play-actin'."

A moment of silence, then brusquely she rose, crossed the kitchen, and stood at the dresser, fumbling in her work - basket. He watched her back with growing apprehension. Suddenly she turned, and Skipper noted with awe that all traces of anger had been wiped from her face.

"I'm sorry ye're bothered," she said, as though forcing herself to speak with deliberation; then, more naturally, and resuming her chair, "Wull ye tell me aboot it?"

Would he tell her! On the crest of remorse and gratitude, he desired nothing better. The illness of the Arab, his home-sickness, his bad dreams, his depression, the necessity of sending him back to the sunshine—all this, and much more, flowed as easily and spontaneously from him as though he were confiding in Tam.

And she listened, watching him meanwhile with gravity. Visible between her eyes was a pucker that told of the effort to enter into his thoughts. Her sympathy with the Arab was but slight, and resolved itself into a faint feeling of compassion that he should be ill. But as she studied her father with the first honest desire to sympathise that had ever possessed her, she became aware of much that merited admiration, ay, even respect. His pity was so genuine, his enthusiasm so whole-hearted. Much was suppressed:

his disappointment at the cessation of the stories, his care of the invalid, his fear to lose him, his great desire to accompany him to southern lands,—all these were, if not forgotten, at least passed over in silence. But enlightened by new-born sympathy, Devina guessed at much that was omitted. Her knitting lay neglected upon her knees, her eyes rested upon him; motionless, she sat and listened to his words.

Encouraged by her attitude, and carried along by the impetuosity of his feelings, Skipper discoursed at length.

But pausing to draw breath, the utter incongruity of the situation struck him silent.

"Weel?" she inquired, for he had cut short an incident in mid-career.

"I must awa' hame," he muttered.

"Ye'll come again?" she asked as she handed him his cap.

The tone of her voice confirmed his suspicions. "She's ailin'," he thought. The incredulous look in his eyes changed swiftly to one of sympathy. Devina was quick to notice it: it deepened the kindly feeling in her heart.

"Guid nicht, faither," she said. "Mind ye tak aff thae wet shoes when ye get hame."

This was the last straw. "She's real bad!" thought Skipper. Wagging an ominous head, he tramped off into the night.

CHAPTER XLII.

It was late one Saturday afternoon. The snug bar-room of the "Far and Sure" was crowded. Hubbub of men's voices mingled with rattle of glasses, and grating of feet on the sanded floor. Day was far spent; the glare of gaslights shed a yellow glow around the interior. It shone upon groups of men, some animated and jovial, others silent and depressed, others indifferent, sipping their drink and listening wearily to those who talked. It lighted the gleaming metal of the handles used for the drawing of beer, the rows of bottles ranged neatly upon the shelves, and the red face of the landlady behind the counter. The atmosphere was warm, redolent of whisky, beer, and the close smell exhaled from damp clothing.

Audible above the hum of conversation came the melancholy wailing of a concertina from the benighted street—a monotonous accompaniment to a nasal and lugubrious voice.

At the far end of the room stood Skipper in an easy attitude, one elbow leaning on the counter. Before him a glass of whisky and water testified to his occupation. Beside him stood Tam. Skipper, like Tam o' Shanter, was in his element when in a bar-room. "O'er a' the ills o' life victorious," he beamed upon the company as cheerful and contented a little man as you might see from Land's End to John o' Groat's House.

The comfortable assurance of shelter and warmth lapped him round. Wind and rain—for the day had been tempestuous, although the gale had abated towards nightfall—had left their effects behind them in a glow upon his skin and a sense of not unpleasant fatigue. The whisky, too, helped not a little towards the jollity in his face. Skipper felt that it lent a pleasant air of romance to his surroundings. With an appreciative eye he inspected the row of bottles.

"They're bonnie, Tam. They're winkin' at us!" he chuckled gaily, giving his friend's lean ribs a dig with his elbow. Tam winced. "Which would ye tak an' ye had yer choice, eh?"

Tam surveyed the gleaming row, then rubbed his nose with his coat-sleeve, thereby causing that organ to glisten with moisture.

"The wee green wan, Skipper," he hazarded doubtfully. "But," he added with more assurance, "I'd rayther hae a pound o' tea."

"Tea! ye auld wife! Tea canna grip yer stomach. Oh, it has its uses, I'm no' denyin'; it's warm. But gie me whusky." He sighed, and moistened his lips with his tongue. "Can ye see ower the bar, Tam?"

The two friends stood on tiptoe. Skipper, pointing with a grimy finger, continued hoarsely—

"Yon's a cask o' whusky. That's whit I'd take. I'd get drunk. Ye see, Tam, it takes a lot o' whusky tae mak me drunk. It's a luxury I canna afford; I've ither uses for ma money noo."

He sighed, and relapsed into serious thought. The babel of conversation around them continued. The landlady bustled about, drawing beer, serving whisky, sweeping money into the till. Occasionally she paused to laugh with a customer, holding her sides, her ample body shaking like an agitated jelly.

"He wouldna let me gang, the thief!" cried a thick voice: Robb was explaining to M'Phee how he and the caddie-master had fallen out. Robb's bull neck gave the impression of great strength, but Skipper eyed him contemptuously. M'Phee listened with inclined head, but his expression informed the observant that he did not intend to commit himself.

"It was in 'Seeventy-sax——" came Donald's quavering tones from the far end of the bar.

"Fowerpence change," cried the landlady, rattling the coins upon the counter.

"There—is—nae—place—like—hame," droned the lugubrious voice from the street, and, audible above the moaning of the wind, rose and fell the shrill, long-drawn wail of the concertina. The dreary music seemed to reiterate the sentiment, imparting to it a dismal irony, until the very echoes whined, "There i—s nae pl—ace like ha—me." Some one entering abruptly, the refrain screamed round the bar, then choked suddenly as the door swung back upon its hinges.

The new-comer—a man of seafaring appearance, short, stout, with one eye partially closed—rolled to the bar and called roughly for whisky. M'Phee and Robb made way for him, a courtesy which he acknowledged by inviting them to drink.

"Whit man's yon?" whispered Tam.

Skipper raised his grizzled eyebrows and favoured the new-comer with a steady stare.

"A stranger bodie," he mused. "Ye can smell the saut sea on him."

His thoughts drifted to his life on the boats, now put away for ever on the dusty shelves of memory. The man reminded him of a comrade long since dead: he, too, had possessed a useless eye with a curious droop. The buzz of voices and sounds around him grew vague

and indistinct, until to his ears they seemed like unto the far-off ravings of the sea. His eyes remained fixed on his glass of whisky and water, but he did not see it—he saw instead the sloping planks of the fishing-boat, wet with spray, half darkened by the shadow of the sail, half gleaming bright in the sun.

Tam's reproachful voice broke the spell.

"I've spoken tae ye twice," he remonstrated.

"Oh, I was thinkin'."

"I saw that. Hae ye gotten a penny on ye?"

Skipper thrust his hand into his pocket, but before he could answer the voice of the seafaring man came to his ears.

"First mate o' the *Sea-Bird*," he was saying to M'Phee.

"Weel," cried Tam, "ye're thinkin' again?"

"Whisht, Tam! whisht! Did ye hear that? Yon's the mate o' the *Sea-Bird*."

"Whit o' that? A mate is naethin' oot o' the common. I mind three mates in here the wan nicht; it was in——"

"Haud yer tongue, man!" cried Skipper angrily.

Tam paused with open mouth.

Far off was heard the wail of the concertina.

"I've nae patience wi' stowaways,—they're a fair nuisance," cried the mate. He spoke hotly, glaring at his audience with his one bright eye, speaking as though some one had contradicted him.

"I'd shove them ower the side if it was ma boat," said Robb, spitting on the sanded floor.

"Oh, Maister M'Clure, ye mak' me laugh," came the voice of the landlady. "There's nae believin' you men."

"It's true as daith, Mistress Weems," said M'Clure. "Ay, and mair nor that——" He leaned over the bar and whispered into her ear.

"There's nae believin' you men," she repeated, then giggled as she turned to serve a customer.

Skipper knitted his brows. In the medley of sounds it was far from easy to follow the drift of any particular conversation. He edged nearer to the group in which he was interested.

"As black as yer fit," the mate was saying. "I lugged him oot o' the hold and set him to help the cook; but och! he was a lazy nout. Clumsy, tae: he broke a dish, and I gied him a taste o' the rope. Ma word! he glowered like hell; an' afore I could move he whippet oot a knife and stuck me in the ribs—ay, just here," he touched his side with one finger. "I bled like a sow. Dod! a man has a lot o' blood in him. Ma claes was a' red wi' it. The captain was for floggin' him. 'Leave him tae me!' roars I; but afore I could reach the black swine everything went queer-like, and doon I fell wi' a grunt on to the deck. Weel, I was in ma bunk for a week, and the nigger wasna flogged after a', for he stole oor boat and made aff that nicht."

"Did ye no' hear tell o' him again?" inquired M'Phee.

"Na, na; he got clean awa', the deevil!"

He paused, and his eye glowed. "Man!" he ejaculated, smiting the counter with his fist, "that minds me it wasna far frae here."

A voice called to Robb from the other end of the bar. Reluctantly he obeyed the summons. Tam, gazing at Skipper, became troubled. "He's angry," he thought; then, casting his eyes around, vainly set himself to discover the reason.

"You've no' heard o' him?" inquired the mate, addressing himself to M'Phee. The big man was about to reply when he caught sight of Skipper. He shifted his position uneasily.

"Weel?" prompted the mate in surprise.

"I ken naethin' aboot black men," said M'Phee warily, watching Skipper out of the corner of one eye.

"Umph!" grunted the seafaring man, visibly disappointed. "Is that so? Ay, ay; weel, I'll be even wi' him yet," he added with returning animosity. "I'll find him, and when I dae, by God! I'll kick the stuffin' oot o' his damned durty black boady, or ma name's no' Jimmy Clapperton."

Skipper felt something rising in his heart, heavy and terrible. Anger seized him. The burly figure of the mate loomed through a halo of yellow and red light. Swiftly he took a step forward, his hands clenched, his face on fire; but ere his wrath could find words, the consciousness that speech would but make matters worse shut his mouth. Turning on his heel, he hastily quitted the bar.

The night air was welcome. Its cold damp touch clung to him like restraining fingers, ruffling his hair and passing softly over his face. To his unsettled vision everything seemed unreal—the houses, faintly visible in the lamplight; the wet flagstones beneath his feet; the black night hemming him in; the voice of the sea hissing at him like dens of snakes in the blackness. Only the coarse words of the mate assumed a horrible reality, burning in his memory as though seared thereon in letters of fire.

He walked towards the sea. Before he had gone far, hasty steps from behind caused him to come to a standstill. For one moment he thought it was the mate, and a fierce pleasure leaped within him; but at the next he recognised Tam, and his heart sank in disappointment.

"Ye're in an awfu' hurry," panted Tam. "Whit's wrang wi' ye the nicht?"

"Wrang wi' me!" roared Skipper ferociously.

"Whisht, man! whisht! dinna cry sae loud. I kenned there was somethin' up, for ye didna finish yer whusky. 'That's no' like Skipper,' says I. 'He never leaves a drop,' and, forby, it wasna paid for."

"Damn the whusky!"

"Eh?"

"Damn the whusky! Damn the money! Damn the hale jing-bang o' them!"

"Ma conscience!" gasped Tam in consternation.

"Oh, the deevil! the cauld-bluided, rotten-hearted deevil!" muttered Skipper through clenched teeth. "Ye heard him, Tam?"

"Wha?"

"Wha, ye eediot! Yon mate, of coorse."

"Him? Oh, ay. But whit o' him?"

"Whit o' him? Ye're enough tae drive a man demented! Did ye no' hear the way he talked o'——" The rest of the sentence growled inarticulately in his throat. Then with fresh indignation as he recalled the scene: "Nae wonder he ran awa'! 'Rope's end,' says he. Whit an insult! Mate! he's no' fit tae be a cabin-boy; he's no' fit tae clean the queer things ma black man wears on his feet. 'Kick the stuffin' oot o' him!' says he. Ma God, Tam! I'd have stuck him masel'—ay, wi' plesure; so I would."

Tam stared at his friend in astonishment.

"Nae doot," he began cautiously,—“nae doot ye hae a reason, but I canna see whit angers ye, Skipper. Whit is this black man in the story tae you? Yer kind feelin's dae ye credit, but—man! ye canna look after a' the black men in the warld—it's no' possible.”

"I'll look after the wan, onyway," growled Skipper, with a note of menace.

"The wan! Ye mean tae tell me that——"

"Ay, just that."

"Dear me! dear me!"

For a moment Tam sank into a bewildered silence; at the next he burst forth—

"But, Skipper, the wan was shipwrecked, and the ither ran awa'. They canna be the same."

"Eediot! canna ye see that was a' his imagination?"

"Imagination! Oh!"

"Whit else *could* he dae? Me and you would be upset if we was mishandled like that. An' him, a man in his high poseetion, wi' slaves, an' camels, an' palm-trees a' waitin' for him in Afriky. Ma word! Tam, it maks ma bluid boil!" He kicked viciously at a loose stone, then continued more calmly, "Whit else could he dae? White men had treated him like dirt; was he tae let on o' the disgrace? No! I can see his feelin's fine. He just pit in that shipwreck oot o' proper pride—ay, and kindness o' heart, for he kenned weel that I would be fair ashamed o' ma ain countrymen if he telt me the truth."

Tam mused over this original rendering of the incident.

"Ye'll hae tae get him awa', Skipper," he said at length.

"Eh!" ejaculated his friend, coming to a sudden halt.

"Ay, he's no' safe here; yon sailor-man means business. He's sure tae hear o' him; ye see, a' the folk ken he's stoppin' wi' you. An' forby, he stole a boat—there's nae gettin' oot o' that. It's a black job, I fear." Tam shook his head, then, gripping Skipper by the arm, "Man, he's in danger! Capt'n Carey 'ull be doon on him in twa shakes. They'll pit him in the jile. Ye'll hae tae get him awa' frae here as fast as ye can."

Skipper groaned.

"Weel," inquired Tam after a pause, "can ye no' dae it?"

"I've nae money," growled Skipper.

"Would Devina no' help you?"

"Na," cried Skipper hastily, "she canna bide the man; an' forby, she does sae much for me as it is, I'd be fair ashamed tae ask the lassie tae dae ony mair."

"It would hurt ye tae part wi' him, nae doot," mused Tam.

"It would that."

"An' him ailin', eh?"

"Ay, that cough o' his is somethin' peetiful—it just shakes him like a bundle o' auld claes. He ocht tae be back in Afriky, and I wisht I could gang wi' him; it's whit I've been hankerin' after, mony's the time," he added under his breath.

Tam eyed him wonderingly. His friend's face, as seen by the light of a neighbouring lamp, was set and sombre. Its expression awed Tam; it made him feel unhappy, he knew not why. He waited awhile, in the hope that Skipper would speak again, but as the silence continued, he said softly—

"Are ye comin' hame, Skipper?"

"No' yet."

Tam coughed—a tremulous sound, terminating in a choke.

"You go on," said Skipper, with gruff kindness.

"Ye mean it, Skipper?" gasped Tam, between coughs.

"I dae."

"Weel, guid nicht. I'm sorry for ye. I wisht fine I could help ye; but a bodie's awfu' helpless whiles, an'——"

"Go on, man."

With a reluctant shake of his grey head, Tam shuffled slowly out of sight.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THAT evening the Herd family were surprised by a visit from Skipper. Mrs Herd was ironing at the table.

"Glad tae see ye, Maister Greig," she cried. "Maggie, get up an' gie Maister Greig yer chair."

"Ay, ay; this is like auld times," said Herd, uncrossing his legs and laying down the 'St Andrews Citizen.'

"I'm no' coming in," said Skipper gruffly.

"Eh!" ejaculated Herd in remonstrance.

"I'm wantin' coals."

Skipper stood in the doorway gazing at the peaceful domestic scene with unusual apathy. The wind, entering behind him, caused the lamp to smoke and a white garment to flutter from the table to the floor.

"Come in, come in," cried Herd. "I'll gie ye a bit o' coal wi' plesure. Shut the door, man; the wund's gey cauld. We see naethin' o' ye noo, Skipper; it's a peety ye canna stop. The wife's got a bonnie haddock for tea; wull that no' tempt ye, eh?"

But Skipper shook his head. Having received a small allowance of coal—the Herd supply not permitting of lavish generosity—he departed with muttered apologies.

As the door closed behind him, Mr and Mrs Herd exchanged a long and significant stare.

"Whit think ye o' that?" inquired Herd, with raised eyebrows. Accustomed to base his opinions on those of his wife, he put the question tentatively.

His wife smoothed her apron with red hands, then shook her head.

"He's no' like the same man," she said thoughtfully; then, raising her voice, "Leave that iron alane, Maggie. Ye're always meddlin' wi' things. Shoo! Stand awa' frae the table a' thegither."

The abashed Maggie sought refuge between her father's knees. He smoothed her fair hair gently.

"That comes o' leevin' wi' a blackamoor," he mused.

"Wull Maister Greig become black tae, faither?" questioned the child.

"Hear til her!" chuckled Herd. "Become black tae! Whit an idea!" He lifted her to his knees, and, leaning back, chuckled again.

"Ay," piped Maggie in shrill complacency, "Jessie Todd telt me it comes aff when he washes his face. I'd be sorry if Maister Greig gets black. He's nice."

"Havers!" snorted Mrs Herd. "Gang tae yer bed, lassie; it's high time ye were sleepin'. And you," she turned upon her husband,—“you're as bad as she is; aye encouragin' the bairn in that silly talk."

Meanwhile Skipper, safely under his own roof, had managed to light a small fire, by the aid of which he warmed some coffee left over from breakfast. Ali Mohammed gulped the steaming beverage greedily, burning his tongue in his haste. The coffee disposed of, he resumed his seat by the fireplace. He looked woefully ill. His figure, always gaunt, seemed more emaciated than ever, and his face had the weary sunken look of one suffering from nervous exhaustion. He knew himself to be ill, and gave way to his indisposition, his mind partly resigned to the decrees of Allah, partly tinged with a self-pity that came near to expressing itself in tears. The presence of his host annoyed him. He would have wished to be left alone, to die if need be;

and yet there was a curious practical strain in his understanding that accepted Skipper as a necessary evil. Wrapped in his ample cloak, he watched the movements of his companion with dull apathetic eyes that closed from time to time, as though the black eyelids were weighted with exhaustion. At length his eyes opened no more; yet he did not sleep, for his thin lips moved continually, and once he gave a long shuddering sigh.

Skipper had no heart for food. Placing the saucepan and coffee-cup in the sink, and extinguishing the lamp for economy's sake, he sat huddled in his arm-chair. The firelight flickered over the kitchen. The faint sputter from the burning coals mingled with the fitful moaning of the wind and the steady and monotonous ticking of the clock. No sound of traffic came from the street—save once, when a drunken man staggered past, singing discordantly. The Arab's face stood out in trenchant contrast to its background of shadow. Skipper watched it fixedly, his mind a prey to utter despondency. Tam's warning words haunted him. He, too, saw the necessity for immediate action, if he were to save his guest from the arm of the law; yet what could he do? Poverty pinned him to inaction. The realisation of his helplessness stung him. Stretching out a clenched fist, he groaned aloud. Little by little, however, his eyelids drooped. Ali Mohammed's face became but a blackness wavering in a grey mist. Unconsciousness gently lifted the load from his mind; with a grunt, his head fell forward on his chest, and sleep overtook him.

He dreamed that he was in a strange house. It was night, for the moon was shining; and, presumably, in the tropics, for through the open window he could see a line of palm-trees. This did not surprise him. With faint curiosity he began to examine the room in which he found himself. There were golf-clubs and numbers of

new balls piled in every conceivable place. The sight gave him pleasure. He wished to look more closely at the clubs, and more particularly to find out the maker's name; but before he could do so, his attention was attracted by a picture hanging on the wall. It was a life-sized oil-painting, representing him—Skipper—in the act of playing an approach shot. Beneath the picture was a brass plate bearing an inscription. The moonlight shone full upon it, so that he could read that it was a testimonial from the members of the "Royal and Ancient" to George Greig, in recognition of long and valued services.

Skipper—glowing with pardonable pride—criticised it affably. The cap and tartan muffler were, he decided, "awfu' like." So engrossed was he that he was wholly unaware that some one had entered the room, until a hollow cough at his elbow caused him to start. It was the mere ghost of a cough—one that had been lost at least a month ago. It proceeded from an old man whom Skipper recognised as the shade of Tammas Armet.

"Dear me, I thocht ye was deid!" ejaculated Skipper, attempting to grasp the old man's hand. The thing was a semi-corporeal substance—cold, damp, and elusive as water. Its touch sent a shudder down his backbone. Looking at Armet more closely, he saw that the moonlight shone through him, and fell on the carpet immediately behind his back.

The aged man sighed, but there was nothing human in the sigh. It issued from between his transparent lips as imperceptibly as an exhalation from a tomb.

"Ay," he acquiesced, "I'm deid; but it's perplexin', for I pass maist o' ma time in the boady."

No sooner had he spoken than he wheezed and gasped for breath.

"It's the asthma," he explained, as soon as he could speak,— "it's the asthma; it's followed me doon here,

damn it! I thocht the change o' air would dae it guid, but the weather here is waur than at Pittenweems—an' that's no' sayin' little," he added with grim humour.

"Eh! whaur are we?" inquired Skipper with anxiety.

Armet wavered uneasily, and, upon Skipper's repeating the question, replied, "Oh, betwixt and between—betwixt and between."

"Ye mean whaur the deid folk gang?"

Armet nodded mistily.

"It's no' true!" cried Skipper indignantly. "I'm no' a corp like you! I'm alive! I'm warm! I'm dreamin'; and whit's mair, I ken that I'm dreamin'—so that's tellin' ye!"

"Ay," assented Armet, ironically wagging his head, "yon are yer twa dreams." He pointed first to the portrait on the wall, and then to the tropical landscape seen through the open window, then added maliciously, "Feast yer eyes on them, you that's dreamin'! ye'll never touch them."

Skipper snorted incredulously, and, all eagerness to prove the old man in the wrong, laid his hand upon the heavy gold frame of the portrait. It crumbled beneath his fingers like dust, and, with the curious dual sensation that accompanies dreams, he fancied that the taste of the dust was in his mouth.

"Ye see," sighed Armet; "I telt ye; but ye're unbelievin'."

"Whit are *you* daein' here?" growled Skipper.

A change came over the old man's face. It became troubled.

"I—I came here tae meet you," he faltered. "I canna bide verra lang. I—I'm wantet elsewhere." He paused, glanced furtively over his shoulder at the open window, then, "I sold ye a cleek wance."

"Ay," assented Skipper grimly, "I've no' forgotten."

"Eh! I was afeared of it. Weel," he twisted his mouth as though swallowing some bitter medicine, "I've got tae ask yer forgiveness."

"Forgiveness! Hoots! it broke a' tae pieces in——"

"Whisht, man! *they* ken a' aboot that. Just you say, 'Tammas Armet, I forgie ye.'"

"Wull that make ony difference whaur ye are?"

"It wull—it wull!" cried the old man with tremulous earnestness.

"Weel, Tammas Armet, I forgie ye."

"Thank ye, Skipper. Noo, there's anither thing that bothers me. Richtly it belongs tae Maister Brandscome, but you'll dae as weel."

"Gang on."

"Ay; d'ye mind about the wee stair in the Cathedral?"

"Dae I mind!"

"I can see ye dae. Weel, I ken whaur it is as weel as if it was ma ain backyaird. Maister Brandscome sent for me and gied me five shullings. Thinks I, 'It's weel worth ten.' Sae I telt him the wrang place."

"Ye auld thief!" cried Skipper hotly.

Armet held up a restraining hand.

"I've been punished enough for it already," he said sulkily. "Nae need for *you* tae blame me. Ye're no' verra accurate yersel'."

Conscience tied Skipper's tongue.

Something strange stirred the night air—a soft but incomprehensibly ominous sound, that began within the room, but died away beyond the moonlit palms. Skipper's flesh crept. Shaking all over, he turned to his companion. Armet's mouth had fallen open; his eyes, distended with terror, stared into the night. All at once his transparent lips moved.

"They're cryin' on me," he whispered; "I must awa'."

A deathlike stillness followed.

"Whaur is it?" questioned Skipper, recovering from his fright.

"Whit?"

"The wee stair."

"I telt ye."

"Ye never did."

"It's——"

"Ay? Gang on!" cried Skipper, as the old man paused.

"Near the stane coffins. Ma God! there it is again."

The same incomprehensible sound made itself felt, for although it partook of the nature of a sound, yet its effect was purely mental.

Skipper followed the direction in which the old man stared.

Through the open window he saw, to his horror, that the moon had turned to the colour of blood; saw, too, that the line of palms and intervening ground had vanished, to give place to something vaguely resembling a sea, over which myriads of tiny flames flitted continually. In the distance a glimmer of green light showed ghostly as the dawn of some unearthly day. A faint moan by his side caused him to turn protruding eyes upon his companion. Armet was rapidly becoming less and less distinct; but despite the wasting away of his features, his expression of abject fear had not changed. In the midst of his transparent frame Skipper noted the torture of his heart. That organ, unlike the rest of his body, did not suffer extinction. On the contrary, as the tissues around it melted into thin air, the heart itself assumed a horrible significance. Its capacity for suffering increased. From its tortured surface darted rays of red fire, swift and pointed, like little venomous tongues. The room glowed dully in this terrible illumination. These tongues increasing in number and intensity, it hung, at

length, a mass of writhing flame, burning fiercely, yet without noise and without smoke. Then, as Skipper watched it horror-bound, slowly and steadily it moved from its place, and, passing out of the window, became but one among the myriad lights that wandered ceaselessly in the gloom without.

Rooted to the ground, fearing he knew not what, Skipper stared at the shifting kaleidoscope of flame. Then suddenly, and without warning, utter blackness fell upon him, stifling and heavy as a pall flung downward from above.

CHAPTER XLIV.

SKIPPER started into wakefulness to find himself still huddled in his arm-chair. How long he had slept he knew not. The fire had gone out, and the blackness was rendered visible by the feeble light of a street lamp seen through the red window-blind. The cold was bitter. He stretched his stiff limbs and rubbed his stiffening fingers. No thought of bed came to him. His mind, still thrall to dreaming fancy, groped in the past, striving vainly to recapture impressions. For long the details of his dream eluded memory. Little by little, however, they returned to him, until at length he was able to piece the scattered fragments into a coherent whole.

Again, with the vision of the mind, he watched the figure of the old man, and again the last disjointed words became audible within the ears of memory. "Near the stane coffins." That, at all events, was something to place to the credit of the treasure-seekers. Skipper's thoughts flew in hot haste to the Cathedral, and swept the sacred precincts with a calculating eye.

There were several stone coffins,—notably two half-concealed beneath an immense slab in the vicinity of the high altar, and three others discovered by Brandscome during recent excavations. The latter had been accommodated in a remote corner of the churchyard, where, sunk to a level with the soil, and surrounded

by a railing, they formed objects of melancholy interest to visitors. Skipper banished them from his thoughts. The former, however, claimed his attention, their position near the high altar lending them a significance not to be lightly dismissed. Mr Brandscome had spoken of them often, and many shafts had been sunk unsuccessfully in their vicinity. Still, although the energy of the treasure-seekers had been great, there yet remained many square feet of ground to be explored.

The more Skipper pondered upon it, the more probable did it seem that somewhere in the neighbourhood of these coffins the narrow staircase seen by Armet would be discovered. The idea thrilled him. All that he had heard of the treasure rushed to his mind. His fancy rioted in gold and silver.

Motionless he sat, his hands clutching the sides of his chair, his eyes fixed upon a blackness which was the grate; but in imagination he was already in the darkness of the crypt.

Yet, even within the rosy midst of these anticipations, doubt beset him, and, giving way to despondency, he laughed,—a scornful dejected laugh, that broke off suddenly as the sound of measured breathing recalled the Arab asleep in the darkness by his side. Then heaving a sigh, he muttered, "I'm a fule, an auld eediot! Whit truth can there be in a dream! A wheen nonsense born in a silly stomach. Get up, man, and gang tae yer bed." But he did not move. The stone coffins continued to haunt him. They assumed an uncanny significance, and to his troubled imagination seemed to be beckoning him out into the night. In vain he strove to think of other matters—of Devina, of Ali Mohammed, and, as a last resort, of trivial details connected with his housekeeping. In vain: the coffins forced themselves upon him, returning again and again, and, with

each succeeding visitation, growing in size until they seemed to fill the kitchen from floor to ceiling.

At length Skipper could bear it no longer. With a tortured grunt he rose to his feet, crossed the kitchen, and, unbolting the door, stared upwards at the sky.

Never, he thought, had he seen so many stars. Through the wondrous sea-side clarity of the air they shot their silver arrows at him as he stood leaning against the lintel of the doorway. Their light seemed to penetrate to his brain; they seemed to lend somewhat of their mystery to the teasing insistency of his thoughts. The coffins had vanished, but the stars took up the tale. They linked themselves into golden chains, and the silver dust of centuries glittered in the air. They paved the fields of heaven with coins unnumbered; they suggested "wealth beyond the dreams of avarice"; they filled him with a feverish desire to be up and doing.

The perturbed little man thrust his fingers through his damp hair. He felt obstinate and indignant, yet strangely troubled. The practical side of his Scottish nature scoffed at the notion that a dream could point out the path to success, when all waking efforts had proved fruitless. And yet there was something to be said in favour of the suggestion, notwithstanding the fact that it had emanated from so untrustworthy a source. To indicate any definite and recognisable part of the Cathedral area was to give birth to fresh hope, and showed that there was method in the madness of the vision. Many times had the site of the high altar been mentioned by Brandscome as the probable place near which the staircase might eventually be discovered; and that the shadowy Armet should have indicated the same spot was, at all events, a coincidence worthy of consideration.

Then, again, there was much in the plan of immediate

action that chimed with Skipper's romantic spirit. Was it not a raid by night into an enemy's country, with the prospect of golden loot galore? The gates of the Cathedral would be locked, the walls would have to be scaled. It was forbidden ground: a delightful feeling of danger and disobedience was in the air. Skipper's brow cleared: he returned the wink of the stars; he thrilled to his sturdy backbone; he smote the door-post with a clenched and enthusiastic fist.

"I'll gang this verra nicht!" he cried; then, struck with the fear that the very houses were listening to him, so dark and silent and watchful did they appear, he added with affected indifference, "I'll just dander roond and keek at thae coffins."

Re-entering the kitchen, he came to a sudden standstill. Ali Mohammed was awake, a mysterious figure sitting erect by the fireplace.

"I thoct ye was in yer bed, Alley," said Skipper in a low voice; then, as he marked how the Arab was shivering, "Pit the shawl roond ye, man; ye'll catch yer daith o' cauld."

A sudden and imperative desire for sympathy coming upon him, he seated himself beside his guest and poured forth the story of the dream.

Ali Mohammed listened in silence, yet it became evident that the recital moved him deeply. It stirred all that was avaricious in his nature. It appealed also to his love of the supernatural. The tale of buried wealth had been the one theme that, apart from the recital of his own personal adventures, had had the power to interest him during the weary days of exile in St Andrews. Skipper, as the central figure in the search, had merited respect. For some time the little caddie had been to him an oracle. In touch with the authorities,—mysterious beings governed by no laws

emanating from the Prophet,—his infidel host might, he trusted, prove a key by the aid of which Ali Mohammed, the worthy and the wise, could unlock the doors to fortune. What deed more meritorious could Mahomet impose upon his follower than to aid in the discovery of, and eventually, perchance, to appropriate, the treasured wealth of the despised Christians. By Allah! it was a scheme devoutly to be welcomed, and, as he pondered upon it, the eyes of Ali Mohammed became as living embers under the sinister blackness of his brows.

But evil days had fallen upon them. The search had been abandoned, and, as a natural consequence, the infidel host lost caste. He became as one of no importance,—a bread-winner, it was true, and a humble and incomprehensible admirer, but otherwise unworthy of consideration. Breaking upon a long period of despondence came this strange story of the dream. It awoke anew his avaricious hopes. To his credulous ears Armet was no fabric of a disordered imagination, but a powerful and amicably disposed Djinn loosed to their assistance by the benevolent spirits of the air. It was all real to him—all of a piece with the tissue of fables and fancies that enmeshed his mind. What wonder that, as he gave ear to Skipper's words, the thin line of his lips straightened and his in-drawn breath hissed audibly.

"Dreams are from Allah," he said huskily.

As usual, the quaint foreign accent stirred some chord of unplumbed sensation in Skipper's mind,—it suggested unfamiliar scenes, far-off countries where all men spoke thus. It suffused a glow: Skipper felt his face flushing.

"Are they, Alley?" he cried eagerly, leaning towards the muffled figure. "It's no' often I mind ma dreams; but this one was somethin' special. It may have been sent on purpose like. I canna get it oot o' ma heid. Dod, it was fearsome!"

He gazed furtively over his shoulder into the darkness of the room, then edged closer to his companion.

"We go to-night?" pursued the guttural voice.

"Weel, whit d'ye think?"

There was a moment's silence, then Ali Mohammed spoke again.

"Yes," he cried harshly; "I, too, will come."

"*You!*" cried Skipper, taken aback. "Na, na, that'll never dae. You're no' fit for it. Just you gang tae yer bed, and I'll tell ye a' aboot it in the mornin'."

But to this his guest would by no means consent. So angry did he grow under his host's friendly remonstrances, and into so pitiable a state of disordered nerves did he work himself, that Skipper judged it wiser to feign approval.

Locking the door of the cottage behind them, the two men set out upon the venture.

CHAPTER XLV.

NOT a soul was stirring. The little street lay bare and deserted, silvering in faint starlight. The air touched the face, cold as ice; but the wind had fallen. Nothing was to be heard save the muffled sound of the men's footsteps and the subdued and distant murmur of the sea.

Reaching the Cathedral wall, they climbed it without difficulty, and felt their way slowly among the tombs.

All at once Skipper stood still.

"Here are the stane coffins," he whispered, bending low and resting his hands upon an immense slab of stone that covered these relics of the past. The breathing of Ali Mohammed betrayed his excitement. Skipper turned to him.

"We maun get the spades, Alley; they're in a shed yonder, and I ken whaur there is a red lamp. You bide here. I'll be back in twa meenutes."

In less than the time specified he was again present.

Slowly and solemnly one o'clock pealed from the College towers. As they hearkened, the chime was taken up by a rival, and again repeated faintly from somewhere within the town. The metallic sounds clanged, vibrated, and died upon the frosty air.

"That's guid," muttered Skipper; "it's airy yet."

He struck a match as he spoke, and, lighting the lantern, placed it in the shelter afforded by the coffins.

The two men stood immediately in the vicinity of the high altar. Above them soared the twin towers, a black mass, between which the great window, with its broken shafts of stone, revealed the stars. Around, dislodged fragments of masonry littered the ground; farther off, ruined foundations of walls showed indistinct; while behind, in serried but disordered ranks, the tombstones stood massed in semi-obscurity.

The absolute quiet oppressed the mind—it stagnated in the air; a damp and churchyard smell rose from the soil. Life seemed to have withdrawn on tiptoe; only the dead remained, wrapped in the sleep that knows no earthly waking.

Skipper moved carefully, fearing to break the stillness. The glow of enthusiasm had passed. He felt chilled in heart as in body. All at once his surroundings grew distasteful to him. The memory of Armet, as he had last appeared, sprang to his mind. His eyes reverted to the tombstones: their awful immobility seemed to him a mute reproach. What if this black hour of night gave the ghastly occupants power to issue forth? Would they not denounce the sacrilege?

A sudden and unexpected noise caused him to grasp his companion by the cloak.

"Whit's that?" he gasped.

The Arab stood motionless. A rush of wings resolved itself into the passage of a pigeon from one tower to the other. Skipper laughed shamefacedly.

"I thoct it was a ghaist," he apologised. "It's fear-some here."

Ali Mohammed was even more nervous than his host. To his oriental imagination the churchyard was full of evil spirits. Skipper could hear his teeth chattering. The sound gave him confidence.

"Whaur wull we start the diggin'?" he questioned.

Together they examined the space about them, keeping ever within half a dozen yards of the coffins. The ground was uneven. At the base of the ruined towers it sank some two feet. Nor were there lacking evidences of bygone sepulchre, for close to the wall they discovered a large oblong slab lying flush with the soil. Upon its horizontal surface grey moss and silvery lichen were to be seen, obliterating all trace of inscription.

"We made a big hole just there," whispered Skipper, indicating a spot at some little distance from the tombstone. Ali Mohammed held the lantern close to the soil, then moved forward, foot by foot.

"This place," he said at length, pointing to a slight cavity within the shadow of the coffins.

"Ay," grunted Skipper, "it's likely. Pit the lamp doon on that stane, Alley."

Spitting on his hands, he seized an iron bar with a pointed end and began to prise up a stone. He worked energetically, yet with caution, taking infinite pains not to make a noise. Beside him stood Ali Mohammed, his dark features stamped with an expression of tense and nervous excitement. The faces and figures of both men were splashed with red light; their breath rose like incense into the frosty air. Above them, watched the ruins, a grim and impassive spectator, and, higher still, the observant stars.

The excavation rapidly became deeper, but no signs of the stair rewarded their exertions. Ali Mohammed took his share in the labour; but so debilitated was he, and so unaccustomed to handling a spade, that Skipper speedily relieved him of the task. The lantern was extinguished for economy's sake, Skipper fearing that it would not last out the night.

The little caddie, almost lost to sight in the narrow trench, continued to dig in the darkness. He had

shaken off his fears. The physical labour sent his blood coursing through his veins. Sweat standing in beads upon his forehead, from time to time he mopped himself with his tartan muffler.

"We're ower deep, Alley," he said at length, with face upturned to where the Arab watched him from above. A disappointed grunt greeted his remark.

"Ay," panted Skipper, wiping the soil from his spade with the flat of his hand. "Ay," he repeated, as he climbed out of the trench, "we're ower deep. We maun fill it up and start again."

A fresh excavation was begun.

Two o'clock pealed upon the night air. The cold increased. Another hour passed; and another, and yet another excavation was abandoned. The most likely places in the vicinity of the coffins had by this time been searched, with no result: it seemed useless to sink a shaft beyond the broken wall that separated the high altar from the main building.

Ali Mohammed had apparently lost hope. His fire of enthusiasm had burned out. Dejected and shivering, he cowered in the shelter of the coffins. In Skipper, however, the fruitless nature of the search had roused a latent obstinacy. He felt as though a conspiracy had been formed against him, and his spirits rose to meet it, doggedly determined to overcome. His companion's pitiable condition stirred his compassion.

"We'll hae it yet, Alley," he cried cheerily, as he again heard the Arab's teeth chattering in the darkness. "Pit on ma jaiket, man; it's lyin' by yer side. I'm warm. We'll hae it yet; ay, if I hae to sift every inch o' soil through ma ain fingers. *They* ken whaur it is," he shook a grimy fist at the dark towers overhead, "but they keep the secret close, damn them! And as fer that auld fule Armet, I never trusted him. Na, na;

askin' me tae forgie yon cleek was maist suspecious—broke a' tae pieces in twa days, so it did."

Grumbling half to himself and half to his companion, Skipper seated himself on the flat tombstone that lay embedded in the soil.

"Hear yon!" he whispered hoarsely, as the clock towers again spoke to the night. "Three o'clock. Folk wull be gettin' up soon. We maun mak' haste, Alley; it would never dae tae be caught here wi'oot permession. I canna think whaur tae dig——" Then, with a burst of impatience, and stabbing the ground with the iron rod, "Auld fule! 'Near the stane coffins,' said he. If I had him here, I'd clout his—— Och! damn!"

The oath rang sharply. The iron rod, thrust forcibly between the edge of the tombstone and the soil, sank into nothingness, slipped from his fingers, and a dull clatter informed his ears that it had fallen into some underground cavity.

"It's gone!" ejaculated Skipper in consternation. "I've lost it!"

"What?" questioned Ali Mohammed, roused into faint curiosity.

"Ma iron. It went that suddent like, I'd nae time tae stop it. Gie me a haund, Alley; we'll lift the stane."

They laboured with their spades; then, stooping, essayed to lift it with their hands, but for long it resisted their united efforts. The slab was one of unusual weight, and accurately fitted the stone framework that supported it. Twice they partially raised it, and twice it sank again into its former position.

"Up wi' it! Up wi' it!" grunted Skipper breathlessly, straining every muscle. Ali Mohammed, his cloak cast aside, seconded his efforts. Slowly the slab

rose on edge, poised for a moment, then, thrust backward, crashed face downwards upon the sod.

A black hole was revealed. Skipper peered in, but drew back hastily. A dank and oppressive smell rose upward, contaminating the night air and clutching at his throat. He coughed, then spat vigorously.

"The lamp!" he gasped. His voice sounded strange, tense; he did not look round.

Ali Mohammed passed it to him in nervous haste. A moment later the red light again lent its lurid glow to the scene. The fœtid stench continued to ascend, but with every minute became perceptibly fainter. Stretched on his stomach, and holding the lamp downwards at full length of his arm, Skipper was at last enabled to gaze into the cavity.

The sides and base of the lantern radiated bars of shadow. Beyond one of these he could see the missing rod. Cobwebs—the accumulation of years—festooned the walls and looped themselves from side to side. Immediately beyond the reach of his arm, a toad—a huge and repulsive creature, with bright and bead-like eyes—gazed unwinking at the light.

All these details were indeed noted by Skipper, but he heeded them not. They were annihilated by the all-important fact that a flight of circular steps led downwards into depths unknown.

With a hand that trembled, Skipper placed the lantern upon the stone framework, then filled his lungs deep with the pure air of the outer world. As he did so, he became conscious that his heart was beating with rapid and painful persistence, and that something throbbed response within his brain. But this feeling passed, and, the joy of discovery flooding his mind like the fumes of strong wine, he leaped to his feet with a shout.

"Alley!" he cried, heedless of the danger of raising his voice, "Alley, yer haund! We've found it at last! Ma word, it's true! Ma word! Ma word!"

Breaking off abruptly, overcome by the violence of his feelings, he gripped the reluctant hand of his accomplice and shook it warmly.

Ali Mohammed winced. He shared the excitement of his host, but in him it awoke only the demon of greed. A hostile glitter was apparent in his eyes. He resented this inexplicable show of cordiality. His suspicions were aroused. Was the little Nazarene crafty? Was this demonstration affected in order to deceive? His dark face, flushed by the red light, grew coldly contemptuous, yet alert, as one who watches a foe.

"Enough!" he cried, snatching his fingers from those of his companion. "Enough! Us go down."

Skipper conquered his emotion with an effort.

"Ye're richt," he acquiesced; "we've nae time tae lose. Come on."

Carrying the lantern, he began the descent. The steps were much worn, and shelved to a fine edge; they were, moreover, slippery, rendering caution necessary. Steadying himself with his disengaged hand, Skipper continued to descend. With every downward step the difficulty of breathing increased. The atmosphere appeared to solidify, to close around them, for, despite the nauseating odour, it was impregnated with moisture and felt bitterly cold. It struck a chill through Skipper's insufficient clothing, that, acting on his heated skin, caused shivers to run in waves over his body. The spirals of the stairs soon shut out the stars. The damp hung upon the impeding cobwebs in a myriad drops. They shone red in the light, as clusters of rubies. Gradually the chill darkness receded step by step before the feeble glow of the lantern. No sound met the ears save the shuffling of Skipper's shoes. Ali

Mohammed, having discarded his sandals, crept after him, noiseless as a ghost. So narrow was the little staircase that Skipper's broad shoulders all but touched the walls on either hand. Holding the lantern low, almost to his feet, he continued to descend, thrilled by nervous expectation, pausing every moment to listen, his heart at sentinel within his ears.

Reaching the bottom of the stair, Skipper stood for a moment irresolute. A low-browed Norman arch of rude but faced stone gave entrance to a blackness that seemed a vault. The foul air, noisome as an exhalation from a tomb, throttled the breath. In the eternal silence, far below ground, naught was to be heard save the drip-drip of moisture oozing through the massive roof overhead. The sound beat upon some nerve of sensation within Skipper's brain. The slow and monotonous regularity would, he felt, drive him to insanity were he forced to give ear to it for any length of time.

The pause that he made was of short duration, yet it excited the anger of Ali Mohammed. With a hoarse grunt that was half a snarl, he snatched the lantern from Skipper's hand and strode forward into the crypt. Suppressing his indignation, Skipper hurried after him.

The cell or chapel in which they found themselves proved to be of some eight feet by ten. The roof was low and groined. The two men devoured the interior with a breathless inspection, then stared blankly into each other's faces.

"Empty!"

Skipper uttered the cry in the bitterness of his disappointment. Ali Mohammed laughed aloud. It was the laugh of a demon. Thwarted avarice blazed in his eyes. Ferociously he turned upon his companion. For some time he poured forth a volume of fierce and incomprehensible words. That he cast all the blame on his

companion was evident, but Skipper merely twitched his shoulder.

"Hoots! hoots, Alley!" he remonstrated; "nae need tae sweer like that, man. I canna help it. I'm as pit oot as you are. Ye're ill, I can see fine, an' bein' a prince mak's ye abusive. But ye maunna forget I'm a Scotchman—ay, an' prood o' it tae. I can see for masel' the treesure's no' here." He smote one hand into the other. "God! whaur can it be? Let's think."

He racked his brains, but in vain. The staircase gave entrance to but one vault; no door led to other subterranean chambers; search as he might, he could discover no pit, recess, or cavity where treasure might be concealed.

Lantern in hand, he closely inspected walls, roof, and floor. The latter was composed of stone slabs of irregular size fitting inaccurately one into the other. Dirty and damp, it was caked in many places with mud, bearing faint impress of footsteps.

On hands and knees Skipper probed the stone cracks with the blade of his penknife. While in this position, a drop from the roof fell upon the back of his neck. He raised his eyes. Another drop was imminent. He looked down. No standing water stood upon the floor.

Skipper scratched his head.

"Queer!" he muttered under his breath. Stooping suddenly, he laid his ear to the crack between the adjacent stones. The attitude recalled to Ali Mohammed's mind a Mussulman engaged in prayer. He awoke from the stupor that had followed upon his outburst.

"Pray, infidel!" he jeered. "Your God sleeps! Pray to him! Pray to him!"

"Quait! damn you! Keep quait!" shouted Skipper, losing all patience.

He listened again. A drop fell from the roof: a

moment later a sound came from the crack at his ear. This sound was so faint that it seemed but the echo of the noise that preceded it, yet it was different. The first met the stone with a dull thud; the second tinkled, a liquid note, barely preceptible, even in the utter silence. Again and yet again the phenomenon took place. Skipper gave vent to a muffled cry.

"What is it?" questioned Ali Mohammed sulkily.

"Doon there—doon there!" shouted Skipper, pointing to the crack in his excitement. "There's a place doon there!"

The Arab threw himself on his knees and listened eagerly. The result swept away scepticism.

"It may be a trap-door," whispered Skipper. "Wait till I scrape awa' the dirt."

In a few minutes a massive iron ring was revealed, resting in a cavity flush with the pavement.

Their excitement redoubled. Thrusting the iron bar—to which they owed the discovery of the stair—into the ring, the two men succeeded in raising the mass of stone. It worked on a rude stone hinge in such a manner that, while comparatively easy to lift from above, it would be absolutely impossible to raise from below.

A foul stench rose from the void. Attaching the end of his muffler to the lantern, Skipper lowered it into the subterranean blackness.

The sight that met his eyes congealed him with horror.

It was a bottle-dungeon similar in construction to the one in the Castle, though somewhat smaller in size. It resembled a squat seltzer-water bottle, the neck uppermost. From above, the sides could be seen only as far as the neck extended; beyond, was a vacancy terminating in the floor. The latter was under water. As the

lantern swung to and fro, Skipper saw that the tops of a number of boxes emerged from this inundation. Across them, half above, half below water, lay two skeletons.

They wore the old-world garb of some long-forgotten monastical order. The cowl of the one had fallen back, revealing the skull, still covered with dark hair. The body drooped forward, as though embracing with both arms the lid of a chest. It was an attitude of hopeless abandonment and despair. One of the fleshless hands—a mere collection of bones—grasped a metal crucifix. The other, pitiable relic of what once had been a man, presented an appearance still more gruesome. His body protruded farther from the water than did that of his companion. It was as though, in the last shuddering moment of dissolution, he had sought to raise himself in a convulsive effort to escape the fate that had overtaken him. His upturned jaws grinned at the swinging light in fixed and horrible irony. Deep darkness and silence lurked in the remote corners of the dungeon. Only around the skeletons the stagnant water lay red in the glow of the lantern. To Skipper's horror-struck eyes it resembled a lake of blood.

That they were monks, and had been custodians of the treasure, was evident. How had they come by their death? The great stone had blocked the mouth of the bottle. They had been caught like rats in a trap, in the very act of concealing their wealth. Their death had been steeped in irony. They had perished on gold and silver, rotted with tapestry and altar-cloth, forgotten in the darkness, while far above them the great Cathedral echoed to the yells of the mob.

Had it been the result of an accident? Had the stone lid fallen suddenly of its own accord, or had a treacherous hand sealed their doom?

Who could tell ?

The place smelt of tragedy ; but the secret was old—old as the rotting bones : it belonged to a bygone century. Crime or accident, it would never be discovered now.

Some vague perception of this floated through Skipper's mind, but the pathos of the spectacle was swept away by the excitement of adventure. He gripped his companion by the arm.

"See yon ladder !" he cried.

As he spoke, he leaned over and caught at the rungs of a rope-ladder that, suspended from two iron hooks built into the masonry, hung almost to the surface of the water. But the ladder had done its last work : it crumbled into decaying strands, and, falling, caused the water to sway and eddy around the skeletons.

Skipper was nonplussed.

"We canna get doon wi'oot a ladder," he muttered. Then, with renewed hope, "I'll get wan frae the shed ; I ken they keep wan there. You wait here, Alley,—I winna be lang."

Fastening the end of his muffler to one of the iron hooks, so that the lantern swayed still within the bottle, he hastened away, leaving his companion to await him in the dimly lit cell.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE sound of Skipper's receding footsteps as he climbed up the little stair grew fainter and fainter; then all was still. Ali Mohammed kept watch alone. His head burned, and waves of fever passed over his body. He felt wofully ill. Yet his physical debility was combated by the lust of possession. To know the treasure so close, acted on him as a stimulant. It helped him to forget all that was disagreeable, even the fever and his unstrung nerves. Superstitious fears no longer beset him. Contempt for the dead men—down there, in the blood-like water—filled him to the lips. They were Nazarenes—the hated race—doomed to destruction. They had gone to the hell that the Prophet had prepared for them. Allah was just! And, moreover, they had been unable to use or enjoy the treasure. They had been outwitted. And if Ali Mohammed despised one man more than another, he despised him whom misfortune has marked for its own. A sneer curled his thin lips. Leaning over the abyss, and gazing downwards with a glare of malevolent concentration, he spat at the upturned face of the dead monk.

After this action he felt unusual self-respect. His brain, stimulated by the red gloom of the vault and the contiguity of the hoard, felt abnormally active. Ideas, thoughts, schemes, all rushed through it. One and all were connected with the treasure. It would be *his*.

How he would enjoy it! How he would trample upon his foes! Yes; it would enable him to grind under his heel many an one who had treated him with contempt in the past. When he had crossed the dreaded sea he would spring at one bound from a person of no importance to a great man. Gold, the all-powerful, would be his slave. He saw himself installed in the chief seat at feasts, covered with goodly raiment, fawned upon by his host, treating lesser men with disdain, proudly conscious of great possessions. By Allah, he would have a harem! Wives, many and fat, young and beautiful, would be his. Nor would he neglect the mosques. No; rich gifts to the shrine of Sidi Abdullah ben Hamed, his patron saint, would cause his piety to smell sweet within the nostrils of the Faithful. Allah! Allah! the time of waiting had been long, but it was even now at hand.

Thus he dreamed, until a faint noise betrayed the return of Skipper. The sound had a strange effect upon him. With a start he sat erect, his thin hands clenched, a hostile expression within his eyes. For the moment he had forgotten his companion. That some other man, and he a hated Nazarene, should have equal claims upon the treasure filled him with resentment. His oriental thoughts worked in dark and devious ways. To his mind gratitude was weakness; good-nature merited suspicion; credulity, contempt. The unaccountable habits of his host were unspeakably distasteful in his sight—nay more, every time Skipper spoke or acted, some deep hereditary instinct in his nature cried out against the outrage. Ill-health had so wrought upon his jangled nerves that it is to be doubted if he could be held responsible for his actions. Oftentimes had he been obliged to bite his bloodless lips to keep back pious curses. Day had added fancied grievances unto day.

The grudge, faint at first, had deepened and spread like a festering sore, until every fibre of his being was contaminated—every thought was clamorous for revenge. The knowledge of favours received but intensified his ill-feeling. Nothing but the bitter consciousness of his own helpless condition—an alien in a hostile land—kept the tide of his anger within bounds. And now that Allah opened wide doors, not only to freedom but also to wealth, it appeared that he must forsooth share it with this Nazarene!—this Infidel! He ground his teeth in impotent fury.

The steps stopped. An exclamation of impatience followed. Skipper was evidently in difficulties. Conquering his evil humour with an effort, Ali Mohammed crossed to the low-browed arch and, scarce raising his voice above a whisper, inquired the cause of the delay.

"I canna get it doon," came the answer, muffled by the circular turnings. "It's ower lang; it aye sticks in the stair. Whit the deevil am I tae dae, Alley?"

After a moment's thought the Arab suggested a rope.

"Man, ye're clever!" cried Skipper's voice in hoarse admiration. "Ye're a godsend tae me! I couldna get on wi'oot ye. A rope's the verra thing. There's wan in the shed. I'll get a basket tae. Bide a wee."

The last words were barely audible: Skipper had already started.

The rope was found, and, on Skipper's advice, knotted at convenient lengths. A loop was made at one end and flung over one of the iron hooks, from which it hung to within a few inches of the water. The question now arose as to which should descend, but was at once answered, Skipper's strength and former sea-life peculiarly fitting him for the task. Taking the basket with him, he lowered himself hand over hand into the dungeon. As he neared the bottom, his feet came into

contact with the water. It was bitterly cold, and entering by the holes in his shoes, sent a shudder through his entire body. Leaving go the rope, he found that he was immersed to the knees. The red lantern, still suspended from his muffler overhead, scarce gave him light sufficient for the work. It filled the cavity with a lurid glow in which even the common things of life would have looked supernatural. By its aid, Skipper noticed that the bottle had been hewn laboriously out of the solid rock, and that its sides, invisible from above, curved outwards, forming deep shadows many yards in circumference. The successful cruelty of its construction became at once apparent. Immured within it, no prisoner — unsupplied with a ladder — could hope to escape, and even with a ladder his efforts would prove unavailing, unless some one outside removed the weighty stone. But beyond one swift glance around him, Skipper gave no heed to the dungeon.

As soon as his feet found bottom, he turned eagerly to the boxes. The red water, disturbed by his movements, plashed and sucked around them. It wrinkled into a myriad lurid lights that wriggled like little snakes into the blackness of the shadows. Skipper stretched out his hand, but even as he did so, the dead monks gave him pause. Their gruesomeness and the fetid stench in their vicinity was like a plague-smitten hand bidding him begone. More especially did the one with the upturned face move him to horror. There was something awful in the way he mowed and grinned at the light. He filled Skipper with a gruesome fascination, bordering on fear. Moved by a morbid curiosity, and almost against his will, he raised a portion of the garment that concealed the skeleton. The stuff, saturated and utterly rotten, tore at the touch. Disturbed by Skipper's action, a something living that was grey

and slimy quitted the shelter of the clothing and, gliding into the water, disappeared without a sound. Skipper, dropping the end of the robe, uttered an ejaculation of horror. His flesh crept. He felt that he could not proceed.

For a moment he stood motionless. Then a hoarse admonition from above urged him to the task. Nerv- ing himself, he removed the fleshless dead and tested the chests one by one with his knife. Soaked and green with the eternal damp, they offered—with but one excep- tion—no resistance to the stout blade that cut into them as though they were butter.

A fever of excitement now took possession of him. With trembling hands he hacked, and cut, and slashed; and at each stroke of the knife the rotten wood broke away, until at length the long-lost treasures of the Cathedral came into sight.

The smaller boxes were found to contain large quan- tities of ecclesiastical adornments and church necessities. These were, for the most part, of solid silver, but so tar- nished and discoloured by centuries of exposure that they appeared black beneath the light of the lantern. Among them were quantities of crucifixes, chalices, lamps, censers, goblets, and a large collection of church plate. Some of these—so antique and curious as to be of inestimable value—were the first-fruit of the treasure.

One chest, however, there was of metal, which, al- though much corroded by the action of the water, yet was of strength sufficient to resist Skipper's efforts. Being long and shallow, it formed a base upon which the monks had piled the lighter cases. It lay quite submerged. Yielding at length, it revealed a number of statues—fourteen in all. One, Skipper recognised from Brandscome's frequent descriptions as that of

the Virgin, known in times gone by as the "Douglas Lady." It was of solid silver, as were the statues of the Twelve Apostles. The fourteenth, however, representing The Christ, was fashioned out of massive gold. Through the troubled water that filled the chest, Skipper saw it shining among its dark companions. Lifting it reverently, he experienced a thrill of emotion, for the precious metal glowed bright as on the morning of its creation. What changes had it not witnessed! Hurried from its honoured niche in the Cathedral amid sounds of anarchy and deeds of violence; plunged into darkness and oblivion; for centuries the companion of rotting humanity; forgotten by the living, unheeded by the dead, it yet rose again to life. Barbaric though it was, the unknown sculptor had caught a faint reflex of the untroubled benignity that must have radiated from the face of the living Christ, for in the noisome dungeon the features of pure gold shone tranquilly, as though the Divine Spirit indeed animated it and rose superior to earthly surroundings.

At length but one great chest, bound about with bands of perforated metal, remained to be opened. With feverish haste Skipper wrenched the hinges from the rotting wood. On the top lay priestly vestments glittering with cloth-of-gold,—evidently of great price, for here and there the shimmering texture was strewn with jewels. Altar-cloths and a magnificent tapestry next came to light; but, ruined by the damp, they presented a pitiable appearance. Below these something glittered in the red water. Exerting all his strength, Skipper lifted by two stout handles a resplendent case of massive gold, and, by reason of sheer weight of metal, costly exceedingly. The lid was domed and adorned with saintly figures in relief. Opening it, Skipper gave vent to an involuntary cry. His eyes, dazzled by the

contents, that sparkled even in the faint light of the lantern, refused to give credence to the sight. It was full—ay, to the golden brim—of personal adornments, evidently belonging to high dignitaries of the Roman Catholic Church. Many of these ornaments were thickly crusted with jewels—great pearls, emeralds, and rubies. One, in especial, attracted Skipper's attention. It was a large heart of gold; flames, represented by rubies set like tongues of fire, darted from it. Hung from a chain of massive gold, it was evidently intended to be worn on the breast at some solemn festival. Skipper held it on high so that it might be nearer to the suspended lantern, turning it about in breathless wonder. The rubies fascinated him. Each stone was of uncommon size, flawless, and of marvellous lustre. They seemed to spring to life. Hot fire darted from them. They made a light within that dismal place.

A gasping noise broke the silence. Skipper started violently. He had forgotten his companion. Gazing upwards, he saw the dark face of the Arab framed in the mouth of the bottle. There was a ferocity in the expression that was fearsome, for the eyes blazed more hotly than did the rubies, and through the parted lips the teeth gleamed white and pointed.

"Give!" he articulated, stretching down a claw-like hand. "Give! give!"

"Bide a wee," whispered Skipper, hoarse with a corresponding emotion. Turning again to the great chest, he plunged his hands into the water. They came up full of golden coins.

"Ma God!" he ejaculated, shutting his mouth on a sob.

The coins moved him as naught else had done. They helped him to realise the value of the hoard. The feel of the broad pieces, so solid and good, unloosened his sinews. His fingers opened,

The coins splashed back into the chest. Utterly unnerved, he continued to stare at the troubled water. Then incredulous delight swept over him, and he felt himself lifted up, whirled away towards a goal that had seemed for ever beyond his reach.

"Saw ye ever the like o' this!" he cried, his voice breaking tremulously. Then, his hands outstretched towards the treasure, "Whit a wealth! Whit a wealth! It's *ours*!" he cried, gesticulating fiercely upwards to his companion, "every bit of it. Ma God, we'll keep it, Alley! It'll tak' us tae Afriky. We'll see the palm-trees an' the bonnie sunshine. Nae mair carryin' fer me! Let ithers wear thirsels oot in the wund an' the rain. I've done wi' it. Damn the links!"

He dashed his cap into the water. Then, carried away by the violence of his excitement, and clasping the rubies to his breast, he essayed to dance.

The Arab watched him, open-mouthed.

It was no successful performance. Skipper was no longer young, nor used to dancing. The water impeded his movements. But the little man in the tattered clothing, with face aflame, shuffling heavily in the red light, was a sight never to be forgotten. The lurid gloom around swayed with the monstrosity of his shadow. The skeletons, floating on the broken chests, stirred into a horrible semblance of life. The water danced too, leaping up at him in frenzied bursts and dashes.

But even in the midst of his rejoicings Skipper stopped dead. His excitement flickered and went out like the expiring flame of a candle. Reaction followed swiftly. His nature was shaken to its depths.

"Alley!" he sobbed breathlessly, with the impulsiveness of an over-wrought child,—“Alley, for God's sake let's get oot o' this! I—I'm chokin'!”

CHAPTER XLVII.

No time was wasted in conveying the treasure from the dungeon to the upper world. The basket proved useful, Skipper filling it below, Ali Mohammed pulling it upwards from above. The two men worked with a will, fully aware of the necessity for haste. Despite their desire to appropriate the whole of the find, they came to the conclusion that it was advisable to leave the less valuable objects where they found them. This they did with reluctance, agreeing to return for them, if possible, upon some other occasion. Well was it that they did so, for day was at hand, and they foresaw that they could not count on more than two journeys from the Cathedral to Skipper's cottage.

As Skipper toiled up the stair with the last basket of treasure, the pure air of the upper world was an elixir of life within his lungs. In the face of this free breathing darkness the noisome gloom of the vault seemed a troubled dream: he could with difficulty believe that it existed. Nothing but the weight of the basket, and the sight of the wonders it contained, convinced him of its reality.

Carefully he and his companion lowered the stone slab to its original position, thus concealing from all eyes the secret entrance to the crypt. An icy gust, precursor of the dawn, stirred among the tombs. It set the Arab sneezing.

"Whisht, man! wisht!" implored Skipper in a hoarse undertone; "we maun be awfu' quait, Alley. Folk 'ull be gettin' oot o' their beds soon." He peered around, seeking to pierce the gloom. "*It's dangerous!*" he added darkly.

His voice and gesture betrayed the delight he took in the situation. The mystery, the excitement, the fascination of wrong-doing, appealed to him as much as, ay, and more than, the actual sense of possession. He thrilled with the culpable self-conscious importance of the schoolboy engaged in robbing an orchard. The apples were welcome, but ah! the element of romance came first. Oh, that Tam or M'Phee could see him in this supreme hour, accompanied by a real blackamoor, conveying a treasure as magnificent as ever Aladin discovered in the wonderful cave. The thought that these worthies were in all probability snoring peacefully, utterly indifferent to the spectacle, came near to depriving him of satisfaction.

Setting down the basket, he breathed hot upon his numb fingers. His feet and legs too caused him pain. Chilled by long immersion, they were well-nigh frozen, and it took much stamping to restore circulation. But his bodily discomfort was more than counterbalanced by the sight of the treasure heaped on the churchyard mould. In the faint grey light the precious metal glowed dully: the jewels had ceased to sparkle. As Skipper's eyes rested exultingly upon them, his thoughts flew to Devina. What would she say? Would she condemn or condone? If she were mortal woman, how could she resist being dazzled into sympathy?

Dawn glimmered over the sea. The twin towers, upbearing the great circular window, stood out black as hewn ebony against the faint lighting of the East. Through the thin, biting air came a flutter of wings: the

pigeons were preening themselves in the ruined niches overhead. The tombs crept out of the obscurity—the nearer graves, shadowy as legions of ghosts; the farther monuments, blurring into the background. An air of intense solemnity, heightened by the silence and the gradual coming in of day, held the churchyard in its spells. Above the landward wall, the houses of the town massed themselves in unrelieved obscurity. A faint mist enveloped them, through which the solitary lamp of some watcher spoke of the night that was not yet dead.

“You tak’ the bag, Alley,” whispered Skipper, pointing to a sackcloth bag which he had filled with booty, “an’ I’ll tak’ the basket. We’ll come back for the rest; nae need tae cover it up,—there’s naebody aboot tae meddle wi’ it. For ony sake walk as quait as ye can: it’s a mercy we’ve no’ got boots like ither men.” He peered into the quarter of the morning. “It’s gettin’ awfu’ light,” he added apprehensively; “I wish to God we was hame!”

Creeping furtively along the deserted streets, they reached the cottage, then, depositing the first instalment of treasure in Skipper’s bed, hurried back to the Cathedral. All was quiet. There lay the residue of the find—the golden objects shining dully, the jewels beginning to glitter in the growing light.

Upon a splendid crucifix sat a toad. It was without doubt the same hideous and bloated creature which had caught Skipper’s eye when for the first time he had peered down the stair. To see it squatting there, asserting its loathsome claim to the relic, filled him with repulsion. His imagination, strung to the resounding point, saw in the incident an omen of evil. He wondered if the soul of one of the dead monks had passed into the reptile, and from its fixed and glassy eyes kept watch over the wealth that had cost him his life. He wondered,

too, if these queer shining things were destined to bring him happiness. For the moment his spirit flagged, and a chill as of coming disaster fell upon him. And, as if in corroboration, from above the seaward wall rose the sun, not glorious, but swathed in dun mist, indescribably ominous, of the colour of blood.

The danger of encountering wayfarers was by this time redoubled. Gradually the houses were emerging from their obscurity. At any one of the windows a face might appear; from any one of these doorways a figure might issue. The result would prove disastrous. The success of the venture, and of every hope attached thereto, depended upon secrecy.

Silently, and as swiftly as might be, the two men hastened forward. Reaching the end of the lane, they debouched upon Castle Street. All at once the Arab came to a halt. His sack fell with a clatter to the ground. Skipper stared at him with anxiety. His dark face was ghastly to look upon. He had evidently come to the end of his strength. Gasping for breath, he leaned against the wall.

"We're a'most there," implored Skipper. "For God's sake, come on! Here, gie me the sack."

He swung the load over his shoulder, but his companion was incapable of effort. Then that which Skipper feared took place. A door opened at no great distance, and a man stepped into the street. Quick as thought, Skipper dragged the Arab into a dark entrance—a passage terminating in a stair. Swift though his movements had been, he felt convinced that he had been sighted. The fear lest curiosity should prompt the stranger to seek them out forced him to mount guard at the mouth of the passage. Leisurely the man approached, the clatter of his sea-boots resounding along the silent street. Skipper recognised

him as Jimmy M'Coll, one of the crew of the *Bonnie Jean*.

"Skipper!" cried Jimmy in astonishment. "Whit are *you* daen' here?"

Skipper clenched his fists in his trouser-pockets and returned the stare. "I'm just oot fer a dander," he explained.

"Ay, oh ay!" commented Jimmy; but he continued to stare at Skipper with eyes that twinkled. "Wha was that wi' ye?" he inquired abruptly.

"Naebody; there was naebody wi' me."

Jimmy gave vent to a hoarse laugh. His thoughts appeared to afford him amusement. He showed his gums, and with curious accuracy of observation Skipper noticed that two teeth in the upper row were missing.

"C-c-k!" croaked Jimmy, inserting his elbow into Skipper's ribs. Then jerking a facetious thumb in the direction of the passage, "Dinna lee tae me, man. I seed her petticoats fine. He! he!" he tittered jocosely. The astonished Skipper stared at him speechless. "Ay," continued Jimmy, wagging his head and assuming a droll affectation of disapproval, "sic goin's-on! Wha would ha' thocht it o' you, Skipper! An auld man like you, wi' a grawn-up dochter tae. Man, ye're a verra deil amang the lassies."

Skipper smirked, but the sweat stood in beads upon his brow.

"I'll tell Devina on ye," threatened Jimmy playfully.

"Na, na," cried Skipper anxiously.

Jimmy roared with laughter. Then, sinking his voice to a hoarse and confidential whisper, "Can she hear us?" he questioned.

"Ay; maybe."

The fisherman chuckled, then peered over Skipper's

shoulder into the blackness of the passage. "Ma word!" he ejaculated, "I believe she's here."

He made as if to pass; but Skipper barred the entrance. There was a friendly tussle.

"See here, Jimmy," gasped Skipper, his hands vice-like upon the other's shoulders,—*"See here, you're no' the man tae keek intil a wuman's secrets. No, no; when I saw you, I said tae masel', 'I'm glad it's Jimmy.' Ma conscience! if ye'd been Simpson noo, it would hae been anither story—you ken Simpson."*

"I dae that," assented Jimmy grimly. (Simpson and he were not on speaking terms.) "Simpson wull dae ony dirty trick."

"Ay," agreed Skipper thankfully, releasing his hold; "he's just the sort o' man tae force himsel' on a poor lassie that doesna want tae see him."

"Oh!" murmured Jimmy, taken aback. He cast a wistful glance towards the mysterious passage. "M-m-m. Is that *your* way o' lookin' at it, Skipper?"

"It is," cried Skipper, with immense conviction.

"Weel, I'll no' say ye're in the wrang. You're aye a kindly man, Skipper; but you're queer; I'm jiggered if I can mak' ye oot."

He spat thoughtfully on the cobble-stones.

"Weel," he cried again, hitching his trousers, "it's nane o' ma business. I maun awa' doon tae the boats. Guid luck tae ye."

"Guid day," muttered Skipper.

He stared vacantly after the fisherman, listening to the retreating clatter of his sea-boots. Then drawing a deep breath, and wiping the sweat from his face, he made haste to pilot his treasure-ship into a safe haven.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE excitements of the night had culminated in a craving for drink that would not be denied. Two of the antique golden coins pawned in the morning for a handful of silver had supplied the necessary funds. It was a royal time while it lasted. Never before had Skipper treated so many friends; never had he been so justly popular. A body of admirers hung upon his words, and accepted his offers of liquid refreshment with bewildered alacrity. That afternoon Club members sought caddies in vain. There was consternation among the Royal and Ancients.

It happened in this wise.

"Skipper!" roared Paterson from his box-office as the little caddie lurched past on his way to the public-house. But Skipper shook an affable head.

"Come on!" shouted Paterson impatiently; "Maister Logan's cryin' on ye."

"I'm no' carryin' the day."

"Eh? Whit's that?"

"I'm no' carryin' ony mair."

The caddie-master stared at him open-mouthed. Skipper returned his stare with impassive face, but with an appreciative twinkle in his eyes.

"Are ye seeck?" inquired Paterson with some anxiety.

"I never was better."

"Weel then, come on. I've nae patience wi' thae jokes."

"Jokes! Man, this is nae joke. I tell ye I've done wi' the links. Gie yer dirty cheque tae some ither bodie. Gowf's a silly game."

"I'll tak' yer badge frae ye," roared Paterson, justly incensed.

Skipper uttered a derisive hoot.

"I'll gie it back tae ye masel'. Man, Paiterson, I'll mak' ye a present o' it. Yer wife tells me it'll be yer birthday the morn. I hear ye'll be seeventy-wan."

There was a general titter, for Paterson was known to be sensitive about his age.

He glared at the offender.

"He's drunk," he muttered, adding with a vindictive shake of his head, "He'll be sorry for this the morn. Gang on, M'Phee."

"M'Phee," called Skipper mildly from where he leaned on the railings.

"Whit?" questioned the big man, moving towards the club-house.

"Could ye dae wi' a drink?"

M'Phee hesitated. All at once his throat seemed dry as a sand-bunker. The tempter continued—

"Come wi' me and I'll gie ye auchteenpence in yer pouch an' a drink forbye. You tae, M'Clure. Ay, an' of course you tae, Tam. Come on, the lot o' ye. Damn the expense!"

He crowed like a game bantam, and in the awestruck silence that followed they heard him rattle a pocketful of money.

Had a bomb burst among them, they could not have been more taken aback. Skipper, the show caddie, to scoff thus openly at golf! Skipper, the poverty-stricken, to parade wealth! Skipper, the law-abiding, to defy Paterson, the very personification of authority! What wonder they stared at him open-mouthed.

"He's queerer than ever," whispered M'Phee.

"Ay, but it doesna look like the drink," mused M'Clure.

"D'ye think he means it?"

"Whit he said? Oh ay, ye heard the money."

"Are ye comin'?" urged Skippper. "I've a thirst that canna wait; if ye're comin', come on."

He began to move towards the "Far and Sure." They followed him like sheep.

M'Phee, M'Clure, and Tam were his more immediate attendants; but there were others who, lured by the tidings of his generosity, deserted the links to rally round the standard of revolt. Nor were they disappointed. As long as the money lasted, "the mirth and fun grew fast and furious." Skipper's brawny hands dived into his pockets and appeared with silver which he expended as freely as though the wealth of the Indies were concealed in his disreputable trousers. His associates eyed him with awe, not untinged with suspicion.

"Hoo did he come by the siller?" questioned Todd of Tam, under cover of the merriment.

"I dinna ken," murmured Tam.

The melancholy little man was utterly bewildered by the events of the afternoon. During these hours of lavish expenditure and inexhaustible liquor, Skipper became more of an enigma to him than ever. His head reeled and grew hot as he tried to solve the mystery. He gave it up in despair, contenting himself with accepting Skipper—and all proffered drinks—with the thankful spirit that appreciates although it fails to comprehend.

"Maybe he stole it," puzzled Todd, eyeing Skipper with increased suspicion.

"*Him!*" quavered Tam with indignation. "No fear! Hoo daur ye insult him! You that's drinkin' his money!"

"Na, na, it's no' insultin' him I would be, Tam; but you maun see hoo suspecious——"

"Hoots! I dinna see ony sic thing."

"Well, I dae. He never has a saxpence tae spend noo—forbye he sells a gowf-ba'—and noo, see tae him."

Todd jerked a cautious thumb towards where Skipper was throwing down another half-crown.

The unconscious cause of these suspicions was roaring with laughter over a jest of M'Phee's. His face shining like a full-blown peony, and with a particularly high light on the nose, expressed nothing but good-will to men. M'Phee, smiling at the success of his story, watched him with approval. Mrs Weems, leaning her plump arms on the counter, joined shrilly in the merriment.

"Verra guid, M'Phee," chuckled Skipper, wiping his eyes; "verra guid indeed. Losh, I can hear him sayin' it. But ye're no' drinkin'. You tae, Todd. M'Clure, yer glass is empty. Nae heeltaps, Tam; this is a speecial occasion, ye may say. Oh ay!"

He rubbed his hands and beamed upon the company. Then throwing down another piece of silver, "Mistress Weems, we'll trouble you again, if you please, mum—the same as before, a' roond."

"Ye've come intil a fortune, Maister Greig?" inquired the landlady, smiling at him.

The others held their breath, eager for disclosures. Skipper hiccoughed thoughtfully—

"Na, na, Mistress Weems; we maunna say that. A fortin's a big word; and whit does it mean after a'?" He glanced cautiously round the circle of expectant faces, then continued, emphasising his words by tapping the counter with the bowl of his pipe, "A fortin may be a fortin tae some, and a fortin may no' be a fortin tae ithers—but," and his smile was "childlike and bland,"

"whit I have wull gie us a' a drink the day, an' that's oor business."

At length there remained but a handful of coppers and a solitary shilling. Skipper eyed them absent-mindedly, then, struck by sudden thought, restored them to his trousers' pocket. Rousing himself, he became aware that Todd had vanished, that M'Clure and M'Phee were engaged in a quarrel, and that Tam was smiling vacantly at a bottle above the bar.

"Come on, Tam," he growled abruptly; "you and me has got tae hae a crack."

"Ay, Skipper," murmured Tam. The words came mechanically to his lips, prompted by force of habit. The bottle still held him like a gleaming eye.

"Come on," urged Skipper.

"It seems tae me that the wee green wan at yon end is awfu' bonnie." Tam's wavering forefinger pointed overhead. With his eyes still fixed on the object of his desires, he finally allowed himself to be led from the bar.

Tam was far gone in intoxication. Not that he had drunk a third of the liquor that had found its way down Skipper's capacious throat, yet his head being much the weaker vessel, he was more visibly under the effects of drink than was his companion.

Now that they were well away from the warm allurements of the bar, and were come into regions of cold-blowing airs, Skipper fell under the influence of two distinct personalities. The one was a purely physical creature, that noted things nebulously, conscious of an unusual and incoherent commotion within his brain; borne down by fatigue, longing to lie down and sleep anywhere, even on the swerving pavement, utterly indifferent to popular opinion. The other was upheld by an excitement feverish in its intensity, marching to the music of dreams realised, before whose mental vision

the details of the treasure appeared and reappeared in a glittering and endless procession.

A smile parted his lips ; from time to time he essayed, but fruitlessly, to whistle.

"Haud up! Cannie, man! dinna barge intil me."

Tam had staggered helplessly.

"I canna help it, Skipper. Ma legs is awfu' weak. He! he! ye're no' verra steady yersel'."

"Hoots, I'm daein' fine. Mind that lamp-post. Here, gie me yer airm."

Supporting each other, they successfully rounded the Grand Hotel, breasted the hill that mounts from the club-house, and tacked along the Scores.

The afternoon pointed to coming storm. A lurid shaft of light falling from a cloud-rift shed an ominous radiance on the sea. Sulphur yellow at its edges, this zone of brightness centred to a pale luminous circle, in the midst of which could be distinguished the black form of a steamer.

"See yon!" ejaculated Skipper, waving a slightly irresponsible arm; "yon's the *Red Dawn*."

"Ay," hiccoughed Tam with indifference.

"I'll be on her the nicht."

"Eh?"

Skipper repeated his assertion. Tam looked at him for a moment, then smiled indulgently. "Whit a fancy he has!" he thought. Then his mind wandered to difficulties domestic, and he felt in his pocket to reassure himself as to the safety of the eighteenpence presented by Skipper.

"Come on!" cried Skipper, suddenly increasing the pace.

"No' sae fast," panted Tam; "are ye for gangin' hame?"

"Ay, but no' yet. *He's* sleepin' in the kitchen, and I want a crack wi' you."

"It's a queer time o' day tae be sleepin'; yet"—he giggled feebly—"I feel awfu' like sleepin' masel'."

"It's no' queer when ye've been up a' nicht," Skipper yawned. "I'm gey weary tae, but I've had nae time tae sleep. There'll be time enough for that when I'm oot yonder."

He jerked his head towards the sea. Tam shuddered.

"Dinna talk like that, Skipper—it's fearsome. I dinna like it. Whit's come ower ye?"

Halting suddenly, he withdrew his arm from that of his friend, and stared into his face with tipsy solicitude. Skipper smiled mysteriously.

"Whit is it?" persisted Tam, steadying himself against a convenient lamp-post; "whit are ye smilin' at? Whaur did ye get a' yon money? Why did ye insult Paiterson the day? He's no' the man tae forgie ye in a hurry. Ye're queerer than ever, Skipper. I'd tak ma aith ye're drunk. There's nae sense in yer words; they're just daft-like words wi'oot ony speecial meanin'. Man, whit is it?"

Tam's face was unwontedly flushed. He spoke thickly; his eyes betrayed the influence of drink; yet there was that in both manner and voice that told of a sincere and upright character. Skipper, gazing at him with a humorous smile, was struck all at once with the intrinsic worth of the meanly-clad little man. On another occasion he would have made haste to have hidden the discovery in gruffness, but upon that particular afternoon the drink he had taken served to break down the barriers of reticence.

"Tam, Tam," he burst forth, bringing down his hand upon Tam's threadbare shoulder, "it's God's truth I'm tellin' ye,—I'm leavin' ye the nicht."

"Leavin' *me*?" repeated Tam stupidly.

"Ay, just that. We've been cronies mony a year,

Tam. We've got on weel, you an' me. I've aye liked you fine." He paused, and the light of his blue eyes rested on his friend. "But," he added, nerving himself to the inevitable, "everythin' comes tae an end in this warld. I'm aff tae Afriky the nicht in that boat oot yonder. I'll be startin' a links in the desert, nae doot, and I'll send for ye, Tam; oh ay, ye may trust me, I'll send for ye. Ye'll be lonesome here, I'm thinkin'; ye're no' verra thick wi' the ithers; but—but—damn it, man, wha are ye starin' at?"

Skipper's voice rang tremulous and strained: the oath was welcome.

Tam's mouth was quivering. He had gone suddenly white. A strange thing had taken place. The fumes of drink had passed from his brain and left him sober. His eyes showed it: they were awake and full of pain. They rested on his friend with an expression which Skipper failed to fathom, yet which touched him deeply. He had no idea that Tam would take the news in this manner. The swift change from intoxication to sobriety rendered him speechless.

Tam drew a long breath.

"Tell me aboot it," he said.

In short pregnant sentences Skipper jerked the story into the ears of his friend. The dream, the discovery of the crypt, the interview held that morning with the Captain of the *Red Dawn*, the plan to convey the treasure secretly that night to the harbour and thence to the steamer, and the promised passage to Africa—these were the main points in the confession; yet there was much else that no words could paint, that could be divined only from the sharp note of excitement and the happiness that shone from Skipper's eyes.

Tam listened stupidly, conscious only of a sense of loss so overwhelming as to swamp all other considera-

tions. He did not speak. He still leaned against the lamp-post: the cold of the iron seemed to pass from his head downwards to his heart. Then, very slowly, the feverish joy of his friend made an impression on him. Had not he been Skipper's confidant during many a long year of servitude? Did not he alone know the thirst for adventure, the unquenchable longing for other lands, that fed upon Skipper's soul? At the memory he thrust his own feelings forcibly into the background with a strength of will that caused him to wonder vaguely at himself.

"It's guid news," he said slowly, forcing a smile.

"It is, Tam," cried Skipper eagerly; "I'll get him oot o' the country. Ye mind, it's whit ye were advisin' yersel', nae mair than yesterday."

To have his own words turned into a weapon against him was more than Tam could stand.

"I never meant that," he contradicted sulkily.

"Oh, but ye did; and forbye, he'll never get better o' that cough if he bides here. It's graund! oh, it's graund!" Skipper smacked his leg. "Ma word, you should hae seen them, Tam—the gowd boxes, an' chains, an' plates, an' figures tae, fit tae furnish a bonnie shop."

"Whit did Maister Brandscome say tae them, Skipper?"

Skipper's face fell.

"He's gey pleased, nae doot," mused Tam.

"Hoots, he doesna ken."

"Eh, whit's that?"

"Ye heard weel enough. I've no' telt him yet. Dinna glower at me. We'd nae time tae think o' him. Man, I've had nae *sleep* even!"

Skipper spoke angrily, self-reproach alive within him.

"But—but," stammered Tam, "ye're no' goin' tae tak' the treesure awa' the nicht wi'oot at least tellin' him?"

"Weel—no' exactly. Ye see, Tam, it's a big treesure; we left boxes an' boxes doon there. Alley an' me are

no' goin' tae tak' it a'. Oh no; that wouldna be honest. We've left a sight o' bonnie things fer Maister Brandscome." He paused to note the effect of this generosity, but as Tam did not comment, he added persuasively, "Ye'll allow we've a richt tae oor share?"

"Ay, maybe," assented Tam doubtfully, stroking his chin.

"Of coorse," cried Skipper genially; "an' is there no' somethin' in the Screeptures aboot that?"

"I canna mind it," said Tam uneasily.

"Hoots ay; it says somewhere or anither that we're a' worthy o' reward—ay, even if we start workin' at the twelfth oor."

"Eleventh," corrected Tam.

"Weel, weel," cried Skipper testily. "It's only an oor later. The Lorrd 'ull no mak' ony difference for a wee thing like that. But as I was sayin', Dod! that's awfu' like me an' Alley. Ay, ay, there's mony a true thing in the Screeptures, Tam."

"And Devina? Ye'll be seein' her the nicht, nae doot?"

"Devina!" ejaculated Skipper, somewhat taken aback. "Weel, whit d'ye think?" He stroked his whiskers and eyed Tam from under thoughtful eyebrows.

"Whit dae I *think*!" cried Tam hotly; then with an apologetic smile, "Hoots, Skipper, ye're jokin'."

Skipper continued to watch him in whimsical perplexity. He found it embarrassing to possess a friend who persistently endowed him with all the virtues.

"Ay," continued Tam, speaking softly, and from the depths of his heart; "it 'ull be an awfu' blow tae her. I—I canna think whit she'll dae wi'oot ye."

"Maybe she'll mairry," suggested her parent hopefully.

"Maybe; there's nae doot she's as guid as she's bonnie. But"—he hesitated, and cast a wistful look at his friend—"she'll miss ye somethin' terrible, Skipper."

"I'll leave her a mairriage-present, Tam ; weemen are aye fond o' mairriage-presents. I'll choose oot the bonniest wan o' ma treesures. She'll be pleased."

He spoke buoyantly. His joyous humour refused to see aught save the bright side of the sign-board. So elated, and withal so irresponsible, did he look, that into Tam's sad eyes came the ghost of a smile. It lent the light of the spirit to his insignificant face.

"When dae ye start?" he inquired with feigned cheerfulness.

"Aboot ten o'clock," burst forth Skipper, plunging into details with all the eagerness of a boy ; "it'll be dark the nicht, and it's awfu' like as if it would snaw—it's gey dirty ower there." He cast an upward glance at the sky, then continued, "Alley an' me wull carry the gear doon tae the boat—ye mind the wee boat he came in ? There'll be naebody aboot sae late as that. We'll get aff fine an' easy. Bob kens we're comin' ; an' once on board we're a' safe, for the *Red Dawn* pits tae sea at the turn o' the tide. Ye'll come an' see us aff, Tam ?"

"Ay, I'll be there." He shifted his position. "When'll ye see Devina ?"

Skipper growled impatiently.

"She'll no' care tae meet Alley," he objected.

"Weel, can ye no' send him doon tae the boat first ?"

"M—maybe ; but—I've nae time tae gang the length o' Gibson Place."

Tam reflected.

"Would ye like me tae gang there the noo ?" he proposed ; "I'll tell the lassie tae come an' see ye as airly as she can. Wull nine o'clock suit ye ?"

Skipper assenting to this proposal, though with obvious reluctance, the two friends betook themselves in opposite directions.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE little kitchen looked both warm and cosy in the lamplight. A good fire burned in the grate; the remains of a substantial meal littered the table. Despite these evidences of occupation, the room revealed signs of preparation for a journey. Even the unaccustomed disposition of the few and simple pieces of furniture testified to something unusual in the air. The cupboard doors were ajar, a stout chest stood open, while on the brick floor lay the Paisley shawl.

Before the latter knelt Skipper. With laborious care he was arranging and rearranging upon its outspread brightness the few household gods which he could not bring himself to leave behind him. There was the oleograph. It made an excellent foundation for the bundle—a species of tray upon which objects of lesser magnitude could be disposed. Over the glowing colours of the picture Skipper had spread an old jersey: its thickness and undoubted warmth would, he trusted, be a safeguard, for he felt extremely doubtful as to the deleterious effect of sea air upon oleographs.

Upon the jersey lay his well-thumbed copy of the ‘Arabian Nights’ Entertainments, his Sunday “blacks,” his Bible, a pipe, half a dozen golf-balls, a bottle of whisky, a photograph frame—made of shells pasted upon cardboard, and containing a faded and unflattering photograph of his dead wife—and lastly, a china dog.

The last was accustomed to mount guard upon a corner of the high mantel-shelf, from which elevated position its smug and uncanine smile patronised all within the house. It was perhaps a singular object to take with him to the deserts of Africa, but Skipper prized it. He thought it not only valuable but beautiful, and decided that its presence in the prospective hut beneath the palms would lend an air of refinement to its surroundings.

Skipper's eyes roved thoughtfully round the kitchen, then returned to the Paisley shawl.

"I canna think o' onythin' else," he murmured; "I'd like fine tae tak' the auld clock, but it's no' possible."

He surveyed the venerable timepiece with a sigh, then folding the ends of the shawl over his possessions, tied them securely in a knot.

Rising to his feet, he stood for a moment listening. There was an intermittent howling in the chimney, and from time to time the window rattled. Between these sounds a soft and almost inaudible patter spoke to the ear. Drawing aside the red blind, Skipper peered without. The snow had come at last. He could see it whirling round a neighbouring lamp-post; eddying hither and thither, now driven by gusts, now falling in great reluctant spots. The street was already white. Overhead stretched blackness, out of which individual flakes issued in myriads. A pause, then with sudden onslaught the wind fell upon the house. The door, the window, the chimney, all cried out, as though taken by surprise. A dislodged slate shuddered down the roof and fell with a crash upon the pavement, and in the turbulent night the snow danced madly.

Skipper's thoughts were with his accomplice. The wildness of the weather had no fears for him, but he dreaded it for Ali Mohammed. This was no night for

a sick man to venture forth. He recalled his guest's cough, and a great pity rose in his heart. He tried to drown it by cheerful thoughts of how the sunshine of the lands they were upon the point of visiting would restore the invalid to health and spirits. But his forebodings would not be banished; again and again they returned to haunt him.

Even as he stood there he knew that Ali Mohammed was awaiting him at the harbour-mouth, in all probability shivering in the stern-sheets of the boat, fretted with fears, straining with impatience to be off. Skipper had been forced to put considerable pressure upon him to induce him to start alone; for his mind, unhinged by illness and vexed by superstition, had transformed him into a feverish danger to all who opposed his desires. Skipper had hardened his heart. Alternate fits of cursing and whimpering had been met with persuasive common-sense.

But the memory of the scene galled, like a finger touching a sore. It shadowed the glad excitement of his departure. It overcame his longing to retard the hour at which he expected Devina. To have done with the inevitable parting; to shoulder the bundle lying at his feet; to shake the load of his past life from his shoulders; to join Ali Mohammed, and with him to set forth upon the trail of adventure,—these were the desires that clutched at his heart and forced a grunt of impatience from his lips. And yet, as he looked round the familiar room, cosy in the lamplight, his thoughts softened with a reluctant sadness. He might never see it again. The regret troubled him but for a moment, for his eyes encountering the clock, he noted with quickening breath that it wanted but five minutes of nine. The observation opened wide doors to Devina. What would he say to her? How would he break the news? In what

spirit would she take it? Nervously he set himself to compose plausible speeches. But they crumpled to the inarticulate before the memory of her eyes.

"If she glowers at me I'll no' be able tae get oot a word," he muttered aloud. All at once his face brightened. He recalled the marriage-present. It was in his bed, behind the curtains. With eager haste he ran towards the recess and unveiled the offering. It was the statue of an Apostle. Holding it at arms' length, he gazed at it with deep admiration. It was sufficiently remarkable, seen thus in homely surroundings.

Black with exposure, and of strangely uncouth proportions, the figure might well have passed as a piece of valueless metal. But Skipper knew that it was of solid silver, and an Apostle. Of some eighteen inches in height, standing upon a stout circular base, the statue was of considerable weight. Its draperies, stiff and without grace of line; the somewhat large hands and feet, the former held closely to the sides; the narrow shoulders; the rudely moulded head, which yet betrayed a certain asceticism of feature,—all stamped it as a work of Christian art, so early as to be of incalculable importance.

They made a singular couple, the little caddie and the old Apostle—the one with his red face set in grey whiskers, a glow of pleasurable anticipation within his eyes, a distinctly modern product; the other, fashioned by dead hands, the gift of a dead king, the pride of a great Cathedral, a something mysterious and strange that had known light and incense and music, and anon darkness and abandonment.

The rise and fall of its fortunes passed through Skipper's mind. He touched it with wondering and almost respectful fingers.

"If the auld king bodie could see ye noo, he'd be

fair astonished," he said, addressing the figure with a reflective shake of his head. Then, his eyes twinkling, "*Devina will* be pleased. She's never had an Apostle before. It will be a surprise tae the lassie. She was aye fond o' releegious things. 'Faither,' she'll say, 'hoo kind o' ye tae think o' me; and a mairriage-present tae, me no' thinkin' o' gettin' marriet at a.' The lassies a' say that; but hoot, they've got their e'en on some likely chap a' the time. Human nature, ye may say; haw! haw!"

He chuckled knowingly, but the look which he cast at the clock betrayed anxiety.

"She's late," he muttered uneasily. He strained his ears, but no sound came from the street. His eyes reverted to the statue. The face attracting his attention, he inspected it closely.

"Eh, but he's black!" he mused. Then with a gasp, "Ma word! whit if she takes him for a blackamoor!" The fear brought consternation upon him. Searching in his pocket, he discovered the wisp of sand-paper with which he was in the habit of polishing golf-clubs. Hastily he began to clean the face of the Apostle. In a short time he was rewarded by a brightening of the features, and, although the hollows resisted his efforts, the general effect was satisfactory: the most prejudiced recipient could no longer doubt the Apostle to be white. With a smile of approval Skipper surveyed his handiwork.

"He'll dae fine," he murmured. As he said the words a step without caused him to start guiltily. A hand was upon the latch. Barely had he time to conceal the present behind the bed-curtains, before the door, opening, gave entrance to Devina.

CHAPTER L.

"COME in, come in," cried Skipper.

Nervousness imparted an additional hoarseness to his voice. Devina complied. A rude gust entering with her, she could with difficulty close the door. Dressed as usual in black, her sombre garments were relieved by a sprinkling of snow.

"Whit a nicht!" she ejaculated, laying down her umbrella and essaying to arrange her dishevelled hair with the aid of the little cracked looking-glass upon the dresser.

"Ye got wet?" sympathised her father, dusting the snow from her skirt and jacket with a careful hand.

"Hoots, that's naethin'. I dinna mind the snaw, it melts on ye at wance; an' forbye, I've naethin' on tae spoil. Na, it's the wind I mind; it knocks ye aboot; I couldna pit up the umbrella."

She readjusted a hat-pin as she spoke; then turning, gazed with astonishment at the disorder in the room.

"Whit a mess!" she exclaimed; "and whit in the name o' mercy's *that*?" She pointed to the bundle on the floor.

"Did Tam no' tell ye?" faltered her father.

"He telt me naethin', except that I was tae be sure tae come an' see ye at nine o'clock. Ma word, it was no' easy managed: Ellen was oot, and the mistress didna want me tae leave the hoose."

"Ay, ay; and whit did ye dae?" questioned Skipper

with an eager affectation of interest. "If I can keep her at the talkin', things wull maybe come easier," he reflected, watching her face.

"Oh, I thocht you must be ailin'. It was a queer-like message. Maister Black cocked his heid in at the door, an' then, afore I could speir at him, he was oot intil the road. The mistress was gey kind. 'Gang on, Devina,' says she; 'if onybody rings, I'll answer the front door masel.' But—whit's wrang wi' ye?"

She turned upon him suddenly with knitted brows. Audible through her gruffness rang a note of solicitude. Skipper was touched.

"I'm verra weel," he said gratefully.

But Devina received the news in no thankful spirit.

"Then why did ye send for me? And whaur is yer black man? And whit is the meanin' o' a' this mess? It's a durty place noo," she added, glancing around her with disapproval.

Prevarication was no longer possible. With a sinking heart Skipper recognised that the supreme moment had arrived. He gazed at her apprehensively, without a thought to find its way into words. Then the memory of the Apostle flashing through his mind, courage and ideas came to his assistance.

"Sit ye doon," he muttered huskily,—“sit ye doon, an' I'll tell ye a' about it.”

Without removing her hat or jacket, she seated herself in the armchair and waited for him to speak.

Skipper stood erect, then leaned against the table; then fearing that the new position might be misconstrued into a confession of weakness, resumed his former upright attitude. He looked but once at his daughter: the glance which encountered his did not encourage him to look again. Not that her eyes expressed hostility, or even indifference, yet there was something in their

steady light, combined with the fixity of her features, that made him conscious of moral inferiority. Neither weakness, nor consideration for weakness, could be expected from this strong serious woman, who seemed uplifted on solid virtues above the frailties of humanity.

Skipper chafed uneasily. He felt as though taken at a disadvantage. He wished to stand well in his daughter's opinion, yet was miserably apprehensive that whatever he might say would be used as a weapon against him.

"Weel?" demanded Devina.

The abruptness of her tone caused Skipper to start. He smiled in would-be conciliation.

"Ay, ay," he murmured.

"Whit have ye got tae say? Ye're no' goin' tae keep me waitin' a' nicht, are ye?"

"Na, na, Devina; I'm just a wee flustered."

"Ye're weary; I can see it in yer e'en. But whit else is wrang wi' ye?"

The kindness in her voice thawed Skipper's reserve. He seated himself beside the table.

"I'm goin' awa'."

As he spoke the momentous words he fixed his eyes steadfastly upon her face. Holding his breath, he became acutely aware of the ticking of the clock; but the ejaculation which he had decided would express her surprise was not forthcoming. Its absence caused him mingled relief and apprehension. It was but a postponement. He made haste to speak again.

"I've been hankerin' after furrin pairts a' ma life, Devina; ye ken it weel. It's a weakness, ye may say, but I canna help it. Maybe ye thocht I was contented wi' the carryin', but I'm no'. Gowf's a fine thing for gentlemen—ay, an' professionals; but whiles it's a weary job for us caddies—it is that."

He shook his grizzled head with a sigh.

"Whaur are ye goin'?" demanded her deep voice.

"I'm comin' tae that," he continued eagerly. "Ye mind Bob Duff?"

"Whit Duff would that be?"

"Bob, the eldest son—him that's Captain o' the *Red Dawn*."

"Well, whit o' him?"

"He's takin' me tae Afriky."

"Afriky!"

The astonishment in her voice pleased Skipper. It was something to have astonished Devina! He nodded, with returning confidence.

"Just that; we're aff the nicht."

She looked at him for a moment, then remarked, "It's a wild nicht for a start. Whit wi' the snaw and the wund, I couldna weel see at the corner o' Castle Street. But—when are ye comin' back?"

"It's no' fixed yet. Ye see, Devina,"—he leaned over the table, his voice pitched to a persuasive key,—“ye see, I've heard o' an openin' as greenkeeper, ay, an' professional on a new coorse. It's no' richtly made yet,”—he nodded with a pleased knowledge of unusual accuracy—“no, it's desert country, they tell me; a power o' sand; it'll take a lot o' layin' oot, but,” and his voice rang confident, “I'm the man tae dae it. It's a graund chance; nae doot the Lord sent it. We maun take advantage o' His kindness, Devina.”

The pious resignation in his voice was combated by the twinkle in his eyes. Devina noticed this phenomenon coldly. Within her mind Africa awoke no train of joyous associations. It was a place given over entirely to the heathen. Distance endowed it with something of the mysterious. Archie had been swallowed up in its immensities for years, and now it was to be her

father's turn. Would he ever come back? And if he did, would they become estranged, even as she and Archie had drifted apart in spite of the unquenchable longings of her heart. The memory of Archie imparted an added melancholy to her face. It softened her mood. Suddenly she saw her father in a new light. He was a child, with all a child's unconscious claim upon her protection. Her affection for him deepened, and yet it was an affection not to be shown by obtrusive word or deed, but by a wellspring of kindly motives unguessed.

"Wha telt ye aboot it?" she inquired gently.

Skipper toyed with a teaspoon. The question was natural, yet it discomposed him. He had felt confident that no reference to Ali Mohammed need be made. It was a subject upon which they would not, and could not, agree. Why did she drag it in? He felt aggrieved.

"Ma black man telt me," he said defiantly.

Watching her face from under furtive brows, he noted with surprise that something of the nature of a conflict was taking place in her mind.

"Whaur is he?" she asked at length in a strained voice.

"Waitin' for me doon at the boat."

"He gangs wi' ye?"

"Ay."

"Ye telt me he was aillin'?"

"I did that, Devina; he's just wearyin' tae get back. He gies me a perfect turn every time he coughs—it's like tearin' a yaird o' cotton. Ye canna speak tae him wi'oot his jumpin'; an' he hasna telt me a story fer weeks. Dod! it's truth I'm tellin' ye; I'll be awfu' glad tae get him awa': this is nae place fer the likes o' him."

"Ay," she murmured thoughtfully; "ay, ay."

Skipper, keenly alive to the inflections in her voice,

felt his heart glowing. This was better far than he had anticipated. Sympathy from an unexpected source calls aloud to gratitude. His eyes rested upon her with unaccustomed kindness.

"I see ye're set on it," she said slowly. "I canna pretend tae understand yer feelin's, but—ay! I see fine ye're set on it."

Skipper listened to her eagerly.

"I see, tae, that ye've made a' yer plans wi'oot consultin' me——" He would have spoken, but she silenced him with a gesture. "Oh, it's naitural; you're a man, and yer ain maister. Dinna think I mind that, but——" She paused, pushed a plate farther on the table, then looking him straight in the face, cried with strange impulsiveness, "I dinna trust yon man." Again he would have spoken, and again she stopped him. "Bide a wee. I'm no sayin' a word again' him; I canna dae it, for I dinna ken him. It's—it's a feelin' I have. It's you I'm thinkin' o'. I see you, like a bairn pleased wi' a new toy, and never a thocht o' the danger that's waitin' for ye oot there."

She broke off abruptly, and pointed to the window and the darkness and storm of the night.

There was a silence. The stern sadness of her face and the ominous import of her words awed Skipper: they chilled his blood. But only for a moment, for at the next he cried out cheerily—

"Hoots, Devina, that's awfu' like you! Ye were always ower serious. I canna think whaur ye got it frae—yer mither liked a joke fine. Never fash yersel' aboot me. I'm a' richt. 'Danger,' says you; ma word! I've often wished we had mair o' it in St Andrews. Alley and me wull hae a graund jaunt, and when I come back——" He paused abruptly, then, "Losh me! I was near forgettin'."

He nodded his head mysteriously, winked with significance, crossed to the bed, returned to her side, then placed the statue before her on the table.

"There!" he ejaculated. "That's for *you*!"

He made so sure of her delight, that he stepped backward and rubbed his hands.

"Whit's that?" she asked coldly.

"But, Devina, can ye no' see! It's an Apostle. He's real bonnie, is he no'? Oh ay, I kened fine ye were partial tae Apostles. I've been cleanin' his face for him, he was that dirty. He's real silver—ay, an' solid; just you feel hoo heavy he is. Ye can clean him all ower when ye get back. He'll look graund when he's a' white and shinin'. Ye see, I said tae masel', 'Devina wull be gettin' marriet wan day, and in case I'm no' back frae Afriky this Apostle wull come in gey useful fer a mairriage-present.' Ay, those were ma verra words."

He spoke quickly, thrilled with satisfaction, yet eagerly, anticipating gladness in her eyes. But she continued to stare at the strange figure from beneath sombre brows. The reference to her marriage cut her to the quick, but not for the world would she have betrayed her pain.

Watching her wistfully, Skipper noted her expression with consternation. For the first time the fear lest he might have made a mistake fell upon him.

"Ye—ye like him?" he questioned.

"Whaur did ye get it?"

Skipper shifted uneasily in his chair. In his heedless, almost boyish, absence of forethought, he had not allowed for the factor of his daughter's curiosity. The escapade in the churchyard was not likely to meet with Devina's approval. In Skipper's private rehearsals of the interview, the Arab and the crypt were carefully omitted—thanks to the tact displayed by both father and daughter;

but in the actual performance things were otherwise. A flush of excusable annoyance came into his face.

"Reely, Devina," he remonstrated, "I canna see whit that has tae dae wi' it."

"Weel, I dae," she returned with stern and measured gravity; "I misdoot me sair but it's a papist thing. I've heard o' sich like. Misguided folk fa' doon and worship them."

Her eyes rested with the utmost condemnation on the Apostle.

"But—he's *in the Bible*, Devina! He's godly, ye'll allow. It's nane o' oor business if silly misguided folk worship him. It isna his faut. He just canna help himsel'." He looked at the statue—the quaint black figure and the pallid face—with whimsical pathos, then faltered, "I thocht ye would like him fine. I've never heard o' a mairriage-present bein' received in this way. It's—it's disappointin'."

There was a note of real feeling in his voice. Devina noted his discomfiture, but hardened her heart.

"Whaur did ye get it?" she persisted.

"Doon the wee stair in the Cathedral."

"Whit? Is it——? Ye dinna mean tae tell me——?"

"Ay, but I dae."

With an ejaculation of wonder she stared at the statue, added curiosity within her eyes. Skipper plucked up heart.

"That's naethin'," he cried enthusiastically—"just naethin' ava'. Oh, there was a sight o' treasures doon there—gowd, and silver, an' jools; and plates tae, and jugs! Ye would have liked them fine, Devina. I'd never seen onythin' like them in a' ma born days."

"Whaur have ye got them?" she asked in a low voice.

Skipper edged nearer.

"We've got them a' safe," he confided in a hoarse whisper. "There's some on it still doon the wee stair; but, between you an' me, Devina"—he treated her to a wink—"it's just ordinar'; for the pick o' it a' is doon at the harbour this verra meenute waitin' till I come."

She looked at him incredulously.

"Doon at the harbour! Whit is it daein' there?"

Skipper gave vent to a crow of triumph.

"We're takin' it wi' us tae Afriky."

"Tae Afriky! But—but ye canna dae that!"

"Eh? Why not?"

"Why not? Can ye no' see? It would be stealin'. It's no' yours. It belongs tae a kirk. I dinna hold wi' the Romans, but I see fine that a' thae braws belongs tae them."

Skipper sat silent.

"Whit has Maister Brandscome got tae say tae this?" she asked.

"He doesna ken."

"He didna help ye tae find it?"

"No."

"And ye were for slinkin' awa' wi'oot tellin' him; *oh, faither!*"

He quailed before the burning accusation in her eyes. They faced each other in the strained silence.

"Ye must pit it back," she said in a low but decided voice.

"Pit it back!" he cried aghast; "I—I canna dae that."

"Ye must. There's nae ither way. D'ye no' understand? Can ye no' see? Ye're standin' at the turnin'. Whit way will ye gang? Think o' yer soul, and whitten a danger it's in the nicht. There's a sair fecht gangin' on. Man! the deevil has ye in his grips."

"Na, na," cried Skipper, with a faint return to confidence; "we'll cheat him yet. He doesna ken that it's treesure-trove—Maister Brandscome said sae himsel'. That means, Devina, that me and Alley hae a richt tae a share."

"Ye've nae richt tae rob a kirk," she flashed indignantly.

"I wouldna hae thocht it o' ye," she burst out anew; "if onybody had telt it o' ye, I wouldna hae believed them. *Ma* faither a *thief*! *Ma* faither tae deceive the wan man wha helped and befriended him in his oor o' need! Oh, it's a guid thing ma mither's deid! It would hae killed her wi' shame, so it would!"

She had risen to her feet. Holding him prisoner with stern reproachful eyes, storming the very citadel of his independence, she dominated him physically as well as morally. To her he was but a brand to be snatched from the burning. Her dead mother seemed to stir within her, prompting her to action. She became conscious of an influx of strength. In the metaphorical puritanism of her upbringing, she almost fancied that she beheld her father in the clutches of the evil one. The sight filled her with the might of angels; every fibre of her spirit nerved itself to the conflict.

Skipper's mind was in a whirl. The swiftness of her onslaught dazed him. He sat staring at her stupidly.

But the right note had been struck. Gradually the full significance of her words pierced his stupor. His conscience awoke. The reference to his dead wife wounded him to the quick. He had loved her. The idea that she would have suffered had he done such a deed during her lifetime filled him with remorse. He had acted impulsively, lured on by the spirit of adventure and the lust of visiting far-off lands, but with no consciousness

of guilt, no knowledge of disloyalty. Devina's accusation put everything in a new and horrible light. Skipper, face to face with facts, saw himself and shuddered.

"I—I never thocht o' it in *that* way," he stammered.

His evident pain moved her. Her voice softened.

"Ye're no' to think I dinna feel for ye. I can see fine hoo set ye were on goin'. It's a sair disappointment nae doot, but there's waur things can happen tae ye than disappointment."

Skipper winced. His anger, like an expiring fire, flamed once more.

"Whit dae *you* ken aboot it?" he cried hotly. "It's a' verra fine—it's easy for you tae talk. Whit disappointment have *you* had?"

She looked down at him with eyes of infinite sadness. For a moment she thought to tell him somewhat of the bitterness of her experience, but the wish passed. His thoughts were no longer with her.

"Whit can I dae! Whit can I dae!" he repeated in an access of impotent despair. His fingers drummed upon the table.

"Ye can gie it back," she said solemnly.

"But there's Alley!" he cried with a note of sharp distress. "He's seeck. *He* canna come back. It would just kill him. He's fair daft aboot the treesure tae. I canna think whit he'll say. Forbye, he's no' safe here. I must get him oot o' St Andrews the nicht."

She reflected, knitting her brows in the lamplight.

"Have ye paid Bob Duff?"

"No' yet. He's askin' five pounds each fer the passage; but nae doot he'll tak a bit o' the treesure instead."

"Five pounds!" The words left her lips in sudden gladness. Hastily she fumbled in her bodice. Producing a bag of soft leather, she opened it with trembling

fingers and laid five bank notes before Skipper's astonished eyes.

"There!" she cried.

"Whit's this?"

"Five pounds."

"Ay; but whit's it for?"

"It's for his passage-money tae Afriky. I see fine that ye're pledged tae him; the man's seeck and dependent on ye, but that'll mak it a' richt. Gie him the money and you bring back the treesure."

Skipper toyed with the notes. They rustled between his fingers.

"It's yer savin's?" he murmured in a dazed voice.

"Ay; I was minded tae pit it intil the savin's-bank the day, but I had nae time."

He looked at her but did not speak.

Slowly and solemnly the grandfather's clock struck ten. The last resonant note died away, but Skipper sat without motion, the money still within his grasp. Before him the grotesque figure of the Apostle stood where his eager hands had placed it. The light shone upon its white face, then passed like a benediction to Skipper's grey hair.

For long no one spoke; then, moving softly, Devina brought him his cap. He put it on with the movement of one who knows not what he is doing. Rising to his feet, he took a mechanical step towards the door, then came to a sudden stop. His eyes rested on the bundle tied in the Paisley shawl. For the first time the full consciousness of all he was giving up swept over him. The treasure was as nothing; a means to an end—no more; but his dreams, the companionship of the Prince, the escape from the treadmill of the links, the voyage to lands of sunlight, the wonder, the adventure,—these were everything. To lose them now that they were

close within his grasp, was to lose them for ever. He knew it, and his face went grey.

"I—I canna dae it," he muttered brokenly.

But Devina's hand was on the door. She opened it without a word. The snow, entering in showers, eddied around them; the wind bit at them with icy teeth; but, all unconscious of their surroundings, they continued to gaze at each other. The contest within their souls was of deeper import than the warring of the elements. It was a duel between all that was strong and steadfast in the woman and all that was coveted by the man. Their wills wrestled in silence.

Had she frowned upon him contemptuously, he would have fought her with the mute antagonism of obstinacy; but within her eyes he read infinite compassion, and the dawn of a feeling that might almost be termed respect.

As long as a man might take to count ten, he faced her in silence. Then something of the nobility of her character passed into his. He drew a deep breath. Squaring his shoulders with the air of a man who makes a sudden resolve, he went out into the night.

CHAPTER LI.

It was a wild night. Blackness held the city in its grip. The desolate streets were a whirl of wind and suffocating snow. Where an occasional lamp-light rendered the darkness visible, a yellow and luminous circle cast its ineffectual influence around. Within this the snow-flakes flew—now driving fiercely, again flitting in wayward aimlessness, and anon dashing themselves madly at the light. They resembled myriads of white moths dazzled by a brightness they could not understand. Underfoot they carpeted the ground, but sparsely. Not that they melted as they fell—the night was too cold for that—but their foe, the petulant wind, gave them no peace. She drove them before her in legions, scourged them from exposed places, hounded them into sheltered nooks, and, pursuing them with fiendish cries, plastered the lee sides of the benighted buildings with their white and inanimate bodies. All day the wind had been on the increase. From moderate force it had risen by slow and stealthy degrees to fitful violence. Between the fury of the gusts, and when the ears, dinned by the uproar, thought to welcome silence, another sound made itself heard. Low, deep, continuous, like the bass notes of some vast elemental orchestra, it moaned to the night. It came from the sea. Something fearsome trembled in the sound, something that awed the senses

and shuddered home to the imagination. It neither waxed nor waned. No insensate clamour as of a storm in its strength, but a dull wail, it sounded incomprehensibly ominous and strange. No human ear could hearken to it unmoved. No human fancy but could picture it as the utterance of some mysterious power, unseen, yet imminent, presaging disaster in the groping blackness of the night. But its influence was intermittent, for the wind, swooping to fresh attack, shouted it down, and the whirl of tortured flakes began anew.

During one of these lulls an old man might have been seen beneath a lamp-post. Donald—for it was he—disappointed in his expectations, for the rough weather had prevented the departure of the boats, was on his homeward way. The climb from the harbour had been steep. Donald was old and scant of breath. By no means desirous of returning at once to the dreary little room that he called “hame,” he paused irresolute, the wish for some one to whom he could talk about the sea rising strong within him. He peered through the falling flakes. All at once he descried Skipper; but his eyes, blinded by the snow, failed to recognise our hero until he had come within the immediate circumference of the light. It was with a gladdening of the heart that the old man noted the familiar figure. “The verra man,” he thought. Skipper was good-nature itself, and would listen without impatience to the time-honoured tales to which so many listeners turned a deaf ear. Donald would be allowed to talk until he almost forgot that he was but a caddie. Anticipation became visible in smiles.

“Guid evenin’, Skipper,” he piped cheerily.

There was no reply.

“Hi! bide a wee!”

Skipper looked at him but did not stop. The light

shone for a moment upon his face. Donald held his breath—speechless.

“Man!” he whispered afterwards to a group of caddies, “he gaed by me like a ghaist. It was as if he didna see me. Sure as daith, the verra boats went oot o’ ma heid!”

Skipper’s mind was in a state of chaos. Outward influences impressed him but vaguely. The snow pelted him, the wind buffeted him, yet he heeded them not. Occasionally he winked the flakes from his eyes, or braced his shoulders against the gale, but these movements were mechanical. His every thought was driven inward. His emotions drifted hither and thither like rudderless ships. Keenly though he had at all times realised sensation, yet at this supreme moment of his life he was victim of a curious atrophy of feeling. It was as though another and not he were called upon to lay down a life’s hope upon the altar of duty. From somewhere within his mind, as from a height, he looked upon this other and wondered. This detached feeling was accompanied by no poignancy of regret. Neither did self-pity puddle his thoughts. He failed to realise the future: it seemed far off, vague, unworthy of anxiety. When, in a dull manner, he attempted to fathom it, it caused his brain to ache. It resolved itself into a grey nothingness—a long column of figures which would not be added.

Besides the presence of this other self, two people were with him continually—Devina and Ali Mohammed.

The former loomed large, dark, impassive, and inexorable as Fate. She was like one of God’s commandments or the Day of Death,—a thing which was clear and had to be faced. The memory of her as she stood at the open door was unforgettable. Before the compassionate rectitude in her eyes all that was weak in

him sunk, all that was good uprose and enlisted itself upon her side. He had said to Tam that if he could but see it, he would like to do his duty; and behold, Life had taken him at his word and pointed out his duty with Devina's finger.

Of the Arab his feelings were equally defined. He thought of him with pity tinged with self-reproach. No doubt as to how his companion would receive the news darkened his mind. He would, Skipper reflected, be grievously disappointed, but he would see that no course other than the entire restitution of the treasure lay open to them. Yet remorse gnawed at his heart. Had he not deceived the Prince, unwittingly, even as he had deceived himself, but none the less completely, —awakening desire with glittering details oft repeated? Had he not raised hopes destined never to be fulfilled, and would he not read in Ali Mohammed's reproachful eyes the penalty?

And yet, even in the midst of his dejection, an inward force sustained him. It breathed warm upon his spirit, instilling into it a strength that knew no vacillating purpose, that nerved him to accomplish that which he saw to be inevitable.

In a lull of the wind he stopped for a moment upon the summit of the cliff. The Cathedral ruins loomed black upon the right; the sea lay far below upon the left. Around him the snowflakes eddied ceaselessly, clinging to his tattered clothing, melting upon his weather-beaten face. Awakening from the heavy stupor of his thought, his ears became conscious of the moaning from the void. The sound thrilled a familiar chord into being. The outcome of an hour cannot obliterate the landmarks of a life. Desire was not dead, but asleep. It awoke at the voice of the sea. Yet it had undergone a change. No longer

eagerly imaginative, the creation of conscious will, it stretched broad wings beyond control. He felt himself to be the sport and plaything of circumstance; and for the time being it was circumstance still instinct with the spirit of adventure. Hope had closed its doors at the very moment of realisation, yet surely one last adventure still awaited him, prophesied by the melancholy forebodings of the sea.

Skipper thrilled as he listened. A tense nervous excitement took possession of him. His memory, singularly alert, recalled a saying of which he had once made use. "Ay," he muttered, and awe became audible in the low hoarse tones, "Ay; it's whit I said afore—the sea mak's ye feel queer. The nicht, it's as if she has a secret for me behind her back! Ay; *behind her back!*"

The sound of rapid footsteps caused him to gaze in the direction whence he had come. Some one approached in the obscurity, and in heedless haste came near to colliding against him. Aware of his vicinity, the figure halted.

"Is that you, Skipper?" panted Tam's voice.

"Ay."

Tam gave a gasp of relief.

"Dod, it's a mercy I found ye! I missed ye at the hoose, an' I was awfu' feared I'd be too late. Whit a nicht! It's the worst snaw we've had the year."

He shook the flakes from the new overcoat, and endeavoured to fasten the faded velvet collar more tightly around his throat.

"Why was—eh—whit are we stoppin' here for, Skipper?"

Skipper was listening intently.

"Ye hear onythin', Tam?"

Tam, straining his eyes into the whirling blackness, listened, then shuddered.

"The sea," he whispered uneasily, "it's—it's angered."

Skipper could barely catch the words.

"Ay, but whit for, think ye?"

"I dinna ken. I misdoot there's a storm brewin'. I mind a queer noise comin' oot o' the sea ten year back, afore it took twa o' the herrin'-boats. An awfu' storm that was tae. It looks as if it'll be gey dirty the nicht. The cone was up at the Coast-Guard this afternoon. Man, hear till it! It's fearsome. It's like as if——"

He broke off suddenly, a gust clutching at his breath.

"Like whit?" urged Skipper, raising his voice to make himself audible.

"Oh, naethin'; it's only a silly notion o' mine. Never heed me, Skipper."

"But whit was it?"

Tam brushed the flakes from his blinded eyes, and shielding his voice with his hand, cried shrilly—

"The treesure—it's like as if the sea was angry about it."

This utterly unexpected flight of imagination staggered Skipper. He stared at Tam's dark figure with bewildered eyes. The idea was new to him. It lent wings and direction to his own restless fancy. The sea was angry. Ay; there could be no doubt of it! That was the one possible meaning of this sinister sound. The great mysterious element, with its terrible power for destruction, had enlisted itself on the side of the dead. It had made the wrongs of the monks its own. It thirsted for revenge. The thought filled him with awe. It lent a new and more ominous significance to the phenomenon, and instinctively he held his breath in anticipation of the coming lull that would again voice the growing hostility of the sea.

A hand on his arm recalled his friend.

"Skipper!" cried Tam; then, as he received no answer, "Man, ye canna mean tae start *the nicht*? It's

no' safe. I'm feared for ye. See, oot yonder, hoo she's pitchin'."

He pointed to where, visible through driving snow, a steamer's lights wallowed and rode high.

"For God's sake pit it aff!" implored Tam, his voice breaking with earnestness. "The verra name is again' ye. *Red Dawn!* whit sort o' a name is that tae gie a boat! A red dawn is uncanny; a'boddy kens that. And ye mind the story Maister Brandscome telt us aboot the ship that pit tae sea wi' a kirk treesure an' foondered wi' a' haunds in sight o' shore. Man, Skipper! wull ye no' listen? I came tae see ye aff; but—but I canna stand it! Ma God! ye ken I'd gie the verra bluid oot o' ma hert tae stop ye!"

The anguish in his voice touched Skipper.

"I'm no' gaein'," he said sullenly.

Tam gasped.

"Na," continued Skipper, with additional gruffness as he felt the need for restraint. "Na, I've changed ma mind. I see noo——" He paused, then, "Weel, I'm bringin' the treesure hame the nicht; that's a' aboot it."

Tam found no words. Joy and amazement struggled within him. He could only stare and gasp. A crushing load seemed lifted from his mind. The future suddenly brightened; yet, realising what this change of plans must mean to Skipper, doubt beset him, and pity welled within his heart.

"Ye mean tae tell me that ye're no' gaeing *at a'*?"

"Just that. Och, ye needna be upset; it's—it's guid news."

The words did not deceive Tam. They but deepened his sympathy. His admiration and respect for Skipper increased. This was indeed the hero he had worshipped all his life.

"And yer black man?" he hazarded respectfully.

"Oh, *he's* gaein'. I meant tae get him aff the nicht, but I'm feared for him. It's just possible the *Red Dawn* 'ull no' sail till the storm's by wi' it." He frowned to seaward. "Onyway," he added, "I'll see if he'll come back the nicht. Come on, Tam; we've bided here ower lang. He'll be perishin' wi' cauld, puir man, just waitin' for me."

They trudged onward, past the battery of obsolete guns, past the little Coast-Guard Station on to the top of the hill that descended precipitately to the harbour. They walked slowly, side by side. At times, jostled by the wind, they rubbed involuntary shoulders. The snow drove in their faces. Out of the void it came, flakes in number as the sands of the sea, sifted from the dark and ragged clouds that were being hounded through the night. It pelted them, impeded their movements, froze upon their clothing, until in the light of the last lamp they showed white as the ground over which they passed.

All at once Skipper spoke.

"Tam!" he shouted.

"Ay," screamed Tam.

"You bide here till I whistle on ye."

"No fear; I'm comin' wi' ye."

They had paused midway down the face of the hill. The harbour, invisible on account of the flying wrack, lay immediately beneath them. Tam's voice sounded obstinate—the obstinacy of a weak man, slow to rouse, but open to no argument.

Skipper fumed.

"I'm no' wantin' ye," he growled.

The words were uttered in his ordinary tone. The wind caught at them. Tam heard them not.

"I'm comin'," he repeated shrilly.

They continued the descent. The harbour was deserted. Its desolation struck a chill. It was as if all

human life had fled the place. The rude stones of which it was built lay white with untrodden snow. The houses of the fisher folk cowered before the gusts. Here and there, from under broad eaves, a lighted window peered fearfully into the night. The snow had plastered the rough stone walls, and had piled itself in drifts against the doors. The white-faced clock with its clumsy black hands was barely visible. It pointed to half-past ten.

But the attention was not permitted to rest on these evidences of humanity. Every sense was but conscious of one thing—the sea.

Its voice had been on the increase, minute by minute. From a far-off moaning it had risen to a dull and thunderous clamour that shook the night. The sea-wall that terminated in the miniature lighthouse was powerless to restrain the waves. From time to time one greater than its fellows would shoulder its way out of the blackness, overtop the concrete, and fall in sounding ruin on the stones below.

Within the immediate shelter of the pier, the waves, shorn of a portion of their strength, swung landwards. The black water fawned upon the dripping stones. It rushed at them, leaped high, licked them with its myriad tongues, and was gone again into the night. With its departure the swish of displaced seaweed and hollow gurgles from innumerable cavities became audible.

Beyond the boundary line of pier all was obscurity. Night and chaos brooded over the waters. Sea and sky wove themselves into one sinister pall. Death was there. Yet life was there too—fierce, terrible, inhuman life. Nought was to be seen, but everything was to be heard. At times, however, there came a momentary glitter out of the blackness, and a wave—a great, wild, sea-born thing, maddened at the thought of coming dissolution—rushed

headlong to its doom. The face smarted with the sting of flying spray, and was chilled by the touch of terrified flakes. The vortex confused the senses.

But all sensation ebbed from other portions of the body to hold its breath within the listening ears. The imagination vibrated like a chord strung to the breaking. That which happens rarely had come to pass. Nature, stirred to her depths, was at last becoming audible. The sea was speaking.

Its voices were many and terrible to hear. They rose together, but not in accord, each giving vent to the passion that possessed it. The waves danced to the ominous sound with murder at their hearts and the foam of sudden anger on their lips.

The listener could distinguish many tones. The roar and hiss of giant breakers; the dull, deep-voiced thunder of wave meeting wall; the crisp, sibilant crash of spray; the deadly shoutings of the long battle-line.

Through it all there was something concerted in their anger,—something suggestive of fixed purpose, irrevocable: almost as though some mysterious power, unseen, awful, were in person directing the attack. The presence of this power awed the senses. One could only hearken and shudder. The utter helplessness of man face to face with so terrible a foe appalled the mind. One prayer alone rose to the lips,—“God help those who trust the sea to-night!”

The two men made their way carefully along the pier. They kept close within the shelter afforded by the wall. Underfoot the stones were slippery, as though caked with ice. When a wave inundated the passage, tons of water, maddened by opposition, leaped and ran along the levels. At such moments the pier became a mill-race. At every few steps Skipper paused and peered anxiously over the side. At length he halted.

"He's doon there," he cried, approaching his mouth to Tam's ear. Tam, straining his eyes, saw something rising and falling upon the blackness below. The shape of a boat could be distinguished, but, owing to the spin-drift that beat upon his face, details were invisible. A hand pressed upon his shoulder. Skipper was speaking again.

"I'll gang doon the ladder and speak tae him. You bide here; we'll want ye tae gie us a haund wi' the treesure."

Tam assented. Bewildered by the clamour and blinded by the spray, his surroundings assumed an air of horrible unreality.

An ominous report from the far side of the sea-wall was followed by a blinding lash of spray. It fell heavily on the friends, but neither heeded it. The wind lulled, but as if to make up for the inaction, the sea roared more furiously than before. The noise of its shoutings gave the impression of an anger that was terrible. It seemed to be working itself up into ever greater fury, and as the great waves thundered out of the darkness the livid light of their crests lent a ghastly pallor to the faces of the men.

Skipper felt for the rungs of an iron ladder that, fixed to the wall of the pier, led perpendicularly to the water. Having found them, he began the descent.

The action roused Tam.

"Stop!" he cried.

Skipper stopped.

"Dinna gang doon there. Tell him tae bring it up to ye."

"Na, that winna dae. I've got tae speak wi' him, an' I canna dae it wi' you here."

They were shouting to make themselves heard.

Skipper descended another rung.

"Here!" implored Tam, his voice pitched to shrill entreaty. "Here! stop! I'm feared for ye. For God's sake, dinna gang doon there! It's no' safe. Skipper—hear me! I dinna trust yon black man."

Tam gazed in an agony at his friend's head and shoulders, dimly discernible above the edge of the pier. They looked like something misshapen—titanic. A whirl of snow blurred the features. Another wave rushed landwards. The black and angry water below roared like hungry tigers. A solemn pause, then out of the obscurity came the answer—

"It's got tae be."

The words swept on Tam with a scream of wind. It seemed as if the elements were gloating in anticipation. The finality of the decision awed him. He made no reply. When he looked again, Skipper's head and shoulders had disappeared. Falling on his knees, he gazed downwards with anxious eyes. The black mass of the boat rocked and swayed to the incoming surges, now mounting high, now sinking low. It was, however, safe so long as it retained its position against the wall. Growing accustomed to the gloom, Tam made out a dark form clinging to a rope passed through one of the lower rungs of the ladder. Skipper entered the boat and seated himself in the stern-sheets. Tam strained his ears. They were evidently talking. Their words remained inaudible, for the wind, returning with additional fury, howled around them, lashing the summits of the waves into spray and deluging the boat in a smother of spume. But despite the confusion, Tam gathered that the interview was stormy; for when the boat heaved high, a shrill note as of angry remonstrance whirled up to him. With growing fear he bent lower, his numb hands gripping the topmost rung of the ladder. The little craft was plunging fearfully, burying her bows in

the walls of water. Skipper was apparently addressing his companion, urging him to some course, for he pointed insistently to the parcels at their feet. His voice rose, hoarse, earnest, pleading.

A sudden lash of spray blinded the listener.

When he had rubbed the salt water from his eyes, the crouching form amidships had risen to its feet. It flourished something in its right hand. Its hold of the rope had relaxed. The boat swung outwards.

"Haud on tae yer rope! Haud on tae yer rope!" yelled Tam, gesticulating passionately.

His shout was heard. Skipper sprang responsive to the warning. His companion, however, resisted. There seemed a struggle. The two forms blended into one swaying blackness, but all was vague, terrible, enveloped in the horror of darkness. The boat, broadside to the billows, swung upwards on the summit of a wave, then with a sickening swoop lurched downwards into an abyss.

Its position had now become one of extreme danger, for the waves were rapidly bearing it against a rude promontory that formed the opposite side of the harbour. Even so, with the help of the oars it could still have been saved, but the struggling men were incapable of self-assistance.

No human power could intervene. In another moment it was too late, for the boat and its occupants were helpless as driftwood in the grip of that angry sea. Tam, frenzied with horror, yelled and yelled again. The wind and the waves stifled his cries. Even as he shouted, he saw the end approach. Again the boat swung high. It poised for a giddy moment on the crest of a mighty surge, as a stone in the hand of a slinger, then, propelled irresistibly forwards, crashed against the wall.

There was but one cry—a terrible sound torn from

souls in agony. It was pounced upon by the wind and whirled with fierce delight into the blackness. A sudden lull, as though the elements were taking breath, then nought was to be heard save the mad exultation of the sea.

The watcher still knelt upon the stones. His figure could dimly be seen. He knelt with bowed head and clasped hands in the attitude of one who prays.

THE END.

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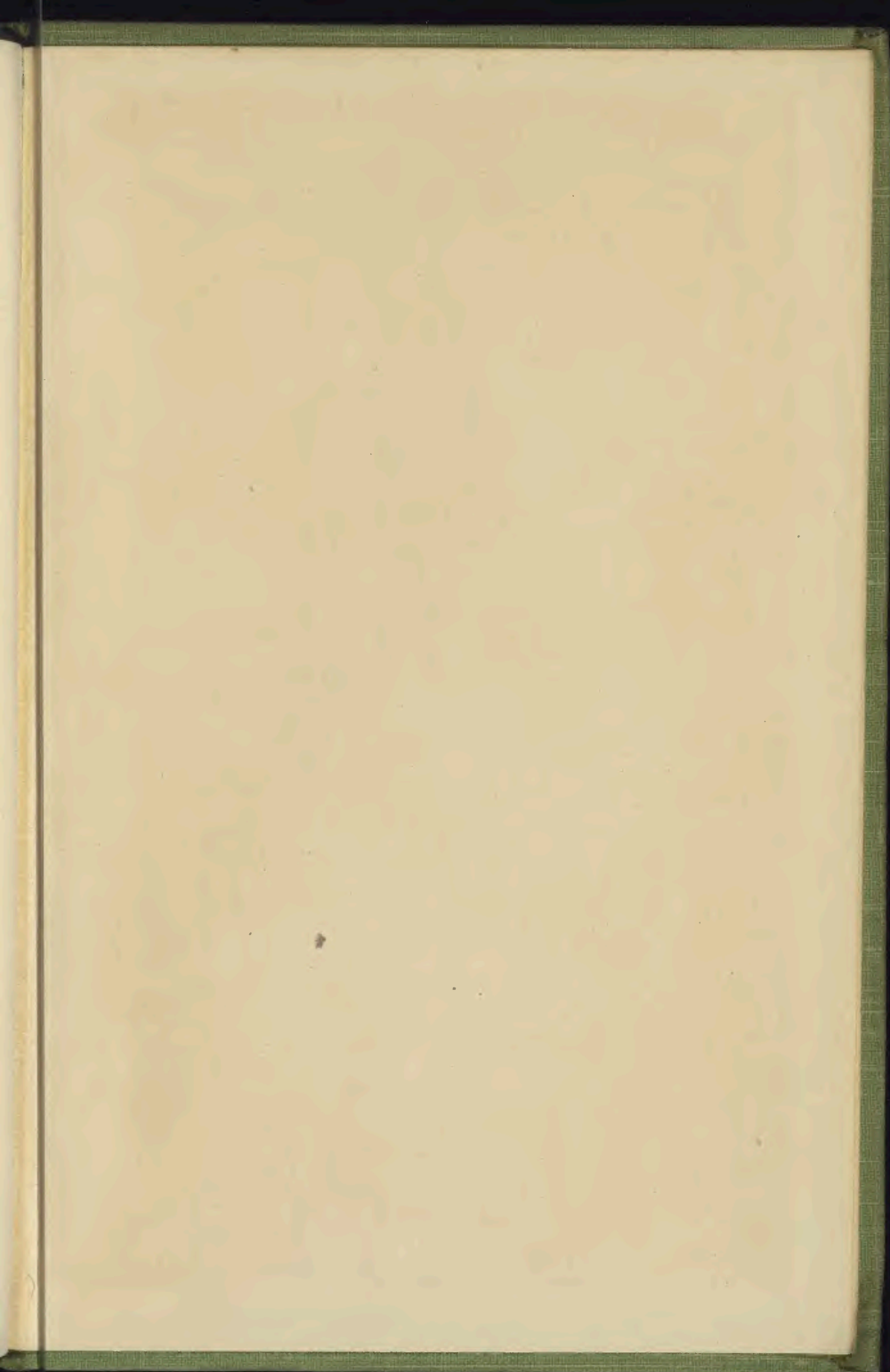
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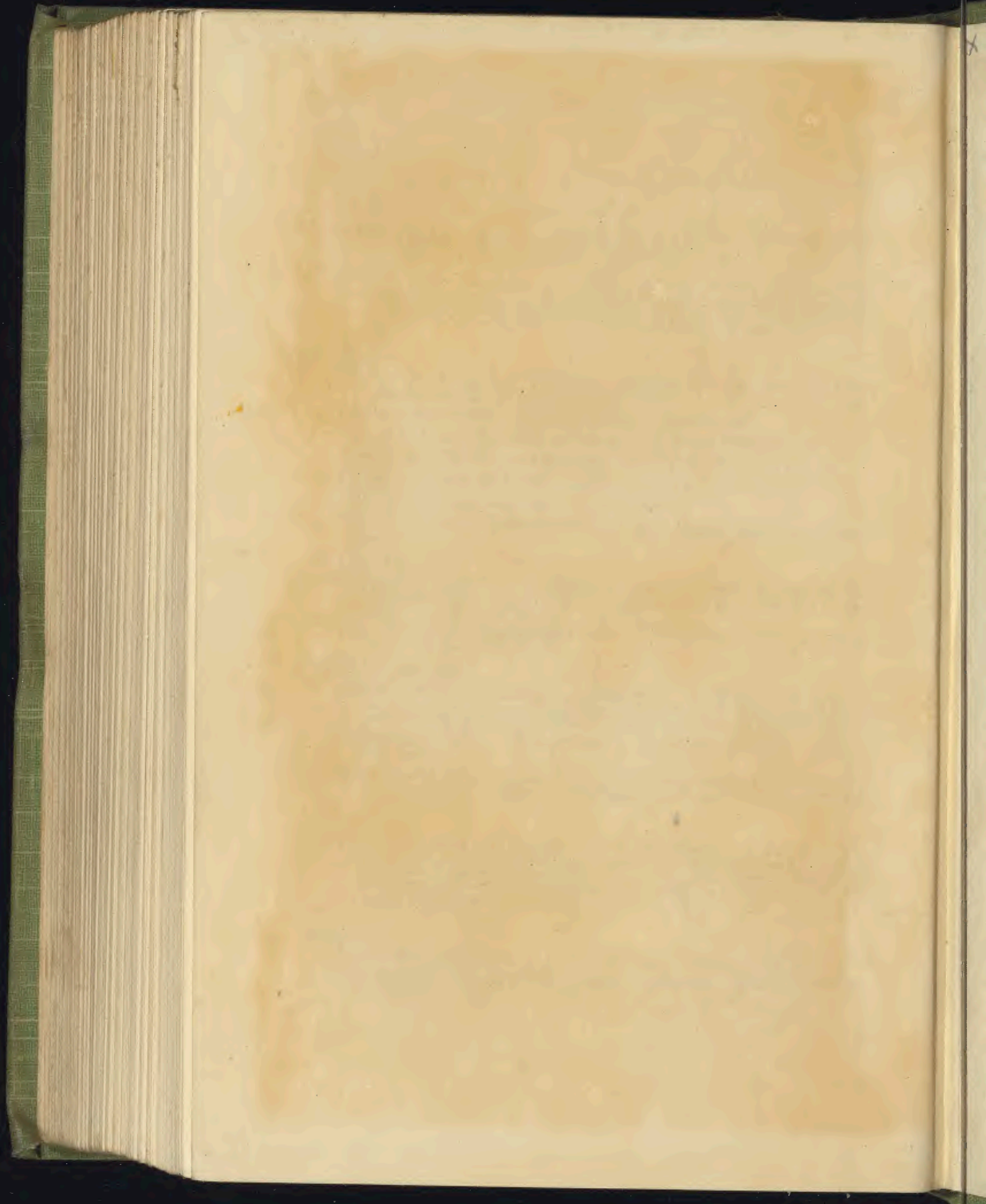
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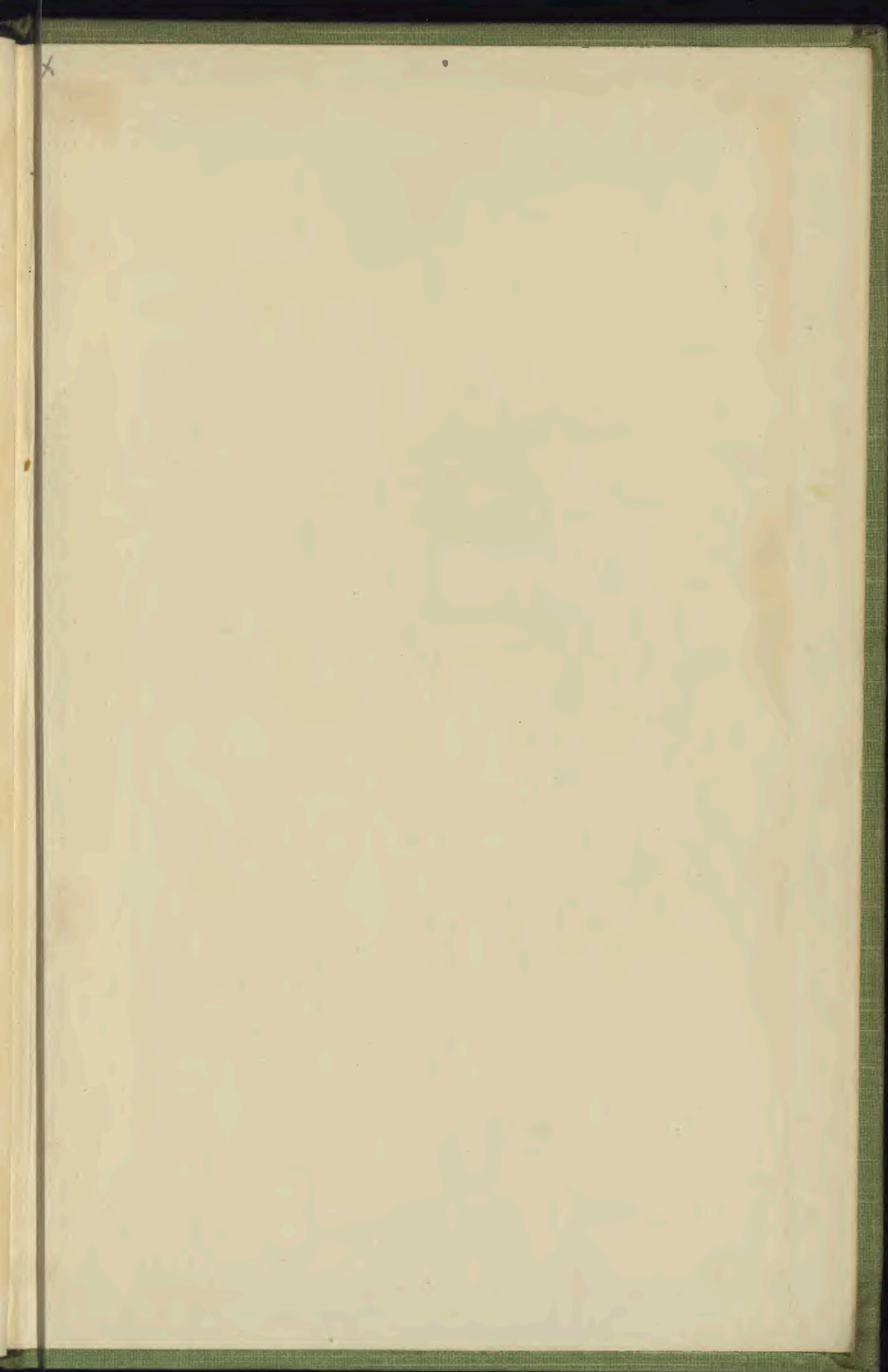
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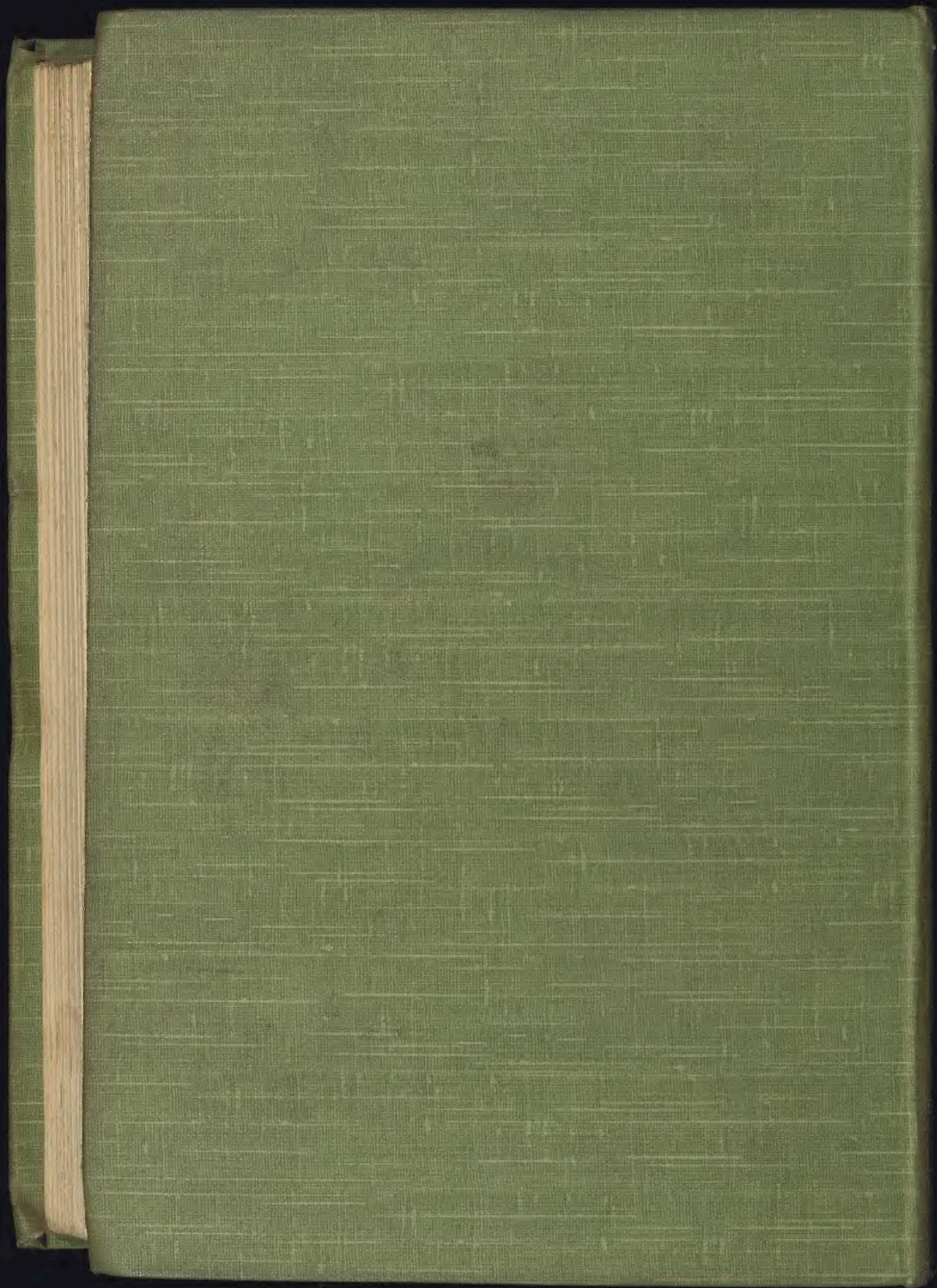
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