The ISLE of the WINDS

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Synopsis of Previous Chapters.

Sir James Stansfield, of New Milns, in company with his grandson, young Philip, meets in an inn-house his son Philip and his son's paramour, Janet Mark. They quarrel. Sir James goes home, taking along his grandson. That night he is murdered by his dissolute son and Janet Mark. They take his body outside and lay it upon an ice floe, in the effort to fasten the crime upon other shoulders. But the boy Philip has witnessed the crime. He tells his grandfather's chief tenant, Humphrey Spurway, and Spurway succeeds in having the real murderer brought to justice. He is sentenced to be hanged, his woman accomplice to be transported. Mysteriously Philip Stansfield escapes the gallows, seeks out his wife, finds her in the company of Spurway, and tries to murder her, but does not quite succeed. She is taken away to Abercairn for cure, leaving her son, young Philip, in charge of Spurway and in the company of little Anna Mark, from whom he learns that in some ways girls are worth quite as much as boys. For example, in the time of the cattle droving, when Master Spurway bought his winter beasts in the mart, Anna beats Philip in helping to cut them out. Still they are excellent friends, even though she beats him at her studies in the school to which they go together. John Stansfield, Philip's lawyer, brings in a new teacher, Dominie Ringrose, a small man, with wonderful eyes. Shortly after his coming the countryside is shocked and thrilled with a number of bloody and mysterious murders, evidently for the sake of robbery. Business calls Humphrey Spurway from home. In his absence a big packing case, purporting to be full of fine Spanish wool, is delivered to Will Bowman, Humphrey's clerk. He puts it in the weaving shed. That night Philip, playing about it, sees shining through the gauze of the packing case a pair of eyes. He calls Will Bowman, who counts three, then stabs the packing case with a small sword. Blood flows. They open the case, and find Dominie Ringrose inside, apparently dead. Shortly after the house is attacked by robbers, whom Ringrose had meant to let in. They are beaten off, but afterwards Philip's mother refuses to let him spend the holidays at New Milns.

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CHAPTER XVIII.—(Continued).

So, home to my mother I went to the little house in the Vennel, whose gable looks on the port and out on the sea washing the very sand before our doors, a mighty chance for a laddie bred on the hills. Before me as I drew on my breeks were hundreds of masts of the harbor of Abercairn, the tall sea-going ships riding without at their anchorholds, the coastwise schooners dimpling on the swell midway, and a score of smacks packed along the quay like herrings in a barrel.

Then such rolling, tarry sailors as clouched and smoked along the sea front, such curious, oiled curls, pierced ears, strange oaths, jolly shiver-my-timbers comrades. All the sullen, melancholy sour humors of the Covenanting hills seemed in an hour blown away by the sunburnt mirth and many-tongued joviality of the seaport of Abercairn.

My mother, however, had a new grievance. She had often pressed it upon Umphray Spurway that he was not the person to bring up a well-grown girl verging upon 14 or 15, who would soon spring up into a woman. And so my mother offered to take Anna Mark as her daughter and bring her up with me in our little house at Abercairn.

"She needs other governance than yours," said my mother to Master Spurway. "What skills it that she can shoot and fish and play backsword as well as any man in 10 parishes? She is not a man and the doing of these things will only shame her the more."

Here I protested vehemently and was promptly put to silence with an asperity quite foreign to my mother's nature. "You know nothing about the matter, Philip. Run your ways out and play."

So for the time I went, ill enough pleased, and left my mother to press her project upon Umphray Spurway in her own manner, which doubtless she did with all success. For there was nothing then or ever that Umphray would not do to please my mother.

But when I came in again, I said to her, "Mother, what ails you and Little Anna Mark? Why do you not like her?"

It was a surely simple question enough, yet must my mother fall a-trembling and looking at me with a pale and perturbed countenance.

"Listen, Philip," she said. "I have had enough of this Little Anna Mark. Ever since you went to the Mlln house it has been 'Little Anna Mark' this, and 'Little Anna Mark' that, as often as you come back. And when Umphray—Master Spurway, I mean—comes in to drink his dish of tea, it is Little Anna all over again. And a wildcat madam at the best, I warrant she is, growing up among men there in that millhouse."

"Why, mother, they all love her," said I, to try her. "Umphray himself—"

But at this she stamped her foot. "I will hear nothing more concerning the minx, neither now nor again!" she said; and so went up to her own chamber, slamming the door after her.

Then, some time after, when she had forgotten her strange angers, I asked her again. "But, mother, if you are so set against our Little Anna, why is it that you desire her to come hither, and be with me in one house?"

"I desire the thing itself not greatly," said my mother. "But, indeed, one cannot see the girl being brought up like a heathen among a lot of men, and for a guardian and companion having only that great, soft heart of an Umphray Spurway."

This was knocking down my two idols at one blow; so I made answer: "Why, mother, what has Umphray done that you have grown to dislike him? I am sure he is ever fond enough of you."

Whereat my mother dashed her hand to her brow, pretending that her hair was falling over her eyes (which it was not nor ever could).

"I mislike none," she said, "but I cannot bear to see silliness. And in this Umphray has been foolish from the beginning!"

I knew that it was time to stop, so I said no more at that time. But, as may be supposed, I thought much about the matter, and the more I thought the less could I see light. Finally I judged that it must be on account of her mother, who had been sent away across the seas to the Carolinas, that my mother hated little Anna. It could not be that she was jealous of a girl like her, living in one house with Umphray Spurway, who was old enough to be her father. No, indeed, that was clean impossible.

But when next I saw Anna I got a still greater surprise. The manner of it was as follows: I was going one morning to the grammar school with Nicholas Kidston, in Abercairn, with my books in a strap under my arm, when I met William Bowman riding into the town. At this I was most mightily rejoiced, and, throwing my books hastily under a bench in a cobbler's shop, where I was acquainted, I ran after him.

"Let me up before you on your beast!" I cried.

"I will do better than that for you, Philip," he replied; "I will give you the beast itself for the day, if you like to risk it—that is, if you are not afraid of the master's birch for truancy tomorrow morning."

"Umph—Nicholas Kidston, indeed! I dare him to meddle me," I made answer. "I care so little for him that I will ride past the school door."

And, indeed, I had feared my schoolmaster once for all the day when first I went to school, by drawing a dirk on him when he bade me untrues. That and the fear of my famous father did the business.

So, without further thought of my schooling, I accompanied Will to his stable at the King's Arms in the High street of Abercairn. As he went he told me his business.

"I am going on board a scow to examine bills of lading with the captain. He is from Hull with a cargo of looms and foreign yarns. The customs themselves will take a full day. Then there are his charges and allowances to be gone over. Now I was bid to tell you that little Anna Mark would fence you for a silver dollar at the back of the Mlln house, and that Umphray Spurway would be all day woolbuying at Moreham fair. You can put the two and two together, I hope."

Will Bowman kept his countenance as he spoke. Indeed, it sounded very like a trysting of lad and lass. But neither Anna nor I thought at all of that. We were comrades—that was all. But nevertheless I longed to see her, and I did not believe that she could fence me. Indeed, I chuckled to myself, for I had been taking lessons in the art from one Sergeant Robert Arthur, sometime of Buchan's foot, but who, as he put it, had been promoted for drunkenness, and was now living in taverns and passing as a veteran of the wars.

It was (as I have elsewhere said) a good 12 miles by the ordinary well-trodden roads to New Milns, but there was a pass or clip through the hills behind Abercairn by which the distance was no more than seven, a good hour's ride only to one that knew the paths. So, when Will had baited his horse and rested it half an hour, I got across the saddle and rode out of the town by devious ways so that my mother would not hear of my evasion.

It was not my habit to go home to dinner, for which indeed there was no time, my mother's house lying at the far end of the town from the grammar school of Nicholas Kidston. So the day was mine own till bedtime.

In little ore than an hour I found myself at New Milns. For as soon as the beast got its head homeward there was no need of whip or spur. Comrade, pasture and manger—or perhaps simply the desire for home pulled the rein so that presently the great square of Umphray Spurway's mill lay beneath me, and there, by the mill wheel (as Will had said), was Little Anna Mark. At sight of her I could hardly get my steed quick enough into the stable and call on Robin Green to take the care of the beast off my hands. I wanted so greatly to run to my comrade, to tread my old pastures, and forget all in the clean downward thresh of the water from the mill wheel, the singing of the weir, and Little Anna's voice scolding me for minding her foolish message and coming at all.

Now if any one thinks this is going to turn out a love tale she is grievously mistaken. For, indeed, Anna and I were far above that kind of thing.

On the contrary, we did nothing but spar and taunt one another, and for a long time there was scarce a civil word spoken between us. But these I need not write down, though I can remember them well enough.

But the serious part I will write. And in the aftercome that proved grave enough for me.

It was not our custom to shake hands when we met, much less—but of that we had not as much as thought at that time. Not I at least.

So little Anna and I sat down on the broad wooden edge of the pool below the mill wheel, the same into which the man had fallen the night of the attack. Here we swung our legs and watched the minnows circling calmly in the cool backwash, till at a certain point they dived heels over head under the impetuous down rush of the mill stream, were tumbled deep in the brown turmoil of the pool, and after a time emerged beaten and breathless in the shallows once more. It seemed so good to be a fish and wear no clothes on such a day. For it had grown hot as I rode over the hills, and down in the sheltered valley there was not a breath of air stirring.

"How will you like it," I said, "when you come to Abercairn to live with my mother? There are no weirs to sing or pools to dabble your feet in there, excepting salt water ones among the dulse and the sandjumpers."

"I might like it well enough," she replied, very composedly, "only I am not coming to Abercairn to live with you or your mother either!"

I could not conceal my astonishment.

"But," I remonstrated, "I know it has been settled so. For I heard my mother persuade Umphray Spurway to it."

"Oh," she made answer, without looking at me, "so your mother persuaded Umphray to it against his will, did she?"

"Certainly, Little Anna," I made answer, "I heard it with my own ears."

"Through the keyhole, I suppose," she said scornfully. But as that was her manner, I paid no heed. (It was true all the same.)

"Well," she went on, "it will surprise you to hear that I am not coming to Abercairn. I do not propose to exchange a house where I am welcome for one where I am not. Besides, my father has come back to this country. And I am not going to Abercairn to be snapped off in some foreign ship to help Saul Mark at his dice tables or to mind his monkey in the sleeping booth."

Both these things came like a thunder clap on me.

Anna Mark would not come to us. Her father was back in Scotland.

And now, so curious is the heart of a boy—I had cared little or nothing hitherto about Anna coming to our house in the Vennel, save to consider how she would agree with my mother, and how late the pair of us would be allowed to play on the quay. But now, so soon as I knew that she would not come, I was in a mighty taking to make her promise—nay, even to take her back with me there and then upon the beast I had left in the stable.

"You would go to school in Abercairn," I urged, "and learn also those things which—which lasses ought to learn. For you know, after all, you are a lassie. You cannot change that!"

"Yes," she answered with great scorn, turning up her nose. "I am a lassie. And because I do not wear knee breeches I must forsooth sit all day stitching at a sampler—so fine—Great A, plain—Great B, plain—little B, flourish B—Anna Mark Her Sampler. Be a good girl and you will succeed in life and be a nuisance to all your loving friends." No, thank you, Philip Stansfield, I would rather a thousand times go help my father with his cartes and his monkey!"

Of course her father possessed no monkey. It was only a manner of speaking the girl had.

So we talked and talked, nor did we make any better of it. Anna would not come to be pressed in a mold like a jelly. She could not be fitted to Mistress Priscilla Allan's set of ladylike manners. The day might come when my mother would put her out of the mill house, but that day had not come.

At this last insinuation I fired up and asked her what she meant by speaking so of my mother, that my mother was a good woman, as she ought to know.

Which was true enough, but I had not learned then that the best of women are not always fair to one another—especially when the same number of years which will bring one of them to 19 will land the other at 40.

So Anna and I swung our legs and talked, while the sun mounted higher till we were almost out of the shade of the great beech which grew over the lade.

"Now come to single stick in the wool shed," she cried, suddenly starting up, "and I will make you all over blue marks to carry back to Abercairn. It will save Dominie Nicholas the trouble of birching you tomorrow."

I was about to consent when a pair of shadows fell across the pool. We looked up, and lo! there on the opposite bank stood her father, Saul Mark, and my own uncle John.

CHAPTER XIX.

Sir Harry Morgan's Treasure.

At sight of these two I started to my feet and made as if I would escape. But the two men stood looking at us with such kindly and smiling countenances that my suspicions were allayed, the more so that little Anna sat still where she was, pulling the tart herb called "soorocks" from the moist crevices and crunching the stalks between her small, white teeth.

"This, then, is his grandfarther's heir—a fine lad," said Saul Mark, after a while.

"And this your daughter?" inquired my uncle, turning to his companion like one who seeks confirmation, rather than like one who asks a question.

"How is it, Philip," he went on, "that we see you so seldom at the Great House, which in a manner belongs to you? That is not well done to your grandmother."

"I am at school, uncle," I said, not knowing well what else to say.

"So I see," said he, smiling at little Anna Mark. "It is a pleasant sort of tutelage. I myself have learned much at such an academy."

That was the way my uncle John talked ever, not speaking plain, but in long lawyer's words—and mostly with some other meaning than that which appeared on the surface.

"You were about to play singlestick," said Saul Mark. "I used to play myself. Will you have a bout with me, Anna?"

"Agreed," said his daughter, rising quickly, and leading the way about the mill house to the wool room. As he entered I saw Saul Mark glance around, as if to verify a description.

"Master Umphray is perchance not at home today?" he said.

"No," said Anna in answer, "but there are half a hundred weavers all busy with their looms."

And she opened a door into the weaving-room where were a crowd of men and the creaking clatter of many looms and shuttles. Then Anna went and found some singlesticks, and she and her father fell to. Saul Mark had been the finest player on Glasgow Green on the eve of St. John (which is their head night for these ploys in the west). But now he had grown a little stiff, and it was not long, whether by accident or intent, before Anna got within his guard and cracked his crown so that a thin thread of scarlet trickled down his brow. He flung down the stick smiling and mopping his head.

"First blood!" he said, "I did not think that the day would come when a girl could crack the pate of Saul Mark! Master John, do you try her."

But my uncle declined, saying that he was a man of peace, and that combats of wit were all that were allowed to gentlemen of the long robe. So Saul Mark bade me take the stick, which, when I had done, Anna and I played a very fast bout, as was our wont, the sallow man with the rings in his ears applauding every good and clever stroke. We did not spare each other, she and I, and when a halt was called we were both out of breath, but Anna manifestly the victor.

"Good schooling!" said Saul Mark, nodding his head.

"Scottish courtship!" echoed Mr. John Stansfield smiling, for which I did not thank him. And Anna cast the sticks on a shelf and turned haughtily away.

The two men did not stay long at the Mlln house after this, being as I think apprehensive lest Umphray Spurway would return. And so Anna and I were left to ourselves. We watched them going slowly and in deep converse across the fields towards the great house of New Milns.

Anna looked long at them under her hand.

"We are quaintly fitted in the matter of fathers, you and I, Philip," she said, with a strange look on her face. I thought she was going to add, "And mothers!" But she did not. Indeed, I know not whether she remembered her own mother or whether any had ever spoken to her of Janet Marks, the Carolina slave.

"Now, you will have a bite of dinner, and be going on your way," she said. "With so many loving friends in the neighborhood you cannot be too soon within the Vennel port of Abercairn. I did wrong to bring you here!"

But with one thing and another it was after 5 of the clock when I took my beast from Robin Green and cried a last good-by to my comrade. She stood by the white thorn tree at the gable end, and the westerly sun was rosy on her face. There was a light in her eyes which smiled upon me, though her mouth was grave. I did not offer even to take her hand, which was a regret to me afterwards.

So in this fashion I rode away from the door of the Mlln house, which I loved so well, and from Anna Mark, my dear companion and playmate of many years.

I had mastered the steeps of the hill and was making my way quickly through the perilous bypaths of the hills when night fell. I will not admit that I was frightened, but drew a long breath when at last, like a gray sheet hung midway the sky, unspotted and unwrinkled, the sea broke upon my vision through a gap in the hills.

After this the night fell sharply, and the dusk seemed almost to speed eastward like a swift-footed runner, as a purple cloud, edged with a rim of living gold, rose, towered and crenellated, shutting out the sunset glow.

I was passing a little darksome loaning which leads to a lonely grange house called the Hermitage, when I heard the sound of horses' feet behind me. I turned apprehensively in my saddle, or rather in Will Bowman's saddle. I could see a dusky shape turn into the main road behind me. The shape seemed familiar, and a spasm of fear took hold of me. I put my finger into my waistcoat pocket, where (a foolish boy's trick) I carried a pinch or two of powder loose, as another might carry snuff. Then I took out the pistol Anna Mark had pressed upon me, one that had been left behind on the night of the attack, silver-mounted and a gentlemanly weapon, though without crest or device. With the pinch of powder I primed and cocked it, and was just setting it in the holster again, when a voice said at my left hand: "So you are a soldier already. You travel armed, I see—a very excellent habit in these uncertain times!"

The speaker was Saul Mark, habited in a long cloak of black, and wearing a hat with a feather. He was mounted on the very gray horse my father used to ride in the old days before my grandfather's death.

I told Saul Mark how I had come by the weapon, and he was interested greatly to hear of the attack and all that concerned it. I told him also of little Anna's bravery, and how she had delivered me from the dead man come alive again.

"Ah, lad," he said, "you have in you the true stuff for adventure. I can see that. 'Tis a pity that you will be a rich man, and never know the sweets of travel, save in a coach and four, or see stranger places than the cities between here and London."

I told him that, on the contrary, I had

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a natural inclination for the sea (which, indeed, most boys have), and that I hoped to enter his majesty's navy and help to fight the French.

"That is good enough," he said, gravely, "but there is better!"

Then there at once was I all agog to know what could be better or more adventurous than fighting the French in the royal navy.

He leaned toward me a little as I gaped open-mouthed at him from the back of my jogging beast.

"Did you ever hear of Sir Harry Morgan?" he said.

"No," I answered, much taken down by my ignorance, "who might he be?"

"He was a great buccaneer," he answered in a hushed tone. "Harry Morgan took Panama and many fine cities, and was a terror to the Spaniards all his days."

"But there are no buccaneers now," I said, "and if there were, how am I to find them?"

"It is called privateering now," he said, "but it brings in the moidores and pieces of eight all the same."

I was eager to hear more, but he seemed all at once to wax mightily reticent. So we rode silent to the gate of the city. Then he seemed to take a resolution.

"I will tell him," he murmured loud enough for me to hear. "I care not what the captain says!"

He turned to me.

"Master Philip," he said, "if you are man to come with me tonight for half an hour, I will show you such a sight as no lad of your age in broad Scotland has seen. I have here in this town of Abercairn the treasure of Sir Henry Morgan, the buccaneer, the spoil of a score of plundered cities. It is waiting safe transport across the north water to Amsterdam, where the diamonds and precious stones are to be cut and reset. There are gold pieces of every tribe and denomination, arms and armor of all sorts, swords and daggers by the hundred, Indian dresses, bows and arrows, chain mail and leather fringed dresses made for great Peruvian Incas. Many of these are of little value," he added softly. "I know not but that the captain might permit me to give you one or two of them to take home to your mother."

"Who is the captain?" I said. "I cannot go unless I know where I am going."

"Oh," said my companion lightly, "take your horse to stable first. He will not be needed tonight, and then come with me. You will surely not be afraid to go to the house of the chief magistrate of this city. He it is who is our receiver and supercargo. Besides you can bring your pistol."

It seemed to me impossible that there could be the least danger in accompanying Saul Mark to the house of Provost Gregory Partan, shipowner and merchant of the town of Abercairn. And the thought of the suits of armor, the damascened swords, and above all the Indian bows and arrows tempted me beyond the power of words to express. I thought that if I could only show myself to Little Anna Mark in the costume of an Indian brave with feather plume, bow and arrow and tomahawk, there would be nothing more left to live for.

So I stabled my horse at the King's Arms without waiting to inquire whether Will Bowman had returned or not. Saul Mark awaited me at the door.

"Follow me," he said, "and remember, be silent. This is a secret we tell to but few. And there is a company of horse quartered in the town."

We went down the High street to the house of that douce man, Mr. Gregory Partan, shipmaster and merchant. My guide passed quickly to a side door under a low-browed arch, which opened at the gable end of the provost's house. He knocked twice.

After a moment the door was opened an inch and I heard the rattle of a chain.

"Who's there?" said a voice.

"A friend to see the treasure!" said Saul Mark.

"His name?"

"Master Philip Stansfield, the younger, whose mother lives in the Vennel!"

"A decent woman," said a voice; "let him come in and see the treasure."

I recognized the provost's voice. I had heard it often enough on the quay upon evening sunshine, I rode away over the hills well enough conceited with myself, which is no unusual habit of mind in 16 when it hath spent an hour or two in the company of an honest young lass.

Well, as I say, I left Anna standing under the flowering thorn which Umphray had fetched all the way from Yorkshire—why, no one exactly knew. It may be that one like it grew in his mother's garden on the edge of the wold, or, perhaps, once on a time he, too, had left a young maiden standing under the white May and smiling even as Anna had now smiled upon me.

Anna Mark stood a while looking after me under her hand, and I, for very pride of my horsemanship and the straightness of my back, did not turn round in the saddle. Then, since William Bowman was in Abercairn and Umphray himself not yet home, she went off to the ordering of domestic matters in the Mlln house, and to see that the foreman weavers shut and barred all the doors properly, for in this matter Umphray Spurway trusted her wholly, as, indeed, well he might.

And while she was within doors the sun began to sink, and the coolness of evening to come up out of the ground. By and by Anna went out to the hillside pastures at the back to find Joey Forgan, the herd boy of the Mlln, who ought to have had the cows home by that time. She was promising to herself what she would certainly do to Joey when she caught him. Walking with the swing I knew so well, and whistling like a lintie, she sped swift and light over the bent. But all suddenly she saw that which made her stop stock still one moment and the next drop out of sight into a copse of tall broom.

The heather grows low down on the hills above Umphray's, those same purple hills I had ridden into half an hour before. The gorse and whin-bloom reach up the burn sides to meet it, and all about there is scattered a bewilderment of rocky knolls and great gray stones as big as cothouses. Anna Mark was turning the corner of one of these huge boulders when a couple of score of yards beneath her she saw two men speaking together like folk who have secrets to hide. One, the smaller and more thickly set, was Saul Mark, her own father. The other was a much taller, more commanding man, in a laced coat, which, though they stood in the shadow, glittered in the bright reflection from the western sky. It was of pale blue cloth, and the braiding was of no pattern which bespoke a soldier of the king. Saul Mark was standing with his hat off before the man in the blue coat, and listening with an air of much respect. The latter appeared to be giving certain orders, for, as he finished speaking, Anna saw her father salute, and presently mount the horse whose bridle-rein had been passed through his arm. He rode off as hard as he could go in the direction of the Tinkler's Slap, the nearest pass through the hills to the town of Abercairn.

The tall, swarthy man stood awhile looking after him, and then, turning abruptly on his heel, he strode past the broom-bush in which Anna was hidden so closely that she could feel the ground shake with his heavy tread as he went.

Then it came into her head that Saul Mark, her father, had been ordered to ride after me for some purpose of immediate treachery. She remembered the look on her father's face as he had watched us across the little linn of Kirkconnel that very afternoon, and do what she would she could not get the sense of impending danger out of her mind.

Anna looked about for Joey and the New Mlln kye. She could see the last of them passing in through the great gate and a couple of weavers standing on either side to make all fast so soon as they were safe. Then there came to the girl one of those quick impulses which, far more than ordered and reasonable resolves, rule and order woman's conduct.

Anna resolved to follow her father through the hill-gap, to find out for what purpose he had ridden off so hotly upon my trail, and to find out who the tall man might be whose orders he had taken like a servitor standing in the presence of his master. All which indeed she achieved before the night was out, though not in the fashion she anticipated.

Now, with Anna to think was simultaneously to act, which circumstance made her so dangerous at fencing and the singlestick play. So it chanced that as Saul Mark rode northward by the Tinkler's Slap to intercept me, he had a long, limber slip of a girl tracking like a sleuth hound hard upon his trail. For the first part of her pursuit it was not hard to keep her father in sight. He did not ride well, but rather with the seaman's roll and lack of both comfort and elegance in the saddle. Besides, the pass was difficult and enough even for a good horseman and in the daytime. What it was to Saul Mark in the gray deeps of the gloaming, only Saul himself knew, and so far he has kept his counsel. But to Anna all this was child's play. She had wandered on the hills with Muckle Saunders Macmillan, till she could run as lightfoot over the heather and morass as one of his scouring collies. The moorland night was to her as the day, being, as I often cast up to her, eyed like a cat.

And so while Saul Mark was every moment gripping and slackening his beast's rein, and cursing under his breath each time it stumbled, Anna was watching every movement with eyes which could distinguish the twinkle of the wide silver earrings in his ears every time his beast plunged over a mossy boulder or wandered aside from the fairway of that perilous and breakneck path.

When at last Saul debouched upon me at the meeting of the hill roads on the brae face overlooking the twinkling lights of Abercairn, Anna was not 100 yards in our rear. Yet such was the resolution of her heart that she did not betray herself either then or afterwards. Such a lass as little Anna Mark there was not in broad Scotland—no, nor ever will be. That heart of hers beat as steady and true between the instant jaws of danger as when she sat in Moreham kirk listening to the minister's sermon. And always, come stress or easement, the merry eyes of laughter or the grinning sockets of death himself, her brain abode under her broad white brow as cool and unruffled as beneath some overhanging rock in the forest you may find in summer heats the caller water of some crystal well.

So it chanced that while Saul the father played me for one silly gull, gorging me with the bait of lies, which I swallowed greedy-tooth, hook and all, his daughter Anna played him for another, and from a safe distance kept us both under observation.

And had she been left to herself, there is little doubt that she would have prevented all the evils which followed. But as ill chance would have it, not a score of yards from the entrance of the town, who should come across her but Will Bowman. He had been walking with his arm about a girl's waist, more for something to do than for any pleasure there might be in courting the not too impervious damsels of the town of Abercairn. But at the sight of little Anna with kilted coats linking it through the busy streets, Will dropped his companion's arm incontinent and took after her as hard as he could go. He thought it was likely that Anna had come over the hills with me to look for Umphray Spurway, and he knew that it would not make any peace that she should seek him where he was to be found at that moment—that is, to be plain, in the little house by the Vennel corner, where he sat sipping his glass and devouring my mother with his eyes.

So on the slanted shoulder of the girl as she went up the lighted street of Abercairn at a harvester's trot, fell the hand of Will Bowman.

"Anna," he said breathlessly, "what in the world of sin are you doing so far from home? You that should be in your warm bed behind barred doors in the house of New Milns?"

She tried to escape from his restraint but Will's hand was overstrong. She never could turn him about her little finger as she did me—aye, and for the matter of that, Umphray Spurway also.

"Let me go—let me go, Will Bowman!" she gasped. "Do not hinder me. It is a matter of life and death. I am following Philip and my father."

"Your father?" repeated Will after her, speaking like a man in a maze.

"Yes; let me go! Or, better still, come with me. They passed up this street a moment ago, and we will lose them if we are not quick!"

But it was not in Will Bowman's power on this occasion to be quick. Beauty scorned was upon him. The lady whose arm he had so unceremoniously dropped was a certain Tib Rorrison, who earned her daily bread in the fish trade of Abercairn. Now, why fish dealing should produce in women a certain rough readiness of wit and raspiness of tongue is not perfectly clear. But the fact could not be doubted while Tib was explaining to Will and little Anna what she thought of them.

"Ye menseless, landward-bred hound!" she cried, shaking her red fist, solid as a quarter of beef, a bare inch under Will's nose, "ken ye so little o' Isobel Rorrison that ye wad dare to mistryst her, to tak' up wi' a silly partan o' a bairn like this. And you, Mistress Babbyclouts, that thinks wi' thae winkin' een o' yours to tak' Tib Rorrison's lad frae her on the high street o' Abercairn—for a bodle I wad tear the bonny face o' ye till it is a' rig-an' furr like a new-plowed field. Aye, an' Tib wad do it, too—were it not that skelpin' wad fit ye better, ye pennyworth o' whitey-broon thread tied in a wisp!

"Na, an' I'll no stand oot o' your road, Will Crack-tryst! And I'll no haud my impident tongue. What care I if a' the toon kens? What business had ye to speer me oot to walk to Lucky Bodden's booth wi' ye, and partake o' spiced gingerbread and fardin' saveloys, forbye the best o' tinpenny ale? Aye, lasses, that did he, the deceivin' thief, an' he shalna leave thae plain-stanes he is standin' on till he has treated no only me, Tib Rorrison, but every ither honest lad and lass within hearin' o' the sound o' my voice!"

"That's right, Tib! Gie him his kail through the reek!" chorused the crowd; "gar him scunner. Tear the e'en oot o' that wee besome that garred him lichtly you!"

"Faith wad I, gin it were me, the randy that she is!"

"Aye, an' me. A herd lass, nocht better!"

"If Tib has only spunk in her ava', she'll never stand the like o' that."

Such were the interruptions, all obviously provocative, which reached the ear of the already militant lady. Mistress Isobel Rorrison, as she squared her arms and strode up so close to Anna Mark that even in the dusky flare of the torches from the booths Anna could see the red of her weather-beaten complexion, netted and marly like the reticulations on a bladder. A fire was beginning to burn in Anna's eye, and her hand stole down toward the dirk she carried in her satchel pocket. But Will noted the signs of coming trouble, and, putting his hand into his pocket, he drew out half a dozen silver coins and held them out to Tib.

"There," he said; "I will stand treat. This is my master's daughter, and she is seeking him ower late to be left on the street of Abercairn by herse'. Tak' the siller, Tib, and bear nae malice. And the next time I come to Abercairn I swear ye shall hae Lucky Bodden's candy-stall, stool and a', gin ye like."

Tib, though considerably mollified, would not at once give in, being in the presence of so many witnesses.

"Gie your dirty siller to wha ye like, Will Bowman," she cried, changing her ground; "when Tib Rorrison sets tryst wi' a lad' it's neither for the sake o' siller nor yet tipeany ale, I wad hae ye ken!"

Will, anxious to be out of the crowd, looked around for some one he knew. He espied the hostler from the King's Arms.

"Hey, Jock Pettigrew, ye are no sae proud as Tib. Here's five silver shillings, sterling money. Gang doon to Lucky's and treat every lad and lass that will follow ye, gein' Tib first choice o' the saveloys. Guid nicht, Tib! Eat your fill and dinna bear malice!"

And so, under cover of the cheering and back-clapping, Will and Anna escaped down the high street of Abercairn.

(To be continued.)

Gigantic Omelet.

A company of the Third African French battalion stationed at Ker (Tunis) recently enjoyed the most gigantic omelet ever made. At the request of the farmers in the neighborhood, the soldiers were sent on an expedition to annihilate the swarms of sparrows which were playing havoc with the crops. Their work finished, they brought back as spoils of war 5000 eggs, which the regimental cook mixed with many pounds of other ingredients and made into an omelet nearly seven feet in circumference.

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