CHAPTER XVII.
THE SHERIFF

It was late in the afternoon when the Sheriff rode into Dalry. The police sergeant spoke to him, and he kindly came into the station. There the sergeant put the matter before him. He was an elderly man, hearty and genial and with a pleasant manner which made every man his friend. When he heard the details of the case, regarding which the policeman asked his advice, he smiled and took snuff and said pleasantly to the officer:

"I don't think ye need be uneasy in your mind. After all 'tis only a matter of a fine; and as the chauffeur is ready to pay it, whatever it may be; and is actually in your custody having as you say more than sufficient money upon him to pay the maximum penalty hereto inflicted for furious driving in this shire, I think you will not get much blame for allowing the lady to go away in the car to a 'foreign country,' as you call it. I suppose sir" turning to Athlyne "you can get good bail if required?"

"I think so" said Athlyne smiling. "I suppose a Deputy Lieutenant of Ross Shire is good enough;" whereupon he introduced himself to the Sheriff. They chatted together a few minutes and then, as he went to his horse which a policeman was holding at the door, he said to the sergeant:

"I must not, as Sheriff, be bail myself. But if any bail is required I undertake to get it; so I think you needn't detain his lordship any longer. You'd better serve the summons on him for the next Session and then everything will be in order."

Athlyne walked down the village with him, he leading his horse. When he knew that Athlyne was going to walk to Castle Douglas so as to be ready to catch his train to the south he said:

"To-morrow is a busy day there and you may find it hard to get rooms at the Douglas, especially as the fog will detain many travellers. Now I had my rooms reserved at the Walter Scott, kept by an old servant of mine, where I always stay. An hour gone I wired countermanding them as I am going to stay the night with Mulgrave of Ennisfour where I am dining; so perhaps you had better wire over and secure them. I shall be there myself in the morning as I have work in Castle Douglas, but that need not interfere with you. If you go early you may be off before I get there."

"I do not want to go South very early; so I hope you will breakfast with me if I am still there." The genial old Sheriff shook his head:

“No, no. You must breakfast with me. I am in my own bailiwick and you must let me be your host.”

“All right!” said Athlyne heartily. The old man who had been looking at him kindly all the time now said:

“Tell me now—and you won’t think me rude or inquisitive; but you’re a young man and I’m an old one, and moreover sheriff—can I do anything for you? The Sergeant told me you were in a state of desperate anxiety to get away—or at any rate to let the lady get off; and I couldn’t help noticing myself that you are still anxious. The policeman said she was young, and much upset about it all. Can I serve you in any way? If I can, it will I assure you be a pleasure to me.” He was so frank and kind and hearty that Athlyne’s heart warmed to him. Moreover he was upset himself, poor fellow; and though he was a man and a strong one, was more than glad to unburden his heart to some one who would be a sympathetic listener:

“The fact is, sir, that the young lady who was with me came for a drive from Ambleside and we came on here on the spur of the moment. Her father had gone to London and returns this evening; and as no one knew that I—that she had gone out motoring he will be anxious about her. Naturally neither she nor I wish to make him angry. You will understand when I tell you that she and I are engaged to be married. He does not know this—though” here he remembered the letter he had posted at Ambleside “he will doubtless know soon. Unhappily he had some mistaken idea about me. A small matter which no one here would give a second thought to: but he is a Kentuckian and they take some things very much to heart. This was nothing wrong—not in any way; but all the same his taking further offence at me, as he would do if he heard from someone else that she had been motoring with me without his sanction, might militate against her happiness—and mine. So you can imagine Mr. Sheriff, how grateful I am to you for your kindness.” The sheriff paused before replying. He had been thinking—putting two and two together: “They are engaged—but her father doesn’t know it. Then the engagement was made only to-day. No wonder they were upset and anxious. No wonder he drove fast. … Ah, Youth! Youth!” …

“I understand, my lord. Well, you did quite right to get the lady away; though it was a hazardous thing for her to start off alone in the mist.”

“It hadn’t come on then, sir. Had it been so I should never have let her go alone—no matter what the consequences might be! But I hope she’s out of it and close to home by this time.”

“Aye that’s so. Still she was wise to go. It avoids all possibility of scandal. Poor bairn! I’m hoping she got off South before the fog came on too thick. It’s drifting up from the Firth so that when once she would have crossed the Border most like it would have been clear enow. Anyhow under the circumstances you are right to stay here. Then there can be no talk whatever. And her father will have had time to cool down by the time ye meet.

“We’re parting here, my Lord. Good-bye and let me wish ye both every form of human happiness. Perhaps by morn you will have had some news; and I’m hoping ye’ll be able to tell me of her safe arrival.”

At the cross roads the men parted. The Sheriff rode on his way to Ennisfour, and Athlyne went back to Dalry. He ordered his dinner, and then went out to send a telegram at the little post office. His telegram ran:

To Walter Scott Hotel Castle Douglas

Keep rooms given up by Sheriff for to-night.

Athlyne.

He had written the telegram through without a pause. The signature was added unhesitatingly, though not merely instinctively. He had done with falsity; henceforth he would use his own name, and that only. He felt freer than he had done for many a day.

He ate his dinner quietly; he was astonished at himself that he could take matters so calmly. It was really that he now realised that he had done all he could. There was nothing left but to wait. In the earlier part of that waiting he was disturbed and anxious. Difficulties and dangers and all possible matters of concern obtruded themselves upon his thought in endless succession. But as time wore on the natural optimism of his character began to govern his thinking. Reason still worked freely enough, but she took her orders from the optimistic side and brought up arrays of comforting facts and deductions.

It was with renewed heart and with a hopeful spirit that he set out on his road to Castle Douglas. He had deliberately chosen to walk instead of taking a carriage or riding. He did not want to arrive early in the evening, and he calculated that the sixteen miles would take him somewhere about four hours to walk. The exercise would, whilst it killed the time which he had to get through, give him if not ease of mind at least some form of mental distraction. Such, he felt, must be his present anodyne—his guarantee of sanity. As he had no luggage of any kind he felt perfectly free; the only addition to his equipment was a handful of cigars to last him during the long walk.

He had left Dalry some miles behind him when he began to notice the thickening of the mist. After a while when this became only too apparent he began to hesitate as to whether it would not be wiser to return. By this time he realised that it was no mere passing cloud of vapour which was driving up from the south, but a sea fog led inward through the narrowing Firth; he could smell the iodine of the sea in his nostrils. But he decided to go on his way. He remembered fairly well the road which he had traversed earlier in the day. Though a rough road and somewhat serpentine as it followed the windings of the Ken and the Dee, it was so far easy to follow that there were no bifurcations and few cross-roads. And so with resolute heart—for there was something to overcome here—and difficulty meant to him distraction from pain—he pushed on into the growing obscurity of the fog.

On the high ground above Shirmers he felt the wind driving more keenly in his face; but he did not pause. He trudged on hopefully; every step he took was bringing him closer to England—and to Joy. Now it was that he felt the value of the stout walking cudgel that he had purchased from a passing drover. For in the fog he was like a blind man; sight needed the friendly aid of touch.

But it was dreadfully slow work, and at the end of a few hours he was wearied out with the overwhelming sense of impotence and the ceaseless struggling with the tiniest details of hampered movement. Being on foot and of slow progress he had one advantage over travelling on horseback or in a vehicle: he was able to take advantage of every chance opportunity of enlightenment. From passing pedestrians and at wayside cottages he gathered directions for his guidance. It was midnight—the town clock was striking—when he entered Castle Douglas and began to inquire his way to the Walter Scott hotel.

After repeated knocking the door was opened by the Boots—a heavy, thick-headed, sleepy, tousled man, surly and grudging of speech. Athlyne pushed past him into the hall way and said:

“I wired here in the afternoon to have kept for me the Sheriff’s rooms. Did my telegram arrive.”

“Aye. It kem a’recht. But that was all that kem. Ye was expectit, an’ the missis kep the rooms for ye till late; but when ye didna come she gied ye up an’ let anither pairty that was lost i’ the fog hae the bedroom. All that’s left is the parlour, an that we can hae an ye will. Forbye that ye’ll hae to sleep on the sofy. A’m thinkin’ it’s weel it’s o’er long than ordinair’, for ye’re no a ween yersel. Bide wheer y’ are, an’ A’ll fetch ye a rug or two an’ a cushion. Ye maun put up wi’ them the nicht for ye’ll git nane ither here.” He left him standing in the dark; and shuffled away down a dim stairway, to the basement.

In a few minutes he re-appeared with a bundle of rugs and pillows under his arm; in his hand was a bottle of whiskey, with the drawn cork partly re-inserted. With the deftness of an accomplished servitor he carried in his other hand, together with the candle, a pitcher of water and a tumbler. As he went up the staircase he said in a whisper:

“Man, walk saft as ye gang; an’ dinna cough nor sneeze or mak’ a soond in the room or ye’ll maybe waken th’ ither body. Joost gang like a man at a carryin’. An’ mind ye dinna snore! Lie ye like a bairn! What time shall A ca’ ye?”

“I want to catch the morning train for the south.”

“That’ll be a’recht. A’ll ca’ ye braw an’ airly!”

“Good night!” said Athlyne as he softly closed the door.

He spread one rug on the sofa, which supplemented by a chair, was of sufficient length; put the other ready to cover himself, and fixed the cushions. Having stripped to his flannels he blew out the candle, and, without making a sound, turned in. He was wearied in mind and nerve and body, and the ease of lying down acted like a powerful narcotic. Within a minute he was sound asleep.

CHAPTER XVIII.
PURSUIT

Colonel Ogilvie found his wife in excellent health and spirits. The cure had been effective, and the prospect of meeting Joy so filled her with delight that her youth seemed to be renewed. He could see, when the morning light was admitted to their bedroom, that her eyes were bright and her cheeks rosy; and all her movements were alert and springy. Judy too, when they went to breakfast, looked well and was in good spirits; but there was something about her which he could not understand. It was not that she was quick of intellect and speech, for such had been always her habit; it was not that she was eager, for she was not always so; it was not that she was exuberantly fond of Joy—she had never been anything else. But there seemed now to be some sort of elusive background to all her thoughts. He began to wonder in a vague way if it were possible that she had fallen in love. She asked, after her usual manner, a host of questions about Joy and about the visit to the Lakes; where they had been and who they had seen; and of all the little interests and happenings during the time of separation. Colonel Ogilvie felt a little wearied of it all. He had already covered the ground with the girl’s mother, for arriving in the grey of the dawn, he had gone straight to his wife’s room where he had rested till breakfast time. There he had told her all that he could remember. With, however, the patient courtesy which had not as yet in his

life failed him with women he went over all the ground again with Judy. He could not but be struck with Judy's questioning on one subject: whether they had met at Ambleside any special acquaintance. He concluded that she meant Mr. Hardy, and asked her if such were the case. She blushed so brightly when she admitted it that he conceived the idea that the peccant Englishman was the object of her affection. Then, as she dropped that subject of questioning, he, in order to draw her out, went on:

"But my dear Judy it was not possible that we could have seen him. He has not seemed particularly anxious to meet us; and even if he was anxious he could not have done it as he did not know where we were."

"Oh, yes he did!" The Colonel was surprised; the tone of her words carried conviction of truthfulness. He answered quickly:

"He did! How on earth do you know that?" Judy in her emotional interest answered without thinking.

"Because I told him so!"

"Oh, you saw him then?" Again she answered without thought:

"No, but I wrote to him."

"How do you know that he got your letter?"

"Because he answered it!" She would have given all she possessed to have been silent or to have answered more discreetly when she saw her brother-in-law's face wrinkle into a hard smile, and noted the cruel keenness of his eyes and the cynical smile on his mouth. She answered sharply; and, as is usual, began the instant after, to pay the penalty for such sharpness. His voice seemed to rasp her very soul as he said:

"I am glad to hear that the gentleman has consideration for some one—even a lady—who writes to him. But to my mind such but emphasises his rudeness—if for the moment I may call it so—of his conduct to others. As for myself when I meet the gentleman—should I ever have the good fortune to do so—I shall require him to answer for this insult—amongst others!"

"Insult?" murmured Judy in a panic of apprehension.

"Yes, my dear Judith. There is no stronger word; had there been I should have used it. When the same man who does *not* answer my letters, or write even to accept or decline my proffered hospitality carries on at the same time a clandestine correspondence with ladies of my family he shall have to answer to me for it. By God

he shall!" Judy thought silence wiser than any form of words, and remained mute. Colonel Ogilvie went on in the same cold, rasping voice:

"May I ask you, Miss Hayes,"—"Miss Hayes, my God!" thought poor Judy trembling. He went on: "if my daughter has had any meeting or correspondence with him?"

"No! No! No!" cried Judy. "I can answer for that."

"Indeed! May I ask how you can speak with certainty on such a subject. I thought you were in Italy and that my daughter had been with me." In despair she spoke impulsively:

"I don't *know*, Lucius. How could I—I only think so."

"Exactly! Then you are but giving your opinion! For that my dear Judith I am much obliged; but it has been for so long my habit to judge for myself in matters of those mutual relations between men which we call 'honour' that I have somehow come to trust my own opinion in preference to that of any one else—even you my dear Judith—and to act upon it." Then, seeing the red flush of anger and humiliation in her cheeks whilst the tears seemed to leap into her eyes, he felt that he had gone too far and added:

"I trust that you will forgive me, my dear sister, if I have caused you unnecessary pain. Unhappily pain must follow such dereliction of duty as has been shown by that young man, and by you too; but believe me I would spare you if I could. But I can promise—and do so now—that I shall not again forget myself and speak bitterly, out of the bitterness of my heart as I have done. I pray your forgiveness, and trust that it may be extended to me." The cynical words and tone of his apology, however it may have been meant, only added fuel to her anger. Words were inadequate, so she sought refuge in flight. As she went out of the door she heard Colonel Ogilvie say as if to himself:

"I may not know how to speak to women; but thank God, I do know how to deal with that damned fellow!"

Judy threw herself on her bed in a storm of futile passion. She could not but feel that she had been brutally treated; but she was powerless to either resent or explain. But well she knew that she had helped to leave matters worse for poor Joy than they had been. All the anger that Colonel Ogilvie had been repressing had now blazed out. He had expressed himself, and she had never known such expression of his to fail in tragic consequences. He would now never forgive Mr. Hardy for his double sins of omissions and commission. She was sorry for the young man's sake; but was in anguish for the sake of the poor girl who had, she felt and knew, set her heart upon

him. Joy's romance in which her heart—her whole being and her future happiness—had been embarked was practically over, though she did not know it as yet. All the life-long brightness that even her father had ever hoped for her was gone. Henceforth she would be only a poor derelict, like Judy herself, wrecked on a lee shore! Judy had always pitied herself, but she had never realized the cause of that pity as she did now, seen as it was through the eyes of loving sympathy.

"I pitied my own heart,

As if I held it in my hand,

Somewhat coldly,—with a sense

Of fulfilled benevolence,

And a 'Poor thing' negligence."

Colonel Ogilvie went out in a very militant humour to interview the motor-agent. He felt angry with himself for having lost his temper—and to a lady; and his anger had to be visited on some one. In any case he considered that the motor people had treated him scurvily and should suffer accordingly. In reality he was in a reaction from great happiness. He was an affectionate husband who had been deeply concerned at his wife's long illness, and lonely and distraught in her long absence. Only that morning he had met her again and had found her quite restored to health and as though she had regained her youth. He had shared in her pleasure at the good account he had to give of Joy. It was, after all, perhaps natural to a man of his peculiar temperament to visit heavily his displeasure on the man who had, to his mind, ill-used him, and on all concerned with him in the doing. Mr. Hardy it was who had jarred the wheels of his chariot of pleasure; and Mr. Hardy it was who must ultimately answer to him for so doing.

The expression of his opinions as to the moral and commercial worth of the motor-agent and of the manufacturer with whom he dealt seemed to relieve his feelings to some degree; he returned to Brown's in a much milder frame of mind than that in which he had gone out. He was kept pretty busy till the time of departure, but in his secret heart—made up to action during the time of his work—he determined to try to make amends to Judy for the pain he had given her. He rejoiced now that his wife had not been present at that scene which it already pained him to look back upon.

He was somewhat incensed that as he could not leave by his intended train he would have to postpone the journey by several hours. He could not now arrive at Ambleside till nearly midnight.

In the train he took the first opportunity of making the *amende* to Judy. Mrs. Ogilvie had fallen asleep—she had been awake since very early in the morning, so the Colonel said quietly to his sister-in-law:

"Judy I want you to forgive me, if you can." She thrilled with pleasure as he spoke her name in the familiar form. It seemed some sort of presage of a change for the better, a sort of lifting of the ban which had all day lain so heavy on her. As he went on her hopes grew; there were possibilities that, after all, Joy was not yet finally doomed to unhappiness. At all times Colonel Ogilvie was impressive in his manner; the old-fashioned courtesy on which he had long ago founded himself was permeated with conscious self-esteem. Now when the real earnestness of the moment was grafted upon this pronounced manner he seemed to the last degree dignified—almost pompous:

"I cannot tell you how sorry I am that I caused you pain this morning, or how ashamed I am for having so lost my temper before you. For more than twenty years I have honestly tried, my dear, to make you happy." Here she interrupted him: "And you succeeded Lucius!" He rose and bowed gravely:

"Thank you, my dear. I am grateful to you for that kindly expression. It does much, I assure you, to mitigate the poignancy of my present concern. It was too bad of me to let my bitterness so wound you. It shall not occur again. Moreover I feel that I owe you something; and I promise you that if I should be so—so overcome again by anger I shall try to obey you to the best of my power. You shall tell me what you wish me to do; and if I can I shall try to do it." Here a look of caution, rare to him, overspread his face: "I won't promise to give up a purpose of my life or brook any interference with the course of honour—that I can promise to no one, not even to you my dear. But if I can grant any consideration—or—or favour I shall certainly try to do so!"

Judy was not so well satisfied with the end of the promise as with the beginning. But it was hopeful of better things for the future; so she meekly and gratefully accepted it *en bloc*.

When they arrived at Ambleside it was dark and the lamps of the station lent but a dim light. It became evident to Mrs. Ogilvie and Judy that Colonel Ogilvie was disappointed at not finding Joy awaiting them on the platform. He had, during the journey, explained to them with some elaboration that they were not to expect her as he had said there was no need of her coming; but, all the same, he had himself expected her. As the train drew up he had leaned out of the window looking carefully along the whole range of the platform. When, however, he ascertained that she was not there, he turned his attention to Judy whom he observed prolonging the search. His mind at once went

back to his original concern that there was something between her and Mr. Hardy. She heard him say to himself fiercely under his breath:

“That damned fellow again!” She did not of course understand that it was with reference to herself, and took it that it presaged ill to Joy. She knew from Colonel Ogilvie’s expression and bearing that the man he had now grown to hate was in his mind, and with a heavy heart she took her place in the waiting landau.

When the carriage arrived at the hotel Colonel Ogilvie jumped out and ran up the steps. This was so unlike his usual courtesy that it not only pained the two ladies but made them anxious. When Colonel Ogilvie forgot his habitual deference to women something serious indeed must have been in his mind! When they followed, which they did as quickly as they could, they found him in the hall reading a telegram. A railway envelope lay on the table, and beside it a little pile of letters. When he had finished reading the first telegram he opened the second and read it also. All the time his face was set in a grim frown, the only relief from which was the wrinkling of his forehead which betrayed an added anxiety. He handed the two transcripts to his wife, saying as he did so:

“I have put them in order; one is a few hours earlier than the other!” Mrs. Ogilvie read in silence and handed the forms to Judy, the Colonel remaining grimly silent. Mrs. Ogilvie said nothing. When Judy had turned over the last and looked at the back of it in that helpless manner which betrays inadequate knowledge, Colonel Ogilvie said:

“Well?”

“I trust the poor child is not in any danger!” said the mother.

“How thoughtful of her to have sent twice. She knew you would be so anxious about her!” said the aunt, wishing to propitiate the angry father. For fully a minute no more was said. Then the Colonel spoke:

“She went motoring. In whose car? I have not yet got my own!” As he was speaking the hotel proprietor came into the hall to pay his respects, as he usually did with incoming guests. He heard the last remark and said:

“Pardon me, Colonel Ogilvie. But your car has arrived. The chauffeur who had charge of it and came in the same train with it to Kirkby Stephen drove it here some time ago!” Colonel Ogilvie bowed a slight acknowledgment and turning to Judy said:

“Then it could not be in that car she went. If not, whose car was it? Whom did she go with? We know no one here who owns a car; and we did not make any new acquaintances during our stay. Indeed none even of our old acquaintances did us the

honour of calling. But perhaps my dear Judy," he spoke with manifest and comforting self-restraint—"you can enlighten us. Do you know if your friend Mr. Hardy whom you informed of our being here has a motor car?" Judy feared to precipitate disaster, and not knowing what to say answered feebly with a query:

"Why Colonel?" The storm cloud of the father's wrath instantly broke:

"Why, madam 'why'!" he almost roared whilst the discreet proprietor withdrew closing the inner door of the hall behind him—the luggage was being taken in by the basement door:

"I'll tell you why if you wish—though perhaps you know it already. Because I want to know under what circumstances my daughter has gone out motoring with some stranger—though indeed it may be that he is not quite a stranger—the moment my back was turned. Let me tell you that it is not usual for unmarried young ladies to go out motoring into far away places with men, unchaperoned. My honour—*my* honour through my daughter—is here concerned. And it is like that damned fellow to take her away in such an underhand manner. You need say nothing of him. It's no use trying to palliate his conduct. True enough I don't know for certain that it is he, or that she is alone with any man; but I have a conviction that it is so; and I tell you I shall lose no time in putting my convictions to the test. I mean to take no chances with regard to that damned fellow. I don't trust him! He has already affronted me, and has been tampering with the women of my family. I have borne even that with what temper I could because I was under obligation to him. But if, as it would seem, he has run away with my daughter, I shall brook his insolence no longer. He shall render me a full account of his doings with me and mine!" He crammed his letters into his pocket and strode upstairs. There he rang the bell in such a violent manner that the proprietor himself attended to it. Colonel Ogilvie asked him to have the chauffeur sent up to him, and requested the proprietor to come also himself as he wished to ask him some questions on local matters. He had by now his temper in hand, and was all the more dangerous because cold. In a few minutes the proprietor brought in the chauffeur, a stolid, hard-featured, silent man; manifestly one to obey orders and to stand any amount of fatigue. When Colonel Ogilvie had looked at his credentials and asked him some questions, all of which he did with perfect self-control and courtesy, he turned to the proprietor and asked:

"Can you tell me whereabout is a place called Castle Douglas?"

"In Scotland, Colonel. In Galloway—the part of Scotland just beyond the Firth of Solway. It is I think in Kirkcudbrightshire."

“How far from here?”

“Something over a hundred miles I should say.” The father started:

“Good God!” Judy’s heart sank at the exclamation and the tone; his voice was laden with horror and despair. The new chauffeur’s mouth opened. He spoke as if every word was grudgingly shot out:

“It is exactly ninety-one and a half miles.” Colonel Ogilvie turned to him quickly:

“How do you know so accurately; have you driven it?”

“Never sir!”

“Then how do you know?”

“In the train coming down I spent my time looking over the maps and the distance as given in the books of the Motorists’ Touring Club. I noted that.”

“Had you any reason for examining that particular route?” asked the Colonel suspiciously. He was obsessed by an idea that the “damned fellow” was corrupting everybody so as to work against him, Colonel Ogilvie.

“None special; I was only trying to do my business well. I thought it likely that you might want me to stay with you a short time until you and your permanent chauffeur should become acquainted with the mechanism of your new car. You see, I was told you were an American, and the American makes differ somewhat from our own. And as I am myself looking out for a permanent situation where I should be well paid, made comfortable, and treated with whatever consideration is due to a first-rate *mechanicien* and driver I thought that if I showed zeal in your temporary service you might wish to retain me permanently. In a certain sense I took, I may say, special note of at least part of that particular route.”

“Why?” Colonel Ogilvie’s suspicions came up afresh at the admission.

“Simply because I took it that you might want to drive into Scotland, and Galloway is perhaps the most promising region for motoring on this side of that country. All the motor roads from this side of England run through Carlisle. Then you cross the Border close to Gretna Green. …”

“To where?” The Colonel’s voice was full of passion. The chauffeur went on calmly and explicitly:

“Gretna Green. That is where run-away marriages used to be made. That place was usually chosen because it was the first across the Border where Scotch law ruled. The

simplifying of our marriage laws and the growth of sanity amongst parents of marriageable daughters generally has done away with the necessity of elopement. Now we go by there without stopping, as Galloway is the modern objective. Indeed in going there you do not go into Gretna at all; you pass it by on the right when you have crossed the bridge over the Sark and are making for Annan. And as to my knowledge of mileages that is a part of my trade. It is my business to arrange for the amount of petrol necessary for the run I am ordered to make. I don't think that you need disturb yourself about that one small item of my knowledge. It may set you more at ease if I tell you that it is one hundred and thirty-six and a half miles to Glasgow; a hundred and one to Abbotsford; seventy-five and a half to Dumfries; a hundred and thirty-five and a half to Edinburgh; two hundred and seventy-four and a half to Aberdeen; one hundred and fifty-eight and three quarters to. ..."

"Stop! stop!" cried Colonel Ogilvie. "I am obliged to you for your zeal in my service; and I think I can promise you that if in every way you suit, you may look on the permanent post as your own. I shall want you to begin your duties this very night. But this is a special job; and with special reward, for it is difficult and arduous."

"I am willing sir, whatever it may be."

"That is well said. You are the sort of man I want."

"My orders sir?"

"I want you to take me to Castle Douglas to-night—now—as soon as you can get ready. I wish to get there as soon as I can. You will want to have everything right, for we must have no break-down if we can help it. And you must have good lamps."

"'Twill be all right, sir. We shan't, I expect, break down. But if we do—the motor is a new one and I did not make it—*I* shall put it right. I am a first-rate *mechanicien* and an accomplished driver. ..."

"All right; but don't talk. Get the car ready, and we shall start at once."

"We can start at once, so far as the car and I are concerned. But we lack something as yet. We must have a pilot."

"A pilot! I thought you knew the way."

"On paper, yes; and I doubt not I could get there all right—in time. But you want to go quick; and we would lose time finding out the way. Remember we are going in the dark." Then turning to the proprietor he said:

"Perhaps you can help us here, sir. Have you any one who can pilot?"

“Not a chauffeur; but I have a coachman who knows all round here for a couple of days’ journey. I have no doubt that he knows that road amongst the others. He could sit beside you and direct you how to go!”

“Right! Can you get him soon?”

“At once. He lives over the stables. I shall send for him now.” He rang the bell and when the servant came gave his message. And so that matter was settled and the journey arranged. The chauffeur went to have a last look over the motor car, and to bring it round to the door.

All the time of the interview Colonel Ogilvie stood silent, keeping erect and rigid. He was so stern and so master of himself that Judy wished now that he had less self-control. She feared the new phase even more than the old. Then care for what had still to be done took hold of her. She took her sister away to prepare a little basket of food and wine for Colonel Ogilvie and the men with him; they would need some sustenance on their long, arduous journey. Those kindly offices kept both women busy whilst Colonel Ogilvie was putting on warm clothes for the night travelling. Presently Mrs. Ogilvie joined him. When they were alone she said to him somewhat timidly:

“You will be tender, dear, with Joy? The child is young, and a harsh word spoken in anger at a time when she is high-strung and nervous and tired and frightened might be a lasting sorrow to her!” She half expected that he would resent her speaking at all. She was surprised as well as pleased when, putting his hands kindly on her shoulders, he said:

“Be quite easy in your mind on that subject, wife. Joy has all my love; and, whatever comes, I shall use no harsh word to her. I love her too well to give her pain, at the moment or to think of afterwards. She shall have nothing but care and tenderness and such words as you would yourself wish spoken!” The mother was comforted for the moment. But then came a thought, born of her womanhood, that the keenest pain which could be for the woman would be through her concern for the man. She had little doubt as to what her husband’s action would be if his surmises as to Mr. Hardy should prove to be correct. And such would mean the blighting of poor Joy’s life. She would dearly have loved to remonstrate with her husband on the subject; and she would have done so, whatever might have been the consequences to herself, but that she feared that any ill-timed expostulation might be harmful to her daughter. All the motherhood in her was awake, and nerved her to endure in silence. The only other words she said as she kissed her husband were:

“Good-bye for a while, dear. God keep you in all dangers of the road—and—and in all the far greater dangers that may come to you at the end of it. My love to Joy! Be good to her, and never forget that she can suffer most through any one dear to her. Bring her home to me, safe and—and happy! I ...” Her voice broke and she wept on his shoulder. Colonel Ogilvie was a determined man, and in some ways a harsh and cruel one; but he was a man, and understood. He took his wife in his arms and kissed her fondly, stroking her dark hair wherein the silver threads were showing. Then he passed out in silence.

By the door of the car he found Judy who said:

“I have put in your supper—you will want it dear—and also supper for the men. And oh! Lucius, don’t forget, for poor Joy’s sake, that this day you hold her heart—which is her life—in your hand!”

This added responsibility filled the cup of Colonel Ogilvie’s indignation. Already his conscience was quickening and his troubles—the agitation to his feelings—were almost more than he could bear. He would have liked to make some cynical remark to Judy; but before he could think of anything sufficiently biting, the motor which had been throbbing violently started.

Before the angry man could attempt to get back his self-possession he was gazing past the two shrouded figures before him and across the luminous arc of the lamps out into the night. The darkness seemed to sweep by him as he rushed on his way to Scotland.

When he had gone Judy turned to her sister and said: “I was going to give him Joy’s dressing bag and a change of dress to take with him. She will want them, poor dear, after a long day of travel and a night in a strange place. But I have thought of a better plan.”

“And that?” asked the anxious mother.

“To take them myself! Moreover it won’t be any harm my being present in case the Colonel gets on the rampage. It will restrain him some. Now you go and lie down, dear. Don’t say anything—except your prayers—in case you feel you must say something. But sleep will be your best help in this pretty tough proposition. I’ll go and get a hustle on that Dutch landlord. He’s got to find an automobile and a chauffeur, and a pilot if necessary, for me too!”

CHAPTER XIX.
DECLARATION OF WAR

Joy Ogilvie was so tired out that her body lay like a log all night. How her mind was occupied she only knew afterwards. For the memory of dreams is an unconscious memory at the time; it is only when there is opportunity of comparison with actualities that dreams can be re-produced. Then, as at first, the dreams are real—as they are forever whilst memory lasts. Indeed regarding dreams and actualities, one might almost appeal to scientific analogy; and in comparing the world of imagination—which is the kingdom of dreams—with the material world, might adduce the utterance of Sir Oliver Lodge in comparing the density of aether with that of matter in the modern scientific view: "Matter is turning out to be a filmy thing in comparison with aether."

This might well serve as a scientific comparison. Nay more, it might well be an induction. The analogies of nature are so marvellously constant, as exemplified by the higher discoveries in physics, that we might easily wander farther than in taking the inner world of Thought as compared with the outer world of Physical Being, as an analogy to the Seen and Unseen worlds.

In the meantime we may take it that Joy's dreams that night were in some way reflective of the events of the day. No girl of healthy emotional power could fail to be influenced by such a sequence of experiences of passion and fear as she had gone through. The realized hoping of love, the quick-answering abandonment of expressed passion; long, long minutes of the bliss of communion with that other soul—minutes whose sweetness or whose length could not be computed until the leisure of thought gave opportunity. Unconscious cerebration goes on unceasingly; and be sure that with such data as she had in her mind, the workings of imagination were quick and by no means cold. Again she lived the moments of responsive passion; but so lived them that she had advanced further on the road to completed passion when the unconsciousness to physical surroundings began to disappear and on the senses the actualities began to consciously impress themselves. The dawn, stealing in between the chinks of the folded shutters, made strange lines on the floor without piercing through the walls of sleep. The myriad sounds of waking life from distant field and surrounding street brought no message to the closed eyes of weariness. The sun rose, and rose, and rose; and still she lay there unmoving.

At last that unaccountable impulse which moves all living things to sentience at the ending of sleep, stirred her. The waking grew on her. At first, when her eyes partially opened, she saw, but without comprehending, the dim room with its low ceiling; the wide window, masked in with shutters whose edges were brilliant with the early light; the odd furniture and all the unfamiliar surroundings. Then came the inevitable self-question: "where am I?"

The realization of waking from such dreaming as hers is a rude and jarring process, and when it does come, comes with something of a shock. For what seemed a long time Joy lay in a sort of languorous ecstasy whilst memory brought back to her those moments of the previous day which were sweeter even than her dreams. Again she heard the footsteps of the man she loved coming up rapidly behind her. Again she saw as she turned, in obedience to some new impulse which swayed her to surrender, the face of the man looking radiant with love and happiness. Again she felt the sweet satisfaction of living and loving when his arms closed round her and her arms closed round him and they strained each other strictly. Again there came to her the thrill which seemed to lift her from her earthly being as his mouth touched hers and they kissed each other in the absolute self-abandonment of reciprocated passion—the very passing memory of which set her blood tingling afresh; the thrill which set her soul floating in the expanse of air and made all conventions of the artificial world seen far below seem small and miserable and of neither power nor import. Again she was swept by that tide of wild desires, vague and nebulous as yet, inchoate, elusive, expansive, all-absorbing, which proclaimed her womanhood to herself. That desire of wife to husband, of sex to sex, of woman to man, which is the final expression of humanity—the love song of the children of Adam. It was as though memory and dreaming had become one. As if the day had merged in the night, and the night again in the coming day; each getting as it came all the thoughts and wishes and fancies and desires which follow in the train of the all-conquering Love-God.

In such receptive mood Joy awoke to life. When she realized where she was; and when the import of her new surroundings had broken in upon her, all the forces of her youth and strength began at once to manifest themselves. She slid softly from her bed—the instinct of self protection forbade noise or else she would have jumped to the floor. Doing must follow dreaming! The attitude of standing, once again helped to recall the previous evening, and she remembered that she had thought then that she must not open the windows in the morning because they faced directly other windows across a narrow street.

She remembered also that the next room, through which she had entered, had windows on two sides. Those on one side opened as did her own; but those on the other side looked out on an open space. And so, without further thought, she opened the door between and passed into the outer room. It too, like her own, was dark from the closed shutters. Instinctively she went softly, her bare feet making no sound on the carpet. With the same instinctive caution she had opened the door noiselessly; when the self-protective instinct has once been awakened, it does not easily relapse to sleep. She went over to one of the windows and tried to look out through the chinks.

The day was bright outside and the sun was shining; the fog had entirely disappeared. In the sudden desire to breathe the fresh morning air, and to free in the sunlight her soul cramped by the long darkness of fog and night, she threw open the heavy shutters.

Athlyne slept so soundly that he never stirred. He lay on the sofa on his left side with his face out to the room. He too had been dreaming; and to his dreams the happiness of the day had brought a vivifying light. Through all his weariness of mind and body came to his spirit the glow of those moments when he knew that his love was reciprocated; when his call to his mate had been answered—answered in no uncertain voice. And so he, too, had lain with bodily nature all quiescent, whilst the emotional side of his mind ranged freely between memory and expectation. And in due process the imaginative power of the mind had worked on the nerves—and through them on the body—till he too lay in a languorous semi-trance—the mind ranging free whilst the abnormally receptive body quivered in unison. It was a dangerous condition of being in which to face the situation which awaited him.

The sound of the opening shutter wakened him, fully and all at once. The moment his eyes opened he saw a figure between him and the window; and at the knowledge that some stranger was in his room the habit of quick action which had prevailed in his years of campaigning re-asserted itself. On the instant he flung aside his blanket and sprang from his bed.

At the sound of a step on the floor Joy turned. The light streaming in through the unshuttered window showed them in completeness each to the other. The light struck Athlyne full in front. There was instant recognition, even in the unaccustomed garb, of that tall lithe form; of those fine aquiline features, of those dark flashing eyes. As to Joy, who standing against the light made her own shadow, Athlyne could have no doubt. He would have realized her presence in darkness and silence. As she stood in her fine linen, the morning light making a sort of nimbus round the opacity of the upper part of her body, she looked to him like some fresh realization—some continuation in semi-ethereal form—of the being of his dreams. There was no pause for thought in either of the lovers. The instant of recognition was the realization of presence—unquestioning and the most natural thing in the world that the other should be there. Delight had sealed from within the ears of Doubt. Unhesitatingly they ran to each other, and before a second had passed were locked tightly in each other's arms.

In the secret belief of the Conventional world—that belief which is the official teaching of the churches of an artificial society, and not merely the world of Adam and Eve (and some others)—the ceremony of Marriage in itself changes the entire nature of the contracting parties. Whatever may have been the idiosyncrasies of these individuals such are forthwith changed, foregone, or otherwise altered to suit that common denominator of Human Nature which alone is officially catalogued in the records of the Just. It were as though the recorded promise of two love-stricken sufferers, followed by the formal blessings of the Church in any of its differentiations—or of the Registrar—should change baser mortals to more angelic counterpart; just as the "Philosopher's Stone" which the mediaeval alchemist dreamed of and sought for, was expected to change baser metals to gold.

Perhaps it is because this transmutation is so complete that so many of those marriages which the Church does sanctify turn out so differently from the anticipations of the contractors and blessors!

But Dame Nature has her own church and her own ritual. In her case the Blessing comes before the Service; and the Benediction is but the official recognition that two souls—with their attendant bodies—have found a perfect communion for themselves. Those who believe in Human Nature—and many of them are seriously minded people too—realize and are thankful for the goodness of God who showers the possibilities of happiness with no stinting and no uncertain hand. "After all" they say "what about Eden?" There was no church's blessing there—not even a Registrar; and yet we hold that Adam and Eve were united in Matrimony. Nor were their children or their children's children made one with organized formality. What was it then that on these occasions stood between fornication and marriage? What could it be but the Blessing of God! And if God could make marriage by His Blessing in Eden, when did He forego that power. Or if indeed there be only a "Civil Contract"—as so many hold to-day—what proofs or writings must there be beyond that mere "parole" contract which is recognized in other matters by the Law of the Land.

So, the believers in natural religion and natural law—those who do not hold that personal licence, unchecked and boundless, is an appanage or logical result of freedom. To these, freedom is in itself a state bounded on all sides by restrictive laws—as must ever be, unless Anarchy is held to be the ultimate and controlling force. And in the end Anarchy is the denial of all Cosmic law—that systematised congeries of natural forces working in harmony to a common end.

But law, Cosmic or Anarchic, (if there be such a thing, and it may be that Hell—if there is one—has its own laws—) or any grade between these opposites, is a matter for

coolness and reflection. *Inter arma silent leges* is a maxim of co-ordinate rulings in the Court of Cosmic law. And the principle holds whether the arms be opposed or locked together in any form of passion. When Love lifts the souls, whose bodies are already in earthly communion, Law ceases to be. From the altitude of accomplished serenity the mightiest law is puny; just as from a balloon the earth looks flat, and even steeples and towers have no perspective.

So it was with the two young people clasped in each other's arms. The world they lived in at the moment was *their* world, bounded only by the compass of their arms. After all what more did they want—what could they want. They were together and alone. Shame was not for them, or to them, who loved with all their hearts—whose souls already felt as one. For shame, which is a conventional ordering of the blood, has no place—not even a servitor's—in the House of Love: that palace where reigns the love of husbandhood and wifehood, of fatherhood and motherhood—that true, realized Cosmos—the aim, the objective, the heaven of human life.

Their circumstances but intensified the pleasure of the embrace. Athlyne and Joy had both felt the same communion of spirits when they embraced at their first meeting out of Ambleside when their souls had met. This had been intensified when they sat in close embrace after lunch beyond Dalry, when heart consciously beat to heart. Now it was completed in this meeting, unexpected and therefore more free and unhampered by preparatory thoughts and intentions, when body met body in a close if tentative communion. The mere paucity of raiment had force and purpose. They could each feel as they hung together closely strained, the beating of each other's heart; the rising and falling of each other's lungs. Their breaths commingled as they held mouth to mouth. In such delirious rapture—for these two ardent young people loved each other with a love which both held to be but the very beginning of an eternal bond and which took in every phase, actual and possible, of human beings—there was no place for forethought or afterthought. It was the hour of life which is under the guidance of Nature; to be looked forward to with keen if ignorant anticipation; and which is to be looked back on for evermore as a time when the very heavens opened and the singing of the Angelic choir came through unmuffled.

For seconds, in which Time seemed to stand still, they stood body to body and mouth to mouth. The first to speak was the man:

"I thought you were in England by late in the evening—and you were there all the time!" He indicated the direction by turning his eyes towards her room. His words seemed to fire her afresh. Holding him more closely to her, she leaned back from her hips and gazed at him languorously; her words dropped slowly from her opened lips:

“Oh-h! If we had only known!” What exactly was in her mind she did not know—did not think of knowing—did not want to know. Perhaps she did not mean anything definite. It was only an expression of some feeling, of some want, some emotion, some longing—some primitive utterance couched in words of educated thought, as sweet and spontaneous as the singing of a bird in its native woods at springtime.

Somehow, it moved Athlyne strangely. Moved the manhood of him in many ways, chiefest among them his duty of protection. It is not a commonly-received idea that man—not primitive man but the partially-completed article of a partially-completed cosmic age—is scrupulous with regard to woman. The general idea to the contrary effect is true *en gros* but not *en detaille*. True of women; not true of a woman. An educated man, accustomed to judgment and action in matters requiring thought, thinks, perhaps unconsciously, all round him, backward as well as forward; but mainly forward. Present surroundings form his data; consequences represent the conclusion. Himself remains neutral, an onlooker, until he is called on for immediate decision and consequent action.

So it was with Athlyne. His instant ejaculation:

“Thank God we didn’t know!” would perhaps have been understood by a man. To a woman it was incomprehensible. Woman is, after all, more primitive than man. Her instincts are more self-centred than his. As her life moves in a narrower circle, her view is rather microscopic than telescopic; whilst his is the reverse. Inasmuch then as he naturally surveys a larger field, so his introspective view is wider.

Joy loved the man; and so, since he had already expressed himself, considered him as already her husband; or to speak more accurately considered herself as already his wife. It was, therefore, with something like chagrin that she heard his disavowal of her views. She did not herself quite understand what those views were, but all the same it was a disappointment that he did not really acquiesce in them; nay more that he did not press them on his own account—press them relentlessly, as a woman loves a man to do, even when his wishes are opposed to her own.

A woman’s answer to chagrin is ultimate victory of her purpose; and the chagrin of love is perhaps the strongest passion with a purpose that can animate her.

When Joy became conscious, as she did in a few seconds, that her lover following out his protective purpose was about to separate himself from her—she quite understood without any telling or any experience both motive and purpose—she opposed it on her part. As the strictness of his embrace lessened, so in proportion did hers increase. Then came to the man the reaction—he was only a man, after all. His ardour

redoubled, and her heart beat harder with new love as well as triumph as he drew her closer to him in a pythonic embrace. Then she, too, clung to him even closer than before. That embrace was all lover-like—an agony of rapture.

In its midst they were startled somewhat by the rumbling of a motor driven fast which seemed to stop close to them. Instinctively Joy tried to draw away from her lover; such is woman's impulse. But Athlyne held her all the tighter—his embrace was not all love now, but the protection which comes from love. She understood, and resigned herself to him. And so they stood, heart to heart, and mouth to mouth, listening.

There was a clatter of tongues in the hall. Joy thought she recognised one voice—she could not be sure in the distance and through the closed door—and her heart sank. She would again have tried to draw away violently but that she was powerless. Her will was gone, like a bird's under the stare of the snake. Athlyne, too, was in suspense, his heart beating wildly. He had a sort of presage of disaster which seemed in a way to paralyse him.

There were quick steps on the stairs. A voice said: "There" and the door rattled. At this moment both the lovers were willing to separate. But before they could do so, the door opened and the figure of Colonel Ogilvie blocked the entrance.

"Good God!" The old man's face had grown white as though the sight had on the instant frozen him. So pallid was he, all in that second, that Joy and Athlyne received at once the same idea: that his moustache, which they had thought of snowy whiteness, was but grey against the marble face.

The father's instinct was protective too, and his action was quick. In the instant, without turning his face, he shut the door behind him and put his heel against it.

"Quick, daughter, quick!" he said in a whisper, low but so fierce that it cut the air like a knife, "Get into that room and dress yourself. And, get out if you can, by another way without being noticed!" As he spoke he pointed towards the open door through which in the darkened room the bed with clothing in disarray could be dimly seen. Joy fled incontinently. The movements of a young woman can be of extraordinary quickness, but never quicker than when fear lends her wings. It seemed to Athlyne that she made but one jump from where she stood through the door-way. He could remember afterwards the flash of her bare heels as she turned in closing the door behind her.

"Now Sir!" Colonel Ogilvie's voice was stern to deadliness as he spoke. Athlyne realised its import. He felt that he was bound hand and foot, and knew that his part of the coming struggle would have to be passive. He braced himself to endure. Still, the Colonel's question had to be answered. The onus of beginning the explanation had

been thrust upon him. It was due to Joy that there should be no delay on his part in her vindication. Almost sick at heart with apprehension he began:

“There has been no fault on Joy’s part!” The instant he had spoken, the look of bitter haughtiness which came on Colonel Ogilvie’s face warned him that he had made a mistake. To set the error right he must know what he had to meet; and so he waited.

“We had better, I think, leave Miss Ogilvie’s name out of our conversation. … And I may perhaps remind you, sir, that I am the best judge of my daughter’s conduct. When I have said anything to my daughter’s detriment it will be quite time for a stranger to interfere on her behalf. … It is of *your* conduct, sir, that I ask—demand explanation!”

Athlyne would have liked to meet a speech of this kind with a blow. In the case of any other man he would have done so: but this man was Joy’s father, and in all circumstances must be treated as such. He felt in a vague sort of way—a background of thought rather than thought itself—that his manhood was being tested, and by a fiery test. Come what might, he must be calm, or at least be master of himself; or else bitter woe would come to Joy. Of course it would come—perhaps had come already to himself; but to that he was already braced.

Colonel Ogilvie was skilled in the deadly preliminaries to lethal quarrel. More than once when a foe had been marked down for vengeance had he led him on to force the duel himself. In no previous quarrel of his life had he ever had the good cause that he had now, and be sure that he used that knowledge to the full. There was in his nature something of that stoical quality of the Red Indian which enables him to enjoy the torture of his foe, though the doing so entails a keen anguish to himself. Perhaps the very air of the “dark and bloody ground” of Kentucky was so impregnated with the passions of those who made it so that the dwelling of some generations had imbued the dwellers with some of the old Indian spirit. As Athlyne stood face to face with him, watching for every sign of intention as a fencer watches his opponent, he realised that there would be for him no pity, no mercy, not even understanding. He would have to fight an uphill contest—if Joy was to be saved even a single pang. What he could do he would: sacrifice himself in any way that a man can accomplish it. Life and happiness had for him passed by! One of his greatest difficulties would be, he felt, that of so controlling himself that he would not of necessity shut behind him, by anything which he might say or do, the door of conciliation. He began at once, therefore, to practice soft answering:

“My conduct, sir, has been bad—so far as doing an indiscreet thing, and in not showing to you that respect which is your due in any matter in which Miss Ogilvie may

be concerned." For some reason which he could not at the moment understand this seemed to infuriate the Colonel more than ever. In quite a violent way he burst out:

"So I am to take it that no respect is due to me in my own person! Such, I gather from your words. You hint if you do not say that respect is only my due on my daughter's account!" At the risk of further offence Athlyne interrupted him. It would not do for him to accept this monstrous reading of what he meant for courtesy:

"Not so, sir. My respect is to you always and for all causes. I did but put it in that way as it is only in connection with your daughter that I dared to speak at all." Even this pacific explanation seemed to add fuel to the old man's choler:

"Let me tell you, sir, that this has nothing whatever to do with my daughter. Miss Ogilvie is my care. Her defence, if any be required, is my duty—my privilege. And I quite know how to exercise—and to defend—both."

"Quite so, sir. I realise that, and I have no wish to arrogate to myself your right or your duty; for either of which I myself should be proud to die!" Athlyne's voice and manner were so suave and deferential that Colonel Ogilvie began to have an idea that he was a poltroon; and in this belief the bully that was in him began to manifest itself. He spoke harshly, intending to convey this idea, though as he did so his heart smote him. Even as he spoke there rose before his bloodshot eyes the vision of a river shimmering with gold as the sunset fell on it, and projected against it the figure of a frightened woman tugging at the reins of a run-away mare; whilst close behind her rode a valiant man guiding with left hand a splendid black horse to her side, his right hand stretched out to drag her to his saddle. Before them both lay a deadly chasm. In the pause Athlyne took the opportunity of hurriedly putting on his outer clothing.

But even that touching vision did not check the father's rage. His eyes were bloodshot and even such vision—any vision—could not linger in them. It passed, leaving in its place only a red splotch—as of blood; the emotion which the thought had quickened had become divergent in its own crooked way. But in the pause Athlyne had time to get in a word:

"Sir, whatever fault there has been was mine entirely. I acted foolishly perhaps, and unthinkingly. It placed us—placed me in such a position that every accident multiplied possibilities of misunderstanding. I cannot undo that now—I don't even say that I would if I could. But whatever may be my fate—in the result that may follow my acts—I shall accept it without cavil. And may I say in continuance and development of your own suggestion, that no other name should be mentioned in whatever has to be spoken of between us." As he finished he unconsciously stood upon his dignity,

drawing himself up to his full height and standing in soldierly attitude. This had a strange effect on Colonel Ogilvie. Realising that he could rely implicitly on the dignity of the man before him, he allowed himself a further latitude. He could afford, he felt, to be unrestrained in such a presence; and so proceeded to behave as though he was stark, staring raving mad. Athlyne saw the change and, with some instinct more enlightening than his reason, realised that the change might later, have some beneficent effect. More than ever did he feel now the need for his own absolute self-control. It was well that he had made up his mind to this, for it was bitterly tested in Colonel Ogilvie's mad outpour:

"Do you dare, sir, to lecture me as to what I shall not say or shall say about my own daughter. What shall I say to you who though you had not the courtesy to even acknowledge the kindness shown you by her parents, came behind my back when I was far away, and stole her from my keeping. Who took her far away, to the risk even of her reputation. Risk! Risk! When I find you here together, alone and almost naked in each other's arms! God's Death! that I should have seen such a thing—that such a thing should be. ..." Here his hot wrath changed to ice-cold deadly purpose, and he went on:

"You shall answer me with your life for that!" He paused, still glaring at the other with cold, deadly malevolence. Athlyne felt that the hour of the Forlorn Hope had come to him at last—he had been hot through all his seeming coolness at de Hooge's Spruit. His self-control, could, he felt never be more deeply tested than now; and he braced himself to it. He had now to so bear himself that Joy would suffer the minimum of pain. Pain she would have to endure—much pain; he could not save her from it. He would do what he could; that was all that remained. With real coolness he met the icy look of his antagonist as he said with all the grace and courtesy of which he was naturally master:

"Sir, I answer for my deeds with my life. That life is yours now. Take it, how and when you will! As to answering in words, such cannot be whilst you maintain your present attitude. I have tried already to answer—to explain."

"Explain sir! There is no explanation."

"Pardon me!" Athlyne's voice was calm as ever; his dignity so superb that the other checked the words on his lips as he went on:

"There is an explanation to be made—and made it must be, for the sake of ... of another. I deny in no way your right of revenge. I think I have already told you that my life is yours to take as you will. But a dying man has, in all civilised places, a right to

speak to the Court which condemns him. Such privilege is mine. I claim it—if you will force me to say so. And let me add, Colonel Ogilvie, that I hold it as a part of my submission to your will. We are alone now and can speak freely; but there must be a time—it will be for your own protection from the legal consequences of my death—when others, or at least one other, will know of your intention to kill. I shall speak then if I may not now!" Here the Colonel, whose anger was rising at being so successfully baffled, interrupted him with hard cynicism.

"Conditions in an affair of honour! To be enforced in a court of law I suppose." He felt ashamed of himself as he made the remark which he felt to be both ungenerous and untrue. He was not surprised when the other answered his indignant irony with scorn:

"No sir! No law! Not any more appeal to law in my defence than there has been justice in your outrageous attack on me. But about that I shall answer you presently. In the meantime I adhere to my conditions. Aye, conditions; I do not hesitate to use the word."

Colonel Ogilvie, through all the madness of his anger, realised at that moment that the man before him was a strong man, as fearless and determined as he was himself. This brought back his duty of good manners as a first instalment of his self-possession. For a few seconds he actually withheld his speech. He even bowed slightly as the other proceeded:

"I have tried to explain. ... My fault was in venturing to ask ... a lady to come for a ride in my car. I had no intention of evil. Nothing more than a mere desire to renew and further an—a friendship which had, from the first moment of my knowing her—or rather from the first moment I set eyes on her, become very dear to me. It was a selfish wish I know; and in my own happiness at her consent I overlooked,—neglected—forgot the duty I owed to her father. For that I am bitterly sorry, and I feel that I owe to him a debt which I can never, never repay. But enough of that. ... That belongs to a different category, and it has to be atoned for in the only way by which an honourable man can atone. ... As I have already conceded my life to him I need ... can say no more. But from the moment when that lady stepped into my car my respect has been for her that which I have always intended to be given to whatever lady should honour me by becoming my wife. Surely you, sir, as yourself an honourable man—a husband and a father, cannot condemn a man for speaking an honourable love to the woman to whom it has been given. When I have admitted that the making of the occasion was a fault I have said all that I accept as misdoing. ..." He folded his arms and stood on his dignity. For a few seconds, Colonel Ogilvie stood motionless, silent. He could not but recognise the truth that underlay all the dignity of the other. But he was in no way

diverted by it from his purpose. His anger was in no way mitigated; his intention of revenge lessened by no whit. He was merely waiting to collect his thoughts so as to be in a position to attack with most deadly effect. He was opening his lips to speak when the other went on as though he had but concluded one section or division of what he had to say:

"And now sir as to the manifest doubt you expressed as to my *bona fides* in placing my life in your hands—your apprehension lest I should try to evade my responsibility to the laws of honour by an appeal in some way to a court of law. Let me set your mind at ease by placing before you my views; and my views, let me tell you, are ultimately my intentions. I have tried to assure you that with the exception of waiting to ask your consent to taking ... a certain passenger for a drive, my conduct has from that moment been such as you could not find fault with. I take it for granted that you—nor no man—could honestly resent such familiarities as are customary to, and consequent on, a man offering marriage to a lady, and pressing his suit with such zeal as is, or should be, attendant on the expression of a passion which he feels very deeply!" Even whilst he was speaking, his subconsciousness was struck by his own coolness. He marvelled that he could, synchronously with the fearful effort necessary to his self-control and with despair gnawing at his heart, speak with such cold blooded preciseness. As is usual in such psychical stresses his memory took note for future reference of every detail.

His opponent on the contrary burst all at once into another fit of flaming passion. Athlyne's very preciseness seemed to have inflamed him afresh. He thundered out:

"Familiarities sir, on offering marriage! Do you dare to trifle with me at a time like this. When but a few minutes ago I saw you here in this lonely place, at this hour of the morning after a night of absence, undressed as you were, holding in your arms my daughter undressed also... God's death! sir, be careful or you shall rue it!" He stopped almost choking with passion. Athlyne felt himself once more overwhelmed with the cold wave of responsibility. "Joy! Joy! Joy!" he kept repeating to himself as a sort of charm to keep off evil. To let go his anger now might—would be fatal to her happiness. He marvelled to himself as he went on in equal voice, seemingly calm:

"That sir was with no intent of evil. 'Twas but a natural consequence of the series of disasters which fell on the enterprise which had so crowned my happiness. When I turned to come home so that ... so that the lady might be in time to meet her parents who were expected to arrive at—at her destination, I forgot, in my eagerness to meet her wishes, the regulations as to speed; and I was arrested for furious driving. In my anxiety to save her from any form of exposal to publicity, and in my perplexity as to

how to manage it, I advised her returning by herself in my motor, I remaining at Dalry. When she had gone, and I had arranged for attending the summons served on me, I wired over to this hotel to keep me rooms. I thought it better that as J ... that as the lady had gone to England I should remain in Scotland. I started to walk here; but I was overtaken by a fog and delayed for hours behind my time. The house was locked up—every one asleep. The night porter who let me in told me that as I had not arrived, as by my telegram, the bedroom I had ordered was let to some one else who had arrived in a plight similar to my own. 'Another party' were his words; I had no clue to whom or what the other visitor was. The only place left in the house unoccupied—for there were many unexpected guests through the fog—was that sofa. There I slept. Only a few minutes ago I was waked by some one coming into the room. When I saw that it was ... when I saw who it was—the woman whom I loved and whom I intended to marry—I naturally took her in my arms without thinking." Then without pausing, for he saw the anger in the Colonel's face and felt that to prolong this part of the narration was dangerous, he went on quickly:

"I trust that you understand, Colonel Ogilvie, that this explanation in no way infringes your right of punishing me as you suggest. Please understand—and this is my answer to your suggestion as to my appealing to law—that I accept your wish to go through the form of a duel!" He was hotly interrupted by the Colonel:

"Form of a duel! Is this another insult? When I say fight I mean fight—understand that. I fight *à l'outrance*; and that way only." Athlyne's composure did not seem even ruffled:

"Exactly! I took no other meaning. But surely I am entitled to take it that even a real duel has the form of a duel!"

"Then what do you mean sir by introducing the matter that way?"

"Simply, Colonel Ogilvie, to protect myself from a later accusation on your part—either to me or of me—of a charge of poltroonery; or even a silent suspicion of it in your own mind!"

"How do you mean?"

"Sir, I only speak for myself. I have already said more than once that I hold my life at your disposal. From that I do not shrink; I accept the form of a duel for my execution."

"Your execution! Explain yourself, sir?" In a calm even voice came the answer.

"Colonel Ogilvie, I put it to you as man to man—if you will honour me with so simple a comparison, or juxtaposition whichever you like to consider it—how can I fight freely against the father of the woman whom I love. Pray, sir," for the Colonel made an angry

gesture “be patient for a moment. I intend no kind of plea or appeal. I feel myself forced to let you know my position from my point of view. You need bear no new anger towards me for this expression of my feelings. I do so with reluctance, and only because you *must* understand, here and now, or it may make, later on, further unhappiness for some one else—some one whom we both hold in our hearts.” Colonel Ogilvie hesitated before replying. The bitter scowl was once again on his face as he spoke:

“Then I suppose I am to take it, sir, that you will begin our meeting on the field of honour by putting me publicly—through the expression of your intention—in the position of a murderer.”

“Not so! Surely you know better than that. I did not think that any honourable man could have so mistaken another. If I have to speak explicitly on this point—on which for your own sake and the sake of … of one dear to you, I would fain be reticent—let me reassure you on one point: I shall play the game fairly. For this duel is a game, and, so far as I am concerned at all events, one for a pretty large stake. If indeed that can be called a ‘game’ which can only end in one way. You need not, I assure you, feel the least uneasy as to my not going through with it properly. I am telling you this now so that you may not distort my intention yourself by some injudicious comment on my conduct, or speech, or action, made under a misapprehension or from distrust of me. Sir, your own honour shall be protected all along, so far as the doing so possibly rests with me.” Here, seeing some new misunderstanding in the Colonel’s eye he went on quickly:

“I venture to say this because I am aware that you doubt my being able to carry out my intention. When I say ‘rests with me,’ I mean the responsibility of acting properly the rôle I have undertaken. I shall conduct my part of the duel in all seriousness. It must be in some other country; this for your sake. For mine it will not have mattered. We have only to bear ourselves properly and none will suspect. I shall go through all the forms—with your permission—of fighting *à l’outrance*, so that no one can suspect. No one will be able afterwards to say that you could have been aware of my intention. I shall fire at you all right; but I shall not hit!”

Instinctively Colonel Ogilvie bowed. He did not intend to do so. He said no word. The rancour of his heart was not mitigated; his intention to kill in no way lessened. His action was simply a spontaneous recognition of the chivalry of another, and his appreciation of it.

Athlyne could not but be glad of even so slight a relaxation of the horrible tension. He stood quite still. He felt that in some way he had scored with his antagonist; and as he

was fighting for Joy he was unwilling to do anything which might not be good for her. He was standing well out in the room with his back to the door of the bedroom. As they stood he saw a look of surprise flash in Colonel Ogilvie's face. This changed instantly to a fixed one of horror. His eyes seemed to look right through his antagonist to something beyond. Instinctively he turned to see what it might be that caused that strange look. And then he looked horrified himself.

In the open door-way of the bedroom stood Joy.

CHAPTER XX.
KNOWLEDGE OF LAW

All three stood stone still. Not a sound was heard except faint quick breathing. Athlyne tried to think; but his brain seemed numb. He knew that now was a crisis if not *the* crisis of the whole affair. It chilled him with a deathly chill to think that Joy must have heard all the conversation between her father and himself. What a remembrance for her in all the empty years to come! What sorrow, what pain! Presently he heard behind him as he stood facing her a sound which was rather a groan than an ejaculation—a groan endowed with articulated utterance:

"Good God!" Unconsciously he repeated the word under his breath:

"Good God!"

Joy, with a fixed high-strung look, stepped down into the room. She stood beside Athlyne who, as she came close to him, turned with her so that together they faced her father. Colonel Ogilvie said in a slow whisper, the words dropping out one by one:

"Have—you—been—there—all—the—time? Did—you—hear—all—we—said?" She answered boldly:

"Yes! I was there and heard everything!" Again a long pause of silence, ended by Colonel Ogilvie's next question:

"Why did you stay?" Joy answered at once; her quick speech following the slow tension sounded almost voluble.

"I could not get away. I wanted to; but there is no other door to the room. That is why I came out here when I woke. ... I could not get my boots which the maid had taken last night, and I wanted to get away as quickly as possible. And, Father, being there, though I had to move about dressing myself, I could not help hearing everything!" Her father had evidently expected that she would say something more, for as she stopped there he looked at her expectantly. There was a sort of dry sob in his throat. Athlyne

stood still and silent; he hardly dared to breathe lest he should unintentionally thwart Joy's purpose. For with all his instincts he realised that she had a purpose. He knew that she understood her father and that she was the most potent force to deal with him; and knowing this he felt that the best thing he could do would be to leave her quite free and unhampered to take her own course. He kept his eyes on her face, gazing at her unwinkingly. Her face was fixed—not stern but set to a purpose. Somehow at that moment he began to realise how well he understood her. Without more help than his eyes could give him, he seemed to follow the workings of her mind. For her mind was changing. At the first her expression was of flinty fixedness; but as she continued to look at the old man it softened; and with the softening her intentioned silence gave way. Her lover's thoughts translated thus:

"I will protect my—him against my father. He has threatened him; he is forcing him to death. I shall not help him by sparing him a pang, an awkwardness. And yet—why that? He is an old man—and my father! That white hair demands respect. He is angry—hard and untender now; but his life has been a tender one to me—and he is my father! Though I am determined to save my lover—my husband, I need not in the doing cause that white head to sink in shame; I can spare him the pang of what he may think ingratitude in me. And, after all, he has what must seem to him just cause of offence. ... He cannot—will not understand. ... He is brave and proud, and has a code of honour which is more than a religion. And he my lover—my husband is brave too. And as unyielding as my father. And he is willing to die—for me. To die for me—*my* honour *my* happiness. Though his dying is worse—far worse than death to me. ... But he is dying bravely, and I—that was to have been his wife—must die bravely, worthily too. If he can suffer and die in silence, so too must I. ..."

It seemed a natural sequence of thought when she said to her father:

"Daddy, do you know you have not said a word to me yet. What have I ever done in my life that you should not trust me now? Have I ever lied to you that you cannot trust me to answer truly when you ask me—ask me anything. Why don't you ask me now? I know that things do not look well. I realise that you must have been shocked when you came into the room. But, Daddy dear, there are few things in the world that cannot be explained—at any rate in part. Don't forget that I am a woman now. I am no longer a child whose ignorance is her innocence. Speak to me! Ask me what you will, and I will answer you truly! Hear me, even as you would listen to one dying! For indeed it is so. If you carry out your intention, as I have heard it expressed, I shall no longer live; there will be nothing for me to live for."

"Do you mean that you will commit suicide?" said her father.

“Oh, no! I hope I have pluck enough to live—if I can. Do not fear for me, Daddy! I shall play the game full, as he will do.” As she spoke, she pointed a finger at Athlyne. She felt now, and for the first time, acutely that she did not know what to call him before a third person—even her father. Athlyne looked relieved by her words. When she spoke of dying he had grown sadly white; he shared her father’s apprehension. Colonel Ogilvie saw the change in his look, and took it ill. As may be surmised a part of his anger towards Athlyne arose from jealousy. Until this man had appeared upon the scene his “little girl” was his alone; no other man shared in her affection. As she was an only child all his parental affection had been centred in her. Though he might have been prepared to see her mate with a man of his own choosing—or at any rate of his acceptance, he was jealous of the man who had stepped in, unaccredited and wanting in deference to himself. It must have been a tinge of this jealousy which prompted his next question. Turning with a bitter formality to Athlyne he said:

“I suppose you are satisfied, now, sir. Whatever may come, my daughter is estranged from me; and it is your doing!” In answer Joy and Athlyne spoke together. Said the latter:

“Oh sir!” There he stopped; he feared to say more lest his anger should master him. But the protest was effective; the old man flushed—over forehead and ears and neck. Joy spoke in a different vein:

“There is no estrangement, Daddy dear; and therefore it can be no one’s doing. Least of all could such a thing come from this man who loves me, and … and whom I love.” As she spoke she blushed divinely, and taking her lover’s right hand between both her hands held it tight. This seemed for some reason to infuriate her father afresh. He strode forward towards Athlyne as though about to strike him. But at the instant there came a quick rap on the door. Instinctively he drew away, and, having called out “Come!” stood expectingly and seemingly calm. The door opened slightly and the voice of the Sheriff was heard:

“May I come in? I am Alexander Fenwick, Sheriff of Galloway!” As he was speaking he entered the room with a formal bow to each in turn. He continued to speak to Colonel Ogilvie:

“You will pardon this intrusion I hope, sir. Indeed I trust you will not look upon it as an intrusion at all when you know the reason of my coming.” Colonel Ogilvie’s habit of old-fashioned courtesy came at once to the fore with the coming of a stranger. With a bow which to those reared in a newer and less formal school of manners seemed almost grandiloquent he spoke:

“I came here on some business, and on my arrival a few minutes ago was asked by our landlady—an old servant of my own—who on that account thought that she might ask what she thought a favour—to come up here. She thought, poor anxious soul, that some unpleasantness might be afoot as she heard high words, and feared a quarrel. All the more on account of a sudden arrival of a gentleman who seemed somewhat incensed. This I took from her description of the personality, to be you sir. Indeed, I recognise all the points, except that of the anger!” As he spoke he bowed with pleasant courtesy. The other bowed too, partly in answer to the implied question and partly in recognition of the expressed courtesy of the words and manner.

Whilst he had been speaking, the Sheriff had been watching keenly those around him. He had been for so long a time in the habit of forming his opinion rather by looks than words that the situation seemed to explain itself; young lovers, angry father. This opinion was justified and sustained by the confidence which had been given to him by Athlyne on the previous afternoon. He had been, on entering the room, rather anxious at the state of affairs; but now he began to breathe more freely. He felt that his experience of life and of law might really be here of some service. But his profession had also taught him wariness and caution; also not to speak on side issues till he knew the ground thoroughly. Joy he read like an open book. There was no mistaking her love, her anxiety, her apprehension. Athlyne he knew something of already, but he now saw in his face a warning look which bade him be silent regarding him. He diagnosed Colonel Ogilvie as a proud, masterful, vain, passionate man; something of a prig; tender, in a way he understood himself; faithful to his word; relentless to an expressed intention; just—according to his own ideas of right and wrong. Weighing these attributes for his own pacific purposes he came to the conclusion that his first effort at conciliation should be made with regard to the last-mentioned. So he began, speaking in a manner of courtly and deferential grace:

“I trust sir, you will yield to me the consideration often asked by, and sometimes granted to a well-intentioned man, however bungling the same might be in thought or method or manner.” Colonel Ogilvie conceded the favour with a gracious bow. Thus emboldened, if not justified, he went on:

“I fain would ask that I might be allowed to make something in the nature of a short statement, and to make it without interruption or expostulation. You will understand why presently.” Again the gracious acquiescence; he continued:

“You are, I take it, a stranger to this country; though, if I am not misled by name and lineament, claiming Scottish forbears?” Colonel Ogilvie’s bow came more naturally

this time. His in-lying pride was coming to the rescue of common sense. The Sheriff understood, and went on with better heart:

“The experience which I have had in the performance of my duties as sheriff has shewn me that such a group as I see before me—father, daughter and lover, if I mistake not—is not uncommon in this part of Scotland.” No one answered his bow this time. All were grimly silent in expectancy. He felt that it was a dangerous topic; but the fact had been stated without being denied. He hurried on:

“Just across the Border, as we are, we have had very many occasions of run-away marriages; I have had myself in earlier days to explain for the good of all parties how the law stands in such matters. More than once the knowledge enabled those interested in it to spare much pain to others; generally to those whom they loved best. I trust that now I may use that knowledge in your behalf—as a friend. I am not here in my official capacity—or perhaps I might not be so free to advise as I am now without, I trust, offence to any one.” Colonel Ogilvie’s gracious bow here answered for all the party. The Sheriff felt more at ease. He was now well into his subject; and the most difficult part of his duty had been, he thought, passed. All three of his hearers listened eagerly as he went on:

“A knowledge of the law can hurt no one; though it may now and again disappoint some one—when expounded too late. Well, there is a common belief in South Britain—and elsewhere that the marriage law in Scotland is a very filmy thing, with bounds of demarcation which are actually nebulous. This doubtless arises from the fact that all such laws are based on the theory that it is good to help such contracting parties to the secure and speedy fulfilment of their wishes. But anyone who thinks that they are loose in either purpose or action is apt to be rudely enlightened. The Scots’ Marriage laws demand that there be a manifest and honest intention of marriage on the part of the contractors. This intention can be proved in many ways. Indeed the law in certain cases is willing to infer it, when direct proof is not attainable, from subsequent acts of the parties. I may fairly say that in all such cases courts of law will hold that mutuality of intention is of the essence of marriage rite. This followed by co-habitation *is* the marriage; though the latter to follow close on the declaration is not always deemed necessary. In our law the marriage may be either of two kinds. The most formal is that effected by a minister or proper official after due calling of banns, or by notice given to sheriff or registrar. The other form is by what is known in the law as ‘Irregular marriage.’ This is in legal parlance—for which I make no apology as it is necessary that all married folk, or those intending to enter that honourable condition should understand it—is known as ‘intention followed by copula.’ Now you must know that either form of marriage is equally binding—equal in

law and honour; and when the conditions attached to each form have been duly fulfilled such marriage is irrefragable. In old days this facility of marriage made Gretna Green, which is the first place across the Border, the objective for eloping lovers matrimonially inclined; and as till 1856 no previous residence in Scotland was required, romance was supposed to stop at the Border. That is, the marriage could be effected and parental objections—did such exist—were overborne. There were many cynical souls who held that repentance for the hasty marriage could then begin. I feel bound to say that this is an opinion in which I do not myself share.

"In 1856 an Act of Parliament, 20th Vict. Cap. 96, was passed, by which it became necessary for the validity of irregular marriage that at least one of the two contractors should have his or her usual residence in Scotland, or have been resident in Scotland for three full weeks next preceding the marriage.

"I thank you, Colonel Ogilvie, for having listened to me so patiently. But as I have no doubt that you three have much to say to each other I shall withdraw for the present. This will leave you free to discuss matters. And perhaps I may say, as an old man as well as a responsible officer of the Law, that I trust the effect will be to make for peace and amity. I am staying here in the hotel and I shall take it as a great pleasure and a great honour if you will breakfast with me in say an hour's time. All your family will be most welcome." With a bow, in which deference and geniality were mingled, he withdrew.

Each of the three left kept looking at each other in silence. Joy drew closer to Athlyne and took his hand. Colonel Ogilvie pretended not to notice the act—an effort on his part which made his daughter radiant with hope. The first words spoken were by the Colonel:

"That man is a gentleman!" The two others felt that silence was present discretion; to agree with Colonel Ogilvie in his present mood was almost as dangerous as to disagree with him. His next words were in no way conciliatory though the *arrière pensée* made for hope.

"Now sir, what have you to say for yourself in this unhappy matter? Remember I in no way relax my intention of—of punishment; but I am willing to hear what you have to say." Athlyne winced at the word "punishment," which was not one which he was accustomed to hear applied to himself. But for Joy's sake he made no comment. He even kept his face fixed so as not to betray his anger. He felt that any change of subject, or drifting off that before them, must be for the better; things could, he felt, hardly be worse than at present. Moreover, it might smooth matters somewhat if Colonel Ogilvie could be brought to recollect that he was not himself an undesirable

person for alliance, and that his intention of matrimony had been already brought before Joy's father. In this conviction he spoke:

"As in this country, sir, intention counts for so much, may I crave your indulgence for a moment and refer you back to my letter to you on the subject of a very dear wish of mine—a wish put before you with a very decided intention." Colonel Ogilvie's answer, given in manner of equal suavity, was disconcerting; the bitterness behind it was manifest.

"I think sir, there must be some error—which is not mine. I never received any letter from you! Your epistolary efforts seem to have been confined to the ladies of my family." With an effort Athlyne restrained himself. When he felt equal to the task he spoke, still with a manner of utmost deference:

"An error there surely is; but it is not mine either. I posted yesterday at the Ambleside post office a letter to you. ..." He was interrupted by Colonel Ogilvie who said bluntly:

"I am not so sure, sir, that the fault of my not reading such a letter was not yours; though perhaps not in the direct manner you mean. When I arrived home last night and found the horrible state of things with regard to my daughter's rash act—due to you" this with a look of actual malevolence "I was so upset that I did not look at the pile of letters awaiting me. I only read Joy's messages." As he said this Athlyne's eyes flashed and there was an answering flash in the eyes of the woman who looked so keenly at him; this was the first time since his arrival that the father had condescended to even mention his daughter's name. There might be some softening of that hard nature after all. Then the old man continued:

"I put them in my pocket; here they are!"—Whilst he looked at the envelopes in that futile way that some people unused to large correspondence love, Joy said with an easy calmness which made her lover glance at her in surprise:

"Daddy, hadn't you better read your letters now; we shall wait." The tone was so much that to which he was accustomed from her that he did not notice the compromising "we" which would otherwise have inflamed him afresh. Drawing a chair close to one of the windows he opened the letters and began to read. Athlyne and Joy, instinctively and with unity of thought, moved towards the other window which was behind him. There they stood hand in hand, their eyes following every movement of the old man. Joy did not know, of course, what was in the letter; but she had seen it before in the garden at Ambleside and when he had posted it before setting out on their motor ride. And so, piecing her information with the idea conveyed by her lover's recent words, she was able to form some sort of idea of its general import. A soft, beautiful blush

suffused her face, and her eyes glistened as she stood thinking; in the effort of thought she recalled many sweet passages. She now understood in a vague way what was the restraining influence which had moved her lover to reticence during all those hours when he had tried to tell her of his love and his hopes without actually speaking words, the knowledge of which given without his consent would have incensed her father against him, and so wrought further havoc. So moved was she that Athlyne, whose eyes were instinctively drawn to her from the observation of her father, was amazed and not a little disconcerted. There must be some strange undercurrent of feeling in her which he could not understand. Joy saw the look on his face and seemed to understand. She raised to her lips the hand that she so strongly clasped in hers and kissed it. Then she raised a finger of her other hand and touched her lips. Thus reassured of her love and understanding, Athlyne followed with his eyes the trend of hers; and so together they continued to watch her father, trying to gather from his bearing some indication of his thoughts. Indeed this was not a difficult matter. Colonel Ogilvie seemed to have lost himself in his task, and expressed his comments on what he read by a series of childlike movements and ejaculations. Athlyne who knew what the letter contained could apply these enlightening comments, and even Joy in her ignorance of detail could inferentially follow the text. Colonel Ogilvie did say a word of definite speech, but the general tendency of his comment was that of surprise—astonishment. When he had finished reading Athlyne's letter—it was the last of the batch—he sat for quite half a minute quite still and silent, holding the paper between finger and thumb of his dropped left hand. Then with a deep frown on his forehead he began to read it again. He was evidently looking for some passage, for when he had found it he stood up at once and turned to them. By this time Joy, warned by the movement, had dropped her lover's hand and now stood some distance away from him. The old man began:

"Sir ... There is a passage in a letter here which I understand to be yours. So far I must acknowledge that I have been wrong. You evidently *did* send the letter, and I evidently received it. Listen to this: 'Having heard in a roundabout way that there was a woman in New York who was passing herself off as my wife I undertook a journey to that City to make investigation into the matter; and in order to secure the necessary secrecy as to my movements took for the time an assumed name—or rather used as Christian and surname two of those names in the middle of my full equipment which I do not commonly use.' What does all that mean? No, do not speak. Wait and I shall tell you. You say the lady—woman you call her—took your name. For saying such a thing, and for the disrespect in her description as a woman, you will have to answer me. Either of them will cost you your life." Athlyne answered with a quiet, impressive dignity which

helped in some degree to reassure Joy who stood motionless in open-eyed wonder—her heart seeming to her as cold as ice at the horror of this new phase of danger. It was a veritable "bolt from the blue," incomprehensible to her in every way:

"Colonel Ogilvie, I regret I shall be unable to meet your wishes in this respect!" As the old man looked astonished in his turn, he proceeded:

"I already owe you a life on another count; and I have but one. But if I had ten you should have them all, could they in any way assuage the sorrow which it seems must follow from my thoughtless act. I have told you already that I shall freely give my life in expiation of the wrong I have—all unintentionally—done to your daughter and yourself. And if any means could be found by which it could add to Joy's happiness or lessen her sorrow I should in addition and as freely give my soul!"

Colonel Ogilvie's reception of these words was characteristic of the man, as he took himself to be. He drew himself up to his full height and stood at attention. Then he saluted, and followed his salute with a grave bow. The soldier in him spoke first, the man after. Both Joy and Athlyne noticed with new hope that he allowed the speaking of her name to pass unchallenged as a further cause of offence. Presently, and in a new tone, he said:

"I have taken it for granted from the allusions in your letter that you are the writer; and from your mentioning an alias have not been surprised at seeing a strange name in the signature. But I have been and am surprised at the familiarity from a man of your years to a man of mine of a mere Christian name."

It was now Athlyne's turn to be surprised.

"A Christian name!" he said with a puzzled pucker of his brows. "I am afraid I don't understand." Then a light dawning on him he said with a slight laugh: "But that is not my Christian name."

"Then your surname?" queried the Colonel.

"Nor my surname either." His laugh was now more pronounced, more boyish.

"Oh I see; still another alias!" The words were bitter; the tone of manifest offence.

Athlyne laughed again; it was not intentional but purely spontaneous. He was recalled to seriousness by the look of pain and apprehension on Joy's face and by the Colonel's angry words, given with a look of fury:

"I am not accustomed to be laughed at—and to my face Mr.—Mr.—Mr. Richard Hardy Athlyne et cetera."

His apology for inopportune mirth was given with contrition—even humbly:

“I ask your pardon, Colonel Ogilvie, very deeply, very truly. But the fact is that Athlyne is my proper signature, though it is neither Christian name nor surname. I do hope you will attribute my rudeness rather to national habit than to any personal wish to wound. Surely you will see that I would at least be foolish to transgress in such a direction, if it be only that I aim at so much that it is in your power to grant.” There was reason in this which there was no resisting. Colonel Ogilvie bowed—he felt that he could do no less. Athlyne wisely said no more; both men regarded the incident as closed.

With Joy it was different. The incident gave her the information she lacked for the completion of the circle of her knowledge. As with a flash she realised the whole secret: that this man who had saved her life and whom now her father wanted to kill was none other than the man whose name she had taken—at first in sport and only lately in order to protect herself from troubles of inquisitiveness and scandal. At the moment she was in reality the only one of the three—the only one at all—who had in her hand all the clues. Neither her father nor Athlyne knew that she had given to the maid at the hotel a name other than her own.

She began to have also an unconscious knowledge of something else. Something which she could not define, some intuition of some coming change; something which hinged on her giving of the name. Now, for the first time she realised how dangerous it may be for any one to take the name of any other person—for any purpose whatever, or from any cause. She could not see the end.

But though her brain did not classify the idea her blood did. She blushed so furiously that she had serious thoughts of escaping from the room. Nothing but the danger which might arise from such a step kept her in her place. But something must, she felt, be done. Things were so shaping towards reconciliation that it would be wise to prevent matters slipping back. For an instant she was puzzled as to what to do; then an inspiration came to her. Turning to her father she said:

“Daddy, let us ask the old Sheriff to come in again!” She felt that she could rely on his discretion, and that in his hands things might slide into calmer waters. Her father acquiesced willingly, and a courteous message was sent through a servant.

CHAPTER XXI.
APPLICATION OF LAW

Whilst the servant was gone there was a great clatter of arrival of a motor at the hotel; but all in Athlyne’s room were too deeply concerned with their own affairs to notice it.

Presently there was a light tap at the door, and the Sheriff's "May I come in?" was heard. Colonel Ogilvie went himself to the door and threw it open. Beside the Sheriff stood a lady, heavily clad and with a motor veil.

"Joy! Joy!" said the veiled figure, and Aunt Judy stepping forward took the girl in her arms. In the meantime the Sheriff was explaining the situation:

"I was just coming from my room in obedience to your summons, when this lady entered the hall. She was asking for you, Colonel, and for Miss Ogilvie, as who she had learned at the railway station, was stopping here. I ventured to offer my services, and as she was coming up here, undertook to pilot her."

Joy was delighted to see Judy. She had so long been accustomed to look with fixed belief on her love and friending that she now expected she would be able to set matters right. Had she had any doubt of her Aunt's affection such must have soon disappeared in the warmth of the embrace accorded by her. When this was concluded—which was soon for it was short, if strenuous—she turned to Colonel Ogilvie and held out her hand:

"Good morning, Lucius. I see you got here all right. I hope you had a good journey?" Then turning to Athlyne she said, as if in surprise:

"Why, Mr. Hardy, how are you? And how do you come to be here? We thought we were never going to see you again." Then she rattled on; it was evident to Joy, and to Colonel Ogilvie also, that she was purposeful to baffle comment by flow of her own speech:

"Lucius, you must thank this gentleman who is, as the landlady whispered to me, the Sheriff of somewhere or other. He's a nice man, but a funny sort of Sheriff. When I asked him where was his posse he didn't know what I meant." Here she was interrupted by the Sheriff who said with a low bow to her:

"It is enough for any man, dear lady, to be in *esse* in such a charming presence!" Judy did not comprehend the joke; but she knew, being a woman, that some sort of compliment was intended; and, being a woman, beamed accordingly:

"Thank you, sir, both for your kindness in helping me and for your pretty talk. Joy, I have brought your dressing bag and a fresh rig out. You must need them, poor dear. Now you must tell me all your adventures. I told them to bring the things presently to your room. I shall then come with you whilst you are changing. Now, Mr. Sheriff, we must leave you for a little; but I suppose that as you have to talk business—you told me they had sent for you—you will doubtless prefer to be without us?"

“Your pardon,” said the Sheriff gracefully. “I hope the time will never come when I shall prefer to be without such charming company!” This was said with such a meaning look, and in such a meaning tone, that Judy coloured. Joy, unseen by the others, smiled at her, rejoicing. The Sheriff, thinking they were moving off, turned to the Colonel saying:

“Now, Colonel Ogilvie, I am at your disposal; likewise such knowledge of law and custom as I possess.” He purposely addressed himself to Colonel Ogilvie, evidently bearing in mind Athlyne’s look of warning to silence regarding himself.

Whilst he had been speaking, Joy stood still, holding Judy by the hand and keeping her close to her. Judy whispered, holding her mouth close to her ear and trying to avoid the observation of the others:

“Come away dear whilst they are talking. They will be freer alone!” Joy whispered in return:

“No, I must not go. I must stay here, I am wanted. Do not say anything, dear—not a word; but stay by me.” Judy in reply squeezed her hand and remained silent. Colonel Ogilvie, with manifest uneasiness and after clearing his throat, said to the Sheriff:

“As you have been so good sir, as to tell me some matters of law; and as you have very kindly offered us other services, may I trespass on your kindness in enlightening me as to some matters of fact.” The Sheriff bowed; he continued:

“I must crave your indulgence, for I am in some very deep distress, and possibly not altogether master of myself. But I need some advice, or at any rate enlightenment as to some matters of law. And as I am far from home and know no one here who is of legal authority—except yourself,” this with a bow, “I shall be deeply grateful if I may accept your kindness and speak to you as a friend.” Again the Sheriff bowed, his face beaming. Colonel Ogilvie, with a swift, meaning glance at each of the others in turn, went on:

“I must ask you all to keep silent. I am speaking with this gentleman for my own enlightenment, and require no comments from any of you. Indeed, I forbid interruption!” Unpromising as this warning sounded, both Joy and Athlyne took a certain comfort from it. The point they both attached importance to was that Athlyne was simply classed with the rest without differentiation. The Sheriff, who feared lest the father’s domineering tone might provoke hostilities, spoke quickly:

“Now, Colonel Ogilvie, I am at your disposal for whatever you may wish to ask me.”

“I suppose Mr. Sheriff, I need not say, that I trust you will observe honourable silence regarding this whole painful affair; as I expect that all present will.” This was said with a threatening smile. When the Sheriff bowed acceptance of the condition he went on:

“Since you spoke to us here a little while ago a strange enlightenment has come to me. Indeed a matter so strange and so little in accord with the experiences of my own life that I am in a quandary. I should really like to know exactly how I—how we all stand at present. From what you have said about the Scottish marriage laws I take it that you have an inkling of what has gone on. And so, as you are in our confidence, you will not perhaps mind if I confide further in you?”

“I shall be deeply honoured, Colonel Ogilvie.”

“Thank you again, sir. You are a true friend to a man in deep distress and in much doubt … We are, as you perhaps know, Americans. My daughter’s life was saved by a gentleman in New York. I think it right to say that it was on his part a very gallant act, and that we were all deeply grateful to him. He came to my house—at my own invitation; and my wife and her sister, Miss Judith Hayes”—the Sheriff turned to Judy and bowed as at an introduction; she curtsied in reply—“were very pleased with him. But we never saw him again. He returned very soon afterwards to England; and though we were coming to London he never came near us. Indeed his neglect was marked; for though I invited him to call, he ignored us.” As he said this he looked straight at Athlyne with hard eyes. “I have reason to know that my daughter was much interested in him. Ordinarily speaking I should not mention a matter of this kind. But as I have received from him—it has only been made known to me in the interval since our meeting—an assurance of his affection and a proffer of marriage, I feel that I may speak.” He turned away and began walking up and down the room as though trying to collect his thoughts.

As Joy heard him speak of her own interest in the man and of his proposal of marriage she blushed deeply, letting her eyes fall. But when, by some of the divine instinct of love, she knew that he was looking ardently at her she raised them, swimming, to his. And so once more they looked deep into each other’s souls. Judy felt the trembling of the girl’s hand and held it harder with a sympathetic clasp, palm to palm and with fingers interlaced. She felt that she understood; and her eyes, too, became sympathetically suffused. The Sheriff had now no eyes except for Judy. Whilst the Colonel had been speaking he had looked at him of course—he knew well that it would be a cause of offence if he did not. But the walking up and down gave him opportunity for his wishes. Judy could not but recognise the ardour of his glance, and she too blushed exceedingly. Somehow, she was glad of it; she knew that blushing

became her, and she felt that she would like to look her best to the eyes of this fine, kindly old man.

When Colonel Ogilvie began to speak again there was a change in him. He seemed more thoughtful, more cautious, more self-controlled; altogether he was more like his old self. There was even a note of geniality in his voice.

“What I want to ask you in especial is this: How can we avoid any sort of scandal over this unhappy occurrence? My daughter has acted thoughtlessly in going out alone in a motor with a gentleman. Through a series of accidents it appears that that ride was unduly and unintentionally prolonged, and ended in her being caught in a fog and lost. By accident she came here, walking after the motor had broken down. She slept last night in that room; and the man, who had also found his way hither later, slept, unknowing of her proximity, in this. I need not tell you that such a state of things is apt to lead to a scandal. Now, and now only, is the time to prevent it” … He was interrupted by the Sheriff who spoke hurriedly, as one who had already considered the question and had his mind made up:

“There will be no scandal!” He spoke in so decided a way that the other was impressed.

“How do you know? What ground have you for speaking so decidedly?”

“It rests entirely on you—yourself, Colonel Ogilvie.”

“What!” His tone was laden with both anger and surprise. “Do you think I would spread any ill report of my own daughter? Sir, you must——” Once more the Sheriff cut into his speaking:

“You misapprehend me, Colonel Ogilvie. You misapprehend me entirely. Why should I—how could I think such a thing! No! I mean that if you accept the facts as they seem to me to be, no one—not you, nor any one else, can make scandal; if you do not!”

“Explain yourself,” he interrupted. “Nay, do not think me rude”—here he put up a deprecating hand—“but I am so deeply anxious about my daughter’s happiness—her future welfare and happiness,” he added as he remembered how his violent attitude had, only a few minutes ago imperilled—almost destroyed, that happiness. Joy had been, off and on, whispering a word to her aunt so that the latter was now fairly well posted in the late events.

“Quite so! quite so, my dear sir. Most natural thing in the world,” said the Sheriff soothingly. “Usual thing under the circumstances is to kill the man; or want to kill him!” As he spoke he looked at Athlyne meaningly. The other understood and checked

the words which were rising to his lips. Then, having tided over the immediate danger of explosion, the Sheriff went on:

“The fact is Colonel Ogilvie, that the series of doings (and perhaps misdoings) and accidents, which have led to our all meeting here and now, has brought about a strange conclusion. So far as I can see”—here his manner grew grave and judicial—“these two young people are at the present moment man and wife. Lawfully married according to Scottish law!”

The reception of this dictum was varied. Colonel Ogilvie almost collapsed in overwhelming amazement. Joy, blushing divinely, looked at her husband adoringly. Athlyne seemed almost transfigured and glorified; the realisation of all his hopes in this sudden and unexpected way showed unmistakably how earnest they had been. Judy, alone of all the party, was able to express herself in conventional fashion. This she did by clapping her hands and, then by kissing the whole party—except the Sheriff who half stood forward as though in hope that some happy chance might include him in the benison. She began with Joy and went on to her brother-in-law, who accepted with a better grace than she feared would have been accorded. When she came to Athlyne she hesitated for a moment, but with a “now-or-never” rush completed the act, and fell back shyly with a belated timorousness.

The Sheriff, having paused for the completion of this little domestic ceremony, went on calmly:

“Since I left you a few minutes ago I have busied myself with making a few necessary inquiries from my old servant Jane McBean, now McPherson. I made them, I assure you Colonel Ogilvie, very discreetly. Even Jane, who is in her way a clever woman, has no suspicion that I was even making inquiry. The result has been to confirm me in my original conjecture, which was to the effect that there has been executed between these two people an ‘irregular’ marriage!” At the mention of the words the Colonel exploded:

“God’s death, sir, the women of the Ogilvies don’t make irregular marriages!” The Sheriff went calmly on, only noticing the protest for the sake of answering it.

By this time Joy and Judith were close together, holding hands. Insensibly the girl drew her Aunt over to where Athlyne was standing and took him by the arm. He raised his other hand and with it covered the hand that lay on his arm, pressing it closer as he listened attentively to the Sheriff’s expounding of the law:

“I gather that I did not express myself clearly when a short time ago I spoke of the Scottish marriage laws. Let me now be more precise. And as I am trying to put into

words understandable by all a somewhat complex subject I shall ask that no one present will make any remark whatever till this part of my task has been completed. I shall then answer to the best of my power any question or questions which any of you may choose to ask me.

"Let me begin by assuring you all that what in Scottish law we call an 'irregular' marriage is equally binding in every way with a 'regular' marriage; the word only refers to form or method, and in no wise to the antecedents or to the result. In our law 'Mutual Consent' constitutes marriage. You will observe that I speak of marriage—not the proof of it. Proof is quite a different matter; and as it is formally to be certified by a Court it is naturally hedged in by formalities. This consent, whether proved or not, whether before witnesses or not, should of course be followed by co-habitation; but even this is not necessary. The dictum of Scots' law is '*Concensus non concubitus facit matrimonium*.' But I have a shrewd suspicion that the mind of the Court is helped to a declaration of validity when *concensus* has been followed by *concubitus*.

"Now let us take the present case and examine it as though testing it in a Court of Law; for such is the true means to be exact. This man and woman—we don't know 'gentleman' and 'lady' in the Law—declared in the presence of witnesses that they were man and wife. That is, the man declared to the police sergeant at Dalry that the woman was his wife; and the woman declared timeously to the police officer who made the arrest that the man was her husband. These two statements, properly set out, would in themselves be evidence not only of inferred consent by declaration *de præsenti* but of the same thing by 'habit and repute.' The law has been thus stated:

"'It may be held that a man and a woman, by living together and holding themselves out as married persons, have sufficiently declared their matrimonial consent; and in that case they will be declared to be married although no specific promise of marriage or of *de præsenti* acknowledgement has been proved.'

"But there is a still more cogent and direct proof, should such be required. Each of these consenting parties to the contract of 'marriage by consent,' on coming separately to this hotel last night gave to the servant of the house who admitted them the name by which I hold they are now bound in honourable wedlock!" He spoke the last sentences gravely and impressively after the manner of an advocate pressing home on a jury the conclusion of an elaborate train of reasoning. Whilst speaking he had kept his eyes fixed on Colonel Ogilvie, who unconsciously took it that an exhortation on patience and toleration was being addressed to him. The effect was increased by the action of Joy, who seeing him all alone and inferring his spiritual loneliness, left Judith but still holding Athlyne's arm drew the latter towards him. Then

she took her father's arm and stood between the two men whom she loved. Judy quietly took Athlyne's other arm, and so all stood in line holding each other as they faced the Sheriff. No one said a word; all were afraid to break the silence.

"We now come to further proofs if such be required. The woman, who arrived first, gave the name of Lady Athlyne." Here Joy got fearfully red; she was conscious of her father's eyes on her, even before she heard him say:

"That foolish joke again! Did not I forbid you to use it daughter?" She felt it would be unwise to answer, to speak at all just at present. In desperation she raised her eyes to the face of her lover—and was struck with a sort of horrified amazement. For an instant it had occurred to him that Joy must have known his identity—for some time past at all events. The thought was, however, but momentary. Her eyes fell again quickly, and she stood in abashed silence. There was nothing to do now but to wait. The calm voice of the Sheriff went on, like the voice of Doom:

"The man arrived later. He himself had wired in his own name for rooms; but by the time he had arrived the possibility of his coming had, owing to the fog, been given up. The other traveller had been given the bedroom, and he slept on the sofa in the sitting-room—this room." As he spoke he went over to the door of communication between the rooms and examined the door. There were no fastenings except the ordinary latch; neither lock nor bolt. He did not say a word, but walked back to his place. Judy could not contain her curiosity any longer; she blurted out:

"What name did he give?" The Sheriff looked at her admiringly as he answered:

"The name he gave, dear lady, was 'Athlyne'!"

"Is that your name?" she queried—this time to Athlyne.

"It is!" He pulled himself up to his full height and stood on his dignity as he said it. His name should not be dishonoured if he could help it.

Colonel Ogilvie stood by with an air of conscious superiority. He already knew the name from Athlyne's letter, though he had not up to that moment understood the full import of it. He was willing to be further informed through Judy's questioning.

"And you are Lord Athlyne—the Earl of Athlyne?"

"Certainly!"

To the astonishment of every one of the company Judy burst into a wild peal of hysterical laughter. This closely followed a speech of broken utterance which only some of those present understood at all—and of those some only some few partly.

“Athlyne!”—“kill him for it!”—“calling herself by his name,”—“oh! oh! A-h-h!” There was a prolonged screech and then hysterical laughter followed. At the first this unseemly mirth created a feeling of repulsion in all who heard. It seemed altogether out of place; in the midst of such a serious conversation, when the lives and happiness of some of those present were at stake, to have the train of thought broken by so inopportune a cachinnation was almost unendurable. Colonel Ogilvie was furious. Well was it for the possibilities of peace that his peculiar life and ideas had trained him to be tolerant of woman’s weakness, and to be courteous to them even under difficulties. For had he given any expression to his natural enough feelings such would inevitably have brought him into collision—intellectual if not physical—with both Athlyne and the Sheriff; and either was to be deplored. Joy was in her heart indignant, for several reasons. It was too hard that, just as things were possibly beginning to become right and the fine edge of tragedy to be turned, her father’s mind should be taken back to anger and chagrin. But far beyond this on the side of evil was the fact that it imperilled afresh the life of—of the man she loved, her ... her husband. Even the personal aspect to her could not be overlooked. The ill-timed laughter prevented her hearing more of ... of the man who it now seemed was already her husband. However she restrained and suppressed herself and waited, still silent, for the development of things. But she did not consider looks as movements; she raised her eyes to Athlyne’s adoringly, and kept them there. He in turn had been greatly upset for the moment; even now, whilst those wild peals of hysterical laughter continued to resound, he could not draw any conclusions from the wild whirl of inchoate thoughts. There was just one faint gleam of light which had its origin rather in instinct than reason, that perhaps the interruption had its beneficial side which would presently be made manifest. When Joy looked towards him there was a balm for his troubled spirit. In the depths of her beautiful eyes he lost himself—and his doubts and sorrows, and was content.

The only one unmoved was the Sheriff. His mental attitude allowed him to look at things more calmly than did those personally interested. With the exception of one phase—that of concern that this particular woman, who had already impressed her charming personality on his heart, should be in such distress—he could think, untroubled, of the facts before him. With that logical mind of his, and with his experience of law and the passions that lead to law-invoking, he knew that the realization of Athlyne’s name and position was a troublesome matter which might have been attended with disastrous consequences. To a man of Colonel Ogilvie’s courage and strong passion the presence of an antagonist worthy of his powers is rather an incentive to quarrel than a palliative.

As to poor Judy she was in no position to think at all. She was to all practical intents, except for the noise she was occasionally making—her transport was subsiding—as one who is not. She continued intermittently her hysterical phrenzy—to laugh and cry, each at the top note—and commingling eternally. She struggled violently as she sat on the chair into which she had fallen when the attack began; she stamped her heels on the floor, making a sound like gigantic castanets. The sound and restless movement made an embarrassing *milieu* for the lucid expression of law and entangled facts; but through it all the Sheriff, whose purpose after all was to convince Ogilvie, went on with his statement. By this time Joy, and Athlyne, whom with an appealing look she had summoned to help, were endeavouring to restore Judy. One at either side they knelt by her, holding her hands and slapping them and exercising such other ministrations as the girl out of her limited experience of such matters could, happily to soothing effect, suggest. The Sheriff's voice, as calm voices will, came through the disturbance seemingly unhindered:

"Thus you will note that in all this transaction the Earl of Athlyne had made no disguise of his purpose. To the police who arrested him he at once disclosed his identity, which the sergeant told me was verified by the name on his motor-driver's license. He telegraphed to the hotel by his title—as is fitting and usual; and he gave his title when he arrived. As I have already said, he stated to the police, at first on his own initiative and later when interrogated directly on the point, that the woman in the motor was his wife. And the identity of the woman in the motor and the woman in the hotel can easily be proved. Thus on the man's part there is ample evidence of that matrimonial purpose which the law requires. All this without counting the letter to the woman's father, in which he stated his wish and intention to marry her.

"Now as to the woman—and I must really apologise to her for speaking of the matter in her presence."—Here Athlyne interrupted his ministrations with regard to Judy in order to expostulate:

"Oh, I say Mr. Sheriff. Surely it is not necessary." But the Sheriff shut him up quite shortly. He had a purpose in so doing: he wished in his secret heart to warn both Athlyne and Joy not to speak a word till he had indicated that the time had come for so doing.

"There is nothing necessary, my Lord; except that both you and the young lady should listen whilst I am speaking! I am doing so for the good of you both; and I take it as promised that neither of you will say a single word until I have told you that you may do so."

"Quite right!" this was said *sotto voce* by Colonel Ogilvie.

“You, young madam, have taken upon yourself the responsibilities of wifehood; and it is right as well as necessary that you understand them; such of them at least as have bearing upon the present situation.

“As to the woman. She, when questioned by the police as to her status for the purpose of verification of Lord Athlyne’s statement, accepted that statement. Later on, she of her own free will and of her own initiative, gave her name as Lady Athlyne—only the bearer of which could be the wife of the Defender; I mean of Lord Athlyne.” The interruption this time came from Colonel Ogilvie.

“If Lord Athlyne is Defender, who is the other party?”

“Lady Athlyne, or Miss Ogilvie, in whichever name she might take action, would be the Pursuer!”

“Sir!” thundered the Colonel, going off as usual at half-cock, “do you insinuate that my daughter is pursuer of a man?” He grew speechless with indignation. The Sheriff’s coolness stood to him there, when the fury of the Kentuckian was directed to him personally. In the same even tone he went on speaking:

“I must ask—I really *must* ask that you do not be so hasty in your conclusions whilst I am speaking, Colonel Ogilvie. You must understand that I am only explaining the law; not even giving any opinion of my own. The terminology of Scot’s Law is peculiar, and differs from English law in such matters. For instance what in English law is ‘Plaintiff and Defendant’ becomes with us ‘Pursuer and Defender.’ There may be a female as well as a male Pursuer. Thus on the grounds of present consent as there is ample proof of Matrimonial Consent of either and both parties—sufficient for either to use against the other. I take it that the Court would hold the marriage proved; unless *both* parties repudiated the Intent. This I am sure would never be; for if there were any mutual affection neither would wish to cause such gossip as would inevitably ensue. And if either party preferred that the union should continue, either from motives of love or interest, the marriage could be held good. And I had better say at once, since it is a matter to be considered by any parent, that should there have been any valid ground for what you designate as ‘scandal,’ such would in the eyes of the law be only the proper and necessary completion of the act of marriage. And let me say also that the fact of the two parties, thus become one by the form of Irregular Marriage, having passed the night in this suite of rooms without bolt of fastening on the connecting door would be taken by a Court as proof of consummation. No matter by what entanglement of events—no matter how or by what accident or series of accidents the two parties came into this juxtaposition!

“There is but one other point to be considered regarding the validity of this marriage. It is that of compliance with the terms of Lord Brougham’s Act of 1856. The man has undoubted domicile in Scotland for certain legal purposes. But the marriage law requires a further and more rigid reading of residence than mere possession of estates. The words are that one of the parties to the marriage must ‘have his or her usual place of residence’ in this Country. But as I have shown you that in Lord Athlyne’s case his living in Scotland for several weeks in one or other of his own houses would be certainly construed by any Court as compliance with the Act, I do not think that any question of legality could arise. Indeed it is within my own knowledge that as a Scottish peer—Baron of Ceann-da-Shail—who declared Scottish domicile on reaching his majority and whose ‘domicile of origin’ was not affected by his absence as an officer in foreign service, his status for the purpose of Scottish marriage is unassailable.

“In fine let me point out that I am speaking altogether of *proof* of the marriage itself. The actual marriage is in law the consent of the parties; and such has undoubtedly taken place. The only possible condition of its nullity would be the repudiation of the implied Consent by both of the parties. One alone would not be sufficient!

“And now, Colonel Ogilvie, as I believe it will be well that you and the two young people should consider the situation from this point of view, will you allow me to withdraw—still on the supposition that you will join me later at breakfast. And if this merry lady”—pointing to Judy who had gained composure sufficiently to hear the end of his explanation—“will honour me by coming to my sitting-room, just below this, where breakfast will be served, it may perhaps be better. I take it that you will be all able to speak more freely, you and your daughter—and her husband!”

He withdrew gracefully, giving his arm to Judy who having risen bashfully had taken his extended arm. She was blushing furiously.

The door closed behind him, leaving Joy standing between her father and Athlyne, and holding an arm of each.

CHAPTER XXII.
THE HATCHET BURIED

For a few minutes there was silence in the room; silence so profound that every sound of the street was clearly heard. Even the shutting of the Sheriff’s door in the room below was distinct.

The first to speak was Colonel Ogilvie. Athlyne, who would have liked to break the silence refrained through prudence; he feared that were he to speak before Colonel

Ogilvie did, that easily-irate gentleman might take offence. He knew that this might be disastrous, for it would renew the old strife in an acute form; as it was, there were distinct indications of coming peace. Joy, and Joy alone, was to be thought of now. By this time Athlyne was beginning to get the measure of Colonel Ogilvie's foot. He realised that the dictatorial, vindictive, blood-thirsty old man would perhaps do much if left to himself; but that if hindered or thwarted or opposed in any way his pride or his vanity—and they were united in him—would force him to keep his position at any cost.

"Well, sir?" The tone was so peremptory and so "superior" that any man to whom it had been used might well have taken offence; but Athlyne was already schooled to bear, and moreover the statement made by the Sheriff filled his heart with such gladness that he felt that he could bear anything. As Joy was now his wife he *could* not quarrel with her father—nor receive any quarrel from him. Still, all the same, he felt that he must support and maintain his own independent position; such would be the best road to ultimate peace. Moreover, he had his own pride; and as he had already made up his mind to die if need be for Joy's sake, he could not go back on that resolution without seeming to be disloyal to her. There would—could—be no hiding anything from her as she had already heard the whole of the quarrel and of his acquiescence to her father's challenge. No one, however, would have thought he had any quarrel who heard his reply, spoken in exquisitely modulated accents of respect:

"Need I say, Colonel Ogilvie, that I am equally proud and happy in finding myself allied with your House by my marriage with your daughter. For, sir, I love her with all my soul, as well as with all my heart and mind. She is to me the sweetest, dearest and best thing in all the universe. I am proud of her and respect her as much as I love her; and to you, her father, I hope I may say that I bless—and shall ever bless for so long as I live—the day that I could call her mine." As he spoke, Joy's hand on his arm, which had trembled at the beginning, now gripped him hard and firmly. Turning his eyes to hers he saw in them a look of adoration which made his heart leap and his blood seem on fire. The beautiful eyes fell for an instant as a red tide swept her face and neck; but in an instant more they were raised to his eyes and hung there, beaming with pride and love and happiness. This nerved and softened him at once, to even a gentler feeling towards the old man; those lovely eyes had always looked trustingly and lovingly into her father's, and he would never disturb—so he vowed to himself—if he could avoid it by any sacrifice on his part, such filial and parental affection. And so, with gentler voice and softened mien, he went on speaking.

"Now I must ask you to believe, sir, that with the exception of that one fault—a grave one I admit—of taking Miss Ogilvie out alone in my motor I have not willingly or consciously been guilty of any other disrespect towards you. You now understand, of

course, that it was that unhappy assumed name which prevented my having the pleasure of visiting you and your family on this side of the Atlantic. No one can deplore more than I do that unhappy alias. The other, though I regret—and regret deeply—the pain it has caused, I cannot be sorry for, since it has been the means of making Joy my wife."

Here he beamed down into the beautiful grey eyes of the said wife who was still holding his arm. As he finished she pinched gently the flesh of his arm. This sent a thrill through him; it was a kiss of sorts and had much the same effect as the real thing. Joy noted the change in his voice as he went on:

"I so respected your wishes, sir, that I did not actually ask in words Joy to be my wife until I should have obtained your permission to address myself to her. If you will look at that letter you will see that it was written at Ceann-da-Shail, my place in Ross-shire—days before I posted it."

"Then if you did not ask her to marry you; how is it that you are now married—according to the Sheriff?" He thought this a poser, and beamed accordingly. Athlyne answered at once:

"When two people love each other, sir, as Joy and I do, speech is the least adequate form of expression. We did not want words; we knew!" Again Joy squeezed his arm and they stood close together in a state of rapture. The Colonel, with some manifest hesitation, said:

"With regard to what the Sheriff spoke of as 'real cause of scandal,' was there. ...?"

"That, sir," said Athlyne interrupting with as fierce and truculent an aspect as had been to the Colonel at any moment of the interview "is a subject on which I refuse to speak, even to you." Then after a pause he added:

"This I will say to you as her father who is entitled to hear it: Joy's honour is as clear and stainless as the sunlight. Whatever has taken place has been my doing, and I alone am answerable for it." Whilst he was speaking Joy stood close to him, silent and with downcast eyes. In the prolonged silence which ensued she raised them, and letting go Athlyne's arm stepped forward towards her father with flashing eyes:

"Father what he says is God's truth. But there is one other thing which you should know, and you must know it from me since he will not speak. He is justified in speaking of my honour, for it was due—and due alone—to his nobility of character that I am as I am. That and your unexpected arrival. For my part I would have——"

“Joy!” Athlyne’s voice though the tone was low, rang like a trumpet. Half protest it was, half command. Instinctively the woman recognised the tone and obeyed, as women have obeyed the commands of the men they loved, and were proud to do so, from Eden garden down the ages.

“Speak on, daughter! Finish what you were saying.” His voice was strangely soft and his eyes were luminous beneath their shaggy white brows. Joy’s answering tone was meek:

“I cannot, father. My … Mr.—Lord Athlyne desires that I should be silent.” She was astonished at his reply following:

“Well, perhaps he is right. Better so!” Then in *sotto voce* to Athlyne:

“Women should not be allowed to talk sometimes. They go too far when they get to self-abasement!” Athlyne nodded. Again silence which Colonel Ogilvie broke:

“Well, sir. I suppose we must take it that the marriage is complete in Scotch law. So far for the past. What of the future?” In a low voice Athlyne replied:

“Whose future?”

“Yours—yours and my daughter’s.” He was amazed at Athlyne’s reply, spoken in a voice both low and sad: so too was Joy:

“Of that I cannot say. It does not rest with me.”

“Not rest with you, sir? Then with whom does it rest.” Athlyne raised his eyes and looked him straight in the face:

“With you!”

“With me?” the Colonel’s voice was faint with amazement.

“Yes, with you! What future have I, already condemned to death! What future has my wife, whose sentence of widowhood came even before the knowledge of her marriage! Do you forget Colonel Ogilvie that my life is pledged to you? On your own doing, I took that obligation; but having taken it I must abide by it. Such future as may be for either of us rests with you!” Colonel Ogilvie did not pause before answering. He spoke quickly as one whose mind is made up:

“But that is all over.” Athlyne said quietly:

“You had not said so! In an affair of this kind the challenged man is not free to act. Pacific overture must be with the one who considering himself injured has sought this

means of redress." Joy listening, with her heart sinking and her hand so trembling that she took it from his arm lest it should upset him, was amazed. He was at least as determined as her father. But she was rejoiced to see that his stiffness was having its effect; her father was evidently respecting this very quality so much that he was giving way to his opponent. Seeing this, and recognising in her woman's way for the first time in her life this fundamental force, she made up her mind that she too would on her side keep steadfastly to her convictions just as ... as ... He had done. In silence she waited for what would follow this new development going on before her eyes. Presently Colonel Ogilvie spoke:

"I suppose Lord Athlyne you are satisfied with the validity of the marriage?" He answered heartily:

"Of course I am! The Sheriff was quite clear about it; and what he says is sufficient for me."

"And your intention?"

"Sir, from the first moment when my eyes lit on your daughter I had only one intention, and that was to make her my wife. Be quite satisfied as to me! I am fixed as Fate! If there is any hindrance to my wishes it can only come from my wife. But understand this: that if for any cause whatever she may wish this marriage annulled, or consider that it has not been valid, she has only to indicate her wish and I shall take any step in my power to set her free."

"Father!" Colonel Ogilvie turned in astonishment at the sound of his daughter's voice, which was in such tone as he had never heard from her. It rang; her mind was made up:

"Father, a while ago when you seemed in some grave trouble I asked you why you did not ask me anything. I told you I had never lied to you and should not do so then; but you asked me nothing. Why don't you ask me now?"

"What should I ask you, little girl. You are married; and your duty is to some one else whose name you bear. Besides, I don't ask women questions which may be painful to answer. Such I ask of men!"

To this she spoke in a calm voice which made Athlyne uneasy. He could not imagine what she was coming at; but he felt that whatever it might be it was out of the truth of her nature, and that he must support her. Her love he never doubted. In the meantime he must listen patiently and learn what she had to say.

“Well father, as you will not ask I must speak unasked. It is harder; that is all. The Sheriff said that mutual intention was necessary for marriage. Let me tell you that I had not then such intention! I must say it. I have never lied to you yet; and I don’t intend to begin now. Especially when I am entering on a new life with a man whom I love and honour. For if this marriage be not good we shall soon have one that is—if he will have me.” Athlyne took her hand; she sighed joyfully as she went on:

“I certainly did intend to marry Mr. … Lord Athlyne when … when he should formally ask me; but I understood then that there was some obstacle to his doing so. This I now know to be that he was wanting to get your consent beforehand. But if I did not then intend that our coming for a run in the motor together was to be marriage, how can I by that act be married?” As she paused Athlyne realised what was the cause of that vague apprehension which had chilled him. Colonel Ogilvie was beset by a new difficulty by this new attitude of Joy. If she repudiated intention such would nullify the marriage, since Athlyne had signified his intention of letting her have her way. If there were no marriage, then there would be scandal. So before beginning to argue with his daughter on the subject of the validity of the marriage, he thought it well to bring to the aid of reason the forces of fear. He commenced by intimidation:

“Of course you understand, daughter, that if you and Lord Athlyne were not married through the accidents of your escapade, there will be scandal from it; there is no other alternative. In that case, such pacific measures as I have now acceded to will be abrogated; and the gentleman who was the cause of the evil must still answer to me for it.” At this threat Joy grew ghastly pale. Athlyne, wrung to the heart by it, forgot his intention of discretion and said quickly and sharply:

“That is not fair, Colonel Ogilvie. She is a woman—if she *is* your daughter, and is not to be treated brutally. You must not strike at a man through a woman. If you want to strike a man do so direct! I am the man. Strike me, how and when you will; but this woman is my wife—at least she is until she repudiates our marriage! But till then by God! no man—not even her father himself—shall strike her or at her, or through her!” Both he and Joy were surprised at the meek way in which the old man received this tirade. But even whilst he had been uttering the cruel threat both his conscience and his courage had been against him. This, the man and the woman who heard could, from evidence, divine. But there was another cause of which they had no knowledge. The moment after speaking, when his blind passion began to cool, the last words of his wife came back to his memory: “Be good to her, and never forget that she can suffer most through any one dear to her.” Furthermore, the recollection of Judy’s words as he was leaving clinched the matter: “You hold poor Joy’s life—which is her

heart—in your hand!" He began his reply to Athlyne truculently—as was usual to him; but melted quickly as he went on:

"Hey-day my young bantam-cock; you flash your spurs boldly. ... But I don't know but you're right. I was wrong; I admit it! Joy my dear I apologise for it; and to you too, sir, who stand up so valiantly and so readily for your wife. I am glad my little girl has such a defender; though it is and will be a sad thought to me that I was myself the first to cause its evidence. But keep your hair on, young man! Men sometimes get hurt by running up against something that's quite in its right place. ... It's my place to look after my little girl—till such time as you have registered your bond-rights. And see, doesn't she declare she had no idea she was being married. However, it's all right in this case. I don't mean her to give herself away over this part of the job any more than you did a while ago when you stopped her telling me something that it wouldn't have been wise to say. So, sir, guess we'll call it quits this time. Well, little girl, let me tell you that you've said all at once to me two different things. You said you *didn't* intend to marry Lord Athlyne that time, but that you *did* at some other. If that last doesn't make an intention to marry I'm a Dutchman. I think we'd better let it rest at that! Now as to you Lord Athlyne! You seem to want—and rightly enough I'll allow—that I make a formal retraction of my demand for your life. Well I do so now. There's my hand! I can give it to you freely, for you are a brave man and you love my little girl; and my little girl loves you. I'm right sorry I didn't know you at the first as I do now. But I suppose the fact is, I was jealous all along. You don't know—yet—what I know: that you were thrown at me in a lot of ways before I ever saw you, by the joke that my little girl and Judy put up on me. When I knew that my girl was calling herself by your name. ..."

"Daddy dear!" This was Joy's protest. "Yes, little girl, I won't give you away; but your husband should know this fact lest he keep a grudge in his heart against your old daddy—and I know you wouldn't like that. You can tell him, some of these days or nights, what you like yourself about the whole thing from the first. I dare say he'll want to know, and won't let you alone till you tell him. And I dare say not then; for he'll like—he's bound to—all you can say. Here, Athlyne—I suppose that's what I am to call you since you're my son now—at any rate my daughter's husband." As he spoke he held out his hand. Athlyne jumped forward and seized it warmly. The two men shook hands as do two strong men who respect each other. Joy stepped forward and took the clasped hands between her own. When the hands parted she kissed her husband and then her father; she had accepted the situation.

After a pause Athlyne said, quietly but with a very resolute look on his face:

“I understand, sir, that the hatchet is now buried. But I want to say that this must be final. I do so lest you should ever from any cause wish to dig it up again. Oh, yes I understand”—for the Colonel was going to speak “but I have had a warning. Just now when it seemed that Joy was going to repudiate—though happily as it turned out for only a time—our marriage as an existing fact, you re-opened that matter which I had then thought closed. Now as for the future Joy’s happiness is my duty as well as my privilege and my pleasure, I must take all precautions which I can to insure it. It would not do if she could ever have in her mind a haunting fear that you and I could quarrel. I know that for my own part I would be no party to a quarrel with you. But I also have reason to know that a man’s own purpose is nothing when some one else wants to quarrel with him. Therefore for our dear Joy’s sake——”

“Good!” murmured the Colonel. “*Our* dear Joy’s sake!” Athlyne repeated the phrase—he loved to do so:

“For our dear Joy’s sake will you not promise that you will never quarrel with me.”

“Indeed I will give the promise—and more. Listen here, little girl, for it is for your sake. I find I have been wrong to quarrel so readily and without waiting to understand. If a nigger did it I think I’d understand, for I don’t look for much from him. But I do expect much from myself; and therefore I’ll go back a bit and go a bit farther. Hear me promise, so help me God, I’ll never quarrel again! Quarrel to kill I mean of course. Now, sir, are you satisfied!” Joy flung herself into his arms cooing lovingly:

“Dear, dear Daddy. Oh thank you so much; you have made me so happy! That promise is the best wedding-gift you could possibly give me!” Athlyne took the hand extended to him and wrung it heartily:

“And I too, thank you, sir. And, as I want to share in all Joy’s happiness and in her pleasant ways, I hope you will let me—as her husband—call you Daddy too?”

“Indeed you may, my boy; I’ll be right glad!”

It was a happy trio that stood there, the two men’s right hands clasping, and Joy once more holding the linked hands between hers.

“We may go join the Sheriff and Judy I think, little girl!” said the Colonel presently. He felt that he wanted to get back to himself from the unaccustomed atmosphere of sentiment which encompassed him.

“Just one moment—Daddy!” said Athlyne speaking the familiar name with an effort and looking at Joy as he did so. The approval shining from her beautiful eyes encouraged him, and he went on more freely:

“Now that our dear Joy is my care I should like to make a proposition. The Sheriff’s suggestion is good, and his reading of the law seems as if it were all right; but, after all, there is no accounting for what judges and juries may decide. Now I want—and we all want—that there be no doubt about this marriage—now or hereafter. And I therefore suggest that presently Joy and I shall again exchange Matrimonial Intention and Consent, or whatever is the strongest way that can be devised to insure a flawless marriage. We can even write this down and both sign it, and you and the Sheriff and Judy shall witness. So that whatever has been before—though this will not disturb it—will be made all taut and secure!” Joy’s comment was:

“And I shall be married to my husband a second time!”

“Yes, darling” said Athlyne putting his arm round her and drawing her close to him. She came willingly and put her arms round him. They embraced and kissed each other and he said:

“Yes darling; but wait a moment, I have a further suggestion. In addition to this we can have a ‘regular’ marriage to follow these two irregular ones. I shall go to London and get a special license from the Archbishop of Canterbury, who is a connection of my own. With this we shall have a religious marriage to supplement the civil ones. We can be married, sir, in your own rooms, or in a church, just as Joy wishes—and, of course, as her mother and her Daddy wish. We can be married the third time, Joy darling, in Westminster Abbey if you so desire!”

“Anywhere you choose—darling!” she spoke the last word shyly “will be what I wish. I am glad I am to be married three times to you.”

“Why darling?”

“Because darling” she spoke the word now without shyness or hesitation. “I love you enough for three husbands; and now we must have three honeymoons!” she danced about the room gaily, clapping her hands like a happy child.

When they were ready to go to breakfast Colonel Ogilvie instinctively offered his arm to Joy, but catching sight of Athlyne drew back and motioned to him to take the honourable place. The husband was pleased, but seeing a new opening for conciliation he said heartily:

“No, no. I hope the time will never come when my wife won’t love to go with her father!” The old man was pleased and called to his daughter:

“Come, little girl, you have got to take us both!” She took her husband’s arm as well as her father’s; and all three moved towards the door. When they got there, however,

some change was necessary, for it was not possible to pass through three abreast. Each of the men was willing to give place to the other; but before either man could move, or indeed before either had his mind made up what to do, the quicker-witted woman slipped back behind them. There taking Athlyne's hand in hers she had placed it on her father's arm. As they both were about to protest against going in front of her she said hastily:

"Please, please Daddy and ... Husband I would really rather you two went first, and arm in arm as father and son should go. For that is what it is to be from this on; isn't it? I would rather a thousand times see the two men I love best in all the world going so, than walk in front of them as a Queen."

"That's very prettily said!" was the comment of her father. Then with a fond look back at her he took the young man's hand from his own arm and placed his own hand on the other's arm. "That's better!" he said. "Age leaning on Youth, and Beauty smiling on both!"

And in this wise they entered the Sheriff's room, in time to see him sitting at one end of the sofa and Judy sitting at the furthest corner away from him—blushing.

CHAPTER XXIII.
A HARMONY IN GRAY

As the trio entered the room Judy jumped from the sofa vivaciously. The Sheriff followed with an agility wonderful in a man of his age; he bade them all welcome with a compelling heartiness. Judy was full of animation; indeed she out-did herself to a degree which made Joy raise her eyebrows. Joy was a sympathetic soul, and unconsciously adapted herself to her Aunt's supra-vivacity.

To Colonel Ogilvie, less enthusiastic by nature and concern, it appeared that she was as he put it in his own mind "playing up to the old girl." He seemed to realise that the Sheriff was ardent in his intentions; and, with the calm, business-like aptitude of a brother-in-law to a not-young lady, had already made up his mind to give his consent.

Judy flew to Joy and kissed her fervently. The kisses were returned with equal warmth, and the two women rocked in each other's arms, to the envy, if delight, of certain of the onlookers viewing the circumstance from different standpoints. Judy took her niece to the now-vacated sofa, and an animated whispering began between them. Joy's attention was, however, distracted; her senses had different objectives. Her touch was to Judy sitting beside her and holding her close in a loving embrace; her ears were to her father who was talking to the Sheriff. But her eyes were all with her husband, devouring him. There came a timid knock at the door, and in answer to the

Sheriff's "Come in," it was partly opened. The voice of the landlady was heard: "May I speak with ye a moment, Sheriff?" He went over to the door, and a whispered colloquy ensued, all his guests turning their eyes away and endeavouring in that way, as usual, to seem not to be listening. Then the Sheriff, having closed the door, said:

"Our good hostess tells me that there will be a full half hour of waiting before we can breakfast, if she is to have proper time to do justice to the food which she wishes to place before us. So I must ask pardon of you all."

"Capital! Capital!" said Colonel Ogilvie, "that half hour is just what we want. Mr. Sheriff, we have a little ceremony to go through before we breakfast. The fact is we are going to have an Irregular Marriage. If you are able to take part in such a thing I hope you will assist us." Joy rose up and stood beside Athlyne. The Sheriff answered:

"Be quite easy on that point, sir. I am not in my own shrieval district, and so, even if such were contra to my duties at home, I am free to act as an individual elsewhere. But who are the contracting parties? You are married already; so too are your daughter and my Lord Athlyne. Indeed it looks, Miss Hayes, as if you and I are the only available parties left. But I fear such great happiness is not for me; though I would give anything in the wide world to win it!" He bowed to her gallantly and took her hand. She looked quite embarrassed—though not distressed, and giggled like a schoolgirl.

"Indeed, Mr. Sheriff!" she said, "this is very sudden. Affairs of the heart seem to move quickly in this delightful country!" As she spoke she looked at Joy and Athlyne who happened to be at the moment standing hand in hand. Joy came over and sat beside her and kissed her. Athlyne, in obedience to a look from his wife, kissed her too. Then the Colonel gallantly followed suit. There was only the Sheriff left, and he, after a pause, took advantage of the occasion and kissed her also. Then to relieve her manifest embarrassment he spoke out:

"I fear I have diverted your purpose, Colonel Ogilvie. I am not sorry for it"—this with a look at Judy which made her blush afresh "but I apologize. I take it that you were alluding to something in which I am to have a less prominent part than I have suggested."

"The marriage, sir, is to be between Lord Athlyne and my daughter." As he spoke Athlyne went to a side table whereon were spread the Sheriff's writing materials. He took a sheet of paper and began to write. Colonel Ogilvie went on:

"We have come to the conclusion that, though the act of marriage which has already taken place between these two young people is in your view lawful and complete, it may be well to go through the ceremony in a more formal manner. There are, we all

know, intricacies and pitfalls in law; and we are both agreed with the suggestion of my lord that it would be well not to allow any loophole for after attack. Therefore in your presence—if you will be so good," the Sheriff bowed, "they shall again pledge their mutual Matrimonial Consent. They will both sign the paper to that effect which I see Lord Athlyne is preparing; and we shall all sign it as witnesses. Then, when this new marriage is complete—and irrefragable as I understand from what you said awhile ago it will be—we shall be ready for breakfast. It will be more than perhaps you expected when you so kindly asked us to be your guests: a wedding breakfast!"

Judy whispered to her niece.

"Joy, you must come to your room and let me dress you properly. I have brought a dress with me."

"What dress dear?" she asked.

"The tweed tailor-made."

"But, Judy dear, I have on a white frock, and that is more suitable for my wedding."

"That was all right yesterday, dear. But to-day you shall not wear white. You are already a married lady; this is only a re-marriage." A beautiful blush swept over Joy's face as she looked at her husband writing away as hard as his pen could move.

"I shall wear white to-day!" she said in the same whisper, and stood up.

Just at that moment a fly drove quickly past the window. It stopped at the hotel door, and there was a sudden bustle of arrival. Voices raised to a high pitch were heard outside. Various comments were heard in the room.

"That's mother!"

"My wife!"

"Sally!"

"Why Aunt Judy that's the voice of Mrs. O'Brien!"

"My Foster-mother!"

The door opened, and in swept Mrs. Ogilvie who flew first to her husband's arms; and then, after a quick embrace, seemed to close round Joy and obliterate her. A similar eclipse took place with regard to Athlyne; for Mrs. O'Brien dashed into the room and calling out as though invoking the powers of earth and heaven: "Me bhoy! me bhoy!"

fell upon him. He seemed really glad to see her, and yielded himself to her embrace as freely as though he had been a child again.

“Joy dear,” said Mrs. Ogilvie “I hope you are all right. After your father and then Judy had gone, I was so anxious about you, that I got the north mail stopped and caught it at Penrith. Just as I was going to get ready for the journey Mrs. O’Brien came in. She had written to me in London that she would like to pay her respects, and I had said we were going on to Ambleside but would be glad if she would come and see us there and spend a few days with us.” Mrs. O’Brien who was all ears, here cut into the conversation:

“Aye, an Miss Joy acushla,—my service to ye miss!—she sent me postal ordhers to cover me railway fare an me expinces. Oh! the kind heart iv her!”

She had by now released Athlyne and stood back from him pointing at him as she spoke:

“An comin’ here through yer ladyship’s goodness who do I find but me beautiful bhoy. Luk at him! Luk at him! Luk at him!” Her voice rose in crescendo at each repetition. “The finest, dearest, sweetest, bonniest child that ever a woman tuk to her breast. An now luk at him well. The finest, up-standinest, handsomest, dearest, lovinest man that the whole wurrld houlds. That doesn’t forget his ould fosther mother an him an Earrll, wid castles iv his own, an medals on to him an Victory Crasses. An it’s a gineral he ought to be. Luk at him, God bless him!” She turned to one after another of the party in turn as though inviting their admiration. Joy came and, putting her arms round the old woman’s neck, hugged and kissed her. When she got free, Mrs. O’Brien said to Athlyne:

“An phwat are ye doin’ here me darlin’ acushla me lord—av I may make so bould as t’ ask ye? How did ye come here; and phwat brung ye that yer ould nurse might have her eyes made glad wid sight iv ye?”

“I am here, my dear, because I am married to Joy Ogilvie, and we are going to be married again!”

Then the storm of comment broke, all the women speaking at once and in high voices suitable to a momentous occasion:

“What, what?” said Mrs. Ogilvie. “Married to my daughter! Colonel Ogilvie, how is it that I was not informed of this coming event?”

“Faith, my dear I don’t know” he answered “I never knew it—and—and I believe they didn’t know it themselves … till the moment before it was done.” He added the last

part of the sentence in deference to the Sheriff's direction as to 'intention.' Fortunately the Sheriff had not heard his remark.

"Do explain yourself, Lucius. I am all anxiety."

"My dear, yesterday Joy made an irregular marriage with Lord Athlyne!"

"Good God!" The exclamation gave an indication of the social value of "irregular" marriage to persons unacquainted with Scottish law. Her husband saw that she was pained and tried to reassure her:

"You need not distress yourself, my dear. It is all right. 'Irregular' is only a name for a particular form of marriage in this Country. It is equally legal with any other marriage."

"But who is Lord Athlyne, and where is he? That is the name of the man who Mrs. O'Brien told Joy was the only man good enough for her."

"Lord Athlyne" said Colonel Ogilvie "at present our son-in-law, is none other than Mr. Richard Hardy with whom you shook hands just now!"

"Lucius, I am all amazed! There seems to be a sort of network of mystery all round us. But one thing: if Joy was married yesterday how on earth can she be going to be married to-day?"

"To avoid the possibility of legal complications later on! It is all right, my dear. You may take it from me that there is no cause for concern! But there were certain things, usually attended to beforehand, which on this occasion—owing to ignorance and hurry and unpremeditation—were not attended to. In order to prevent the possibility of anything going wrong by any quibble, they are to be married again just now."

"Where? when?"

"Here, in this room!"

"But where's the clergyman; where is the license?"

"There is neither. This is a Scottish marriage! Later on we can have a regular church marriage with a bishop if you wish or an archbishop; in a church or a room or a Cathedral—just as you prefer." Mrs. Ogilvie perceptibly stiffened as he spoke. Then she said, with what she thought was dignified gravity, which seemed to others like frigid acidity:

"Do I understand, Colonel Ogilvie, that you are a consenting party to another 'irregular'"—she quivered as she said the word—"marriage? And that my daughter is

to be made a laughing stock amongst all our acquaintances by *three* different marriages?"

"That is so, my dear. It is for Joy's good!"

"Her good? Fiddlesticks! But in that case I have nothing more to say!" Some of her wrath seemed to be turned on both Athlyne and Joy; for she did not say a single word to either of them. She simply relapsed into stony silence.

Mrs. O'Brien's reception of the news afforded what might be termed the "comic relief" of the strained situation. She raised her hands, as though in protest to heaven for allowing such a thing, and emitted a loud wail such as a "keener" raises at an Irish wake. Then she burst into voluble speech:

"Oh wirrasthrue me darlin' bhoy, is it a haythen Turk y' are becomin', to take another wife whin ye've got one already only a day ould. An such a wan more betoken—the beautifullest darlinest young cratur what iver I seen! Her that I picked out long ago as the only wan that ye was good enough for. Shure, couldn't ye rist content wid Miss Joy, me darlin'? It's lookin' forward I was to nursin' her childher, as I nursed yerself me lord darlin', her childher, an yours! An' now it's another woman steppin' in betune ye; an' maybe there'll be no childher at all, at all. Wirrasthrue!"

"But look here, Nanny," said Athlyne with some impatience. "Can't you see that you're all wrong. It is to Joy that I am going to marry again! There's no other woman coming in between us. 'Tis only the dear girl herself!"

"Ah, that's all very well, me lord darlin'; but which iv them is to be the mother? Faix but I'll go an ax her Ladyship this minit!" And go she did, to Athlyne's consternation and Joy's embarrassment. All in a hurry she started up and went over to the sofa where Joy sat, and with a bob curtesy said to her:

"Me lady, mayn't I have the nursin' av yer childher, the way I had their father before them? Though, be the same token, it's not the same nursin' I can give thim, wid me bein' ould an' rhun dhry!" Joy felt that the only thing to do was to postpone the difficulty to a more convenient season, when there should not be so many eyes—some of them strange ones—on her. To do this as kindly and as brightly as she could, she said:

"But dear Mrs. O'Brien, isn't it a little soon to think—or at any rate to speak—of such things?"

"Wasn't ye married yisterday?" interrupted the old woman. But looking at her lady's cheeks she went on in a different tone:

“But me darlin’—Lady, it’s over bould an’ too contagious for me to mintion such things, as yit. But I’ll take, if I may, a more saysonable opportunity to ask ye to patthernise me. Some time whin ye’re more established as a wife thin ye are now!”

“Indeed” said Joy kindly. “I shall only be too happy to have you near me. And if I—if we are ever blessed with a little son I hope you will try to teach him to be as like his——” she stopped, blushing, but after a short pause went on “as like my dear husband as ever you can!” There was a break in her voice which moved the old woman strongly. She lifted the slim fine young hand to her withered lips and kissed it fervently.

“Glory be to God! me Lady, but it’s the proud woman I’ll be to keep and guard the young Earrll. An’ I’ll give my life for him if needs be!”

“Come now!” said the Sheriff who had been speaking with Colonel Ogilvie and Athlyne, and who had read over the paper written by the latter. “Come now all you good people! All sit round the room except you two principals to this solemn contract. You two stand before me and read over the paper. You, my Lord, read it first; and then you too, my Lady, do the same!” They sat round as they wished. Joy and Athlyne stood up before the Sheriff, who was also standing. Instinctively they took hands, and Athlyne holding the paper in his left hand, read as follows:

“We Calinus Patrick Richard Westerna Mowbray Hardy Fitzgerald, Earl of Athlyne, Viscount Roscommon and Baron Ceann-da-Shail and Joy Fitzgerald or Ogilvie late of Airlville in the State of Kentucky, United States of America, agree that we shall be and are united in the solemn bonds of matrimony according to the Law of Scotland and that we being of one mind as to the marriage, are and hereby declare ourselves man and wife.

Witness of above

We the undersigned hereby declare that we have in the presence of the above signatories and of each other seen the foregoing signatures appended to this deed by the signatories themselves in our presence and in the presence of each other.

Alexander Fenwick (Sheriff of Galloway).

Lucius Ogilvie (father of the bride).

Mary Hayes Ogilvie (mother of the bride).

Bedelia Ann O’Brien, widow (formerly nurse and foster mother to the bridegroom).

Judith Hayes (aunt of the bride).”

When the document was completed by the signatures the Sheriff, having first scanned it carefully, offered it to Colonel Ogilvie, who raising a protesting hand said:

“No, no, Mr. Sheriff! I think we should all prefer that it should be kept in your custody, if you will so oblige us.”

“With the greatest pleasure” he said; and Athlyne and Joy having consented to the scheme he folded the document and put it into his pocket. Just then the landlady, having knocked and being bidden to enter, came into the room followed by several maids and men bearing dishes.

“And now to breakfast” he went on. “Will the Bride kindly sit on my right hand, with her Husband next her. Mrs. Ogilvie, will you honour me by sitting on my left, with Colonel Ogilvie to support you on the other side. Miss Hayes will you kindly sit on Lord Athlyne’s right.” “And Mrs. … Mrs. O’Brien,” whispered Judy. He went on:

“Mrs. O’Brien will you sit on Colonel Ogilvie’s left.”

“’Deed an’ I’ll not!” said the Irishwoman sturdily.

“Do you mean” asked Colonel Ogilvie icily “that you do not care to sit next to me individually?”

“Faix an’ I don’t mane anything so foolish yer ’ann’r. Why should the likes o’ me dar to object to the likes iv you? All I mane, sorr, is that an ould Biddy like me isn’t fit to sit down alongside the quality—let alone an Earrll and his Laady whose unborn childher I’m to nurse. An’, more betoken, on such an owdacious occasion—shure an I don’t mane that but such a suspicious occasion.”

“Mrs. O’Brien ma’am” said the Sheriff taking her hand “you’re going, I hope to take your place at the table that all these good friends wish you to take.”

“In troth no yer”—whispering to Joy “what’s a Sheriff called Miss Joy? Is he ‘yer Majesty’ or ‘me lord’ or ‘yer ann’r’ or what is he anyhow?” “I think he is ‘yer honour’” said Joy. So Mrs. O’Brien continued: “Yer Ann’r. Don’t ask me fur to sit down wid the quality where I don’t belong. But let me give a hand to these nice girrls and byes to shling the hash. Shure it’s a stewardess I am, an accustomed to shovin’ the food.”

“Nanny” said Athlyne kindly but in a strong voice “we all want you to sit at table with us to-day. And I hope you won’t refuse us that pleasure.”

“Certainly me darlin’ lord!” she said instantly. “In coorse what plases ye!” The Master had spoken; she was content to obey without question. In the meantime Joy had been whispering to her mother who now spoke out:

“Mr. Sheriff, will you allow me to make a suggestion about the places at table?”

“With a thousand delights, madam. Pray make whatever disposition you think best. I am only too grateful for your help.”

“Thank you, sir. Well, if you do not mind I should like my sister, Miss Hayes, placed next to you; then Colonel Ogilvie and myself. On the other side if you will place next to my son-in-law his old nurse, I am right sure that both will be pleased.”

“Hear, hear!” said Athlyne. “Come along, Nanny, and sit next your boy! Joy and I shall be delighted to have you close to us. Won’t you, darling.” Joy’s answer was quite satisfactory to him:

“Of course … Darling!” It was wonderful what a world of love she put into the utterance of those two syllables.

The breakfast was a great success, though but few of the party ate heartily. Neither Athlyne nor Joy did justice to the provender. They whispered a good deal and held hands surreptitiously under the table, and their eyes met constantly. The same want of appetite seemed to have affected both the Sheriff and Judy; but silence and a certain restraint and primness were their characteristics. Mrs. O’Brien, seated on the very edge of her chair, was too proud and too happy to eat. But she was storing up for future enjoyment fond memories of every incident, however trivial.

It was mid-day before any move was made. There were no speeches—in public, as all considered it would break the charm that was over the occasion if anything so overt took place. When all is understood, speech becomes almost banal. But there were lots of whisperings; whispers as soft in their tone as their matter was sweet. No one appeared to notice any one else at such moments; though be sure that there were words and tones and looks that were remembered later by the receivers, and looks and movements that were remembered by the others. Judy and the Sheriff had much to say to each other. Ample opportunity was given from the fact that the newly married pair found themselves occupied with each other almost exclusively. Occasionally, of course, Joy and the Sheriff conversed; but as a working rule he was quite content to devote himself to Judy who seemed quite able to hold up her end of the serious flirtation. When finally the party broke up, preparatory to setting out for the south, the Sheriff asked Colonel Ogilvie if it might be possible that he should join in travel with the party, as he wished to spend a few days in Ambleside—a place which he had not visited for many years. Colonel Ogilvie cordially acquiesced. He was pretty sure by now that the meeting of Judy and this new friend would end in a match, and he was glad to do anything which might result in the happiness of his sister-in-law of whom he

was really fond. But it was not on this account only that he made him welcome. The reaction from his evil temper was on him. Conscience was awake and pricking into him the fact that he had behaved brutally. His mind did not yet agree in the justice of the verdict; but that would doubtless come later. He now wished to show to all that there was quite another side of his character. In this view he pressed that the Sheriff should be his guest. The other was about to object when he realised that by accepting he would be one of the household, and so much closer to Judy, and more and oftener in her society than would otherwise be possible. So he accepted gladly, and he and the Colonel soon became inseparable—except when Judy was speaking! In such case Colonel Ogilvie often felt himself rather left out in the cold. At the beginning of breakfast Athlyne had learned from Joy of the abandonment of the motor, and he had accordingly sent his father-in-law's chauffeur, with his pilot, to bring it back. They had to travel in a horse carriage; he could not drive two motors at once, and the pilot could not drive one. In due course the motor was retrieved, and having been made clean and taut by the "first-class *mechanicien* and driver" was ready for the road. Colonel Ogilvie's motor was also ready, and as the pilot could now be left to travel home by train so that the owner could sit by his chauffeur, there would be room for the new guest to sit between the two ladies in the tonneau. When he mentioned this arrangement, however, the Sheriff did not jump at it, but found difficulties in the way of incommoding the ladies. At last he said:

"I hope you will excuse me, Ogilvie, but I had already formed a little plan which I hoped with your sanction and that of your wife, to carry out. Before breakfast I—Miss Hayes and I had been talking of the old manner of posting. Her idea had, I think, been formed by seeing prints of break-downs of carriages in run-away matches to Gretna Green, and I suggested ... In fact I ventured to offer to drive her in old-fashioned postal style to Ambleside, and let her see what it was like. I have in my house at Galloway a fine old shay that my father and mother made their wedding trip in. It has always been kept in good trim, and it is all right for the journey. As Sheriff I have post-boys in my employ for great occasions and I have good horses of my own. So when J ... Miss Hayes accepted my offer ... of the journey, I wired off to have the trap sent down here. Indeed it should arrive within a very short time. I have also wired for relays of horses to be ready at Dumfries, Annan, Carlisle and Patterdale, so that when we start we should go without a hitch. My boys know the road, and four horses will spin us along in good style—even if we cannot keep up with your motor." So it was arranged that the pilot could occupy his old place with the chauffeur; and the Colonel and Mrs. Ogilvie would travel in the tonneau, Darby and Joan fashion. This settlement of affairs had only been arrived at after considerable discussion. When her father had told Joy that she was to

ride with her mother, she had spoken out at once—without arrangement with Athlyne or even consultation with him:

“Athlyne will drive me, and we can take Mrs. O’Brien with us. There is stacks of room in the tonneau, and we have no luggage. I am sure my husband would like to have her with us.”

But when the arrangement was mentioned to the foster-mother she refused absolutely to obey any such order:

“What” she said “me go away in the coach wid the bride and groom! An ould corrn-crake like me wid the quality; an this none other than me own darlin’ lord and Miss Joy that I’m going to nurse the childher iv her. No, my Lady, I’ll do no such thing! Do ye think I’m goin’ to shpoil shport when me darlin’ does be drivin’ wid his beautiful wife by him an’ him kissin’ her be the yard an’ the mile an’ the hour, an’ huggin’ her be the ton, as he ought to be doin’, or he’s not the man I’ve always tuk him for. Shure ma’am” this to Mrs. Ogilvie “this is their day an’ their hour; an’ iviry minit iv it is goold an dimons to them! I’m tellin’ ye, I’d liefer put me eyes on Styx than do such a thing!” Mrs. Ogilvie, who recognised the excellence of her ideas, said:

“Then you must come with the Colonel and me. We’ve loads of room, and we are all alone.”

“An’ savin’ yer presence, so ye should be ma’am whin ye’re seein’ yer daughter goin’ aff wid her man. There’s loads iv things you and your man will want to be talkin’ about. Musha! if it’s only rememberin’ what ye said an’ done whin ye was aff on yer own honeymoon. Mind ye, ma’am, it’s not bad talkin’ or rememberin’, that’s not! No motors for me, ma’am—to-day at any rate. I’ll go by the thrain that I kem’ by; an’ when I get to yer hotel, if I’m before ye, I’ll shtraighten out things for ye, an’ have the rooms nice an’ ready. For mind ye, ma’am, me darlin’ Lord tould me that he’s goin’ to have a gran’ weddin’ to Miss Joy whin he gets his license! Be the way, does he get that, can ye tell me ma’am, from the polis or where the sheebeeners gits theirs? An’ av there’s goin’ to be a weddin’ wid flowers an’ gowns an’ veils an’ things in church, I suppose they won’t be too previous about comin’ together. Musha! but’s it’s a quare sort iv ways the quality has! Weddin’s here be the Sheriff, an’ thin be bishops, an’ wid licenses. An’ him in Bowness—for that’s where he tells me he’s shtoppin’—an’ his wife in Ambleside—on their weddin’ night! Begob! Ireland’s changin’ fast, fur that usen’t to be the way. I’m thinkin’ that the Shinn-Fayn’ll have to wake up a bit if that’s the way things is going to go. Or else there’ll be millea murther, from the Giant’s Causeway to Cape Clear!” As Mrs. Ogilvie did not wish to discuss this part of the question herself, she beckoned over Athlyne and told him that Mrs. O’Brien had refused to go in his motor.

“Not even if I ask you or tell you to?” he said to the old woman, having not the least intention of doing either.

“Not even thin, me Lord darlin’” she said with a cheery smile. “An’ I’m thinkin’ it’s thankin’ me—you an’ yer lovely wife too—’ll be before ye’re well out of sight of this place. Faix it’s a nice sort iv ould gooseberry I’d be, sittin’ in the carriage wid me arrums foulded, wid me darlin’ Lord sittin’ in front dhrivin’ like a show-flure in a shute iv leather. An’ his bride beside him, wid her arrums round him bekase both his own is busy wid the little wheel; an’ her wondhrin’, wid tears in her beautiful grey eyes, why he doesn’t kiss her what she’s pinin’ fur. Augh! no! Not me, this time! I was a bride meself—wanst. An’ I know betther nor me young Lady does now, what is what on the weddin’ day afther the words is said. Though she’ll pick up, so she will. She’s not the soort that’ll be long larnin’! Musha …” Her further revelations and prophesyings were cut short by Athlyne’s kissing her and saying “Good-bye!”

If the journey up North had been Fairyland, the journey southward was Heaven for both the young people. Athlyne felt all the triumph of a conqueror. If he had sung out loud, as he would like to have done, his song would have been a war-song rather than a love-song. There was the *elan* of the conqueror about him; the stress of love-longing and love-pining were behind him. The battle was won, and his conqueror’s booty was beside him, well content to be in his train. Still even conqueror’s love has its duties as well as its right, and he was more tender than ever to Joy. She, sitting beside him in all the radiancy of her new found wifehood, felt that their hearts were beating together; and that their thoughts swayed in unison. When her eyes would be lifted from the lean, strong, brown hands gripping the steering wheel—for in the rush of departure he had other things to think of than putting on the gloves which were squeezed behind him in his seat—and would look up into his face she would feel a sort of electric shock as his eyes, leaving for a moment their steering duty, would flash into hers with a look of love which made her quiver. But presently when his yielding to affection had been tested, and even her curiosity had been satisfied, she ceased such sudden looks. She realized his idea of the gravity of the situation when she saw, as his eyes returned to their necessary task, the hard look become fixed on his eagle face—the look which to one engaged in his task means safety to those under his care. She was all sympathy with him now. She was content that his will should prevail; that his duty should be the duty of both; that her service was to help him. And the first moment she realized this, she sighed happily as she sank back in her seat, her lover-rapture merged in wife-content. She had compensation for the foregoing in the exercise of her own pride. From her present standpoint all that came within the scope of her senses was supremely beautiful. The mountains grey and mysterious in their higher and further

peaks; the dark woods running flamelike up into the glory of the mountain colouring; the scent of the new-mown hay, drifted across the track by the bracing winds sweeping over the hills; the glimmering sapphire of the water as they swept by lake or river, or caught flashes of the distant Forth through long green valleys. They went fast; Athlyne's wild excitement—the echo of the battle-phrenzy that had won him distinction on the field—found some relief in speed. He had thrown open the throttle of his powerful engine and swept along at such a speed that the whole landscape seemed to fly by the rushing car, giving only momentary glimpses of even the most far-flung beauty. He did not fear police traps now. He did not fear anything! Even the car seemed to have yielded itself like a living thing to the spell of the situation. Its wheels purred softly as it swept along, and the speed made a wind which seemed to roar in the ears of the two who were one.

Joy felt that she had a right to be content. This journey was of her own choosing entirely. The manner of it had been this: when the party had been arranged for starting her father had said to Athlyne:

"When you get to Ambleside, as I suppose you will do before us, will you give orders to have everything ready for our party. You can do this before you drive over to Bowness. You can come over to dinner if you like. I suppose you and Joy will want to see something of each other—all you can indeed, before the wedding comes off. That can be as soon as you like after you have got the license." To this he had replied:

"I should like to—and shall—do anything I can, sir, to meet your wishes. But I cannot promise to do anything now, on quite my own initiative. You see our dear girl has to be consulted; and I need not tell you that her wishes must prevail—so far as I am concerned!"

"Quite right, my boy! Quite right!" said the old man. "Then we shall leave the orders to her. Here, Joy!" she came over, and her father put his suggestion to her. She hesitated gravely, and paused before she spoke; she evidently intended that there should be no mistake as to her deliberate intention:

"No! Daddy, that won't do; I'm going with my husband!" She took his arm and clung to him lovingly, her finger tips biting sweetly into his flesh. "But, Daddy dear, we'll come over to-morrow and lunch or breakfast with you, if we may. Call it early lunch or late breakfast. We shall be over about noon. Remember we have to come from Bowness!"

Athlyne seemed to float in air as he heard her. There was something so sweetly—so truly wifely, in her words and attitude that it won to his heart and set him in a state of rapture.

The late breakfast at Ambleside next day, though ostensibly a mere family breakfast, was hardly to be classed in that category. It was in reality regarded by all the family at present resident in that town as a wedding breakfast. They had one and all dressed themselves for the occasion. Not in complete marriage costume, which would have looked a little overdone, but in a modified form which sufficiently expressed in the mind of each the prevailing spirit of rejoicing. A few seconds before noon the "toot toot" of Athlyne's powerful hooter was heard some distance off. All rushed to the windows to see the great red car swing round the corner. The chauffeur was driving; the bride and groom sat in the tonneau. As Athlyne was not driving he wore an ordinary morning dress—a well-cut suit of light grey which set out well his tall, lithe powerful figure. Joy was wrapped in a huge motor coat of soft grey, with her head shrouded in a veil of the same colour. In the hall they both took off their wraps, Athlyne helping his wife with the utmost tenderness. When they came into the room they made a grey pair, for with the exception of Athlyne's brown eyes and hair and a scarlet neck tie, and Joy's dark hair and a flash of the same scarlet as her husband's on her breast, they were grey—all grey. It would seem as if the whole colour-scheme of the couple had been built round Joy's eyes. She certainly looked lovely; there was a brilliant colour in her cheeks, and between her scarlet lips her teeth, when she smiled, flashed like pearls. She was in a state of buoyancy, seeming rather to float about than to move like a being on feet. She was all sweetness and affection, and flitted from one to another, leaving a wake of beaming happiness behind her.

Athlyne too was manifestly happy; but in quieter fashion, as is the way of a man. He was not overt or demonstrative in his attention to Joy; but his eyes followed her perpetually, and his ears seemed to hear every whisper regarding her. Her eyes too, kept turning to him wherever she might be or to whom speaking. Judy at first stood beaming at the pair with a look of proprietary interest; but after a while she began to be a trifle nettled by the husband's absorption in her niece. This feeling culminated when as Joy tripped slightly on the edge of the hearth-rug her husband started towards her with a swift movement and with that quick intake of breath which manifests alarmed concern. Judy's impulsiveness found its expression in a semi-humorous, semi-sarcastic remark:

"Why Athlyne you seem to look on the girl as if she was brittle! You weren't like that yesterday when you flashed her away from us at sixty miles an hour!" For a moment there was silence and all eyes were fixed on Joy who looked embarrassed and turn rosy-red. Athlyne to relieve her drew their attention on himself:

“No, my dear Judy—I’m not ever going to call you anything else you know. She wasn’t my wife then!”

“Wasn’t she!” came the answer tartly spoken. “She was just as much your wife then. She had been married to you only twice! And the first marriage was good enough for anything. I know that is so, for my sheriff says so!—Oh …” The ejaculation was due to the shame of sudden recognition of her confession. She blushed furiously; the Sheriff, looking radiantly happy, stepped over to her, took her hand, raised it to his lips, and kissed it.

“I think my dear,” he said slowly and quietly, “that constitutes a marriage—if you will have it so?” She looked at him shyly and said quietly:

“If you like to count it a step on the way—like Joy’s first marriage, do so—dear! Then if you like we can make it real when Joy becomes a wife—in the Church!”

Everyone in the room was so interested in this little episode that two of them only noticed a queer note of dissent or expostulation, coming in the shape of a sort of modified grunt from the two matrons of the party. Said Athlyne, still mindful of his intent to protect Joy:

“All right, Judy. I’ll remember: ‘*my* sheriff,’ if there’s any more chaffing. It seems that he’ll be ‘brittle’ before long!” Judy flashed one keen happy glance at him as she whispered close in his ear:

“Don’t be ungenerous!” For reply he whispered back:

“Forgive me—dear. I did not intend to be nasty. I’m too happy for anything of that sort!”

As breakfast wore on and the familiarity of domestic life followed constraint, matters of the future came on the tapis. When Mrs. Ogilvie asked the young couple if they had yet settled when the marriage—the church marriage—was to come off, Joy looked down demurely at the table cloth as her husband answered:

“I go up to town early in the morning to get the License. It is all in hand and there will be no hitch and no delay. I had a wire this morning from my solicitor about it; and also one from the Archbishop congratulating me. I shall be home by the ten ten train on Thursday and we can have the wedding late that afternoon, if you will have the church and the parson ready.”

“But, my dear boy, isn’t that rather sudden?”

“Not sudden enough for me! But really, so far as I am concerned, I shall wait as long as Joy wishes. Now that we are married already, I fancy it doesn’t much matter. Only that anything which could possibly bind me closer to Joy will always be a happiness to me, I don’t care whether we have a third marriage at all.” Mrs. Ogilvie caught her daughter’s eye and answered at once:

“So be it then! Thursday afternoon at six. I suppose there can be no objection as to canonical hours?” The Sheriff answered:

“I can tell you that. The License of the Archbishop goes through and beyond all canonical hours and all places—in South Britain of course. Armed with that instrument you can celebrate the marriage when and where you will.” Joy and Athlyne were by this time holding hands and whispering.

“Of course Joy will stay with us till then—Athlyne.” Mrs. Ogilvie spoke the last word with a pause; it was the first time she had used his name.

“Not ‘of course.’” he answered. “She is the head of her house now and must be free to do as she please. But I am sure she will like to come to you.” Joy made a protesting “*moue*” at him as she said:

“Of course I’d like to be with Mother and Daddy, and Judy—if I—if I am not to be with you—Oh, darling! you’re hurting me. You’re so frightfully strong!”

Breakfast being over, the party broke up and moved about the room. Joy was sitting on the sofa with her Mother when Mrs. O’Brien came sidling up by the wall. When she got close she curtsied and said:

“Won’t ye tell me now, me Lady, if I’m to be the wan to nurse yer childher?”

“Oh dear! But Mrs. O’Brien, I said only yesterday that I’d tell you that some other time. You *are* previous!—Didn’t you hear that I am to be married on Thursday. Later on …”

“No time like the prisint, me Lady. It was yistherday ye shpoke; an to-day’s to-day. Mayn’t I nurse yer ch …”

“Tell her, dear—” her Mother had begun, when Judy joined the group.

“What’s all this about? Whose children are you talking of?” began the merry spinster. But her sister cut her short:

“Never you mind, Judy! You just go and sit down and try and get accustomed to silence so as to be ready to keep your Sheriff out of an asylum.” Athlyne, too, with ears preternaturally sharp on Joy’s account, had heard something of the conversation.

Looking over at his wife, he saw her face divinely rosy, and with a troubled, hunted look in her eyes. He too instantly waded into the fray.

“I say, let her alone you all! I hope they’re not teasing you darling?” Joy, fearing that something unpleasant might be said, on one side or the other, made haste to reassure him.

Then she closed his mouth in the very best way that a young wife can do—the way that seems to take his feet from earth and to raise him to heaven.

THE END

TRANSCRIBER’S NOTES.

Inconsistencies of the author that have been preserved:

Missing commas from some direct addresses and quoted passages.

Capitalization of he/him when referring to Lord Athlyne.

Spelling and hyphenization of some words (*e.g.* cross-roads/cross roads, doorway/door-way, Lake Country/Lake County, etc.).

Alterations to the text:

Minor punctuation fixes (missing periods, improperly paired quotation marks, etc.).

[Chapter I]

Change “on the *nothern* shore of Lake Superior” to *northern*.

“We may be Americans; but *we’ve* not to be played for suckers” to *we’re*.

[Chapter II]

“Judy’s insight or *prophesy* was being realised” to *prophecy*. (*prophesy* is a verb and thus doesn’t make sense).

[Chapter IV]

“without names or *indentification* marks” to *identification*.

[Chapter V]

“she sank *sensless* to the ground” to *senseless*.

“When he saw that *he* was only fainting” to *she*. (It was Joy who fainted, not a male character.)

[Chapter VI]

“the overwhelming impulses of *mother-hood*” to *motherhood*.

“he was *painfuly* conscious of his” to *painfully*.

[Chapter VII]

“he felt horribly *dissappointed*” to *disappointed*.

“She spoke in a gay *debonnair* manner” to *debonair*.

[Chapter VIII]

“the forthcoming visit to *Eurpoe*” to *Europe*.

“She’s the *letterwriter* of the family” to *letter-writer*.

[Chapter X]

“have called *unconcious* cerebration,” to *unconscious*.

“She had to content *hersef* with” to *herself*.

“whom he wished to *propitate*” to *propitiate*.

“the whole *word* seemed to revolve round Joy” to *world*.

[Chapter XI]

“For my own part *of* ever I fall in love” to *if*.

“he met the *chaffeur* whom he sent back” to *chauffeur*.

“the personal *manisfestation* of Nature’s God” to *manifestation*.

“Then *impulvisely* she put her hand” to *impulsively*.

[Chapter XII]

“with a trusty *chaffeur* or by train” to *chauffeur*.

“in London at Brown’s Hotel *Albermarle* Street” to *Albemarle*.

“at the station at *Windmere*” to *Windermere*.

[Chapter XIII]

“between which her inward *natured* swayed pendulum-wise” to *nature*.

[Chapter XIV]

“hope that it *woud* be in a spot” to *would*.

“necessitated by the *eaboration* of organised society” to *elaboration*.

“*uness* we hear to the contrary” to *unless*.

“Love surely was so *triumpahnt*” to *triumphant*.

[Chapter XV]

“was not due at *Windmere* till seven” to *Windermere*.

“while *she* poor girl would have to bear all the brunt” to *the*.

[Chapter XVI]

“with as *brace* a face and bearing as she could muster” to *brave*.

[Chapter XVIII]

“he *determind* to try to make amends” to *determined*.

(“Why, madam ‘why’” he almost roared whilst…) Change the passage in quotes to an exclamation (because of the roaring).

[Chapter XXI]

“There was a prolonged *screceh*” to *screech*.

“two parties came into this *juxta-position*” to *juxtaposition*.

[Chapter XXII]

“What of of the future?” delete one *of*.

[Chapter XXIII]

“our son-in-law, *in* none other than Mr. Richard Hardy” to *is*.

[End of Text]