

MARJORIE BOWEN
*The Man With the
Scales*



'Matters of Heaven and Hell are mingled in this business,' says one of the characters in this story. It is, indeed, a strange and compelling tale. An historical romance of love, intrigue and adventure, it is at the same time a subtle and haunting allegory, in which the characters move through a twilight world where dream and reality are one. It concerns Julius Sale, a young Scot who is studying law at Leyden University, and whose life is dominated by the single aim of avenging the death of his father. To do this, he believes that he must compass the ruin of a young man of his own age, Martin Deverent, the son—or so Julius believes—of his father's murderer. The intensity of his hatred brings about the strange events of a story which proves ultimately that, strong as is the power of hate, there are forces still stronger which will, in the end, prevail. But much befalls Julius before he discovers this, and, to his own bewilderment, he becomes involved with three mysterious personages, among them a botanist named Dr. Jerome Entrick—the enigmatic "Man With the Scales" from whom the book takes its title. The late Miss Marjorie Bowen was a distinguished and remarkably fertile writer who occupied a unique position in her particular genre, and this, her last novel, is a work of unusual qualities.

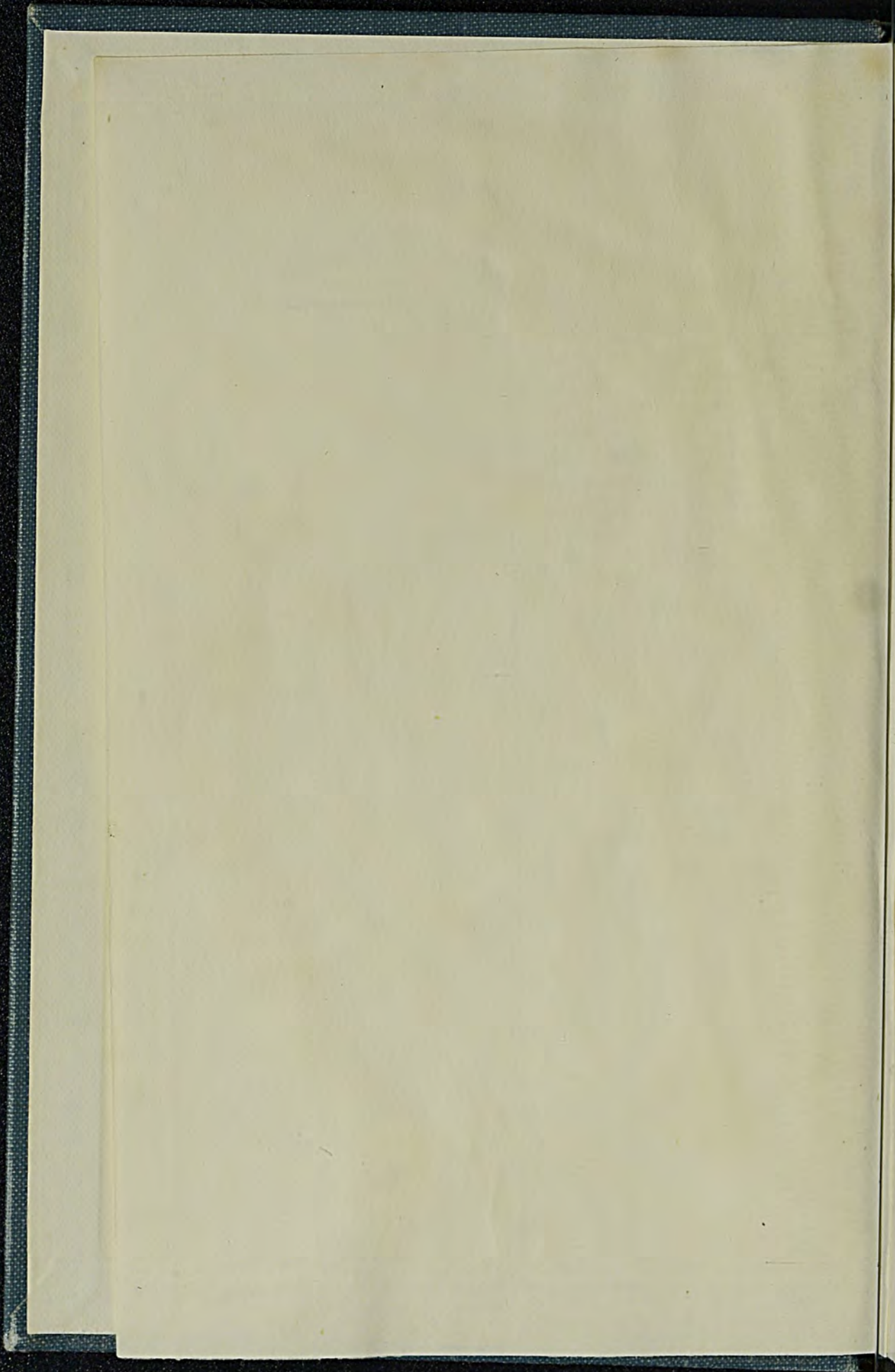
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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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Mr. Tyler's Saints } *aspects of*
The Circle in the Water } *English thought*

The Golden Roof } *A trilogy*
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I Will Maintain } *A trilogy*
God and the King } *on*
Defender of the Faith } *William III*

Exchange Royal
Today is Mine
etc.

THE MAN
WITH THE SCALES

MARJORIE BOWEN

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CHAPTER I

JULIUS SALE was delighted to see the brilliant stranger who was so in keeping with his own mood and the sunshine of the winter day.

Life was neither dull nor uncomfortable for Julius, who was young, strong, rich, and possessed happy prospects; moreover, he found the background of the entrancing town of Leyden very agreeable and was very satisfied with the prospects open to him when he should return to Scotland.

He had worked late into the night at his law studies; but before he had retired he had given some thought to a design never absent from his soul—that of ruining an enemy.

As he possessed the self-confidence of one well born and well dowered who has never received a rebuff, he went up to the stranger, who was pausing by the great canal to watch the barges bringing up their winter cargoes. "Ah, sir, you are new to Leyden, I think," said Julius with a pleasant address that avoided any air of effrontery. "You should see this sight in the summer, when flower petals and fruit seeds are scattered from the barges along the quays."

"I doubt if I shall be here in the summer," replied the other with a civil smile, adding: "I wonder why you take notice of me among all those who go to and fro in this excellent city."

Julius had spoken in English and without thought; now he was impressed by the perfection of the other's accent, for he did not take him to belong to his own nation.

Slightly set back, he replied:

"You suited my thoughts and the day. Pardon me if I have offended."

"By no means," replied the stranger. "I have few acquaintances here and I shall be glad of your company."

Julius was flattered.

"Shall we go to the coffee house by the Morsch Gate?" he asked. "The Golden Standard?"

"With pleasure."

Julius was regarding the stranger with considerable interest. He was a well-built, finely formed man of middle age with an air of remarkable distinction that consisted more in his regard and bearing than in his looks, for he was not handsome, his features being rather flat though robust and well coloured; his clothes were of the finest quality but without ostentation; Julius perceived that he was followed closely by a servant in a plain but good livery; this fellow was of a pleasant aspect but slightly deformed.

"You, sir, are not English?" asked Julius, as they proceeded towards the Morsch Gate.

"No—nor am I a Scot," replied the other. "Both I and my servant—I perceive that you regard him closely—come from a far distant kingdom and serve a mighty master."

The native pride of Julius was somewhat offended by the tone of these words, which seemed to hint at some haughty mystery. He gave his own name: "Julius Sale of Basset."

"I am Baron Kiss," smiled the other.

"I think that is a Hungarian name?"

"Certainly. My master is both King and Emperor; he employs me on important business. This poor fellow is named Trett. You might consider him my body servant or else a mere jottery man."

"What! You are familiar with the vulgar idiom of my own country—the Scottish Border!" exclaimed Julius. "I have never heard that term 'jottery man' beyond my native place."

"I have travelled widely and studied much," replied Baron Kiss. "It is not difficult to pick up odd scraps of knowledge."

The air was bluish, and the sunshine had not melted the frost that lay white in the shadows; the smaller canals were coated with ice; the buildings of exquisite brickwork, with applied ornaments of white plaster, showed in flat, pale tones; the leafless trees shivered delicate outlines in pale shades of lustre.

The two entered the coffee house that bore the English name of the Golden Standard, in compliment to the large number of students and travellers who came from Great Britain. The servant disappeared; Julius did not observe how he crept away.

The coffee house was well appointed and one of the most popular in Leyden.

"You know a fair number of people here?" asked Baron Kiss.

"Yes, indeed, but of course I always feel an alien."

"I have heard very good reports of you," smiled the older man, and again Julius, who considered himself not at all meanly, was slightly offended; this stranger was not his schoolmaster.

Baron Kiss perceived his pique and added at once:

"No one can be long in Leyden without hearing of the excellent abilities of the well-graced student—Julius Sale of Basset."

This compliment satisfied the younger man.

"I was up with my books until early this morning," he said. "I hope to do well in my law studies."

"And in everything else, I suppose? Come, admit that as the sole heir of a wealthy house your prospects are superb."

"I do not deny that," replied Julius, drawn out by the stranger's manner, which was at once flattering and reassuring; they drank their coffee together as if they were old friends and gossiped lightly of this and that.

Suddenly Baron Kiss asked:

"Were you thinking of nothing but your legal studies when you lay awake this morning?"

"Perhaps not," admitted Julius.

"What then was your design?"

Julius did not know why he gave his confidence to one whom he had met so shortly before; but he replied, as if without his own volition:

“Revenge on an enemy.”

“Are you at Leyden because of this intention?”

“It is true that I thought that a complete knowledge of the law might help me to ruin this man—a Leyden degree is very useful.”

“To ruin this man,” repeated Baron Kiss. “That sounds cruel.”

“His father killed mine,” Julius broke out impulsively. “Is it not natural that I should wish to avenge such an atrocity?”

“What age is he—this enemy of yours?”

“About my own.”

“Then he must have been a small child when this crime was committed.”

“How do you know that?” demanded Julius.

“I guessed. A feud, I suppose, and as such something that has nothing to do with you.”

Julius found himself telling his story. It sounded in his own ears very commonplace when related in the comfortable atmosphere of the Leyden coffee house.

Yes, there had been a feud; one of long standing about a parcel of land and some other matter; the so-called crime might have been an accident; the two men had been out shooting together; the verdict had been ‘not proven’; but the man once accused and always suspected had gone to Italy and France soon after his acquittal and there died, leaving one son to grow up in poverty on his small estate. Many angry relatives had told the tale again and again to Julius, until he was convinced that his father had been murdered. He was studying law because he thought that by some legal quirk or quibble he could deprive his enemy of his estate; the two families had once been connected, and some clever jurists had secretly assured Julius that there were many flaws in the titles that his enemy Martin Deverent held.

"The land would be useful to me also," said Julius. "And it is a poor price to pay for the death—murder, rather—of a man like my father."

"Has this young man any knowledge of your design, which I must say I applaud?" said Baron Kiss.

"No. We have hardly met. I am glad that you agree that what I intend to do is just——"

"So it seems to me."

"Then I will tell you that I do not intend to stop at the estate—there is a lady——" Julius paused; never before had he spoken so frankly of this affair that lay at the very centre of his being.

He gazed dubiously on Baron Kiss, then down at his coffee cup, beside which stood an empty glass.

"Have we been drinking?" he asked childishly.

"My dear fellow, you yourself ordered the brandies—surely you recall?"

"I cannot say that I do. Maybe I was a little light-headed after a night nearly sleepless—and then the frost."

Baron Kiss smiled indulgently.

"I am quite prepared to play the host," he remarked with a slight bow.

"You could not suppose that I was thinking of the reckoning?" exclaimed Julius. "What surprised me was that I gave a lady's name."

"You did not do so."

"It was on my tongue." Julius beckoned to the waiter and ordered two more brandies. "We should be drinking this chill weather."

"It is a beautiful day."

"Yes, indeed."

The brandies were brought, and this time Julius noticed the warmth that loosened his speech.

"Her name is Annabella Liddiard," he said. "And she is almost betrothed to this enemy of mine."

"A pretty name," remarked Baron Kiss courteously.

"Yes. She has no dower and therefore is not much sought after, but I admire her myself——"

"Still, your motive is revenge—you wish to take this Annabella Liddiard away from this other young man; your enemy, as you think."

"The murderer of my father," said Julius quickly.

"Or rather, the son of the man you suppose murdered your father?" Baron Kiss put in his correction gracefully.

"Yes, yes, I have told you the story. Perhaps you think that I am acting badly, but let me tell you that I intend to marry this girl—even against the wishes of my relations."

"You are in love with her?"

"By no means. But I do not wish to abuse my position by doing anything dishonourable."

Julius spoke with a simplicity that accorded with his comely aspect and took all suspicion of bragging from his words.

"And what are her feelings?"

"I do not know. She is extremely simple and, I suppose, will be ready to make a good match. At least, her people will—they are both ambitious and not rich. Her mother in particular urges on an engagement with me."

"Your prospects are excellent."

"Quite how do you mean that?" asked Julius.

"I mean that you are likely to attain the revenge you seek and to deprive this young man of his estate and his betrothed wife."

"Put like that, the thing doesn't seem pleasant."

"Yet you are elated at the thought of success, are you not?"

"Yes, I confess I am—I have hated this Martin ever since I can remember."

"You think, perhaps, that hate is stronger than love?" asked Baron Kiss.

"I do, indeed—despite all the preachers say. After all, no one loved me very much."

"Not even your mother?"

"Oh, she is a reserved sort of person. I think that all her affection was given to my father."

Baron Kiss called the waiter and asked for a church-

warden pipe, which he filled and lit with a deliberate gesture. It seemed to Julius that his face was shining, although he sat in shadow, and that his manner had increased in self-confidence.

"My tale cannot interest you—indeed, it must seem rather paltry."

"By no means," replied the elder man. "There is something majestic in your design that I much admire."

"Perhaps you would if you knew the whole story. I am really rescuing Annabella from a hard life as a poor man's wife."

"Is she really betrothed to him?"

"Oh no—but somehow it has been an understood thing—they are close neighbours."

The coffee house was now empty; a mellow light came from the brass lamps and a gentle warmth from the white porcelain stove. Julius had thought it was early in the day that he had met Baron Kiss, but now surely it was afternoon; probably he had told his story at greater length than he had supposed; he said as much, with reserve and dignity, but Baron Kiss gave his arm a reassuring touch.

"My dear fellow, I have not been so interested for a long time. Why, I can *see* the whole thing, the people I mean, and the background——"

"It is familiar to you, perhaps, the Border? But I think I asked you that before——"

"It is familiar."

"Strange that I have never seen you—we have few strangers. I hope that one day you will visit me at Castle Basset."

"I hope so, too."

Julius was a little breathless; he supposed he was excited but could not think why this should be; the image of Annabella in her green snood and scarlet dress was clearly before his inner vision.

He ventured on a further confidence.

"My mother knows nothing of my plans, of course—she hopes that I shall marry another lady."

"A pretty tangle, I see!" smiled Baron Kiss. "So your mother is not revengeful?"

"Yes—but her manner is different from mine. She has always ignored this Martin and never mentioned the dreadful episode that killed the heart in her—yet I think that she will be glad when he is ruined——"

Baron Kiss glanced at him keenly out of his sharp little eyes.

"I know this all sounds—well—hateful," Julius once more protested.

Baron Kiss seemed to think this over gravely; there was, however, a pleasant smile on his face that encouraged Julius.

"You see, sir, this Martin is like his father—no one has heard anything good of him. It is a bad family, there is much to his discredit."

"I can quite believe that."

"You are very kind, sir, yet I fear that I have cut a poor figure in your eyes——"

"How often must I repeat that I have heard excellent reports of you and much admire your design?"

"I am an utter stranger——"

"I trust that we shall soon be much better acquainted—and remain on good terms——"

"I am flattered," said Julius.

Baron Kiss smiled across at him with a direct stare and slightly inclined his head.

'How important he looks!' thought Julius. 'Certainly like the servant of a great King—or, rather, Emperor. I wonder what opinion he would have of Annabella.'

Some customers came into the coffee house; cold air followed them before the heavy doors were shut.

"I shall be pleased," said Julius, "when I have taken my degree and am able to go home."

He spoke with great simplicity; not in the least as if he was capable of planning a long revenge on a man who had not injured him at all.

The Baron gave him a glittering glance of appraisal.

Julius was good to look at; graceful, yet massive, everything about him was pleasant; his thick yellow hair hung down like a cap, straight and smooth, and his large grey eyes had an expression of utter candour; he seemed serious and in great earnest; he had an air of having something important to do in life.

"We have sat here too long," he said, rising. "I must not neglect my studies."

"Yes, let us be going," agreed Baron Kiss. "I lodge in the Breestraat—perhaps you will walk some of the way with me?"

Julius gave his own address. He did not want to lose sight of the stranger, yet he was not sure that he altogether liked him; something in the manner of Baron Kiss roused a little prickle of pride in the young Scot.

They left the coffee house together.

CHAPTER II

THE sky was now of a greenish hue, against which the outline of the steep gabled houses stood out sharply; the time seemed to Julius early afternoon. He could not recall when or how he had met Baron Kiss or where he had taken his midday meal. Trett, the servant, with an obliging humble air had taken his place behind his master. Julius found something familiar in the man; what it was he could not say.

There were many people going about on the cheerful business of winter; some with skates, others with wreaths of evergreens.

"I fear that I have missed my lecture," said Julius, "but it is no great matter."

"Certainly not—why, I could teach you in a few hours more than any of these pundits."

Julius was gratified by the Baron's interest in himself and by the worldly man's fluent charm. He did not regret that he had told him so much of his story; indeed, he was eager to relate more details.

"Lydia Dupree—of French descent—is the lady my mother wishes me to marry," he confided, "and I must confess that she is a fashionable beauty of a swinging fortune——"

"Yet you prefer this Annabella Liddiard?"

"Only in order to confound my enemy. She would, alas, be unhappy with him, as I have told you; he is a man of evil tendencies."

"And as such deserves to be punished," said the Baron comfortably.

"Yes, a bad landlord—one without regard for truth or honour——"

"You do well to remove him from the society of decent men."

"But Lydia is a most fair creature."

The Baron was directing their steps into a part of Leyden unknown to Julius.

"I thought you said we were going to the Breestraat?" he asked.

"I have changed my mind. There is an amusing place I should like you to see."

They paused before a building, trim and gay, of red brick and white pilasters, which Julius could not recall seeing before. Baron Kiss rapped on the door with his elegant cane. Julius now perceived that his attire had a military cut and was looped about the seams with braiding in the form of thin laurel leaves.

The door was opened at once by a smart footman in a dark livery; behind him was a vista of light, a corridor which was lit by highly polished candelabra. The servant seemed to know Baron Kiss and bowed with almost exaggerated politeness.

"I am bringing a young friend of mine, well known in Leyden for his learning and the state that he keeps."

The footman bowed again, and Julius followed the Baron into the corridor, which was painted white. Julius noticed that Trett slipped in behind his master. They were at once taken to a large door leading out of the corridor; the footman opened this to show a circular room where a close company were gathered round a table that occupied most of the space.

There was something about the place that Julius did not like. The people, all youthful, had the faces of dolls and wore fantastic straw hats over which were laid sheaves of wild flowers.

It was plain that they were gambling; cards and money were heaped on the green table cloth. Julius had never suspected that there was anything in the nature of a gambling den in Leyden.

Beyond the table was a large mirror with a shelf in front that held a vase of winter evergreens. Nearby stood a young lady who appeared to view the scene with contempt; she was beautiful in a dark Eastern style and dressed in a costly manner. Close to her stood a little man of middle age who also surveyed the gamblers with a slight degree of disdain.

As Julius and Baron Kiss entered everyone became still so that it was like looking at an exhibition of waxworks; then suddenly the girl by the mirror laughed; everyone joined in the merriment, and the gamblers took off their masks, as if at a given signal, disclosing the fresh and comely faces of students and the daughters of the citizens of Leyden, many of whom were familiar to Julius.

Their laughter seemed to be pointed at him as if he had in some way been made a fool of, and he glanced at Baron Kiss in a questioning manner.

"I had no idea that this sort of pastime went on in Leyden," he said; "and still less do I know why I was brought here."

"I don't suppose that any of these had any idea of the tale you have just told me," smiled Baron Kiss. "Most people have a secret or two."

Julius now regretted that he had confided in this stranger; he tried to deny what he felt was a piece of folly.

"Oh, as to what I have told you about Martin, Annabella and the death of my father—there is no truth in it. I invented it all——"

"Perhaps you think that I have invented this building and this company?" smiled Baron Kiss.

"No, indeed. I do not take you for a magician," replied Julius; but he was vexed with everyone in the room, including himself. He felt galled that so many of his fellow students, whom he had seen so often decorously enjoying a pipe and a glass of ale in the modest elegance of the Golden Standard, should all the while have been leading this other life of which he knew nothing. He was not pleased, either, to observe, seated at a gambling table, so many young ladies to whom he had always bowed respectfully on the quays or whose finger-tips he had kissed with so distant a courtesy at the formal gatherings given by their parents.

The whole thing seemed like a trick, and he felt a dislike for Baron Kiss (if that really was the fellow's name) for placing him in so disagreeable a situation.

The quiet-looking little man by the mirror came forward and introduced himself as Dr. Jerome Entrick. He at once presented the lady, naming her as his niece who was keeping house for him. He had just, he added, come to take up his quarters in Leyden, where he now held a professorship in botany. He soothed the annoyance Julius felt at the gambling party by explaining that it was all a newly got up affair and they had not mentioned it to Julius as they considered him of too serious a bent to be interested. "As indeed I am," said Julius, eagerly swallowing this sop to his vanity. "It is my earnest wish to get my degree as soon as possible and to return to Scotland"—he glanced at the Baron and noticed for the first time that he wore a curiously shaped cap, of a military cut, the flap of which was turned over and fastened by a jewel of a blazing intensity.

The students and the girls now gathered round Julius and pressed him to join in a game of chance; the stakes were, they declared, very low. He smiled at this enticement, for he had plenty of money.

"Nothing keeps me in Leyden but my studies," he said with an air too grave for his youth.

Dr. Entrick's niece, Amalia von Hart, then asked them all to supper in the adjoining eating room; all excused themselves, however, and, taking shawls and fur coats from the hangers, went their ways, cramming their masks and hats wound with wild flowers into their pockets.

"Well, then," said Amalia, speaking directly to Julius, "will you come and have supper with us and Baron Kiss, or must you always be at your books?" Julius sensed a challenge, perhaps a mockery, in these words.

"Do not hesitate because you think you are guarding a mystery," added Amalia. "For, of course, your story is well known in Leyden."

"I have not spoken of it to anyone before today!" exclaimed Julius.

"I dare say. But there are many Scots here, and all these feuds are publicly discussed."

"My thoughts and intentions cannot be," replied Julius. The empty gambling room now seemed desolate; he wished that he had not met the Baron, or, for that matter, Dr. Entrick and his niece; all three of them seemed to treat him in a way that made him feel raw, inexperienced, and as if his story, which had so far seemed so important to him, was remote from reality and of no consequence.

Amalia von Hart put on a pelisse of red fur with a lining of striped Roman silk; she seemed, then, in her dark, withdrawn beauty, to be much more than herself; a symbol of unseen things. Julius, for a moment, thought of both Annabella and Lydia as cast-off loves.

They came into the street. Julius was still ignorant of the time. The steep gabled houses still stood out clearly against a greenish sky; chimes were striking; two different clocks clashed the quarter-hour together yet not exactly in

unison; Julius was used to the constant filling of the air with religious melodies; they were so much part of the landscape, with the low, quick-flying clouds, the canals bordered with wych elms and the causeways of clearly polished brick, that the young Scot could not set them separately in his thoughts.

The two older men had gone ahead, as if they knew the way, and Julius was obliged to offer some conversation to Amalia von Hart.

He asked her where she had been before she came to Leyden. She replied that she had lived with her uncle in Pisa; he had held a small post at the decaying University. She had found the ancient Italian town very lowering to the spirits; it was much deserted, and many of the grand palaces were falling into ruins or being used as tenements.

Julius had always had joyous thoughts of Italy, which he one day intended to visit, and he was displeased to hear this talk of Pisa, a name that had always dwelt in his mind with a certain grandeur. Amalia seemed to perceive his mood, for she added: "No doubt the city would look very differently to you, going there as a rich traveller. We had to live poorly. My father was killed in the French wars, and we have only my uncle's fees and so see the sad side of things wherever we go."

"How did you come to know this Baron Kiss, who seems a man of substance?"

"Why, he came to one of my uncle's classes. He had a whim to study botany and possesses a very pretty herbarium. Indeed, I should say that he has studied many things. As I dare say you have noticed, he is rather eccentric and has travelled a good deal. Those who have no settled home tend to become odd."

During this speech Julius was turning over his impressions of the whole episode, and finally decided on frankness.

"It seems to me," he said, "that this gentleman deliberately brought us together——"

"Yes, so it seems to me," she replied with an air of

candour. "And I cannot think why. We were asked to that gambling party on the excuse that it was a gathering for music—my uncle plays the 'cello and I sing."

"But there was no music."

"None. Nor, I think, any gambling either; only all those people dressed up in masks."

"But I saw the gold and the cards," said Julius.

"Did you? I perceived nothing of that kind, but I had just come from an inner room when you arrived."

"I don't know what it all means," said Julius, slightly perplexed and even alarmed. "Perhaps it has no meaning. At least I hope that you will take no notice of a story this Baron Kiss will claim to have drawn from me."

"I knew that story before I met the Baron," smiled Amalia. "Of course I don't think it is one that does you credit."

"Indeed? May I ask what your nationality is?" asked Julius, piqued by this blame after the praise given him by the Baron.

"Oh, we are of a mixed race. But you will have perceived that I speak an excellent English—is that not sufficient for you?"

"You do not know Scotland?"

"No—but I have spoken with several Scots in Leyden, both professors and students, and all know your feuds and your design of revenge on Martin Deverent."

This statement seemed odd to Julius after what her uncle had said about their recent arrival in Leyden; nor was he aware that there were so many Scots in Leyden or that they would be likely to know of his story. He was heartily sorry that he had imparted this to Baron Kiss and hoped to be able to dispel the whole situation as a legend or delusion.

The air was balmy though keen and full of the salt spray that forever hangs over the Netherlands. Here and there wooden signs and pennants still faintly showed their colours; Julius could not tell if it were moonlight or the last glimmer of the sun that so faintly lit the streets. The

few passers-by were hurrying as if intent on arriving at some important destination, and all of them were muffled against the rising cold.

Julius remembered that usually at this time of the evening (if evening it was) he was at home in his comfortable lodgings copying extracts from the vellum-covered books with the sepia inscriptions, or possibly writing a carefully worded letter home to his mother; she was his only correspondent save for his factor, Maryon Leaf, who sent Julius business reports.

They turned down a side street, where a cold light, which appeared almost like ice, covered the narrow canal. They followed Baron Kiss and Dr. Entrick into a small, quiet house of modest pretensions. Everything seemed to have been prepared for them; there was a light on the stairs, and the room they entered was adorned with flowers in Delft vases, heated by a white stove and lit by candles in sticks of blue and white porcelain. Supper for four people was set on the highly polished table.

Julius was about to exclaim at the out-of-season blooms when he recalled the profession of his host and the skill of the Dutch in raising plants under glass; these flowers were mostly white and of a frail, almost unearthly look.

"Wherever we go," said Amalia, "we contrive to find someone who will grow us flowers, even in the winter time."

"I prefer them in their proper season, when they have a more robust air," said Julius, touching a tress of white lilac of a ghostly appearance. "These have no perfume," he added. "One can see that they have never made contact with the earth."

"That has been said sometimes about me," said Amalia, pointing a finger to her bosom and thus directly drawing attention to herself.

Julius had certainly thought that there was something strange about the girl, but he did not think that she shared the remote scentless, delicate quality of the hot-house flowers.

"You wonder why you are here," she added without coquetry.

"Yes, I am rather surprised at the weakness of my own will in allowing this Baron Kiss to force me into your company."

He turned away from Amalia, who appeared to be soliciting his scrutiny, and looked keenly at the Hungarian as he spoke.

But Dr. Entrick put aside this protest. "There are places set for all of us, as you can see," he remarked. "I hope that you can endure our poor company for a short time. The truth is that I met Baron Kiss as soon as I arrived in Leyden, and begged him to come to supper tonight, bringing anyone he knew of interest——"

"And why did the tryst have to be at the gambling salon?" asked Julius.

"Music rooms, my dear sir," replied the botanist in a tone so whimsical that Julius did not trouble to remark that he had seen cards and money on the table; besides, did one have to wear a mask and a fantastic hat in order to play music?

Julius now noticed that Trett was setting the meal. The food was elegant; some delicately preserved fruits were placed in baskets of filigree silver; the wine was in long, pale green bottles; the goblets had a faint amber tinge, and the napkins were of the finest damask. Julius took his place beside Amalia; he now saw that she was wearing a gown of the most brilliant green colour, laced with gold at the seams.

"Do you recall," she asked, "when you took Annabella Liddiard to a ball—and were snowed up? What merry games you had, and how quickly the short winter days passed before the coaches could get through the snow!"

"It is astonishing that anyone should know that!" exclaimed Julius.

"Oh, I am a gossip, and you have already been reminded that there are several Scots in Leyden who know you quite well."

"I suppose that is so," agreed Julius dubiously. "Still, that anyone should recall anything so trivial——"

"Was it so trivial? You learned a good deal of the character of Annabella."

"But that could only affect myself—no one else could consider it of sufficient importance to keep it in mind——"

"But you see that it has been kept in mind. I can tell you what Annabella wore—white, like the snow, fur and slippers—come, eat up your supper and drink this good wine."

"I think that we should drink a toast to the lady we have been mentioning," said Baron Kiss, half rising, with a ceremonious bow. "The health of Miss Annabella Liddiard!"

Julius could not refuse to rise with the others and honour the name of one who seemed extremely remote. He again wished that he had not mentioned her, and he felt the toast to be not only incongruous, but something of a mockery.

As the meal proceeded he was able to take a close note of his companions. Now that Baron Kiss had removed his hat with the gleaming jewel he showed a high forehead and a smooth tuft of white hair that added to his stately appearance. Dr. Entrick, on the contrary, appeared so ordinary as to be almost featureless; Julius was sure that a few moments after leaving him he would have forgotten what he was like.

There could be no doubt about Amalia's beauty; the richness of her colouring and the precise lines of her features were accompanied by a cool self-assurance and a polished manner that made it seem odd even to the inexperience of Julius that she should be content to fill the part of housekeeper to an ill-paid pedant. Nor, indeed, did her clothes indicate poverty. Still, there it was, she lived in obscurity, and Julius wondered why; he knew that both Annabella and Lydia would fade before her as the candle before the sun.

"Will you not find life in Leyden somewhat dull?" he asked her boldly.

"Oh, I make my own world."

"There is no one like you in this old university city——"

"Perhaps not—or perhaps you have never looked for them. And maybe we shall not be here very long."

These words gave Julius a sudden pang of loneliness; yet he could have been sure that he disliked all three of these strangers, even the beautiful woman whose manner towards him was so flattering; for she seemed to give him all her attention as if she had no one better to concern herself with.

"My visit also," said Baron Kiss, "will probably be short."

"Why, when it comes to it, I don't intend to stay very long myself," said Julius. "Only until the end of the term, when I hope I shall take my degree."

"As if that degree was of any importance!" exclaimed Amalia, with a swift smile.

Julius agreed with this comment, which reminded him that he had a certain contempt for his company. At first he had taken Baron Kiss to be a man of property, and the Hungarian had referred to himself as someone who was serving a master of immense power; but if this was so, how came it that he concerned himself with Dr. Entrick, a poor pedagogue, and his jointless niece?

Julius found himself gazing at all three of these strangers with a curiosity that was touched by hostility. Even the beautiful woman looked tawdry, and the hospitality that had first appeared so elegant now seemed vulgar.

He should not have allowed himself to be drawn into this company; he was at Leyden only because of what most people would term a whim; at home his position was that of a lord, owner of a wealthy estate covering many acres of rich land and one of the mightiest castles on the Border.

"I perceive," said Baron Kiss, filling his glass, "that you begin to grow moody. Would you care for us to discuss your story? It is very familiar to all of us, I assure you."

"I do not know," replied Julius with some heat, "what the vanity of an idle moment tempted me into telling you—but I assure you it was all merely a fable."

"We can soon discover the truth of that," interrupted Dr. Entrick. He rose, calling for his hat and cane from Trett, who seemed to be as much in his service as in that of Baron Kiss.

"The host must not be the first to take his leave," said Julius, also rising. "I was about to be on my way——"

"You are coming with us," put in Amalia, accepting from Trett the red fur with the silk Roman-striped lining. Julius could not be rid of them. He thought that they must intend to extract some service from him, perhaps even to offer some violence; he was still annoyed by their knowledge of his story and irritated by the social inferiority of all of them (save perhaps the Baron) to himself.

CHAPTER III

A SLIGHT storm of snow had fallen while they had been at supper; the buildings were outlined in a glitter, and though the sky had cleared again to a greenish hue, the sparkling crystals seemed still to hang in the air, making it luminous.

"We do not need Trett's lanthorn," said Baron Kiss, "but this is an odd kind of light."

They passed a house where the lower windows were unshuttered. A cheerful festivity was in progress, and groups of laughing young men and women were gathered round a centre table piled with cakes and sweetmeats. This

reminded Julius of the party in the gambling house, but there was no sign of either money or cards; on the walls of this bright room were pictures of flowers and fruit, arranged without regard for season, so that the snowdrop lay across the cheek of the nectarine and the petals of the tulip touched those of the dahlia. Julius was already used to the excellence of the Dutch in such studies, and thought that they looked more natural than those real blooms that had decorated the homely chamber of Dr. Entrick.

They passed along a street that Julius took to be the Noordeinde, though he could be sure of nothing; the light was, as Baron Kiss had remarked, odd and uncertain. They paused before the porch of a large church that Julius believed was dedicated to Saint Bavon; he himself attended the Scots Church, but he was familiar with the Dutch churches with their splendid Gothic interiors, ornate and brightly painted organs, whitewashed walls and superb tombs honouring heroes who had died in battle for their country.

He now found himself in front of one of these of a bizarre design, where a young man in armour had sunk into the swoon of death above an anchor, a coil of rope and heavy laurel wreaths; all was sculptured in sparkingly white alabaster and seemed to give out a light of its own in the dimness of the white-walled church.

Julius looked round for his companions but found himself alone; he did not understand how they had contrived to lead him to this place or to escape from him. There seemed no object at all in his being there.

The organ was playing what seemed to Julius to be a majestic slow march; he looked up at the gilded pipes and the columns supporting the wreaths of coarse wooden flowers.

In the small mirror fixed over the keyboard he could see the face of the organist, a young man in a plain black habit.

At first Julius was resolved to blame again the light and his own disordered memories, for it did not seem

possible that this could be his enemy Martin Deverent seated in this unlikely place, at this unlikely hour.

But the other had seen him and came to the edge of the loft, looking down. As the wind left the pipes, a last whisper of melody fell across the white, silent church.

"I am obliged to you for keeping this tryst," said Martin; he resembled his fellow Scot in that he was fair, comely and robustly made; but his attire was shabby, and gave him, in this winter season, a threadbare air.

"I made no tryst!" exclaimed Julius in astonishment, moving towards the pale shadow of the nearest pillar.

Martin descended from the organ loft.

"I think some friends of mine did so for me," he answered. It was a long time since they had spoken, though each had been familiar to the other since early childhood.

"I do not think so," said Julius. "I was with a party of strangers, all of whom have disappeared. Indeed, I do not know why I am here."

"It is to meet me," replied Martin with conviction. "Was not one Baron Kiss a member of this party of strangers?"

"Yes, but he brought no message from you."

"All the same, he arranged this meeting—at my request."

Julius was vexed by the whole sequence of events: the first encounter with the Hungarian, the visit to the gambling salon and the supper at the chambers of Dr. Entrick; most vexed of all by this forced meeting with the man he had resolved to ruin.

"We can have nothing to say to each other," he retorted coldly.

"On the contrary, we have so much to say that I came to the Lowlands solely on that account."

"You might, at least, have found me in the ordinary way in my lodgings. This is a very strange place for us to be in."

"That may be, but it is the tryst that this friend of mine advised——"

"Friend of yours?" interrupted Julius. "He did not speak as if he were one. As for the other two, Dr. Entrick and his daughter——"

"Well, what about them?"

"They hardly seemed to be there at all," confessed Julius. "We were like so many waxworks at that supper party—while as for the man Trett——"

"This has nothing to do with me," interrupted Martin. "I know only the man Kiss and I know him as a friend."

He looked at Julius with a mournful intensity, and his shadow was thrown over the reclining figure of the mailed warrior on the sumptuous tomb.

"Friends," said Julius with increasing firmness, "we can never be——"

"Surely you cannot still feel any bitterness about that old grievance?"

"Is it to be dismissed so lightly? An old grievance? When your father killed mine?"

"You know that that was never proven—indeed, everyone believes the affair was an accident."

"I do not so believe."

"Why?"

"As if, standing here in this strange place, I could give you the hundred and one reasons——"

"Let us leave reason out of it," persisted Martin. "Supposing that this happened—why, what has it to do with us? We were children at the time—we never harmed each other."

"I do not know why you are talking like this to me," said Julius. "I never threatened you in any way."

"Everyone knows," replied Martin, "that you are taking a law degree in order that you may the better throw me out of my small heritage."

"You may have heard talk of that, yet hardly anything substantial enough to bring you to the Lowlands."

"Yet here we stand—in this outlandish place, to which we have been led in an outlandish fashion."

Julius looked coldly at his enemy, for this was the word that he obliged himself to use about Martin Deverent.

"Why do you not look after your own affairs instead of forcing yourself on me?" he demanded.

Martin took this rebuke in good part.

"It is true that I have led a somewhat thriftless life and not done what I might have with my estates, poor as they are. But the accident brought us all down—as you know. After the acquittal we went abroad, and the property was much neglected. My education, also, was greatly abridged—my parents died in Paris, and when I returned home it was as a ruined man."

Julius took advantage of the other's humility.

"I never heard that you took any trouble to mend affairs—but mooned about and wrote verses and sighed after a girl you could not hope to marry."

"I am glad that you have brought in this name," said Martin steadily, "for it is precisely of Annabella Liddiard that I wished to speak."

"I did not bring in any name," said Julius, to whom the whole scene was fantastic.

"But you invited me to do so," replied the other, still patiently. "I wanted to tell you that I am betrothed to Miss Liddiard——" He held out a golden object that hung from a fine cord round his neck; Julius saw that it was the half of a thin coin. "We exchanged this, Mr. Sale, when last we met, and our promises of fidelity were sincere."

"Should this have anything to do with me?" asked Julius with an angry look.

"We all know that the Liddiards are ambitious people and that they would prefer you as their daughter's husband."

"I have not made any offer for the lady——"

"But you may do so——"

"On the other hand it is common knowledge that my mother designs me for Miss Dupree."

"Can you then promise me," urged Martin, "that you will not any longer trouble Miss Annabella?"

"I did not know that I had ever troubled her," replied Julius haughtily. He began to find the church extremely cold; the massive monument appeared to be carved out of ice.

"You pay her a good deal of attention," said Martin. "And her parents are continually pressing her to listen to you——"

"I repeat that I have made no offer for the lady."

"You only evade me," persisted Martin. "You know that as long as there is any hope of gaining you as a son-in-law the Liddiards will never listen to my suit——"

"And has the lady not sufficient spirit and daring to defy her parents?"

"Alas, no; and she is much in terror of her mother and indeed I have little to offer."

Martin paused and looked intently at the scowling face of his companion. It would not have cost Julius much to make the promise so earnestly and patiently demanded; his design to avenge himself on Martin was growing faint, and he doubted if he would have the energy to put it through. The image of Annabella Liddiard became remote; he could see himself, easily enough, leaving his law studies, going home, marrying the girl his mother thought so highly of and settling down to look after his estates.

The meeting with Baron Kiss had disconcerted him, and Martin had put in his plea at the very moment when Julius, despite the incivility of his bearing, was most disposed to listen to it. Julius did not find it easy to despise the humble yet dignified young man who stood almost submissively before him, asking only that he should forego a few miles of barren moorland that he did not want and a quiet girl he did not greatly desire.

He was about to turn to where Martin was waiting before the monument and to pass his word that he would no longer interfere with the Deverent fortunes when his attention was attracted by a small blaze of light behind one of the white pillars. A second glance showed this to be the jewel that Baron Kiss wore on his military bonnet;

as the Hungarian moved forward, Martin retreated yet farther into the shadows cast by the heavy tomb.

"Come, are you going to grant this request, so touchingly made?" asked the Baron.

"I thought you were my friend," said Martin, who was standing in almost total obscurity. "But you do not now speak as if you were."

"I only mingle in the affair out of curiosity," replied Baron Kiss; he turned, with a touch of mockery, to Julius and repeated that young man's recent thoughts almost exactly.

"Come, what is it to give up, but a poor neglected estate and a girl to whom you are not really attached? I dare say that your legal studies will not have done you any harm even if you do not use them for the ruining of Martin Deverent." There was something in this tone—too slight to be termed scorn—that changed everything for Julius Sale.

It suddenly seemed to him the greatest folly to abandon a course of action so long and so carefully preserved, and the figure of Annabella appeared before his inner vision as of a compelling attraction.

"I had not given my answer," he said coldly. "And I find this church—to which you, Baron Kiss, led me—a strange place for this manner of bargaining."

"Rather like an enchantment," remarked the Baron, "as if the power of some spell had brought your enemy across the sea to appeal to you."

Julius laughed at that; but he wished himself away from the church and from the company of both Martin Deverent and the Hungarian.

"I suppose," he said, "that you, Mr. Deverent, if you have anything serious to say to me—for I do not take what you have said as anything but a jest—that you can find your way to my lodgings."

Martin did not answer; he was now totally lost in the shadows of the tomb; of this nothing could be seen but the falling figure of the young hero in his snow-white alabaster.

Baron Kiss took Julius by the arm and led him out of the church.

"Is it true, Baron Kiss, that you are, after all, a friend of this man's and that you arranged this interview?"

"Perhaps so. Yet it is a thing that has been much on your mind, and you may have invented the whole string of incidents."

Julius laughed.

"I am a very practical sort of fellow. I am only surprised at the folly of Martin, idle as he is, who should have nothing better to do than to follow me here."

"He takes very seriously your intention of ruining him and stealing his Annabella——"

"He deserves no better than both misfortunes," said Julius. "I made no promises, did I?"

It was now clear day, and a pale sunshine fell over the snow-mirrored buildings and the canal skimmed with frost; the quarter chimes struck from a nearby steeple.

"I shall get some sleep," said Julius, "before I am due at the university. It seems to me that I have been up all night—and how, and for what purpose, I do not know. I should be glad if you could tell me, Baron Kiss."

"Your curiosity about myself and the whole episode will soon be satisfied," replied the Baron politely. "Did you know that Dr. Entrick is descended from the famous Charles de d'Ecluse—known as Clusius, who introduced the turbaned tulip from Russia into the Lowlands?"

"How should I have known that, and what difference does it make to me? To tell the truth, I found something disagreeable about the couple."

"What! You even disliked the beautiful Amalia!" exclaimed the Baron.

"My feelings are not deep enough to be termed dislike," replied Julius. "But I must urge that I am very fatigued—I seem to have lost a day and a night."

With that he took his leave abruptly of one whom he now regarded as a meddling stranger, and set out for his lodgings. It appeared to be dark when he reached them;

certainly he had lost all count of time; his cheerful landlady made no comment (he had half dreaded one) on his appearance; he tried to concentrate on his studies, but, after burning half a candle, found that he could not do so; he then extinguished the feeble light, undressed and went to his comfortable bed; was this really the evening of the same day as that in which he had met Baron Kiss, gone to the gambling saloon, supped with the professor of botany and met Martin Deverent before the heroic tomb at the whitewashed church?



CHAPTER IV

WHEN Julius awoke it was broad daylight, and the round-faced serving-maid brought in his breakfast as if nothing curious had happened. Perhaps, he thought, it was all a dream—though he had never thought of himself as a dreamer.

He went to the window, a cup of hot coffee in his hand, and looked out at the handsome street; a lingering sweetness was in the chill air, a lingering gold in the pallid sky, yet the icy gloom of the short winter's day was already everywhere.

Where had he been last night, in the Oude Kirk or that of Saint Bavon?

Leaving his breakfast uneaten, Julius left his lodging and walked briskly in his fur-lined coat, along the tranquil back streets where the notice *cubicola locanda* showed in many of the gleaming windows. He walked at random; by the Weigh House and the butter market, the harbour with the Zyl Port. Not being able to come to terms with his thoughts or his roamings, Julius took himself to the stables of a man well known to him and there hired a

horse; in order to have somewhere to go, he took the level road to a certain ruined castle that he knew of; he had always considered it odd that in a country so completely prosperous there should be a place so completely abandoned.

He paused by the verge of a lake, formed by the overflowing of the old moat, where a lad had gathered some sheep; Julius, who now spoke Dutch with a fair fluency, asked the youth the story of the castle; the shepherd did not know; hollow and forlorn the ruin had stood thus in the midst of the water ever since even old men could remember; the family who had built it must long since have become extinct.

The winter sky now had the quality of blond nacre dabbled with brown tossed clouds; the lake reflected these colours, also the broken walls of the Kasteel and the crumbling towers, one of which still retained a whimsical metal turret and a spire from which no weathercock glittered.

Through the hollow windows of floorless rooms Julius could see the distant outlines of a snow-flecked landscape. On the far bank some peasants watched their cattle trying to find some green amid the winter-bitten grass.

Near to the sheep and close to where Julius had stayed his horse was an uprooted tree—for the winter gales had been sharp—and one of those dark-leaved, thick plants that withstand the winter's cold. Other trees, erect but stripped of leaves, showed within the grim interior of the castle; once a fortalice built for war, and long since useless save as a passing shelter to a vagrant bird or wild beast.

Julius gazed in dreamy curiosity at this desolate building that did not even possess a legend; then, turning the head of his neat patient horse, he went back towards Leyden. His mood was now softened and calm. Had Martin Deverent now appeared before him, Julius would have granted all his requests; nay, if he had suddenly come upon Baron Kiss he would truthfully have assured the Hungarian that he desired no revenge on the man whom he had so long

considered his enemy. Yet this halting of his spite caused a halting of all his activities also; it no longer seemed worth while to pursue his studies, nor did he feel any animation at the thought of returning to his native place and fulfilling his mother's wishes by marrying Lydia Dupree.

Leaving his horse at the stables, he returned, in an idle mood, to his lodgings.

The door of the great parlour was open, and he glimpsed his landlady's daughter, a studious girl, bent over her books; everything about her was luxurious and more splendid than anything that Julius might hope to find on his return to Scotland. Once more, and now without knowing that he did so, he admired the black-and-white marble floors, the leather chairs with the brass nails, the mirrors framed in gilt wood and the heavy presses and cupboards that contained, he knew, a rich store of silver, fine damask, and rolls of satin and velvet. The air was flavoured with the perfume of coffee and spice; on Persian tapestries stood carven pots holding flowers that blossomed in the heat given out by the large porcelain stove. The girl, Cornelia by name, did not look up. She took no more notice of the entry of Julius than she took of the anxious gazing greyhound that stood close to the folds of her vermilion-coloured skirt.

On the stairs he met Cornelia's mother, a woman who seemed much shut away from him.

He knew that these two Dutchwomen, who lived fastidiously on the savings of a dead professor of anatomy and their own letting of rooms to students, represented a way of life that would always be alien to him. He had lived nearly two years in their house and knew very little of them.

The older woman was carrying upstairs a bundle of cold, glossy linen. She was stout and a little bent, for she had seen much service; her strong shoulders were bowed by bending over so many cradles, so many pots and pans, so many death-beds. Julius recognized her as one who saw the will of the Lord in everything that befell her. He

wished that he could gain the same serene resignation. If she had no faith in Divine Compassion, at least she credited God with great good sense.

Julius watched her as she moved into another room, leaving the door open behind her. From the oaken side-board she took down some goblets, amber-green in colour, and, finding them without a speck of dust, returned them to their places.

Beyond the diamond-paned window behind her Julius could see the row of low, pollarded limes that bordered the canal. There, too, he saw a red fur with a lining of Roman-striped silk.

This sudden sight of Amalia von Hart had an almost overpowering effect on him. He went upstairs to his own chamber, and would have bolted the outer door had not the impulse seemed utterly childish. But evidently it was not himself that the pedant's daughter had come to see; he could hear her pretty voice, speaking Dutch with a strong foreign accent, speaking to the landlady on the stairs.

What did she want in his retreat? How had she found out about it?

Julius, lingering by his door, the key yet in his hand, overheard the conversation of the two women. Amalia von Hart was trying to obtain lodgings, for herself and her father, whose position she represented in very rosy hues.

Despising himself for eavesdropping, Julius closed the door, and, in sheer idleness, went to the window. Martin Deverent was on the other side of the canal, waiting with an interested air. He was soon joined by Amalia von Hart, who crossed swiftly over the humped bridge that arched the canal.

Julius at once felt a great tingle of anger that he could by no means understand. What was either of these people to him? Had he not resolved to put Martin out of his life?

It now seemed that this was not possible; the fellow must interfere with him. Julius could not guess at his enemy's connection with the von Harts, but it was clear

that there was one. He went hastily downstairs in search of his landlady, and found her standing by the door of her room with a puzzled expression on her usually serene face.

"Did that young lady come to ask after me?" he demanded impetuously.

"Do you know her?" asked the Dutch woman in surprise. "I should not have thought, Mynheer——"

"You are right," returned the young Scot resolutely. "She is not of my acquaintances—yet I met her once—and I know the man—a fellow Scot, with whom she came——"

"I did not see him. The lady came to ask for lodgings for herself and her father, who has a post at the University."

"And you had no rooms to let?"

"None," replied the old woman firmly. "Can you imagine a creature like that in my house?"

"No—but would you tell me exactly why?" asked Julius with a curiosity he could not understand very well himself.

The other replied with great simplicity:

"I have never seen anyone like that in Leyden or in Dordt, which is my native town."

"She is foreign—do you know of what race?" asked Julius.

"No. But why, sir, should it trouble you? She did not even mention your name."

Julius thought it useless to confide to this tranquil old woman the odd turn that his story had taken; for odd it appeared to him; he still could not understand why he felt so angry at the obvious friendship between Amalia von Hart and Martin Deverent. He felt that, in some obscure way, they were in a plot to make a fool of him, and that Martin's appeal in the whitewashed church had been part of this stratagem. These feelings confirmed him in his almost foregone resolve to ruin Martin.

He turned to his table and took up his law books, then turned over several portfolios that contained accounts of the various quarrels that had embroiled the family of Sale with that of Deverent, together with descriptions of the

death of Kenneth Sale and the trial of Robert Deverent for his murder. He almost knew them by heart; yet there was something unsatisfactory about the whole episode, as if it had never yet been rightly told.

His mother and his friends had never doubted that Martin's father had murdered his; in fact it seemed as if the accused man had hardly attempted to defend himself. He had put in a plea of accident at the trial, certainly, but after his acquittal he had appeared to accept the unexpressed verdict of his neighbours and gone abroad, self-exiled, paying little attention to either worldly or spiritual matters. Julius could just recall the appearance of this dark man with the scowling brows, who resembled his son in so little; he had always lived like a recluse, and his wife was a sad-faced creature who shared his misfortunes with a mute constancy.

The story went—and Julius had heard it from his earliest youth—that Martin, though no more than a child of ten years or so at the time of the tragedy, had somehow helped his father, though in what way had never been made clear to Julius—either by giving false evidence in his favour, or even (for he had been present at that scene) by distracting the attention of Kenneth Sale so that Robert Deverent might shoot him as either of the men would have shot a rabbit.

This strong rumour had always nourished the hatred that Julius had felt for Martin. Other tales also had come to his ears of how Martin had boasted of the manner in which Kenneth Sale, too arrogant, too wealthy, too narrow-minded, had been disposed of as if he had been vermin.

These tales had been brought to the ears of Julius by various travellers who had met Martin unexpectedly abroad, where he would suddenly appear at some club, casino or gambling salon, always shabby, neglectful of his own interests and possessing neither discretion nor grace of manner. Many evils were imputed to his charge; the best that was known of him was his respectful wooing of

Annabella Liddiard during his brief and infrequent visits to Scotland.

Turning these matters over in his mind, Julius decided that it was not, after all, so strange that Martin should have appeared in Leyden; but what had Baron Kiss and the von Harts to do with the matter? Julius, frowning over the whole exasperating situation, perceived one cause of his own annoyance; if Martin was attracted by Amalia von Hart, then he, Julius, could not irritate, slight or humiliate him by attracting the affections of Annabella Liddiard; yet Julius could not get from his mind the appeal that Martin had made in the whitewashed church, out of the shadows of the young warrior's tomb. It was difficult to believe that that was in any way feigned. Julius recalled also the gleaming half of the golden coin that had hung above the young man's faded attire.

"At least," Julius muttered to himself moodily, "the routine of my life in Leyden has been shattered. I do not see how I can get back to the lecture room—the treatise—the law book——"

Two days had surely been already spoilt; for though he was confused as to time he thought that it must be at least forty-eight hours since he had first met Baron Kiss, the man who had at first attracted him so brilliantly and who now seemed the cause of intangible misfortunes. Yet why, he asked himself, should it be a misfortune to lose a revenge, that was, whichever way one looked at it, ignoble? Julius had no answer to this question, but he felt that some powerful attraction had gone out of his life and that it would be impossible to return to Scotland and live as a landed gentleman and the husband of Lydia Dupree. At least he would go about Leyden and try to find where Martin lodged.

First he went to the Golden Standard, which was frequented by all save the very poorest students. While he ate his meal he looked about, expecting to see at least Baron Kiss, who had seemed so familiar with the place; but there was no one there he knew save some of the

students he had seen in the gambling saloon, and they gave him no sign of recognition.

'Perhaps,' he thought, 'this coffee house is too costly both for the von Harts—for did not Amalia boast of poverty?—and for Martin.'

He therefore quickly finished his meal and visited several other coffee houses, some quite modest, where the students were likely to go for their hot drinks, their disputations and their readings of the Dutch gazettes.

But in none of these did he see the red fur with the Roman-striped lining, the peculiar military cap with the brilliant jewel, or the shabby clothes worn by Martin Deverent. It seemed so strange to him that in a city as small as Leyden, where there were so few places for people to congregate, he should chance not to meet any of those three that he began to wonder if all were not some trick dream engendered, perhaps, by over-attention to his studies. But against this theory, fantastic at best, was the visit of Amalia von Hart to his own lodgings and his own sight of Martin waiting for her on the other side of the canal. No, these people were somewhere in Leyden, and he, without doubt, was determined to find them.

Without giving a thought to his neglected studies, which now seemed purposeless, he wandered the wintry streets, as if, by hazard, he might find the people whom he sought. Recalling, vaguely, where he had met Martin Deverent, he turned into a church, but it was not at all like the one he had entered the evening before. The atmosphere was of great gloom, something bleak and dreary; only the windows, composed of coloured glass, filled the church with magnificence. Daylight shone through the florid designs, which were so rich that they seemed like glimpses of actual scenes between the rounded arches of the arcades. The figures, draped in veils of brilliant blues, purples and reds, moved through immense and flowing compositions and a pellucid, golden air, while the reflections of a thousand rich gems seemed to glitter.

Julius saw Cornelia, his landlady's daughter, enter the

church; she carried a rush basket of flowers covered with a clean cloth. Julius then remembered, what he had never noticed before, that his rooms were kept sweet with blooms all the year round. No doubt the women had the acquaintance of a greenhouse-keeper. Yet the forced odourless flowers of winter had not made the impression on him that had been made by the displays offered by Amalia von Hart at her father's supper.

Cornelia set the basket on the floor. Dutch churches, as Julius well knew, were not adorned with anything but the beautiful glass. Cornelia began her set task of dusting and polishing, taking no heed of her mother's lodger, who sat vacantly regarding her from one of the rush-bottomed chairs. Cornelia's step made a notable sound in the drowsy stillness. A large tiled stove heated the church. The girl wore a hood and cloak of pear-coloured cloth with wide bands of white fur, over a gown of lustrous grey silk; her hair, fine and pale as raw silk, was twisted in a rope like satin at the nape of her fair young neck. Julius had no interest in Cornelia and had never noticed her with detailed care before; he had always thought of her, when he had thought of her at all, as a slightly pampered child; now, as she went about the church with her duster and feather broom, she seemed like a diligent housekeeper.

Yet Julius was not really thinking of her at all, but of Amalia von Hart, who was probably nothing of a housekeeper; but he remembered the supper served at Dr. Entrick's and retracted his opinion. His vague meditations were interrupted by the appearance of the very person he had, if not hoped, at least perversely wished, to see: Martin Deverent.

"By what strange chance," he exclaimed, "do I twice come upon you in a church?"

He was indeed deeply startled, as if he had come upon an apparition at noonday. Cornelia took no more heed of the second comer than she had of himself. Martin now wore a shabby russet mantle over his worn suit.

"You disappeared yesterday before we could finish our argument."

"It was no argument," replied Martin. "Come outside and let us speak again."

They left the church; it was evening again and unclouded. They went outside the city; the sun was disappearing behind the immense distant horizon and casting long shadows that would linger until the last withdrawal of the long rays.

The distance was misted with touches of gold; here a faintly seen spire, here a bouquet of trees, here a little farm guarded by espaliers, everywhere the gleams of the waterways, the only movement the sails of a windmill quietly revolving.

"Make it possible for me to go home," said Martin Deverent.

"You know that I do not prevent you."

"I know that you evade me," replied the other. "If I could be sure that there would be no lawsuit—that Annabella would be faithful to me——"

Julius scornfully cut him short.

"You should be man enough to confront these eventualities!"

"But all the cards are in your hands," protested Martin. "You know that Annabella is much pressed by her people to accept you—and you know that winning the lawsuit—or gaining victory without one—is very likely to happen to you."

Hearing these words from the man he still disliked gave Julius a sensation of triumph.

The radiance had reluctantly faded from the landscape; but the afterglow had the same quality of clarity; purple shadows darkened the dykes; in the sombre blue-green water the stonework of the causeways and the shapes and sails of the canals were reflected, line for line, thread for thread; all was fading into darkness, but nothing was blurred. The very darkness was clear; the snowdrifts, frozen in the starved grass at the feet of Julius and his

enemy, were minutely exact even in this twilight; while beyond them was the flat distance, immense, mournful, a region of immeasurable illusion of sad enchantment.

"Come," asked Julius, trying to throw off the spell of the place and hour, "how is it that you have twice brought yourself into my company in this unexpected way?"

"Surely my requests to you were made in the plainest manner?"

"Yet there is something odd about them. How did you know I was at Leyden?"

"Many people know that—it is common gossip," replied Martin sadly.

"But not my reason for being here——"

"That also is known to several——"

"Ah, you make me think of Dr. von Hart and his daughter, and that strange fellow Baron Kiss."

"What should they have to do with me?"

"That I do not know, but it seems to me as if they were the means of bringing us together."

"There is enough to bring us together without that," said Martin.

They were now re-entering Leyden. The easy, comfortable crowded city was once more about them. They passed between airy fantastic gables, houses of just proportion and elegant brickwork with a rich yet practical air; in such a house Julius lodged, and he thought of this and of how pointless was his walk with his rival; for he was resolved not to ask him into his own rooms.

"You have asked questions," he said, "to which I can give no answer. If the land you occupy belongs to me—why, I must have it. I cannot see that it brings you much. You are never in residence there—or seldom."

"It provides the few monies on which I live," replied Martin with some firmness. "Besides, if I had some hope for the future and Annabella for my wife, I should have more heart to put energy into my stewardship."

"I make no promises," said Julius, walking quicker.

"I do what I like with my own and I pay court where I wish."

"If you are interested in Amalia von Hart," demanded Martin, "why cannot you undertake to leave Annabella alone?"

"You do not impress me with your stern accents and your frowns," replied Julius. "I shall do as I please."

"No doubt you are, first of all, gifted and wealthy, then you are eloquent and have the *entrée* wherever you go," replied Martin unexpectedly. "This evening we walk the streets because you will not ask me to your lodgings; and I—who dwell in a hole in the rocks—have none."

"You are resolved to think that I hate you," said Julius; "and perhaps it is so. At least, I regard you as the heir to your father's crimes, as I have said——"

"And have not I said—pleaded—that he has paid? He died poor, in exile, under a shadow."

"I do not wish to hear all that again," said Julius. "Come, we are near to my lodging, and it is true that I do not intend to ask you to enter."

He paused before the agreeable medley of pleasant little shops, now shuttered for the evening, that surrounded his comfortable lodging.

But he added, as if against his own volition:

"It is true that you are on your estate long enough to see Annabella Liddiard and to exchange love tokens with her——"

"You speak as if that were a contemptible thing to do——"

"Perhaps I think that it is. You confess yourself ruined—you have no profession——"

Martin Deverent interrupted:

"And perhaps you would like to add that I have an evil reputation?"

"That has nothing to do with me—but I am not going to invite you into my lodgings, and I refuse your requests."

"Ah, do you, indeed? Then that means that you did intend that I should be desolate and bereft?"

"You have heard my answer."

"I should have thought that the whole affair would seem very small to you——"

"Perhaps it does—yet it is concerned with the death of my own father."

"With which I had nothing to do——"

"Some think that you had, child as you were," replied Julius. "But I cannot—will not—stand debating here with you."

"Yet you deign to spend some time with Baron Kiss, and his companions——"

"Those people!" sneered Julius. "Let me warn you that the Hungarian, at least, is no friend of yours—he urged me on to my design——"

"That of ruining me? You admit, then, that you have one."

"Not at all," said Julius impatiently. "But this stranger—who seems to have come from nowhere—has tried to urge me to make an end of your fortunes."

"Let that be as it may," replied Martin, "I dare say I can contrive to live as well as the next man. What I wanted was your promise to leave Annabella Liddiard alone——"

"You should trust her fidelity," said Julius, and closed the door in the supplicant's face.

CHAPTER V

THE precisely kept, dignified house seemed in keeping with his studious days, hitherto unbroken, and the grim purpose of his life. His landlady was preceding him up the finely polished oak staircase; she had again a basket of freshly laundered linen on her stout arm; indeed, he had never seen either her or Cornelia empty-handed. Half

turning, she told him that a lady waited for him in his chamber. The slow smile on her complacent face seemed to note that it was new for him to have female visitors.

Julius expected to find Amalia von Hart in possession of his handsome chamber; and it was indeed she who rose as he entered and greeted him as if she had been the hostess.

Julius rented two rooms, of which this, the outer, he used as a parlour. It contained a chance medley of objects as well as the cases and shelves of all the law books that he used in his studies. There were some brass lamps, kept cleaned to a milky whiteness; one of the windows was occupied by a seascape painted on three panes of glass, set, one behind the other, in a grooved frame; the effect, being before the light, was of a luminous green under gold, and Julius had often half-desired to make such a toy for himself.

"Why do you bother yourself with my affairs?" he asked Amalia.

"Oh, I have been amusing myself. I was looking from behind this pretty trifle and watching you rebuff the poor shabby wretch who still, I see, stands below."

Julius also looked into the placid yet gay pageant of the street. The little metallic warrior was coming out from his tower opposite and about to strike the half-hour chimes.

"There is no getting away from the sound of bells in this country——"

"And no getting away from the sight of your enemy, eh?"

"Oh, I had not seen him for a good number of years, and I shall soon miss him again," replied Julius carelessly.

"But you have been thinking of him a great deal——"

Julius laughed in her face.

"Again I ask you what has this story, that somehow, I suppose, you wheedled out of Baron Kiss, to do with you?"

He seated himself opposite her, thinking how radiant she looked in her red fur, her face flushed from the frosty weather.

"My father and I were at Drenthe lately," she said. "It was on our way from Pisa to Leyden. My father wished to find some rare bog flower; this province, as you know, is a sandy heath. He stayed at Assen and found the people dull and obstinate——" She stopped.

"Yes?"

"It is a haunted country, covered with prehistoric monuments that appear to mark the graves of giants or some such monsters——"

"Hardly the place in which to look for a flower," remarked Julius impatiently.

"Oh, but it is—and we found exactly the variety we searched for—in that sterile plain outside the old capital, Koevorden, that is now no more than a hamlet——" She looked full at Julius, and added, "It is a mean-looking white bloom."

Julius pictured with some distaste the stretches of stagnant marsh which father and daughter had wandered searching for an insignificant flower. But, no doubt, he thought, such meagre triumphs were among the glories of his dull profession.

"But none of this," he said aloud, "affects me and my affairs."

"Yes, it does, for it was at Koevorden that I met the wise woman. There are several such, living on memories of the past and inheriting some of their magic——"

"I believe nothing of that," replied Julius quickly. "You waste your time."

"Oh, that, very likely!" she conceded. "But do not be so disdainful—think a little what the word magic may mean. I do not talk of changing the weather by the beating of a Laplander's drum."

"Tell me what you do mean?"

"Suppose someone dwelt on one idea only—from infancy upwards—do you not think that that might become concrete, so that, instead of thoughts, figures might appear?"

Julius laughed; the suggestion seemed to him non-

sense; he believed that Amalia must have some secret purpose in making it.

She saw his incredulity and, rising, asked him to go with her to the wise woman, who was now in Leyden, and who might have something strange to show him.

"Whatever it is," replied Julius, "she will not be able to persuade me that I am surrounded by apparitions, not human beings. But I do not think," he added, stayed by an unexpected thought, "that I have a mind to go out; Martin Deverent may still be there."

Amalia peered behind the glass seascape.

"No—he has gone—do you think he has such faith in your tenderness?"

"It is very odd that I should meet him like this in Leyden—playing the organ in some silent church."

"He wanders all over the place."

"The stranger that I should not have met him before. I had no idea that he was so strongly attached to Annabella Liddiard——"

"And to that piece of ground he calls his own. Come, will you make this visit with me?" They went out into the street. Martin Deverent had at last left his post. The luminous green of late afternoon was again glowing behind the ornate houses and reflected in the still water of the canal, skimmed with ice; the iron warrior had come out to strike his bell, and the chimes of other clocks could be heard in the distance; people were hurrying home, their heads bent before the sharp east wind. Time seemed to have passed very swiftly with Julius Sale since he had first met Baron Kiss and his companions.

Amalia von Hart led him to a side street and into a small, brightly lit shop where sweetmeats were on display in jars and trays, together with apples dipped in sugar, known as toffee apples; in between were bunches of dried flowers and evergreens and honey cakes scattered with drops of coloured sugar.

"This is where we live," said Amalia unexpectedly, smiling at the old woman who sat behind her wares.

"Surely it is not where I came to supper with you?" exclaimed Julius.

"Yes, indeed it is, only we took you up by a side stair, not through the shop."

"I do not know," said Julius, "why you concern yourself with me at all."

"One must do something," smiled Amalia. "And it is not often that one meets anyone with a set purpose in life."

"So that attracts you? I, for my part, am vexed that Baron Kiss should have got my story out of me, and at once imparted it to you and your father."

"I think that I have already told you that we are both people of discretion."

But Julius noted that she had not answered his question why she took such an interest in him; she would have no lack of admirers, he was sure.

"In the summer this house must be very pleasant," she said. "It looks towards cool, thick trees; come upstairs with me and I shall show you a notable collection of books from the *Officina Elzeviriana*, who, as you know, issued choice volumes to a large number."

"I did not think that we had come to see books, but a wise woman," smiled Julius.

Amalia beckoned him up a flight of back stairs that turned on themselves behind the display of sweetmeats now faintly lit by a candle in a paper shade. Amalia led Julius into a room that was indeed full of books; on shelves, in cabinets and on tables. Julius turned over one or two, the product of human hands only, and of a remarkably touching beauty and interest; most were in the ancient or Oriental languages, some produced by Louis Elzevir, some by the Daniel, some of the second Louis of that name.

Julius looked at the exquisite printing and bindings and the various strange symbols that enriched them. Among these he came constantly on the figure of a man seated at a church organ, always with his head turned away.

"How strange that I should see that!" he remarked to Amalia, who was regarding him with a quizzical air.

“Why? It is a common enough symbol.”

“What of?”

“Oh, that, perhaps you will learn later on. Now do you not want to see what the wise woman from Drenthe has to show you?”

Julius put down the splendid old book he held, and turned to behold with surprise the plump, red-faced old woman he had seen in the shop behind the sweets and toffee apples.

“Did you expect someone who looked more like a witch?” asked Amalia.

“Indeed, I have no idea of what they do look like—save from some old cuts in children’s books—yet there have been a number of witches in Scotland.”

The shopwoman had now taken up her place in front of her two visitors. She held a large jar of a thick greenish glass, such as Julius had often seen used for water.

“She will seem to gaze into that, but it is merely to concentrate her attention.”

The seer now asked him—or so he supposed—what he wished to know; he had not sufficient knowledge of Dutch to answer her; besides, he had been brought by chance and almost unwillingly to this meeting, which, coming so soon after his refusal of Martin Deverent’s appeal, had put his thoughts into a confusion.

Amalia flashed a glance of scorn at his hesitation.

“What! With such an important purpose in your life is there nothing that you wish to know?”

Julius was angry at what seemed this continual prying into his affairs, and turned his head away. Amalia laughed at his vexation, and, as he turned to look at her again, he noted how beautiful she was, with a rich bloom and a brilliancy of colour most uncommon. He understood also, as in a flash, that she would never give satisfaction to ordinary people; she might be an object of contempt, if not of derision, because of her peculiar manners, but she would never enjoy the pleasures and attentions that are the delight of most women. Perhaps, he thought, it was

because other people avoided her, or at least overlooked her, that she had taken such an interest in him and his affairs. Perhaps her roving life, the solitary habits of her father and her own over-bright beauty had caused her to feel herself something of an outcast from society.

"Perhaps your fortune would be more interesting to follow than mine," he ventured.

"Perhaps," she answered, with that manner between haughtiness and humility that was so difficult to place. "But do women have any fortunes? Usually their lives are empty, worthless, until attached to the careers of some men."

"Well," said Julius, "I realize that I can only become a worthwhile human being by discovering some reason for my existence. I must often pause, as I do now, and ask myself why I behave as I do. For example," he added rapidly, "I do not know why I refused Martin Deverent as I did——"

"It was because this revenge gives you a purpose in your life. Annabella Liddiard is more interesting to you than any other woman could be, because she will always remind you of the exploits to which you have given all your energies."

Amalia looked strangely ill at ease as she spoke. She appeared now like a young girl of good family who has behaved imprudently with a stranger.

"Well," she added abruptly, "do you not want, in any case, to see these marvels?"

"In which I do not believe!"

"Wendela," said Amalia, turning to the old woman, who sat patiently waiting with her coarse glass jar balanced on her knees, "he feels nothing and knows not what to do—but there must be something that you can show him."

Wendela spoke to Amalia, who gave Julius the translation; it was an injunction to gaze into the glass jar.

Julius obeyed and at first saw nothing but a grey-brown swirling mist which was much the same as he had seen that winter over the flats of the Low Countries. Then these

vapours cleared, and he saw the outline of a house; it was familiar to him, but he could not recall what it was; close by was a brook, so shallow as to show the pebbles, crossed by a bridge; a figure so faint as to be hardly discerned crossed this bridge and, rising to an unnatural height, tapped at one of the upper windows. After repeating this gesture several times the figure vanished; dissolved, as it seemed to Julius, into the mists.

But the window was opened, and an elderly man, wearing night attire, looked out. Astonishment was expressed on his features, which, though still handsome, were fretted with care and anxiety; he seemed extremely surprised at the summons on his windows, and looked about him in bewilderment. Soon he was joined by a woman of mature beauty, who seemed to share his wonder; then both withdrew and the casement was closed; in a very short time, however, Julius saw the couple come out from the front door. The lady was muffled, as if from the cold (Julius took the scene to be at night), while her companion also carried a mantle and held a stout single stick. As if he had been gifted by the flight and vision of a bird, Julius followed the progress of this couple, who seemed to be lit by the dim glow of a moon covered again and again, by veils of a thin vapour; so that Julius could sometimes see the couple walking over the heath or a bridle path, while at other times they were lost to his view with the darkening up of the moon; but there never seemed to be a hesitation in their walk, any faltering in the direction that they were taking. Their progress was steady, as if they followed directions explicitly given, perhaps by the creature who had tapped at their window, yet Julius could not discern any guide. He began to doubt the evidence of his sight and to wonder if he were in the room over the shop of the woman who sold toffee apples or out on the moor with the two, who seemed to be searching for something precious and to be guided in their strange quest by a person or a spirit he could not see.

The vapours of brown and grey, familiar to him from

many a childhood scene, seemed to grow less dense; but all was uncertain in this blurred expanse that involved the figures of Amalia von Hart and the stout little shop-keeper.

Yet he could still discern the two figures of a man and a woman (they seemed now to have joined hands), who glided rather than walked above the rough dead heather. There was a dead kind of light, such as might come from the last flare of a lamp about to go out, and by that Julius recognized the scene. It was a piece of rising moorland close to his own home, and precisely that which formed the boundary between his own house and that of Martin Deverent.

Now the couple, who might have been described as flying rather than walking, appeared to pause and to tremble over a certain spot well remembered by Julius. It was not far from Castle Basset, which stood in a lonely and formidable situation, and it consisted of a small, still lake irregular in shape and lit by an indeterminate light; the edges seeped into the heath and were only broken by the sharp spikes of a few winter-cracked reeds.

Julius saw the two figures pause and cling together as if terrified; he himself heard a sound like the whistling of a wind in a long place where it meets with no obstacle. The two were gazing across the spread of water, which had become more defined in the brightening light; he looked as they did, and saw the figure of a young woman stretched out on the edge of the water. She appeared to be asleep, and one arm was passed over her head; her hair was unbound and her loose dress resembled in hue the stunted heather and winter-bitten grasses. The woman now called out in a low voice, making it seem like a moan; Julius thought that it was a name she uttered, but he could not be sure; the man seemed to repeat the word, and the two passed round the spreading lake. But as they neared the recumbent figure this seemingly disappeared from their eyes, for they gazed wildly about, as if searching for someone. The brown-grey mists returned to the room, and then these also disappeared,

and Julius could see only the homely furniture and the woman who sold toffee apples sitting patiently with the coarse glass jar on her knee.

"Give her some money and let us go," said Amalia von Hart.

CHAPTER VI

JULIUS put a piece of silver on the table and followed Amalia downstairs by the corkscrew side, returning out on to the quay.

"I do not know," he protested, "what I have seen—but it was certainly close to my father's seat, Castle Basset."

"You cannot, then, expect it to mean anything to me," replied Amalia.

"But at least you can tell me why you brought me to this appointment."

"One cannot give a reason for everything" replied Amalia. "It must be all part of the design on which you are engaged."

"I wish that you would not so often talk of that design of mine."

"Does the very thought of it already fill you with exhaustion—perhaps collapse?"

"Why should you ask that?" he demanded, startled. "Do you think that I inhabit a dream world and am never likely to become a man of action?"

She looked at him in a way that he found disturbing as well as fascinating, for she seemed to know his very thoughts; and she seemed to find him very young and inexperienced.

He replied to her unspoken thought:

"Some day you will see that I am not such a fool and can, on the contrary, manage my own affairs very well."

"Oh, indeed," she replied. "That will be the day, I suppose, when Martin Deverent is ruined and you are married to Annabella Liddiard."

"Was it her I saw beside the lake?" he exclaimed. "And were those two going round to search for her the parents?"

"Surely you should know. All these people are strangers to me."

"I could not see clearly—the light was so shifting. Suppose instead we talk of your affairs? How is it that with such brilliant charms you have not contrived to secure a handsome match? Will not you ask Madame Wendela to gaze in her old glass bottle for you?"

And he burst out laughing, thinking how absurd everything had been from the moment he had met Baron Kiss.

"Do you suppose," replied Amalia quietly, "that anyone would take the least notice of the niece of a poor pedant like Dr. Entrick?"

"Yes, I should have thought so. You must show like a star in a dust heap in some of these humble universities to which you go. Why, I wonder you have not had offers, even from sons of the local marquises and dukes."

"Perhaps they have not been quite the offers you imagine," said Amalia gravely. She spoke with what seemed to Julius excessive delicacy of feeling, and he pitied her, without quite knowing why. She was a person, who, like himself, did not fit into society. He liked her wandering life, as he liked his own life as a student at Leyden, because neither had anything to do with an orderly existence. He looked at her a little sadly as he answered:

"Neither of us quite know where we belong. You have been brought up without a family or a home, and I have been allowed to fill my thoughts with those of vengeance. So we are both, in a fashion, cut out from custom. Is it likely," he added, "that we can continue long like this? We are both in conflict with society; and society, in turn, will shatter us."

"Do you mean that you intend to abandon your plan against Martin and Annabella?"

"By no means. I shall accomplish what I set out to do, and then it will all seem very commonplace. Some influential relation will find Martin a respectable post abroad in return for his lost acres, and Annabella will prove a very comfortable little wife."

"And you?"

"I shall be the ordinary Border landlord—with probably Maryon Leaf still as my factor and doing all the work."

"And what do you suppose will become of me?"

"I know nothing about you."

"But you have already expressed surprise at my lack of suitors."

"And you as good as admitted that you had none. Well, then, I suppose you will continue to be the housekeeper of your dry little uncle until he dies, when you will perhaps inherit a small pension and a herbarium. By then you will be middle-aged and ready to join some religious community. I do not know what your faith is, but no doubt it makes provision for women such as yourself."

"Do you think that there are so many of us?" asked Amalia.

"No, but I venture to say that one way or another there are always women, of all faiths, who are glad of a religious retreat when a life of their own is no longer possible to them."

"How scolding you sound! Yet I believe that already you think more of me than you do of either Lydia Dupree or Annabella Liddiard."

This was spoken in a tone of cold coquetry, and Julius spoke the exact truth when he replied drily:

"I wonder that you concern yourself about me in any way at all."

"Oh, none of the ducal younger sons you have mentioned have lately come my way," mocked Amalia.

"Come, we are at the entrance of the Botanical Gardens, will you not enter? There may be something worth seeing in the glass houses, even in this rough season."

But it seemed to Julius that they were walking beside one of his native burns that fell in full spate over the tawny-coloured rocks. He was no longer with Amalia, but with a child of his own age; the period must have been far back in his life, for he felt that his companion was Martin, and that of the two men who walked ahead of them, one was Martin's father and one was his own, and they were talking together in quiet pleasantries; it must have been long before the feud; the very air was the pleasanter for that. It was early autumn, and Julius was mostly conscious of the rowan trees weighed down with the clusters of scarlet berries; the rowan tree, he knew, protected against magic and all kind of evil; he put out his hand and touched the low swinging branch and felt protected.

The sky was a pale blue, across which clouds of the finest texture and the palest milky white moved rapidly.

Julius and his youthful companion, hand in hand, and bound, as it seemed, by the closest affection, passed between open gates, but these were not the gates of the Botanical Gardens at Leyden. The path led them to one of those modest stone-walled enclosures, generally set at some distance from the houses, that were familiar to Julius during his childhood in Scotland. Here, in a mild yet fresh air, he was enclosed by double hedges of privet and box, both in full flower and linked with some poignant association, he did not know what, in the mind of Julius. They passed into an inner garden, and this was marked by an elder tree, as potent as the rowan, Julius recalled, to protect against evil. He could see and smell sweet basil, rosemary, thyme and mint. They were soon out of the herb garden; the two grown men, who appeared to be talking together in perfect amity, were a few paces ahead; they were following a track, such as was (his nurse had often told him) often made in ancient times by outlaws, speeding away to some secret hidden place; near them might be forgotten houses, villages or roads. Julius had heard many tales of children being lost when following these half-forgotten tracks; now he felt half-lost himself, in time as well as

place. Now it seemed to be spring, perhaps as late as May; but the wind was cold, and he thought of Dr. Entrick and his daughter searching for the chill frail flower on the bogs of Drenthe. "Amalia, where are you?" called Julius, raising his voice.

His small companion had faded from his side, and the two grown men were no longer in view. Julius was in a hollow across which struck a white road, disappearing in the waning light. Julius had come out of a forest of rowan trees, and, perceiving the cottage, went to it at once to ask his way to Leyden, for the skies were livid and foretold an almost instant storm. Then the cottage disappeared, and on the site of it was a pool set with early lilies, purple and white, while the hoarse voices of some night birds croaked nearby.

Julius put out his hand as if to support himself against a decaying tree that gave out a pale blue light. But his hand struck something more solid than the fungus-eaten trunk of the dead willow, and he found himself again in his familiar rooms at Leyden, and that his blow had been on the wall and summoned the servant.

He was relieved that she spoke first, for he did not feel that he could give a very good account of himself or his recent wanderings. "Dr. Entrick," she said, "sent you an invitation for the opera tonight; he hopes that you will be able to go."

"I did not know that there was an opera house at Leyden," he said stupidly.

"Oh, but there is. You have only to open that door by your cupboard, and you will find yourself in the private box that Dr. Entrick has reserved for you."

"I hope that I am to find him and his daughter there?"

"I know nothing about that. Dr. Entrick said that he hopes you will go at once, as the performance is about to begin."

Julius rose, feeling drowsy and dishevelled, as if he had been in a long, deep dream. Certainly by his wardrobe was a door that he did not recall seeing before; it seemed

ridiculous to suppose that it led to any opera house. However, he turned the handle and found himself in a box that gave into a theatre; this was empty and dimly lit. Julius looked about expectantly, but there was no sign of orchestra, players or audience; in fact he seemed the only person in the large and ornate auditorium.

Crimson curtains to which were attached golden cords concealed the stage. As Julius watched, the musicians, two by two, came into the pit; they wore a drab livery, and tuned up their instruments without speaking one to the other. Julius would have liked to get away from so melancholy a place, but he found that the door by which he had entered was locked. He wondered for whose possible entertainment such a place could be used; never had he heard of anything like it in Leyden. The drop-cloth was painted, in sombre tones, with the likeness of a country scene; there was a loch from which low hills sloped away, and there was a sky that lowered with the chill darkness of a winter evening. This scene seemed familiar to Julius; but it was with a start that he realized it was the same that he had seen in the vision in the glass jar held by old Wendela.

Leaning forward from his box, he saw again the prone figure of a woman, lying as if asleep, with her arm tossed up over her head; and this time he was sure that the figure was that of Annabella Liddiard. As he stared eagerly, he saw that the figure wore a coin or medallion that glittered faintly on her bosom; he was certain that it was the counterpart of that coin he had seen on the breast of Martin Deverent. 'So, they are pledged,' he thought; and this realization made him the more resolved to win the girl away from his enemy. He at once justified himself to himself. Annabella was very delicately bred, and it was most unjust to expect her to share the life of Martin Deverent—a man likely to have even a furnished room in some outlandish town only so long as his luck at the tables held good, and who, in some passes, might be roaming the roads like a gipsy and sleeping in barns. At this thought a great tenderness came over him for Annabella, and he felt that he

was doing something splendid in saving her from the life she would have as the wife of a gambler.

He looked round expectantly, hoping that the lanterns and candles would be lit; but the theatre remained in the same half-light, completely empty. Dull grey draperies, held back by silver buckles, surrounded the boxes, and Julius peered from one to another hoping to see someone enter; but every box except his own remained empty. The orchestra struck up a thin music that was much in keeping with the mood of Julius; the conductor raised a white baton and shook back his powdered wig; the strings scraped in what seemed to Julius an unending melody that turned on itself in a maddening repetition.

'I wish,' thought Julius, 'that I was dealing with someone of more force and intelligence. There will not be much zest in destroying this poor rat.'

And he thought with contempt of Martin as he had last seen him, shabby, pale and pleading for pity. Plainly he was a weak fellow who had made but a poor struggle against forces too strong for him—the shadow that had overcast his parents, the lapsing of his small estate into poverty, and his own taste for a wandering life. He had, besides, a bad reputation, and Julius wondered why that might be. No definite accounts of any wicked or even rash deeds on the part of Martin Deverent had come to the ears of Julius Sale, and the woebegone man he had seen, each time in an attitude of supplication, had not seemed to him hateful or capable of odious deeds.

Julius rose and again tried the door at the back of the box; it was still locked. He now found something frightening about the situation, which was like a dream from which the dreamer cannot wake. The mean-looking orchestra, playing one monotonous tune, the deserted theatre, the drop-cloth on which was depicted a scene so familiar to him and the exhausted figure of Annabella, asleep with Martin's love token on her heart, seemed to him beyond anything strange; yet he had at first accepted it all as perfectly natural. He thought of Martin, at the same time,

as being frightening; a man who, deprived of fortune, and even reduced to a ridiculous figure, yet was prepared to fight the chaotic society in which he found himself.

If he had a bad name, was it not true that the environment in which he found himself was corrupt? Almost Julius Sale could have pitied him; but he was soon able to turn this compassion into loathing and a resolve to ruin Martin Deverent.

Yet he could not arouse in himself the gust of powerful emotion that would be needed to do this; it would have to be by way of law books and long creeping calculations that he must bring his enemy down. While as for Annabella, feeling, as he did, so exquisite a compassion for her, it was hard for him to grasp how he would ever be able to deceive her into believing that he cared for her; for Annabella, he knew, would never wrong anyone as part of a plot of revenge; indeed, it was possible (in view of the exchanged coins) that she truly loved Martin.

And he? What did he feel for these three women? For Lydia Dupree he believed that he felt nothing, for Annabella Liddiard this tender compassion that might be termed love, and for Amalia von Hart an amorous emotion that might easily develop into a passion.

He sank back into the chair at the front of the box and tried to think out the meanings of the terms he had just used in his mind. Annabella, for instance, he had known all his life, yet he was ignorant of everything about her; still, when thinking of her, time ceased to exist; in her loneliness she existed, belonging to neither the past nor the present. It was the same with Amalia; of her he knew nothing at all save what she had chosen to tell him herself. And she, no more than Annabella, had need of a past or a future; both of them existed in the golden light of the present, as he seemed to exist only in the dim light of the empty theatre.

He felt this theatre to be symbolical of his mood, for he too was grey and empty, and there was no harmony in his heart more powerful than the faint melody of the violins. He

felt as if someone had set a trap for him, and he was about to hurl himself again on the door in the back of the box when he observed that the drop-cloth had gone and that the stage was now occupied.

An enormous clown, hunched and robust, stood against a background of leafless trees. Regardless of the empty theatre, he began to go through his conventional gestures. Julius stared dully at the figure in white, wearing the frills edged with blue and red. Soon, however, the figure of the huge clown became transparent, and through it, as it moved in a mocking dance about the stage, Julius could discern the drop-cloth, which had not been taken away, but only moved to the back of the stage. The small sheet of water, the recumbent maiden, the gently sloping banks now showed distinctly through the outlines of the clown's figure. It seemed to Julius that it was the unlucky night of All Hallow's Eve, when all the spirits of the moors would be abroad, and that he was no longer enclosed in an empty theatre at Leyden, but on his way home from Castle Basset; he knew the way, every loch and wayside turning, so well that he did not hesitate in his gait, but walked forward in a sprightly manner.

He had it in his heart that he was soon to be united to someone very dear to him. He had no need of a lantern, for a moon, hardly on the wane, lit his path; yet this moon had a very dull, yellowish light that gradually depressed his spirits and gave a melancholic turn to a landscape already bleak and barren; the shadow of this pallid moon showed like a goblet of cold fire in the lake; the braes on the other side grew darker in shadow, and the figure of the maiden, taken by Julius for Annabella Liddiard, had this foul light on it that was neither bright nor dull, but dismal.

Julius stumbled on and was met by what seemed a shadow in his path; a creature that was no more than a sack in shape, yet that appeared to be a blending of Martin Deverent, Dr. Entrick, and the clown, who like a phantom had performed on a dim stage; the creature had also a certain likeness to Baron Kiss, which Julius found most unpleasant.

“What!” exclaimed this creature. “You are late abroad and on All Hallow’s Evening?”

“I certainly feel something lost in my wits. I thought that I was also mostly forced into a little theatre at Leyden, and there I saw what must be a recurrent dream—Annabella Liddiard in a sleep or swoon beside the little loch that is near Castle Basset.”

The figure that barred his way seemed to smile at this; seemed, for so vague was it in outlines that it was difficult to see if it smiled or frowned.

“You may put up prayers for your poor, lost ruined lassie,” it said; “for I fear that she is lost for this world, and who knows about the next?”

“Of whom do you speak?” demanded Julius. “And tell me, in the name of God, are you Baron Kiss?”

At this question, spoken with desperate severity, Julius found himself again in the empty theatre.

Everything vanished, and Julius was back again in his room. All was in order; much that was strange had vanished with the night. He looked round at the familiar objects in the chamber; he was surprised to think that he had ever met Baron Kiss.

CHAPTER VII

CORNELIA brought him his morning meal. In order to test the reality of the last few days, he asked her if Baron Kiss had lately been inquiring for him.

“Yes, he came too early, and I sent him away again,” replied Cornelia.

“I would,” said Julius vehemently, “that I might never see him again. He brings bad dreams and, worse than those, visions that have the seeming of reality.”

Cornelia looked at him anxiously and seemed about to

question him; but nervous fancies were rare in her nature, and she put down the young Scot's rambling speech to some mundane indisposition.

"The past comes much back to me," he said, "and I remind myself of much that I thought I had forgotten. The country round Basset is one that it is impossible to view without peaceful emotions. The streams are clear, of a tawny colour, showing the pebbles; and the mountains, though high, are green to the very summit, and covered with lint-white sheep. It is indeed a beautiful pastoral country, and I am often homesick for it; it is true that the clergy are morose and that their teaching is bleak, but once one is away from the churches one might almost imagine oneself in Paradise."

"The Lowlands also are very beautiful," answered Cornelia, "with our gentle woods and dunes—and our clergy are gentle, too, so I have heard, in comparison with yours."

"Baron Kiss," said Julius, "belongs to neither Scotland nor the Lowlands. Do you know of what nationality he is?"

"Hungarian, as I have been told," said Cornelia, "but no one knows exactly what his nationality is."

"Cornelia, is there a door near my wardrobe that opens into a theatre—a disused theatre, I should say?"

Cornelia looked astonished.

"I know of no such theatre in Leyden," she replied. "There are only the two, and they are always occupied by some comedy troupe."

This caused Julius to think of himself as a haunted man, and he fell into a gloomy silence that alarmed Cornelia. She drew his attention to the brightness of the day and the sun that had overcome the snow clouds.

"It is hardly a question of the weather, Cornelia. I have inherited some curious story and I do not know what part I am to play in it. Is there some old woman round here who sells toffee apples?"

Cornelia laughed.

"There are a fair number of them——"

"This one came from Drenthe, and all she has for magic is a coarse glass bottle into which one gazes in order to see visions."

"Did you see any, Mynheer Julius?"

"Why, I think I did, but it is difficult to be certain—for the scene I beheld was that given on the drop-cloth of the theatre I thought I visited last night."

"What was it?" asked Cornelia, humouring him pleasantly.

"I do not know—certainly not enough to describe it, for it was a scene of my own country, and it does not seem likely that a landscape of the Border would be used for a drop-cloth in Leyden."

Julius then continued to ask after the toffee-apple woman, but Cornelia could not recall her even when Julius said that she was smiling and pleasant and showed a child-like simplicity.

"And if it will help to tell you what she revealed to me, why, it seemed to be the parents of a girl I know, who were roused at night by some spirit to go where this young woman lay sleeping, or in a swoon, or perhaps dead, beside a loch that I know very well."

"Then it certainly is not a theatre in Leyden, Mynheer, with such a scene. They have drop-cloths of a pretty scene of a rose garden."

Afraid to bring too much curiosity on to himself, Julius affected a cheerfulness he did not feel and spoke of giving up his lodgings soon after the end of the term, which would fall about Easter.

"Are you so sure, then, Mynheer, of taking your degree?"

If Julius had answered frankly he would have said that whether he took his degree or not, he would leave Leyden and abandon his intention of revenge against Martin Deverent. It seemed clear that that unfortunate young man was going his own pace to destruction, and Julius was not as unmoved as he pretended to be by the appeals that had been made to him.

Giving him a doubtful look, Cornelia left the room. Much seemed to have gone with her, and Julius felt as if he would have to make an effort not to be caught away wholly into a dream world to which he had delivered himself by his strong concentration on the feud caused by his father's death.

'I must try,' he thought, 'to find something in which I can be interested, though that is very difficult.'

He thought that he would like to find out more about Martin Deverent and that there possibly might be some scheme whereby this wanderer might be set on his own land again and made a successful man. Both of them were fatherless and in that sense their own masters, and Julius saw himself, with great pleasure, as the benefactor of Martin and of Annabella; by then, he supposed, he would be married in a prosaic manner to Lydia, but it would make life more agreeable to have a neighbour who was obliged to one, and with whom the years could be passed in amity.

The law books slipped out of his hands, and he did not observe when Cornelia came in with the lamp. It seemed to him that he was on a dark road, going home to someone whom he loved; the greenish moon began to show over the loch, or rather, over the low hills beyond them; this again seemed a recurrent dream, for often had Julius Sale passed this way, and not often in his sober senses.

He reached the house he was making for without meeting anyone, human or supernatural, on the way, and came to a small dwelling that seemed to be his destination. One window that he expected to find lit was now dim; he peered in and saw nothing but darkness and vacancy. Julius felt shocked and affronted, and was going round the place to see if there was another window unshuttered when the whole dream, if that it was, broke, and he found himself in his Dutch chamber with his law books at his side and the lamp burning brightly on the side table.

He was surprised to find that it was so late. He parted the curtains and found the evening full of snow; it would

be a pleasant change from these moody thoughts that haunted him to go to the Golden Standard for his evening meal. There, too, he might find Martin Deverent, towards whom he could make some gesture of friendship—some hint that his appeals were, after all, not to be disregarded.

He went into his second chamber, which he used as a sleeping room. This was in darkness save for the watch-light set beside the white porcelain stove; the two together gave out only a dim glow. Julius turned to the press where his hat and mantle were kept. At the same time he felt the drugget curtains of the bed agitated, and someone leapt upon him. Thus fallen upon unawares, Julius nearly fell over but managed to grasp the massive bed post and pull himself upright, his enemy, however, still clinging to him. Julius was about to shout for help but recalled that there were only the women in the house and that it would best become him to settle this matter himself. His opponent was powerful, however, and had a good mind to choke him; it took all that Julius possessed in the way of strength to release himself. He flung off his unseen enemy twice, and he was making for him a third time when Julius heard the muttered words:

“If not the other way then this——”

“It is the voice of Martin Deverent,” said Julius, on the defensive.

“And who should it be? How many other broken dogs have you kicked out of your path?”

“I was thinking over a friendly message to you, even as I came into this room. And you were waiting here to murder me, as I suppose.”

“I should have been glad if I could have done it, but like many of my schemes, it went awry.” Martin was now leaning against the bed post, as Julius, even in that faint light, could perceive.

“It is an ill thing,” said Julius, “to hide in a man’s bed chamber in order to murder him—as ill a thing as to go out shooting with a man and make him the quarry.”

“That is not true.”

"Tonight's attempt is true. How did you get in the house?"

"It is easy to slip past a young girl and an old woman."

"It is of a piece with your reputation, Martin Deverent," said Julius. "But still I ask you to the Golden Standard to have supper with me."

"I refuse, of course, for I find such an invitation farcical."

"Farcical or tragical, somehow the issue must be fought out between us."

"You think I am merely applying to you again for compassion?"

"I have told you I think I was wrong in refusing, but a father's death lies heavy on a man's mind."

"Well, perhaps I have something to regret in mine—*his* death was not so agreeable, exiled under the shadow of a crime he had not committed."

"Was he the kind of man to have made much better care for himself, even supposing that this misfortune had not come his way?" As he spoke Julius glanced at Martin in such a way as to make his meaning quite clear.

"You mean that he was like myself, quite incapable of making life successful?"

Julius laughed.

"You were not even able to make a success of murdering me—though the advantages were all on your side," he replied. "Come, what made you think of this absurd attempt?"

"Twice you had refused my appeal," said Martin in a low voice, "and it did not seem as if both of us could exist at the same time in the world."

"You have changed your mind, then, for when you appealed to me to leave Annabella Liddiard alone you seemed to think that we could live together not only on this planet, but as neighbours."

"So I did think. Then it seemed to me as if I must destroy you."

Julius laughed again. "Come and have supper with me

at the Golden Standard," he suggested, thinking that want and misery were largely responsible for the poor fellow's behaviour.

Martin glanced at his clothes as if he could read what was in the other's mind.

"There are many far shabbier than you who manage to scrape a meal at the Golden Standard," said Julius with an air of good humour. "Come, let us try if we two cannot be friendly."

"You have not given me the promise I asked as to Annabella Liddiard?"

"Oh, that is something one can hardly make a promise about. Do you, in your turn, tell me of Baron Kiss, Dr. Entrick and the fair but mischief-making Amalia."

The two young men were soon in the street, and before long in the cheerful dining-room of the Golden Standard. Outside, the chimes quavered in the salty air; inside, the aroma and haze of tobacco smoke dimmed the figures of the students sitting over their pots of beer, their herrings and sauerkraut.

"I know nothing of Baron Kiss," said Martin Deverent. "He appeared before me suddenly in a sidewalk, spoke to me civilly and soon showed that he knew all my story."

"He much admired my design for ruining you," smiled Julius grimly.

"When he spoke with me, on the contrary, he was all in my favour. He presented me, for no reason at all that I could discern, to Dr. Entrick and his curious niece."

Animated by food and wine, Martin now appeared youthful and handsome, and his worn clothes were no longer noticeable.

"I have met Dr. Entrick before," continued Martin. "At a place in this country where I was tutor to the young count; he came to show a new strawberry plant that he had discovered."

"Where was this?" asked Julius. "I thought that they told me they came from a post in Pisa."

"This must have been on the way. It was a charming

Hof, with a moat, and beyond thick woods, mostly lime trees. There was a place for wild beasts where the lions and a dromedary were kept, a bleaching green—there was a chapel, also, with a blue ceiling and golden stars such as is not often seen in this country.”

Julius paid the bill.

“Let us take a ride,” he suggested. “We can easily hire horses here, if it pleases you.”

“I am glad to have found a friend in one I believed was pursuing me with hatred. That pleases me,” replied Martin simply.

In this cordial spirit the two set off. The houses were reflected in the tawny waters of the canals; in some of the windows showed bright lamps, casting a radiance on little bouquets of winter flowers. Martin and Julius passed many such, and crossed a maze of intersecting old bridges, then more streets of houses, with lions and heroes crowning the gables and a thin moon coming up behind the roof tops.

At last they came out from the clustered houses, canals, towers and belfries, and, though the tall steeples of Leyden still dominated the landscape, they were free of the city, and riding on a straight road, lined either side with limes, and beyond them a canal; the chorus of the carillons followed them in irregular chimes of timid yet piercing sweetness.

Julius leaned forward a little in the saddle, for he had seen between the trees a solitary figure in a boat on the canal, who seemed to be resting on his oars.

There seemed to be a flash of brightness from this figure, and Julius thought he recognized the curiously brilliant gem that fastened the casque of Baron Kiss.

He was about to point out this person—half seen in the dark—to Martin, when he felt himself seized round the waist by the leather belt he wore, with a violence that made his horse rear and nearly threw him from the saddle.

He soon perceived that his attacker was Martin, who had flung himself on him with his bare hands.

"Ah, now I perceive that you are indeed an evil man!" exclaimed Julius, grappling with his enemy, whose eyes now shone as bright with hatred as did the jewel on the cap of Baron Kiss.

The two men were soon off their horses, and they fought together on the darkening causeway while the frightened animals clattered away towards the city.

Julius, who felt that he was getting the worst of the struggle, called for help and directly asked it of Baron Kiss; but there was no answer, and when Julius contrived to peer between the trunks of the lime trees the canal was empty save for the spear-like reeds and the reflections of the small evening clouds.

At the same moment Martin loosened his hold and stood away from Julius.

"I do not know," he gasped, "what prevailed on me to do that——"

"I know that you are a very treacherous rascal," cried Julius in deep anger, "and that I was a fool to trust you a second time."

Yet Martin, whose demeanour appeared not only contrite, but dejected, seemed at the same time so bewildered that Julius did not fear a renewal of the attack.

"I certainly do not wish for your company," he said. "I have pistols on me, and I suggest that you walk ahead of me into the city."

"That is a fair suggestion," agreed Martin sadly. "But I swear to you that when we set out together from the Golden Standard I had nothing but friendly feelings towards you."

"That I cannot believe—but shall rather credit the tales I have heard of you as a violent, evil fellow."

"They are not true. But it is better that we should not molest one another. I shall, as you suggest, walk ahead of you into Leyden while you may hold the pistol at my back."

Julius considered it strange that Martin, instead of continuing a fight in which he definitely had an advantage,

should thus put himself at the mercy of his opponent; but as they had now lost the horses they were obliged to proceed on foot, and Julius did take one of his pistols from its case and hold it in readiness, although he could see that Martin was not armed.

"Did you," he asked, "perceive Baron Kiss in a boat in one of the canals, just before you attacked me?"

"No, no," replied the other, speaking over his shoulder in a confused way. "I thought that we were alone. I swear I had no intention of this attempt when we left Leyden."

"Somehow I am inclined to believe that you speak the truth," said Julius. "But if you are given to these fits of wanton violence you are no companion for me. Ah, Martin Deverent," he added in a serious voice, "the old feud must rest. It is plain that there can be no friendship between us."

"I suppose so."

"You suppose so?" responded Julius, half amused, half angered by this reply. "Twice you have made an unprovoked attack on my life, and yet you seem reluctant to leave the idea of our friendship—companionship—what is the word I should use?"

"I thought no more than that we might give up this feud. It was yet another way of appealing to you about Annabella Liddiard."

"It was a strange way."

"Oh, I don't mean when I threw my hands round your neck—that was an impulse I cannot account for. I mean that there was something of an appeal in my attempt to be friendly with you."

"All you did was to show me the manner in which your father murdered mine."

They had now reached the outskirts of the city, and Martin asked if he might walk beside the other. As Julius could get help easily, he agreed, but kept his hand on the loaded pistol in his pocket; he did not know what hidden impulse Martin might have. The night was settling blue and cold around them. This man, thought Julius, was lost; he would go from one evil thing to another, dissipate

all his property—such as it was—and die in the gutter, at last, miserably.

Even as he thought thus he felt a certain compassion for his companion; when viewed closely his looks were very striking, at once majestic and delicate and of ill accord with his miserably shabby attire, which seemed to be some kind of mourning but was rusty and almost threadbare.

“Good-bye,” said Julius. “I do not know where your lodge is, and I shall not ask. I hope that we do not meet again.”

“That would be my hope also, were it not for Annabella Liddiard!”

“Still harping on that name!” Julius felt as if Annabella were no longer a human being. He thought of her as he had seen her in his dream or on the drop-cloth of the theatre, lying with her hand and arm over her head, asleep, or perhaps dead by the borders of the little loch so near his home and therefore so familiar to him.

“Yes—I implore you to leave her alone—not to use any persuasion with her parents, who are, as you know, poor and ambitious.”

“You really mean that you would condemn Annabella to such a life as you must lead?”

“I think that you asked me that before. I tell you that if we were together, everything would be different and even my wretched estate be made to flourish.”

“These are day-dreams, such as foolish youths and girls sigh over. Annabella Liddiard does not live sumptuously, yet she has no idea of poverty—nor,” added Julius, “of what it is like to live with a smirched name.”

Martin turned aside; it seemed as if no rebuke or insult could hurt him—as if he wanted merely the one promise.

Again Julius saw the pale gold of the half-coin gleam in the transient light from a nearby window. ‘Suppose,’ he thought to himself, with a burning of compunction, ‘these two should be really plighted in some promise so strong that it would be wickedness for me to try to make

them break it? Suppose she should be happier following his miserable fortunes than sharing mine?"

Yet to suppose thus was against all likelihood; no one could say that there was any peace, rest or respect, let alone happiness, for the wife of Martin Deverent.

"I make no promises," said Julius.

CHAPTER VIII

MARTIN swung away with the dark.

Martin's black clad figure was soon lost in the thickening shadows.

"You are well rid of him," said a voice close to Julius. He turned to see Dr. Entrick, whose existence he had nearly forgotten.

"Why, what do you know of him?" asked Julius. "You come all fresh to the story."

"Baron Kiss has told me."

"Who is Baron Kiss, and how does he know so much?" asked Julius.

"Oh, he is a man who goes everywhere and knows everything. Come, it grows late and cold—will you visit my room?"

"Where sometimes one has an excellent supper and other times an old apple woman shows one visions in a jar?"

"Don't come, then," said Dr. Entrick, with a smile, "but it is damp standing here by the canal—and I was going to answer your questions about Baron Kiss."

"Come, then, to my chambers."

"You refuse my hospitality in rather an offhand manner," said the botanist without offence. "But I can understand your doubts and suspicions. Yes, I shall step

up to your rooms, but only for a while. Amalia will have the supper ready for me."

"When it comes to it," said Julius, as they walked along, "it seems to me as if the houses in Leyden must be bewitched. I found a door in mine that led into the box in a theatre. This was totally empty save for the orchestra."

He continued his story as he walked beside Dr. Entrick to the house of Cornelia's mother, behind the canal and the lime trees. The lamp had already been lit in his outer room.

"Now I," said Dr. Entrick, looking round him with serious appreciation, "could never afford chambers like these. And yet," he added with a laugh, "I am a learned man, and you, I suppose, merely live upon your lands?"

"I hope to take my degree."

"Oh, I see. A studious nobleman."

"That does not quite describe me, either," smiled Julius. "I have a fair estate on the Border—my father was killed when I was young—have I told you this before—or only to Baron Kiss?"

"I have heard it," replied the pedant. "It must be much in your mind that you refer to it so often."

"It might be said," admitted Julius, "that there is nothing much else in my mind. I am an only child, and I have led a solitary youth; my mother could not entertain for me, and never spoke to me on any subject save the death of my father when I was a child. Lately she has been silent on the subject." He offered a winged chair to his visitor, close to the stove, and begged for any information there might be about Baron Kiss.

"I thought I saw him tonight, just beyond the city—in a boat on a canal."

"That is unlikely, but he is to be met anywhere. He attached himself to me about two years ago—it was the time that I took Amalia to live with me. I met him casually—I could not say just where. He had the same manservant with him who attends him now. I took him for a half-pay officer who had been in the service of the Emperor."

"Why, yes, he said he belonged to a great master, one who was both Emperor and King, and that would suit his Imperial Majesty, who is King of Hungary."

"But it doesn't explain," said Dr. Entrick, "why, if he is a man of wealth and position, he is not living on his estates."

"Perhaps he has neither wealth nor position," suggested Julius.

"I have seen him in very fashionable places, where I was a mere spectator, and in gambling saloons playing high stakes where I had gone merely to see the excitement from afar."

Julius noted as odd that the pedant should have gone to such places, even as a looker-on.

Dr. Entrick continued: "I have also seen him with grand equipages."

"A man of mystery, then," replied Julius with a slight sneer, "as if he would hint that he was the Comte Saint Germain or the Wandering Jew."

"He has never given himself any such airs, I assure you," replied Dr. Entrick. "I have never known him display any quackery or attempts at magic."

"I dare say not—but the knowledge he has of my affairs and his interference in them seem to me very odd indeed. Has the fellow no life of his own? Then there was the vehemence with which he tried to stimulate *my* vengeance against a man hardly known to him."

"It is strange, no doubt," agreed Dr. Entrick. "But, my friend, is it a very interesting subject to discuss?"

"Not at all—but can you think of a better? One becomes somewhat moth-eaten in a place like this. However, let us talk of that strange theatre into which I found my way."

But on looking for the door beside his wardrobe Julius could not find it. Dr. Entrick made nothing of the adventure.

"I expect that you had had a glass or two of wine and turned into some theatre where an amateur performance was taking place."

"Maybe I did—but how explain the drop-cloth that has the likeness to that same scene near my own home so familiar to me, and to that young woman so seldom out of my mind?"

"Ah, there you have confessed to the crux of the whole affair. She is much on your mind—there you tend to see her often—there you feel as if only half of you were real."

"You, like Baron Kiss, seem to know too much," said Julius, adding with a sigh, "I believe that you are right—and that it is not because of hatred of the man—Martin, whom I take to be but a weakling—that I try to ruin him, but because I want to be sure of the woman to whom he is pledged—this Annabella Liddiard."

"And this after you have seen Amalia von Hart?"

Julius turned suspiciously on his guest.

"Was she put in my way in order to distract me?" he demanded, his thick hand falling on the botanist's shoulder.

"I brought her," replied the latter. "What had the affair to do with me?"

"You are right—I had forgotten. Ever since I met Baron Kiss my affairs seem to have gone strangely. Amalia von Hart is very beautiful, and I wonder at the life she tolerates with you, sir."

"Wonder at no story until you hear the end of it," replied Dr. Entrick.

Julius broke down suddenly, after the manner of a man whose emotions have been long on the stretch.

"Yes," he declared, "it is Annabella that I would have and must have, and I suppose that has always been my desire; but I do not want to attain her by ruining this wretch Martin—though I have pretended so ever since I can well remember."

"You were then animated by love, not hatred?" asked Dr. Entrick closely.

"Not altogether—no—that would not be true. I loved what I recalled of my father and wished to have a revenge for that. Everyone about me kept me to this subject—so

much so that I was driven from my home to study law in Leyden."

"And yet you cannot see what has happened?" asked the other curiously.

"No? Has anything special happened? This young man has proved himself indeed a villain by making two confronted attacks on me."

"All his life he has felt your hatred following him—look upon his actions as those of despair," replied Dr. Entrick.

"Very well, then, say that his actions were logical—I should not be surprised or deflected from my purpose."

"I do not suppose that you will be. I do not, like Baron Kiss, urge you on to your revenge—I may stand by and watch."

"It is strange that you take any interest in me at all."

"Perhaps it is—but in the kind of life you lead you must expect strange things to happen. Are you not alarmed about this young man—for fear he might make some other and perhaps more deadly attack on you?"

"I feel no fear of him, solely a dislike, at last confessed to myself and to you—to ruin him. You see, he has made direct appeals to me, and I cannot forget them. Also I have seen on his breast and on hers, in this vision I beheld, the two halves of a gold coin—their pledge."

"I perceive that you soften," smiled Dr. Entrick; and before Julius could reply, Amalia von Hart was in the room.

She at once slipped her arm through that of her uncle and remarked that she was tired of waiting for supper.

"You can continue the debate," said Dr. Entrick. "I still have some drawings that I wish to finish tonight."

He slipped away from Amalia, and with a brief salutation to Julius was gone.

"Who do you think he is?" she demanded, turning up the wick of the lamp.

"Why, your uncle," said Julius, surprised. "And had you not better follow him and give him his supper?"

"It is all set for him, and it is not a condition of our life together that I slave for him. No, I do not know who he is, but he is commonly believed to be the Man with the Scales."

"And who is he?" demanded Julius, still more astonished.

"You may call him one of the signs of the Zodiac—or the dreadful Sagittary—or just the Man with the Scales."

"Nemesis, then—the Avenger?"

"Sooner the first than the last, but possibly neither, just the Man with Scales."

"I do not understand. You speak as if this were some figure I had evoked from my overheated fantasy."

"Why might it not be?"

"Because I am a sane man, living in a sane world. At this rate who are you?"

"I am the distraction thrown between you and your real desire. Something created to keep you from your deadly purpose."

Julius looked at her closely.

"You know that all you say is nonsense," he replied.

"Dr. Entrick is a humble professor of botany who moves quietly from place to place as he can find work, and you are the niece who keeps house for him."

"I am sure," smiled Amalia, "that anyone would find us a likely pair."

"I did not say that." Julius stumbled in his speech; he wished that she would leave; the events of the evening had tried him, and he wanted to think them over quietly.

The house was quiet, as was the city of Leyden. Only the chimes struck by the iron warrior, and muffled by the closed window, sounded every quarter of the hour, preceded or echoed by all the other Leyden chimes.

"The Man with the Scales," said Julius to himself. "He will see justice done."

"In the end, yes," said Amalia. "But sometimes one has to wait a very long time."

"Of course I do not believe any of it!" exclaimed Julius

with sudden violence. "I think that I shall leave Leyden, where so much that is odd has happened, and return to Basset without taking my degree."

Even as he spoke Julius felt as if all his life he had been trying to live a fantasy and had never come into contact with reality. Even his childhood had been of the nature of a dream, for it had been filled with this thought of the feud that he ought to feel because of his dead father; and though at first his life at Leyden had gone on humdrum lines, with the coming of Baron Kiss it had been difficult for him to see himself as an ordinary student pursuing ordinary studies.

The appearances of Martin had greatly shaken him, and he was disturbed also by Dr. Entrick and his niece. There was no doubt that the last few weeks had been fused in some strange pattern that was not of every day.

"The Man with the Scales?" he said to himself. "Why should he come to haunt me?"

"One who leads your kind of life," replied Amalia, "is sure to have spectres."

"I do not know what you are talking about save that you have invaded my privacy—my solitude," he replied. "You and your uncle both speak to me with a false half-confidence. I feel as if you were watching me, not to say spying on me."

"That merely shows how poor a state your nerves have got into during this forced studious life you lead."

"What is it to do with you," exclaimed Julius with angry impetuosity, "what kind of life I lead or what kind of life I have in mind?"

"I speak as an observer only," replied Amalia with a warm smile.

"I require no spectator," said Julius with a desperate attempt to keep a hold on himself. "Why cannot you—all three of you—leave me to myself?"

"Has it not struck you," she replied, "that all three of us are interested in these two poor young lovers?"

"Why should you be? And do their lives stop at this

point? They are lovers, but for how long? Martin Deverent's main concern is not to obtain his wife but to keep his estate, unless you mean to make him out a very likely sort of fellow indeed, such as one only hears of in ballads."

All this seemed to Julius a trivial discord, and one also that had been forced on him. He did not want to argue, but to listen and to watch some drama taking place within himself.

"I assure you it is more than that," said Amalia. "We know the whole story far better than you could."

"That seems to me nonsense, since I was brought up on it," replied Julius. "And still it is much of a mystery to me."

"Did I not tell you that uncle of mine is the Man with the Scales?"

"That talk seems to me more nonsense still," said Julius with some heat.

She was standing close to him, and he could see how beautiful she was with a string of purple Roman pearls outlining the tawny gold of her neck, and the rich knot of her hair that was carelessly twisted and plaited with narrow yellow ribbons among the curls.

Laughter suddenly restored her golden serenity.

"All this means more to you than you will understand, but I shall leave you now. All will be well for a while. The difficulties will come later."

She was gone quickly, and Julius was left alone and discontented; it seemed to him that sufficient difficulties had arisen already.

As he had no wish to go out again, he decided to study in the pleasant solitude of his chamber. There was a sense of urgency behind this resolve; since he had met Baron Kiss he had missed many lectures and many hours of study; he sat down resolutely at his desk, taking from the shelves above him several routine legal volumes. But he found it difficult to apply himself to the work that hitherto he had found so easy. The past not only dragged at him but

seemed to merge itself into the present; he had a strong feeling that someone was standing behind his chair, and that this person was his murdered father.

"Oh, what do you want me to do?" he said, his elbows on his desk and his head in his hand. "Through all these confusions *that* has never been made plain to me."

He made an effort not to look round and to bend to his books, and then he made an effort to look round and to satisfy himself that there was no one there. The mind of Julius swung away from his present task; his pen lay idle beside the unopened books. He was thinking of a place in the Lowlands he had visited one vacation when he had had no mind to go home. There was a pond with stone lions on either side, once the watering place for the stables of a vanished castle; nearby a wooden hunting box had been built on the site, but it was shuttered and deserted; Julius had seen the outlines of a castle's foundations through the heavy wheat. It had been easy to trace these dream castles, their turrets rising high into the northern blue, to follow the avenues still marked by ancient lindens that marked the frontiers of vanished lordships; sometimes, when the bolders were drained, skulls washed clean were brought to light, thus showing where some forgotten church had stood before the inundations. Julius felt much at home in those vanished castles with wall, turrets and parterres; he took his mind away from them, for it was too easy an indulgence to imagine himself with Annabella walking those paths between low hedges of box and privet that had first been claimed by the sea and then drained for use as harvest lands.

Many a time had Julius walked or driven along the narrow artificial banks that edge the canals of the Lowlands, and marked that the meanest weed was brought out with an exquisite clarity against the changing panorama of the vast sky. Reflections of these rides were usually pleasant enough, but now they were associated with Martin's attack on him and how they had ridden out from Leyden as friends and ridden back as enemies. And what sort of tumult was

he in now? Almost it seemed as if he were pledged to the destruction of an enemy he did not hate. Martin was already a pitiful figure; Julius did not care to think what he might be in a few years' time, when he was a little more besotted with drink, gambling and poverty and when, perhaps, there would be another wretched figure beside him, a shrinking woman in tatters who had once been Annabella Liddiard.

Julius bethought him of other scenes in the Lowlands more in tune with his present mood. He could recall vast tearing clouds and low sandhills; some horsemen in uniform were galloping across the darkness of the gloomy day; the colours of the Republic showed on the person and on the tassel of the lance of the young nobleman who was leading them. Heavy rain began to fall; the scrub was bent as by a gale; the outline of a walled town showed in the distance; the clouds were rent behind the city, and the massive ramparts showed grim against a streak of light. 'What has any of this to do with me?' thought Julius desperately. Other pictures of the Netherlands crowded in on him; a city on the crest of a hill crowned by massive buildings that had an Imperial air, and, huddled beneath, streets of mean houses close together.

'I have been in this country too long,' thought Julius, pushing aside his law books with disgust. Several strange projects formed in his mind; one that was soon dismissed was to put his dilemma before his mother; another that had more dare about it was to go to Annabella herself. He could tell her (without bias, he hoped) how Martin was living, how unlikely it was that he would ever be able to provide reasonably for her; and he could ask her if she would tell him truly if her heart was concerned in her pledge to him—what precise meaning there was in the parting of the pale gold coin.

Was he, however, certain of himself, thus to expose himself before this girl? Could he say to her—if this youth is nothing to you, I, who am his enemy, am ready to take his place?

Julius could not see the situation clearly. He did not know enough about Annabella Liddiard; despite his grandiose talk to Baron Kiss, he felt that he could not endure to marry a woman who was romantically attached to another man.

Sooner, as his mother advised, take Lydia Dupree, the woman of whom he hardly thought yet who, no doubt, would be charming enough as mistress of Castle Basset. He tried to study himself on his own ambitions; did he want this degree in order that he might be something more than a Border lord, and have a chance to join the rulers of his country? It seemed to Julius that he was perhaps deceiving himself in thinking that this sojourn at Leyden was solely for the purpose of ruining Martin Deverent.

CHAPTER IX

HE could not sleep for long that night, and when he woke he found it unnaturally cold even for the place and season. He looked out of the window and saw a most impressive sight; everything was covered with snow that must have fallen silently while he dozed and debated with himself; the snow had ceased to fall, but the sky was dark and had a chilly look. Julius felt lost and wasted; he had had so much argument with himself and the others on his dilemma, and now the end was nothing; besides, everyone had gone and no conclusion had been reached.

He had raged at the interference of Baron Kiss, but now he was sorry that he was not likely to see him again. Martin Deverent seemed also to have vanished, doubtless to evil ways; but Julius would have liked to see again the man who was all his trouble and who had twice tried to murder him. If only one could come to terms with life and in some manner settle things! He looked with distaste at

himself in the circular mirror; the oddity of his life was beginning to show in his face, which was becoming distorted, the mouth slightly dragged, the eyes slightly closed, the complexion blotched.

Cornelia entered with his breakfast. "A gentleman wishes to see you, Mynheer," she announced.

Julius thought of the few with whom his life had lately been entangled, and asked eagerly who it was. Cornelia surprised him by replying that it was a gentleman from Scotland.

"He arrived late last night, and I came to tell you, but you were asleep in the chair."

"I am very dishevelled," said Julius. "Ask him to give me five minutes' grace and then please to bring him up. Take away the breakfast, also—I do not want to eat."

Cornelia did as she was bid. Julius adjusted his attire, shaking out his ruffles and re-tying his cravat so that it might not appear that what sleep he had taken had been in his clothes. He also refastened his hair and plunged his face deeply in the bowl of fresh water that Cornelia always kept for him in the inner cabinet; the water had a film of ice, and the sharp cold helped to revive him. All the while he was wondering who this man could be—from Scotland—who had sufficient interest in his affairs to call on him late at night; who knew his lodging and would not leave a name.

When no more than the bare five minutes was up Cornelia appeared again, introducing the last person that Julius had thought of—Sir William Liddiard, Annabella's father. He seemed restless and uneasy.

"I am surprised that you should have taken the trouble to wait on me here, sir," said Julius, thinking of his mother. "I hope there is no ill news for me at home."

"Your mother is well," replied Sir William, taking the chair offered to him. "I come to you on a matter you may laugh at——"

"Indeed no, sir, seeing that you have come so far to propound it to me."

Sir William Liddiard did not come of an old Border family, and by those whose forbears had lived there so long he was looked upon as something of an upstart—the more so as his wife, Lilian, came of a Highland family. He was a clever, ambitious man, who made money in Glasgow as a merchant trading with the Indies and who looked carefully after his estate; but he spent heavily on keeping up a state that was probably beyond his means. He was not popular with his neighbours, nor much respected, because of the trade in which he engaged. He was always extremely loyal to the government and never entered into the feuds of those whose estates bordered his own.

“You know,” he said heavily, “that there was some unfortunate talk—when they were children—of an engagement of marriage between my daughter Annabella and young Martin Deverent.”

“Yes, of course, sir, it is known to the whole Border, I think.”

“Well, then, disgrace fell on the family through your father being murdered by the elder Deverent—of course the ‘not proven’ meant guilty—and the whole family had to go abroad.”

“Yes.”

“The father died miserably,” said Sir William, “and the son became a wanderer and a vagabond. I sometimes meet your steward, Maryon Leaf, and he tells me that the estates are most neglected.”

“They would be.” Julius spoke drily; he wanted to convey that this unhappy affair was nothing to do with Sir William Liddiard.

“The fellow found time to return to Scotland now and then and pay court to my daughter—who is, you must know, a rather foolish, romantical sort of girl.”

“And what, sir, have you to say to that?” asked Julius.

“Only this,” replied the elder man with some pride; “that I believe that you look upon yourself as the betrothed of Annabella.”

This plain speaking did not lack dignity and was

acceptable to Julius after the half-hints offered by Baron Kiss and his fellows.

"I suppose it was always understood, sir, subject to the lady's liking."

"Subject only to the wishes of myself and her mother," replied Sir William.

Julius knew what he meant; the Basset match would be a fine one for Annabella Liddiard, and her parents had always intended that it should take place.

"We always believed that you had come to Leyden to find some flaw in Deverent's tenure."

"So I do—it was a just revenge, was it not?" asked Julius, defending himself.

Sir William tried to soothe him.

"By all means—so we always thought. Besides, the land itself is not to be despised—in the hands, say, of a man like Maryon Leaf, it should show a profit——"

"And what do you think this wretched fellow himself is going to do?"

"I suppose he will go to ruin," said Sir William harshly, "as his father went before him."

"It will be an old Border family the less, Sir William."

"Hardly, however, a loss," smiled the Baronet. "Come, let us talk sense. I have no son and you are an only child—we should consolidate, especially as the lands match."

"I suppose so. I don't believe I ever said anything that showed I wished to get out of my side of the bargain."

"It is a good one," said Sir William with some eagerness. "I have a tidy fortune beside the estate, and there's only Lilian to be provided for when I am gone—everything else is for Annabella."

Julius was surprised to hear this, for Sir William was reputed to have little fortune.

"Surely, sir," he replied, "you did not come to Leyden to tell me this? By Easter I shall be home."

"No, I did not—though I must confess it would be a good thing if I could finish the business between you and Annabella. The truth is that her mother sent me."

"Her mother!"

"Yes, and the matter is serious enough for me to wish to come. I did not wish to alarm your mother—not that she could have been of any use."

"Pray tell me what this trouble may be."

"Annabella has been very moody of late—no longer industrious and cheerful as she once was. She confessed to her mother that this wretch Martin had slipped to the Border, contrived to see her and even to exchange with her a love token—the half of a coin—to which she seemed to attach great value."

"I know something of that," replied Julius. "But pray continue."

"Her mother told her that this could never be and that she must put Martin out of her mind; on this her health began to fail. And you know how it is with wilful girls—it was quite useless to put before her the advantages of a match with yourself."

"It would be," agreed Julius.

"But what I want to come to is this: on two occasions my wife and myself were roused by what seemed a tap on the window; but I must tell you that we sleep on the second storey, and it would be very difficult for anyone to reach that window. The summons, however, was so persistent, that both my wife and I arose, and both of us seemed to see a misty figure, suspended in the air, that beckoned us to follow. Of course I was for going alone, but my wife insisted on going with me. It was a young moon, and the night was full of a greenish light; this figure, which might have been no more than a wisp of mist, led us to the little loch by Castle Basset. On the far side of this appeared Annabella, apparently asleep, one arm over her head. We called to her but could not rouse her, and presently the figure disappeared. We then returned home. Our guide—if guide it was—had vanished. We found our daughter in her bed, looking wan and weary and complaining of evil dreams. For our part we decided to be silent, thinking the whole thing to be an illusion. But

it happened again, recently—and this time Annabella's health has visibly declined."

"Do you come to me merely as to her possible future husband?"

"No—we mean more than that. We think you may know something of this strange affair."

"I can tell you that Martin Deverent is in Leyden—that twice he has appealed to me to free Annabella—that twice he has tried to murder me, and that twice I have seen the very vision you have just described."

Sir William looked gravely startled; and, largely in order to give him a chance to recover himself, Julius gave the details of the episodes he had just related.

"What is amiss?" exclaimed Sir William with a groan. "What has gone wrong with us all?"

"It began with the feud between my father and this Martin's father—and I tell you, sir, there must be no softening, for this Martin is a very wretched, ragged fellow indeed."

"And twice tried to murder you, you say? God be about us!"

"Yes. But I must add that in both cases he did not seem to have thought the deed out. He was not even armed, but closed with me with his bare hands. Afterwards he seemed confused, as if led on by a superior force."

"And what do you think of these dreams so like our own?"

"I do not know Annabella well enough to answer," replied Julius quietly; privately he thought that there was some great cleft between the girl's body and spirit that showed itself in these visions to those who loved her. He caught himself up; did he love Annabella?

"Of what, sir, are you thinking so intently?" demanded Sir William irritably.

"I am trying to sort out the whole puzzle. There is so much that we do not understand, Sir William."

"I don't think that I understand any of it," retorted

the Baronet bluntly, "except that you should come home as soon as maybe and marry Annabella——"

"Sick, dreaming, lost to another?" asked Julius.

"I think, sir," replied the other coldly, "that you speak very oddly. Am I, on such nonsensical notions, to hand my daughter over to a man known to be not only worthless—but a rascal?"

"Certainly not—I recollect myself—I always consider that I offered for Annabella, not out of revenge on Martin Deverent, but to save her from an evil man."

"And out of affection?" asked the other stiffly. "And because the match appeals to you?"

Julius felt irked by this forcing of the issue.

"I have always felt a great friendship for Annabella," he said.

"And you do offer formally for her hand?" asked Sir William sharply.

"Sir, did you come to Leyden about this or about the dream you had? To see me—or to see Martin Deverent?"

"I notice that you hedge," smiled the older man in a disagreeable fashion. "I know quite well what is in your mind, as I dare say you know what is in mine. For us—the Liddiard family—the marriage would be of great advantage; but Annabella is a most lovely girl, highly accomplished."

"But attached to another man and with strangeness in her disposition." Julius could not avoid putting this remark in, though he felt it was churlish. Sir William was pulled up short. What it came to was that he had offered his daughter before she had been asked, thereby perhaps ruining her chances. Sir William was the more vexed with himself that he did not like Julius Sale; he only tolerated him because of his worldly possessions, which he keenly coveted.

Julius also saw chances slipping. If he were to insult Sir William now it would be impossible ever to ask for Annabella; the other man would probably get her, and with her help might save his estate; quick as flames on a dry ground there ran through his mind a feeling for Martin that revealed to himself that his hatred was not dead.

"Yes, I do ask for her," he said in a firm tone. "You know that I am set on taking this degree. After that there is no obstacle that I am aware of."

"There is none on my side," said Sir William, speaking falsely as Julius well knew. "Although, as I said, the match is splendid in a worldly sense, still I admire you greatly as a man—your industry in taking this degree. You mean to make it a stepping stone to politics, I don't doubt?"

"I have no such ambitions."

"Then why not throw the thing up," asked Sir William, with a touch of contempt he could hardly conceal, "and return with me now to Scotland?"

"I would rather put it through," replied Julius. To leave Leyden now, he thought, would be like vacating a field of honour without having struck a blow.

Sir William surprised him by saying that he had brought Annabella with him and that she was staying with her mother and himself at the English Residency at the Hague. "She much desires your company and hopes—as I do—that you will accompany us home."

This persistence vexed Julius; he resolved that he would not be baulked of what might prove his last months of freedom. There was something, he did not know what, in his nature, that enjoyed the student life of Leyden; besides, he was resolved to have some more ado with Martin Deverent; he did not, therefore, commit himself, but easily enough promised to wait on Annabella.

CHAPTER X

JULIUS was already familiar with the English Residency at the Hague. A house built by Peter Post, it was situated close to the entrance to the Binnenhof and overlooking the

Vyver. Annabella received him in the Picture Gallery, which looked out on to the sheet of water, faintly glazed with ice, that was broken by the slow movements of the swans. The cold blue haze of evening already hung over the prospect, and Annabella wore a pale gauze over her head that gave her a curious semblance to the figure that Julius had seen in his vision. Her dress was sad-coloured and she wore no ornaments, but she showed an eager vitality that set her far apart from dreams.

At first Julius thought she was pleased to see him for his own sake; but she soon dispelled this illusion by saying:

"It is kind of you to see me alone—for you must know that I want to appeal to your goodness of heart."

"I am supposed to be here as a formal suitor for your hand."

"But you know," she replied anxiously, "that such a marriage could never be."

"I am not so sure of that," replied Julius, piqued and looking at her steadily.

She was in the window place, and the half-light fell tenderly on her delicate features.

"Have you seen Martin?" she asked. "You know that my parents prevent us from meeting or even writing to each other—save now and then—secretly."

"Yes, I have seen him in Leyden," said Julius, who had a mind to tell her of Martin's behaviour, yet he could not stoop so low. "It seems he leads a wandering sort of life and is in no condition to support either an estate or a wife."

"That should be for us to decide," said Annabella; but though the words were brave in themselves, the tone in which she spoke was wavering and melancholy.

'She'll never make a fight for it,' thought Julius; yet at that moment he caught the gleam of the gold coin hanging among the gauzes on her bosom.

"It is very cold," she said, "let us leave the window and this view of dreary water and get nearer the stove."

"Your parents press you," began Julius, as they moved. Annabella interrupted nervously: "Oh, yes, they press

and press, you see you are the finest match I could ever hope to find—but I am pledged to Martin. I thought that I might escape, and ran off to join him—but was bewitched and got no farther than the loch by Castle Basset.”

“You see, by that, how much all this is getting on your mind.”

“Oh, yes, very much on my mind. My only hope is in you.”

“You want me to withdraw any claim on you, Miss Liddiard?”

“Yes—do that.”

She looked at him steadily: there was a blankness about her gaze that he could not understand and did not like.

“If you have spoken with Martin he must have told—asked you—implored you—just that.”

“He did so.”

“And you refused him?”

“I gave him neither yes nor no.”

“You still stood on that ancient feud,” said Annabella. “But what has it to do with us?”

“With you—nothing.”

“But you want me—not for my own sake—but in order to ruin Martin?”

Julius was surprised and inflamed that she knew or had guessed as much as this.

“Better leave alone,” he said, “a landless, vicious man, who will break your heart in a month or so.”

“Perhaps we were meant to do just that,” she said, “but I love him—with his barren acres and his broken house.”

Julius could not protest that he loved her in this manner; to him she had been only a symbol of his revenge. He viewed her beauty, which seemed to him a little tarnished, with a detached admiration; perhaps she was no more than commonly fair; her accomplishments were known to be no more than prim and genteel; her infatuation for Martin Deverent had a touch of wildness; he, Julius Sale, might easily forego her and be none the worse for it; she seemed

austere; he was sure that she was virtuous and might be dull.

"Why cannot you leave me alone?" she asked. "Someone who does not belong to you?"

There was something worse than disdain in her tone, and she looked past him in a manner worse than scornful.

"I always felt as if you did belong to me," he replied. "Were we not friends and playmates even from our earliest years?"

"Martin was there, too."

"No—for only a short time. He went abroad with his father, and rarely came home after that disgrace."

"Julius," said Annabella firmly, "tell me, once and for all, if you really believe that Martin's father killed yours?"

"You know that he did."

"But I mean by malice, with intent to murder—do you believe that?"

"How could you suppose that I did not? If I thought this death an accident, all my life since then has been a sham."

"How do I know that it has not?" she asked. "How do I know that this hatred for Martin is not something self-created?"

"You should know—knowing me," he replied with a touch of violence, "as you should know that Martin, not I, ruins himself."

"Because he has been reduced to despair. I don't know how it is I don't find the courage to go to him. I tried to—even to my soul parting from my body."

"Come," said Julius with a smile. "You are no elfin lady, but one like your mother before you and my own mother, to teach the poor children and visit the sick folks and broken down labourers, and make a caudle for the aged——"

Disregarding this, Annabella replied:

"Your steward, Maryon Leaf, goes out of his way to provoke and ruin Martin—bit by bit he gets his estate."

"If that is true," replied Julius, "it is honestly done,

and shows Martin to be a foolish landlord—idling here on the continent.”

“Castle Deverent is little more than a tower,” said Annabella, “and the servants are forlorn and crazy; but one could be happy there, with his tame hedgehog and his tame jackdaw, and there are chess and claret in the evening when a guest comes.”

“How do you know of this? You have not been there?”

“No,” she replied vacantly, “but I have heard of it—and Martin used to tell me, long ago, when we were children—how all went as in his grandfather’s time, when there would be dances in the servants’ hall and prayers an hour long.”

“You should not dwell on such trivial details,” interrupted Julius. “I do not withdraw my suit to your father.”

As he spoke he wondered at the girl’s lack of courage; as she was of so romantic a turn, surely she would find the grit and the energy to escape from her parents and join Martin; they could be married in the English Chapel at the Hague; what fatal cowardice held her back? Why did they both sate themselves with dreams and term that life?

Julius looked at her curiously. Her beautiful eyes shifted uneasily; she twisted her hands in the ends of the gauze wrap round her head. Julius thought only of how fine an ornament she would make at Castle Basset, and how he and his mother would soon have done with her whims when she found herself the centre of fine company, shining at London or Edinburgh for part of the year at least.

“You have no answer to give me?” he asked firmly. “Beyond these vague hints and childish recollections?”

Annabella started as if roused from a deep reverie:

“I have given you my answer.”

The impatience of Julius found expression.

“So faithful to Martin, and yet you make no effort to join him?”

She was silent; it seemed to Julius a breathless pause of

terror. For the first time he realized that she lived in keen dread of her parents.

"I wonder Martin has not the spirit to take you away!" he exclaimed.

"He has nothing to offer."

"Bah! He is a weakling—again I tell you that he himself and not I have ruined him."

"My father would kill him."

Julius questioned this; he thought Sir William too prudent thus to affront the law; but there was no doubt that the terror of Annabella was genuine. She had to lean against the wall, and only the golden glow from the open door of the stove gave any colour to her features.

"You—you alone could do it—placate my father—help Martin."

Julius hardened himself; he turned away from her countenance, from the wilting figure on which the clothes seemed to hang like a shroud, and went out into the street. The blue light of evening was soon falling across the Hague, and as Julius left the houses and the canals this deepened into mist.

He was in the woods that enclosed the palace before he realized that he had missed his way; the sea fog had come down suddenly, in wisps and clouds. Julius took a turning that he thought was familiar to him, and found that he was lost. He saw a figure that seemed to him to be that of one of the guardians of the place, but as he approached in order to ask his way this figure disappeared.

Julius found himself on a broad path, crisp with frost and so little used that last year's leaves still lay, ice bound, in the crevices.

'I must let them go, both of them,' thought Julius. 'I must look upon their cowardice and vanities as exceedingly droll.'

The figure again appeared, this time with a light before it; a faint greenish gleam in the fog; Julius shouted and again approached. He found himself face to face with Baron Kiss. Although no light from the fading day (save a general

faint illumination) penetrated the fog, the jewel on the Baron's military casque had caught some reflection, for it shone brightly.

"Are you also lost?" asked Julius.

"Why, no—I was attending an audience at the palace and I have outstepped my servants," replied the Baron. "The law is a dry study," he added with a cool smile, "and you also, who are of some standing in your own country, should attend these functions and go into society."

"I did not come to the Hague for amusement," replied Julius. "And now I must force my company on you, for I have lost my way."

"College days will have an end," said the Baron, still with that smile that Julius found so mocking. "You are, luckily for yourself, an only child—but your fortune is not so large that you can afford to neglect it indefinitely. You should be making your way, either at the Bar or as a landowner."

"I did not take you as my tutor," replied Julius vehemently. "Come, I would rather find my way alone in the mist."

The Baron took his arm. "Come, you must see that the girl is almost idiotic."

"Then why press her on me? Let her go and marry an idle rascal."

"But she is very beautiful and would be docile—her spirit is nearly broken. Cannot you imagine the stir she would make—anywhere? And then the lands—always useful."

"I make my own decisions."

"Do you? Why are you at the Hague today? To see her? And have her appeals affected you in the very least?"

"My suit lies before her father. I shall not withdraw it."

"Well, don't break your term too long unless you wish to fail in your degree."

The mist was becoming more dense.

"Do you know your way?" asked Julius; the vapour seemed to cling to his side. It blotted out his companion.

When it lifted in a rift of gloomy light Baron Kiss was gone. Julius shouted, but there was no answer; he was both annoyed and angry at this sudden disappearance, hardly to be accounted for by the sea mist.

As he could not get any response to his shouts, Julius proceeded blindly, yet slowly, as trees were continually in his way. Absently thrusting his hand into his breast, he felt a packet of considerable size that he did not recall having received. He pulled it out, and there was just sufficient light for him to see that the seals were unbroken; it was as if Baron Kiss had thrust it into his pocket. He tried to recall when he had last received anything by the post. There was only his mother to write to him; Maryon Leaf's accounts were usually included in her cool letters; nor was it likely that any postage would be forwarded from Leyden; yet there the thing was, heavy in his hand.

Julius began to feel stiff and foot-galled. He would gladly have stopped at any inn he might have come upon, or even have asked for shelter at a private house. It was odd that so near the Hague there should be no habitation and no passer-by; he wondered if he was advancing towards the sea. As he went slowly along the path he heard a most unexpected sound—that of bells; they seemed close to him and almost tangible. They were not the chimes common to the Low Countries, but lighter and more inconstant. Julius pressed on in the direction from which the sound seemed to come and soon saw two lights, not far from the ground; the bells seemed to shake, and there was a jingle and a burst of laughter. A few steps brought Julius to the lights; they were lanterns belonging to a sledge drawn by two bay ponies; the reins were held by Amalia von Hart, wrapped in a cloak of poppy-red colour.

"You look footsore," she smiled. "Get in beside me, and I shall drive you home."

"I have merely lost my way," said Julius, thinking that her beauty more than her lantern illuminated the woods and dispersed the sea mist. "If you can direct me."

"Why not come with me? I know the road very well."

The mist overtook me as I was out for an airing," she answered with a simplicity that he felt to be false.

"Was Baron Kiss in your company? I met him just now and then lost him—unaccountably."

"Yes, he wished to walk."

"Strange—in this mist."

"He wanted, perhaps, to see you."

Julius glanced at the package he held; he saw that it was addressed in the handwriting of Maryon Leaf, and thrust it back into his pocket.

"You do not waste many candles over your correspondence," remarked Amalia. "Come, we need not wait here in this frosty air." Again she indicated with a gloved hand the seat beside her in the sledge or small chaise cart she was driving.

Julius gave her a long and anxious look; he had an objection to being with her so soon after being with Annabella Liddiard.

"If only I could get out of this mist," he muttered nervously.

"If you will not ride with me you may follow me," smiled Amalia. "But first, would you not care to glance at your letter? The light of my lantern is strong enough."

"It is only from my steward."

But Julius took the suggestion; it was seldom that Maryon Leaf wrote to him directly.

The contents were unexpected. They consisted of sharp complaints of Martin Deverent; he had been, the steward wrote, at home and had borne himself in a most provoking manner. "He is dangerously proud for one in his position, and there is something repulsive in everything he does. He has set himself out to be a torment to you; his temper is shifty and he will be up to any trick." Julius ran his eye over a list of miscarriages that had happened on his own estate, which his steward imputed to Martin Deverent. Then Maryon Leaf had added some sentences that caused Julius extreme surprise and even horror. "Why not do away with him while it is possible?" the steward wrote.

"It could easily be undertaken in a place like this, where there is so much lonely and barren country. There are many who would do it, as he is greatly disliked."

Julius crumpled the letter up and thrust it again into his pocket. The suggestion was shocking; yet had not Martin twice tried to murder him? And, as the steward wrote, the thing could be done without trouble; a slip, one dark evening, into a lonely canal.

"What are you thinking of?" asked Amalia. "See, my ponies are getting cold."

Julius jumped into the seat beside her. He was trying to get events in perspective; when could Martin, so recently seen in Leyden, have so vexed Maryon? Had the letter been delayed?

Julius reflected that it was not long since Martin had appeared in Leyden, and that Maryon's complaints might well refer to the period before his visit abroad.

"There is something wrong," he muttered, as Amalia drove her bays carefully, with jingling bells and swinging lanterns, along the narrow fog-bound path. He felt her beauty over him, as if the rosy cloak she wore gave out a tender glow to warm the dismal and obscure night.

"Bad news in your letter?" she asked.

"No—why should there be? But I think that the signature is in red ink and I find that most curious."

He also found it curious, although he did not say so, that Maryon Leaf, a careful, prudent man, though inclined to live at rack and manger like a lord and always well mounted for the field, should, without the least encouragement, put on paper a suggestion for sheer murder.

The mist lifted as they neared the Hague, and, in the light that fell from the lamps by the canals, Amalia's cloak looked but a dull brown colour while her lanterns gave out but a feeble glow. Julius begged to be allowed to dismount by the Vyverberg; he wished to look at the house that sheltered Annabella though he did not know her window.

Amalia pulled up her bays in silence; Julius gave his thanks and she was swiftly gone, leaving him staring at the

sheet of water over which a few wisps of mist still floated. Everything was too indistinct for Julius ever to be able to distinguish which house was the Residency. He made his way to his own lodgings, where he found the lamp lit and the supper set; it was far earlier in the day than he had supposed. He quickly drew the letter from his pocket and read it earnestly. It proved to be an ordinary business report, enclosed in a short and formal epistle from his mother. It was not signed in red ink, nor was there any reference in it to any proposed murder of Martin Deverent. It was all about serious trifles, such as the breaking of stone boundaries, padlocks on the barns, the setting of crops and the purchase of paraphernalia for the harness room. Julius looked at the seal, at the date, at the state of the package; it was six weeks old, and now he recalled perfectly receiving it at Leyden. 'Have I been concerning myself about the locking up of corn bins or preserve cupboards?' thought Julius, and he stared at himself in the mirror behind the Delft vases as if he feared to stare into the face of a lunatic. 'I have never been one to think that my stocks were pulled and robbed in the dark.'

He spent the night watching and reading in the small Bible that his mother, without any ceremony or words of advice, had given him on his departure for the Low Countries.

CHAPTER XI

THE next day, weary and heavy-eyed, and making no attempt to see Annabella again, Julius returned to Leyden. By a stern effort of will he applied himself to his law studies, and while he was thus employed neither Martin Deverent, Baron Kiss, Dr. Entrick nor Amalia von Hart molested him. Indeed, so obvious was their absence that he was

inclined to put them down as mere phantoms provoked by his incessant application to study and his continual brooding over the murder of his father. He knew that such a supposition was nonsensical, yet could not avoid feeling it strange that he never saw the botanist who was supposed to hold a position at the university or the niece who kept house for him. As for Martin, that wanderer might easily be on his way to another country, while Baron Kiss and his man Trett spent their lives roaming the continent. "If I could I would think that I had dreamed it all," said Julius to himself, taking his steel-rimmed spectacles from his tired eyes. "Yet that would be to go helter-skelter for the madhouse."

He knew that he was overworking, for he could hardly lift his eyes from his work, but he saw the faint yet luminous image of his father in his Border plaid, as he sank sideways from the shot that killed him. This figure would haunt him in the lecture room and in the *aula* of the university, but it never had any substance or appeared to be anything but what it was, an hallucination.

Sir William Liddiard and his daughter remained for some time at the Hague, and the anxious father paid several visits to Julius Sale, trying, in a decorous sort of way, to settle the marriage details. The more he pressed, the more provoked Julius became; and beyond agreeing that the marriage should take place that summer he would not come to any conclusions.

"I know that Annabella's dowry is small and that I shall settle on her all that I possess, setting aside my mother's jointure. Surely that is sufficient."

It was not sufficient for Sir William; but he dared not press for details of the properties owned by Julius in Caithness, Ayrshire and the Kingdom of Fife. He knew that the Sale estate had been much enlarged by several marriages with heiresses and by small families, and that Julius must be very wealthy indeed; but he did not wish to show his own greed. Nor could he bring himself to touch on the question of Martin Deverent, though he

hoped greatly that tiresome suitor with the blighted name might quickly be disposed of—say, by the plague in Rome, or the malaria in Venice—and that what remained of his property might drop, by some legal quibble, into the grasp of Annabella's proposed husband. But Julius remained close; the only times when he welcomed Sir William were those when his matter-of-fact presence would dispel the illusion of his own father's appearance, floating in the air, with his hand to his side and the pistol smoke breaking behind him. Julius had never admitted to a distempered brain or a nervous temperament, but now he began to fear that he was afflicted with both. Hardly an evening passed that he did not, with a furtive air, go through his papers and search for one with a red signature that suggested the murder of Martin Deverent.

Unable to let this subject entirely rest, he wrote in an evasive manner to Maryon Leaf, hinting at possible changes in the neighbourhood and asking when Martin Deverent had last been seen. The steward responded frankly to this disingenuous letter; he stated that everything went well on the estates and that Martin Deverent had not been seen for so long that he was almost forgotten; and that his estate, such as it was, remained in the charge of an old and crazy factor who kept everyone at a distance and who lodged in the only habitable wing of Castle Deverent. Maryon Leaf added that the affairs of the Liddiards were not supposed to be in good condition. Sir William had run into debt by making a show in Edinburgh and London, and kept up a state beyond his means even in his Border house. This scrap of gossip explained to Julius the urgency of Sir William in pressing the marriage of Annabella. "My dallying over taking this degree must infuriate him, no doubt."

Julius felt this news gave an urgency to his own actions also. Annabella, if rejected by him, would become a victim to the extravagance of her parents and be exposed to all the humiliations of poverty. There seemed to be no other suitors for her hand, despite the large sums her father had

spent in carrying her about. Julius wondered if a certain vacantness and listlessness about the girl, as well as her dowerless condition, repelled those who might have been attracted by her singular loveliness and artless manners. Julius wondered also if he himself cared much for a bride so unwilling and so dull; but he could not draw back from the solemn engagement entered into with Sir William and his desire to humiliate Martin Deverent. The disappearance of the latter was pleasing to Julius. In one of the few interviews that he had with Annabella he pointed out that the man of whom she thought so much had not even the courage to continue his dispute for her hand.

“And his property falls to pieces—every day he has less to offer.”

Annabella appeared to take no interest in these statements, the last of which was made shortly before the Liddiards were about to return to Scotland. Julius was to follow when he had taken his degree, and the wedding was to take place in the church at Liddiard in the summer.

Sir William wished for a formal betrothal and Julius could not object. Lawyers were hired by either side, and Julius duly attended the house in the Hague now rented by Sir William. As neither side had any near relations save the mother of Julius, who had no desire to travel so far, the party was a private one, the witnesses being the English Resident and his wife and a young Scots noble Julius had met at Leyden. The betrothed pair were alone for a few minutes before the ceremony, and Julius renewed his expressions of conventional but sincere devotion.

Annabella put him aside with a quick movement of the hands and head, and then said, in a low voice:

“Will you not, before it is too late, release me? You alone can——”

“I have answered that plea, Annabella. Will you not understand that Martin Deverent is not even here to answer for himself?”

“He is not far away.”

“Oh, I dare say he is—he knows that you are lost, and

perhaps that is not of so much account to him as you might think," said Julius with deliberate cruelty.

She turned to look at him, and even he, who could not take a young girl's love affair very seriously, was impressed by her expression of anguish.

"Come," he added, assuming curtness to hide his own dismay, "the lawyers and our friends will soon be here."

Annabella approached the table on which the legal documents were piled. Julius brought out the handsome diamond ring he had gone to Amsterdam to fetch, and set it beside the parchments.

"You force me?" asked the girl quietly.

"Why, no, this is a marriage like any other, arranged for the well-being of all."

She stared at him as if she did not comprehend what he said and continued to regard him in a peering manner as if she examined him for the first time. Julius Sale at that period was comely enough to satisfy the eyes of most women; he was, in every thing, well set up, fair and candid in expression, and splendidly dressed; yet the expression with which Annabella regarded him was one of horror.

Julius was vexed. "There is nothing in me," he declared, "to provoke such distaste."

"There is in what you do," she answered on a sigh. Her father entered the room, and she sank on a chair with a shudder. The two men exchanged glances, as if they silently noted some female stupidity. Lady Liddiard entered, went up to her daughter and whispered to her; but Annabella did not stir.

'She is frightened of them—perhaps of me,' thought Julius. He was minded to throw down the pen he was offered and to set her free. He hesitated, the parents, the witnesses and the lawyers looking at him the while. It was a splendid portion that he was settling on her, and the dowry was so small as hardly to make a decent showing, so all those who saw him hesitate thought that he did so for reasons of prudence, because he would not so easily throw

himself away; but the truth was that pity for Annabella made him pause.

His remorse was increased by a sight of the thin half-coin that showed behind the lacing of her bodice. Evidently she had concealed it there, hanging it on a string so fine as to be almost invisible, and, as she strained away from her parents, it had come partly loose and thus showed itself, like a mute appeal, to Julius. He was about to put down the pen and to refuse to sign when another person entered the room, and, stepping quickly up to the table, put the other half of the coin in front of Annabella.

It was Baron Kiss. He held his military cap against his bosom, and the jewel on it, which now seemed of the fire and glow of an opal, illuminated his drawn and yellow features.

"I was asked by Martin Deverent to give you this, Miss Liddiard."

Annabella started and convulsively clutched at her bosom.

"I hope, after this open insult," cried her father, "there will be no more hesitation."

But Julius asked the newcomer:

"Who, sir, sent you on this errand?"

"Your rival—and he gave me the time and place of this ceremony."

"What has a keepsake to do with a marriage ceremony?" asked the lawyer engaged by Sir William. "I take it this trifle is no more than that."

"No more, indeed," said Lady Liddiard vehemently. "Have I not often told you, Annabella, you were not to wear such trash? And you, sir"—she turned harshly towards Baron Kiss—"this is an odd thing that you do—you are a stranger to my family."

"I know him and the kind of errand he would be on," said Julius, exasperated that Martin should be, after all, in the neighbourhood. He took up the pen, signed and pushed the parchment towards Annabella. She pulled at the cord round her neck and, when it broke, placed her half of the

coin on the table. With a deft movement Baron Kiss put the two halves together so that one pale coin, in which the join hardly showed, gleamed among the rolls of skins.

"So," said Sir William harshly, "You are convinced of treachery."

"Not that," protested Annabella faintly.

"What else do you call it? Disobedience to your mother and myself."

"Not any need, sir, surely, of such sternness," protested Baron Kiss. "The two halves are joined, and no harm has been done."

"I am not so sure," replied the angry father, glancing at Julius. "Do you, sir, feel inclined to overlook this insolence?"

"I attach no blame to Miss Liddiard," replied Julius with almost mechanical gallantry. "I think that she has been overpowered by one whose will is stronger than her own. As to the behaviour of Martin Deverent, I know not what to say or think."

"Overpowered—yes," whispered Annabella, "but not by Martin Deverent."

"By whom, then?" demanded her father. "You would not dare mention your parents, who have only exercised a rightful authority over you?"

"No, father."

"You would not dare," continued Sir William with increasing vehemence, "say that we have not chosen well for you? A man of substance and standing? You would not dare to claim that this Martin was anything but a wanderer to whom strange and countless crimes are ascribed?"

"No, father."

"Pray, Sir William," interceded Julius, "do not torment her. Let her sign as I have signed, and all will be forgiven."

"Forgiven—by you?" asked Sir William with black haughtiness.

"Certainly. I have had slights and worse to endure." Julius stood his ground. "I have told you of the attacks made on me by this discarded suitor of Miss Liddiard's."

"He tried to murder him—more than once," put in Baron Kiss.

"I knew him to be a rascal, like his father before him," said Sir William, "and I think he must have bewitched our daughter for her to have a liking for such a fellow."

"Send the police of the Hague after him," suggested Lady Liddiard hotly. "Let him be taken up. He must be near, or he could not have given Baron Kiss the split coin."

"No, no," cried Annabella, rousing herself. "I shall sign whatever you wish—but please leave Martin in peace."

"Does he leave us in peace?" demanded Lady Liddiard, putting the pen into her daughter's hand. "You are a fool, girl, and do not know your good luck. Pray sign."

Annabella took the quill and traced her name at the bottom of the parchment, which the lawyer quickly took. The Baron Kiss picked up the two halves of the pale coin and slipped them into his pocket.

Annabella sat motionless, her hand and arm stretched on the table before her, her face turned away from Julius.

"We shall see you, then, at home, for the wedding festivities," said Sir William.

"Certainly. There is my word and my signature. Meanwhile, I see my presence distresses Miss Liddiard, and I bid you all good day."

Julius went from the room with Baron Kiss, who held him by the arm.

"Even now," exclaimed the young man, "I feel like breaking the whole thing off. Why, she behaves as if she hated me."

"A young girl's fancies," said Baron Kiss soothingly. "Anyway, I can assure you that if you don't have her, Deverent won't. He was in a furious mood when he gave me that half-coin."

"I had no knowledge that he was still in the Low Countries."

"Well, he is, and well informed of all your doing. He may attempt murder again. If I were you, I should keep well out of his way."

"How can I, when I know not where he is?"

"Return to Scotland secretly."

"I intend to take my degree," said Julius obstinately.

"Very well, if you must—but remember that you have an enemy always lurking near you, and one without hope—since he will know that the marriage settlement is signed."

"Give me the split coin."

"As you wish."

Baron Kiss drew the thin pieces of gold from his pocket and gave them to Julius.

"Now I must say goodbye. My master has sent for me on an errand to a distant country. I hope we shall meet again soon."

He saluted Julius, turned down a side street and was gone.

CHAPTER XII

JULIUS returned that day to Leyden and applied himself diligently to his law studies. As he heard nothing from the Liddiards he understood that he was to be left in peace and not expected to play the conventional part of the accepted lover. These ideas were confirmed when he received a brief note from Lady Liddiard stating they were all returning to Scotland and expecting him for the wedding festivities, which were fixed for the middle of June. Julius replied with suitable courtesy, and felt as if he was pledged to a stranger. By these letters he was thus accorded a space of freedom before he became the husband of Annabella, and in that time he hoped to come to issue with both Martin Deverent and Dr. Entrick. He found that the latter's name was not known at the University, where someone else

held the chair of botany; nor did he come upon any trace of his enemy Martin.

A natural aptitude for routine work and a power of concentration usual to his nation forced him through his examinations, and before the end of the sessions he had taken the legal degree for which he had once longed but which now seemed to him almost useless.

The day he left the *Aula* after receiving his diploma was full of warmth and light; the heads showed on the poplars lining the canals, and the florists' windows were full of outdoor-grown flowers.

Annabella had not written to him nor he to her; but he could very well imagine the kind of life she led, shut up, with the neighbours and her mother supervising the preparations for a stately wedding, from the clothes and food to the gifts for the tenants and the merrymaking in barn and bower. Sir William would, no doubt, strain his purse to make a show and find it worth while also, since he was placing his only child so handsomely. Julius was prepared to play his part; but he did not intend to return to Scotland until shortly before the wedding. Better, he thought, to idle in the Low Countries than be an object of comment and curiosity in his own.

Hearing good reports of Alkmar at carnival time, he went there by canal. It was a real carnival; suddenly there was the first bouquet of trees, and he was gliding, in his narrow barge, in the cool, clear twilight, the stars beginning to glitter in the immense dome of upper air, between the elms either side of the canals and the gabled houses. Julius got off at a landing stage before a house that had the notice *beeren logement*, and there he was given a pleasant chamber for a small price.

He went out that evening into the heart of the old town. The *kermesse* was in progress, and the street lamps were wreathed with flowers and little lamps with candles in them. In the public square people were dancing to a huge German organ, and he was in the middle of the press, with the darkling towers and the orange banneroles above.

Elbowing his way among the good-natured people, he crossed an old bridge, looked down and saw on the canal the model of an ancient ship, lit with coloured lamps, while across the canal hung light baskets of flowers, suspended on chains of laurel and box, the vivid flowers clearly reflected in the dark, still, tawny water below.

Julius pushed his way across the bridge. Every street corner was banked by exotic flowers, amongst which glowed tender little lights; the beauty of the lustrous blossoms, lit by the wax lights in the dark old streets, was a lovely sight. Everyone seemed comfortable and happy.

Julius felt he had missed a good deal. He put his hand in his pocket and felt the two halves of the gold coin that he always kept there. He went along the Lange Straat to the sombre old church, the Plaats and the Weigh House, with the pompous tower and the stately clock; the carillon rang out, and then, wandering through a maze of streets, he came out at the Stadhuis, with flat wing steps crowned by lions, gabled windows and a fine door; all this shown by the light of lamps. It seemed to Julius that no ghosts lingered here; the very air seemed free of echoes; yet he remembered how he had been lonely, and that it was ill to be solitary in the midst of carnival. He could have had companions enough, but they had come more and more between his studies and his broodings on his betrothal, so he had begun to shut himself away, and he led more and more the life of a recluse. As this sense of malaise pinched him more keenly he felt a touch on his arm. It was Baron Kiss, only partly revealed in the fluttering light of the oil lamps, but with the jewel on his casque gleaming with a moonlight brightness.

"You look lonely," he said. "This carnival is gross and not for men of subtle feeling."

"I thought it had great charm," replied Julius. "It is surely surprising to see you in so remote a place."

"I told you my errands took me here and there," replied the Baron. "I have been busy for my master since I saw you last, and now I may have a little relaxation."

"You will hardly," said Julius briefly, "obtain that by prying into my affairs. I have taken my degree—my wedding settlements are signed—and I now put in a few weeks before returning home."

"Ah, indeed? And why do you not return home at once?"

"I am weary of the whole affair," said Julius. "I shall have enough of the Liddiards for the rest of my life."

"And you hoped, perhaps, to come across Martin Deverent, who, you may think, has hardly sufficient coin to get him out of the Netherlands?"

"Maybe. I certainly was surprised to find that there was no trace of Dr. Entrick at Leyden."

"Some error, I suppose," said the Baron indifferently. "I certainly thought he had an academic post in that city. I am lodging at this coffee house," he added, indicating a building nearby. "Will you come here and talk awhile?"

Julius agreed; for he thought to himself that the Baron and his constant appearances needed explaining.

They entered the coffee house, which was full of revellers, drinking, pipe-smoking, laughing and telling comic tales. Baron Kiss ordered coffee. Julius regarded him keenly; he seemed to have grown in size and stateliness, and close behind him was the figure that Julius had only just now noticed, the humble, cringing Trett. The Baron wore a different uniform, of a more costly design and make, from that in which Julius had seen him before; some links of gold, like a chain of office, were round his neck, and his voice had taken on a harsher note of authority. He ordered coffee without ascertaining the wishes of his guest, who asked sarcastically:

"Perhaps you have been to the Scotch Border since I saw you last?"

"Yes, I have, and found Lady Liddiard is in all the pother of contriving a cheap wedding to look like a costly one. The house is full of mantua makers, sempstresses and stillroom maids, while ancient acquaintances pay for their keep in endless service."

"Where is Sir William?"

"Oh, he has gone to Edinburgh, to be out of it all. Young Martin has not come home, and Maryon Leaf gives a very good account of himself."

"It is strange to hear all this news from you in this place."

"You could have gone home yourself and gleaned it," replied the Baron as the pot of blue Delft was placed before them on the Chinese-shaped table.

"And the girl—Annabella—what does she do?"

"Nothing," replied the Baron with a wide smile. "My dear sir, absolutely nothing. She moves about like an automaton. By the by, she is coming with the first fair wind to spend a few days with her friend, the wife of your Resident at the Hague."

"I have not been told of that!" exclaimed Julius.

"Why should you be? She has been sent to buy curios for her wedding—or rather because the doctors say she is moping." The Baron grinned again.

"I shall not wait on her. If I don't see her, let it go," said Julius.

But he found an excuse to leave the Baron early and soon returned to Leyden. For three days he held out; then he called at the Residency. Annabella received him with a civility he had not expected. He saw no wilting of her beauty, her hair was lusted with silver and her gown was fashionable and becoming. Lady Liddiard at once offered him flattery and begged him to take her daughter out to several well-known shops in the Hague where objects of *virtu* were sold. Julius knew nothing of such things, but could not refuse. The air was blue and bright, there was nothing unpleasant in the future and he did not find it difficult to put aside all disagreeable thoughts.

They visited one shop, where Annabella bought curios, dragon dogs, blue and coloured plates and jars of ginger; then another, where she bought several lengths of silk, blue and purple, from Shantung. Julius tried to probe a little into her heart; but she evaded him, turning every-

thing to triviality. Her last visit was to a cutler's shop; she wished to buy a pair of scissors; several pairs with enamelled handles were shown to her, but she had a difficulty in making a choice. Finally she was satisfied, and then asked for a knife that was far better, she declared, for cutting sewing silks than scissors. Many of these were put before her, and she deferred to the judgment of Julius.

"What do I know of knives?"

"Nor I, either, for cutting silks," he replied.

The cutler was equally at a loss; never before had he known anyone make such a purchase. But Annabella made her choice; a long blade with a scabbard of red Cordova leather and a hilt set with coral and turquoise—an Eastern weapon, the cutler explained, such as would only be bought in the West for slitting packages. But Annabella was satisfied. She tried the blade on the palm of her hand, bending it up and down, measured the length, then ordered it to be sent to the Residency.

Julius half-humorously wondered if Sir William, a poor man, would care for all these extravagances, or if they were to be kept until he, the bridegroom, would have to consider it an honour to have to meet these expenses. Annabella looked at him with shining eyes; she was really extremely beautiful, in her bloom, her rich dress and her smiling air of desire gratified. "When will you be returning to Scotland?" she asked kindly.

He would not yet name a precise date; he fingered the split coin in his pocket.

"I am away tomorrow," added Annabella without waiting for an answer. "These pretty trifles shall follow me." Changing her tone abruptly, she asked, "Why do you linger in the Lowlands now that you have taken your degree?"

Julius did not know what to answer, and she laughed in his face.

"Well, you will know me one day," she remarked with a wild gaiety, and, refusing his escort, got into her carriage and drove away, leaving Julius standing foolishly at the door of the cutler's shop. He thought of his own marriage

present and what it should be; so far this had not come into his mind; he turned back into the cutler's shop, but he could hardly expect to find anything there for a lady's pleasure. His eye fell on the knife she had chosen; it was hardly a serviceable weapon. "The scissors are better for cutting silk," said the cutler respectfully.

"The ladies have their whims," returned Julius. "The knife is a handsome piece. Could you add some jewels to the hilt and scabbard and put the account to me—so that I could make it a gift?"

The shopman was shocked; he had never heard of so unlikely a present, and Julius, abashed, went out into the blue air. A gift of some sort he must give, and he returned to the china shop, where he found a pair of dull silver bracelets, set with emerald, which he ordered to be sent round to Annabella Liddiard. When he returned to his castle he would have to look out his mother's jewels and beg for some of them to send Annabella. Meanwhile this meeting had been inopportune; it seemed to hasten a day he wished to avoid.

As he turned the corner of the Vyverberg he met Martin Deverent. The man was now dressed like a wandering scholar and had a dry, pinched, whimsical look, not in the least like that of a man of action. He met Julius with surprise and pleasure and caught him by the sleeve.

"Have you also been following the Lady Annabella?" he asked in a low voice. "I cannot afford to buy her presents, you know."

This sounded as if Julius had been spied upon, and he said so. "When I look for you I cannot find you—and *mal apropos* I come upon you. Of course she never expected gifts from you."

"But it was my duty to send them. I never could give her more than the half-Jacobus that was robbed from her."

"We waste time in this mad tone!" said Julius. "Surely there is nothing more to be said?"

"Oh, yes, there is—and if you will come to my lodging I shall say it."

Julius followed Martin to a poorer quarter of the town and to his room, which was mean to the point of penury.

"It is your steward, Maryon Leaf," said Martin at once. "He seizes every chance to ruin me."

Julius smothered blasphemy.

"Why do you not go home and look after your estate yourself?"

"I do."

"But only at short periods and during intervals of years."

"I am quite able to see what is going on. Your steward is seizing my land, morsel by morsel—setting my tenants against me, invoking obsolete laws and using provocation to put these men in the wrong. Everyone knows that you are behind him, and I have no chance whatever of justice."

"Maryon Leaf is an honourable man," replied Julius sternly.

"Why do you not go home and see for yourself just how honourable he is? For every advantage gained for you there is one for himself. Any fool would tell you it is madness to stay away from your property so long."

"I am returning in June," replied Julius. "Meanwhile I do not know what you want of me."

"Everything between us is too poignant," said Martin. "It is impossible for me to put it into words."

"Then why do you follow me about and spy upon my actions?" asked Julius in anger. "Even ask me to your chamber and insist on speaking to me, when, as you say, there is nothing to be said?"

Martin looked at Julius with sudden shyness, and there was a sad note in his voice as he answered:

"We are bound in a dreadful intimacy."

Julius repelled this violently.

"I do not admit that."

"You will have to. When you are married, I shall return to Deverent and you will have to know that I am there—your neighbour, rotting in my derelict estate. You see, I

put my heart into everything—most of all into my betrothal.”

“Bah, you should have fought it out like a man—even this misfortune of your father’s—no need to take it like a curse.”

“But it was—it *is*—a curse.”

“If you make it so.”

“I have always been disinherited.”

“By your own act,” retorted Julius. “You could have worked on your place—even with your own hands—instead of this aimless wandering abroad.”

“One has daydreams. Not even you could deny me those.”

“I don’t allow that name,” said Julius. “But I say you have been weak—even with Annabella.”

“Don’t you think that she daydreams, too?”

“She seems to me lifeless—no spirit. She could have eloped with you.” Julius spoke contemptuously.

“She fed her faith and hope in silence,” replied Martin. “She never thought that it would come to this. She was never fitted for what you term an elopement, Julius Sale—never fitted for more than the exchange of the old fine golden halves of a coin.”

“How did you contrive to meet her?”

“I am free of my own domain,” answered Martin, “and she was not so jealously watched she could not sometimes escape into the glen—and one appointment led to another. It was all,” he added quickly, “like a fairy tale. She seemed to me an unearthly being, like one of those ladies in the ballads who come from Ireland on the wings of the wind and smile on mortal lovers.”

“I hope she did no more than smile.”

“We hardly touched one another,” replied Martin, as if the subject were indifferent to him. “I always thought that you would give way and that I should marry Annabella.”

Julius thought of the girl in the cutler’s shop; she did not seem the same to him as the image conjured up by Martin; but, after all, he knew very little about Annabella.

"Her parents drive for this marriage with you out of pure greed," continued Martin. "Lady Liddiard intends to spend your money very freely."

"There is my mother to be considered," said Julius. "We shall live as we always have—looking after the estate. And these affairs have nothing to do with you."

The rebuke seemed childish; but Julius was still angry with himself for being drawn into this mean chamber and this senseless talk.

"You should understand," said Martin, "that the more a woman loves, the less she can fight for that love. As for me, I did a good deal. I appealed to you."

"That was not very likely to be successful," sneered Julius.

"So I now understand. But, you see, I did not know you. There were only gloomy rumours—legends of our fathers—I thought you a victim like myself. I believed that you were betrothed to Lydia Dupree. In brief—only the small emotions make such fuss, you know."

Julius was angry, but he smiled; he wished very much that he could get rid of Martin. His mind went calmly back to the days of paid assassins; if that were a custom now he, Julius, would have been glad of it; as it was, the murder of Martin would cause the same uproar that the death of his own father had caused.

"I am going," he said, averting his eyes from the shabby young man.

"To Leyden? I hear you have your degree."

"No—home—to Basset."

"To new experiences—new hopes?"

"I suppose so. Life doesn't stand still. I shall take a house in Edinburgh and set up a law practice—maybe. I rather think of myself as a judge."

"And of Annabella as a judge's wife?"

"As my wife," replied Julius. He saw Annabella, a dim figure with a powdered face and a smile too slow and indifferent to please, moving among the *salons* of Edinburgh.

Martin looked weary and disconsolate.

"It is impossible," he complained, "to make you understand that this is a dark story."

"You must blame your father for that. Meanwhile we waste time."

"As you, I suppose, have never wasted it before?"

"I'm no idler."

"Perhaps worse—perhaps you set mischief in train."

Julius half-closed his eyes. This was the man he had meant to ruin; he was not sure that intention held; once he was married and set up in his place, what need would there be to concern himself over Martin? His view of Annabella buying curios at the Hague had not disclosed any passionate personality to his secret scrutiny. He did not believe for a second, from her behaviour then or during the betrothal ceremony, that she would ever give the least trouble to anyone. She would never, he was sure, be in opposition, but always cool and obedient like a waxen image without the slightest degree of animation. No doubt Martin Deverent had urged her to flight and a secret marriage, but she had never found the courage. Julius was only surprised that she had the spirit to meet her lover in the glen—and how had they become lovers, with exchanged tokens? Julius looked curiously at the haggard figure before him and smiled; he did not know against what background he saw him—certainly not that of this shabby room. Martin seemed withdrawn again; the contempt of Julius was darkened by nervous boredom; he felt reserved about the whole situation; he would be relieved when the wedding was over; but there would always be Martin to reckon with.

"I hope that you will keep away from Basset," he said harshly.

"You have no right to ask what I shall do. Maybe I shall return to Deverent, if not to Basset."

"We had better beware of times and places," warned Julius. "It would be wiser if we were not to meet again."

"It was you who set out to ruin me."

"But not to meet you," interrupted Julius, turning

towards the door. "And the Liddiards," he added, without knowing why he gave this information, "came to the Hague without any connivance of mine, I assure you."

"I have not seen her," retorted Martin without malice, "save in a sledge with her mother on the artificial ice."

Julius at once recalled the winter scene when Amalia von Hart had found him in the wood and taken him into the town. He wondered about her, her father and Baron Kiss, and what they had to do with his story, and abruptly took his leave from the dingy apartment. 'Am I considering as something shallow something very deep?' he thought as he passed into the street bright with spring. 'Can I be so very much mistaken? No, I don't think so. Martin is a moody rascal—and the girl almost an imbecile.'

He took back this verdict as too harsh; but he could not dismiss the impression that there was not any genuine feeling between Martin and Annabella. He, surely, had only responded to some dream of a lonely girl when she had crept down into the glen and allowed Martin to make forlorn and distant love to her and to give her a worthless token.

CHAPTER XIII

IT was dark and the wind had risen when Julius embarked at the Hook. The flat expanses of land seemed like low-lying clouds—a dreary day for full summer. It was dark again and a storm was blowing when Julius landed at Preston Quay, and the journey across England seemed even longer and more tedious than usual. Julius broke this reluctant travelling at Cambridge, Nottingham, and Leeds; when he reached Carlisle there was a tempest of rain, but the carriage he had hired pushed on, and two more stages found him on the Border. Here the weather brightened,

and some sparkles of sunshine glittered in the raindrops still hanging in the heather and bracken.

Julius had not told his mother the exact date of his return, nor had he ordered any of his servants to meet him; so it was alone on his hired horse, a stout grey, that he took the bridle path across the moor. The scene was that of the background of his dreams of Annabella; the heather was in flower, the bee was droning, the air soft, yet the whole was gloomy by reason of an overcast sky and low-hung clouds. Julius rode close to the borders of Martin's estate; but as the ground supported only a few sheep there was no sign of desolation; in this region the poor and the wealthy looked the same.

The approach of Julius to Castle Basset showed that massive building at its most formidable aspect. It had been built, long ago, for defence, and the keep rose sheer from a piece of water, bounded by a high shelf of land. From this side there was no access to the castle nor any bridge across the water—a loch that formed a natural moat. The castle was of gigantic size; and the walls of the keep were broken only by slit-like windows. Julius, coming suddenly on the structure, thought it barbaric and belonging to another age. He reined in his horse and allowed the gloom of the scene to overpower him; well he knew that by riding round the sombre castle he would find a drained and grassed moat, a bridge, a gateway, and an entrance to the pleasant turf that divided the curtain from the castle itself. This had been modernized from one generation to another, and was largely in the Italianate style favoured by the last Stuart Kings.

Julius knew that the interior, for comfort and luxury, would well compare with any residence on the Border, and that his mother kept a well-ordered, pleasant household. Yet the impression of the mighty building rising sheer from the water, seemingly impregnable, in the dull weather was not easily effaced, and seemed even menacing after the bright civilization of the Low Countries.

Julius turned his horse aside, and after a ride of four

miles or so over barren country he arrived at the trim house occupied by Maryon Leaf. The position of the house was desolate, but it had a cheerful air; and close by, but not attached, was the usual walled flower garden of a Scottish mansion. Julius pulled the iron bell that hung by the outer gate. The servant who answered greeted him with surprise and pleasure. The master of Basset had been away a long time, it seemed to his dependants, and none of them had been exactly sure of the day of his return. This old man ventured to ask if Julius had been up to the big house yet.

"No—it looked so confoundedly gloomy. The thing is a monstrosity. The truth is, with the rain falling and the night coming on, I thought I would rather come here first—with no disrespect to the lady of Basset."

Maryon Leaf came out at once, astonished but well-bred enough to give the affair an air of unimportance. The horse was led away, and Julius entered a room that matched in elegance any of those he had seen in the Low Countries, though the appointments were mostly of Edinburgh craftsmanship. This was the lady's room of the house; but Maryon Leaf had no wife or female kin to keep house for him. He had, however, an instinctive and cultured taste, and this one room was kept free from guns, tobacco jars, fishing-rods, and all the medley of maps and papers that usually cumber a factor's office. A lustrous French carpet was on the floor; pastel drawings hung on the walls, and the furniture was delicate and shining. A quick word to a maid far more trim than those usually found in this region, and a wood fire was burning brightly; while Maryon Leaf himself had brought out a tray of bottles, glasses and pipes. He asked if he should send over to Castle Basset with news of the arrival of Julius.

The traveller shook his head. "No need to bother my mother before I need. To tell the truth, the place looked so confounded gloomy with night coming on that I decided to wait for the morning. Though born and bred here I feel sometimes homesick for the Low Countries."

Julius, in the brocaded arm-chair, and stretching his legs before the fire, felt ashamed of this speech, which was artificial, and a poor cover for his real feelings.

"I hope that you found your long sojourn abroad worth while?" asked the factor politely. "Everyone here is in high expectancy of your marriage."

"I met the Liddiards—several times—at the Hague," said Julius, trying to speak easily and to dismiss from his mind the absurd question: 'Did you send me a letter signed in red, advising the murder of Martin Deverent?'

Maryon Leaf slid easily into accounts of trusts; but this could not take long, as the reports he had sent to Leyden had been minute and regular. Julius was quite aware that under his suave manner he was wondering both at the absence of his employer and his return.

"The wedding will be traditional," smiled Julius. "You all know the details."

"Are there any to know?"

"You are too smooth, Leaf. All the Border knows that Sir William is a poor man, for all the state he keeps."

"That is obvious enough," said the other with a change of tone. "Does everyone know why you marry Miss Liddiard?"

"Is there any reason why I should not?" demanded Julius, controlling the vexation roused by the frankness for which he had asked.

"Several. It hardly seems a love match. There is no advantage in it for you—and she was betrothed to Martin Deverent."

"Betrothed?"

"They thought so, poor young fools—and certainly your mother's choice seemed the more likely one for you. You wanted the tattle, Mr. Sale, and there it is."

Julius broke through his reserves to the extent of saying:

"I met this man in Holland, and I take him to be no better than his father. He is in penury."

"Certainly he gets very little from his estates," smiled the factor.

"Have you found any flaws in his title deeds?" asked Julius brusquely.

"A good few. I've been to Edinburgh about that business—for the lands near Moffat you could bring a case that would ruin him. But it would look evil—I don't know if you care."

"Evil? Why, if the lands are mine?"

"'Naboth's vineyard,'" smiled the factor. "Then the man has never had a chance, and a poor, silly, wandering life—that rouses pity, you know—while his attachment to Miss Liddiard is well known, as I said."

"You mean that it would look like revenge for my father's murder?"

"There are many who don't think it was murder. The verdict was 'not proven', you know."

"I should have thought that you would have been on my side."

"So I am. You have not yet heard my suggestions. I take it you *do* want to ruin him?"

Julius was silent, and Maryon Leaf continued with a deepening of his smile:

"You already have the lady. As for the land—with a landlord absent so often and for so long, why trouble about legal quibbles or noisy scandals? It is not so difficult to alter a boundary here, make a claim there—or even, if one is dealing with one so poor and indifferent, to get hold of documents and destroy them."

"Leaf, I had some horrid dreams and visions in the Low Countries—some strange encounters, such as might put any man off his balance. I used to wake up sometimes in the most tranquil night in the most tranquil of towns and think I heard a violent storm."

"We have had them here," replied the steward coolly. "The worst was between Crawford Muir and the Border, where seventeen shepherds perished—but none of yours. I foresaw this tremendous hurricane, and

all your people and cattle were brought away from that fearful area."

"I was not thinking of such things," replied Julius impatiently.

"You were saved some thousands of pounds," retorted the factor.

"I am not ungrateful. Who," Julius added on a sudden thought, "saved the Deverent flocks and herds?"

"No one save that old factor of his, Lowry Gilbert, who had them all—and there are not so many of them—in the ruins of Deverent Castle."

"Ruins?"

"They are little better. It is some years since you saw them, and do not buildings need repair? Nothing is ever done to that castle. In some parts only the weeds hold the stones together, and only the tower is habitable."

"Yet I thought not of, spoke not of, such storms, such ruins as there. Our natures work on two levels, Leaf, and I have lately been on that which is not of this earth."

"Ah, there—surely a man has not the strength of a weasel—but would it not be wiser, Mr. Sale, being young, healthy, and of good estate, to leave such obscure matters for material things?"

The words were spoken with a deference that hid the hint of mockery, and Julius was encouraged to unburden himself.

"I have my degree. Yet I am not satisfied. The man is in my hands."

"Ay, no doubt you can completely ruin him," smiled the factor. "And not much of joy and cheerfulness will be left about the countryside."

"Why not? His tenants will have a better master."

"And Miss Liddiard a better husband?"

"Without vanity one may say so," said Julius, slightly affronted. "The man is no more than a vagabond."

"And you will lead a sober retired life, and with the best of reputations."

"You seem to sneer, Leaf," said his employer, "but I

must get rid of this fellow. He might come back after my marriage and hang about the mansion even as a forester or wood-clearer."

"You have seen too much of him," replied the factor. "You have allowed the matter to become an obsession."

"I don't think so!" replied Julius with a violence that proved the falseness of his denial.

"Well, then," said Leaf indulgently, "all is clear. Go ahead with your affair, and ignore this man, who may be a rascal for all I know."

"But supposing Annabella *loves* this rascal? And I step between?"

"I don't know the different meanings of this word love," replied Maryon Leaf calmly. "If they loved in my sense of the word, they would have gone away together before now."

"But he has nothing to offer—and she, also, is poor."

"That would have made no difference," replied the factor. "It is not love if it cannot overcome such difficulties. What would her parents' wrath be to her if she truly loved? They could live on his estate if he cared to pay some attention to it."

"True enough, I suppose. I don't know what does hold them apart."

"You, of course—the brilliant marriage that is being continually thrust on her by her parents—your own pursuit."

"How could I help them?"

"You could marry Miss Dupree, who is an heiress, and so set them free and please the good lady your mother."

"That gentlewoman, Miss Dupree, and I could never make a match," said Julius. He fell silent, and the factor respected his mood. Then Leaf remarked casually that a stranger had appeared in the neighbourhood, reputed to be a professor.

"Of botany?"

"Of geology, I thought."

"Has he a very handsome niece who keeps house for him?"

"I know nothing of that. This pedant is an ordinary man who keeps himself alone."

"I feel confused," said Julius, "torn between two worlds."

"Leyden law has mixed your wits," said Maryon Leaf. "Cannot your mother help you in your dilemma?"

"No, she always bids me go my own way and gently presses on me Lydia Dupree." He paused. "I ought to thank you for the care you have taken of the estate."

"My plain duty. And well paid."

Julius rose to take his leave, and Maryon Leaf offered to accompany him at least part of the way to Castle Basset.

The two young men rode across the bracken in the fair cool northern sunlight. For all the pleasantness of the scene, Julius felt a certain horror of mind. This was increased by their meeting a singular old woman, who insisted that they should slacken their pace while she walked beside them; she was a wandering simpleton, touched by cunning, who made her fortune by going among the rustics as a seer and a teller of future events. Julius thought he had met her before, perhaps in the sweetmeat shop at Leyden; yet she was by no means familiar, she would continue to talk of the Liddiards, who had just returned home; there had been terrible scenes, as the menials had reported, between the young lady and her parents, she standing fast to her troth with Martin Deverent, they pressing on her Julius Sale. There was much feeling among the retainers that the young lady should be left to her choice and not sacrificed to the greed of her father and mother. Some touched up the whole affair with stories of disaster that would happen if the girl were forced, while others spoke of strange voices and cries heard from Castle Liddiard. A party of Englishmen had been staying there, with a stud of fine horses for sale on which Sir William intended to make his profit, and there was one there with a Spanish jennet who had behaved impudently to Miss Annabella and been turned out of the castle with much ado.

Julius was highly vexed by all this, and knew not what

to make of it, for the old woman mixed cries and lamentations with her story and was so odd a figure, with her white hair flying under her hood and her plaid swirling behind her as she made haste to keep pace with the horses, that he felt himself bewildered.

But Maryon Leaf was scornful.

"The old woman has fits," he said, "and impresses the simple folk. All this is but to get a bit of silver out of you."

"I know—I was brought up with such creatures; but after being in such a placid place as the Lowlands it seems strange to return to them."

Maryon Leaf felt in his pouch and threw out a coin to the babbling crone. Her speech ceased with remarkable abruptness, and she ran off behind one of the knolls that rose by the way.

"Surely you are not disturbed?" smiled Maryon Leaf. "She cannot know anything of what is happening in Castle Liddiard."

"But I do."

As he spoke he saw, on the knoll from which the gypsy had disappeared, a young woman who seemed to him none other than Amalia von Hart, wearing a green bonnet and a white gown.

"Why, what is this?" he exclaimed. "That girl yonder?"

"I see no one," replied Maryon Leaf. "Why do you point and exclaim?"

"I thought I saw someone I knew."

"If you did it was but a vagrant. We have hardly any gentry here."

"It was a delusion," said Julius.

They had now come within sight of Castle Basset, which was from this view one of the most massive fortalices of the Border. One side rose, a sheer blank from the deep moat, which was crossed by a slender bridge and defended by a portcullis. Julius took leave of his steward; he envied this active, calm man who was so lonely, in a dependent position, yet so satisfied; who knew how to meet every chance of life and yet remained of a subtle mind. While

Julius was thinking this, Maryon Leaf surprised him by saying: "You could always shoot him on sight, as a prowling felon—who is to know who he is until it is too late to matter?" Julius started; the factor laughed and rode away, looking like a tiny puppet in that large landscape, close to that huge castle.

Julius went straight in to his mother. "I wonder," he said, "if we should not let Miss Liddiard free."

"We? Speak for yourself, Julius. I never had any liking for the girl. You know my choice."

"Yes—it is not mine. I spoke without thought. I meant that we should cease our feud against Deverent."

"But I have never pursued any feud against that young man."

"I suppose you knew what I was doing and what I meant to do. You never tried to check me."

"Nor to goad you on."

"Martin is the son of my father's murderer. I don't think that you have ever forgotten that."

The lean and placid woman, who retained many graces, looked shrewdly at her son. "I left it to you. Man's work, all of it. Martin seems to have ruined himself. I don't like the Liddiards—vulgar and scheming—and the girl half a fool. I have no more to say."

"Unless I asked for Lydia Dupree?"

"You won't. I don't press the point. If I have to receive this Annabella I shall be kind enough, Julius."

The young man wished that he could have loved his mother more. He knew that she would always be mistress in Castle Basset, whoever he married. He longed for her to advise some generosity, some large gesture, but he knew that she never would.

"There is a certain Baron Kiss," he said, "and two other people I would like to ask here, if you are willing."

"You are the master," she said.

"You never make me feel so," he answered.

"You have got what you wanted—your degree—and I suppose you could get the girl by asking."

"Yes, but against her will. And supposing, mother, this is what haunts me—she and Martin *love* each other."

Isabella Sale replied in almost the exact words of Maryon Leaf. "Why don't they make a match of it, then? They permit fear—of some sort—to keep them apart."

"Annabella is very timid, and Martin is half mad with wretchedness," replied Julius. "Mother, they appealed to me."

"Why did you not listen favourably?"

"It was Baron Kiss—Dr. Entrick and his niece—they made a mock of the whole thing. Again and again I would have let her go, but hatred rose up."

"Hatred? Oh, you have created something stronger than yourself. Perhaps these three people are merely emanations of your hatred."

"I answer you, no," smiled Julius. "They are as real as you or I."

"And who knows how real that is?" Isabella Sale made a sudden effort as if to sunder herself from dreams. "You would never take any advice of mine, of course—but I would say leave them all alone and get on with your own life."

"For my own sake or your own do you say that, mother?"

"For the sake of everyone. I saw your father brought home dead, and what was there after that for me? It is so difficult to die. No, I do not want any more tragedies. Leave the girl."

She spoke without warmth, and Julius was goaded into saying: "If only you would show some emotion, mother!"

Isabella Sale smiled without pity. "You only try to put your puzzles on me, Julius. Are you enthralled by this girl—do you only pretend a revenge?"

"Sometimes one thing—sometimes another. I do admire this girl, yet I feel that she would wither at once in Castle Basset."

"You have a house in Edinburgh."

"That, also, is but a gloomy place."

"Why, no," smiled Isabella Sale. "The house is very well, and a young bride could soon find gaiety in the capital. The family is well connected, and you do not lack for friends."

"Yet I cannot see her in Edinburgh."

"Where do you see her, Julius?"

"Where she probably often is—in the glen with Martin Deverent."

"I think her mother too watchful."

"Sir William has practically pressed an engagement on me. I should really consider myself betrothed, yet I am tormented by these doubts. Yes, I was accepted as her betrothed in Leyden. We went shopping together."

"She is resigned, then?"

"She had to buy a knife—yes, perhaps she is resigned—but what of him?"

"It is not for me to think out his part," said Isabella Sale. "Remember he is guiltless of his father's crime, for which he has already suffered. If I were you, I would let him go. By that I mean that you should go to Sir William and break off the match."

"Some advice at last," said Julius.

"But it does not run with your liking? I see that you want this girl and hate Martin Deverent."

"I am half minded," said Julius. "I much wish that I could see Baron Kiss again."

"I, too, would like to see this strange foreigner. But I also think it better that you should stay at home and look after your own affairs."

"Maryon Leaf does very well."

"Too well. You pay him a commission on all he saves?"

"Yes—and worth it."

"I dare say—but he builds himself up a fortune. Soon he will be a wealthy man."

"He does his task, and beyond that doesn't interest me."

"You—we—are lucky to have him, but don't trust him for anything save his own interest."

Julius spoke as if he had not heard this. "I shall keep

the match," he declared, "and then I shall see what Martin will do."

Isabella Sale rose to end the interview. She had much dignity and the charm of tranquillity; since the death of her husband she had grown much away from her son. She held a prayer book, and was outlined in grey against the pale grey of the landscape seen from the window. Julius withdrew with a sense of disappointment; yet he did not know how his mother could have helped him in his prolonged and complex dilemma.

CHAPTER XIV

SIR WILLIAM LIDDIARD had one forthright purpose, and that was to see his daughter married to Julius Sale. Though these two were betrothed, he felt a certain uneasiness that all would yet not go well. There was reluctance on both sides, and his own position was not strong.

Julius postponed the marriage every week or so, and Annabella's relief at these delays was obvious. Sir William scolded his wife for not having trained the girl better, and anxiously counted over his own assets; he had the corroding anxieties of one living beyond his means, and was deeply fretted at the constant putting off of his daughter's marriage to a wealthy man. A deeper vexation lay in his wife's quiet reminders that he was himself in part responsible for the lowness of the family's fortunes. Yet when she saw her husband perturbed beyond all bearing, Lady Liddiard had her consolations ready.

"The young man is in honour bound to us. I think him honest, and he has no excuse for a gross betrayal."

"In honour bound!" sneered Sir William. "I make nothing of his honour. What of his pranks in Leyden?"

"Certainly I would like to know more of them," said the lady, "and of those three queer foreigners who seemed to impress him so violently—also of his meetings and compounds with Martin Deverent."

"You will never know," retorted Sir William sharply. "I tried to probe into the matter myself and could make nothing of it. I think that Julius affects to be a mystagogue, or at least to deal in occult matters, and that he fell into the hands of some charlatans, but it is all cloudy. Nevertheless, this marriage should stand."

"It must stand," said Lady Liddiard. "I waited on his mother and found that she will do nothing for or against—a cold woman, too wealthy to be ambitious."

"I hope that she will be kind to our sweet Annabella."

"Oh, as for that, Annabella should establish herself in Edinburgh and leave Castle Basset alone."

"Why," cried Sir William impatiently, "does not this marriage take place? All the papers were signed in Leyden."

"Patience," smiled Lady Liddiard. "Julius says August—we can hardly appear too eager."

"But he is behaving with insufferable arrogance and discourtesy."

"Not insufferable since we suffer it," said his wife. "And what can we do to bring him to an issue?"

"I think that I shall wait on him and again put the matter to him broadly."

"I think patience better—there is no need to make Annabella so cheap."

"It is the delay that cheapens her!" flared Sir William. Controlling himself, he added: "Madam, we desire to be alone, therefore be pleased to free us of your company."

The Lady Liddiard, as in duty bound, then left her husband, debating within herself how to handle this matter of the marriage of her only child. In a secret manner she wrote to Julius and asked him to wait on her. This was a summons that he could not refuse, and the result of the

interview was that the high-spirited lady overbore the reluctant young man, and the marriage was fixed for 12 August, at the church attached to Liddiard Castle. All was to be very quiet and thrifty, and the young couple were to go at once to Edinburgh and enjoy the gaities of the capital.

Though he had thus made doubly sure his grave promise, Julius paused, on his way from Castle Liddiard to Castle Basset, at the mound where the crazy woman had disappeared. There he met, as usual, Amalia von Hart, in her white gown and green bonnet. To keep these trysts she said she came from Ireland, travelling at the rate of sixty miles an hour, and she never stayed longer than a few moments. Who she was or why she concerned herself with him Julius had not yet discovered; sometimes she spoke of Baron Kiss, then engaged at the siege of Vienna, sometimes of her uncle at the university of Edinburgh, but Julius never saw either of these personages. Sometimes he thought that there was something of magic in the appearances of this fair woman; but he gave but little thought to that aspect of the matter; he found her speech, her smile, her discourse so enthralling that he had no space in which to ponder the strangeness of her appearances; always at this one place, and this one hour, just before the set of sun. Sometimes he said that he would not come again, on which she showed great distress, crying out: "Oh, Julius Sale, what will become of me and how will you answer for this day's work!" Julius then felt that the creature was a witch, or fairy, or, as his mother had suggested, some projection of his own obsession, but he could not keep away.

This evening he told her of his final promise to Lady Liddiard, and she laughed as if much delighted, and said how she had hurried to this meeting through the dark of the glen. She bade Julius follow her, and took him, through rugged stones, to a cottage where sat the old woman who had spoken to him on the heath. Julius had been in this cottage before, while out hunting, but the old woman,

though she resided there out of his charity, did not recall. Amalia von Hart seemed well known here and asked for milk, which the crone brought, laughing immoderately.

"There are some fine bridals soon to be held," Amalia smiled, "and here is the groom." She looked at Julius in such a way as to make him feel he was in the power of the infernals; and this despite her beauty, which was ripe and rosy.

As he cried out, the whole illusion vanished and he was alone on the bare hillside. On reaching home he told his mother that the date of his marriage was fixed for the twelfth day of August; and she, showing neither pleasure nor discontent, said she would make ready for that day. As for his singular dreams that he imparted to her, she told him to take no heed of them. She doubted if he had ever met Amalia von Hart on the fairy knoll, or, indeed, if such a creature existed.

But that evening the courage of Isabella Sale was somewhat shaken, for an exceedingly handsome equipage drew up at her door, and the occupant descended in the full white, scarlet and gold uniform of an Imperial Field Marshal. He was attended by eight servants in vermilion and green liveries, and he gave his name as Baron Kiss and begged the hospitality of Castle Basset. The lady could not refuse through inborn courtesy, but she was alarmed and at once sent for Julius. Baron Kiss, so splendidly accompanied, made Castle Basset appear dark and dreary, and Julius was again touched with a horror of mind. He decided, however, to carry all off with boldness, and welcomed the stranger to his domain.

"But," said he, "I thought you had been under the walls of Vienna."

"So I was, and I did my turn there with other volunteers," smiled the Baron. "But I had a mind to visit you and to see how your affairs went."

Isabella Sale seemed in a trance of sorrow and fatigue, yet behaved graciously. Julius noted that the Baron, in his magnificent uniform, looked far younger than he had

seemed in Leyden; now, though his appearance was florid, he showed as a very handsome man. There were several medals on his chest, and tassels of vermilion hung from his shoulder straps.

While the mistress of the castle was giving orders for the entertainment of the visitors she was moaning under her breath: "That this should ever have happened to me—here on my very threshold—and so powerful! It is my fault that I did not take greater care of Julius."

Meanwhile Julius tried to make out why Baron Kiss had come to this lonely castle on the Border, and, indeed, asked him as much.

"It is because your wedding is fixed," he answered. "My master gave me leave to attend that great event."

"What can your master know of me?" asked Julius, trembling.

"Oh, he knows all your affairs and bade me have a care of them." The Baron smiled and nodded, and Julius noted that the jewel on his casque was burning more brightly than ever before. Indeed he was attired in so grandiose a way that the younger man felt quite overpowered by this display of military glory.

Isabella Sale found rooms and food for the Baron's retinue and stabling for his six white horses, then she returned to the large chamber where her son tried to entertain Baron Kiss. The latter treated her with great respect, but she shuddered the more for that. She had never expected that the enemy would so suddenly and with such a strong retinue be installed in her very castle.

She had prayed, and there seemed to be no answer, so she took one waiting woman and two good mounts and rode over to Castle Liddiard, where all was in a hurry for the approaching wedding. Sir William and his lady were greatly surprised by this visit, especially when Isabella Sale said that she wished to see Annabella, their daughter. As mother of the bridegroom she could hardly be refused, and so she was fetched up to a closet where the girl was

meditating. The older woman took off the silken snood from about her grey hair and said quickly:

"*He* has got into my house and will soon make an end of me and my son. Now, tell me truly—for we have never spoken together frankly before—if you really wish this marriage with my son."

"No," said Annabella. "I even entreated him to give me my freedom."

"These things were hidden from me," lamented Isabella Sale. "I now set you free. You shall not be forced—that is the only way to be rid of *him*."

"Of whom do you speak?" asked the girl with great caution.

"He names himself Baron Kiss, and I can see that he has a stranglehold on my unfortunate son."

The ladies gazed at each other with understanding. Annabella laid down her book of devotions; she had been trying to sublimate her love for a mortal into love for her God.

"It was always Martin and I," she said. "And long ago I saw how Julius was destroying himself. But nothing came into the open until he went to Leyden with the deliberate intention of ruining Martin. There are three of them, you know; this Baron Kiss, a professor of botany and his niece."

"Yes, that is the creature he thinks he meets on the Brownie's Knoll. But this Baron Kiss is no vision—I have him in my house and have to entertain him as the great noble he appears to be." Isabella Sale added with much emphasis, "I can only get rid of him by undoing the wrong that Julius has done to you."

"Must not that rather be his own act?" asked the girl quietly. "You can hardly be his deputy."

Isabella Sale shuddered; this was just what she had feared.

"But I have no influence over him. Now that this Baron Kiss has actually been evoked—why, it is clear what the thoughts of Julius must have been."

"You come into this rather late," said Annabella sadly. "You always stood aside—until *he* was actually in your house."

"Remember that I was shocked by the murder of my husband."

"Yes, and maybe you also wanted revenge on him."

"I was always silent."

"Yes, but you knew what Julius was doing. You allowed him to go on and now, perhaps, it is too late—for all of us."

"And I thought of you as a simpleton!" exclaimed Isabella Sale.

"Oh, I am—but some things are plain only to the simple."

Annabella stood before a little altar table covered with green tapestry that resembled spring fields; this was in a recess filled by a window that looked on to the low brown hills of the Border.

"You think that I cannot get rid of *him* by myself?"

"I do think it beyond you—because you have been passive so long."

"You never came to me."

"I was afraid." Annabella sighed and added, "Fetch the Minister, Guy Henderson."

"I have always thought him a rough, unlettered man," objected Isabella Sale.

"For your purpose he is right—a man of pure faith with a strong heart. You need do no more than ask him to meet this Baron Kiss."

"Is it fair to put this poor man to such a trial?" asked Isabella Sale.

"It is his duty to confront evil."

"Well, I shall try. But do remember that for my part I set you free from your engagement to our house."

With no more than that she went her way, and, the light just holding, stopped at the manse, a place where the proud, aloof woman was not often seen, and asked for Guy Henderson.

The good man was surprised at this but came meekly. "Listen," said Isabella Sale. "Do you claim any powers of exorcism?"

"None but those any minister may use—but I would not fail to meet a challenge."

"There is one now in Castle Basset. But first, tell me what is your opinion of Annabella Liddiard, who was my son's promised wife?"

"She has a saintly reputation and deserves it. But how mean you, madam, by saying she *was* your son's promised wife?"

"Because I have been to her just now to set her free. This curse has come upon us because he and her parents forced her. Her real liking is for Martin Deverent."

"I heard something of this," replied the Calvinist, "but nothing clearly. Do you mean that concrete evil has been evoked by the attempt of your son to avenge the murder of his father?"

"You have quickly come to the core of it and put it most forthrightly. I think that is what has happened. But come up to the castle and see for yourself."

The minister got out his stone-grey horse and rode beside the lady and her waiting woman through the blue dusk. The ferns were curling over, russet gold, like the crooks of shepherds, close in with the heather bells of pale pink. The distant hills were pink also, and there was a whispering in the air that did not come from any bird known to either the women or the minister.

Isabella Sale shuddered in her warm mantle; never had she seen the castle look so overwhelmingly monstrous.

Isabella Sale recounted to the minister some of the odd stories she had heard from Julius since his return from Leyden.

"He speaks of the Man with the Scales—named 'the dreadful Sagittary' in some old play, who yet is justice and Nemesis."

"I know some pagan lore," replied Guy Henderson, "and here there is a gross confusion. Sagittary is a Roman

bowman, no more, and named by us the Archer. He is in the Zodiac and a constellation, sometimes shown as a centaur; he has nothing to do with justice. The scales stand alone in the Zodiac and are known to us as the Balance."

"Julius spoke of a palace in Venice, mentioned by this Baron Kiss, where there is a chamber devoted to justice and which has this sign of the Archer," said Isabella Sale. "Julius thought that Dr. Entrick took this part and was to hold the balance between himself and Martin Deverent."

"It seems to me," replied the clergyman, "that your son feared the Erimyes. It has been a bad matter from the first. I have often told you, Mrs. Sale, that you did not take care enough to restrain your son in his thoughts of vengeance."

"I did not know he had any such thoughts."

"Is that true?" asked the pastor darkly. "I have not seen either of you much at the kirk of late."

"Yet, Mr. Henderson, I appeal to you in our present desperate plight."

Mr. Henderson paused outside the huge entrance to the mighty fortalice. He had heard many stories of visitations near Castle Basset, but he had but little clue to their meaning, save that they all seemed to hark back to a death that was perhaps a murder, a trial that perhaps gave a wrong verdict; one youth exiled, another growing up fatherless with a cold mother and a brooding hatred for the son of one whom he held to be a murderer.

"Tell me, Mrs. Sale," said the Calvinist, "exactly whom you have in this castle and why you are so afraid."

"I have always been a good Christian. And so I have always believed in——"

"Don't speak the name," interrupted the parson sternly. "God be about us. If there is some infestation I am a lone man to face it."

"You will not come in?"

"Ay, I'll come in."

Guy Henderson followed the lady into a high, dark hall, hung with armour and weapons that had been old in her husband's father's day. He followed her up a wide,

massive flight of stairs. The walls were hung with rich tapestry, but it was ill lit.

"Shall I tell you," the lady began to whisper; but the pastor checked her by saying: "Tell me nothing; let me judge for myself."

They came into a wide landing. Isabella Sale opened a door, and Guy Henderson followed her into a room that had been altered to the modern taste. The huge windows looked on to the brown and rolling landscape of the Border and a heaven full of quickly moving grey clouds. Julius Sale, handsomely dressed as suited the handsome room, was conversing with a stranger who turned at once to face the newcomers. The minister beheld a fine-looking man, obviously of high rank and birth, wearing the splendid uniform of His Imperial Majesty; that of a Field Marshal, scarlet, white and gold, much decorated with cords, tassels and braidings; while on his heart glittered a double row of ribbons and medals; powdered curls, tied with strips of bullion, surrounded a face that became, as the pastor gazed, more and more comely, until the Calvinist was staring into a countenance of singular beauty; only the unblinking eyes, as brilliant as those of a serpent, betrayed his real quality.

"This is my friend," said Julius Sale proudly. "He serves the greatest master in the world, and is on a most important mission—Marshal Baron Kiss."

"Well do I know," said the Calvinist, not flinching but with a paling in his homely features, "the power of the master your friend serves and the importance of his servants."

"I do not like your tone, Mr. Henderson. Mother, why did you bring him here?"

"Because," said the minister, "the lady knows her duty and who I am——"

"And who might you be?" asked Baron Kiss pleasantly. "I thought that you were a very small fellow with a very timid flock."

"I make no boasts for myself or my flock; we are both

poor things. But I serve a master who is just once more powerful than yours, and my mission is just once more important than yours."

"These hedgerow parsons often fall into a kind of ranting," said Baron Kiss.

Julius Sale advanced on his mother.

"My friend has been insulted by the man you brought here—why? Is it something to do with my wedding?"

"Do not quarrel with your mother," said the minister steadily. "Your wedding has to do with your present plight."

"Are you asked to perform it?" demanded Baron Kiss, tossing his glove.

"No, but I'll have a word with Dr. Rae, the minister of Liddiard—unless the ceremony is called off in time."

Julius swore, "By the devil," and Baron Kiss laughed heartily; Isabella Sale took hold of the minister's arm.

"Never fear, my lady," said Guy Henderson. "It was fit for you to bring me here today. I now declare that any talk of a marriage between Miss Liddiard and Julius Sale is displeasing to God and arises only out of the desire of Julius Sale to have vengeance on Martin Deverent."

"This is sheer impudence!" cried Julius Sale, crimson with rage.

"And this vengeance is misplaced, Julius Sale being ignorant of the circumstances of his father's death, and having done his best to ruin a youth of whom he knows nothing save that he is the true love of Miss Liddiard."

"That is so," sighed Isabella Sale.

"So intense has been the concentration of Julius Sale on hatred that it has been sufficient——"

"—to raise the devil himself?" put in Baron Kiss.

"No—it was not strong enough for that; but there was some answer from Hell to an evil so persistent, and three emanations were sent to destroy Julius Sale," said the minister.

"Did I not say he was crazy?" smiled Baron Kiss. "Surely, my dear Julius, we do not have to endure the

outbursts of your mother's guest. I shall shortly be on my way again—meanwhile can we not go into another chamber?"

"It is needless," said the minister. "I withdraw, taking the mistress of the castle with me." As the door closed behind them, Isabella Sale asked:

"Was I right?"

"Yes."

"Then why did you leave them?"

"He is too powerful for me. I could do nothing. There are many noted men, among them Dr. Rae, who might have done it—I could gather them together for a wrestling—but it might send Castle Basset into the pit."

"This marriage, then, is damned?"

"Yes."

"How do we prevent it?"

"You must go to Miss Liddiard and help her to escape."

"Alas!" said the helpless great lady, always waited upon, always guarded. "I should not know how to do that. I hear she has tried her best to escape and appealed to both her parents and to Julius in vain."

"Would Maryon Leaf help?"

Isabella Sale was surprised.

"He is not in this at all."

"Not tainted," said the minister. "That is what I meant. Yet he is a very worldly young man, and little given to God."

"You have not helped me," said Isabella Sale as she went with the old man to the door. There was a certain hesitation now in the demeanour of Guy Henderson, as if what had once seemed to him wisdom now appeared as cowardice.

The lady opened the little door in the large one, and there were two figures standing without: a middle-aged man and a girl.

"Why," exclaimed Isabella Sale, "You are Dr. Entrick and Amalia von Hart!"

The doctor bowed.

"Your good son described us, then? We are here only out of courtesy."

But the minister, thereto so calm, took instant fright, pushed aside his hostess, and tried to escape across the bridge that spanned the moat. The light was already failing, and Mr. Henderson did not perceive the small staircase that led from the bridge to the moat. Catching his foot on that, he fell with a dreadful cry headlong over the oaken stair into the dried great ditch of Castle Basset.

CHAPTER XV

ISABELLA SALE hastened after the minister. The moat was darkness itself, and she could neither hear nor see anything, though she called loudly on the pastor's name.

She was followed by Dr. Entrick and Amalia. The former had somehow procured a little lamp; by this frail light they found the corpse of the minister, mangled and bleeding on a heap of stones. When Isabella Sale touched his outflung hand she found it already cold.

"It is always a mistake to interfere," said Amalia. "Especially when matters begin to be so serious."

"He lost courage," said Dr. Entrick. "Allow me, madam, to take you back to the castle. We must report this fearful accident."

Julius, however, took the affair very lightly. He could not understand why his mother had asked the minister to Castle Basset, nor why the latter had been insolent to Baron Kiss.

The domestics, of whom, with hangers-on, there were a great number in the castle, took a different view of the matter. Some of the women wept and prayed; all the men

asked for extra beer, and none of them would take up the broken body of Guy Henderson as it lay, in Geneva black and bands, in the moat. The servants of Baron Kiss refused to take any part in the matter. So, though there was a ring of spectators, with torch and lamp, round the dead man, no one would as much as touch him.

Julius lost his temper and retired with Baron Kiss to his private chamber, where the foreign servants waited on them for supper, smoking and chess.

Isabella Sale was beside herself. Her distress was heightened by the disappearance of Dr. Entrick and his niece. This also gravely disturbed the domestics, some of whom had seen the strangers leading their mistress home. At last a certain hanger-on of the place, or fothering man, came forward and, bowing low, addressed the desolate and distracted lady. He suggested that someone should ride to Mr. Leaf's house and fetch him with his own servants; also that a night watch should be kept in Castle Basset and that the very man to hold this would be the great metaphysical minister of Liddiard, Gilbert Rae, who would surely ride over and sit up the dark hours for the poor abandoned creature in Castle Liddiard.

Isabella Sale readily agreed, and it was not difficult to find two men to go on these errands. But when they had gone she was startled by the approach of the butler, Kenneth Hume, who, in the absence of both master and factor, had taken charge of the crowd.

"Surely, my lady, you cannot stay the night here in the coldness and the darkness and with this useless crowd? If you go to your chambers, I'll stand guard over it—dirk drawn."

"I must wait the coming of Mr. Leaf and possibly Dr. Rae. And I could not go into the castle, good Hume."

She glanced at a high-set window that was lit up, and from which came the laughter of her son and Baron Kiss.

"Will either come?" sighed Hume. "Your ladyship took the advice of an evil body——"

"No—it was poor, harmless, silly Barton, the fothering

man who does a little tree clearing and is a general hanger-on—maybe feeble-minded, Hume, but not evil.”

“It was not poor Barton that your ladyship sent,” replied Hume gravely, “but Trett—who indeed appears a fothering man, but is employed by Baron Kiss.”

“Surely some trick has been put upon me,” said Isabella Sale with a dismal laugh.

The butler thought so too; but the messengers had been sent, and Maryon Leaf soon arrived and took command of the disordered scene. His calm presence restored the nerve of most, but Hume was disdainful of the factor’s refusal to listen to talk of “delusions and exhalations.”

“You are a bold gentleman, no doubt, but there are those here who can tell a corpse candle from an elf candle and a will o’ wisp from all other lights of the world,” muttered the butler.

Isabella Sale pressed his arm, knowing him to be loyal and valiant. “God does nothing in vain,” she said. “Whatever has happened tonight, there is His hand in it.”

“In that?” asked Maryon Leaf, pointing to the body of the preacher.

“Maybe—he lost faith.”

“Or maybe merely a foothold in the dark,” replied Maryon Leaf. “The castle is ill lit. Why has Dr. Rae been sent for?”

“To keep watch.”

The factor checked a smile; he had not believed that the stately lady of Castle Basset was so bound by superstition. Still, the behaviour of Julius was unaccountable. The minister lay dead by a frightful accident at his door, and Julius was closeted and junketing with an outlandish foreigner, a man not at all to the liking of Maryon Leaf.

However, the factor enjoyed taking command. It was clear enough that all these people thought more of him than they did of their own master. And he noticed, with calm satisfaction, that the maidens were sufficiently distracted from the terrors of the night to glance at his handsome person, ruddy complexion and thick, hazel-coloured

hair. He at once ordered four of his own servants to take up and put on a farm cart the body of Guy Henderson, and told them to take it to the manse. There was the apothecary to be told and the useful women who would come with clean linen and fresh water.

When the body had gone Maryon Leaf turned to Isabella Sale and repeated the plea of Hume the butler; he, too, offered to sit with her all night, but the lady refused to enter the castle while Baron Kiss was there. While this argument was in force Dr. Rae arrived on a sleepy pony, he himself being half out of his cassock, with his cauliflower wig awry; but Maryon Leaf knew him to be a brave, learned and liberal-minded man. He at once pointed out the case of Isabella Sale, who now appeared in a stupor. Her features were changed and she seemed to be muttering prayers.

"Let your Ladyship take heart," said Dr. Rae. "There is no need for this great distress and horror of mind for a misfortune that was none of your doing but rather the will of God, who ordained that Mr. Henderson should be snatched away in this terrible manner."

"Oh, Dr. Rae!" she cried. "Who do you think these people are?"

"Ordinary folk, viewed by a fancy overheated by some secret fear."

But Isabella Sale heard nothing; as she fainted, Maryon Leaf told two of her women to take her up, two of the men to assist them, and the whole party to put the distracted and senseless creature into a cart and convey her to Maryon Leaf's home.

Now that the lady was out of the way Dr. Rae roundly demanded of the factor what he knew of the circumstances that seemed to hang round them like a fog. Maryon Leaf knew much and guessed more; when he had finished his recital, which was given in a very sensible sort of way, the minister remarked: "You seem, sir, to be commonsensical. Now pray tell me your impressions of these characters with whom we have to deal."

Both glanced up at the high-set window in the massive fortress, from which came a ruby-red light and the sound of songs and laughter, as if some buffoon was performing before a kindly audience.

"Julius Sale you know for yourself," said the factor, who did not wish to speak evil of his employer. "He has undoubtedly been much concerned—to an obsession—with the death of his father. As for young Martin, I take him to be an idler who could have done better than wander in foreign places, leaving his own to ruin—well, there is an ancient steward, but the man is past his work. As for the others—no doubt but that Martin and Miss Liddiard consider themselves betrothed and have made appeals to Mr. Sale—who has respected them."

"So far, our poor human nature," opined the doctor. The moon was coming up over the low brown hills and showed the two men in their sober attire seated on the wooden stairs down which Guy Henderson had fallen.

"But what," continued Dr. Rae, "do you make of these three foreigners?"

"I believe that Baron Kiss is some half-pay officer, a charlatan of some wit—no more a Field Marshal than I am—who is greatly helped in his tricks by the man Trett, who pretends to be crazy in order not to be observed."

"And the pedant of whom you spoke, and the girl?" asked Dr. Rae doubtfully.

"A wandering scholar, no doubt, who has not taken a good degree and is of an unsettled habit of mind. The girl is more difficult to explain—but I doubt if there is any mystery there, only some commonplace story of error."

"And these creatures have imposed themselves on Julius Sale as being of supernatural origin?"

"Surely not," replied the factor. "But you yourself know the credulity of this countryside. Why, even the poor mother believes she is dealing with infernal beings. Of course they know that Mr. Sale is wealthy—also his story, and they have played on that. In a great deal also he has been hallucinated—subject to vapours and even to

some optical delusions. They try to please him by urging on the Liddiard marriage—even by way of an abduction, if need be—and for that he would pay them well. You, sir, I believe, are supposed to join the two in holy matrimony.”

“It now sounds to me more like a devil’s pact, and I shall refuse to have anything to do with it.”

“They will get in some divine from Edinburgh,” replied the factor. “Dare I offer my advice?”

“I should be glad of it.”

“Then feign to know nothing of these troubles, allow the wedding preparations to go forward, then, even when they are in the church, denounce the plotters and save Miss Liddiard.”

Dr. Rae was silent. He foresaw that by this scheme he would offend a good many powerful patrons; but he was an honest man and he wished to save Annabella Liddiard from a marriage that could hold for her nothing but wretchedness. He knew that if he protested to the Liddiards or to Julius Sale he would merely be warning them, and that the plan suggested by Maryon Leaf was sound.

“But,” he said, “we should find some way of conveying to these young people that they are not to be forced apart.”

“I think I could get a message through to Miss Liddiard,” replied the factor. “But who is to know where Martin Deverent is? The man is a bad friend to himself.”

“I should like to meet him,” said Dr. Rae. “It might be that I could disabuse his mind of many foolish things.”

“The one who follows foolish things sits up yonder,” said Maryon Leaf. “Now, tell me, Dr. Rae, why we should watch out the night here, in the muck and damp, while the others amuse themselves alone?”

“You mean that we should face them?”

“Why not? He can but put me out of my post, and I should not greatly care for that. As for you, reverend sir, he can do nothing.”

“Even if he could I think that it is my duty to face him,” said Dr. Rae, rousing himself. “What behaviour was it for him to shut himself up with this foreigner while a

minister of the gospel is dead at his door? He should be rebuked, and I will do it. But tell me, Mr. Leaf, you have no thought in your mind that there may be some taint of diabolism in these curious happenings?"

"No. Have you, sir?"

"I have not. I think it can easily be explained on the human level—but there is another level—we must never forget that."

The factor had the key of the little door within the big door, and by this means he and the metaphysical doctor entered the castle. In the first corridor, which was lit only by one small lantern, they found Hume, the butler, as if on watch.

"How many are up there, in the turret room?" asked the factor.

"Sir, it might be a thousand. But of a certainty he is well followed."

"Come with us, honest man," said Dr. Rae. "It will be one Christian the more, and well I know thy candid life."

Hume eagerly assented, and his heavy hand went to his dirk. Maryon Leaf laughed at this, though he also was armed with a little hunting knife. Dr. Rae, who needed no arms of earthly forging, led the way up the dark and massive staircase with the walls hung with sombre tapestry. Without knocking, he threw open the door of the turret chamber; it was elegantly furnished and lit by a silver-plated chandelier.

Julius Sale was alone with Baron Kiss. They were playing chess, and both seemed sober and grave; there was no sign of the crimson light, no sound of the laughter and the wild songs that the factor and the minister had heard when in the moat. Both players rose at the entrance of the minister, and Julius asked if there was some trouble as his factor and butler thus came on him.

The answer was left to Dr. Rae, who eyed Baron Kiss with a deep curiosity.

"I come as a Christian minister and these two as Christian men, to demand why you evaded your duty tonight when Guy Henderson lay dead at your door?"

"I know nothing of it," replied Julius sullenly.

"A marvellously impudent demand," remarked the Baron, whose attire now seemed shabby. He reached for his cap, on which the jewel shone dimly.

"So it is," said Julius. "My factor was there and saw to everything."

"But I had to be sent for," said Maryon Leaf, "because you did nothing and no one would touch the corpse."

"He died of fright because he thought he saw a hobgoblin," remarked the Baron lightly.

"Many things have happened round here of late," said Dr. Rae, "that have caused much whispering. I think this a proper moment to ask this person who he is and why he has attached himself to Julius Sale."

"So you are not afraid of breaking your neck?" laughed the Baron.

"No—precisely that—I am not afraid."

"Nor I," said Maryon Leaf.

"Nor I," said Hume the butler.

"Why are you all here!" cried Julius Sale almost in a scream. "I came up here to be alone and to meditate."

"We are alone," said Maryon Leaf.

It was true that Julius Sale was the sole occupant of the dingy-looking room into which the three men had so sternly advanced. Dr. Rae looked triumphant; he felt his spiritual value to be enhanced; he would have liked to admonish Julius then about his wedding, but remembered the factor's warning. However, he went as far as to rebuke the master of Castle Basset for lurking in this dismal and distant chamber while his whole household had been roused by the death of Guy Henderson.

"And where is the creature we saw when we entered here?" concluded the minister.

Julius Sale retorted that his only guest, Baron Kiss, had left after the accident, and gone with all his retinue towards Edinburgh.

"You are plainly bewitched," said Dr. Rae, "and suffer from delusions, a subject on which I have written a

philosophical treatise. Do you still intend to put forward your marriage with Annabella Liddiard?"

"We are betrothed." Julius was in a dingy bed gown, lying on a meagre couch; he shivered and protested that the night was cold.

"I advise you," said the parson, "to leave this gloomy spot and to return to your proper chamber—in the state to which you are entitled."

"I see no reason to listen to either of you," replied Julius. "I feel sick, like a man vanquished in something he has undertaken."

"Why do you not consider the lady your mother suggests, Miss Lydia Dupree?" asked Maryon Leaf. "Why this persistence in a match hateful to Miss Annabella?"

"You take a great deal on yourself," said Julius with a scowl.

"I might take more," said Maryon Leaf with a careless air. "I have no wish to work for a man who is so indifferent to his own credit."

The two young men faced each other with hostility; but Julius Sale had a feverish air and suddenly began to look anxious.

"Help me up," he whispered, all his enmity vanished; his own two servitors obeyed and took him under the arms; with Dr. Rae preceding them, they left the dreary room, which now seemed little better than an attic, and took him down to the fine chamber that overlooked the moat and the low hills of the Border now outlined in the white light of the rising moon.

Hume called one of the chamber servants—no one was in bed—and Julius Sale was undressed and placed in the vast four-poster where he had been born.

"Have you seen Martin Deverent?" he asked. All three answered him that they had not for some time and did not know his whereabouts.

"There is no need to make a watch night of it," said Maryon Leaf. He ordered Hume to send the domestics to their beds and himself went off with the good doctor,

who was a little puzzled by what he had seen but afraid of nothing.

"Who was that creature who vanished when we began to question him?" he asked.

The factor saw no great mystery in this happening.

"Some side door and a knave clever at tricks," he replied. "A castle like Castle Basset has many such contrivances."

"But would this foreigner know them?"

"Oh, I dare say—he and the fellow Trett would soon discover holes and crannies."

But still Dr. Rae, cantering home in the moonlight, turned over many anxious puzzles in his mind.

CHAPTER XVI

THE next day was blue with a strong south wind, and Maryon Leaf rode over to the craggy mansion of the Liddiards. His intention was to give some hope to Annabella, without disclosing to one so simple the ruse that Dr. Rae intended to employ. The factor was received by Lady Liddiard, who told him that her daughter was ill and kept to her chamber with two women in close attendance. Maryon Leaf knew a lie when he heard one and did not like the resolute look of the lady, which seemed to rebuke him for daring to mention her daughter. This stung him to further boldness.

"I have a message for her from Martin Deverent," he said.

The lady raged; she could hardly credit such insolence.

But Maryon took her wrath as a jest. "Is your daughter secluded from the world?" he asked pleasantly.

"She is to be married to your master."

"Madam, I advise that you prevent that. All manner of miseries will come from an attempt to force that marriage. No, I am not impertinent; my blood is as good as any in the Border, and I know more than you think, perhaps, of this tragic story."

The lady became frightened by these stern words coming from a man, young, calm and strong, who spoke with authority.

"But they are betrothed," she made feeble protest. "Sir William would never consent."

"The marriage will never take place. Your daughter is bound to Martin Deverent."

Lady Liddiard did not know how to answer this bold young man, who added with a fine smile: "Some actions are forbidden by Heaven, and this is one of them."

She tried to parry his insistence.

"What business can Heaven have in this simple matter?"

"Maybe it is not so simple," replied Maryon Leaf. "Maybe it is a question of losing souls to the devil."

"I had never thought to hear you talk like this. You are but the factor of Julius Sale."

He laughed pleasantly enough in her face.

"Look to your daughter. I know that you and your husband hold her a prisoner."

"You have no right to say so, nor to torment me. Speak, if speak you must, to Sir William, my husband."

"Certainly—but I know him to be as obstinate as your ladyship, and as eager to obtain possession of the Sale estates."

"I'll not endure any more of this insolence," cried Lady Liddiard, suddenly altering her mood and her tone. "Come upstairs with me and speak to Annabella yourself."

The young man followed the angry lady upstairs. He was surprised at her sudden change of front, but at once suspected the cause of it; nor was he mistaken.

He was conducted into an ornate room where Annabella sat at the window. Two women in drab gowns were sitting by the small straight bed, one hemming yards of ruffling,

the other pounding herbs in a mortar. Both rose to their feet as the lady of the house entered and stared, with a curiosity they could not suppress, at the comely figure and bright face of Maryon Leaf. Lady Liddiard crossed over to her daughter and took her hand, which hung idle at her side.

"Annabella, this is the factor to Julius Sale, who, for reasons unknown to me, has chosen to come here and confront me with vile accusations."

Annabella turned her head and seemed to be listening; but her face was expressionless, and she did not change her attitude.

"Is it not true that you are agreeable to this marriage with Julius Sale that your father and I have arranged for you with such care?"

"Yes, Mother."

"Is it not true," continued the lady with increasing triumph, "that you were formally betrothed to him in Leyden?"

"Yes, Mother."

The lady turned to Maryon Leaf.

"There, you hear from my daughter's own lips——"

The factor waved her aside.

"Permit me, Miss Annabella, to ask a few questions in my turn. Is it not true that your first, true, and only troth was plighted to Martin Deverent?"

Annabella did not answer, but her right hand crept to her bosom.

"Oh, nonsense!" cried the Lady Liddiard. "That was but an early folly."

"Do you know, Miss Annabella," ventured the factor, "that this malice on the part of Julius Sale has created three creatures who certainly are not of this earth and who lately contrived the death of worthy Mr. Henderson?"

At this even Lady Liddiard seemed subdued, even frightened, and the two watchers by the bed paused in their simple employments to mutter in unison: "God be about us!"

"I have heard something of this story," faltered the elder woman, "but Dr. Rae, the metaphysical doctor, believes it all to have been an accident and a hallucination."

Annabella did not speak, but her hand remained at her bosom. Maryon Leaf saw that she was clutching, not some ornament, but the delicate handle of a small knife.

"Did not you and Martin," he asked in a gentle tone, "break a coin and each keep half?"

"Where is he now?" asked Annabella.

"Where any vagabond or rascal might be," said her mother. "Ruined, outcast and undone—what else would you suppose?"

"You and he are bound together," said the factor earnestly, "and you must be true to him. Do you understand me, Miss Annabella? If you do, or if Mr. Sale freely gives you up, then we shall all be free of evil imaginings."

The girl looked slowly round at the three women who were her jailers. Maryon Leaf longed to give her some hope and even to tell her of the resolution of Dr. Rae's to refuse to perform the marriage ceremony; but he considered that this would be only to warn the mother. He stood his ground, however, though Lady Liddiard plucked impatiently at his sleeve.

"Try to be true—to be faithful, Miss Annabella, and all may yet be well. I will myself go in search of your unfortunate lover and try to put some heart and courage into him—for your sake."

"A ragged Robin, indeed!" cried Lady Liddiard almost in a shriek at such steadfast impudence. "I think that he would not dare to show his face in the Border!"

"Do you know," asked the factor, "who came to Castle Basset?"

The lady was quick to seize on this stern question.

"An Austrian grandee," she said, "who serves a mighty master."

"Ay, his master is mighty enough," agreed the factor.

"And the other two," persisted Lady Liddiard.

“A poor professor of botany and his niece—who could be more harmless?”

Annabella gave no heed to her mother's words, but listened with a strained attention to all that Maryon Leaf said; her attitude, as she leaned forward, with an earnest look and parted lips, reminded the factor of a child he had once seen, long ago, listening to a large shell. The two women by the long white bed were listening intently to all that was being said, and their faces were green with fear; Lady Liddiard observed this, and her anger against the factor increased. She continued to drag at his sleeve in nervous rage.

“I can do no more,” said Maryon Leaf, looking most earnestly into the girl's brooding face, “save to bid you keep up your heart, Miss Annabella, and be sure that help will come to you, for matters of Heaven and Hell are mingled in this business.”

With no more than that he left her, and he saw her turn away from the three other women and lean her sick head against the mullions.

Maryon Leaf, when he got free of the Liddiard mansion, did not know what to do. He had spoken boldly enough of finding the outcast Martin, but now common sense asserted itself; was he to throw up a good post and cast himself on the Continent searching for a man who must be living like a toad in a hole? And what business of his was it to play champion for a man who had not the strength to assert himself? As the factor was musing on these things, he was aware of another horseman riding beside him, along the lonely track; it was Baron Kiss, unattended, but splendidly mounted, in all his martial splendour.

“Are you wise,” he asked pleasantly, “to meddle in this business?”

“Sometimes one does not think of wisdom,” replied the factor calmly.

“That is apparent. You know that I intend to put this marriage through, and yet you dare to cross me—to try to cross me. You, perhaps, want the fate of Mr. Henderson?”

"I shall never have it, because I am not afraid," replied the young man.

He was aware that they were passing over haunted ground. There lived a kelpie in the stream that foamed, brown as an agate, over the broken stone, who had accounted for the death of many travellers. The factor had spoken with those who had seen him on land, with great splay hooves and thick mane of green colour, feeding with the herds. Nearby, too, was a hillock given over to the fairies, where a girl in a white dress and a green bonnet waited to lure any youths who might carelessly pass by. She would take them in a chariot, travelling at sixty miles an hour to Ireland, and they would never be seen again, though the lady would return alone to the hillock, waiting for other victims.

Yet Maryon Leaf did not flinch; he glanced at his magnificent companion and remarked with a dry laugh:

"It is strange that you concerned yourself with so poor a victim as Guy Henderson—a man who was afraid."

Baron Kiss frowned, and the jewel on his casque sparkled brightly. Maryon Leaf knew that he was in great danger; his horse began to tremble and sweat, and he had to keep a tight rein on the beast.

"I am resolved that the marriage of Julius Sale and Annabella Liddiard shall not take place," he said firmly, "and you would be well advised to return to the great potentate you boast of serving."

"By what authority," demanded Baron Kiss, "do you threaten me?"

"By that of a Christian."

Baron Kiss fell behind, and the factor pushed boldly on, his horse being now calmer. A rosy light overspread the landscape, and when he looked over his shoulder he could not see the Baron.

Despite his courage his heart was lighter; but, turning a corner, his horse shied and nearly threw him. There was Dr. Entrick, with a glass, bending over a humble flower that he was examining with zeal. Close beside him

stood Amalia von Hart, wearing a white dress and a green bonnet.

"Oh, good evening to you both," cried the factor, for the day was darkening, "and may you quickly return from whence you came."

"That was Leyden," said the good doctor, meekly looking round. "I have now a post at Edinburgh University."

"It is a long way from here," remarked the factor, pulling on his horse hard. "Where do you intend to sleep tonight?"

"I dare say we can find shelter at Castle Basset," replied the botanist with a sudden grin. "There is no one to hinder us, since you have taken away that foolish lady."

"Perhaps it would be better for you to remain in the hollow of the hills," said the factor. "For I intend to ask Dr. Rae to spend the night with Julius Sale."

With that he put his horse to a canter, and did not stop until he reached the modest manse of the celebrated minister.

Dr. Rae willingly undertook to spend the night with Julius Sale. He set off, unconfounded, through the murk, while Maryon Leaf returned to his own home, where he found Isabella Sale and her two women. She seemed, to him, to be sinking into death, through sheer horror of mind. He tried to comfort her by telling her that Dr. Rae was sitting up with her son and that he himself, the poor factor, had successfully wrought with the three foreigners.

"I think also," he concluded, "that you should not be so disturbed, since, humanly speaking, there are rational explanations for all these events, cursed as they seem."

He then related how he had forced his way into Castle Liddiard and even spoken to Annabella herself and tried to put some heart into her. He did not add that the girl seemed to him half imbecile, a prisoner, and fumbling at a knife (doubtless that she had bought in Leyden) in her bosom.

Isabella Sale seemed a little comforted, but she remained greatly stricken—largely by remorse, as she blamed herself for not having kept a closer watch over the soul of her son, which now seemed in mortal danger.

Mortal danger? The catch-words pressed upon her heart; did she not rather mean that her son was in supernatural danger?

Isabella Sale felt with shame that she had learned little from her own life. Since her husband's violent death she had lived in Castle Basset as if in a prison—thinking of the past, allowing her son and even the staff to go their own ways. It had even seemed right to her that Julius should undertake the ruin of Martin Deverent. Now the walls of her existence had been broken down and another world had enveloped her, so that she did not know what to do. What was this other dimension into which she had moved so unknowingly?

It was trouble, perhaps disaster, perhaps God.

Could she, so untaught, so self-absorbed, be expected to trace this mystery?

She could make the matter seem commonplace enough. Julius was to marry a young woman of his own rank; two Border estates that marched were to be united. It was a pity that Julius had not chosen Lydia Dupree, for Isabella Sale liked her cheerful presence as much as she disliked Annabella Liddiard. Yet she did not dislike Annabella as much as the circumstances—the betrothed maiden's reluctance for the match; her sacrifice to the greed of worldly parents; the dark bond with the outcast Martin; the lack of love for the chosen woman on the part of Julius. And, worst of all, the change in Julius and his three strange friends.

Surely the death of Guy Henderson had been very horrible. Isabella Sale wondered why he wore the Geneva gowns and bands instead of the usual worsted and neck-cloth, no different from that worn by any of his flock. Had he come in that uncommon garb merely to be slain—bodily slain—by the forces of evil, and his soul whirled—whither? Isabella Sale wondered why there had been no

immediate response to her own terror. The minister had perished, but she had been suffered to live.

Her memory was very confused; she could not recall who had beseeched her to stop this marriage that she herself thought of as ill-starred. Her flesh crept at the thought of having Annabella, silent, cold and bitter, mistress in Castle Basset. She herself would have to go away to some horrid house, as she had no relatives. And so the last phase would pass, in eclipse, she never hearing of her son's welfare; surely there had been murder in the wild eye of Julius when she had last seen him?

She could not concentrate on this theme, but began to dream of her own old home. How delightful that time had been! There had been many brothers and sisters, and it was a cruel fate that they were all now dead. Then there had been her young lover; she recalled the days as always sunny, and their walks in the walled garden that was some distance from the stone house. She had never been sure that the earth was solid under her foot; it was a long receding vista, at the end of which the murdered man—was she sure of that?—the slain man—had been the merry gallant. What curse had been laid on them that their only son should be thus absorbed in vengeance?

Isabella Sale could not recall by what degrees she had passed into a long mourning that had allowed her son to drift into these terrible projects of revenge. Had he learned anything from her? As master of the estate he had gone his own way, surely; not at her knee had he devised any prattle for ruining Martin. She recalled the last as a merry boy, given to jests and tales; how many years was it since she had seen him in Castle Basset? If she had not so soon been left a widow there would have been many other children to lighten the vast halls and winding corridors.

She had been so much alone. Her acceptance of utter loneliness had been complete since the day her husband had been carried in on a gate, a shawl over his face. Only her solitary devotions had bespoken her soul. Defenceless and solitary; so she had been, so she was now before Julius

and his emanations. There was the metaphysical doctor, Gilbert Rae, but he had been no help to her but rather treated her as if she was deluded or foolish.

But what meaning had he given to the three figures who seemed now to be the constant companions of Julius?

Isabella Sale felt as if she had been saved from everything—even from hatred. The best part of her had certainly gone with her husband; the sweet lover, the faithful wife, the wise housekeeper, the stately mistress of a fine establishment were all dead; there remained only this wan woman, capable only of a sidelong glance of the hard happenings of her day. She called out for a drink of water, and a strange woman answered her; Isabella Sale then remembered that she was no longer in Castle Basset but in the house of the steward, Maryon Leaf.

Baron Kiss lorded it in Castle Basset. The botanist and his niece had taken up residence there, and a large number of foreigners proceeded to drive out the native domestics and to transform the gloomy old castle. Black and heavy bookcases and presses, four-poster tester beds crowned with dingy plumes, hangings darkened by age and dirt, were all quickly removed; while wagons and covered carts, coming, the natives supposed, from the Port of Leith, brought outlandish trappings to the old fortalice.

Vast mirrors, the squares joined by bands and bosses of bronze, were set against panels of enamel of the most tender and brilliant of hues. Gilt furniture of the baroque style entirely altered the appearance of the rooms. The hanging gallery in the great hall, which had been empty for centuries, was filled with relays of minstrels in scarlet liveries; while curious animals in crimson coats, which looked uncommonly like monkeys, were allowed a liberty they frequently abused. Parrots hung in ebony rings; curtains of Utrecht velvet and Lyons silk hung at the gaunt windows, and at every hour, seasonable and unseasonable, appeared food and drink that those few of the Sale retainers who had contrived to keep their posts had never seen before.

Julius was hardly aware of what was going on around him. He signed many bills that seemed to him quite in order, and he was satisfied by the explanation given him by Baron Kiss that the castle was being merely prepared for his wedding. He resented the withdrawal of his mother to the steward's house, but admitted that the castle was much more agreeable without that sad presence.

"You are an extremely wealthy man," said Baron Kiss, "and it is more reasonable for you to live like this than moping in some dull lodging in Leyden."

Julius agreed; he found all these foreigners good company, especially as his neighbours avoided him. Sometimes when looking from his windows, he would see a party of these gentlemen on horseback, pausing beyond the moat and looking at the castle with expressions of dismay. Sometimes Dr. Rae would be among them, wearing his usual worsted suit. Julius missed his own particular servants, such as Hume, the butler, who had been in his service for long years. Baron Kiss explained that they had returned to their houses in a dudgeon, refusing to work with foreigners.

Family worship was forgotten. Julius could not even recall the name of the chaplain. Baron Kiss had his own faith, which consisted in the service of his mighty master of whom he spoke so frequently and with such great respect. Once a note got through from Dr. Rae, warning Julius that he was in "a dark and perilous state"; but even while he tried to get the meaning of this it changed in his hand—or was he only half awake?—for he found that he held an amusing book in the French language that had been given to him by Baron Kiss. Sometimes he longed to see Annabella; but his passion was quickly subdued, for he had, every day, less and less feeling for the girl.

"What kind of mistress will she make for this place?" he grumbled to Baron Kiss, chagrined and dismayed at the prospect of married life with a stranger.

"You do not expect a fond and affectionate lover?" sneered the Baron. Then, sampling some old hock that had

been lately sent to the castle, he added, "Is it not sufficient for you that Martin Deverent will finally be dissolved with rage, misery and, I dare say, want, for his steward becomes more senile every day."

"There is not much relish," replied Julius sullenly, "to have one's revenge on one already ruined—as you say this man is——"

"Ah, but if you relax—even for a moment—he will triumph again. Have you forgotten that he tried to take your betrothed?"

"I think that his claim came first," retorted Julius with a grimace.

"Maybe—but have you forgotten that he tried to murder you?"

This episode was faint in the mind of Julius. He recalled bells ringing over the Lowland flats, a dark road between poplar trees—and then a church where stone warriors reclined on stone altars.

Baron Kiss was looking at him keenly. "Do not tell me that you are weakening in your purpose," he remarked sternly. "Your mother and your old servants have gone, an accident removed the prying pastor—the other keeps away——"

"What is my purpose?" asked Julius, with an intonation that was almost feeble.

"To marry Annabella Liddiard."

"Ay, yes, that is settled——"

"Your other purpose was to obey me."

"Did I make any such promise?"

"Indeed, yes, it was a day of thunder and we were together in a dark parlour. You promised to serve me as jealously as I once promised to serve my imperial and royal master."

"How could I serve you—or your master?" asked Julius.

"You have gone some way already," smiled the other. "And you have been splendidly repaid. Look around you, and see if all is not more magnificent than you have ever known it."

"Yes, you have helped me to get ready for the entertainment of my bride; but I hardly know for what end this kindness was offered—nor why it was accepted."

"Say," smiled Baron Kiss, "that it was caprice on my part and laziness on yours."

Julius tried to think of Annabella; in an instant Amalia von Hart was before him, holding up for his inspection a length of watered green silk.

"We think of that for the hall, if you approve," she said. "It is a sample from Paris, which has come with some grey stockings for yourself."

Julius saw her as a wraith of something long past. Her white dress and small green bonnet were out of keeping with the splendour of the room.

He walked to the window; the light was pale but steady over the brown Lowland hills.

"It is a long time since I saw my steward, Maryon Leaf."

"I thought that you had some quarrel with him." The Baron spoke over his shoulder.

"Surely not. If so, how is it that he is in charge of my affairs?"

"Or that your mother stays at his house?" added Amalia von Hart pleasantly.

"I'll not have the silk," said Julius, looking at her. "It is absurd for this ancient fortalice to be adorned in this fashion. Ay, and I have to think of the bills. Annabella brings no money."

"It will be curious to see how this marriage arranged for spite and greed comes along," said Baron Kiss.

Julius did not care to have things put so plainly.

"It is a marriage like any other," he protested. "Her parents are willing, and I was generous with the settlements."

"But the marriage is based solely on your hatred of Martin Deverent and the greed of the Liddiards," said the Baron firmly. "You could not deny that, I think, could you?"

"Why do you want to force that question on me?" complained Julius. The casement was open and a light wind filled the room, fluttering the specimen of watered silk that Amalia still held. She was looking at him with excitement touched by shyness; she laughed and then abruptly was silent.

"There are too many people who seem to be waiting—watching—for what?" exclaimed Julius. "Surely, Baron Kiss, you do not need so many foreign servants about the place?"

"It is only until your wedding—another ten days," smiled the Baron.

Julius leaned out of the window. He felt reluctant, undecided. It seemed a long time since he had seen Annabella; he felt bemused; he wished for the company of Maryon Leaf, who was a sane, downright fellow, even if he sometimes took too much on himself.

"I must see the accounts," he said. He turned from the window as if he wished to leave the room; yet his movement was hesitant, and as Baron Kiss raised his hand with a gesture of command Julius paused.

"The accounts can stay until after your marriage. You should think more of that." Baron Kiss spoke sternly. "We—my friends and I—do everything for you. That seems too much taken for granted, if you will allow me the rebuke."

Julius flashed a glance of dislike, but Baron Kiss had already turned away.

"Do I really owe you so much?" he asked of the girl folding up her samples of silk. "You speak as if I desired flight."

"You must not," was her gentle answer. "He is our master, you know."

"In what way?"

"Do you not know? You have given yourself to him by taking of his advice. As for me and my uncle, without him we should not exist."

"I hardly understand such talk. I must not tolerate it."

Julius felt as if heavy weights were holding him back, yet he struggled towards the door. The wind blowing in from the casement seemed colder. The jewel on the casque of Baron Kiss (which he had suddenly placed on his head) burned more brightly. Julius wished to speak, but felt that his voice was unnaturally silenced. Yet he escaped; that was the word that he had used in his mind. Somehow or other he had escaped from those two and their followers, who, bright but shadowy, had occupied the great hall.

CHAPTER XVII

JULIUS felt that Baron Kiss was angry, and that Amalia von Hart was deeply offended. He wondered why, for it was in their power to have detained him. There were foreign servants in the hall, at guard on the drawbridge and in the stables; but he found his own horse and rode away. He could not resist looking back, and there they both were, as he had expected, staring at him from the window, side by side. He had not realized that it was twilight; but he would not have to pass the knoll where the lady in the white dress usually waited—why, how foolish was that thought! The lady was Amalia von Hart, and she was in Castle Basset with the Baron.

The wind was keen; the moon, slowly rising—yet how could that be—slowly? It was against nature. The moon glided into the sky; the feel of the chill breeze was threatening; he kept an outlook for anything that might attempt to bar his way; but there was nothing. He glanced about for some signs of his steward's neglect; there were none. In some of the hills that he passed the grain was already growing sweet, thick and strong; in others the thick-coated sheep moved under the direction of shepherds seated in the thorn trees, with dogs at their feet. He reached

his steward's house. He was glad to see the man who opened the door to him, although he did not recall his name. Here was a house that was not infested, where homely people dwelt.

"I want to speak with your master, Maryon Leaf." As he spoke the conventional words, he felt that the servant was regarding him with a curiosity, barely masked by the respect due to the master of his master and all the countryside.

"Mr. Leaf has gone to foreign parts, sir."

"So, and without my permission!"

The fellow knew nothing of that but stood firmly holding the door.

"My mother, then, she is here?"

"No. The lady went also. They were for Edinburgh, several days ago."

Julius felt that he was isolated in misery. Almost he exposed himself before the servant, but he retained sufficient self-respect to reply coldly:

"I should have been told this, or rather I should have been able to find out for myself, but I have been much occupied in the preparations for my marriage."

The man bowed without saying anything. Julius was astonished at the amount of humiliation it was possible to bear while maintaining an appearance of pride.

He went his way; but where was he to go?

It seemed that he was welcomed nowhere, that his own house was barred to him. He felt like one bound on a journey who did not know that journey's end. How triumphant and exultant life had once seemed to him! Now it was a mere living through the days. Two levels of time seemed to be running together; it was impossible to get anything into focus. He was undermined, as a besieged town might be; still standing, but with the foundations in peril, waiting only the touch match of the enemy for absolute destruction. It came into his mind that he should wait on the Liddiards; was it not usual to ask the bride to inspect her future home? Annabella's taste might not be the same

as that of Amalia von Hart. He turned his horse towards the mansion of the Liddiards. He had not observed the darkening landscape or reflected that it was late for a formal visit.

The brightness that showed when the door was opened had on him the effect of violence. Lady Liddiard was crossing the hall. She was plainly startled, but welcomed him almost too eagerly.

"I hoped that you would come," she said. "Without being sent for——"

"Did Annabella think of that—of sending for me?" he asked.

"By no means," retorted the lady, "but there is one side of the marriage to be considered. My husband and I wished to consult you."

Julius was dismounted, but holding his own horse. Although he had wanted to see Annabella, there was something in the aspect of Lady Liddiard (though she was trying to be civil) that made him wish to leave at once.

"Have you no consultations to make with my husband?" she asked at random.

"The attorneys settled all business matters when we signed the contract at Leyden."

"Ah, yes, my query was the stupidity of a woman—but there are some things that attorneys cannot settle. But call the groom to take your horse—we cannot argue on the doorstep."

There was no disobeying this command, and Julius reluctantly whistled; a man out of livery appeared and led away the splendid horse.

Lady Liddiard walked before Julius up the narrow stairs. The house was hardly more pretentious than that occupied by Maryon Leaf; both were more cheerful than Castle Basset.

'I should feel strong, since I desire nothing of these people,' thought Julius. 'Yet I do desire something of them—they are to be the means of my vengeance against Martin.'

"Annabella has had her gowns to see to—patterns from Edinburgh and London. And we are refurnishing the house against the wedding festivities."

She smiled drily. Julius knew that, even with an effort, they could hardly afford the most modest of celebrations; probably they had raised money on their future son-in-law's estates. He felt a distaste for her concealed impertunity; he tried to put all the blame for this wretched marriage on the worldly woman, not on himself. She looked over her shoulder and repeated the stab he had already given himself.

"I hear that you have a foreign girl, with her pedantic uncle, helping you in Castle Basset. Are you sure that she will guess at the taste of Annabella?"

"They are chance guests," he defended himself, thinking the while of Amalia with her length of watered silk. "And it is Baron Kiss who is decorating Castle Basset—with, I think you will agree, superb skill."

"Our opinion has not been asked," smiled the lady, as she opened the door of a room in which Annabella was seated, writing by the light of two candles.

"Annabella, I will not disturb you," said Julius, feeling empty as if he looked at a picture, not a human being; but the door was closed on him and the girl had turned round.

Like a picture indeed. The desk was set against the wall, and the writer, clad in black and white, sat in a straight-backed chair. She stared at Julius as if she had just been awakened from sleep.

"I did not mean to come—at least I was impelled to come," he said in distress. "Do not look at me like that—we are both ensnared."

The girl's eyes were fixed, half closed; one hand rested on the paper on which she was writing. Julius noted how beautiful she was, with her colouring of a honeysuckle; a golden air seemed to surround her in the quiet room.

"That is not true—a few words from you, and I should be free."

"I could not; we both signed the contract."

"We both divided the medal," she replied. "Yes, I signed the contract—I was forced by some power outside myself. But still you could let me go, even now——"

He excused himself foolishly by reminding her how her parents would hold to the contract, of the dozens of people who would be put out by a postponement of the wedding.

"All that is as nothing," she replied, "compared with the harm this marriage will cause."

"Harm? Why should it cause harm? Are we not two reasonable people? We are fitted in every way——" he protested.

"Except that I am bound to another."

"That is mere fancy. You are weak and easily led. Did you not say just now that you were forced by some power outside yourself?" he pleaded; he could not confine his thoughts to this one present issue. "Perhaps," he added, "I am myself constrained by some power I neither understand nor even, perhaps, know."

"Who is this Baron Kiss?" she asked at a tangent.

"What he says he is—an Imperial grandee."

"He did not seem so when we first saw him. He then had only the one servant. Now, it seems, he has a retinue to obey him."

"For your benefit. My mother allowed Castle Basset to become very dingy and even gloomy."

"From what I hear, this decoration must be costing you a great deal of money."

"Why not? As I have just said, my mother spent very little. I, also, was most economical in my tastes; in fact, until I met Baron Kiss I hardly knew how to regulate my life. Believe me, Annabella, you will have the finest residence in the Border."

He knew that he was babbling, talking nonsense. In an effort to control himself he advanced to the desk.

"To whom are you writing?"

"To Maryon Leaf," she answered with indifference, adding: "if you cannot exorcise——"

"Exorcise!" he exclaimed. "What a word is that to use?"

"You know what I mean. You could do it, by one honourable act. I could do it—but I have been so weak and afraid. Love could do it—but Martin's love is not strong enough. Very well, these creatures must prevail and the cruel climax come."

Julius hardly understood what she said; his glance was imploring her to help him, but she was holding him off.

"Maryon Leaf is at the Hague," she said. "He is trying to find Martin."

"My steward doing this? Until today I did not know he had left my employ!" exclaimed Julius.

"Perhaps he has not; your mother is with him—that gives decorum to his actions—maybe he regards her as his mistress."

"What makes him think that Martin is in the Low Countries?"

"A friend of his wrote from Leyden that Martin had come there asking for employment in copying script. He got some work from some of the students, but Maryon does not know where he lives, so humble is his dwelling."

"Is he never returning to the Border?"

"That is what Maryon has gone to find out," said Annabella. "He wants to tell him that his estate needs him, that I need him——"

Her whole aspect suddenly changed; she allowed the paper to flutter from under her hand, and now turned to Julius in an attitude of supplication that was almost as if she knelt.

"Will you not allow me to go, even now?" she whispered. "I can offer you nothing in return for such generosity—and that should make you the more inclined to grant this favour."

He interrupted her harshly.

"I did not come here to listen to this plea. In fact I do not know why I came——"

"Was it not an attempt to escape from Baron Kiss and his confederates?"

She had read him truly, and he was struck hardly; he blanched and seemed rather the one who asked for pardon.

“Do not speak of them.”

“But they have taken possession of you. If they had not appeared you might have been more merciful,” said Annabella.

“Baron Kiss serves a mighty master. I am proud to be his friend.”

“Oh, we talk at cross-purposes! Yet this is such a chance—one we never thought to have—of us being alone together.”

“I can hardly suppose that you wanted much of my company.”

“I did, I did,” cried Annabella. “Look at me closely—I am not very fair, I have no dowry, I am pledged to another man—our life together will be nothing but misery.”

“You are too young to know your own mind,” retorted Julius. “I have set my heart on this marriage. That will end my feud with Martin Deverent.”

“You cannot imagine how blithe and grateful I should be,” pleaded Annabella. “Martin and I would find life quite delightful—even if we were barefoot and hungry.”

“You got this extravagance out of some book of rhymes,” said Julius; but he was vexed at the girl’s air of intense sincerity, and thought, ‘I wish that there was someone to say as much for me.’

“You do not know how hardly I am beset,” he answered vaguely. “For all my learning in the law books it is as if I was like the knight in the fable, who was so beset by the devil and his fellows that all he could do was to close his eyes and press on.”

“Ay, and you have got on,” replied Annabella. “But have you at times felt their breath on your face and known fears that a man void of evil conscience should not know?”

“Whose breath? Of what adversaries are you speaking?” asked Julius.

“You know—or partly know. I cannot enlighten you or save you since I do not love you.”

"Who does love me?" he asked wildly. "Even my own mother forsakes me."

"You would not listen to her, she begged you to let me go."

Annabella turned from him, picked up her letter and seemed to muse.

"If Martin returns—do not, for your own sake, try to find him. He knows this country well, the rocks, caverns and waterfalls, the morasses, the apparently desolate regions where a hundred men might hide for years."

"Do I not know them also?"

"But you would travel them with evil in your heart, perhaps with infernal accomplices. Not for you the friendship of the lone shepherd or the solitary families—that would be offered to Martin."

"Ay," responded Julius bitterly, "I suppose that I, who keep all my tenants in decency, am to be outlawed, while a vagabond who neglects all is to be by all protected?"

"So it is," she answered, "for these people have met us on our stolen interviews—given us food in their solitary cottages, offered us their blessings on the low hillside—linked our names with the power of love."

"You make so much of love."

"Is there any higher power?"

The simplicity of the girl irritated Julius. He wondered, indeed, how it was that they were shut up together in this meagre room by the light of the candles. He had not intended to see her until after the wedding; then it would have been easy enough to send her off with her mother to Edinburgh to buy clothes and furnishings. He felt uneasy at this intimacy.

"Our families once were linked in deadly matters," continued Annabella. "When those who were being persecuted for their religion came here for shelter and were helped by our forbears."

"Ay, I have heard many tales of those times of terror—they hardly touch our dilemma," replied Julius in an uneasy and fretful mood.

Annabella's tone became low and humble: "I only know what I have heard the curate clerk and my own kin say—when you have a crowd of hidden folk in the very land of fairies you will have there awesome tales."

"Such as are now circulating about ourselves," said Julius, trying to force a sneer.

"I never heard of any."

"Did you not say that the whole countryside, including my own tenantry, were championing this young Martin?"

She turned on him a look of a certain tenderness.

"Fair fall your heart," she said, "and may you get out of this without a curse."

"And when was a curse ever laid on me?" he demanded.

"Perhaps it was laid on me," she answered gravely. "My parents act from plain, worldly motives, and do not touch immortal things—but for me, only daughter of their house—there was one Kate." She motioned him to a chair, which he accepted reluctantly. "Listen to me, for the story runs much in my mind. I am not inter-meddling or teasing you—this was the tale of an old shepherd my grandfather had, yet when this happened he was not so old. He had one daughter—as my father has one daughter. It was the time of bloody nights and anxious days, when the government men were searching for the Westland men."

"What is the use of these old stories?"

"What will be the use of ours? It is already mixed with myth," said Annabella.

"Well, this girl was married by a man of a dashing, impudent character, yet his farms did well and he paid his labourers regularly—until he was killed in some distant war. There is always a war, is there not? Then his younger brother and his widow had to manage the estate. The dead lord's wife acted as factor and as housekeeper to his brother, who was studious and spent much time in the library—studying—as you used to study at Leyden, Julius."

"And she tried to send him out to the field sports—shooting the moorcocks and black cocks and fishing—to

keep him robust and fresh and active; I have heard this story."

"Yes, but I must remind you of it—what matter if it is of the books or the fowling? I am not thinking of any fine-spun argument—but merely how this young man went abroad because of the chiding of his sister-in-law and sat down by a brook, with no intention of tangling his hook—which indeed he knew not how to throw; finding the business tedious, he went farther up the water, until he came to a clear, tawny-coloured pool where the sheep had lately been washed; and there was a girl wool-gathering; there were tufts gathered into her apron, and she was stooping over the water as he saw her. Now he went every day, under the pretence of fishing—to the pool—though it was well known to be haunted by a kelpie. He met the girl many times, yet she seemed rather to avoid him, and quickly withdrew after his appearance on the scene."

"Why do you tell this to me?" asked Julius with great suspicion.

"Even in the winter he went, and when the rime was sithering down, the clouds creeping, and the drift on—God knows if this story be true, but it be a warning to many."

"What warning do I need?" demanded Julius. "Your candles grow very low."

"So I see," replied Annabella, and took two others from her stock on the drawer of the desk. "As for the warning—surely you need it. Have you never heard tell of dark birds seen flying over the moor, with a speck between them? That is some poor wretch's soul."

"If you had not wandered in the wild glens of Peebles with your outcast lover you would never have heard such stories."

"Ah, such valleys, clean, green and beautiful!" exclaimed Annabella, as the fresh candles, after sinking into pin points, rose into strong flames. "And the pure shadows the mountains cast across the glens! And the kindness of the creatures who live there, who will offer a glass of milk

and a smile and a dance from the dog who sits before the cottage door!"

"You seem to have chosen low company," observed Julius. "The divot of the cottager—or the sward beneath the open sky."

"Yet I was grand enough at Leyden," she smiled, "when we went to market together and I bought a knife."

"That is an unlikely thing to be thinking of now—why do you detain me? I have told you that I came against my will."

"Will you hear the psalm sung, the scripture read, the prayer addressed to the throne of grace?" she asked. "For I think now is the time that my father leads us all into the hall."

"Alas, I have lately much neglected my prayers. Baron Kiss is a Romanist and has different methods of worship."

"Always this Baron Kiss—has he persuaded you that witch and fairy tales are better than prayers?" cried Annabella with an air of wildness. "Do you not perceive my flow of spirits and fresh looks?"

"I think rather that you are ill and that the cause of it is this false attachment to which Martin Deverent holds you. I can promise that once you are married to me you shall have none of this disquiet."

"Sir," she answered, taking her face in her hands, "my dreams by night and my reflections by day all become a dream together. I hardly know which of my impressions are real and which fantasy. All was unstable save my troth with Martin—but allow me to finish the story of the wool-gatherer."

"We cannot be disturbed by any such casual matter," he interrupted, with an effort at sternness. "Of course, the gallant married the wool-gatherer and turned the meddling sister-in-law out of his house for ever."

"No such thing," smiled Annabella. "An awful prospect was before him. The knoll beside the pool where the wool-gatherer wandered was reputed to be haunted, and she herself wore a white gown and a green bonnet."

Julius sprang up and ran to the door; Lady Liddiard was close outside as if she had been in waiting.

"Go to your daughter," he said. "I shall be present at the wedding."

"That is not enough for me," the lady replied; and Julius, after a second's reflection, turned back into the chamber, where Annabella was still standing by the writing table.

"You were right," he said. "I cannot marry you. To do so would be the act of revenge, not love—I'll not do it."

"Can I believe such bounty!" exclaimed the girl at the same moment, as her mother exclaimed harshly: "Do not think to escape so easily an obligation undertaken in all honour."

"I find the greater honour in breaking it," said Julius, and ran down the narrow stair, while behind him rang the voice of Lady Liddiard: "Have you forgotten the man who slew your father?"

CHAPTER XVIII

JULIUS found his horse and rode away in a distraction; it was now clear that even Lady Liddiard was aware that his sole object in the marriage with her daughter was revenge, and this caused him an intense melancholy. He had certainly played his part very badly and let everyone see his obsession; he thought of turning again to the house of Maryon Leaf in the hope that his steward or his mother might really be there, only hiding from him. He pondered on Dr. Entrick and the meaning of Nemesis.

The night was neither light nor dark, but there was a fair softness in the air. As Julius was startled from his thoughts he found that he had lost his way even in these familiar places. A quagmire lay before him and glittered

although there was no moon. "I do not seem to know this country," said Julius to himself; and though he drew his bridle and looked carefully round him, he could not see the massive outline of Castle Basset that was visible for many miles.

Julius had a distaste for riding aimlessly, and thought he would find shelter for the night as he had often done before at some shepherd's house; so he rode on with a loose rein and soon saw such a dwelling as he was thinking of. It was a cottage of trees with a roof thatched with heather.

Feeling sure that this belonged to one of his own people and that he would therefore be welcome, Julius dismounted. There was a candle burning in the window, and sheaves of yarn hung in the doorway. But it was no herd or herd's wife that Julius saw as he entered the hut, but Baron Kiss, seated by the glimmering candle and dressed very shabbily as when Julius had first met him in Leyden.

"I had not expected to see you here," stammered Julius foolishly. "But since we have met," he added, somewhat recovering himself, "let us ask a blessing on the place and see if there is bread and milk to be had."

Baron Kiss pointed to a pitcher and a loaf set on the humble table.

"If you care to eat," he said, "the food is there ready to your hand."

"I have lost my way, and that is strange on my own land."

"Yes, I think you have indeed lost your way. Why did you go over to the Liddiards' house? I suppose that it was to release Annabella from her promise."

"Yes, it was," replied Julius defiantly, as the door space was blocked by the figure of a wandering piper, looking for shelter for the night in return for his tunes; but as he advanced into the hut Julius saw that it was Dr. Entrick.

"There is a peculiar light on the moss," he said. "What you, Mr. Sale, would call a corpse candle. As it is on your land it may mean some ill luck to you."

"Delusions of the eye or exhalations of the mind," said Julius, mechanically using the words of the metaphysical doctor.

"Yet nothing is in vain," remarked Baron Kiss. "It is either of one Power or the Other."

"Well," said Julius with affected boldness, "God protects us wherever we are, and I should have no reluctance in gazing at these same lights."

Dr. Entrick darted him a sidelong glance. Julius rose, being wishful to get away from Baron Kiss; but that personage made ready to go with them, and Julius saw that there was no escaping what had been ordained.

The three went out together, and Julius still found the night pleasant and himself greatly strengthened by the firm declaration that he had made to Baron Kiss.

"Often enough," he said, "I have wandered in lonely and haunted places. As a child I was familiar with those solitary graveyards that have no church and where often a murdered man is buried."

"Perhaps," said Baron Kiss, "these lights will lead us to some such place—where blood has been spilt and where lies a man who has not come to his natural end."

The light that had guided Julius to the heather-thatched hut had now strengthened and enabled them to see their way clearly.

Julius soon observed that this light was uncommon to such a degree that many might call it supernatural, and that it appeared brightest before the heads of their horses.

"I saw a man here the other night," observed Dr. Entrick. "I thought that he might belong to the invisible world and have made himself solid in order to do someone a mischief."

"It might have been one of my own people," said Julius, assuming more confidence than he felt. "They are about at all hours of the day and night, and know very well their way across the moor, as they term it."

"I hardly think that likely, for he was in the dress of olden times, with a fleece of hair and a fierce look."

Baron Kiss laughed.

"This apparition hardly seems one to follow, and certainly there is an odd light over the morass," he said. "Have you not tales enough of those whose bitter feuds led to an untimely death?"

"You hint at my father," said Julius. "Several times lately I have seen him in dreams or visions. Nor is that strange, seeing how much thought I give to him in waking hours."

They had now passed the moss, by what means Julius did not know, and were in a place very familiar to him; the old burial ground of the Sales.

Julius found himself standing before the memorial, with its doubtful inscription, erected to the memory of his father.

"It should have read unlawfully slain," said Julius, "I recall that was my mother's wish—but after the 'not proven' verdict was given she had put in 'violently' slain."

"Ay," said Baron Kiss. "And by her will, and the permission of the church, he was buried as he was slain, with his watch and his money in his pocket, his knife in his stocking and his bonnet on his head."

"How do you know that?" asked Julius, startled and staring at the monument, which was of plain stone cut with the name of the man who lay beneath together with his arms and titles.

"Will he lie still while you forego your vengeance?" asked Baron Kiss. "As for my knowledge, it is the talk of the countryside. Not so many are cut down in their bloom."

"This place is many miles from Castle Basset," said Julius. "I do not know how I got here—and in this company. I remember my father, he was a lively, affable man, and I cannot think what cause of quarrel there was—or could have been—between him and Deverent. I heard nothing at the time, but became moping and unsettled, and often had a cold horror at my heart, so that my mother sent me to Paris, and there I first heard of the attachment

of Martin and Annabella and put into design my vengeance."

He was silent suddenly, as if afraid that he had said too much.

"And what are your thoughts now," asked Dr. Entrick, "standing so close to where he lies buried?"

"I told Annabella that I would let her go," murmured Julius. "But I doubt if the Liddiards would be agreeable."

"Agreeable!" echoed Baron Kiss. "They would raise the countryside against you. But who am I, a foreigner, to judge this difficult affair? I think that it is time that I was away to my own country, to report to my master."

These words seemed to Julius most dismal, as if he could by no means lose the company of the Baron that had indeed become essential to him. He touched the cold stone of his father's monument, on which fell a sickly light that was neither of moon nor stars—or so it seemed to Julius, to whom the heavens were veiled.

"Death comes to us all," he whispered, "and he missed but a few years of life. I wonder if he would have wished us to carry on a feud? Annabella and Martin were pledged to each other before ever I thought to study law at Leyden in order to rob this man who is not the murderer—no, not the murderer—of his bride and his few barren acres."

"When I first appeared before you, you were not in such a soft mood," Baron Kiss reminded him. "You were then set, at a round pace, on this vengeance."

"I have forgotten how we first met," said Julius, turning to Dr. Entrick. "Can you, sir, enlighten me?"

"That is not my purpose," replied the botanist. "Not my part in your story."

Julius did not appear to hear; he turned to the Baron.

"Is my castle still full of splendour?" he asked. "You yourself are but drably attired."

But even while he spoke the uniform of Baron Kiss seemed to increase in magnificence, and the jewel on his casque in brilliancy, while the monument to the violently slain man seemed to glow in a horrid, greenish light.

"Do you not resent," said Baron Kiss, "that your steward should go to the Hague in order to support and condone with your worst enemy?"

"I suppose I do," replied Julius. "I never cared for Maryon Leaf."

"But you found him useful in doing all the work you did not like yourself."

Julius suspected a sneer in the foreigner's voice and felt some yearnings of the soul long since suppressed. He did not care for the familiar scene that now appeared so strange. He would have broken away and once more assured Annabella Liddiard that he would leave her in peace; but the Baron put a firm hand on his sleeve.

"Do you wish to give your mean enemy the chance of openly defying you? I have sure but secret news that unless you marry Miss Liddiard on the date arranged she will be away to the continent to meet young Deverent."

"My feelings are unaccountable to myself," confessed Julius wearily. He glanced at Dr. Entrick, who was delving with a small spade near the monument, flinging some pale roots into a basket he carried. There was a bank near the graveyard, thick with flowers. Chagrined at the poor figure he cut in his own lack of courage and resolution, he gazed with aversion on the flowering bloom.

"Is there anyone as troubled by dreams as I am?" he complained. "And dreams of the dead—of what use are they?"

"They will end with your marriage," Baron Kiss assured him. "At present you are annoyed and confounded."

"Yes, that is true. I hardly know where I am, nor what I should do."

"Bring your gaze to bear upon this monument on which an unnatural light seems to hover, and consider if you can forego your revenge for the murdered blood."

As he spoke, a bitter gleam of disappointment darkened his austere features, and Dr. Entrick looked up from the thicket where he was grubbing for his plants. Julius felt terrified and chilled with dread; but his sense of pity for

Annabella had vanished. With a half-stifled cry he took to his horse and turned on the road that led (he was now sure) to Castle Basset. He felt grievous injuries and pains, as if he had been struck with many knives, as if some infernal giant had dealt with him harshly; but he knew that he had not been attacked save by some phantom of the air, which had vented on him both scorn and perfidy.

He seemed to be riding through a great storm, like that of which his father had spoken. This had lasted for a fortnight, and had caused a daily increasing desolation that had produced a deep religious awe in one who had to battle with a snow drift that, for all that while, never abated, when the shepherds could not rouse the sheep, drowsy with hunger and cold. Many a wretched farmer on the Basset estate had seen his flock frozen stiff, and out of many thousands of sheep only a few remained. "A black beginning makes a black end," had been the saying passed from one to another, and many an honest man was ruined during that fearful time.

Julius now felt as if he and his horse were spinning through such a storm—that the snow was blinding him and wrapping him in a thick mantle of white. He traversed a lonely glen, where lay the corpses of shepherds who had perished with their Bibles in their hands. The rivers and lakes were frozen over, and Julius knew not if he crossed water, a morass or a meadow. Through the gloomy aspect that enveloped him Julius could see a few thin flakes of snow such as are usually only to be ascertained at the beginning of a storm; yet the air was overloaded with the falling snow, and complete darkness enveloped Julius, who muttered to himself: "This is such a night as never blew from Heaven."

He drew his plaid closely around himself and crushed his bonnet on his head, as his horse without need of guidance plunged on his hopeless way. Great trees appeared to crash before his eyes. Although he could see nothing, these grey shadows falling from the passes on either side of the glen were visible to his inner eye.

Julius now felt that the snow had got inside his clothes and was striking the coldness of death to his heart. It was as if he was in the water plunging for life, while the trees came towards him only to melt with vapours before his eyes. He felt friendless and destitute; it was worse than any winter twilight he had ever known. Meanwhile the trees were flourishing above his head. It was some optical delusion, he supposed, that painted their shadows on the darkness, yet seemed dark themselves.

"Surely this is an enchantment," he said to himself, raising his left hand to defend his face, while the right grasped the bridle. "And this is an illusion caused by the evil spirits that pursue me."

The trees seemed to encroach on him, and to stretch for hundreds of miles, so that he was no longer in the glen, or valley, but encompassed by a forest that entirely shut out the heavens; the wind had almost ceased, and the snow turned to a mild rain. The chill left the numbed limbs of Julius, and his misery and distress became lightened; he shook the clotted snow from his cloak and saw before him the cold dawn of morning.

"It is a time," said Julius, "when I might easily die."

This thought was to him a consolation. A great weariness came over him. The wind, though mild, blew the bonnet from his head, and he was like to have fallen bare-headed into the snow from a profound desire to sleep; but an insistent liveliness kept him awake, until, in the increasing light, he saw before him a shepherd's hut, fringed with the first flowers of spring. An old man was seated in the doorway, stirring, with a wooden spoon, a bowl of porridge.

"Have I lost my way on my own land?" Julius asked himself. "Sir, are you a tenant of mine, and can you give assistance to myself and my horse?"

"I have little for either," replied the old shepherd, "nor do I know of which place you are lord. Yet I thank the bestower of all good things that you have come safely through the night."

"There has been a storm, has there not? Or was I a little out of my reason?"

"There was a storm, a mild summer storm, of silver rain and low winds. And am I a dweller on your bounty?"

"I am Julius Sale of Castle Basset."

"My son's lord," replied the old man. "And here he comes who will ease you and your horse."

A younger man appearing, Julius dismounted and gave his horse to the care of this anxious tenant, who knew his guest and pulled his forelock and his bonnet as he led away the tired animal.

"I feel as if I had escaped some great danger," said Julius, seating himself on the warm stone.

"God be about us," whispered the old man. "It is said there are some mad merry-makings at Castle Basset, with a covey of foreigners, who come, maybe, from no country you will find on any printed map—and this, too, so near a wedding—surely yours?" added the old man with a laboured interest; for life passed him by like a hallucination.

Julius looked at him in his dark corduroy breeches, drab-coloured leggings, blue and grey threadbare coat, and wished that he could change places with one so serene. Soon a young woman came out, hastily attired in the clothes she had bought for the wedding festivals at the castle—cork-heeled shoes, a long-waisted gown, and a silken bonnet on her dark curls. She brought a dozen of bannocks and some fresh milk, which she offered to Julius with rustic diffidence. Though she was neither handsome nor comely, she put Julius, after the terrors of the night, in mind of wholesome things, and her half impudent chatter of the forthcoming wedding festivities cast many a blight from off his tired mind. He was surprised to learn what active preparations had been made for these games. In their uncouth accounts of them the old and the young man joined with descriptions of how recruiting was going on for runners, both for the bridegroom and the bride, a contest in which some of the finest youths of the Border

would take part. Julius fancied them as already stripped and panting from their efforts, while Annabella, in her white gown and tartan plaid, should stand ready with the prize.

‘And what prize,’ he thought, ‘will there be for me?’

But the pure air and the simple talk soothed him, and the snow, grey trees and slippery morass became like figments of a dream. Soon the gay, rude talk died away, and all three of them looked at their young lord suspiciously with troubled glances; had not the tale that Castle Basset was bewitched flown like wildfire among the gossips? As Julius felt and saw these humble people draw away from him the chill returned to his heart.

“I shall see you, good people, on the day of my wedding,” he said. Then he called for his horse, which was hastily brought by the younger man. Once mounted, Julius rode slowly and by familiar ways to his gloomy home, where Baron Kiss awaited his arrival.

CHAPTER XIX

WHILE Julius Sale was thus returning to the thralldom of his haughty guest, Maryon Leaf was searching the bookshops of the Hague for some trace or news of Martin Deverent. He found an ancient library near the Hof Van Holland, that centre of what was once a perfect feudal establishment.

This, though privately owned, was put generously at the disposition of scholars, and in charge was one Jan Van Poelgeest, who claimed to be descended from the long-dead shield-bearer and steward of South Holland, who was the father of Alied, the beloved of Adelbert, Count of Holland, who had once lived on this very spot in great

splendour, having two lions and a camel to solace her leisure, as well as a famous mechanical clock and pipers wearing rose-coloured livery. Alied had become too powerful and had been found murdered one morning on the blue stones by the Voorpoort.

Maryon Leaf had often been told this sombre tale. The stone on which the body of Alied had been found he had seen in the Plaats. It was marked with long gashes and showed a sinister bluish colour among the white cobbles.

Maryon Leaf spoke to the keeper of the library, asking him if any Scots ever came there to study or to solicit work for copying. The reply was that there were several who came to copy the maps of old Brazil with the exotic trees, or the fine manuscripts in Greek and Latin; "They come and go quietly," added the Dutchman in his excellent English, "and are all poorly vested and lean of aspect."

"Such will be the man for whom I seek," said Maryon Leaf, "but noble also, and plainly of gentle birth."

"Yes, there are several such," agreed Van Poelgeest. "I believe there are troubles in your country, while here there is always peace."

Maryon Leaf pulled out his tablets and wrote his name on one of them. He then minutely described Martin to the attendant and gave the address of the hostel, near the St. Sebastian Doelen, where he was staying. The keeper listened carefully to these instructions. He believed that he had lately seen such a gentleman, thin and threadbare, come in to copy some of the manuscripts of Christian Huyzens, the great mathematician.

Maryon Leaf then turned into the streets of the Hague, empty save for the sunlight. The blinds were mostly drawn over the fronts of the little shops, gay, enticing and charming, with the windows arranged as if they were pictures in a book. There were so many flowers and fruit sellers that it was as if the cornucopia of abundance had been emptied over the princely little town.

Everywhere he looked, Maryon Leaf saw loose and graceful bouquets, sprays and garlands worthy of the dewy

masterpieces of Herysum or Van Oss. In his troubled mind Maryon Leaf contrasted this utmost elegance with the rudeness of his native land, and an indolent desire came over him to leave the service of Julius Sale and to forego any interference with the broken affairs of Martin Deverent for the profusion of luxury, expressed in the most delicate fashion, that entranced every fastidious visitor to the Hague. He had toiled long in the service of another and had money saved; he could, too, have found many acquaintances in the capital of South Holland and found, perhaps, some small post at the court.

The midday passed, and Maryon Leaf paused at a little shop just opening its doors where China tea could be bought and drunk. Behind the green glass panes stood Oriental toys, pots, canisters, and a few choice flowers arranged in Eastern rooms. There was Chinese matting on the floor and the most fragrant of perfumes issuing from the tiny door: of coffee, tea and frothed chocolate. Maryon Leaf, as he passed, saw the mother of Julius Sale seated within, an untouched cup before her and a painted fan hanging useless in her pale hand.

At the sight of this woman, so harmless and so uncomplaining, who had trusted to him in her deadly dilemma, his yearning for this foreign country left him. He entered the shop and took the seat beside Isabella Sale in the muted sunlight that fell between the muslin curtains, drawn into the shape of an hour glass. Close by was a parrot, harsh green and vivid yellow, hanging in an ebony ring on which it polished its fierce, shining and rosy beak.

Martin Leaf related how he had visited several booksellers and the ancient library, and how he had fair hopes of finding Martin Deverent.

"What shall I say to him when I do see him—if I see him?" sighed Isabella Sale. "I have become drowsy of late, and feel as if I wish to resign my task and remain for ever in this pleasant town, so opulent, so peaceful."

"Such a thought came also to me," Maryon Leaf confessed, "yet I soon dismissed it. I think that our min-

istering angels keep us here until we have accomplished our task."

"We have only a bare week before the wedding," said Isabella Sale, pouring out the chocolate for her companion.

"The wedding will never take place," he reminded her. "That is arranged with the metaphysical doctor, Gilbert Rae. He will denounce the Liddiards and your son, even as the marriage party enters the kirk, you must be there—even if Martin is not—in order to take the girl away—to my house, if nothing better offers."

"I wish that he would take action sooner, not leave all to the last minute," said Isabella Sale uneasily.

"Sometimes I also wish that, but the argument that to do that would only be to warn and forearm the Liddiards is potent."

"How many more days may we wait at the Hague?"

"Perhaps four days. I keep in post touch with a captain at the Hook, and the wind and weather are likely to remain favourable."

So they discoursed in low tones, covering up with commonplace words the tumultuous emotions they felt; for the woman was reproaching herself with neglecting her son for long years so that his soul had become in danger, and the young man was curiously moved, even, as it seemed to him, as by a divine inspiration, to endeavour to avert a tragedy that he saw across his path. He raised his fine hand and opened the shutters so that the slumbrous sunshine rested on the orderly waves of his nut-brown hair, his trim white collar and his crimson-coloured coat tied with black ribbons.

"Why should I," he wondered to himself, "mingle thus in the story of two other men? Is it that I am secretly in love with Annabella and need her for myself?"

But he knew that this was not true. The pale, passive girl did not interest him; her beauty, which was simple, almost humble, left him unmoved; he truly desired to see her united to her chosen lover; yet he was entangled, and

he looked with a half-amused reproach at the woman by his side; one so much older than himself who should have been so much wiser, who had allowed herself to drift into this dangerous pass.

Once she had been fair, fair as Annabella, with the same tints as of pearl and lily spray. All that had gone with her brief happiness. For long she had been nothing but a withered wreath upon her husband's tomb. She wore mourning unsuitable to the time and place, and her face was pinched as a waning moon.

"When this is over, what will you do?" he asked in compassion.

"Perhaps I can go abroad with Julius," she replied vaguely.

"It will not be as simple as that. He will have to save himself by some bold action that will put to flight the evil that now surrounds him so closely."

The air was heavy with Eastern dust, rising from the bales and cases at the back of the shop. Maryon Leaf paid the reckoning, and, giving the lady his arm, escorted her into the street. The shadows, golden and pure, were beginning to fall; a slight breeze ruffled the white clouds in the upper air.

"Somehow," said Maryon Leaf, "we must get the flavour of achievement, of victory, of adventure, of strange bright lands and uncharted seas—where the waves whistle up huge tempests."

"Such a spirit," said Isabella Sale, "is hard to understand, much less to imitate."

"It is the only thing that will help us now," said Maryon Leaf.

They stood silent, by the water, in the most beautiful light in the world; that of the Low Countries, that tinges the high, endless, changing clouds, that cross from sea to sea, with shifting hues of glory. A wash of light and air was over everything. They went into the wood that surrounds the royal palace, and between the trunks of the trees they could glimpse faint, dusty, golden, sad distances.

"It is like some fairyland dreamed of in youth," said Isabella Sale. "It is a blossoming and fertile country, and I weary at the thought of returning to my own."

They paused under the lindens, full of young leaf, and listened to the carillons coming from the town behind them. It was tempting to the young man and to the ageing woman to forget Castle Basset and its inmates; yet the beauty about them was painful to both of them, for they were divorced from it and, in their different ways, lonely.

Maryon Leaf was a younger son, whose parents had died abroad. He had always led a solitary life, never inclining to love or marriage, save in some light encounters of his youth. He had always felt content with his work, his walks across the heath with gun and dog, the round of local sports and festivities; but now it seemed that this seeming satisfaction had been more apathy than happiness.

To the lady her past life seemed like a grey dream through which the figure of a dead man moved, holding his bleeding side.

They skirted the woods and came out by a pond with stone lions on either side. It had been the watering place for a castle, of which nothing remained save a wooden pavilion; a grain field was over the brick outline of the ancient fortalice.

"Some day Castle Basset will have passed away in the like manner," said Isabella Sale. "And we in our turn shall be but a legend and topic for idlers."

"Ay," said Maryon Leaf. "I too can see these fairy castles rising through the wheat and the flax-rearing thin turrets into the eternal blue. Do not these flowery lindens mark the frontiers of some lost lordship?"

"The country is laying an enchantment upon us," said Isabella Sale, "and we must be about our business."

"Yes," agreed the steward, "but let us have this little time of peace. I should like to go to Leyden, where Martin met Julius and Julius met Baron Kiss, the botanical doctor and the girl."

"I have always wondered about the girl."

"She will have many meanings," said Maryon Leaf carefully.

"You think that she is merely an emanation of the evil mind of Julius?" whispered the lady, finding courage in this tranquil spot to speak more plainly than she would have spoken at home.

"No, I think nothing of the kind," Maryon Leaf assured her stoutly. "Why should not these people be what they claim to be? A half-pay officer in the Imperial forces, a wandering scholar and his niece."

"If they are only that, why do we so concern ourselves about them?"

"We concern ourselves with Julius," said the steward. "Who has meddled with God's province—vengeance is mine, saith the Lord; how often is that repeated and how often obeyed?"

"I obeyed it," replied Isabella Sale, as if in self-defence. "I did nothing against the man who slew my husband."

"But you allowed your son to brood on this deed of blood until, maybe, he is lost."

The lady heard in the young man's stern tones the echoes of his Cameronian ancestry.

"How shall he expiate his sin?" she asked, seating herself on one of the lions, whose stone back was warmed by the sun. The shadows of the linden leaves flickered over her face.

"Would not the preachers say, only by love and sacrifice?" replied Maryon Leaf, "And are we not here precisely to oblige Martin to return to the Border and make one more plea for this?"

"I hardly know why I am here," said the lady. "I fled from what I could not endure, and here I seem to find a haven. What will you do next in order to find Martin?"

"I shall return to the little library and find out if he is indeed among the poor scribes who frequent that place. If he is not, then there are several other bookshops I may search. If I do not find him in any of those—why, we must utter those most dreadful words—too late."

"I shall not leave it too late," protested Isabella Sale. "I shall go and stop the wedding, even at the church, even without Martin."

"And what, madam, do you think that you can accomplish against the wishes of your wilful son—and Baron Kiss?"

"Truly, so far I have been unsuccessful and useless," she admitted sadly. "And I am here out of weakness, because I could not endure my own house or the shelter of yours. But, tell me, if this Baron Kiss be a mere half-pay officer, why should he be at such pains to interfere in my son's business?"

"Say—it is his mood—he is one of those creatures, half genius, half charlatan, forsaken by God, who love to do a mischief. Moreover, Julius is wealthy, and no doubt Baron Kiss has been well paid for indulging his projects."

"You think that he can do conjuring tricks and create optical illusions?"

"Maybe—but Julius has been so worked upon by his own obsession that he can hallucinate himself, or so I think."

Isabella Sale rose, pulling her veil across her face in an agitated manner. She saw the sunshine through this haze of black, she was restless, yet knew not where to go.

"Let us return to the hostelry," she said.

Together they went along the canal filled with brown water until they came to the modest inn with the brick frontage and stone facings. Isabella Sale glanced down into the kitchen. A woman in the native costume was beating eggs in a blue bowl; another shredded orange peel into an opal jelly; behind them lay piles of vegetables, carrots, turnips and bunches of pungent herbs.

They went upstairs into the lady's room. The walls were painted a duck's egg colour, and in the centre of each panel was a flower portrait in crayons. On a spinet of a darker green were painted landscapes that took the mind's eye away into limitless horizons.

"Shall I return tonight to the library while there is yet

a little light, to see if I can find young Martin?" asked Maryon Leaf.

"Do so," she replied. "I feel as if I dwelt in a wilderness of stones. Do you recall an old engraving we had at Castle Basset, kept in a red portfolio, of corridors, great wheels, staircases, all combined into a design of webs, and in the centre a small creature struggling to get out?"

"Ay, I recall the same. It never seemed to me anything but a fantasy—until now, perhaps."

"I have long felt like that little creature. And from whence is deliverance coming? Where are we to spread our wings and rise above this harsh entanglement?"

"There are but a few days now," he reminded her, "before all will be put to the test on the wedding day of Annabella Liddiard."

Maryon Leaf took up his hat and gloves and went out into the last sunlight. By the time he reached the library the doors were just closing. On the steps he came face to face with Martin Deverent, who was clothed in shabby black and carrying a roll of paper.

His astonishment seemed touched by fear, and Maryon Leaf took him by the arm to prevent him from hastening away into the dusk.

"I have come to the Lowlands on purpose to visit you—to find you—to speak with you," said the steward with an earnestness that caused the other to pause.

"Why should you wish to see me?" he asked, as the porter closed the metal-studded door behind them; he had been the last to leave the library.

"We were once tolerably friendly," said Maryon Leaf, "and is it not natural that I should come to seek you out?"

Martin appeared haggard and downcast, but his hair was glossy and his linen fresh.

"I did not suppose," he answered, "that anyone remembered me at home. I write sometimes to my factor."

"The man is past his work, your estates are ruined—who can see this without regret?"

"Let the poor hinds keep their money," replied Martin. "Let the roof of my house fall in—I can make my head here, as a copyist."

"Solitary? An image of desolation?" said Maryon Leaf sadly. "Come, walk with me a little beside the canal."

The two young men paced together along the canal; the steep gabled houses the other side of them were reflected in the brown water. Half gay, half grave, the factor tried to bring some warm humanity into his speech.

"You have allowed hallucinations to overcome you," he said. "Do you know that in a week's time Julius Sale will marry Annabella Liddiard?"

Martin shivered, lifting his shoulders as if against the chill of the oncoming night wind.

"What is that to do with me?" he asked. "I suppose that she goes willingly."

"You know that she had implored both her intended groom and her parents to set her free."

"But in the end she gave way."

"She is alone—inadequate to the position in which she finds herself. You know all this, and that she considers herself as plighted to you."

"I have nothing to offer." There was deep pain behind the conventional words. "Why do *you* take this upon *yourself*? You are Julius's factor—but not, I think, his friend."

"Baron Kiss is still at Castle Basset," said Maryon Leaf. "He has a great influence over Julius. He and his two companions, the doctor and the girl, keep him to this marriage."

"I have heard of them," said Martin evasively. "Who are they, in your opinion?"

"A half-pay officer in the Imperial army, who has an evil mind—he likes to see mischief done. As for the others—one was once termed the Man with the Scales; and yet I think the Archer had no scales, nor was he Nemesis," replied Maryon Leaf thoughtfully. "So one goes from confusion to confusion. Yet who should they be but idlers,

entangling a rich young man? The mother of Julius is with me now at the Hague," he added abruptly.

"Why?" demanded Martin.

"She was frightened and fled to me for protection. Nothing would satisfy her save that we should come to the Lowlands in order to find you."

"Why was she frightened?"

The two young men stopped beneath the shade of a tree. Beside this was a street lamp, and fluttering shapes of shadow lay on the causeway and the waters of the canal.

"You must know," said Maryon Leaf, "that I had some talk with Dr. Entrick before I left for the Lowlands. He spoke of the fates, she who spins, she who guides, she who cuts the thread."

"Such talk seems better suited to the metaphysical doctor," replied Martin without interest. He looked down at the brown waters of the canal as one who had taken his farewell of the world, the sun, moon and stars and the gabled houses of Amsterdam.

"Did he also speak of the furies?" he added. "The irreconcilable, the malignant and the avenger of bloodshed?"

"He did so—and how all three might be disguised in a single person, who perhaps would not even be female. He mentioned also a hobgoblin, sent by Hecate, who has a hoof instead of a left foot, and who haunts, sometimes, he says, Castle Basset, where he lurks among the thistles or even a tussie-mussie of wild flowers."

"No doubt," said Martin, smiling, as if to himself, "this goblin is the subtle substance that permeates all grosser matters. But you lead me far into deep thoughts—and still I do not know why you came to seek me out."

"Is this an ash tree over our heads?" asked Maryon Leaf. "The enchantress of the forest—our rowan tree?"

"No, it is the wych elm or a poplar tree—the lamplight flutters—and I cannot truly see." Martin added, "I had thought you to be a practical man."

"I hope so—but I have all the Sale estate doors, pins,

whips and yokes made of the rowan, and I have it planted by all the lawns where I set also the curly doddy in which a spirit lives. But you think that I grow minute and tedious."

"No," said Martin shrewdly, "I think that you try to direct me from the large issues that lie before me and to give me time to think over my future course of action. Truly your coming has set my mind in a jangle. I was resigned to the placid life of this placid place——"

"You only thought that you were resigned, sir," interrupted Maryon Leaf. "You have, as I believe, beneath a forced resignation, an intolerable pride—and—rather than this should be struck at, you retreat into oblivion."

"I should be nettled by that," said Martin slowly, "but I perceive your extreme friendliness on this sad affair."

"Friendly enough," replied the factor. "But I am more concerned with Julius Sale, my master, than with you. I am engaged to him, the lands and the castle are his, and he must be obeyed; yet, sooner than see him go to perdition, I would leave his service and become his enemy."

Martin became pale in the wavering light of the street lamp. Maryon Leaf thought that it was with displeasure; yet the exile held himself with decorum, and there was something affecting in his dignity in his shabby clothes, as he still held a roll of copying paper under his arm.

"Will you see the mother of Julius Sale, who is here with me, Mr. Deverent?"

Martin started at this and turned his face half aside.

"You must," insisted Maryon Leaf, "respect this lady and her motive."

"Yes," agreed Martin. "She too is involved, if she sees the dilemma as you do."

"She does indeed, but with feminine superstition added. A minister was killed by falling from the steps at Castle Basset, and she thinks that the hand of some evil was in it."

"I had not heard that; who was the unfortunate pastor?"

"You must have known him—Guy Henderson. He

was sent for to Castle Basset, and came in a Geneva habit instead of his usual plain cloth."

"And there was killed?"

"Yes."

"By accident?"

"As I suppose—or as others may think, by lack of faith." Maryon turned so that he looked fully at the young man beside him. "You also have lost your faith, have you not?"

"My faith?" echoed Martin.

"Yes, in yourself, in Annabella, with God, or the power of the universe to help you."

"What makes you say that?"

"Because you are shirking an issue—hiding from action."

"Come," responded Martin. "Let us go to the mother of Julius—perhaps she may help me to make a decision. It is true that I have been overborne by events that happened when I was too young to understand them. I have taken the blame and the punishment for a crime—if it was a crime—that I did not commit—and allowed the shadow of that violence to darken my days."

CHAPTER XX

THE two young men, so much alike in appearance save for the shabbiness of Martin, and so unlike in thoughts, went to the hostelry where the mother of Julius sat by the window.

She greeted Martin with intense pleasure, and he was moved to compassion when he observed how haggard she was, how her trembling limbs, shaken speech and imploring eyes told how she had escaped the limitations of this world,

only to be afflicted by the powers of some other world beyond her comprehension.

In her turn she exclaimed: "How ill you look, and tired! How I rejoice that Maryon Leaf found you—by some rare chance!"

"By honest diligence," said the factor. "The place is small and the Scots here are few. I am, however, in danger of losing my hold on this errant youth, so I have brought him to you in order that you may persuade him to return to the Border."

"In order," concluded Martin, "that I may break off the marriage arranged between your son and Miss Liddiard."

"Precisely for that," said the lady. "But what can I say that will persuade you?"

Martin smiled; at the invitation of their hostess the two young men seated themselves on gilt chairs covered in plum-coloured velvet. The two tall candles had just been lit on the desk, and their light fell on the portraits of flowers that hung on the green panels of the wall.

"First," said Martin, turning to Maryon Leaf, "I should like to know how and why you, sir, came to meddle in this affair. I speak in kindness and courtesy."

"In answer to that," said the factor, "I shall tell you a story that will illustrate my meaning better than any flat answer I could give."

"It is the custom of our country," said Martin, not displeased at having this further space of time in which to decide his course of action; for he felt in a tumult, having been taken out of a tragic surrender to resignation into the pressure of the interference of others.

"So be it," smiled the factor. "My tale, then, runs thus. Once in Pomerania there lived a nobleman who was in the extreme proud and forbidding in his nature. He had, therefore, few friends, and cared little for the isolation thus created until the loss of his young wife, who died, the gossips said, from loneliness and the freezing manners of her spouse. Yet he kept a large retinue of servants, and his

establishment was conducted with both economy and elegance. His heir was still in the cradle; and one day, on gazing at the motherless boy, he felt some pang of remorse that the child should grow up with no company beyond that of the expensive retinue that served the castle. Nor did he trust any of them to be faithful. So he thought that he would make a sumptuous feast to which he would invite all his neighbours.

“Many hours were spent with his stewards in the ordering of rich dishes and costly wines. There was stock of everything conceivable in the castle, and dainty cooks, though the master since the death of his wife had always taken his repasts by himself. But on the morning of the day of the feast there arrived excuses for not coming from all his neighbours. At this the lord, staring in a transport of rage at the table spread with so many luxurious dishes, and at the chairs so richly hung with embroidered clothes, broke out: ‘Since my neighbours thus spurn me, I wish that so many devils from Hell would come here and eat up the provision made for those uncivil folk.’

“With this he flung out of the castle in a rage before which he trembled himself, so he took his way to the church on the estate, where the pastor was preaching a sermon—this part of Pomerania having been Lutheran since Gustavus Adolphus marched through it with a wreath of corncockle and dandelion over his armour. Soon after he had left the castle, a cavalcade arrived there; they were dark and splendid, of remarkable stature. One called for grooms to take their horses, another bade a serving lad fetch his master from church and tell him that his guests were come.

“This youth, panting and half out of his senses, ran to his master and told him what had happened. Upon this the nobleman, rising, bade the preacher stop his sermon and give him ghostly counsel. The pastor could do no more than advise that all should withdraw from the castle; and, with the entire congregation following, the holy man advanced towards the castle, from which the servants had

already escaped and hidden themselves in the nearby woods. The bidden guests were now feasting in the dining room, from which came a great noise as if they greeted one another. One looked through the window and, with a smile on his sombre countenance, said he would drink to the health of the master of the house who had so generously invited them to so splendid a feast.

"The nobleman, seeing his servants all safe, thought: 'What of my son? Who has thought to rescue him from this fiendish crew?' The servants then admitted that in their haste and confusion all, even the nurse, had forgotten the child in his cradle. These words were hardly uttered before one of the guests showed himself at a window with the infant in his arms; the nobleman became almost lifeless at this spectacle, but his steward came forward and said: 'Sir, by God's help I will rescue your child, or perish with him.'

"With that the parson gave the bold fellow his earnest blessing, while the nobleman hoped that God would prosper his attempt, both thus urging on a fellow human being with a free use of the name of the Almighty. The steward entered the castle, which was lit from top to bottom with an infernal light, and proceeded to the antechamber of the dining-room. There he knelt and desired the protection of Heaven. Feeling assured of this, he pressed in among the rioting guests; one of these at once asked him his business. The steward, though in an agony of fear, yet constant to his purpose, replied that he had come for the child and approached that creature who held the infant, saying: 'In the name of God deliver that infant to me.' The other denied him with the remark: 'Let your master come and fetch him, who has the greatest interest in him.' But the steward said: 'I have come to do that office and service to which God has called me, by virtue of which and of his power I take this innocent.' With that he snatched the child and carried him through the clamour of the guests and, despite their menaces, brought him away and gave him to his father. So," continued Maryon Leaf, "you see with what courage some have faced evil spirits,

and you will note that the man who defied the devils was the factor."

"Devils!" exclaimed Martin, as if that word was the only one of interest to him in this long tale. "We have never spoken of them before. What do you mean by devils? We deal with human beings."

"I told an ancient fable," said Maryon Leaf, "by which means I hoped to make clear my position in your affairs. I do not say that the half-pay officer and his servants at Castle Basset are anything save human beings, but the force of evil we must recognize. What else brings you to this pass?"

"I would rather deal on a rational basis," said Martin slowly.

The mother of Julius answered him at once: "Is it not rational to secure for yourself your true love to whom you are betrothed? Is it not rational to try to save my son from his obsession—give it what name you will?"

"Do you lack courage?" asked Maryon Leaf. "No, do not frown—it is what few of us possess. Yet to hint at the lack of it is to give mortal offence, I know."

"Yes, perhaps I do lack courage—to expose myself as the fellow I am—to risk failure and scorn."

"The first you need hardly fear," replied the factor, "Since Miss Liddiard will go with you whenever she sees you, and you have many friends in Edinburgh who will protect you until you are married. As for the scorn, who is to offer that? Believe me, you are more likely to be despised for remaining away than for returning to claim your own."

"I love Miss Liddiard dearly." Martin bowed to the lady. "I believe that with her only I can find happiness. She makes the ordinary things of life appear delightful, yet I do dread returning to the Border, where I fear some terrible conclusion to my tragic story. Yes, without taking on the colours of a poetical fool, I do believe that I may call my story tragical. I have inherited guilt—or what others are quick to term guilt—and have always lived in the shadows of a vengeance."

"But if," said Isabella Sale, "you are now to face that climax, all the dread and fear might dissolve. One must love one's enemy."

"I must love Julius Sale?"

"Ay," she replied, "and love him better than I have done—for I was too engrossed by my own anguish to be able to turn him from brooding over his father's death."

"Can one control love?" asked Martin. "I feel indifference only for your son, madam. It is impossible that I should love him."

"As yourself," concluded the lady. "And how do you love yourself? Have you not become worn, shabby, out of the world to which you belong—melancholy and a drudge?"

"All this is true enough," replied Martin, "yet as nothing compared with what I fear to face should I return home."

"So you are afraid," said Maryon Leaf softly. "Then I fear that we can do nothing."

But the lady would not give way; with great earnestness of manner she leaned forward; and the tender candlelight gave the illusion of beauty if not of youth to her fine features, enclosed in the mourning hood.

"I was afraid and fled," she said. "Now you must help me to return."

Martin set down his roll of paper and took a small book from his pocket. From this he proceeded to read: "Who shall deny the existence of spirits? Surely if there are any such they must be regarded as incurably mad, such as no hellebore can cure; for to reject all such appearances is too severe a reflection on the most severe of historians. For example, when Cassius and Brutus were passing from Asia into Europe, a dreadful spectre is said to have shown itself to the latter; it was at cockcrow and the moon set, while the army slept, only the general, Brutus, was awake and seated by the light of a taper in an alabaster lamp in his tent; he was reflecting on what the outcome of this horrid war might be, when he saw this dark apparition standing by him; Brutus retained his tranquillity and

asked: 'Are you from my fellow men or from the gods?' The spirit replied: 'O Brutus, I am thy evil genius, and you shall see me again at Philippi.' "

Martin closed the book and returned it to his pocket, while he glanced at his two companions. "So I feel—that I shall meet my evil genius at Castle Basset."

"Has any such spirit appeared to you?" asked Maryon Leaf.

"No," replied Martin. "Though sometimes I think I see the Furies in the habits of old women who come to sweep out my chambers, and that when I have met my fate the place will be clean indeed."

"Were your senses whole and perfect?" asked the factor. "Come, let us regard all these matters humanly speaking; you are melancholy and your life is unnatural; you muse in half-lit rooms, reading antique books. Come into the light of day and consider this affair coolly."

"Ay, do so," sighed the lady. "But as for an evil genius, I believe in them, and think that one such killed Guy Henderson."

Maryon Leaf smiled and said: "Each man or woman has an evil genius within his or her heart—but who is to free one possessed by a devil?"

"Are you turned preacher?" asked Martin sadly. "Remember that you speak to an exile and to one who is forlorn."

"And remember," replied the factor, "that their misfortunes are of your own doing. You have given up where you should have fought back—retreated where you should have advanced."

"The more we should pity him," put in Isabella Sale. "And though I have been taken by these old wives' tales, yet I believe we should act, as Mr. Leaf suggests, in a manner both cool and wise."

"Instruct me," said Martin.

The other man regarded him with compassion. "First," he said, "consider this Baron Kiss as but a human being, an adventurer who attaches himself to a wealthy landowner

and persuades and dazzles him with many acts and tricks, encourages him with thoughts of revenge for an old crime that maybe was no crime and pushes him into a marriage from which he hopes to gain an advantage; for I do not doubt that he sees himself as permanently attached to the establishment of Mr. Sale, who will feel under an obligation to him. There are many of these half-pay officers on the Continent looking for such positions—masters of mischief and of intrigue. What do we know of the history of this man? Or of what he has learned, or how?”

“Yes,” urged the lady. “Take it thus, and surely you will find the resources needful to deal with this charlatan.”

“If that is the truth about Baron Kiss,” replied Martin, “what is the truth about the botanist and his niece?”

“The first is a wandering scholar,” said Maryon Leaf. “The second may truly be his relation, for some reason desirous to forget her home. They are useful to Baron Kiss, and he fees them; yet sometimes Dr. Entrick forgets all this and moves according to his own whim.”

“So you see,” added the lady earnestly, “there is nothing appalling to encounter, and we should sail for home with the first favourable wind.”

“Home,” repeated Martin. “It is a long time since I heard that word.”

“Your old factor still keeps your estate,” said Maryon Leaf. “It would not take much of your energy to set it all in order again. The weed-covered avenue may be cleansed, the old pale restored, the fields fresh sown, the cattle replenished. Do you not long to see the brown hills again? And the sheep grazing, the fair church——”

“Oh, I recall a sombre wind-swept place—with barren, deep hills that turn the river to the sea.”

“Come,” said the lady, rising. “We will go to the coast and will take that vessel that will carry us in due course to Scotland.”

“Yes,” said Maryon Leaf, putting his strong hand on the shoulder of the other. “You will return with us to the Border and prevent this marriage of your betrothed with another.”

"Pack up my books, leave my tranquil retreat, my daydreams, and return to the terrible affairs of men?"

"So you must," said Maryon Leaf. "Sooner than live the life of a solitary."

"I wonder that you waste so much endeavour on me—you and the lady here——"

"I think of my own son and how he must be saved from himself," she replied. "There is another woman who will take him and make him as happy as any creature deserves to be."

Martin regarded her steadily.

"Very well," he replied. "I shall return with you to the Border, since you have been at such pains to fetch me. The splendour of the design does enthrall me."

He kissed the lady's hand, pressed that of Maryon Leaf and left the stately little house. Under the street lamp by the canal he paused and looked up at the brightly lit, unshaded window where Maryon Leaf sat with Isabella Sale. The sky had become clouded; there was not one star to be seen, and only the light from that one window; he began to feel afire with the thought of the adventure to come. Yet he felt weak, as if he had just recovered from a fever. The place held for him melancholy associations; nor could he think with pleasure of his return to the Border.

He wished either that his destiny had been different or that he had had more resolution to meet the fate assigned to him. He wished that his existence might be renewed or set back to those early days before his father's death. He retraced, in this quiet place in a foreign land, his steps among the bracken, fern and heather, beside the burn, or in his own house, now, as Maryon Leaf had told him, so sadly decayed and forsaken. He knew this fit of dejection to be unworthy of the resolution he had undertaken, but he could by no means control it.

He wondered how much his native land had changed. He thought that it would be the same, to the very gleams and shadows on the hills and in the valley. He thought

upon the bygone day and of how his peaceful studies had been interrupted by this summons to return to strife; and his love for Annabella faltered, as does a weak candle in the wind. He pondered also on things natural and spiritual; on Baron Kiss and the Man with the Scales, the centaur, the balance, the archer, the fury with the broom; he was double-minded and knew it.

"I wish," he said aloud, "I had someone to direct me."

At this a passing stranger turned and said in English with a slight accent: "What, sir, is your trouble?"

Martin could not, owing to the uncertain light, very clearly observe the speaker; all that he could see revealed was a young man wrapped in a light summer cloak.

"I have often," continued this stranger, "observed you about the town."

"And yet, sir," replied Martin, "I do not think that I know you."

He could now discern the other's countenance. Though it was well shaded by a hat, he could see that this face, turned towards him with an air of tranquil repose, was well shaped, olive in complexion, with large dark eyes and wing-shaped brows.

"Yet you have seen me," he replied.

"Perhaps," said Martin, "in some crowd, when a procession has been passing by."

"That may be. You are a foreigner here and in some distress?"

There was a kindness in the stranger's tone that made Martin realize that it was long since that he had spoken to a friend.

"Yes," he replied. "I am an alien here and in a dilemma. I have made promises that I do not think I have the strength to keep."

"Come with me," said the other. "I have a short time to spare and perhaps I could help you in your bewilderment."

"Why should I intrude my sorrows on you?" asked Martin. "Yet I shall come with you, for I have no heart to face my solitary rooms."

"Follow me, then," said the other; and the two proceeded along the causeway, beside the canal until they came to a large mansion with a double entrance stairway. The stranger opened the door with a key, and Martin followed him into a corridor nobly furnished with tapestry and mirrors.

Martin's host opened another door to the left and discovered a spacious chamber. A silver lamp, set on a side table, threw into fine relief the carving of the wainscoted sides and elaborate mantelpiece. The distinctive features of the room, massive and yet in the best of taste, were thus brought out from the shadow. Martin could now see his unknown friend (for friend he held him to be), who had taken off his hat and cloak and who motioned him to a chair covered with Venetian brocade.

Martin beheld a man of about his own years, of medium height with thick auburn hair and an arched nose set above a perfect mouth. He thought that this personage was regarding him with a quizzical humour that was, however, wholly generous.

"You do not know many people here, Mr. Deverent?" he asked.

"But you know my name?" exclaimed Martin startled.

"Yes, this is but a small place, though a royal residence, and the police are active if unobtrusive."

Martin was even more surprised.

"I hope," he said, "that I have not done anything to merit the attention of the police."

"They have called my attention to you. I chance to be connected with them," replied the other, smiling as he seated himself at an ornate desk. "You seem to indulge an unreasonable despondency, a sick foreboding."

"So I do," Martin agreed. "It is owing partly to my fortune, partly to my disposition. My father killed, perhaps murdered, another man, and that has cast a shadow over all my life."

"Speak out," said the host, grasping a bell full of embroidered silk. "It is possible that one who has never

heard your story may be able to help you—if only by listening.”

“I come,” said Martin, “from a futile champaign close to low hills—a Border country. My home is half-screened by an orchard and has about it several farms. Nearby—though not nearby as you, sir, would reckon distances—is the kirk, with several houses clustered round, the residences of the apothecary and the attorney, the ale house and the smithy. Above my gate still hangs—or did until lately—my father’s escutcheon. The church is rude and once was the chapel of my family; it stands on a green knoll, in the upper part of a long vale, which forks into three valleys, each bringing its own river. This will seem to you, sir, like the hair-splitting divisions of an old-fashioned sermon—but to ease my mind I must bring up these familiar scenes.”

A servant entered and offered wine to Martin, of which his host did not partake. Martin drank sparingly; the wine was rich and served in a silver cup; Martin felt a peace he had not known for years. His host was looking at him with a patient kindness in which there was no hint of disapproval. Martin, fatigued and almost at the end of his nerve, accepted gratefully this active benevolence. He began his story, and in half an hour by the long case clock close to his hand he had finished it, describing his situation with lively strokes and a gentle vehemence that proved his sincerity.

His host listened with gravity and appeared to understand perfectly well. This gentleman and the rich room in which they sat combined to give Martin a sense of security; he felt that until now he had been shiftless and indolent and that here was someone who would take his case in hand.

“I know something of this Baron Kiss, Mr. Deverent. I take him to be a common adventurer on whom the police have a watchful eye. It is well known that he has been engaged in dubious exploits and travels from one country to another, fastening himself, whenever he can, on some wealthy man. He has many acts, and does not scruple how he employs them.”

"And do you, sir, know anything of this Dr. Entrick, who terms himself the Man with the Scales?" asked Martin.

"Is it not the woman with the scales?" smiled his host. "And she is Justice."

"Justice," repeated Martin. "I was thinking of the dreadful Sagittary—of Nemesis or Revenge."

"Leave that alone," advised the other. "Have no thought of it."

"I have none. It is Mr. Julius Sale who desires to be avenged on me, and to some extent he has succeeded. You can see for yourself that I am much reduced."

"And yet," replied the other, "you are in the very bloom of your life, and it would become you to have a large charity."

"Even for Julius Sale?"

"In particular for him."

Martin then related the visit of Maryon Leaf and the mother of Julius Sale to the Netherlands and their sharp request that he, Martin, should return with them to the Border and claim Annabella Liddiard, thus preventing a fatal marriage.

"And fatal it would be," answered his host. "It is a curious story, and I am glad that you have related it."

"Are you indeed, sir? I have often wished for such kindness when I have been half delirious with fatigue and remorse."

"Have you no religion?"

"Yes, indeed, I was brought up to it. Until my father's misfortune I could count myself a sincere Christian. Since then I have found no consolation anywhere save in the love of Miss Annabella Liddiard."

His host had his hand on a bagatelle board that was set on the desk. Martin noticed his fine fingers, on one of which was a magnificent signet ring.

"Then you must have her and cultivate your estate—yes, at every hazard. That is my advice to you."

"Yet I wonder if I shall not make a vain attempt on a faithless woman. She has given her consent to a marriage

with Julius Sale, which is to take place in a few days' time." Martin named the day and the place. "Perhaps," he added bitterly, "she has lost her heart a second time to Julius Sale, wild and possessed as he seems to be."

"How do you know that she is not loyal?" asked the host. "Do you mean that you yourself are faithless?"

"Yes, so I have been. I have stayed away from it all, doing my copying, leaving my lands to go to ruin, happy in a dull fashion to be out of it all."

"That must be a fit of sickness."

"Ay, a sickness of the heart, maybe."

And despondency again touched Martin as he thought of the brown hills and purple horizons of the Border, and of Annabella Liddiard shut up in her parents' house awaiting marriage to Julius Sale.

"You resemble a man under a spell," remarked his host shrewdly. "I have seen you often, as I have told you, and you seemed like a man in a dream. And all the trouble is but an old disaster with which you have nothing to do."

"That is the common sense of it," agreed Martin. "Yes, humanly speaking it is so—but I have been invaded and overcome."

"The miseries of which one should die and does not die damage the character and all one's interests in life," remarked the other. "But there is no need for you to be so far gone in despair, for the matter lies in your own hands. If you carry about a heart oppressed, how can you hope to win this battle?"

Now it seemed to Martin as if the rich room and the stately gentleman did not exist, and that he was back again in his poor chamber, poring over a book on horticulture, written—could it be?—by one Dr. Entrick and dedicated to Baron Kiss, who was pictured on the frontispiece together with his servant Trett.

But this dizziness left him, and he saw again the kindly host by the bagatelle board, looking at him with smiling dark eyes.

"I feel," said Martin, "as if I had been haunted and

watched, and that now some dark presence had been removed."

"That was but of your own creation," replied the other. "This Baron Kiss and his confederates will vanish as soon as you oppose them. Do you know of the old fable of the man who saw lions in his way and feared to pass them—yet when he ventured to do so found them chained and harmless?"

"I wonder," said Martin, "that you take all this trouble with me."

"It is hardly a trouble, and my time will soon be occupied. I have said that I have observed you and like you. The advice that I give you is sound. Leave this tranquil town, which is not for you, and return to your own place. Forgive your enemy and take the woman who loves you. In my own life, which has been very troublesome, I have found that the love of another has been my sole support and consolation."

"Your wife, sir?"

"She was my wife. Now she is dead, but not for me."

The speaker rose and again pulled the bell rope. The servant appeared and conducted Martin to the door. The stately gentleman, although he smiled warmly, did not rise.

"Who is the owner of this mansion?" asked Martin as he paused with the servant in the passage.

"He is, sir, the Prince of all this country."

CHAPTER XXI

By the fiery light of the setting sun Annabella Liddiard looked at her wedding dress. The material had been sent from Edinburgh. Beyond the narrow window was a prospect of the low hills, fast becoming gloomy in the

increasing purple of the closing hour of day. There was much that she wished to exorcise from a heart long closed; she would have preferred emptiness to this continual suffering. Leyden appeared before her in visions of which none was clear save the buying of the dagger in the company of Julius Sale, so soon to be her bridegroom.

She sat still and passed the rich folds of the gown across her knee with slow, quiet movements. Silver braid and ribbons dangled from the yet unfinished bodice. She tried to think of earlier days when she and Martin had met in one of the glens and broken the coin between them, but this was a memory that would not come. She had denied herself all thought of him for so long, destroying her passion (as she supposed) as a flower may be killed by poison poured into the root.

Obsession inflicted her and clouded all her delicate nature. She believed that she was without a friend, and that her lover had forsaken her, for she knew nothing of the journey of Maryon Leaf and Isabella Sale to the Lowlands. Thwarted in all her simple desires and designs for happiness, she saw, as a cloud within a cloud, the faces of her enemies, her parents, her future bridegroom and that of the minister who was to unite them, the metaphysical doctor, Gilbert Rae.

Frail and ignorant as she was, she hardly knew the cause of her own grief or how to assuage it. She wished that she might consult the metaphysical doctor, and hardly knew that his was among the cold and threatening faces that blurred her inner vision. Some nobility inspired her as she rose, put down the wedding dress and turned to a chest of drawers in a corner of the room. She pulled open one of these, and saw the weapon that she had bought in Leyden.

It was full summer, but chill and draughty in her bed-chamber, from which the light was receding, leaving only a faint glistening on the satin of the wedding dress; but the rosy and purple light of youth still shone over Annabella as she laid the dagger on the top of the chest.

Annabella sang softly to herself:

“O fare ye weil, young man, she says,
Farewell, and I bid adieu;
Sin ye’ne provided a meed for me
Among the simmer flowers,
I will provide anither for you,
Amid the winter showers.”

Annabella looked into the mirror and watched her own pale lips moving.

“The new fall’n snow to be your smock
It becomes your bodie best;
You’r shal be wrapt wi’ the eastern wind,
And the cauld rain on your breast.”

A maid came in with candles and lifted the white dress from the floor. The small clear flames of the tapers were reflected in the dark depth of the mirror on either side of the singing face of Annabella as she paused in the old song.

“And here is your rich cloak,” said the maid. “Of Genoa velvet, set with golden braid and a hood; for as Sir William does not keep a coach, you must ride the white horse, which has a wedding aspect, and be carried pillion behind your father.”

“Ay, so it shall be,” said Annabella, softly putting a muslin kerchief over the weapon and so returning it unseen to the drawer, which she locked, the key, with many others, hanging at her waist. The maid knew full well the story of the early plighting of Annabella and stared at her secretly in curiosity.

“Here, mistress,” she said, “is a dish of black cherries sent you from your lady mother. The old tree is bearing well for the festival.”

Annabella sat down by the spinet and turned over a

book of songs; the maid moved the candles so that their light fell over the keys.

“Fals luv! And hae ye played me this
In the summer, mid the flowers?
I sall repay ye back again
In the winter, mid the showers!

“Bot again, dear luv, and again, dear luv,
Will ye not turn again?
As ye look to ither women,
Sall I to ither men.”

“Does one with second sight,” she asked the maid, as she closed the book of songs, “ever see the spectre of a person who is already dead?”

“No,” replied the maid, who much relished this subject, “but only living creatures and images of things in motion.”

“As I knew,” said Annabella, “and but spoke of in idleness as it came into my mind. I have had a dream of a ship in motion on grey waters.”

“There is one of the servants have it, who is from the Islands,” said the maid. “He can foresee death if a person appears to him with a shrouding sheet. He also has seen ships and people in distant countries. He does not like these visions, which come to him suddenly, when his eyes are fixed on a given object. He does not care to go where these spectres lie where there are no stars.”

“Are the stars coming out now?” asked Annabella, going to the window, which was no wider than the mirror. “Come, Meggy, and look for me.”

“Sing another song,” suggested the maid slyly. “That one about the weary world to end her life or ‘Son Davie’.”

“They are songs of Nemesis,” replied Annabella, “or so my father said—that is, revenge, Meggy. Now what evil have I done that so much should be revenged on me?”

“Oh, mistress,” said Meggy, coming to the side of Annabella, so that they were as two pale flowers pressed

in the window space, "who meets the false knight on the road must give good answers to all his questions, for who is this false knight but the Devil himself?"

"Is Baron Kiss still at Castle Sale?" asked Annabella. "I think my bridegroom spends more time in his company than he does in that of mine."

"Ay," said Meggy. "And do you think, mistress, that his other name is old Cloutie? And will the Sales give him a bit of wild untilled land to quieten him? And where have you put the wedding dress?"

She found the wedding dress and held it up. It was of cut Genoa velvet and covered with strange figures, the signs of the Zodiac, the Man with the Scales, the fury with the brooms and Nemesis.

And this was a wedding dress she held, and her spirit was stayed from her body and she was away in the Lowlands. Now what did she know of the Lowlands? She had never seen the trim canals, the stone lions by the lake, the tranquil people going their ways, the alabaster warriors sinking to death in the white-washed churches.

But she knew of these things, because Martin had known them. She knew of Cornelia with her clean linen and her rich blooms, she knew of the old toffee-apple woman who saw the future in a green glass jar, and she had been with him in Leyden when he was copying out the old manuscript; and she had slept beside the Border lake with her arm across her face trying to escape, but her parents had come and brought her back, and now she was in prison.

And there was no one there but Meggy with her old songs. And the wedding dress was not strange and beautiful but a fashionable garment from Edinburgh.

Meggie looked at her sideways, and both the women said: "Who is knocking at my window, who?" And Meggy was then silent, hiding her face, but Annabella went to the casement and opened it on the wet, dark night. "Go away from me, wild bird of darkness. Though the golden coin was taken from us they came back again, and I have my half in my bosom here."

Now there was another knock, and this time at the door. Meggy opened it, and Baron Kiss stood there, very grand and stately in his imperial uniform. The women allowed him to come in, but they had shut the window against the rain and the dark.

He wore his military casque, and the jewel in it gleamed fitfully. He said: "I am going to join my master."

Annabella answered: "Have you then completed your mischief here?"

"I am going, but perhaps I shall take you with me. I was there when you bought the dagger at Leyden. I was there when twice Martin tried to murder Julius Sale."

She had nothing to say. She looked down as though she saw through the floor, and there was a clanging as of great gates opening.

"You must never say the words," said he, "but you know them, and you know why Guy Henderson died."

"Because he was afraid," said Annabella.

Baron Kiss was vexed. "You know too much," he said. "And yet you are only an imbecile."

"You cannot," she replied, "defeat the metaphysical doctor; yet he has forsaken me and he will marry me to Julius Sale. And that will be sold that has no market, and that will be bought that has no price."

Meggy was on her knees and tried to remember some of the psalms, but the words would not come. Both of them saw his medals and his ribbons, his gold braid and his sword.

"You will ride," he said, "on the white horse, pillion behind your father, for the roads are too rough for any carriage."

"But not," said Annabella, "for the chariot in which the lady rides with the white dress and the green bonnet."

Both the women asked him, pressing on him earnestly, who this creature was—was she the niece of Dr. Entrick?

"Why," said he, "she is very old indeed."

But Annabella answered: "I am older still."

And again they beseeched him asking, "Why is this place infested?" And his answer was a question: "Have you

heard of the ride to the abyss? Only you will be on a white horse, and when you meet your bridegroom you will have the dagger ready."

Meggy complained: "I cannot pray." But Annabella said: "Lord be about us."

And she opened the window on the brown hills of the Lowlands, and it was morning and fair white birds were abroad. There was snow on the hills, but in the walled garden there were apricots and roses.

Now Baron Kiss had gone, and they did not see his departure. Annabella's mother came up and rebuked the girl for sitting awake all night with her wedding garments about her. But Meggy, the servant, rebuked Lady Liddiard, saying: "I, too, am a woman and I know that you do what you do for lands and money."

The great dame was astonished, but Annabella told her: "There has been someone here tonight."

Her mother checked her, saying quickly, "That is not true, it is a concocted tale, and Isabella Sale is out of her mind."

"I think," said Annabella, "she wanted to save me, but perhaps it was too late; and those are the most dreadful words in any language."

Lady Liddiard was startled. She went back to her own youth, when the world had been lovely, and she had thought nothing of greed and gain, or of houses and lands. That was long ago, and she had sold herself. And now she was going to sell another woman.

But these fancies quickly left her. She brushed aside her guardian angel. He folded his wings and wept, and stood behind Meggy, covering her in a glory.

Preparations for the feast were magnificent. Sir William had stretched all his resources. There were the musicians in the galleries and the servants coming and going. And everywhere was the hired gold and silver plate.

But Sir William was an anxious man. He drew himself apart and talked to himself. It was a long time since he had looked at his daughter, and now he could not look at his

wife. But he said to himself again and again: "It is a splendid match, a brilliant fortune. Annabella will be set up in Castle Bassett, and I will be mightier than any of the chieftains of Border!"

Meggy, the servant girl, looked in on him, and then she ran away to fetch Maryon Leaf. He came with her at once; he took her hand kindly. "You must remember," he said, "that we are both servants and that service has a value."

She said: "I am not afraid." And they passed nothing on the way.

The old man received them with astonishment. "A factor and a servant girl!" he exclaimed. "What business have you here?"

Maryon Leaf put him gently into the chair and looked with compassion on all the hired and borrowed pomp for the wedding. "If you could only be humble, Sir William, if you could only understand what you are doing."

But pride held the old man stiff. He sneered and said: "You are only the factor of my future son-in-law, and Meggy is only my daughter's handmaiden."

Maryon Leaf put that aside. He insisted with a warm friendliness, "Julius Sale must never marry Annabella Liddiard."

Sir William tried to laugh. "I suppose you think," he answered with a feeble viciousness, "that my beautiful daughter should marry young Martin Deverent, who is a rascal and the son of a murderer."

Maryon Leaf put in quickly: "That was never proved!"

"And I suppose," retorted Sir William, "it was never proved that he lived like a toad in a hole on the Continent, leaving his estate to go to ruin."

"Not so much ruin," said Maryon Leaf coolly, "but that you would be glad to seize the last scraps of it."

Sir William had no ready answer to this plain speaking. But his lady, who had been waiting outside in a passion of impatience, came in upon them and rated her husband for a fool.

"And you, my lady," said Maryon Leaf, "are something worse than a fool."

Without waiting for orders to be gone, they went away; and Meggy took him to the chamber of Annabella.

"Now," said Maryon Leaf, very kindly and taking her hand, "you know what you have in your bosom."

"The knife," said she, "that I bought in Leyden. It is useful for cutting silk."

"You have more than the knife," said Maryon Leaf. "You have half of the golden coin, and Martin has the other half. It is true that some evil power took these tokens away, but they are returned to you, and to him, and some day you shall join them together."

She would not believe him but spoke of her approaching marriage to his master, and of the white horse on which she would ride pillion to the chapel.

"Now, listen to me," he said. "I am a plain common man. I like the daylight and the blue air, and one day I shall marry!"

"But never," she interrupted, "a woman like myself."

Again he tried to reassure her. "You are not lost, you must try to be loyal. You have love but not faith."

She said: "You cannot help me, but some power be thanked for men like you."

Meggy, looking at her, began to be stricken also, and she said to Maryon Leaf: "Take me away to my old mother in the glen, for I have had enough of this." So Maryon Leaf had to choose between the two women, and he looked at them both with pity.

Annabella now found some courage. She took the young girl's hand and put it into that of the young man, and so released her from the spell. "For it is better that I should go alone than that I should take innocence with me."

Maryon Leaf gave her the kiss of a brother on her brow. He said: "You, too, are innocent, but it is only just that I should take the young girl away."

Now Lady Liddiard broke in on them again and sternly commanded the factor and the girl to be gone. "For," said

she, "you spoil everything with your dismal fancies. There is to be a mighty festival here and a great gathering."

"Take care, you poor creature, of the guests you will have!"

For a moment Lady Liddiard considered this, that she might indeed be lost and confounded. And she muttered to herself: "Is it possible that I might be mistaken?"

Maryon Leaf heard these words and said earnestly: "Indeed, I implore you to believe that you might be mistaken."

Then she became very angry and called her servants and had them driven out.

So Mary on Leaf set the girl behind him on his horse, and they went to the glen where her mother lived. And she was the woman with the toffee apples in Leyden who had seen the future in a green glass jar. Meggy was the wool-gatherer and went up and down the stream plucking the white fleece from the thorn bushes.

Maryon Leaf knew them all; but he left them, and he went back to his own house. He tried to think it all out. Humanly speaking, he decided that it was a folly to agree to the device of the metaphysical doctor, Gilbert Rae, who had promised to stop this ugly marriage at the last moment, for fear that if he gave notice of his intention they would get a willing divine from Edinburgh.

"Fear," mused Maryon Leaf. "That is the trouble. Too many of them are afraid." Smoking his churchwarden and drinking his ale, he tried to consider how this foolish tragedy might be avoided.

There were so many people to be saved. As he came to this pass in his thoughts there was a knock at the door. He went to it very quickly. There stood Dr. Entrick with his large press of flowers. And with him was Amalia von Hart.

The factor noticed that they were both shabby and seemed cold and hungry. 'Now,' he thought, 'this is the Man with the Scales who shall decide all, and as for the woman——'

As he smiled at her the pallid creature, for such she had become, vanished!

So Maryon Leaf asked the botanist in and they sat down together for a while in silence. Then Maryon Leaf said: "I am not to be confronted with any conjuring tricks."

The botanist opened his press, and it was full of the ghosts of flowers that had grown on the moors and on the bogs.

"Look, Mr. Leaf," he said "they grow lovely and beautiful but they do not escape the shears. And when they are cut down I go to these solitary places and collect them. And here are their ghosts in this old box of scented wood."

"I know," said Maryon Leaf steadily, "that you are thinking of Annabella Liddiard in her grave clothes in her coffin."

"No," said the botanist, "that indeed is not true."

Now Maryon Leaf knew very well what the botanist meant, and the two men smoked together in silence. The steward was thinking of Cornelia. He had seen her by chance when he was searching for Martin Deverent; and he had thought there was the wife for him. She was cool and lovely with her baskets of exotic flowers in the white-washed church and her files of clean linen.

Maryon Leaf thought: 'This is a tale that has been told and that will be told again, and Cornelia and I shall recall it when we are very old and have our grandchildren about our knees. But first there are one or two things to be settled!'

Annabella had put on the wedding dress. In her bosom was the half of the gold coin and the dagger. She looked at herself in the mirror and then kissed Meggy. Now who should be the bride of Maryon Leaf—Meggy or Cornelia?

But Annabella knew they were the same; the one who serves, who watches and who waits. If she could have blessed the factor and his bride she would have done so; but she could not do this because of the dagger in her bosom.

So Julius Sale was in peril of his mortal life from

Annabella and of his immortal soul from Baron Kiss. It was now time for this personage to go, for his master had other service for him; but though he was much diminished and all of his retinue had left him save the man Trett, still he was resolved to take one of them with him—Martin or Julius. He tossed a coin, and it was Julius.

Dr. Entrick was there and said: "Now I have my part to play."

He and the factor went over the hills, the brown Lowland hills, to the dark glen where Martin was travelling home to his barren acres and his lost bride.

Martin was worn and haggard. The other half of the coin hung round his neck. He sat down by a southward running stream, and watched the waters, which were the colour of agate. There Dr. Entrick and the factor found him. He said: "Today is the wedding day of Annabella to Julius Sale."

But Dr. Entrick told him of the two perils waiting for Julius Sale; and the factor said: "Can you forgive your enemy?"

Martin wondered what this might mean. The factor explained while the wind rushed by and the sun went down in a golden mist. "Sooner than marry him she will strike him down with the dagger in her bosom, and then they will take her up for a poor mad thing. But he will not be slain, but chased by Baron Kiss to——"

And all of them heard the gates clang beneath them.

Martin looked at the glamour that hung on the chain.

He said: "I can do it. Twice I tried to murder this man. And it was thought that my father had murdered his father, but now an old wrong is forgotten. And I shall save them both."

So the others vanished, and Martin found himself watching the bridal procession to the chapel. He did not know that the metaphysical doctor was prepared to refuse to marry them. Baron Kiss was riding beside the bridegroom, and all was song and rejoicing. Annabella was fingering the dagger, and at the chapel door she meant to

strike him down in front of her proud mother and her anxious father, who had sold her against her wish and her love.

Martin took the bridle of Julius Sale and stayed his horse.

"I have come," he said, "to save you both."

And he looked steadily at Baron Kiss, to whom he said: "I have saved them both. The old revenge is forgotten, and I love my enemy."

Baron Kiss was not to be cheated. "Do you," he asked, "offer your soul for theirs?"

"So," said Martin. "I do offer. I shall go to——"

But that word must never be spoken. It was only a half-pay officer of the Imperial court, who stood bowing and shabby and who begged that he might come as a wedding guest.

Martin and Julius clasped hands, and all the evil was gone like thin smoke. Martin took the bridegroom's place, and Annabella threw the dagger out of her bosom at the half-pay officer, and so all the infernals vanished.

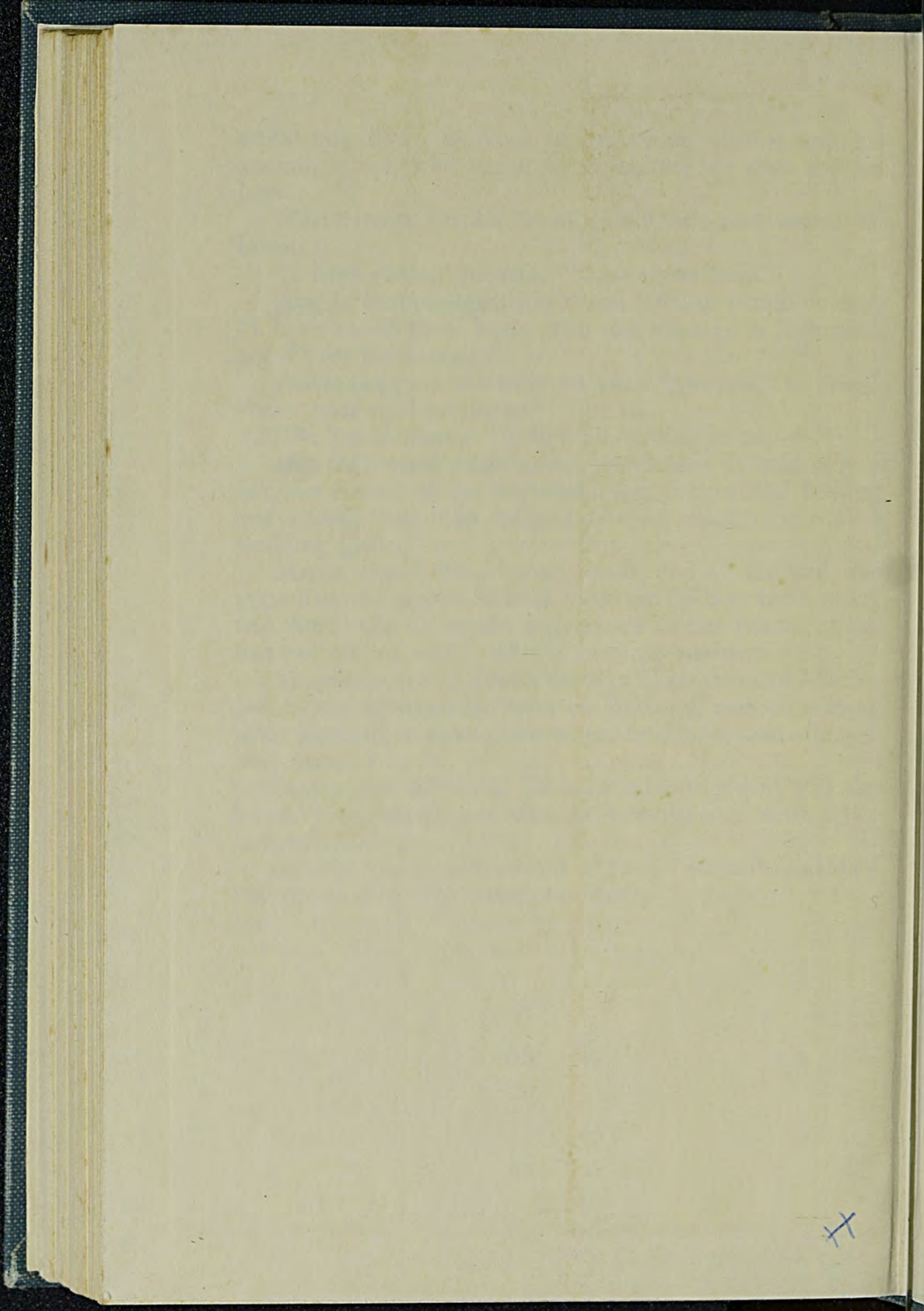
The metaphysical doctor married Annabella and Martin. Julius Sale dowered her with all his lands, and went away from them all to a far place where he died—soon after—a holy man.

So the two halves of the coin came together, and the lovers were joined; nor was the botanist ever seen again in the Border.

Isabella Sale took the hand of Lady Liddiard; and they kissed and each went about her duty.

THE END

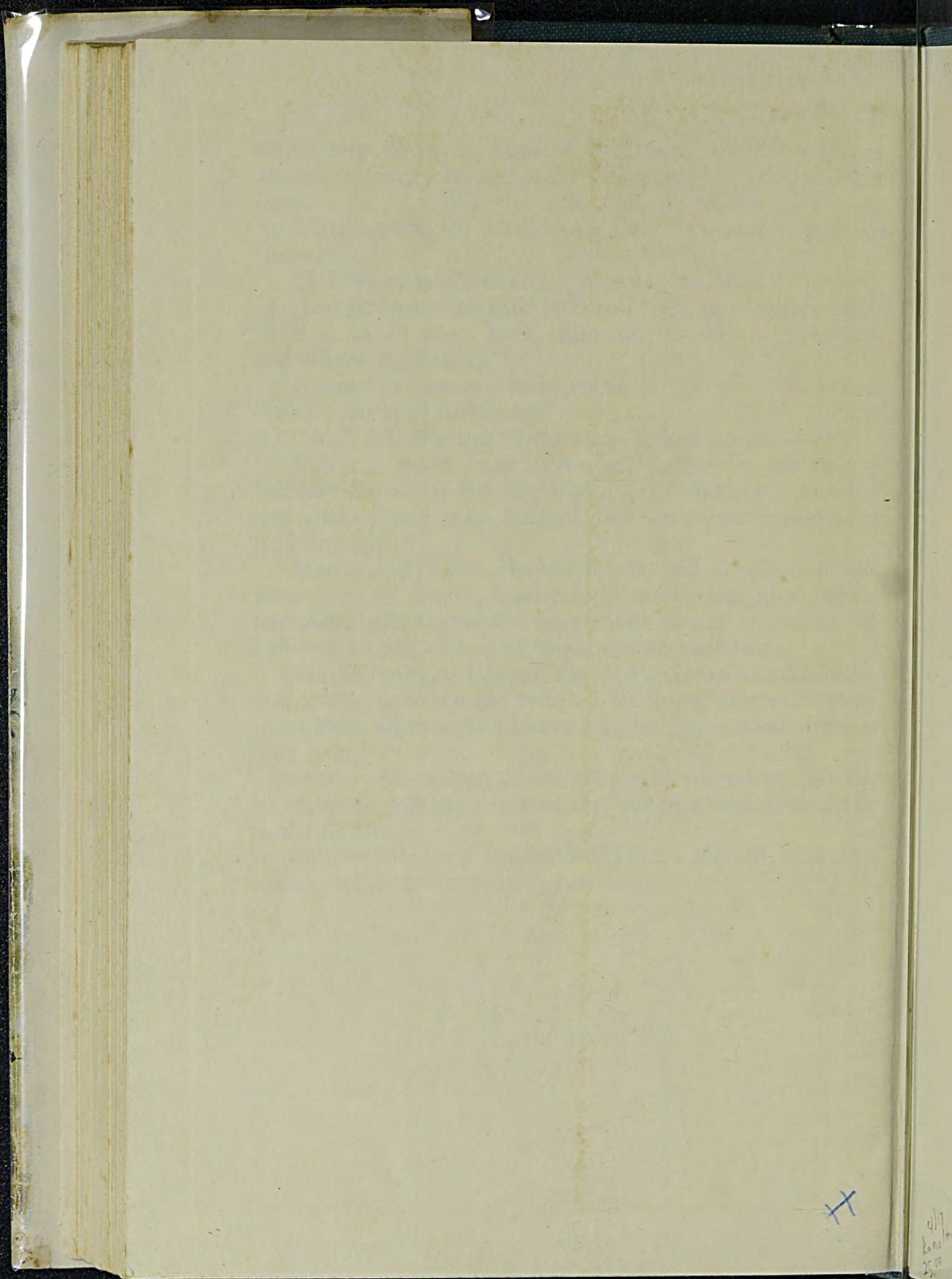
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