

Selected Story.

How I Won the Laird's Daughter.

BY DANIEL GORRIE.

CHAPTER I—Continued.

In the morning the tidings were through the whole village that a new doctor had come, and several people became suddenly unwell, for the express purpose, I presume, of testing my skill. Three urgent cases I found to be sick headache, and fearing lest my trip to the Haugh might be delayed for two weeks, I hired the best hack the Cross-Keys could afford, and made off for the domicile of the eccentric Laird. The owner of the hack was very anxious to accompany me, but I preferred making the excursion alone. The weather was mild and delightful; the trees seemed lovelier in their decay than in the fullness of summer life; and the Tweed flowed and murmured softly as the waters of Siloah. Half-an-hour's riding brought me to the Haugh—an ancient edifice embosomed among trees. In the prime of its youth it would doubtless be considered a splendid mansion; but in its old age it had an ungainly appearance, although not altogether destitute of a certain picturesque air. After disposing of my hack to a little Jack-of-all-work urchin, who was looking about for some work to do, or meditating mischief, I knocked at the door, and was ushered, by an old serving-woman, into a quaint apartment, crammed with antique furniture. The mantle-piece absolutely groaned under its load of ornaments, while a great spreading plume of peacock's feathers waved triumphantly over all. This must be the Laird's fancy, I thought and not the taste of Miss Jessie. Several pictures illustrative of fox-hunting, and two portraits, adorned the walls. None of them could be considered as belonging to any particular school, or as masterpieces of art. On the window-blinds a beseeching force was represented as assaulting a not very formidable castle.

While I sat amusing myself with the oddities of the apartment, the door opened and the Laird entered. He was a gray-haired, ruddy-faced, shrewd-looking man of fifty or thereabouts. I was rather taken with his dress. He wore a blue coat of antique cut, knee breeches, long brown gaiters with metal buttons, and his vest was beautified with perpendicular yellow stripes. There was an air of dignity about him when he entered as though he were conscious that he was Laird of the Haugh, and that I had come to consult him about some important business. Being a Justice of the Peace, as I afterwards learned, he probably wished to impress a stranger with a sense of his official greatness. I did not know very well whether to address him as Mr. Ramsay or the "Laird," but he relieved me of the difficulty by saying in broad Scotch, "This is a grand day, sir; hae ye ridden far?"

"No," I replied, "only from St. Dunstan."

"Just that—just that," said the Laird with a peculiar tone. "I thocht as much when I met the callant leadin' awa the Cross-Key's charger,—puir beast!"

I handed the Laird the letter of introduction which I had received from one of the medical professors in Edinburgh. He read it very slowly, as though he were spelling and weighing every word, and he had perused it twice from beginning to end before he rose and welcomed me to the Haugh.

"He's a clever man, that professor," quoth Laird Ramsay; "an' he speaks o' ye, doctor in a flattering way; but the proof o' the puddin' is the preenin' o't, ye ken. Ye've shown some spunk in comin' sae quick to St. Dunstan; but ye're young enuch to be on your ain coat tail yet."

"We must begin somewhere and sometime, Mr. Ramsay," I rejoined.

"Ye're richt there," answered the Laird; and then add'd with a chuckle, "but patients dinna like to be made victims o'. However, we'll think about that. Ye'll be nane the worse o' something to eat and drink, I'm thinkin'; an' to tell the truth, I want to weety my ain whistle."

So saying, the Laird o' the Hague rose and rang the bell, and told the old serving-woman, the handmaiden of the household, to bid Jessie speak to him. In a short time Jessie, a tall, handsome, hearty, fresh-coloured, black-haired beauty, came tripping into the room. The Laird was not very ceremonious so far as the matter of introduction was concerned, but Jessie was one of those frank girls who can introduce themselves, and make you feel perfectly at home at once. The father and daughter were evidently strongly attached to each other.

"Bring us some wine first, like a gude lass," said the Laird, "an' then we'll tak something mair substantial when ye're ready."

Jessie, like a dutiful daughter, placed the decanters and glasses on the table. There was an elasticity in her step, a grace in her every motion, and an irresistible charm in her frank and affectionate smile. The Laird did not

seem altogether to relish the manner in which my eyes involuntarily followed her movements; and remembering what mine host of the Cross-Keys had told me on the previous night I resolved to be as circumspect as possible, both in look and word. The Laird of the Haugh pledged the young doctor, and the young doctor pledged the Laird. Meanwhile, Jessie had disappeared to looJ after the substantial. A glass or two of his capital wine warmed Laird Ramsay into a fine conversational mood, and we got on famously together. After dinner, when the punch was produced, our intimacy increased, and I began to love the eccentric Laird for the sake of his beautiful and accomplished daughter. I discovered that he had a heavy relish for humorous stories and anecdotes, and I plied him with them in thick succession, until the fountain of laughter ran over in tears. I was determined to take the old gentlemen by storm and Miss Jessie, with quick feminine instinct, appeared to be more than half aware of my object. However, I carefully abstained from exciting his suspicion by conversing directly with Jessie, even when he appeared to be in the most genial and pleasant mood.

The evening was pretty far advanced when I left his hospitable board. "Mind, ye're to be the doctor o' St. Dunstan," he said as I mounted the Cross-Keys charger. "We'll hae naeboddy but yoursel, an' ye mun be sure an' come back soon again to the Haugh." I rode home to mine inn fully resolved to locate myself in the village, and firmly persuaded that if I had not captivated the Laird's daughter, I had at least conquered the Laird himself.

To be continued.



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Oct. 17, 1878.

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