

Selected Story.

How I Won the Laird's Daughter.

By DANIEL GORRIE.

CHAPTER II.

"Weel, doctor, is it a' richt wi' the Laird?" inquired Mr. Barlas when I returned to the Cross-Keys.

"Yes," I rejoined, "it's all right. Laird Ramsay is now my warmest and staunchest supporter, and a most companionable gentleman he is."

"I never heard the like o' that," said the landlord, lifting up his eyebrows in astonishment. "Od docter, ye're just like the auld Roman reiver, Cæsar, wha gaed about seein' an' conquerin'. Ye hae a clear coast noo, when ye hae gotten the gudewill o' the Laird and minister. An' what think ye o' the dochter? Isna she a comely lass, Miss Ramsay?"

"She is, indeed, Mr. Barlas," I replied. "The young lady seems to do her best to make her father feel happy and comfortable, and I have no doubt that many 'braw woers' will frequently find their way to the Haugh."

"Na, doctor, Na. As I tell't ye afore the Laird is unco fond o' Miss Jessie, an' I dinna think he would part wi' her to the best man i' the kintra-side. But ye hae sic an uncommon power o' comin' roond folk that I wadna wonner to see ye tryin't yersel'."

"Stranger things have happened, Mr. Barlas," I rejoined. "Meantime, my mind is made up to settle down in St. Dunstan. I like the place and the people, the Eildon Hills, the Tweed, and Laird Ramsay."

"No to speak o' his dochter," interjected mine host with a knowing look. "But where," I continued, "am I to take up my quarters?"

"Ye needna put yersel in a peck o' troubles about that, doctor. There's Dr. Sommerville's cottage just waitin' for ye along the road a bit. It's a commodious hoose wi' trees roond it an' a bonny garden at the back slopin' to the south. Dr. Sommerville was fond o' flowers, an' I never saw a pleasanter place than it was in simmer. But the fac' is, ye'll hae to tak it, doctor, because there's no anither hoose to let in the hale town."

"Such being the case, Mr. Barlas, there is no choice, and the matter is settled."

"Just that—just that," responded the landlord, and then added, with an eye to business, "Ye can mak the Cross-Keys yer hame till ye get the cottage an' painted an' furnished to your mind."

"So be it, Mr. Barlas; and now that the house is settled, what about a house-keeper? Was Dr. Sommerville married?"

"Married? of course, he was married, an' had lots o' weans to the bargain. But just try yer hand wi' Miss Ramsay. I would like grand to see ye at that game docter."

"Nonsense," I rejoined. "I do not want to steal the Laird's ewe-lamb, and break with him at the very commencement of my course. Is there no quiet, decent, honest body about St Dunstan who would make a good and active house-keeper?"

"They're a' honest an' decent thegither, except it be twa or three o, the canglin, mugger folk wha mend auld pans and break ane anither's heads. Let me see—stop a wee—ou, ay—I have ye noo, doctor; there's Mrs. Johnston—a clean, thrifty, tidy woman o' forty or thereabouts; she'll fit ye to a T. an' keep yer hoose like new leek. Her gudeman was an elder; but he took an inward trouble about a years syne, an' a' the skill o' Doctor Sommerville couldna keep his life in when his time was come. I'll speak to Mrs. Johnston the morn, so ye can keep yer mind easy about a house-keeper."

"We're getting on famously, Mr. Barlas. The house and housekeeper are both disposed of. What next?"

"What next, doctor? The next thing, I'm thinkin' 'ill be a horse. Folk will be sendin' for ye post-haste to gang sax or seven miles awa, an' ye canna get on without a beast. Are ye onything skeely in horseflesh?"

"No," I replied, "not particularly. I would require to purchase a horse by proxy."

This reply appeared to give mine host considerable satisfaction. After a brief pause, he said, "Weel, doctor, what think ye o' the beastie that took ye to the Haugh the day? Its fine an' canny, an' free frae a' kind o' pranks. It would never fling ye aff an' break yer banes when you were gaun to mend ither folks bodies. It'll no cost you muckle siller, and ye'll get a capital bargain wi' the beast."

I could not help smiling when the landlord detailed the excellent qualities of the Rosinante of the Cross-Keys—the superb beast which excited the compassion of Laird Ramsay.

To be continued.

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