# The Heart of the Bush

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# The Heart of the Bush.

## INTRODUCTION.

### LOVE IN INFANCY.

THE boy threw off his solitary garment and waded into the creek, kicking up the water higher and higher around him, until he had gone too far for splashing. Near the opposite bank he paused a few moments and looked down with anticipatory enjoyment into a deep pool, so clear that he could see the yellow sand at the bottom. Then plunging into the forest bath he swam about with the agility of a fish or a North Island Maori. Next, he emerged on to the ferny bank, and then, recollecting an important detail of his toilette, he took a corner of his shirt, rubbed his face vigorously and looking into the rippled mirror of the pool, remarked aloud with enthusiasm, "Clean—clean as anyfing." Still naked, his sturdy brown limbs gleaming and dripping, he ran backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards in the spring breeze, until the time seemed ripe for completing the drying process by a rub over with the

one invaluable garment. This garment was in the shape of a smock or shirt: the material was of strongest drill; the colour, originally ultramarine, was modified by sun and rain and weather of several seasons into that of a neutral-toned sky. In the winter it was supplemented by braces and short trousers; but he did not have a favourable opinion of these trousers nor of the trousers' season. There was no purgatory he could have imagined worse than being compelled the whole year round to wear drawers, vest, shirt, waistcoat, trousers, socks, boots, hat and all the useless trappings of civilisation which encumbered "Rat" Willoughby, the only other boy he had ever seen. Having no impediments worth mentioning, Dennis could climb trees, run races, swim and wade with an ease and speed that was the envious despair of "The Rat," and though his father thrashed him for many other sins, it was never for tearing his clothes.

The child evidently enjoyed both the bathing and the wind-drying, but at the same time he went through these processes in a purposeful manner that suggested a ceremonial rite. When they were performed, he climbed through the bush towards "The House," with steps that became slower and slower, and were finally arrested just outside the cleared ground where English grasses and gowan daisies and daffodils grew wild. Across this charmed circle he gazed for some time, in a mingling of bush shyness and curiosity, screening himself behind a covert of

sprouting miro bushes. He was a fine child, with limbs of heroic build, and smooth brown skin, a fine head heaped with waving hair, and his eyes were as beautiful as those of a superb calf or dog or some woodland animal, but gifted with a more divine intelligence. The object of his devotion was a lady who sat on a lounge on the verandah of "The House," playing with the infant in her lap, dangling a string of red corals into its tiny hands and out again and raining down smiles and pretty words. There was a fine other world aspect about both mother and child, transcending anything else in Dennis's experience, and of the two the infant was the more miraculous: the one had not long come from far away over the unseen sea, but the other had just fallen from fairyland. Curiosity having ripened into resolution, the boy stepped out of the beech covert and announced his presence in a musical drawl with a roll on the r's and a lift at the end —"Mitheth Borrl's!"

Mrs. Borlase looked up with a start and then a smile.

"Why, is that you, Boysie?"

"Yeth, me."

"Come and see my new baby." As he had come expressly for that purpose, he now advanced with an engaging mixture of shyness and boldness; then drawing close to Mrs. Borlase, laid one arm along her lap and leaned against her more and more confidingly, like the well-mothered, much-cuddled child that he was.

This was the only baby he had ever seen and he watched it with great attention, and finally touched its hand. It had a surprising way of twining its fingers round his, and waiting vaguely to see if he were laughing before it laughed. Then, too, that was all so mysterious about its being brought by the fairies from Elfinland and dropped into the astonishingly glorious cradle at Haeremai. The brown wavy head nestled closer into Mrs. Borlase's dress, and the boy looked up sideways.

"I 'ud like to have that baby," he said; "you give it me?"

"Give you my little daughter, Dennis?"

"Yeth, do," he coaxed. "I 'ud be clean."

Grubbiness was the sin most commonly laid to his charge "up at the House."

"What would you do with her, Boysie?"

This was an unforseen question, and he buried his head in her skirt for a considerable time, then looked up.

"What 'you do, Mith' Borrl's?"

Mrs. Borlase touched on a long list of disheartening duties, such as sewing, knitting, feeding, finally culminating in the task of all most impossible—that of walking up and down in the middle of the night. "Could you do that?" she concluded.

He heaved a sigh. The baby was not quite worth that. It was a pity, because it was so very small and soft.

"No -a -p," he said decisively.

"Ada! Ada!"

Mrs. Borlase rose quickly, but not before the owner of the voice appeared—a well-knit figure, rather under the average height, with eyes so blue they seemed to sparkle out of a prevailing greyness of costume and tint—a man who even in his farmer's dress bore the conscious air of a gentleman, though rather the worse for the rough wear and tear of colonial life. "I've been looking for you everywhere," he went on.

"I am sorry, dearest." There was a gentle deprecation in her tone and in her eyes. "I have been sitting here to watch for you. I did not expect you to come through the orchard."

"Yes, it's my fault, isn't it?" Mr. Borlase laid one hand caressingly on her cheek, then looked down at the child. "Well, what did you come for, young man? Bothering you, Ada?"

"Oh, no, Dennis and I are great—chums." She hesitated and smiled over her deliberate colonialism. "I think he wants our baby."

"You are a modest young man, aren't you? Would you like my wife as well?"

"No –a –p. She too beeg." The child shook his head vigorously, then added with depressed philosophy, "And I don't want the baby much."

"You would like a piece of cake better, wouldn't you, Boysie?"

"May I have a piece of cake, Mith' Borrl's?" He brightened and swung one brown dimpled foot with animation.

"Yes. Go and ask Emmie."

Dennis was rapidly disappearing when his head again showed round the corner of the house.

"Mith' Borrl's?"

"Yes, Boysie?"

"How much cake d' you say?"

"As much as Emmie will give you."

"Emmie will give me lots." The bare legs trotted fast out of sight while he was speaking.

"Your are an angel, Ada. But don't let the brat bother you."

"I think he is a dear little fellow, Anthony. But fancy his coming up to the house to ask for our precious baby." And she fell to kissing and cooing again.

# Part First.

## BETWEEN TWO HEMISPHERES.

"The hawk unto the open sky,
The red deer to the wold,
The Romany lass to the Romany lad,
As in the days of old."

# CHAPTER I.

## HAEREMAI.

MOUNTAINS all around, mountains unrolling in scroll after scroll of gold; edge and surface illuminated with jewelled tints of amethyst and pale yellow topaz. Mountains, shaggy and tawny with rock and tussock, but smoothed into velvet by the sunset light of a spring 'Nor' Wester. Far in the depths of them all a strange wild beautiful forest, palmy like the Asiatic East, but cool and green like an English wood—a picture graved on the heart of Adelaide's childhood. Somewhere hidden in the Bush, a primitive wooden house that was home. Between her and that vision an intervening plateau, over which she was being driven at ease—a plateau roughly plastered with tussock and strewn with stones, and crossed by clear shallow streams. All uncultured but all fresh, strong and great, and fragrant with the clean scent of grass and flax and warm earth. On this flat and over the hills thousands of sheep and of healthy well-conditioned cattle. Behind her, disappearing rapidly, a fine homestead like an English country seat, with a grand house of stone, and with pleasure grounds and many oaks and sycamores.

Adelaide leaned back and put up a small gloved hand to draw her veil, then looked around with delicately-restrained enthusiasm. So all this country had appeared to her in dreams, often through tears of longing, during her ten years' absence.

"Now, is there any country in the world like New Zealand, Mr. Brandon?" she said, and threw a soft triumphant challenge to the faultlessly got up Englishman by her side.

"None—for sheep, Miss Borlase. But for civilised people——," he glanced with no favour at the mountains and the plain. "Excuse me if I prefer some culture and art. There isn't a castle nor an old cathedral, nor even a thatched cottage, in the whole colony. You can't seriously compare these weird mountains and woods with our grand old Rome and Venice and Florence?"

The little lady looked at him dreamily, "Mr. Brandon, I have begun to suspect that I am only a child of nature after all."

Horace Brandon glanced at the exquisitely cut riding-habit, that fitted like her own dainty gloves, the hat and veil so perfectly poised on her elaborate pile of hair, the tip of the small tan shoe that certainly did not look fit to tread amongst stones and shaggy grass. He smiled significantly and lowered his voice in a courtly fashion.

"Nature improved by art, as it should always be, Adelaide, I make a point of not

admiring Nature when there is anything more charming near." His voice grew still lower and more significant. "I have some hope you will come back to England in three months from now."

The noble grounds of the Miramar estate were now lost behind a shoulder of the lower range, and the "Haeremai" bush grew nearer and nearer to view, dark against the clear amber flame of the western hills, sweetly dark with a secret hidden in its depths. They jested and laughed over all the novelties and incongruities around. There was an intoxicating quality in the high mountain air — "demoralising" Horace Brandon called it because it made him feel nearly emotional, and he regarded emotion as a mental debauch. Yet the sensation was distinctly agreeable. Adelaide's vivid face and childish enthusiasm were so pretty that he began to wish he was alone with her. She was English enough to be tame and civilised, colonial enough to have the charm of novelty and piquancy. They had understood each other for some months now, and he had every moral right to call her Adelaide. But neither of them was in a hurry. The modern Londoner manages his love affairs with calmness and refinement. As for Adelaide, she enjoyed a dainty dalliance with love and lightly kept off even Horace when he came too close. They had travelled together, well chaperoned by his aunt, through Germany and Switzerland and

Italy and France, had met each other constantly during her one delightful and triumphant season in London. Just now he felt it would be a pity to wait much longer. Sitting so close to her, and looking now and then into the glad upraised eyes, he found the barbarous air and scenery producing in him an enjoyably primitive sensation, something like that of the schoolboy whose hands are about to close on the fluttering bird. There was something fugitive about her eyes that aroused the instincts of the British sportsman. But unluckily his aunt and his sister were also in the carriage, and though Evelyn loyally engrossed Mrs. Brandon's attention, the definite engagement would have to be postponed. It was a pity, because the psychological moment had undoubtedly arrived, and he knew enough of himself to feel uncertain when it might recur.

The bush came nearer and nearer. It was closing in around them. It sent out messengers to greet them, one lace-bark tree and then another, standing gracefully separate amongst stumps and sprouting fern, a fragmentary black-plumed rimu, and then the sound of a great soft murmuring and rushing of waters. The carriage passed down the road-cutting and stopped in a river-bed. The bush rose up before them on the high opposite bank, not so much like a wall as like rising galleries of green living shapes,—primeval, beckoning, calling. Out of its recesses there came a rough-coated

primitive bushman who made his way slowly across the ford, riding a bay horse and holding the bridle of another. His voice full and deep, as he urged the animals on, reached them melodiously like one of the forest sounds that echoed amongst the cliffs and rocks. The wildness and the shadows made Evelyn shiver and fasten her marabout closely at the throat. "Now I know what back-blocks are," she said, "Aidie, it's like those dismal things in Dante that you would dose us with at Ravenna."

"And here comes the native Charon of the flood," added Horace. He adjusted an eye-glass and scrutinised the advancing bushman with impersonal detached interest. "A son of the soil," he observed. "But really his make-up is rather disappointing. Can't you turn out something more local than this, Miss Borlase? This full dress must have been put on in your honour, but I am sure you would have liked him better in his everyday tattoo and feathers. Yet he is rather weird, now I come to look at him—all that can be seen of him through his beard and general hairiness. His hat is very, very squash, and has had too many experiences. As your father sent him, he can't be an unconverted cannibal, still I'm sorry we have to give you up to him."

The big brown New Zealander now emerged from the stream, the water dripping from his horses. He made his way to the carriage, favoured the whole party with a momentary

glance from brown bovine eyes, gave them a laconic "Good evening," and having singled out Adelaide with evident interest, said "Miss Borlase," not interrogatively.

"Mr. Borlase sent you? Thanks," and Adelaide, now on horseback, turned back to her friends.

"Come over to Miramar soon and have a little music, Adelaide," said Mrs. Brandon.

"A litttle civilisation, Miss Borlase. As much as we can give you out here."

"Yes. When I have enjoyed some of my native barbarism first."

"A rivederci." "A rivederci," was repeated gaily at intervals across a widening space until the carriage disappeared in the cutting, and Adelaide found herself riding across the ford in the wake of her guide. It was delicious to be alone and once more in the regions of childhood Following the careful directions of the mar. in front, she picked her horse's way amongst the boulders and large stones, with a romantic sensation of plunging into a flood not of oblivion but of memory. Then she ascended the wooded bank and got at last right into the bush, into its very heart, cool, liquid, full of scents and sounds, wild and grotesque, lovely and strange, and all dimly remembered. Oh, the Bush, the Bush, the homeland of her infancy! Just for a few rapturous moments her spirit flew straight back into childhood. Oh the flutter of little wings, and the bird-calls

never heard through the long years, and oh the deep, dear darkness, with even the sky shut out! There was too much remembrance to be held all at once, and she let her mind float hither and thither amongst it all in a golden mist and cloud.

The first thing that began to disturb this super-exalted rapture was the man. Yet a well-trained groom should know better than to interrupt the self-absorbed solitude of his mistress. From time to time he cast incomprehensible and questioning glances at her, and was visibly taking her in. It was impertinent of him, or at least disrespectful. Or perhaps it was not. After all, she was not riding in the Row, and Major Brandon had warned her that New Zealand was democratic. A sensation of universal benevolence, born of the rapture of sunset and mountain air and home-coming, filled Adelaide, and overflowed even on to the groom. She wished not to ignore him, but to be gracious. She also reflected that graciousness with aloofness is the softest and surest means of putting transgressors in their place. So she tried graciousness, but it did not seem to work on colonials. The man only answered in monosyllables, and as it was not worth while discovering a new means of managing him, Adelaide simply forgot him and lapsed into silent delights of recollection. As they rode slowly upwards, the fragrance of some forest leaves penetrated her senses beyond all the

other scents. There were no flowers, but yet it was so sweet and so unlike all other sweetness that no one with such fine senses as hers could pass the shrub unawares. "Why, it's the myrtle!" she exclaimed. "Yes, it is myrtle—rama-rama," the man answered, unnecessarily, for she was not addressing him. He bent from the saddle, broke off a small branch, and handed it to her without another word, and as he handed it, he gave her a longer and more disturbing look. A little startled, Adelaide noticed him for the first time, and saw a bearded face, brown with sun and weather, ox eyes, brown with golden lights, and heavily lashed. She could not get him or something about him out of her mind, and began to be annoyed and to wonder why he had looked at her. What he saw was a slight little lady, bearing herself very gracefully, one dainty hand laid lightly on the reins and another holding the myrtle bough negligently; a face with no grand beauty at all, but most finely shaped and finely cut in clear and delicate outlines, quivering with expectancy, a face not only speaking but singing "like the melodie that's sweetly played in tune," sometimes the face of a child, sometimes that of an English girl, sometimes far-off the face of a high-born lady.

"I seem to remember you," Adelaide said in some momentary confusion.

"It doesn't 'seem' so to me at all," was the unexpected reply.

"I am not going to like democracy in the least," Adelaide thought. "However ought one to treat inferiors here?" Then she said, still coldly gracious. "You were perhaps on my father's farm before I left home?"

"I was. Very much on it."

So he wanted to be remembered, that was all. This idea touched her momentarily, and she tried to remember any large-limbed, broad-shouldered, bearded man, with a particularly pleasant voice, but there might have been a good many about Haeremai.* While she was pursuing an intangible evanescent phantom of recollection, something else distracted her attention. It was a little creek, a baby off-spring of the river that had forced its way through the heart of the strong rock, and cleft it in two, making it more beautiful than if it had been unbroken. For each side of the cleft heart was living green with treasures of moss and fern, transparent, dewy, tremulous in light and shade. Adelaide reined in her horse a minute, possessed by the sheer joy of loveliness, then a confused memory began to inhabit the peace. There was a rough foot-track to the farther bank, almost untrodden, and on the top a group of six tall tree ferns. They stood with their six columns wreathed with creepers and tiny fernlets and moss, and above they spread out and formed an interlacing fan tracery that

* "Haeremai" is Maori for "Welcome." It is here used as the name of a sheep and cattle farm.

mocked old architecture with their own richer loveliness and life. The phantom memory drifted near, and it too was lovely and mocking.

"I used to play here," Adelaide said aloud. "There was a footpath from the creek."

"It is there." The man pointed it out with his whip, and said in a pleasant even voice, "You remember this place anyway, Aidie."

Adelaide flushed with anger, and her little head was held haughtily. It was outrageous. Any man about the farm might have known her as a child of ten, but that gave him no right to use her pet name to a young lady of twenty. If this was democracy, she, for her part, never would give in to it. She wished her father had not sent this particular man, he was spoiling her home-coming.

Then in the distance the sheep-dogs barked from their kennels, and the rocks echoed with the barking. The phantom fled. Oh, how often she had heard that sound after a long day's absence! It was the first bit of home, and the next came soon, the gleam of a lighted window, an oblong of light in the darkness, the flash of a lantern, and then dear, dear voices calling out. "That you?" "Have you brought her?" "That you, Aidie?" "Haeremai." "Haeremai." "Really you at last! Let me have a look at you, Aidie." "Well, my little girl, so you've come back at last to your old dad."

And next moment a little lady with her arms

around her father's neck, her head on his coat, her heart beating fast and tears on her cheek, was calling him her dear and her darling. A man, not yet seen, but felt was saying, "Tut, tut, nonsense. Come in and get something to eat," when his voice got husky and he caught her to him, and nearly smothering her said, "My pet, my Ada's girl," and thought of his dead wife. Then Emmie, dear good Emmie, step-sister, but in love almost a mother to Adelaide's orphan childhood, Emmie who had been waiting her turn, hugged her in a long close warm hug and led her indoors. Adelaide stood in the middle of a bright old-fashioned room, her eyes dazzled with the light, and she sent soft glances around the homely walls and furniture while Emmie stood still to admire her. Ten years ago she had left her home, a little girl in a black frock with a white sad face. Now she had come back, a fairy dropped out of the darkness. When they all got into the dining-room, an odd constraint fell on them. They began to be shy of her and she of them, and to feel they had to make each other's acquaintance again.

Emmie was a disillusionment, though an agreeable one. Adelaide had always regarded her sister as an elderly person, but she had forgotten how decidedly homely she was. Emmeline was stout, with a shape between square and round, and a large face that plainly showed she had just been cooking. Yet it was a pleasant face, the face of a born mother, if such

a paradox may be allowed. You could not think of anything more comfortable than to be kissed and cuddled by Emmie. She took off Adelaide's hat and brought her to the table, and there heaped her plate with good things. There was a wood fire in the open white-washed fire-place and pine-logs blazing and spluttering, and on the table there was a shaded oil-lamp and a feast of Emmie's own cooking, such scones as Adelaide had not tasted even in Scotland, wild honey and clotted cream, tea-cakes in piles and preserves of amber-colour and ruby jelly, a cold Paradise duck and the home-cured ham of a wild boar. "It was an old chum of yours who shot the boar and the wild duck too, on purpose for you, Aidie," said Emmeline but Adelaide was in a delicious dream. She seemed to feel Emmie, see Emmie, taste Emmie all through that meal, and thought that, though she was from an æsthetic point of view plain, yet as she sat at the head of the table and poured out tea and served the good things she had cooked, she was more than beautiful to behold. From time to time the sisters examined each other, Emmie more openly, Adelaide under some well-bred pretext. Once they caught each other doing this and laughed, and some of the constraint wore off. Adelaide had been talking about her London season when suddenly the thought came, "Imagine Emmie in Mayfair!" and a light ripple of laughter just touched her lips. The next moment she was penitent, and going to her

bedroom brought from her trunks treasures of costly lace, a piece bought from a cottager in County Kerry, a scarf from Como, old point lace of Italy and lace of Malta, and long floating scarves of silk and gauze reminiscent of summer days' shopping at Liberty's and in Bond Street. These she draped gracefully about her sister and herself, over her hair and round her neck and floating down, taking up and throwing aside first one and then another. While she was amusing herself in this way under the fire of her father's sarcasm, the door opened, letting in the cool night air, and the man who had escorted her came in. He gave her one of his enigmatical glances, sat down at the table, and proceeded to help himself liberally to the provisions. Emmeline came to make some fresh tea and then poured it out, remarking, "How late you are!" He drained the cup at one draught, and then said good-naturedly, "Now, you look after your sister and don't bother about me."

Adelaide gave a slight shiver, which might have been the draught and might have been annoyance. The voice seemed familiar. "Do I remember him or not? I wonder how I ought to treat him?" she thought. Not being able to decide, she did not treat him at all, that is to say she ignored him. If he had been either a groom or a gentleman she would have known exactly how to behave, but he was clearly neither. His manner was not even insolent, it was quiet and unaffected. And yet this was a

profounder kind of insolence. It showed that he failed to recognise her superiority. This irritated her, and she talked a long way over his head about Gothic and early Norman arches and Cologne Cathedral and Tintern Abbey, the tombs of the Medici, and then about the London stage and Tree, of Ellen Terry and of Bernard Shaw, of Melba and of the Wagner Cycle at the Royal Opera. While she was talking, and she talked very prettily, she forgot about being annoyed, and was carried away by bright memories of those crowded years since she had left the girls' school at Wycombe. "Well, you've had a rare good time, my little lass," said her father. "I meant you should, but you'll find the bush deadly dull after London and the Continent."

"I will not, Father." Adelaide came and knelt by his arm-chair and put up her hand to his face as she used to do. Father alone did not seem changed. "It has all been delightful, Dad," she said. "And Grandmamma Bohun has been very kind. It all seems like a fairy opera these last two or three years. But I've only got one father and one sister in the world, and now I've come home to you both." The slender arms went up again and closed around his neck, and the flower-like head was laid down again in its old place.

The man got up and went out quietly. For a person who did not speak one word to Adelaide's hundred, he was remarkably trouble-

some. His going out was annoying as his coming in. It had a positive quality about it. Adelaide could neither give her mind to him nor yet get him out of her head until she had said goodnight for the fourth time and had finished saying, "O Emmie, but I must just tell you," or "O Dad, but I forgot." At last she was alone in her own mite of a bedroom, so small, so white and pretty, with bush flowers on the old cedar chest of drawers that used to be mother's. Whoever was he, this bronzed and bearded labourer, claiming to be her equal? Oh confusion, could it be Dennis MacDiarmid? Her heart seemed almost to stop, while there flashed across her mind familiar looks and tones. Long ago her grandmamma had forbidden her even to think of "any such person," and the child with an appalled sense of having committed some unknown crime, had done her utmost to fulfil the majestic command. While coming home, she had from the habit of years banished to a subconscious sphere the remembrances that kept floating upwards. But *this*—this large, broad, full-grown man, changed beyond all recollection—could this really be the boy-playmate of her childhood? Away back in the prohibited realms of her memory there had throughout been a vague expectation of meeting that boy again, sometime—but never transformed into such a questionable shape as this. The whole story came back now, and the phantom vision was scorching her. That creek

and that group of tree-ferns—how dared he remind her? She saw herself, a little girl of ten, putting on her best white muslin frock and her "old-gold" sash, stealing her dead mamma's wedding ring out of her workbox and going to her tree-fern "church" to be married to Dennis. She had made him be bridegroom and priest in one. She had made him read—oh, is anything in the world equal to the atrocities perpetrated by innocence?—she had insisted on his reading every word of the marriage service, beginning at that part where it begins to be interesting, "Wilt thou have this woman——." He had vowed he would. She could just see him as he looked then, mock-grave, enjoying it all. He was sixteen years old. She thought it was much the same look he had given her once or twice to-night. For two years after she went to her Cornish grandmother, Adelaide had cherished the romantic consciousness of a secret marriage, and had written to him. Oh those letters, did he dare to keep them still?—letters signed, "Your loving wife," and ending with a row of crosses for kisses, until one day Lady Bohun opened a scrawl from Dennis, and the sprouting youthful fancy was levelled in the dust. Adelaide grew so hot that she put out the light, and throwing the window open, sat down by it. The recollection of that far-away bush idyll made her half shiver, half laugh. Of course she had been only a foolish child with a dramatic instinct.

But he remembered it all, that was clear. Was it possible he presumed—he had given her at that mock marriage a bridal bouquet of wild myrtle. She indeed had asked him for it. That was why he had given her the rama-rama to-night. She seemed to smell the scent again, and not only in fancy. Oh yes, she had left the branch on the dressing-table. Adelaide flashed into sudden resentment, and threw it out of the window. Ill-bred boor to take advantage of a child's folly and to suppose he could claim intimacy with Lady Bohun's grand-daughter, the *fiancée* of Horace Brandon, the pet of London drawing-rooms. Adelaide soared above her old playmate into those inaccessible heights reserved for the British aristocracy, and re-gained sufficient serenity to go to bed and fall fast asleep.

# CHAPTER II.



BEING at home is not quite the same thing as coming home. It is only once in a lifetime that you can come home as Adelaide did, but you can live at home continuously, and what you do continuously can hardly be rapturous. Adelaide kept her sense of pleasure, but it began to be dashed with some wandering isles of night. The first morning after her arrival she was wakened by a chorus of bush birds, and went to the window, with only a silk wrapper on, to look out. It was early morning with a sky so blue and so still. The bush was waking all around her, and letting its nightdress of white mists fall in coils at the feet of the trees while it clothed itself above with light. A dear little fantail, Piwakawaka, came fluttering from a ngaio tree in through the window, flying with wavering impulses of confidence and hope and alarm. Then recognising in the silk-clad figure with the wooing voice a kindred spirit, it flew above her head for some moments, settled on her outstretched arm, and then, both terrified and glad at its own audacity, it fluttered back into the bush to tell all the other birds what it had seen. This episode delighted Adelaide,

and braced her up to endure many privations. It seemed there was no morning tea unless she went into the kitchen for it, an inconceivable experiment on that first day. Neither was there fire nor hot water. She bathed heroically in cold water, and rather enjoyed it. Then she put on a simple morning costume, exquisitely made, and all of one fawn colour; she never wore blouses and skirts of two colours, she was too slight and symmetrical not to require uniformity. She had a silver belt, and she stuck some bush blossoms in it. As she could not expect any stranger to see her, there was no apparent reason for spending an hour over her toilette, coiling and uncoiling her hair till her arms were tired, and coming back to give a parting look at herself just before leaving her room. But that is what Adelaide did do.

She had no more doubt now how to hold herself towards MacDiarmid. He would have to be taught their relative positions. Adelaide had only to remain at the serene and lofty distance of the genuine aristocracy and the thing would be done.

So she came tranquilly into the sitting-room, where Emmeline greeted her warmly, waited on her, and said, "You'll have to tell me every-thing you've been accustomed to, Aidie, and I'll do it." Adelaide inwardly vowed to do no such thing. She was much too well-bred not to be uncomfortable at having her sister to wait on her, and submitted to it only on account of a

new sensation of being rather helpless and dependent. MacDiarmid came in to breakfast. He evidently lived in the house. Adelaide gave him a coolly-gracious "Good-morning," in the style of Lady Brandon when she meant to signify that a common person had been trespassing on her own uncommonness. She had thoughts of making some remark about the weather, but he did not seem encouraging, so she gave the idea up, and kept up a running stream of conversation with her father, chiefly about her grandmother, old Lady Bohun, and about her cousins and second cousins and cousins once and twice removed. MacDiarmid got up as soon as he had finished breakfast and left the room, and as he left she could not resist meeting his quiet eyes. There was no amusement in them now, but something else. "What was it—contempt?" she asked herself, hot and wounded. How could Dennis—or rather, how dare MacDiarmid — Adelaide, in some confusion, dropped the thought, whatever it was, that she was beginning to think. After all, it was not of the slightest importance what opinion such a person formed of her. Of course Dad wanted to hear about Mother's people, and if they did go to Eton and Oxford, or sit in Parliament, and shoot in Scotland; well, there are other people in the world beside farm labourers. MacDiarmid turned at the door to ask her father about a ram hogget and some other creatures—some of those improper male and

female animals whose names she had been diligently taught in school, and ever afterwards forbidden to mention. But he seemed in a hurry to get away.

At the mid-day dinner he was absent, and while her father and Emmeline fidgeted, Adelaide began to have compunctions. Of course she had not meant to hurt him or drive him out of the house, but only to prevent undue presumption. If he came in to tea, she would smooth it all over. She came into the dining-room, an irresistible vision of pinkness and fragility, in fine muslin and exquisite lace.

Emmeline remarked, "You'll cost your husband a fortune to keep, Aidie."

"Oh, my husband won't think this dress expensive, Emmie," said Adelaide airily. "I will show you some evening gowns after tea." Horace Brandon would not endure to see her a shade less exquisitely dressed than she was. MacDiarmid, who had not waited, was again leaving, when Mr. Borlase said, "What the mischief has come over you, Dennis? Stay and talk with Aidie. You're not frightened of her, are you?" He stopped awkwardly, she thought, but said in a good-humoured open manner, "I rather believe I am."

"Please don't go on my account," Adelaide said. The boor sat down by her, only saying, "I'll take you at your word for once." Adelaide floated down gracefully to his level. She said it was so sweet of her father and him not to

destroy the bush around the house. "Oh, it's sweet of us, is it?" he said, and looked at her with eyes so shockingly like those of the boy she used to know that she very nearly called him "Dennis." She talked about the birds, and told him of her morning visitor, which really seemed to interest him. She asked the names of native wild flowers, and identified some from memory. The delight of last night in returning to her childhood came back, and her cheeks were pinker than her dress, and her eyes made him think of a bird flying up to the clouds. He listened with a pleased attention, which gratified her.

"If you'd like a ride to-morrow," he said, "I'll take you up the mountains and show you something prettier than you'll find about here—a mile of mountain lilies and any quantity of mountain daisies and gentians."

Adelaide was thrown back again from the glow into the coolness. She did not approve of his offering "to take" her, and answered with distant sweetness, "Thank you, I will see if I have any other engagements," and appeared to muse over a contingency so highly probable in the Bush, while in reality she was considering the suggestion. Mountain lilies and daisies and the Alps themselves were too delightful to be resisted. Besides it would give her a chance of putting things on their correct footing with MacDiarmid. Finally she announced her acceptance. It was received with a disconcert-

ing lack of gallantry. "Don't put yourself out if you don't care about it," MacDiarmid said shortly. He really had no nice feeling and no tact. Adelaide said in a clear distinct tone, "I have said that I do wish to go, Mr. MacDiarmid."

They had a morning of breeze and sun. Adelaide's heart sprang upward to the summits before ever they started; she had dreamed in the night of snow and snow-white lilies. MacDiarmid began by being gruff when he brought round the horses, but no one could have stayed cross with Adelaide that morning. Dennis at least could not, as he helped her to mount, and made her put her small and dainty foot upon his hand, and saw her eyes when she leaned down to take the whip from him, eyes that made him think of a lark poising itself a moment in its flight. Dennis read a great deal of poetry and was very intimatewith Shakespeare and Burns and other antiquated text books.

"You ought to have stronger shoes," he remarked pleasantly. "You'll get these cut to pieces on the hills."

"Oh, it won't matter," Adelaide answered lightly, "if only they don't look too frightful before I get back."

"I was thinking about your feet more than your shoes," he said, and Adelaide blushed, but forgave his crudity.

They rode fast, the horses were fresh and so was Adelaide, and the blood sang in her veins. If he had been a gentleman, MacDiarmid could

not have been more attentive and careful of her. At the ford he dismounted to shorten her stirrup, and on the other side to put it right again. He never once touched her unnecessarily, nor with a touch too long or close, yet every time she felt his hand it sent warmth through her. They got amongst the mountains and rode some miles through the pass. Adelaide thought she would put off setting things on their proper footing until they were going home. Nothing indeed was on any footing that morning. Everything was flying, floating, sailing in mists and clouds and wind, and Adelaide's soul was borne on with them. She mounted up into the clear high light and air that lie above the clouds, and saw white peaks rising out of the mists, and a wide river of turquoise rolling unsullied out of a glacier, and a sea-gull from the wild western fiords flying far inland, and she felt the wind blow pure off the snow. Then she saw a mountain side all hung with thousands and thousands of immaculate white lilies. Dennis wanted her to stay on the road below while he gathered the flowers for her, but Adelaide imperatively waived the suggestion. Her fancy rioted amongst those flowers, and he was surprised how lightly and swiftly she climbed up and up an almost invisible track of rolling stones and bare rock until she stood breathless among the lilies, perplexed with the multitude and with desire of more than her hands could possibly hold. Dennis had given her a good

deal of assistance up that mountain, but only as an excellent guide would do, and she knew well how to receive necessary attentions. At the top he persuaded her to rest. "Don't overdo it," he said, "you've got to get back, you know. I don't believe you've thought of that." Adelaide had not, and she did not want to just yet. They had lunch together, which meant his sitting not very far off, and taking it from her hand—that fine, slender artist's hand, quick to feel and to respond—and they drank the milk in turn. Foolish Emmie, to put in only one glass. She talked about mountain lilies, and she upbraided him for saying they were really buttercups and forbade him ever to make such a prosaic remark to her again. Lilies they were and lilies they should be as long as Adelaide was near. She saw a snowdrift up in a hollow under a rock and took some snow in her palm, admiring the miracle of its whiteness and played with it, letting it fall bit by bit through her fingers. She wanted to feast on it, but her guide would not let her, and said, "Now that's enough. It's not good for you," and as she had travelled in Switzerland before, she knew one must never disobey the guide.

Adelaide sat high up and looked at the sky over her head and then at the white and shining clouds rolling up the gorges below her feet, and she looked at the summits of snow rising out of the mists around her. Then she looked at Dennis MacDiarmid. He sat bare-

headed on a rock a little way off. She thought he would make a good subject for an artist, and the mountains would form a natural background, Or better still than a picture, a statue of bronze would do justice to head and trunk and limb, so large and massive and barbaric. Regarding him solely from the artistic point of view, she saw that his hair and beard in the sunlight were rather magnificent, and that his eyes were quite beautiful—Irish eyes, made up of laughter and an immense gravity. Judged by every civilised standard, Horace Brandon was incomparably the finer man of the two, but he would have been most incongruous amongst the mountains and the clouds where Dennis was quite at home. He was "a son of the soil," but there was something pleasant about that—soil of this great, free, fragrant land. Adelaide had been very fond of the boy Dennis long ago, had imagined that she loved him better than anyone else in the world. Had she been treating him badly since her return? She hoped he had not been wounded. It was ill-bred to ignore the past. Of course he must understand that the old intimacy could not possibly be renewed, but still they might be friends in a distant sort of way. This seemed a good opportunity of putting him in his proper place, so gently and amiably that he would hardly know what was being done to him.

"Mr. MacDiarmid," she began, with a pretty expression, "I hope you have forgiven me

for not remembering you the night I came home."

"Well, I expect I've altered a good bit since you left."

"I was only a little girl then."

"I think you are only a little girl now, Aidie."

Adelaide turned pale with the wound to her dignity. She rose and said it was time to go, but, determined that MacDiarmid should not imagine he had power to disturb her, she merely gave him one glance of surprised inquiry and began to descend. It was much harder work getting down that mountain than it had been getting up, and she refused his arm except when absolutely forced to take it. As they rode down the Pass, the mists had begun to roll all the high Alps out of sight, and they clung round her and chilled her. Adelaide was not accustomed to such rough roads nor such long hours in the saddle, and now that her excitement had gone, a mental collapse set in, and she quivered with the effort of concealing it. The man had got it into his stupid head that she was simply cross from over-tiredness, and ought to be humoured in silence. As he helped her to the saddle he said, "Tired? I wish I hadn't taken you up that mountain; I knew you'ud do yourself up, and now you have."

"Taken her!" "I went of my own accord, Mr. MacDiarmid."

"You couldn't have gone without me."

This was true, but irritating, and Adelaide

declined to pursue the conversation farther. She thought he was treating her like a servant girl out for a holiday. No doubt that was the sort of girl he was accustomed to. There was no reserve, no delicate suggestiveness about this man. He was not even taking the trouble to woo her, but assuming that she would only be too glad to renew the old intimacy. She was not a dairymaid, she was Adelaide Borlase. He needed to be kept at a distance, and she had somehow failed to do so. Yet she had said nothing that might have disgraced any drawing-room. Adelaide had been so well brought up by her grandmother. Not all her life would she forget the hour when Lady Bohun, after disposing of Dennis's remarkable letter, had taught her once for all that she owed a duty to Herself and to her Family and to Society. Even old ladies always spoke of her as "a nice girl." She was accustomed to delicate flatteries and pretty compliments, but she had learnt how to receive them. She flirted in the same way that she danced and shook hands, a little way off, and with grace.

The ride in the fog seemed interminable, but at last they got into the bush.

"Do you remember the creek, Aidie?"

MacDiarmid's voice, breaking the long silence, had something in it that made Adelaide desperately angry, and she used all her will to keep her answer calm and distinct.

"Mr. MacDiarmid, you have no right to

take advantage of anything I did or said when I was a silly child. That has nothing to do with either of us now."

It was a speaking silence that followed, but Adelaide could not tell what it might be saying. When he spoke—he had such an irritating way of replying a quarter of an hour after one had spoken—his voice seemed to come out of the mist and to be far away.

"You mean that?"

"Of course," haughtily.

"Very well. I won't trouble you again."

Adelaide felt ten miles more tired than before. It was dreadful. It was final. It was like killing things. All she really wanted in this world was to behave prettily and to please and be pleased. The creek? Yes, indeed she did remember that creek. Dennis used to carry her over. It was a trick of hers when she was five or six years old to pretend she could not cross alone. Sometimes he would put his arms behind his back and tell her she could easily get over by herself and tease her till she nearly cried, but it always ended in his lifting her up and setting her down on the other side with a kiss. She could almost remember the clasp of his strong safe arms; they had been close to her many times to-day. It was shameful, it was outrageous to have to remember such things. Indeed, she could not possibly have remembered them if she had not been so demoralised by fatigue. It was she who had

wooed him in their childhood. It was she who had arranged their bush wedding. He had told her to "wait a bit." "Wait a bit!" for him to pick up or leave at his pleasure. Was he thinking of that now? Was that why he would not pay her even proper deference? Of course it was all childish nonsense. It was monstrous that a lady should be held responsible for a foolish child. Yet somehow, re-entering the scenes of her childhood gave her the sensation of being the same child again, or rather of being two distinct persons who did not agree with each other. All day long she had been seeing the boy Dennis in the man MacDiarmid, and now that the bush idyll was dead and gone, she could not help feeling a romantic interest in it.

Was he badly hurt? Or did he not care in the least. He kept an exasperating silence, and Adelaide thought what a tactless and ill-bred thing silence might become. The long, low house came in sight and then Adelaide said—

"Of course, Mr. MacDiarmid, there is no reason for us to be on anything but friendly terms. My father thinks so much of you. But I am sure you must see——"

"Don't explain. You've made yourself clear enough."

Then a few minutes later, "Do you want me to help you down, or will you get down yourself?"

It was barbarous insolence. To be sure Adelaide had sprung from her horse unaided

the first night he brought her home, but then it was under special excitement, and now she was utterly weary. If it had not been for her duty to Herself she could have cried.

"I must leave that question to you, Mr. MacDiarmid."

He helped her boorishly, and took the horses to the stables. Agitated and mortified, Adelaide went into the house, and with a revulsion of delight found Horace and Evelyn Brandon waiting for her. Ah, these were the people that really understood her. Horace was chivalrous and courtly and said many charming things. They sang solos and operatic duets together and discussed their latest news of London friends, weddings and travels and the stage. Adelaide's colour glowed with the touch of snow and mountain air. She had changed into an evening gown of pale pink crêpe de chine. Her young and delicate arms glistened beneath the fall of transparent pink, and her white throat was visible beneath the lace. MacDiarmid came in during the evening in an absolutely unembarrassed manner, as if he were quite at home, took up a book and sat down in a roomy arm chair. Horace Brandon smiled a gay inquiry at Adelaide which said, "Is this the sort of thing you do in your country?" so plainly, that she answered in an undertone, "Contrasts are half the charm of life, Mr. Brandon. That is why nothing is tame or flat in New Zealand."

"No, there certainly is not much tameness. And one of the contrasts in this room is very charming to-night."

Emmeline had gone out into the kitchen to get supper ready. She had only fitful help from the wife of M'Ilvride, the head shepherd and ploughman, and now Mrs. M'Ilvride had come over with her baby in her arms to tell Miss Borlase that she was near her time, and what with her man and the six bairns she couldna think o' comin' near Hæremai for mony a day. As her voice was unsubdued and very North British, interesting details of the M'Ilvride ménage floated into the parlour, where Horace was singing with a smile in his eyes:—

"Non obbliar che un occhio tutt' ardor
Ad ammirarti e intento
E che t' aspett' amor."

Both he and Adelaide enjoyed this light wooing through love songs, significant of inexpressible sensations but relieved from sentiment by a touch of operatic gaiety. It was the most perfectly decorous and sublimated form of courtship, and also for Horace the least troublesome. He liked to have even his emotions prepared for him by unleisured authors and composers, just as Piccadilly lovers like those ideal buttonholes which Solomon prepares for them.

The parlour was a long and low-ceiled room, where shadows would linger in corners and nooks, and the end, where MacDiarmid now

occupied rather too large a space, seemed very far away from the piano with its candles, and from the lady in bright-hued draperies, and her immaculate admirer and her English friend. Emmie dismissed Mrs. M'Ilvride, and soon came into the room with the whitehaired, red-cheeked baby in her arms and sat down near M'Diarmid. The graceless babe, as soon as he saw him, stretched out his chubby hands and chuckled, "Mon! Auntie Emmie na, Mon, Mon!" Dennis took the infant Alec on his knee, gave him his watchchain to play with, and when he fell asleep kept his arm round him and went on reading, without further disturbing himself. Adelaide passed him once, and glancing down saw that his book was Milman's *History of Latin Christianity*. The man, the baby, the book, were all so hopelessly out-of-the-world that she felt a slightly satirical mirth. Her resentment against him fled. What could one expect of such a man? She was ten thousand miles away from M'Diarmid in her own sphere of grace and lightness and gaiety.

Emmie sat, absorbed in her sister.

"What a lovely colour Aidie has to-night!" she exclaimed. "Isn't she pretty, Dennis?"

He glanced up and then down again at his book. "Yes, very."

"Have you two quarrelled?"

"Which two?"

"You and Aidie."

"No. She has only been telling me to

remember that I am her father's hired man and that she is Lady Bohun's granddaughter, Miss Adelaide Borlase. Don't interfere, Emmie."

Emmeline got redder than usual.

"Dennis." She laid her hand on his knee and lowered her voice under the current of music and laughter at the other end. "Don't let her marry that man. He was talked about with a married woman. Evelyn Brandon is shocked at my speaking about it, but she doesn't think the thing itself matters. Lady Brandon wants to have him married to Aidie and the talk hushed up."

"Well?"

"Look at him now, bending over her and smiling into her eyes. How can she like him? I never could endure smooth men. He is all pink and white, like a Christmas cake. And look at his figure! I believe he wears stays."

"Do leave me alone, Emmie. Here, take the little man from me. I'm going out for a gallop to get over that (he used a rude word) crawl this evening."

MacDiarmid did not gallop far, and when he came back he went to the slip-rails where the little girl in the pink gingham frock and the white muslin pinafore used to wait for him ten years ago. He leant on the slip-rails and forgot even to smoke. "Little girl in the waving silk and gauze, with the delicate vivid face and the eyes of my little sweetheart, what have they done to you over there in England?"

# CHAPTER III.



EMMELINE insisted on doing the washing herself when Monday came duly round. It came on to blow heavily and to rain, and her flax clothes-line broke, and all the clean clothes were thrown on to the muddy grass. The kitchen chimney smoked atrociously, and the smoke filled the house, and got into Adelaide's eyes, and threathened to injure all her Paris and London gowns. Emmie had cold mutton and dumplings for dinner, and the dumplings did not rise. Adelaide nervously begged to help her sister, but Emmeline was one of those immorally unselfish people who never allow anyone else a chance. Adelaide was dismissed as incompetent, and painted in disconsolate humiliation. Mr. Borlase, who had not been well for some time, read and smoked and fell asleep in his armchair.

In the evening Emmeline, not in the best of tempers, began to attack Adelaide in the intervals of machining small-clothes for Alec M'Ilvride, on the occasion of his emerging from frocks.

"Why do you treat Dennis so badly, Aidie?"

"My dear Emmie, do explain what you mean."

The Wonderful Wertheim, very much overworked, rattled on discordantly for a time.

"Dennis is a fine fellow, Adelaide, good enough for you or anyone. Evelyn Brandon asked me if he were our groom or our ploughman. He is father's manager now. If it weren't for Dennis, we should not have a roof over our heads, father and I. He could have sold us up long ago. Any other man would have said he was sorry, and would have done it all the same. And he has had better offers than managing Hæremai. Major Brandon himself tried to get him a year ago. What have you against him?"

"Nothing in the least. I have no doubt he is an excellent young man, but that is no reason for my being intimate with him."

"I've no patience with you, Aidie. You used to be so fond of him, too! I wish you had never gone to England. Ever since you came back you've done nothing but slight him, or take favours and pretend to be far above thanking him. You need to be told the truth sometimes. I suppose it is because Dennis has made his own way up that you despise him. Well, if his father was a ploughman, my mother was father's housekeeper before they were married, and Dennis is my equal. I'm not Lady Bohun's granddaughter, I'm thankful to say."

"I think, Emmie, you are forgetting yourself.

I don't despise any one except for the way they behave."

Even this sublime sentiment failed to overawe Emmeline. The ancient Wonderful Wertheim jerked and rattled on while Adelaide sat a thousand miles (spiritually) distant from her sister as well as from Dennis MacDiarmid. It was all vulgar, jarring, lowest middle-class. If only she had been a child she could have cried. Rain, washing tragedies, smoke, cold mutton and heavy dumplings were nothing compared to a scolding sister, persecuting her to accept the dull wooing of a ploughman's son. These were the prose of bush life. Mountain lilies and the scent of rama-rama, the tree-ferns and the fantail were all loveliest poetry, but they too could sting and wound. They were somehow inseparably connected with Dennis MacDiarmid.

Adelaide went to her bedroom and did cry. She thought of her grandmother, who was always gentle and quiet even in her most awe-inspiring hours; she wished herself back in the little castle on the Cornish coast, where everything always went smoothly. She recalled her brilliant and triumphant summer in London, when the only problem was not to be worn out with pleasures, where the world was all drawing-rooms and parks, and lovely flowers and lovelier flunkeys, where everyone had pretty dresses and pretty manners to match. Then she imagined living on the farm for the rest of

her life, and suddenly the house in which she sat seemed to have grown so small, so lonely, so remote, in the dismal rain and darkness. There was no more magnificent music of the Wagner Cycle, no more gorgeous banqueting Neros and Roman chariots and the entrancing humour of stage tragedy, no more bowing and smiling and flattering eyes bent on herself. Here she must stay to be handed over to this boor, who would not even take the trouble to make himself agreeable. Was there no escape for her?

There was a way which Adelaide knew quite well, but she was much too nice a girl to put it definitely before herself. The whole of the next day she spent at Miramar, the homestead of Major Brandon, who was famous throughout the province for the style he kept up. The family lived almost as much in England as in New Zealand, and did everything in the English manner. Oh, the joy and relief of escaping from the farm! Horace laid himself out to be as agreeable as possible, and gave amusing accounts of his colonial experiences, and of what he believed to be the habits of the natives. Emmeline Borlase, on her side, had several superstitions about Londoners, and her description of Horace Brandon must not be taken too literally. He did not, for example, wear stays, and if he had a graceful figure that was not an offence to everyone. Adelaide lightly touched upon her troubles. "I feel that I am transmi-

grating," she said, "and am a compound of two beings. You can't imagine what a painful process it is until it gets completed. I suppose I shall take to washing clothes and cooking dumplings and working the Wonderful Wertheim some day."

"Heaven forbid!" Horace Brandon exclaimed with mock-dramatic fervour, but with sincere commiseration.

The butler waited at dinner and there were eight courses. Adelaide was ashamed of enjoying these circumstances, but she did, and she enjoyed still more the sensation of wearing evening dress again and knowing herself to be absolutely charming. Mr. Brandon's implied admiration soothed her bruised and wounded pride and pleasure in herself. He cut the choicest stephanotis in the conservatory and presented it to her with an air and tone that said more than the gift. He handed her coffee and sweets, he begged to be made use of, he brought a fan and fanned her when the drawing-room got too hot, admired her gown and humourously assured her that he was quite an authority on ladies' dresses. He really found her very sweet that night. She deferred to him constantly, asked him what song he would like her to sing, and whether she should wear his flowers in her hair or in her belt, and she promised not to read any more Nietzsche if he disapproved. Horace thought she really would make a dear little wife. He was a man of the

world and did not expect impossible bliss, but Adelaide was certainly the nicest girl he had met. Until now marriage had never presented itself under the aspect of anything but a duty that Lord Brandon's second son owed to himself and his family and to society.

He drove home to "Hæremai" with her in a closed carriage, through heavy rain, and on the way he made her a definite offer, in a nice gentlemanly manner, without importunity or stale hackneyed sentiment. It was only, "For we do understand each other, Adelaide, don't we?" and from her with her eyes fixed on the stephanotis, "Yes." Then Horace, "You can make me very happy, Adelaide," and she, "I hope to do so." "Give me my name, dear," and then "Horace," very softly, without the least vulgarity of emotion. But she would not give him more that night, and withdrew even her hand, which he had some thought of putting to his lips.

On his return he sat in his own room for some time, smoking a choice cigar, and enjoying most agreeable reflections. Adelaide's reserve was a trifle disappointing, but still more stimulating. It roused in him something not exclusively civilised. He really did want her now, he even wanted matrimony. Adelaide would be an ideal wife for him. With all her little flights, she was not really rebellious; she only required a light, firm hand like his to tame her. There was a dash of colonial wild-

ness about her that would have to be subdued before she took her place in English Society, but in a young *fiancée* it was deliciously amusing. The sportive taming of Adelaide promised to be a most agreeable pastime and was quite in the very latest style of courtship. Moreover, and this was a weightier consideration, his engagement would stop once for all the impertinent and disgusting gossip over his private affairs, that is, his much misunderstood connection with Mrs. Poynter. Not that he had been much to blame, the woman was older than he, and he had been most decorous over it all, nothing would have come out but for her own brainless vanity. The very remembrance of her and of the half-suppressed scandal sickened his æsthetic instincts, and he turned back for relief to the thought of his *fiancée*. Dear little Adelaide, what a good thing there were a few nice girls still left in the world. Horace finished his cigar and wrote to his mother announcing his approaching marriage. He knew she would be greatly pleased. It was she who had directed his attention to his sister's schoolgirl friend after the Poynter episode, and she who had sent him travelling in her company over Europe. His letter was a nice filial production, and altogether all was well with the world.

Adelaide sat in her own bedroom, forgetting to stop brushing her fair hair, not quite so satisfied as her lover was. She wanted to go

back to England, to sail in a yacht and rush in a motor, to dream away mornings in transferring her pretty fairylike fancies into shape and colour of pictures; she very much wanted another London season; she had not had nearly enough of the musical and operatic comedy of life, the romance and prestige and antique associations of wealth and rank. But she honestly confessed to herself that she would have preferred all these luxuries without a husband attached. She hoped Horace would never want to kiss her; he had looked uncomfortably near it to-night. But oh, no; Horace would never do anything so antiquated. Kissing had quite gone out three seasons ago. It had been proved to be a bacterial and a barbarous practice. How bacterial and how barbarous it was Adelaide had never realised before. As she put his flowers in water she tried to say "Dear Horace," and then she gave a little laugh. It sounded so sentimental and Early Victorian. "How absurd I am!" she thought. "We are Twentieth Century lovers. He won't want me to gush, and I never shall." Her spirits rose and she went to bed cheerfully. After all, Horace and the Brandons' drawing-room were an unspeakable relief from a smoky house and a rattling machine and Emmeline red in the face, losing her temper and scolding.

Adelaide had not been many hours asleep when there was a sudden sound of something

heavy falling, and soon afterwards Emmie's voice in terror crying, "Father! Father!" Adelaide started up in bed and listened through a strained silence, that changed into a confusion of sounds, plainly heard through the thin wooden walls. Hurriedly she threw on her dressing-gown and came to the dining-room. Her father was lying helpless on the floor, Emmeline supporting his head and MacDiarmid bending over him.

"Oh Dad—Emmie—Oh Dennis, what is it?"

They had not heard her light footstep and Emmie, absorbed in her father, neither spoke nor stirred, but Dennis gave her a long look. The wind wafted the thin silk gown around her. She held a candle in her hand, and its wavering flame showed her so slight, so frail a being for trouble. So it seemed to him. She almost appeared to be walking in sleep, her face so white and her eyes wide and startled. Dennis rose to meet her, and she laid a light appealing hand upon his sleeve. He drew a sharp breath as if her touch cut him, and almost shook off her hand, but said with the kindest grave eyes, "He's not dead—it is only a stroke. Get me some brandy and don't you give way."

They raised Mr. Borlase and laid him on his bed. Soon afterwards Dennis came back into the bedroom equipped in oilskins and leggings for the long ride to Roslyn, the township on the other side of the mountains twenty-

five miles away. He gave Mr. Borlase a parting look before leaving, and then turning to Adelaide said, "I'll bring the doctor back by the morning. People don't die from one stroke. He may have a long life yet. Cheer up, little girl."

She answered only by a piteously quiet look of thanks, re-lit her candle and lighted him to the back door, still unconscious even of what she was wearing.

"Suppose Dr. Meares is out, Dennis?"

"Well, I suppose I can go after him. I'll get him back, never fear."

"O Dennis, it is such a wild night for you to go over that terrible pass, and the rivers will be in flood."

"You're never worrying about me, are you? Go in, little lady, and put something warm on. That silk you're wearing is as thin as a convolvulus flower. You'll catch your death of cold, standing about in this draught."

Adelaide dressed and went back to sit beside her father. He was breathing in heavy gasps, his blue eyes fixed with a confused look on the ceiling until he fell asleep. Adelaide heard the sound of horses' hoofs on the gravel, then a deluge of rain, the rushing of wind and flood and the creaking and snapping of boughs. Twenty-five miles over swollen creeks and rivers and up a great mountain pass. Dennis might make nothing of it, but it seemed a tremendous undertaking to her, and she shrank

at every outburst of the storm. The rivers would be flooded and not one was bridged. An increasing fear possessed her that the doctor would not be found, would come too late, and she fastened all her hopes on his appearance as if that meant her father's life. Suppose Dennis were swept away in the river, or hurled down some precipice before ever he reached the township. A great blast shrieked round the house. A great tree fell crashing to the ground, and she heard the Wainoni roaring. If Dennis never came back——

Then Adelaide made a discovery, and with honesty and sincerity owned it to herself. "O Dennis, I love you. Can't you hear me out in the storm? I love you, just the same as when we were children together. O God, send him back home to me out of the dreadful mountains and the roaring floods! Dennis, Dennis, I never will be Horace Brandon's wife."

# CHAPTER IV.

## PETRUCHIO AT PLAY.

ADELAIDE'S mind had not quite reached a position of stable equilibrium, and next morning it even vibrated slightly towards civilisation. There is always something flat and calculating about the daylight that follows a night of excitement. When Dr. Meares arrived, he made light of Mr. Borlase's illness—it was such a long distance to come and attend a patient who was not wealthy. He promised him comparative recovery and many years of life. Emmie, who had been superhumanly heroic all through the crisis, thereupon weakened and succumbed to what she called neuralgia, but which was really nervous reaction. Dennis came into the kitchen prosaically undrowned and uninjured, but dripping and sodden with muddy water. His hair and beard were clotted with rain, his cheeks were stained with it, his boots left streams upon the floor and his eyes were dull and tired. He threw off his oil-skins, asked in a toneless voice for the doctor's report of her father, and then sat heavily down. Adelaide got him some breakfast, but he only looked in a dull way at her performing this unusual task, and did not thank her nor appear to take any

notice of her. He asked for some whisky, which he gulped down not very artistically, and then, leaning his elbows on the table, laid his head down on one arm and went fast asleep. He was dead beat, and slept like a great tired child, breathing so heavily she was in momentary terror lest he should snore. A distraught sense of comedy began to affect her head in the midst of tragedy as she sat watching in her father's room. Her eyes occasionally wandered to Dennis, who was visible through the open door. She was utterly weary herself with the long night's vigil, and now that the strain was over, she craved for mental refreshment and found none. Her prospects made her shrink. All the exquisite habitations of art were crumbling away from her, and just then the only substitute seemed a wooden house where people washed and machined and cooked. She could face the change with courage, if only Dennis—Adelaide looked at the sleeping man and a warm glow came over her. If only he would not be phlegmatic, if only he were—she meant, "just what I want him to be."

She came to the dining-room door and stood looking at him, doubtfully, timidly. They were tired chest-breaths he was drawing. He did not snore, which, considering the comfortless way in which he was sleeping, was rather creditable. Adelaide wondered if it were possible to make him more comfortable. She noticed that his clothes were still wet and feared he might take

cold, so she noiselessly fanned up the blackening log on the hearth, afraid to waken him, though as a matter of fact, nothing less than a gun fired at his head would have disturbed him just then.

The sou'-wester howled and howled. Emmeline came in and promptly put her sister to bed, where she slept till tea-time. Then she reappeared in the fire-lit dining-room, greatly refreshed, and was told that father was much better and had talked a little. Dennis, with his back to the fire, was arguing hotly with Emmie. He insisted she should have a proper servant in. Emmeline reiterated her conviction that servants did nothing but make work in a house. Dennis growled out wrathfully that she was talking nonsense and deserved to be ill, and he declared that he would get that girl from Roslyn and see whether Emmie would send her back. Adelaide wondered nervously if he would ever scold her like that.

Her own footing with him was uncertain. She was waiting to be wooed, but he did not take advantage of the many chances she gave him. Last night both had been lifted up into the great and wide simplicities of grief and sympathy; but now trifles began to assert their importance in the everyday scheme of things. Adelaide jealously guarded her inward avowal of love, and meant to be sweet but not to rush into his arms. Dennis did not know what to make of her. He answered her pretty words in an em-

barrassed manner, and seemed too shy to look at her. Emmeline went to her father and left them alone. Adelaide sat working the lace border of a handkerchief exquisitely, and meanwhile discoursed with the self-possession and amiability of most English girls. It did not please this difficult young man in the least, and he openly fidgetted under her conversation and finally became rude. Adelaide said good-night sweetly, was sure he must need rest, and hoped he had not got any chill, then added, "I can never thank you enough for what you did for us, Mr. ——." She hesitated with pretty embarrassment, looking at him from under half-raised lids. "Dennis" was too suddenly familiar, and "Mr. MacDiarmid" ignored any change in their relations.

"Try MacDiarmid without the Mister," he suggested rudely. "You call the other hands by their surnames, don't you?"

Adelaide looked at him with a look of distant tears.

"There is nothing to make a fuss over," he continued, but was visibly a little ashamed of his rudeness. "I don't like being thanked by you—Miss Borlase,—if that is what I am to call you."

"I would rather you called me 'Aidie,' as you used to do," she said, and bowing a silent good-night went swiftly away.

Adelaide had left the room with all the honours of forgiving martyrdom. MacDiarmid, smarting and impatient, went to his own narrow

bedroom. There was a lovely portrait of Adelaide, an exquisite photogravure, on the wall opposite his bed, hung between a photograph of his mother and one of Mr. Borlase. He took Adelaide's down, and looking at it long and steadily said to himself, "Little girl, if you don't make short work of this one way or another, I shall do something desperate."

Adelaide was overwhelmed at his stupidity, and vowed she would not move one step farther. She winced at the remembrance of having done most of the innocent love-making of their childhood. He should be the wooer now, or break her heart, and his own with it.

On Sunday the grey rain shifted up to the hill tops, the dull clouds broke and the sun drew steam from the sodden earth. A tui sang in her myrtle tree and a lark in the field of clover. Horace Brandon and Evelyn rode over to inquire after Mr. Borlase and to sympathise with "poor, dear Adelaide." Adelaide reflected that they had waited until the storm was over, and speculated on the manner in which Horace Brandon would have behaved if he, and not Dennis MacDiarmid, had been in the house. Horace had plenty of pluck, as every normal Englishman has, but he was not willing to discompose himself. He would have faced death by drowning, but he could not endure to be splashed with mud.

Evelyn stayed indoors to talk over the engagement with the much-disgusted Emmeline,

who had not heard a word about it from her sister. Emmie had been inclined to think her a nonentity before, but Evelyn was suppressing herself for the sake of the brother she affected to run down and plainly adored. Also, she did not shine so much while he was by. With most people except Horace she had a reputation for wit, which was sometimes a strain on her intellect, and which she kept up by letting herself go recklessly when the mood came on, and by looking suggestively satiric when she had no ideas at all in her head.

Horace and Adelaide drove over the Wainoni flat together. Adelaide had not been thinking so much of her betrothed as she ought to have done. The engagement had been for more than a year a distant indefinite affair, and she knew very well that they had had fancies before. The charming young colonial had received several far-away offers, implied rather than said, and had refused them in the manner that they were made, by a gracefully-veiled double entendre. A hint, a light regret, perhaps a touch of suggested resentment, an implied apology, a graceful acceptance of her change of mind, and then they would ride back and talk politely and no one would be any the wiser.

These affairs, however, are much easier to arrange smoothly in society than in a wilderness, and the New Zealand air seemed to have demoralised Horace Brandon in earnest.

Adelaide quickly saw that explanation was going to be very difficult. He was so gay and confident, so deferentially devoted that she became more and more nervous. She began "Mr. Brandon——," and he expostulated, "My dear Adelaide!"

She ignored the suggestion, and a shade paler than before, said lightly, "Do you remember when I told you my heart was in New Zealand? It is still."

"You can't imagine I would wish it to be anywhere else just now?" he asked with tender significance. "In four months' time perhaps——"

"Four months will not make any difference, Mr. Brandon. Nor six, nor twelve."

He began to be nettled. Adelaide was not being nearly so charming as usual. If she resented his not coming to see her while she was flooded in, it was vulgarity on her part. Exacting women were detestable, and Adelaide would have to be gently but firmly taught that there were limits to a lover's indulgence.

"You might tell me, Adelaide, in what way I have offended you since we last parted," he said.

"I offended! Oh no, you quite mistake me." Adelaide began to be deeply distressed. Horace waited, but for some minutes Adelaide could not think of any words to clothe the facts in. Every softening phrase had been long ago used up by out-of-date three volume novels, as, for example, that she wished to be a sister to

him, but that she had mistaken the nature of her sentiments; that she was honoured by his attentions but begged to be excused; and that she hoped he would find some one worthier than she to be his wife. Adelaide tried all these forms of apology in her mind, and swiftly rejected them. For herself she would at that moment have thankfully degenerated into copy-book maxims, if they could have helped her out of her difficulty, but she knew that Horace was more highly cultured. He could not tolerate anything staler than last season's slang.

"Mr. Brandon, will you forget all that was said on Tuesday evening?"

He was quick to seize on all that was intelligible. "You have changed your mind, Adelaide?"

"It is best for both of us."

"Allow me to have my own opinion about that. Will you favour me with any reason?"

"I love my own country and its ways."

"The Wonderful Wertheim and the smoking chimney and the dumplings for dinner?" he inquired with light irony. "Adelaide, this is absurd. You speak of our last evening together, but let me remind you that we have been virtually engaged for some months now. In all that time you have never once until to-day shown any change towards me. You have always been sweet and reasonable."

"I love—my own people best." She was visibly trembling. Then unexpectedly Mr.

usually kind condescension Evelyn's kiss of congratulation. But much the worst part of the whole affair was that the announcement to his mother was already on its way home and could by no means be recalled, and that he was in the very deuce of a situation.

"Adelaide," he said, after some meditation, "I refuse to accept your decision. It is too preposterous. I am to some extent responsible for you to Lady Bohun. And I cannot stand by while you sacrifice yourself in this outrageous manner. This MacDiarmid does not belong to our class, to our world at all. You are an English lady, not a raw Colonial girl. I have not been in this country long, but I can guess the sort of life an English lady would lead tied to such a fellow on the backblocks. He is an uncouth, uncultured boor, too great a boor to behave properly to you now. What will he do after marriage?"

It was rather like grasping a dewdrop to treat Adelaide in this way. Always a poor fighter, she had an artistic susceptibility to other people's points of view, and indeed got so fascinated by them, when they were strong, that she was apt to lose sight of her own. She could not have imagined this suave, graceful Englishman taking repulse as he was doing. All the smooth lines of his face had disappeared and left something hard as iron, the noble sternness of the dominant sex and the dominant race combined. A sense of her own misbehaviour

crushed the life out of her, and she welcomed chastisement. All she could think of saying was, "I wish to ride back, Mr. Brandon; I am very sorry."

"For me, Adelaide?" he asked haughtily. "Spare me that, please," then he continued, "I suppose this fellow forced his attentions on you while you were alone and in trouble?"

Adelaide thought of the Fijian captives who were made to prepare an oven for themselves and lie down in it to be roasted alive. Dennis had not spoken one single word of love to her. But she came heroically to the rescue of his name.

"Mr. Brandon, he has never even hinted that he cares for me."

"Is this another understood thing, Miss Borlase?"

"Oh, I would not endure this if I had not treated him so badly," Adelaide thought and said tremulously, "There is no understanding between us."

"Really? This begins to be mysterious." Brandon looked at her ironically, but not quite so sternly. Then an idea occurred to him. It has been observed that the stage has taken the place of the pulpit in the instruction of twentieth century London. Brandon was not above taking a hint from it, and he thought of Petruchio. Why should he give way to his little *fiancée's* whims and fancies? It was not for her good nor for his. He resolved on a free

adaptation of Petruchio into polite modern English. His face relaxed and he smiled down at her. She was such a slight little thing to oppose him. "Adelaide, my dear, can't you see how absurd all this is? I do not want to hear any more about it just now. You may tell me the rest after we are married. I have not tried to bind you in any way before, but the fact of my trusting you does not make your engagement to me any the less a compact of honour, does it?"

"Oh no, only the more." Then with sudden entreaty, "I beg you to release me, Horace."

"And if I don't,"—still smiling.

Adelaide had feudal ideas of honour which was perhaps a consequence of her being brought up by Lady Bohun, in a Cornish castle. She turned quite white and terror-stricken. They were at the drive before the gate. Horace gallantly helped her to dismount, and went with her into the dim parlour, "I must deliver my Titania from her clown," he said gaily, and took both her hands in his and kissed her lips, not in the least roughly, but masterfully. "If you are not able to make up your mind, I must make it up for you." Emmeline and Evelyn appeared, talking together at Mr. Borlase's door. "Good-bye for the present. I will send you your ring to-morrow, and you will wear it, my dear."

"I won't, I won't," Adelaide said, but only in the depths of her heart. As soon as he had

gone she sank down in the nearest chair, trembling. She wished that she were Early Victorian and could let herself faint, it would have been such a rest. She wished she were Evelina, and it struck her that in that case she would now be defunct, which would be a great blessing. She found that she was crying without being conscious of it, and that the room was dark, and then that Emmie had come beside her chair. Emmeline had always been more nurse or mother than sister, and now she simply took Adelaide on to her ample bosom and held her there. She had maternal instincts about her pet. "It's that man, I know," she said. "You have broken off the engagement, Aidie?"

"I wanted to. He will not allow me."

"Well! I never!" exclaimed Emmeline ungrammatically. "What's he going to do, I wonder?" Emmeline never allowed her own morals to interfere with anything more important.

"He has every right to keep me to my word. I have been misleading him so long."

Emmeline revolved many things, but made no comment. "Go and lie down on the sofa, Aidie," she said, "and I'll bring you your tea in."

She did not bring it in. She sent Dennis in with it. Emmie was not strictly speaking artless. She said, "Aidie has got a dreadful headache, Dennis. I found her nearly fainting

a few minutes ago. Do you mind taking in this tray for me?"

He did not mind in the least. Considering that he was a clown and a boor he managed with a good deal of consideration. When he had "fixed" the table and lamp for her, he thought the room a little chilly, and brought a warm Kaiapoi rug and wrapped it round her. Adelaide thrilled at his touch. She could have borne anything if only she had had him to stand by her. If only Dennis—oh, why didn't he speak to her? Was it possible he didn't care for her? Yes, he did; she knew it, she felt it in everything he did, in the way he touched her, looked at her, spoke to her. While he was in the room Adelaide revived, thanked him over and over again, assured him her headache was nothing and talked lightly.

Lying alone in the dimly-lighted parlour, she heard fitfully her sister's voice and his from the dining-room, though no words reached her. Kind voices, dear voices, she called them, and clung for comfort to the sound of them.

Emmie sat by the fireside and hushed the M'Ilvrides' baby to sleep in her arms, now with nursery words and now with a snatch of song, and then again she laid him in a cradle at her feet, and sewed buttons on his clothes and talked to Dennis. The yearling Alec was teething, and, though sleep was overtaking him, he woke whenever he could, and gave a little

wail, with a sleepy but resentful sense that "Aunt Emmie" was not doing her full duty by him.

"By-bye, mannie, Mammy's away, Aunt Emmie sing and Alec shut eyes," she murmured, and sang for a lullaby an old love-song, changing the words but not the music for two parts. Emmie had some very sweet soft notes in her voice.

"My true love hath my heart, and I have his,
By just exchange one for another given :
I hold his dear, and mine he cannot miss,
There never was a better bargain driven :
My true love hath my heart, and I—and I—have his."

The notes grew softer and softer, and there was a lull while Emmie stitched and stitched.

Dennis sat at the table jotting down figures, but found time to look up and say—

"What about sending that new girl back, Emmie?"

"Kate? Oh, she's worse than useless, of course. They always are."

"I notice you get more time to sit still, though," Dennis remarked. "And your temper has improved the last few days. I think we'll keep her, Emmie."

"I hope Aidie isn't going to be ill, Dennis," said Emmie a few minutes later. "She reminded me of her mother to-night."

"Well now, that's a cheerful thing to say, isn't it? You've both of you got upset worrying over the Boss."

"Hushaby, hushaby, hush, hush," murmured Emmie, and crooned more softly still:—

"His heart in me keeps him and me in one,
My heart in him his thoughts and senses guides:
He loves my heart for once it was his own,
I cherish his because in me it bides;
My true love hath my heart, and I—and I—have his."

"Aidie has always been delicate. I never thought we should rear her. She needs some one to take care of her."

"What are you driving at, Emmie?" His tone was very good-homoured.

"My true love hath my heart, and I—and I—have hers," crooned Emmie, without sufficient excuse this time, for the baby only turned on his side without waking. Then she began afresh. "Dennis, you do care for her?"

He went on writing for some time, then answered, "Yes, I care for her." He had a way of speaking that might mean nothing in particular or might mean a great deal.

"She has broken with that man, Dennis, or tried to. She told me so just now. But he means to hold her to her word, and she's so superstitious. I never did like him. I did not notice till to-night, but he has thin lips. Men with thin lips are always cruel.

MacDiarmid gave a short laugh. "There is no pleasing you, Emmie. Last week Brandon was 'sickeningly amiable'."

Emmie sewed on in silence till MacDiarmid finished his score of ewes and rams and lambs

and market prices, pocketed his note-book and got up.

"Where are you going?"

"Off to the workshop. The gate of the Five-Acre paddock has been torn off its hinges and smashed to pieces. Some fool left it swinging in the storm. I'll see what we can do for that chimney of yours to-morrow. And you want something done to the piping first chance, don't you? The roof will be leaking in Adelaide's bedroom next time it rains if it's not put right. By the way, Emmie, get her off to bed early and don't worry her talking to-night."

"Dennis." Emmeline followed him to the door and laid her hand on his arm. "Dennis, she is fond of you. Do speak to her."

"Mind your own business, Emmie, and I'll mind mine." But he spoke in an even pleasanter tone than before, and then suddenly threw his arm round her and gave her a hearty kiss.

Emmeline came back into the sitting-room very flushed. "He *shall* marry Aidie," she said to herself. "Brandon indeed!"

# CHAPTER V.

## ADELAIDE AT CONFESSION.

ADELAIDE lay in an acute nerve fever which she mistook for profound remorse. Between half-sleep and dreams came intervals of intense consciousness, in which she rehearsed a number of speeches and acted and re-acted a variety of scenes. She felt like a sinner who is under conviction but who means to risk perdition and see the game through. Her conduct had been too shocking even for open reprobation in polite circles. "The local grocer's" daughter might have been expected to behave so, but not Adelaide Borlase. She had forfeited all right to respect amongst her peers, and had declined to a lower level, owing no doubt to something common and spiritually unaristocratic in herself. Horace Brandon was perfectly justified Every one of their London acquaintances would judge her as he had done. She could just imagine how the news would be received, the shocked condemnation of their eyes and the suppressed laughter on their lips. She had broken with her English lover, a gentleman and a charming man, because she was infatuated with a quite unpresentable farmer who had never wooed her at all. The

enormity of her guilt towards Brandon grew to a towering height like a child's ghost. That no formal promise had been given or claimed made her dishonour only the greater. There was something far more despicable in evading an implied promise than in repudiating a formal contract. Horace's image, or rather, two images of him, rose before her mental eye, which was just then not the bliss but the torment of her solitude. Sometimes he appeared virile, stern, showing her the contemptibleness of her own nature; sometimes he appeared gay, loving but masterful, treading down her foolish little will and setting up his noble masculine one for the benefit of both. But always, always, he shone immeasurably superior to herself. Oh yes, she freely admitted his superiority, but the more superior he rose, the more Adelaide did not want to marry him. Would he really not release her? Would he by some psychic means — always chivalrous, always well-bred and charming— actually compel her to be his wife? Adelaide started from drowsy consciousness and gave a little cry, "Dennis, Dennis." She meant, "Oh deliver me from this nightmare, and be quick, be quick!" Mentally she reproached him for not setting about her release at once. But Dennis, though under the same roof, was lying in profound slumber, facing her picture but without a dream of her. It was not his habit to waste time worrying himself awake,

and he was even more tired than usual that night. Adelaide lit her candle and lay awake for hours, her small girlish breasts palpitating beneath the fine muslin and laces, the baby curls damp around the half moon of her forehead, and her pink white hands pressed tight together. Nothing, she resolved in desperation, nothing psychic or social, should force her into marrying Brandon. "I will be a wild girl, untame, un-English, without taste or principles, a social outcast, a moral reprobate, anything but Horace Brandon's wife," she cried inwardly. Was she then infatuated with Dennis MacDiarmid, who had scarcely even smiled on her? Yet he was all that Horace had said, uncouth, rough, a clown—no, not exactly a clown, but what might be considered a clown in highly cultured society. His image, too, came vividly before her, and she saw him sitting in the specially big wooden chair he generally used either at table or by the fireside, smoking or reading with scarcely a movement, taking his rest in a kind of large placidity. Adelaide felt cross with the image, it was so liable to criticism, it was not all it ought to be. Then she melted and grew tender to it. Suddenly her heart leapt up to him and she cried, "O Dennis," and glowing from head to foot, turned her face away from the light into a soft hollow of the linen-covered down to hide herself from herself, and she tried to stop her heart from beating so fast. She had no right

to be glad about anything, and yet for a few moments without the slightest cause she was extravagantly glad. Then with something of the accent of the petted little girl, she invoked her profoundly unconscious lover :—" O Dennis, love me more. Respect me, honour me—you, and the rest won't matter." Though she put out her candle, sleep would not come at once, but a chastened calm fell on her. Her way was not going to be smooth, but she welcomed the prospect of loss and hardship because she deserved punishment and it lightened her offence. By this time the frosty dawn had come and there was a concert of birds in the bush, a kingfisher shrilling from the creek, two thrushes singing from the apple trees and then a solitary tui, followed by a whole chirping chorus of sparrows and greenfinches in the fields. Adelaide went to sleep with most unfashionable tears on her cheek. She was only twenty, and had not left school quite three years.

After a short sleep, she woke and rose still in a mood of penitence. Her first duty was to write to Horace Brandon. He must not send that ring. She dreaded the sight of it. At any cost she must break free from him. Let him think the worst of her. She would humbly acknowledge her offence, she would go through any penance to appease his wounded dignity, but he must learn how hopelessly she and Dennis belonged to each other. She laid not only herself but her love at his injured feet.

However, when Adelaide sat down to pour out her penitence, she found it very difficult to express herself in cold ink. Sleeplessness had unnerved her, and her hand shook. She decided to make a rough copy, and she began without any address, because she could not decide between "Horace" and "Mr. Brandon."

"I am sorry that you refuse to accept my answer. Even if I wished to change again, I could not. You can not, must not, bind me against my will. I have proved myself unworthy of your trust, and you cannot think worse of me than I do of myself. You have been all that is considerate and just, and I must seem all that is foolish and unreasonable. I am not my own to give or to refuse to any man but one. Even if Mr. MacDiarmid did not care for me, I never would think of anyone else. We were sweethearts when we were children. This seems silly to you but not to me. I did not know my own mind till the night of the storm when he rode to Roslyn to get the doctor for father. The rivers were in flood, and then I knew if he were drowned I should not care to live. He may be all you say, uncultured and boorish compared to you, and not a gentleman. But I love him, and I am sure he loves me, and you know what that means. Leave me, let me be happy with my own people. Forget me, think me not worth remembering. I would rather seem to have no sense of honour than be forced into marriage

when you could never have my heart. I beg you to set me free at once and to forgive me.

ADELAIDE BORLASE."

Adelaide was divided in mind about this letter. To have confessed to the utmost her sins against convention gave her a sensation of humility so unbounded that it almost met its extreme and became exaltation. To unburden her heart was unspeakable relief. Yet somewhere away back was a haunting subconsciousness of something wrong with that letter. To Brandon its expressions might seem childish and emotional and not sufficiently novel, and she vaguely felt that some of the glow of her sentiments for Dennis had coloured her words primitively. This would be embarrassing in the extreme, for after all Dennis was an unavowed lover. It is all very well to advise people to be off with the old love before they are on with the new, but there is really a good deal to be said for reversing that plan, and so preventing the trying interregnum when one has neither the old love nor the new.

While Adelaide was still meditating indecisively, pen in hand, Emmeline came into her bedroom with a tray and said, "Adelaide! Whatever did you get up for? I told you I would bring you your breakfast in bed. Well, as you are up you had better come and have it comfortably in the dining-room with us."

Emmeline glanced suspiciously at the writing-

case. She felt sure that Adelaide had got up early on purpose to write to Brandon, and she longed beyond measure to see the letter. Adelaide hastily put it between the blotting sheets and left the room with her sister.

Dennis stood at the back door, stamping mud off his boots and letting in the brilliant sunshine and a strong wind. Emmie from the dining-room scolded him crossly, but he cheerfully declined to mend his ways, and went on stamping and whistling and leaving the door open. He seemed more than usually cheerful and unsympathetically hearty. Adelaide in a panic wondered if they would ever wrangle and he be impolite to her. "Can't have too much of this sunshine, Emmie," he said, "it will dry up your ceiling and walls before you know where you are."

"And meanwhile Aidie and I have to sit in a draught and get neuralgia."

"You really want it shut? Oh well, that's another matter." He shut the door. "I thought you were only scolding to make things lively."

He came into the dining-room, and his eyes under the long lashes rested a minute or two on Adelaide. She greeted him with a pretty distant air, but through all the gentle pride and practised self-restraint, she looked to him piteous, and he felt sure she had been crying. Adelaide had not the least desire to look piteous. She was trying to pick up the remain-

ing fragments of herself and put them together, not to be altogether broken and of no account. The soft hair was waved over her forehead even more artistically than usual. Her own world was forfeited for ever, but with Dennis at least she must keep some state.

Adelaide said it was a divine morning, and the sun never shone so bright in England.

"Why you haven't half seen the morning yet," MacDiarmid replied, as he carefully sliced cold ham for her. "There's a powder of snow on the foothills and it's frozen in the night. You could see the Alps at sunrise, Aorangi as clear as crystal, and you wouldn't have forgotten it if you'd seen it then. You and Emmie ought to get a drive to-day."

Emmeline inquired meditatively, "Have you got anything very special on hand, Dennis?"

"I just about have. The storm's made no end of work. The roof's blown half off the woolshed and the footbridge is broken on this side the river and the boundary fence is down between us and Te Puhi; besides that gate. I shall have to start marking the lambs before the end of next week, so I want to get all the odd jobs through first. But I'll tell M'Ilvride to catch the horses for you and you can drive yourself."

"I can't leave Father and the house, Dennis, you know I can't But couldn't you take Aidie into Roslyn or somewhere?"

MacDiarmid mused for some time. "Yes, I think I can manage it."

The offer seemed to Adelaide ungallant in the extreme. In her drawing-room world facts were not half so stubborn as in the bush, and it was worse than middle-class to talk of work.

"I could not think of taking up your time while you have so much to do, Mr. MacDiarmid," she said with a gentle blend of pride and humility, and thought, "Oh, I shall have to be very humble now. There is no more flattery for me. Well, I have brought it all on myself." And in her fancy she took him with all his imperfections on his head.

MacDiarmid turned restive, and his mind went back to her declaration by the creek after their last ride. "Well, I *am* busy and that's a fact," he said shortly, "If you'ud like to go, I'll go, and if you don't, I won't."

"I never saw such stupid people," burst out Emmeline. "You're both of you longing to go and you both pretend you don't care, like two silly children. Dennis, haven't you got an atom of sense?" MacDiarmid laughed, helped himself liberally to more cold ham, and then said, "I can make time, I daresay. Besides, I've got some business to do in Roslyn. I want to see about that last shipment of wool." He studied Adelaide a few moments and then asked, "Will you come, Miss Borlase?"

"Oh, why not 'Aidie,'" she thought, "I told him he might. He can't expect me to call him 'Dennis' first." She thanked him, a little more

gently proud, a little more distant, and, through it all, a little more appealing than before. Emmeline hurried her sister into a costume of finest mirror-grey cloth, with a gleam of mother o' pearl silk and with the ruffled white feathers of a marabout; and she helped her fix daintily on her shining head the small grey hat with the wing of a dove and complete the harmony with a misty veil. If you wanted to see a fair girl more exquisitely and simply dressed than Adelaide was, you would have had to ride far and wide, north and south, east and west, over all the borderlands of Canterbury and Otago. Emmie regarded her sister approvingly.

"I wish, Emmie, you would not press Mr. MacDiarmid to go out with me. It's not kind to me," said Adelaide reproachfully.

"You are almost as stupid as he is, Aidie. There go, my darling pet, and enjoy yourself."

The breeze brought a shade of colour back to Adelaide's face, and she looked more like the lady who had gone up the ranges to get mountain lilies. She praised the radiance of the sky, the heights deep-coloured after storm and sprinkled with silvery snow, and the distant white peak hovering at noon like a lovely spirit far away. "You cannot see nearly so far in England," she said. "You are always looking through a kind of film. And there are no heights there and no depths."

MacDiarmid reflected that she seemed out of love with England that day, and wondered how

far Mr. Brandon might be taken to represent his country.

"I wonder if it all looks as beautiful to you this morning as it does to me. Do you always feel the beauty of it just the same, living amongst it every day?"

"No, it's not always the same. It seems a good bit prettier when you're with me," he answered, in a composed and deliberate manner.

Adelaide lit up with amusement and gratification. "I did not know you said such charming things, Mr. MacDiarmid."

"You haven't given me much chance yet, have you?"

As he was driving her home, MacDiarmid led her on to talk about some of the places she had seen. She talked like one who tells her dreams; of the road that lies between Spezzia and Genoa, where a lustrous sapphire sea breaks white against steep cliffs, and there are little Italian towns, white as marble, and so lovely you could scarcely think them anything but old-world romances, and not things of to-day; gardens all crimson with red roses, and flashing with scarlet pomegranate and sweet with jasmine; Genoa and its disused palaces of marble, and the harbour crowded still with merchant ships and all the traffic of the Mediterranean, and with South of Europe sea-faring men. She spoke of its old memories of the Dorias and of Saint Catherine, and as she spoke her eyes grew fair

and more fair to see. Then rather suddenly she checked herself.

"Do I tire you? Does all this interest you?" she asked gently.

"You mean have I got sense enough to appreciate it," MacDiarmid answered. "Yes, I think my brain will about stand it. I've read about those places. It interests me very much. Go on."

Adelaide could not. "Does he love me at all?" she asked herself, and was visibly depressed.

"You mistake me, Mr. MacDiarmid. I am sorry that I so often offend you."

MacDiarmid looked at her strangely a moment, full in the eyes.

"No, it's not that you offend me, Adelaide." A few minutes later he seemed to dismiss the subject, and said in his usual tone, "I wonder if you would teach me in the evenings. I've plenty of time then."

This touched and amazed her. It did not fit at all into her ideas of the majesty of man, and she said with humility:

"You do not really want to take lessons from a girl, Mr. MacDiarmid?"

"Why not? I particularly like girls."

"If you think that it would be of any help to you, we might read sometimes together."

"Well, put it your own way. But don't you bother about my dignity if I don't. You used——"

Dennis broke off abruptly, but Adelaide filled in the hiatus easily. There had been no conventions for the two bush children in the days when the world was very young. In the summer evenings and in the afternoons of school holidays, when the hay was cut, Aidie Borlase was fond of watching her farm-boy friend do his share of tossing the golden grass on to the stack, and when he had finished, she sat in the shadow and read to him, while he lay stretched out near her, propped on his elbows and his face on his hands. Most of all, they revelled in Scott, but they did not always agree. Dennis was in a hurry to get to the tournaments and duels and battles; he much preferred Roderick Dhu to Malcolm Græme, and Marmion to De Wilton, and he was callous to the woes of Constance de Beverley and of Clara de Clare. Over "Marmion" they once had a quarrel. Dennis had a low opinion of De Wilton, and said that he was a mean sneak and a mountebank to go dressing up for a ghost and a pilgrim, and telling tales to The Douglas. Aidie argued a few moments, and then, being overborne, she wept profusely, at first into the new hay, and afterwards into Dennis's flannel shirt. He was nicer then than he had ever been before. He said, "Dash the whole lot of them, he didn't care, she could have it her own way; she mustn't cry, she was his sweetheart, and he would give her his Waterbury watch." Recollections of this kind made the twenty-year old Adelaide more shy with

MacDiarmid than she could have been with the Duke of Norfolk. Reading with him now was not likely to have a soothing effect on her nerves, but he had shown himself so touchy that she feared to wound him by refusing.

"What do you think of reading?" she asked.

MacDiarmid looked at her, with sunlight in his eyes. "Well, now, isn't that for my tutor to say?"

"Oh no! The student always chooses his own subjects."

"Well, history," he said slowly, laying the whip along the flank of the mare, merely to remind her that she was not out walking for her own pleasure. "I've read all that is in the house, Josephus and Gibbon and Prescott and Motley, and most of Sismondi, and I thought of getting Grote."

These all seemed to Adelaide so hopelessly out of the world and behind the times.

"I don't think anybody reads books like that now," she said gently, trying not to be too explicit, "except, perhaps, professional people, and they have to learn things so as to teach other people."

"I expect the fault is not with the books, but with the people who don't read them."

The mingled simplicity and shrewdness of the backblocks at first touched and then impressed Adelaide. "Mr. MacDiarmid," she answered playfully, "I am an honest tutor, though a very poor one. I cannot teach you anything learned.

You have read far more than I. That is not the sort of thing I have learnt in the Old World."

MacDiarmid surprised the mare, who knew his hand well, by striking her sharply. She neighed a remonstrance, and he apologised. "Yes, I forgot myself that time. Steady, lass, steady. There, I won't do it again."

"He is passionate," thought Adelaide, with a slight tremor. He was saying to himself, "Can a man ever understand a girl? Is she trying to put me off again?"

"Well, teach me what you have learnt, will you?" he said, looking at her, and trying to read her face.

"I will try." Adelaide's meaning was wrapt in a misty air of reserve, suggesting so much and telling so little, that he reached the gate almost as much exasperated as charmed. The sweeter she grew, the more elusive she seemed, and her eyes called him to her, only to tantalise him by still farther retreat. What he meant was, "Read anything or nothing if you like, so long as you will talk to me," and what Adelaide meant was, "Yes, if you will let me, I will teach you to be all that I wish, my hero, my love and my king." However, they were talking to each other in foreign tongues, and though Adelaide came into the house freshened with the sun and breeze, Dennis drove to the stables in a dissatisfied frame of mind, saying inwardly, "What on earth does she mean? She must either want me or not want me, but she seems

to manage to do both." Then he pulled up. "Hullo, Emmie dear, what's in the wind now?" Emmeline, who had been taking in clothes from the lines, left a white heap down, and came to the buggy to speak to him.

* * * * *

Adelaide found Evelyn Brandon waiting for her in the parlour. Mr. Horace Brandon had called and stayed talking with her father for over an hour, so Kate told her. Evelyn did not regard the visit to Roslyn with favour.

"I don't think, Aidie, you ought to go out riding and driving so much with the milkman," she said. "It might put ideas into his head. Life is so much simpler in London. The milkman never goes beyond the area door there; at least I've always understood he did not. I've never seen him myself. He always called hours too early for me."

Adelaide could parry these thrusts lightly. "My dear Evie, you've been a fortnight in South Canterbury, and you don't know yet that there are no milkmen on a sheep run. Mr. MacDiarmid is father's overseer."

"Oh, isn't he the milkman?" said Evelyn airily, "I thought he was. He seems to be always looking after cattle of some sort; it comes to the same thing. I really don't know what you call the Colonial equivalent, but you might actually have to put him in his place some day, and you're much too sweet to do it effectually."

"I am quite safe with Mr. MacDiarmid."

"You never can tell out here. Such extraordinary things do happen. Beryl Thornton married a publican, and he used to beat her and throw razors and things about. Poor Beryl! how she must have wished she had been born in Stepney, and got accustomed to that sort of thing early. Then there was Ida Desmond, the tall handsome girl we met at the Fellows' garden party. She mixed herself up with a Blavatasky sect in Christchurch, and very nearly eloped with an American prophet, but it turned out he had another wife and was only taking Ida on as an extra Ida was always of a jealous disposition, if you remember, so she gave up the prophet, and then no one else would have anything to do with her."

"Don't distress yourself, Evie, I am not going to marry a prophet or a publican or a bigamist or a wife beater, or anyone at all so far as I know."

"Of course I did not mean to suggest that you would marry the milkman, but he might get offensive. And you are rather impulsive sometimes, Adelaide, if you will forgive me for saying so."

Adelaide prepared to defend herself against such a damaging imputation, but stopped and said, "Perhaps I am, Evie. It isn't very wicked to be impulsive, is it?"

"It's un-English," said Evelyn, with soft condemnation, stifling like a down pillow.

# CHAPTER VI.

## UNDER THE TREE FERNS.

"Thou that bringest all that bright morning scattered."

WHEN Evelyn had gone Adelaide went to rewrite her letter, but could not find it anywhere. At first she thought herself mistaken, and continued to search among papers and books with increasing alarm, but no letter came to light. She sat down petrified, trying to imagine what could have become of it. A girl's agony of shame came over her, and she recalled every word she had written, and every word seemed to burn and sting her. Had the servant stolen it, and was she—O Heaven mercifully forbid!—was she at that moment spelling it out with avidity by the kitchen fire? Kate was herself of a literary turn of mind and had a modest pride in her own compositions, mostly poems inscribed on the margin of Mr. Borlase's "Otago Witness," and on Emmie's best cake paper, and left artlessly about where they were likely to be discovered and appreciated. Oh, that letter, that letter, what had become of it? Adelaide dared not inquire, but nerved herself to the martyrdom of enduring

its loss, with the tormenting fear at her heart that meanwhile Kate or one of the men might be in full possession of Miss Borlase's love affairs. Was there to be no end to her humiliations? It was like a realisation of one of those unclad dreams that haunt early girlhood. She had a vivid remembrance of once starting from a nightmare in which she was entertaining her grandmamma's correctest friends in the drawing-room at Tremayne when she became conscious that she had only her nightgown on. This was just as bad, indeed it was worse. It was not to be laughed away, it would go on without an end. It was being mentally unclad and affecting to ignore the fact. The very extremity of shame nerved her, and you might have supposed it was a very proud little lady who went into the six o'clock tea that night, only that she started nervously once or twice and flushed and paled too fast. Dennis and Emmeline did not help her out; they seemed uncomfortably occupied with her, and yet not with what she said. Emmeline's unconsciousness was supernatural, but Adelaide rebuked herself for suspecting her sister. Dennis looked at her several times across the table with a look she could not fathom, a look of laughter, questioning and something else, that made her heart beat fast. As soon as their eyes met, he turned his away. When tea was over, he came to her and putting one arm on the back of her chair, said, "Come out to

the slip-rails with me, Aidie. I want to speak to you." He had never since their mountain ride used her pet name, and he had avoided touching even her hand, but now when she brought a long silk scarf, he took it from her and arranged it, as he had often seen her do, over her head. His touch was gentle, but she tingled with it. Only an accepted lover should have used that tone and that manner. Oh the letter, the letter! Of course he could not have read it; it was insulting him to imagine such a thing, but what had been told him, what did he know?

Adelaide had lost her usual faculty for covering agitation by a surface current of conversation. It was all she could do to keep her half-proud, half-plaintive air, that claimed respect and homage more than love. They came to the trysting-place of the schoolboy and the child long ago, before shames and agonies were known in the world. The slip-rails and the fence divided the bush land from the Western hills that rose from the valley, upwards and upwards to the great mountains and the great setting sun. The bush lay on one side with the creek and the tree ferns in sight, cool, liquid and glad in the shadows, and on the other side the hidden sun burnt through and through the intervening mountains as if they had been glass. Adelaide stood by the railings with one arm resting on them, a light girlish shape in waving silks and floating scarf, like a figure

by Botticelli; or (as Dennis thought) like a vision

"The cloud-mirrors fling
On the gaze of a shepherd that watches the sky,
Half-dreamed and half-seen in the soul of his eye."

Only the small and delicate face was very lofty in expression, and the light figure drew itself away perceptibly from the man, who watched her with the eyes of the bush, of shadow and sunlight, of laughter and seriousness mingled. It seemed she was not held worth the wooing. She was simply to be claimed as brides are claimed by savages. Even so she must come to him. She loved him and by some means he knew it.

"Aidie." And then failing to move her, "I've waited a long time for this."

"For what have you waited, Mr. MacDiarmid?" tremulously and yet proudly.

"Oh, the time for 'MacDiarmid' has gone by. I'll be your Dennis now for good and all."

"Please let me know what this means."

"It means that I've found my little sweetheart again. I understand you at last, and I'll have nothing come between us while there's life in me. You've kept me off and you've drawn me on, you've forgotten me one day and remembered me the next, till you've nearly driven me wild. I've had all I could do not to take you straight into my arms, over and over again, and make you tell me what you meant by it. Only I could not bear to see you

frightened or vexed. Well, now that's over, and I'll be as tame as an uncultured and ungentlemanly boor can be expected to be, if you'll drop the drawing-room manners, and remember we are here together in the bush."

A very pale lofty face beneath the floating silk scarf, and the shadow of soft hair, a small hand trembling on the rail, so light a hand the wind might almost blow it off. The man came a few steps nearer and laid his big warm brown hand over it. He knew—how much? Nearly all? Surely not all? Oh, this was worse than yesterday. Why could a lady not defend herself from such a barbarous lover?

"Are you so sure you have the right——"

"Now, don't. It's no use, my darling. You've given yourself away, and you can't go back on your own words. You love me and you can't live if I get drowned, and you're sure that I love you, and Brandon knows what that means," he quoted unsparingly, then added, "What's more, Aidie, so do I."

The small hand was torn away from his, and the cloud face, framed in the dying sunset, was tense and quivering with anger, contempt and injury.

"You read my letter?"

"Yes, I read it."

"You are not ashamed to tell me that?"

"Not a bit."

"Then, Mr. MacDiarmid, it is not true now. I do not love you, you are dishonourable."

A few minutes' silence. The man was a trifle pale now. Then he spoke quietly. "I won't let even you say that, Aidie."

"Oh, Dennis, Dennis, don't take me at my word." Of course Adelaide did not say this aloud, it was an inarticulate cry, followed by another, "Oh, what shall I stoop to at last?" What she said was, "I have been mistaken in you. I did not dream you could do anything disgraceful."

"I could if I tried, but I don't remember trying."

"You stole a confidential letter addressed to another man and read it."

"That's libellous. But I can't be angry with you to-night. It was not addressed, it was given to me, and I was told it was meant for me. I couldn't make head or tail of it at first. Until I came to that part comparing me to Brandon, blest if I didn't think it was the queerest new-fashioned way my little girl had got of writing to me."

"Emmie gave it to you!"

"Now, who said anything about Emmie?" But Dennis was so vexed she knew her intuition was right.

"It was Emmie," and to herself, "O Emmie, Emmie, how could you betray your sister?"

"Don't you turn round on Emmie. You're Emmie's little goddess, next only to being mine."

A little quivering of the firm set lips, a little

softening of the eyes, but still a resentful and severe fairy-queen.

"If you read my letter by mistake, you ought not to make use of it."

"Oh, nonsense, Adelaide!" He laughed delightfully, looking down on her. "Do you suppose I'll get a letter telling me you love me and then take no notice of it?"

"It was never meant for you. Give it back to me."

"Not unless you promise not to send it. Do you think I'll let my sweetheart crawl to a man like Brandon? You've nothing to apologise for. He took his chances like any other man. Let him be thankful for what he has had. He's had the smile of your pretty eyes and the touch of your dear little hands, while I've been shut out in the cold. Has he been rough to you?"

"Oh no, you do not understand. He could never be rough. He was," a shadowy evanescent smile, "not nearly so rude as you are, Dennis."

"I've no opinion of Brandon. He shouldn't try force with his sweetheart. I wish you weren't so vexed about the letter. I had the real claim to it, not he. And, Adelaide, if you write any more letters of that sort, I'll open them and keep them all, addressed or not. I'll take good care no other man sees what you wrote about me."

She drooped a little then, though still holding

herself from him, and her expression seemed not quite so distant, so far aloft.

"Dennis, I'm very, very sorry. I want to take back what I said against you. I did not altogether mean it—not in the way you think."

"I don't care a straw about your calling me hard names, if it amuses you, though why you like it I don't know. But you are not going to write to any other man about the old days, and about that night and the way we love each other. That's my affair, and I don't take Brandon into my confidence."

Then they both waited and had no more words. Adelaide's head was bowed on one hand, her arm still resting on the rail, while she seemed to watch the West. The sun had set. The clouds and the air were fields of flowers in a celestial spring, daffodils and faint primrose and orchard blossom, the blue of speedwell and the youngest green of leaves, but most of all the wild pink briar. It flushed the cold violet of the mountains, and the lovely snow lily of Aorangi, faint and remote, blushed at its neighbourhood into an aerial rose. The lark dropped down into its nest, and its low last cadence died away into the full content of silence. The lambs bleated to the ewes on the hills. So every sound and sight had seemed to the child half her lifetime ago. She often lay out on these hills cradled on Dennis's arm, and they would watch for the first star and then see who could count the most, until too many

came to be counted, and all the sky was countless stars. When it grew damp and chilly he used to fold the little girl in his coat; she remembered the feel of the rough Kaiapoi wool, and the scent of gorse and clover in it. "O Dennis, Dennis, you surely loved me better then." Adelaide was crying, her face turned from him, the silk scarf drawn carefully forward, and her hand shading her forehead as if she were only musing and watching the West. She meant Dennis not to see in the twilight, but he felt now rather than saw.

"Aidie, don't." He had put his arm round her, but she could not let him take her out of pity. It was too cheap, too common, too much like Pamela, to move him by tears. "Won't you let me comfort you? I promised you I would."

"Forgive me for that letter, Dennis."

"Why, Aidie, it was the best letter that I ever got. I don't mind how much you scold me if you'll tell me that you love me, and can't live without me."

"Don't keep it, Dennis, please."

"There." He took it out of his pocket and tore it into fragments. "That's an end of it."

"I have behaved very badly. I've injured you more than anyone else, Dennis."

MacDiarmid sat on the brae below her, her hands were left in his now, and he saw a little lady not too lofty to be sweet, only too shy yet for strong caresses, the scarf floating round her,

but no longer shading the face that looked down on him. The glow had gone, the first stars were coming out in a pale sky, and he remembered as she had remembered.

"My little sweet, my little dear, you haven't been injuring anyone, and don't you go fancying it. You'd got one set of English ideas and another set of Colonial, and you couldn't quite decide between them. It was a bit rough on me sometimes, and—yes, well, perhaps it was on Brandon too."

"You do despise me, Dennis."

"Now, why will you talk such nonsense? I despise *you!* You're a bit of a miracle to me, love, you with your songs and your flowers, your scraps of silk and gossamer, and lace that look as if they were part of yourself. And all the wonderful things you've seen in the countries and seas that belong to poets and kings and heroes; it's all of it been a real live poem to me. All the while you were away I used to come up to the house when the mail came in, and in the evening your father read your letters aloud, and we fancied you in the castle in Cornwall that the Tudor knight built. And the last two years it was magic, if anything ever was. One day you were on the Rhine, and another in Alt Heidelberg, and then in the gondola in Venice, and another you were hearing the 'high, high Mass' in St. Peter's, and then it was the Cathedral choir at Westminster and then in the court of the Queen.

That evening when I rode to the Wainoni to bring you home I kept wondering what you would be like, and I thought about Kilmeny coming back in the gloaming from a far countree."

Twilight and a soft voice falling on the silence.

"Aren't you going to tell me that you love me, Dennis? I have told you."

"What's the use of telling you that when you've known it all along? Love you? Of course I love you. God knows I do, my darling. I've come to these slip-rails many and many's the time when you've been on the other side of the world, and I've never come but what I've seen you here, as I see you now this blessed night. I can't remember when the love began with me, and I don't suppose it is ever going to end. First it was the wee, wee bit lassie in the red shoes running out of the house to pluck the daisies. And then it was the little girl in the muslin frock, who would be married to me under the tree-ferns whether I wanted or no. And then it was my lofty little lady up amongst the mountain lilies who would keep trampling over me."

"You couldn't have liked that one, Dennis?"

"That one? No, it wasn't to call 'liking' with that one. That one was next only to what I've got to-night—my love, my wife that shall be soon. Aidie, you've angered me often, and just for a moment or two I've almost thought I

'ud burn your dear, funny letters and give you up to Brandon. But I couldn't do it. Whatever you did or said, still it was you."

"I am only a vain, spoiled child, Dennis. I wanted to be courted."

"Oh! You wanted that, did you? What a blockhead I have been! Well, have I courted you now? Aidie, my Aidie, we're more than children playing now. Come and let me take you along the creek and show you your temple under the tree-ferns. The myrtle's there still. I wouldn't have a leaf touched." He rose. "Come, your hand, love."

It was starlight on the hills, but dear dark night in the bush. Adelaide knew it was not the voice of the boy that spoke to her now, and overcome by secret shyness of him and of herself, she gave him a hand that scarcely touched him, held out gracefully as if this had been a starlight dance. But the formality provoked Dennis beyond further endurance. He lifted her off her feet and held her to him. "You've kept me at arms' length too long. Give me just this minute," he said, and took a long hour. He carried her along the creek to the tree-ferns, and there sat with her in his arms. Adelaide made a protest, but it was insincere, and he knew and laughed low, but took no further heed. Dennis was by blood and birth a barbarian, of a race that had come from the wilds of the Highlands and the Isle of Achill, and had rooted itself here in the still more

savage country amongst the Alps of Maoriland. Then Adelaide let all the civilisation drift over her and far away from her, and came back to old, primitive childlike things. She was glad of the strength of his arms, and glad to feel his strong heart-beats against her own. She put up a small white hand to his cheek, and he held it against his lips. A little thin mist came up out of the waters and crept around his knees and around her as she lay on them, and the night dews fell. The white silk scarf was drenched with dew, and he took it off, and felt that her cheek and forehead were chilled, and her hair damp with mist and dew. Her dress was only of fine thin muslin. He drew her into the folds of his coat, and she knew the scent of grass and gorse, and then she was closer than before, as close as the lambs pressing to their mothers out on the hills. There is something maternal in all strong love, even if it is a man's. He held her in his arms as if she were his infant, and she remembered the bosom of her dead mother. His right arm held her, and it was strong to hold, his right hand was on her heart, and his left was laid upon her face, to give it warmth. There was the heat of the sun in his lips and in his hand, and all through his great frame. Adelaide thought he would never be anything but warm, even if the snows fell or the night froze around them. Her head lying back, she saw above them the tracery of arching tree-ferns. There was a gap in the

blackness of leaves and sky, and in that gap she saw a great star. Once or twice Dennis spoke, but only repeated her name, and each time separately, as if it meant more than all other words in the world. "Aidie," and then again, "Aidie." Adelaide was perfectly content, without one desire or fear. Beyond all the pulsing of joy and passion and remembrance, she felt herself encircled by some ultimate and large tranquillity. She put up her hand to secure a loosened comb of gold, but Dennis moved to stay her hand, and unfastened all her hair around her face and shoulders, and played with it at his pleasure. "It was just so long when you left," he said. That broke the spell of silence, and Adelaide spoke.

"Let me go, Dennis. I really mean it this time. It is late."

His arms relaxed, and they moved apart, and felt as if they had been all but drowned in deep waters. But they could not separate at once, and so came together again for one more long embrace and kiss. Then they went up to the house, hand in hand, through the dark and whispering leaves and the tremulous ferns, and they were children once more.

# CHAPTER VII.

## AT THE BOSS'S LEVEE.

"For love would still be lord of all."

WHEN they came to the verandah, and the lamplight fell on her from the uncurtained window, and she heard movements within the house, shyness and strangeness woke in Adelaide, and her conventional self strove to shield and cover her natural self again. She was young and fragile for such a might of passion, and she had been so well brought up. As they said good-night, she leaned lightly against her lover, and appealed for what she had been.

"Oh, not again, Dennis. You are tempestuous. I never saw you so before to-night."

"You didn't know much of me till to-night, my Aidie. But tell me what you want and I'll do any mortal thing for you."

"Dennis, don't kiss me so, don't hold me so again. Not yet awhile." Her face was hidden in the curve of her arm against his chest.

"Aidie, I haven't touched you against your will! You gave yourself up to me, and don't you think I knew it?"

"I wouldn't undo this night for all that is in

the world. But afterwards it makes me almost ashamed. Oh no, no, not of you—but to be so glad, to love you so dreadfully. Oh, Dennis, let me be myself a little longer."

"I can't promise not to kiss you, Aidie. I'm not made of starched shirt front. But you'll find I can be quiet enough. Well, good-night, love. Don't cry to-night."

"My scarf, Dennis, please."

"No, I'll keep that scarf. You've plenty of others. Go in, sweetheart, or I shall take another kiss."

Adelaide went into the house and sat down for a few minutes to recover herself. Then she walked into the kitchen and there found Emmeline ironing. She had a pernicious habit of ironing on the same day that she washed, which kept her at work from five in the morning till ten or eleven at night. Emmeline's unconsciousness was even more supernatural than at tea. "Well, Aidie," she said, "have you had a nice walk?" as if a three hours' conference with Dennis at the slip-rails was part of the ordinary day's routine. She looked out through the open window and added, "What a lovely night!"

"Emmie, how could you take my letter?"

"What letter?" asked Emmeline, still blankly innocent. "Oh that! it was flying all over the place while I was dusting the room. It's all right. I saw Mr. MacDiarmid somewhere on it, so I gave it to Dennis, and he's got it now."

Then they both tried not to laugh, and Adelaide said, "I can never trust you again, Emmie, and I never shall forgive you."

"Oh yes, you will," cried Emmeline, and hugged her sister to her ample breast. "I'ud do ten times worse than that to see you so happy, my darling."

Emmeline took upon herself to break the news to her father when she went in to help him dress and move to his armchair in the morning. He was always particularly irascible during these processes, and this always made her particularly tender because she knew it was his way of expressing resentment at his own helplessness and discomfort.

"Dennis wants to see you this morning, Dad," she said, studiously not looking at his face, while she handed him his dressing-gown.

"Well, suppose he does," said Mr. Borlase, "there's nothing mysterious in that, is there?"

"Oh no—I think it's about Adelaide, that's all." She stroked him soothingly as she put the gown on.

"Adelaide—what's he got to do with Adelaide?" sharply. "Don't pat me any more, Emmie. I want to get up."

She drew on his socks and slippers with loving hands, then moved to arrange the pillows and the footstool.

"I think Adelaide is engaged to Dennis," she said in a subdued manner.

"Adelaide engaged to MacDiarmid!" Mr.

Borlase roared in a tone that made her tremble, then said more quietly, "There's a lively young lady for you! She was engaged to Horace Brandon yesterday, and they're the only two young men she has seen this week."

Emmie helped him tenderly into the arm-chair, which he reached with difficulty, increased by agitation.

"Dad dear, be kind to her. She never loved that Brandon." Emmie wrapped the rug around his knees and surreptitiously caressed them.

"'That Brandon' will make her a much more suitable husband than MacDiarmid."

"She always has been fond of Dennis."

"Always! Why she hasn't seen him more than a fortnight, and she has been snubbing him the whole time."

"She was fond of him," replied Emmie sagaciously, "but she didn't think he admired her enough."

"Admire her! The little minx with her airs and her graces. Dennis is worth three of her."

"Indeed, he's not!" retorted Emmie. "Father, how can you? Dennis isn't half good enough—Oh yes, he is though," she corrected herself, perceiving her partizanship toppling dangerously. "They're just about right for each other," she ended comfortably.

"I'll see if I can't prevent it."

"Father!" She held her head down and

cried as if it had been her own bridal in danger. "Adelaide loves him."

"Stop blubbering this moment, Emmie, you great baby." But Mr. Borlase did not speak very severely that time. "All this has been going on while they wouldn't even look at each other, has it? I might have known it was not all above board. Now, who's been confiding in you? Not Dennis, I'll swear. Aidie been gushing——"

"I have eyes in my head, Father, and I don't need to be told anything when I see my little sister after Brandon has left her frightened and as white as a ghost, and then she goes out with Dennis and comes back looking like a rose, and so happy she doesn't know what to do with herself."

"Poor little dear!" He sighed, and sat sunk in thought for a while, but roused himself when Emmie gave him some medicine, and then stood by him considering if there was anything she could do for his comfort before leaving the room. "I wish Dennis would take you," he said rather cruelly, "you are much the best of the two, and he could have you and welcome."

Emmie shook her head. "No, don't care about that sort of thing for myself. I like seeing other people in love. Besides, Dad, you're quite enough for me."

"Yes, I'm a fair-sized handful." Mr. Borlase found his handkerchief, dried the last traces of her tears and patted her on the shoulders.

"We understand each other, old girl, don't we?" he said affectionately, then added with a twinkle in his blue eyes, "But I'll eat my boots, Em, if you're not at the bottom of this somehow."

MacDiarmid came in a few minutes later, but he did not stay long. It did not please him to ask the Boss for permission to marry his daughter, and he soon saw that Mr. Borlase was not pleased. He nodded in the Back Country style, not meant to be disrespectful, but suggestive of a desire to get through the salutation without waste of time.

"Better this morning, Boss? Glad to see you up again." Then he fell into one of his long silences because words were not handy.

"Well, MacDiarmid?"

"Adelaide is going to be my wife, Mr. Borlase."

"So Emmie has been hinting." Mr. Borlase's tone was the reverse of encouraging.

"I wish Emmie would let me manage my own affairs," replied Dennis, with base ingratitude.

"So do I. But she won't." He still remained in cheerless meditation. "Won't you wait awhile and let Aidie get decently over this affair with Brandon?"

"No." Dennis spoke in a heavy traction-engine manner of his. "That's what I won't do." Then with feeling, "I am not going to let my little girl be coerced or frightened any more."

"Pooh." But Mr. Borlase's tone was indecisive, and his eyes were on the floor. "She doesn't know which of you she does want."

"She knows her own mind now as well as any girl under the sun."

"I'll hear what she's got to say for herself. You don't know what that child is to me, Dennis. She and her mother——." He pulled himself up short.

"I'll take care of her, Boss."

MacDiarmid held out his hand boyishly, awkwardly, but with some of his great warm heart in it, and gripped the hand of his chief.

"Send her in to me."

Adelaide came to her father, and kneeling by him, put her pretty head down on his knee. He kept his heavy lifeless hand upon it, and seemed sad at heart. For a time neither of them spoke, then he said, "Horace Brandon and Dennis have both spoken to me, Aidie. You won't hear of Brandon?"

"I couldn't marry him, Dad. Not any more than I could be another girl. I shouldn't want to live. Dennis and I always have belonged to each other, ever since I can remember. The love was always somewhere deep down in me, only so many things had covered it over."

Mr. Borlase moved his hand impatiently. "All very nice and pretty, Adelaide, all very well for a few months. Of course you'll look at it now entirely as a matter of sentiment. But you're only twenty, and you're more than half a

child. I'm not a mercenary father, trying to make a great match for my daughter; don't get that idea into your romantic little head. But there are other things beside sentiment in this world, and so you'll find to your cost. It's the suitability of the thing I'm thinking of. I haven't a word to say against MacDiarmid. He is a good, straight fellow. I've known him all his life, and there's not a bit of vice in him. He has been a brother to Emmie, and she is almost as idiotically fond of him as you are. I don't mind telling you, Aidie, I am under a great obligation to him. It was a few years back when things looked pretty bad in this district for sheep farmers and this cursed illness was creeping on me. I told him he'd better take his chance and buy me up, but he chose to be my manager and put in all his own money. He bought some good stock and started this connection with the Roslyn Dairy Factory, and that pulled us through. He has a sort of Highland loyalty to me, and has always looked after my interests rather better than his own. But for all that, it doesn't follow that I'm bound to give him my Ada's only child. Dennis is the son of my ploughman, and all his forbears were crofters and fisherfolk. Your mother's family have intermarried more than once with Brandon's people. Horace is a gentleman."

Adelaide flushed, and the distinct, cultured voice rang clear and emphatic, "Dennis is a man, Father, and that is more."

Mr. Borlase looked half-tender, half-amused. "What's got into you, Aidie? You used to be such a gentle little girl. Aren't you going to listen to your old Dad?"

"If you won't say anything that reflects on Dennis, Father."

"Oh, ho, you've come to that pass, have you? You were in quite another tune last week." He laughed too boisterously for his physical state. "Dennis has all the virtues now and Brandon none worth mentioning. Let me tell you, Aidie, you've not treated Brandon fairly, and he couldn't have behaved better than he has done over it. He is more concerned about your sacrificing yourself than about your dismissing him. No need to resent that, child. It is a big sacrifice, and it's no use blinking the fact." He had grown as depressed now as he had been lively before. She inherited her fluctuations of temperament from him. "You've been brought up to every comfort and luxury, and you've never known what it is to work and to bear hardships. For two years you've had nothing but pleasure and amusement and society, and every kind of refinement. It's no use thinking you won't miss all this, even if Dennis turns out to be the archangel Gabriel. You're made of very fine stuff, my little Aidie, and you're not fit for any other sort of life than the one you have been leading. I know what I'm talking about and you don't. You have only a very small income from your mother. Emmie's

not disposed to marry, and I'll have to leave the farm to her, if there's anything but debts to leave. You can't dress as you do on Dennis's money, and amuse yourself riding and driving and painting. He'll do what he can for you, I trust him for that, but it won't amount to much. You don't know what you're going into—a struggle for years before you can even take your proper place in the colony, a lonely, lonely life on this bush farm, with not one of your friends and acquaintances near, work all the year round, and then perhaps only loss and ruin at the end of it all. I sent you to England on purpose to keep you out of the Bush, and now you haven't been three weeks back when you are so desperately in love with my manager; you want to tie yourself down to it for the rest of your life. Brandon can and will give you all that you have been accustomed to, all that this world has to give."

The clear, emphatic voice struck in quickly, "Except love and sincerity and happiness"; then it became lighter, "I do enjoy art, Dad, and everything artistic, but I enjoy nature more."

"You won't have much time for what you mean by nature, my child. Look at Emmeline. She never gets beyond the gate more than once or twice a year. It may be all right at first, but wait till the children come. I like MacDiarmid as well as any man I ever dealt with, but if I could stop your marriage at once

I would. Bush life isn't fit for any gently nurtured lady."

Adelaide had changed her position, and was sitting now on the floor beside her father's chair, looking not at him but away into the future, and seeing things no more pleasant and easy and amusing, seeing sacrifice instead of enjoyment, and welcoming it. "I am glad I have so much to give up for him," she thought, then said to her father, "There were many of the first settlers' wives who were ladies, gently brought up in England, Father. They came out into the Bush when everything was much rougher than now, and there were no roads, and not even proper food and clothing."

"Yes," he answered more heavily than before. "They did, Aidie—the wives of the pioneers. I was a first settler in these ranges myself. After Emmeline's mother died, I went back to the Old Country, and there I met your mother. You know the home she came from before I brought her into the backblocks. She was just such a girl as you, Aidie, but lovelier and more quiet. Her people were dead against her marriage, and Lady Bohun most of all. It was a poor match for Adelaïda Bohun; the best in the duchy wasn't too good for her. Well, she came to this wooden cottage, and there was no one to help her but Emmie and Dennis's mother, Noreen. She never complained. She was one of the saints of the earth. The second baby came too soon, and

there wasn't a doctor or a nurse near her. When I got back from Roslyn it was all over." He paused awhile and then went on. "You know that cemetery on the hill above the township? Half the older graves are the graves of young mothers and their infants. My Ada's lying there, and my son who never drew the breath of life." And after another silence. "Now you know what I want to save you from, Aidie."

Dennis and he were dragging the poor girl through strong experiences, and she blanched and her eyes grew startled. Mr. Borlase thought she was yielding when she rose and clung to him, partly to comfort him, partly herself. "Dad, I don't think mother was ever sorry for having chosen you any more than I shall be for having chosen Dennis. One day she was showing me some pictures of Tremayne, and when I said how much she must want to be there, she said the happiest days of her life were out in the bush with you, and that she could never hear your step without trembling for joy."

"My Ada!" His thoughts wandered to his dead wife, and then returned to her daughter. "And you feel that way for Dennis, my pet?" he asked, with a slightly incredulous smile. Not being in love with his manager, he could not understand why Dennis should inspire that sort of emotion, and he could not suppose that his daughter's love affairs were as serious as his own had been.

"I want to be as happy as mother was, if it is only for a few years. If I knew I must die here in the bush soon, or else marry Horace, and live in England, I 'ud rather stay with Dennis." Not heroically said at all, but in her most plaintive bird-notes. Dennis should have been there to hear that voice, but he was nowhere near; he was putting on the gate up in the clover paddock.

"Good little lass, brave little lass." Her father's voice was unsteady. "You'll be your mother over again—but, my God, what a sacrifice!"

Then he gave in. He was tired of the mental strain, and tired of sitting in the same position, and he began to want his dinner. These facts helped him to reflect that it would be easier to direct the wind than a girl in love.

"Well," he concluded, "Dennis has beat the favourite this race by a good many lengths, and I hope he appreciates his trophy. Get up, get up, child, and don't look like Juliet. I'm not an irate parent, and, if I were, I shouldn't have a show in this household. MacDiarmid is about as tractable as a bullock stuck in a mud-hole, and I've had Emmie blubbering, like the over-grown infant that she is. And you, my little Aidie, though you look like all the flowers of the garden, there's a deal of Cornish granite about you too. Yes, my darling, you're a chip of the old block." He was giving and receiving

a good many kisses as he spoke, and the colour was on her cheeks again. "Now, bring me my dinner. And there, give Dennis my blessing or whatever it is he wants from me. He'll take my daughter, that's certain, so he may as well have my leave."

# CHAPTER VIII.



IF these people had all belonged to the back country of Otago, the historian might now have to relate how thenceforth a deadly feud raged between the houses of Borlase and Brandon, and how perturbed hostesses had to smuggle any Borlase they might be entertaining out the back way, if a Brandon called, or *vice versa*. Emmeline anticipated such a vendetta with some satisfaction, but the Brandons never stooped to such vulgarities. They were experts in those social arts of hushing things up and smoothing things down, which are necessary to preserve an unruffled surface amongst the high-born and high-placed.

Horace received a letter from Adelaide, carefully worded this time, and with a veiled apology, announcing her engagement. What he felt, probably he himself did not know—rather, as if he had been playing bridge too late, too long, but not too well. In the main, however, he was occupied in trying not to feel anything and in succeeding. He got through dinner with the polished composure of the social stoic, and Evelyn was the only person who noticed that he looked tight-strung, and

was inclined to talk about the Liberal Government and its attacks on peers and on property, a subject which she dreaded above all others. It is, however, a safety valve which has relieved many private grievances. But even the Liberals and the Lords proved insufficient for Horace that night, and when the family and guests were dispersing, he asked Evelyn to come into the library. Though he opened the door for her in the politest manner, and even asked if she would like a cigarette, Evelyn began to wonder what impropriety she had been guilty of lately.

"I should like you to read this letter from Miss Borlase and tell me what you think of it, Evelyn," he said, handing her Adelaide's letter. He watched her expression closely as she read. Evelyn made an heroic attempt to have no expression, but did not succeed. Adelaide was her favourite girl friend, and her feeling for Horace was the most genuine religion she had. She would have given her latest enamel pendant to go over to him and kiss him, to have a little cry and say how dreadfully sorry she was, but any degenerate idea of that kind was quenched when she met his glance, nobly stern and impassive. Horace was far above receiving the trivial consolations of a merely feminine sister.

"Have you nothing to say, Evelyn?"

"Oh, Horace!" This was a feeble remark, but at least non-committal. His eyes, however,

compelled her to be a trifle more explicit, and she studied the edge of her gauze over-skirt, murmuring "How dreadful!"

"Are you distressing yourself on my account, Evelyn?" Horace inquired with a cold ironic smile. "I assure you it is unnecessary. Adelaide has effectually disenchanted me. I am extremely glad the enlightenment comes before and not after marriage." He really was thin-lipped and square-jawed sometimes. Feeling that he was determined she should talk to him, and then be castigated for whatever she said, Evelyn continued to study the sequins of her gown for an inspiration, and at last got one. "Poor Adelaide," she murmured, "it's quite too atrocious. What will she sink to with that dreadful man?"

Horace was secretly mollified but far above owning to the fact. "I don't care to speculate about that. It is not a pleasant subject. The man is probably no worse than other labourers."

"How can she endure him? His boots are enough for me. And his hands! Enormous. Oh, poor Aidie!"

Evelyn collapsed with a little shock of suppressed laughter and inexpressible horror. She began to feel tired and nervous, and to wonder when she could get to bed. She had endured the Liberals and the Labour Party for three hours with scarcely any intermission.

Horace walked to the window with an air of

restrained exasperation, but he soon came back again. He always did think Evelyn rather a mistake, still she was there, and he was more or less accustomed to her.

"It is a pity you are so frivolous, Evelyn," he remarked with some commiseration. "Miss Borlase is pleasing herself, and certainly does not want our sympathy."

"Adelaide is so easily influenced," Evelyn said. "She has been shut up for days with that man and her own family, and no society to distract her. Emmeline Borlase is quite a common sort of woman and even her father is not the same as the Bohuns. They must all have talked her into this engagement. Aidie is so sweet and charming herself, at least, she always used to be, though she certainly has deteriorated since she came back to New Zealand."

"No nice girl would under any circumstances have behaved as Adelaide has done—no English girl. I am not referring to her breaking her engagement with me but to—other things." He was too noble to mention to his sister that Adelaide had declared her love for a man who had never offered himself to her, but they both knew of her riding and driving about with a ploughman's son.

"Why I brought you here to-night, Evelyn," he went on incisively, "was not for the pleasure of discussing this wretched affair, but because I wish you to understand, once for all, that there

is to be no further allusion by you or by anyone else to my former engagement with Miss Borlase. That subject is finally disposed of. I refuse to permit the vulgarity of a quarrel to be thrust upon me. You will only show bad taste if you do not make the best of things as they are. I shall write to Miss Borlase to-night, and I suggest that you and Aunt Elinor should call before long and congratulate her on her choice." The last words came out with a swift swing that had the effect of a lash. Evelyn began to feel fagged out. He noticed it and said, "I won't keep you longer, Evie. You look tired." Then he opened the door for her and touched her forehead with cold lips in token of confidence and admonition, saying, "Goodnight. You understand my wishes now, and I am sure that you will carry them out."

"Goodnight, Horace," Evelyn longed to say "dear" but dared not, lest he should detect condolence lurking in the word. So she went to her own room and collapsed there in private.

What the rest of the family might have done if Horace had not taken this lead, it is unsafe to guess, but nothing suited them better than the policy of making the best of things as they were. If you only ignore all that is unpleasant or troublesome, it practically ceases to exist for you ; this is a useful psychic law, well known to the great. The Brandons were an amiable family. The engagement with Horace was to be ignored. Dennis MacDiarmid was to be

promoted to social recognition by his superiors, and to be thenceforth known as "Mr. MacDiarmid."

Evelyn showed symptoms of being refractory, and planned a visit to some friends near Christchurch in order to escape meeting Adelaide and her lover, but Horace's admonitions recalled her to her better self, and she consented to pay her visit if he would accompany her. He had replied to Adelaide in such a manner that it was possible for them to meet on perfectly friendly terms. Horace Brandon had one quality supposed to be un-British, he knew when he was effectually beaten. The fact of being beaten is not enjoyable, but then one can always ignore it. It created a germ of respect for MacDiarmid in which Evelyn did not share. She had an unaffected horror of bearded men, and never ceased to regard him as a weird monstrosity. Her manner towards him was consequently colourless in the extreme, and might have conveyed to a mere Colonial the impression of vacuity. Adelaide, however, saw that she had been victimised, and asked her to come out into the orchard and see the apple blossom. They went out, and when Evelyn had said "How sweet!" perfunctorily, and Adelaide had replied, "Isn't it?" she said in another tone, "Evie, you are a dear to come and see me so soon. And how good of Horace!" The visit delighted her beyond measure. Reprobation always excited in her

mind an abnormal consciousness of sin, quite irrespective of what she had been doing, and she never had been less in a mood than now for quarrelling with her fellow-creatures. This social acknowledgment made her feel as if she had chosen Paradise for her portion and had had the world thrown in.

Evelyn studied the orchard as if it had been an Academy picture and observed, "Wouldn't it be a good subject, that mass of pink and white blossom, with the dark bush in the shadow of the hill for a back-ground?"

To which Adelaide replied, "Horace would never have been happy with me. He was mistaken in thinking he cared much about me."

"How can you tell, Adelaide? Horace does not show his feelings on the surface. Englishmen never do. But they are deep down."

Adelaide thought that Horace's feelings were so very deep down that there was no hope of their ever coming up, and that on the whole—Well, she was ecstatically in love and the conclusion was foregone. Thoughts of this kind she always kept entirely to herself.

"I admire Horace too much to marry him. I want some one nearer my own level, who has faults of his own and can forgive me mine."

"You want a husband you can rule over, instead of obeying as a wife ought to do. It is not right. You like having your own way, Aidie."

Adelaide confessed her guilt but pleaded some extenuations. "Only now and then, Evie. Not always. And not with an Englishman. I should never think of trying to have my own way with Horace. Only with Dennis." She looked around at the cloud of apple blossom and picked a spray, and suddenly saw that it was the loveliest thing in the world, and her own face, what with spring air and one thing and another, grew as deliciously pink and white as the blossoms. "I don't think Dennis minds," she said softly.

"It is not right," repeated Evelyn.

Adelaide thought it was nevertheless delightful, and that she would chance the iniquity. She also thought that there was a good deal of Spring and apple blossom in the world, and that if she was going to die early she might as well have a good time while she was on the earth.

Horace, meanwhile, had been trying to draw MacDiarmid out.

Horace's manner all through this interview was irreproachably artistic and well-bred. He shook his rival's hand with engaging cordiality, congratulated him on his good luck, and then—Englishmen being notoriously expansive on sentimental topics—started a conversation on stock-breeding. It was so nice and self-effacing of him to talk about sheep and cattle, because it was the one subject of which he knew absolutely nothing, and of course MacDiarmid

could not converse on any other. MacDiarmid, though known to be a first-class farmer, stubbornly ignored the chances so tactfully offered him, and his churlishness became fatiguing. A boor he was and a boor he would remain. It was a relief when Adelaide and Evelyn re-entered the sitting-room and Horace got up to go. His manner towards Adelaide was as perfect as towards her lover. It suggested that she need fear no reproaches from him, that he was sincerely sorry for her (he really was), but that he and she and everybody else must now make the best of this fiasco. All he actually said was—"Goodbye, Miss Borlase. It is really goodbye this time. I am going to the North Island next week. Evie will join me in Auckland after Christmas, and we will get home in time for the season. You know you have my best wishes. I hope we may see you and Mr. MacDiarmid in London some day." He could not imagine any form of bliss for people who had no hope of ever getting to London.

The farewells were not over when Major and Mrs. Brandon arrived in state, that is to say, in the best carriage with a liveried groom on the box seat. Mrs. Brandon wore a very costly dress, but her manner showed the artistic simplicity which is a great improvement on nature, while her husband chose the out-of-door bluff British style. These amiable people had a high opinion of Dennis MacDiarmid, and

favoured him with that affability which never fails to endear the aristocracy to its social inferiors. Major Brandon in particular possessed that preternatural gift for detecting merit and ability even in the most unlikely circumstances, which is one of the special characteristics of the English nobility. It is only the middle class who, in spite of repeated exposures in society novels, still ignore and spurn modest merit, and the Brandons would be anything rather than middle class.

"I have known Dennis since he was a boy, Aidie," the Major said, reviving an indistinct memory of a barefoot boy driving cows across the river. "Remember your father too, Dennis." He did. Dougal MacDiarmid once poured a flood of untutored Celtic eloquence upon him for blocking up a narrow part of the Pass with his carriage. "Always felt sure you would do something uncommon, and now you are carrying off our little Aidie. You must think of getting into Parliament some day and making a name for yourself. If ever there's anything I can do to help you, you can count on my help—such as it is, and I hope you won't hesitate to ask for it, for Aidie's sake and your own. I thought Horace was to be the favourite, but if we can't have Adelaide for our niece, we shall keep a charming neighbour."

The Major had left home in rather a lukewarm state, but he was warming up nicely. Adelaide, all spring pink and white, with apple

blossoms in her silk muslin dress, and so much in love with her lover that some of the love overflowed on everyone around, charmed his middle-aged heart so thoroughly that he went on to say he had a favour to ask of them both. So nice of him to put it in that way. He wanted the bride to be married from his own house and in the Miramar chapel, and to give her away himself. Dennis was about to open his lips when Adelaide, deftly interposing, went over to the old gentleman, thanked him prettily, gave him a stage kiss—Dennis did not envy him that kiss—said Emmeline would never let her be married from any other house than Haeremai, and wasn't it too soon for her to settle all these things?

As they drove home in state, Mrs. Brandon remarked: "I am glad that engagement with Horace did not come to anything. It would have been too much like taking away MacDiarmid's one ewe lamb. And Adelaide's income is really not worth considering. It will be a help to Mr. MacDiarmid, but it would have been nothing to Horace. He has so many prospects."

* * * * *

"Any more of that tribe coming?" Dennis asked, when Adelaide returned from the verandah step where she had been smiling and waving her hand to the occupants of the retreating carriage.

"Dennis, you are not to be rude to my friends."

"D—— those Brandons! Pardon, Aidie. I must go up to the sheepyards and swear for half an hour. I'll come back to you when I feel decent again."

"You are going to leave me, Dennis?"

"Oh, well." He sat down. "I know you want something, Aidie, and you know you are going to get it. Now, let's hear what it is."

"I don't like to be married in the parlour, Dennis. I want a proper wedding."

"You shall have the thing if it is to be got in this district. What is a proper wedding, dearie?"

"I want to be married in the Miramar chapel."

"All right. I don't mind making an idiot of myself for once."

"I want Major Brandon to give me away."

"No, that he shall not. I'll be—What, Aidie, haven't you outgrown that?" Adelaide had quite forgotten about behaving nicely, and was pressing her cheek against his and saying, "Please, Dennis, please," as if she were six years old. Dennis thought he might forget too, and he forgot in rather an overwhelming manner. His wrath vanished, and his sentiments became so mixed up with hers that there was no disentangling them. "Of course, darling," he concluded, "you can do whatever

you like on your own wedding day. You always had a fancy for arranging the whole ceremony yourself. Though I don't see how Major Brandon is to give you away, when you always have belonged to me and you never were his."

# CHAPTER IX.

## TE RAMA-RAMA.—THE BRIDE COMES REJOICING—LET THE BRIDEGROOM REJOICE.

EVEN the leaves of the wild myrtle have some beauty and fragrance of their own; but the quintessence of beauty and fragrance is the blossom. So Adelaide began to think, and she grew tired of leaves alone, and wanted the season of flowering. The spring days passed, and she wandered about the bush in the evenings with Dennis, or sat in her father's home and read and sang and talked to him. The first thing that disturbed her was the shade of her grandmother fitfully haunting her conscience. Adelaide knew that her conduct, though delightful to herself and Dennis, would not stand the criticism of correct society. Now Lady Bohun was Early Victorian, and, secure in her Cornish castle, thought scorn of the Smart Set and its ways and liberties only the more because the Smart Set flouted her dowdy black dress and her unimpeachable descent and her dowager greatness. What she would have said to her granddaughter if she had had her under her own eye was beyond that young lady's power to imagine, but, to everyone's surprise, she proved quite gracious about the marriage,

because she did not understand it in the least. It was Colonial, the colonies had been "blasted" in her young days, and blasted and unintelligible they remained to her. All the more, Adelaide, remorseful, and not quite easy in her conscience, tried to propitiate her ghost. Dennis, on the other hand, saw no particular reason for coming under the sway of his future grandmother-in-law. He was a peaceable man on the whole, but he was quite unbroken, and he could not stand the curb. Adelaide banished him the house, very prettily, very nicely, merely referring to the fact that of course he would not be staying there now. Dennis looked her straight in the eyes. "That's Lady Bohun, is it?" he asked, and made her nervous. "What a shameful idea to put into such an innocent girl's head! You don't want a chaperon to protect you from me, love." Adelaide's face had just the faintest pucker of perplexity as if she were saying, "I am sure I am in the right," and adding, "But aren't I?" Dennis's own expression grew very kind. "The settlers are a very decent lot about here, and they'll think no harm of me, nor of you either, Aidie. But I'll go." Then he thought he would change the subject. "Come and give me a lesson, my little girl."

"That is what I have been trying to do," Adelaide said to herself, and to him as near petulance as good manners would allow, "You turn the world upside down, Dennis."

"Your world is upside down to me," he answered. "Don't try to train me for a drawing-room, Aidie. You can't do it, and you wouldn't like me if you could."

Dennis's lessons—oh, call them not lessons, but spells and sorceries!—were enthralling beyond the power of ink and paper to describe. Adelaide tried him first with much that is new and choice and late, but he seemed impervious to Maeterlinck and the resuscitated Pater and Twentieth Century Hellenics and Gaelic Renaissances. Then she herself began to feel that there was nothing in nor out of fashion in the Bush, nothing new and nothing old, but all things changeless and tideless, as all things were in the days of Sappho and Theocritus, of Surrey and of Sidney, and of Wordsworth and Tennyson, immortal, like old folk songs and legends and ballads, and like love and home, and toil and the fruitful earth. She read to him from Malory and Tennyson, and often laid the book down on her knee, and in her own words raised up scenes that now had changed into visions for her, and that were a thousand times more strange and enchanting in this rude solitude than they had ever been while her bodily eyes looked on them. She talked of lone Tintagel and of Bude, of Lyonnesse, the "land of old upheaven from the abyss," where once Lancelot and Guinevere rode through the budding woods, and where King Arthur fought that "last dim weird battle of the West"; and

she told him how she had seen the close and death-white mists sleeping over the land, and then it had all been to her ages and ages old. She talked of the Cornish coast, where the Atlantic waves are shredded into thin fleeces and tossed up to the windy air; of the "great vision of the guarded mount"; of ancient barren moors with granite posts and blocks and farms and Druidical stones; of legends and old tales that still hang about the caves and sands and seas; of smugglers and wreckers and giants and witches. Most of all Dennis liked to hear about her own life; the castle hidden in the misty glen where a tunnelled rock juts out into the sea; of her garden wall, smothered in red and purple fuchsias: of the old strong tower of granite with the glittering spiral staircase, the inscriptions on the old hall of state; the mysterious niche within the stone; and the slits for shooting arrows; and high above all the yellow lichened battlements from which old Tudor knights might watch their foemen creeping up to the attack. While she was speaking her eyes spoke or sung more than her lips told, and he sat as still as he sometimes did on fine evenings under the spell of the clouds and the mountains. The low ceiling and the shadowy walls and the homely chintz-covered stuffed sofa and armchairs all vanished, and he saw a visionary land, and in the centre of it his little witch with the blue, blue eyes. This is how Adelaide taught her big bronzed lover.

Sometimes he read to her while she wrought embroideries, but while she drew the threads of silk and fine linen she began to fret secretly more and more. She wanted to spend those hours making miracles of fine needlework for her home and her wedding garments. But Dennis never made the slightest reference to the prospect of their ever being married. While she was returning the Miramar visit, Major Brandon asked when his duties were to be performed, and though she made a gay, evasive answer, she thought with a pang that she knew no more than he. Adelaide began to be more and more distant with Dennis, but he only looked at her, kindly, inquiringly, and said nothing. She knew that her state of mind (or of heart) was shockingly uncivilised. She knew perfectly well—her grandmother had often signified to her—that nice girls always sit still without a wish in their hearts or an idea in their heads, and let their lovers do all the wishing. And yet do what she would, she could not help longing to be Dennis's wife and not to wait indefinitely. She wanted to be nearer and dearer even than now, to reign and to serve and to love without even her grandmother's ghost disapproving; to have him for her own and hers alone. It filled her with envy when Emmeline waited on him and baked him scones and tea-cakes, and made his tea exactly as he liked it, and she could have cried with jealousy when he handed Emmeline, and not her, his coat to

mend. These disgracefully plebeian emotions, worthy only of a kitchenmaid, overcame her with shame and mortification, but in no way could she attain cultured serenity. Adelaide had expected a fervent lover—"And oh, he is that," she cried to herself, remembering one night—she had expected him to urge their speedy union and she had intended to put him off prettily or pretend to, and then to have her excuses swept aside and her will overborne into doing exactly what she had set her heart on doing. Adelaide had a way of arranging her life as if it were an opera of which she was both the heroine and the author.

Dennis, however, had not got up his part in her play at all, and so far from urging her to anything, took no notice when Emmeline gave him a very plain hint. Adelaide began to get pale, and sometimes irritable and sometimes piteous.

When Dennis had gone on placidly doing nothing for a month, he said in the most casual manner after tea, "Come up the hill with me, dearie, and tell me exactly where you'ud like the house to be."

Adelaide tried not to flush, but she was both glad and angry. "What house do you mean?" she asked with fairylike severity, and withdrew her hand from his.

"Why, our house to be sure. I want to start the men on it before the shearing begins, and

then we can be married any day you like in the Christmas fortnight."

"Oh, Dennis!" She gave a little laugh, but never before had felt so much inclined to scold. "Don't you think you might ask me to settle when the wedding is to be?"

"Well," Dennis answered seriously, "I don't suppose you can get married without me, can you? And I can't possibly get the time before then."

It was too provoking. Would he never remember that Adelaide ought to be wooed?

"It might be *after* Christmas," she said distantly.

"No, it might not," Dennis replied, and looked down at her with his brown eyes, not quite so serious this time. "The harvesting will have to begin in February."

Adelaide had not a word to say.

"You've been vexed with me lately, Aidie," Dennis said. "What have I been doing this time?"

"Nothing at all." Adelaide's look still suggested that she had withdrawn into misty altitudes, and that if he wanted her he must follow.

"Now tell the truth, Adelaide, or I'll make you." He did not mean anything very brutal, but only that he would down with Lady Bohun, and take his love to himself, and then she knew she could keep nothing from him any more than he could from her.

The mist was scattered in a light breeze. "It's what you haven't been doing that is the matter, Dennis." Adelaide answered with a laugh, and a blush and a tear. "You made me ask you to tell me that you love me, and now you have settled when we are to be married without saying a word to me."

"Come and tell me where you want that house," was the only answer he made.

They arranged to have it on the western slope between the bush and the cleared paddocks. Dennis told her that he was to be her father's partner in the whole estate of Haeremai, and that all the arrangements were to be completed to-morrow, and then he said in a low voice that made amends for the wasted opera and the three weeks fretting, "And now, this land that will be for our own home, my Aidie,—I want it to take in your old playground with the tree ferns and the hill where my love came back to me. I must keep that for myself and you. What will you call your house?"

"Te Rama-Rama," said Adelaide. They walked through the bush together, and he picked a branch of myrtle and gave it to Adelaide, and said, "You mustn't go trying to misunderstand me again, love." Then they were at peace with one another and with all the world.

When MacDiarmid showed the Boss the ground he wanted to reserve, Mr. Borlase drew up his bushy grey brows. "Are you

moonstruck, MacDiarmid?" he asked. "What the mischief do you want with a wedge of rough bank and creek cutting into my ground? Why don't you take some more of the cleared land round your house and make your orchard larger?"

"I want it, Mr. Borlase, and you don't, and that's good enough for a deal, isn't it?"

"Oh, take it, by all means. Much good may it do you—you and that lovesick girl of mine. Or rather of yours."

"I'll have the land now," said Dennis calmly. "And I'll take my Adelaide at Christmas. And she'll be just as much your daughter as she ever was."

"Have a whisky," replied Mr. Borlase unsentimentally. "Emmie, Emmie! Bring us that deed and some whisky."

* * * * *

So Adelaide and Dennis were married at Christmas in the fulness of the year. The corn stood high and golden in the fields, and waited for the reaping machine and those that guide it, and the settlers' hearts were glad as they saw it, and thought of the days when the iron should cleave through its strength and toss it off for the binding and the lords of the harvest should enter into the possession of their heritage and of their toil. It was a semi-civilised, semi-barbarous wedding. The bride shone and glistened like a fairy princess, like

Alpine snow and ice, like the lilies that adorned the Miramar chapel. But the bridegroom refused to wear correct wedding garments, and as it was obviously impossible to cast him into outer darkness on that occasion, Adelaide granted him a dispensation. He had a rooted objection to sitting behind the horses, unless he held the reins, and he had wished to drive her to and from the chapel in an open buggy, but he yielded at the sight of her alarm and dismay, though for his own part he did not see why such a proceeding need prevent her appearing in bridal state. No one was more enraptured than Dennis at the apparition of Adelaide passing up the aisle under native palms to altar rails all white with myrtles and lilies, and wearing a trained gown of satin covered with the fine lace Lady Bohun had sent, and veiled like early morning, and carrying the white mountain lilies and myrtles. The flowers were his own and only gift—except himself. Major Brandon liberally bestowed Adelaide on her Dennis, and was agreeably conscious of his own generosity towards that rising young man. It was observed that the bridal pair murmured some tender confidences to each other as they came from the vestry. What they really said was this:—"You won't make me go through this performance every ten years, will you, Aidie?" To which Adelaide murmured back, "You know you like it, Dennis." And he, "Perhaps. Once

in a way. But I think this will about do." At the church porch they were met by a group of settlers and their young families. The children strewed marguerites all the way to the carriage, and Adelaide royally kissed the first small girl. The settlers from all the district round, headed by the men of Haeremai, presented a casket of greenstone and Colonial gold by the hands of M'Ilvride, who explained at some length that they had worked with MacDiarmid and they had worked under MacDiarmid, and a better mate and a better master they didna' want to meet, and they could mind Mr. Borlase's daughter when she was a bonnie bairn, and they were proud to see her there the day, the bonniest bride there had been in the province or would be for many a long year. And they wished them both joy. To which MacDiarmid, still bare-headed and with one hand on the carriage door, replied laconically, "Thanks, boys. I hope you married ones are only half as happy as we are going to be, and those of you that aren't married, I wish you the pick of New Zealand—what's left after to-day." Then he took his seat by Adelaide and suffered himself to be driven away while the settlers and shearers gave three ringing cheers. It is astonishing how popular a happy bride and bridegroom can be.

The breakfast was at Haeremai, and was presided over by the Boss in person. As there were only the family and two little bush

girls who had played at being bridesmaids, formality was dispensed with.

"You got through beautifully, Dennis," Emmeline remarked encouragingly. "You were not nearly so idiotic as I expected you to be."

Dennis looked up gravely—he had been interesting himself in cold turkey—and answered, "I could have got through much better if the parson hadn't been there. Adelaide coached me up in the marriage service long ago, didn't you, Aidie? And I've rehearsed it now and then to myself, bits of it."

At the "Miramar" dinner table, a small family party discussed the prospects of the newly-wedded pair. Major Brandon expanded genially when the soup had disappeared.

"I always liked MacDairmid," he said. "There's a good deal in him and he'll make his way now. That little girl of Borlase's can do anything with him. He is not nearly so dull as you and Horace suppose, Evie. He fought the Road Board and the Government too over that railway bridge scandal and beat them hollow. And he's immensely popular with the settlers round about here. We shall see him in Parliament at the next election, and in ten or twenty years he'll be in the ministry—get knighted perhaps. 'Sir Dennis MacDiarmid' sounds rather well, doesn't it?"

Evelyn was depressed. "Adelaide will not live to see that day, Uncle. She is very

delicate, and she has always before lived in civilised surroundings. Emmeline Borlase has just kept her alive by waiting hand and foot on her, and now she has gone to live alone in that little cottage with her husband and only one servant. The ploughman, or whatever he is, will soon stop petting her, and will treat her as ploughmen do treat their wives. He will roar at her. He looks capable of roaring. Adelaide will be heroic, and he will not notice until some day he will wake up and be astonished to find that she is dead. For about a month he will think that he is sorry. Then he will get a wife at the Matrimonial Bureau and live happy ever afterwards."

"Oh no, not so bad as that," said Mrs. Brandon gently, though she laughed. "Adelaide is partly Colonial and easily moulded. She will adapt herself and become like Emmeline, not quite so plump and rosy, but matronly. She will be a model wife, and will be absorbed in her husband's interests."

"Yes, he will absorb all her vitality. He is that kind of person. He will become a prominent patriot while Aidie is losing all her charm and refinement. He will get into the House as a Labour Agitator (Evelyn thought this was a recognised Parliamentary title). He will rant about 'social pests' while he is drawing his income from the land. Aidie can't get quite common, but she will become purely negative. She will coach him up and then pretend to

quote 'my husband.' They will have ten children—everyone does in this district——"

"Evie, Evie, I cannot allow you to be so graphic." Mrs. Brandon rose, and added as they went into the drawing-room, "Fortunately Adelaide cannot both die next year and also live to have such a very inconvenient family."

* * * * *

The bride and bridegroom for whom so many varieties of fortune had been predicted sat alone in the home he had built for her on the western hill, and, with the lamps unlit, they watched the afterglow pass into dark loveliness. It was the blossoming time of myrtles and the room was sweet with them. The mountains communed with the bush and sent down the breath of their winds into its heart, and the bush stirred and gave up its secrets to the spirits of the mountains, in the whispering of dark leaves and the trembling of slight ferns and the falling of little waters. Dennis was better pleased to listen to his bride just then than to say much himself. She talked about the future and then about the earliest memories that they shared, and as she talked she became plaintive in the height of ecstasy as the lark does when it sings in the highest. She spoke of her girl-mother coming to her home in the bush, and said if she herself should die young, and she thought it might be so, he was to re-

member she had had her full share of happiness, and she asked if he would lay her close to her mother on the hillside. Dennis laughed, but there was a throb in the laugh, and said, "No, I won't. I won't bury you anywhere," and holding her strongly to him, "I'm not going to let you die."

Then even the presence of the mountains and the bush was shut out, and there was solitude and loving silence except for a murmur of water and of leaves. "Aidie, my wife, my joy, the desire of my heart," he called her in the glad darkness of the night, and she thought he would hold off death.

# Part Second.

## THE HIDDEN VALE.

# MAORI WORDS USED IN PART II.

1. TOHUNGA, . . . . a Maori wizard, one who lays a spell upon others. The term is used playfully here.
2. WHARE, . . . . . a native hut.
3. TIKI, . . . . . a Maori charm, generally the distorted figure of a God.
4. HINE-NUI-TE-PO, . . the Maori goddess of the Underworld.
5. KEA, . . . . . the Mountain parrot of New Zealand, attacks sheep and lambs.
6. KAUKA TREE, . . . known to the New Zealanders generally under the term of "cabbage tree." It is really a "palm-lily," as it is called elsewhere in this part.
7. TANE, . . . . . the Maori God of trees.

# CHAPTER I.

## A RETROSPECT—WHERE CHILDHOOD SLEEPS.

THERE was a lonely undiscovered valley that lured Adelaide's fancy when she was a little girl. Dennis told her there must be a valley there, because the Wainoni made a gap in the western ranges, but some distance away it swept, curving round into the unseen, and just at the bend a crag thrust its foot forward into the waters; and there the current ran deep and strong, and the forest trees formed an inpenetrable jungle. Mr. Borlase considered the entrance impracticable, and did not find it worth his while to try. Aidie liked to sit in the paddocks and watch the Wainoni flowing away under the sunlight of afternoon and evening, flowing away to where the great crag hid it from sight, away into the very midst of the Unknown and the Beyond. Like so many imaginative children in the Colonies, Aidie was always dreaming and waiting for the unseen world, which all her reading presented to her, and which was living in the memory of her parents. Just as she never doubted that the sky and the clouds were literally heaven, so she was sure that it must be in that western vale that fairies and dragons and knights and

heroes lived. She could never find them about Haeremai, and as she said to Dennis, "They must be somewhere." Everything invisible, impossible and romantically unlike her home inhabited that impassable territory. These things she told herself and Dennis so often, and so imperatively, that they both grew to believe them; she as proved fact, he as at any rate an undisproved possibility worth entertaining. Sometimes Aidie was satisfied with dreaming, sometimes she got fits of longing to run or fly or swim along the shining pathway of the Wainoni. One afternoon she began dipping first one foot, then another in the stream, and shrinking from the unkind stones and the cold water, when Dennis came whistling down the hill. He stopped and contemplated her with interest.

"What are you up to, Aidie?" he inquired. "*You* can't get over the river, you know."

"Oh dear, oh dear!" Aidie sighed in despair, "I do want to see over that hill where the river runs to. Dennis, Dennis, how can you?"

The boy had waded into the water, and was looking back at her with rather ostentatious enjoyment. She called to him to come back, then on second thoughts bade him stand in the very middle and tell her what he could see.

"Nothing much. Only crinkly water and little sparkles." Then, with sudden animation, "Oh, I say! Such lots of fishes!"

"Can you see up into the valley, Dennis?"

But it was some time before the boy would be coaxed to leave off grabbing for the little fishes. Then he stood, looking and listening intently up the wind-blown track, almost expecting the moving clouds to alight and take visible human form upon the wavelets.

"I hear a sort of music coming that way," he said after a silence of suspense. "It is those Maori fairies that peeped at Te Kanawa and then ran away with the shadows of his ornaments for patterns. You know they always go about in little crowds singing together," said Aidie confidently. "O Dennis, do come here, *please*, and don't listen all to yourself. Don't the stones hurt your feet terrificabilly?" she inquired with sympathy as he waded back.

"Don't feel 'em a bit. Stones don't hurt if you walk on 'em enough. Better put your shoes and stockings on, Aidie; *you* aren't allowed to go barefoot."

"My foot won't never dry enough."

The boy felt for his handkerchief, said, "Dash it, he hadn't got one." He rarely had as a matter of fact. Fortunately, he never needed one. Then plucking some broad downy leaves he dried her feet gently. They seemed to him extraordinarily small, and she such a wee little lady, and so dainty. Aidie was the Boss's daughter, and her mother was the lovely lady of Haeremai, whom everyone looked up to; she was the only playmate near at hand; he was an unsophisticated boy, and in his quieter moods

nothing pleased him better than to play with her and tease her and take care of her. Aidie thought him a wonderful hero, and credited him with quite superhuman powers, but with rather a trying disposition. He put his arm behind her now without a trace of self-consciousness or even shyness, and if his eyes still kept a dreamy expression, it was because he was haunted by the wind music. Sometimes he did think of Aidie as his sweetheart, with much more knowledge of nature than had come to her from her story books. He always meant to marry her some day, but at present there were only green knobs of sentiment in him. Her imagination was in full flower already, but, so far as consciousness was concerned, she was a baby still.

"Couldn't I float up the river, Dennis?" she suggested in a beguiling tone. She felt sure he could arrange it for her somehow, if he tried hard enough.

"Floating's no use," he answered. "Nice and wet you 'ud get your dress that way. And the current flows East and the valley's West. See here, Aidie, don't you let on to anyone, and we'll ride down the river-bed to-night and get a look into those mountains. I'll catch our horses and steal your saddle for you, and then hide with them behind the matipos. You pretend to be tired and go to bed early, and when you hear a mavis sing, it 'ull be me whistling. So you climb out of the

window and come to me. Only if you say a word I'll get thrashed. Black and blue from head to foot and my bones all broken," he went on composedly, piling terror on terror, for Aidie at that age was of rather too confiding a disposition. "Then you'll cry, you know." Dennis's thrashings caused more acute anguish to her than to him.

Aidie shrank back terrified and yet fascinated.

"O Dennis, you might get hurt!"

"No matter," he answered with hardened philosophy. "I'm bound to get thrashed for something soon. And I'm going to find out where that music comes from, anyway. So you may as well come away too."

Never at any other time did Aidie do so daring and lawless a deed as on that night when she rose from her cot at the note of the thrush, and obeying Dennis's whispers, was lifted on to her horse and rode with him along the river bed. How dark it looked, totally changed from its everyday aspect. She had never seen or imagined it at night. The hills were only masses of darkness on each side. Somehow they seemed more alive than by day. One could not imagine what might be moving amongst them. The face of the moon flew fast in a many-coloured scarf of vapour. The river was "blacker than anything." There was little gurglings in it that one never heard in afternoons or mornings. A delightful, mysterious, guilty feeling seized the child.

At last they got near the crag and plunged into the stream, deeper and deeper, until they were clear of the shadow. Exactly what they saw or did not see, Aidie had no very clear idea; at first a great flood of moonlight, rushing waters, white shining mists moving amongst crags and blackness, little wisps of fog shifting over a marsh-garden of those rare blooms that grow only amongst the Alps, and white peaks, with only mists below them, rising out of the clouds instead of out of the ground. Even the very wind that rushed out of the mountains touched her cheek with an unfamiliar touch. Or was it really wind and not a mystic hand? Were those really moving mists or flying raiment? Surely there was a beautiful old witch with silver hair and blueish veils in amongst the fog and the moonlight! And who was ringing those little bells and the big bells in the water across the crag? Unfortunately the river flowed here deep and impassable, and rocks and forests kept the haunted vale forbidden territory. The children turned homewards discussing in a mixture of doubt and belief the extraordinary apparitions of that night, when in the strange darkness a most portentous thing occurred. A huge white ox strode into the stream and sent out a terrific bellow that echoed from rock to rock. It was of course not Willoughby's white ox, but a monster of a supernatural size. It had red fire for eyes; its horns were silver; smoke came out of its mouth; there were little

stars about its legs where they stood in the water. Aidie thought it was very likely Io, whom she was learning about in a little book called *Heathen Mythology*. Dennis felt certain it was a Taniwha, and that it was his duty to kill it, or as he had no weapon at hand, to throw stones at it. With this object he jumped off the filly and fired pebbles with considerable skill. The monster roared and Aidie shrieked. Dennis could not immediately leave off this exciting enterprise, but the fact that the ox continued immoveable convinced him that it was a phantom, and therefore impervious to stones. Now, though he was ready to deal with any creature of flesh and blood, he did not care much about tackling such an uncanny apparition as this, and was inwardly glad to yield to Aidie's agitation and leave the spot. Then they galloped back as fast as they could go, she deliciously thrilled with fear and with admiration of her hero, he fired by this midnight encounter with the Taniwha—a very rare monster even in Maoriland. The farther off they got the more enormous grew the dimensions of the ox and the fierier the sparks of its eyes. One might indeed see anything at that hour of dreams.

It was a very tired nervous little girl that Dennis lifted up to her bedroom window, and her pretty hair and her pretty frock were in most unusual disarray. He put his cheek down to hers, called her "Sweetheart," which

always pleased her greatly, then loitered a minute to whisper, "All right, Aidie?" and received her assurance and her farewell entreaty not to let anyone hurt him, as she stood tiptoe by the window to embrace him. Then he lingered about the bush for some time in the hope of evading his father. He had been suddenly struck with remorse for having led Aidie into this adventure. He knew the guilt was all his. She was only a wee little girl, and quite incapable of any wildness of her own, while he was a big boy of thirteen; besides he had heard Mrs. Borlase say, "Aidie is quite safe if she is with Dennis," and that made him feel proud and responsible. While he was thinking over his wrong-doing, he fell asleep until he was awakened by his sheepdog sniffling over him. Then he went home and opened the kitchen door quietly, but it was past four o'clock, and there sat his father taking his first breakfast by candlelight before going off to the milking. What happened after that, Dennis did not tell Aidie. No need to make her cry. Besides he deserved it that time. And the Taniwha was really worth being flogged for.

Aidie allowed the boy to take the burden of responsibility, but she had a haunting consciousness that she would feel guilty herself if her Mamma ever found out. Meanwhile, the recollection was a delightful, thrilling, mysterious secret, that she could not speak about even to her playmate except in whispers when they were alone.

# CHAPTER II.



THOUGH Adelaide went straight home on her bridal day, she did not mean to do without a honeymoon. Hers was to be different from other people's and much lovelier. She would go away with Dennis into the mountains, into the very heart of his kingdom, where there was no Society and no Art and no Civilisation, only Nature; he was to show her all its wonders, palaces of clouds and temples of Alps, cathedrals of pine-forests and of rocky gorges and peaks. There she would find him, his own self, in his own element. She wanted to reach out of herself into him, as love always does. In truth he was in her own home a little trying, or at least unexpected, but among the mountains his most uncivilised ways would be appropriate, and there the prelude to their married life would be perfect.

These were only flying ideas and impulses that visited Adelaide in her bed just before she slept, until one delicious summer evening when her wedding day was near at hand. The parlour window was open, and they heard the ceaseless murmur of the Wainoni over its

rough pebbles. Dennis's soul had opened, as it occasionally did, and he became eloquent as he talked of the river and the Alps, of days he had gone camping out and exploring, of flying cataracts and of the ice-falls and of crumbling rocks, of perilous adventures and escapes. Then he told her about a valley that a very little girl had longed to see; he asked if she remembered his wickedness in taking her up as far as the gap to look into it by moonlight, and he went on to say that while she was away in England occupied in forgetting him, he had gone camping out on purpose to explore it, and he had been thinking all the time about his wee little sweetheart, and wondering if he ever would show her the valley. Adelaide had half forgotten, but the memory came back vividly, and she knew by inspiration that it was in that valley that their honeymoon was to be. They would go back into the days of their childhood, when they wandered through the bush together and looked for fairies and magicians, and made love whenever they were not thinking of other things. "What! Are you going to take me there?" Dennis inquired, but looked well pleased.

"Dennis, it is you that are going to take me," she reproved him. Adelaide was making a miraculous silk wrap—a shawl, he called it, for her head, and Dennis, sitting near and taking it up now and then to admire, was not inclined to refuse her anything. "I expect you

think you can do pretty much what you like with me just now, don't you ?" he asked with a smile; "but mind, its just about as rough as—as your lover is."

"Then it will be all right," answered Adelaide, and her blue eyes flashed on him a moment, as only such blue eyes can.

They made a compact, which they were not destined always to keep, that on this bridal journey each should do as he or she pleased. In this way they would find out all about each other, and if there was anything that they thought required improving, they would leave it until they got home.

So after the wedding Adelaide and Emmeline and their maids baked cakes and loaves of bread. The farm hand cut up a lamb, and they roasted the fore-quarter of it, and they boiled the home-cured ham. Then they took the remains of the marriage feast, and they put all these provisions into cloths and bags. Early in the summer morning, when the valley was still in dew and shadow, and the sun lit only the high hills, Dennis rose and loaded a pack horse, and he put on it his gun and a fishing-rod and a canvas tent. Then he went to look for his bride, but she was putting on her veil and her gloves. "You have forgotten your card case," said he, "you are certain to want it up in the Alps."

"Dennis," she remonstrated, "do you think that is quite kind? You don't want to see me

burned to a cinder, do you?" He vowed he did not.

Then splashing through water and slipping over grey shingle and over grassy tracts, they rode out into the unknown to find the secret valley that they could not enter when they were children. In the freshness of the morning Adelaide felt as if even the valley would not satisfy her. She would like to go up and up into the very height of the mountains, she would like to see the great peaks and the glaciers, and look down on all the land far below them; her desire flew upwards to reach the cradle of the river, to see it at its source and birth. There was a fillet of cloud making level the tops of the intervening range, and she thought it would really be better than heaven to sit on a high summit above the clouds and to look down on them.

Dennis listened thoughtfully, and when she paused he examined her and said, "And how do you think you will climb up moraines and mountains, Aidie? Look at your little shoes—and your gloves! Were there ever such ridiculous wee bits of hands in the world before?" Adelaide looked at him, undecided whether she liked this speech or not until he went on, "It's a palace of marble you ought to have, my dearie, and I wish I could build you one." Adelaide told him nature built the loveliest palaces, that it was his world she wanted to see, the mountains and everything he loved; the

mountains belonged to him or he to the mountains, and that was why she was going amongst them.

So with lovers' talk they rode on mile after mile through the freshness of the morning. But the track was stony and the sun rose higher and began to get hotter and hotter. Adelaide grew weary and, instead of coming nearer, the visionary valley seemed farther away. They crossed the stream once, and crossed it twice and three times and over again, until she thought it was coiling itself round and round them. The higher up they went, the louder and wilder the waters sounded in her ears. About noon when the sun was hottest they came to some rapids. They crossed just below, and the waters here were in tumult and swirled to right and to left. Dennis rode in front to show her the way, but she looked nervously at the foam, and while she was looking she forgot to see where his horse had trodden. So she called, "Dennis, do stop or I shall be drowned." He looked back and laughed. "You have lost your nerve my little girl, that's all. Come! be brave." Adelaide rode another pace and stayed again, and put on a doubtful expression. She wished to be brave, but she still more wished not to be drowned. "I think, Dennis, the horse seems to be rather frightened," she said in a clear voice. "Oh, the horse. To be sure," he answered, but he spared her anything more. "Take the poor

creature back then, Aidie." He rode over, leading the pack-horse, then waded back, but just as he got near Adelaide she let her horse stumble, and the next thing she knew clearly was that they were on the bank, and that she was pressed rather too closely against the coarse woollen shirt that Dennis wore on this journey. Adelaide was not altogether displeased, but she was ashamed to have lost her dignity, so she moved her head back, and putting her hand to her cheek, remarked, "Your shirt is a little rough, dear. Let me go. Now I will ride across."

"Indeed and you won't," said Dennis. "I am going to carry you across." And he stooped down to take her.

But she drew away and vowed she couldn't, wouldn't, shouldn't be carried.

"Are you pretending I never carried you over a river before?" he asked, and looked like her boy-sweetheart, very like but not quite the same.

"Oh, but then I was only a child." Adelaide took another step further from him, holding her skirt daintily, and he thought it was a play.

"I seem to remember carrying you through the bush not many years ago, my Aidie," he said, and coming near he sat himself down below where his bride stood and put his hands on her feet and kissed them.

"Oh, but," murmured Adelaide in her lowest bird notes, "that was at home and in private."

"And this," said he, "is public." And he looked around on the river and the untrodden mountains, then took her completely to himself. But Adelaide really felt as if the river were talking about them, and the sun watching overhead and the placid mountains looking on. Her heart beat in an ecstasy, but whether from fatigue or the newness of her marriage, every nerve thrilled with self-consciousness. Her bridegroom was such a barbarian sometimes, and she felt as if he were literally bearing her straight out of her civilised sphere into his kingdom. He put her veil back and bared his chest to press her face against it. "My shirt is too rough, love, isn't it?" he said; then asked, "Are you very unhappy?" Adelaide made no reply. She was most extravagantly happy, and excessively ashamed of herself and of him. Out of the open sky a lark sang shamelessly all the secrets she was hiding in her heart—music, sweetness, love, life, ecstasy and marvel. Yes, she knew what every note meant. These secrets should not be told so clearly, and the barbarous sun should not shine with such unveiled light upon lovers.

In the middle of the stream Dennis stopped and said, "Look up the river, sweetheart. Do you know where you are?"

Adelaide looked along the leaping pathway of the Wainoni, and saw two rocky cliffs, one on each side, and at the base of one was a rock where the water fell gurgling and dripping into

a pool. Beyond the gorge was a serrated range now clear of mist, and at its foot were tranquil waters, blue with the sky; they overflowed into a marsh starred with Alpine blossoms. Behind the range she could see the tops of one or two peaks, white as clouds, but immutable and unvarying in colour and in shape. "Our valley," Adelaide exclaimed.

Dennis lay along the bank, his arm upon her knee as she sat. "Isn't it getting late?" she asked, but he answered, "It is never late nor early in this valley, and there isn't any time here, only day and night. Now give me a kiss, Aidie, for taking you over." At that moment there was a harsh outcry at the edge of the bush, and Adelaide involuntarily rose to her feet. An owl flew out of a native birch on to a nearer branch. There he sat blinking solemn disapproval and propriety, closing one eye in disgust, but leaving the other open to see if they might not do something worse, and every now and then he ejaculated to himself that such things were never done in his young days, and he wondered what the bush was coming to next.

"There, didn't I tell you, Dennis?" said Adelaide. "Oh no, I couldn't think of such a thing just now, not with that frightfully respectable owl watching us." And she led her horse to a rock.

"I'll shoot the creature," said Dennis. "Nonsense, Aidie, what's an owl anyway?"

"This one seems to be a maiden aunt—a gentleman maiden aunt," she corrected herself. She sprang lightly into the saddle without his aid, and cantered on while he got the other animals. Her fatigue had gone, and a breeze that had touched the snow breathed upon her. It struck her that her bridegroom had been rather too supreme at the gates of the valley, and that as a change she would like to recover her own self, at least for a time. They had lingered some time together by the cliffs, but she rode the first half-mile into Eden in front of him, looking back now and then with a smile that was half challenge and half excuse, as if she said, "You may not come too close just now, but don't misunderstand me, will you?"

# CHAPTER III.

## ADELAIDE'S BOWER OF BLISS.

SO these two lovers entered into the visionary paradise of their childhood. Adelaide felt, it must be confessed, some visitings of human hunger and thirst, heat and fatigue, but these earthly weaknesses were forgotten when at evening, just as the live blue flame of the sky began to die out into the unheating glow of amber, they rode side by side into a grand corridor of forest, where straight columns of rimu and matai rose a thousand feet in the air. Turning aside from impenetrable bush, they passed into a bowery glade, the undergrowth gemmed with berries of transparent ruby and dark purple amethyst, festively looped with wild vines and decorated with the pale gold and downy silver of tree-orchids set in high branches, and the ground was soft with delicate ferns. Here a Maoriland God of Love was holding high court, while a chorus of birds sang to him and to each other; wrens and tits, white-fronted robins, chorister tuis in velvet, and wooing fantails. In a sunlit space outside the grove a bell-bird rang a distant wedding peal from a flax bush, where he clung, sucking honey from the blossoms in the intervals of his song, while the

river sounded in undertones. Unalarmed, the birds welcomed their human visitors with a clear chorus of elfin trumpeting and piping and ringing, and they flew over and round Adelaide while she called and cooed to them. She told Dennis that they were her kindred; she was descended from a bird and not from a monkey, and had inherited longings to fly and to sing, to live amongst green leaves and in the clouds, and to see strange lands. She must rest here, she said, in honour of the birds, and with daintily alluring lips and questioning eyes she invited him to lift her from her horse. But Dennis thought it was his turn now and he would let her woo him. So he helped her down as if she had been Emmeline, and answered in great good humour, "All right. You stay here while I take the horses on and choose a camping-ground."

"Very well, Dennis." Adelaide's tone was polite but not lively.

"Why, there's nothing the matter, is there?" said Dennis, and he stayed and leaned against a giant matai, adding in a rather different tone, "Haven't you been showing me how well you can do without me?"

"It's unmanly to nurse a grievance," said Adelaide with a little laugh.

"Are there any owls in this part?" inquired Dennis.

"You might see," suggested Adelaide.

And the birds sang lower.

There was starlight in the torn wavelets of the river when they reached its banks, and Adelaide, tired out into dreaminess and passivity, was conscious chiefly of its tumultuous voices, of the pure darkness overhead and of the subalpine fragrance of earth and moss. Dennis hewed down a young tree and made props and a ridge-pole, and set up a tent taut and trim and pegged it down stoutly. Then when he had carried into the tent the load from the pack-horse and fed his beasts and hobbled them, he gathered manuka and bracken and dry fern and made a bed for his love. The night was cold at this height, so he lay down by her and held her close and kept her warm. The ceaseless rushing of the Wainoni sounded on, but Adelaide heard it only a few dreamy moments before she fell into the deepest and happiest sleep of her life.

The sun rose on their first morning of Eden, but still Adelaide slept on. Dennis rose from the bed of bracken, but he could not leave Adelaide at once, so he crouched down on his knees and bent over her watching and adoring her, the little stray curls, the fine slender hands lying so still, the soft young throat that showed above the ruffled lace and muslin, the half-hidden outline of her limbs beneath the rugs. "All mine, and so glad to be, my little lady," he said inwardly, and felt the humbleness of love. "And I'm hers and she can do what she likes with me. And doesn't she know it,

the darling!" But he would not disturb her by the slightest touch. He took his gun and rod and whistled to his dog Tane, who had followed close at the horses' heels, and he showed him his lady sleeping and bade him guard her strictly until she woke. Tane sat up on his haunches and yearned with his mouth; he spoke with reluctant slow moving tail and with watering eyes and said, "Oh, that I might follow you and scare wild birds. But your will shall be done, for who am I but the dog of my master?" MacDiarmid went out singing and whistling, and he plunged into the icy torrent, where it ran deepest, then tramped by marsh and bush and woke long echoes with his gun.

The sun was two hours old when Adelaide opened her eyes, and looking out of the tent door saw a wonderfully still light and in it a palm lily; its foot was dipped in a dark pool, and on its head was a tiara of yellow rays of blossom, and from the heart of it a bell-bird sang a clear reveillé. This was her first morning in the wilds where Nature was supreme. "Yes," thought Adelaide, "Nature is much better than Art," and she began to search for her hand mirror, and discovered to her dismay that it was badly cracked, and that she would have to do her hair by instinct. Then she put the tent in order and picked up Dennis's night-shirt. He would wear a night-shirt and not pyjamas. This had given her pangs of laughter in the

very thrill of poetical exultation, and now she held the calico half critically, half smiling, then dropped her head and buried her pretty pink face in it. If he had not been so utterly unconcerned, many of his ways would have been a ludicrous trial to her, but as it was, being enamoured, she secretly doated on everything he did and on the very clothes he wore; and loved the mountains and the bush where he walked. And yet forgetful of the charms of simplicity she vowed to civilise him—in the future.

In varying moods Adelaide went out to find her primitive bridegroom, and soon saw him more primitive than usual. Dennis was leaning against a rock in the stream fishing. His trousers were rolled back and his legs showed bare above the knee, his sleeves were rolled back from his thick brown arms; across the chest he had only the navy-blue knitted shirt, open at the throat; the wind was in the magnificent masses of his hair and beard. Adelaide stood some distance off and looked at him with divided mind. "My husband, my barbarian," she said to herself, "oh what am I to do with him?" Still looking, she thought with heightened colour that he was a grand type of man, and she compared him to the statue of Poseidon, a resemblance which might not have occurred to a stranger, and next said he was a kind of river god. "At least, to me." Then she quieted her conscience by adding, "Of course

I shall have to tame him when we begin married life in earnest."

With a quick step she went towards him. Dennis did not see her at first, and when he did he gave her one look and went on fishing; he had just hooked a trout. Adelaide forgave him even that. It was much too joyous a morning for a lover's quarrel. She only said, "Oh, Dennis, isn't it beautiful, a new-born earth all made of air and sunlight and mountains and water. And only just you and I, all alone in our own world."

"How long would you like that, love?"

"Dennis, how can you be prosaic this morning?" Then she asked, but not severely, "Haven't you finished dressing, dear?"

"Don't you like me this way, my darling?" he asked, taking in his line. "I've just been making a bath for you."

He had heaved back a boulder in the stream and thrown out stones, and there was a crystal pool where the water threw pearly tints on the sand at the bottom. Here she might bathe at noon when the sun was hottest. Then Adelaide vowed in her heart that he should dress or undress as he pleased, and it should always seem poetic to her. Her king could do no wrong in his own kingdom. Nothing matters much or long when one is camping out.

Dennis took from the stone near him two wild pigeons and some fish upon a string of green flax.

"How shall I cook them?" asked Adelaide in some trepidation, and she wondered how anyone could cook without a range.

"You are not going to cook them at all. I will," he answered, and told her he was going to be her patient logman in this valley, and he called her his little fairy and his dear little goddess. Then with the axe-head he scooped a hole in the earth and laid stones in it, and kindling a fire of twigs he made the stones red hot. Adelaide spread a damask cloth upon a flat stone, and decorated it with clusters of Alpine daisies and lilies. She brought out her stores and china and arranged them prettily, and her spoons and her forks were of silver. Her dress was a summer fabric of white with blue silk threads in it, and so light the breeze played with it; she had a cluster of white lace-bark blossoms like cherry blooms in her hair and another cluster at her waist. This first breakfast in the wilderness ought to have been their wedding breakfast, she said, and she was sure there never was such a flavour before in bread or fish or bird. There was no human being near, no creature to molest them. There were no living animals except Tane, and the horses placidly munching grass. Two wekas, the thievish imps of the bush, who are feathered and winged but cannot fly, prowled about shamelessly for what they could steal; and an owl like the editor of a morning paper, dozed and dreamed of wisdom all day until the even-

ing woke him up. He was the censor of bush morals, and Adelaide declared, certainly the same as he who had criticised them so severely at the river gates.

This was the manner of their life for several days. Dennis shot birds and caught fish and cooked them, and at night he made a big fire and watched the branches and the smallest twigs glow into living scarlet and pyramidal flames leap up and down, and the red sparks scatter in the profound shadows of the ranges. After the second day the bread became stale, and he noticed that Adelaide ate little of it, and after many hours mountaineering, she owned that she greatly longed for fresh milk. So he used to ride away sometimes out of his kingdom into the other world to the East that did not belong to him and his wife. There the settlers and runholders gave him whatever he wanted, and took no money, for they said heartily, "You would do the same to us, MacDiarmid." While her husband was away Tane followed Adelaide closely, more for company than for fear. There were no serpents in that Eden, no devouring beast, and nothing that tears or destroys the life of man. Adelaide got green fans of tree ferns fresh each day and set them at the corners of the tent. She hung trailing lycopodium from the ridge-pole, and strewed the floor thick with moss and little white stars of manuka. Then she called the tent her Bower of Bliss.

"Wasn't that rather a dissipated accommodation house?" asked Dennis.

"Yes, but all the correct palaces in Spenser are so dull, and the incorrect gardens are delightful. Just listen now!" Adelaide lifted her own head. "All the music is here, the choir of birds and the bass murmuring of the waterfall and the gentle warbling wind. The silver sounding instruments——," she paused, "Oh, they will do for the river where it divides over the rocks. It has a lot of different notes."

Only one mortal dread afflicted Adelaide, and that was lest she should get sunburnt, for which reason she sedulously sought the shades of bush or hill or tent from early morning until the sun was low, while Dennis rode bare-headed and often bare-throated and bare-armed. The sun had got into his composition from his infancy, and it could burn him no more. Sometimes Adelaide was celestially happy. Sometimes there were summer clouds in heaven. Occasionally Dennis was too imperturbable, and did not think about wooing her. Once or twice he stayed just a little too long away; sometimes she distantly invited caresses and he did not respond. Then would come a look or tone, a word or two, or more often some deed done for her comfort and happiness, and then for the next hour she would go singing love songs softly to herself as she decorated the tent or prepared their meals, or sat embroidering his initial on his substantial handkerchiefs.

If he came back at noon from shooting or exploring or getting provisions, he always found her waiting for him in the shadow of the tent, if in the evening, he looked for her by the blue-flaked marsh. This marsh was Adelaide's Alpine garden, though she could only sit on the edge of it and lean over from a rock to look at the flowers and the flakes of blue water in amongst them, and watch the grey cygnets, and listen for the loud whirr of black swans rising from the raupo reeds. Here there were snow-white lilies and daisies much larger and purer than any that grow in lower regions; no worm or fly crept over them, and they bloomed as if they did not know decay.

# CHAPTER IV.



IN this spot Adelaide might have been content to spend all the honeymoon if it had not been for the river. It kept calling her to go farther on and further up to its source in the Alps. It was the first sound she heard in the morning when she woke, and the last sound she heard at night before she slept, and in her dreams it went on calling her to a field of frozen snow and caves of coloured crystal. The snow peaks beckoned her to them. So she told Dennis she greatly longed to follow the Wainoni up to its source. He mused for some time and said nothing.

One night Adelaide sat in the light of the camp fire and sang to Dennis. In the mountain air her voice was so clear it could be heard far off. Just as the moon touched the top of the hill opposite, she broke off and said, "Dennis! Look up. There is a shadow against the moon. It is alive. It moves."

"Well," said he. "I suppose it is a sheep."

"No, it is a man. Look. He must have got into our world by mistake."

"Well, shall I ask him to move on into Mars or Mercury? Or shall I shoot him for trespass-

ing? Or shall I take him prisoner and give him some supper?"

"Do nothing," said Adelaide imperatively. "Let us wait and see if he reveals himself."

"This is your fairy tale we are in," Dennis answered. "So fix up everything your own way."

Adelaide began to sing "Over the sea to Skye" very pathetically, but yet she looked up for the shadow and saw it. The moonlight brimmed over the edge of the mountain and ran down the side, and the shadow moved slowly closer and closer. She was singing "Dead on Culloden's field," and the notes were stirring Dennis's soul, when she exclaimed, "We *must* go and find that man."

"What man?" He was just about to swear when he stopped and presently grew mild. Then he bethought himself of his former pilgrimage.

"I had forgotten. There was a crazy old fellow who lived somewhere up those mountains. I met him when I was exploring the bush. I shouldn't wonder if he could guide us up to the head of the river.

"Of course," said Adelaide. "He is the Tohunga of the Glacier. Please, Dennis, do conjure him."

But when Dennis rose and coeyed, the shadow retreated and soon disappeared in the blackness of the rocky fissure.

"I expect we can follow him," said Dennis,

"unless he fell out of some planet and has gone back into it. Come up the hill with me, Aidie."

"Suppose he doesn't want us?" inquired Adelaide hesitating.

"Then he shouldn't come haunting us."

They climbed upwards, and presently the shape emerged into the moonlight and turned to give one look backward. They caught only a momentary glimpse of a grey figure still retreating. Soon afterwards their feet were on a narrow track of trodden grass and fern, and at the end of it was a clearing made in amongst bracken. Here the old man turned, run to earth. His long thin figure was trembling, his unkempt beard and hair were as white as glacial ice, and they wavered in the wind, his eyes were dark and hollow and he could not speak a word. "Oh, let us go, Dennis," said Adelaide in pity and terror.

"No, no, that's all right," MacDiarmid replied. "You've always got to catch your wizard before he tells you anything." And he said cheerfully to the spectre, "Hulloa, mate. Is this your camp here?"

There was a whare, tent-shaped and thatched with flax and raupo, built against a rock. The old man without a word went towards it, looking back to see if they followed, and when Adelaide drew a little away he motioned her in. Quite automatically he kindled a fire and made tea in his billy, because it is an unwritten

law in the bush that anyone who sits down near any man's habitation shall drink that man's tea and eat and talk with him. Dennis began talking in his matter-of-fact manner, and the old man looked vaguely at him, and at last began muttering in an incoherent manner. Though he would not look at Adelaide, she began to think that he must be a benevolent old wizard, and that she would like to make a friend of him. Wouldn't he come down to their camp, she asked prettily, and she would sing to him if he liked. While she was speaking his eyes were fixed on her face, as if it were an unknown thing and belonged to a visitant from another planet. She rose, still with question and invitation in her manner, and without a word he followed, more like a stray dog than a human being. Yet there was a sort of tattered grandeur about him. Suddenly on the way he began to talk, not answering nor inquiring, but turning the words over in his mind first, and when they were spoken, listening to the sound of his own voice. A forgotten length of years he had lived in these mountains. Many years he had not seen the face of any woman, and lately very rarely the face of any man. His stores came by the coach. He had nailed a box to a tree by the coach road some miles away, and there the driver left what he thought necessary. He camped out anywhere in wild places where no other man went, often sleeping in caves and the hollows of trees

or in the open. The more he talked the lighter his mind seemed to rise, as if a weight were lifted from it, and indeed it became difficult to stop him a moment. At last Adelaide ventured to say they wished much to go up to the Wainoni glacier, and she wondered if he would guide them. It took him some time to comprehend this, then he said, "Yes, he went up to the glaciers." He told them the river came out of a cave, high up in a moraine of grey stones, and he pointed out the way that they must go after leaving their valley. It was through a stony gorge, and they would go over an old native battle-field strewn with bones and with stone clubs and axes. The tribes that had fought there had vanished utterly. They would come to a stream full of reflections and then to a lake, and on the lake the Tohunga had a house with many rooms. There they could stay and sleep with him, and he would show them everything in his house. In the morning he would take them through the bush, then on three miles over the stones of an old moraine. Adelaide was enraptured at the prospect of these adventures; it would be much better than a fairy pantomime; it would be playing a part in an original and living legend of Maoriland, she said very prettily to the Tohunga, but Dennis interrupted almost angrily, "It won't do. My little lady here is very delicate, and she isn't fit for that sort of a tramp."

"You are quite mistaken, dear," said Adelaide very politely but decisively. "You have no idea how much travelling I have done," and she turned again to the old man, "I shall love to go."

"Don't be so foolish," Dennis said heavily, then sat pondering. It disturbed him if there were anything Adelaide desired and she could not have it.

Adelaide quivered beneath his tone but she laughed lightly, like the brave little lady that she was sometimes, and then went on talking to the Tohunga, while Dennis sat silent until the moon held the centre of the sky and he knew that it was late. The night wind blew sharply and cold, and Adelaide's eyes longed for sleep, but she denied it, because her guest did not know how to go.

"Oh nonsense," said Dennis impatiently, "you can hardly sit up. Go to bed, Aidie." Then he said calmly to the old man, "It's getting late. I'll walk a piece of the way with you."

Adelaide went into the woodland bower and lay on the couch of manuka and bracken, heaped with fur rugs. She had a pillow of dry moss spread with fine white linen for her cheek. The tent was lit by a lamp wreathed with lycopodium and hanging from the ridge pole. It shone upon her and upon the ground of the tent, strewn thick with moss and the little white manuka stars. The tree ferns at the corners

nodded and bowed in the wind as if they were sylvan vassals. The moon shone in at the entrance and there Tane crouched, two guardians, dog and shadow. But Adelaide lay and grieved because her husband had shown her discourtesy, and that before a stranger.

Dennis bethought himself of a way to let Adelaide have her wish, and he came back running and leaping across the water, glad of life and vigour, the breath of the mountains and of his love. He stooped to enter the tent, and as he entered, he thought she was more of a miraculous fairy than ever, she in her bower in this wild solitude of shaggy banks and Alpine water and rocks. She wore a thin robe of Eastern silk, blue as summer air, and under it a gown of the finest white wool; the sleeves fell back from her wrists; her cheek was touched with mountain air, but her eyes were misty. As he came to her, his heart was quickened. He put his arm under her head, but, though she would not quite resist him, she would not allow him more; with one small hand and the look of her eyes, she lightly kept him a little distance off. But whatever she did just then, it would have been lovely to him. The memory of his words did not stay in his mind. He called her his delight and his sweetheart, and was so warm and glad she could not keep her own heart still. "Aren't you sorry for being unkind to me, Dennis?" she asked, pretending it was in play. He tried to be

serious, and began to laugh. "No," said he, in a fine Hibernian hash, "I really can't be sorry about anything just now, but I'm sorry I can't. What does a word matter, sweetheart, when you are the joy of the earth to me? Shall I tell you a Maori legend, Aidie? There was once a warlike chief named Tawhaki, who, without any sufficient cause, was loved by a heavenly maid. She descended from the skies to gaze upon him, and she visited him every night in his sleep, then vanished every morning, until at last her love was so great that she revealed herself, and lived with him, deserting, for his sake, all the other gods and goddesses. One day something put him out, and he made a disrespectful remark. Immediately the heavenly Tango-Tango wept—I'm sure I don't see why—then she took her flight towards the sky, but paused just a moment with one foot on the carving of the ridge-pole. Tawhaki, in a desperate state of mind, rushed forward, sprang up and tried to clasp his young wife, but she was too far away. So he called aloud and entreated her to stay. Tango-Tango was obdurate and only called down, 'I shall never return to you again.' The unfortunate man was torn up into shreds of emotion at such a superhuman punishment, and it was sometime before he recovered his common sense sufficiently to think of starting off for heaven himself. It was just about all he could manage to get there, on a tram line of enchanted supple-jacks.

Then he had to disguise himself and pretend to be the humblest of Tango's slaves, and to be aged and worn out with grief before he was even permitted to sit near her fire—although, by the way, he had to bring in the firewood himself, and quite right too. In the end he was made to live always in the sky himself, and to behave properly to his heavenly wife. And that's what it is to have a goddess for a wife in Maoriland."

Adelaide put out the other hand and played with the button of his coat, and half caressed, half kept him off. "Now I will tell you a true story," she began. "There was a mortal maid, who loved a wood-god, disguised as a herdsman. But fate wafted her away to the underworld—the Elysian Fields part. After a time she wafted herself back into her native vale. There the wood-god found her and made her his bride. He was strong and could do anything; he built her a bridal palace and a whole bridal world of blue crystal, and she was happy. But sometimes the bridegroom stole the thunderbolts of Jove and threw them about anywhere. Then the whole palace shook, and the crystal world was cracked, and the poor bride fled into the mists for a refuge."

"Very mild thunder," said Dennis. "I know a much truer story than that. There was a poor herdsman, who kept a prince's flocks and herds; he loved the fairy princess, and won her for his wife. But there was a

spell over the princess that no one should use common speech to her, but only fairy language. Sometimes the poor herdsman forgot and used mortal words, and, whenever he forgot, the bride began to vanish into the clouds."

After that there was a silence full of half-thoughts and glances, and still Dennis looked down on Adelaide, full of love and laughter. "Well?" he said at last, "What will you do to me, Aidie?"

Then she let the light grief go with a breath, and lifted her face slowly.

# CHAPTER V.

## THE RIVER OF IMAGES.

THE way that Dennis had contrived for Adelaide to have her wish was that he should take his own mare and the pack-horse to the nearest cattle station, and leave them there while they were away, and that she should ride through the gorge while he went on foot leading the horse. He had examined the gorge and knew that from the farther side she could get a distant glimpse of the Alps. Adelaide thanked him and thought in her heart, "When I have got so far, who knows what may happen next?" And she fixed her hopes on the Tohunga.

But in the morning when they went to look for the Tohunga, he had disappeared, and they searched in his hut and on the side of the mountain. Adelaide almost thought she must have dreamed him, when looking down, she saw near the tent-pole some tree orchids, and she knew that he had "materialised" them.

"Cheer up, Aidie, never mind the —— old lunatic, —— him," said Dennis, with cheerful profanity. "I'll dispose of these animals first, and then we'll hunt up a sight of the glacier. If we keep to the river we can't go wrong."

But halfway through the gorge to their amazement the river too vanished. The mountains meant to hold their own. Even Dennis was stupefied at this portent. The Nor' West Spirit swept down to oppose them with troops of wind driven rains, but Adelaide rode on gaily without quailing, and the Spirit fled down the Pass behind them. The mountains broke open, and through the clefts showed the country they had ridden. Behind were rain and angry cloud, in front warm sunshine. A rainbow spanned the intervening space, dropping from rock to rock and glorifying the wet grass. Through its mist of colour they saw a tranquil shining valley with Alpine verdure and waving plumes of toi grass ; a silent forest, sunlit at the top, stood in the valley, white sea-gulls sailing high in air above it. The Wainoni flowed out of Nowhere again to join a small still river, so still it seemed to lie in a dream without moving. On the farther side of the valley was a line of snow shapes that at first seemed clouds, a dome, a ridge of jagged shapes, a pyramidal peak. Between a heaven of white Alps and a chaos of iron-black crags and shingle slides, Dennis pointed out a silver streak of solid mist, and told Adelaide that this was the glacier from which the Wainoni flowed.

"And now you are quite satisfied, aren't you?" he asked.

"Of course," Adelaide answered in a

reluctant tone. "We cannot go any further, can we?"

"Can you walk through virgin bush or wade up the stream?" he inquired, not unkindly.

"You can, Dennis?"

"What has that got to do with anything? My little girl, remember I've taken you out of your own world into mine."

"That is what I wanted." Adelaide gave him a sudden quivering glance between light and shadow. "To see your world, dear, to share your life."

"You can't, my darling—not in that way." He spoke seriously, then became unexpectedly poetic as his eye fell on a rock with a celmisia growing in a hollow of it. "Mine's only a block of stone and earth, and your's is the flower that's grown up in the heart of it."

As soon as he had finished speaking he looked again at the small stream. There was the Tohunga floating in a canoe; and by a clump of nigger-head grass he stayed and watched them. But when they came near he was scared again, and stood up to push off. Dennis sprang from the saddle, threw the reins back and halloed. The Tohunga stood with his oar arrested. MacDiarmid went into the water and laid hold of the stern of the boat, but followed up this vigorous proceeding by the mildest persuasion, "You're never going off without the lady, mate?" he said in his most melodious tone, "And you've got in those

sheepskins on purpose for her to sit on, now haven't you? Run the prow into that point and I'll help her in. Come, Aidie." Adelaide made some faint protests, but in a few minutes he had lifted her in and settled the matter for two uncertain minds, and they, much the happier for it, were passing silently up the stream, while he mounted her horse bareback and urged her on into the jungle of thorny lawyer and rotting branch and trunk and bog and rotten bark that looked so fair above. Many a time he dismounted and led the mare, and cut through supple-jack and lawyer to make way. As he went he thought, "My poor little girl, no, she can never go where I go. But why on earth does she want to?" For that was a thing he never understood.

The canoe slid smoothly over the stream. The Wai-o-hine is the stillest of all rivers in that country, and seems to move only by an imperceptible current. The air above had no motion, and on the water the only ripple was where the oars broke. All was glamour and magic. From bank to bank was a stretch of only a few yards, and the bush dipped root and branch into the water. Every trunk and projecting bough, every space of grey sky hung upside down in the river. The keel of the boat drifted along with the curving side. Adelaide saw the images of herself and her guide below; she shunned the bank where there was no bank; she ran into a tree think-

ing it a shadow, and laughed to see a bird sitting on a bough in mid-stream. For nature itself has illusions. They floated into a misty lake, and on one side was a landing-place rotting to decay. Her guide moored the boat and went on in front, still without speaking. Adelaide followed, and their feet trod down the grass and fern. They came to a weather board house prematurely old, round which the bracken grew tall and rank. By the house wall stood a rose tree, crusted with hoary moss, and with few leaves but two pale blossoms. When they had entered, the Tohunga stood uncertain and perplexed, then told Adelaide to get through the house and choose which room she would have, and take whatever she wanted for herself. As she walked from room to room, she started at the sound of her own footfall. In one the window was boarded up, and she took a few steps into darkness. Some drapery wafted slowly and softly against her and she shivered. In the next room, where eyeless windows let in the light, there was a long table with benches on each side and a chair at each end, but no one sat there, and she fancied there were ghosts of parents and of children who had passed away. A door had fallen down, and in the dusk beyond she saw a wooden cradle. The last room she chose, because it had not been so long disused, though grass had sprung up in the rotten flooring. On one side was a wide open fireplace, and while she stood

looking around, a large bird, startled by the sound of human footsteps, fluttered and whirred past, then flew through the window. There was a single tester bed with shreds of drapery, and near it a large old-fashioned leather trunk, with a half-effaced name of which she made out the letters T. D. but no more. She opened the lid and took out one piece after another of household linen, yellow and almost crumbling with decay. She was just unfolding some sheets when Dennis came in. Adelaide told him it was a haunted house where something had happened long ago, but he only laughed and said he was starving; he would as soon dine with ghosts as anybody just then, sooner than wait any longer he would sup full of horrors if he only could get enough of them. Dennis had shot some redbills as he came along, and these the old man cooked while Adelaide made some damper, much better than Dennis's, as he was obliged to own. As the night went on, storm battered on the sheets of zinc overhead, and winds howled through every casement and gap of the ruinous house, and the lightning darted in through undraped windows, followed by blackness or seething showers. It might have been a scene of enchantment in the room, lighted only by the fireflames on the wall. Dennis felt poetical and mystic as soon as he had finished his dinner, and he leant one elbow on the table and sat listening intently to the Tohunga's tales, while Adelaide's eyes

became dreamier and dreamier and her hands played half unconsciously with a greenstone tiki, or charm, on her lap. The Tohunga's features grew keener, and a curious light came into his eyes as he talked of the vanished tribe who had been driven southwards and further south to the waters of this forest lake, where at last the northern invaders fell on them and slew every living one. He told them of a burial pit of the natives up north, and said he had gone down into it and taken from it the tiki which he had given to Adelaide. Then he spoke of the Wainoni, and said it tunnelled for itself a sunless cavern under the mountain and came out at the other end.

It was nearly midnight when they separated. Dennis made a fire in the room Adelaide had chosen ; then he threw some sheep-skins in front of it, lay down on them and went to sleep. Adelaide lay the whole night long, half-awake, half-asleep in her mummified wrappings of old sheets, and she dreamed, not quite unconsciously, for Adelaide's dreams were sometimes like her imaginings of the day and not altogether involuntary. She dreamed the bird came fluttering and crying over her head, turning its restless eyes down on her, flying a little way towards the door, then back, until she got up. It flew in front of her and she followed it all through the house, but could not see the Tohunga anywhere. After a gap of unconsciousness, she was out on a mountain of grey

stones and slippery rocks, and there was the old man, thinner and taller and greyer than before. He held out one finger in warning, but she felt a current of wind blowing her on until she saw a frozen river. A thick dark mist lay over it, and the Tohunga hurried on through it, where she stumbled and could not follow.

Adelaide woke up but would not let her dream go without an end. Soon she was looking into a cavern full of mists; these coiled into the semblance of a robe trailing about the hidden feet of an infant, and of a white film veiling the face of an infant who seemed to lie in the cloudy vapours. Adelaide put out her hands to take the child but touched chill mists, and then it vanished. She asked the old man who was the infant, and imagined that he answered "Life." "What has become of the river?" she cried, and was distressed. The old man answered, "It is the River of Life." Then she asked the name of the valley that it flowed through, and he answered, "Love." "And you, who are you?" she asked, and her spirit was troubled. His voice sounded fainter and far away, and he began to melt into nothingness. Two words came into her head —"Time," "Death"—but she did not know which of them he had said, or whether he had said both. Repeating these words, she woke herself in a fit of palpitation. Rising out of the haunted bed she stood opposite Dennis,

ethereal in the last red glow of the fire. He stirred, looked at her fixedly, and after some minutes said, "It is you, Aidie, and not a ghost." "I think it is myself," said Adelaide, "but I am not quite sure," and she put one bare foot forward and then stopped, not wishing to come to him quite of her own impulse. Without altogether rousing himself, he grasped the situation enough to make a place by his side amongst the sheep-skins, and half rising on one arm to say, "Come, Love, and I'll soon tell." Adelaide was glad to be content with that invitation, so she nestled down by him and told him all her dreams. "They seem rather nice and visionary now they are over," she concluded, "but I didn't enjoy them at the time." Then she found that she had been talking to herself, for Dennis as soon as he had wrapped the rug round her and thrown his arm across had fallen fast asleep again.

# CHAPTER VI.



WHEN morning came they found that the Tohunga really had wandered away by himself again. Dennis swore till Adelaide turned pale. But she thought of their honeymoon compact that he should do as he pleased until their return. So she said nothing, but she sat still looking at her hand, and she turned her wedding ring round on her finger. This he presently perceived, and began abusing himself and ingenuously swore that she never should hear him swear again, compact or no compact, if it hurt her the least little bit, and he called her many sweet things, and stooped down to woo her until all was well again.

After a morning with the outside world blank and blind with rain, a hot sun shone out, and Dennis made his way upward through the bush. Emerging from wet shades and crumbling trunks, he reached the realm of ice and snow and heard the Alps call him in a loud voice to come and conquer them. It was night when he returned, mud-stained but magnificently happy. He talked to his bride of blue ice and green, of the Dome, and of a range from which he saw not one but a dozen

glaciers, and the tips of snow shoulders and snow crowns one above another. If once she saw them, he said, she would own they beat all her marble palaces and temples hollow. "And you are going to show them all to me, aren't you, Dennis?" said Adelaide, with the air that had so often beguiled him when he was a boy. Dennis dropped his arms upon his knees in a pondering attitude and sat without answering, weighing his desire to see delight in her eyes against a common sense perception that the adventure was too rough for her. Adelaide decided the matter in her own favour by saying, "O Dennis, I have come to see your world, and you are going to keep the loveliest places to yourself?" And she leaned lightly over him and her breath was in his hair.

"I wonder when it will begin to be my turn to be obeyed," he asked. "All right, little girl, I'll make the first part of the track better for you."

All the next day and the morning afterwards Dennis toiled at the track, while Adelaide sat in the shade and admired him inwardly, or sang to him, or prepared meals in a South Sea Island state of bliss and simplicity except for some fear of injuring her delicate complexion. She heard the sound of great waters softened in the distance. MacDiarmid hewed with his axe through the jungle, cutting down the thorny creepers; he rolled away stones and logs, and sent them crashing down the side of

the precipice. Then he leapt down in good spirits and said they could begin the ascent. "Mind you tell me the moment you're tired," he said, "and I'll lift you up." But Adelaide never did tell anyone when she felt tired, and she did not want her husband to carry her for need, but only in an ecstacy of love. Dennis was much too matter-of-fact to understand this. For the first quarter of an hour Adelaide sprang lightly up the rocks, catching at one bough, then another. They went by the almost dry bed of a creek, where the rain of two days ago had left scarcely a trickling stream. Adelaide soon began to flag, and she became more and more afraid lest she should faint before Dennis. The more she feared the fainter she grew, but she thought, "It is not much further. I will not give way and let him think me so weak." Dennis wished to lift her over the steepest part, but she resisted him and said, "Oh no, she was not really tired," until while she was saying this she leaned against him and closed her eyes. Dennis was greatly wroth and rebuked her violently, but all the while held her fast to him. Adelaide unfastened his arm, and went and sat on the trunk of a tree and looked on the ground, because she never liked to be disesteemed. She thought the towers of Paradise were fragile and were falling around her.

"I think we had better go straight home to Haeremai," said Dennis, looking upon her and still angry and doubtful.

A tiny bird flew on to a bough just in front of Adelaide, and sang and sang and quivered as if its body were the magic song.

"Dennis!" said Adelaide, as she rose and lifted her blue eyes with a delightful smile. "I will go home or I will go on, just whichever you please."

"I want *you* to be pleased," said he, but his wrath began to be lowered.

"I *will* be pleased then," said she. "But what am I to do just now, dear?"

"I wish," said he, "you would let me swear."

"No, you must not," said Adelaide gravely, and looked like a bijou miniature of her grandmamma, "because you gave me your word of honour not to swear, and a knight may even be unkind to his lady and be forgiven, but he may never break his word."

At that he laughed a great laugh and threw himself down by her. "No," said he, "that you shan't do. You are not going to pretend to be an angel, my darling. You are a foolish little girl, and you nearly made yourself ill and gave me no end of trouble. But you're my goddess and my Elfin Queen all the same, and I'm sorry I scolded you. Pardon, Aidie." Then he took her up the ascent, and with strong hand lifted her up the steep slope. The sound of waters grew deeper and deeper until it filled all the air.

They came out of the edge of the forest, and Adelaide saw as it were the very heart and

soul of that mountain kingdom which it pleased her to call her husband's. Her eyes were dazzled and could not take the whole in at first, but saw it bit by bit. There was an undimmed splendour of blue sky, without earth-mists or vapours. Then her eyes followed the direction of the sound of waters, and she saw a giant mountain sheeted in flying spray. Where the spray reached, light and colour were veiled and glowed with moist brightness, and there was verdure and bloom. A little Alpine vale lay bathed in sun and spray, all one garden of celmisia and lilies and gentians, thorny spikes of yellow, and moss of amber and of emerald. From the rock cliff two trees of lace-bark trailed branches of white blossoms downward to meet the ground flowers below. Kubla Khan in a vision could not build a pleasure dome like that giant waterfall—a flying palace of waters that quivered with opal in the breeze and light, as they built themselves up afresh each moment, falling downwards incessantly with such force that they splashed some feet upwards from the levelled rock. They fell in sheets of thinnest glass, in columns and globes of crystal and of chipped marble, in flying buttresses and wavering towers. Adelaide sighed a little, and said the Falls were so glorious it made her feel desperate, and she did not know what she should do with herself if the ice-cave were really lovelier still as he told her. But when Dennis had helped her up the side of the cave

and she bent gracefully over it, she declared it really was a miracle. No one knows what purity of colour means until he has seen Alpine ice, purer than the atmosphere, its blueness only a tint of immaculate white.

They were standing on the verge of a great mountain plain of loose shingle and boulders, an older moraine joining the terminal moraine of the Wainoni. A high wall of grey stone, the banks of the Wainoni glacier shut them in on one side; at the end of the glacier was a rocky mass, and from the cave underneath the river rushed out in a mad tumult of life and strength, forcing its way downward. All around the grey valley rose mountains, one scarred with red cliffs and one a mass of iron-black rock, seamed terribly with jagged ice, and others covered with pure snow. From the farther edge of the glacier rose more peaks and a long line of snow and ice, sharp-edged against the deep blue of the atmosphere, and in one slope was a frozen cataract of ice with a green glitter in it. The bride and bridegroom sat down on a rock and almost involuntarily drew closer together as if to share each other's wonder, but Dennis was disappointed at missing Adelaide's quick rapture. Her very soul was exhausted within her, the more because her slight body was still fatigued. There is something appalling in the loveliness of these snow heights, barren of all verdure, something unearthly in the intensity of light, in the unmixed colour of the

sky, the silence and whiteness of snow, the icy glitter of frozen water, the grim blackness of rocks, and most of all in the colourless grey desolation that dominates these great stony moraines of Maoriland. Dennis pressed her to him that she might feel the solemn pleasure in his own mind, but she felt only the comfort of his touch. Something had gone subtly wrong. He relaxed his hold, his arm still round her, but his face turned to watch the mountain that rose from the further end of the glacier, a few miles distant. An avalanche of snow fell downward with the soft immensity of sound that is like nothing else, neither waves nor wind nor thunder, a sound that gathers and breaks in one vast volume, wakening echoes among deep gorges and giant precipices of rock. It was a voice that called him. Now what had gone wrong was this: Adelaide was thinking only of Dennis, and Dennis was thinking of something else. His desire to trace the river to its head had come from Adelaide, but he had one ambition of his own, and that was to climb the summit of the Rangatira, the snow peak beyond the glacier, not one of the great monarchs, but one which no one yet had climbed, though he himself had attempted it before from another side. The longer he looked at that mountain the stronger grew his conviction that this was the thing he had got to do. It became irksome to sit still with that white summit daring him to conquest. His large hand stroked Adelaide's hair and neck

and the sleeve of her dress with a touch that suggested restlessness, and she, under a pretence of changing to an easier position, moved from his touch. She never wished to give herself unsought, nor to let caresses be too easily taken.

"I want badly to get to the top of the Rangatira," Dennis observed. "You can't imagine what it's like climbing a mountain, hanging on to nothing in particular, clinging on to rocks and cutting steps in the ice, without an idea in your head except your next step, and something in you making you go up."

"I should think," said Adelaide tremulously, "it would be frightfully hard."

"Yes, that's it," he said; "it's so hard you get mad to do it, and when you have done it, when you've got to the summit where nobody else has been, why, you just feel you're worth something. If I had got a mate here and not you, my darling, I'd be up the Rangatira like a shot."

"Oh, what a pity," Adelaide said, with a little pride and a little pain, and she played idly with the twisted tiki.

"It's tapu," Dennis remarked; "must have been buried with some chief, and we shall certainly die from it—in the course of time. Halloo-oo-oo!"

Adelaide gave a slight start, and looking up saw the old Tohunga creeping cautiously amongst the frozen mounds of the glacier, his hand stretched out to feel one rounded mass of

white, his scanty beard and hair blown wildly by the wind, a lean dog at his heels. He had never before seemed so unearthly, and she thought of her dream and gave a little shiver.

The Tohunga raised himself from his stooping posture and pointed to the mountains, but Dennis hallooed "Wait," and he stood stock still in the same attitude.

"Now, you can go where you like, Dennis," Adelaide said.

"Why, yes, I suppose I could. The old man knows these mountains like anything. But what about you, child?"

"I am not a child, Dennis, and I shall be all right. I could not think of keeping you back."

"Let me see. I could be back in five or six hours, and I will, whether we get to the top or not. You won't get fancies, my dearie?"

"Do you think I would ever spoil your pleasure, Dennis?" Her face was pale, and there was a slight strain about the eyes and lips. "Do go. I want you to."

"Well, good-bye, my sweetheart." He took her in his arms, and she yielded herself passively to his kisses. Then he left her, but looked back once or twice, and she waved her handkerchief to him and smiled, but the smile died quickly when he was out of sight.

Adelaide was alone with his dog in the solitude of the Alps. Tane's anguish overcame his breeding, and he whimpered piteously, and holding his head pleadingly on one side and

looking up at her, he implored her to follow. He reasoned that it must be her fault that he had to remain here. When she wasn't about, he was always free to follow his human god; they went the wildest expeditions together, and the wilder they were the more they enjoyed themselves; when his master was alone he made a chum of him, and they had conversations together. His mistress was a new introduction; he was always rather jealous of her, and just now thought her a sad mistake. Finding his most moving whimpers had no effect, he left them off and sulked. This was the first thing Adelaide noticed after Dennis had gone, and, somehow, it made her feel exceedingly forlorn.

She had come into her husband's world, and, somehow, it did not seem quite meant for her. She was in the presence of nature, absolute and supreme. It was beautiful, but it was terrible. It had wrought her up into a state of exaltation, which a touch one way or other could turn to joy or to melancholy. She had not the least complaint to make of Dennis, she told herself. Here she was as safe as at home. There was water near, he had brought up meat and bread and all she needed in a swag. Until to-day he had devoted himself to her comfort and her pleasure. "Too much, perhaps," she told herself. He was strong, he must use his strength, She was delicate, she must endure her weakness. "He never shall be sacrificed to me in

any way," she said to herself, holding her head erect. "He shall stay with me only while he wishes; he shall come to me only for his pleasure." But somewhere back in her heart a stifled voice was crying that this might be the law of nature, it was not quite the law of love.

"If only Tane would not whine and sulk! I might spare Dennis these few hours. He will enjoy them so much." And at that thought she was ashamed to feel tears in her eyes. For a change of thought Adelaide began at first unconsciously to watch the scene around her. The very spirit of solitude seemed to reign here. Often in their valley she had spent three or four hours alone, and been perfectly happy in the thought of Dennis's return. He had often left her while he went out to shoot, or to bring back bread and milk for her. But as soon as they had slept in the tent it had become home, and when they had feasted among the rocks and ferns these had become familiar. The Alpine marsh had been her garden and the bush her park, and she knew the voices of the river. But the immensity of the Alps overwhelmed her, and these barren stones were an oppression. On the moraine there was not a tuft of grass in sight, not one tree grew among the stones. There was not one animal except Tane in sight. The sounds that reached her were strangely unfamiliar, the cracking of ice, the falling of rocks down deep hollows, the gradual

gathering and the final crash of an avalanche, the wild plunge and tumult of the new-born river, the answering of the waterfall, unseen from where she was now sitting. Her dream began to haunt her as if it had been reality, and with that kind of civilised superstition which is half sincere, half affected in jest, she let the tiki fall. Not two hours had gone by yet. Must she just wait and do nothing until Dennis came back? That was the hardest part of all, not that he had left her, but that she must wait until he was ready to return to her. "I wish it were you that needed me," she thought. "O Dennis, love, am I quite as much to you as you to me?" Then she checked herself. "I am getting childish and exacting." She took some food and fed Tane, then rose up. "Come, Tane, let us have a walk." Tane, only half propitiated, wagged his tail feebly. He knew the walk with her just then would be a poor affair, but it was better than nothing. Adelaide climbed up the bank of the glacier above the cave, and with the effort her depression almost vanished. She had got quite close to the white masses of frozen snow and ice and her pleasure revived. They were so beautiful, those curving outlines. To anyone regarding the whole length of the glacier their shapes suggested waves of the sea, one running into another and arrested and motionless. But looking at the mounds separately, she saw their shapes were

peculiar to themselves, irregular in size and form, here a long white ridge, and there a round dome pressing into it, squares and pentagons and hexagons and polygons of all varieties. And then the loveliness of the snow—There is always in it, in the sound as it falls, in flakes or in avalanches, in its very whiteness, in all its infinite multitude of shapes, a softness that fascinates the ear and eye. Adelaide's colour came back, and her heart beat with pleasure. It was a hard climb for her but she hurried on eagerly, now losing sight of the glacier in some hollow ridge, then delightedly gaining a still nearer view.

Suddenly the stones slipped from under her feet and she fell down and down into a hollow gap of stones.

# CHAPTER VII.

## HINE-NUI-TE-PO.

GREAT moraines of loose stones are one of the extraordinary features of the New Zealand Alps. They sometimes cover the whole floor of the high vales between the snow ranges and the lower ranges of rock. The lateral moraine stretching the whole length of the glacier up to some frozen mountain is formed by loose shingle stones and fragments of rock on the surface, not level at the top, but forming irregular ridges and long hollows. In some of these the piled stones slightly project and conceal a deep pit or crevasse. So that for one unacquainted with this region, walking on the moraine is almost as dangerous as on the glacier, for without the slightest warning the footing may give way.

Adelaide had only the vaguest sensation of losing grasp of all things as one does in a nightmare. It seemed to her that she went on falling for an incalculable length of time, though in reality it could have been only a few minutes. The shock had almost paralysed her senses, and she made no struggle and was conscious of no physical pain. After a while she partially woke from this state into a twilight of

consciousness. She was lying against a rocky boulder that had broken her fall, and she realised that it was a ledge between her and death. Her predominant feeling was wonder at the strangeness of this chance. With an instinctive movement she arranged her dress, then seeing blood upon the sleeve, she wiped it carefully away with her handkerchief. She was surprised not to feel any of the agonies and terrors she had associated with the prospect of death. In the background of her mind was complete assurance that her husband would rescue her, and suggestions of doubt or fear passed only over the surface. Superficially she perceived that there was the chance of her remaining undiscovered, but the one question that really occupied her was the length of time during which she must wait for deliverance. An extraordinary resignation fell on her. The immensity of the forces in that waste of nature silenced all small fretfulness and made resistance futile. In the narrow limits of a sick room, with friends and attendants near, all occupied only with her, an approach of death less near than this might have been full of anxieties, fears, efforts. Here death itself meant mere cessation. Adelaide lifted her eyes questioningly upward, and so kept them fixed for some time. Above her she could see the awful divinities of snow and ice with her frail human life in their power, waiting to crush it out for ever. Yet it was deliverance she

expected, not death. What she felt was not despair, but "a faith on trial." And visiting of doubt did come, or else there would have been no trial. She gave one fleeting glance downward into the depths of darkness, then looked up again. On the edge of her stony tomb she saw Tane, sitting with his throat upturned and rigid, howling dismally. Superstitious fear chilled her for a moment. High overhead, a kea screeched, and Adelaide shuddered. The morning when they first reached their valley they had come upon the body of a lamb, its white fleeces stained with blood, while a kea with fierce beak pierced its flesh. Dennis had turned savage in an instant and had shot the kea, then flung it, still palpitating, to his dog to tear, while with a clean cut of his knife he put the dying little creature out of its pain. Adelaide, now watching the hovering bird, recalled this incident plainly. It seemed to her strange that at the time she, seeing it from a little distance off, had not felt anything but a slight thrill of pity and a desire to get away as soon as possible. It had not struck her more than a hunting episode used to do. Now she seemed to see Dennis more vividly than she had done then, standing over the lamb, an extraordinary mixture of savage anger and of kindness in his manner, "O Dennis, come quickly," she suddenly cried, as this image of him rose before her, and a sob escaped her.

Some stones fell rattling from above.

Adelaide felt a slight pricking sensation in her forehead, and putting up her hand, she found that she was cut there too, and tried to wipe the blood away, but her handkerchief was already too much spotted and dyed. A childish anxiety seized her lest Dennis should see her disfigured, and a childish sense of helplessness. Just for a few moments she trembled with suppressed sobs—the bride of a fortnight suddenly thrown out of the world and entombed in this grey pit. A passing shadow of fear came on her. Was this, perhaps, the fate foreshadowed by those anticipations that had visited even her bridal night? Then the mountains hushed her again, and she lay quite still waiting, questioning the sky. An utter faith grew on her as her body became weaker. Only the time seemed so long. The snow in the heights flushed, and the red glow crept even to the hollow. Then a cold light held all the atmosphere, and the hollow grew dimmer and more chilly. She heard the dog howling over her and closed her eyes. When would her husband come?

# CHAPTER VIII.

## THE RETURN TO LIGHT.

DENNIS came back from Mount Rangatira in boyishly high spirits, singing a negro song and whistling. At last he had stood on the summit where no man had been before, and he had seen a great kingdom of mountains, peak beyond peak, long valleys with their glacial streams, crags and ice-falls, away to where the forest trees seemed small as plumes of moss, and the western ocean came in sight. Now he was coming back to his love in the hour of sunset. She had not been quite happy at his going he knew, although she had told him to go. He had not been altogether blind to the little shadow that crept into her eyes, and the slight strain about the lips that she yielded to him. It was the merest fancy on her part and not reasonable, but—"Darling!" he interjected half-aloud—he was not going to blame her for excess of fondness. Now he had had his own pleasure, and he would make it up to her tenfold. His own mood was hearty and fond enough to vanquish any mists and clouds. He had gathered some edelweiss for her, and as he carried an axe, a stick and

a rope, the rare blossoms decorated his wide-awake and his belt.

As he and the Tohunga approached the place below the ice-cave where he had left Adelaide, he bounded forward, calling "Aidie!" then stood astonished. She was nowhere to be seen. "Of course," he exclaimed aloud, "what an ass I am. I couldn't expect her to sit still here for five hours." Then he said to the Tohunga that his wife had taken a short walk, and that they had better sit down and wait until she came back. But his mood had received a check, and he could hardly contain his impatience as the minutes passed. The Tohunga sat and talked of the rivers that issued out of the Alps, and of the valleys that they flowed through. He said that there were rubies and emeralds and garnets amongst the grey shingle of their beds, and that he often wandered amongst their courses and picked up precious stones, but everybody laughed at him, so now he hid them in a secret place in his old house and showed them to no one. Then he began to speak of enormous reefs of pure gold on the west coast that they had seen from the Rangatira, and he talked of gold seekers who explored the hills but always missed the reef. Dennis dug his axe vigorously down amongst the loose stones, and began to be half angry with Adelaide, half anxious, as the whole valley shone with gold, and then flushed red even to the stones. What could have happened?

Her feeling of solitude among these moraines was an incomprehensible fancy to him. The very air of the Alps exhilarated him. These mountains had familiar voices and familiar looks. He had known them from childhood, and loved nothing better than wrestling with their hundred dangers, forcing their secrets from them and triumphing on their summits. That had been his chief idea of a holiday and its joys. But Adelaide astray amongst them! The Tohunga talked on and on, self-absorbed, as solitary people will do when once they have started. Dennis had ceased to pay any attention. The glow went out from atmosphere and valley, and the mountains turned spectral. Dennis astounded the Tohunga by leaping to his feet with a burst of profanity, meant for his companion or the scene around, or for fate in general. His face looked strained in the twilight as he stood collecting his powers. "Stay here," he said briefly, "and light a bonfire." And he went to search in the short space of daylight that remained. At first there seemed no clue as to what direction to take. If Adelaide and Tane had walked over earth, there would have been footprints, or if over grass it would have been trodden down, but these accursed stones gave no indication. Soon he had got beyond swearing or uttering a syllable that was not necessary. The most probable thing was that she had gone back through the bush to the house, and he followed

the course of the river back the way that they had come in the morning, and soon came to fern and loose soil. There were footmarks, but they all went towards the glacier. Except along the watercourse the bush was impracticable for one so inexperienced as she was, and it was certain she and Tane had not returned. Indeed, it would not have been like Adelaide to go back alone. Where else, then? The valley of the Cascade? No! And he almost smiled when he thought over that chance. Adelaide enjoyed it at a distance, but she would never go near enough to get her pretty clothes wet with the spray. She would not be likely to climb such mountains alone, and if she had been on the terminal moraine he would have seen her. MacDiarmid returned to the spot where the Tohunga sat, now dumb and helpless in an emergency, and for some time he stood looking first in one direction, then in another, thinking. Then he went towards the ice-cave. It had fascinated her, and perhaps she had gone nearer to see it. Daylight was over, and the moon did not rise till late, though in the unearthly clearness of this atmosphere there was no absolute darkness; two planets and a multitude of stars shone with white points of flame, too remote to be effectual, but the bonfire blazed up and threw flame on the leaping torrent and the ridges of stone. She was not there, and though he searched he found no trace. Adelaide, unlike most

heroines, never dropped anything about, not even her gloves. Utterly at a loss, he scrambled up the unsound rocks above the cave on to the glacier. It was a perilous undertaking in the dark, and he felt cautiously with his stick or with bare hands as he went. Once he found himself on the very edge of a crevasse, but recovered his balance instantly. Then he knew what had happened, and sat down overcome. "Adelaide! Adelaide!" he called with all the force of his breath across the frozen snow, and heard distinctly the howling of a dog. That ended the terrible blankness of uncertainty. Still feeling every step before him, and often creeping along on his knees, he followed in the direction of the sound, calling at intervals from the powerful lungs of a mountaineer accustomed to send his voice into the distance. Many a time in his life he had found his way into the bush or among the hills guided by the barking of a sheep dog. Hearing no sound from Adelaide he shouted "Tane, Tane!" and with astonishing quickness the dog found its master, fawned at his feet, half mad with joy, looked for a stick, and in default picked up a stone by way of doing something or other. MacDiarmid wasted no time over him. "Find her. Go on," he said. Tane whined, he had a singular reluctance to return. MacDiarmid thrashed him as he had never done before, then repeated his command. Tane crawled dismally over the stones until they

reached the yawning gap. "God!" ejaculated MacDiarmid, and then, "My Adelaide!" For a while he lay looking over the edge into the blackness of the hollow without being able to distinguish anything. From time to time he called down into the depth, but only the echo of his voice came back.

In the starlight he fancied at last that he saw something glimmering against the side of the gap. It might be snow. He considered the possibility attentively and reckoned that it was unlikely that there would be a single patch at that depth. Still watching intently, he seemed to see a slight movement of wind from above touching something moveable, he fervently prayed, some drapery. If it were Adelaide's dress she was probably stunned. That she was dead he refused to believe.

With his clasp knife he peeled and split the ends of his stick, dipped it in the spirits he carried and setting it alight made a rough torch. This he held over the hollow, and by its flame made out dimly the light summer gown Adelaide was wearing. When MacDiarmid saw it he clenched the nails hard into the palm of his hand. His wife seemed to stand before him as he had seen her standing by the cave early that morning; he remembered how pretty the dress was, so incongruously pretty in these wilds that he had pretended to ridicule it, "woollen muslin" he called it, she said it was delaine; he had played with the

ribbons at her wrists. "Aidie, Aidie," he cried now to himself, and lay for a few moments broken. There was no time to lose. MacDiarmid held the flaming stick over the hollow to see if the boulder against which Adelaide lay would support both of them. It would at least give him a footing. The danger was lest he might loosen it by the additional weight of his descent, but this was a risk that would not bear considering. There was a rock a few yards away. Round this he fastened the rope which he had used when mountaineering that morning. The other end he fastened round his own body, and with the axe on his shoulder and the torch in one hand he descended slowly, not resting his weight on the rope but sliding and using it merely as a support until his feet were on the boulder. Finding that this bore his weight, he tried to attach the end of the rope to it, but from its shape it afforded no hold. With his axe he chipped notches in the stone, breaking off crumbling lumps with his hands, until he had formed a groove deep enough to be secure. Then he stooped over the heap of drapery and lifted his wife in his arms, turning her face full to the light, but not speaking one word. She stirred slightly; her breath came naturally. She was not even stunned. A strange thing had happened to Adelaide, she had fallen into a profound sleep while her eyes were fixed on the sky, questioning it. An immense tender-

ness possessed MacDiarmid, and his breath went out in great sighs over her. He looked up at the clear sky as children look up for God. But the trial was prolonged. The light of the moon now filled the upper atmosphere, but all below the mountains, moraine, glacier and their pit, were in shadow. His torch burnt out. It was useless to try the ascent in darkness. In daily life Dennis was often impatient and angry over little things, but somewhere in him, before the inevitable was inexhaustible patience. He sat down on the narrow ledge with Adelaide upon his knees and waited, watching for the dawn. Inutterable love filled his heart. Every girlish charm of hers came freshly before his mind, as she lay still in the darkness, not yet rescued—her enchanting smile, her delicate reserves and her complete surrenders, her various pretences and half transparent unrealities. Adelaide's sleep was exhaustion, and she was too faint to help herself or to comprehend what had happened. The moon rose higher, but still an oblique shadow was thrown across the hollow. Adelaide opened her eyes and gazed with a long look at Dennis. "You have come. It seemed such a long time waiting." She sighed, but not in complaint. "Have you been frightened, love?" he asked. Both spoke below their breath, as if in the presence of some mystery. "Oh no, not really frightened. I knew that you would come." Then after a

pause, "Must we wait here?" "For more light, my love." "For how long, Dennis?" "An hour or two." He laid his hand upon her eyelids and kept them closed. "Don't open your eyes until I tell you. It will be over soon. Can you sleep again?" "Yes, I think so." "Then do." She slept peacefully.

The first glimmering of dawn crept down amongst the stones. There was no more time to linger. MacDiarmid took off Adelaide's blue sash, and fearing she might lose her hold he bound her to his own body. Then grasping the rope, he made his way upward, toilsomely and slowly. One arm still supported his wife, who was now awake, but too faint to clasp him securely. Often he was obliged to use both hands. For a few yards the ascent was over bare rock, and farther on the loose stones kept slipping from under his feet. The sweat broke out in great drops, and his eyeballs were strained unnaturally. But he never once lost his footing. Extraordinary force and certainty entered into him. This one thing had to be done, impossible or not, and he could not fail in doing it. At last he struggled to the top.

As they emerged from their stony sepulchre, "Look up, Adelaide," he said. There was exultation in his voice and it thrilled her. The moon still shone, and there were stars high overhead, but the far off approaches of the day had blanched their light into mysterious paleness. One might have imagined a voice from

the sky announcing some more glorious manifestation at hand which should quench the Pleiades and the Milky Way, Orion and the Southern Cross. Absolute solemnity was throned on the summits of snow, rock and ice, but now they looked benignant and no longer cruel. It might have been the Resurrection dawn.

Still in the solemn veiled light, the man carried his wife over the glacier and back to the ice-cave; then down the terminal moraine to the shingle banks of the river, now coloured like broken heaps of copper. The Tohunga was there and he looked at them wistfully. He could not quite understand these human happenings, but he vaguely remembered a girl whom he had loved half a century ago in a world that had no atom in common with this. "Get us some food," said MacDiarmid, not rudely but sparing of words. The old man disappeared in the gloom of the bush.

Adelaide was glad that she and her husband were alone again. They seemed to have something to say to each other, or better still, something secret to share. The bonfire had burned low into a heap of white powder and black wood, with only gems of scarlet. Dennis took off his jersey which he wore at night over his shirt, and spreading it on the stones he made Adelaide lie on it, keeping her head against his knee. "Now you rest," he said. She lay quite still with her eyes closed, not sleeping

but letting thought and feeling pass through her as they would. The solemnity of escape was in the minds of both, and at some moments possessed them entirely, but there began to be a welcome return of everyday sensations. Adelaide remembered with a curious pleasure that he had not given her one kiss or caress since they met, and that she had not missed either. There was no longer any need of endearments. Seeing that her forehead was still bleeding, he pressed his handkerchief to it. "Does it show much, Dennis?" she asked with a blush. He laughed that she should think of such a thing just then, and yet because it was Adelaide it was somehow sweet.

"Does it pain you? It is bleeding." "Oh, do wipe the blood away, please, Dennis dear," she begged. He laughed again but obeyed, and going to the river rinsed her handkerchief out, then bathed the wound. "Are you hurt anywhere else?" "Not particularly." "Are you hurt?" he insisted with impatience. "My shoulder and my foot—a little." She spoke reluctantly. Dennis crouched down and drew off the small shoe and the worked silk stocking, that seemed to him so absurdly and yet delightfully pretty. The leg was bruised above the ankle where it struck the rock, and the soft flesh was broken. He bandaged it with a strip torn from his handkerchief, then pushing up her sleeve found a bad bruise on her shoulder, and pressed the cold leaf of a lily to the

swelling. Adelaide lay quite still, but her lips and closed eyelids quivered. She had been adored, her husband had not touched her before, except after wooing, or in one of his overwhelming outbursts. "I am disfigured. Don't look at those bruises, Dennis," she said plaintively. "Aidie." He spoke with deep feeling. "If you knew how I love you, you would not mind anything." "I do know—my Dennis." She looked up at him a moment with wide-open happy eyes, as blue as the sky.

The dogs had eaten the remains of the meat, but Dennis had with him some hard bread and some of Emmeline's home-made wine, brought for an emergency, because Adelaide would not taste alcohol. She would eat nothing that he did not share, so she broke the bread and gave half to him. Then Dennis poured the wine into a horn goblet and they drank in turn. While they were eating and drinking, it struck Adelaide with a sense of awe that the meal was sacramental, and that somehow God was near, too near to them. They had never before so utterly worshipped each other as when they sat alone again simply sharing their food together. The body of the sun was itself invisible, but its spirit filled the upper atmosphere. In lower regions we see light through a cloudy medium of vapour, but here they were face to face with light itself, perfect light. Adelaide rose to her feet, and bride and bridegroom stood side by side to watch the

sunrise. Dennis laid his hand on her shoulder. "Look." A long line of serrated crags of ice and rock glowed like knobbed brass in the blaze of a furnace, and the snow-peaks shone like new-wrought gold. The Alps dazzled their eyes, and they turned to look at each other, and each was beautiful to the other. Then came a long embrace and kisses and simple words. The Alps were nothing, they themselves were all in all. "I am sorry, Dennis; I have given you so much trouble. You look tired." Thinking of her awakening in the dark to feel his hand on her, her heart beat extravagantly. "You have had scarcely any food, and you have not slept."

"Don't, love. As if that mattered. I wish I had not left you in this wild place. I meant to take care of you, and now you've been frightened and hurt. I have quite spoiled your honeymoon, Aidie."

"Oh no, Dennis, don't say that." She put up a light hand to smooth his hair, disordered with wind and clotted by the sweat of exertion. "Last night and this have been much the loveliest part of all. Don't you understand?"

For some time Dennis studied with serious intentness her vivid face, weary but delicately flushed and illumined.

"Why, yes. Of course," he answered finally.

# Part Third.

## THE BOOK OF DENNIS AND ADELAIDE.

"The true pathos and sublime
Of human life."

# CHAPTER I.

## HOW DENNIS WAS BEING CIVILISED.

HOW after all would it turn out, the marriage of the leisured and the labouring class, of art and nature, of civilisation and barbarism? Would the first settler's experience of real life count for nothing in comparison with the power of love? Was Emmeline Borlase a sentimental baby in her belief that love was all-sufficient? Or was Evelyn Brandon a cynical fool, when she prophesied that Dennis MacDiarmid would either break Adelaide's heart in a year, or else reduce her to a nonentity? As it fell out, they were all of them more or less right, and all of them more or less wrong.

The honeymoon, they agreed, was not to count. It had been ecstasy dashed with wandering isles of night. They could not live permanently up to the height of the Alps. The prelude was over, and now the real play was to begin. They must settle down to everyday married life, and must adore each other only within reasonable bounds. Not indeed that they had been absorbed in love-making. Camping out in new country is an occupation in itself, though an idyllic one, both

for the man who explores and provides, and for the woman who does the primitive housekeeping, or rather the tent-keeping. Love had taken them back into their childhood, and they took as fresh an interest as children in the simplest thing,—their food, their bed at night, the clouds, the weather, the birds, their horses and their dog, the day's adventures and each other's caresses. Adelaide thought she had seen into the depths of her husband's nature and knew the whole of him now, and that there would be no more difficulties. She made up her mind to be sweet but sensible. The sweetness at least came spontaneously.

They had still another fortnight of holidays, aud this they spent at home, making their house beautiful and laying out an orchard where flowers were to grow in the future. At present all that the common eye could discern was a ploughed field planted with rows of potatoes and bristling with labelled sticks, but Adelaide did not see these things nearly so often as a beatific vision of perennial orchard blossom and leaf and red-streaked apples, and below the trees, violets and daffodils in bloom. Dennis worked under his lady's directions, and enjoyed himself working out her poems into tangible realities. Adelaide trained native clematis round her verandah posts, and, not to waste any time, she began training Dennis too. The evening before their wedding he had promised to do his share of

the obeying, but added, "Don't you be too hard on me, Aidie, will you?" Adelaide remarked that she was going to promise without making any reservation, and that this showed her trustful disposition. He said it showed her knowledge of their characters. A few days later he told her that he liked being ordered about, and he only laughed when she proved by examples that he gave the most orders.

Each found the differences attractions just then, as travellers in a mood to be pleased find new and surprising virtues and beauties in foreign lands. Adelaide built up a pleasing sentiment around Dennis, as son of the soil, imagining some close relation between the mountains and his free nature, with its tranquillities and its outbursts. As she did not examine the prosaic details of pastoral toil, she found a poetry in the thought of his peasant ancestry, and of his own open-air life spent in the culture of the earth and the tending of animals. Even his roughnesses of manner and speech were dear when the heart and will were so kind and warm. The voice, full-toned and singularly soft for a man, gave a pleasant meaning to words that in themselves were often brusque. On his side, it never entered his head to grudge Adelaide the romance of her descent and her associations with the unconceivably splendid and magical illusions of luxury and art. He never took these things

quite in earnest; they were all parts of that Midsummer Night's Dream which Aidie and Aidie alone could have played so exquisitely; he would as soon have grudged her the fine silky texture and the fragrance of her garments, the dear soft flesh and delicate curves of cheek and lip and breast. They were all part of the delightful, adorable miracle that was his Adelaide.

Dennis preferred taking things as they came, Adelaide liked adapting them. She meant to adapt Dennis. Sometimes he was very easy to manage, sometimes very difficult, indeed impossible to move. Sometimes he swept her off her feet. Whoever ruled and whoever was ruled, they were both supremely happy. They presented the unusual spectacle of a bride and bridegroom who were much more in love after marriage than before, and for whom disillusion was only a jest. They were greatly amused with each other, and still more delighted, he with her arts and conventions and manifold graces, she with his large simplicities and disregard of all conventions. She began reforming him in the matters of whisky and tobacco, and language known as "strong." It was not at all on old-fashioned grounds of morality that she objected to these indulgences, but merely as matters of good taste. Indeed, she offered to let him down gently on wine, cigars, and such well-authorised expressions as "rotten." Dennis rejected these paltry makeshifts of an

effete aristocracy. "What a little tyrant you are!" he said admiringly. "I think I'll make you give up coffee and sweets and London slang."

"Very well, I will," Adelaide answered with the elusive smile that was one of her witcheries, a smile that flew into her eyes and touched her lips, and was away almost before you could see how lovely it was. "Will that make you any happier, dear?"

"No, it won't. I like you to enjoy yourself."

Even that did not melt her. "I want to worship you, Dennis," she murmured, and wafted herself upon him. "I don't want you to have any faults." He began disarranging with his large hand all the artistic coils of her hair, and she had not a word of impatience. While he looked down at her, a remembrance gradually came. "You have given up a lot more than those things for me, you blessed child—and never spent a thought on them."

"Don't, Dennis," she answered in angelic reproach.

Dennis confessed he had no right to use the disputed language in her presence, but said he could not get on without it in the yards and woolsheds, because the dogs and sheep and cattle did not understand unfortified English. However, he did thenceforth improve even amongst the animals. As for the whisky, he remained a total abstainer all the rest of the summer, but when the cold days came he not

unfrequently backslid. His pipe Adelaide gave him leave to smoke in a room which he used as a study and office and workshop, and which was to be held outside her sovereignty. Here he occasionally retired into seclusion, but Adelaide soon found her solitude in the drawing-room more unsatisfactory than he found his. She had never been "smart" enough to smoke cigarettes, again not because she objected on high moral grounds, but because she was very careful of her apple-blossom complexion, and much preferred it to the most artistic "make-up." Not having this consolation, if ever Dennis stayed in his office more than half-an-hour, she always found it imperatively necessary to seek him out and ask or tell him something. For some reason or other, she generally sat on his knee to explain her object in coming, and he was then very willing to lay aside his pipe.

When the honeymoon month was over, the harvesting began. Dennis scolded Adelaide for getting up at four o'clock in the morning to prepare his breakfast—"As if he couldn't make tea for himself!" and carried her straight back to bed. But she thought his behaviour in the evening inconsistent and in very bad form. She had the dinner waiting an hour after dusk, and was admiring her own patience in saying nothing about his unpunctuality, when he said, "Tell Lena to get a bath ready for me, Aidie." Adelaide was going, too polite to show

displeasure, when he called after her, "Put some clean clothes out for me, darling. And bring me my slippers, I never know where you put them." Adelaide gave him an expressive look then, but he was too dense to understand. All the evening he sat quite still, and when Lena brought her coffee and his tea in—Adelaide indulged him with a most capacious cup—he said, without moving, "Won't you hand it to me, Aidie?" She looked at him a moment with her delicate brows a little more visibly arched, and then her blue eyes began to dance. "I will," she said, and when he had finished stood by him with an Elizabethan-Stage air. "What is your will now, my lord?" she inquired. "Shall I play to you, or sing, or read? Or will you bid me discourse? I wait to learn my lord's good pleasure." Dennis contemplated her with the serious expression he had when he was reading a difficult passage. "I don't quite follow you to-night, Aidie," he said with simplicity. "I am a bit tired."

"O Dennis love, I will do anything for you, whether it is good form or not. I forgot this isn't London, and we don't belong to the leisured class." But he persisted in the first train of thought. "I suppose I have not been treating you well," he concluded at the end of his meditations. "You treat me beautifully," said Adelaide, "only sometimes it seems a little, just a little—original, dear."

"I expect Emmie spoiled me," he continued

good-humouredly. "I'll be more attentive now."

Adelaide's jealous heart took fire. "O Dennis, don't say Emmie did more for you than I would do."

"My dear little girl, I can't make you out to-night." He got up to put his arm round her. "Don't you think I know the difference between you and Emmie? You're my little chieftainess as well as my wife. I want to make you happy more than I want anything else on earth."

"I am happy." She closed her eyes blissfully to shut out everything but bliss.

"Well, don't you ever do anything for me that you're not inclined to do," he said, giving it up as beyond a husband's comprehension. She opened her eyes a moment.

"'Inclined'?" she was saying inwardly, and keeping down an extravagance of passion. "If that were all—oh, in the name of Love, what is there that I'm not inclined to do for you?"

The Haeremai harvesting was all over in a few days. It was chiefly the oat crop for the farm animals. There was no harvest home, only a royal dinner at the old homestead for the harvesters. But when the sun was close upon the mountain's rim, Dennis stood watching the loaded waggon slowly dipping down the glen to the threshing paddock, and, as he watched, he held a heartfelt thanksgiving on his own account. There had been no rain or blast to beat down its ripeness, and he turned home-

wards in the full content of having seen the work of his hands prospering upon him. In fact he was so self-satisfied that he retrograded in every possible way. At the door he wished to salute Adelaide while he was still unwashed and half-clad, but was very properly denied. He came into her drawing-room with nothing on but his trousers, and a dusty flannel shirt covering his chest, and with his sleeves rolled back, said, "Phew, it was thundering hot," and, throwing himself into his armchair, began to inhale the evening breeze.

"Are you tired, Dennis?" Adelaide asked with the clear enunciation that signified disapproval. "If he is, I will forgive him everything," she thought.

But he cut that refuge from under his feet. "Not a bit," he answered cheerfully. "We got through two hours earlier to-day." Then immediately he became so absorbed in his own contemplations that he seemed oblivious of his bride. Adelaide herself was very tired. Lena had been away half the day helping Emmie at Haeremai, and Adelaide had been on her feet too long; it was very hot, and Dennis took no notice, and was misbehaving sadly. She had on a dainty muslin tea-gown, and she had carefully obliterated all traces of work or fatigue, so that his primitive undress was all the more conspicuous. It was a very pretty room too that they sat in, and sweet scented with the soul of Adelaide. She embroidered a tray-

cloth, and glanced at her rude barbarian with a little flicker of the eyelashes that would have made any civilised man wince. Dennis sat facing the sky of evening primrose, yellow and sweet-briar pink, motionless in serene repose, with a thoughtful expression.

"It will be dinner time in less than an hour," remarked Adelaide, but he seemed to find that remark unanswerable. She wondered what he was thinking about, or if he was thinking about anything. He had begun by reflecting that it was a good harvest, and that things were going well with him, and then he went off into a speculation which was connected with the fact that his Boss thought Aidie had been sacrificed by marrying him. Then his mind wandered into more poetical regions, and abode with Shelley and Keats and Wordsworth, and many old legends and ballads. Meanwhile, he was not altogether unconscious of Adelaide's presence, any more than he was of the cooling breeze and the colour of the sky; he was only sub-conscious. Presently the comedy of it reached Adelaide. Her lips trembled with a smile, and she came over to him and, sitting near, quietly unrolled his sleeves. He turned his head a moment to look at her, and the sleeping love began to waken in his eyes, then he turned back to the sky. The right sleeve was torn, she began to mend it while he still sat immovable, and at first by chance and then not by chance she touched lightly the muscular

and sun-browned flesh. The smile grew more tremulous, and she bent and put her lips to the thick blue vein. The love woke up then.

"What's that about, Aidie?" he asked, and would have held her but she slipped away, and standing at the door, looked back a moment to say, "Do go and make yourself decent at once, Dennis. It's nearly dinner time."

"Oh, it's ridiculous," she said to herself, laughing and breathing quicker in her own room. "It's Philistine to be so disgracefully in love with my own husband. I'm afraid I'm more in love with him than he is with me. Well, if I am ——," her pretty lips took a rather stubborn curve, "he shall never know it." She went to choose a dress. Sometimes she enraptured him by wearing her loveliest Paris gowns in the evening. He was her world and her society now. There was a gown of pale rose pink, of fine gauze and rippled folds of chiffon, stuff vaguely known to Dennis as "gossamer," which he particularly admired. She took it out now. "I will make myself enchanting," she said, "and then I will talk Colonial politics all the evening and see how he enjoys it." She coiled her hair in elaborate masses of pale shining yellow, wave meeting wave, above her half-moon forehead, and fastened it with pearl ornaments, and put carmine carnations between the curves of her breasts. "I am not going to let him even touch me," she said. "I will go on mending that

lace after dinner and tell him he must not come near and tangle it. He deserves to be punished." She looked backwards once again at her image in the mirror before opening the door, and knew that she was bewitching. "I'll be sweet," she said, "oh yes, I'll be very sweet. But I will punish him this time."

Then the door opened and she found herself instantly overwhelmed in Dennis's arms. He lifted her up and, carrying her to the couch in the sitting-room, held her there with her little head laid back upon his arm. She just saw faintly that he had made himself unusually presentable, and thought what a magnificent man he was even to behold, and then she saw him bending over her and looking down—oh, with such a look! She closed her eyes to feel it. Perhaps they were not nearly so beautiful as each thought the other, or perhaps they were, and the truth was not revealed to anyone else. There are hundreds of girls as pretty as Adelaide, but only their lovers have discovered their loveliness. For Dennis there never had been any other girl in the world except Adelaide, and she meant all that love can mean to a single-hearted, loyal lover. Yet even at his fondest he never lost his head and became foolish, which is the one unpardonable sin. Dennis was by no means an ascetic, but he was temperate, as healthy, hard working men generally are. He had always the cherishing sentiment towards his wife, and it redeemed

his passion from any risk of grossness. Sometimes there came a mighty upheaving of emotion, not spasmodic, but pulsing evenly, like the great heart of nature, and then she lay quite still, drowned in love and Dennis. She was such a marvel to him, and his wonder was poetical. For some time now he was content to hold her securely, and to watch with strong delight her girlish beauty. He was always finding some new charm, and now his eye fell on a slight incurve, not quite a dimple, of the blush rose flesh, where the rose tint ever so slightly deepened just at the sitting of the round young neck and soft shoulder, and he kissed it once or twice. But the dearest wonder of all was her love—to feel her heart give back throb for throb to his own, and to watch her breath come and go with the breath of his own being, and the blood quicken in every vein beneath his hand, beneath his glance.

Dennis looked at the rippled folds of the gown he most admired, and he thought of the kiss upon his bare and unregenerate arm, and he said, "You're very good to me, my Aidie." Adelaide smiled with a half-submerged sense of humour. It was not worth while explaining that he was making a little mistake, and after all he was let off his punishment, for she did not talk any politics that evening nor did she mend any lace.

# CHAPTER II.

## HOW ADELAIDE REPENTED OF HER BESETTING SIN.

"WELL, Aidie, have you come home for good already? Is he a monster, and won't you bear it any more, and are you going to tell Father?"

Adelaide was taking off her hat in front of the old-fashioned looking-glass in Mr. Borlase's bedroom, and showing every appearance of a prolonged stay, and while he jested, her Father was looking rather keenly at her. Beyond disproof, he saw the exaltation of the well-loved wife. Adelaide wore a new-blown matronly air, which suggested that Mrs. MacDiarmid was not just exactly the same person as Adelaide Borlase.

"Nothing nearly so interesting, Dad," she answered. "Dennis has gone to Roslyn, and I could not possibly have a meal all alone by myself, so I have come to take care of you, dearest darling."

"Oh, it's Dennis that has run away, is it? *You* don't look heartbroken, I must say."

"No one ever was so happy before, Dad." She spoke in beautiful earnest now. "You see, we remember each other so well. It isn't like

a strange man having all sorts of fancies about a woman he doesn't know at all, and then each of them thinking the other a fraud because they are both human."

Adelaide began arranging lunch for him and herself upon the side-table, with a slightly meditative air, suggestive to an experienced person of the fact that she was afraid of forgetting something. Her domestic accomplishments had the charm of freshness, and she played her new part exquisitely. She had brought over some peaches of her own preserving, and her father watched her with amused attention, not unmixed with pride, as she set them before him. Experience had taken most of the sentiment out of him, and what he had left lay back in the past. Adelaide was as near as he came now to living sentiment, and that was because she belonged to the smoother, brighter and more luxurious sphere associated with his own youth. He saw through all the artificialities of that sphere, but yet found a charm in them. He was not altogether in love with realities. Face to face with savage life and nature in the wilds, he had fought them so long that he sometimes felt as if he had had enough of nature, and would relish a little art.

"So you and Dennis always agree about everything, darling, do you?" he asked as she served the peaches.

"Oh no, that would be monotonous. But

when we disagree, you see, Dad," Adelaide began to blush, "it is only like the discords that composers put in the harmony to resolve into lovely concords."

"Oh, go home to your husband, Aidie, if you are going to talk poetry. I don't want to hear your honeymoon nonsense. What's Dennis gone to Roslyn for?"

"He is thinking of founding a club—I mean a company, of course," she corrected herself quickly. "They are going to have refrigerating plants, and freeze all the poor lambs in the district." Adelaide was inwardly uncertain whether "refrigerating plants" were animal, vegetable or mineral, but she would have liked to convey the impression that she did understand all about her husband's business.

"H'm. I think he's got rather a good thing on there," said Mr. Borlase, partly to himself. This latest project of MacDiarmid gave him more solid satisfaction than his daughter's bright face.

Adelaide did not stay at Haeremai so long as she had intended because a small M'Ilvride girl in a cotton sun-bonnet came running in, excitedly, an hour or two after dinner, to say that the Miramar carriage was just outside of the gate at Te Rama-Rama. So Adelaide went home in haste to entertain Major and Mrs. Brandon. They urged her to come over with Dennis and visit them on the following day. She promised for herself and her husband, and then wondered

by what possible means she could persuade him to go. While she was still wondering, she saw him at the door, and made some excuse for meeting him. He had been looking forward to having her sing and talk to him, and he was wroth to find her lavishing pretty smiles and flatteries on his neighbours. Indeed, he swore inaudibly within his beard, when she bade him present himself in her little drawing-room. Major Brandon was particularly anxious to see him and inform him that there was likely to be a bye-election for their district, and that he certainly ought to stand.

"I don't know what your politics happen to be, MacDiarmid," he said with a bluff good-humoured laugh, "but I'll back you whether you are Liberal or Conservative. There's not a halfpenny difference between the two in New Zealand, as far as I can see. The Liberals want to go faster than the Conservatives perhaps."

"Thanks. I have been spoken to about it once or twice. Scott asked me in Roslyn to-day."

"Oh, do get elected, Dennis!" exclaimed Adelaide lightly, and he looked at her a moment, but saw that she had not given a serious thought to the question.

"He can't refuse his wife, Aidie, not to speak of the mighty Mayor of Roslyn and my humble self."

"I'm not going to stand," said MacDiarmid slowly, like a traction engine grinding down

pebbles. "What's the use in letting the farm go to ruination while I humbug the district in Wellington?"

Mrs. Brandon was annoyed. "Oh, these Colonials!" she was saying to herself. "I'm very sorry for Adelaide. I hope he won't be in the next time I call." And she rose to leave. But Major Brandon's foible was to be a colonial with colonials, an Englishman with Englishmen, and the correct thing everywhere. He had an impression that he had discovered and patented MacDiarmid himself, and he took quite an inventor's pride in pushing forward his own invention. He could not give up this project.

"Seriously, you'll make a great mistake if you refuse to be nominated, MacDiarmid," he said as they parted, "you've got to think of your wife as well as yourself now. You must give her some position in society and here's your chance. Why, you don't know what a success that little girl of yours was in London, and the big people she had crowding round to get a few words with her. You mustn't let her pine away all alone in the Bush, you know. All right, Elinor, I'm coming. See you to-morrow MacDiarmid."

"No, he won't. D—— his interference," said MacDiarmid, but inwardly he brooded over that speech.

"He means to be kind, Dennis. I like him very much."

"Well, I don't. What do you think of a

man who will be a Liberal or a Conservative, whichever I please?"

Adelaide secretly thought this was very nice of Major Brandon, and just what she herself would do. She was more than willing for Dennis to choose her politics. But she discreetly turned the attack.

"Dennis, you promised me not to swear."

"I'm sorry, darling." He thought for a considerable time about Major Brandon, and reflected that he really was fond of Aidie. "I believe he is rather a nice old humbug after all," he said at last. "But whenever he gets near me, I always feel as if I had got into a swarm of sandflies. He sort of raises lumps on me and slips out of my hands, and then I feel wild to squash him. I like Evelyn best," he concluded, "she is the only one that hates me out and out. Do give me a kiss, love, and hang politics and the Brandons."

"Will you get the buggy for me from Haeremai to-morrow, Dennis?"

"Of course I will. Allan M'Ilvride can drive you."

"O Dennis, you are going to drive me. It is quite a long time since we have been out together," said Adelaide with duplicity.

"I'll drive you anywhere else."

"Except where I want to go."

"You're rather hard on me, Aidie—but I'll take you and hold the horses while you go in.

"Please, Dennis, dear."

"All right, my little tyrant. Now come and sing 'Mary of Argyle.'"

When they arrived at Miramar, the groom immediately came to hold the horses, as Adelaide knew he would do. Dennis dismissed him, much to the groom's disappointment, for he had got to a particularly thrilling part of "Dracula," and was looking forward to an undisturbed hour of really enjoyable literature. Adelaide, not yet foiled, went in alone, but presently reappeared at the top of the steps with Major Brandon by her side, so that any exclusively conjugal remarks were out of the question.

"O Dennis," she said with superficial innocence on her face and tremulous guilt in her heart, "the groom will look after the buggy. Major Brandon wants to show you a Jersey cow with such lovely ears and the sweetest biscuit-coloured hair. It has a pedigree or a breed or a genealogy something like grandmamma's, hasn't it, Major Brandon? You really must see it, dear."

Dennis saw that he was entrapped, glanced with meaning at his betrayer, and left the buggy resignedly. When they came indoors from the paddocks, they found several guests in the drawing-room. Major Brandon, with his usual amiable solicitude for MacDiarmid, introduced him to three influential runholders, two of whom MacDiarmid already knew, and the third of whom he had a great objection to,

and had always hitherto succeeded in avoiding. Adelaide's conscience was restless, and all the more because her husband was quiet and quite himself, though she knew well there were few things he abhorred more than a tea-party of this kind. She thought he looked as if he could say a good deal to her "an if he would." He did not speak a word on the way home until they got out of the Miramar gates.

"Well now, what have you got to say for yourself?" he began.

"It *was* a sweet cow," replied Adelaide nervously. "I knew you would like to see it, Dennis."

"Oh! You and your 'sweet cows,' and their pedigrees. It's a bull, my child, but that's no matter. No wonder you're so fond of that old humbug. You're only a fraud yourself. But you won't take me in so easily again, my darling."

"You mean that I am insincere, Dennis?"

"What do you think yourself of all this manœuvring, Aidie?"

"I think you are punishing me too severely." She tried to look dignified, but only looked downcast.

"Oh, yes, I punish you, my Aidie, don't I?" He laughed melodiously, looking down at the graceful little lady by his side. "You're very frightened of me, I know."

But Adelaide was really hurt, because her conscience troubled her, and at night she cried

to him, "O Dennis, do say you don't think me a false society sort of person."

"You're trying to fret over what I said, Aidie? Don't you know I think my wife everything that's best in the world."

"I mean to be more sincere," Adelaide sighed repentantly, and he wondered, but forbore to ask, how long she would keep that up.

# CHAPTER III.

## HOW DENNIS LOVED HIS BOSS.

AS the year went on, Dennis rode more and more often into Roslyn, or to see Willoughby of Te Puhi, or some other of the chief farmers and runholders in the neighbourhood. Adelaide ceased to go over to Haeremai on the days that he was away, because she would not draw the attention of her father and sister to the frequency with which she was now alone in her home. So she learnt to take a good many meals by herself, and to try to persuade herself that of course she could not expect anything else. But still the house would seem very still and vacant, when she had finished superintending and helping Lena and sat sewing or reading. She ceased to take a pleasure in the murmuring of the Bush trees, and had a fancy they were exulting over her and saying, "You hear us now, don't you? You've nothing else to hear." She scolded herself and would not say a word to Dennis. "I am getting morbid," she said inwardly. "It's beautiful, the great silence of the mountains."

When Dennis was at home he spent more and more time in the office, but it was not now

to smoke that he went there, and when she came in he did not always say more than a few words to her. He asked her to help him turn out all the tools, and said they could go to the old workshop; he would not have time for much of that work now. He studied uninteresting hand-books about animals and crops, and read the farming columns in the big weeklies. Adelaide wanted him to re-read with her their well-beloved Scott, and said she would tell him all about Loch Lomond and holy Melrose, "Corriskin dark and Coolin high," "Dun-Edin" and its castled rock, the Borough moor and the Flodden Stone, Tweed's silver stream and Teviotdale, just as in the enchanted hours before their marriage she had raised up visions of the Arthurian "Lyonnesse." Dennis looked greatly tempted, but said after a few minutes' consideration, "I have a lot of business in hand just now. I've not much time for poetry, my little love." Only one long night he sat by her and kissed her hands and worshipped her. She had been very cross and had scolded Lena, and then scolded him for excusing Lena—so altogether unlike Adelaide, and she was leaving the room to have her cry out in the dark when he captured her and made her tell him what was the matter. Dennis was overjoyed at the prospect of having a child of his own, with a grave and tender joy that was beautiful to see, and he did not for some time wake up to the thought of danger for her. But

Adelaide expected to die, and she dreaded to lose the beautiful earth and to be separated from her husband. Yet because she would not sadden him, she laid down her bridal glory with a sigh and a shiver at the prospect of so swift an end of all things.

Her father was more anxious about her than her husband. Mr. Borlase had thrown away all chance of getting well by insisting on sitting up when he ought to have been in bed, and by trying to manage his own affairs when he ought to have been resting. By autumn he was physically helpless again and greatly changed for the worse. One day he said to MacDiarmid, "I don't care what the doctor says, Dennis, I shan't see this year out."

"Well, I never thought you'ud give in like that, Mr. Borlase."

"Pooh, do you think I'm frightened of dying? Do you think I'm a man, and like to lie here and watch the flies crawl on the ceiling till my daughter comes to wash and feed me? The only thing that bothers me is Ada's little girl. Em will cut up terribly, I know, but she'll get through. But I hope to God that I'll drag on till Aidie's got her child safely, and then the sooner the better."

Dennis sat in a dumb grief like that of inanimate things. He was not thinking of his wife just then but of his Boss.

"Perhaps you 'ud like to know, MacDiarmid, I've come round about your marriage. The

child's wrapped up in you, and she's willing to stay in the Bush."

MacDiarmid found voice to speak, leaving deepest things unsaid. "I don't mean Aidie always to live in the Bush. She is wasted here, and you were all right about that. If all goes well she can have a trip to the Old World in a year or two. I'll take her if I can, and if I can't she must just go and enjoy herself with her friends."

"You are a good fellow, MacDiarmid." Mr. Borlase put out a lifeless hand. "Not that Aidie ever will go without you. Look after both my girls for me." Then he added with an inextinguishable sparkle of the blue eyes that had something so like Adelaide's, "You've been a son to me since—well, you remember when."

Dennis got up and went heavily from the room. He had intended to go and speak to M'Ilvride, and he walked on mechanically, but when he got near the cottage on the hill he sat down on the ground, and the sunshine had a curious dull look, or else his eyes were dazed.

As a Highlander loves his chief, as a Bushman loves his mate, as a dog loves his master, so MacDiarmid loved his Boss. He loved him romantically, next only to Adelaide. He loved him in an every-day, matter-of-fact manner. He had not realised his own feeling until he sat on the hill looking down on Haeremai, and knew

that he would never again see its master mustering the sheep up on the mountains, or yarding the cattle in the Bush, or shouting his orders at the ford, first and foremost amongst ploughmen and shearers, or sitting at meat in his own home jesting with his daughters.

The little painted wooden cottage with its fenced-in flower garden and potato patch, that was M'Ilvride's now, had once been Dougal MacDiarmid's, and there Dennis was born. He liked his father well enough, not overmuch; Dougal was not very good to Dennis's mother. Noreen was a poor peasant girl who had gone into the second Mrs. Borlase's service, but she was also a beautiful Madonna and an adorable Irish mother.

One day when Dennis was eleven, Mr. Borlase caught him riding an unbroken filly barebacked, and holding on. He made the child get off instantly, and there and then he thrashed him without mercy. Then he flung the horsewhip away and said, "What, can't I make you move a muscle? What a little brick you are! I wish you were my son. I'll thrash you again if you try to break your neck that way. But look here, boy, I'll break that filly in for you and you can have her yourself. Now crawl off to your mother if you can."

Dennis went, feeling as if his cuts and bruises were wounds of glory. He hardly knew which he wanted most, to be the Boss's son or to have that filly. Mr. Borlase was riding past

the cottage next morning when he saw Noreen digging up potatoes, and drew rein and called to her, "I thrashed that boy of yours for you, Noreen," a fact she had discovered for herself and wept over; her tears began to flow again as he spoke. "Pooh, pooh, woman, don't cry. Did him good. I can't have him spoiling my horses and breaking his neck. Don't you coddle him. He is the bravest little chap I ever saw, and I mean to keep my eye on him. You keep him to his books for the next three or four years, and then I'll give him the first chance that comes along." Sad to confess, Dennis did not employ his school time profitably. He could not have been quite so incorrigibly idle as the violent-tempered Gælic pedagogue swore that he was, for he worked manfully on the farm, and, in the evening, he read prodigiously and thought over what he read; but the Wainoni Flat School he never did cease to regard as a happy hunting ground for "animal spirits." At fourteen he came altogether under Mr. Borlase, and was made pretty sharply to stick to work and show the stuff that was in him. Mr. Borlase was the making of the idle clever boy who had shirked routine and had his own fun, and on whom thrashings and threats were wasted. Dennis knew his debt right well, and repaid it by boundless devotion.

All this helps to explain why Dennis MacDiarmid, one of the best practical farmers

in the province, was still only the lesser partner in Haeremai, instead of being sole owner there, or else the opulent manager of the lordly estate of Miramar. And this also is why he sat on the hill that evening until the sun went down and all the fields grew dark.

# CHAPTER IV.

## HOW DENNIS CONFESSED TO HIS WIFE.

THE mists came down from the Alps, and the rain fell. Dennis had gone to Roslyn, and Adelaide sat alone machining. It was an artistic machine, and it hummed softly. The small foot on the treadle, under the parted skirts, was dainty enough for a Cavalier lyric, and the slim, half-draped arm was held gracefully to guide the work. But Adelaide was white, and there were tears in her eyes, and in truth she was not quite so pretty as she had been. "I thought of everything but this—that he should leave me," she was saying to herself. She had expected him back by four o'clock, and had made the room warm and bright, and baked his favourite scones and tea-cakes herself, and tired herself out looking after the dinner. Adelaide had developed the talent for cooking which is displayed by most clever colonial girls in the backblocks, and she took a pride and pleasure in it, which was half artistic, half loving. She had dressed herself with care, not so confidently as she used to do, indeed a little anxiously. She had tried first the blue dress, and put it away because her complexion seemed not so exquisitely fair just now, and

then she tried the pink, and thought the chiffon was beginning to look limp. And then at the moment when he should have blessed her with his coming, there came instead of her big, brown, loving Dennis, only a scraggy settler, named Grant, who had happened to be in Roslyn that day, and who handed her a folded leaf, torn from Dennis's notebook, with a few lines scribbled on it:—"I have to go on to Dunedin by to-night's express, Aidie dear. I want to get some of the business men in town to take shares in our Farmers' Freezing Company. Can't say when I'll be back. Take care of yourself, my little girl, and don't worry. I'll come home to you as soon as I can.—Your DENNIS."

This was the first time he had left her for more than a day or two, but she felt it would not be the last. The first day's absence she had taken lightly, but now he was frequently away from morning till night. Was this to be the beginning of weeks of absence? And when he was at home, he often shut himself up in his office. Often men came to see him, and stayed to dinner, uninteresting, middle-class men, who smelt of rank tobacco, and who did not know what to say to her, but looked puzzled if she interpolated any of her light and airy nonsense. They talked of cows, of cream separators, of cargoes and of carcases, and of other deadly things. Meanwhile, everyone was praising him, that was the irony of it, her father and

Major Brandon, with whom he was now quite friendly, and Dr. Meares and the Willoughbys, everyone except Emmeline, who watched her, and often embraced her silently. This was the hardest thing of all to bear. When the others talked, she smiled gaily with lips that were a little pale, and said, "Oh yes, she was sure nobody else knew so much as Dennis about refrigerating plants and Prime Canterbury and all that sort of thing. She was getting quite learned herself about the frozen meat trade, and knew the names of all the ships that sailed under the Tyser flag." But she could not bear to be pitied by Emmeline.

Dennis never told her how the thought of her was mixed up in his business, and how could she guess, poor child? To make matters worse, he was a little short with her sometimes. He was worried, poor man, and she, poor girl, was overstrained and suffering. He saw that she suffered, and thought that she was finding Bush life bare and rough. So he worked the harder for her, and left her more alone.

Adelaide tried to impose on herself with the consecrated cant which makes all failure in love the fault of one alone. She had been trained to rely upon her own attractions, which were partly her radiant and joyous spirit and the pleasures of her life. She tried hard to be reasonable, but she went the wrong way about it, applying good old stock maxims which did not happen to be true about her Dennis.

"Men cannot be expected to love as women do," she said to herself, as she went on machining. "They must put outside interests first. It is only beauty and charm that men admire in a woman, and I look almost faded now, so of course he cannot love me so much." It is doubtful whether any woman who was deeply in love ever found much consolation in such reflections. Certainly Adelaide did not. They meant despair, pretending to be content. Unfortunately, both Dennis and she had lost their light-hearted humour. Neither of them spoke of their anxiety about her father, but it weighed heavily on both.

"If I have not Dennis, I have nothing," she thought, and her tears fell over the fine monthly gowns of cambric. Lena brought in her dinner, but it seemed to choke her. She had had a salmon trout, fresh caught from the Wainoni, and a roast duck and tarts of her own making, and clotted cream. It was a damp and chilly ride, and he would need a good dinner. She ate a few morsels of the trout, and then touched the hand bell. "Take it away, Lena, please," she said, "and don't bring the rest of the dinner in. I do not care about anything to-night."

Lena looked with mingled sentiments at the duck and the vegetables and the tarts on the kitchen table. "Poor body!" she said, with real sympathy for her girl-mistress. "I hope *my* bloke will come to-night, no use wasting these," and it struck her that if Johnnie

Saunders were to call on her there might be some advantages in MacDiarmid's absence. Johnnie, who looked after the Haeremai cattle and horses and slept in a bunk in one of the men's whares near the yards and woolsheds, was conveniently near at hand. Lena was a buxom lass, and not quite so demure with her blokes and her chums as she was with Mrs. MacDiarmid. She was more or less engaged to a storekeeper in Roslyn, but as he was such a long way off, she had taken the red-haired Saunders on as *locum tenens*, for, as she herself explained to Miss Borlase's Kate, "a girl must have a bloke that she can *see*."

Adelaide sewed Valenciennes edging on the dainty gowns until it was ten o'clock. The house grew almost deathly still. Lena and her Johnnie, having banquetted, strolled out to M'Ilvride's. The Bush trees became more and more unfriendly and insistent, crying, "You hear us now! You hear us now!" The rain went drip, drip, drip from the piping until she listened for each drop, and felt sure it was saying something cruel. "So many days he has been away out of four months' marriage. So many more days he may be away before I die." When she lay in bed, in the silence and the solitude, the dripping rain still went on, counting and working out curious problems of arithmetic, the answers to which could never be found out. "If I have only six more months to live, he will have been with me only so many days—

so many hours," and as she was falling asleep, she tried to reckon but could not, because there might be a geometrically increasing rate of absences, and there was always at least one unknown quantity somewhere. Adelaide had always had the true literary horror of mathematics, and the sum that had no conceivable answer began to haunt her nights deliriously.

The days went on drearily. There was no object in dressing nicely with no one to see; no meaning in cooking for herself or adorning a house that was no home. Yet she did go on doing these things almost mechanically. As she sat alone, she began to think of all that she had once so gladly sacrificed, friends and amusements and lovely moving scenes, all the gay opera that life had been a year ago. If she had had her husband she would not have pined for these things, but sometimes now she thought they would have been distraction and relief. It must be an immense love on both sides that can be all in all, and Dennis loved his business best. At least he was most interested in that.

MacDiarmid stayed in town for nearly a fortnight. He was bent on starting refrigerating works near Roslyn, and instead of putting the business into the hands of the city company, he determined to break through their monopoly of the freezing industry in the province and to start a farmers' company. For two years the foreign trade had been depressed, partly owing to the fact that the breeders' interests were not

immediately identical with those of the exporters of frozen meat, and that they held back supplies to raise the prices, or supplied inferior qualities indifferently if they could get a good price from the City Company. This policy might be profitable for the moment, but it was suicidal in the long run, and MacDiarmid thought the time was ripe for a company in which the breeders themselves should be involved in the profit or loss of the London market. When he went to Roslyn, it was to hold a public meeting in the Town Hall of the chief farmers and runholders in the district, but except Major Brandon, they were all too canny and too cautious, and they threw the whole burden of the enterprise on him. The district was a poor one, and as there was not enough capital forthcoming, he was obliged to apply to the wealthy men of Dunedin. Already he had a high business reputation in town, not only for integrity, but what was more important, for success, and the old proverb about success succeeding proved true in this case, for he got the capital subscribed, came back to Roslyn, and there held the first meeting of the Farmers' Refrigerating Company. It was a big thing for a farmer in the backblocks to undertake, but he was a big man in some ways, and he meant to see it through.

When the joy of his return had almost died away, like a hunger too long unsatisfied, he came home unexpectedly. Adelaide was lying on

the couch, tired and weak, and knowing that she did not look her charming self, when she heard his step on the gravel path. Though her face flushed as she went to meet him, it was almost as much with pain as with pleasure. She was immediately enveloped in his embrace, but he saw at the first glance that she had been fretting, and he was not pleased. "O Dennis, I did not expect you to-day," she said.

"Well, you're glad to see me, aren't you, Aidie?"

"Oh yes. Of course. But I have nothing in the house good enough for you—for your dinner, I mean."

"Nonsense, child. Some cold meat and some tea will do, and I suppose you've got that. Let's have it soon, that's all. I'm hungry. Wait—what's the matter, Aidie?"

"I haven't been quite well to-day, that is all. It is really nothing, Dennis."

"Aidie, I'm sure there's something wrong. I won't let you go till you tell me. Is it about my staying away?"

"You have been rather a long time," she said slowly and with some effort.

"I must attend to my business. Do be reasonable."

"I try to be, Dennis." She spoke with an appealing accent.

"Let Lena get the dinner and you stay with me, darling."

"I really can't." And then with just the

phantom of her enchanting smile. "I have a few duties too, dear."

Adelaide stood in her clean, new kitchen in domestic despair. There was absolutely nothing but cold ham and a very small piece of cold mutton. She had told M'Ilvride not to send up any meat until Mr. MacDiarmid came back, and that suited M'Ilvride particularly well just then. He always expected a spell in the autumn before the ploughing began, and he was busy cultivating his own ground when Lena, hot and red with haste, rushed up to the fence to say Mr. MacDiarmid had come home and would he get her some meat or would he kill a fowl. M'Ilvride was completely scandalised at both suggestions. He looked at Lena in silence a few moments, inexpressibly outraged, and then went on digging :—

"Mr. MacDiarmid will no be asking me to start work at five o'clock. I wull no believe it, Lena Thomson." Mrs. MacDiarmid he chose to ignore.

Lena, abashed, stammered out an enquiry as to whether Allan would run over to Haeremai and get something from Miss Borlase. M'Ilvride gave her another expressive look. "Ye're no blate, Lena Thomson," he remarked with sarcastic admiration, and drove his spade into the ground, but finding that his feelings were too much for him, he raised his head and his voice too, "And is it Allan ye would be sending over to Haeremai the nicht? Canna

ye see for yoursell the puir bairn's lame in both feet with the chilblains?"

The poor bairn, who with red, chilblained feet bare on the steaming earth, was grubbing up his kind parent's potatoes, had looked up eagerly at the prospect of a little excitement, with a cake at one end from Miss Borlase and another cake at the other end from Mrs. MacDiarmid, but now he subsided into hopeless gloom, and went on grubbing up potatoes, as Lena slunk away, ashamed of herself and of her mistress.

Adelaide, with anxious thoughts for the morrow, was obliged to tell everything to Dennis, but he only laughed as he consumed the cold mutton till nothing but bones was left.

"It's all right," he said. "I did promise him this week to himself, and it's against his principles to oblige his master. I'll see about it to-morrow, Aidie dear."

MacDiarmid knew M'Ilvride well and got what he wanted out of him. He could break people if he liked, but he did not like.

Adelaide tried so heroically to be bright and lively in the evening that she overdid it and was not natural. Dennis always resented this manner of hers more than any other; it was throwing to him the mere garment of Adelaide when he wanted the living body.

Early in the following afternoon he came into the house by the back way, as he often did

when he had been doing rough work, and would not soil her pretty curtained passage of French-polished rimu. Adelaide, who was directing Lena in the kitchen, came into the porch to meet him and suddenly turned faint. "Dennis? What is it? You have blood on you."

He laughed. "Oh, you're not as bold as Alice Brand, Aidie. 'Tis but the blood of deer,' or rather of the sheep. I washed myself as well as I could, and I'll change in a minute."

She had forgotten a good many things in her ten years' absence.

"The blood of the sheep?" she said, "I don't understand."

"I've been killing, that's all," he answered shortly.

"Killing?" she repeated slowly.

"Yes, killing—cutting a sheep's throat," he said impatiently. "Aidie, don't stand there looking at my moleskins, if you don't like them. Go into the sitting-room and I'll be in presently."

Aidie went in and took up some mending. Her baby's gowns she could not touch in her present mood. She was almost afraid of her husband's coming in, and yet the incident fascinated her morbidly.

"I wish you were not obliged to do such things," she answered, when he kissed her and asked her if she were still lamenting the mutton.

"Well, you didn't think I sat on a hill with

a crook all day, or carried lambs about in my arms, did you? It wouldn't pay to keep sheep that way in New Zealand. I think there ought to be a Colonial version of the New Testament, it's misleading about shepherds," he said irreverently; but to Adelaide's mood the remark seemed in bad taste.

"It seems—unpleasant," she said, choosing her epithet carefully. The poetry of labour began to resemble tussock hills a little too near in the hard light of noon. Adelaide loved nature, but she loved it poetised, not plain.

"I am sorry for the sheep, poor brutes, but it's no use getting soft over it. There are a lot of things beside the killing I shouldn't like my little girl to see. I don't generally think about them when they've got to be done, and I don't want you to make me. Killing sheep for food is not half so cruel as hunting foxes and hares for fun, and you've done that yourself, my darling."

Adelaide saw no resemblance between the two, and her mind went back with almost a pang of longing to the aristocratic and sportive torture and slaughter. It was so historic, time-honoured, and so suggestive of immemorial ages of poetry and romance; it was such an exclusive perquisite and mark of rank and breeding. All the attendant pomp and circumstances were so charming, and now they seemed so far away from her present life as she sat and silently recalled them—the early break-

fast in some ancient hall, the start in the dewy October morning, the joyous race over the gentle downs and vales of England, the pleasant ride home, the eyes that smiled on her, the flatteries and gallantries and the light jests over the day's adventures. The hunted, slaughtered animal was such an insignificant feature in the whole entertainment, and she had learned to accept its fate with aristocratic serenity. But this killing of sheep was sheer unadorned butchery, it reeked of Smithfield market and the slaughter-yard, and her husband was the butcher. She began to feel as if there was something unknown, something potential about him that fascinated and terrified her.

"Why don't we have a butcher?" she asked.

"Oh, that's mean. If it's got to be done, I may as well do it." Then he went on, "As a matter of fact, it's not my work. I've got other things to look after, but there happened to be no one else handy except that boy from Eton —St. Aubyn, the cadet your grandmother sent to Haeremai. M'Ilvride had set him on to the job. It's their idea of a joke with a new chum, but it's a bit too rough on an English lad. Are you interested, Aidie?"

"St. Aubyn? Yes. I'm sure his people did not expect him to do that sort of work. They're one of the first families in England, and if there weren't so many elder sons, he wouldn't be here."

"No, I guess his Honourable Papa and his

Lady Mamma didn't know what they were sending him into. I'll wean him as gently as I can. But," he concluded with heavy force, "he's got to do that and other things too before long."

Adelaide sat looking at him and thinking that he was somehow different from the St. Aubyns and the people she had been accustomed to for ten years.

"Have you ever killed other things?" she asked lightly and yet tremulously.

"Yes, bullocks now and then."

"You don't mind my asking? You see, it's strange to me and—so interesting."

"Oh no, ask away. I'll tell you all my crimes."

They had never since the hour under the tree-ferns stood so far apart as now, and Adelaide shivered inwardly with a spiritual loneliness and chill.

"You certainly have not killed anything else?" she said, but felt a curious instinct of not having got to the end yet. The sense of his potentialities was overmastering her imagination.

Dennis sat still for some minutes, and then said, as if he were awakening out of a dream, "Yes, I have."

"Oh—what?" she asked still lightly, but unable to keep her eyes from him.

"I killed my sheep-dog, Rangi, the collie that we used to play with when we were children."

"You killed my dear old Rangi?" It was a little cry, and her face was very white. Rangi was the dearest pet and plaything of her childhood, almost a rival then to her sweetheart Dennis.

"Yes. I shot him one night."

"Tell me all about it, Dennis," she demanded, piteous and yet imperative, dropping the society manner altogether.

He told her with a rugged and savage sincerity that crushed the girl's flower-like grace beneath it.

"You want to hear all about it?" he said, and forgot what he should have remembered, but she was driving him too hard. "Well, he got to worrying Willoughby's sheep. It was my fault. I spoiled him, petting him too much. He was all right under my eye, but directly he had a chance he was off and away to Te Puhi. Willoughby came over to us as mad as he could be—swore he'd cut Rangi up, and shoot him and disembowel him; I don't know what he wasn't going to do to him. Quite right too, and I'll shoot his dogs if they come worrying my sheep. But I would rather Rangi died by my hand. So I went to the kennels and let him off the chain, and he fawned on me and licked my hands and feet. Then he followed me down the valley, and I tied him to the rimu tree, and all the time he went on licking my hands. And I shot him. I made a pretty clean job of it, but he tried to crawl to me, and

he howled just once. That night when I was sleeping, I dreamt I heard him howl again, and I felt as if I had killed a child.——What did you make me tell you that for ?"

"I wonder," she dropped her fair head lifelessly on her hand, and gave a shuddering laugh, "I wonder if you could ever kill *me*, Dennis."

"Adelaide!" he called out stormily, and faced her, with all his soul torn up. "Don't you ever say such a thing to me again." He paused, then went on, still with crushing force, too hard for such a delicate child, "I've got to do my work, whether it pleases you or not."

Adelaide had no refuge from him, no refuge at all but in him. She broke into helpless sobs, and did not even struggle against them. Her pride, her joy, her love were all beaten down. Dennis stood looking at her a few minutes, and then put out his arms and slowly took her into them, but could give her only cold comfort. There was not comfort enough in himself to give.

"It's nothing, nothing," she sobbed, "it's all about nothing!"

"It's not," he answered. "You don't like this life, and I never had a right to—all the joy I've had with you."

"Don't, Dennis," she sobbed on, childishly, unresentfully. Other women might console themselves by calling their husbands brutes, but not Adelaide her Dennis. She was a sweet

girl, only not strong enough for his mate, and yet he adored her very fragility. His arms closed around her now in helpless love. "O Aidie, Aidie, my poor child, my poor, motherless girl," he said, and thought of her dying father and of her unborn babe. "I can't make you happy, and I've tried so hard. You take the heart out of me when you look and talk as you did to-night. You were always happy before you came back to me. And now I've been cruel to you."

"No, Dennis, no."

"Come to bed now. You're not fit to be up."

He carried her to her bedroom and laid her on her bed, and then, going back to the dining-room, he sat inactive that evening and realised his harshness. She should not have had one impatient word now in her weakness and grief and fatigue, but he had given her a shock, and then had gone on increasing and feeding her fright, and when she wanted soothing he had stormed at her.

In the middle of the night he woke up (a thing almost unknown to Dennis), as a mother instinctively wakes up when her sick child stirs and needs her, and he felt that she was weeping to herself. "Aidie," he said, and knew he had not finished comforting her before she slept, "Come to me now, my darling, and let us have it all out."

"If I could only tell him what my real

trouble is," Adelaide thought, but shrank from hearing the old impatient explanation that he had business and must see to it, and that she must be sensible. Then she had a delicate pride that would not let her complain of being neglected. "Dennis, I'm sorry. I'm a baby to cry so. I don't really care what you do, so long as you love me."

"I'll always do that, my Aidie. More than my own flesh. I 'ud chop myself up into little pieces before I 'ud hurt you, love," he answered in a slightly Hibernian manner.

"My dear! My Dennis!" she cried to him in the sweetest thrilling tone, and kissed his slaughterous right hand and laid it on her heart. Then she came to the surface again with a little sobbing laugh. "I don't care if you cut the shearers' throats as well as the sheeps'. Only give me time to get accustomed to things. I thought we knew each other so well, and this afternoon you seemed quite strange to me. Are there other things I don't know about you, Dennis? I want to understand all of you. Tell me anything, everything."

"You mean all the wrong things that I've ever done, Aidie?" he asked. She had not exactly meant that, but he was in a penitential mood.

"Anything," she answered, with a hunger and thirst to understand him better.

For some time he lay quite still, thinking,

like a very large child, and tried to judge himself by the conscience of a dear innocent girl of twenty. He did not cant about the moral difference between men and women, nor make capital out of the blackness of other men compared to himself, as bridegrooms are too apt to do with youthful brides. Just as he used to stand by the knees of his mother, when he was a little boy, and tell her all about his misdeeds—all about the boys he fought, the sparrows that he shanghaied, the plum trees that he robbed, the times he played the truant and rode bullocks or draught horses or any other handy animals in lonesome gullies, the lessons that he shirked, the tricks he played upon the schoolmaster—so now he came to the dear breast of his wife and confessed the ill-doings of his youth.

"I lose my temper sometimes, Aidie," he began. "I once knocked a man down and stunned him. I thought I'd killed him, and if I had, I suppose I should have been a big criminal and got locked up for the rest of my life. It was only a chance that he wasn't dead." Dennis paused, and an unholy satisfaction began to revive. "He deserved to be knocked down, though. He was slandering a woman who was fond of him. It was a bad business. I ought not to have stunned him, of course. But I'm glad I did."

The next confession came with far more emphatic conviction.

"The meanest thing I ever did was to flog a mare till she nearly dropped. I was fond of her too, but there had been a banquet to Seddon over in Roslyn, and I'd drunk too much whisky. I was coming back about four o'clock in the morning. She'd got it into her head she would not pass the engine on the road, and I'd got it into my head I'd make her do what I told her somehow. She was only frightened, and I nearly paralysed her at last. When I did get down, she was trembling and covered with sweat and blood, and didn't she look at me—do you know the look in a dumb creature's eyes when you've been a devil to it? No, of course you don't. How should you? If I hadn't been a thundering ass and a brute, I 'ud have gone to her head at the first and led her past, and she would have come like a lamb. It was just my devil's determination to have my own way. "Yes," he concluded, "that was the —— meanest thing I ever did. It wouldn't have mattered so much if it had been a man, but she couldn't even curse me."

Adelaide gave a sorrowful laugh. "O Dennis, you have used so many bad words."

"I'm sorry," he said contritely. "I forgot."

"Do all the people about here ill-treat animals sometimes?"

"No, some don't. Some do worse. Yes, I've seen some bad things done. But I'm not confessing about other men. And those that did the worst did not understand animals.

I do. Well, I've sometimes drunk more than is good for me, Aidie; not that I've ever been what men call drunk, but I forget myself and quarrel about nothing. I believe I 'ud do best to give up whisky altogether."

"Dennis,—is it true that all men do—things like those that some people say Horace Brandon did? I mean ——," Adelaide broke off and began stroking his chest in confused agitation.

"Are you asking me if I've done harm to any girl, Aidie?" he said bluntly. "No, that I'll swear I never did. How could I, darling, when I loved you so?" He thought honestly for a few minutes. "I have kissed girls sometimes," he confessed. "They didn't seem to mind. I couldn't help myself. Girls are very nice sometimes, Aidie."

Adelaide thought these shameless women who beguiled her Dennis were far indeed from being nice. She stirred and nestled closer. "Kiss *me*, Dennis."

He kissed her with a great wave of passion. "Don't think that it was ever like this with anyone but you."

Adelaide was longing to hear him confess that he had been neglecting her. "Is that all, Dennis?"

"Things of that sort. I don't remember any more just now. Except being rough with you, and that's the worst of all. Good-night, love. Forgive me all my sins."

"And you, forgive me mine."

"Yours? You have none."

"I'm afraid you know them without my telling you, Dennis."

"No. You are rather too fond of make-believe, and you do seem to go by what conventional people might think, and not to do your own thinking for yourself. And that's a pity, my dearie. But you haven't a bad wish or an angry thought in your heart. Don't move away. Put your head down on me and go to sleep—so."

Adelaide gave a sigh that was half disappointment, half contented love. She was still to be forsaken, and yet she was beloved.

# CHAPTER V.

## HOW DENNIS WENT ON KILLING HIS LOVE.

FROM pure loving kindness and unselfish devotion, Dennis was steadily starving the life out of his wife. She had a joyous spirit, but she needed joy to thrive on, and he was giving her none at all, only saving it up for a problematical future, without even letting her into the secret. When he was stupid, he was stupid on a large scale, and in proportion to his great ability. For he was generally recognised now as a very able man in his own way. All the settlers round looked up to Mr. MacDiarmid, from Te Puhi on the hill slopes to Wainoni Flat and Roslyn township, and as he was a kindly man, he liked the human side of his popularity. But his main object in taking up this refrigerating business had been to give Adelaide all the luxury and pleasure that seemed her native element. There was nothing too fine, too choice for his love, nothing too varied for the bright changeful spirit that was so lovely in its joy. It made his heart throb when he saw the light in her eyes, as she talked to St. Aubyn of Venice and Rome and of the cities of Spain. One night he happened to be in the room while she was

telling the boy that she had one dream unfulfilled, and that was to go a yachting cruise to Sicily and all the Isles of Greece. Dennis smiled down on her so kindly then, as he came to her chair to lay his hand a moment on her shoulder and to say, "Well, Aidie, who knows?" Adelaide flushed, looking up at him quickly, and caring more for the touch of his hand than for the Ionian Islands, but she made the conventional struggle for serenity and said, "Oh, it's only a dream of mine, you know. My travelling days are done. Did you hear from your mother by the 'Frisco mail, Mr. St. Aubyn?"

This was only one of the ravishing tours that Dennis planned out for her. He often asked about far countries from the Brandons and St. Aubyn, and he accumulated a good deal of information. Then he meant his Adelaide to have a beautiful house, not large, but as like as possible to the Cornish castle that had been her mother's home. This was the poetry of his life in those days.

There was a good deal of prose. And once started in business, he took a great interest in it on his own account, as an energetic man is likely to do when he sees an enterprise thrive in his hands. It was a critical time in the industrial history of the colony. During the past ten or fifteen years a revolution had been going on in the whole agricultural and pastoral systems, owing to the growth of the frozen meat

trade and the dairy factories. Then the Argentine and Australia came into the running, and it became a question how long New Zealand would hold its own. Those involved, as MacDiarmid was, felt to the full the excitement of the race, and the proud consciousness of pushing on the prosperity of the young country that New Zealanders love so well. MacDiarmid saw the whole prospect far and near, with the practical imagination of a Colonial who was also an Irishman, and who liked some concrete and substantial basis, but coloured even the most prosaic facts with the instinctive warm glow of his own temperament. Far more than with the colony at large, he was concerned with opening up his own district. There was good pastoral land in the valley, indeed as far as pasture and water are concerned, the whole country round Haeremai could have held its own with the best in Otago or Canterbury. But Mr. Borlase had made the fatal mistake of pushing settlement too far into the mountains, away from any of the main centres. At the time when he started farming, it was impossible to do more than speculate what land to take up, but as it turned out, no railway line or main road ever came his way, and he died a disappointed man. The Wainoni Flat settlers who followed in his wake, lived hard, bare lives in their small houses of painted or weatherboard wood, scattered at wide distances on the river banks and in recesses of the hills.

The whole district had been falling behind the times into the hard-working, thrifty poverty that seems the fate of Scotch peasants, when MacDiarmid took Mr. Borlase's place on the Road Board and fought like a lion, or better, like a clansman, for the making of roads and bridges, and the more equitable adjustment of a carelessly unfair method of rating high and low levels, accessible and almost inaccessible places alike. In a few years he had done great things within this lonely and isolated neighbourhood, and his purpose was to do much greater. If he was sometimes a child in the arms of his wife, he was a man amongst men. He would have gone into Parliament, but he had that objection to politics which is only too common amongst straight-dealing colonials, and he preferred the downright scrimmage on the Road Board. His patriotism was local and narrow, but it was intense. He loved these mountains and these valleys as the Celt and the Gael love their misty islands and craggy hills. Here he had been born, and here, if it had not been for his wife, he would have been content to do his life-work, and to die and be buried. A few years back he had helped start the Dairy Factory in Roslyn. That was his first enterprise, but he was only a very young man then, and he himself held only a few shares. It had prospered, and he had made money. Now he was agitating for a creamery on the Flat, because the distance to Roslyn was such a serious

difficulty in conveying unseparated milk. As every farmer knows, the question of conveyance is the supreme one in regard to every form of produce, and his idea was to set up buildings and machinery sufficiently near at hand to make both milk and meat fit for distribution beyond his own neighbourhood. His own special project was this Farmers' Refrigerating Company, and for the time it absorbed the greater part of his energies. These two enterprises, the Freezing Works and the Dairy Factories, meant an immense boon to the district, saving it in fact from being hopelessly starved out, and finally deserted, as more than one settlement in back country has been. The pastoral revolution had made it impossible to compete with other parts of the Colony if the old methods of farming were persisted in, and MacDiarmid saw, ready to his hand, the only means of saving the settlement. There were human interests involved. If the district went under, it meant ruin to all the settlers, every man, woman and child of whom he knew intimately. So it was a great day for him, and for them too, when the first blocks of stone were laid for the foundation for the freezing works, and a greater still when the arrival of the refrigerating machinery was wired from Dunedin.

All these things MacDiarmid meditated on when he rode to and from Roslyn, and when he sat at home absorbed in his papers and letters,

leaving his wife for the present alone in her loneliness. He did not exactly forget her, but neither did he quite remember her. He had a habit of feeling the presence even of his best-beloved in a sub-conscious manner, and was, in some ways, singularly undemonstrative. But Adelaide was vivacious and accustomed to unlimited attention. Dennis was much more often away now than at home. Unless there was any special operation on — branding, dipping, docking or shearing or harvesting— the work on Haeremai was slack for a man of his capability, and M'Ilvride was perfectly competent to look after the ordinary routine management of the stock—the yarding, the milking, the ploughing and fencing, beside the innumerable odd jobs that a good farmer must turn his hand to. M'Ilvride was a hard-working man, and in his own way reliable. He had "a sort of Hielan honesty," which in his case might be defined as honesty with pickings. Since Mr. Borlase's illness, MacDiarmid had been gradually placing him more and more in the same anomalous but important position that he himself had formerly held, making him, so to speak, "head man in general," and M'Ilvride relished his own importance. The higher and more scientific part of the management—the stock-breeding and the culture of the land, the raising of root crops and all market transactions —still remained entirely in MacDiarmid's own hands, but these matters, too, involved his spend-

ing a good deal of time either in the township or in Dunedin.

So Adelaide was left to break her heart alone, until Lena busied herself at the stove or the dresser to hide the pity on her face, whenever her young mistress came in after seeing her husband ride off. Since the night of his confession, Dennis had never been anything but tender to her, but then he scarcely spoke to her for days together. He never talked of all his plans for her happiness, because he suffered from a constitutional "tardiness in nature, which often leaves the history unspoke that it intends to do." The whole enterprise was a risk, and he might not after all be able to give her the gifts that he desired to give. Adelaide tried to take an interest in his business, but he saw no use in that. She was by no means an empty-headed girl, she read and enjoyed "Monna Vanna," and "Es War," and "Il Santo" in the original. She could dress, and sing, and dance, and talk in exquisite perfection, and she kept her little house in the prettiest and most artistic order. But the frozen meat trade was quite beyond her, and she was heart sick and weary of its very name.

So she drooped and pined like a lovesick girl, which in truth was all she was. If she could have been angry, it might have roused her, but he was never unkind enough to excite anger. She had such sacred memories of him; she had seen such depths of love. It was all

a mystery and a wonder of pain. It was a pity she could not offer any resistance to him, but she could not. Just then she was all the more his own because she bore their child. Day after day she grew more pale and weak and lay more and more on the couch, so tired out, not as Dennis thought, with work, but with heartbreak—that she could scarcely lift her head. All those who saw her began to say she would go, as her mother had done, and she knew that they were saying this. Still she tried to console herself with the old consecrated cant that women should not be exacting, that when men stayed from home it was because their homes were not attractive to them, that a woman's place is in her home and a man's in the world. She made a piteous effort to be attractive, and seeing that her husband thought her manner artificial and was vexed, she yet more piteously gave up the attempt. "It is my fault," she said to herself. "I can't amuse him at all now. I ought to be thankful it is only his work and not some other woman that he cares for." To excite reluctant pity was the thing she would most of all have dreaded, so she lay gracefully on her couch in the evening, and if Dennis noticed, which he did not always do, she said, "Yes, she did get a little tired now, not much, but she liked indulging herself if he did not mind. She had got into indolent ways in London with nothing to do but to amuse herself and rest." But

oftenest she lay quite alone in her pretty little drawing-room, and saw through tears the furniture and pictures that brought back the days when they had arranged every detail together in the first joy of union. At night she was sleeping now by herself, but if he were not away in town or city, Dennis always came to her bedside with a kiss and a few fond words, and then she clung to him with her arms around his neck, in a sort of despair. "Why, Aidie," he said once with kind laughing eyes, "aren't you going to let me go? I believe you're afraid to be left alone in the dark."

"Yes—alone in the dark," she echoed wildly, and let her arms drop from his neck, and threw them out across her bed, "alone in the dark—I'm afraid to be left alone in the dark." Then coming to herself, "Forgive me, Dennis. I am hysterical to-night."

"Drink some cold water," he suggested with unutterable stupidity, and gave her some.

This potent cure for loneliness excited Adelaide's sense of comedy, and she laughed distractedly, but drank the water and said with an effort, "Women—who are not very strong—often get hysterical—at this time. Now leave me, dear. Goodnight."

"Yes, I think you had better get to sleep," Dennis said, and went away perplexed and worried.

# CHAPTER VI.

## HOW BIRTH AND BREEDING ALWAYS SHOW THEMSELVES IN AN EMERGENCY.

MR. BORLASE could not quite manage it, so one morning, impatient and fighting against fate to the end, he had to give in to the last enemy and lie still. He had made a preternatural effort to rise, gasped out "Em!" but before she could rush to him, had breathed his last. Emmeline was left bereaved. In his affectionate companionship and his exacting dependence, he had been husband and child as well as father to her. It was not just common loneliness that she felt, but having no one to look after. There could have been nothing more pathetic than Emmeline, sitting still in the house with idle hands, wondering what she should do next, or if there were anything worth doing any more. It was a relief when Dennis came in. He kissed her and looked steadily at her. "I wish you would cry, Emmie," he said. "It would do you good."

"I can't, Dennis—Does Aidie know?"

"No. I met Dr. Meares, and he says I had better keep her out of the way. I'll go to Miramar after—I want to see him now, Emmie."

Dennis looked down on his dead chief, and thought how like he was to Adelaide asleep.

"It will kill her," said Emmeline stonily, as she stood by his side.

"I won't have you say that, Emmie. Do you forget you're speaking of my wife?" He spoke in his overwhelming manner.

Then he galloped to Miramar, and was shortly conscious in a vague manner of a large room and of a fine, clear, precise voice, and of words that reached his ear not very coherently, "Poor dear Adelaide—how sudden—how sad, what a shock to her—and to you too, Mr. MacDiarmid; please accept our sympathy."

"All right," he said brusquely. "Can Adelaide stay with you while I bury her Father?"

They would have been so glad to have dear Adelaide, but just at the present time did he think it was wise for her to be away from her own home? It was not at all that they were wanting in sympathy. They could not tell him how much they felt for her, but the risk to her health was so great. This was chiefly Mrs. Brandon. The Major, to do him justice, seemed to agree against his wishes, and said in an undertone, "Poor Aidie." The cultured voice began again, "Anything they could do for him or for her, he had only to let them know."

"Oh, I'll let you know, of course," MacDiarmid said, and strode out of the house without saying goodbye.

"What an eccentric man!" remarked Mrs. Brandon, taking up the latest English novel, and cutting the leaves.

"Perhaps he is upset," hazarded Major Brandon.

"Perhaps. But it is very ill-bred to show it in that manner. Still of course we ought not to expect anything else from a man of his antecedents. It is always in an emergency of this kind that race and breeding do show."

"I suppose we could not have Aidie here for a few days?" inquired Major Brandon.

"Impossible. You know the Vaughans come to-day, and they will expect to be entertained. How Mr. MacDiarmid could think of Adelaide staying with us just now I cannot imagine. Such bad taste on his part. At a time when she might be in danger herself."

"No, I suppose we can't," acquiesced the Major, with a resigned sigh which annoyed his wife.

"She might actually die here. We are bound to consider the possibilities. The most extraordinary suggestion. You have done too much for Mr. MacDiarmid, and there is no limit to what such people will ask." And she fell to reading her novel.

Dennis galloped straight back to Emmeline and told her of his reception and laughed aloud. "That's what they're worth," he said.

"The poorest settler in the valley would not have refused now."

"Not one of them. Never mind, Em, we'll get our darling through without them." Then he broke down a moment. "Oh God, my love! And I've got to tell her!"

Emmeline roused herself. "Yes, you must tell her," she said, "but I'll go over and stay with her now. He doesn't need me any more," she ended pathetically.

They sat down hand in hand without trying to speak for a time. Then Emmeline broke the silence. "I'll nurse Adelaide, Dennis, and then I mean to go out as companion or something of that kind. We've been in your debt a long time, and the farm ought to be yours." For some years Emmeline had known rather more of her father's pecuniary affairs than he did himself, and she knew that Dennis had been drawing a nominal salary as manager, and using his own money to pay off the mortgage and back debts.

"You'll do nothing of the sort," he answered. "Do you think I'll rob the hand that's fed me, now it's cold? I owe more to him and to you than any money will ever pay. What's the use in reckoning up favours, one side or another? You've helped me and I've helped you, and that's all there is in it." He kissed her again. "You're my partner now. You'll stay in your own home, my dear, and I'll work for you as long as I live."

Dennis went home to his wife. Adelaide was tired and was lying on the couch, and her

eyes were closed. He stood in the doorway looking at her, and it struck him that her face was ethereal and white, as if she were already in the mists and twilight of the unseen world. Then she heard his step and looked up startled, with a faint apologetic smile. "I was asleep, dear," she said, and would have risen.

"Don't move." He came and put his head down by her, and her hand wandered over his face and beard, lightly, too lightly, with a touch like the wind's.

"You love me, Aidie?"

"O Dennis, isn't it I who ought to ask you?" she said, trying to be playful. "Do I ever leave you?"

"No, don't. Don't ever leave me, my Aidie. We are all the world to each other, aren't we? If I think of love, it means you to me."

"And you to me. You know that, Dennis."

"Then nothing matters so much. Not if we lose all other friends, does it,—Aidie?"

"Nothing so much." Adelaide closed her blue eyes a moment, then surprised him by opening them wide. "Is my father dead?" she asked quietly.

"Yes, love, yes. He died suddenly this morning. But you—you won't leave me too, my Aidie? Stay with me and let me have my child and you together. I have no joy on earth if I have not you. It is different with other men and their wives, girls they pick up

one week and are sick of before the honeymoon is out. But you, my child, my babe, my love of twenty years, you've grown into my life. You'll have to be brave and live, Aidie."

"I will." She lay back, almost swooning with the effort, before she spoke again. "I must go to him now. Dad, dear dad, I must have one kiss." Adelaide raised her head, but he laid it back gently upon the cushions.

"You must not, love. It is the thing he would least of all have wished. He was very anxious about you. Doctor Meares says you should not go near the house."

"I will do what you all think best."

"The doctor thought you would be better away from home."

"Oh no, you will not banish me now, Dennis?" She clasped her arms around his neck. "I need you—all that you can spare me of yourself."

MacDiarmid went to the Roslyn churchyard to bear his chief to the grave, and the sunlight was not bright to him that day, and the clods of earth were cold. There was a large gathering, and all along the street men stood bareheaded as the First Settler passed for the last time. Colonials of the backblocks, especially where there is much Scotch blood, still love a good funeral. The flags were down at half mast, and the bells of the Anglican church tolled out the number of his three-score years and five. As

the mourners were turning away, M'Ilvride shook his head dismally and said, "It will no be verra long before we'll be seeing another Borlase carried here, I'm thinking." He was considerably startled when MacDiarmid turned round and remarked in a matter-of-fact manner, "I'll throttle any man who says that in my hearing again, M'Ilvride."

"Preserve's, Mr. MacDiarmid. It's no decent to talk that gait in the verra kirkyard," the scandalised M'Ilvride exclaimed, but he judged it advisable to make off in another direction.

# CHAPTER VII.

## HOW DENNIS MACDIARMID FOUGHT WITH DEATH FOR THE SOUL OF ADELAIDE.

WHEN MacDiarmid got back from the funeral, he knew that his home was a house of mortal agony. Lena, red-eyed, went to the door before he reached the doorstep, and said with that hushing air that chills the life within, "Mrs. MacDiarmid is very ill, sir."

He put her aside almost roughly, and went towards the room where a faint low moan was heard. Emmeline tried ineffectually to remonstrate with him. "When did you send for the doctor?" he asked, and on her reply, looked at his watch and said, "Two or three hours at the soonest," and then, "Go into the next room, Emmie, and leave me with her." Then he went to the bedside, and sat there with his wife's hand in his, the thin white fingers locked around his own. Adelaide was floating in a thin, wild, windy air with no hold on earth, a region sounding with stifled cries and voices, now cold with deadly chills and now tearing her young flesh with fierce electric flames. Her dead father was drawing her over towards death, and her spirit longed to go

to him and to rest. MacDiarmid looked down on her and said, "You know me, Aidie?"

The blue eyes fixed themselves on him.

"Dennis."

"You *must* stay, love. Do you understand me?"

"Yes ——, I will," in the voice of the dying.

He had not any theory about mind and matter. It was sheer love and strength wrestling with death and overthrowing.

Then he went to the door. "Now you may come in, Emmie. But if you say one word about my leaving her, I'll turn you out yourself, my dear."

When Dr. Meares arrived, MacDiarmid became temporarily sane. "I must come to her if there's any danger," he said.

"Perhaps — in extremity," said the old doctor, and began to search his memory for precedents, "But no need to think of that yet."

It was such a long, long travail, by night and by day. Adelaide lay seeming to wonder if her torn spirit would ever be released, but was so gentle the doctor himself made use of his handkerchief once or twice. The delay made him rather impatient, of course, still he was not a city doctor with scores of cases, and the whole district took a pride in "that bonnie Mrs. MacDiarmid." MacDiarmid sat in the dining-room with his head bowed and his hands clenched, until the doctor began "livening him up."

"Come, come, MacDiarmid, my friend, this won't do. We doctors see a lot of this sort of thing. All women go through it, and forget all about it soon. Not half so bad as it seems. Not a disease, you know. All in the course of nature. How do you think the world would get populated without?"

MacDiarmid remained stupidly indifferent to this profitable field for speculation, and still with bowed head and the eyes of a dumb animal said to no one, "My little girl, my little girl."

"I think we'll get your wife through," said the doctor. "She is a brave little lady. If we don't, it can't be helped. We can't expect to save the baby."

"I don't care a straw about the baby," answered Dennis, who, until yesterday, had been delighting himself with the thought of Adelaide's child and his. Then he looked up, but it is doubtful if he saw the doctor. "I wish I'd never married her," he said.

"Oh, nonsense, nonsense. Exaggerated sentiment, my dear sir. You're imagining that women feel pain as much as men do. They are not capable of suffering to anything like the same degree."

MacDiarmid regarded him for an instant with mild and childlike curiosity. "How do you find that out?" he asked, but his attention wandered, and the doctor's reply reached him only in incoherent scraps;—"matter of science

—physiological causes—lower nervous organisation—inferior development of the brain," then one coherent sentence, "They get over it so easily."

"Except when it kills them," thought MacDiarmid, but let the doctor drone on unregarded and sat silent, until they heard one low cry that Adelaide could not quite stifle, and then he said in a monotonous tone, "Poor, gentle, loving girl, why must she suffer so for me?" It was no use reasoning with this man, he had such an illogical mind.

Then a man came riding post-haste from Roslyn. "Sorry to disturb Mr. MacDiarmid, but it was most important. Could he possibly attend a meeting of the Farmers' Refrigerating Meat Company?" No, he possibly could not, and he certainly would not. Then would he go to Te Puhi to give his instructions to Mr. Willoughby? He had no instructions. "Go, go," said the doctor, "it will not make the slightest difference to your wife. I won't hear of your seeing her." "It's imperative, Mr. MacDiarmid," said Laing.

MacDiarmid had not risen from his chair to greet his visitor, but now he made an impatient movement.

"Go away, Laing, there's a good chap, and don't bother me," he said. "You would all have to do without me if I were dead. I have no more notion of giving instructions just now than I have of writing an epic poem."

Then he got up and went out of the house, unable to stand the teasing of these mosquito bites any more. But for them, he would have stayed at the door of the torture chamber, to hear his wife's soft moans or catch some word about her from those allowed to enter. There was even in her agony something of Adelaide, sweetly and tenderly young, gently and finely brave.

He sat on the brae by the sliprails and looked first at his home against the Western hills, and then at the creek and the tree ferns. Here, after ten years' exile from her arms, he had gathered his love to himself again. While he sat there in the dusk, it was as if the glamour had fallen on his eyes, and he saw the door of the homestead open and the black coffin of the lady of Haeremai carried out, and a ghostly procession in black following, and at its head the man whom he had buried that day, rigid and stern as death, with his eyes fixed on the ground. "'Another Borlase?' No, by the love that gives and fosters life, the love that made our hearts one in fact and not in word alone, by the life that is strong in me and has no worth without hers." The night fell, and the stars came out, keen in the bitter cold of Alpine skies, and he rose and looked up to them, like a deep-souled Hebrew tossed with the tempests of God, and he cried without a sound to the strength of the mountains, and the dark heaven above, and to whatsoever

power made and shaped them, to give back to him the body and the soul of his wife, safe and released from torment.

The sky grew black and a sudden storm swept across the earth, but he stood heedless of the weather until he heard his name called, "Dennis! Dennis!" and he knew it was Adelaide. It was not the cry that comes from the lips to meet the ear; it was the very life crying straight to the life that it loved.

Then he said within himself, "It is I that must save her. Nothing on earth shall keep my love from me while she is struggling with death. I must go to her."

He went into the house. The doctor was in the middle of a good dinner. MacDiarmid, who had fasted all day, stood a few minutes to eat and drink, then said, "I am going to my little girl now, doctor. I know she wants me."

"Altogether contrary to professional etiquette," said the doctor decisively, while MacDiarmid went to the door. "Mr. MacDiarmid, do you understand?" He raised his voice. "As physician in charge of this case, I refuse permission."

"Sorry," said MacDiarmid, "I shall have to do without it."

Dr. Meares rose in incensed authority. "Then I'll drop the case."

Dennis turned and smiled at him. He had absurdly beautiful eyes for a man. "No, you won't, Dr. Meares," he said, "because you are

a very good fellow, and you don't want my Adelaide to die, and after all the trouble you've had saving her till now. We'll keep it dark between ourselves and—the etiquette of the thing. You take it out of me some other way."

"Blarney," muttered the doctor, but he sat down to finish his dinner. "You don't get over me that way. If I do stay, it will be for her sake and her father's, not yours. And if she dies, I'll have you up for manslaughter." This last idea somehow soothed his feelings, and seemed to afford an honourable compromise.

"All right," answered MacDiarmid in a friendly manner, "I'll give you leave to hang me then."

When Dr. Meares came into the room, Adelaide was lying on her husband's arm, with her head thrown back, and her eyes looking up to him with a question and an appeal and a submission to pain all in that look. After MacDiarmid saw her face, he saw nothing else, was conscious of nothing else but her for hours. She must not die, he could not let her go, she was so young, she loved the earth so much, their life was one; these thoughts and these alone possessed him, and he saw only the image of the chill terror holding out pale hands to draw his darling from him and to leave him desolate.

The doctor, with authority grown to awful and supernatural dimensions, sternly ordered

the obedient Emmeline about, and sternly ignored the refractory MacDiarmid.

In the dark midnight, while the wintry showers fell outside, Emmeline Borlase, by the flickering light of a candle, with one kiss laid in its cradle the tiny, wan, light body of Adelaide's dead babe. No one else gave a moment's thought to it. The two men stood on opposite sides of the bed, watching intently. Suddenly the doctor cried, "She is going fast." But her husband called her, "Adelaide! Adelaide!" and she saw him and came back.

# CHAPTER VIII.

## HOW THE HEAVENS SMOTE MACDIARMID.

"PERHAPS you will stop exciting her now, Mr. MacDiarmid?" inquired the doctor sarcastically sometime later.

MacDiarmid did not even raise his eyes, but as gently as one touches a new-born child, he moved Adelaide's head to where it often lay, "Come, love, to sleep," he said.

"She just gave a little sigh and off she dropped like an infant," the doctor told his wife afterwards. "She seemed pretty well used to sleeping that way. Her husband sat by her four mortal hours and never moved a muscle, and I hope he enjoyed it—nice state of cramp his arm must have been in. I'm glad she has pulled round. She is a nice little lady herself, and I don't altogether dislike MacDiarmid."

When Adelaide woke, they two were alone. She looked up at Dennis and spoke in a strange, thin voice, that seemed newly come back to the world from the borderland of death. "It is dead, dear," she said sadly, and felt she had not done all that was expected of her.

"What does that matter?" he answered. "You are safe. You are here. I have you still."

The heart of the mother went out to her unheeded infant. "Bring it to me, Dennis."

He looked thoughtful. "You would not take it from me forever, and not even let me see it once?" she asked in anguished reproach.

"I did suffer for it, dear."

"You shall see it, my love."

Dennis went into the next bedroom and saw the bare cradle and in it the wee, white, waxen body that should have been his daughter. His soul yearned over her, and he looked at her for a long time, then kneeling down, he touched the tiny hands and face. When he gave her to her mother, she laid her between her blue-veined breasts and kissed her many times. She looked sadly at the bare wicker-cradle. "I had not time," she said; and then, "Put some ferns and little daisies round her, Dennis."

The sun had not yet risen and the earth was heavy with drops of rain. Dennis went into the Bush, and then up the hill, which was dotted all over with pink and white flowerets, and he plucked them in handfuls and thought of the baby Aidie running out and getting her shoes wet, as she gathered the daisies in the spring, until, because he was almost dazed with want of sleep, the image of her and of his dead baby became confused in his mind. When he got back he made a bed of ferns and flowers, and Adelaide kissed the child again, sighed and gave her back. "I have been reasonable,

Dennis, haven't I?" she said. "Now take her from me. Goodbye, baby."

For a week Dennis and Emmeline nursed her night and day before the nurse came. Emmeline had been frequently sent for by the settlers' wives, who knew in their hour of sickness and peril that there was always at hand one tender woman, ready to leave her own affairs and minister to others. As for Dennis, he had nursed his Mother himself on her deathbed, though he was only a boy at the time. Men may do such strange and beautiful things in solitudes where conventionalities are of no importance. For weeks he put everything but Adelaide into the background. He fed her with his own hand; he bathed her face and hot hands; he carried her from her bed to the sofa and back, and always seemed to know what she wanted. There was nothing he would not do for her. It was such soothing and comfort to have him always near her. Adelaide almost thought the loneliness and separation had been morbid fancies, like her former fears of death.

But when Adelaide was out of danger, Dennis began to be more and more interested in the new Wainoni Flat Creamery and the Roslyn Refrigerating Works. To him they were bound up with his love for Adelaide, while to her they were her triumphant rivals. He meant to wean her gradually, and for more than a month he spent many hours with her

carrying her from her bed to the sofa and back again, bringing her food, and talking or reading to her. The only convention he had was that there must be no interference between him and his wife. As he became more and more frequently absent, something like a silent revolt began in Adelaide, but only as an occasional relief to her utter submission to Dennis and to love. It is useless saying she should have spoken to him openly. She could not. There sometimes are, between lovers, subjects that become impossible. They had come to that stage when a third person's intervention would have been invaluable, as, in spite of all our consecrated cant, it often is between man and wife.

Emmeline saw what was going on and longed to be their guardian angel, but was rejected, first by her sister and then by Dennis. Adelaide thought that it was sacrilegious to reveal her trouble, and she grew so cross and impatient with Emmie for seeing it, that they became estranged. Emmeline, who loved to wait upon her, and who would have roused herself to be a tender confidant, now sank back into the apathy that had settled on her after her Father's death. She was so rooted in Haeremai that she was almost incapable of leaving it. There, when the short routine of work was finished, she chose to sit alone, imagining from time to time that she heard him calling her, and only fitfully waking to the blank reality.

One evening she tried to make some impression on Dennis. He was walking home with her to get some harness from Haeremai, when she said bluntly—

"It is not fair to Adelaide to treat her as you have been doing, Dennis."

"What on earth do you mean?"

"You're away half the week, and when you are at home you're wrapped up in yourself."

"Wrapped up in myself?—You mean in my business, I suppose."

"It's the same thing so far as Aidie is concerned."

"You interfere too much, Emmie." Dennis spoke in his heaviest manner. Emmeline got red and slightly tearful, and they walked on in silence to the house. When he came from the harness room, he saw her sitting alone in her black dress, opposite her father's chair, in the patient idleness that was becoming habitual with her. He put his hand on her shoulder. "You mean well, dear old girl," he said. "I know that. But you must leave my Aidie to me." Then after a pause he continued. "You might as well be with her more, and I'll ask St. Aubyn to come now and then. She likes him, and he thinks no end of her." Dennis had mercifully transferred St. Aubyn to Miramar for a month or two.

"Oh, you great stupid!" said Emmeline hopelessly, and gave up the attempt. "She didn't marry me and St. Aubyn."

Dennis went home to his wife. She was lying on a couch by the bedroom fire, where he had laid her in the afternoon. She wore a dressing-gown of pale nemophila blue silk, over the daintiest of cambric nightrobes, and the tiger-skin rug thrown half over her emphasised the more her fair and delicate grace. By day she looked too pale and thin, but at night, when her husband was near, nothing could look sweeter than she. He drew his chair to the side of the couch and, taking both transparent hands on one large brown palm, he began to stroke and fondle them.

"How very pretty you are, Aidie," he said admiringly.

Adelaide blushed with the blush of a bride. "Why, am I really more enchanting to-night than Prime Canterbury, Dennis?" she said, and gave him her lovely, flying smile. "I shall always wear sky-blue silk after this, and get overheated by the fire."

"Too hot?" he asked with his usual practicality, and got up to take off a log from the grate, then stood with his broad back to the fire, looking down on her, handsomest always when he was tenderest. "I am afraid you are rather lonely, dearie."

"Yes ——, I am." Her eyes were closed now, and she spoke painfully.

"I'll ask St. Aubyn to come over and stay with you in the evening sometimes."

She looked up then, and for a moment there

was something in her expression that he did not understand. "Oh, Mr. St. Aubyn. Thank you, Dennis. He is a nice boy, but I am not quite strong enough to entertain strangers yet."

Dennis meditated. "Well, you write down a list of all the new books you would like, and I'll see what I can get you in Dunedin next week?"

"Thank you, dear, but I am in no hurry for more. Are you going to Dunedin next week?"

"Yes, I must."

The colour left her face. "It is beginning all over again," she thought, but tried to speak lightly, "I cannot keep you from the Frozen Meat Trade, can I? Not even if I wear blue silk?"

"Aidie, that is a little foolish, darling." He was trying to curb his impatience. "It was more for your sake than for anything else that I went into this business at all. I am doing you more good by working than by wasting time and idling about at home. I'm sorry we can't be more together, but it can't be helped. Now don't let us have any more words about this. My business is not in the least interesting to you, and I'ud rather you didn't pretend it is. Time you went to bed, love. Come, let me carry you."

He laid her in her bed, helped her remove her wrapper, and then took off her blue satin slippers and kissed her white feet, as he often did.

"Now go to sleep," he said cheerfully, and went off to Te Puhi.

Adelaide lay watching the light of the flames leap up, and then die down on the bedroom wall, and listening to the clock tick and then strike one hour after another in the silent house. "This is the beginning," she thought. "The more strength I get the more and more he will leave me, and all will be just as it was before my travail. Why did he drag me back to life for this?" She looked back with longing on the weeks of pain and danger, when Dennis had scarcely left her night or day, and almost wished she could remain weak and dying, if that was all that would keep him. "Mother never had this to bear," she thought. "Father was at home every night, and all the hours and all the days when he was not at work on the farm. O Mother, my Mother, you were happier to die than to be left alone! I could count every hour he spends with me and is not thinking of other things. I wonder if women ought to be forsaken and try to make their homes and themselves sweet and pretty for men who don't half notice them and often do not come at all. To try to put me off with that foolish boy, who thinks he is in love with me, because there is no other woman near that he can talk to! 'Wasting time!' 'Idling about!' O Dennis!" A hot shame ran through every vein, and she lay helpless with humiliation. All those dear sacred hours of

companionship, the times they sat in silence and dreamed lovely dreams together, or read and talked or went about the hills and bush together in the glow and delight of love—the best part of her life—that was how he thought of them. Not even though she was given back to him from the grave could she keep her hold on him. To be despised, to be of no worth—and all the while to be adored—when he had a few odd moments to spare for adoration. "Oh that a man could be so loving and yet so cruel!" Nine o'clock. Adelaide tossed her fair head restlessly from side to side, and then thought she heard his step upon the gravel path. "How could I blame him? O Dennis, love!" she called softly through the dark, and sat up and held out her arms. "It's nothing. Only my sick fancy." She lay back desolately and the hours went on. "I gave you all my time, my life, myself. O Dennis, can't you understand? It's you, you, you, I want. I have a right ——." She wept. "I know you love me. I am not disloyal, but how can I live like this? Oh!" She grew wilder. "For pity, Dennis, don't love me so much if you must leave me to myself. The District—the District—the Company—the money that is to make me happy when all these hours and days and nights have gone on into years, perhaps when I am old, perhaps when it is all too late. Twelve o'clock. He will not come to-night. How many of these nights must I go through?

My husband, my husband, my love, my life." Adelaide tried to pray, but she fainted off instead. She was still very weak and sometimes got light-headed.

Dennis stayed all night at Te Puhi, merely as a matter of convenience, not necessity, and next day rode with Willoughby to the Wainoni Flat School, where they held a meeting of the settlers to talk over the projected Creamery. After the meeting MacDiarmid took a friendly leave and swung himself easily into the saddle, his manner showing plainly the self-confidence and kindliness of a successful and popular man. Some half dozen of the settlers still hung about the schoolroom porch, loth, as back country people usually are, to break up any sort of gathering. As he rode away with the seat of a bushman whose horse has become almost part of himself, they watched him with enthusiasm, soon dashed by more critical sentiments. "There's a fine figure of a man, if you like," remarked Saunders, the horse breeder. "Ay, he's that, and a lot more than that," chimed in Grant, who liked him well. "If we had a few more men like MacDiarmid now, it would be the making of the province." "The making of New Zealand," said Saunders in a tone of conviction, determined not to be outdone. "MacDiarmid's right enough," said Willoughby shortly. "I can't see where anything remarkable comes in. I used to go to school with him once, and a fine scamp he was.

and got the strap every day that he wasn't playing truant." Willoughby was one of those cantankerous people who think they effectually dispose of any man's claims to distinction by asserting that they knew him when he was young. He did not dislike his neighbour, but he objected to the chorus of praise. "MacDiarmid is in too much of a hurry to make money," he continued in a disparaging tone. "And he leaves that poor little wife of his too much alone. He won't have her long, if he doesn't look out. I never saw a girl go off as she has done." Then amongst them they pulled his character and Adelaide's to pieces, until it grew so dark that they were obliged to disperse.

MacDiarmid galloped over the plain and thought at first of settlers and cows and factories, and then, as he got nearer home, he thought of his Adelaide. There was a reason for his wanting money in a hurry. St. Aubyn, after a few months of going back to the land, had decided that the charms of the Simple Life had been over-rated, and that he would rather try something a little more complex in the Army or Navy. So he was returning to England in a few more months, and this seemed to Dennis such a good chance for Adelaide to go with someone who would look after her. St. Aubyn's admiration for his wife was a thing he simply laughed over, just as he did over wee Elsie Grant's tricks of trotting to

the gate and following him about whenever he came to her father's house. Adelaide needed a change after all she had gone through. Poor little darling, what a delicate flower of a girl she was. "I think I'll just about manage it," he said to himself, as he entered the house. "But it's no use saying anything to her yet. I wonder what is the matter with her lately. She hasn't been quite herself."

Then the heavens themselves came to the rescue of these perplexed lovers who were so hopelessly at cross purposes. It was very literally the heavens, because it was all a question of the weather. When Adelaide was getting about the house again, there came a terrible spring, or rather, the hardest winter known for twenty years shifted itself into months that should have been spring. A great tempest swept the hills and the valleys, and the snows came down from the mountains and turned green life into one white universal death. Then when the snows had wrought their will, the tyrannous blasts and wild rains of the South West followed hard upon their tracks and bored through the white mass, then muddying it with soil from the hills, whirled it in dissolving fragments down all the water courses and the hollows. All across the wide shingly stretch of river-bed, fresh streams forced a way for themselves, and then swelled and swelled until they joined in one wide sheet from bank to bank. Still swelling with the snow as it melted and the

rains as they fell, the flood rolled over the lower bank and spread for miles across Wainoni Flat. All the strength of man was mocked and the toil of his hands was laid low. The Alpine elements and the floods laughed him and his contrivings to scorn. All these things followed an August of warm sunshine, and now it was the season when the ewes drop their lambs on the hills, and the corn sprouts in the paddocks.

MacDiarmid was always about the farm in those days, but he was no longer Adelaide's kind, beautiful Dennis. He was a silent labouring man, who rose in the twilight of tempestuous dawns, and said to her, not gently enough, "Go to sleep again, I won't have you get up," and went forth his ways across the plain of water, and in amongst the snowdrifts in the gorges and crevices of the mountains, where, hour after hour, from dawn to dark, the storm blasts fell upon him and battered against his strength. He waded up to his thighs through the flood, where the bitter waters ran as cold as ice, and he sank often knee deep in snow. He swam his noble mare across to a shingly island, that had once been part of the river-bed, and would soon be engulfed in the swirling waves. There the sheep and young lambs had gathered, idiotically, piteously waiting until the flood should swell and whelm them, and bleating meanwhile up to the dark, relentless skies and the sweeping sleet and rain.

All these deeds seemed heroic to the Delight of Drawing-rooms, and she trembled at the sight of man the Barbarian at war with barbarous Nature. Oh, she was good and gracious to him in these rough days, and sweetly patient, as gentle wives and daughters often are in the backblocks to the strong men who fight the elements in the wilderness. For his sake she struggled back into a sort of desperate strength. She did such services for him as Adelaide had never dreamed of doing for herself, she who, until her marriage, had never soiled her hands with work. While he still slept, she rose on dark mornings to light the fires and get his breakfast, and then lay down by him and woke him up, pretending that these preparations had been made by Lena. When he found out her secret, he said angrily, "You're obstinate, Aidie. Don't think you're doing me any good by making yourself ill. I can't nurse you now. Well, if you will do it, don't let us have any more pretence about it."

Lena now took it into her head to get influenza, and Adelaide, determined that Dennis should miss no comfort, wore herself out, and crept to bed at night, feeling bruised in body, neuralgic, and too tired for anything but broken sleep. And for all this he gave her neither thanks nor praise. Dennis came in, wet, weary and heavy in soul, and sat in his arm-chair, not even reading. Sometimes he watched her, and sighed heavily with a torn heart. But

he had hardly a word for her, and at eight o'clock he went to bed. Adelaide stayed up later to mend and sew. Many a night she lay down by him, unkissed and uncaressed, and cried herself to sleep, and in her sleep she sobbed from weariness.

# CHAPTER IX.

## HOW DENNIS CAME BACK TO ADELAIDE, AND OF THE JOY THEY HAD, AND HOW TRUE LOVE IS LIKENED TO SPRING.

THE tempest stopped, and the weather began to break, but in a sullen and grudging mood. Grey showers still descended fitfully from dull skies, as if the storm demon were not yet quite satisfied. Orchard and garden and the wide circle of paddocks and hills were mud and slush, and on the Flat and in the higher levels of the river bed were stranded branches and rotten logs, and the carcases of drowned sheep and cattle, tangled in grass and weeds.

Adelaide sat in her dining-room and waited for her husband, in a mood that she herself scarcely understood. She was physically exhausted, and her face was pale with suppressed suffering. She would die without complaining of the dull prose of her life, but her eyes seemed to wonder over it, and to ask for something unattainable. Adelaide did so keenly love bright, lovely things, and she had been so much a part of them all—fine fabrics and rooms of state, food served delicately in services of silver, all the romance of wealth and

high station, swift glad motion and musical sounds, and the light comedy of life. But she was a woman and a Celt, and she thrilled with the heroic joy and pride of sacrifice. With unbroken courage she could have borne the aching of delicate limbs, the quivering of sensitive nerves, and the heat and weariness of tired feet, that had always before been accustomed to rest at leisure. But even a martyr expects heaven, and so did Adelaide expect her heaven of love. It was nothing to fling everything away for Dennis, to cook and mend and even to clean for him, if only he would throw incense on her sacrifice and let it rise in perfume.

But when Dennis saw her exhausted, he was angry, and though his wrath was against fate, it struck back on his wife, and in his wrath his hand was heavy. Yet even these days when she served him were less intolerable than the meaningless blankness of his absence had been. What tried her now most of all was his silence. It was a dead wall of obstruction, against which even her love and tender pity were cast in vain.

"Some change must come and must come soon," she thought. "Our life must not be spoiled like this. God help us both." She sat and mended his socks and shirts, until she heard him in the porch at the back. At first a nervous inability to rise chained her down. When he opened the dining-room door, she would have

gone to him, but as he only looked at her without kiss or greeting, she changed her loving impulse into a movement to light the lamp. There was no service that he might not have freely, but if he wanted kisses he must woo her. Dennis had taken off his top boots and oil-skins, but he had neither changed nor washed, and now he threw himself into his armchair and sat motionless. Adelaide looked at him and thought that there was something pathetic about his eyes, like those of a sheep-dog in pain, and the tears came to her own. "Oh why doesn't an angel come and help us?" she thought, but felt herself powerless.

"Are you cold, dear?" she asked, and kneeling on the hearthrug, put on some wood and blew up the fire.

"Yes—no—not particularly. I don't know. Aidie, why can't Lena see to the fire for you?"

"Lena's influenza is worse, Dennis, and she wants to be nursed herself. Emmie has been here till an hour ago."

"Oh, —— Lena! What the —— did she get ill for just now!" Adelaide rose to leave the room.

"What are you going away for?"

"I cannot stop you from swearing, Dennis, but I need not stay to listen," Adelaide answered, with her half-proud, half-plaintive air.

He made a weary movement with one arm and let his head fall on his hand. "Aidie, I'm tired."

"Yes, so am I," she thought, but only looked at him with restrained tears, hopelessly, not resentfully. Instead of going away, she took a chair near, too proud to court him, but too loving not to comfort. "Is anything wrong, Dennis?"

"Yes, pretty nearly everything."

"Won't you tell me, dear?"

"It's all this cursed weather."

"I wish you were not forced to go out into it. It's dreadful. You must get so cold and tired. And going through the water and the snow!"

"I don't care a rap about getting wet, you silly child. It's not that. And it's not the work either. But oh ——, the weather! It's pretty well broke me for the time. And just when I wanted every penny to get these works well started. I've lost half the lambs and some of the best cattle, not to speak of all the corn being washed away. I've been round to-day reckoning up all that I've lost, and it's enough to take the heart out of any man. If there was anything I'd done wrong or neglected doing, I could curse myself for a fool and start again. But I've done all that a mortal man could do, and worked till I could drop to get the beasts off the flat and the hills. After a year's hard work, this storm comes without rhyme or reason and snatches everything out of my hand."

"I'm very sorry, Dennis, love. I wish that I could help you."

"I don't care about myself, but it drives me wild to see you work as you do, and look thin and white and always tired, when you're only twenty-one, and you never did a stroke of work until you were my wife. Oh—the whole thing! Come here, Aidie. There, look at your pretty white hands. You've cut one of your fingers, and you've scalded your wrist."

Adelaide drew her hands away.

"It is nothing, Dennis. I am careless, and I get hurried and nervous."

"You've no right to be doing rough work and hurrying to get it done. If I were alone, I wouldn't mind living under canvas, and sleeping on a bracken bed."

"And I would live so and sleep with you, Dennis," Adelaide said, but in a shy and somewhat sad manner.

"Oh, you! The first rain would kill you," he answered literally. "You would go into anything because you don't know what it is. You didn't know what you were doing when you married me."

Adelaide was desperately hurt, and her heart throbbed with the undeserved wound.

"What a year you've had of it! You ought to have married Brandon," Dennis went on moodily.

She answered with the best look of "race," a fine high pride in herself, blent with the devoted and heroic loyalty of the Celt, "You dishonour me by saying such things, Dennis."

Then she went into the kitchen where Lena was sitting muffled up. "Lena, couldn't you just serve the dinner?" she said. "I will do everything afterwards." Lena, with an inward record of the inhuman heartlessness of mistresses, went like a martyr to the range.

Dennis came to table, somewhat carelessly clad, and still moody, but subdued.

"I'm sorry I've been rough, dearie," he said.

"It does not matter. You must have been dreadfully worried." But Adelaide's expression was still a little proud and distant.

"I don't know how I'll meet all the Company's claims," Dennis went on. "There's a lot to pay out next month, and it nearly all falls on me."

Adelaide had picked up a few vague notions of business.

"Couldn't you get Mr. Willoughby and the Grants to pay back what you lent them?"

"No, Aidie, I *can't* come down on them now. I spoke to Willoughby this afternoon, and he's pretty well stone-broke, a lot worse than I am. Grant is only a poor settler, who does any odd jobs of fencing or shearing on the runs about here. That land he is on never was his own. It all belongs to the Bank, and their agent is as hard as nails. There will be a bad time now all over the Valley, and it falls so hard on the poor womenfolk and the children. I rode over to Grant's to-day. He was away up on the hills fencing Willoughby's land with

only a tent to shelter him when the storm came on, and he very nearly lost his life. I couldn't get away from Mrs. Grant. Poor woman, she used to look after the cows herself and pretty well kept the home up, and now she has lost one of her best beasts." Dennis looked steadily at his plate for some time and then glanced up. "The fact is, Aidie," he said shamefacedly, "I gave her some more money."

"My Dennis," Adelaide said softly, and did not look remote.

"Oh, it wasn't a bit generous. I hadn't it to give. It was only making free with other people's money. I'll have to come on you, my little girl, to pay off my debts."

"O Dennis, it is all yours," she answered with a beautiful expression. Yet she stifled some inward pangs. Her pretty dresses were nearly all worn out and this cut off all prospect of getting more. They had finished dinner now, and Adelaide left the room on some pretext, but in reality, as he well knew, to work in the kitchen. She was almost ashamed of feeling glad of these confidences, but Adelaide is not the first wife who has welcomed misfortune because it has made her husband turn to her. "Perhaps we will begin now to understand each other," she thought with an anxious hope.

Then the thrice-accursed Frozen Meat again stepped in to part them. When she returned to the dining-room Dennis had gone to his

office. "If it isn't clear to-night," Adelaide cried desperately to herself, "it never will be. I haven't the strength to go on any longer." And she did what she had not done for months—went to him. It had become an understood thing that he was not to be disturbed. Dennis was sitting at the desk that had been her Father's, deep in papers, and he looked up mechanically.

"What do you want, Aidie?"

"You," she thought, but answered with something tremulous in her voice. "I may as well stay here and look after your fire. I will not disturb you, Dennis," and sitting down she tried to go on mending. Dennis made no reply, but went on writing and reading. Half an hour later he said, without raising his eyes, "I am going in to Roslyn first thing to-morrow morning. I don't expect I shall be back for a fortnight this time."

Every hope seemed snatched away. "Will nothing ever bring us together?" Adelaide cried inwardly, and all her gentleness failed, and her breeding with it.

"Dennis, Dennis," she cried out. "You must not go. You shall not go away and leave me. I cannot bear it any more."

"Adelaide," he said rather wearily, "I can't make you out to-night. You seem to be in a dozen different moods. I suppose you're upset and worn out. Go to bed, there's a dear girl, do. I can't work with you in the room."

Her pride came to the rescue enough to make her resume some appearance of calm.

"Very well, Dennis. Good-night."

His eyes followed her as she left the room, then he turned back to his papers; but nothing seemed to go well that night. Adelaide's cry had reached him and disturbed him vaguely. "I've brought all this misery on her," he thought, "when I would have done anything on earth to make her happy. I must be tired. I can't give my mind to business." He was scarcely conscious of any separation between them, but felt that there was a general cursedness about fate just then.

Adelaide had made such a desperate attempt to break down the barrier, and all was useless. "I haven't any power to move him in the least," she thought. "This is the beginning of the end of all happiness for us both." Without noticing or caring how time went, she sat in the dark in her bedroom. An hour or so later, Dennis came and opened the door quietly, so as not to waken her.

"Aidie! I told you to go to bed. Why didn't you?"

Then something very beautiful descended into Adelaide's soul, not exactly a mediæval angel with bird's wings, but a divine messenger of the God who is Wisdom and Love and Power. She came to her husband and put up her arms to him.

"Because there is something I must say to you to-night, Dennis."

He stood still, greatly moved and not quite knowing why. Her cry had reached him and disturbed him vaguely.

"Tell me, darling."

"Dennis, I've loved you more than anything on earth, more than anything that God could give me after death. I've lived for you, thought for you, worked for you, given up all I once cared about for you. I bore the pains of death for you, and I will gladly again. What have you given me back?"

"Not much, poor child, but all I had to give."

"You have refused me, you keep on refusing me, all that I really want."

"What have I that you could want, Aidie?"

"Yourself, your dear self, Dennis," she cried with a soft cry.

He thought in silence. "I know my business has come between us, love, and I'm not much with you, but I work for you."

"For me? To buy me things? Which do I love the most, you or what money can get me? And while you are wrapped up in your work, do you ever think how I live without you?" She leaned against him and he bent down over her. "O Dennis, Dennis—think of what it has meant to me, to be forsaken so soon. Think of all my lonely days, my lonely nights. I made your home ready for you, and

you did not come to it. I cried in the dark and no one cared. I fainted alone and no one even knew. I was in fear of death and there was no one near to comfort me. Yet you had made me yours so utterly that I was no longer my own ——." Adelaide paused, but Dennis only tightened his clasp. It was some time before he spoke, and then it was in a low voice and with uncertainty. "Aidie, my own love, I never understood. What else could I do? There was so much to see to."

"I never grudged the farm work," she went on; "*that* you had to do, and I had my share of duties too. But not to have any days, not even an hour together! Do you know what is my happiest memory of these last six months? The day when I was dying and you would not stir from me. Must I be nearly dead before you'll spare the time to love me, Dennis? The District? Yes, it's right that you should care about that. But haven't I a nearer claim? Haven't I any claim at all—not to a share in the profits—but to a share in my husband—in you, you, yourself, your thoughts, your time, your interests, all that I gave you up of mine?"

"You had, you have, love." He spoke with deep conviction. "The nearest, dearest claim of all. Don't go on, Aidie. I've made a big mistake. I've wounded the dear wife I love more than myself. But this is an end of it for ever. You forgive me, my sweetheart, I know."

"There is no such thing as forgiveness from me to you. There's only love, but you can make it glad or sad, Dennis."

"You always were the sweetest little dear in all the world. Poor little love. Poor little wife. Come to the sitting-room. There's a light there still, and I want to see you." He went in and sat down by her on the couch. "I thought so. You've been crying yourself ill. How white you are! And I came home and scolded you, like the great rough boor I am."

"You mustn't abuse my husband, Dennis. You are the kindest man there ever was, but you are not quite so wise nor I so childish as you think."

Dennis mused awhile, then unexpectedly smiled and remarked.

"I feel like keeping out of Emmie's way for a bit. I wish she didn't always manage to be right. You understand, Aidie, that I can't drop this business altogether, there are other people in with me. But I don't need to run the whole district myself, and that's what I've been doing. I swear I'll find a way to give myself to you. You could come with me when I go to the township or to Dunedin, and I'll never shut myself away from you again. Aidie, I want to tell you why I have been worrying so much. I'd set my heart on sending you to Europe when St. Aubyn goes, to make you strong again and give you a few months' pleasure. It's dull for you here."

"O Dennis, you dear, adorable, delightful, stupid Dennis!" Adelaide slipped down from the couch and knelt on the floor by him, clasping his knee in an abandon that had something passionate and primitive, and yet was civilised and restrained by grace and prettiness. "Do you think I would go away to Europe and leave my lover working here?"

"I might make you go, my Aidie."

"There are some things not even you can do, my Dennis, dear." He held her face in both his hands, and looked down with the laughter in his brown eyes once more.

"I wonder."

"I do not. I know."

"Well, I believe you are pretty obstinate sometimes."

Adelaide answered softly, "So Dad told me when I would have you instead of Horace Brandon."

Dennis laughed outright then, and lifted her to his knees.

"There, I'll own you have got the better of me now. So you're really willing to stay in the Bush alone with me?"

"Oh, yes. But the question seems to be whether *you* are willing to stay in the Bush with *me*."

"I never thought of it that way," Dennis answered with simplicity.

"Think of it now," Adelaide suggested, and then repeated prettily, very prettily:—

"Yet 'sang' she Brignall banks are fair,
And Greta woods are green,
I'd rather rove with Edmund there
Than reign our English queen."

"You really would, you blessed child? Aidie, I think we'll 'rove' up the Pass the first fine day and look at the Alps again, and see if the mountain lilies are out yet. Why, Aidie, its worth losing a thousand pounds to see you look so bonnie. I won't let you tire yourself this time. I'll carry you down without asking your leave, and I won't be cast off at the creek."

Adelaide was lying back against his arm, and her lips trembled with a smile. For a few minutes neither spoke, then she unclasped her husband's arm and moving to the piano said, "Now, you may ask me to sing, Dennis. I want to."

"Do, darling. I don't believe I've heard you sing for months."

Adelaide turned over the music meditatively and then began :—

"What's this dull town to me?—(London, Dennis.)
Robin's not near,
What was't I wished to see,
What wished to hear?
Where's all the joy and mirth
Made this town heaven on earth,
Oh, they're all fled with thee,
Robin Adair.

"Though now thou'rt cold to me ——"

Dennis took both her hands off the keyboard. "That's not so anyway. Come, Aidie."

* * * * *

So Dennis MacDiarmid threw away all his golden chances once again. He sold out most of his shares in the Farmers' Refrigerating Company to Major Brandon, and resigned his seat on the Board of Directors. When Willoughby heard this, he got into a passion, and called his neighbour a fool, and more than one canny Roslynite agreed with him. Lena was, for a Colonial maid, unusually respectful in the presence of her master and mistress, and as she condescendingly observed to Kate, "You couldn't help liking them somehow." But Adelaide would have been surprised at the humour expended over her and her husband in the M'Ilvrides' hospitable kitchen, on the evenings when Johnny Saunders and the maid from Te Rama Rama looked in and narrated how Mr. and Mrs. MacDiarmid read "poetry books" and "history books" together, with a map of Europe and pictures in front of them; how they had picnics "all alone by themselves" in wooded gullies and up the mountains; how they went walks together, "as if they were sweethearts and not a married couple"; how they came home with their hands full of flowers and ferns; how Mrs. MacDiarmid could make Mr. MacDiarmid do anything "whatever," and how he could always make her. Which things are somehow or other humorous to the genuine unsophisticated rustic.

But MacDiarmid went his own way, and heeded not Willoughby nor Lena, nor Johnny

Saunders nor the M'Ilvrides, nor all of the Roslyn township. Adelaide began all her tyrannies again, and Dennis laughed under them. He was not afraid of himself; he could be as immoveable as a rock when he chose. The belated spring came in a swift rush up the valley. The high Alps, and the great mountains, and the little hills at their feet, rejoiced in sunlight and showers; and the Bush and all its streams were glad and made merry together.

The immortal childhood of Nature came back into the spirits of the two who were children and lovers together for life. They went again into the upper valley of the Wainoni and explored the hills around. There they found many hidden vales and many untrodden summits, many mountain pools and lakelets floating in blue mists. Together they watched the light of sunsets, and of sunshine in the rolling clouds and rains, and the vapourous masses up passes and heights; and Dennis saw what he thought lovelier still, the light and colour come back into her face, and the joy of life into her eyes. At night he listened while she told him

> "Of the place, that she had seen,
> And the glories that lay in the world unseen."

He would have sworn that he enjoyed her tale better than he could have done the actual sight—only that "he never swore again,"—at

least not in her hearing. The Tohunga came down from the mountains, whenever he thought they were in the valley, and he followed Adelaide about and brought her strange offerings of crystals and quartz from the mines, and greenstone and Bush flowers. Dennis remarked, "You are much more of a witch than he is a wizard, though you look such an innocent little girl, my darling." Even Tane was overcome by her arts, and became her fawning slave, and the very owl winked at the caresses she took and gave in the shade of the palm lily; and he said no more about it to the Bush. The Rangatira and its sisters they were content to see at a distance. Adelaide made Dennis climb some peaks alone, but he came back declaring he was getting domestic or double-souled or something, and didn't so much enjoy exploring without her. Only once from the shoulder of a ridge they saw the Wainoni glacier far away at sunrise. Adelaide thought of their ascent from the crevasse in the pale dawn. At that minute something stirred and throbbed within her, and the life-blood ran fuller. When the night came, she told him a little tremulously that she must wait at home now for many months, and she asked him if he could be patient with her. At first he made no answer in words, but simply kissed her hands and her face and her feet, then he said that this time he would go to the Silver-eye for an example, and the rest of the flock might fly as

they pleased; he would stay by his mate while she wanted him.

The Farmers' Freezing Company and the Wainoni Flat Creamery both throve. On the afternoon when the dividends were declared, Dennis drove home with Adelaide from Roslyn. He was not quite happy, and she saw it, but said nothing until she was sitting by him at night in the firelight.

"You don't regret giving up money and getting happiness, Dennis?"

"No, it's not quite regret. But, O Aidie, I did so want to give my darling the best that's in the world."

"The best thing in the world, Dennis? Why, haven't I got that now?"

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