

Current Literature

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VOL. XVIII., No. 5 "I have gathered me a posie of other men's flowers, and nothing but the thread that binds them is mine own."—Montaigne. NOV., 1895

Americans as Builders of Ships

Forty years ago, when vessels were built of wood, the American clipper ship was the admiration of the world, and our merchant navy was at that time the largest in existence. We were then builders of ships and owners of them. To-day we take rank among other nations as the seventh nation in point of importance. Our shipbuilding industry has completely disappeared, and those coast towns that used to be witnesses to prosperity, and the launching of noble vessels to carry our flag, are as dead as the streets of Pompeii, while their wharves are rotting for want of use. That we have not lost our cunning is perhaps evidenced in the results which have been obtained under the forced stimulus of a subvention granted to the American line. That line has built two vessels to compete with the products of the Clyde, and they have both of them attained high speed, which is now considered the most desirable feature of an ocean-going steamer. Our navy, also home-made, has been a credit to our country, while in the "finesse" of the art of boatbuilding we can point to the yachts and torpedo boats, built at enormous expense by the Herreshoffs, to show that American hands have not wholly lost their cunning. To attain again the glory which follows the American flag of old upon the seas, we must do more than show skill in the making of good models; for here, whether we wish it or not, we are obliged to enter into competition with the rest of the world. The only available material with which to make modern boats is iron, and iron has been of such price, through protection to our mines, that it has been utterly impossible to push the shipbuilding industry against other nations. Recent changes, however, have rendered it possible to think of reviving this ancient and honored trade, but curiously enough, the intimation does not come from the seaboard, but from the inland lakes. In a paper which was recently read before the International Deep Waterways Convention, held at Cleveland, Ohio, Professor George Turrell stated that the shipbuilders of the lakes are ready to enter into competition with coast towns in the building of iron vessels, provided a ship canal is built by which access to the ocean can be had. The material with which to build such vessels is gradually growing cheaper with us, while in England the tendency of it is to increase in price. Professor Turrell was even of opinion that in the development of a new merchant marine the lake cities could take the place, in the revival of our shipbuilding industry, which the New England towns held in the history of the old marine. The threatened rivalry between the coast and the inland cannot take place too soon.

Foods of the Future

This is the age of condensation, the age of Liebig extract in all worlds of effort and experience. Condense time, space, labor and energy, is the cry of the hour. The libraries of to-day fill their shelves with single volumes that contain

the pith, the vitality of hundreds of books, the quintessence of the thought of thousands of thinkers epitomized into a few paragraphs. We are reducing great fields of roses of fact to drops of intellectual attar. The great army of creeds and religious tenets and formulas is slowly simplifying into a few simple basic moral principles upon which all that is highest and truest in religion must rest. The same process that concentrates our mental and moral food is reducing twenty-course dinners to troches that can be carried in the vest pocket, and provisions for armies on the march to a few sticks of nutriment that can be packed in a match-case. Synthetic chemistry is the Nineteenth Century wizard that is working these miracles of condensation. In all the revelations of science, from the research of its thousands of specialists, do we see more and more the divine wisdom of nature as the master teacher of epitome. Relentlessly, day by day, is science by its unveiling crowding the infinity of the world's wonders of phenomena back into an ultimate atom from which all has come. And nature puts into that atom the potentiality of all the billions of manifestations that atom has assumed in the unending revelation of its possibilities. Just a striking instance, a station, not a destination, in the rapid progress of science, is the prophecy of Dr. George Plumb, of the University of Chicago. He proclaims a time coming soon when hot water and food tablets will contain all the necessities and superfluities of a well regulated kitchen. The electric range, with the aluminum accompaniments, will be a thing of the past. The refrigerator for a large hotel will be amply provided for in a cracker jar. He says the essential food elements of a 1,200 pound steer can be put in an ordinary pill box. One of his tablets, the size of a pea, makes a large bowl of good, real soup. A ration case of his planning, which weighed only eight ounces, contained this repertoire: Three tablets concentrated soups, equal to three quarts; four tablets of beef, equal to six pounds; one tablet milk, equal to one pint; two tablets wheaten grits, equal to two pounds; one tablet egg food, equal to twelve eggs.

The Kaffir Circus

European investment in the gold fields of South Africa amounts to 1,100 millions of dollars, while the par value of the stock is less than one-quarter of this amount, or only 250 millions of dollars. Out of this amount only 32½ millions belong to dividend-paying mines. The market valuation of this 32½ millions is \$192,822,000, or six times the par value of the stock. As these paying mines have averaged a profit of 23 per cent., they represent a fair investment at the inflated price. So much cannot be said of the non-paying mining companies, over most of which European investors have recently lost their heads. The par value of the shares of the non-dividend paying mines of the Transvaal is 138½ millions, but the market value of them over 566 millions

AT THE WATTER'S MOU': BETWEEN DUTY AND LOVE

BY BRAM STOKER

A selected reading from *The Watter's Mou'*. By Bram Stoker. D. Appleton & Co. William Barrow, a young sailor, was chief boatman in the Scotch Preventive Service, on the lookout for smugglers. On the night of this reading, special danger is feared, and he has been ordered, by telegraph, to be even more watchful than usual. His pride, and his desire to establish a record, make him determined to make an arrest, if possible. Maggie MacWhirter, his sweetheart, is the daughter of an honest old fisherman, who has been secretly betrayed into engaging in smuggling. It is, for William, a struggle between duty and love.

As soon as Sailor Willy was seen to enter, a large part of the wedding gathering looked relieved, and at once began to chat and gabble in marked contrast to their previous gloom and silence. Port Erroll was well represented by its womankind, and by such of its men as were not away at the fishing; for it was the intention to mask the smuggling scheme by an assemblage at which all the respectability would be present. There appeared to be little rivalry between the two shoemakers, MacPherson and Beagrie, who chattered together in a corner. Lang John and Lang Jim, the policemen of the place, looked sprucer even than usual, and their buttons shone in the light of the many paraffine lamps as if they had been newly burnished. Mitchell and his companions of the salmon fishery were grouped in another corner.

But these and nearly all the other Port Erroll folk present were quiet, and their talk was of local interest; the main clack of tongues came from the many strange men who stood in groups near the centre of the room and talked and laughed loudly. In the midst of them was the bridegroom, more joyous than any, though in the midst of his laughter he kept constantly turning to look at the door. Sailor Willy was greeted joyously, and the giver of the feast and the bridegroom each rose, and, taking a bottle and a glass, offered him a drink.

"To the bride," said he; but seeing that no one else was drinking, he tapped the bridegroom on the shoulder. "Come, drink this with me, my lad!" he added. The latter paused an instant, and then helped himself from MacDonald's bottle. Willy did not fail to notice the act, and, holding out his glass, said:

"Old style, my lad, you drink with me! Change glasses in come time!" An odd pallor passed quickly across the bridegroom's face, but MacDonald spoke quickly:

"Tak it, mon, tak it!" So he took the glass, crying, "No heel-taps!" threw back his head and raised the glass. Willy threw back his head, too, and tossed off his liquor; but, as he did so, took care to keep a sharp eye on the other, and saw him, instead of swallowing his liquor, pour it into his thick beard. His mind was quite made up now. They meant to keep him out of the way by fair means or foul.

Sailor Willy in a few minutes moved toward the door, and just as the parson opened his book began to pass out. Tammas Mac immediately spoke to him:

"Ye're no gangin', Sailor Willy? Surely ye'll wait and see Tam Keith marrit on my lass?"

He instantly replied: "I must go for awhile. I have some things to do, and then I want to try and bring Maggie down for the dance;" and before anything could be said he was gone.

The instant he left the door he slipped round to the back of the barn, and, running across the sandhills to the left, crossed the wooden bridge, and, hurrying up the roadway by the cliff cottage, gained the watchhouse.

Without a moment's delay he arranged his signals for the call for aid; and, as the rockets whizzed aloft, sending a white glare far into the sky, he felt that the struggle had entered on its second stage.

The night had now set in with a darkness unusual for August. The swaths of sea-mist, whirled in by the wind, came fewer and fainter, and at times a sudden rift through the driving clouds showed that there was starlight somewhere between the driving masses of mist and gloom. Willy Barrow once more tried all his weapons, and saw that all his signals were in order. Then he strapped the revolver and the cutlass in his belt, and lit a dark lantern, so that it might be ready in case of need. This done, he left the watchhouse, locking the door behind him, and, after looking steadily across the bay to the Scaurs beyond, turned and walked northward toward the Watter's Mou'. Between the cliff on the edge of this and the watchhouse there was a crane used for raising the granite boulders quarried below, and, when he drew near this, he stopped instinctively and called out: "Who is there?" for he felt, rather than saw, some presence.

"It is only me, Willy," came a soft voice, and a woman drew a step nearer through the darkness from behind the shaft of the crane.

"Maggie! Why, darling, what brings you here? I thought you were going to the wedding?"

"I knew ye wadna be there, and I wanted tae speak wi' ye." This was said in a very low voice.

"How did you know I wouldn't be there? I was to join you if I could?"

"I saw Bella Cruickshank hand ye the telegram as ye went by the post office, and—and I knew there would be something tae keep ye. O Willy, Willy! why do ye draw awa frae me?" for Sailor Willy had instinctively loosened his arms, which were round her, and had drawn back—in the instant his love and his business seemed as though antagonistic. He answered, with blunt truthfulness:

"I was thinking, Maggie, that I had no cause to be making love here and now; I've got work, mayhap, to-night!"

"I feared so, Willy—I feared so!" Willy was touched, for it seemed to him that she was anxious for him, and answered tenderly:

"All right, dear! All right! There's no danger. Why, if need be, I am armed," and he slipped his hand on the butt of the revolver in his belt. To his surprise Maggie uttered a deep, low groan, and turning away sat on the turf bank beside her, as though her strength was failing her. Willy did not know what to say, so there was a span of silence. Then Maggie went on hurriedly:

"O my God! It is a dreadful thing to lift yer han' in sic a deadly manner against yer neighbors, and ye not knowing what woe ye may cause." Willy could answer this time:

"Aye, lass, it's hard indeed, and that's the truth. But

that's the very reason that men like me are put here, that can and will do their duty no matter how hard it may be." Another pause, and then Maggie spoke again. Willy could not see her face, but she seemed to speak between gasps for breath.

"Ye're lookin' for hard wark the nicht?"

"I am—I fear so."

"I can guess that that telegram tellt ye that some boats would try to rin in somewhere the nicht."

"Mayhap, lass. But the telegrams are secret, and I must not speak of what's in them."

After a long pause Maggie spoke again, but in a voice so low that he could hardly hear her amid the roar of the breaking waves which came in on the wind: "Willy, ye're not a cruel man! Ye wadna, if ye could help it, dae harm to them that loved ye, or wark woe to their belongin's?"

"My lass, that I wouldn't." As he answered he felt a horrible sinking of the heart. What did all this mean? Was it possible that Maggie, too, had any interest in the smuggling? No, no! a thousand times, no! Ashamed of his suspicion, he drew closer and again put his arm around her in a protecting way. The unexpected tenderness overcame her, and, bursting into tears, she threw herself on Willy's neck, and whispered to him between her sobs:

"O Willy, Willy! I'm in sic sair trouble, and there's nane that I can speak tae—nae, not ane in the wide warld."

"Tell me, darling; you know you'll soon be my wife, and then I'll have a right to know all."

"Oh, I canna! I canna! I canna!" she said, and taking her arms from around his neck she beat her hands wildly together. Willy was something frightened, for a woman's distress touches a strong man in direct ratio to his manliness. He tried to soothe her, as though she were a frightened child, and held her tight to him.

"There, there, my darling, don't cry! I'm here with you, and you can tell me all your trouble." She shook her head; he felt the movement on his breast, and he went on:

"Don't be frightened, Maggie; tell me all. Tell me quietly, and mayhap I can help ye out over the difficult places." Then he remained silent, and her sobs grew less violent. At last she raised her head and dashed away her tears fiercely with her hand. She dragged herself away from him. He tried to stop her, but she said:

"Nae, nae, Willy, dear; let me speak my ain way. If I canna trust ye, wha can I trust? My trouble is not for mysel'." She paused, and he asked:

"Who, then, is it for?"

"My father and my brothers." Then she went on hurriedly, fearing to stop, lest her courage should fail her, and he listened in dead silence, with a growing pain in his heart.

"Ye ken that, for several seasons back, our boat has had bad luck—we took less fish and lost mair nets than any of the boats; even on the land everything went wrong. Our coo died, and the shed was blown down, and then the blight touched the potatoes in our field. Father could dae nothing, and had to borrow money on the boat to go on with his wark; and the debt grew and grew, till now he only owns her in name, and we never ken when we may be sold out. And the man that has the mortgage isn't like to let us off or gie time!"

"Who is he? His name?" said Willy, hoarsely.

"Mendoza—the man frae Hamburg who lends to the boats at Peterhead." Willy groaned. Before his eyes rose the vision of that hard, cruel, white face that he had seen only a few minutes ago, and again he saw him hand out the presents with which he had bought the man and the woman to help in his wicked scheme. When Maggie heard the groan her courage and her hope arose. If her lover could take the matter so much to heart, all might yet be well, and in the moment all the womanhood in her awoke to the call. Her fear had broken down the barriers that had kept back her passion, and now the passion came with all the force of a virgin nature. She drew Willy close to her—closer still—and whispered to him in a low, sweet voice that thrilled with emotion:

"Willy, Willy, darlin', you would na see harm come to my father—my father, my father!" and in a wave of tumultuous, voluptuous passion she kissed him full in the mouth. Willy felt for the moment half dazed. Love has its opiates, that soothe and stun even in the midst of their activity. He clasped Maggie close in his arms, and for a moment their hearts beat together and their mouths breathed the same air. Then Willy drew back, but Maggie hung limp in his arms. The silence which hung in the midst of nature's tumult broke its own spell. Willy realized what and where he was; with the waves dashing below his feet, and the night wind, laden with drifting mist, wreathing around in the darkness, and whistling among the rocks, and screaming sadly through the ropes and stays of the flagstaff on the cliff. There was a wild fear in his heart, and a burning desire to know all that was in his sweetheart's mind.

"Go on, Maggie! go on!" he said. Maggie roused herself, and again took up the thread of her story, this time in feverish haste. The moment of passion had disquieted and disturbed her. She seemed to herself to be two people, one of whom was new to her, and whom she feared; but, woman-like, she felt that as she had begun so she must go on, and thus her woman's courage sustained her.

"Some weeks ago father began to get letters frae Mr. Mendoza, and they aye upset him. He wrote answers, and sent them away at once. Then Mr. Mendoza sent him a telegram frae Hamburg, and he sent a reply; and a month ago father got a telegram telling him to meet him at Peterhead. He was very angry at first, and very low spirited after; but he went to Peterhead, and when he came back he was very still and quite pale. He would eat naething, and went to bed, although it was only seven o'clock. Then there were more letters and telegrams, but father answered nane o' them—so far as I ken—and then Mr. Mendoza cam to our hoose. Father got as pale as a sheet when he saw him, and then he got red and angry, and I thoct he was going to strike him; but Mr. Mendoza said not to frichten his dauchter, and father got quiet, and sent me oot on a message to the Nether Mill. And when I cam back Mr. Mendoza had gone, and father was sitting with his face in his hands, and he didna hear me come in. When I spoke, he started up, and he was as white as a sheet; and then he mumbled something, and went into his room. And ever since then he hardly spoke to anyone, and seemed to avoid me a'thegither. When he went away the last time he never even kissed me. And so, Willy—so I fear that that awfu' Mr. Mendoza has

made him dae something that he didna want tae dae, and it's all breaking my heart!" And again she laid her head on her lover's breast and sobbed. Willie breathed more freely; but he could not be content to remain in doubt, and his courage was never harder tried than when he asked his next question:

"Then, Maggie, you don't know anything for certain?"

"Naething, Willie. But I fear."

"But there may be nothing, after all!" Maggie's hopes rose again, for there was something in her lover's voice which told her that he was willing to cling to any straw, and once again her woman's nature took advantage of her sense of right and wrong.

"Please God, Willy, there may be naething! but I fear much that it may be so. But we must act as if we didna fear. It wadna do to suspect poor father without some cause. You know, Willy, the Earl has promised to mak' him the new harbor-master. Old Forgie is bedridden now, and when winter comes he'll no even be able to pretend to wark, so the Earl is to pension him, and father will get the post and hae the hoose by the harbor; and you know that everyone's sae, sae glad, for they all respect father."

"Aye, lass," interrupted Willy, "that's true; and why, then, should we—you and me, Maggie—think he will do ill to please that damned scoundrel, Mendoza?"

"Indeed, I'm thinkin' that it's just because that he is respectit that Mendoza wants him to help him. He kens weel that nane would suspect father, and"—here she clipped her lover close in her arms once again, and her breath came hot in his face till it made him half drunk with a voluptuous intoxication—"he kens that father—my father—would never be harmt by my lover!"

Even then, at the moment when the tragedy of his life seemed to be accomplished, when the woman he loved and honored seemed to be urging him to some breach of duty, Willy Barrow could not but feel that responsibility for her action rested on him. That first passionate kiss, which had seemed to unlock the very gates of her soul—in which she had yielded herself to him—had some mysterious bond or virtue like that which abides in the wedding-ring. The Maggie who thus acted was his Maggie, and in all that came of it he had a part. But his mind was made up; nothing—not Maggie's kisses or Maggie's fears—would turn him from his path of duty; and strong in this resolution, he could afford to be silent to the woman in his arms. Maggie instinctively knew that silence could now be her best weapon, and said no word as they walked toward the guardhouse, Willy casting keen looks seaward and up and down the coast as they went. When they were so close that in its shelter the roar of the surge seemed muffled, Maggie again nestled close to her lover, and whispered in his ear as he looked out over Cruden Bay:

"The Sea Gull comes hame the nicht!" Willy quivered, but said nothing for a time that seemed to be endless. Then he answered:

"They'll find it hard to make the Port to-night. Look! the waves are rolling high, and the wind is getting up. It would be madness to try it." Again she whispered to him:

"Couldna she rin in somewhere else? There are other openings besides Port Erroll in Buchan!" Willy

laughed the laugh of a strong man who knew well what he said:

"Other openings? Aye, lass, there are other openings; but the coble isn't built that can run them this night. With a southeast gale, who would dare to try?—the Bullers, or Robie's Haven, or Dunbey, or Twa Havens, or Lang Haven, or the Watter's Mou? Why, lass, they'd be in matches on the rocks before they could turn their tiller or slack a sail."

She interrupted him, speaking with a despairing voice: "Then ye'll no hae to watch nane o' them the nicht?"

"Nay, Maggie. Port Erroll is my watch to-night, and from it I won't budge."

"And the Watter's Mou," she asked, "is that no safe wi'oot watch? It's no far frae the Port." Again Willy laughed his arrogant, masculine laugh, which made Maggie, despite her trouble, admire him more than ever, and he answered:

"The Watter's Mou? To try to get in there in this wind would be to court certain death. Why, lass, it would take a man all he knew to get out from there, let alone get in, in this weather! And then the chances would be ten to one that he'd be dashed to pieces on the rocks beyond." And he pointed to where a line of sharp rocks rose between the billows on the south side of the inlet. Truly it was a fearful-looking place to be dashed on, for the great waves broke on the rocks with a loud roaring, and even in the semi-darkness they could see the white lines as the water poured down to leeward in the wake of the heaving waves. The white cluster of rocks looked like a ghostly mouth opened to swallow whatever might come in touch. Maggie shuddered; but some sudden idea seemed to strike her, and she drew away from her lover for a moment, and looked towards the black cleft in the rocks, of which they could just see the top from where they stood—the entrance to the Watter's Mou.

And then with one long, wild, appealing glance skyward, as though looking a prayer that she dared not utter in her heart, Maggie turned toward her lover once more. Again she drew close to him, and hung around his neck, and said, with many gasps and pauses between her words:

"If the Sea Gull should come in tae the Port the nicht, and if ony attempt that ye feared should tak ye away to Whinnyfold or to Dunbuy, so that you might be a bit—only a wee bit—late tae search when the boat cam in——"

She stopped affrighted, for Willy put her from him to arm's length—not too gently, either—and said to her, so sternly that each word seemed to smite her like the lash of a whip, till she shrunk and quivered and cowered away from him:

"Maggie, lass, what's this you are saying to me? It isn't fit for you to speak or me to hear! It's bad enough to be a smuggler, but what is it that you would make of me? Not only a smuggler, but a perjurer and a traitor, too! God! am I mistaken? Is it you, Maggie, that would make this of me? Maggie MacWhirter, if this be your counsel, then God help us both! you are no fit wife for me!" In an instant the whole thing dawned on Maggie of what a thing she would make of the man she loved, whom she had loved at the first because he was strong and brave and true. In the sudden revulsion of her feelings she flung herself

on her knees beside him, and took his hand and held it hard, and, despite his efforts to withdraw it, kissed it wildly in the humility of her self-abasement, and poured out to him a passionate outburst of pleading for his forgiveness, or justification of herself, and of appeals to his mercy for her father.

"O Willy, Willy, dinna turn frae me this nicht! My heart is sae fu' o' trouble that I am nigh mad! I didna ken what tae dae nor where tae look for help! I think and think and think, and everywhere there is naught but dark before me, just as there is blackness oot ower the sea when I look for my father. And noo when I want ye to help me—ye that are all I hae, and the only ane on earth that I can look tae in my wae and trouble—I can do no more than turn ye frae me! Ye that I love—oh, love more than my life or my soul!—I must dishonor and mak' ye hate me! Oh! what shall I dae?—what shall I dae?—what shall I dae?" And again she beat the palms of her hands together in a paroxysm of wild despair, while Willy looked on with his heart full of pain and pity, though his resolution never flinched.

"O Willy, Willy! forgive me, forgive me! I was daft to say what I did. I was daft to think that ye would be so base—daft to think that I would like you to so betray yourself! Forgive me, Willy, forgive me, and tak my wild words as spoken not tae ye, but to the storm that maks me feel sae for my father! Let me tak it all back, Willy, darlin'—Willy, my Willy!—and dinna leave me desolate here with this new shadow ower me!" Here, as she kissed his hand again, her lover stooped and raised her in his strong arms and held her to him. And then, when she felt herself in a position of security, the same hysterical emotion came sweeping up in her brain and her blood—the same self-abandonment to her lover overcame her.

"Willy," she whispered, as she kissed him on the mouth and then kissed his head on the side of his neck—"Willy, ye have forgiven me, I ken; and I ken that ye'll harm father nae mair than ye can help, but if——"

What more she was going to say she hardly knew herself. As for Willy, he felt that something better left unsaid was coming, and unconsciously his muscles stiffened till he held her from him rather than to him. She, too, felt the change, and held him close—closer still—with the tenacity induced by a sense of coming danger. Their difficulty was solved for them, for just on the instant when the suggestion of treachery to his duty was hanging on her lips, there came from the village below the fierce roar of a flying rocket.

Up in the air a thousand feet above their heads the fierce glitter of the falling fires of red and blue made a blaze of light which lit up the coast line from the Scaurs to Dunbuy; and with an instinctive intelligence Willy Barrow took in all he saw, including the many men at the port below, sheltering under the sea-wall from the sweeping of the waves as they looked out seaward. Instinctively, also, he counted the seconds till the next rocket should be fired—one, two, three; and then another roar and another blaze of lights. And then another pause—of six seconds this time—and then the third rocket sped aloft with its fiery message. And then the darkness seemed blacker than ever.

By this time the man and the woman were apart no less in spirit than physically. Willy, intent on his work, was standing outside the window of the guardhouse,

whence he could see all around the bay and up and down the coast, and at the same time command the whole of the harbor. His feet were planted wide apart, for on the exposed rock the sweep of the wind was strong; and as he raised his arm with his field-glass to search the horizon, the wind drove back his jacket and showed the butt of his revolver and the hilt of his cutlass. Maggie stood a little behind him, gazing seaward with no less eager eyes, for she, too, expected what would follow. Her heart seemed to stand still, though her breath came in quick gasps; and she did not dare to make a sound or to encroach on the business-like earnestness of the man. For full a minute they waited thus, and then far off at sea, away to the south, they saw a faint blue light, and then another and another, till at last three lights were burning in a row.

Instantly from the town a single rocket went up—not this time a great Board of Trade rocket, laden with colored fire, but one which left a plain white track of light behind it. Willy gazed seaward, but there was no more sign from the far-off ship at sea; the signal, whatever it was, was complete. The coastguard was uncertain as to the meaning, but to Maggie no explanation was necessary. It was with a faint voice indeed that she now spoke to her lover. "Willy!"

His heart was melted at the faltering voice, but he feared she was trying some new temptation, so, coldly and hardly enough, he answered: "What is it, lass?"

"Willy, ye wadna see poor father injured?"

"No, Maggie, not if I could help it. But I'd have to do my duty all the same."

"And we should a' dae oor duty—whatever it might be—at a' costs?"

"Aye, lass, at all costs!" His voice was firm enough now, and there was no mistaking the truth of its ring. Maggie's hope died away. From the stern task which seemed to rise before her over the waste of the black sea she must not shrink. There was but one more yielding to the weakness of her fear; and she said, so timidly that Willy was startled, the voice and manner were so different from those he had ever known:

"And if—mind I say 'if,' Willy—I had a duty tae dae, and it was fu' o' fear and danger, and ye could save me frae it, wad ye?" As she waited for his reply her heart beat so fast and so heavily that Willy could hear it; her very life, she felt, lay in his answer.

"Maggie, as God is above us, I have no other answer to give! I don't know what you mean, but I have a shadow of a fear. I must do my duty, whatever comes of it!" There was a long pause, and then Maggie spoke again, but this time in so different a voice that her lover's heart went out to her in tenfold love.

"Willy, take me in your arms—I am not unworthy, dear, though for a moment I did falter!" He clasped her close to him, and whispered, when their lips met:

"Maggie, my darling, I never loved you like now. I would die for you if I could do you good."

"Hush, dear! I ken it weel. But your duty is not only for yourself, and it must be done! I, too, hae a duty tae dae—a grave and stern ane!"

Her words were lost in the passionate embrace which followed. Then, when he least expected it, she suddenly tore herself away and fled through the darkness across the field which lay between them and her home, while he stood doggedly at his watch, looking out for another signal between sea and shore.