Chapter XXXVII - SECOND JOURNEY OF THE DOMINIE TO THRUMS DURING THE TWENTY-FOUR HOURS.

Here was a nauseous draught for me. Having finished my tale, I turned to Gavin for sympathy; and, behold, he had been listening for the cannon instead of to my final words. So, like an old woman at her hearth, we warm our hands at our sorrows and drop in faggots, and each thinks his own fire a sun, in presence of which all other fires should go out. I was soured to see Gavin prove this, and then I could have laughed without mirth, for had not my bitterness proved it too?

"And now," I said, rising, "whether Margaret is to hold up her head henceforth lies no longer with me, but with you."

It was not to that he replied.

"You have suffered long, Mr. Ogilvy," he said. "Father," he added, wringing my hand. I called him son; but it was only an exchange of musty words that we had found too late. A father is a poor estate to come into at two and twenty.

"I should have been told of this," he said.

"Your mother did right, sir," I answered slowly, but he shook his head.

"I think you have misjudged her," he said. "Doubtless while my fa- -, while Adam Dishart lived, she could only think of you with pain; but after his death--"

"After his death," I said quietly, "I was still so horrible to her that she left Harvie without letting a soul know whither she was bound. She dreaded my following her."

"Stranger to me," he said, after a pause, "than even your story is her being able to keep it from me. I believed no thought ever crossed her mind that she did not let me share."

"And none, I am sure, ever did," I answered, "save that, and such thoughts as a woman has with God only. It was my lot to bring disgrace on her. She thought it nothing less, and she has hidden it all these years for your sake,

until now it is not burdensome. I suppose she feels that God has taken the weight off her. Now you are to put a heavier burden in its place."

He faced me boldly, and I admire him for it now.

"I cannot admit," he said, "that I did wrong in forgetting my mother for that fateful quarter of an hour. Babbie and I loved each other, and I was given the opportunity of making her mine or losing her forever. Have you forgotten that all this tragedy you have told me of only grew out of your own indecision? I took the chance that you let slip by."

"I had not forgotten," I replied. "What else made me tell you last night that Babbie was in Nanny's house?"

"But now you are afraid--now when the deed is done, when for me there can be no turning back. Whatever be the issue, I should be a cur to return to Thrums without my wife. Every minute I feel my strength returning, and before you reach Thrums I will have set out to the Spittal."

There was nothing to say after that. He came with me in the rain as far as the dike, warning me against telling his people what was not true.

"My first part," I answered, "will be to send word to your mother that you are in safety. After that I must see Whamond. Much depends on him."

"You will not go to my mother?"

"Not so long as she has a roof over her head," I said, "but that may not be for long."

So, I think, we parted--each soon to forget the other in a woman.

But I had not gone far when I heard something that stopped me as sharply as if it had been McKenzie's hand once more on my shoulder. For a second the noise appalled me, and then, before the echo began, I knew it must be the Spittal cannon. My only thought was one of thankfulness. Now Gavin must see the wisdom of my reasoning. I would wait for him until he was able to come with me to Thrums. I turned back, and in my haste I ran through water I had gone round before.

I was too late. He was gone, and into the rain I shouted his name in vain. That he had started for the Spittal there could be no doubt; that he would ever reach it was less certain. The earl's collie was still crouching by the fire, and, thinking it might be a guide to him, I drove the brute to the door, and chased it in the direction he probably had taken. Not until it had run

from me did I resume my own journey. I do not need to be told that you who read would follow Gavin now rather than me; but you must bear with the dominie for a little while yet, as I see no other way of making things clear.

In some ways I was not ill-equipped for my attempt. I do not know any one of our hillsides as it is known to the shepherd, to whom every rabbit-hole and glimmer of mica is a landmark; but he, like his flock, has only to cross a dike to find himself in a strange land, while I have been everywhere in the glen.

In the foreground the rain slanted, transparent till it reached the ground, where a mist seemed to blow it along as wind ruffles grass. In the distance all was a driving mist. I have been out for perhaps an hour in rains as wetting, and I have watched floods from my window, but never since have I known the fifth part of a season's rainfall in eighteen hours; and if there should be the like here again, we shall be found better prepared for it. Men have been lost in the glen in mists so thick that they could plunge their fingers out of sight in it as into a meal girnel; but this mist never came within twenty yards of me. I was surrounded by it, however, as if I was in a round tent; and out of this tent I could not walk, for it advanced with me. On the other side of this screen were horrible noises, at whose cause I could only guess, save now and again when a tongue of water was shot at my feet, or great stones came crashing through the canvas of mist. Then I ran wherever safety prompted, and thus tangled my bearings until I was like that one in the child's game who is blindfolded and turned round three times that he may not know east from west.

Once I stumbled over a dead sheep and a living lamb; and in a clump of trees which puzzled me--for they were where I thought no trees should be--a wood-pigeon flew to me, but struck my breast with such force that I picked it up dead. I saw no other living thing, though half a dozen times I must have passed within cry of farmhouses. At one time I was in a cornfield, where I had to lift my hands to keep them out of water, and a dread filled me that I had wandered in a circle, and was still on Waster Lunny's land. I plucked some corn and held it to my eyes to see if it was green; but it was yellow, and so I knew that at last I was out of the glen.

People up here will complain if I do not tell how I found the farmer of Green Brae's fifty pounds. It is one of the best- remembered incidents of the flood, and happened shortly after I got out of the cornfield. A house rose suddenly before me, and I was hastening to it when as suddenly three of its walls fell.

Before my mind could give a meaning to what my eyes told it, the water that had brought down the house had lifted me off my feet and flung me among waves. That would have been the last of the dominie had I not struck against a chest, then half-way on its voyage to the sea. I think the lid gave way tinder me; but that is surmise, for from the time the house fell till I was on the river in a kist that was like to be my coffin, is almost a blank. After what may have been but a short journey, though I had time in it to say my prayers twice, we stopped, jammed among fallen trees; and seeing a bank within reach, I tried to creep up it. In this there would have been little difficulty had not the contents of the kist caught in my feet and held on to them, like living things afraid of being left behind. I let down my hands to disentangle my feet, but failed; and then, grown desperate, I succeeded in reaching firm ground, dragging I knew not what after me. It proved to be a pillow-slip. Green Brae still shudders when I tell him that my first impulse was to leave the pillow-slip unopened. However, I ripped it up, for to undo the wet strings that had ravelled round my feet would have wearied even a man with a needle to pick open the knots; and among broken gimlets, the head of a grape, and other things no beggar would have stolen, I found a tin canister containing fifty pounds. Waster Lunny says that this should have made a religious man of Green Brae, and it did to this extent, that he called the fall of the cotter's house providential. Otherwise the cotter, at whose expense it may be said the money was found, remains the more religious man of the two.

At last I came to the Kelpie's brig, and I could have wept in joy (and might have been better employed), when, like everything I saw on that journey, it broke suddenly through the mist, and seemed to run at me like a living monster. Next moment I ran back, for as I stepped upon the bridge I saw that I had been about to walk into the air. What was left of the Kelpie's brig ended in mid-stream. Instead of thanking God for the light without which I should have gone abruptly to my death, I sat down miserable and hopeless.

Presently I was up and trudging to the Loups of Malcolm. At the Loups the river runs narrow and deep between cliffs, and the spot is so called because one Malcolm jumped across it when pursued by wolves. Next day he returned boastfully to look at his jump, and gazing at it turned dizzy and fell into the river. Since that time chains have been hung across the Loups to reduce the distance between the farms of Carwhimple and Keep-What-You-Can from a mile to a hundred yards. You must cross the chains on your breast. They were suspended there by Rob Angus, who was also the first to breast them.

But I never was a Rob Angus. When my pupils practise what they call the high jump, two small boys hold a string aloft, and the bigger ones run at it gallantly until they reach it, when they stop meekly and creep beneath. They will repeat this twenty times, and yet never, when they start for the string, seem to know where their courage will fail. Nay, they will even order the small boys to hold the string higher. I have smiled at this, but it was the same courage while the difficulty is far off that took me to the Loups. At sight of them I turned away.

I prayed to God for a little of the mettle of other men, and He heard me, for with my eyes shut I seemed to see Margaret beckoning from across the abyss as if she had need of me. Then I rose calmly and tested the chains, and crossed them on my breast. Many have done it with the same danger, at which they laugh, but without that vision I should have held back.

I was now across the river, and so had left the chance of drowning behind, but I was farther from Thrums than when I left the school-house, and this countryside was almost unknown to me. The mist had begun to clear, so that I no longer wandered into fields; but though I kept to the roads, I could not tell that they led toward Thrums, and in my exhaustion I had often to stand still. Then to make a new start in the mud was like pulling stakes out of the ground. So long as the rain faced me I thought I could not be straying far; but after an hour I lost this guide, for a wind rose that blew it in all directions.

In another hour, when I should have been drawing near Thrums, I found myself in a wood, and here I think my distress was greatest; nor is this to be marvelled at, for instead of being near Thrums, I was listening to the monotonous roar of the sea. I was too spent to reason, but I knew that I must have travelled direct east, and must be close to the German Ocean. I remember putting my back against a tree and shutting my eyes, and listening to the lash of the waves against the beach, and hearing the faint toll of a bell, and wondering listlessly on what lighthouse it was ringing. Doubtless I would have lain down to sleep forever had I not heard another sound near at hand. It was the knock of a hammer on wood, and might have been a fisherman mending his boat. The instinct of self-preservation carried me to it, and presently I was at a little house. A man was standing in the rain, hammering new hinges to the door; and though I did not recognize him, I saw with bewilderment that the woman at his side was Nanny.

"It's the dominie," she cried, and her brother added:

"Losh, sir, you hinna the look o' a living man."

"Nanny," I said, in perplexity, "what are you doing here?"

"Whaur else should I be?" she asked.

I pressed my hands over my eyes, crying, "Where am I?"

Nanny shrank from me, but Sanders said, "Has the rain driven you gyte, man? You're in Thrums."

"But the sea," I said, distrusting him. "I hear it, Listen!"

"That's the wind in Windyghoul," Sanders answered, looking at me queerly. "Come awa into the house."

THRUMS DURING THE TWENTY-FOUR HOURS-DEFENCE OF THE MANSE.

Hardly had I crossed the threshold of the mudhouse when such a sickness came over me that I could not have looked up, though Nanny's voice had suddenly changed to Margaret's. Vaguely I knew that Nanny had put the kettle on the fire--a woman's first thought when there is illness in the house--and as I sat with my hands over my face I heard the water dripping from my clothes to the floor.

"Why is that bell ringing?" I asked at last, ignoring all questions and speaking through my fingers. An artist, I suppose, could paint all expression out of a human face. The sickness was having that effect on my voice.

"It's the Auld Licht bell." Sanders said; "and it's almost as fearsome to listen to as last nicht's rain. I wish I kent what they're ringing it for."

"Wish no sic things," said Nanny nervously.

"There's things it's best to put off kenning as lang as we can."

"It's that ill-cleakit witch, Erne McBean, that makes Nanny speak so doleful," Sanders told me. "There was to be a prayer-meeting last nicht, but Mr. Dishart never came to 't, though they rang till they wraxed their arms; and now Effie says it'll ring on by itsel' till he's brocht hame a corp. The hellicat says the rain's a dispensation to drown him in for neglect o' duty. Sal, I would think little o' the Lord if He needed to create a new sea to

drown one man in. Nanny, yon cuttie, that's no swearing; I defy you to find a single lonely oath in what I've said."

"Never mind Effie McBean," I interposed. "What are the congregation saying about the minister's absence?"

"We ken little except what Effie telled us," Nanny answered. "I was at Tilliedrum yestreen, meeting Sanders as he got out o' the gaol, and that awfu onding began when we was on the Bellies Braes. We focht our way through it, but not a soul did we meet; and wha would gang out the day that can bide at hame? Ay, but Effie says it's kent in Thrums that Mr. Dishart has run off wi'--wi' an Egyptian."

"You're waur than her, Nanny," Sanders said roughly, "for you hae twa reasons for kenning better. In the first place, has Mr. Dishart no keeped you in siller a' the time I was awa? and for another, have I no been at the manse?"

My head rose now.

"He gaed to the manse," Nanny explained, "to thank Mr. Dishart for being so good to me. Ay, but Jean wouldna let him in. I'm thinking that looks gey gray."

"Whatever was her reason," Sanders admitted, "Jean wouldna open the door; but I keeked in at the parlor window, and saw Mrs. Dishart in't looking very cosy-like and lauching; and do you think I would hae seen that if I had come ower the minister?"

"Not if Margaret knew of it," I said to myself, and wondered at Whamond's forbearance.

"She had a skein o' worsted stretched out on her hands," Sanders continued, "and a young leddy was winding it. I didna see her richt, but she wasna a Thrums leddy."

"Effie McBean says she's his intended, come to call him to account," Nanny said; but I hardly listened, for I saw that I must hurry to Tammas Whamond's. Nanny followed me to the gate with her gown pulled over her head, and said excitedly:

"Oh, dominie, I warrant it's true. It'll be Babbie. Sanders doesna suspect, because I've telled him nothing about her. Oh, what's to be done? They were baith so good to me."

I could only tell her to keep what she knew to herself.

"Has Rob Dow come back?" I called out after I had started.

"Whaur frae?" she replied; and then I remembered that all these things had happened while Nanny was at Tilliedrum. In this life some of the seven ages are spread over two decades, and others pass as quickly as a stage play. Though a fifth of a season's rain had fallen in a night and a day, it had scarcely kept pace with Gavin.

I hurried to the town by the Roods. That brae was as deserted as the country roads, except where children had escaped from their mothers to wade in it. Here and there dams were keeping the water away from one door to send it with greater volume to another, and at points the ground had fallen in. But this I noticed without interest. I did not even realize that I was holding my head painfully to the side where it had been blown by the wind and glued by the rain. I have never held my head straight since that journey.

Only a few looms were going, their pedals in water. I was addressed from several doors and windows, once by Charles Yuill.

"Dinna pretend," he said, "that you've walked in frae the school- house alane. The rain chased me into this house yestreen, and here it has keeped me, though I bide no further awa than Tillyloss."

"Charles," I said in a low voice, "why is the Auld Licht bell ringing?"

"Hae you no heard about Mr. Dishart?" he asked. "Ob, man! that's Lang Tammas in the kirk by himsel', tearing at the bell to bring the folk thegither to depose the minister."

Instead of going to Whamond's house in the school wynd I hastened down the Banker's close to the kirk, and had almost to turn back, so choked was the close with floating refuse. I could see the bell swaying, but the kirk was locked, and I battered on the door to no purpose. Then, remembering that Henry Munn lived in Coutt's trance, I set off for his house. He saw me crossing the square, but would not open his door until I was close to it.

"When I open," he cried, "squeeze through quick"; but though I did his bidding, a rush of water darted in before me. Hendry reclosed the door by flinging himself against it.

"When I saw you crossing the square," he said, "it was surprise enough to cure the hiccup."

"Hendry," I replied instantly, "why is the Auld Licht bell ringing?"

He put his finger to his lip. "I see," he said imperturbably, "you've met our folk in the glen and heard frae them about the minister."

"What folk?"

"Mair than half the congregation," he replied, "I started for Glen Quharity twa hours syne to help the farmers. You didna see them?"

"No; they must have been on the other side of the river." Again that question forced my lips, "Why is the bell ringing?"

"Canny, dominie," he said, "till we're up the stair. Mysy Moncur's lug's at her keyhole listening to you."

"You lie, Hendry Munn," cried an invisible woman. The voice became more plaintive: "I ken a heap, Hendry, so you may as well tell me a'."

"Lick away at the bone you hae," the shoemaker replied heartlessly, and conducted me to his room up one of the few inside stairs then in Thrums. Hendry's oddest furniture was five boxes, fixed to the wait at such a height that children could climb into them from a high stool. In these his bairns slept, and so space was economized. I could never laugh at the arrangement, as I knew that Betty had planned it on her deathbed for her man's sake. Five little heads bobbed up in their beds as I entered, but more vexing to me was Wearyworld on a stool.

"In by, dominie," he said sociably. "Sal, you needna fear burning wi' a' that water on you, You're in mair danger o' coming a-boil."

"I want to speak to you alone, Hendry," I said bluntly.

"You winna put me out, Hendry?" the alarmed policeman entreated. "Mind, you said in sic weather you would be friendly to a brute beast. Ay, ay, dominie, what's your news? It's welcome, be it good or bad. You would meet the townsfolk in the glen, and they would tell you about Mr. Dishart. What, you hinna heard? Oh, sirs, he's a lost man. There would hae been a meeting the day to depose him if so many hadna gaen to the glen. But the morn'll do as weel. The very women is cursing him, and the laddies has begun to gather stanes. He's married on an Egyp--"

"Hendry!" I cried, like one giving an order.

"Wearyworld, step!" said Hendry sternly, and then added soft- heartedly: "Here's a bit news that'll open Mysy Moncur's door to you. You can tell her

frae me that the bell's ringing just because I forgot to tie it up last nicht, and the wind's shaking it, and I winna gang out in the rain to stop it."

"Ay," the policeman said, looking at me sulkily, "she may open her door for that, but it'll no let me in. Tell me mair. Tell me wha the leddy at the manse is."

"Out you go," answered Hendry. "Once she opens the door, you can shove your foot in, and syne she's in your power." He pushed Wearyworld out, and came back to me, saying, "It was best to tell him the truth, to keep him frae making up lies."

"But is it the truth? I was told Lang Tammas--"

"Ay, I ken that story; but Tammas has other work on hand."

"Then tie up the bell at once, Hendry," I urged.

"I canna," he answered gravely. "Tammas took the keys o' the kirk fram me yestreen, and winna gie them up. He says the bell's being rung by the hand o' God."

"Has he been at the manse? Does Mrs. Dishart know--?"

"He's been at the manse twa or three times, but Jean barred him out. She'll let nobody in till the minister comes back, and so the mistress kens nothing. But what's the use o' keeping it frae her ony langer?"

"Every use," I said.

"None," answered Hendry sadly. "Dominie, the minister was married to the Egyptian on the hill last nicht, and Tammas was witness. Not only were they married, but they've run aff thegither."

"You are wrong, Hendry," I assured him, telling as much as I dared. "I left Mr. Dishart in my house."

"What! But if that is so, how did he no come back wi' you?"

"Because he was nearly drowned in the flood."

"She'll be wi' him?"

"He was alone."

Hendry's face lit up dimly with joy, and then he shook his head. "Tammas was witness," he said. "Can you deny the marriage?"

"All I ask of you," I answered guardedly, "is to suspend judgment until the minister returns."

"There can be nothing done, at ony rate," he said, "till the folk themsel's come back frae the glen; and I needna tell you how glad we would a' be to be as fond o' him as ever. But Tammas was witness."

"Have pity on his mother, man."

"We've done the best for her we could," he replied. "We prigged wi' Tammas no to gang to the manse till we was sure the minister was living. 'For if he has been drowned, "we said, 'his mother need never ken what we were thinking o' doing.' Ay, and we're sorry for the young leddy, too."

"What young lady is this you all talk of?" I asked.

"She's his intended. Ay, you needna start. She has come a' the road frae Glasgow to challenge him about the gypsy. The pitiful thing is that Mrs. Dishart lauched awa her fears, and now they're baith waiting for his return, as happy as ignorance can make them."

"There is no such lady," I said.

"But there is," he answered doggedly, "for she came in a machine late last nicht, and I was ane o' a dozen that baith heard and saw it through my window. It stopped at the manse near half an hour. What's mair, the lady hersel' was at Sam'l Farquharson's in the Tenements the day for twa hours."

I listened in bewilderment and fear.

"Sam'l's bairn's down wi' scarlet fever and like to die, and him being a widow-man he has gone useless. You mauna blame the wives in the Tenements for hauding back. They're fleid to smit their ain litlins; and as it happens, Sam'l's friends is a' aff to the glen. Weel, he ran greeting to the manse for Mr. Dishart, and the lady heard him crying to Jean through the door, and what does she do but gang straucht to the Tenements wi' Sam'l. Her goodness has naturally put the folk on her side against the minister."

"This does not prove her his intended," I broke in.

"She was heard saying to Sam'l," answered the kirk officer," that the minister being awa, it was her duty to take his place. Yes, and though she little kent it, he was already married."

"Hendry," I said, rising, "I must see this lady at once. Is she still at Farquharson's house?"

"She may be back again by this time. Tammas set off for Sam'l's as soon as he heard she was there, but he just missed her, I left him there an hour syne. He was waiting for her, determined to tell her all."

I set off for the Tenements at once, declining Hendry's company. The wind had fallen, so that the bell no longer rang, but the rain was falling doggedly. The streets were still deserted. I pushed open the precentor's door in the school wynd, but there was no one in the house. Tibbie Birse saw me, and shouted from her door:

"Hae you heard o' Mr. Dishart? He'll never daur show face in Thrums again."

Without giving her a word I hastened to the Tenements.

"The leddy's no here," Sam'l Farquharson told me, "and Tammas is back at the manse again, trying to force his way in."

From Sam'l, too, I turned, with no more than a groan; but he cried after me, "Perdition on the man that has played that leddy false."

Had Margaret been at her window she must have seen me, so recklessly did I hurry up the minister's road, with nothing in me but a passion to take Whamond by the throat. He was not in the garden. The kitchen door was open. Jean was standing at it with her apron to her eyes.

"Tammas Whamond?" I demanded, and my face completed the question.

"You're ower late," she wailed. "He's wi' her. Oh, dominie, whaur's the minister?"

"You base woman!" I cried, "why did you unbar the door?"

"It was the mistress," she answered. "She heard him shaking it, and I had to tell her wha it was. Dominie, it's a' my wite! He tried to get in last nicht, and roared threats through the door, and after he had gone awa she speired wha I had been speaking to. I had to tell her, but I said he had come to let her ken that the minister was taking shelter frae the rain in a farmhouse. Ay, I said he was to bide there till the flood gaed down, and that's how she has been easy a day. I acted for the best, but I'm sair punished now; for when she heard Tammas at the door twa or three minutes syne, she ordered me to let him in, so that she could thank him for bringing--the

news last nicht, despite the rain. They're in the parlor. Oh, dominie, gang in and stop his mouth."

This was hard. I dared not go to the parlor. Margaret might have died at sight of me. I turned my face from Jean.

"Jean," said some one, opening the inner kitchen door, "why did you--?"

She stopped, and that was what turned me round. As she spoke I thought it was the young lady; when I looked I saw it was Babbie, though no longer in a gypsy's dress. Then I knew that the young lady and Babbie were one.

HOW BABBIE SPENT THE NIGHT OF AUGUST FOURTH.

How had the Egyptian been spirited here from the Spittal? I did not ask the question. To interest myself in Babbie at that dire hour of Margaret's life would have been as impossible to me as to sit down to a book. To others, however, it is only an old woman on whom the parlor door of the manse has closed, only a garrulous dominie that is in pain outside it. Your eyes are on the young wife.

When Babbie was plucked off the hill, she thought as little as Gavin that her captor was Rob Dow. Close as he was to her, he was but a shadow until she screamed the second time, when he pressed her to the ground and tied his neckerchief over her mouth. Then, in the moment that power of utterance was taken from her, she saw the face that had startled her at Nanny's window. Half-carried, she was borne forward rapidly, until some one seemed to rise out of the broom and strike them both. They had only run against the doctor's trap; and huddling her into it, Dow jumped up beside her. He tied her hands together with a cord. For a time the horse feared the darkness in front more than the lash behind; but when the rains became terrific, it rushed ahead wildly--probably with its eyes shut.

In three minutes Babbie went through all the degrees of fear. In the first she thought Lord Rintoul had kidnapped her; but no sooner had her captor resolved himself into Dow, drunk with the events of the day and night, than in the earl's hands would have lain safety. Next, Dow was forgotten in the dread of a sudden death which he must share. And lastly, the rain seemed to be driving all other horrors back, that it might have her for its own. Her perils increased to the unbearable as quickly as an iron in the fire passes through the various stages between warmth and white heat. Then she had to do something; and as she could not cry out, she flung herself from the

dogcart. She fell heavily in Caddani Wood, but the rain would not let her lie there stunned. It beat her back to consciousness, and she sat up on her knees and listened breathlessly, staring in the direction the trap had taken, as if her eyes could help her ears.

All night, I have said, the rain poured, but those charges only rode down the deluge at intervals, as now and again one wave greater than the others stalks over the sea. In the first lull it appeared to Babbie that the storm had swept by, leaving her to Dow. Now she heard the rubbing of the branches, and felt the torn leaves falling on her gown. She rose to feel her way out of the wood with her bound hands, then sank in terror, for some one had called her name. Next moment she was up again, for the voice was Gavin's, who was hurrying after her, as he thought, down Windyghoul. He was no farther away than a whisper might have carried on a still night, but she dared not pursue him, for already Dow was coming back. She could not see him, but she heard the horse whinny and the rocking of the dogcart. Dow was now at the brute's head, and probably it tried to bite him, for he struck it, crying:

"Would you? Stand still till I find her. I heard her move this minute."

Babbie crouched upon a big stone and sat motionless while he groped for her. Her breathing might have been tied now, as well as her mouth. She heard him feeling for her, first with his feet and then with his hands, and swearing when his head struck against a tree.

"I ken you're within hearing," he muttered, "and I'll hae you yet. I have a gully-knife in my hand. Listen!"

He severed a whin-stalk with the knife, and Babbie seemed to see the gleam of the blade.

"What do I mean by wanting to kill you?" he said, as if she had asked the question. "Do you no ken wha said to me, 'Kill this woman?' It was the Lord. 'I winna kill her,' I said, 'but I'll cart her out o' the country.' 'Kill her,' says He; 'why encumbereth she the ground?'"

He resumed his search, but with new tactics. "I see you now," he would cry, and rush forward perhaps within a yard of her. Then she must have screamed had she had the power. When he tied that neckerchief round her mouth he prolonged her life.

Then came the second hurricane of rain, so appalling that had Babbie's hands been free she would have pressed them to her ears. For a full minute

she forgot Dow's presence. A living thing touched her face. The horse had found her. She recoiled from it, but its frightened head pressed heavily on her shoulder. She rose and tried to steal away, but the brute followed, and as the rain suddenly exhausted itself she heard the dragging of the dogcart. She had to halt.

Again she heard Dow's voice. Perhaps he had been speaking throughout the roar of the rain. If so, it must have made him deaf to his own words. He groped for the horse's head, and presently his hand touched Babbie's dress, then jumped from it, so suddenly had he found her. No sound escaped him, and she was beginning to think it possible that he had mistaken her for a bush when his hand went over her face. He was making sure of his discovery.

"The Lord has delivered you into my hands," he said in a low voice, with some awe in it. Then he pulled her to the ground, and, sitting down beside her, rocked himself backward and forward, his hands round his knees. She would have bartered the world for power to speak to him.

"He wouldna hear o' my just carting you to some other countryside," he said confidentially. "'The devil would just blaw her back again, says He, 'therefore kill her.' 'And if I kill her,' I says, 'they'll hang me.' 'You can hang yoursel',' says He. 'What wi'?' I speirs. 'Wi' the reins o' the dogcart,' says He. 'They would break,' says I. 'Weel, weel,' says He, 'though they do hang you, nobody'll miss you.' 'That's true,' says I, 'and You are a just God.'"

He stood up and confronted her.

"Prisoner at the bar," he said, "hae ye onything to say why sentence of death shouldna be pronounced against you? She doesna answer. She kens death is her deserts."

By this time he had forgotten probably why his victim was dumb.

"Prisoner at the bar, hand back to me the soul o' Gavin Dishart. You winna? Did the devil, your master, summon you to him and say, 'Either that noble man or me maun leave Thrums?' He did. And did you, or did you no, drag that minister, when under your spell, to the hill, and there marry him ower the tongs? You did. Witnesses, Rob Dow and Tammas Whamond."

She was moving from him on her knees, meaning when out of arm's reach to make a dash for life.

"Sit down," he grumbled, "or how can you expect a fair trial? Prisoner at the bar, you have been found guilty of witchcraft."

For the first time his voice faltered.

"That's the difficulty, for witches canna die, except by burning or drowning. There's no blood in you for my knife, and your neck wouldna twist. Your master has brocht the rain to put out a' the fires, and we'll hae to wait till it runs into a pool deep enough to drown you.

"I wonder at You, God. Do You believe her master'll mak' the pool for her? He'll rather stop his rain. Mr. Dishart said You was mair powerful than the devil, but--it doesna look like it. If You had the power, how did You no stop this woman working her will on the minister? You kent what she was doing, for You ken a' things. Mr. Dishart says You ken a' things. If You do, the mair shame to You. Would a shepherd, that could help it. let dogs worry his sheep? Kill her! It's fine to cry 'Kill her,' but whaur's the bonfire, whaur's the pool? You that made the heaven and the earth and all that in them is, can You no set fire to some wet whins, or change this stane into a mill-dam?"

He struck the stone with his fist, and then gave a cry of exultation. He raised the great slab in his arms and flung it from him. In that moment Babbie might have run away, but she fainted. Almost simultaneously with Dow she knew this was the stone which covered the Caddam well. When she came to, Dow was speaking, and his voice had become solemn.

"You said your master was mair powerful than mine, and I said it too, and all the time you was sitting here wi' the very pool aneath you that I have been praying for. Listen!"

He dropped a stone into the well, and she heard it strike the water.

"What are you shaking at?" he said in reproof. "Was it no yoursel' that chose the spot? Lassie, say your prayers. Are you saying them?"

He put his hand over her face, to feel if her lips were moving, and tore off the neckerchief.

And then again the rain came between them. In that rain one could not think. Babbie did not know that she had bitten through the string that tied her hands. She planned no escape. But she flung herself at the place where Dow had been standing. He was no longer there, and she fell heavily, and was on her feet again in an instant and running recklessly. Trees

intercepted her, and she thought they were Dow, and wrestled with them. By and by she fell into Windyghoul, and there she crouched until all her senses were restored to her, when she remembered that she had been married lately.

How long Dow was in discovering that she had escaped, and whether he searched for her, no one knows. After a time he jumped into the dogcart again, and drove aimlessly through the rain. That wild journey probably lasted two hours, and came to an abrupt end only when a tree fell upon the trap. The horse galloped off, but one of Dow's legs was beneath the tree, and there he had to lie helpless, for though the leg was little injured, he could not extricate himself. A night and day passed, and he believed that he must die; but even in this plight he did not forget the man he loved. He found a piece of slate, and in the darkness cut these words on it with his knife:

"Me being about to die, I solemnly swear I didna see the minister marrying an Egyptian on the hill this nicht. May I burn in Hell if this is no true."

(Signed) "ROB DOW."

This document he put in his pocket, and so preserved proof of what he was perjuring himself to deny.