

### CHAPTER III THE CAPTAIN'S CHILDREN

LORD GLENARVAN'S fortune was enormous, and he spent it entirely in doing good. His kindheartedness was even greater than his generosity, for the one knew no bounds, while the other, of necessity, had its limits. As Lord of Luss and "laird" of Malcolm, he represented his county in the House of Lords; but, with his Jacobite ideas, he did not care much for the favor of the House of Hanover, and he was looked upon coldly by the State party in England, because of the tenacity with which he clung to the traditions of his forefathers, and his energetic resistance to the political encroachments of Southerners. And yet he was not a man behind the times, and there was nothing little or narrow-minded about him; but while always keeping open his ancestral county to progress, he was a true Scotchman at heart, and it was for the honor of Scotland that he competed in the yacht races of the Royal Thames Yacht Club.

Edward Glenarvan was thirty-two years of age. He was tall in person, and had rather stern features; but there was an exceeding sweetness in his look, and a stamp of Highland poetry about his whole bearing. He was known to be brave to excess, and full of daring and chivalry-- a Fer-gus of the nineteenth century; but his goodness excelled every other quality, and he was more charitable than St. Martin himself, for he would have given the whole of his cloak to any of the poor Highlanders.

He had scarcely been married three months, and his bride was Miss Helena Tuffnell, the daughter of William Tuffnell, the great traveler, one of the many victims of geographical science and of the passion for discovery. Miss Helena did not belong to a noble family, but she was Scotch, and that was better than all nobility in the eyes of Lord Glenarvan; and she was, moreover, a charming, high-souled, religious young woman.

Lord Glenarvan did not forget that his wife was the daughter of a great traveler, and he thought it likely that she would inherit her father's predilections. He had the DUNCAN built expressly that he might take his bride to the most beautiful lands in the world, and complete their honeymoon by sailing up the Mediterranean, and through the clustering islands of the Archipelago.

However, Lord Glenarvan had gone now to London. The lives of the shipwrecked men were at stake, and Lady Helena was too much concerned herself about them to grudge her husband's temporary absence.

A telegram next day gave hope of his speedy return, but in the evening a letter apprised her of the difficulties his proposition had met with, and the morning after brought another, in which he openly expressed his dissatisfaction with the Admiralty.

Lady Helena began to get anxious as the day wore on.

In the evening, when she was sitting alone in her room, Mr. Halbert, the house steward, came in and asked if she would see a young

girl and boy that wanted to speak to Lord Glenarvan.

"Some of the country people?" asked Lady Helena.

"No, madame," replied the steward, "I do not know them at all.

They came by rail to Balloch, and walked the rest of the way to Luss."

"Tell them to come up, Halbert."

In a few minutes a girl and boy were shown in. They were evidently brother and sister, for the resemblance was unmistakable.

The girl was about sixteen years of age; her tired pretty face, and sorrowful eyes, and resigned but courageous look, as well as her neat though poor attire, made a favorable impression.

The boy she held by the hand was about twelve, but his face expressed such determination, that he appeared quite his sister's protector.

The girl seemed too shy to utter a word at first, but Lady Helena quickly relieved her embarrassment by saying, with an encouraging smile:

"You wish to speak to me, I think?"

"No," replied the boy, in a decided tone; "not to you, but to Lord Glenarvan."

"Excuse him, ma'am," said the girl, with a look at her brother.

"Lord Glenarvan is not at the castle just now," returned Lady Helena;  
"but I am his wife, and if I can do anything for you--"

"You are Lady Glenarvan?" interrupted the girl.

"I am."

"The wife of Lord Glenarvan, of Malcolm Castle, that put an announcement  
in the TIMES about the shipwreck of the BRITANNIA?"

"Yes, yes," said Lady Helena, eagerly; "and you?"

"I am Miss Grant, ma'am, and this is my brother."

"Miss Grant, Miss Grant!" exclaimed Lady Helena, drawing the young girl  
toward her, and taking both her hands and kissing the boy's rosy cheeks.

"What is it you know, ma'am, about the shipwreck? Tell me,  
is my father living? Shall we ever see him again? Oh, tell me,"  
said the girl, earnestly.

"My dear child," replied Lady Helena. "Heaven forbid that I  
should answer you lightly such a question; I would not delude  
you with vain hopes."

"Oh, tell me all, tell me all, ma'am. I'm proof against sorrow.

I can bear to hear anything."

"My poor child, there is but a faint hope; but with the help of almighty Heaven it is just possible you may one day see your father once more."

The girl burst into tears, and Robert seized Lady Glenarvan's hand and covered it with kisses.

As soon as they grew calmer they asked a complete string of questions, and Lady Helena recounted the whole story of the document, telling them that their father had been wrecked on the coast of Patagonia, and that he and two sailors, the sole survivors, appeared to have reached the shore, and had written an appeal for help in three languages and committed it to the care of the waves.

During the recital, Robert Grant was devouring the speaker with his eyes, and hanging on her lips. His childish imagination evidently retraced all the scenes of his father's shipwreck. He saw him on the deck of the BRITANNIA, and then struggling with the billows, then clinging to the rocks, and lying at length exhausted on the beach.

More than once he cried out, "Oh, papa! my poor papa!" and pressed close to his sister.

Miss Grant sat silent and motionless, with clasped hands, and all she said when the narration ended, was: "Oh, ma'am, the paper, please!"

"I have not it now, my dear child," replied Lady Helena.

"You haven't it?"

"No. Lord Glenarvan was obliged to take it to London, for the sake of your father; but I have told you all it contained, word for word, and how we managed to make out the complete sense from the fragments of words left--all except the longitude, unfortunately."

"We can do without that," said the boy.

"Yes, Mr. Robert," rejoined Lady Helena, smiling at the child's decided tone. "And so you see, Miss Grant, you know the smallest details now just as well as I do."

"Yes, ma'am, but I should like to have seen my father's writing."

"Well, to-morrow, perhaps, to-morrow, Lord Glenarvan will be back. My husband determined to lay the document before the Lords of the Admiralty, to induce them to send out a ship immediately in search of Captain Grant."

"Is it possible, ma'am," exclaimed the girl, "that you have done that for us?"

"Yes, my dear Miss Grant, and I am expecting Lord Glenarvan back every minute now."

"Oh, ma'am! Heaven bless you and Lord Glenarvan," said the young girl, fervently, overcome with grateful emotion."

"My dear girl, we deserve no thanks; anyone in our place would have done the same. I only trust the hopes we are leading you to entertain may be realized, but till my husband returns, you will remain at the Castle."

"Oh, no, ma'am. I could not abuse the sympathy you show to strangers."

"Strangers, dear child!" interrupted Lady Helena; "you and your brother are not strangers in this house, and I should like Lord Glenarvan to be able on his arrival to tell the children of Captain Grant himself, what is going to be done to rescue their father."

It was impossible to refuse an invitation given with such heart, and Miss Grant and her brother consented to stay till Lord Glenarvan returned.