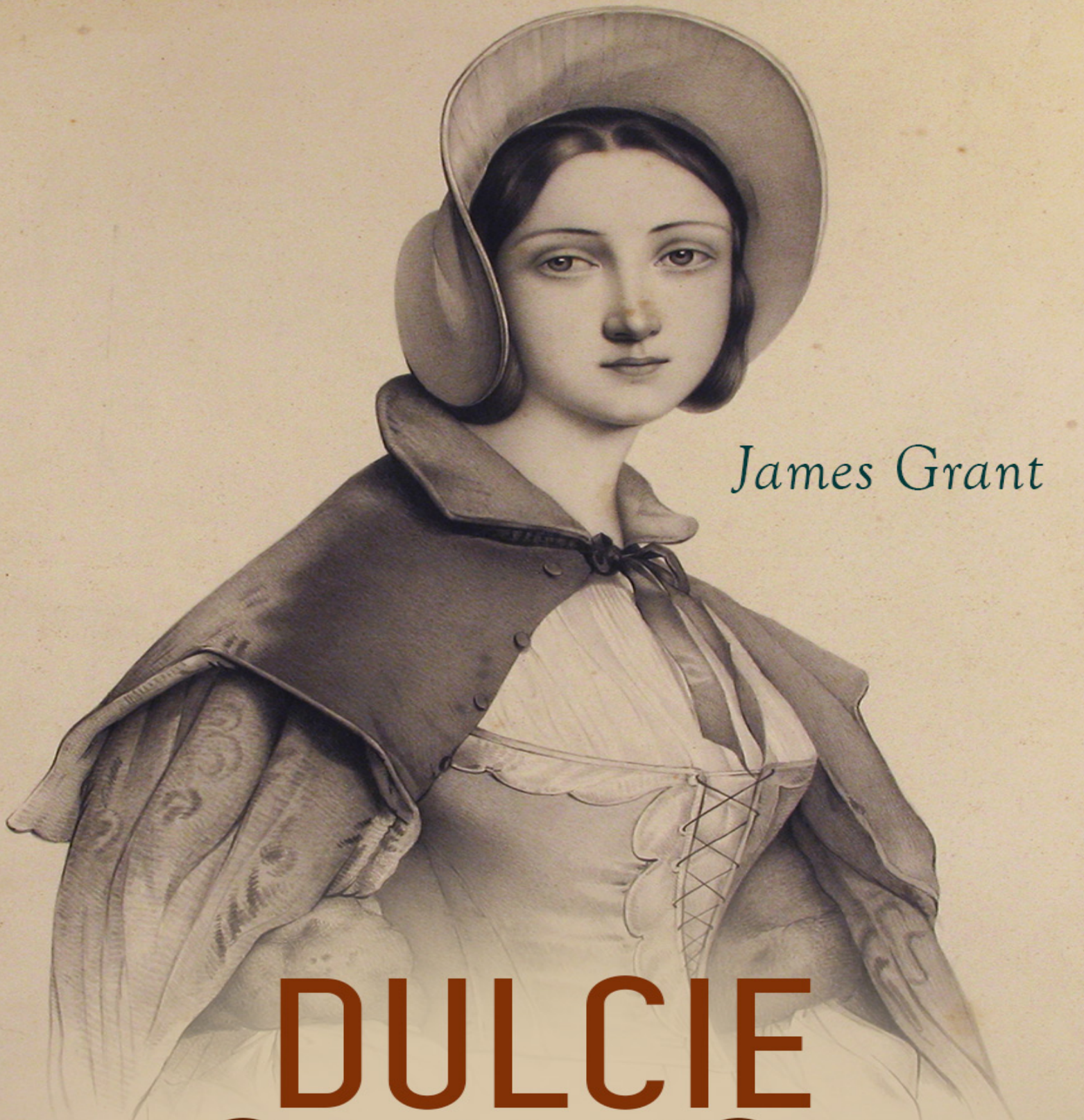

James Grant

DULCIE CARLYON

(Vol. 1-3)

James Grant

Dulcie Carlyon (Vol. 1-3)

Historical Novel

e-artnow, 2022
Contact: info@e-artnow.org

EAN: 4066338127426

Table of Contents

Volume 1

Table of Contents

Chapter I.
In the Howe of the Mearns.

Table of Contents

'This will end in a scene, Fettercairn, and you know how I hate scenes.'

'So do I, they are such deuced bad form.'

'I shall need all my self-possession to get over the *esclandre* this affair may cause,' exclaimed the lady, fanning herself violently.

'Well, life is made up of getting over things,' responded her husband.

'But not things so disgraceful as this, Fettercairn!'

'Is this son of yours in his senses?'

'Who is that loves? it has been asked,' said the culprit referred to.

'A marriage between you and a penniless girl in her rank of life is not to be thought of, Lennard.'

'Her rank of life, father?'

'Yes!'

'Her father's rank was superior to that of the first of our family, when life began with him.'

'What is that to you or to me now?'

'Much to me.'

'Too much, it would seem.'

The excited speakers were a Peer, Cosmo, Lord Fettercairn, his wife, the Lady thereof, and their youngest son, Lennard Melfort, a captain of the line, home on leave from India, who had been somewhat timidly venturing to break—knowing the inordinate family vanity of his parents—we say to break the news of his love for a girl possessed of

more beauty than this world's goods; and, in his excitement and indignation, his lordship's usual easy, indolent, and drawling way was forgotten now when addressing his son.

Cosmo, Lord Fettercairn of that Ilk (and Strathfinella in the Mearns) was by nature a proud, cold, selfish, and calculating man, whose chief passion in life was a combined spirit of enormous vanity and acquisitiveness, which he inherited from his predecessors, whom he resembled in political caution and selfishness, and also in personal appearance, to judge from the portraits of three generations, by Sir John de Medina, Aikman, and Raeburn, adorning the walls of the stately room in the house of Craigengowan, where this rather stormy interview took place.

Tall and thin in figure, with flat square shoulders and sandy-coloured hair, cold grey eyes, and irregular features, he was altogether a contrast to his son Lennard, who inherited his slightly aquiline nose and perfect face from his mother, but his firm dark eyes and rich brown hair from a previous generation; and these, together with an olive complexion, rendered more dusky by five years' exposure to an Indian sun, made his aspect a very striking one.

My Lady Fettercairn's birth and breeding were, as Sir Bernard Burke had recorded, irreproachable, and she certainly seemed a *grande dame* to the tips of her long slender fingers. She was about forty-five years of age, but looked ten younger. The upper part of her aristocratic face was strikingly handsome; but the lower, with its proud and firm lips, was less pleasant to look at. Her complexion was almost colourless, her hair of the lightest brown, like her eyebrows and lashes; while her eyes were clear and blue as an Alpine sky, and, as Lennard often thought with a sigh, they seemed quite as—cold.

Her manner was always calm, assured, and self-possessed. She would smile, but that smile never degenerated into honest laughter, while her pale and impressive face was without a line—especially on her forehead—that seemed to indicate either thought or reflection, and certainly she had never known care or sorrow or even annoyance until now.

'She is beautiful, mother,' urged the young man, breaking an ominous silence, with reference to the object of his love.

'Perhaps; but she is not one of us,' exclaimed Lady Fettercairn, cresting up her handsome head haughtily, and a whole volume of intense pride and hauteur was centred in the last word she spoke.

'Who is this Flora MacIan, as she calls herself?' asked his father in a similar tone; 'but I need not ask. You have already told us she is the governess in a house you have been recently visiting—that of Lady Drumshoddy—a governess, with all her beauty, poor and obscure.'

'Not so obscure,' said Lennard, a wave of red passing under the tan of his olive cheek; 'her father was a gallant old officer of the Ross-shire Buffs, who earned his V.C. at the battle of Khooshab, in Persia, and her only brother and support fell when leading on his Grenadiers at the storming of Lucknow. The old captain was, as his name imports, a cadet of the Macdonalds of Glencoe.'

'With a pedigree of his family, no doubt, from the grounding of the Ark to the battle of Culloden,' sneered his father.

'Then his family would end soon after ours began,' retorted the son, becoming greatly ruffled now. 'You know, father, we can't count much beyond three generations ourselves.'

Lord Fettercairn, wounded thus in his sorest point, grew white with anger.

'We always suspected you of having some secret, Lennard,' said his mother severely.

'Ah, mother, unfortunately, as some one says, a secret is like a hole in your coat—the more you try to hide it, the more it is seen.'

'An aphorism, and consequently vulgar; does *she* teach you this style of thing?' asked the haughty lady, while Lennard reddened again with annoyance, and gave his dark moustache a vicious twist, but sighed and strove to keep his temper.

'I have found and felt it very bitter, father, to live under false colours,' said he gently and appealingly, 'and to keep that a secret from you both, which should be no secret at all.'

'We would rather not have heard this secret,' replied Lord Fettercairn sternly, while tugging at his sandy-coloured mutton-chop whiskers.

'Then would you have preferred that I should be deceitful to you, and false to the dear girl who loves and trusts me?'

'I do not choose to consider *her*,' was the cold reply.

'But I do, and must, now!'

'Why?'

'Because we are already married—she is my wife,' was the steady response.

'Married!' exclaimed his father and mother with one accord, as they started from their chairs together, and another ominous silence of a minute ensued.

'My poor, lost boy—the prey of an artful minx!' said Lady Fettercairn, looking as if she would like to weep; but tears were rather strangers to her cold blue eyes.

'Mother, dear mother, if you only knew her, you would not talk thus of Flora,' urged Lennard almost piteously. 'If we had it in our power to give love and to withhold it, easy indeed would our progress be through life.'

'Love—nonsense!'

'Save to the two most interested, who are judges of it,' said Lennard. 'Surely you loved my father, and he you.'

'Our case was very different,' replied Lady Fettercairn, in her anger actually forgetting herself so far as to bite feathers off her fan with her firm white teeth.

'How, mother dear?'

'In rank and wealth we were equal.'

Lennard sighed, and said:

'I little thought that you, who loved me so, would prove all but one of the mothers of Society.'

'What do you mean, sir?' demanded his father.

'What a writer says.'

'And what the devil does he say?'

'That "love seems such a poor and contemptible thing in their eyes in comparison with settlements. Perhaps they forget their own youth; one does, they say, when he outlives romance. And I suppose bread and butter is better than poetry any day."'

'I should think so.'

'We had other and brilliant views for you,' said his mother in a tone of intense mortification, 'but now——'

'Leave us and begone, and let us look upon your face no more,' interrupted his father in a voice of indescribable sternness, almost hoarse with passion, as he pointed to the door.

'Mother!' said Lennard appealingly, 'oh, mother!' But she averted her face, cold as a woman of ice, and said, 'Go!'

'So be it,' replied Lennard, gravely and sadly, as he drew himself up to the full height of his five feet ten inches, and a handsome and comely fellow he looked as he turned away and left the room.

'Thank God, his elder brother, Cosmo, is yet left to us!' exclaimed Lady Fettercairn earnestly.

It was the last time in this life he ever heard his mother's voice, and he quitted the house. On the terrace without, carefully he knocked the ashes out of his cherished briar-root, put it with equal care into its velvet-lined case, put the case into his pocket, and walked slowly off with a grim and resolute expression in his fine young face, upon which from that day forth his father and mother never looked again.

Then he was thinking chiefly of the sweet face of the young girl who had united her fortunes with his, and who was anxiously awaiting the result of the interview we have described.

Sorrow, mortification, and no small indignation were in the heart of Lennard Melfort at the result of the late interview.

'I have been rash,' he thought, 'in marrying poor Flora without their permission, but that they would never have accorded, even had they seen her; and none fairer or more beautiful ever came as a bride to Craigengowan.'

Pausing, he gave a long and farewell look at the house so named—the home of his boyhood.

It stands at some distance from the Valley of the Dee (which forms the natural communication between the central Highlands and the fertile Lowlands) in the Hollow or Howe of the Mearns. Situated amid luxuriant woods, glimpses of Craigengowan obtained from the highway only excite curiosity without gratifying it, but a nearer approach reveals its picturesque architectural features.

These are the elements common to most northern mansions that are built in the old Scottish style—a multitude of conical turrets, steep crowstepped gables and dormer gablets, encrusted with the monograms and armorial bearings of the race who were its lords when the family of Fettercairn were hewers of wood and drawers of water.

The turrets rise into kindred forms in the towers and gables, and are the gradual accumulation of additions made at various times on the original old square tower, rather than a part of the original design, but the effect of the whole is extremely rich and picturesque.

In the old Scottish garden was an ancient sun and moon dial, mossy and grey, by which many a lover had reckoned the time in the days of other years.

Of old, Craigengowan belonged to an exiled and attainted Jacobite family, from whom it passed readily enough into the hands of the second Lord Fettercairn, a greedy and unscrupulous Commissioner on the forfeited estates of the unfortunate loyalists. It had now many modern comforts and appliances; the entrance-hall was a marble-paved apartment, off which the principal sitting-rooms opened, and now a handsome staircase led to the upper chambers, whilom the abode of barons who ate the beef and mutton their neighbours fed in the valley of the Dee.

The grounds were extensive and beautiful, and Lord Fettercairn's flower gardens and conservatories were renowned throughout Angus and the Mearns.

To the bitter storm that existed in his own breast, and that which he had left in those of his parents, how peaceful by contrast looked the old house and the summer scenery to Lennard—the place on which he probably would never gaze again.

There was a breeze that rustled the green leaves in the thickets, but no wind. Beautiful and soft white clouds floated lazily in the deep blue sky, and a recent shower had freshened up every tree, meadow, and hedgerow. The full-eared wheat grew red or golden by the banks of the Bervie, and the voice of the cushat dove came from the autumn woods from time to time as with a sigh Lennard Melfort turned his back on Craigengowan for ever, cursing, as he went, the pride of his family, for, though not an old one, by title or territory, they were as proud as they were unscrupulous in politics.

The first prominent member of the family, Lennard Melfort, had been a Commissioner for the Mearns in the Scottish Parliament, and for political services had been raised to the peerage by Queen Anne as Lord Fettercairn and Strathfinella, and was famous for nothing but selling his Union vote for the same sum as my Lord Abercairnie, £500, and for having afterwards 'a rug at the compensation,' as the English equivalent money was called. After the battle of Sheriffmuir saw half the old peerages of Scotland attainted, he obtained Craigengowan, and was one 'who,' as the minister of Inverbervie said, 'wad sell his soul to the deil for a crackit saxpence.'

With the ex-Commissioner the talent—such as it was—of the race ended, and for three generations the Lords of Fettercairn had been neither better nor worse than peers of Scotland generally; that is, they were totally oblivious of the political interests of that country, and of everything but their own self-aggrandisement by marriage or otherwise.

Lennard Melfort seemed the first of the family that proved untrue to its old instincts.

'And I had made up my mind that he should marry Lady Drumshoddy's daughter—she has a splendid fortune!'

wailed Lady Fettercairn.

'Married my governess—the girl MacIan!' snorted my Lady Drumshoddy when she heard of the dreadful mésalliance. 'Why marry the creature? He might love her, of course—all men are alike weak—but to marry her—oh, no!'

And my Lady Drumshoddy was a very moral woman according to her standard, and carried her head very high.

When tidings were bruited abroad of what happened, and the split in the family circle at Craigengowan, there were equal sorrow and indignation expressed in the servants' hall, the gamekeepers' lodges, and the home farm, for joyous and boyish Captain Melfort was a favourite with all on the Fettercairn estates; and Mrs. Prim, his mother's maid, actually shed many tears over the untoward fate he had brought upon himself.

Chapter II.
Wedded.

Table of Contents

'And you will love me still, Flora, in spite of this bitter affront to which you are subjected for my sake?' said Lennard.

'Yes,' said the girl passionately, 'I love you, Lennard—love you so much,' she added, while her soft voice broke and her blossom-like lips quivered, 'that were I to lose you I would die!'

'My darling, you cannot lose me now,' he responded, while tenderly caressing her.

'Are we foolish to talk in this fashion, Lennard?'

'Foolish?'

'Yes—or rash. I have heard that it is not lucky for people to love each other so much as we do.'

'Could we love each other less?'

'I don't think so,' said she simply and sweetly, as he laid her cheek on his breast with her upturned eyes gazing into his.

The girl was slight and slender, yet perfect was every curve of her shapely figure, which was destitute of any straight line; even her nose was, in the slightest degree, aquiline. Her beautifully arched mouth, the scarlet line of her upper lip, and the full round of the nether one were parted in a tender smile, just enough to show her teeth, defied all criticism; her complexion was pure and soft, and her eyes were of the most liquid hazel, with almost black lashes. Her hair was of the same tint, and Flora seemed a lady to perfection, especially by the whiteness and delicacy of her beautifully shaped little hands.

When she walked she did so gracefully, as all Highland women do, and like them held her head poised on her slender neck so airily and prettily that her nurse, Madelon, called her 'the swan.'

'How I trembled, Lennard,' said she, after a pause, 'as I thought of the *mauvais quart d'heure* you were undergoing at Craigengowan.'

'It was a *mauvais* hour and more, darling.'

'And ever and anon I felt that strange chill, or shudder, which Nurse Madelon says people feel when some one crosses the place where their grave is to be. How can your parents be so cruel to you?'

'And to you, Flora!'

'Ah, that is different,' she replied, with her eyes full of unshed tears, and in a pained voice. 'Doubtless they consider me a very designing girl; but in spite of that, you will always care for me as much as you do now?'

'Why such fears? Ever and always—ever and always, my darling,' said Lennard Melfort, stopping her questioning lips most effectually for a time.

'Oh, if you should ever come to regret, and with regret to love me less!' said she, in a low voice, with her eyes for a moment fixed on vacancy.

'Why that boding thought, Flora?'

'Because, surely, such great love never lasts.'

He kissed her again as the readiest response.

But the sequel proved that his great love outlasted her own life, poor girl!

Then they sat long silent, hand locked in hand, while the gloaming deepened round them, for words seem poor and feeble when the heart is very full.

'How long will they continue to despise me?' said Flora suddenly, while across her soft cheeks there rushed the hot

blood of a long and gallant line of Celtic ancestors.

An exclamation of bitterness—almost impatience, escaped Lennard.

'Let us forget them—father, mother, all!' said he.

The girl looked passionately into the face of her lover-husband—the husband of a month; and never did her bright hazel eyes seem more tender and soft than now, with all the fire of love and pride sparkling in their depths, for her Highland spirit and nature revolted at the affront to which she was subjected.

The bearing of Lennard Melfort and the poise of his close-shorn head told that he was a soldier, and a well-drilled one; and the style of his light grey suit showed how thoroughly he was a gentleman; and to Flora's loving and partial eye he was every-way a model man.

They had been married just a month, we have said, a month that very day, and Lennard had brought his bride to the little burgh town, within a short distance of Craigengowan, and left her in their apartments while he sought with his father and mother the bootless interview just narrated.

For three days before he had the courage to bring it about, they had spent the time together, full of hopeful thoughts, strolling along the banks of the pretty Bervie, from the blue current of which ever and anon the bull-trout and the salmon rise to the flies; or in the deep and leafy recourses of the adjacent woods, and climbing the rugged coast, against which the waves of the German Sea were rolling in golden foam; or ascending Craig David, so called from David II. of Scotland—a landmark from the sea for fifteen leagues—for both had a true and warm appreciation and artistic love of Nature in all her moods and aspects.

The sounds of autumn were about them now; the hum of insects and the song of the few birds that yet sang; the fragrance of the golden broom and the sweet briar, with a score of other sweet and indefinable scents and balmy breaths. All around them was scenic beauty and peace, and yet with all their great love for each other, their hearts were heavy at the prospect of their future, which must be a life of banishment in India, and to the heaviness of Lennard was added indignation and sorrow. But he could scarcely accuse himself of having acted rashly in the matter of his marriage, for to that his family would never have consented; and he often thought could his mother but see Flora in her beauty and brightness, looking so charming in her smart sealskin and bewitching cap and feather, and long skirt of golden-brown silk that matched her hair and eyes—every way a most piquante-looking girl!

Young though he was, and though a second son, Lennard Melfort had been a favourite with more than one Belgravian belle and her mamma, and there were few who had not something pleasant or complimentary to say of him since his return from India. At balls, fêtes, garden and water parties, girls had given him the preference to many who seemed more eligible, had reserved for him dances on their programmes, sang for him, made unmistakable *œillades*, and so forth; for his handsome figure and his position made him very acceptable, though he had not the prospects of his elder brother, the Hon. Cosmo.

Lady Fettercairn knew how Lennard was regarded and valued well, and nourished great hopes therefrom; but this was all over and done with now.

To her it seemed as if he had thrown his very life away, and that when his marriage with a needy governess—however beautiful and well born she might be—became

known, all that charmed and charming circle in Belgravia and Tyburnia would regard him as a black sheep indeed; would shake their aristocratic heads, and pity poor Lord and Lady Fettercairn for having such a renegade son.

Flora's chief attendant—a Highland woman who had nursed her in infancy—was comically vituperative and indignant at the affront put by these titled folks upon 'her child' as she called her.

Madelon Galbraith was strong, healthy, active, and only in her fortieth year, with black eyes and hair, a rich ruddy complexion, a set of magnificent white teeth, and her manner was full of emphatic, almost violent, gesticulation peculiar to many Highlanders, who seem to talk with their hands and arms quite as much as the tongue.

Sometimes Madelon spoke in her native Gaelic, but generally in the dialect of the Lowlands.

'Set them up indeed,' she muttered; 'wha are the Melforts o' Fettercairn, that they should slight you—*laoghe mo chri*?' she added, softly (calf of my heart). 'What a pity it is ye canna fling at their heads the gold they love, for even a Lowland dog winna yowl gin ye pelt him wi' banes. But you've begun wi' love and marriage, and a gude beginning mak's a gude ending.'

'But we shall be so poor, Nursie Madelon, and I have ruined my poor Lennard,' urged Flora, as the kind woman caressed her.

'They say a kiss and a cup of water mak' but a wersh breakfast,' laughed Madelon; 'but you're no sae puir as that comes to, my darling.'

'Not quite' said Flora, laughing faintly, in turn. 'Yet I have sorely injured my husband's prospects.'

'Tut, tut, my bairn. Ony man can woo, but he weds only whar his weird lies; and so Captain Melfort wedded you, and

wha better? Then what is a Lord that we should *lippen* to *him*? As long as ye serve a tod ye maun carry his tail? And your father's daughter may carry her head wi' the highest.'

Lennard Melfort now resolved neither verbally nor by letter to have further intercourse with his family at Craigengowan or elsewhere, but before he could make up his mind what to do or could betake him south, as he meant to quit Scotland without delay, on the day subsequent to the stormy interview Madelon announced a visitor, and on a salver brought in a card inscribed—'MR. KENNETH KIPPILAW, W.S.'

Chapter III.
The Spurned Offer.

Table of Contents

'The family agent from Edinburgh, Flora,' said Lennard, in answer to her inquiring glance. 'Mrs. Melfort,' he added, introducing her to their visitor, who bowed with a critical glance and appreciative smile.

'I have been telegraphed for by your father, Captain Melfort,' said Mr. Kippilaw, as they shook hands and he was motioned to a chair.

A hale, hearty, unpretentious, business-like man, about forty years of age, Mr. Kenneth Kippilaw was too well-bred and too sensible to begin the matter in hand by any remarks about youthful imprudence, early marriages, or so forth, as he knew the pride and temperament of the young man before him, but laid down his hat, and, after some of that familiar weather talk which is the invariable prelude to any conversation over all the British Isles, he gently approached the object of his mission, which Flora, in the simplicity and terror of her heart, never doubted was a separation of some kind between herself and Lennard, so with a pallid face she bowed and withdrew.

'To what am I indebted for the pleasure of this—a—unexpected interview?' asked Lennard, a little stiffly.

'Instructions just received from your father, Captain Melfort.'

'Then you have come from Craigengowan?'

'Straight.'

'Has he made up his mind to accept my wife as his daughter-in-law?'

'Quite the reverse, I regret to say.'

Lennard's face darkened with indignation, and he gave his moustache an angry twist.

'Are my father and mother determined to ignore the fact that she is a lady by birth?' asked Lennard after a gloomy pause.

'Yes—they know, of course, that she is a lady,' stammered Mr. Kippilaw, feeling his mission an ungracious one, 'but poor—one who has sunk into obscurity and dependence—pardon me, I but use their own identical words.

'Well?'

'What is done in this instance unfortunately cannot be undone, Captain Melfort; but his lordship, feeling, of course, keenly in the matter, is willing to continue your allowance, and even to double it, on one condition.

'Name it.'

Mr. Kippilaw sighed, for though, as a lawyer, considerably hardened, he felt the delicacy of the whole situation, and Lennard's dark eyes seemed to focus and pierce him.

'The condition—to the point!'

'Is—that you will return to India——'

'I mean to do so forthwith,' interrupted Lennard sharply.

'Or you may live anywhere out of Britain, but never attempt to intrude Mrs. Melfort upon your family or their circle, and contrive, if possible, to let that circle forget your existence.'

'Insolent—and cruel as insolent!' exclaimed Lennard Melfort as he started from his chair and paced about the room, with his dark eyes flashing and the veins in his forehead swollen like whip-cord.

'The words I speak are not my own,' said Mr. Kippilaw, deprecatingly.

'Return to Craigengowan, and tell my father that I reject his bribe to insult my wife—for a bribe it is—with the scorn it merits. Not a penny of his money will I accept while my sword and pay, or life itself, are left me. Tell Lord and Lady Fettercairn that I view myself as their son no more. As they discard me, so do I discard them; and even their *very name* I shall not keep—remember that!'

'Dear me—dear me, all this is very sad!'

'They have thrust me from them as if I had been guilty of a crime——'

'Captain Melfort!'

'A crime I say—yet a day may come when they will repent it; and from this hour I swear——'

'Not in anger,' interrupted Mr. Kippilaw, entreatingly; 'take no hasty vow in your present temper.'

'I swear that to them and theirs I shall be—from this hour—as one in the grave!'

'But,' urged the lawyer, 'but suppose—which God forbid—that aught happened to your elder brother, Mr. Cosmo Melfort?'

'I wish Cosmo well; but I care not for my interest in the title—it may become dormant, extinct, for aught that I care. Neither I nor any of mine shall ever claim it, nor shall I again set foot in Craigengowan, or on the lands around it—no, never again, never again!'

To every argument of the kind-hearted Mr. Kippilaw, who really loved the Fettercairn family and esteemed the high-spirited Lennard, the latter turned a deaf ear.

He departed in despair of softening matters between the rash son and indignant parents. To them he greatly modified the nature of the useless interview, but they heard of Lennard's determination with perfect unconcern, and even with a grim smile of contempt, never doubting that when

money pressure came upon him they would find him at their mercy. But that time never came.

Mr. Kippilaw returned to Edinburgh, and there the affair seemed to end.

The parting words of Lord Fettercairn to him were said smilingly and loftily:—

'The French have a little phrase, which in six words expresses all our experiences in life.'

'And this phrase, my lord?'

'Is simply—*tout passe, tout casse, tout lasse*—that we outlive everything in turn and in time—and so this matter of Lennard's pride will be a matter of time only. Be assured we shall outlive the indignation of our misguided son.'

'But will you outlive your own?'

'Never!'

'I can but hope that you will, my lord. Remember the hackneyed quotation from Pope—"To err is human, to forgive divine."

'I never forgive!' replied his lordship bitterly.

The name of Lennard was never uttered again by his parents, nor even by his brother Cosmo (then reading up at Oxford) till the hour for forgiveness was past; and even Cosmo they contrived to innoculate with their own cruel and unchristian sentiment of hostility. Lennard's portrait was removed from its place of honour in the dining-hall, and banished to the lumber-attic; the goods, chattels, and mementoes he left at home were scattered and dispersed; even his horses were sold, and the saddles he had used; and the Fettercairn family would—could they have done so—have obliterated his name from the great double-columned tome of Sir Bernard Burke.

Heedless of all that, the young husband and his dark-eyed girl-wife were all the world to each other.

'After mamma followed papa to the grave, Lennard—for she never held up her head after she heard of his death at Khooshab,' said Flora, as she nestled her head in his neck, 'I seemed to be condemned to a life of hardship, humiliation, and heartlessness, till I met you, dearest. I felt that even the love of some dumb animal—a dog or a horse—was better than the entire absence of affection in the narrow circle of my life. I did so long for something or some one to love me exclusively—I felt so miserably, so utterly alone in the world. Now I have you—*you* to love me. But in winning you I have robbed you of the love of all your people.'

'Talk not of it, and think not of it, dearest Flora. We are now more than ever all in all to each other.'

The money bribe, offered in such a way and for such a purpose, exasperated Lennard still more against his family, and drew many a tear of humiliation from Flora in secret.

She thought that she had wrought Lennard a great wrong by winning his love for herself, and she was now burning with impatience to turn her back on the shores of Britain and find a new home in India; and there, by staff or other employments and allowances, Lennard knew that he could gain more than the yearly sum his father so mortifyingly offered him.

Flora wept much over it all, we say, and her appetite became impaired; but she did not—like the heroine of a three-volume novel—starve herself into a fright.

But a short time before she had been a childish and simple maiden—one sorely tried, however, and crushed by evil fortune; but with Lennard Melfort now, 'the prince had come into her existence and awakened her soul, and she was a woman—innocent still—but yet a woman.'

The scenery of the Mearns looked inexpressibly lovely in the purity and richness of its verdure and varied artistic

views, for the woods were profusely tinted with gold, russet brown, and red, when Lennard Melfort turned his back upon it and his native home for ever!

The birds were chirping blithly, and the voice of the corncraik, with

'The sweet strain that the corn-reapers sang,'

came on the evening breeze together. The old kirk bell was tolling in the distance, and its familiar sound spoke to Lennard's heart of home like that of an old friend. The river was rolling under its great arch of some eighty feet in span, the downward reflection of the latter in the water making a complete circle like a giant O. The old castle of Halgreen, with its loopholed battlements of the fourteenth century, stood blackly and boldly upon its wave-beaten eminence, and the blue smoke of picturesque Gourdon, a fisher village, curled up on the ambient air, as the scenery faded out in the distance.

Flora became marvellously cheerful when their journey fairly began, and laughingly she sung in Lennard's ear—

'The world goes up and the world goes down,
But *yesterday's* smile and *yesterday's* frown
Can never come back again, sweet friend—
Can never come back again!'

Means were not forgotten to support nurse Madelon in her native place, where we shall leave her till she reappears in our narrative again.

So Lennard and his girl-wife sailed for India, full of love for each other and hope for their own lonely and unaided future, and both passed for ever out of the lives and

apparently out of the memory of the family at Craigengowan.

Times there were when he hoped to distinguish himself, so that the circle there—those who had renounced him—would be proud of him; but in seeking that distinction rashly, he might throw away his life, and thus leave his little Flora penniless on the mercy of a cold world and a proverbially ungrateful Government.

But they could not forget home, and many a time and oft, where the sun-baked cantonments of Meerut seemed to vibrate under the fierce light of the Indian sun, where the temples of Hurdwar from their steep of marble steps look down upon the Ganges, or where the bungalows of Cawnpore or Etwah, garlanded with fragrant jasmine, stand by the rolling Jumna amid glorious oleanders and baubool trees, with their golden balls loading the air with perfume, while the giant heron stalked by the river's bed, the alligator basked in the ooze, and the Brahmin ducks floated overhead, Flora's sweet voice made Lennard's heart thrill as she sang to him the songs of the land they had resolved never to look upon again, even when that sound so stirring to the most sluggish Scottish breast when far away, the pipes of a Highland regiment, poured their notes on the hot sunny air.

At home none seemed to care or think of the discarded son but the worthy lawyer Kenneth Kippilaw, who had loved him as a lad, and could not get his hard fate out of his mind.

From time to time, inspired by kindness and curiosity, he watched his name among the captains in the military lists of that thick compendium which no Scottish business establishment is ever without—'Oliver and Boyd's Almanack.' Therein, after a while, the name of Lennard Melfort *disappeared*, but whether he was dead, had sold

out, or 'gone to the bad,' the worthy Writer to the Signet could not discover, and he not unnaturally sighed over what he deemed a lost life.

And here we end that which is a species of prologue to our story.

Chapter IV.
Revelstoke Cottage.

Table of Contents

More than twenty years had elapsed after the episodes we have described, and Lennard and Flora had found a new home, and she, her *last one*, more than four hundred and fifty miles as the crow flies from where Craigengowan looks down on the German Sea. But none that looked on Lennard Melfort now would have recognised in the prematurely aged man the handsome young fellow who in ire and disgust had quitted his native land.

In two years after he had gone eastward a dreadful fever, contracted in a place where he had volunteered on a certain duty to gain money for the support of his wife and her little Indian establishment—the Terrai of Nepaul, that miasmatic border of prairie which lies along the great forest of the Himalayas, and has an evil repute even among the natives of the country in the wet season when the leaves are falling.

This fever broke Lennard's health completely, and so changed him that his rich brown hair and moustache were grey at six-and-twenty, and ere long he looked like a man of twice his age.

'Can that fellow really be Lennard Melfort of the Fusiliers? Why, he is a veritable Knight of the Rueful Countenance!' exclaimed some old friends who saw him at 'The Rag,' when he came home to seek a place of quiet and seclusion in Devonshire, as it subsequently chanced to be.

Amid the apple bowers of the land of cider, and near a beautiful little bay into which the waters of the British

Channel rippled, stood the pretty and secluded cottage he occupied, as 'Major MacIan,' with his son and a nephew.

The wooded hills around it were not all covered with orchards, however, and the little road that wound round the bay ran under eminences that, from their aspect, might make a tourist think he was skirting a Swiss lake. Others were heath-clad and fringed at the base by a margin of grey rocks.

Into the bay flowed a stream, blue and transparent always. Here salmon trout were often found, and the young men spent hours at its estuary angling for rock fish.

A Devonshire cottage is said by Mrs. Bray to be 'the sweetest object that the poet, the artist, or the lover of the romantic could desire to see,' and such a cottage was that of Major MacIan, the name now adopted by Lennard—that of Flora's father—in fulfilment of the vow he had made to renounce the name, title, and existence of his family.

Around it, and in front sloping down to the bay, was a beautiful garden, teeming with the flowers and fruits of Devonshire. On three sides was a rustic verandah, the trellis work of which was covered by a woven clematis, sweetbriar, and Virginia creeper, which, in the first year of her residence there, Flora's pretty hands, cased in garden gloves, were never tired of tending; and now the Virginia creeper, with its luxuriant tendrils, emerald green in summer, russet and red in autumn, grew in heavy masses over the roof and around the chimney stalks, making it, as Flora was wont to say exultingly, 'quite a love of a place!'

On one hand lay the rolling waters of the Channel, foaming about the Mewstone Rock; on the other, a peep was given amid the coppice of the ancient church of Revelstoke, and here the married pair lived happily and alone for a brief time.

Save for the advent of a ship passing in sight of the little bay, it was a sleepy place in which Lennard, now retired as a major, had 'pitched his tent,' as he said—the Cottage of Revelstoke. Even in these railway times people thereabout were content with yesterday's news. There was no gas to spoil the complexions of the young, and no water rates to 'worrit' the old; and telegrams never came, in their orange-tinted envelopes, to startle the hearts of the feeble and the sickly.

No monetary transactions having taken place, and no correspondence being necessary, between Lennard and his family or their legal agent, Mr. Kippilaw, for more than twenty years now, he had quite passed away from their knowledge, and almost from their memory; and many who knew them once cared not, perhaps, whether he or his wife were in the land of the living.

A son, we have said, had been born to them, and Lennard named the child Florian, after his mother (here again ignoring his own family), whom that event cost dear, for the sweet and loving Flora never recovered her health or strength—injured, no doubt, in India—but fell into a decline, and, two years after, passed away in the arms of Lennard and her old nurse, Madelon.

Lonely, lonely indeed, did the former feel now, though an orphan nephew of Flora—the son of her only sister—came to reside with him—Shafto Gyle by name—one who will figure largely in our story.

Would Lennard ever forget the day of her departure, when she sank under that wasting illness with which no doctor could grapple? Ever and always he could recall the sweet but pallid face, the white, wasted hands, the fever-lighted dark eyes, which seemed so unnaturally large when, after one harrowing night of pain and delirium, she became