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PATSY

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Patsy

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CHAPTER I

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HEIRESS AND HEIR

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They stood high on the Abbey cliff-edge—an old man, eagle-profiled, hawk-beaked, cockatoo-crested, with angry grey eyebrows running peakily upwards towards his temples at either side... and a boy.

They were the Earl Raincy and his grandson Louis—all the world knew them in that country of the Southern Albanach. For Leo Raincy was a great man, and the lad the heir of all he possessed.

For all—or almost all—they looked upon belonged to the Earl of Raincy. Even those blue hills bounding the meadow valleys to the north hid a fair half of his property, and he was sorry for that. Because he was a land miser, hoarding parishes and townships. He grudged the sea its fringe of foam, the three-mile fishing limit, the very high-and-low mark between the tides which was not his, but belonged to the crown—along which the common people had a right to pass, and where fisherfolk from the neighbouring villages might fish and dry their nets, when all ought to have been his.

The earl's dark eyes passed with carelessness over hundreds of farm-towns, snug sheltered villages, mills with little threads of white wimpling away from the unheard

constant clack of the wheel, barns, byres and stackyards—all were his, but of these he took no heed.

Behind them Castle Raincy itself stood up finely from the plain of corn-land and green park, an artificial lake in front, deep trees all about, patterned gardens, the fiery flash of hot-house glass where the sun struck, and pinnacles high in air, above all the tall tower from which Margaret de Raincy had defied the English invader during the minority of James the Fifth. The earl's eyes passed all these over. He did not see them as aught to take pride in.

What he lingered upon was the wide pleasant valley beneath him, with a burn running and lurking among twinkling birches, interspersed with alders, many finely drained fields with the cows feeding belly-deep with twitching tails, and the sweep of the ripening crops which ran off to either side over knolls carefully planed down—and so back and back to the shelter of dark fir woods. Twelve hundred acres—and not his! Not a Raincy stone upon it, nor had been for four hundred years.

There were two houses on this twelve hundred acres of good land. First came Cairn Ferris, at the head of the glen of the Abbey Water. Close to the road that, under the lee of the big pines, a plain, douce, much-ivied house; and down in a nook by the sea, Abbey Burnfoot, called "The Abbey," a newer and brighter place, set like a jewel on the very edge of the sea, the white sand in front and the blue sweep of the bay widening out on either hand. Horrible—oh, most horrible! Not his—nor ever would be!

This was the blot which blackened all the rest—the property of the Ferrises of Cairn Ferris, of Adam, chief of the name at the top of the Glen, and of his brother Julian—he who had cursed the noble scythe-sweep of the Abbey Bay, which all

ought to have been untouched Raincy property, with crow-stepped gables and beflowered verandahs.

"They stole it, boy, stole it!" muttered old Earl Raincy, setting a shaking hand on the boy's shoulder, "four hundred years ago they stole it. They came with the Stuart king who had nothing to do in the Free Province, and we stood for the Douglasses, as was our duty. Your ancestor and mine was killed at Arkinholm with three earls and twenty barons, he not the least noble!"

He paused a moment to control his senile anger and then went quavering on.

"This Ferris was a mercenary—a fighter for his own hand, and they gave him *this* while we were exiled. And they have held it ever since—the pick of our heritage—the jewel in the lotus. Often we have asked it back—often taken it. But because they married into the Fife Wemysses—yes, even this last of them, they have always retaken and held it, to our despit!"

The boy on the stile, sprawling and thinking of something else (for he had heard all this fifty times before), yawned.

"Well, there's plenty more—why worry, grandfather?" he said, fanning himself with the blue velvet college cap that had a bright gold badge in front.

The old man started as if stung. He frowned and blinked like an angry bald eagle.

"There speaks the common wash of Whiggish blood. MacBryde will out!—No Raincy would thus have sold his birthright for a mess of pottage."

The eyes of the lad were still indolent, but also somewhat impudent in schoolboy fashion, as he answered, "Still, grandfather, mother's MacBryde money has paid off a good

many Raincy—encumbrances, don't you call them here?—mortgages is the name for them in England! And more than that, don't go back and worry mother about these old cow-pastures. You know you are really very fond of her. As for me, I may not be a real Raincy, for I was born to do something in life, not to idle through it. You won't let me go into the navy, and fight as a man ought. If I go into the army, we shall have mother in a permanent fit. So I must just stop on and lend a hand where I can, till I am old enough to turn out that thief of an estate agent of yours and do something to help you—really, I mean!"

"Remember you are a Raincy by name, whatever you may be by nature," said the old man. Suddenly the boy stood up straight and firm before him, with a dourness on his face which was clearly not akin to the swoop and dash of his vulturine grandfather.

"If you don't let me do as I like here—do something real which will show that I have not been to school and the university for nothing, I shall go straight to the ship-building yard and get my uncle, mother's brother David, to take me on as an apprentice! We still own enough of the business to make him ready to do that."

Like one who hears and rebukes blasphemy, the old man made a gesture of despair with his hands, as though abandoning his grandson to his own evil courses, and then turned on his heel and walked slowly away towards the Castle.

With a sigh of relief the young man stretched himself luxuriously out on the broad triple plank of the stile, and drew from his pocket a brass spy-glass which he had been

itching to make use of for the past ten minutes. He also had his reasons for being interested in the Ferris properties which lay beneath him, every field and dyke and hedgerow, every curve of coast and curvet of breaking wave as clear and near as if he could have touched them merely by reaching out his finger. But Louis Raincy nourished no historical wraths nor feudal jealousies.

"I am sorry the old fellow is savage with me," he muttered as he looked about to make sure that his grandfather was not turning round to forgive him. "I'm sure I don't mean to make him angry. I promise mother every day. But why he wants to be for ever trotting out a grievance four hundred years old—hang me if I see. Anyway, Dame Comfort will soon put him all right. He gets on with her—he and I never hit it off... quite. I fear I wasn't born lordly, even though my father was a Raincy. They say he disgraced his family by being an artist, and that it was when he was painting Dame Comfort's portrait that—oh, I say, there's Patsy, or I'm the son of a Dutchman!"

As only the moment before he had been declaring himself the son of a De Raincy, this could hardly be. So there was good prima facie evidence that, in Louis's opinion, there *was* Patsy, whoever Patsy might be.

In a moment he had the spy-glass to his eye. He stilled the boyish flailing of his legs in the air as he lay prone on the stile-top, leaning on his elbows, and intently studying something that flashed and was lost among the birches that shaded the path up the glen of the Abbey Burn.

"Patsy it is, by Jove of the Capitol!" he proclaimed triumphantly, and shutting up the brass telescope with a facile snap of sliding tubes, he slipped it into his pocket and sprang off the stile. In three seconds he was on Ferris territory—and a trespasser. Louis Raincy was quick,

impulsive, with fair Norse hair blown in what the country folk called a "birse" about his face, and dark-blue western eyes—the eyes of the island MacBrydes who had built ships to ride the sea, and whose younger branches had captained and made fortunes out of far sea adventuring. So with the thoroughness of these same privateer shipbuilders, Louis precipitated himself down the steep breakneck cliff, catching the trunk of a pine here, or snatching at a birch and swinging right round it there to keep his speed from becoming a mere avalanche, till at last, breathed a little and with a scraped hand, of which he took not the slightest notice, he stood on the winding, hide-and-seek path which meanders along the side of the Abbey Burn, as it were, keeping step with it.

The pines stood about still and solemn. The light breeze from the sea made no difference to them, but the birches quivered, blotting the white of the path with myriads of purple splashes, none of which were distinct or ever for a second stood still, criss-crossing and melting one into the other, all equally a-dither with excitement.

Louis checked for a moment to breathe and listen. He said to himself that Patsy, for whose sake he had torn through the underbrush at the imminent danger of life and limb, was still far away down the glen.

"I shall go a bit farther till I find a snug corner and then—wait for Patsy!"

What Louis Raincy meant was that he would find a place equally sheltered from the eyes of his grandfather and from possible spies in the front windows of Cairn Ferris, the quiet ivy-grown house at the head of the glen, against which his grandfather had hurled so many anathemas in vain.

At last he found his place—a chosen nook. The sound of voices would be drowned by the splash of the little waterfall. The pool into which it fell was deep enough to keep any one from breaking in upon them too suddenly, and through a rift in the leaves a piece of bluest sky peered down. White of waterfall, sleepy brown of pool, dusky under an eyelash of bracken, and blue of sky—Patsy, who noticed all things, would like that.

But Patsy did not come. Could she have passed and he not seen? Clearly not, for Louis had come downhill as fast as a big boulder set a-rolling. What, then, could she be doing?

Ah, who could ever tell what Patsy might be doing or call her to account afterwards for the deed? Louis only knew that he dared not even try. All the same he left his nook with some disrelish—it would have been so capital a conjuncture to have met her just there, and he had taken such pains! However, there was no choice. He must go to seek Patsy if Patsy would not come to him.

She was returning from her daily lesson at her uncle Julian's. He knew that she would most likely have a book under her arm, and an ashplant in her hand. She would come along quietly, whistling low to herself, tickling the tails of the trout in the shallows with her stick and laughing aloud as they scudded away into the Vandyke-brown shadows of the bank.

The glen opened out a little and Louis paused at the corner, standing still in shadow.

Twenty yards away Patsy was talking to a young man in a shabby grey suit, a broad blue bonnet set on his head, and they were conferring profoundly over a book which Patsy held in her hands. The young man in the shabby suit appeared to be instructing Patsy, or at least explaining a

difficult passage, which he did with more zeal and gusto than Louis cared about.

He knew him in a moment, for of course the heir of Raincy knew everybody within thirty miles.

"Only Frank Airie, the Poor Scholar!" he said to himself, his jealousy melting like a summer cloud, "of course—what a fool I was. He's on his way home from teaching the Auchenmore brats. Though it is a miracle that he should happen to cross the glen at the same point exactly. Perhaps he had a spy-glass, too!"

What Louis noticed most of all was the pretty shape of Patsy's small head, the dense quavering blackness of the little curls that frothed about her brow, and the sidelong way she had of appealing to the giant who bent over her with his finger on the line of Virgil he was expounding.

Presently with a squaring of the shoulders and a grasp at the blue bonnet which lifted it clear of his head, the Poor Scholar strode away. He crossed the Abbey Burn in a couple of leaps, his feet hardly seeming to touch the stones, and in a moment more his tall figure was hoisting itself up the opposite bank, his hands grasping rock and tree-trunk, root and dry bent-grass indiscriminately, till presently, without once turning round, he was out of sight.

Louis Raincy detached himself from the rock by which he had stood silent during the interview with the Poor Scholar. He swung himself lightly up into the Y-shaped crotch of a willow that overhung the big pool.

The girl came along, her lips moving as she repeated the words of the passage she had just had explained. Then Louis Raincy whistled an air well known to both of them, "Can ye sew cushions, can ye sew sheets?"

Instantly the girl looked up, turning a vivid, scarlet-lipped face, crowned with a ripple of ink-black locks, to the notch of the willow, and said easily, "Hillo, Louis Raincy! What are you doing here, a mile off your own ground?"

"Watching you turn the head of that poor boy Francis Airie!"

"His head will not turn so easy as yours, Louis, lad," Patsy retorted; "there is a deal more in it!"

Louis Raincy was not in any way put out. Of course Patsy was different. You never knew in the least what she was going to say, and it would have grieved him exceedingly not to be abused. He would have been sure, either that the girl was sickening for a serious illness, or that he had mortally offended her.

"How did you leave the Wise Uncle this morning?" he asked, with a nod of his head in the direction of the house by the Abbey Burnfoot. Both had begun to climb a little way up out of the path by the waterside. They did so without any words. It was the regular order of things, as they both knew. For in the valley bottom Uncle Julian or Adam Ferris might come round the corner upon them in a moment, and being young, they wanted to talk without restraint. Besides, there was a constant coming and going of messengers between the two houses. A carriage road led along the highway to the cliffs, and then bent sharply down steep zigzags to the stables of the Abbey, but all ordinary intercourse between the houses was conducted along the footpath by the Abbey Burn.

"Uncle Julian," said the girl, as if continuing some former conversation, "is quite different from father. He has seen the world and can tell tales of black savages and Arab chiefs and piracy in the China seas. But father has just lived in his own house of Cairn Ferris all his life. You know he called me Patricia after my mother—Patricia Wemyss Ferris. Oh, not

even your grandfather is better known than my father. They made him a justice of the peace, too, but because he can do no good to the poor folk against the great landlords, he mostly stays at home. You know our house? From the outside—yes, of course. Well, when your grandfather will let you, you shall know it from the inside too. But not till then. Oh, it is big, roomy and quite comfortable, and though it would not hold an army like Castle Raincy, it is quite big enough to get lost in."

"Of course," said Raincy, vaguely feeling the necessity of defending himself and those who were his, "if it were not for grandfather and his wretched old feud, mother and I would come and see you to-morrow. She is—well, she would love you!"

"Would she, I doubt?" said Patsy, giving her bonnet a vicious jerk to bid it stay on her head; "mothers seldom like those whom their sons—"

"Adore!" put in Louis Raincy smilingly.

"Out, traitor!" cried the girl with a quick, scornful upthrow of the chin, "it is the smile that saves you, Louis, lad. Easy it is to see that you have had little experience of talking to women, when you come firing off words that ought to mean great things into the middle of a talk about smuggling cases and justices of the peace."

"But I do mean—" began Louis, preparing to take solemn oath.

"You mean nothing of the sort, and well it is for you, little boy. Quiet, now, and listen! I am a Pict—yes, I, Patsy Ferris! Uncle Julian says so. I am (so he tells me) a throwback to my grandmother's folk who were Fingauls—and her father the Laird of Kirkmaiden was the chief of them. That is why I do nothing, say nothing, think nothing like a scone-faced maid

of the Scots. I am centuries older than they. If it ever arrives to me to fall in love with any man—it seems impossible, but Uncle Julian says it will come—it is I who will seek that man and make him love me, and if he ever leaves me or is untrue, I shall kill him. For that is the way of the Fingaul. Uncle Julian says so."

As she explained her lot in life Patsy was peeling and eating a sappy root of rush which she had plucked. With this and a piece of clear brown gum, the exudation of a smooth-barked wild cherry tree, she made a delicious repast. She offered his share to Louis, who was in no mood for frivolities. In spite of his smile he had been hurt to the quick. But Patsy was perfectly calm, and having fixed a large lump of cherry-gum on a thorn, she licked round and round it with relish, occasionally holding it between her eye and the twinkle of the sun to see the effect of the deep amber hue.

Still she was circumspect, and when a figure in grey appeared tramping sturdily up the glen swinging a stick, she nudged her companion into sulky kind of attention.

"Uncle Julian," she said, after the tall clean-shaved man had turned the corner. "I wish you could see his house—properly, I mean, not just from the road."

"I have seen it from the sea!" said Louis, still grumpily.

"And that is no wise way to see it. There are always gentlemen of the Free Trade hanging about in the offing these days, and if they thought that the heir of Raincy was spying on them—well, they might take the liberty of throwing him overboard to sink or swim."

"But surely your uncle has nothing to do with smuggling or smugglers? My grandfather says that it is no business for a gentleman to dip his fingers in!"

"Your grandfather says a great many other things to which you do not pay great heed—else you would not be sitting here looking as gloomy as the raven that croaked when the old cow wouldn't die. No, sir, you would be sitting up on the stile yonder, cursing the Ferrises with bell, book and candle—and the old man helping you out when you forgot the words."

The girl went on sucking her cherry-gum without the least concern as to whether Louis Raincy was hurt in his feelings or no. If he were, the obvious alternative was before him. He could return to Castle Raincy the way he had come. About this or about him Patsy gave herself no trouble.

Indeed, Patsy gave herself no trouble about anything or anybody, and so accustomed herself to the management of men. Women, she knew, were different.

CHAPTER II

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THE MAIDENS' COVE

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Castle Raincy was a great lord's mansion, and the best of the neighbouring county folk were glad of a rare invitation there. Cairn Ferris was the ancient home of an ancient family, the house of a "bonnet" laird, but then the feather in the side of the Ferris bonnet had always been worn very proudly and gallantly indeed.

Abbey Burnfoot was the picturesque modern fancy of a cultured man of the world, who had come thither to live his life between his books, his paintings, his music, and the eternally fresh wash of the sea in the little white bay of pebble and shell underneath his windows.

But half a mile or a little more over the heuchs stood the farm of Glenanmays, which, with two or three smaller holdings and his own farm of Cairn Ferris, constituted the whole landed estate of Adam Ferris. The Garlands of Glenanmays had been holders of that farm and liegemen of Cairn Ferris almost from the days when the first Ferris settled on that noble brace of seaward-looking valleys, through which the Mays Water and the Abbey Burn trundled, roared and soughed to the sea.

The early years of the nineteenth century looked on no more characteristic farmhouse than that where dwelt Diarmid Garland and his brood, on the bank above the swift-

running water-race which turned the corn-mill with such deftness that people came from as far as Stranryan to admire.

A large farm it was, needing many hands to work it—byre, stable, plough-lands, hill pasture, flat and heathery in appearance and outline, but satisfactory for sheep-feeding—that was Glenanmays. Diarmid had three sons and four daughters, with most of whom this history must one time or another concern itself.

Diarmid also was no mean citizen of any state, hard to be driven, temperate, humorous and dour. He held for the old ways, and each day presided at meals, his bonnet of blue on his head, broad as a barrow-wheel, and brought all the way from Kilmarnock. All the rest of the table sat bareheaded—the sons and daughters whom God had given him, as well as the hired servant, and even the stranger within his gates.

For at Glenanmays there was no master but old Diarmid Garland. To each man and maid there was set down a plate of earthenware, a horn spoon, a knife and fork—that is, for all who fed at the high table, over which the blue Kilmarnock bonnet of the master presided. For the minute or so while he said grace or "returned thanks," Diarmid took off his bonnet, but resumed it the moment after. He doffed his blue crown of his to God alone, and even his liege lord, Adam Ferris, had to content himself with a hand carried half military fashion to its weather-beaten brim.

When Adam dined, as he often did, at the bountiful table of Glenanmays, he also found his horn spoon, his knife and fork beside his plate, and he was always careful to set his hat, his riding-whip and his gloves and cape behind the door. Then, bareheaded, he took his place on the right hand of his host at the long oaken table, to which in due order came son, daughter, house-maiden, out-lass, ploughman

and herd. The only difference was that when it came to the blessing upon the food to be partaken of, Adam the Laird stood up, while the others sat still with bowed heads. Why this was, no one knew, not even Adam or Diarmid. But so it had been in the time of their fathers, and so it would continue till there was not a Ferris in Cairn Ferris—a time which neither liked to consider—for the same thought came to both—how that Patsy being an heiress, Patsy would marry, and the lands that had so long been those of Ferris of Cairn Ferris would pass to children of another name.

At the end of the long red-tiled kitchen in which the family meals were served opened out a sort of back-kitchen to which a wooden extension had been added. It was a sort of Court of the Young Lions, where herd-boys, out-workers of the daily-wage sort, turnip-singlers, Irish harvesters, Stranryan "strappers" and "lifters," crow-boys, and all the miscellany of a Galloway farm about the end of the Napoleonic wars ate from wooden platters, with only their own horn spoon and pocket-knife to aid their nimble fingers. There was no complaint, for Glenanmays was "a grand meat house," and with the broth served without stint and the meats rent asunder by the hands of the senior ploughman, the Young Lions did very well.

If quarrels arose, the senior ploughman kept a stick of grievous crab-tree handy, and was not loath to use it. Usually, however, his voice upraised in threatening sufficed. For Rob Dickson could stir the Logan Stone with his little finger. He had escaped from the press-gang on his way from Stanykirk Sacrament, and had carried away the slash of a cutlass with him, the scar of which was plain to be seen of all, beginning as it did a little below his ear and running to the point of the shoulder-blade. This made the prestige of Rob Dickson notable, especially among the Irish. Had he not resisted authority? So of him chiefly they sought counsel

and direction—so much so that old Diarmid, quick to notice what made for the good of his farm, caused Rob Dickson to act as a kind of "grieve" during the time of harvest, when the land was overrun with "Islanders," "Paddies" and "Paipes"—for the religious hatred, though never crossing the North Channel, has yet made of the Irish Catholic in Wigtonshire a hewer of wood and a drawer of water to his Presbyterian masters.

Few things Adam Ferris liked better than a look at the Court of the Lions during feeding time, when Rob Dickson rose in his place to salute him and the Young Lions bent lower over their wooden platters, "eating away like murder" lest any neighbour should get ahead of them in the race. When their own proper broth was finished and the flesh sodden in it had all been distributed, the Young Lions were made free of the debris of the high table, and never were bones cleaned with greater dispatch. Scarce did those which were saved for the rough-tailed, soft-eyed collies, waiting expectant outside, emerge with a higher polish. The herds had to see to this final distribution themselves, each feeding his own pair at different corners of the yard, ready to check growlings which might end in fights with the stern toe of a mountain boot, very proper to the purpose.

Even oftener than her father, Patsy came to Glenanmays. It was good to get away from the dear but dull house of Cairn Ferris, the schooled and disciplined servants, the gentle but constant and masterful supervision of her old nurse, Annie McQuilliam.

She loved her home. She loved all who were in it. But there was no one of her own age at Cairn Ferris, and here at Glenanmays she could dip deep in the fountain of youth. Of the four girls, Faith and Elspeth were her seniors, and she looked up to them, sitting at their feet and keeping her

secrets as carefully from them as she would have done from her own father.

But the third, Jean, a tall slight girl with head coiled about by swathes of fair hair, was year for year, month for month, Patsy's own age. And neither had any secrets from the other. Hopes, fears, anticipations were exchanged, but cautiously and in whispers, like young bathers who test the chill of the sea with bent, temerarious toes. So they touched and paused, shivering on the brink of the incoming tide of life.

Ménie Garland, the youngest of all, was then a slim girl still at Stranryan Grammar School, with the softest eyes and the most wonderful voice, round-throated and full-chested even at the ungrateful age of fourteen.

Not the three brothers Garland, Fergus, Stair and Agnew, stalwart and brown, nor yet the two elder girls—not little Ménie coming singing like a linnet over the moor, brought Patsy so often that way. But the quiet talks with Jean—Jean who had learned wisdom from her sisters' love affairs, from the escapades of her brothers, and who, by the rude rule of fact, could reduce to cautious verity the fiction which Patsy had learned from her Uncle Julian's books.

So Patsy went often to Glenanmays, and without interrupting the busy round of the afternoon's duties, prescribed by Diarmid for each member of his family, she made her way to the little shed hidden by the burnside, on the green in front of which the clothes-lines were strung, and clean garments fluttered in the sea-wind, fresh and glad as ship's bunting.

"Yes," Jean Garland would say after the girls had kissed one another, "I was up early this morning—soon after dawn. Madge Blair and I had our arms in the tubs by half-past

three, and she had got the pot to boil before that. So now I am ready for the ironing, and—"

"Oh, let me help!" cried Patsy.

"Very well," Jean acquiesced, "you are getting to be none so ill with the goffering iron and the pliers—"

"Better with the fancy than the plain!" laughed Patsy.

"It is to be expected, you have the light hand, and you have taste—most have neither one nor the other, but iron for all the world like a roller going over a wet field."

They worked a while in silence, only looking up occasionally and smiling at each other, or Jean might throw in a hint as to a frill or tucker which must be dealt with in a particular way.

Suddenly Jeanie Garland came nearer, a pile of folded linen over her arm.

"Have you heard anything of the press-gang at your house, Patsy?"

"Nothing," said Patsy, busy with a best Sunday cap, all lace frills and furbelows. "Of course there is always Captain Laurence at Stranryan. On clear nights you can hear his fifes and drums by standing on the stile above our house, and they say there is a King's ship or two about Belfast Lough—but why do you ask?"

Jean Garland paused yet nearer to Patsy and spoke in her ear.

"It's the lads!" she murmured. "They are in it. I am feared for them."

"What?" exclaimed Patsy, but checked by a glance she instantly lowered her voice—"not Fergus and Stair and

Agnew?"

Jean nodded slightly.

"Does their father know?" Patsy whispered back. Jean preserved a grave face.

"Not any one of us, his own family, can guess what Diarmid Garland knows and does not know. He had his time of the Free Trading. He was at the head of it, and if the boys head a clean run from the Dutch coast or the Isle of Man—why, if father is ignorant of the business, it is because he wishes to be."

"But there is nothing new in all that," said Patsy; "there have always been smugglers and shore lads who helped them—always King's cutters and preventive men to chase and lose them—what danger do the boys run more than at other times?"

"This," said Jean Garland, very gravely, "there is a new superintendent of enlistments at Stranraer. He is just a spy, one Eben McClure from Stonykirk, a man of our own country. He works with the preventive superintendent, and when they cannot or dare not meddle with the cargo-runners, as they dare not with my brothers, they set the press upon them—and the soldiers' press is the worst by far."

No more was said. The girls worked quietly for an hour till all was finished. The hedges and clothes-lines were cleared of their burden, and with a whisper of "Shall we go down to the cove—the tide is nearly full," the girls slipped each a cotton gown and a towel apiece into Patsy's little reticule and made off to the bathing cove, a well-hidden nook of sand, half cavern, half high shell-bank, which bygone tides had excavated in the huge flank of the Black Head. Fergus and his brothers knew about it, of course, and saw to it that none about the farm interfered with the girls at their play.

In a minute their young figures were lost among the birches of the valley, a wider and an opener one than that of the Abbey Burn, the banks higher and farther off, and from their ridges giving glimpses of the distant Mull of Galloway and the blue shores of Ireland.

They kept in the bottom of the glen, splashing and springing from stone to stone, with mirthful enjoyment of each other's slips. Far off on a heathery knoll Diarmid watched them go. He had noted the swift intaking of the white cleading on the hedges, the disappearance of fluttering garmentry from the clothes-lines. He approved of young people enjoying themselves, *after* their work was done—Diarmid's emphasis on the "after" was strong.

As they went Jean Garland pointed out a pony track high on the fells. "Careless fellows," she said, "that must have been Stair's band. For both Fergus and Agnew are more careful!"

Indeed, the trail by which the laden ponies had passed was still clearly evident, and Jean was roused to anger against the headstrong brother who had risked bringing all about the house into trouble.

"The others went by the bed of the burn," she said, "why could not Stair?"

Looking seaward, they saw all things more clearly than usual—the pause before a storm from the west, prophesied Jean Garland. The island at the Abbey Burnfoot divided itself into two peaks. They could see the houses at Donnahadee, and the boats turning sharply about to make for Belfast Lough, showing a sudden broadside of white canvas as they did so. But little they minded. At present the sky was glorious, the sea a mirror, and here was the Maidens' Cove, into which they dipped from the cliff edge, as suddenly as a kite swoops from the sky. In a moment they were lost to

sight, and only the tinkle of their laughter among the blue, purple and creamy reflected lights of the cove told where they were.

Outside the sheltered sea rocked and laved the sands with a pleasant swishing invitation. Presently they looked out from the low mouth of the cove. All seemed still and lonely, and they were about to step down into the clear green water of the Atlantic, when a noise came to their ears. It was the sound of men rowing—many men, and many men at that time and place meant the pinnacle of a King's ship. The thought of Stair's careless bridle-track high on the heathery side of the fell tortured the mind of his sister. What could they want? It was too early in the day for any surprise work in the interests of the Excise. There were no smuggling cellars near to search—but at that moment the girls of one accord drew in their heads. They moved stealthily into the dark of the cove. Here they could not be observed, but they could see a boat's crew of seamen which went past rapidly in the direction of Abbey Burnfoot, the salt water sparkling in a rain of silver and pearl from the oars, and an officer sitting spick and span at the tiller-ropes.

The next moment they were gone and in the clear submerged dark of the purple dulse that shaded the cavern mouth the girls looked at one another with dismay in their eyes.

"Can they be going to take Uncle Julian?" said Patsy.

"Uncle Julian—no," exclaimed Jean Garland, "of course not—what would they be doing with a learned man and a gentleman? It is that silly Stair who has set them on the track of my brothers. They will land at the Burnfoot and catch them all at the Bothy of Blairmore, where they gather to take their "four hours"—I must run and warn them—"

"Jean," said Patsy, "I can run two yards for your one. Lend me your scarf and I shall go and warn the lads."

"You—the laird's daughter!"

"Yes, I," said Patsy, girding her waist with the red sash, and looking to the criss-crossed ties of the bathing-sandals her uncle had given her out of his store of foreign things. Her kilted skirt came but a little way below her knee and her blouse of fine blue linen let her arms be seen to the elbow. Patsy looked more Pictish than ever thus, with a loose blown tassel of ink-black hair on her brow. Jean offered some faint objections but did not persist. After all, it was the main thing that the lads should be warned in time.

So Patsy, trim and slim as your forefinger with a string of red tied about it, sped eastward over the hills to the Bothy of Blairmore.

CHAPTER III

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THE BOTHY

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Patsy had always been a wonderful runner. She could outpace her pony. She could flee from Louis Raincy like the shadow of a wind-blown cloud crossing a mountain-side, and on the sands, with none but Jean Garland to see, Patsy could fleet it along the wet tide wash, sending the spray about her as a swallow that skims a pond and flirts the surface with its wings.

Old Diarmid mounted on the stile, balanced himself with his staff, and looked. The dogs accompanying him cocked their ears in hopes of a chase, but the next moment, their keen senses telling them that it was only Patsy running over the heather, they settled down, marvelling that men could be so strong with foot and hand and yet know so little.

There was half a mile to be run along the sands before turning up over the hot glacier-planed stones of the moor. Diarmid Garland watched and wondered. He had often seen Patsy giving his daughter Jean, of the heavier and slower-moving blonde Scandinavian blood, half the distance to Saythe Point and then passing her, as an arrow may miss and pass one who flees. Now she moved like a leaf blown by the hurricane. Her white feet in their sandals of yellow leather of Corinth hardly seemed to touch the sand. Then Patsy turned up the crumbling cliffs at their lowest point, mounting like a goat with an effortless ease till she crowned

the causeway of seaworn rock and plunged to the armpits into the tall heather of the Wild of Blairmore.

Then Diarmid lost sight of the girl for a minute, but when he saw her again she was far out on the perilous goat-track which led down to the bothy itself. Diarmid scanned the distance with his eye—he knew the length of time it would have taken a hillsman to go from point to point.

"That girl is a miracle," he muttered to himself, "she can run through deep heather as fast as on the sand of the seashore."

He was wrong, however. She was only a Pictess, with some thousand years of the heather instinct in her blood. Her body was lithe and supple, her foot light, and her eye sure. Besides, she could hear what was hidden and unheard at the stile on which Diarmid stood, the *rock-rock* of the short, steady navy stroke, which was pulling the landing-party from His Majesty's ship *Britomart* nearer and nearer to the Bothy of Blairmore.

Then she passed quite out of sight. She had a long descent before her, sheltered seaward, so that she did not need to consider the danger of being seen by the enemy. The leather of her sandals pattered like rain on dry leaves on the narrow, twisted sheep-tracks, then mounted springily over the bulls'-fell of the knolls of stunted heather, and as it were in the clapping of a pair of hands, she appeared at the door of the Bothy of Blairmore, scarce heated, quite unbreathed, but with grave face and anxious eyes.

"Scatter!" she commanded, clapping her hands. "Off with you, lads! Take to the hills. The press-gang is landing at this moment at the Abbey Burnfoot to cut you off. Eben McClure is with them. He has heard of your cargo-running and he wants to send you all to the wars."