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JOHNSTONE OF THE BORDER

HAROLD BINDLOSS

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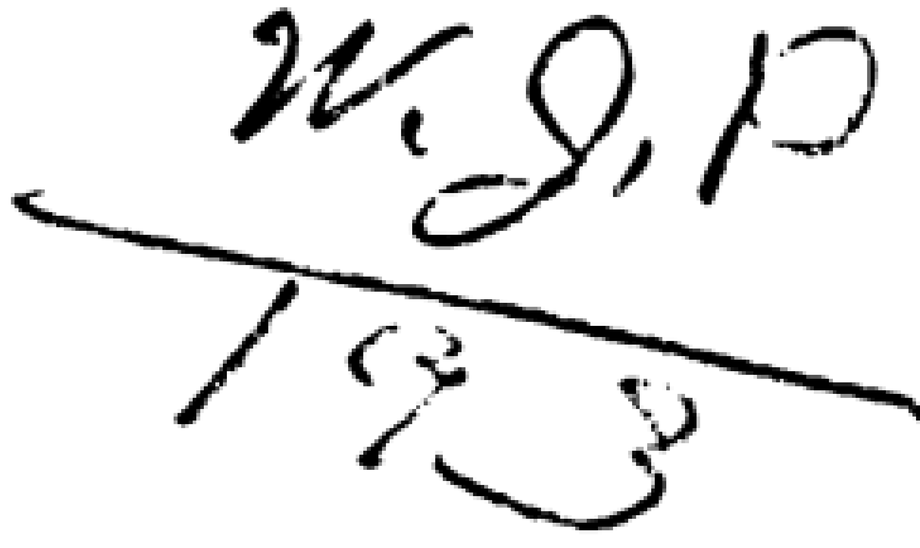

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ALTON OF SOMASCO
LORIMER OF THE NORTHWEST
THURSTON OF ORCHARD VALLEY
WINSTON OF THE PRAIRIE
THE GOLD TRAIL
SYDNEY CARTERET, RANCHER
A PRAIRIE COURTSHIP
VANE OF THE TIMBERLANDS
THE LONG PORTAGE
RANCHING FOR SYLVIA
PRESCOTT OF SASKATCHEWAN
THE DUST OF CONFLICT
THE GREATER POWER
MASTERS OF THE WHEATLANDS
DELILAH OF THE SNOWS
BY RIGHT OF PURCHASE
THE CATTLE BARON'S DAUGHTER
THRICE ARMED
FOR JACINTA
THE INTRIGUERS
THE LEAGUE OF THE LEOPARD
FOR THE ALLINSON HONOR
THE SECRET OF THE REEF
HARDING OF ALLENWOOD
THE COAST OF ADVENTURE

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"An occasional word or phrase reached her: '. . . . submarine . . . . coast of . . . . this line marks . . . .'" — *Page 220*

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JOHN MARVEL

of this Parish

By HAROLD

Author of

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HONOR," THE

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. . . . submarine

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JOHNSTONE *of the* BORDER

By HAROLD BINDLOSS

Author of "Prescott of Saskatchewan," "Ranching for Sylvia," "For the Allinson Honor," "The Secret of the Reef," etc.

WITH FRONTISPIECE IN COLOR

NEW YORK
FREDERICK A. STOKES COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

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JOHNSTONE OF THE BORDER

CHAPTER I

THE SUMMONS

SABLE LAKE shone like a mirror among the ragged pines, as it ran back between the rocks, smooth as oil except where a puff of wind streaked its flashing surface with faint blue wrinkles. Behind it the lonely woods rolled on, south to Lake Superior and north to Hudson Bay. At one place a new transcontinental railroad cut its way through the forest; hammers rang and noisy gravel plows emptied the ballast cars along the half-graded track; but these sounds of human activity were quickly lost and in a mile or two only the splash of water and the elfin sighing in the pine-tops broke the deep silence of the woods. This belt of tangled forest, where the trees are stunted and the soil is sterile, offers no attraction to homesteader or lumberman. In consequence, it has lain desolate since the half-breed *voyageurs,* who crossed it with canoe and dog-team, abandoned the northwest trail when the Canadian Pacific locomotives began to pant through the rock-cuts by Lake Superior.

The solitude itself had drawn Andrew Johnstone into the quiet bush. The lone trail had a charm for

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him. He knew the empty spaces of Canada; for his inaptitude for an idle life had led him on adventurous journeys through many leagues of its trackless forest. He was of the type that preferred some degree of hardship to conventional comfort. His one ambition had been to be a soldier; it was the career which from early boyhood he had chosen. He had entered Woolwich as a prize cadet, and had left it with honors; but a few weeks later he had met with an accident on a mountain crag, and his military career was suddenly closed. The surgeons did what they could; but it soon was obvious that Andrew never again would be able to take his place in the British Army. He was not crippled; he could still walk well; but he limped slightly and his injured knee gave him trouble sometimes.

He sat alone now, on a rock that jutted out into the lake. The thick branches of a spruce sagged above him and furnished a welcome shadow, for it was a close, hot day. A few feet behind him a gray trout lay in the frying-pan beside a log hearth; and beyond that stood a small weather-beaten tent, with flecks of bright sunlight filtering through the trees and spreading over it in fantastic shapes.

Andrew lighted his pipe and looked about him in languid content. The pines that came down to the lake's edge were small and ragged; some had been blackened by fire and some leaned drunkenly, but their resinous sweetness hung about the camp. In the shadow, the reflection of worn rock and rigid branch floated on the crystal water; but the reflections quivered, and there was a soft splash upon the pebbles near Andrew's feet. He heard it with reminiscent satis-

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faction and a touch of longing. It reminded him of the swirl of the salt tide along the Solway shore; and his thoughts went back to the Old Country he had left two years before.

He wondered what Elsie and Dick were doing at home at the old house in Annandale. He called Appleyard home because he loved it, better perhaps than Dick did, although the place did not belong to him. When he was left an orphan, Dick's father had brought him up with stern kindness, and he had afterward spent a month or two at Appleyard whenever it was possible. Indeed, in the old man's last illness he had promised that, so far as things permitted, he would look after his somewhat flighty cousin. Andrew remembered with a twinge that he had not done much to keep his promise; but, after all, there seemed no reason to believe that Dick needed him.

Then he thought of little Elsie, as he had called her, though she must be grown up now. He was much the elder, but they had always been good friends. No doubt they would try to marry her to Dick. Andrew was fond of Dick, but he did not think him good enough for Elsie.

For nearly an hour he sat on the rock, lounging back against an outcropping boulder, thinking of Appleyard and little Elsie. Then his thoughts were interrupted by a sound near the tent — some animal scampering past — and he stood up and looked out across the lake. His pose, easy and virile, showed a wiry figure of medium height; and the strong sunshine touched his brown face. It was not a face that attracted attention, but the eyes were gravely good-humored and the mouth was firm.

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Andrew was watching for the gleam of a varnished hull. Whitney, his American partner, had gone to the railroad for provisions three days previously and should have returned. The canoe he had taken had been built in Toronto, especially for them. Andrew would have been satisfied with an Indian birch-bark; but Whitney not only was a keen sport but he had enough money to afford the best of everything.

At last something twinkled far up the lake, and Andrew's keen eyes distinguished a small dark speck amidst the play of light. He knew that it was Whitney; for only a canoe from which the varnish had not worn off would so catch the sunshine. When the craft had grown into shape, Andrew sat down again and watched her draw nearer with quiet approval. He liked to see things done well and there was a rhythmic precision in Whitney's movements that suggested well-directed power. The paddle flashed at exact intervals, the lithe form behind it bent with a graceful swing, and a curl of foam broke away from the gliding hull. Modern as she was, the canoe did not jar upon the primitive austerity of the wilds. Andrew felt this, though he could not have put it into words, for there was something innately primitive in him.

He sprang from a rugged stock, for he was a descendant of the Annandale Johnstones, whose crest was significantly the flying spur. Appleyard stood on the edge of the bleak moorlands that drop down to the western marshes of the Scottish border, and he knew every lonely rise and boggy flat that his mosstrooper ancestors had ridden on moonless nights. It is possible that in his youthful rambles across the high, wind-

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swept waste, he had acquired something that linked him to the past. In later times, his people had made some mark as soldiers and explorers, but for the past two generations the head of the house had been a quiet country laird.

Whitney drew near and in a few minutes ran the canoe upon the shingle and stood smiling at Andrew when he had pulled her up. He was young and athletic, with brown hair and eyes, brown skin, a rather thin face, and an alert, half-humorous air. His clothes had been specially designed for hunting trips by a fashionable New York tailor, but they now looked much the worse for use in the wilds.

"I've got the grub and brought our mail," he said, throwing Andrew a packet. "Here's your lot; you can wade through it while I fix supper."

"I'd have had things ready," Andrew replied; "but I was stuck for flour and pork. You've covered some ground to-day."

"Some," laughed Whitney. "It was pretty fierce clambering over the portages with the canoe on my head, but I made much better time than I could have done when I struck the woods two months ago. Looks as if the harder you have to work, the stronger you get. Nature's way of fixing things. But I'm not tired; so I'll fix supper while you read your news."

Andrew opened a letter in a girlish hand, and while he read it, lingering over the words, his thoughts went back with longing to Appleyard on the Solway shore. He pictured the low house, built of Scottish granite and beaten by the winds; the red moorland rolling north in waves; and the flash of wet sands in the distance edged with white surf by the savage tides.

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It was an artless letter, treating of loved, homely things, but it showed sweetness of temperament and, Andrew thought, half-concealed uneasiness. The reason for this became obvious when he read the postscript:

"I am anxious about Dick. He is not very strong, you know, and I wish that you were here."

Andrew felt troubled, for he knew that Elsie never made the worst of things. Dick was weak of will as well as of body, and his dissipation had a marked effect on him. There was nothing vicious in the lad, but he lacked stability, and it looked as if Elsie could not counteract the rather demoralizing influences to which Andrew imagined the boy was subjected.

He opened a Montreal newspaper and then soon forgot Appleyard. It was some time since any news from England had reached him, and the cablegrams predicted coming war. He read on until Whitney took the trout and a can of coffee off the fire, and called him to supper. Andrew ate as usual, because he was hungry, but he said very little and wore a preoccupied air.

Whitney waited until the meal was finished; then he turned to his comrade as he lighted his pipe.

"There's something worrying you," he said bluntly.

"Out with it!"

"I was wondering whether you'd mind my not going north with you on the hunting trip this fall."

"I certainly *would* mind. All the same, I'll let you off if there's a reason."

Andrew folded the letter so that the last page came

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on top and handed it to him with the newspaper. Whitney carefully read the first column in the paper before he looked up. He wanted to understand the situation, and Andrew was not good at explaining.

"I don't quite get the drift of things," he said. "First of all, who's Elsie Woodhouse?"

"In a way, she's like Dick's sister; they were brought up together and Elsie always tried to take care of him — though she's really no relation. Dick is my cousin."

Whitney nodded and tried to be patient.

"Do you want to go home because she's anxious about the fellow?" he asked.

"It's rather complicated," Andrew answered with some hesitation. "You see, Dick's father raised me, and I always thought, in his way, he was fond of me."

Whitney found the workings of his companion's mind more interesting than the particulars about his relatives. Andrew was sometimes slow, but one could rely on his doing the right thing in the end.

"And Elsie?" Whitney suggested. "Did he raise her too?"

"Oh, no. When he died, Dick's mother soon married again, a man called Staffer; clever fellow, but I never quite trusted him. Then she died, and Staffer was left in charge of Appleyard until Dick came of age. He brought his sister there, Mrs. Woodhouse, a widow; and Elsie's her daughter. Dick and Elsie were both quite young then, but from the beginning Elsie made it her business to take care of Dick."

"You like her," said Whitney, noticing a certain tenderness in his companion's voice.

"Yes," said Andrew slowly; "I never liked any-

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body quite as much. But that's all there is to it. She's much younger than I am, and she'll probably marry Dick."

"If she's like his sister and has been looking after him, she more probably won't. I'm getting Dick fixed as a bit of a maverick. He and his stepfather don't get on."

"On the contrary, they get on very well; that's the trouble."

"How?"

Andrew hesitated.

"Well, you see, Staffer does most things well; he's excellent company and a witty talker, the kind of man a lad would try to copy."

"Makes the pace pretty hot, eh? One of your smart set?"

"He's extravagant, but he never gets into debt. He'll play cards on champagne half the night, and get up next morning as steady as a rock and bring down a cork-screwing snipe with the first barrel. I've seldom seen a better man on a horse."

"Think I've got him placed. Your cousin will want nerve and judgment to play up to him. But we'll take the newspaper now. Why do you want to go back? You won't fight."

"I can't," Andrew replied with some color in his face. "It's my misfortune; after I fell on the Pillar Rock."

Whitney gave him a sympathetic nod.

"You take me wrong; I mean your countrymen. It's been stated in your parliament that they have no obligation to fight for France."

Andrew filled his pipe before he answered.

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"They won't see her smashed," he said quietly.

"I'm not sure of it, after reading the English newspapers."

"You don't know us yet," Andrew replied.

Whitney smiled, for he knew that his comrade would carry out an obligation to the farthest limit; but he said nothing, and for the next few minutes Andrew thoughtfully looked about.

The sun was getting low, and dark shadows stretched across the glassy lake, but in the distance a small gray dot moved amidst a ring of widening ripples. A loon was fishing. Presently a wild, unearthly cry rang through the stillness as the bird called its mate; and after that everything was very quiet except for a soft splash of falling water a long way off. The dew was settling on the brush about the camp, and the cooling air was heavy with the fragrance of the pines. It all appealed to Andrew; the lonely woods had a strange charm for him.

"I'm lame and not much use, but it doesn't seem quite the thing to stay here enjoying myself, just now," he said. "Perhaps something I could do might turn up when I got home."

"But you haven't a home! You lived in a boat for some years, didn't you?"

"I thought of living in one again. It's cheap and gives you liberty; you can move about where you like. Then there's good wildfowl shooting in the bays, along our coast. That would keep me occupied — if I could find nothing else."

"Pretty lonely though, isn't it?"

"Sometimes. When you're wind-bound in a desolate gut among the sands, the winter nights seem long.

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Then, if you have to clear out in a hurry, with a sudden breeze sending the sea inshore and there's the anchor and kedge to get, you feel you'd like an extra hand."

"Then why don't you ship one?"

"It's hard to find the right man. Living on board a small cruiser hasn't much attraction, unless you're used to it."

Whitney chuckled.

"That's easily understood. I think you need a partner. How'd I do?"

Andrew gave him an eager look, and then answered discouragingly:

"It's rough work; you're often wet through and can't dry your clothes; and sometimes there's not much to eat. You can't cook on a miniature stove when she's rolling hard. Then there's no head-room and you get cramped because you can't stand up straight."

"Well," Whitney declared smilingly, "it can't be much rougher than clambering over rock ledges and smashing through the brush with a canoe on your head. So, my friend, if you have no marked objection, I'm coming along. For one thing, an English friend of ours who lived in New York has a shooting lodge in the Galloway district and my mother and sister are over there. I can plant myself on them, if I get tired of you."

Andrew said nothing and Whitney thought him reluctant to take advantage of his rash offer.

"It's settled, old man," Whitney went on lightly. "We'll pull out at sun-up and get on to the Canadian Pacific at Whitefish Creek. I'll try to catch a trout now, and then we'll go to sleep."

He launched the canoe, and when he paddled out

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across the darkening lake, Andrew sat by the sinking fire, feeling quietly satisfied. He did not know what he might find to do when he reached Scotland, but he would have a partner in whom he had confidence.

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CHAPTER II

A PAINFUL MEMORY

A WEEK after leaving Sable Lake, Andrew and Whitney stood one night on Portage Avenue, Winnipeg. The air was hot and oppressive, as it often is in the prairie city during late summer, and smooth sidewalks and roadway, wet with heavy rain, glistened like ice in the lamplight. The downpour had now slackened to a scattered splashing of big, warm drops, and thunder rumbled in the distance. At one place, the imposing avenue was blocked by a crowd through which the street-cars crept slowly with clanging bells. The crowd seemed bent on holding its ground, but there was not much jostling, and its general air was one of stern interest rather than excitement. The small dark figures that filled the gap between the towering buildings were significantly quiet, and where a ray of light fell across them, the rows of faces were all turned in one direction.

Andrew studied them as he stood on the outskirts of the throng. Human nature always interested him. He noticed first that these men were better dressed and looked more prosperous than the members of similar gatherings he had watched in the Old Country. It was, however, not altogether their clothes that conveyed the impression: there was a hint of self-confident optimism in their faces and bearing; though one could see that they were graver than usual. Their appear-

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ance was rather American than British, and although this was mainly suggested by certain mannerisms and the cut of their clothes, Andrew was conscious of a subtle difference he could not explain. For one thing, an English street crowd is generally drawn from one particular walk of life, and if units of different rank join it they stand apart and separate. This gathering in Winnipeg included men of widely different callings — farmers from the plains, merchants, artisans, clerks, and flour-mill hands — but they had, somehow, an air of common purpose and solidarity.

Whitney indicated them after he had lighted a cigarette.

"It's almost an hour before our train goes out, and these fellows evidently expect a new bulletin to be posted up soon," he said. "They interest me because I don't know how to class them. They're developing themselves on our lines, but they don't belong to us. If this were a city in the United States, there'd be something doing: joshing and pushing, or somebody would start a song. Yet I guess they wouldn't like you to call them Englishmen."

"That's true," Andrew agreed.

"Then they're pretty good customers of ours and anxious to trade," went on Whitney, "and yet when we offered them reciprocity they wouldn't have it. They had all to gain, because the natural outlet for their commerce is to the south, but they said they were British and shut the door on us. On the other hand, I get on with them better than you can, and if we wanted a job in this city, I'd get it before you. Now our States are sovereign, but they're all American."

"Ours are sovereign, but not English," Andrew

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replied. "One's strictly Canadian, another frankly Australian, and so on. We're an individualistic race, and our different branches grow their own way. It looks like a loose arrangement, but we've found we hold together well. You'll see when the bulletin comes out — if it's what I expect."

"We'll wait. What's this fellow talking about?"

A short, dark-skinned man had buttonholed a neighbor and was speaking vivaciously, his dark eyes snapping.

"But, mossieu', the alliance, *la belle alliance!*" he exclaimed, and wheeled around to Andrew. "Is it not determine in London that we fight?"

"Spotted you first time, partner," Whitney laughed, and then turned to the man: "When did you come over?"

For a moment the fellow looked puzzled.

"Two hundred year, mossieu'. That is, the family she arrive. Me, I am born in Kebec."

Whitney smiled at Andrew.

"You haven't made much of a Britisher of him yet. They'll speak better German in Alsace in much less time, if the Prussians keep their grip."

"Alsace!" cried the French-Canadian. *Attendez, mais attendez;* the great day come. Together we take her back. It is an obligation, *Mossieu'. Vive la belle alliance!*"

"Your people claim there isn't an alliance," Whitney said to Andrew.

"I don't know. This is certain: if our friend's attacked, we step into the ring."

There was a sudden movement in the crowd, which pressed closer upon the newspaper office opposite, and

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a cry was raised as a lighted car came clanging down the street:

"Hold that driver up!"

The car slowed, but still came on, until a well-dressed citizen stepped quietly in front of it.

"Stop!" he said. "You can't get through."

The car stopped and as the passengers got out, a window in the tall building opposite was opened. A bulletin board was hoisted in, and for the next two minutes the crowd stood silent and motionless. Andrew felt his nerves tingle and noted that Whitney's face was tense, though his interest in the matter could hardly be personal. There was something that stirred the imagination in the sight of the intent, quiet throng that awaited the result of a crisis not of their making. They had had no say in the quarrel that began far off in the obscure East; but one could not doubt that they meant to make it their own. Their stern gravity caused Andrew a half-conscious thrill of pride.

After all, they sprang from British stock and he knew what kind of men they were. He had seen the miles of wheat that covered the broken, prairie waste, cities that rose as if by magic in a few months' time, and railroads flung across quaking muskegs and driven through towering rocks, at a speed unthought of in the mother country. He had heard the freight-trains roaring through the great desolation between the Ottawa and the Western plains, where no traffic would ever be found, and had wondered at the optimism which, in spite of tremendous obstacles, had built eight hundred miles of track to link the St. Lawrence to the rich land beyond. These Canadians were hard men who tempered with cool judgment a vast energy and

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enthusiasm, and the mother country's foes would have to reckon with them.

There was a strange, dead silence, as the board was replaced and the bold black letters stood out in the lamplight. So far as Andrew could afterward remember, the bulletin read:

War inevitable. England must keep her word!
Kaiser's armies marching. British fleet sails with sealed orders.

A few cablegrams followed, and when they were read a deep murmur rose from the crowd; but there was no strong excitement. These were not the men to indulge in emotional sentiment; their attitude indicated relief from suspense, and steady resolve. Perhaps it was characteristic that the man who had stopped the car waved his hand to the driver.

"Now you may go ahead," he said.

Breaking into groups, they began to talk, and Andrew caught snatches of their conversation.

"A big thing, but we're going to put it through," said one. "If you hadn't fired out Laurier, we'd have been rushing our own fleet across the ocean now."

"Well," his neighbor replied, "we've got the boys. We want to call a city meeting right off. Manitoba can't be left behind."

"Manitoba's all right!" another declared. "We'll send them all the flour they want, besides men who can ride and shoot. They'll put the Maple Leaf right up to the front. But we want to hustle before Regina and Calgary get a start on us."

The man turned to a companion and the two moved off. They were followed by other groups, and as one passed, Andrew heard an exultant voice.

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"I tell you what happen. *Vive la belle alliance!*"

Whitney and Andrew crossed the emptying street and walked toward the station. "I guess you noticed they didn't talk about the Old Country's program," Whitney remarked. "It's what Manitoba and the West are going to do that interests them. My notion is that it will be something big."

"One feels that," Andrew agreed. "Somehow, it's stirring."

"And it's contagious. When they hoist the flag you'll see some of the boys from our side riding across the frontier to the rally."

"You're bound to keep neutral," Andrew objected.

"Officially, yes. But when a man can drop a flying crane with the rifle and bust a wild range horse, they won't ask if he was born in Montana or Saskatchewan."

They walked up Main Street and it was obvious that the news had spread, for talking men blocked the sidewalk here and there, and the wide windows of the hotels were full. When they reached the station, Whitney went off to check their baggage, and Andrew sat down, rather disconsolately, in the great waiting-room. The damp weather had affected his knee, and he frowned as he stretched it out, for his aches reminded him painfully of his disadvantages. While he sat there, a summer-evening train from Winnipeg Beach arrived and a stream of smartly-dressed excursionists passed through the hall breaking off to ask for the latest news. Their keen interest was significant, and Andrew felt downcast. Canada approved the Old Country's action and meant to do her part; but he was useless, nobody wanted him.

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Moodily lighting a cigarette, he recalled his youthful ambitions, for he had meant to follow where his ancestors had led. It was not for nothing that their crest was the flying spur, and their traditions had fired him to the study of difficult sciences, which he had mastered by dogged determination rather than cleverness. His heart was in his work; he meant to make a good horse-artilleryman; and he had thrilled with keen satisfaction when the examiners placed him near the top of the list. Then came the momentous day in Ennerdale that altered everything. Six months after the accident he had resigned his commission, knowing that he would never walk quite straight again.

Well, all that was done with; but now, when Britons everywhere were springing to arms, he was good for nothing. He reflected gloomily that he might as well stay in Canada. Yet, if he were in England, there was a chance that something might turn up for him to do.

Besides, there was little Elsie. . . .

Whitney came swinging across the marble floor of the waiting-room just as an official at the door announced that their train was ready to start.

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CHAPTER III

THE SOLWAY SHORE

THERE was a light wind from the westward, and the flood tide, running east, smoothed the sea to a faintly wrinkled heave, when the *Rowan* crept across Wigtown Bay on the southern coast of Scotland. Andrew lounged at the tiller while Whitney sat in the cockpit, holding a tray on which were laid out a pot of smoke-tainted tea, several thick slices of bread, sardines, and marmalade.

Whitney wore a woolen sweater — which had been white a few days before but now was a dingy gray — new blue trousers, already streaked with rust, and an expensive yatching cap which had got badly crushed. His hands were not immaculate, and there was a soot-smear on his face.

"This kind of yachting's not quite what I've been used to," he remarked. "On Long Island Sound you don't get the sea we ran into coming round the head last night; and when we went cruising in small craft we always hired somebody to do the dirty work."

"There's not much room for a paid hand on board the *Rowan*," Andrew replied hesitatingly. "Still, if you'd like —"

"You don't want a man."

"He would be rather in the way, and I don't know what he'd find to do, except the cooking."

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"And hauling the dinghy up a muddy beach, taking out the kedge on a stormy night, and pulling twenty fathoms of heavy chain about when you shift your moorings! I could think of a few other trifles if I tried; but I won't insist. It looks as if I were going to get some muscle up."

Whitney thought his companion had a private reason for dispensing with a paid hand; and an extra man was certainly not needed for open-water navigation, for Andrew had shown himself quite capable of sailing the *Rowan* alone. After searching the Glasgow yacht-agents' registers for a boat of sufficiently light draught, they had bought the *Rowan* at an Ayrshire port; and Whitney got a surprise when his partner drove her through the furious tide-race that swirls around the Mull of Galloway, in a strong breeze of wind. He had confidence in the little yacht after that. She was thirty-two feet long, low in the water, and broad of beam, but her mast was short and her canvas snug: Whitney knew the disadvantages of a long heavy boom. Her deck was laid with narrow planks, no longer white, for there were stains like blood upon them where the rain had run from the mainsail, which was tanned with cutch.

Now the canvas glowed a warm orange in the evening light as its tall peak swayed gently across the sky, and the ripples that lapped the gliding hull united beneath the counter and trailed astern in silky lines.

To starboard, far off, the Isle of Man, rose in a high, black saw-edge above the shining sea; ahead to the east, water and sky were soft blue; to port, the Scottish hills rose in shades of gray and purple.

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Andrew named them as the boat crept on.

"Cairn Harry, running straight up from the water; Dirk Hatteraik stored his brandy in a cave on Raven Crag, and John Knox hid in Barrholm tower, in the long patch of woods. The black ridge behind is Cairnsmoor o' Fleet, and a waste of moors runs back from it toward the head of Clyde. The water of Cree flows through the dark hollow."

"The Cree!" Whitney exclaimed. "That is where my mother and sister are. Our friend has a grouse moor and some salmon rights." He paused and laughed. "I can imagine them sitting down to dinner under the electric light in somebody's ancestral hall, with a frozen British butler running the show. Wonder what they'd say if they knew I wasn't far off, living like an Indian on board this craft!"

"There are no ancestral halls beside the Cree, and electric lights are scarce in the Galloway wilds," Andrew explained.

Whitney chuckled. He was not thinking of ancestral halls, but was wondering what his sister Madge would think of his comrade. On the surface, Andrew was easy-going, ingenuous, and diffident, but beneath this lay an unwavering firmness.

"Historic country, isn't it?" he remarked, to make Andrew talk.

"Yes," said Andrew in an apologetic tone, and started off on his favorite hobby.

Slowly the sea grew dimmer; the sunset glow behind them faded to a smoky red; and while they drifted east with the flood tide a black island detached itself from the dusky shore. Soon a trembling beam flashed out from its summit.

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"The Ross," Andrew said. "I was wrecked there."

"Tell me about it," requested Whitney, lounging in the cockpit, lazily watching a razor-bill which had risen with a hoarse croak from the boat's rippling wake.

"It was the only time such a thing ever happened to me, and I don't understand it yet. I was living on board the *Arrow* then, shooting from a punt. She was a stiff, roomy boat, of nearly nine tons, and I'd just had her pulled up at Glencaple for an overhaul. Staffer, Dick's stepfather, found me a Glasgow carpenter who had been building some anglers' boats at Lochmaben."

"And what had the carpenter to do with your being wrecked?"

"Nothing, so far as I can see; though I've thought about him now and then."

Andrew paused for a moment, and Whitney, knowing his comrade, waited for him to go on.

"The ebb had been running for some time when I left Gibb's Hole, and a nasty surf broke on the sands. There was not wind enough to account for it, but everything was harshly clear and that's often threatening. However, I set the big jib and topsail, because I wanted to clear the banks before the flood tide made. It runs from four to six knots an hour among the Solway shoals, and there's some risk of knocking the boat's bilges in if you get aground. The breeze fell light, and near dusk I came round and stood inshore on the port tack, so that I could, if necessary, slip back into Rough Firth. The Scotch channel of the Solway is no place to run for on a dirty night.

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"When I got down to Abbey Head the swell was growing steep and the sea looked ragged where it cut the horizon — which showed there was wind out there. The shooting-punt I was towing was a drag, and I didn't make much progress until a smart south-westerly breeze sprang up soon after dark. I could just lay my course down the coast, and I hung on to big jib and topsail while I could. With two or three hours of that wind I'd be able to run in behind the Ross, which you see ahead. Then the breeze freshened suddenly and she listed over until most of her lee deck was in the water. For a time after that I had my hands full."

"So I imagine," Whitney remarked. "I've seen a big jib give two men trouble when they had to take it in, and you were alone and had the topsail up. I'm not surprised that you got wrecked."

"I wasn't wrecked just then. In fact, I made her snug, with two reefs in the mainsail, and I lighted the compass binnacle. The trouble was that the wind was drawing ahead and the night had turned very dark. I couldn't get a glimpse of the coast, and it wouldn't have been wise to run back yet. There's a light on Hestan Island, but I wouldn't have found water enough across the sands in Rough Firth. She'd have gone down at her anchor if I'd brought up to wait.

"Well, I ate some sandwiches I had ready, and stood on. She was plunging wildly and putting her storm-jib into the sea that was getting up; but she was an able boat, and the punt towed pretty well when I'd made an extra rope fast to her."

"You wouldn't find that easy," Whitney suggested, as he pictured the lonely man's struggle to haul up the

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heavy craft while the yacht on which he must relinquish control rolled with thrashing canvas athwart the combers.

"I let the *Arrow* come up and dropped the peak. The worst was that I had to lean right out with both hands on the punt while I made the second rope fast, and I nearly went overboard when she lurched. I made it fast, but when we went on I got a shock, for the water was washing up from under the cockpit floor. You see, as she'd shipped two or three combers, I'd thought it was washing down."

"The floorings would be nearly two feet above her bottom planks," Whitney said.

"Yes. It meant she was leaking hard, and I'll admit that rather staggered me, because she'd always been a remarkably tight craft. Well, I hove her to again, lighted the cabin lamp, and pulled up the floorings. This wasn't easy; they were closely fitted and the carpenter had nailed one or two of them down. I can't tell you why he did it, but I tore my hand before I got them loose. You can understand that I had to be quick. She wouldn't lie to well with nobody at the helm, and kept forging up head to wind and falling off again. The way she lurched about threw me against the lockers and once or twice I heard a sea come on board. There was too much water for me to find where it was coming in, and when I crawled out and tried the pump it wouldn't draw, so I went back and felt for the bottom of its pipe. There was a suction-box at the end, and it seemed to be stuffed up with shavings. The carpenter must have thrown them under the floor."

"Rather a curious place to put them!" Whitney

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commented. "I suppose a shaving had stuck under a valve and stopped the pump. But, as you'd have a grid on the suction-box, how did they get in?"

"I've never found out, but I'd like to meet that carpenter," Andrew replied grimly.

He felt for his pipe and lighted it, and Whitney had to prompt him before he resumed:

"Things didn't look hopeful. It was blowing hard; she was leaking fast, and I couldn't pump her out. I had to make the Ross while she kept afloat. I thought about cutting the punt adrift, but it seemed a waste, and afterward I was glad I didn't. As it was a dead beat to windward, speed was important, and the only thing was to keep her sailing hard and let the seas come on board. There was so much spray flying that I couldn't see the punt astern, but the drag on the tow-lines showed that she was there. Then the old boat began to get sluggish, and it made me savage. She'd brought me through many a stiff blow, and I was fond of her. The Ross light was getting brighter; but a sea that came over the coaming washed out the binnacle lamp when I was ready to make the Sound. If I'd been able to take the light's bearing and look at the chart, I might have sailed her in.

"Well, with the compass gone, I had to run for it blind, and she was so waterlogged that she would hardly steer. Then suddenly she stopped with a shock that threw me from the helm. What had happened was plain, and when the next sea washed over her I pulled up the punt, cut the lines, and fell into the well. She swung away on top of a comber, and I wondered where she'd take me; for there were crags about and the paddles had washed overboard. She was full and

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waterlogged, but I lay along the deck and she kept right side up until we came ashore on a bank of shingle. Rocks ran up behind it, and there was a gully I couldn't cross at the end of the cove. I pulled the punt up, and spent the night lying behind her out of the wind, when I wasn't tramping about the shingle to keep myself warm. In the morning a coastguard showed me a way up the cliff; and when I came back there later there was no sign of the *Arrow*."

Andrew stopped, and for some minutes the silence was broken by the rustle of the flapping topsail and the soft splash at the bows. It had grown dark and the sea was faintly phosphorescent: pale blue and green spangles glimmered down the wake. Ross Island had faded into the black head behind it, but a bright beam of light still glittered across the water.

"On the face of it, the reason you were wrecked is obvious," Whitney said. "The boat began to strain when she was pounding, overpressed with sail, through a steep head sea, and you couldn't pump her out. Besides, as she'd just been hauled up for repairs, a butt may have got started by the hammering or a seam have been left open."

"The carpenter was a good workman," Andrew replied quietly.

"He may have neglected something, for all that. Boats will leak when they're driven hard; pumps get out of order; and a stranger might nail down a floor board you kept loose. The curious point is that all these things should happen together." Whitney paused and smiled. "Of course, if you had some dangerous secret or were heir to a great estate that some-

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body else wanted, one might suggest a melodramatic explanation."

"I've no secret anybody would give twopence for, and I inherit nothing except a very small annuity."

"Then you'll have to put the series of accidents down to coincidence. Where were you bound for when you came to grief?"

Andrew glanced back toward a stretch of water that still shone faintly among the shadowy hills.

"Up yonder, near the head of Wigtown Bay, to shoot geese. Dick was to come on by train and join me. He's fond of wildfowling, and I took advantage of it to get him away."

"Away from what?"

Andrew hesitated.

"Well, you see, he was inclined to go the pace, and Staffer had some friends at Appleyard just then — clever, amusing men-about-town, who were fond of cards and knew all about the turf. Dick tried to play up to them, and he was losing a good deal of money and drinking rather more than was good for him."

"And his stepfather encouraged his extravagance?"

"Oh, no. Staffer gave him good advice in a cynical, witty way; told him he must pull up because the pace was too hot for a lad. I never quite liked the man, but one must be fair, and he was willing to let me take Dick. In fact, he agreed it was the best thing to do."

"But as it turned out, you didn't take him. Were you much at Appleyard afterward?"

"No. One of Staffer's friends offered me a pretty good post abroad, and everybody thought I ought to

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seize the chance, but I didn't. In consequence, a kind of coolness grew up and I haven't stayed long at Appleyard since. Dick sends a message and Elsie writes long letters now and then."

Whitney stood up and stretched himself. A rhythmic throb of engines stole out of the silence, and, some distance off, a yellow and a green light moved across the level sea. Overhead, the topsail cut black against the sky, and the water had grown more luminous in the eddying wake. To the east, a thin, silver moon was shining above the dim heights of Cumberland. Tiny ripples lapped the *Rowan's* side, but the breeze was faint and everything was still.

"The flood will take us to Rough Firth, and we may as well stand on," Andrew said. "You can go below. I'll call you if you're wanted."

Carefully lowering his head, Whitney crept into the small cabin and lighted the lamp. Its illumination showed the oilskins swinging against the forecastle bulkhead, and the narrow table on top of the centerboard trunk, which ran up the middle of the floor. On each side were lockers that served as seats, and two folding cots were strapped against the skin of the boat. Whitney let one down and got into it with his clothes on: he had found that this was prudent when cruising in small vessels. There was a rack, loaded with odds and ends, a few inches above his head; and a smell of tarred rope, paraffin and mildewed canvas came out of the forecastle; but this did not trouble him, and he was soon asleep.

In the meanwhile, Andrew sat at the helm, his mind busy with gloomy thoughts.

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CHAPTER IV

APPLEYARD

IT was a stormy evening when Whitney caught his first glimpse of Appleyard. He felt disappointed. He had expected to see an ancient Border tower with modern additions; but the low, straight-fronted house did not look much more than a century old. It was solidly built of gray granite, with mullioned windows and a small pepper-box turret at one end, but while it made no pretense of architectural beauty, Whitney admitted that it had some charm. For one thing, Appleyard stood boldly on the breast of a knoll, with dark firs packed closely about it, and the landscape it commanded was ruggedly wild. Bleak pastures and lonely moorland, stained a purple-red, rolled back to the hills that melted into leaden cloud in the north. To the south, a strip of green littoral was dotted with white farmsteads and traversed by the curves of a river that flashed where it caught the light.

Beyond this level strip, the Solway sands ran far out to sea, glowing red in the angry sunset and pierced by channels of slate-green water. In the distance, a narrow white line showed where their edge was washed by the receding tide. On the western shore of the wide estuary, Criffell's lonely height stood out, a harsh dark-blue, against a saffron glare.

The car sped across an iron bridge spanning a ravine where hazel, mountain-ash, and scrub oak grew among

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the stones, skirted a broad lawn, and stopped at the door. Whitney was presented to Mrs. Woodhouse and Staffer, who welcomed him cordially, and then he shook hands with Dick. They entered the house at once, and Whitney found himself in a large, square hall, which looked older than the rest of the building. The light was dim, for the windows were narrow and were placed unusually high in the massive walls. A wood fire burned in the big, old-fashioned hearth, but the place felt chilly and especially cheerless.

Dick took them up a staircase that led to a gallery at the back of the hall.

"Your kit arrived from Glasgow, and I think you'll find all you want laid out in your rooms," he said. "Dinner will be ready as soon as you have changed."

They went along a passage, and Whitney was glad to be left alone in his room. It was his first visit to an old Scottish house, and although not an antiquarian he was capable of receiving impressions from places, and he wanted to discover what influence Appleyard had on him. He noted that a fire was laid ready in the grate, although it was August and until that morning the weather had been warm. The room was rather bare, but the few articles of old-fashioned furniture were solid and were made on a good model. They were marked by a certain austerity of taste, and he thought of them as business-like. The plain, self-colored rugs and curtains had a similar effect. Everything that utility demanded was there, but he marked the absence of luxury and ornament.

The walls were very thick, and there were seats in the deep window recesses. Opening one of the casements, Whitney stopped a minute and looked out. He

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could see a stretch of wet sands that were now growing dim, and the faint line of surf, and then, by turning sharply, black hills running back into gathering cloud. The air was unusually keen, and although darkness was fast coming on, the distance was clean-cut and sharp. The landscape somehow harmonized with the house; it was perhaps a trifle harsh, but it had a peculiarly distinctive character.

Andrew came in while Whitney was dressing, and finding him not ready, he went down first.

There was no one in the hall when Andrew reached it, and he was satisfied to be alone as he stood by the hearth, looking about. A lamp had been lighted, but the illumination did not carry far, and the high roof and the corners were shadowy. The hall occupied the lower story of the old central tower, which had served as a fort in bygone years but had since been partly rebuilt and incorporated in the house. Andrew knew its history, for he loved Appleyard. He was, in some respects, truer to the type of the men who had built and fought for it than Dick. He was not jealous of his cousin, but it was hard to feel himself a mere passing guest in the old house, and a vague discontent tempered his satisfaction at coming home. Besides, he was poor, and was condemned by an accident to a life of obscurity. He wondered why Elsie had not been there to welcome him, as she had always done on previous visits. He remembered her frank regret when he last went away. Indeed, he had often pictured her as she stood by the lodge gate, a slender, fresh-faced girl, with ruffled hair and a hint of tears in her blue eyes. She was as graceful as a fawn; but her beauty as yet was immature.

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Andrew heard a sound behind him, and turning from the fire he saw a girl coming down the stairs. She stood out against the dark-paneled walls, for her pale green dress caught the light and shimmered. It went well with her auburn hair, emphasizing the pure white and pink of her skin; and it matched her eyes, which had the changing color of the sea. The immature grace Andrew had known had gone; there was something of distinction in her carriage.

While he gazed at her, she came toward him with a frank smile of pleasure.

"It's very nice to have you back," she said. "I couldn't get home until a few minutes after you arrived. Roy lost a shoe as I was driving up the Lockerbie road."

Andrew took her hand and held it for a moment, but the only remark he could think of was:

"You have Roy yet?"

Elsie laughed as if she understood, and rather liked, his embarrassment.

"Oh, yes. He's still going strong, and when Kevan re-shod him he brought me home in record time. But you're very brown and looking well."

"It's good to be back at Appleyard," he said quietly.

"You're still very fond of it? So am I, though that may seem curious, because I'm really an outsider."

"That applies to me more than to you, because the old place would never be the same without you."

Elsie looked at him as he stood, gravely quiet, studying her.

"Well," she said, "Appleyard is Dick's. His father was a true Johnstone, his mother a Jardine, but you

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make one feel that you're more at home here than he is. I can't account for it. Can you?"

"I might blame your imagination," he answered, smiling.

Elsie gave him a roguish look, which made her seem more like the little Elsie he had known two years before.

"You haven't told me how I'm looking," she said. "Perhaps you don't realize that this gown was made in Paris and was put on in your especial honor."

"You're rather wonderful," Andrew replied gravely. "But then you always were. For all that, I had a pleasant surprise when you came downstairs."

Elsie's eyes twinkled, and he thought they looked like the sea when the sun touched it in a breeze.

"A surface change," she laughed. "Munich and London account for it. I'd run wild, you know, when you saw me last. But there's no difference underneath. You're the same too, and that's what I like. I want to keep my old friend. You must promise you won't alter."

"I'll try not to," he answered. "Perhaps I'm incapable of it; I'm not progressive. Still, there are times when I feel rather old."

"Oh, I know," she said with understanding sympathy. "But after the cheerful letters you wrote from Canada, I hoped the lameness didn't trouble you very much."

"One mustn't grumble, though it's rather hard to feel useless — just now."

Elsie's face grew thoughtful.

"Yes," she said slowly, "that must hurt. I've felt

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that we don't realize the seriousness of the great struggle here. It's easy to subscribe to funds and go on committees, but that kind of service leaves you cold, and we haven't practised much self-denial at Appleyard. I was glad Dick wanted to enlist, even though they wouldn't have him; but he'll tell you about it himself."

Mrs. Woodhouse and Whitney came toward them, with Dick close behind. Dick was not unlike Andrew, but it was as if his cousin's prominent characteristics had been watered down. Although the handsomer of the two, he somehow looked a feeble copy of Andrew when they were together. He had twinkling eyes and a humorous way of regarding things, but his face was weak. His figure was light, well-poised and athletic, but his color was unusually high, and on close study he showed signs of bad health.

When he had spoken a few words to Andrew they went in to dinner, and during the meal Whitney devoted some attention to the company. One of the differences between him and his comrade was that he was most capable at managing people, and Andrew in handling things. Andrew knew all about a boat and a gun, and could be relied upon to deal with contrary tides and dangerous shoals, but he was less acquainted with the intricacies of human nature.

Whitney dismissed Dick as not counting; Elsie he reserved for future study. Mrs. Woodhouse he found interesting because baffling. She was rather fat, with regular features but an expressionless face, eyes of light china-blue, and flat, flaxen hair. She answered his remarks with conventional politeness, but he could not, as he thought of it, strike a spark from her. He

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could not tell whether she was reserved or merely dull. Her brother, Staffer, was of very different stamp. His face was clean-cut and intellectual, his manners were polished but easy, and Whitney had no trouble in placing him as a man who knew the world. Indeed, since there was a hint of force and command about him, Whitney wondered why he was, so to speak, vegetating in the Scottish wilds. Staffer clearly belonged to the busy cities and the centers of action.

Nothing that Whitney thought worth noting occurred at dinner, except that Dick drank a good deal of wine and Elsie watched him with half-veiled disturbance. Whitney thought her attitude was protective and motherly; she would have interfered had it been possible. This suggested that a supposition of Andrew's was wrong. A girl like that would not marry a man whom she must guide and control.

When they went back to the hall, Andrew found a quiet corner, hoping he might get a few minutes alone, for his meeting with Elsie had a disturbing effect. When he last went away, she had told him that when he came back things would not be the same; and he now recognized the truth of this. The girl who had treated him as a trusted elder brother had grown into a beautiful, accomplished woman. Indeed, she had, so to speak, left him behind. She was cleverer and more composed than he; she grasped things at once while he clumsily searched for their meaning. The old frank confidence and the comradeship were no longer possible, but in essentials she had not changed. The world could never spoil Elsie's freshness nor blunt her keen honesty.

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After a while she came and sat down near where he stood in the shadowy recess of the great hearth.

"I believe you were trying to hide, and we must have a talk," she said. "I'm half afraid I brought you home from Canada."

"No," Andrew replied awkwardly; "anyway, not altogether. I felt that I ought to come back, even if there's nothing I can do. Still, of course, if I can be of help here —"

Elsie's eyes were soft as she looked at him.

"Yes, I know; you're a good friend, Andrew, but I was alarmed when I wrote. After what the army doctors told him, Dick went to see a specialist in Harley Street, and he must have got a plain warning, for he was depressed and quiet for some time. Things are serious when Dick's cast down."

"Do you know what the doctor said?"

"No; Dick wouldn't tell me. I'm not sure that he told Uncle Arnold much."

"Ah!"

Andrew was silent for a moment.

"Has he been indulging in any rashness since then?"

"No, nothing fresh; but I'm afraid he's heavily in debt. His allowance is very large, but he tried to borrow money a few days after he got it." Elsie's color grew deeper as she continued: "I've seen him quite unsteady at luncheon; and the worst is that it's telling on his health."

"Looks bad; I must see what I can do. But it's awkward, because Staffer's really responsible for him. Has he tried to pull Dick up?"

"Yes, in a way," Elsie answered with a thoughtful

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air. "Still, I don't think it disturbs him as it ought to when he sees that he hasn't done much good. He's witty when he should be firm — and I've sometimes imagined that Dick feels rather flattered than ashamed after the talk."

"I understand. What Dick really needs is a good kicking for being fool enough to try to copy Staffer."

"Couldn't you take him away for a time in the boat?"

"I'll try, but he's not fond of sailing. Then it's a delicate matter. If one could make Staffer understand —"

Elsie gave him a steady look.

"No; I think you'd better not. Uncle Arnold's very kind; mother and I owe him a good deal, and he likes Dick. For all that, he doesn't seem to feel it's his duty to take much trouble —"

Andrew knew she was not saying all that she thought; but he did not press her.

"I will try to find a way," he said. "And now tell me how things have been going since I left."

While they were talking, Dick came up; and not long afterward the two men found themselves alone in the smoking-room.

Andrew put his hands on Dick's shoulders and held him off at arm's length.

"You strike me as not being quite up to the mark," he said.

"Do I?" Dick grinned. "You've been talking to Elsie!"

"I have; and I'm sorry to hear the doctors didn't think you very well. Hadn't you better tell me about it?"

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"I suppose I must. You're a persistent fellow, but you don't often take the superior moral tone. Well, as I'd been in the officers' training corps, I applied for a commission, and they sent me up to a medical board. One doctor asked me some catchy questions, and, being quite inexperienced, I fell into the trap. The consequence was I didn't pass."

"You didn't learn much about yourself from him?"

"Not much! It was he who got the information. But when he'd finished he offered me a scrap of advice — I'd better see a private doctor at once."

"Did you?"

Dick chuckled.

"Instead, I went up to London and tried to join one of the special battalions. I was wiser this time, and told their medical examiner nothing I could help. I thought I'd made a good impression; but at last he looked at me pretty hard. 'I admire your keenness, but you won't do,' he said. I told him I was a bit off color, but I'd play golf all day and drink nothing but soda-water, and then come back to him in a month. 'It would be of no use; I'd go to Harley Street now,' he said."

"I hope you did," Andrew remarked with a frown.

Dick lighted a cigarette.

"Yes; I went. I'll spare you technicalities; for that matter, I've forgotten them; but, after all, I didn't get much of a shock. It seems my heart's gone a bit rocky."

"Go on," said Andrew.

"Well, if I give up everything I like and live like an ascetic, I may get over the trouble, though I think the

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fellow doubted it. On the other hand, I may get worse and drop off suddenly."

"Unless you steady down."

"Yes; he hinted something of the kind."

Andrew said nothing for a few moments. He was fond of his cousin; and, besides, he had promised Dick's father to look after the boy. He felt that he had been neglectful; and he wished now that he had more tact. He had a duty ahead of him, and he did not know how to discharge it.

"The proper course is obvious," he began somewhat awkwardly. "Suppose you come down the Galloway coast with Whitney and me? It's early for the black geese, but there are ducks about."

Dick smiled.

"Unfortunately, I'm not keen on sailing; and I must say that living on board a small, damp boat gets monotonous. Now, if you would land me where one could get a game of cards in the evening, or —"

"Where they had a bar?"

"Precisely. A bar with a fetching girl in it."

"It wouldn't work," said Andrew firmly. "I remember what happened when I landed you at Douglas — and a poaching escapade with some Creetown quarrymen on the same cruise. You have a talent for getting into trouble. Well, if you won't come with me, I'll have to make Appleyard my headquarters for a time."

"I hope you will," Dick replied with feeling. "Has it ever struck you that Appleyard might be yours?"

Andrew's face grew stern.

"Appleyard belongs to you and, what's more, you belong to it. It's your duty to pull yourself together

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and take care of the estate, to marry and bring up your children to be a credit to your name. Instead, you're dragging it in the dirt, making shabby betting men and turf sharpers your friends, and, I'm half afraid, getting into speculative money-lenders' hands."

Dick winced and Andrew saw that his random shot had scored.

"If you're in difficulties, I might raise a hundred pounds or so," he went on. "If, as I suspect, that isn't half enough, we'll go and see Mackellar before you get in too deep."

Mackellar was the acting executor of Dick's father's will.

"I'll think over it," Dick answered; and there was something that puzzled Andrew in his expression.

"Very well. Did you tell Staffer what the doctor said?"

"I wasn't quite as frank with him as I've been with you; one isn't proud of being a lame duck. Still, I imagine he has a pretty accurate notion of how things are with me."

"Then he ought to pull you up; he has the power."

"That's doubtful. I don't think you're quite fair to Staffer. I might have got a stepfather of a very different kind."

"It might have been better if you had," Andrew dryly rejoined.

Dick flushed.

"I wish you'd leave Staffer alone; I won't have him run down."

"I didn't mean to run him down," Andrew said.

"Well, perhaps you didn't consciously. You'd try to conquer your prejudices, but you're antagonistic."

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Andrew gave Dick a shrewd glance.

"I wonder how Staffer feels about me?" he ventured.

"You're not likely to find out," Dick answered with a laugh. "I suppose he has his failings, but he never gives himself away."

When Andrew went to his room that night he sat beside his window for a long time, with a thoughtful frown. The task he had undertaken would not be an easy one.

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CHAPTER V

SWEETHEART ABBEY

SOON after their arrival Whitney and Andrew drove back to the boat, which was moored in the mouth of a stream at some distance from Appleyard. It was a bright morning and they sat smoking in the cockpit when they had shaken some of the canvas and laid their sea clothes and blankets out to dry.

Behind the white beach, a strip of marish heath led back to the broad belt of cultivated land, with neat farmsteads scattered about; in front, the narrow channel, in which the shallow-bodied boat lay nearly upright, wound seaward through a great stretch of sand. The open sea was not visible, but three or four miles away a glistening streak that seemed to be in motion caught the light. In the middle distance a green lagoon and two ribands of water were rapidly widening. Flocks of black and white oyster-catchers fluttered about the banks of the channels, and long rows of salmon nets ran back along the shore.

"This is a curious place to navigate," Whitney remarked. "You were right in insisting on shallow draught and a centerboard."

"The shoals are not the worst," Andrew replied. "The tide runs up these gutters very fast, and, as a rule, you can't take out an anchor if you get aground."

"But that's the first thing one generally does."

"It's dangerous here. If the anchor held until she

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floated on the flood tide, the strain on the cable would probably pull her down. If it didn't hold, which is much more likely, it would check her while she drove across the bank, sheering athwart the stream, in danger of rolling over. The safest plan is to keep all sail set and try to make for deep water as soon as she floats."

Whitney glanced at the nearest channel. A small white ridge, perhaps six inches high, stretched from bank to bank, moving forward about as fast as one could walk, and as the wave passed on the riband of water changed into a lake. He thought it would not be pleasant to meet the advancing tide at some distance from the land.

On looking round, Whitney saw a man walking toward them across the bank. The fellow was old and his brown face was deeply lined. He wore a yellow oilskin cap, an old blue jersey, and rubber waders that reached to his thighs. Clambering on board, he nodded to Andrew.

"Weel," he said, "I'm glad to see ye back, an' it's a bonny wee boat ye have got."

"She's not bad for work among the shoals, but she's not the best type for the long seas you get in open water," Andrew replied, and turned to Whitney. "You might bring up the bottle in the port locker, Jim, and the soda."

"Ye can let the sodda bide; I've nae use for't." When Whitney returned the fisherman filled his glass. "Here's til ye an' her! Ye have given her a right name," he said.

"Why's the name good? What does *Rowan* mean?" asked Whitney.

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"The mountain-ash. The old mosstroopers sometimes wore a spray in their steel caps as a protection against witchcraft and bad luck. We're descendants of the Norse pirates, and the ash was the Scandinavians' sacred Ysdragil, the tree of life."

"You're a curious lot," Whitney remarked. "I guess our beachcombers don't know much about archæology: they don't have superstitions a thousand years old."

"Were ye thinking o' making a trip to the deep water doon wast?" the Scotsman inquired.

"I don't know yet. We might do some shooting here. Is there much fowl about?"

"Ye'll get shellduck noo, an' a few teal; whaups, too, if ye're wanting them, but the lag-geese an' the bernicle are no' here yet." He paused and added: "I wouldna' say but it might be better if ye bide until they come."

Andrew looked hard at him.

"Why?"

"I'm thinking ye're wanted here. It would be an ill thing to see Appleyard gang doon, and it might be yours some day."

"It's my cousin's and he's younger than I am," Andrew answered with a frown.

"Just that! Ye're leal, we ken. Weel, as ye're fond o' the young laird, it might be wiser to keep an eye on him. He's overmuch under yon foreigner's thumb."

"How's the fishing?" Andrew asked pointedly.

The old fellow broke into a slow chuckle.

"It might be better an' it might be waur; there's ower many o' the Board's watchers here awa' for my

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liking. An' noo, I'll need to win ashore before the tide's on the bank."

He went off across the sands and Whitney turned to Andrew with a smile.

"You people leave a good deal to the imagination, but, so far as I could understand him, he gave you a hint or two. What's his business?"

"Salmon-fishing with a drift net. I've known Jock Marshall since I was a boy, and I believe he takes a well-meaning interest in me."

"Why did he call Staffer a foreigner?"

"In a sense, he is a foreigner, although he's been a naturalized British subject for some time. We knew nothing about him until he married Dick's mother, but there's reason to believe his name used to be Von Stauffer, or something like it. Mrs. Woodhouse was born in Austria, but she came over young, and her husband was all right."

Whitney was not much interested.

"What about to-morrow?" he asked.

"If the breeze holds, we'll have no trouble in crossing the sands to New Abbey. Elsie and Dick will come, and I expect you'll enjoy the trip. It's an interesting place."

As they stowed the sails the boat suddenly rose upright, drifted a few yards, and then brought up with a jar of tightening cable while the tide splashed against her planks. Launching the light dinghy, they paddled shoreward with the stream.

At high-water the next day they went back on board and the *Rowan* stood out across the sands. Elsie sat at the tiller, while Andrew sounded with a long boat-hook, and Dick lounged in the cockpit, smoking a

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cigarette. He laughed and told humorous stories, but Whitney noticed that Elsie was intent upon her steering. He had expected this, for he thought that whatever the girl undertook would be well done; but she did not obtrude her earnestness. Now and then she glanced at Andrew as he dipped the pole and a nod or a gesture was exchanged. He was feeling his way across the shoals with half-instinctive skill and the girl understood what he wished her to do. Their task was not an easy one: there was only a foot or two of water under the boat and she forged ahead fast through the short seas the tide made as it raced across the banks.

The seas began to curl as the ebb met the freshening wind, and little showers of spray splashed into the straining canvas. The deck got wet; the water was filled with sand and streaked with foam. There was no mark in all the glittering stretch, but Andrew knew when he reached the main channel, and told Whitney to let the centerboard down. Then they went to windward faster, the sea hurrying westward with them in confused eddies while small white combers foamed about the boat. She plunged through them, scooping their broken crests on board, and by and by the water ahead grew yellow and marked by frothy lines.

Elsie looked at Andrew, and he took out his watch.

"We ought to get a fathom most of the way across," he said, and turned to Whitney. "You might stand by below to pull up the board."

Whitney crept into the low-roofed cabin, where he sat on a locker, holding the tackle that lifted the heavy iron centerplate. He knew that it would be desirable to heave it up as soon as possible after he got the order.

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From where he sat he could see nothing outside the boat, but as he looked aft through the hatch he was offered a fascinating picture.

A strip of the tanned mainsail, shining ruby-red, cut against a patch of clear blue sky, and Elsie sat beneath it, her gracefully lined figure swaying easily as the boat rose and fell. She leaned on the long tiller, and a lock of loosened hair that shone like the sail fluttered across her forehead. Her eyes were bright, and there was a fine color in her face; but it was not so much her beauty as her decision and confidence that Whitney liked. The girl was capable of keen enjoyment, but it must be in something that was worth doing. He was already conscious of a curious respect for Elsie Woodhouse.

Andrew called to him to lift the board and come up; and when he reached the deck he saw close ahead of them a long, hump-backed mountain that rose abruptly from a narrow strip of rolling pasture. A row of very small white houses bordered a green common behind the beach, and the tide swept, froth-streaked, down the channel in front.

"Where do we bring up?" he asked.

"In the Carsethorn gut," said Andrew. "Do you think you can find it, Elsie?"

"I'll try. Give her a foot or two of sheet."

The boat swung round a little, edging in toward the beach, and Whitney saw by the ripples that they were in shallow water. Andrew let the staysail run down, but when he stood ready with the boathook, Elsie smiled.

"Sound if you like, but you won't find bottom here," she said.

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"A good shot. You have hit the mouth of the gut."

"You'll touch now," said Elsie a few minutes later; and Andrew dipped the pole, then threw it down and lowered the jib. The boat came round head to wind, and the anchor went down with a rattle of running chain.

Landing from the dinghy, they struck across the fields, and although it was autumn, Whitney wondered at the lush greenness of the grass. Close on their left hand, Criffell's lonely ridge ran up against the sky, colored purple-red, though the hollows in its curving side were filled with dark-blue shadows. The ash-trees in the hedgerows that crossed the rolling pasture obscured their view ahead, and they were crossing the last rise when Whitney stopped.

"This is worth coming a very long way to see!" he exclaimed.

A deep glen, where the light was subdued and the colors dim, cleft the mountain's northern flank, and at its mouth a cluster of white houses stood among the trees; then, on a narrow green level, bright in the sun, the old abbey shone rosy red. Ancient ash-trees and crumbling granite walls straggled about it, but the molding of the high, east window, buttress and tower, still rose in lines of beauty, worked in warm-colored stone.

Elsie gave him a quick look and he knew that she was pleased with his frank admiration. When they entered the cool, shadowy interior she acted as his guide, for Dick and Andrew stayed outside in the sun. Presently she stopped near the east end of the building, and Whitney looked back down the long rows of

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plinths, from which the pillars had fallen, and up into the hollow of the great ruined tower.

"It must have been a wonderful place in the old days; a jewel in the shape of a church. And I dare say if they'd searched Scotland they couldn't have found a finer setting than these rich meadows at the mountain's foot."

Elsie led him a few yards along a wall, over which a low, groined roof still hung.

"Its building was a labor of love, and perhaps that's why it never leaves one cold," she said. "I suppose you know its history?"

"I only know it's called Sweetheart Abbey."

"The Countess Devorgilla built it as a shrine for her husband's heart, which was embalmed and buried on her breast. It's a moving story, when one thinks of what she undertook. Galloway was then, for the most part, a savage waste; skilled workmen must be brought from somewhere else, perhaps from Italy or France. Then there is only granite, which could not be cut and molded, on these hills, and the soft red stone had to be carried down the Firth and across the sands. They had no mechanical transport, and you can see the size of the blocks. In spite of all this, the abbey rose and still stands, marked, I often think, by a tender, elusive beauty that's peculiar to the North."

Elsie moved back to where the sun shone down into the roofless nave, and Whitney thought he understood why she did so. Her imagination was fastidiously refined: she would not loiter talking by Devorgilla's tomb. Standing silent beside her, he waited, with a faint smile. He was not a sentimentalist trying to play up to a pretty girl; somehow, she had stirred him.

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He felt that she had the gift of seizing what was true in romance and missing what was false. Then, she had the strange elusive beauty of the North which she had spoken of: an ethereal tenderness that flashed out and vanished, leaving the hard rock of a character steadfast as the granite upon the Solway shore.

Elsie turned and looked east with grave, steady eyes.

"One reaches out for something that's on the other side," she said; "but perhaps when one knocks and the gate is opened, one goes through unawares —"

"You mean, that when one's eyes are opened, there may not be much difference between the land of enchantment and ours?"

"Something like that."

During the short silence that followed, Whitney looked round the great church that was still majestic in its decay.

"Well," he said, "there can't be many of us, nowadays, who'd deserve the love and labor this place must have cost."

"But there must be some," she insisted.

"It seems a big thing to claim, but I have met two or three who, so far as my judgment goes, were good enough for the kind of woman your Countess seems to have been; not clever men and in no way remarkable, until you knew them well, but you felt that, whatever happened, they'd do the square thing. One could trust them. Somehow, one man in particular stands out from the rest."

Elsie turned toward him and he saw the strange, elusive tenderness shining in her eyes. Momentary as

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it was, it transformed her face, and he wondered whether she approved his sentiment or knew whom he meant.

"I imagine you are a good friend," she said softly. "It must be nice to have somebody who believes in you like that."

"If the man I'm thinking of knew how he stood with me and others, it would make him embarrassed." Whitney laughed. "But that's natural. It's a hard thing to feel that you must live up to your reputation."

"I like you best when you're serious," Elsie rebuked him, though she smiled.

She took the lead he gave her and they went back to the others, engaged in careless talk. When they reached an arch that opened on a sweep of sunny grass, Andrew looked up from the stone on which he sat.

"You haven't hurried," he remarked.

"No," said Whitney. "I've been learning some more of your traditions, and they're inspiring. The people round here seem to have been great lovers as well as pretty hard fighters."

"A happy thought has struck me," Dick broke in. "It would be hot work dragging the dinghy down across a quarter of a mile of sand, and I don't feel up to carrying a heavy lunch basket. There's a hotel in the village where they'd give us something to eat, and we could stroll up the burnside afterward. It's a pretty walk."

Whitney noticed that Andrew's glance rested for a second on Elsie's face and then passed on. She made no sign, but it seemed that Andrew understood without it.

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"I think not," he said; "the place would probably be full of Dumfries excursionists. It would be pleasanter on the beach."

"And I want to see the view you talked about," Whitney followed him up.

Dick broke into a resigned grin.

"Very well; but you'll drag the dinghy down yourselves."

They had to carry the boat some distance, and afterward they rowed lazily along the edge of the sand until they landed at the foot of a little glen. Here they lunched and lounged in the sun until the flood tide came softly lapping across the flats.

The breeze had fallen very light when the stream swept the *Rowan* east across the shoals, and Whitney, sitting on the cabin-top, watched the Galloway shore recede. The western sky was a pale saffron, against which Criffell rose, steeped in a wonderful blue. The shadows were gathering fast about the rolling ground below, but the hollow where the old red abbey stood still could be distinguished.

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CHAPTER VI

ON CRIFFELL HILL

THE sun burned down on the heather. Below, in the curving glen where the heath gave place to white bent-grass, a burn flashed like a silver riband among the stones; above, the long ridge of Criffell ran up against the clear blue sky. Grouse were calling as they skimmed the steep downward slope, and a curlew's wild cry fell sharply from the summit of the hill. These were sounds that delighted Andrew, for he loved the fellside almost as he loved the sea; but his lips were set and his brows knitted as he stood waist-deep in the heather.

Whitney was toiling up the hill beside Elsie a short distance farther on, and Dick was behind them; but, seeing Andrew stop, they waited until he came up.

"It's rather steep," said Elsie, giving Andrew a sympathetic glance. "Here's a nice flat stone; we'll rest for a few minutes."

She sat down on a slab of lichened granite, and Dick found a place beside her.

"I wonder why Andrew loaded himself up with that heavy ruck-sack on a day like this?" he said. "I suppose there's a pair of marine glasses and a chart, and a parallel rule and compass, inside of it. Andrew thinks he'd get lost if he didn't carry the lot about when he risks himself ashore."

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"They're all there," Andrew replied somewhat grimly. "Still, it wasn't the bag that stopped me."

"I'm sorry we forced the pace," Elsie said. "You were going well at the bottom."

"I felt all right; but that's just when my weakness finds me out. Sometimes it's the damp that brings it on and sometimes the heat; but one oughtn't to grumble about not being able to climb a hill as fast as usual." He broke off and resumed after a twinge of pain: "It's thinking of our boys being rolled back on Cambrai while I loaf about the Solway shore, that worries me."

When they had rested a while they climbed up the steep face of a pointed knoll, and then followed a long ridge to the massive cairn on the top of the hill, where shallow pools gleamed among the green moss of a bog. Andrew sat down on a stone, but Whitney stood on the highest hillock, his eyes wandering across the wide landscape that rolled away beneath him.

To the south the sea glittered like silver, and a bright arm wound inland up a valley. To the west and north a few lemon-yellow harvest fields and strips of green pasture checkered the red heath, and the smoke of a little town hung about a hollow; but the picture's dominant tone was wild solitude. The plain rose in step-like ridges, the hillsides that bordered it were washed with shades of delicate gray, and in the distance lofty rounded summits cut against the sky.

"It looks as lonely as our Western deserts," Whitney remarked.

Andrew was busy with his chart. He had spread

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it on a flat stone; then, putting a compass on the middle of it, he moved a notched brass ring round the instrument. The tide was about half ebb and broad belts of sand rose among the glistering channels in the firth. Andrew took sights across them, then penciled notes on the margin of the chart, but at times he lay still for a minute or two with the marine glasses at his eyes. The others left him alone until he rolled up the chart and lighted his pipe.

"I've learned something useful," he said. "These channels change so fast that a chart's of no use unless you keep it up to date."

"What's the country to the east like?" Whitney asked. "It looks high and rough, but I seem to make out a deep valley beyond your Annandale."

"Now you have set him off!" Dick exclaimed. "Andrew's one hobby is that western road to England!"

Andrew laughed.

"The road is interesting. I will take you over it some day. For one thing, nature has provided a good route through a rugged country. For most of the way, the valleys are shut in by high moors, and that made Eskdale a natural sallyport for the old Border clans."

Elsie and Dick were walking about, picking their way among the shallow pools; but Whitney sat down beside Andrew and listened with interest to the history of the old Eskdale road.

"I shall buy a motorcycle," he declared, when Andrew had concluded; "one of those with a side-car, so that we can travel around these roads."

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Elsie and Dick joined them and for a time they sat talking and looking about. There was very little wind and the murmur of the Solway tide came up to them faintly across the purple slopes where the grouse were calling.

Suddenly, as if he had sprung from the earth, a young man in khaki uniform appeared, picking his way across the bog. He was hot and breathless, and seemed surprised when he saw the party, but he came toward them with a smile.

"So you're back!" he exclaimed to Andrew. "I meant to look you up."

"We'll be glad to see you, Murray," Dick said cordially. "You haven't been round for a long time. What brings you up Criffell in full uniform? I must say it's a better fit than some they've been serving out lately."

Murray laughed.

"We are giving the Terriers a run; but business first. I suppose you haven't seen any turf that might have been dug over recently, or stones that seemed to have been pulled up?"

"No. Did you expect to find anything of the sort?"

"To tell the truth, I don't know what I did expect to find. We're ostensibly practising scouting, but there's a batch of Dumfries cyclists scouring the Galloway roads, and I imagine the authorities have some reason for sending us out."

"I suppose if you met a foreigner or anybody with an electric battery, he'd go into the bag," Dick suggested. "After reading the newspapers, one must ad-

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mit that the Terriers are remarkably good shots. In fact, it's not safe to meet them in the dark."

"You imagine this turnout isn't merely part of the men's training?" Andrew asked.

Murray looked thoughtful.

"No; I believe there is something going on round here. We've got orders to search the country as far as Screel of Bengairn — though of course that can't be done in a day. I heard they mean to organize scouting parties in the Castle Douglas neighborhood."

"Well, perhaps a wireless installation could be made small enough to carry about and hide; but a good deal of Galloway's a wilderness of granite and heath."

"That's why it might prove a suitable place."

"Yes, in a way. There are glens where a man could lurk for a long time without being seen; but they're hard to reach, and nothing that the enemy would wish to learn is likely to happen here. Then the sands protect this shore. The east coast's our vulnerable point: any important news could best be picked up about Rosyth. If there are wireless installations working, one would naturally look for them on the eastern slope of the Lammermuirs and along the seaboard between Berwick and the Forth."

"Of course," agreed Murray. "And no doubt they've had that district searched. But you must remember we're dealing with remarkably clever people, who wouldn't go to work in the obvious way. Now, suppose some news was gathered about Rosyth, how long would it take a powerful car to bring it here?"

"Four hours and a half, provided that none of your fellows or the police interfered."

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"That's by the Eskdale road. I'd go the other way — a rough country, but there's nobody to bother about the speed limit."

"Well," said Andrew, thoughtfully, "I'd prefer the Eskdale. The obvious way's sometimes safest; it's the unusual thing that excites suspicion."

"There's only one road for Andrew," Dick laughed.

Murray got up.

"I must be off," he said. "My Terriers are scattered about the mosses, and khaki has its disadvantages when you're looking for your men."

He turned away and when he went, springing down the western slope of the hill, Elsie looked at the others.

"It was so serene up here," she said; "and he has broken the charm. The war cloud looked a long way off, but it seems closer now." She glanced across the ranges of sunny hills as she added: "What a beautiful world this might be if men were sensible and just!"

"True," replied Dick; "but then we'd miss some excitement and get fat and slack. A certain amount of trouble's good for us, and that's why we make it."

"We didn't make this horrible war."

"No; I suppose we didn't. As a future landowner, I've naturally no admiration for the Lloyd George gang, but one must admit that they were forced into the fray. To do them justice, they're not the lot to fight when they can help it, and they're certainly getting on better than I expected."

"You were bound by the 'Scrap of paper,'" Whitney remarked.

Dick chuckled.

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"Our politicians have left us nothing to say about that; but I'll admit there's something convenient in the other fellows' theory. I happen to know a little about scraps of paper and there are one or two I'd be glad to disown."

"So I thought!" Andrew interposed dryly.

"Oh," Dick laughed; "my frankness is always getting me into trouble."

Soon afterward they went down the hill, talking carelessly, but Elsie's eyes were grave when she saw in the distance small scattered figures moving across the heath. There was something ominous about the soldiers' presence on the quiet moors where the black-faced sheep had long fed undisturbed.

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CHAPTER VII

THE GRAY CAR

IT was one o'clock in the morning, but Andrew could not sleep. He sat by an open window, looking at the tops of the firs, which stood out in black silhouette. It annoyed him to be so wakeful, as he and Whitney were to make an early start for Edinburgh; but Andrew had something to think about, for he realized that his friendship with Elsie could not be resumed where it had broken off. She had grown up while he was away, and his feeling toward her had changed. To be regarded as an elder brother no longer satisfied him, and if he were not very careful, he would find himself in love with her. This was unthinkable: first of all, because he was lame and poor, and then because it was obvious that Elsie ought to marry Dick. She had no money; Dick had plenty and, besides, Dick needed her. Elsie would keep him straight, and his weak heart would cease to trouble him when he steadied down. Andrew had long cherished an affection for both of them, and he knew that Dick trusted him.

Then he reflected that Elsie's attitude toward Dick was to a large extent protective and motherly, which was not the feeling one would expect a girl to show for the man she meant to marry; and while Dick was obviously fond of her, his attachment, so far as one could judge, was not passionate. Besides, when one

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came to think of it, the suggestion that their marriage must be taken for granted had come from Staffer. He had, so to speak, delicately warned Andrew off.

Andrew firmly pulled himself up. He was being led away by specious arguments. It was easy to find excuses for indulging oneself and he had promised to look after Dick. If he tried to supplant his cousin in Elsie's affection, he would be doing a dishonorable thing. There was no getting around this; but it cost him an effort to face the truth.

A soft rattle of gravel down the drive attracted Andrew's attention. Rabbits sometimes got through the netting and one might have disturbed the stones as it sprang across; but he rejected this explanation. The sound was too loud, although he imagined that there was something stealthy in it. Anybody coming toward the house across the smoothly paved bridge, would have to walk on the gravel, as there was a flower border between the drive and the shrubbery. This had a narrow grass edging, but hoops were placed along it to keep people off.

Andrew leaned forward cautiously and looked about him. It was a calm night and not very dark, although there was no moon. He could see the firs near the house cutting black against the sky, and the blurred outline of a shrubbery beside the drive to the bridge. Thin white mist rose from the ravine, and beyond it a beechwood rolled down the hill. The air was warm, and the smell of flowers and wet soil drifted into the room. There seemed to be nothing moving, however, and the sound was not repeated. For a few moments Andrew waited, expecting to hear the intruder fall over one of the hoops that edged the drive. When

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this did not happen, he fixed his eyes intently upon the end of the shrubbery, and then he made out a very indistinct figure moving slowly through the gloom beneath the firs.

This was strange. He had never heard of any house-breaking in the dale, and there was nothing at Appleyard to attract a burglar from the distant towns. It was too late for a villager to keep tryst with one of the maids; and a poacher would not cross the well-fenced grounds. Andrew decided that he would not give the alarm, but he slipped across the room and opened his door quietly so that he could hear if anybody entered the house. Though he stood beside it, listening closely, he heard nothing. Then he returned to the window, and saw a dark form move back into the gloom of the trees. Presently there was another soft rattle of gravel near the bridge, and after that deep silence except for the splash of water in the ravine. Andrew imagined that about five minutes had elapsed since he heard the first sound, but the prowler had gone and he must try to solve the puzzle in the morning.

He got up early and went down to the drive before anybody was about. A fresh footprint showed plainly in the flower border near the bridge, close to an opening in the shrubbery by which one could reach the lawn, is if the man had meant to jump across and had fallen a few inches short. That he had not gone along the grass edging showed that he knew the hoops were there.

Andrew examined the footprint. It was deep and clearly defined, and he thought it looked more like the impress of a well-made shooting boot than of the heavy

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boots the country people wore. For one thing, he could see no marks of the tackets the Scottish peasant uses. Acting on a half-understood impulse, he covered the footprint up and strolled toward the gardener, who was just coming out with his rake.

"You have a big place to take care of, Fergus, but you keep it very neat," Andrew said.

"Aye," replied the gardener. "I'm thinking it's big enough."

"Have you help?"

"Willie Grant comes over whiles, when I've mair than ordinar' to do. He has a club foot, ye'll mind, an' is no' verra active, but there's jobs he saves me."

Andrew knew the man, and knew that he could not have sprung across the flower border.

"I see Tom is still at the stables, but the man who drives the car is new. How long have they had him?"

"A year, maybe. Watson's a quiet man, an' makes no unnecessar' mess, like some o' them. He leeves in the hoose."

"Then he doesn't get up very early."

"He's at Dumfries wi' the car. There was something to be sortit an' he took her there yestreen. Mr. Staffer's for Glasgow, the morn."

After a few remarks about the garden, Andrew strolled away. He had learned that the night prowler could not have been one of the men employed at Appleyard. The fellow had apparently not entered the house, and although he had stayed long enough to deliver a message to somebody inside, Andrew had not heard a door or window open. The matter puzzled him, but he determined to say nothing about it, al-

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though he was conscious of no particular reason for his reserve.

An hour later, Whitney and he started for Edinburgh, with Dick on the carrier of the motorcycle. The machine was powerful and they meant to travel by short stages and stop at points of interest for a walk across the hills. Andrew was glad to have Dick with them, particularly as he was dubious about the visits the boy was in the habit of making to Dumfries and Lockerbie. Dick generally returned late at night and did not look his best the next morning.

Whitney enjoyed the journey. He had understood that southern Scotland was the home of scientific agriculture, and in this respect the valleys came up to his expectations; but when they left them on foot, as they did now and then, they crossed barren, wind-swept spaces clothed with bent-grass and heather. In places, lonely hills rolled from horizon to horizon without sign of life except for the black-faced sheep and the grouse that skimmed the heath.

Andrew knew every incident in the history of this rugged country, and with a little encouragement he told tales of English invasions and fierce reprisals, of stern Covenanting martyrs and their followers' fanatical cruelties. Looking down from the heights of the Lammermuirs, they saw where Cromwell crushed his Scottish pursuers; they climbed the battlements of old square towers that had defied English raids, and traced the line of Prince Charlie's march.

Whitney found it rather bewildering. There was so much romantic incident packed into two or three centuries; but he felt that he understood the insular Briton better than he had done, and this understanding im-

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proved his conception of the native-born American. It was here that some of the leading principles of American democracy were first proclaimed and fought for. Another thing was plain — if the spirit of this virile people had not greatly changed, deeds worthy of new ballads would be done in France and Flanders.

On the return journey they reached Hawick one evening and stopped for an hour or two. Dick suggested that they stay the night; but there was nothing to keep them in the smoky, wool-spinning town, and Andrew preferred to push on.

"The night air's bracing among the moors and I like to hear the whaups crying round the house," he said to Whitney. "There's a small hotel, built right on the fellside, and we should get there in an hour."

They set off, with Andrew on the carrier, and the powerful machine rolled smoothly out of the town. The street lamps were beginning to twinkle as they left it and low mist crept across the fields past which they sped. The cry of geese, feeding among the stubble, came out of the haze, which lay breast-high between the hedgerows, clogging the dust, but it thinned and rolled behind them as the road began to rise. Then the stubble fields became less frequent, fewer dark squares of turnips checkered the sweep of grass, and the murmur of Teviot, running among the willows, crept out of the gathering dusk.

Cothouses marked by glimmering lights went by; they sped through a dim, white village; and Whitney opened out his engine as they went rocking past a line of stunted trees. They were the last and highest, for after them the rough ling and bent-grass rolled across the haunts of the sheep and grouse. Whitney changed

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his gear as the grade got steeper, the hedges gave place to stone walls until they ran out on an open moor, round which the hills lifted their black summits against the fading sky. The three men made a heavy load on the long incline, but the machine brought them up, and the last of the light had gone when they stopped in front of a lonely hotel. It looked like a Swiss châlet on the breast of the fell, and a dark glen dropped steeply away from it, but it glowed with electric light.

"They seem to have some shooting people here," Dick said. "I'll run across and see if they can take us in, while you look at the carbureter. We may have to go on to Langholm and she wasn't firing very well."

He went up the drive and Whitney opened his tool bag. The top of the pass was about half a mile behind them, and the road ran straight down from it, widening in front of the hotel. There was a patch of loose stones on the other side, and the motorcycle stood a yard or two from the gate. Everything was very still except for the sound of running water, and it was rather dark, because the hills rose steeply above the glen.

"Dick's a long time coming back," Andrew said with a frown.

"Perhaps you'd better go for him," Whitney suggested.

Andrew went off, but met Dick in the drive.

"It's all right; there's nobody stopping here," he reported. "They keep the lights blazing to draw motoring people."

He spoke clearly, but with an evident effort, and Andrew frowned again.

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"There's a nut I can't get hold of," Whitney called to them from under the motorcycle. "Do you think I could borrow a smaller spanner here, Dick?"

"I'll get it for you," Dick volunteered jovially, and started back toward the house.

Andrew put a firm hand on his arm.

"You will not!" he said shortly.

Dick turned upon him in a moment's rage; and then laughed.

"Oh, all right. You're a tyrant, Andrew, but you mean well."

When Whitney went for the spanner Dick knelt down in the road to inspect the machine.

"Lend me your knife," he requested. "It will be all right if I put something in the jaws."

"I'm inclined to think you'd better leave it alone," Andrew replied meaningly.

Dick laughed.

"You're a suspicious beggar. I wasn't away five minutes. Anyhow, there's a fascination in tampering with other people's machines. Where's the knife?"

Andrew let him have it, and soon afterward Dick uttered an expletive as he tore the skin from one of his knuckles.

"The beastly thing will slip; but I'm not going to be beaten by a common American nut," he declared. "If I can't screw it up, I'll twist the bolt-head off."

"Leave it alone!" said Andrew.

"It's going!" Dick panted, and threw the spanner down. "Another knuckle skinned," he added grimly.

As he stopped to wipe his hand, a loud humming came across the summit. Then four lights leaped up and their united beam rushed down the pass.

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"That fellow's driving very fast, but he has plenty of room," Dick remarked, and Andrew, stepping back, saw that the tail-lamp of the motorcycle was burning well.

Dick got up, and Andrew moved out a yard or two across the road with the headlamp, half dazzled by the blaze of light that filled the glen. Suddenly the stream of radiance wavered, and Andrew wondered whether the driver had lost his nerve on seeing the patch of stones, which perhaps looked larger than they were. Then he heard the wheels skid and loose metal fly as the car lurched across the road.

"Jump!" he shouted, violently hurling Dick back before he sprang out of the way.

He struck the motorcycle with his lame leg, staggered, and fell on the gravel close to the gate. For a moment or two he had not the courage to look up, and then, with keen relief, he saw Dick standing safe.

"The clumsy brute!" Dick cried, in a voice that sounded hoarse with rage.

Running to the bicycle, he started it and jumped into the saddle. The red tail-light streamed away through the dark like a rocket, and when it grew dim, Andrew, standing shakily, saw Whitney beside him.

"He's gone mad!" Whitney exclaimed.

Andrew did not speak, and above the dying roar the big car made in the narrow hollow they heard a shrill buzzing that sounded strangely venomous.

"Forty miles an hour, anyway," Whitney estimated. "It would take a good car to get away from her. Is he fool enough to run into the back of it?"

"I don't know," said Andrew. "Dick's capable of

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anything when he's worked up. The curious thing is that his head is steadier than usual then."

They waited until the sound grew fainter and then died away.

"I am going down the glen," Andrew said.

They had not gone far when they heard a motor panting up hill to meet them, and a minute later Dick's car ran past and he waved his hand.

"Hotel gate!" he shouted. "Don't want to stop!"

When they reached the gate, Dick was waiting. Andrew turned the light on him, and started at the sight which met him. Dick's face was white and strained and smeared with blood, and he was evidently laboring under an emotion not wholly due to anger and excitement.

Even in the sudden flash past them of the automobile Andrew thought he had recognized the car as one belonging to Appleyard — a low, gray car which Staffer always used. He had believed that the lurch which nearly cost them their lives was due to reckless driving; but there was a tenseness in Dick's expression which he could not quite understand.

"Did you overtake the car?" he asked.

"No," said Dick, with a forced grin; "I took the bank and I'm afraid the machine is something the worse for it. I was gaining and close to the car when we got down to the bottom of the glen. You know it's very narrow there."

Whitney nodded. There was a sharp bend where road and stream ran out side by side through the sharply contracted gap in the hills. The slope on both sides was very steep and there was only a strip of

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grass between the road and the water, seven or eight feet below.

"Yes; it's not the place I'd care to negotiate at full speed."

"I meant to catch the car and ran on to the grass to get a wider sweep; but she wouldn't take the curve. Went straight up the hillside for a dozen yards and then threw me off. Luckily I fell into some fern and when I'd pulled myself together, I somehow got her down."

"But the car?"

"Got off," Dick replied in a strained tone.

Andrew spoke quickly.

"You'd better come and let us see if your face is badly cut."

They entered the hotel, but Dick stopped as they were passing the bar.

"We've all had a shock," he said; "and if you feel you'd like a drink, don't mind me. You needn't be afraid of setting me a bad example — I don't want anything."

Andrew smiled.

"Nor do I. Sometimes you're a very thoughtful fellow, Dick."

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CHAPTER VIII

DICK'S cuts were not deep and he joined his companions at supper. One of the windows was open and the smell of peat smoke came in, while the noise of Ewes water running down the glen mingled pleasantly with the bleating of sheep. The room, however, was illuminated by electric light and a row of sepia drawings hung on the wall.

"There's something distinctive about the Border," Whitney remarked; "but there's one thing that strikes me. In old English cities — Chester, for example — there are streets that look as they did in Queen Elizabeth's reign; but the Scottish towns you've shown me might have been built forty years ago."

Andrew smiled.

"The reason lies in our national character. We're utilitarian and don't allow sentiment to interfere with progress. As soon as a building gets out of date, we pull it down. Our past lives in the race's memory and we don't need to keep it embodied in stone."

He turned to Dick, who had been unusually quiet.

"It's lucky you didn't get worse hurt. Did you see the car's number?"

Dick hesitated a moment.

"No-o. The plate was covered with mud."

"But there has been no rain," Whitney objected.

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"I was near the gate when the driver swerved, and I couldn't see any reason for his doing so."

"He may not have noticed the loose stones until he was close to them, and then lost control of the steering because he was startled; or perhaps the wheels skidded on the loose metal," Andrew suggested.

"It's curious," Whitney persisted, "because if the fellow's nerve had given way he would have gone over the motorcycle and into the gate. Anyhow, he didn't lose control, because he straightened her up the moment Andrew threw you back."

"His nerve did not give way," said Dick.

Andrew looked hard at him.

"You know something. What is it, Dick?"

"I know the car," Dick said grimly; "but it isn't nice to think your own friends came near killing you."

"You're sure?"

"Positive. I thought I recognized the hum she makes on the top gear, and when I was close behind them at the bottom of the glen, I saw the tail-lamp had a cracked glass and a dinge in the top. It isn't a coincidence that our lamp's like that. I remember when Watson dropped it."

"Staffer certainly wouldn't lose control of his steering."

"No," said Dick; "he's as steady as a rock. So's Watson. You don't often find a lowland Scot of his type jumpy."

Whitney lighted a cigarette and leaned back, watching the others.

"Staffer was going to Glasgow," Andrew argued.

"Yes; the hydraulic ram that pumps our water had

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broken down and he meant to see the makers. He told me he might not be back for a few days."

"But would he return by Edinburgh? Had he any business there?"

"None that I know of; we deal with Glasgow. I wanted him to come up to Edinburgh not long ago, but he wouldn't. Said he didn't know anybody in the place and there was nothing to do."

"After all, you may have been mistaken about the car."

"Oh, no," said Dick; "but we'll talk about something else. I don't like to think that Staffer nearly finished me — and he wouldn't feel happy about it. Of course he didn't recognize us; and, on the whole, I think we'd better not mention it to him."

"I agree with you," Whitney said; and they planned to ship the damaged machine to Hawick and to walk back across the hills.

On their return to Appleyard, Whitney watched Staffer closely when Dick explained that they had been delayed by an accident in the glen at Teviot-head. He showed only a polite interest in the matter, and when Whitney talked about Edinburgh, he remarked that he found the city disappointing and seldom visited it.

A few days later, they all sat on the terrace one calm evening when Watson came back with the car and gave Dick and Staffer some letters.

"From Murray," Dick announced when he had opened his. "They're going to search the Colvend country next Thursday, and he suggests that we might like to join, though he hints that he's not allowed to give us much information."

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"What does he expect to find?" Staffer asked. His tone expressed indifference, but Whitney suspected that it covered a keen interest.

"He doesn't say. Somebody working a wireless installation, I imagine."

"And is Thursday particularly suitable for that kind of thing?"

"It's Dumfries' early-closing day. They can get a lot of motorcyclists then. Murray states that the coast and moss-roads will be watched."

"You ought to go," Elsie interposed. "Mr. Whitney would enjoy a day upon the heather."

"An opportunity for combining a pleasant excursion with a patriotic duty!" Staffer remarked. "Well, the high ground from Bengairn to Susie Hill will need some searching. No doubt, they'll push across the moors toward Black Beast?"

"Murray doesn't say, but it's probable. I don't know whether the military authorities have the spy mania; but if there is any ground for suspicion, it can do no harm to draw the Galloway moors. What do you think, Andrew?"

"I'd try the hills farther east."

"About Eskdale, of course?" Staffer said with ironical humor.

"Well," Andrew replied, "I don't claim much strategical knowledge, but if we take it for granted that a hostile force could be landed on our east coast —"

"Rosyth's being a naval station would make that difficult. But go on."

Beginning rather awkwardly, Andrew worked out a supposititious plan of campaign, and to Whitney, who

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had just been over the ground, it seemed a very good one. The scheme he outlined certainly appeared practical; and Whitney saw that Staffer was more interested than he pretended, and that his objections were designed to draw Andrew on. Both showed a knowledge of military needs and history; and when Staffer mentioned Cromwell's retreat on Dunbar, Whitney thought Andrew's defense of his favorite route across, instead of around, the Lammermuirs was good. He noted that Staffer did not claim as much local knowledge; indeed, he thought he was careful not to do so.

"I'm not convinced that we have much to fear, but you have worked the thing out very well," he said at last. "Have you thought that the War Office might find something to interest them in your views?"

Andrew flushed.

"They're probably bothered enough by amateur strategists," he replied. "Of course, I may be all wrong; but if there really did seem any need for it, I'd try to get somebody with influence to put my ideas before them."

Staffer folded a letter he had been reading, and looked at his watch.

"I must send off a telegram," he said, and left them.

"Well, Andrew, are we going on this spy hunt?" Whitney asked. It sounded promising to him.

"I could take the boat to Rough Firth. Then we might go on to Wigtown Bay, where you could see your people. Will you come, Dick?"

"Yes — as far as Rough Firth; but I don't know about the rest. Small boat sailing needs an acquired taste. You have to get used to eating half-cooked food

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and sleeping among wet sails. On my last cruise, drops from a deck-beam fell on my face all night when it rained. Andrew's hardier than I am, and no doubt truer to the old strain; but while the Annandale Johnstones did many reckless things, they had generally sense enough to stick to dry land."

They made the necessary arrangements, and a few days later the *Rowan* went down the Solway with the strong ebb-tide. The shoals were beginning to show above the sand-filled water when she drifted past a point fringed by low reefs and boulders, at Criffel's southern foot. Whitney guessed its distance as about three miles, and took a compass bearing at Andrew's order. The coast turned sharply west at the point, and the mountain, sloping to meet it, broke down into a wall of cliffs that rose, grim and forbidding, from the beach. At one place, a gap in the wall suggested a river mouth. There was not much wind, the sky was hazy, and on the port hand a stretch of gray water ran back to the horizon. It looked like open sea; but the strong rippling in the foreground indicated that the tide was running across thinly-covered banks.

"I should have liked a breeze," Andrew said. "If we bring her around, the ebb will sweep us past the mouth of the Firth. There's not much water on the sands ahead, but we ought to get a fathom, if I can find the Barnhourie gut. Keep her as she's going, Dick, with the knoll ashore on the bowsprit-end, while I look at the chart."

Andrew went below and Whitney turned to Dick.

"Do you know this gut?" he asked.

"I remember something about it, but they keep changing. See what depth there is."

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Whitney found six feet, and looked around as he heard the topsail flap. The *Rowan* was sailing upright, but going very fast, with the current eddying about her. Wreaths of sand came up to the surface and went down again.

"Keep her full," he said. "She's luffing off her course."

"It's possible. The tide's strong and she's not steering well. I dare say there's enough water everywhere, but Andrew must find the gut: he feels he has to do the proper thing. He's made like that."

"We'll take no chances," Whitney answered; and ran to the scuttle. "Pull up the board and come on deck!" he shouted to Andrew.

In a few moments Andrew's head appeared; and after a glance round, he swung himself up and jumping aft took the helm from Dick.

"Ready with the head-sheets!" he ordered. "We'll come round."

She began to turn and then suddenly stopped, with a rush of sandy water boiling about her stern. Andrew seized an oar, but could not push her off, and she sank on one side until the water flowed along the lower deck-planks.

"She's fast," Whitney said. "Where are we?"

"On the Barnhourie tongue of the Mersehead bank," replied Andrew, throwing down the oar. "I meant to run through the gut between them." He turned to Dick. "You're a hundred yards off your course."

"That's the tide's fault. Shall we take the sail off her?"

Andrew thought for a moment.

"Yes. I don't know about laying out an anchor.

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The flood runs pretty fast here; but we'll see when the sands are dry."

They lowered the canvas and then went below to cook a meal. This took them some time, for the floor and lockers slanted awkwardly, as the boat listed over, and when they went on deck again the light had begun to fade. Whitney was astonished at the transformation. What had looked like open water when he went below, was now a waste of sloppy sand that ran back as far as he could see. It was, however, pierced by a broad channel, from which a depression, filled with shallow pools, cut through the bank and ended in a lagoon not far off. This was evidently the gut Andrew had meant to navigate. The cliffs round the bay, to the westward, were losing their sharpness of outline; but two or three blocks of houses and a tower on the rocky point showed black above the level strip behind them.

"That's Southerness; they'll light up, soon," Andrew said. "I know one of the light-keepers and I'll walk across and ask him about the entrance to Rough Firth. There's a flock of duck up the channel, Jim, and you might get a shot at them from the dinghy when it's a bit darker. Will you stay on board, Dick?"

"Not much! There's nothing more melancholy than sitting alone in a stranded boat. I'll go with Jim."

Andrew went below and trimmed the anchor-light; then fastened it firmly to the forestay, and set off across the sands. Half an hour later, Dick and Whitney carried the small, folding dinghy to the channel and pushed her off. The current was now slack and they

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made progress until Dick shipped his oars and, kneeling down, took up the small hand paddles; but he let her drift for a few moments while they looked about. It was dark and the shore-line had faded, but some distance up the channel a small black sail was visible across the bank, and a steady bright beam marked the Southerness lighthouse. Half-seen birds were wading about the water's edge, but Dick said these were oyster-catchers and not worth powder and shot. A curlew's wild whistle fell from overhead and the cry of a black-backed gull came out of the obscurity like a hoarse laugh. It was rather dreary; and their clothes and the dinghy were getting damp; so, dipping the paddles, Dick drove the boat ahead.

After a while they distinguished a cluster of small dark objects some distance in front, and made toward them cautiously. The ducks did not seem to get much plainer, and Whitney thought they were swimming away. Stopping a few minutes to allay suspicion, Dick paddled again; but the ducks vanished as they crept on. Then he turned in toward the bank and pushed the craft along the bottom, hoping the dark background would hide their approach. Presently they saw the ducks again and Whitney raised his gun.

There was a red flash, smoke blew into his face, and the air was filled with the clamor of startled wild-fowl. Still, they had heard a splash and Dick got out the oars and rowed ahead. As he picked up a floating mallard, they heard a flutter and knew there was a crippled duck not far off. Rowing out into the stream, they saw it rise awkwardly from the water. Whitney fired, and missed. After this, they spent some time in trying to get into range before he brought down the

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bird. Then they ran the dinghy ashore and Dick landed with his gun.

"I'll walk up the bank and try the soft places about the pools," he said. "If I don't turn up soon, it will be because I've gone back to the *Rowan*."

Whitney lighted his pipe while he waited to allow the birds to recover from their alarm, but he had to strike several matches because his hands were wet, and he was annoyed to find that he had not many left. It was very dark, and a cold wind was blowing. Whitney lay down on the floorings, for shelter and to hide the glow of his pipe. The birds were quiet, but a dull, throbbing roar came out of the distance, and he supposed it was the splash of the surf on the seaward edge of the shoals. When his pipe was empty, he got up, intending to step overboard and drag the dinghy down to the receding water; but he found that this was not needful, as the ebb had nearly run out. Paddling up the channel he heard the whistle of curlew, and for a time followed the invisible birds. He could not get a shot, and, deciding that he had had enough, he laid down the paddles. Hitherto, he had been looking ahead, but when he put the oars in the crutches he was facing aft.

Grasping the oars firmly, he looked for the twinkle of the *Rowan's* light. In his surprise he almost dropped an oar. The *Rowan* had disappeared.

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CHAPTER IX

IN THE DARK

WHITNEY frowned as he looked about. He could see nothing except the black line of the bank a few yards away and the beam from the lighthouse on Southerness, though this had grown less distinct. There was no fog, but the air was filled with an obscuring moisture that wet his face and gathered upon the dinghy. Since the *Rowan's* canvas had been lowered she would be hard to see, and she lay at some distance from the water. He could not remember how long it was since he had seen the light, but it must have been some time, and he blamed himself for not keeping an eye on it.

Still, he ought to find the gutter near which she lay, and he knew the bearing of the Southerness light from there. He had guessed its distance, and if he took a new bearing now, the angle between it and the other would give him the length of the line he must follow to reach the neighborhood of the yacht. Taking out a small compass, he struck a match, but it went out. His hands were wet and the box was damp. He tried two or three more with no better success, and when he got the last to burn, the knife-blade he laid across the compass cast a shadow on the card. This prevented his seeing the points; and finding that he had no matches left, he paused to think.

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If his friends had returned to the boat, they would certainly not have put out the lamp, and it was disturbing to imagine their wandering about the sands, particularly as Andrew might have to cross some hollows up which the tide would shortly flow. Whitney shouted, but got no answer, and after waiting a few minutes he began to row, because it was plain that he must relight the lamp as soon as possible. He kept out in the channel to get the help of the stream, which he thought was running with him, but he did not seem to be making much progress, when he passed a projecting tongue of sand. Stopping to get his breath, he saw that the dinghy began to drift slowly back, and this disturbed him. The tide had turned sooner than he expected.

Heading in toward the bank, he rowed savagely; but the flat-bottomed craft did not pull well. Her main advantage was that she could be folded up and stowed on deck. After a time bits of seaweed and flakes of scum drifted up to meet him, and he could hear the water ripple along the edge of the sand where the channel bent. The flood was beginning to run and he had not covered much distance yet. Sweat dripped from his face, his back ached and his hands blistered; but this did not matter. Dick should be able to follow the channel down; but Andrew was no doubt a long way from land, with his retreat to the beach perhaps cut off. Moreover, Whitney saw that his own position was not fortunate.

He had the dinghy, but her side was only a foot above the water and the tide would presently sweep her up the Firth. He could not row against it long, and the current would capsize or swamp the boat if he

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struck a shoal. Still, it would be slack for about an hour and he must make good use of the time. His arms got stiff, but he kept up the pace and edged inshore until he touched bottom, when he made a deep stroke. The temptation to turn round and look ahead was strong, but he resisted it. He must not relax his efforts for a moment. He ought to see the mouth of the gutter when he had gone far enough. Unfortunately, however, the edge of the bank began to be indented by shallow bays, and, as he must pull straight across in order not to lose time, their ends were not always visible. It was unthinkable that he should overshoot the gutter, but he imagined it was still some distance off.

At last he saw a bold ridge of sand that looked like the place where they had launched the dinghy, but on pulling close in, he could not distinguish the mark she must have made as they dragged her down. He rowed on for a hundred yards and stopped. There was no gutter, though he believed he had come far enough. The sound of the surf was ominously loud and a black-backed gull that fluttered overhead seemed to mock him with its hoarse, croaking laugh.

Whitney felt unnerved; but he pulled himself together. His friends' lives, and perhaps his own, depended on his keeping cool. He must have passed the gutter, but he might see the *Rowan* from the top of the bank. Running aground, he pulled the dinghy out. There was no grapnel, but she had a few fathoms of painter and he tied it to an oar, which he drove into the sand. This ought to hold her if she floated before he came back.

For a few minutes he walked rapidly away from the

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water, then turned and ran along the flat, but could not see the yacht; and when he dared stay no longer he came down to the channel. There was nothing that looked like the mouth of the gutter and the dinghy was afloat. Pushing off, he rowed a short distance and made another unsuccessful search. Whitney was now getting desperate, but he tried to think calmly what he should do. He could fold up the dinghy and carry her toward the Southerness light, shouting as he went; but the others would be in very grave danger if he missed them; besides, they would not both come the same way. The plan would not serve; he must try again to find the *Rowan*. Progress was difficult against the current; but he did his best, and landing again, he dragged the dinghy up. She would not float for some time because the bank was steep, but he dared not go far, lest he should lose his way in coming back.

Striking shoreward, he plowed breathlessly through soft sand, but saw nothing for some minutes. Then, when he was despairing, a black object emerged from the gloom. It might be only a hummock; but after he had gone a few yards, he knew it was the yacht and felt a thrill of relief that was unnerving in its keenness. Still, he must brace himself and decide between two courses. The dinghy might be needed to take his comrades off, and there was a risk of her going adrift before he got back; he ought not to lose a moment in returning to her. On the other hand, Dick and Andrew must be in danger of being cut off by the advancing tide and the lamp would show them where the boat lay; but it might take some time to light. Hesitation would be fatal: he must do one thing or the other at once.

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Running to the yacht, he clambered on board and unfastened the lamp from the stay, and then groped about the cabin for matches. At last he found some and, shaking the lamp, heard the oil splash inside. The wick did not ignite readily and he had to rub the charred edge off, but by and by the flame began to spread and he scrambled on deck, striking his head against the hatch. When he reached the bow, he found himself shaking and scarcely able to tie the lamp to the stay, but he jumped down on the sand and ran with all his speed toward the channel. He could not see the dinghy and feared that she had gone, but he found her safe, afloat and straining at the rope.

Jumping on board, he pulled along the edge of the bank until an eddy swept him into the mouth of the gutter. This decided a point that he was anxious about. The tide was flowing into the hollow from the channel and not from its seaward end, which meant that there was less danger that the others would be surrounded. The rising water carried him close to the yacht, and when he got on board he sat down, breathing hard and feeling conscious of keen nervous strain. He shouted, but there was no answer; only the crying of wildfowl and the ripple of the tide broke the silence. It was running fast up the gutter, surging noisily over the uneven bottom and lapping the edge of the sand, and Whitney soon heard a splash against the starboard plank.

He must now grapple with a fresh problem. The *Rowan,* drawing little water when her centerboard was up, would shortly be afloat. Andrew had not laid out an anchor, for it might be dangerous. If the anchor failed to hold, she would sheer across the current before

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her keel was quite off the bottom, and the leverage of the taut chain might help the rush of water to press her down into the sand or roll her over. One could take no chances with the Solway tide. Still, if left unmoored, she would drive across the flats, away from his comrades.

Whitney could not determine what to do; and while he waited in tormenting indecision, the boat rose upright and the water swirled furiously round her bilge. Then his heart leaped as a cry came out of the dark, and soon afterward two indistinct figures appeared at the side of the gut.

"Be quick! She'll be off in a moment and the anchor's on board," he shouted, pulling up the dinghy to row across.

"Stay where you are!" Andrew called. "We can wade it. In with you, Dick!"

They were soon knee-deep and Whitney saw the current boil about their legs when they stopped as the water got deeper, but Andrew encouraged Dick, and they went on again and reached the yacht. Dick was panting, but Andrew seemed quite cool.

"I don't know about the anchor yet; we'll wait," he said, and stood watching the tide ripple past.

"It was lucky I met Andrew when I lost the channel," Dick said to Whitney in a resentful tone. "You might have waited for me."

"Hold on, Dick," interrupted Andrew. "Perhaps you'd better go below and change your clothes."

Dick left them; and soon afterward the boat began to move uneasily.

"The stream's getting slack; the water must be coming through from the other end," Andrew said.

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In another minute she slowly floated away and he threw the anchor off the bow.

"She'll ride to it, but as we needn't make sail until the flats are covered, we'll go down and get supper."

He changed his clothes while Whitney lighted the stove.

"How did the lamp go out?" he asked presently.

Whitney related his adventures, and Dick turned to him with a smile.

"Sorry I was huffed, but I dare say you can make allowance for my feelings. They'd got rather harrowed while I wandered about in the dark. You did the right thing, of course, in going back."

Dick made some coffee and when it was on the table Whitney was glad to lean back on a locker and light his pipe. With two candle lamps burning, the narrow cabin looked very snug and cheerful after the desolate sands, and it was something to see Andrew sitting opposite, safe but thoughtful.

"Did you trim the lamp properly?" Dick asked, puzzled.

"Of course," said Andrew, with a touch of dryness. "That's something I don't often neglect. Mixed the oil myself — colza and a dash of paraffin; and the lamp's the best I could get in Glasgow. Suppose you bring it down."

Dick did so, and Andrew took off the oil-container, which was nearly full, and examined the burner. There was nothing wrong, and Whitney noted the good workmanship of the fittings.

"It couldn't go out," he said decidedly.

"That," Andrew replied, frowning, "is my opinion; but as I came down to the gutter I saw only two rows

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of footsteps, and you made those in coming and going back to the dinghy. I can't say there wasn't another track, because the light was faint so far from the boat; but we might look about the deck and cabin-top to see if anybody has been on board."

"I'm afraid I mussed that all up with sand," Whitney pointed out.

"But who'd want to come on board?" Dick asked. "Theft could be the only object, and we'll soon find out about that."

They looked round the cabin, but missed nothing.

"A thief wouldn't have put out the light, because he'd know that might bring us back before he got away," Dick elucidated; then turned to Whitney. "What do you think?"

"Well," said Whitney, smiling. "I've only one suggestion and it's rather far-fetched. The thing might have been a plot to make us lose the boat or, perhaps, make an end of us. If that's so, it nearly succeeded."

"Rot!" exclaimed Andrew. "Nobody would be twopence the richer for putting me out of the way."

"And I haven't an enemy in the world — unless it's myself," Dick grinned. "I don't count the Kaiser, because the bad feeling's patriotic; I've nothing personal against him."

Andrew made a sign of impatience, and Whitney, watching him closely, thought he felt disturbed.

"Did you see anybody on the bank?"

"No," Whitney answered. "I saw a small sail; a lugsail, I think, because it was long on the head. It looked very black."

"Tanned with blacklead and oil; one of the Annan

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whammel boats, most likely. They drag a net for salmon, but wouldn't get any just now, as the water's too smooth."

"Then why were they out?"

"After flounders, perhaps. But none of the Annan men would meddle with our light. However, we'd better make a start if we mean to reach Rough Firth this tide."

"Now and then I'm glad I'm not much of a seaman," Dick laughed. "As I'd probably pull the wrong string, I'll stay below and smoke."

A cold east wind was blowing when Whitney went on deck, and after hoisting sail they crept away against the tide. Whitney sounded with the pole until he could no longer touch bottom, when Andrew seemed satisfied. It was very dark, but two quivering beams pierced the gloom.

"Get the topsail down," Andrew ordered after a while. "We'll find the stream that fills Rough Firth in a few minutes and it will take us up fast enough."

This proved correct, for shortly afterward the sea broke about them in confused eddies, and the boat splashed and lurched as she crossed the troubled space that divided the tides. Then she forged ahead very fast, and blurred hills and shadowy cliffs soon loomed out. Whitney used the sounding pole again, the cliffs grew plainer, and when the land closed in on them, they dropped anchor. She brought up and, after helping to stow the canvas, Whitney climbed into his folding cot.

For a time he did not sleep but lay thinking about the extinguished light. It seemed impossible that the lamp should have gone out accidentally, and he was not

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satisfied that the explanation he had humorously offered was altogether absurd. His friends had had another narrow escape not long before, and it might be significant that although they were together on both occasions, Andrew had run the greater risk. Whitney admitted that this might be coincidence and he must not let his imagination run away with him. One must use sense and not wrap up in romantic mystery a matter that might be perfectly simple. For all that, he meant to seize any clue that chance might offer him.

Next morning they landed and joined Murray at a village among the hills. They spent the day upon the heather, working inland across broad, grassy spaces and red moors where the sheep fled before them, and then climbed a line of rugged hills. These were not high, but Whitney found them romantically interesting as he scrambled among black peat-hags where the wild cotton grew, up marshy ravines, and past great granite boulders. Stopping now and then to get his breath, he watched the line of small figures stretched out across the waste and thought that nobody lurking among the stones and heather could escape. Still, when the different detachments met upon a windy summit, none of them had seen anything suspicious.

"We've drawn blank," Murray remarked, as they ate some sandwiches behind a boulder.

"Yes," said Andrew. "If there is anything to be found out, I'd locate it farther east."

Murray looked at him keenly for a moment and then answered:

"On the whole, I agree with you. It's my business, however, to search where I am told."

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