

*Name of George Milner of Manchester, a Man most Generous,
Brave, True, to whom, because he freely gave me That of His which I
the most desired – I, having Nothing worthier to give, Give This.*

KENMURE

1715

"The heather's in a blaze, Willie,
The White Rose decks the tree,
The Fiery-Cross is on the braes,
And the King is on the sea.

"Remember great Montrose, Willie,
Remember fair Dundee,
And strike one stroke at the foreign foes
Of the King that's on the sea.

"There's Gordons in the North, Willie,
Are rising frank and free,
Shall a Kenmure Gordon not go forth
For the King that's on the sea?

"A trusty sword to draw, Willie,
A comely weird to dree,
For the royal Rose that's like the snaw,
And the King that's on the sea!"

He cast ae look upon his lands,
Looked over loch and lea,
He took his fortune in his hands,
For the King was on the sea.

Kenmures have fought in Galloway
For Kirk and Presbyt'rie,
This Kenmure faced his dying day,

For King James across the sea.

It little skills what faith men vaunt,
If loyal men they be
To Christ's ain Kirk and Covenant,
Or the King that's o'er the sea.

ANDREW LANG.

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PREFACE

There is a certain book of mine which no publisher has paid royalty upon, which has never yet been confined in spidery lines upon any paper, a book that is nevertheless the Book of my Youth, of my Love, and of my Heart.

There never was such a book, and in the chill of type certainly there never will be. It has, so far as I know, no title, this unpublished book of mine. For it would need the blood of rubies and the life of diamonds crusted on ivory to set the title of this book.

Mostly I see it in the late night watches, when the twilight verges to the cock-crowing and the universe is silent, stirless, windless, for about the space of one hour. Then the pages of the book are opened a little; and, as one that reads hungrily, hastily, at the bookstall of an impatient vendor a book he cannot buy, so I scan the idylls, the epics, the dramas of the life of man written in words which thrill me as I read. Some are fiercely tender, some yearning and unsatisfying, some bitter in the mouth but afterward sweet in the belly. All are expressed in words so fit and chaste and noble, that each is an immortal poem which would give me deathless fame – could I, alas! but remember.

Then the morning comes, and with the first red I awake to a sense of utter loss and bottomless despair. Once more I have clutched and missed and forgotten. It is gone from me. The imagination of my heart is left unto me desolate. Sometimes indeed when a waking bird – by preference a mavis – sings outside my window, for a little while after I swim upward out of the ocean of sleep, it seems that I might possibly remember one stanza of the deathless words; or even by chance recapture, like the brown speckled thrush, that "first fine careless rapture" of the adorable refrain.

Even when I arise and walk out in the dawn, as is my custom winter and summer, still I have visions of this book of mine, of which I now remember that the mystic name is "The Book Sealed." Sometimes in these dreams of the morning, as I walk abroad, I find my hands upon the clasps. I touch the binding wax of the seals. When the first rosy fingers of the dawn point upward to the zenith with the sunlight behind them, sanguine like a

maid's hand held before a lamp, I catch a farewell glimpse of the hidden pages.

Tales, not poems, are written upon them now. I hear the voices of "Them Ones," as Irish folk impressively say of the Little People, telling me tales out of the Book Sealed, tales which in the very hearing make a man blush hotly and thrill with hopes mysterious. Such stories as they are! The romances of high young blood, of maidens' winsome purity and frank disdain, of strong men who take their lives in hand and hurl themselves upon the push of pikes. And though I cannot grasp more than a hint of the plot, yet as my feet swish through the dewy swathes of the hyacinths or crisp along the frost-bitten snow, a wild thought quickens within me into a belief, that one day I shall hear them all, and tell these tales for my very own so that the world must listen.

But as the rosy fingers of the morn melt and the broad day fares forth, the vision fades, and I who saw and heard must go and sit down to my plain saltless tale. Once I wrote a book, every word of it, in the open air. It was full of the sweet things of the country, so at least as they seemed to me. I saw the hens nestle sleepily in the holes of the bank-side where the dry dust is, and so I wrote it down. I heard the rain drum on the broad leaves over my head, and I wrote that down also. Day after day I rose and wrote in the dawn, and sometimes I seemed to recapture a leaf or a passing glance of a chapter-heading out of the Book Sealed. It came back to me how the girls were kissed and love was made in the days when the Book Sealed was the Book Open, and when I cared not a jot for anything that was written therein. So as well as I could I wrote these things down in the red dawn. And so till the book was done.

Then the day comes when the book is printed and bound, and when the critics write of it after their kind, things good and things evil. But I that have gathered the fairy gold dare not for my life look again within, lest it should be even as they say, and I should find but withered leaves therein. For the sake of the vision of the breaking day and the incommunicable hope, I shall look no more upon it. But ever with the eternal human expectation, I rise and wait the morning and the final opening of the "Book Sealed."

S.R. CROCKETT.

NOTE.

I am deeply in the debt of my friend, Mr. Andrew Lang, for the ballad of 'Kenmure' which he has written to grace my bare boards and spice the plain fare here set out in honour of the ancient Free Province.

BOOK FIRST

ADVENTURES

*Lo, in the dance the wine-drenched coronal
From shoulder white and golden hair doth fall!
A-nigh his breast each youth doth hold an head,
Twin flushing cheeks and locks unfilleted;
Swifter and swifter doth the revel move
Athwart the dim recesses of the grove ...
Where Aphrodite reigneth in her prime,
And laughter ringeth all the summer time.*

*There hemlock branches make a languorous gloom,
And heavy-headed poppies drip perfume
In secret arbour set in garden close;
And all the air, one glorious breath of rose,
Shakes not a dainty petal from the trees.
Nor stirs a ripple on the Cyprian seas.*

"The Choice of Herakles."

I

THE MINISTER OF DOUR

*This window looketh towards the west,
And o'er the meadows grey
Glimmer the snows that coldly crest
The hills of Galloway.*

*The winter broods on all between –
In every furrow lies;
Nor is there aught of summer green,
Nor blue of summer skies.*

*Athwart the dark grey rain-clouds flash
The seabird's sweeping wings,
And through the stark and ghostly ash
The wind of winter sings.*

*The purple woods are dim with rain,
The cornfields dank and bare;
And eyes that look for golden grain
Find only stubble there.*

*And while I write, behold the night
Comes slowly blotting all,
And o'er grey waste and meadow bright
The gloaming shadows fall.*

"From Two Windows."

The wide frith lay under the manse windows of the parish of Dour. The village of Dour straggled, a score of white-washed cot-

tages, along four hundred yards of rocky shore. There was a little port, to attempt which in a south-west wind was to risk an abrupt change of condition. This was what made half of the men in the parish of Dour God-fearing men. The other half feared the minister.

Abraham Ligartwood was the minister. He also feared God exceedingly, but he made up for it by not regarding man in the slightest. The manse of Dour was conspicuously set like a watch-tower on a hill—or like a baron's castle above the huts of his retainers. The fishermen out on the water made it their lighthouse. The lamp burned in the minister's study half the night, and was alight long ere the winter sun had reached the horizon.

Abraham Ligartwood would have been a better man had he been less painfully good. When he came to the parish of Dour he found that he had to succeed a man who had allowed his people to run wild. Dour was a garden filled with the degenerate fruit of a strange vine.

The minister said so in the pulpit. Dour smiled complacently, and considered that its hoary wickednesses would beat the minister in the long-run. But Dour did not at that time know the minister. It was the day of the free-traders. The traffic with the Isle of Man, whence the hardy fishermen ran their cargoes of Holland gin and ankers of French brandy, put good gear on the back of many a burgher's wife, and porridge into the belly of many a fisherman's bairn.

The new minister found all this out when he came. He did not greatly object. It was, he said, no part of his business to collect King George's dues. But he did object when the running of a vessel's cargo became the signal for half his parishioners settling themselves to a fortnight of black, solemn, evil-hearted drinking. He said that he would break up these colloquings. He would not have half the wives in the parish coming to his kirk with black eyes upon the Lord's Sabbath day.

The parish of Dour laughed. But the parish of Dour was to get news of the minister, for Abraham Ligartwood was not a man to trifle with.