

THE MAID OF KILLEENA.

BY WILLIAM BLACK.

CHAPTER I.

THE FIVE BROTHERS OF DARROCH.

"Fair and fine is the Maid of Killeena. Her foot is light on the heather as the foot of the roe-deer on Corriball; her eyes are bluer than the blue sea round Uig; when she speaks the valley rejoices. And she has no lover, the Maid of Killeena; her heart is as free as the winds of the morning; the young men are afraid of her laughing; they avoid the road to Killeena."

"Such were the phrases, mere echoes of Macpherson's Ossian, that were running through the head of a young lad who lay on the beach of the far and lonely island of Darroch, in the Hebrides. He was dressed in rough, dark-brown fisherman's costume; his hands and face were browned with the weather; but somehow he did not seem to have the robust and hardy look common to the inhabitants of that rough coast. His face was pensive and sad; his eyes large and thoughtful; his limbs appeared slender and supple rather than thick and strong. At this moment he was regarding with an absent and indifferent look the sea before him, the islands that stood black in the pale colors of the water, and a large brown rowing-boat which was being pulled out through one of the channels to the open plain beyond. In that boat were his four brothers. He was to have gone out fishing with them as usual; but he had forgotten the time and missed them, and he had run down to this projecting point of the coast to hail them as they went by. For a second or two they hung on their oars, and seemed inclined to pull in for him; but then he could see his eldest brother, Duncan, turn round and address his companions with many angry gestures; and presently the oars were dipped into the wave again, and the boat made out for the open sea. The young lad, Alistair Lewis by name, lay down on the shingle, disappointed, ashamed, and wretched. His heart was not in the fishing, and every one knew it; still it was hard that he should be left at home to mind the farm as if he were a girl or an old woman. But as he lay and dreamed of all these things, his fancy took him away to the neighboring island of Killeena and to a small farmstead there, where a mother and an only daughter lived. The daughter was Ailisa Macdonald—the Maid of Killeena; the boy used to call her to himself—and his heart grew light in thinking of her. The picture he had before his imagination was really one to dwell with delight on; that of a young girl of sixteen, graceful in figure, with light-brown hair that, unloosed, would have rippled down to her feet, eyes brightly blue and shaded with dark eyelashes, and a disposition as merry, and bright, and innocent, as ever cheered up a rude home. And that was a rude home enough—the small farm-house of Carn-Sleau, which was set in the middle of a moor, with a few fields reclaimed from the black peat-moss all round, and with but a scanty shod of sheep on the drier uplands abutting on the farm. She had no lover, this Maid of Killeena; but there was some one over the narrow channel that separated the island from Darroch who led his boyish fancies cluster around her in a tender and wishful fashion, keeping the secret, as he imagined, sacred to himself.

"And you are going away like that, Alistair Lewis?" she said; "and none of your friends to come and drink a glass of your health, and not a word to any one of them? And it is only in half an hour that we will be dinner, Alistair; and what is half an hour if you are going away like that?"

"But you will not be ferrying with me, Ailisa," he said, rather shamefacedly, "because it is a hard thing to go away, and I will not let the spirit to say good-bye to them all—only to you, Ailisa, and it will be a ferry good day for me that day that you will send me a letter to Glasgow."

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much—indeed, he had calculated on it—he rapidly dressed himself again, and began walking smartly up and over the marshy green waters of Killeena, until he reached a small farm set amidst the black moorlands that had been cut for peat. An elderly woman was at the door, in the misty sunlight, spinning wool. One or two people—mostly old women, who had given up the fishing, but who still wore fishermen's clothes—were at work in the fields. There was no sign of the young Maid of Killeena.

"Yes, it is you, Alistair Lewis!" Mrs. Macdonald said, in the Gaelic; "and have you not brought your fiddle to go to the fishing to-day?"

"My brothers have gone to the fishing without me," said Alistair, in the same tongue, "and they have taken my fiddle with them. I want to see your Ailisa, Mrs. Macdonald, for I am going away."

"You are going away, Alistair Lewis?" she said; "and where are you going?"

"I am going to Glasgow—yes, that is where I am going. I am not any use at the fishing; and my mother and father they do not want me at the farm. It is a long way to Glasgow."

"You will find Ailisa in the kitchen," said Mrs. Macdonald.

Ailisa was raking up the peats—the fire was in the middle of the floor, with a chimney overhead going up through the thatch of the roof—with the intention of putting a big pot on the iron hook. She turned round suddenly as he entered—a bright look of surprise and gladness flashed into her face—and she said in English, "And is it you, Alistair, at last? You had not been here for more than two weeks."

"No, I had not, Ailisa," he said, casting down his eyes; "and now I have come to bid you good-bye, for it is to Glasgow that I am going. It is no use my being here any more; and if I can get any work in Glasgow, that will be ferry well indeed; and if I can get the open sea, I will do that, too, for it is not any great money you want to go to college there, as Malcolm Ross he was telling to me when I will see him in Stormoway, and so—and so, Ailisa, I was wanting to say good-bye to you before I go."

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And there and then the three brothers settled it, Duncan being the only dissident. When Alistair came in to supper he was pale and silent. He felt himself an outcast, and that his brothers had reason to despise him for he could not work in the boat as they did. He was conscious that he spent his time in idling about the moors and solitudes—in playing his rude violin by the side of lonely streams—in reading books and studying algebraic puzzles that could be of no use to any one. So he came in and sat down at the plain wooden table, silent and ashamed.

"And where were you been this day, Alistair?" said Nicol Lewis.

"The lad bit his lip and was silent; he did not wish to be laughed at.

"At Carn-Sleau—that is where he was," said Duncan Lewis, looking dark.

"That is true," the lad said at last. "I was over by Carn-Sleau—to say good-bye. For I am going to Glasgow—it is no use my being here any more."

"That is true word you have spoken, Alistair Lewis," said his brother Nicol, in a kindly fashion; "and we are ferry glad you would think of going to Glasgow, because it is not many has such skill of reading and writing as you; and we was saying 'there is no great expense of the going to the college, and we was saying that the expense—well, we will take the expense, and it is no great thing that we will take the expense. And if you get a place in Glasgow that will keep you in your meat and your clothes, that was ferry well whatever; but the college, it is Donald, and Hamish, and me, we will pay for the college, and you will send us the letter, Alistair, that will tell us all the news."

Surely the boy was not fit for the hard life of a fisherman; for at this moment, when he ought to have been glad of heart, any one could have seen that tears were running down his face. He rose abruptly from the table. He went to the small window—a single pane of glass let into the wall—and stood there for a moment or two. Then he came back, and held out his hand to each of the three brothers in succession.

"It is a ferry kind man you are, Nicol Lewis," he said to the last of them, "and a ferry good brother to me. And it is not much of your money I will spend at the college; and when I can I will pay you back your money but there is more than the money that I thank you for this night, Nicol Lewis."

And so, some few days thereafter, Alistair Lewis sailed in the steamer for Glasgow; and many thought they should see him no more in this world, considering that he had gone away to that distant place; but as for Ailisa Macdonald she had no such thoughts, and used, on the contrary, to sit of an evening and wonder what the great city was like; and wonder, too, when Alistair Lewis would grow to be a great and famous man and come back in pride and honor to the humble farm in the island of Darroch.

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Law Notices, etc. Administrator's Notice. THE UNDERSIGNED, William M. Kelly, have been appointed Administrator of the Goods and Chattels, Rights and Credits of John Stewart, late of Miramichi, in the County of Carleton Place, deceased, and all persons owing to or claiming against the said deceased are requested to present their claims to the undersigned on or before the 15th day of November next.

Law Notices, etc. German Consul's Notice. I AM instructed by the Department for Foreign Affairs of the German Empire to attend to any claims of German subjects in the County of Carleton Place, and to all persons owing to or claiming against the said deceased are requested to present their claims to the undersigned on or before the 15th day of November next.

Law Notices, etc. SHERIFF'S SALE. To be sold at Public Auction, on FRIDAY, the 15th day of February next, in front of the Registry Office, Newcastle, the contents of one Parcel of Land, situate, lying and being in the Parish of Land, in the County of Northumberland, and being the same as is described in the following particulars:—

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