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It's sailing I am at the dawn of the day,
To my brother that's over the sea;
But its little I'll care for life anywhere,
For it's breaking my heart will be.
But a treasure I'll take for old Ireland's sake,
That I'll prize all belonging above;
It's a handful of earth from the land of my birth.
From the heart o' the land I love.

And won't the poor lad in his exile be glad,
When he sees the brave present I bring?
And won't there be flowers from this treasure of ours,
In the warmth of the beautiful spring?
Och, Erin, machree! though it's partin' we be,
It's a blessing I'll leave on your shore,
And your mountains and streams will I see in my dreams
Till I cross to my country once more.

Miscellany.

The Maid of Killeena.

BY WILLIAM BLACK,

Author of "The Princess of Thule," "A Daughter of Heth," etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE FIVE BROTHERS OF DARROCH.

"Fair and fine is the Maid of Killeena. Her foot is light on the heather as the roe-deer on Corrabhal; her eyes are bluer than the blue seas 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 blue 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 thickset and strong. At this moment he was regarding with absent and indifferent look the sea before him, the island 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 the projecting point of the coast to hail them as they went by. For a second or two they held 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 in the waves again, and the boat made out for the open sea. The young lad, Alister 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 farmsteading there, where a mother and only daughter lived. The daughter was Ailias Macdoneld—the Maid of Kitleena, the boy used to call her to himself—and his heart grew in thinking of her. The picture before his immagination 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 Slean, which was set in the middle of a moor, with a few fields reclaimed from the black peat-moss all around, and with but a scanty show 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 the island from Darroch who let his boyish fancies cluster around her in a tender and wistful fashion, keeping the secret, as he imagined, sacred to himself.

It was no secret, however, to his four brothers, the eldest of whom—a short, thickset, hardvisaged man of fierce temper and passionate speech—was himself supposed to harbor some wish that he might in a year or two get this bright young lass to be his wife. Duncan Lewis spoke angrily of his younger brother's visits to the farm of Carn-Slean. He never had any great love for the lad, who was ill qualified for the rough work of the fishing; but sometimes he spoke of him with a sudden emphasis of hatred which startled the others. On this occasion, when young Alister Lewis came running down to the point to hail the boat, the eldest brother had turned and said, fiercely,

"We will not go in to the shore for him—no, by Kott, we will not go in to the shore. He is no use for the fishing, not more as if he was a child; and who will look out for the storms with these teffies of eyes of his staring. Let him go to the farm. Let him look after the hens, and bring the cows home. We hef no more use for him in the boat!"

"But we hef got his fiddle with us," said another of the brothers, regretfully; "and he is ferry goot with the songs and the stories."

"The songs and the stories!" said Duncan Lewis, with an oath. "Who will want to hef stories that will mek the ferry dead rise up in their graves? They are not goot songs for the middle of the night. His songs and his stories! Let him tek them over to that lass at Killeena—she will hef his songs and his stories!"

"But it is you, Duncan Lewis, yourself," retorted the brother, "who like to have a word with Mrs. Macdonald's lass."

The eldest brother did not answer; he struck his oar into the water, the other oars instantly following; and the measured throb could have been heard along the shores of these lonely islands, while a gloomy silence prevailed on board the boat.

Meanwhile Allister Lewis had got up to his feet, showing himself a tall and well-made stripling enough, though he had not the stalwart make of his brothers.

"I will go over to Killeena," he said to himself, "I hef something to say to Ailasa."

He walked along the shores of the island—the shingly beach of which soon gave way to strenches of fine wind-swept sand. He came to a narrow channel, on the other side of which was another island—darker and more rocky than Darroch; while the strait between had clearly a strong current running through it. How to get over? There was not even a house within sight on these desolate shores. The lad cooly undressed himself, tied his clothes in a bundle, and strapped them on his shoulders: then he made his way carefully into the water, and swam the channel. The water was pretty smooth; but all the same the lower part of the bundle was considerably wet. Not heeding that much—indeed, he had calculated on it—he rapidly dressed himself again; and began walking smartly up and over the marshy green wastes of Killeena until he reached a small farm set among 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 men, who had given up the fishing, but who still wore fisherman's clothes—were at work in the fields. There was no sign of the Maid of Killeena.

"Yes, is it you, Allister Lewis?" Mrs. Macdonald said, in the Gaelic; "and have you not brought your fiddle to give us a tune? And are your brothers not gone to the fisking to-day?"

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

"Are you going away, Alister Lewis! And where are you going?" she said.

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

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

Ailasa 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—ith 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 iss it you, Alister, at last? You hef not been here not for more as two weeks."

"No, I hef not, Ailasa," he said casting down his eyes; "and now I wass come to bid you good-by, for it is to Glasgow that I am going. It iss 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 go to the schools there I will do that too, for it iss not any great money you want to go to the college there, as Malcolm Ross he wass telling to me when I will see him in Stornoway, and so—and so, Ailasa, I wass wanting to say good-by to you before I go."

"But you will not be for going to Glasgow all at once, Alister?" said the girl, with two big tears appearing in her eyes.

"It iss no use spending the time any more here," the lad said, wistfully. "I would write you a letter, Ailasa, from Glasgow, if you would like that: and if you would send me the news, that would be a ferry good day the day that I got a letter from you with all the news in it."

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

"But you will not be ferry angry with me, Ailasa," he said, rather shamefacedly "bekass it is a hard thing to go away, and I will not hef the spirit to say good-by to them all—only to you, Ailasa, and to your mother; and so good-by to you, Ailasa, and it will be a ferry good day for me that day that you will send me a letter to Glasgow."

Ailasa was now crying bitterly. She held out her hand: and he, unable to speak, shook it warmly, and went away. Then, with some broken sentences in Gaelic, he bade good-by to the old mother, and betook himself again to crossing the wild moorland on the way to sea.

That night the brothers, who had only been out with the lines, came home late and rather dispirited. The take had been small. When in due course they sat down to supper, the old father and mother included, Alister only was absent.

"I suppose he hass been all the day over with that lass at Carn-Slean," said the black-haired Duncan, angrily. "He is better there than at the fishing. He will go to the fishing with us no more—by Kott, he will go with us no more."

"You are right, Duncan Lewis, and it is a hard man you are," the old mother said, beginning to cry. "He will not go to the fishing with you, not any more, for the boy is going to Glasgow."

"And a ferry good thing too and mirover," said Duncan, gloomily, "he will be ferry much better in a counting-house than at an oar; and he will hef his fiddle when he likes, and his stories, and his books. 'Tiss a ferry good thing that he will be a going away to Glasgow."

"By Kott," exclaimed one of the other brothers, with a sudden vehemence, "if Alister iss going for to go to Glasgow, it iss not with empty pockets that he will go to Glassgow!"

"No, no!" cried the other brothers. "We will gif the lad something to put in his pocket! By Kott, he will hef something to put in his pocket!"

And here the white-haired old father interfered; and with many wise shakes of the head he intimated that he knew all that lay before a young man who was going to seek his fortune in a strange and distant city. Old Hector Lewis, to be sure, had never been out of the Hebrides, and had never seen any greater or more glorious city than Stornoway; but he was supposed to know much more than most men of what was going on in the world. Alister would soon get a situation He could be recommended to Mr. Macilwham, the painter and glazier, of the Gallowgate; and though it was too late to apprentice him to that trade, Mr. Macilwham would surely be able to find an occupation for a young man who was learned in all matters of bookcraft, handwriting, figuring and the like.

"I wass thinking he will not get much money for the writing of verses of poetry—that is a very bad trade," said Duncan Lewis, with some contempt.

"But this is what I say," said Nicol Lewis, the third brother, with unnecessary warmth, "I say there is no finer lad in the Western Isles as Alister Lewis, and it will surely be a shame, and a great shame, if we wass to let him fight his own way in a strange town. And this what I say, that if effery penny of my money that is in the bank of Stornoway will hef to go, Alister he will be at the college, as sure as I am a living man by Kott!"

And there and then the three brothers settled it. Duncan being the only dissentient. When Alister came in to supper he was pale and silent. He felt himself an outcast, and that his brothers had reason to despise him for that 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 algeraic 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 hef you been this day, Alister?" said Nicol Lewis.

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

"At Carn-Slean—that iss where he wass," said Duncan Lewis, looking dark.

"That iss true the lad said at last. "I wast over at Carn-Slean—it wass to say good-by. For I am going to Glasgow—it iss no use my being here any more."

"That is a true word you hef spoken, Alister Lewis," said his brother Nicol, in a kindly fashion; "and we are ferry glad you would think of going to Glasgow, bekass it is not many hass such e'reading and writing as you; and it wass Donald, and Hamish, and me, we wass sayin' there iss no great expense of the going to the college, and wass saying that the expense—well, we will tek the expense, and it iss no great thing that we will tek the expense. And if you get a place in Glasgow that will keep you in your meat and your clothes, that wass ferry well whatever; but the college it iss Donald, and Hamish, and me, we will pay for the college, and you will send us the letter, Alister, 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 be 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 iss a ferry kind man you are, Nicol Lewis" he said to the last of them, "and a ferry good brother to me. And it iss 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, Alister Lewis sailed in the steamer for Glasgow; and many thought they could see him no more in this world, consider that he had gone away to that distant place; but as for Ailasa 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 Alister 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.

CHAPTER II.

NEWS FROM FAR AWAY.

Three months went by before they got a letter. It was on the evening of a warm autumn day that Ailasa saw the solitary figure of the postman come over the level moors; and in the distance—in the midst of the glow of rich color that was shining over all the land and the sea—that humble official seemed to her to come like an angel out of a cloud of golden mist. She knew the letter had come at last. Fleet-footed as a young roe she ran to meet him, and she was too breathless to ask him the necessary question when she was face to face with him.

"Oh, ay," the shriveled old man said, opening his bag; "it wass more as four times or six times you hef come out to meet me, Ailasa, and you was thinking I had a letter from Alister Lewis that is away in Glasgow? And this time you hef nome the right time; and there is more as a letter for you, there is a gran' big book—a ferry fine big book, and you will be ferry proud of it whatever. I hef not seen any such fine book since the wan that Sheila Mackenzie sent all the way from Horvabost to Mrs. M'Gregor's lad when he wass ferry ill wi' the fever.

"And if you would give me the book and the letter, John Cameron," said Ailasa, rather impatiently, "you could go on to the house and hef a dram."

So she got the letter and the book, and forthwith she sat down on the heather, leaving the postman to go on his way. It was a well-written letter—Alister Lewis had always been clever with his pen.

"Dear Ailasa," so it ran, "you will be expecting all the news from me this long time; but I would not send the news till I had the good news to send you. And now I can do that; for I have got a good master, and a good master makes a willing servant, and he is very kind to me whatever. And I have been very busy with the night classes since I was come to Glasgow: and I have been three nights in the week for my Latin to an old gentleman that I have heard was a Catholic priest many years ago, and he has classes for the young men that are going to college, and they are all very eager to go to the college. The Greek is at eight in the morning; and it is very much easier for me to learn here than in Darroch, where there was no one to tell you if you were right. My teacher thinks that I will pass the examination; and the junior Latin at the college it is early in the morning, and my master says he will give me what hours I will want for my classes. Dear Ailasa, I have spent not one farthing of the money that Nicol, and Hamish, and Donald they gave to me, no not any one farthing of the money; and I am in hopes to keep myself at the college. It is a terrible place this big town—you can not sleep for weeks after coming to it; and it is very lonely you are. But I am very busy all the day, and have not much time to think of any thing but the work of the day and my books at night; and when I have a little time I go down to the river where the ships are, and I hear a little Gaelic among the sailors, and I see the big steamers going away for Oban, and Islay, and Stornoway, and then I think of all the people I know in Killeena, and Darroch, and if I shall see them any more. That is all the news. If you would send me a letter with the news, that would be a great pleasure to me. I was thinking I would like to send you a book if you will take it from me; but if you do not wish to take the book from me you will tell me about that in the letter with all the news. And I hope your mother is very well; and I remain, dear Ailasa, your faithful friend,

ALISTER LEWIS.

The young girl did not look at the book. She read and re-read the letter, and her face was full of pride and gladness. Had he not prospered famously in the far city, where they had already so far recognized the erudition he had picked up in Darroch that they were going to admit him to the great University? And he had maintained himself, keeping himself free from debt, and he a mere stripling. Ailasa drew a wonderful picture for herself of the young man's triumphant circumstances and prospects. She did not know of the dingy little room in the attic; of the breakfast, dinner and supper of oatmeal porridge; of the weary hours of study stretching far into the night, and of the slow drudgery of the day in that shop in the Gallowgate.

Surely this evening was to be one full of wonders. Another figure appeared as if coming out of the sunset; what new stranger was this? A short, stout-built dark-haired man came across the rough moorland, and approached Ailasa in a somewhat shy fashion.

"I hope you are ferry well, Ailasa," said he, holding out his hand in an embarrassed way.

"Yes, I am ferry well whatever, Duncan Lewis," said she, without any great concern. "And you will be for seeing my mother. She is in the house."

"I might hef come to see yourself, Ailasa," said he.

The young girl laughed lightly.

"To come all the way from Dorroch to see me? That would be ferry kind of you, Duncan, if I could believe it. But my mother was saying it will be a long time since we hef seen any of the Darruch people, and she will be ferry glad to see you this day—oh yes, she will be ferry glad to see you."

The fisherman stood embarrassed and uncertain. He would like to have said samething more; but he had been regarding the open letter and the gilt-edged book lying on her lap, and angry suspicions were crowding in on his mind. So he suddenly left her, and went on to the house, where he found Mrs. Macdonald stirring up the peat fire. She rapidly dusted a stool for him, and bade him sit down.

"It is a ferry fine evening this evening," said he.

"Indeed it is, praise God," she said, in the Gaelic; and therefore they spoke in that tongue.

"It is a strange thing I am come to you about this day," said he, with his eyes on the ground. "I am the eldest one of my family. I have done well in the world, Mrs Macdonald. I have more than £120 in the bank at Stornoway."

"That is a good thing, Duncan Lewis," she answered. "You have kept off the drink like a prudent man. It is not every one has so much money in the bank at Stornoway."

"And it is time, Mrs. Macdonald," he continued, "that one of our family should take a wife; and the eldest first, according to the old saying."

"Yes, indeed, the eldest first," she said, producing a bottle, and a glass, and a plate with some pieces of oatmeal cake on it.

"And this is it, Mrs. Macdonald; there is no lass in all the islands so good and fine a lass as your Ailasa, Mrs. Macdonald, and if she will take me for a husband, it is a good husband I will be to her; and I will come to Carn-Slean when there is no fishing and look after the farm for you, for you want a man to look after the farm at the time of the sowing and at the time of the harvest."

The Highland woman received this proposal in a calm and matter-of-fact way.

"Take a glass of whisky, Duncan Lewis, and drink to our good health. I do not touch the whisky myself. As for our Ailasa, she will be married some day, I hope, for that is good and right for a lass, and I hope she will have an honest husband who knows how to keep off the drink like yourself, Duncan. But she is too young a lass to think of taking a husband yet. If she waits five or six years, then it will be a good time to take a husband."

"That is fairly spoken," said the fisherman. "I will wait five or six years if Ailasa will promise to be my wife. I am not in a hurry, Mrs. Macdonald; but it is a good thing to know you have made your choice, instead of going to all places to look for a wife."

"Then you can speak to herself, Duncan Lewis; and here she comes" said the mother. "And do not forget to say that you will come and look after the farm when you have not to go to the fishing."

Ailsa came in, bearing her two treasures in her hand; and surely a brighter or prettier lass than this comely young creature could not have been found anywhere in these remote islands.

"Do you know I hef a letter from Alister Lewis?" she said to her mother, "and a fine book too, that is full of the pictures of flowers. And it iss a ferry good letter of news, for he is going to the college, just like Malcom Ross."

"Oh, ay," his eldest brother said, with an angry look gathering on his face, "it is ferry fine for him to go and be a gentleman with all the money that Hamish and Nicol gif to him as if he was no more nor a beggar's son, and it iss ferry fine for him to live on their money and go to the College."

"But it is a mistake and a ferry great mistake that you hef made, Duncan Lewis," said Ailasa, very warmly. "It is no beggar's son that Alister is, for he has not touched a farthing of money; and if he had, it wass only a loan that he could give them back again; but he hass not spent no not one farthing of the money, and he iss no more a beggar's son as you are yourself Duncan Lewis!"

"I am not a beggar's son," said the dark-haired fisherman, his temper getting the better of his prudence. "It is more as £120 I hef in the bank at Stornoway; and when will he make that at the College?"

"He will make that and a great deal very much more than that before a few years is over," said the girl, confidently; "and it is not money that is every thing."

"Well, it is not right for us to hef a quarrel, Ailasa Macdonald," said Duncan Lewis, gloomily. "I did not come here to hef a quarrel. I wass saying to your mother that a man who hass money to tek a farm of his own should think of marrying; and I hef told you what money it is that is mine in the bank at Stornoway; and I wass saying I would come and look after the farm at Carn-Slean when there wass no fishing—"

"That is ferry good of you, Duncan Lewis," said Ailasa, with some surprise. He was not ordinarily generous.

"But this is it, Ailasa," said he; "you are a young thing, and hef no one to tek care of you if your mother wass ill. And I wass saying—I wass saying to your mother—that I would like to hef you for my wife, in five years, or four years, as might be, and that is the word I wass wishing to speak to you, Ailasa Macdonald."

The girl looked more and more astonished, and then turned, as if for guidance, to her mother. Mrs. Macdonald had begun to peel some potatoes for supper, and was apparently not listening.

"To be your wife, Ducan Lewis? And it iss not any joke that you are making?"

"It iss not any joke at all," said he.

"Then I can not gif you my word back, Duncan Lewis," she said, simply. "Not in five years, or in four years—it iss no use your thinking of it all that time—you will get some other lass in Darroch."

The man rose with a gloomy look about the dark eyes.

"That iss your answer to me, Ailasa Macdonald; and it iss the last word you hef for me?"

"Yes, it iss the last, Ducan Lewis," she said; "but it iss ferry good friends that we may be, although I can not think of marrying you."

He did not make any answer to that proposal. He bade mother and daughter good-by in a brief word or two in Gaelic; and then he set out to cross the Killeena moors. The shadows of night were gathering over the islands and the sea when he entered his own home; but their blackness was not half so forbidding and ominous as the fixed and angry scowl on his face.

(To be Continued.)