

# **FOR LOVE AND LIFE.**

**Volume 1**

BY  
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## CHAPTER I.

### On the Shores of Loch Arroch.

THREE people were walking slowly along together by the side of the water. One of them an invalid, as was apparent by the softly measured steps of her companions, subdued to keep in harmony with hers. These two attendants were both young; the girl about twenty, a little light creature, with the golden hair so frequent in Scotland, and a face of the angelic kind, half-childish, half-visionary, over-brimming with meaning, or almost entirely destitute of it, according to the eyes with which you happened to regard her. Both she and the invalid, a handsome old woman of about seventy, were well and becomingly dressed in a homely way, but they had none of the subtle traces about them which mark the "lady" in conventional parlance. They were not in the smallest degree what people call "common-looking." The girl's beauty and natural grace would have distinguished her anywhere, and the old lady was even dignified in her bearing. But yet it was plain that they were of a caste not the highest. They moved along the narrow path, skirting the newly-cut stubble, with the air of people entirely at home, amid their natural surroundings. The homely farm-house within sight was evidently their home. They belonged to the place and the place to them. Notwithstanding the angelic face of the one, and the natural stateliness of the other, they were farmer folk, of a kind not unusual on that proud half-Highland soil. I will not even pretend to say that good blood gave a grace to their decayed fortunes; I do not believe their race had ever held a more exalted position than it did now. They were independent as queens, proud yet open-hearted, sociable, courteous, hospitable, possessed of

many of the special virtues which ought to belong to the nobly born; but they were only farmer folk of Loch Arroch, of a family who had lived for ages on that farm, and nothing more.

It would have been unnecessary to dwell on this particular, had not the appearance of the young man upon whose arm the invalid leant, been so different. As distinctly as they were native to the place, and to the position, was he stranger to them. He was not so handsome by nature as they, but he had about him all those signs of a man "in good society" which it is impossible to define in words, or to mistake in fact. His dress was extremely simple, but it was unmistakeably that of a gentleman. Not the slightest atom of pretension was in his aspect or manner, but his very simplicity was his distinction. The deferential way in which he bent his head to hear what his companion was saying, the respect he showed to them both, was more than a son or brother in their own rank would ever have dreamed of showing. He was kind in all his words and looks, even tender; but the ease of familiarity was wanting to him; he was in a sphere different from his own. He showed this only by a respect infinitely more humble and anxious than any farmer-youth or homely young squire would have felt; yet to his own fastidious taste it was apparent that he did show it; and the thought made him condemn himself. His presence introduced confusion and difficulty into the tranquil picture; though there was nothing of the agitation of a lover in his aspect. Love makes all things easy; it is agitating, but it is tranquillizing. Had he been the lover of the beautiful young creature by his side, he would have been set at his ease with her old mother, and with the conditions of her lot. Love is itself so novel, so revolutionary, such a break-down of all boundaries, that it accepts with a certain zest the differences of condition; and all the embarrassments of social difference such as

trouble the acquaintance, and drive the married man wild, become in the intermediate stage of courtship delightful auxiliaries, which he embraces with all his heart. But Edgar Earnshaw was not pretty Jeanie Murray's lover. He had a dutiful affection for both of the women. Mingled with this was a certain reverential respect, mingled with a curious painful sense of wrong, for the elder; and a pitying and protecting anxiety about the girl. But these sentiments were not love. Therefore he was kind, tender, respectful, almost devoted, but not at his ease, never one with them; in heart as in appearance, there was a difference such as could not be put into words.

“I cannot accept it from you,” said old Mrs. Murray, who was the grandmother of both. She spoke with a little vehemence, with a glimmering of tears in the worn old eyes, which were still so bright and full of vital force. She was recovering from an illness, and thus the tears came more easily than usual. “Of all that call kin with me, Edgar, my bonnie lad, you are the last that should sacrifice your living to keep up my auld and weary life. I canna do it. It's pride, nothing but pride, that makes me loth to go away—loth, loth to eat other folk's bread. But wherefore should I be proud? What should an old woman like me desire better than a chair at my ain daughter's chimney-corner, and a share of what she has, poor woman? I say to myself it's her man's bread I will eat, and no hers; but Robert Campbell will be kind—enough. He'll no grudge me my morsel. When a woman has been a man's faithful wife for thirty years, surely, surely she has a right to the gear she has helped to make. And I'll no be that useless when I'm weel; there's many a thing about a house that an old woman can do. Na, na, it's nothing but pride.”

“And what if I had my pride too?” he asked. “My dear old mother, it goes against me to think of you as anywhere but at Loch Arroch. Mr. Campbell is an excellent man, I have no doubt, and kind—enough, as you say; and his wife very good and excellent—”

“You might say your aunt, Edgar,” said the old lady, with a half-reproach.

He winced, though almost imperceptibly.

“Well,” he said with a smile, “my aunt, if you prefer it. One thing I don’t like about you proud people is, that you never make allowance for other people’s pride. Mine demands that my old mother should be independent in her own old house; that she should have her pet companion with her to nurse her and care for her.” Here he laid his hand kindly, with a light momentary touch, upon the girl’s shoulder, who looked up at him with wistful tender eyes. “That she should keep her old servants, and continue to be the noble old lady she is—”

“Na, na, Edgar; no lady. You must not use such a word to me. No, my bonnie man; you must not deceive yourself. It’s hard, hard upon you, and God forgive me for all I have done to make my good lad unhappy! We are decent folk, Edgar, from father to son, from mother to daughter; but I’m no a lady; an old country wife, nothing more—though you are a gentleman.”

“We will not dispute about words,” said Edgar, with a shrug of his shoulders. “What would become of Jeanie, grandmother, if you went to your daughter, as you say?”

“Ah!” cried the old woman, pausing suddenly, and raising both her hands to her face, “that’s what I canna bear—I canna bear it! Though I must,” she added hurriedly, drying her eyes, “if it’s God’s will.”

“I would go to my uncle in Glasgow,” said Jeanie; “he’s not an ill man. They would take me in if I was destitute; that’s what they aye said.”

“If you were destitute!” cried Edgar. “My poor little Jeanie destitute, and you, my old mother, eating the bread of dependence, watching a coarse man’s look to see if you are welcome or not! Impossible! I have arranged everything. There is enough to keep you both comfortable here—not luxuriously, as I should wish; not with the comfort and the prettiness I should like to spread round you two; but yet enough. Now listen, grandmother. You must yield to me or to some one else; to me or to—Mr. Campbell. I think I have the best right.”

“He has the best right,” said little Jeanie, looking in her grandmother’s face. “Oh, granny, he would like to be good to you and me!”

“Yes; I should like to be good to you,” said Edgar, turning to the girl gratefully. “That is the truth. It is the highest pleasure you could give me.”

“To heap coals of fire,” said the old woman in her deep voice.

“I know nothing about coals,” said Edgar, laughing; “they should be more in Mr. Campbell’s way, who trafficks in them. Come, Jeanie, we must take her in, the wind grows cold. I shall go off to Loch Arroch Head to get the newspaper when the boat



comes, and you must persuade her in the meantime. You are my representative. I leave it all to you.”

A flush ran over Jeanie’s angelic little countenance. She looked at him with eyes full of an adoring admiration as he led the old woman carefully to the door of the farm-house. He patted her pretty shoulder as she followed, looking kindly at her.

“Take care of the old mother, Jeanie,” he said, smiling. “I make you my representative.”

Poor little innocent Jeanie! There was no one like him in all her sphere. She knew no other who spoke so softly, who looked so kindly, who was so thoughtful of others, so little occupied with himself. Her little heart swelled as she went into the low, quaint room with its small windows, where the grandmother had already seated herself. To be the parlour of a farm-house, it was a pretty room. The walls were greenish; the light that came in through foliage which overshadowed the small panes in the small windows was greenish too; but there were book-cases in the corners, and books upon the table, for use, not ornament, and an air of wellworn comfort and old respectability were about the place. It was curiously irregular in form; two windows in the front looked out upon the loch and the mountains, a prospect which a prince might have envied; and one on the opposite side of the fire-place, in the gable end of the house, in a deep recess, looked straight into the ivied walls of the ruin which furnished so many stories to Loch Arroch. This window was almost blocked up by a vast fuchsia, which still waved its long flexile branches in the air laden with crimson bells. In front of the house stood a great ash, dear northern tree which does not disdain the rains and winds. Its sweeping boughs stood out against the huge hill opposite, which was the

background of the whole landscape. The blue water gleamed and shone beneath that natural canopy. Mrs. Murray's large high-backed easy-chair was placed by the side of the fire, so that she had full command of the view. The gable window with its fuchsia bush was behind her. Never, except for a few months, during her whole seventy years of life, had she been out of sight of that hill. She seated herself in the stillness of age, and looked out wistfully upon the familiar scene. Day by day through all her lifetime, across her own homely table with its crimson cover, across the book she was reading or the stocking she was knitting, under the green arch of the ash-branches, she had seen the water break, sometimes with foaming wrath, sometimes quietly as a summer brook, upon the huge foot of that giant hill. Was this now to be over? The noiseless tears of old age came into her eyes.

"We'll aye have the sky, Jeanie, wherever we go," she said, softly; "and before long, before long, the gates of gold will have to open for me."

"But no for me," said Jeanie, seating herself on a stool by her grandmother's side. The little girlish face was flashing and shining with some illumination more subtle than that of the firelight. "We canna die when we will, Granny, you've often said that; and sometimes," the girl added shyly, "we might not wish if we would."

This brought the old woman back from her momentary reverie.

"God forbid!" she cried, putting her hand on Jeanie's golden locks; "though Heaven will scarce be Heaven without you, Jeanie. God forbid! No, my bonnie lamb, I have plenty there without you. There's your father, and *his* mother, and my ain little angel Jeanie

with the gold locks like you — her that I have told you of so often. She was younger than you are, just beginning to be a blessing and a comfort, when, you mind?—oh, so often as I have told you!—on the Saturday after the new year—”

“I mind,” said Jeanie softly, holding the withered hand in both of hers; “but, granny, even you, though you’re old, you cannot make sure that you’ll die when you want to die.”

“No; more’s the pity; though it’s a thankless thing—a thankless thing to say.”

“You canna die when you will,” repeated Jeanie. “Wasna your father ninety, granny, and Aunty Jean a hundred? Granny, listen to me. You must do what *he* says.”

“*He*, Jeanie?”

“Ay, he. I might say his name if there were two like him in the world,” said Jeanie, with enthusiasm. “It’s your pride that will not let him serve you as he says. It would make him happy. I saw it in his kind e’en. I was watching him while he was speaking to you. It was like the light and the shadows over Benvohrlan. The brightness glinted up when he spoke, and when you said ‘No,’ granny, the cloud came over. Oh, how could you set your face against him? The only one of us a’ (you say) you ever did an ill turn to; and him the only one to bring you back good, and comfort, and succour.”

“Jeanie, you must not blame the rest,” said the old woman. “They have no siller to give me. They would take me into their houses. What more could they do? No, Jeanie; you may be just to him, and yet no cruel to them. Besides, poor lad,” said Mrs.

Murray with a sigh, “he has a rich man’s ways, though he’s rich no more.”

“He has the kindest ways in all the world,” cried Jeanie. “Granny, you’ll do what he says.”

The old woman leant back in her chair, crossing her thin hands in her lap; her musing eyes sought the hills outside and the gleam of the water, her old, old counsellors, not the anxious face of the child at her feet. She was but a farmer’s wife, a farmer herself, a lowly, homely woman; but many a princess was less proud. She sat and looked at the blue loch, and thought of the long succession of years in which she had reigned as a queen in this humble house, a centre of beneficence, giving to all. She had never shut her heart against the cry of the poor, she who was poor herself; she had brought up children, she had entertained strangers, she had done all that reigning princesses could do. For forty years all who had any claim on her kindness had come to her unhesitatingly in every strait. Silver and gold she had little, but everything else she gave, the shelter of her house, her best efforts, her ready counsel, her unfailing help. All this she had bestowed munificently in her day; and now—had she come to the point when she must confess that her day was over, when she must retire from her place, giving way to others, and become dependent—she who had always been the head of her house? I do not say that the feelings in the mind of this old Sovereign about to be dethroned were entirely without admixture of ignoble sentiment. It went to her heart to be dethroned. She said to herself, with a proud attempt at philosophy, that it was the natural fate, and that everything was as it ought to be. She tried to persuade herself that a chair in the chimney-corner was all the world had henceforth for her, and that her daughter and her daughter’s husband would be kind—enough. But it went to her

heart. She was making up her mind to it as men make up their minds to martyrdom; and the effort was bitter. I do not know whether it ever occurred to her painfully that she herself, had she been in the fulness of her powers, would never have suffered her old mother to be driven from that homely roof which she loved—or if something whispered in her soul that she had done better by her children than they were doing by her; but if such thoughts arose in her mind, she dismissed them unembodied, with an exercise of her will, which was as proud as it was strong. Her very pride prevented her from assuming even to herself the appearance of a victim. “It is but the natural end,” she said, stoically, trying to look her trouble in the face. She was ready to accept it as the inevitable, rather than own to herself that her children failed in their duty—rather than feel, much less admit, that she had expected more of them than they were willing to give.

The cause of this deep but undisclosed pain was, that things had been going badly for some time with the Castle Farm. Mrs. Murray herself was growing old, and less strong than is necessary for a farmer, and she had been absent for some time, a few years before, an absence which had wrought much trouble in the homestead. These misfortunes had been complicated, as was inevitable, by one or two cold springs and wet autumns. It was October now, and the harvest was but accomplishing itself slowly even on the level fields on the loch side. The higher lying acres of corn land still lay in sickly yellow patches on the braes behind the house, half-ripened, damp and sprouting, sodden with many a rain-storm; a great part of the corn would be fit for nothing but fodder, and what remained for the woman-farmer, unable to cope with these difficulties as she once had done, before strength and courage failed—what remained for her to do? She had made up her mind to

abandon the old house she loved—to sell all her belongings, the soft-eyed cows whom she called by their names, and who came at her call like children—and the standing crops, the farm implements, even her old furniture, to denude herself of everything, and pay her debts, and commit the end of her life to Providence. This had been the state of affairs when she fell ill, and Edgar Earnshaw was summoned to come to her, to receive her blessing and farewell. But then, in contradiction to all her wishes, to all that was seemly and becoming, she did not die. When she knew she was to get better, the old woman broke forth into complainings such as had never been heard from her lips in her worst moments. “To lead me forth so far on the way, and then to send me back when the worst was over—me that must make the journey so soon, that must begin all over again, maybe the morn!” she cried, with bitter tears in her eyes. But Heaven’s decree is inexorable, whether it be for life or death, and she had to consent to recover. It was then that Edgar, her grandson, had made the proposal to settle upon her a little income which he possessed, and which would secure her a peaceful end to her days in her old home. That he should do this had filled her with poignant emotions of joy and shame. The only one of her kith and kin whom she had wronged, and he was the one to make her this amends. If she accepted it, she would retain all that she desired—everything that was personally important to her in this life. But she would denude him of his living. He was young, learned (as she thought), accomplished (as she thought), able “to put his hand to anything,” doubtless able to earn a great deal more than that, did he choose to try. It might even be for his advantage, as he said, to have the spur of necessity to force him into exertion. All this was mingled together in her mind, the noble and generous feeling that would rather suffer than harm another, rather die than blame, mixed with sharp stings of pride and some sophistries of

argument by which she tried to persuade herself against her conscience to do what she wished. The struggle was going on hotly, as she sat by her homely fireside and gazed out at the loch, and the shadow of the big ash, which seemed to shadow over all Benvohrlan; things which are close at hand are so much bigger and more imposing than things afar.

## CHAPTER II.

### Edgar.

EDGAR set off on a brisk walk up the loch when he parted from the two women at the door of the farmhouse. The previous history of this young man had been an extraordinary one, and has had its record elsewhere; but as it is not to be expected that any—even the gentlest reader—could remember a story told them several years ago, I will briefly recapitulate its chief incidents. Till he was five-and-twenty, this young man had known himself only as the heir of a great estate, and of an old and honourable name, and for some few months he had been in actual possession of all the honours he believed his own. He was a great English squire, one of the most important men in his district, with an only sister, to whom he was deeply attached, and no drawback in his life except the mysterious fact, which no longer affected him except as a painful recollection, that his father, during his lifetime, had banished him from his home, and apparently regarded him with a sentiment more like hatred than affection. But Clare his sister loved him, and Edgar, on coming to his fortune, had begun to form friendships and attachments of his own, and had been drawn gently and pleasantly—not fallen wildly and vehemently—into love with the daughter of one of his near neighbours, Augusta (better known as Gussy) Thornleigh, whom he was on the very eve of asking to be his wife, when his whole existence, name, and identity were suddenly altered by the discovery that he was an innocent impostor, and had no right to any of the good things he enjoyed. I do not attempt to repeat any description of the change thus made, for it was beyond description—terrible, complete, and overwhelming. It



plunged him out of wealth and honours into indigence and shame—shame not merited, but yet clinging to the victim of a long-continued deception. It not only took from him all his hopes, but it embittered his very recollections. He lost past, and present, and future, all at a blow. His identity, and all the outward apparel of life by which he had known himself, were taken from him. Not only was the girl whom he loved hopelessly lost to him, but she who had been his sister, his only relative, as he supposed, and his dearest companion, became nothing to him—a stranger, and worse than a stranger—for the man whom she loved and married was his enemy. And in place of these familiar figures, there came a crowd of shadows round him who were his real relations, his unknown family, to whom, and not to the Ardens, he now belonged. This fatal and wonderful change was made all the harder to him from the fact that he was thus transplanted into an altogether lower level, and that his new family was little elevated above the class from which he had been in the habit of drawing his servants, not his friends. Their habits, their modes of speech, their ways of thinking, were all strange to him. It is true that he accommodated himself readily to these differences, as exhibited in the old grandmother whom I have just presented to the reader, and the gentle, soft-voiced, poetic Jeanie; but with the other members of his new family, poor Edgar had felt all his powers of self-control fail him. Their presence, their contact, their familiarity, and the undeniable fact that it was to them and their sphere that he actually belonged was terrible to the young man, who, in his better days, had not known what pride meant. Life is in reality so much the same in all classes that no doubt he would have come to perceive the identity of substance notwithstanding the difference of form, had he not been cast so suddenly into this other phase of existence without

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