

**WHO WAS LOST AND IS
FOUND**

A NOVEL

BY
MRS OLIPHANT

Table of Contents

CHAPTER I.

CHAPTER II.

CHAPTER III.

CHAPTER IV.

CHAPTER V.

CHAPTER VI.

CHAPTER VII.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHAPTER IX.

CHAPTER X.

CHAPTER XI.

CHAPTER XII.

CHAPTER XIII.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHAPTER XV.

CHAPTER XVI.

CHAPTER XVII.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHAPTER XIX.

CHAPTER XX.

CHAPTER XXI.

CHAPTER XXII.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CHAPTER XXIV.

**WHO WAS LOST AND IS
FOUND.**

CHAPTER I.

ONE of the most respected inhabitants of the village, rather of the parish, of Eskholm in Mid-Lothian was Mrs Ogilvy, still often called Mrs James by the elder people who had known her predecessors, who had seen her married, and knew everything about her, her antecedents and belongings. This is a thing very satisfactory in one way, as giving you an assurance that nothing can be suddenly found out about you, no disreputable new member or incident foisted into your family life; while, on the other hand, it has its inconveniences, since it becomes more or less the right of your neighbours to have every new domestic occurrence explained to them in all its bearings. Great peace, however, had for a long time fallen over the house in which Mrs James Ogilvy was spending the end of her quiet days: no new incident had occurred there for years: its daily routine to all appearance went on as cheerfully as could be desired. It was one of the prettiest houses of the neighbourhood. Built on the side of a little hill, as so many houses are in Scotland, it was a tallish two-storeyed house behind, plunging its foundations deep in the soil, with an ample garden lying east and south, full of all the old-fashioned vegetables and most of the old-fashioned flowers of its period. But in front it was the trimmest cottage, low but broad, opening upon a little round platform encircled by a drive, and that, in its turn, by closely clipped holly-hedges, as thick as a wall and as smooth. Andrew, the gardener, thought it more genteel to fill the little flower-border in front with bedding-out plants in the summer,—red geraniums, blue lobelias, and so forth—never the pansies and gillyflowers his mistress loved,—and it was only with great difficulty that he had

been prevented from shutting out the view by a clump of rhododendrons in the middle of the grass plot. "The view!" Andrew said in high contempt: but this time his mistress had her way. The view, perhaps, was nothing very wonderful to eyes accustomed to fine scenery. A bit of the road that led to Edinburgh and the world was visible among the trees at the foot of the brae, where the private path of the Hewan between its close holly-hedges sloped upward to the house: and behind stretched the full expanse of country,—the towers of the castle making a break among the clouds of trees on one hand, and some of the roofs of the village and the little stumpy church-steeple showing on the other side. Between these two points, and far on either side, the Esk somehow threaded his way, running by village and castle impartially, but indeed exerting himself very much for the Hewan, forming little cascades and bits of broken water at the foot of the steep brae, throwing up glints of sunshine as it were from the depths, and filling the air always with a murmur of friendly companionship of which the inhabitants were unconscious, but of which had it stopped they would have instantly become aware and felt that all the world had gone wrong.

There was a garden-chair placed out here under the window of the drawing-room, where Mrs Ogilvy used to sit during a great part of the summer evenings—those long summer evenings of Scotland, which are so lingering and so sweet. To sit "at the doors" is so natural a thing for the women. They do it everywhere, in all climates and regions. Ladies who were critical said that this was a bad habit, and that there was nothing so becoming for a woman as to sit in her own drawing-room, in her own chair, where she could always be found when she was wanted. But a seat that was just under the drawing-room window, was not that as little different

from being inside as could be? I agree, however, with the critics that the sentiment was quite different, and that to go indoors at the right time and have your lamp lighted, and sit down in your comfortable chair, denotes, perhaps, a more contented mind and a spirit reconciled to fate.

It would have been hard, however, to have looked upon the face of Mrs James Ogilvy as she went about her little household duties in the morning, or took her walks about the garden, or knitted her stocking in the placid afternoon, and to have thought of her as discontented or struggling with fate. She was about sixty, a little woman but trim in figure, with a pleasant colour, and eyes still bright with animation and interest. Perhaps you will think it ridiculous to be asked to interest yourself in the character and proceedings of an old woman of sixty when there are so many younger and prettier things in the world: which I allow is quite true in the general: yet there may be advantages in it, once in a way. She wore much the same dress all the year through, which was a black silk gown of varying degrees of richness (her best could “stand alone,” it was so good), or rather of newness—for the best gown of one year was the everyday dress of another, not so fresh perhaps, but wearing to the last thread, and always looking *good* to the last, as a good black silk ought to do. Over this she wore a white shawl, which on superior occasions was of China crape beautifully embroidered, a thing to be remembered—but often of humbler material. I recollect one of fine wool with a coloured border printed in what was called an Indian pine pattern in those days. But whatever the kind was, she always wore a white shawl. Her cap was also all white, lace for best, but net for everyday, trimmed with white ribbons, and tied under the chin with the same. This dress had been old-fashioned when she assumed it, and was

more than old-fashioned now; but it suited her very well, as unusual dresses, it may be remarked, usually do.

And she was kind as kind could be. She could not refuse either beggar or borrower, unless the one was a sturdy beggar presuming on the supposed loneliness of the house and unaware of Andrew in the background, upon whom she would flash forth indignant, sending him off “with a flea in his lug,” as Janet said: or the other a professional spendthrift of other people’s money. Short of these two classes—and even to them her heart had moments of melting—she refused nobody within her humble means. But I will not deceive you by pretending that she was a woman who went a great deal among the poor. That fashion of charity had not come into use in her days. The Scotch poor are *farouche*, they are arrogant, and stand tremendously on their dignity—which is thought by many people a fine thing, though, I confess, I don’t think it so; but it was no doubt cultivated more or less by good people like Mrs Ogilvy, who never visited among them, yet was ready to give with a liberality which was more like that of a Roman Catholic lady “making her soul” by such means, than a Scotch Puritan looking upon all she herself said or did as unworthy of regard. They came to her when they were in want; they came for food, for clothes, for coals; for money to pay an urgent debt; for all things that could affect family peace. And they very seldom were sent empty away. It was for this, perhaps, that the other ladies thought a woman should be found in her own chair in a corner of her own drawing-room. But if so, it certainly did not matter much, for Mrs Ogilvy’s seat outside answered quite as well.

There was a dining-room and a drawing-room inside, one on each side of the door. The latter was usually called the parlour. It was full of curious things, not exactly of the kind that are

considered curious now,—Mrs Ogilvy was not acquainted with *bric-à-brac*,—but there had been two or three sailors in the family, and they had brought unsophisticated wonders, shells, pieces of coral, bowls, sometimes china and precious, sometimes wood and of no value at all: but all esteemed pretty much alike, and given an equal place among the treasures of the house. There was some good china besides of her own, one good portrait, vaguely believed or hoped by the minister and some other connoisseurs of the village to be a Rubens (which meant, I suppose, even in their sanguine imaginations, a copy); and a row of black silhouettes, representing various members of the family, over the mantelpiece. Therefore it will be seen there was great impartiality in respect to artistic value. The carpet was partially covered with a grey linen cloth to preserve it, which gave the room a somewhat chilly look. It was in the dining-room that Mrs Ogilvy chiefly sat. She would have found it a great trouble to change from one to another at every meal. The large dining-table had been placed against the wall, which was a concession to comfort for which many friends blamed her during these years when Mrs Ogilvy had been alone. A smaller round table stood near the fire, her chair, her little old-fashioned stand for book and her work and her occasional newspaper, in the corner. It was all very comfortable, especially on the wintry evenings when the fire sparkled and the lamp burned softly, and everything felt warm and looked bright—as bright as Mrs Ogilvy's face with her white hair under her white cap, and her white shawl upon her shoulders. It might have been a symphony in white, had anybody heard of anything so grand and superior in these days.

It seldom happened, however, that one of the long evenings passed without the entrance of Janet, who at a certain hour in the

placid night began always to wonder audibly what the mistress was doing, and to divine that she would be the better of a word with somebody, "if it was only you or me." Perhaps this meant that Janet herself by that time had become bored by the society of Andrew, her husband and constant companion, who was a taciturn person, and who, even if he could have been persuaded to utter more than one word in half an hour, had no new subject upon which he could discourse, but only themes which Janet knew by heart. They were a most peaceable couple, never quarrelling, working into each other's hands as the neighbours said, keeping the Hewan outside and inside as bright as a new pin; and I have no doubt that the sincerest affection, as well as every tie of habit and long companionship, bound them together: but still there were moments very probably when Janet, without using the word or probably understanding it, was bored. The "fore-night" was long, and the ticking of the clock, so offensively distinct when nothing is being said, got on Janet's nerves; and then she bethought herself of the mistress sitting all alone in the silence. "I'll just go ben and see if she wants onything," she said. "Aweel: I'll take a look at Sandy and see if he's comfortable," replied Andrew. Sandy was a sleek old pony with which Mrs Ogilvy drove in to Eskholm when she had occasion, and sometimes even to Edinburgh, and he held a high place in Andrew's affections. The one visit was as invariable as the other; and Sandy, to whom perhaps also the fore-night was long, probably expected it too.

"Well, Janet," Mrs Ogilvy would say, putting aside the newspaper. She did not put aside her stocking, which went on by itself mechanically, but she turned her countenance towards her old servant always with the shining on it of a friendly smile.

“Well, mem—I just came in to see if ye maybe were wanting onything. Andrew he’s away taking a look at Sandy. You would think he is a Christian to see the troke there is between that beast and my man.”

“Andrew’s a good creature, mindful of everybody’s comfort,” said Mrs Ogilvy.

“I’m saying nothing against that; but it might be more cheery for me if he were a wee less preceese about what he hears and sees. A man is mair about, he canna miss what might be ca’ed the events of the day. But you and me, mem, we miss them a’ up here.”

“That’s true, Janet; a man that brings in the news is more entertainment in a house than the newspaper itself.”

“Whiles,” said Janet, moderating the expression. “It’s no the clashes and clavers of the toun that I’m wanting, but when onything important is stirring—there’s another muckle paper-mill to be set up on our water. It brings wark for the lads—and the lasses too—and ye daurna say, just for the sake of Esk, that is no living thing——”

“I have more courage than you, Janet, for I daur to say it. What! my bonnie Esk no a living thing! What was ever more living than the bonnie running water? Eh, woman, running water is not like anything else in the world! It’s just life itself! It sees everything happen and flows on—no stopping for the like of us creatures of a day. It heartens me to think that there’s aye some bairns sitting playing by it, or some young thing dreaming her dream, or some woman with her little weans—not you and me, for our time is past, but just other folk.”

“I’m no like you, mem. I get little comfort out of that. It’s a bonnie stream, and I like the sough of it coming up through the trees; but none of the paper-mills would stop that. And when you think that it will bring siller into the place and wark, and more comfort for the poor folk——”

“Will it do that? God forbid that I should go against what brings work and comfort. It will bring new families, Janet, and strange men to sit and drink, and roar their dreadful songs at the public-house door; and more publics, and more dirty wives and miserable weans. I’m just for doing the best we can with what we have,—and that is not an easy thing.”

“And I’m for ganging forward,” cried Janet. “The more ye produce the better off ye are—that’s what the books ca’ an axiom. I carena for the new folk; but it is a grand thing to be making something, and putting work into men’s hands to do. Thae poor Millers themselves get but little out of it. They say there’s another of them, the little one with the curly head, that is just going like the rest.”

“Oh, Janet, the Lord forbid! the little blue-eyed one, that was just the comfort of the house?”

“That’s what folk say. I’m no answering for it. In an unfortunate family like that, ye canna have a sair finger but they’ll say it’s the auld trouble breaking out.”

“Poor man, poor man!” cried Mrs Ogilvy. “My heart is wae for him, Janet. He is like the man in the Bible that built Jericho. He has laid his foundations in his first-born, and established his gates on his youngest son. You must tell Andrew that I will want him

and Sandy to-morrow to go and inquire. No the bonnie little one that was his comfort!—oh, not her, not her, Janet!”

“Mem, it is aye the Lord that kens best.”

“I am not misdoubting that; but I’ve had many a thought—I would not aye be blaming the Lord. When the seed is put into the ground, we should be prepared for what it will bring forth, and no look for leaves of silver and apples of gold; but why should I speak? for there is little meaning in words, and we are a strange race—oh, just a strange race—following our wild ways.”

Mrs Ogilvy had dropped her stocking by this time into her lap, and she wrung her slender hands as she spoke, with a look that was not like the calm of the place. Whether Janet noted this or merely followed the instinct of her wandering record of events, it was impossible to tell from her steady countenance, which did not change.

“And there’s to be a wedding up the water at Greenha’. You will mind, mem, Thomoseen, that was once in our ain house here as the girrl, and an awfu’ time I had with her, for she would learn nothing. She’s grown the biggest woman on a’ Eskside, and they call her Muckle Tammy, and mony an adventure she’s had since she left my kitchen—having broken, ye will maybe mind, mem, every dish we had. And for her ain sake, thinking it would maybe be a lesson to her, I wanted you to take it off her wages——”

“Yes, yes, I mind. The things would not stay in her hands; they were too big. We have had our experiences with our girrls, Janet,” Mrs Ogilvy said, with a smile. She had taken up her knitting again, and recovered her tranquil looks.

“That we have, mem! if I was to make out a chronicle—but some of them have turned out no so ill after a’. Weel, Muckle Tammy, she has gotten a man.”

“He will likely be some small bit creature,” the mistress said.

“They say no—a clever chield, and grand wi’ a garden, and meaning to grow vegetables for the market at Edinburgh; for she is a lass with a tocher, her mother’s kailyard and her bit cottage, and nothing for him to do but draw in a chair and sit down.”

“I doubt there’ll be but little comfort inside,” said Mrs Ogilvy. “If it had been her to look after the kail and the cabbages, and him to keep everything clean and trig; but there’s no telling. A change like that works many ferlies. You must just see, Janet, if there is anything she is wanting for her plenishing—some linen, or a few silver teaspoons, or a set of china, or a new gown.”

“They a’ ken there will be something for them in the coffers at the Hewan,” said Janet; “but, mem, if ye will be guided by me, you will let it be no too much. If only one of these dishes had been stoppit off her wages it would have been a grand lesson: but ye will never hear a word! A set of chiney! they would a’ be broken afore ever she got them hame.”

“Let it be the silver spoons then, Janet; they are the things that last the best. And now, if you were to cry in Andrew, we might read our chapter, and get ready for our beds.”

This was the invariable conclusion of these evening colloquies. And Janet went “ben” to her kitchen and then to the garden door, and “cried upon” Andrew, still conversing with the pony in the stable. And then there was a great turning of keys and drawing of

bolts, and the house was closed up for the night. And finally the pair went into the parlour, where Mrs Ogilvy, with her clear little educated voice read "the chapter," usually from one of the Gospels, and read in sequence night by night. Janet was of opinion that she never understood so well as when her mistress read, and indeed Mrs Ogilvy had a little pride in her reading, which was very clear and distinct with its broad vowels. The little prayer which was read out of a book did not please Andrew so much, who was of opinion that prayers ought never to be previously invented and written, but come, as he said, "straught from the hairt." He had himself indeed thought on occasion that he could have poured forth the sentiments that moved the family with more unction and expression than was in the sometimes faltering voice and pause for breath which affected his mistress when she read these "cauld words out of a book"; but Andrew knew his own place: or if he did not know, Janet did.

What was there to catch the breath, and make the voice falter, in the printed words and amid all that deep calm of waning life? It was at the prayer for the absent that Mrs Ogilvy for fifteen years past had always broken down. Nay, not broken down: she was too deeply sensible that to make an exhibition of private feeling while leading the family devotions would have been irreverent and unseemly, but she was not capable of going on quite smoothly without a pause over that petition, "Those who are absent of this family, be Thou with them to bless them, and bring them home in Thy good time if it be Thy blessed will." Every night there came to Janet's eyes as she knelt a secret tear; and every night it seemed to Andrew that if he might speak "straught from the hairt" instead of that cauld prayer that was printed, the Lord would hear. I need not say that even in a Scotch book of domestic worship the words were

varied from day to day, but the meaning was always the same. They left the mistress of the house in a certain commotion of mind when her old servants had bidden her good night and withdrawn. She had a way then of walking about the room, sometimes pausing as if to listen. There was deep silence about the Hewan, uplifted on its little brae, and with few houses near,—nothing to be heard except the distant murmur of the Esk, and the rustling of the trees. But the night has strange mysteries of sound for which no one can account. Sometimes something came that seemed like a step on the gravel outside, sometimes, fainter in the distance, what might have been the swing of the gate, sometimes a muffled knock as at the door. She knew them all well, and had been deceived by them a thousand times; nor was she undeceived yet, but would stop and raise her head and hold her breath, waiting for perhaps some second sound to follow to give meaning to it. But there never came any second sound, or at least there never was, never had been, any meaning in them. She listened, holding up her head, and then drooped it again, going on upon her little measured walk. “At ainy moment!” she would say sometimes to herself.

Over the front door of the cottage, which was not without a little pretension, there was what we used to call a fanlight: and in this summer and winter every night a light burned till morning. People shook their heads at it as a piece of foolish sentiment and very extravagant; and Andrew grudged a little the trouble it caused him. But there it burned all the year round, every night through.

CHAPTER II.

IN the summer evenings Mrs Ogilvy sat on the bench outside the parlour window. I have never forgotten the sort of rapture with which the long summer evenings in Scotland impressed my own mind when I rediscovered them, so to speak, after a long interval of absence. The people who know Scotland only in the autumn know them not. By that time all things have grown common, the surprises of the year are over; but in June those long, soft, pearly, rosy hours which are neither night nor day, which melt by indescribable degrees out of the glory of the sunset into everything that is soft and fair, through every tint and shining colour and mingling of lights, until they reach that which is inconceivable—surround us with a heavenly atmosphere all their own, the fusion of every radiance, the subdual of every shade. There are no shadows in that wonderful light any more than there is any sun. The midnight sun must be a very spectacular sort of performance in comparison. To people who live in it always, however, it will probably appear no such great thing.

Mrs Ogilvy was not aware that there was anything that was not most ordinary in these June nights. She loved them, but knew no reason why. She sat in the sweet air, in the silence, sometimes feeling herself as if suspended between air and sky, floating softly in space with the movement of the world: and in her thoughts she was able even sometimes to detach herself from Then and Now, those two dreadful limits of our consciousness, and to catch a glimpse of life as it is rounded out, and some consciousness of the beginning and the end, and the sequence and connection of all things. Sometimes: but perhaps not very often, for these gleams of

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

