

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

"THE LAIRD OF GLENFERNIE."*

"Said Mother Binning, "Whiles I spin and whiles I dream. A bonny day like this I look." Mother Binning was reported to have second sight, which she described as "to see behind the here and now."

This book, which dates at the period round about the Young Pretender's invasion of Scotland, is largely tinged with mysticism, and teems with imagination of the highest order.

Alexander, the eldest son of the Laird of Glenfernie, a fine, handsome lad, was described by his younger brother Jamie as a "queer body. He says he thinks he lived a long time ago, and then a shorter time, and then now. He says that some days he sees it all come up in a dark desert."

Alice put in a word, "mother says he's many in one, and one doesn't yet recognise the other."

This boy, hitherto lonely and given to lonely wanderings, met when he was seventeen years old for the first time Ian Rullock, the nephew of a neighbouring laird.

Alexander was sitting on a heath bare of trees, lifted and purple. He sat amid the warm bloom; he lay down. Within was youth's blind tumult and longing, passionating for he knew not what. "I wish there were great things in my life. I wish I were a discoverer, sailing like Columbus. I wish I had a friend."

A youth came up the path from the vale. A handsome head with a cap and feather, with gold-brown hair tightly clustering, and a countenance of spirit and daring with something subtle rubbed in.

From that moment Ian Rullock was to be Damon to Alexander's Pythias.

"Alexander's father watched the two going down the avenue, the dogs at their heels. It's a fair David and Jonathan business!"

David needed Jonathan, and Jonathan David.

"Had Jonathan lived on, Ma'am and the two had come to conflict about the kingdom, what then, and where would have flown that friendship?"

"It would have flown on high, I suppose, and waited for them until they had grown wings to mount to it."

Prophetic words. "But Ian and Alexander felt only the earth about them was bright and warm."

The description of the eerie Kelpie Pool, which the lads delighted to visit together and feed their imagination on the Kelpie that was supposed at times to appear shows much insight. "Its a gey, lonely place," said Alexander. "Now I like it as well or better than I do the cave, and now I would leave it far behind me!"

It was from this pool that Alexander saved his friend from drowning, and from which later he drew the lifeless body of the woman he loved,

betrayed and deserted by him who had been to him as Jonathan.

This was some years later when Alexander was a man and was himself Laird of Glenfernie. Elspeth was a granddaughter of the stern old kirk elder, Jarvis Barrow.

Glenfernie sees her for the first time for many years by the Kelpie Pool.

"The beauty in the girl's face was subtle, not discoverable by everyone."

"The all of her smote him like some god's line of poetry."

There was in Glenfernie's nature an empty palace. It had been built through ages, and every wind of pleasure and pain had blown about it. Now with a suddenness every door clanged open. The palace stood shining like a home. Set in the throne room, upon the throne, he saw the queen."

"But when, after short wooing, he avows his love, she can only answer him—

"I like you so much, but I do not love you now—and I'll not wed and come to Glenfernie House until I do.

"'It's clear to try,' you said."

Elspeth looked at him long; "If it is there, even a little and far away, I'll try to bend my steps the way shall bring it nearer. But oh, Glenfernie, it may be there's naught upon the road!"

And so Glenfernie left his home for a space, and in his absence his own familiar friend wrought havoc in his life.

Elspeth thought him braw. Now she knew why her heart had lain for months, for years, cold and still. That was what hearts did till the sun came. Definitely, in this hour, for her now, upon this stretch of the mortal path, Ian became the sun.

And Ian bruised and broke this fair flower that surrendered to him so gladly.

The news that Elspeth was missing reached Glenfernie, and after prolonged search he came to the Kelpie Pool.

He it was who carried the still body of his love wrapped in Mother Binning's plaid, carrying her like a child against his shoulder. From the moment he learned that Ian was her undoer, he hunted him with dour hatred in his heart.

The latter part of the book deals with the Charles Stewart's invasion of Scotland, and gives stirring accounts of those romantic and exciting times.

Ian had enrolled himself in the Stewart cause, but his wanderings did not prevent Glenfernie from pursuing him and taking what vengeance he might.

An insatiable desire for vengeance caused him to meet and encounter him again and again.

But a healing process caused by the image of Elspeth rose up between him and his bitter feelings and by slow degrees lessened his thirst for vengeance. Against his will he, posing as Mr. Nobody, pays the ransom for Ian's deliverance and conceals him at Glenfernie House when pursued by his enemies.

* By Mary Johnston. Constable & Co., London.

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