

**FLORA MACLEAN'S
REWARD: A TALE
OF THE HEBRIDES**

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Flora Maclean's Reward: A Tale of the Hebrides by Jane M. Kippen

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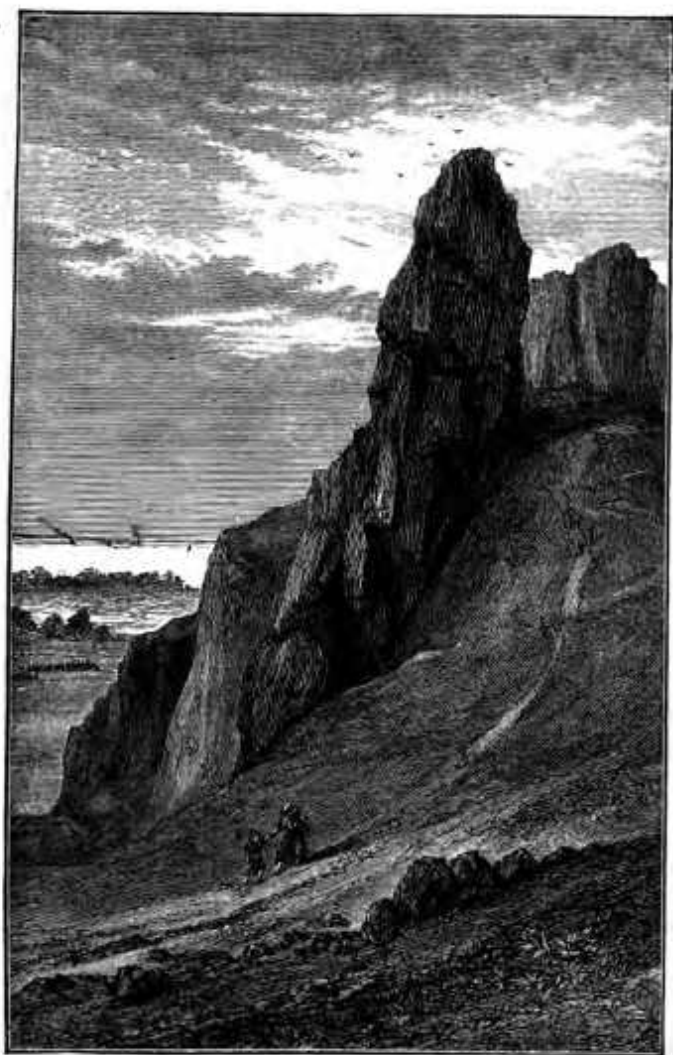
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JANE M. KIPPEN

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Frontispiece.



FLORA MACLEAN'S REWARD.

A Tale of the Hebrides.

BY

JANE M. KIPPEN,

AUTHOR OF 'AUNT MARGARET'S VISIT,' 'EDITH OSWALD,' ETC. ETC.



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FLORA MACLEAN'S REWARD.

CHAPTER I.

FLORA GOES TO SERVICE.

IT was a day of universal sorrow and regret in Flora Cameron's native island, when she left it to seek service in the distant city of Glasgow.

And no wonder that such should be the general feeling at parting with one as universally beloved as she was universally known.

With old and young,—we need not add with rich and poor, for the inhabitants of that district are much on a level as regards that distinction,—the kind-hearted girl was a general favourite, from the reverend sire and 'granny'

down to the little child, for all of whom she had the ready smile, the kind word, and the helping hand. Though neither beautiful in person nor captivating in manner, in a conventional sense, she possessed qualities of mind and character far excelling mere outward attractions. The beauties of a warm, loving heart, and an honest, kindly nature, were pre-eminently Flora's.

A dutiful, affectionate daughter and sister; active, useful, and industrious in the home circle; ever willing to help and comfort alike the old and young, or to redress the wrongs of the timid and oppressed; as strong and energetic as she was obliging; distinguished by good sense, high principle, and a humble reverence for the sacred and the true, there was nothing wanting in her to gain the regard of neighbours and friends in that primitive community. And now that she was about to leave them, all felt how great a blank she would make. How she should be missed by the good-wives, whose dwellings she had often helped to tidy up when her own home duties were over; by the aged men whose sight was waxing dim, to whom she had been in the habit of reading the word of God in her clear melodious voice, and in the 'tongue' that every Gael loves so well! And

the young people in whose pleasures and sports she had ever willingly shared; the little ones she had so often carried about in her arms, or tenderly nursed when their mothers were employed in out-door work, or away with dinner to their husbands labouring in distant fields; and many others to whom she had rendered like kindly offices,—what would they do when the genial influence of Flora's presence should be withdrawn?

But all must make up their minds to the inevitable, as Flora had made up hers to do as most of her young country-women were wont when they attained the age at which it was considered right that they should gain their own livelihood. And it was only natural that a strong active girl like Flora should wish to be upsidcs with others in this most laudable ambition. The very thought of contributing to the comfort of her parents in their approaching old age was sufficient incentive to such exertion, had such been necessary. Hard-working, patient, and frugal, not without an unusual amount of energy and self-denial, had they toiled and struggled on in a region whose natural resources are few and scant, to make 'ends meet,' and to bring up their three sons

and two daughters respectably. And now that John, or Ian as he was familiarly called in the native tongue, had got on to be a journeyman worker along with his father at the slate-quarry, all was sure to go well with them, so much would depend on this eldest son, as good and exemplary in his own way as Flora was in hers. Then, as Donald had gone to sea, and Hamish to work with a farmer in a neighbouring island, there would be the less household duty for Morag, the youngest girl at home; so it behoved Flora to do for herself, and help to requite the good parents who had done so much for her. As no reasonable objection could be offered to this step towards independence, the stores of the mother's industry for many past winters in the product of her spinning-wheel were brought forth to furnish a suitable outfit for Flora, which she made up for herself. And now, all preparations completed, she stood, one bright sunny April morning, on the little jetty or pier from which the ferry-boat takes out passengers to the steamer, attended by the members of her own family, and half the population of the village who had turned out to see her depart. A few moments of anxious, nervous watching, and then, as the large steamer