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THE
THREE PERILS OF MAN:
A BORDER ROMANCE.

THE
THREE PERILS OF MAN;
OR,
War, Women, and Witchcraft.
A BORDER ROMANCE.

By JAMES HOGG,
AUTHOR OF "WINTER-EVENING TALES," "BROWNIE OF BODSBECK," "QUEEN'S WAKE," *&c. &c.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

Beshrew me if I dare open it.
FLETCHER.

LONDON:
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1822.

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TO

WILLIAM STEWART ROSE, ESQ.

AS A SMALL MEMORIAL

OF

YARROW,

AND

THE SHEPHERD'S HUMBLE SHEIL,

THIS WORK

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY

THE AUTHOR.

[1]

THE
THREE PERILS OF MAN.

CHAPTER I.

There was a king, and a courteous king,
And he had a daughter sae bonnie;
And he lo'ed that maiden aboon a' thing
I' the bonnie, bonnie halls o' Binnorie.

* * * * * *

But wae be to thee, thou warlock wight,
My malison come o'er thee,
For thou hast undone the bravest knight,
That ever brak bread i' Binnorie!

Old Song.

The days of the Stuarts, kings of Scotland, were the days of chivalry and romance. The long and bloody contest that the nation maintained against the whole power of England, for the recovery of its independence,—of those rights which had been most unwarrantably wrested from our fathers by the greatest and most treacherous sovereign of that age, with the successful and [2] glorious issue of the war, laid the foundation for this spirit of heroism, which appears to have been at its zenith about the time that the Stuarts first acquired the sovereignty of the realm. The deeds of the Douglasses, the Randolphs, and other border barons of that day, are not to be equalled by any recorded in our annals; while the reprisals that they made upon the English, in retaliation for former injuries, enriched both them and their followers, and rendered their appearance splendid and imposing to a degree that would scarcely now gain credit. It was no uncommon thing for a Scottish earl then to visit the Court at the head of a thousand horsemen, all splendidly mounted in their military accoutrements; and many of these gentlemen of rank and family. In court and camp, feats of arms were the topic of conversation, and the only die that stamped the character of a man of renown, either with the fair, the monarch, or the chiefs of the land. No gentleman of noble blood would pay his addresses to his mistress, until he had broken a spear with the knights of the rival nation, surprised a strong-hold, or driven a prey from the [3] kinsmen of the Piercies, the Musgraves, or the Howards. As in all other things that run to a fashionable extremity, the fair sex took the lead in encouraging these deeds of chivalry, till it

came to have the appearance of a national mania. There were tournaments at the castle of every feudal baron and knight. The ploughmen and drivers were often discovered, on returning from the fields, hotly engaged in a tilting bout with their goads and plough-staves; and even the little boys and maidens on the village green, each well mounted on a crooked stick, were daily engaged in the combat, and riding rank and file against each other, breaking their tiny weapons in the furious onset, while the mimic fire flashed from their eyes. Then was the play of *Scots and English* begun, a favourite one on the school green to this day. Such was the spirit of the age, not only in Scotland, but over all the countries of southern Europe, when the romantic incidents occurred on which the following tale is founded. It was taken down from the manuscript of an old [4] Curate, who had spent the latter part of his life in the village of Mireton, and was given to the present Editor by one of those tenants who now till the valley where stood the richest city of this realm.

There were once a noble king and queen of Scotland, as many in that land have been.—In this notable tell-tale manner, does old Isaac, the curate, begin his narrative. It will be seen in the sequel, that this king and queen were Robert the Second and his consort.—They were beloved by all their subjects, (continues he,) and loved and favoured them in return; and the country enjoyed happiness and peace, all save a part adjoining to the borders of England. The strong castle of Roxburgh, which was the key of that country, had been five times taken by the English, and three times by the Scots, in less than seventeen months, and was then held by the gallant Lord Musgrave for Richard king of England.

Our worthy king had one daughter, of exquisite beauty and accomplishments; the flower of all [5] Scotland, and her name was Margaret. This princess was courted by many of the principal nobility of the land, who all eagerly sought an alliance with the royal family, not only for the additional honour and power which it conferred on them and their posterity, but for the personal charms of the lady, which were of that high eminence, that no man could look on her without admiration. This emulation of the lords kept the court of King Robert full of bustle, homage, and splendour. All were anxious to frustrate the designs of their opponents, and to forward their own; so that high jealousies were often apparent in the sharp retorts, stern looks, and nodding plumes of the rival wooers; and as the princess had never disclosed her partiality for one above another, it was judged that Robert scarcely dared openly to give the preference to any of them. A circumstance, however, soon occurred, which brought the matter fairly to the test.

It happened on a lovely summer day, at the end of July, that three and twenty noble rivals for the [6] hand of the beauteous princess were all assembled at the palace of Linlithgow; but the usual gaiety, mirth, and repartee did not prevail; for the king had received bad tidings that day, and he sat gloomy and sad.

Musgrave had issued from the castle of Roxburgh, had surprised the castle of Jedburgh, and taken prisoner William, brother to the lord of Galloway; slain many loyal Scottish subjects, and wasted Teviotdale with fire and sword. The conversation turned wholly on the state of affairs on the border, and the misery to which that country was exposed by the castle of Roxburgh remaining in the hands of the English; and at length the king enquired impatiently, how it came that Sir Philip Musgrave had surprised the castle this last time, when his subjects were so well aware of their danger.

The earl of Hume made answer, that it was wholly an affair of chivalry, and one of the bravest and noblest acts that ever was performed. Musgrave's mistress, the lady Jane Howard, of the [7] blood royal, and the greatest heiress of the north of England, had refused to see him, unless he gained back his honour by the retaking of that perilous castle, and keeping it against all force, intercession, or guile, till the end of the Christmas holidays. That he had accomplished the former in the most gallant stile; and, from the measures that he had adopted, and the additional fortifications that he had raised, there was every possibility that he would achieve the latter.

"What," said the king, "must the spirit of chivalry then be confined to the country of our enemies? Have our noble dames of Scotland less heroism in their constitutions than those of the south? Have they fewer of the charms of beauty, or have their lovers less spirit to fulfil their commands? By this sceptre in my right hand, I will give my daughter, the princess Margaret, to the knight who shall take that castle of Roxburgh out of the hands of the English before the expiry of the Christmas holidays."

Every lord and knight was instantly on his feet to accept the proposal, and every one had his [8] hand stretched towards the royal chair for audience, when Margaret arose herself, from the king's left hand, where she was seated, and flinging her left arm backward, on which swung a scarf of gold, and stretching her right, that gleamed with bracelets of rubies and diamonds, along the festive board, "Hold, my noble lords," said she; "I am too deeply interested here not to have a word to say. The grandchild of the great Bruce must not be given away to every adventurer without her own approval. Who among you will venture his honour and his life for me?" Every knight waved his right hand aloft and dashed it on the hilt of his sword, eyeing the graceful attitude and dignified form of the princess with raptures of delight. "It is well," continued she, "the spirit of chivalry *has not* deserted the Scottish nation—hear me then: My father's vow shall stand; I will give my hand in marriage to the knight who shall take that castle for the king, my father, before the expiry of the Christmas holidays, and rid our border of that nest of reavers; but [9] with this proviso only, that, in case of his attempting and failing in the undertaking, he shall forfeit all his lands, castles, towns, and towers to me, which shall form a part of my marriage-portion to his rival. Is it fit that the daughter of a king should be given up or won as circumstances may suit, or that the risk should all be on one side? Who would be so unreasonable as expect it? This, then, with the concurrence of my lord and father, is my determination, and by

it will I stand."

The conditions were grievously hard, and had a damping and dismal effect on the courtly circle. The light of every eye deadened into a dim and sullen scowl. It was a deed that promised glory and renown to adventure their blood for such a dame,—to win such a lady as the Princess of Scotland: But, to give up their broad lands and castles to enrich a hated rival, was an obnoxious consideration, and what in all likelihood was to be the issue. When all the forces of the land had been unable to take the castle by storm, where was the probability that any of them was now to succeed? None accepted the conditions. Some remained silent; some shook their heads, and muttered incoherent mumblings; others strode about the room, as if in private consultation. [10]

"My honoured liege," said Lady Margaret, "none of the lords or knights of your court have the spirit to accept of my conditions. Be pleased then to grant me a sufficient force. I shall choose the officers for them myself, and I engage to take the castle of Roxburgh before Christmas. I will disappoint the bloody Musgrave of his bride; and the world shall see whether the charms of Lady Jane Howard or those of Margaret Stuart shall rouse their admirers to deeds of the most desperate valour. Before the Christmas bells have tolled, that shall be tried on the rocks, in the rivers, in the air, and the bowels of the earth. In the event of my enterprise proving succesful, all the guerdon that I ask is, the full and free liberty of giving my hand to whom I will. It shall be to no one that is here." And so saying she struck it upon the table, and again took her seat at the king's left hand. [11]

Every foot rung on the floor with a furious tramp, in unison with that stroke of the princess's hand. The taunt was not to be brooked. Nor was it. The haughty blood of the Douglasses could bear it no longer. James, the gallant earl of Douglas and Mar, stepped forward from the circle. "My honoured liege, and master," said he, "I have not declined the princess's offer,—beshrew my heart if ever it embraced such a purpose. But the stake is deep, and a moment's consideration excusable. I have considered, and likewise decided. I accept the lady's proposals. With my own vassals alone, and at my own sole charge, will I rescue the castle from the hands of our enemies, or perish in the attempt. The odds are high against me. But it is now a Douglas or a Musgrave: God prosper the bravest!"

"Spoken like yourself, noble Douglas," said the king, "The higher the stake the greater the honour. The task be yours, and may the issue add another laurel to the heroic name." [12]

"James of Douglas," said Lady Margaret, "dost thou indeed accept of these hard conditions for my sake? Then the hand of thy royal mistress shall buckle on the armour in which thou goest to the field, but never shall unloose it, unless from a victor or a corse!" And with that she stretched forth her hand, which Douglas, as he kneeled with one knee on the ground, took and pressed to his lips.

Every one of the nobles shook Douglas by the hand, and wished him success. Does any man believe that there was one among them that indeed wished it? No, there was not a chief present that would not have rejoiced to have seen him led to the gallows. His power was too high already, and they dreaded that now it might be higher than ever; and, moreover, they saw themselves outdone by him in heroism, and felt degraded by the contract thus concluded.

The standard of the Douglas was reared, and the bloody heart flew far over many a lowland dale. The subordinate gentlemen rose with their vassals, and followed the banner of their chief; but the more powerful kept aloof, or sent ambiguous answers. They deemed the service undertaken little better than the frenzy of a madman. [13]

There was at that time a powerful border baron, nicknamed Sir Ringan Redhough, by which name alone he was distinguished all the rest of his life. He was warden of the middle marches, and head of the most warlike and adventurous sept in all that country. The answer which this hero gave to his own cousin, Thomas Middlemas, who came to expostulate with him from Douglas, is still preserved verbatim: "What, man, are a' my brave lads to lie in bloody claes that the Douglas may lie i' snaw-white sheets wi' a bonny bedfellow? Will that keep the braid border for the king, my master? Tell him to keep their hands fu', an' their haunches toom, an' they'll soon be blythe to leave the lass an' loup at the ladle; an' the fient ae cloot shall cross the border to gar their pots play brown atween Dirdan-head and Cocket-fell. Tell him this, an' tell him that Redhough said it. If he dinna work by wiles he'll never pouch the profit. But if he canna do it, an' owns that he canna do it, let him send word to me, an' I'll tak' it for him." [14]

With these words he turned his back, and abruptly left his cousin, who returned to Douglas, ill satisfied with the success of his message, but, nevertheless, delivered it faithfully. "That curst carle," said the Douglas, "is a thorn in my thigh, as well as a buckler on my arm. He's as cunning as a fox, as stubborn as an oak, and as fierce as a lion. I must temporize for the present, as I cannot do without his support, but the time may come that he may be humbled, and made to know his betters; since one endeavour has failed, we must try another, and, if that do not succeed, another still."

The day after that, as Sir Ringan was walking out at his own gate, an old man, with a cowl, and a long grey beard, accosted him. "May the great spirit of the elements shield thee, and be thy protector, knight," said he. [15]

"An' wha may he be, carle, an it be your will?" said Ringan; "An' wha may ye be that gie me sic a sachless benediction? As to my shield and protection, look ye here!" and with that he touched his two-handed sword, and a sheaf of arrows that was swung at his shoulder; "an' what are all your saints and lang nebbit spirits to me?"

"It was a random salutation, knight," said the old man, seeing his mood and temper; "I am not a priest but a prophet. I come not to load you with blessings, curses, nor homilies, all equally unavailing, but to tell you what shall be in the times that are to come. I have had visions of futurity that have torn up the tendrils of my spirit by the roots. Would you like to know what is to befal you and your house in the times that are to come?"

"I never believe a word that you warlocks say," replied the knight; "but I like aye to hear what you *will* say about matters; though it is merely to laugh at ye, for I dinna gie credit to ane o' your predictions. Sin' the Rhymer's days, the spirit o' true warlockry is gane. He foretauld muckle that has turned out true; an' something that I hope *will* turn out true: But ye're a' bairns to him." [16]

"Knight," said the stranger, "I can tell you more than ever the Rhymer conceived, or thought upon; and, moreover, I can explain the words of True Thomas, which neither you nor those to whom they relate in the smallest degree comprehend. Knowest thou the prophecy of the Hart and the Deer, as it is called?

'Quhere the hearte heavit in het blude over hill
and howe,
There shall the dinke deire droule for the dowe:
Two fleite footyde maydenis shall tredde the
greine,
And the mone and the starre shall flashe betweine.
Quhere the proude hiche halde and heveye hande
beire
Ane frenauch shall feide on ane faderis frene feire,
In dinging at the starris the D shall doupe down,
But the S shall be S quhane the heide S is gone.'"

"I hae heard the reide often and often," said the knight, "but the man's unborn that can understand that. Though the prophecies and the legends of the Rhymer take the lead i' my lear, I hae always been obliged to make that a passover." [17]

"There is not one of all his sayings that relates as much to you and your house, knight. It foretels that the arms of your family shall supersede those of Douglas, which you know are the bloody heart; and that in endeavouring to exalt himself to the stars, the D, that is the Douglas, shall fall, but that your house and name shall remain when the Stuarts are no more."

"By the horned beasts of Old England, my father's portion, and my son's undiminished hope," exclaimed the knight,—"Thou art a cunning man! I now see the bearing o' the prophecy as plainly as I see the hill of Mountcomyn before my e'e; and, as I know Thomas never is wrong, I believe it. Now is the time, auld warlock,—now is the time; he's ettling at a king's daughter, but his neck lies in wad, and the forfeit will be his undoing."

"The time is not yet come, valiant knight; nevertheless the prophecy is true. Has thy horse's hoof ever trode, or thine eye journeyed, over the Nine Glens of Niddisdale?" [18]

"I hae whiles gotten a glisk o' them."

"They are extensive, rich, and beautiful."

"They're nae less, auld carle; they're nae less. They can send nine thousand leel men an' stout to the field in a pinch."

"It is recorded in the book of fate,—it is written there—"

"The devil it is, auld carle; that's mair than I thought o'."

"Hold thy peace: lay thine hand upon thy mouth, and be silent till I explain: I say I have seen it in the visions of the night,—I have seen it in the stars of heaven"—

"What? the Nine Glens o' Niddisdale amang the starns o' heaven! by hoof and horn, it was rarely seen, warlock."

"I say that I have seen it,—they are all to belong to thy house."

"Niddisdale a' to pertain to my house!"

"All."

"Carle, I gie nae credit to sic forbodings; but I have heard something like this afore. Will ye stay till I bring my son Robin, the young Master of Mountcomyn, and let him hear it? For aince a man takes a mark on his way, I wadna hae him to tine sight o't. Mony a time has the tail o' the king's elwand pointed me the way to Cumberland; an' as often has the ee o' the Charlie-wain blinkit me hame again. A man's nae the waur o' a bit beacon o' some kind,—a bit hope set afore him, auld carle; an' the Nine Glens o' Niddisdale are nae Willie-an-the-Wisp in a lad's ee." [19]

"From Roxburgh castle to the tower of Sark,"—

"What's the auld-warld birkie saying?"

"From the Deadwater-fell to the Linns of Cannoby,—from the Linns of Cannoby to the heights of Manor and the Deuchar-swire,—shall thy son, and the representatives of thy house, ride on their own lands."

"May ane look at your foot, carle? Take off that huge wooden sandal, an it be your will."

"Wherefore should I, knight?"

[20]

"Because I dread ye are either the devil or Master Michael Scott."

"Whoever I am, I am a friend to you and to yours, and have told you the words of truth. I have but one word more to say:—Act always in concert with the Douglasses, while they act in concert with the king your master,—not a day, nor an hour, nor a moment longer. It is thus, and thus alone, that you must rise and the Douglas fall. Remember the words of True Thomas,—

'Quhane the wingit hors at his maistere sal wince,
'Let wyse men cheat the chevysance.'"

"There is something mair about you than other folk, auld man. If ye be my kinsman, Michael Scott the warlock, I crave your pardon, Master; but if you are that dreadfu' carle—I mean that learned and wonderfu' man, why you are welcome to my castle. But you are not to turn my auld wife into a hare, Master, an' hunt her up an' down the hills wi' my ain grews; nor my callants into naigs to scamper about on i' the night-time when they hae ither occupations to mind. There is [21] naething i' my tower that isna at your command; for, troth, I wad rather brow a' the Ha's and the Howard's afore I beardit you."

"I set no foot in your halls, knight. This night is a night among many to me; and wo would be to me if any thing canopied my head save the cope of heaven. There are horoscopes to be read this night for a thousand years to come. One cake of your bread and one cup of your wine is all that the old wizard requests of you, and that he must have."

The knight turned back and led the seer into the inner-court, and fed him with bread and wine, and every good thing; but well he noted that he asked no holy benediction on them like the palmers and priors that wandered about the country; and, therefore, he had some lurking dread of the old man. He did not thank the knight for his courtesy, but, wiping his snowy beard, he turned abruptly away, and strode out at the gate of the castle. Sir Ringan kept an eye on him privately till he saw him reach the top of Blake Law, a small dark hill immediately above the [22] castle. There he stopped and looked around him, and taking two green sods, he placed the one above the other, and laid himself down on his back, resting his head upon the two sods,—his body half raised, and his eyes fixed on heaven. The knight was almost frightened to look at him; but sliding into the cleuch, he ran secretly down to the tower to bring his lady to see this wonderful old warlock. When they came back he was gone, and no trace of him to be seen, nor saw they him any more at that time.

[23]

CHAPTER II.

This man's the devil's fellow commoner,
A verie cloake-bag of iniquitie.
His butteries and his craboun he deschargeth
Flasche, not by airt or reule. Is it meet
A Ploydenist should be a *cedant arma togae*,
Mounted on a trapt palfrey; with a dishe
Of velvatte on his heide, to keepe the brothe
Of his wit warm? The devil, my maisteris,
There is no dame in Venice shall indure itt.

Old Play.

Whilst the knight and his lady were looking about in amazement for their mysterious guest, the tower-warder sounded the great bugle, a tremendous horn that lay on a shelf in the balcony where he kept watch. "One—two—three," said the knight, counting the three distinct notes,—a signal of which he well knew the language,—"What can that mean? I am wanted, it would appear: another messenger from the Douglas, I warrant."

"Sir Ringan, keep by that is your own," said the lady—"I say, mind your own concerns, and let the Douglas mind his."

"Dame," said the chief, "I hae gotten some mair insight into that affair than you; an' we maun talk [24] about it by an' by. In the meantime let us haste home, and see who is arrived."

As they descended from the hill hand in hand, (for none walked arm in arm in those days,) they saw Richard Dodds, a landward laird, coming to meet them. "Oh," said Sir Ringan, "this is my officious cousin, Dickie o' Dryhope; what business can he be come upon? It will be something that he deems of great importance."

"I hate that old fawning, flattering sycophant," said the lady; "and cannot divine what is the cause of your partiality for him."

"It is his attachment to our house that I admire, and his perfect devotion to my service and interests," said the knight.

"Mere sound," exclaimed the lady bitterly: "Mere waste of superfluous breath! I tell you, Sir Ringan, that, for all your bravery, candour, and kindness, you are a mere novice in the affairs of life, and know less of men and of things than ever knight did." [25]

"It is a great fault in women," said the knight, making his observation general, "that they will aye

be meddling wi' things they ken nought about. They think they ken every thing, an' wad gar ane trow that they can see an inch into a fir deal.—Gude help them! It is just as unfeasible to hear a lady discussing the merits of warriors an' yeomen, as it wad be to see me sitting nursing a wench-bairn."

"Foh, what an uncourtly term!" said the lady; "What would King Robert think if he heard you speaking in that uncouth stile?"

"I speak muckle better than him, wi' his short clippit Highland tongue," said the chief: "But hush, here comes the redoubted Dickie o' Dryhope."

No sooner were the knight and his lady's eyes turned so as to meet Dickie's, than he whipped off his bonnet with a graceful swing, and made a low bow, his thin gray locks waving as he bowed. Dickie was a tall, lean, toothless, old bachelor, whose whole soul and body were devoted to the [26] fair sex and the house of his chief. These two mighty concerns divided his attention, and often mingled with one another; his enthusiasm for the one, by any sudden change of subjects or concatenation of ideas, being frequently transferred to the other. Dickie approached with his bonnet in his hand, bowing every time the knight and lady lifted their eyes. When they met, Sir Ringan shook him heartily by the hand, and welcomed him to the castle of Mountcomyn.

"Oh, you are so good and so kind, Sir Ringan, bless you, bless you, bless you, noble sir; how do you thrive, Sir Ringan? bless you, bless you. And my excellent and noble lady Mountcomyn, how is my noble dame?"

"Thank you," said the lady coldly.

Dickie looked as if he would have shaken hands with her, or embraced her, as the custom then was, but she made no proffer of either the one or the other, and he was obliged to keep his distance; but this had no effect in checking his adulations. "I am so glad that my excellent lady is [27] well, and the young squires and maidens all brisk and whole I hope?"

"All well, cousin," said the chief.

"Eh! all well?" reiterated Dickie, "Oh the dear, delightful, darling souls, O bless them! If they be but as well as I wish them, and as good as I wish—If the squires be but half so brave as their father, and the noble young sweet dames half so beautiful as their lady mother—oh bless them, bless them." "And half so independent and honest as their cousin," said the lady, with a rebuking sneer.

"Very pleasant! very pleasant, indeed!" simpered Dickie, without daring to take his lips far asunder, lest his toothless gums should be seen.

"Such babyish flummery!" rejoined the lady with great emphasis. Dickie was somewhat abashed. His eyes, that were kindled with a glow of filial rapture, appeared as with flattened pupils; nevertheless the benignant smile did not altogether desert his features. The knight gave a short look off at one side to his lady. "It is a great fault in ladies, cousin," said he, "that they will always [28] be breaking their jokes on those that they like best, and always pretending to keep at a distance from them. My lady thinks to blind my een, as many a dame has done to her husband afore this time; but I ken, an' some mae ken too, that if there's ane o' a' my kin that I durstna trust my lady wi' when my back's turned, that ane's Dickie o' Dryhope."

"H'm, h'm, h'm," neighed Dickie, laughing with his lips shut; "My lady's so pleasant, and so kind, but—Oh—no, no—you wrong her, knight; h'm, h'm, h'm! But, all joking and gibing aside—my lady's very pleasant. I came express to inform you, Sir Ringan, that the Douglasses are up."

"I knew it."

"And the Maxwells—and the Gordons—and the hurkle-backed Hendersons."

"Well."

"And Sir Christopher Seton is up—and the Elliots and the Laird of Tibbers is up."

"Well, well."

"I came expressly to inform you—"

"Came with piper's news," said the lady, "which the fiddler has told before you." [29]

"That *is very* good," said Dickie; "My lady is so delightfully pleasant—I thought Sir Ringan would be going to rise with the rest, and came for directions as to raising my men."

"How many men can the powerful Laird of Dryhope muster in support of the warden?" said Lady Mountcomyn.

"Mine are all at his command; my worthy lady knows that," said Dickie, bowing: "Every one at his command."

"I think," said she, "that at the battle of Blakehope you furnished only two, who were so famished with hunger that they could not bear arms, far less fight."

"Very pleasant, in sooth; h'm, h'm! I declare I am delighted with my lady's good humour."

"You may, however, keep your couple of scare-crows at home for the present, and give them something to eat," continued she; "the warden has other matters to mind than wasting his vassals that the Douglas may wive."

"Very true, and excellent good sense," said Dickie. [30]

"We'll talk of that anon," said Sir Ringan. And with that they went into the castle, and sat down to dinner. There were twelve gentlemen and nine maidens present, exclusive of the knight's own family, and they took their places on each side as the lady named them. When Sir Ringan lifted up his eyes and saw the station that Dickie occupied, he was dissatisfied, but instantly found a remedy. "Davie's Pate," said he to the lad that waited behind him, "mak that bowiefu' o' cauld plovers change places wi' yon saut-faut instantly, before meat be put to mouth." The order was no sooner given than obeyed, and the new arrangement placed Dickie fairly above the salt.

The dining apparatus at the castle of Mountcomyn was homely, but the fare was abundant. A dozen yeomen stood behind with long knives, and slashed down the beef and venison into small pieces, which they placed before the guests in wooden plates, so that there was no knife used at [31] the dining board. All ate heartily, but none with more industry than Dickie, who took not even time all the while to make the complaisant observation, that "my lady was so pleasant."

Dinner being over, the younger branches of the family retired, and all the kinsmen not of the first rank, pretending some business that called them away, likewise disappeared; so that none were left with the knight and his lady save six. The lady tried the effect of several broad hints on Dickie, but he took them all in good part, and declared that he never saw his lady so pleasant in his life. And now a serious consultation ensued, on the propriety of lending assistance to the Douglas. Sir Ringan first put the question to his friends, without any observation. The lady took up the argument, and reasoned strongly against the measure. Dickie was in raptures with his lady's good sense, and declared her arguments unanswerable. Most of the gentlemen seemed to acquiesce in the same measure, on the ground that, as matters stood, they could not rise at the Douglas' call on that occasion, without being considered as a subordinate family, which neither [32] the king nor the Douglas had any right to suppose them; and so strongly and warmly ran the argument on that side, that it was likely to be decided on, without the chief having said a word on the subject. Simon of Gemelscleuch alone ventured to dissent; "I have only to remark, my gallant kinsmen," said he, "that our decision in this matter is likely to prove highly eventful. Without our aid the force of the Douglas is incompetent to the task, and the castle will then remain in the hands of the English, than which nothing can be more grievously against our interest. If he be defeated, and forfeit his lands, the power of the Border will then remain with us; but should he succeed without our assistance, and become the king's son-in-law, it will be a hard game with us to keep the footing that we have. I conceive, therefore, that in withdrawing our support we risk every thing,—in lending it, we risk nothing but blows." All the kinsmen were silent. Dickie looked [33] at my Lady Mountcomyn.

"It is well known that there is an old prophecy existing," said she, "that a Scot shall sit in the Douglas' chair, and be lord of all his domains. Well would it be for the country if that were so. But to support the overgrown power of that house is not the way to accomplish so desirable an object."

"That is true," said Dickie; "I'll defy any man to go beyond what my lady says, or indeed whatever she says."

"Have we not had instances of their jealousy already?" continued she.

"We have had instances of their jealousy already," said Dickie, interrupting her.

"And should we raise him to be the king's son-in-law, he would kick us for our pains," rejoined she.

"Ay, he would kick us for our pains," said Dickie; "think of that."

"Either please to drop your responses, Sir," said she, sternly, "or leave the hall. I would rather hear a raven croak on my turret in the day of battle, than the tongue of a flatterer or sycophant." [34]

"That is very good indeed," said Dickie; "My lady is so pleasant; h'm, h'm, h'm! Excellent! h'm, h'm, h'm!"

Sir Ringan saw his lady drawing herself up in high indignation; and dreading that his poor kinsman would bring on himself such a rebuke as would banish him the hall for ever, he interposed. "Cousin," said he, "it's a great fault in women that they canna bide interruption, an' the mair they stand in need o't they take it the waur. But I have not told you all yet: a very singular circumstance has happened to me this day. Who do you think I found waylaying me at my gate, but our kinsman, the powerful old warlock, Master Michael Scott."

"Master Michael Scott!" exclaimed the whole circle, every one holding up his hands, "has he ventured to be seen by man once more? Then there is something uncommon to befal, or, perhaps, the world is coming to an end."

"God forbid!" said Redhough: "It is true that, for seven years, he has been pent up in his [35] enchanted tower at Aikwood, without speaking to any one save his spirits; but though I do not know him, this must have been he, for he has told me such things as will astonish you; and, moreover, when he left me, he laid himself down on the top of the Little Law on his back, and the devils carried him away bodily through the air, or down through the earth, and I saw no more of him."

All agreed that it had been the great magician Master Michael Scott. Sir Ringan then rehearsed the conversation that had passed between the wizard and himself. All the circle heard this with astonishment; some with suspense, and others with conviction, but Dickie with raptures of delight. "He assured me," said Redhough, "that my son should ride on his own land from Roxburgh to the Deadwater-fell."

"From Roxburgh to the Deadwater-fell!" cried Dickie, "think of that! all the links of the bonny Teviot and Slitterick, ha, ha, lads, think of that!" and he clapped his hands aloud without daring to turn his eyes to the head of the table. [36]

"And from the Deadwater-fell to the tower o' Sark," rejoined the knight.

"To the tower of Sark!" exclaimed Dickie. "H— have a care of us! think of that! All the dales of Liddel, and Ewes, and the fertile fields of Cannobie! Who will be king of the Border, then, my lads? who will be king of the Border then? ha, ha, ha!"

"And from the fords of Sark to the Deuchar-swire," added Sir Ringan.

Dickie sprang to his feet, and seizing a huge timber trencher, he waved it round his head. The chief beckoned for silence; but Dickie's eyes were glistening with raprures, and it was with great difficulty he repressed his vociferations.

"And over the Nine Glens of Niddisdale beside," said Sir Ringan.

Dickie could be restrained no longer. He brayed out, "Hurrah, hurrah!" and waved his trencher round his head.

"All the Esk, and the braid Forest, and the Nine Glens o' Niddisdale! Hurrah! Hurrah! Mountcomyn for ever! The warden for ever! hu, hu! hu!" [37]

The knight and his friends were obliged to smile at Dickie's outrageous joy; but the lady rose and went out in high dudgeon. Dickie then gave full vent to his rapture without any mitigation of voice, adding, "My lady for ever!" to the former two; and so shouting, he danced around, waving his immense wooden plate.

The frolic did not take, and Sir Ringan was obliged to call him to order. "You do not consider, cousin," said the warden, "that what a woman accounts excellent sport at one time is at another high offence. See, now, you have driven my lady away from our consultation, on whose advice I have a strong reliance; and I am afraid we will scarcely prevail on her to come back."

"Oh! there's no fear of my lady and me," said Dickie; "we understand one another. My lady is a kind, generous, noble soul, and so pleasant!

"For as pleasant and kind as she is, I am deceived if she is easily reconciled to you. Ye dinna ken Kate Dunbar, cousin.—Boy, tell your lady that we lack her counsel, and expect that she will lend us it for a short space." [38]

The boy did as he was ordered, but returned with an answer, that unless Dickie was dismissed she did not choose to be of the party.

"I am sorry for it," said Sir Ringan; "but you may tell her that she may then remain where she is, for I can't spare my cousin Dickie now, nor any day these five months." And with that he began and discussed the merits of the case *pro* and *con* with his kinsmen, as if nothing had happened; and in the end it was resolved, that, with a thousand horsemen, they would scour the east border to intercept all the supplies that should be sent out of England, and thus enrich themselves, while, at at the same time, they would appear to countenance the mad undertaking of Douglas.

[39]

CHAPTER III.

> "Come, come, my hearts of flint; modestly; decently; soberly; and handsomely.—No man afore his leader.—Ding down the enemy to-morrow,—ye shall not come into the field like beggars.—Lord have mercy upon me, what a world this is!—Well, I'll give an hundred pence for as many good feathers, and a hundred more for as many scarts:—wounds, dogs, to set you out withal! Frost and snow, a man cannot fight till he be brave! I say down with the enemy to morrow!"
>
> *Sir John Oldcastle.*

The castle of Roxburgh was beleaguered by seven thousand men in armour, but never before had it been so well manned, or rendered so formidable in its butresses; and to endeavour to scale it, appeared as vain an attempt as that of scaling the moon.

There was a great deal of parading, and noise went on, as that of beating drums, and sounding of trumpets and bugles, every day; and scarcely did there one pass on which there were not tilting bouts between the parties, and in these the English generally had the advantage. Never was there, perhaps, a more chivalrous host than that which Musgrave had under his command within the walls of Roxburgh; the enthusiasm, the gallantry, and the fire of the captain, were communicated to all the train. [40]

Their horses were much superior to those of the Scots; and, in place of the latter being able to make any impression on the besieged, they could not, with all the vigilance they were able to use, prevent their posts from being surprised by the English, on which the most desperate encounters sometimes took place. At first the English generally prevailed, but the Scots at length became inured to it, and stood the shocks of the cavalry more firmly. They took care always at the first onset to cut the bridle reins with their broad-swords, and by that means they disordered the ranks of their enemies, and often drove them in confusion back to their strong-hold.

Thus months flew on in this dashing sort of warfare, and no impression was made on the fortress,

nor did any appear practicable; and every one at court began to calculate on the failure and utter ruin of the Douglas. Piercy of Northumberland proffered to raise the country, and lead an army to the relief of the castle; but this interference Musgrave would in nowise admit, it being an infringement of the task imposed on him by his mistress. [41]

Moreover, he said, he cared not if all the men of Scotland lay around the castle, for he would defy them to win it. He farther bade the messenger charge Piercy and Howard to have an army ready at the expiry of the Christmas holidays, wherewith to relieve him, and clear the Border, but to take no care nor concern about him till then.

About this time an incident, right common in that day, brought a number of noble young adventurers to the camp of Douglas. It chanced, in an encounter between two small rival parties at the back of the convent of Maisondieu, which stood on the south side of the Teviot, that Sir Thomas de Somerville of Carnwath engaged hand to hand with an English knight, named Sir Comes de Moubray, who, after a desperate encounter, unhorsed and wounded him. The affair was seen from the walls of Roxburgh, as well as by a part of the Scottish army which was encamped on a rising ground to the south, that overlooked the plain; and, of course, like all other chivalrous feats, became the subject of general conversation. Somerville was greatly mortified; and, not finding any other way to recover his honour, he sent a challenge to Moubray to fight him again before the gate of Roxburgh, in sight of both armies. Moubray was too gallant to refuse. There was not a knight in the castle who would have declined such a chance of earning fame, and recommending himself to his mistress and the fair in general. The challenge was joyfully accepted, and the two knights met in the midst of a circle of gentlemen appointed by both armies, on the castle green, that lay betwixt the moat and the river, immediately under the walls of the castle. Never was there a more gallant combat seen. They rode nine times against each other with full force, twice with lances and seven times with swords, yet always managed with such dexterity that neither were unhorsed, nor yet materially wounded. But at the tenth charge, by a most strenuous exertion, Sir Thomas disarmed and threw his opponent out of his saddle, with his sword-arm dislocated. Somerville gained great renown, and his fame was sounded in court and in camp. Other challenges were soon sent from both sides, and as readily accepted; and some of the best blood both of Scotland and England was shed in these mad chivalrous exploits. The ambition of the young Scottish nobles was roused, and many of them flocked as volunteers to the standard of Douglas. Among these were some of the retainers of Redhough, who could not resist such an opportunity of trying their swords with some rivals with whom they had erst exchanged sharp blows on the marches. Simon of Gemelscleuch, his cousin John of Howpasley, and the Laird of Yard-bire, all arrived in the camp of Douglas in one night, in order to distinguish themselves in these tilting bouts. Earl Douglas himself challenged Musgrave, hoping thereby to gain his end, and the prize for which he fought; but the knight, true to his engagement, sent him for answer, that he would first see the beginning of a new year, and then he should fight either him or any of his name, but that till then he had undertaken a charge to which all others must be subordinate. [42] [43] [44]

The Laird of Yardbire, the strongest man of the Border, fought three combats with English squires of the same degree, two on horseback and one on foot, and in all proved victorious. For one whole month the siege presented nothing new save these tiltings, which began at certain hours every day, and always became more obstinate, often proving fatal; and the eagerness of the young gentry of both parties to engage in them grew into a kind of mania: But an event happened which put an end to them at once.

There was a combat one day between two knights of the first degree, who were surrounded as usual by twenty lancers from each army, all the rest of both parties being kept at a distance, the English on the tops of their walls, and the Scots on the heights behind, both to the east and west; for there was one division of the army stationed on the hill of Barns and at the head of the Sick-man's Path, and another on the rising ground between the city and castle. The two gentlemen were equally matched, and the issue was doubtful, when the attendant Scottish guards perceived, or thought they perceived, in the bearing of the English knight, some breach of the rules of chivalry; on which with one voice they called out "foul play." The English answered, "No, no, none." The two judges called to order, on which the spearmen stood still and listened, and hearing that the judges too were of different opinions, they took up the matter themselves, the Scots insisting that the knight should be disarmed and turned from the lists in disgrace, and the English refusing to acquiesce. The judges, dreading some fatal conclusion, gave their joint orders that both parties should retire in peace, and let the matter be judged of afterwards; on which the English prepared to quit the ground with a kind of exultation, for it appeared that they were not certain with regard to the propriety of their hero's conduct. Unluckily, it so happened that the redoubted Charlie Scott of Yard-bire headed the Scottish pikemen on the lists that day, a very devil for blood and battery, and of strength much beyond that generally allotted to man. When he saw that the insidious knight was going to be conducted off in a sort of triumph, and in a manner so different from what he deemed to suit his demerits, he clenched the handle of his sword with his right hand, and screwed down his eyebrows till they almost touched the top of his nose. "What now, muckle Charlie?" said one that stood by him. "What now!" repeated Charlie, growling like a wolf-dog, and confining the words almost within his own breast, "The deil sal bake me into a ker-cake to gust his gab wi', afore I see that saucy tike ta'en off in sic a way." And with that he dropt his pike, drew his sword, and rushing through the group he seized the knight's horse by the bridle with his left hand, thinking to lead both him and his master away prisoners. The knight struck at him with all his might, but for this Charlie was prepared; he warded the blow most dexterously, and in wrath, by the help of a huge curb-bridle, he threw the horse backward, first on his hams, and then on his back, with his rider under him. "Tak ye that, master, for whistling o' [45] [46] [47]

Sundays," said the intrepid borderer, and began to lay about him at the English, who now attacked him on both sides.

Charlie's first break at the English knight was the watch-word for a general attack. The Scots flew to the combat, in perfect silence, and determined hatred, and they were received by the other party in the same manner. Not so the onlookers of both hosts,—they rent the air with loud and reiterated shouts. The English poured forth in a small narrow column from the east gate along the draw-bridge, but the Scottish horsemen, who were all ready mounted, the better to see the encounter from their stations, scoured down from the heights like lightning, so that they [48] prevailed at first, before the English could issue forth in numbers sufficient to oppose them. The brave Sir Richard Musgrave, the captain's younger brother, led the English, he having rushed out at their head on the first breaking out of the affray; but, notwithstanding all his bravery, he with his party were driven with their backs to the moat, and hard pressed, Douglas, with a strong body of horse, having got betwixt them and the castle-gate. The English were so anxious to relieve their young hero that they rushed to the gate in crowds. Douglas suffered a part to issue, and then attacking them furiously with the cavalry, he drove them back in such confusion, that he got possession of the draw-bridge for several minutes, and would in all likelihood have entered with the crowd, had it not been for the portcullis, the machinery of which the Scots did not understand, nor had they the means of counteracting it; so that just when they were in the hottest and most sanguine part of their enterprize, down it came with a clattering noise louder [49] than thunder, separating a few of the most forward from their brethren, who were soon every one cut down, as they refused to yield.

In the meantime it fared hard with Richard, who was overpowered by numbers; and though the English archers galled the Scottish cavalry grievously from the walls, he and all that were with him being forced backward, they plunged into the moat, and were every one of them either slain or taken prisoners. The younger Musgrave was among the latter, which grieved his brother Sir Philip exceedingly, as it gave Douglas an undue advantage over him, and he knew that, in the desperate state of his undertaking, he would go any lengths to over-reach him. From that day forth, all challenges or accepting of challenges was prohibited by Musgrave, under pain of death; and a proclamation was issued, stating, that all who entered the castle should be stripped naked, searched, and examined, on what pretence soever they came, and if any suspicious circumstances appeared against them, they were to be hanged upon a post erected for the [50] purpose, on the top of the wall, in sight of both armies. He was determined to spare no vigilance, and constantly said he would hold Douglas at defiance.

There was only one thing that the besieged had to dread, and it was haply, too, the only thing in which the Scots placed any degree of hope, and that was the total failure of provisions within the castle. Musgrave's plan, of getting small supplies at a time from England by night, was discovered by Sir Ringan Redhough, and completely cut off: and as Douglas hanged every messenger that fell into his hands, no new plan could be established; and so closely were the English beleaguered, that any attempt at sending additional supplies to those they had proved of no avail. The rival armies always grew more and more inveterate against each other, and the most sharp and deadly measures were exercised by both. Matters went on in this manner till near the end of October, when the nights grew cold, long, and dark. There was nothing but the perils [51] of that castle on the Border talked of over all Scotland and England. Every one, man, maid, and child, became interested in it. It may well be conceived that the two sovereign beauties, the Lady Jane Howard and Princess Margaret of Scotland, were not the least so; and both of them prepared, at the same time, in the true spirit of the age, to take some active part in the matter before it came to a final issue. One of them seemed destined to lose her hero, but both had put on the resolution of performing something worthy of the knights that were enduring so much for their sakes.

[52]

CHAPTER IV.

And O that pegis weste is slymme,
And his ee wald garr the daye luke dymme;
His broue is brente, his brestis fayre,
And the deemonde lurkis in hys revan hayre.
Alake for thilke bonnye boye sae leile
That lyes withe oure Kynge in the hie-lande shiele!

Old Rhyme.

I winna gang in, I darena gang in,
Nor sleep i' your arms ava;
Fu' laithly wad a fair may sleep
Atween you an' the wa'.
War I to lie wi' a belted knight,
In a land that's no my ain,
Fu' dear wad be my courtesye,
An' dreich wad be my pain.

One cold biting evening, at the beginning of November, Patrick Chisholm of Castleweary, an old yeoman in the upper part of Teviotdale, sat conversing with his family all in a merry and cheerful mood. They were placed in a circle round a blazing hearth fire, on which hung a huge caldron, boiling and bubbling like the pool at the foot of a cataract. The lid was suspended by a rope to the iron crook on which this lordly machine was hung, to intercept somewhat the showers of soot [53] that now and then descended from the rafters. These appeared as if they had been covered with pitch or black japanning; and so violently was the kettle boiling, that it made the roof of Pate Chisholm's bigging all to shiver. Notwithstanding these showers of soot, Pate and his four goodly sons eyed the boiling caldron with looks of great satisfaction,—for ever and anon the hough of an immense leg of beef was to be seen cutting its capers in the boil, or coming with a graceful semicircular sweep from one lip of the pot to the other.

"Is it true, callants," said Pate, "that Howard is gaun to make a diversion, as they ca't, in the west border, to draw off the warden frae the Cheviots?"

"As muckle is said, an' as muckle expectit," said Dan, his first born, a goodly youth, who, with his three brethren, sat in armour. They had come home to their father's house that night with their share of a rich prey that the warden had kidnapped while just collecting to send to Roxburgh [54] under a guard of five thousand men. But Sir Ringan, getting intelligence of it, took possession of the drove before it was placed under the charge of those intended to guard it.

"As muckle is said, an' as muckle is expectit," said Dan; "but the west border will never turn out sae weel to us as the east has done. It's o'er near the Johnstones, and the Jardines, and the hurkle-backit Hendersons."

Pate looked from under his bonnet at the hough of beef.—"The Cheviot hills hae turned weel out for the warden," continued Dan; "Redhough an' his lads hae been as weel scrieving o'er law and dale as lying getting hard pelts round the stane wa's o' Roxburgh, an' muckle mair gude has he done; for gin they dinna hunger them out o' their hauddin, they'll keep it. Ye'll draw an Englishman by the gab easier than drive him wi' an airn gaud. I wad ride fifty miles to see ony ane o' the bonny dames that a' this pelting an' peching is about."

"Twa wanton glaikit gillies, I'll uphaud," said Pate, looking at the restless hough; "o'er muckle [55] marth i' the back, an' meldar i' the brusket. Gin I had the heffing o' them, I sude tak a staup out o' their bickers.—Whisht, I thought I heard the clanking o' horse heels.—Callant, clap the lid down on the pat; what hae they't hinging geaving up there for?"

The clattering of the horses approached, but apparently with caution; and at length a voice called at the door in an English accent, "Hollo, who holds here?" "Leel men, an' for the Scots," answered Dan, starting to his feet, and laying his hand on his sword. "For the knight of Mountcomyn, the Scottish warden?"—inquired the horseman without. "For the same," was the answer. "It is toward his castle that we are bound. Can any of you direct us the way?"

"Troth, that I can," said old Pate, groping to satisfy himself that the lid was close down on the pot, and then running to the door; "I can tell you every fit o' the road, masters: You maun gang by the Fanesh, you see; it lies yon way, you see; an' then up the Brown rig, as straight as a line through [56] Philhope-head, an' into Borthwick; then up Aitas-burn,—round the Crib-law,—an' wheel to the right; then the burn that ye come to there, ye maun cross that, and three miles farther on you come to the castle of Mountcomyn.—Braw cheer there lads!"

"I am afraid, friend," said the English trooper, "we will make nothing of this direction. Is it far to this same castle of the Scottish warden?"

"O no, naething but a step, some three Scots miles."

"And how is the road?"

"A prime road, man; no a step in't a' wad tak your horse to the brusket; only there's nae track; ye maun just take an ettle. Keep an ee on the tail o' Charlie's wain, an' ye'll no gang far wrang."

"Our young lord and master is much fatigued," said the trooper; "I am afraid we shall scarcely make it out. Pray, sir, could you spare us a guide?"

Dan, who was listening behind, now stepped forward, and addressed them: "My masters, as the [57] night is o' darkness, I could hardly ride to Mountcomyn mysel, an', far or near, I couldna win there afore day. Gin ye dought accept o' my father's humble cheer the night—"

"The callant's bewiddied, an' waur than bewiddied," said Pate: "We haena cheer for oursels, let abe for a byking o' English lords an' squires!"

"I would gladly accept of any accommodation," said a sweet delicate voice, like that of a boy; "for the path has been so dreadful that I am almost dead, and unable to proceed further. I have a safe-conduct to the Scottish court, signed by all the wardens of the marches, and every knight, yeoman, and vassal is obliged to give me furtherance."

"I dinna ken muckle about conducks an' signatures," said Pate, "but I trow there winna be mony syllables in some o' the names if a' the wardens hae signed your libelt; for I ken weel there's ane o' them whase edication brak aff at the letter G, an' never gat farrer. But I'm no ca'ing ye a leear, southron lord, ye may be a vera honest man; an' as your errand may be something unco express, [58] ye had better post on."

"It sal never be casten up to me neither in camp nor ha," said Dan, "that a stranger was cawed frae my auld father's door at this time o' the night. Light down, light down, southron lord, ye are

a privileged man; an', as I like to see the meaning o' things, I'll ride wi' ye mysel the morn, fit for fit, to the castle o' Mountcomyn."

The strangers were soon all on their feet, and ushered into the family circle, for there was no fire-place in the house but that one. They consisted of five stout troopers, well armed, a page, and a young nobleman, having the appearance of a youth about seventeen or eighteen years of age. Every eye was instantly turned on him, there was something so extraordinary in his appearance. Instead of a steel helmet, he wore a velvet cap, shaped like a crown, striped with belts, bars, and crosses of gold wire, and manifestly more for ornament than use. His fair ringlets were peeping [59] in curls out from below his cap, and his face and bright blue eyes were lovely as the dawn of a summer's morning.

They were not well seated till a noise of the tread of horses was again heard.

"The warld be a-wastle us!" cried old Pate, "wha's that now? I think fouk will be eaten up wi' fouk, an' naething for folk's pains but dry thanks;—thanks winna feed the cat—"

He was stopped in his regretful soliloquy by a rough voice at the door: "Ho, wha bauds the house?" The same answer was given as to the former party, and in a minute the strangers entered without law or leave.

"Ye travel unco late, maisters," said old Pate: "How far may ye be for the night?"

"We meant to have reached the tower of Gorranberry to-night," said one of the strangers, "but we have been benighted, and were drawn hither by the light in your hole. I fear we must draw on your hospitality till day."

"Callant Peter, gang an' stap a wisp i' that bole," said Pate; "it seems to be the beacon light to a' [60] the clanjaumphry i' the hale country. I tauld ye aye to big it up; but no ane o' ye heeds what I say. I hae seen houses that *some* fouk whiles gaed by. But, my maisters, its nae gate ava to Gorranberry,—a mere haut-stride-and-loup. I'll send a guide to Bilhope-head wi' ye; for troth we hae neither meat nor drink, house-room nor stabling, mair about the toun. We're but poor yeomen, an' haud our mailin for hard service. We hae tholed a foray the night already, an' a double ane wad herrie us out o' house an' hauld. The warld be a' wastle us! I think a' the mosstroopers be abraid the night! Bairns, swee that bouking o' claes aff the fire; ye'll burn it i' the boiling."

The new comers paid little attention to this address of the old man; they saw that he was superannuated, and had all the narrow selfishness that too generally clings to that last miserable stage of human exisence; but drawing nigh they began to eye the southron party with looks of dark suspicion, if not of fierceness.

"I see what maks ye sae frightet at our entrance here," said the first Scots trooper, ye hae some [61] southron spies amang ye—Gudeman, ye sal answer to the king for this, an' to the Douglas too, whilk ye'll find a waur job."

"Ken where ye are, an' wha ye're speaking to," said Dan, stepping forward and browing the last speaker face to face: "If either the ae party or the ither be spies, or aught else but leel men, ye shall find, ere ye gang far, whase land ye are on, an' whase kipples ye are under. That auld man's my father, an,' doitet as he is, the man amang ye that says a saucy word to him I'll gar sleep in his shoon a fit shorter than he rase i' the morning. Wha are ye, sir, or where do you travel by night on my master the warden's bounds?"

"Sir," answered another trooper, who seemed to be rather a more polished man, "I applaud your spirit, and will answer your demand. We go with our lord and master, Prince Alexander Stuart of Scotland, on a mission to a noble English family. Here is the king's seal as well as a pass signed [62] by the English warden. We are leel men and true."

"Where is the prince?" said Dan: "A prince of Scotland i' my father's house? Which is he?"

A slender elegant stripling stept forward. "Here he is, brave yeoman," said the youth: "No ceremony—Regard me as your fellow and companion for this night."

Dan whipped off his bonnet and clapped his foot upon it, and bowing low and awkwardly to his prince he expressed his humble respect as well as he could, and then presented the prince to his father. The title sounded high in the old man's ears, he pulled off his bonnet and looked with an unsteady gaze, as if uncertain on whom to fix it—"A prince! Eh?—Is he a prince o' Scotland? Ay, ay!" said he, "Then he'll maybe hae some say wi' our head men—Dan—I say, Dan"—and with that he pulled Dan's sleeve, and said in a whisper loud enough to be heard over all the house,—"I say, Dan, man, gin he wad but speak to the warden to let us hae a' the land west the length o' the Frosty lair. O it wad lie weel into ours." "It wad, father, and I daresay we may get it; but hush just [63] now." "Eh? do you think we may get it?" enquired the old man eagerly in the same whispering tremulous voice, "O man, it wad lie weel in; an' sae wad Couter's-cleuch. It's no perfect wanting that too. An' we wad be a great deal the better o' twa or three rigs aff Skelfhill for a bit downfa' to the south—See if ye can speak to the lad."

Dan shook his father's hand, and nodded to him by way of acquiescence. The old man brightened up: "Whar is your titty Bessy, Dan? Whar are a' the idle hizzies? Gar them get something set down to the princely lad: I'se warrant he's e'en hungry. Ye'll no be used til siccan roads as thir, Sir? Na, na. They're unco roads for a prince.—Dan, I say, come this way; I want to speak to you—I say," (whispering very low aside) "I wadna let them ken o' the beef, or they'll just gang wi't. Gie them milk an' bread, an' cheese, an' a drap o' the broo; it will do weel aneuch. Hunger's good sauce. But, Dan,—I say, could ye no contrive to get quat o' thae English? I doubt there will be [64]

little made of them:—They're but a wheen gillie-gaupies at the best, an nae freends to us.—Fouk sude ay bow to the bush they get bield frae."

"It's a' true that ye say, father; but we surely needna grudge an Englishman a piece o' an English cow's hip.—The beef didna cost you dear, an' there's mair where it cam frae."

The old man would not give up his point, but persisted in saying it was a dangerous experiment, and an unprofitable waste. However, in spite of his remonstrances, the board was loaded with six wooden bickers filled with beef broth, plenty of bear-meal bannocks, and a full quarter of English ox beef, to which the travellers did all manner of justice. The prince, as he called himself, was placed at the head of the table, and the young English nobleman by his side. Their eyes were scarcely ever turned from one another's faces, unless in a casual hasty glance to see how others were regarding the same face. The prince had dark raven hair that parted on a brow of snow, a [65] black liquid eye, and round lips, purer than the cherry about to fall from the tree with ripeness. He was also a degree taller than the English lord; but both of them, as well as their two pages, were lovelier than it became men to be. The troopers who attended them seemed disposed to contradict every thing that came from the adverse party, and, if possible, to broach a quarrel, had it not been for the two knights, who were all suavity, good breeding, and kindness to each other, and seemed to have formed an attachment at first sight. At length Prince Alexander inquired of his new associate his name, and business at the Scottish court, provided, he said, that it did not require strict secrecy. The other said, he would tell him every thing truly, on condition that he would do the same: which being agreed to, the young English nobleman proceeded as follows:

"My name is Lord Jasper Tudor, second son to the Earl of Pembroke. I am nearly related to the throne of England, and in high favour with the king. The wars on the Borders have greatly [66] harassed the English dalesmen for these many years, and matters being still getting worse between the nations, the king, my cousin, has proposed to me to marry the Princess Margaret of Scotland, and obtain as her dowry a confirmation of these border lands and castles, so that a permanent peace may be established between the nations, and this bloody and desperate work cease. I am on my way to the Scottish court to see the princess, your sister; and if I find her to be as lovely and accomplished as fame speaks her, I intend to comply with the king's request, and marry her forthwith."

This speech affected the prince so much that all the guests wondered. He started to his feet, and smiling in astonishment said, "What, you? you marry m—m—my sister Margaret? She is very much beholden to you, and on my word she will see a becoming youth. But are you sure that she will accept of you for a husband?" "I have little to fear on that head," said the Lord Jasper Tudor jeeringly; "Maids are in general not much averse to marriage; and, if I am well informed, your [67] lovely sister is as little averse to it as any of her contemporaries."

The prince blushed deep at this character of his sister, but had not a word to say.

"Pray," continued Tudor, "is she like you? If she is, I think I shall love her,—I would not have her just like you neither."

"I believe," said the prince, "there is a strong family likeness; but tell me in what features you would wish her to differ from me, and I will describe her minutely to you."

"In the first place," said the amorous and blue-ey'd Tudor, "I should like her to be a little stouter, and more manly of frame than you, and, at least, to have some appearance of a beard."

All the circle stared. "The devil you would, my lord," said Dan; "Wad ye like your wife to hae a beard, in earnest? Gude faith, an your ain war like mine, ye wad think ye had eneuch o't foreby your wife's." The prince held up his hands in astonishment, and the young English lord blushed deeper than it behoved a knight to do; but at length he tried to laugh it by, pretending that he [68] had unwittingly said one thing when he meant the very contrary, for he wished her to be more feminine, and have less beard."—"I think that will hardly be possible," said Dan; "but perhaps there may be a hair here an' there on my lord the prince's chin, when ane comes near it. I wadna disparage ony man, far less my king's son."

"Well, my noble lord," said the prince, "your tale has not a little surprised me, as well it may. Our meeting here in like circumstances is the most curious rencounter I ever knew; for, to tell you the plain truth, I am likewise on an errand of the same import, being thus far on my way to see and court the lady Jane Howard, in order that all her wide domains may be attached to my father's kingdom, and peace and amity thereby established on the border."

"Gracious heaven!" said young Lord Tudor, "can this that I hear be true? You? Are you on your way to my cousin, the lady Jane Howard? Why, do you not know that she is already affianced to Lord Musgrave?"

"Yes, it is certain I do; but that is one of my principal inducements to gain her from him; that is [69] quite in the true spirit of gallantry; but, save her great riches, I am told she has little else to recommend her," said the prince.

"And, pray, how does fame report of my cousin Jane?" said Tudor.

"As of a shrew and a coquette," answered the prince; "a wicked minx, that is intemperate in all her passions."

"It is a manifest falsehood," said Tudor, his face glowing with resentment, "I never knew a young lady so moderate and chastened in every passion of the female heart. Her most private thoughts are pure as purity itself, and her—."

"But, begging your pardon, my lord, how can you possibly know all this?" said the prince.

"I do know it," said the other, "it is no matter how: I cannot hear my fair cousin wronged; and I know that she will remain true to Musgrave, and have nothing to do with you."

"I will bet an earldom on that head, said the prince, "if I chuse to lay siege to her." [70]

"Done!" said the other, and they joined hands on the bargain; but they had no sooner laid their hands into one another's than they hastily withdrew them, with a sort of trepidation, that none of the lookers on, save the two pages, who kept close by their masters, appeared to comprehend. They, too, were both mistaken in the real cause; but of that it does not behove to speak at present.

"I will let you see," said the prince, recovering himself, "that this celebrated cousin of yours shall not be so ill to win as the castle of Roxburgh; and I'll let Musgrave see for how much truth and virgin fidelity he has put his life in his hand; and when I have her I'll cage her, for I don't like her. I would give that same earldom to have her in my power to-night."

The young Lord Tudor looked about as if he meditated an escape to another part of the table; but, after a touch that his page gave him on the sleeve, he sat still, and mustered up courage for a reply.

"And pray, sir prince, what would you do with her if you had her in your power to-night?" [71]

"Something very different from what I would do with you, my lord. But please describe her to me, for my very heart is yearning to behold her,—describe every point of her form, and lineament of her features."

"She is esteemed as very beautiful; for my part I think her but so so," said Tudor: "She has fair hair, light full blue eyes, and ruddy cheeks; and her brow, I believe, is as fine and as white as any brow can be."

"O frightful! what a description! what an ugly minx it must be! Fair hair! red, I suppose, or dirty dull yellow! Light blue eyes! mostly white I fancy? Ah, what a frightful immodest ape it must be! I could spit upon the huzzy!"

"Mary shield us!" exclaimed young Tudor, moving farther away from the prince, and striking lightly with his hand on his doublet as if something unclean had been squirted on it. "Mary shield us! What does the saucy Scot mean?"

Every one of the troopers put his hand to his sword, and watched the eye of his master. The [72] prince beckoned to the Scots to be quiet; but Lord Tudor did no such thing, for he was flustered and wroth.

"Pardon me, my lord," said the prince, "I may perhaps suffer enough from the beauty and perfections of your fair cousin after I see her; you may surely allow me to deride them now. I am trying to depreciate the charms I dread. But I do not like the description of her. Tell me seriously do you not think her very intolerable?"

"I tell you, prince, I think quite otherwise. I believe Jane to be fifty times more lovely than any dame in Scotland; and a hundred times more beautiful than your tawny virago of a sister, whom I shall rejoice to tame like a spaniel. The haughty, vain, conceited, swart venom, that she should lay her commands on the Douglas to conquer or die for her! A fine presumption, forsooth! But the world shall see whether the charms of my cousin, Lady Jane Howard, or those of your grim and tawdry princess, have most power."

"Yes, they shall, my lord," said the prince: "In the mean time let us drop the subject. I see I have [73] given you offence, not knowing that you were in love with Lady Jane, which now I clearly see to be the case. Nevertheless, go on with the description, for I am anxious to hear all about her, and I promise to approve if there be a bare possibility of it."

"Her manner is engaging, and her deportment graceful and easy; her waist is slim, and her limbs slender and elegant beyond any thing you ever saw," said Lord Tudor.

"O shocking!" exclaimed the prince, quite forgetting himself: "Worst of all! I declare I have no patience with the creature. After such a description, who can doubt the truth of the reports about the extreme levity of her conduct? Confess now, my lord, that she is very free of her favours, and that the reason why so many young gentlemen visit her is now pretty obvious."

High offence was now manifest in Lord Jasper Tudor's look. He rose from his seat, and said in [74] great indignation, "I did not ween I should be insulted in this guise by the meanest peasant in Scotland, far less by one of its courtiers, and least of all by a prince of the blood royal. Yeomen, I will not, I cannot suffer this degradation. These ruffian Scots are intruders on us,—here I desire that you will expel them the house."

The Prince of Scotland was at the head of the table, Tudor was at his right hand; the rest of the English were all on that side, the Scots on the other,—their numbers were equal. Dan and his three brethren sat at the bottom of the board around the old man, who had been plying at the beef with no ordinary degree of perseverance, nor did he cease when the fray began. Every one of the two adverse parties was instantly on his feet, with his sword gleaming in his hand; but finding that the benches from which they had arisen hampered them, they with one accord sprung on the tops of these, and crossed their swords. The pages screamed like women. The two noble adventurers seemed scarcely to know the use of their weapons, but looked on with [75] astonishment. At length the prince, somewhat collecting himself, drew out his shabby whanger, and brandished it in a most unwarlike guise, on which the blue-eyed Tudor retreated behind his

attendants, holding up his hands, but still apparently intent on revenge for the vile obloquy thrown on the character of *his cousin*, Lady Jane Howard. "Tis just pe te shance she vantit," said the Scot next to the prince.

"My certy, man, we'll get a paick at the louns now," said the second.

"Fat te teel's ta'en 'e bits o' vee laddies to flee a' eet abeet 'er buts o' wheers? I wudnae hae my feet i' their sheen for three plucks an a beedle," said the third.

"Thou's a' i' the wrang buox now, chaps," said the fourth. These were all said with one breath; and before the Englishmen had time to reply, clash went the swords across the table, and the third Scot, the true Aberdonian, was wounded, as were also two of the Englishmen, at the very first pass.

These matters are much sooner done than described. All this was the work of a few seconds, and [76] done before advice could either be given or attended to. Dan now interfered with all the spirit and authority that he was master of. He came dashing along the middle of the board in his great war boots, striking up their swords as he came, and interposing his boardly frame between the combatants. "D—n ye a' for a wheen madcaps!" cried Dan as loud as he could bawl: "What the muckle deil's fa'en a bobbing at your midriffs now? Ye're a' my father's guests an' mine; an', by the shin-banes o' Sant Peter, the first side that lifts a sword, or says a misbehadden word, my three brethren and I will tak' the tother side, an' smoor the transgressors like as mony moor-poots."

"Keep your feet aff the meat, fool," said old Pate.

"Gude sauff us!" continued Dan, "What has been said to gie ony offence? What though the young gentlewoman dis tak a stown jink o' a' chap that's her ain sweet-heart whiles? Where's the harm in that? There's little doubt o' the thing. An' for my part, gin she didna"— [77]

Here Dan was interrupted in his elegant harangue by a wrathful hysteric scream from young Tudor, who pulled out his whinyard, and ran at Dan, boring at him in awkward but most angry sort, crying all the while, "I will not bear this insult! Will my followers hear me traduced to my face?"

"Deil's i' e' wee but steepid laddie," said Buchan the Aberdonian; "it thinks 'at 'er preeving it to be a wheer 'e sel o't!"

Dan lifted up his heavy sword in high choler to cleave the stripling, and he would have cloven him to the belt, but curbing his wrath, he only struck his sword, which he made fly into pieces and jingle against the rafters of the house; then seizing the young adventurer by the shoulder, he snatched him up to him on the board, where he still stood, and, taking his head below his arm, he held him fast with the one hand, making signs with the other to his brethren to join the Scots, and disarm the English, who were the aggressors both times. In the meantime, he was saying to Tudor, "Hout, hout, young master, ye hae never been o'er the Border afore; ye sude hae stayed at [78] hame, an' wantit a wife till ye gathered mair rummelgumption."

The five English squires, now seeing themselves set upon by nine, yielded, and suffered themselves to be disarmed.

When Tudor came to himself, he appeared to be exceedingly grieved at his imprudence, and ready to make any acknowledgment, while the prince treated him with still more and more attention; yet these attentions were ever and anon mixed with a teazing curiosity, and a great many inquiries, that the young nobleman could not bear, and did not chuse to answer.

It now became necessary to make some arrangement for the parties passing the night. Patrick Chisholm's house had but one fire-place in an apartment which served for kitchen and hall; but it had a kind of *ben end*, as it was then, and is always to this day, denominated in that part of the country. There was scarcely room to move a foot in it; for, besides two oaken beds with rowan-tree bars, it contained five huge chests belonging to the father and his sons, that held their [79] clothes and warlike accoutrements. The daughters of yeomen in these days did not sit at table with the men. They were the household servants. Two of Pate's daughters, who had been bustling about all the evening, conducted the two noble youths into this apartment, together with their two pages. The one bed was neatly made down with clean clothes, and the other in a more common way. "Now," said one of the landward lasses, "You twa masters are to sleep thegither in here,—in o' this gude bed, ye see, an' the twa lads in o' this ane." The two young noblemen were standing close together, as behoved in such a room. On the girl addressing them thus, their eyes met each other's, but were as instantly withdrawn and fixed on the floor, while a blush of the deepest tint suffused the cheeks of both, spreading over the chin and neck of each. The pages contemplated each other in the same way, but not with the same degree of timidity. The English stripling seemed rather to approve of the arrangement, or at least pretended to do so; for he [80] frankly took the other by the hand, and said in a sweet voice, but broad dialect, "Weall, yuong Scuot, daghest thou lig woth mey?" The young Caledonian withdrew his hand, and held down his head: "I always lie at my master's feet," said he.

"And so shall you do to-night, Colin," said the prince, "for I will share this bed with you, and let my lord take the good one." "I cannot go to bed to-night," said Tudor, "I will rest me on this chest; I am resolved I sha'n't go to bed, nor throw off my clothes to-night."

"Ye winna?" said May Chisholm, who visibly wanted a romp with the young blooming chief,—"Ye winna gang til nae bed, will ye nae, and me has been at sic pains making it up til ye? Bess, come here an' help me, we sal soon see whether he's gang til his bed or no, an' that no wi' his braw claes on neither." So saying, the two frolicsome queans seized the rosy stripling, and in a moment

had him stretched on the bed, and, making his doublet fly open all at one rude pull, they were proceeding to undress him, giggling and laughing all the while. Prince Alexander, from a momentary congenial feeling of delicacy, put his hand hastily across to keep the lapels of Tudor's vesture together, without the motion having been perceived by any one in the hurry, and that moment the page flung himself across his master's breast, and reproved the lasses so sharply that they desisted, and left them to settle the matter as they chose. [81]

The prince had, however, made a discovery that astonished him exceedingly; for a few minutes his head was almost turned,—but the truth soon began to dawn on his mind, and every reflection, every coincidence, every word that had been said, and offence that had been taken, tended to confirm it: so he determined, not for farther trial, but for the joke's sake, to press matters a little further.

When quietness was again restored, and when the blush and the frown had several times taken alternate sway of the young lord's face, the prince said to him, "After all, my lord, I believe we must take share of the same bed together for this one night. It is more proper and becoming than to sleep with our pages. Besides, I see the bed is good and clean, and I have many things to talk to you about our two countries, and about our two intended brides, or sweet-hearts let us call them in the meantime." [82]

"Oh no, no, prince," said Tudor, "indeed I cannot, I may not, I would not sleep in the same bed with another gentleman—No—I never did—never."

"Do not say so, my dear lord, for, on my word, I am going to insist on it," said the prince, coming close up to him, his eyes beaming with joy at the discovery he had made. "You shall sleep by my side to-night: nay, I will even take you in my bosom and caress you as if you were my own sweet dear Lady Jane Howard." Tudor was now totally confounded, and knew neither what to say for himself, nor what he did say when he spoke. He held out both his hands, and cried, "Do not, prince, do not—I beg—I implore do not; for I cannot, cannot consent. I never slept even in the same apartment with a man in all my life."

"What, have you always slept in a room by yourself?" asked the teazing prince. [83]

"No, never, but always with ladies—yes, always!" was the passionate and sincere reply.

Here the prince held up his hands, and turned up his eyes. "What a young profligate!" exclaimed he, "Mary shield us! Have you no conscience with regard to the fair sex that you have begun so wicked a course, and that so early? Little did I know why you took a joke on your cousin so heinously amiss! I see it now, truth will out! Ah, you are such a youth! I will not go a foot further to see Lady Jane. What a wicked degraded imp she must be! Do not kindle into a passion again, my dear lord. I can well excuse your feigned wrath, it is highly honourable. I hate the knight that blabs the favours he enjoys from the fair. He is bound to defend the honour that has stooped to him; even though (as in the present instance I suppose) it have stooped to half a dozen more besides."

A great deal of taunting and ill humour prevailed between these capricious and inexperienced striplings, and sorely was Tudor pressed to take share of a bed with the prince, but in vain—his feelings recoiled from it; and the other, being in possession of a secret of which the English lord was not aware, took that advantage of teazing and tormenting him almost beyond sufferance. After all, it was decided that each should sleep with his own page; a decision that did not seem to go well down at all with the Yorkshire boy, who once ventured to expostulate with his lord, but was silenced with a look of angry disdain. [84]

[85]

CHAPTER V.

He set her on his milk-white steed,
Himself lap on behind her,
And they are o'er the Highland hills;
Her friends they cannot find her.

As they rode over hill and dale
This lady often fainted,
And cried, "Wo to my cursed moneye,
That this road to me invented."

Ballad of Rob Roy.

O cam ye here to fight, young man,
Or cam ye here to flee?
Or cam ye out o' the wally west
Our bonnie bride to see?

Ballad called Foul Play.

It is by this time needless to inform my readers, that these two young adventurers were no other than the rival beauties of the two nations, for whose charms all this bloody coil was carried on at Roxburgh; and who, without seeing, had hated each other as cordially as any woman is capable of

hating her rival in beauty or favour. So much had the siege and the perils of Roxburgh become [86]
the subject of conversation, that the ears of the two maidens had long listened to nothing else, and each of them deemed her honour embarked in the success of her lover. Each of them had set out with the intent of visiting the camp in disguise; and having enough of interest to secure protections for feigned names, each determined to see her rival in the first place, the journey not being far; and neither of them it is supposed went with any kind intent. Each of them had a maid dressed in boy's clothes with her, and five stout troopers, all of whom were utterly ignorant of the secret. The princess had by chance found out her rival's sex; but the Scottish lady and her attendant being both taller and of darker complexions than the other two, no suspicions were entertained against them detrimental to their enterprise. The princess never closed an eye, but lay meditating on the course she should take. She was convinced that she had her rival in her power, and she determined, not over generously, to take advantage of her good fortune. The time drew nigh that Roxburgh must be lost or won, and well she knew that, whichever side succeeded, [87]
according to the romantic ideas of that age, the charms of the lady would have all the honour, while she whose hero lost would be degraded,—considerations which no woman laying claim to superior and all-powerful charms could withstand.

Next morning Dan was aroused at an early hour by his supposed prince, who said to him, "Brave yeoman, from a long conversation that I have had last night with these English strangers, I am convinced that they are despatched on some traitorous mission; and as the warden is in Northumberland, I propose conveying them straight to Douglas' camp, there to be tried for their lives. If you will engage to take charge of them, and deliver them safely to the captain before night, you shall have a high reward; but if you fail, and suffer any of them to escape, your neck shall answer for it. How many men can you raise for this service?"

"Our men are maistly up already," said Dan; "but muckle Charlie o' Yardbire gaed hame last night [88]
wi' twa or three kye, like oursels. Gin Charlie an' his lads come, I sal answer for the English chaps, if they war twa to ane. I hae mysel an' my three billies, deil a shank mae; but an Charlie come he's as gude as some three, an' his backman's nae bean-swaup neither."

"Then," said the counterfeit prince, "I shall leave all my attendants to assist you save my page,—we two must pursue our journey with all expedition. All that is required of you is to deliver the prisoners safe to the Douglas. I will despatch a message to him by the way, apprising him of the circumstances."

The Lady Margaret and her page then mounted their palfreys and rode off without delay; but, instead of taking the road by Gorranberry, as they had proposed over night, they scoured away at a light gallop down the side of the Teviot. At the town of Hawick she caused her page, who was her chief waiting-maid and confidant, likewise in boy's clothes, to cut out her beautiful fleece of black hair, that glittered like the wing of the raven, being determined to attend in disguise the issue of the contest. She then procured a red curled wig, and dressing herself in a Highland garb, [89]
with a plumed bonnet, tartan jacket and trowsers, and Highland hose and brogues, her appearance was so completely altered, that even no one who had seen her the day before, in the character of the prince her brother, could possibly have known her to be the same person; and leaving her page near the camp to await her private orders, she rode straight up to head-quarters by herself.

Being examined as she passed the outposts, she said she brought a message to Douglas of the greatest importance, and that it was from the court; and her address being of such a superior cast, every one furthered her progress till she came to the captain's tent. Scarcely did she know him,—care, anxiety, and watching had so worn him down; and her heart was melted when she saw his appearance. Never, perhaps, could she have been said to have loved him till that moment; but seeing what he had suffered for her sake, the great stake he had ventured, and the almost hopeless uncertainty that appeared in every line of his face, raised in her heart a feeling [90]
unknown to her before; and highly did that heart exult at the signal advantage that her good fortune had given him over his rival. Yet she determined on trying the state of his affections and hopes. Before leaving Hawick, she had written a a letter to him, inclosing a lock of her hair neatly plaited; but this letter she kept back in order to sound her lover first without its influence. He asked her name and her business. She had much business, she said, but not a word save for his private ear. Douglas was struck with the youth's courtly manner, and looked at him with a dark searching eye,—"I have no secrets," said he, "with these my kinsmen: I desire, before them, to know your name and business."

"My name," said the princess pertly, "is Colin Roy M'Alpin,—I care not who knows my name; but no word further of my message do I disclose save to yourself."

"I must humour this pert stripling," said he, turning to his friends; "if his errand turns out to be [91]
one of a trivial nature, and that does not require all this ceremony, I shall have him horse-whipped."

With that the rest of the gentlemen went away, and left the two by themselves. Colin, as we must now, for brevity's sake, term the princess, was at first somewhat abashed before the dark eye of Douglas, but soon displayed all the effrontery that his assumed character warranted, if not three times more.

"Well now, my saucy little master, Colin Roy M'Alpin, please condescend so far as to tell me whence you are, and what is your business here,—this secret business, of such vast importance."

"I am from court, my lor'; from the Scottish court, an't please you, my lor'; but not directly as a body may say,—my lor'; not directly—here—there—south—west—precipitately, incontrovertibly,

ascertaining the scope and bearing of the progressive advance of the discomfiture and gradual wreck of your most flagrant and preposterous undertaking."

"The devil confound the impertinent puppy!" [92]

"Hold, hold, my lor', I mean your presumptuous and foolhardy enterprise, first in presuming to the hand of my mistress, the king's daughter,—my lovely and queenly mistress; and then in foolhardily running your head against the walls of Roxburgh to attain this, and your wit and manhood against the superior generalship of a Musgrave."

"By the pock-net of St Peter, I will cause every bone in your body to be basted to powder, you incorrigible pedant and puppy!" said the Douglas; and seizing him by the collar of the coat, he was about to drag him to the tent-door and throw him into the air.

"Hold, my lor'; please keep off your rough uncourtly hands till I deliver the credentials of my mistress."

"Did you say that you were page to the Princess Margaret? Yes, surely you are, I have erst seen that face, and heard that same flippant tongue. Pray, what word or token does my dear and [93] sovereign lady send me?"

"She bade me say, that she does not approve of you at all, my lor':—that, for her sake, you ought to have taken this castle many days ago. And she bade me ask you why you don't enter the castle by the gate, or over the wall, or under the hill, which is only a sand one, and hang up all the Englishmen by the necks, and send the head of Philip Musgrave to his saucy dame?—She bade me ask you why you don't, my lor'?"

"Women will always be women," said Douglas surlily to himself: "I thought the princess superior to her sex, but—"

"But! but what, my lor'? Has she not good occasion for displeasure? She bade me tell you that you don't like her;—that you don't like her half so well as Musgrave does his mistress,—else why don't you do as much for her? He took the castle for the sake of his mistress, and for her sake he keeps it in spite of you. Therefore she bade me tell you, that you must *go in* and beat the English, and take the castle from them; for she will not suffer it that Lady Jane Howard shall triumph over [94] her."

"Tell her in return," said Douglas, "that I will do what man can do; and when that is done, she shall find that I neither will be slack in requiring the fulfilment of her engagement, nor in performing my own. If that womanish tattling be all that you have to say,—begone: the rank of your employer protects you."

"Hold, my lor', she bade me look well, and tell her what you were like, and if I thought you changed since I waited on you at court. On my conscience you look very ill. These are hard ungainly features of yours. I'll tell her you look very shabby, and very surly, and that you have lost all heart. But oh, my lor', I forgot she bade me tell you, that if you found you were clearly beat, it would be as well to draw off your men and abandon the siege; and that she would, perhaps, in pity, give you a moiety of your lands again."

"I have no patience with the impertinence of a puppy, even though the messenger of her I love [95] and esteem above all the world. Get you hence."

"Oh, my lor', I have not third done yet. But, stay, here is a letter I had almost forgot."

Douglas opened the letter. Well he knew the hand; there were but few in Scotland who could write, and none could write like the princess. It contained a gold ring set with rubies, and a lock of her hair. He kissed them both; and tried the ring first on the one little finger, and then on the other, but it would scarcely go over the nail; so he kissed them again, and put them in his bosom. He then read to himself as follows:

> "My good Lord,—I enclose you two love-tokens of my troth; let them be as beacons to your heart to guide it to deeds of glory and renown. For my sake put down these English. Margaret shall ever pray for your success. Retain my page Colin near your person. He is true-hearted, and his flippancy affected. Whatever you communicate to him will be safely transmitted to [96]
>
> "Margaret."

It may well be supposed how Colin watched the emotions of Douglas while reading this heroic epistle; and, in the true spirit of the age, they were abundantly extravagant. He kissed the letter, hugged it in his bosom, and vowed to six or seven saints to do such deeds for his adored and divine princess as never were heard or read of.

"Now, my good lor," said the page, "you must inform me punctually what hopes you have of success, and if there is any thing wanting that the kingdom can afford you."

"My ranks are too thin," replied the Douglas; "and I have engaged to take it with my own vassals. The warden is too proud to join his forces to mine on that footing, but keeps scouring the borders, on pretence of preventing supplies, and thus assisting me, but in truth for enriching himself and his followers. If I could have induced him and his whole force to have joined the [97] camp, famine would have compelled the enemy to yield a month agone. But I have now the captain's brother prisoner; and I have already given him to know, that if he does not deliver up the castle to me in four days, I will hang the young knight up before his eyes,—I have sworn to do it, and I swear again to keep my oath."

"I will convey all this to my mistress," said Colin. "So then you have his only brother in your hold?

My lor', the victory is your own, and the princess, my mistress, beside. In a few hours will be placed in your hands the primal cause and fomentor of this cruel and bloody war, the Lady Jane Howard."

The Douglas started like one aroused from slumber, or a state of lethargy, by a sudden wound. "What did you say, boy?" said he. "Either I heard amiss, or you are dreaming. I have offered estates, nay, I have offered an earldom, to any hardy adventurer who would bring me that imperious dame; but the project has been abandoned as quite impracticable."

"Rest content, said Colin: "I have secured her, and she will be delivered into your hands before [98] night. She has safe passports with her to the Scottish court, but they are in favour of Jasper Tudor, son to the Earl of Pembroke; so that the discovery of her sex proves her an impostor, and subjects her to martial law, which I request, for my mistress' sake, you will execute on her. My lady the princess, with all her beauty, and high accomplishments, is a very woman; and I know there is nothing on earth she so much dreads as the triumph of Lady Jane over her. Besides, it is evident she was bound to the Scottish court either to poison the princess, or inveigle her into the hands of her enemies. All her attendants are ignorant of her sex, save her page, who is said to be a blooming English country maiden. The Prince Alexander bade me charge you never to mention by what means she came into your hands, but to give it out that she was brought to you by a miracle, by witchcraft, or by the power of a mighty magician." "It is well thought of, boy," said the [99] Douglas, greatly elevated—"I have been obliged to have recourse to such means already—this will confirm all. The princess your mistress desired that you should remain with me. You shall be my right hand page, I will love and favour you; you shall be fed with the bread and wine, and shall sleep in my tent, and I will trust you with all my secrets for the welcome tidings you have brought, and for the sake of the angelic dame that recommends you to me; for she is my beloved, my adored mistress, and for her will I either conquer or die! My sword is her's—my life is her's—Nay, my very soul is the right of my beloved!" Poor Colin dropped a tear on hearing this passionate nonsense. Women love extravagance in such matters, but in those days it had no bounds.

It was not long till the prisoners arrived, under the care of muckle Charlie Scott of Yardbire and Dan Chisholm, with their troopers, guarded in a very original manner. When Charlie arrived at old Chisholm's house, and learned that a *prince* had been there, and had given such charges [100] about the prisoners, he determined to make sure work; and as he had always most trust to put in himself, he took the charge of the young English nobleman and his squire, as he supposed them to be. The page he took on his huge black horse behind him, lashing him to his body with strong belts cut from a cow's raw hide. His ancles were moreover fastened to the straps at the tops of Charlie's great war boots; so that the English maiden must have had a very uncomfortable ride. But the other he held on before him, keeping her all the way in his arms, exactly as a countryman holds up a child in the church to be christened.

The Lady Jane Howard had plenty of the spirit of romance about her, but she neither had the frame nor the energy of mind requisite for carrying her wild dreams of female heroism into effect. She was an only child—a spoiled one; having been bred up without perhaps ever being controlled, till she fell into the hands of these border mosstroopers. Her displeasure was excessive.—She complained bitterly of her detainment, and much more of being sent a prisoner [101] to the camp. When she found herself in muckle Charlie Scott's arms, borne away to be given up to the man whom of all the world she had most reason to dread, she even forgot herself so far as to burst into tears. Charlie, with all his inordinate strength and prowess, had a heart so soft, that, as he said himself, "a laverock might hae laired in't;" and he farther added, that when he saw "the bit bonny English callan', that was comed o' sic grand blude, grow sae desperately wae, an' fa' a blirting and greeting, the deil a bit but his heart was like to come out at his mouth." This was no lie, for his comrades beheld him two or three times come across his eyes with his mailed sleeve—a right uncouth handkerchief: and then he tried to comfort the youth with the following speech: "Troth, man, but I'm unco wae for ye, ye're sae young an' sae bonny, an' no' a fit man at a' to send out i' thir crabbit times. But tak good heart, an' dinna be dauntit, for it will soon be over w' ye. Ye'll neither hae muckle to thole nor lang time to dree't, for our captain will hang ye directly. He hangs a' spies an' messengers aff hand; sae it's no worth naebody's while to greet. Short [102] wark's aye best i' sic cases."

"He cannot, he dares not injure a hair of my head," said Lady Jane passionately.

"*Canna!*" said Charlie, "Gude faith, ye ken that's nonsense. He can as easily hang ye, or do ought else w' ye, as I can wipe my beard. An' as for the thing that the Douglas *darena* do, gude faith, ye ken, I never saw it yet. But I'm sure I wish ye *may* be safe, for it wad do little good to me to see your bit pease-weep neck rackit."

"It was most unfair, as well as most ungenerous in your prince to detain me," said she, "as my business required urgency. I had regular signed warrandice, and went on the kindest intent; besides, I have a great aversion to be put into the hands of Douglas. How many cows and ewes would you take to set me at liberty?"

"Whisht, whisht, Sir!" said Charlie; "Gudesake haud your tongue! That's kittle ground. Never speak o' sic a thing. But how many could ye afford to gie, an I *were* to set you at liberty?"

"In the first place, I will give you five hundred head of good English nolt," said Lady Jane. [103]

"Eh? What?" said Charlie, holding his horse still, and turning his ear close round to the lady's face, that he might hear with perfect distinctness the extraordinary proffer. It was repeated. Charlie was almost electrified with astonishment. "Five hunder head o' nout!" exclaimed he: "But

d'ye mean their heads by theirsels?—cuttit aff, like?"

"No, no; five hundred good live cattle."

"Mercy on us! Gude faith, they wad stock a' Yardbire—an' Raeburn," added he, after a pause, putting his horse again slowly in motion; "an' Watkerrick into the bargain," added he, with a full drawn sigh, putting the spurs to his beast, that he might go quicker to carry him away from the danger. "For troth, d' ye ken, my lord, we're no that scarce o' grund in Scotland; we can get plenty o' that for little thing, gin we could get ought to lay on't. But it's hard to get beasts, an' kittle to keep them i' our country. Five hunder head o' black cattle! Hech! an Charlie Scott had a' [104] thae, how mony braw lads could he tak at his back o'er Craikcorse to join his master the warden! But come, come, it canna be. War somebody a Scots lord, as he's an English ane, an i' the same danger, I wad risk muckle to set him free. But come, Corby, my fine naig, ye hae carried me into mony a scrape, ye maun carry me out o' this ane, or, gude faith, your master's gane. Ha, lad, ye never had sic a back-fu' i' your life! Ye hae five hunder head o' black cattle on't, ye dog, an' ye're carrying them a' away frae your master an' Yardbire wi' as little ceremony as he took you frae Squire Weir o' Cockermouth. Ah, Corby, ye're gayan like your master, ye hae a lang free kind o' conscience, ye tike!"

"But, my dear Sir," said Lady Jane, "you have not heard the half of my proffer. You seem to be a generous, sensible, and good natured gentleman."

"Do I?" said Charlie," Thanks t' ye, my lord."

"Now," continued she, "if you will either set me and my page safely down on English ground, or within the ports of Edinborough, I'll add five thousand sheep to the proffer I have already made [105] you."

"Are ye no joking?" said Charlie, again stopping his horse.

"On my honour I am not," was the answer.

"They'll stock a' Blake-Esk-head an' the Garald-Grains," said Charlie: "Hae ye a free passport to the Scottish court?"

"Yes, I have, and signed with the warden's name."

"Na, na, haud your tongue there; my master has nae name," said Charlie: "He has a good speaking name, an' ane he disna think shame o', but nae name for black an' white."

"I'll show you it," said Lady Jane.

"Na, ye needna fash," said Charlie; "I fear it wad be unmannerly in me to doubt a lord's word."

"How soon could you carry us to Edinborough?" inquired Lady Jane, anxious to keep muckle Charlie in the humour of taking her any where save into the hands of Douglas.

"That's rather a question to speer at Corby than me," said Charlie; "but I think if we miss [106] drowning i' Tweed, an' breaking our necks o'er the Red-brae, an' sinking out o' sight i' Soutra-flow, that I could tak in hand to hae ye in Edinborough afore twal o'clock at night.—Bad things for you, Corby."

"Never say another word about it then," said Lady Jane; "the rest are quite gone before us, and out of sight. Turn to the left, and ride for Edinborough. Think of the five hundred cows and five thousand sheep."

"Oh, that last beats a'!" said Charlie. "Five thousand sheep! how mony is that? Five score's a hunder—I'm sure o' that. Every hunder's five score; then—and how mony hunder maks a thousand?"—

"Ten," said the page, who was forced to laugh at Charlie's arithmetic.

"Ten?" repeated Charlie. "Then ten times five hunder that maks but ae thousand; an' other ten times five hunder—D—n me if I ken how mony is o' them ava. What does it signify for a man to hae mair gear than he can count? I fancy we had better jogg on the gate we're gaun, Corby."

"I am sure, friend, ye never had such a chance of being rich," said Lady Jane, "and may never, in [107] all likelihood, have such a chance again."

"That is a' true ye're saying, my lord, an' a sair heart it has gi'en me," said Charlie; "but your offer's ower muckle, an' that maks me dread there's something at the bottom o't that I dinna comprehend. Gude faith, an the warden war to suffer danger or disgrace for my greed o' siller, it wad be a bonny story! Corby, straight on, ye dog: ding the brains out o' the gutters, clear for the camp, ye hellicat of an English hound. What are ye snoring an' cocking your lugs at? Od an ye get company like yoursel, ye carena what mischief ye carry your master into. Get on, I say, an' dinna gie me time to hear another word or think about this business again."

The young lady began here to lose heart, seeing that Charlie had plucked up a determination. But her companion attacked him in her turn with all the flattery and fair promises she could think of, till Charlie found his heart again beginning to waver and calculate; so that he had no other shift [108] but to croon a border war-song, that he might not hear this dangerous conversation. Still the page persevered, till Charlie, losing all patience, cried out as loud and as bitterly as he could, "Haud your tongue, ye slee-gabbit limb o' the auld ane. D—n ye, d'ye think a man's conscience is to be hadden abreed like the mou' of a sack, an' crammed fu' o' beef an' mutton whether he will or no? Corby, another nicker an' another snore, lad, an' we'll soon see you aff at the gallop."

Thus ended the trying colloquy between muckle Charlie Scott o' Yardbire and his two prisoners;

the rest of his conversation was to Corby, whom he forthwith pushed on by spur and flattery to the camp.

When the truth came to be discovered, many puzzled themselves endeavouring to guess what Charlie would actually have done had he known by the way what a treasure he had in his arms,—the greatest beauty, and the greatest heiress in England;—for Charlie was as notable for kindness and generosity as he was for bodily strength; and, besides, he was poor, as he frankly [109] acknowledged; but then he only wished for riches to be able to keep more men for the service of his chief. Some thought he would have turned his horse round without further ceremony, and carried her straight to Yardbire, on purpose to keep her there for a wife; others thought he would have risked his neck, honour, and every thing, and restored her again to her friends. But it was impossible for any of them to guess what he would have done, as it was proved afterwards that Charlie could not guess himself. When the truth came to be divulged, and was first told to him, his mouth, besides becoming amazingly extended in its dimensions, actually grew four-square with astonishment; and when asked what he would have done had he known, he smacked his lips, and wiped them with the back of his hand as if his teeth had been watering—and, laughing to himself with a chuckling sound, like a moor-cock, he turned about his back to conceal his looks, and only answered with these emphatic words: "Gude faith, it was as weel I didna ken."

[110]

CHAPTER VI.

Some write of preclair conquerouris,
And some of vallyeant emperouris,
And some of nobill mychtie kingis,
That royally did reull the ringis;
And some of squyris douchty deidis,
That wonderis wrocht in weirly weidis;
Sa I intand the best I can
Descryve the deidis and the man.

Sir Dav. Lindsaye.

Wald God I war now in Pitcary!
Becass I haif bene se ill deidy.
Adew! I dar na langer tairy,
I dreid I waif intill ane widdy.

Ibid.

In the same grotesque guise as formerly described, Charlie at length came with his two prisoners to the outposts of the Scottish army. The rest of the train had passed by before him, and warned their friends who was coming, and in what stile; for no one thought it worth his while to tarry with Charlie and his overloaden horse. When he came near the soldiers they hurra'd, and waved their bonnets, and gathering about Charlie in crowds, they would not let him onward. Besides, [111] some fell a loosing the prisoner behind him, and others holding up their arms to release him of the one he carried before; and, seeing how impatient he was, and how determined to keep his hold, they grew still more importunate in frolic. But it had nearly cost some of them dear; for Charlie, growing wroth, squeezed the Lady Jane so strait with the left arm, that she was forced to cry out; and putting his right over his shoulder, he drew out his tremendous two-hand sword, "Now stand back, devils," cried Charlie, "or, gude faith, I'll gar Corby ride ower the taps o' the best o' ye. I hae had ower sair a trial for heart o' flesh already; but when I stood that, it sanna be the arm o' flesh that takes them frae me now, till I gie them into the Douglas's ain hands. Stand back, ye devils; a Scott never gies up his trust as lang as his arm can dimple at the elbow."

The soldiers flew away from around him like a flight of geese, and with the same kind of noise too,—every one being giggling and laughing,—and up rode Charlie to the door of the Douglas' [112] pavilion, where he shouted aloud for the captain. Douglas, impatient to see his illustrious prisoner, left the others abruptly, and hasted out at Charlie's call.

"Gude faith, my lord," said Charlie, "I beg your pardon for garring you come running out that gate; but here's a bit English lord for ye, an' his henchman,—sic master, sic man, as the saying is. There war terrible charges gi'en about them, sae I thought I wad secure them, an' gie them into your ain hands."

"I am much beholden to you, gallant Yardbire," said Douglas: "The care and pains you have taken shall not be forgotten."

This encouraging Charlie, he spoke to the earl with great freedom, who was mightily diverted with his manner, as well as with his mode of securing the prisoners.

"There's his lordship for ye," said Charlie, holding him out like a small bale of goods: "Mind ye hae gotten him safe off my hand; an' here's another chap I hae fastened to my back. An a' the English nobles war like thir twa, I hae been thinking, my lord, that they might tak' our lasses frae [113] us, but we wadna be ill pinched to tak their kye frae them; an' it wad be nae hard bargain for us neither." So saying, he cut his belts and thongs of raw hide, and let the attendant lady, in page's clothes, free of his body. "He's a little, fine, soft, cozey callan this," added Charlie, "he has made

my hinderlands as warm as they had been in an oon."

Douglas took Lady Jane off from before the gallant yeoman in his arms. He observed with what a look she regarded him; and he was sure, from the first view he got of her features, that the page Colin must have been right with regard to the sex of the prisoner. He likewise noted the holes in her ears, from which it was apparent that pendent jewels had lately been taken; and he hoped the other part of the page's information might likewise be correct, though how to account for such an extraordinary piece of good fortune he was wholly at a loss. He led her into the inner pavilion, and there, in presence of his secretary and two of his kinsmen, examined her papers and [114] passports. They were found all correct, and signed by the public functionaries of both nations, in favour of Jasper Tudor, son to the Earl of Pembroke.

"These are quite sufficient, my young lord," said Douglas; "I see no cause for detaining you further. You shall have a sufficient guard till you are out of the range of my army, and safe furtherance to the Scottish court."

The prisoner's countenance lighted up, and she thanked Douglas in the most grateful terms, blessing herself that she had fallen into the hands of so courteous a knight, and urged the necessity of their sudden departure. Douglas assured her they should be detained no longer than the necessity of the times required; but that it was absolutely requisite, for his own safety, the safety of the realm, and the success of the enterprise in which he was engaged, and so deeply concerned, that they should submit to a personal search from head to foot, lest some traitorous correspondence might be secretly conveyed by them.

The countenance of the prisoner again altered at this information. It became at first pale as a lily, [115] and immediately after blushed as deeply as the damask rose, while the tears started to her eyes. It was no wonder, considering the predicament in which she now stood; her delicate lady form to be searched by the hands of rude warriors, her sex discovered, and her mission to the Scottish court found out to be a wild intrigue. She fell instantly on her knees before Douglas, and besought him in moving accents to dispense with the useless formality of searching her and her young kinsman and companion, assuring him at the same time that neither of them had a single scrap of writing that he had not seen, and adjuring him on his honour and generosity as a knight to hearken to this request.

"The thing is impossible, my lord," said Douglas;" and, moreover, the anxiety you manifest about such a trifle argues a consciousness of guilt. You must submit to be searched on the instant. Chuse of us whom you will to the office."

"I will never submit to it," said she passionately, "there is not a knight in England would have [116] refused such a request to you."

"I would never have asked it, my lord," said he; "and it is your utter inexperience in the customs of war that makes you once think of objecting to it. I am sorry we must use force. Bring in two of the guards."

"Hold, hold, my lord," said Lady Jane, "since I must submit to such a degradation, I will submit to yourself. I will be searched by your own hands, and yours alone."

They were already in the inner tent. Douglas desired his friends to go out, which they complied with, and he himself began to search the person of Lady Jane, with the most careful minuteness, as he pretended, well aware what was to be the issue of the search. He examined all her courtly coat, pockets, lining, and sleeves,—he came to her gaudy doublet, stiff with gold embroidery, and began to unloose it, but she laid both her hands upon her breast, and looked in his face with eyes so speaking, and so beseeching, that it was impossible for man to mistake the import. Douglas [117] did not mistake it, but was bent upon having proof positive.

"What?" said he, "do you still resist? What is here you would conceal?"

"Oh my Lord," said she, "do you not see?"

"I see nothing," said he; and while she feebly struggled he loosed the vest, when the fair heaving bosom discovered the sex of his prisoner, and at the same time, with the struggle, the beautiful light locks had escaped from their confinement, and hung over her breast in waving ringlets. The maid stood revealed; and, with the disclosure, all the tender emotions and restrained feelings of the female heart burst forth like a river that has been dammed up from running in its natural channel, and has just got vent anew. She wept and sobbed till her fair breast was like to rend. She even seized on Douglas' hand, and wet it with her tears. He, on his part, feigned great amazement.

"How is this?" said he, "A maid!"

"Yes indeed, my lord, you see before you, and in your power, a hapless maid of noble blood, who [118] set out on a crazy expedition of love, but, from inexperience, has fallen into your hands."

"Then the whole pretended mission to our Scottish court is, it appears, a fraud, a deep laid imposition of some most dangerous intent, as the interest that has been used to accomplish it fully demonstrates. You have subjected yourself and all your followers to military execution; and the only method by which you can procure a respite, either for yourself or them, is to make a full confession of the whole plot."

"Alas, my lord, I have no plot to confess. Mine was merely a romantic expedition of youthful love, and, as you are a knight, and a lover yourself, I beg your clemency, that you will pardon my followers and me. They are innocent; and, save my page, who is likewise a lady, and my own kinswoman, all the rest are as ignorant who I am, and what I am, as the child that is unborn."

"If you would entertain any hopes of a reprieve, I say, madam, either for yourself or them, declare here to me instantly your name, lineage, and the whole of your business in Scotland, and by whose powerful interest you got this safe conduct made out, for one who, it seems, knows nothing of it, or who, perhaps, does not exist." [119]

"Surely you will not be so ungallant as to insist upon a lady exposing herself and all her relations? No, my lord, whatever become of me, you must never attain to the knowledge of my name, rank, or titles. I entrust myself to your mercy: you can have nothing to fear from the machinations of a love-lorn damsel."

"I am placed in peculiarly hard circumstances, madam; I have enemies abroad and at home, and have nothing but my own energies to rely on to save my house and name from utter oblivion, and my dearest hopes from extinguishment. This expedition of yours, folded as it is in deceit and forgery, has an ominous and daring appearance. The house of Douglas must not fall for the tears of a deceitful maiden, the daughter of my enemy. Without a full disclosure of all that I request, [120] every one of you shall suffer death in the sight of both armies before the going down of the sun. I will begin with the meanest of your followers, in hopes, for the sake of your youth and your sex, that you will relent and make a full disclosure of your name, and all your motives for such an extraordinary adventure."

Lady Jane continued positive and peremptory, as did also her attendant, who had been thoroughly schooled before-hand, in case of their sex being discovered, never, on any account, to acknowledge who she was, lest it should put Musgrave wholly in Douglas' power. The latter, therefore, to keep up the same system of terror and retribution first practised by his opponent, caused sound the death knell, and hung out the flag of blood, to apprise those within the fortress that some of their friends were shortly to be led to execution.

The first that was brought out was a thick-set swarthy yeoman, who said his name was Edmund Heaton, and that he had been a servant to Belsay, whom he had followed in the border wars. [121] When told that he was about to be hanged for a spy and a traitor, he got very angry, even into such a rage that they could not know what he said, for he had a deep rough burr in his throat, and spoke a coarse English dialect. "Hang'd? I hang'd? and fogh whot? Domn your abswoghdity! Hang ane mon fogh deying whot his meastegh beeds him?"—He was told that he had not two minutes to live, unless he could discover something of the plot in which his employers were engaged; that it was found he had been accompanying two ladies in disguise, on some traitorous mission which they would not reveal; and it was the law of war that he should suffer for the vile crime in which he was an accomplice.

"Nobbit, I tell you that won't dey at all;—n-n-nor it sha'n't dey neithegh. Do you think you aghe to hang eveghy mon that follows ane woeman? Domn them, I nevegh knew them lead to oughts but eel! If I had known they had been woemen—Domn them!"—He was hauled up to the scaffold, for he refused to walk a foot.—"Wh-wh-why, nobbit speak you now," cried he in utter desperation; [122] "why n-n-nobbit you aghe not serious, aghe you?" He was told he should soon find to his experience that they were quite serious.—"Why, cworse the whole geneghation of you, the thing is nwot to be bwoghn. I wont swoffegh it—that I woll not. It is dwonright mworder. Oh, ho, ho!" and he wept, crying as loud as he could, "Oh-oh! ho: mworder! mworder! Domn eveghy Scwot of you!"—In this mood, kicking, crying, and swearing, was he turned off, and hanged in sight of both hosts.

The walls of Roxburgh were crowded with spectators. They could not divine who it was that was suffering; for all kind of communication was forbid by Musgrave, and it was now become exceedingly difficult. Great was their wonder and anxiety when they beheld one trooper after another of their countrymen brought out and hanged like dogs. But it was evident to every beholder, from the unsettled and perturbed motions of those on the wall, that something within the fortress was distressing the besieged. Some hurried to and fro; others stood or moved about [123] in listless languor; and there were a few that gazed without moving, or taking their eyes from the spot where they were fixed. Not one flight of arrows came to disturb the execution, as usual; and it was suspected that their whole stock of arrows was exhausted. This would have been good tidings for the Scots, could they have been sure of it, as they might then have brought their files closer to the walls, and more effectually ensured a strict blockade.

Lady Jane's followers were all executed, and herself and companion sore threatened in vain. Douglas, however, meant to reserve them for another purpose than execution,—to ensure to himself the surrender of the fortress, namely; but of her squires he was glad to be rid, for fear of a discovery being made to the English that the lady was in his hands, which might have brought the whole puissance of the realm upon him; whereas the generality of the nation viewed the siege merely as an affair of Border chivalry, in which they were little interested, and deemed Musgrave [124] free from any danger.

It was on St Leonard's day that these five Englishmen were executed; and as a retaliation in part, a Scots fisherman was hanged by the English from the wall of the castle; one who indeed had been the mean of doing them a great deal of mischief. And thus stood matters at that period of the siege; namely, the Earl of Douglas and Mar lay before Roxburgh with eight thousand hardy veterans, all his own vassals. The Redhough kept a flying army on the borders of Northumberland, chiefly about the mountains of Cheviot and Cocket-dale, interrupting all supplies and communications from that quarter, and doing excellent service to himself and followers, and more to the Douglas than the latter seemed to admit of. Whenever he found the English gathering to any head, he did not go and attack them, but, leaving a flying party of horse to watch their motions, he instantly made a diversion somewhere else, which drew them off with

all expedition. A numerous army, hastily raised, entered Scotland on the west border, on purpose to draw off the warden; but they were surprised and defeated by the Laird of Johnston, who raised the Annandale people, and attacked the English by night. He followed them into Cumberland, and fought two sharp battles with them there, in both of which he had the advantage, and he then fell a spoiling the country. This brought the Northumberland and Durham men into these parts, who mustered under Sir William Fetherstone to the amount of fifteen thousand men. Johnston retired, and the Earl of Galloway, to back him, raised twenty thousand in the west, and came towards the Sarke: So that the siege of Roxburgh was viewed but as an item in the general convulsion, though high was the stake for those that played, and ruthless the game while it lasted. Douglas now looked upon the die as turned in his favour, as he held pledges that would render the keeping of it of no avail to his opponent. The lady was in his power at whose fiat [126] Musgrave had taken and defended the perilous castle so bravely,—but of this no man knew save the Douglas himself. Sir Richard Musgrave was likewise in his hand, the captain's youngest, most beloved, and only surviving brother; and Douglas had threatened, against a certain day, if the keys of the castle were not surrendered to him, to hang the young hero publicly, in the view of both hosts; and in all his threats he had never once broke his word. We must now take a peep within the walls of Roxburgh, and see how matters are going on there.

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CHAPTER VII.

I cast my net in Largo bay,
And fishes I caught nine;
There were three to roast, and three to boil,
And three to bait the line.

Old Song.

Saw never man so faynt a levand wycht,
And na ferlye, for ouir excelland lycht
Corruptis the witt, and garris the blude awail,
Until the harte, thocht it na dainger aill,
Quhen it is smorit memberis wirk not rychte,
The dreadfulle terrour swa did him assaile.

Pal. of Hon.

Berwick was then in the hands of the English, and commanded by Sir Thomas Musgrave, the captain of Roxburgh's cousin; so also was Norham, and all the forts between, on that side of the river. Notwithstanding of this, the power of the Scots predominated so much in the open field during that reign, that this chain of forts proved finally of no avail to Lord Musgrave, (or Sir Philip Musgrave, as he is generally denominated,) though he had depended on keeping the [128] communication open, else in victualling Roxburgh he had calculated basely. The garrison were already reduced to the greatest extremes; they were feeding on their horses and on salted hides; and, two or three days previous to this, their only communication with their countrymen had been cut off, they could not tell how. It was at best only precarious, being carried on in the following singular way.—The besieged had two communications with the river, by secret covered ways from the interior of the fortress. In each of these they had a small windlass, that winded on and let off a line nearly a mile in length. The lines were very small, being made of plaited brass wire; and, putting a buoy on a hook at the end of each one of these, they let them down the water. Their friends knowing the very spot where they stopped, watched, and put dispatches on the hooks, with fish, beef, venison, and every kind of convenience, which they pulled up below the water, sometimes for a whole night together; and though this proved but a scanty supply for a whole garrison, it was for a long time quite regular, and they depended a good deal on it. [129]

But one night it so chanced that an old fisherman, who fished for the monastery, had gone out with his coble by night to spear salmon in the river. He had a huge blaze flaming in a grate that stood exalted over the prow of his wherry; and with the light of that he pricked the salmon out of their deep recesses with great acuteness. As he was plying his task he perceived a fish of a very uncommon size and form scouring up the river with no ordinary swiftness. At first he started, thinking he had seen the devil: but a fisher generally strikes at every thing he sees in the water. He struck it with his barbed spear, called on Tweed a *leister*, and in a moment had it into his boat. It was an excellent sirloin of beef. The man was in utter amazement, for it was dead, and lay without moving, like other butcher meat; yet he was sure he saw it running up the water at full speed. He never observed the tiny line of plaited wire, nor the hook, which indeed was buried in the lire; and we may judge with what surprise he looked on this wonderful fish,—this [130] phenomenon of all aquatic productions. However, as it seemed to lie peaceably enough, and looked very well as a piece of beef, he resolved to let it remain, and betake himself again to his business. Never was there an old man so bewildered as he was, when he again looked into the river,—never either on Tweed or any other river on earth. Instead of being floating *down* the river peaceably in his boat, as one naturally expects to do, he discovered that he was running straight against the stream. He expected to have missed about fifty yards of the river by his adventure with the beef; but—no!—instead of that he was about the same distance advanced in his return up the stream. The windlass at the castle, and the invisible wire line, of which he had

no conception, having been still dragging him gradually up. "Saint Mary, the mother of God, protect and defend poor Sandy Yellowlees!" cried he; "What can be the meaning of this? Is the world turned upside down? Aha! our auld friend, Michael Scott, has some hand i' this! He's no to cree legs wi': I's be quits wi' him." With that he tumbled his beef again into the water, which held on its course with great rapidity straight up the stream, while he and his boat returned quietly in the contrary and natural direction. [131]

"Aye, there it goes," cried Sandy, "straight on for Aikwood! I's warrant that's for the warlock's an' the deil's dinner the morn. God be praised I'm free o't, or I should soon have been there too!"

Old Sandy fished down the river, but he could kill no more salmon that night,—for his nerves had got a shock with this new species of fishing that he could not overcome. He missed one; wounded another on the tail; and struck a third on the rig-back, where no leister can pierce a fish, till he made him spring above water. Sandy grew chagrined at himself and the warlock, Michael Scott, too—for this last was what he called "a real prime fish," Sandy gripped the leister a little firmer, clenched his teeth, and drew his bonnet over his eyes to shield them from the violence of his blaze. He then banned the wizard into himself, and determined to kill the next fish that made his appearance. But, just as he was keeping watch in this guise, he perceived another fish something like the former, but differing in some degree, coming swagging up the river full speed. "My heart laup to my teeth," said Sandy, "when I saw it coming, and I heaved the leister, but durstna strike; but I lookit weel, an' saw plainly that it was either a side o' mutton or venison, I couldna tell whilk. But I loot it gang, an' shook my head. 'Aha, Michael, lad,' quo' I, 'ye hae countit afore your host for aince! Auld Sandy has beguiled ye. But ye weel expeckit to gie him a canter to hell the night.' I rowed my boat to the side, an' made a' the haste hame I could, for I thought auld Michael had taen the water to himsel that night." [132]

Sandy took home his few fish, and went to sleep, for all was quiet about the abbey and the cloisters of his friends, the monks; and when he awoke next morning he could scarcely believe the evidence of his own senses, regarding what he had seen during the night. He arose and examined his fishes, and could see nothing about them that was not about other salmon. Still he strongly suspected they too might be some connections of Michael's,—something illusory, if not worse; and took care to eat none of them himself, delivering them all to the cook of the monastery. The monks ate them, and throve very well; and as Sandy had come by no bodily harm, he determined to try the fishing once again, and if he met with any more such fish of passage to examine them a little better. He went out with his boat, light, and fish-spear as usual; and scarcely had he taken his station, when he perceived one of a very uncommon nature approaching. He did not strike at it, but only put his leister-grains before it as if to stop its course, when he found the pressure against the leister very strong. On pulling the leister towards him, one of the barbs laid hold of the line by which the phenomenon was led; and not being able to get rid of it, he was obliged to pull it into the boat. It was a small cask of Malmsey wine; and at once, owing to the way it was drawn out, he discovered the hook and line fastened to the end of it. These he disengaged with some difficulty, the pull being so strong and constant; and the mystery was thus found out. In a few minutes afterwards he seized a large sheaf of arrows; and some time after, at considerable intervals, a number of excellent sides of beef and venison. [133] [134]

Sandy Yellowlees saw that he could now fish to some purpose, and formed a resolution of being the last man in the world to tell his countrymen of this resource that the enemy had. The thing of which he was most afraid was a discovery. He knew that the articles would soon be missed, and that his light would betray him; and then a flight of arrows, or even a single one, from a lurking foe at the side of the river, would put an end to his fishing for ever. Such an opportunity was not to be given up, notwithstanding of this danger; so, after much prying, both by day and by night, Sanders found that at an abrupt crook in the water, whatever the line brought up came close to the side, and when the water was low it even trailed them over a point of level sand-bed quite dry. This was a joyous discovery for Sandy. He had nothing ado but to sail down in his boat when it grew dark, and lie lurking at this crook in the water, and make a prey of whatever came within his reach. The very first night he filled his boat half full of valuable stuff. There was a necessity for disposing of a part of this, and Sandy was obliged to aver that he had discovered a hidden store belonging to the English; and, moreover, he hinted that he could supply the towns of Kelso and Roxburgh, the abbey of the one and the priory of the other, for some time to come. Great was the search that was made about the banks of the river, but no one could find the store; yet Sanders Yellowlees continued to supply the market with luxuries, tho' no one knew how. Intelligence was sent down the stream, with the buoys, of the seizure of the provisions, and of the place where they were taken off, which they knew from the failure of the weight they were pulling to be always at the same place. The news also spread of Sandy's stores, and both reached the secret friends of the English, from whom the provisions were nightly sent to their besieged friends and benefactors, with all the caution and secrecy possible, it being given them to understand that on that supply alone depended the holding out of the fortress. [135] [136]

Many schemes were now tried to entrap Sandy, but all without effect; for the Scots had a strong post surrounding that very point where Sandy caught all his spoil. It was impossible to reach it but by a boat; and no boat was allowed on the river but that one that belonged to the abbey. At length an English trooper undertook to seize this old depredator. Accordingly, in the dead of the night, when the lines came down, he seized them both, twisted them into one, and walked silently up the side of the river until he came nigh to the spot where the Scots lines on each side joined the stream. He then put the two hooks into his buff belt, and committing himself to the water, was dragged in silence and perfect safety up the pool between the outposts. [137]

The first turn above that was the point where Sandy lay watching. He had only seized one prey

that night, and that was of no great value,—for they had given over sending up victuals to enrich an old Scots rascal, as they termed honest Sanders. He was glad when he saw the wake of a heavy burden coming slowly towards him. "This is a sack o' sweet-meats," said he to himself: "It must be currans an' raisins, an' sic fine things as are na injured by the fresh water. I shall get a swinging price from the abbey-men for them, to help wi' their Christmas pies."

No sooner did this huge load touch the land, than Sandy seized it with all expedition; but, to his inexpressible horror, the sack of sweetmeats seized him in its turn, and that with such potence that he was instantaneously overpowered. He uttered one piercing cry, and no more, before the trooper gagged and pinioned him. The Scottish lines were alarmed, and all in motion, and the troops on both sides were crowding to the bank of the stream. A party was approaching the spot [138] where the twain were engaged in the unequal struggle. To return down the stream with his prisoner, as he intended, was impracticable; so the trooper had no alternative left but that of throwing himself into Sandy's boat, with its owner in his arms, shoving her from the side into the deep, and trusting himself to the strength of the wire-lines. As the windlasses were made always to exert the same force and no more, by resisting that they could be stopped; so by pushing the boat from the side in the direction of the castle, the line being slackened, that again set them agoing with great velocity; and though they soon slackened in swiftness, the trooper escaped with his prisoner undiscovered, and, by degrees, was dragged up to the mouth of the covered way that led through or under the hill on which the castle stood; and there was poor Sanders Yellowlees delivered into the hands of his incensed and half-famished enemies. It was he that was hanged over the wall of the castle on the day that the five English yeomen were executed.[1] [139]

The English now conceived that their secret was undiscovered, and that their sufferings would forthwith be mitigated by the supply drawn by their lines. They commenced briskly and successfully; but, alas! their success was of short duration. Sanders' secret became known to the Scots army. The night-watchers had often seen the old man's boat leaning on the shore at that point at all hours of the night; for he was always free to go about plodding for fish when he pleased. His cry was heard at that spot, and the boat was now missing: the place was watched, and in two days the Englishmen's secret, on which they so much relied, was discovered, and quite [140] cut off; and that powerful garrison was now left with absolute famine staring them in the face. As in all cases of utter privation, the men grew ungovernable. Their passions were chafed, and foamed like the ocean before the commencement of a tempest, foreboding nothing but anarchy and commotion. Parties were formed of the most desperate opposition to one another, and every one grew suspicious of his neighbour. Amid all this tempest of passion a mutiny broke out:—a strong party set themselves to deliver up the fortress to the Scots. But through such a medley of jarring opinions what project could succeed? The plot was soon discovered, the ring-leaders secured, and Sir Stephen Vernon, Musgrave's most tried and intimate friend, found to be at the head of it. No pen can do justice to the astonishment manifested by Musgrave when the treachery of his dear friend was fully proven. His whole frame and mind received a shock as by electricity, and he gazed around him in moody madness, as not knowing whom to trust, and as if [141] he deemed those around him were going to be his assassins.

"Wretch that I am!" cried he, "What is there more to afflict and rend this heart? Do I breathe the same air? Do I live among the same men? Do I partake of the same nature and feelings as I was wont? My own friend and brother Vernon, has he indeed lifted up his hand against me, and become one with my enemies? Whom now shall I trust? Must my dearest hopes—my honour, and the honour of my country, be sacrificed to disaffection and treachery? Oh Vernon—my brother Vernon, how art thou fallen!"

"I confess my crime," said Vernon; and I submit to my fate, since a crime it must be deemed. But it was out of love and affection to you, that your honour might not stoop to our haughty enemies. To hold out the fortress is impossible, and to persevere in the attempt utter depravity. Suppose you feed on one another, before the termination of the Christmas holidays, the remnant that will be left will not be able to guard the sallying ports, even though the ramparts are left unmanned. [142] In a few days I shall see my brave young friend and companion in arms, your brother, disgracefully put down, and ere long the triumphant Scots enter, treading over the feeble remains of this yet gallant army. I may bide a traitor's blame, and be branded with a traitor's name, but it was to save my friends that I strove; for I tell you, and some of you will live to see it, to hold out the castle is impossible."

"It is false!" cried Musgrave. "It is false! It is false!" cried every voice present in the judgment-hall, with frantic rage; and all the people, great and small, flew on the culprit to tear him to pieces; for their inveteracy against the Scots still grew with their distress.

"It is false! It is false!" shouted they. "Down with the traitor! sooner shall we eat the flesh from our own bones than deliver up the fortress to the Scots! Down with the false knave! down with the traitor!"—and, in the midst of a tumult that was quite irresistible, Vernon was borne up on their shoulders, and hurried to execution, smiling with derision at their madness, and repeating [143] their frantic cries in mockery. It was in vain that the commander strove to save his friend,—as well might he have attempted to have stemmed the river in its irresistible course single-handed. Vernon and his associates were hanged like dogs, amid shouts of execration, and their bodies flung into a pit. When this was accomplished, the soldiers waved their caps, and cried out, "So fare it with all who take part with our hateful enemies!"

Musgrave shed tears at the fate of his brave companion, and thenceforward was seized with gloomy despondency; for he saw that subordination hung by a thread so brittle that the least concussion would snap it asunder, and involve all in inextricable confusion. His countenance and manner underwent a visible change, and he often started on the approach of any one toward him,

and laid his hand on his sword. The day appointed by the Douglas for the execution of Sir Richard, provided the castle was not delivered up before that period, was fast approaching,—an [144] event that Musgrave could not look forward to without distraction; and it was too evident to his associates that his brave mind was so torn by conflicting passions, that it stood in great danger of being rooted up for ever.

It is probable that at this time he would willingly have complied with the dictates of nature, and saved the life of his brother; but to have talked of yielding up the fortress to the Scots at that period would only have been the prelude to his being torn in pieces. It was no more their captain's affair of love and chivalry that influenced them, but desperate animosity against their besiegers; and every one called aloud for succours. Communication with their friends was impracticable, but they hoped that their condition was known, and that succours would soon appear.—Alas, their friends in Northumberland had enough ado to defend themselves, nor could they do it so effectually but that their lands were sometimes harried to their very doors. The warden, with his hardy mountaineers, was indefatigable; and the English garrison were now so [145] closely beleaguered, that all chance of driving a prey from the country faded from their hopes. Never was the portcullis drawn up, nor the draw-bridge at either end let down, that intelligence was not communicated by blast of bugle to the whole Scottish army, who were instantly on the alert. The latter fared sumptuously, while those within the walls were famishing; and at length the day appointed for the execution of Sir Richard drew so near that three days only were to run.

It had been customary for the English, whenever the Scots sent out a herald, bearing the flag of truce, to make any proposal whatsoever, to salute him with a flight of arrows; all communication or listening to proposals being strictly forbidden by the captain, on pain of death. However, that day, when the Douglas' herald appeared on the rising ground, called the Hill of Barns, Musgrave caused answer him by a corresponding flag, hoping it might be some proposal of a ransom for the [146] life of his beloved brother, on which the heralds had an interchange of words at the draw-bridge. The Scottish herald made demand of the castle in his captain's name, and added, that the Douglas requested it might be done instantly, to save the life of a brave and noble youth, whom he would gladly spare, but could not break his word and his oath that he should suffer. He farther assured the English captain, that it was in vain for him to sacrifice his brother, for that he had the means in his power to bring him under subjection the day following, if he chose.

A council of the gentlemen in the castle was called. Every one spoke in anger, and treated the demand with derision. Musgrave spoke not a word; but, with a look of unstable attention on every one that spoke, collected their verdicts, and in a few minutes this answer was returned to the requisition of the Scots.

"If Sir Philip Musgrave himself, and every English knight and gentleman in the castle were now in the hands of the Douglas, and doomed to the same fate of their brave young friend, still the [147] Douglas should not gain his point,—the castle would not be delivered up. The garrison scorn his proposals, they despise his threats, and they hold his power at defiance. Such tender mercies as he bestows, such shall he experience. He shall only take the castle by treading over the breasts of the last six men that remain alive in it."

This was the general answer for the garrison—in the meantime Musgrave requested, as a personal favour of the Douglas, that he might see and condole with his brother one hour before his fatal exit. The request was readily complied with, and every assurance of safe conduct and protection added. The Douglas' pavilion stood on the rising ground, between the castle and the then splendid city of Roxburgh, a position from which he had a view of both rivers, and all that passed around the castle, and in the town; but, since the commencement of winter he had lodged over night in a tower that stood in the middle of the High-town, called the King's House, that had [148] prisons underneath, and was strongly guarded; but during the day he continued at the pavilion, in order to keep an eye over the siege.

To this pavilion, therefore, Musgrave was suffered to pass, with only one knight attendant; and all the way from the draw-bridge to the tent they passed between two files of armed soldiers, whose features, forms, and armour exhibited a strange contrast. The one rank was made up of Mar Highlanders, men short of stature, with red locks, high cheek bones, and looks that indicated a ferocity of nature; the other was composed of Lowlanders from the dales of the south and the west; men clothed in grey, with sedate looks, strong athletic frames, and faces of blunt and honest bravery. Musgrave weened himself passing between the ranks of two different nations, instead of the vassals of one Scottish nobleman. At the pavilion, the state, splendour, and number of attendant knights and squires amazed him; but by them all he was received with the most courteous respect.

Sir Richard was brought up from the vaults of the King's House to the tent, as the most [149] convenient place for the meeting with his brother, and for the guards to be stationed around them; and there, being placed in one of the apartments of the pavilion, his brother was ushered in to him. No one was present at the meeting; but, from an inner apartment, all that passed between them was overheard. Musgrave clasped his younger brother in his arms; the other could not return the embrace, for his chains were not taken off; but their meeting was passionately affecting, as the last meeting between two brothers must always be. When the elder retired a step, that they might gaze on each other, what a difference in appearance!—what a contrast they exhibited to each other! The man in chains, doomed to instant death, had looks of blooming health, and manly fortitude: The free man, the renowned Lord Musgrave, governor of the impregnable but perilous castle of Roxburgh, and the affianced lord and husband to the richest and most beautiful lady in England, was the picture of haggard despair and misfortune. He [150] appeared but the remnant, the skeleton of the hero he had lately been; and a sullen instability of

mind flashed loweringly in his dark eye. His brother was almost terrified at his looks, for he regarded him sometimes as with dark suspicion, and as if he dreaded him to be an incendiary.

"My dear brother," said Sir Richard, "what is it that hangs upon your mind, and discomposes you so much? You are indeed an altered man since I had the misfortune to be taken from you. Tell me, how fares all within the castle?"

"Oh, very well; quite well, brother. All perfectly secure—quite well within the castle." But as he said this he strode rapidly backward and forward across the small apartment, and eyed the canvass on each side with a grin of rage, as if he suspected that it concealed listeners; nor was he wrong in his conjecture, though it was only caused by the frenzy of habitual distrust. "But, how can I be otherwise than discomposed, brother," continued he, "when I am in so short a time to see you sacrificed in the prime of youth and vigour, to my own obstinacy and pride, perhaps." [151]

"I beg that you will not think of it, or take it at all to heart," said the youth; "I have made up my mind, and can look death in the face without unbecoming dismay. I should have preferred dying on the field of honour, with my sword in my hand, rather than being hanged up between the hosts, like a spy, or common malefactor. But let the tears that are shed for Richard be other than salt brine from the eyes of the Englishmen. Let them be the drops of purple blood from the hearts of our enemies. I charge you, by the spirits of our fathers, whom I am so shortly to join, and by the blessed Trinity, that you act in this trying dilemma as the son of the house you represent. Shed not a tear for me, but revenge my death on the haughty house of Douglas."

"There is my hand! Here is my sword! But the vital motion, or the light of reason, who shall ensure to me till these things are fulfilled. Nay, who shall ensure them to this wasted frame for one moment? I am not the man I have been, brother: But here I will swear to you, by all the host of heaven, to revenge your death, or die in the fulfilment of my vow. Yes, fully will I revenge it! I will waste! waste! waste! and the fire that is begun within shall be quenched, and no tongue shall utter it! Ha! ha, ha! shall it not be so, brother?" [152]

"This is mere raving, brother; I have nothing from this."

"No, it is not; for there is a fire that you wot not of. But I will quench it, though with my own blood. Brother, there is one thing I wish to know, and for that purpose did I come hither. Do you think it behoves me to suffer you to perish in this affair?"

"That depends entirely upon your internal means of defence," answered Richard. "If there is a certainty, or even a probability, that the castle can hold until relieved by our friends, which will not likely be previous to the time you have appointed for them to attempt it; why, then, I would put no account on the life of one man. Were I in your place, I would retain my integrity in opposition to the views of Douglas; but if it is apparent to you, who know all your own resources, that the castle must yield, it is needless to throw away the life of your brother, sacrificing it to the pride of opposition for a day or a week." [153]

Musgrave seemed to be paying no regard to this heroic and disinterested reasoning,—for he was still pacing to and fro, gnawing his lip; and if he was reasoning, or thinking at all, was following out the train of his own unstable mind.—"Because, if I were sure," said he, "that you felt that I was acting unkindly or unnaturally by you, by the Rood, I would carve the man into fragments that would oppose my submission to save my brother. I would teach them that Musgrave was not to be thwarted in his command of the castle that was taken by his own might and device, and to the government of which his sovereign appointed him. If a dog should dare to bay at me in opposition to my will, whatever it were, I would muzzle the hound, and make him repent his audacity." [154]

"My noble brother," said Richard, "what is the meaning of this frenzy? No one is opposing your will, and I well believe no one within the castle will attempt it—"

"Because they dare not!" said he, furiously, interrupting his brother: "They dare not, I tell you! But if they durst, what do you think I would do? Ha, ha, ha!"

Douglas overheard all this, and judging it a fit time to interfere, immediately a knight opened the door of the apartment where the two brothers conversed, and announced the Lord Douglas. Musgrave composed himself with wonderful alacrity; and the greeting between the two great chiefs, though dignified, was courteous and apparently free of rancour or jealousy. Douglas first addressed his rival as follows:

"I crave pardon, knights, for thus interrupting you. I will again leave you to yourselves; but I judged it incumbent on me, as a warrior and a knight of honour, to come, before you settled finally on your mode of procedure, and conjure you, Lord Philip Musgrave, to save the life of your brother—" [155]

"Certainly you will not put down my brave brother, Lord Douglas?" said Musgrave, interrupting him.

"As certainly," returned he, "as you put down my two kinsmen, Cleland and Douglas of Rowlaw, in mere spite and wanton cruelty, because they were beloved and respected by me. I am blameless, as it was yourself who began this unwarrantable system, and my word is passed. Sir Richard must die, unless the keys of the castle are delivered to me before Friday at noon. But I shall be blameless in any thing further. I conjure you to save him; and as an inducement, assure you, by the honour of knighthood, that your resistance is not only unnatural, but totally useless; for I have the means of commanding your submission when I please."

"Lord Douglas, I defy thee!" answered Musgrave. "You hold the life in your hand that I hold

dearest on earth, save one. For these two would I live or die: but, since thy inveterate enmity will not be satisfied with ought short of the life of my only brother, take it; and may my curse, and the curse of heaven, be your guerdon. It shall only render the other doubly dear to me; and, for her sake, will I withstand your proud pretensions; and, as she enjoined me, hold this castle, with all its perils, till the expiry of the Christmas holidays, in spite of you. I defy your might and your ire. Let your cruel nature have its full sway. Let it be gorged with the blood of my kinsfolk; it shall only serve to make my opposition the stronger and more determined. For the sake of her whom I serve, the mistress of my heart and soul, I will hold my resolution.—Do your worst!" [156]

"So be it!" said Douglas. "Remember that I do not, like you, fight only in the enthusiasm of love and chivalry, but for the very being of my house. I will stick at no means of retaliating the injuries you have done to me and mine, however unjustifiable these may appear to some,—no act of cruelty, to attain the prize for which I contend. Little do you know what you are doomed to suffer, and that in a short space of time. I again conjure you to save the life of your brother, by yielding up to me your ill-got right, and your conditions shall be as liberal as you can desire." [157]

"I will yield you my estate to save my brother, but not the castle of Roxburgh. Name any other ransom but that, and I will treat with you. Ask what I can grant with honour, and command it."

"Would you give up the life of a brave only brother to gratify the vanity and whim of a romantic girl, who, if present herself, would plead for the life of Sir Richard, maugre all other considerations, else she has not the feelings of woman? What would you give, Lord Musgrave, to see that lady, and hear her sentiments on the subject."

"I would give much to see her. But, rather than see her in this place, I would give all the world and my life's blood into the bargain. But of that I need not have any fear. You have conjurors among you, it is said, and witches that can raise up the dead, but their power extends not to the living, else who of my race would have been left?" [158]

"I have more power than you divine; and I will here give you a simple specimen of it, to convince you how vain it is to contend with me. You are waging war with your own vain imagination, and suffer all this wretchedness for a thing that has neither being nor name."

Douglas then lifted a small gilded bugle that hung always at his sword belt, the language of which was well known to all the army; and on that he gave two blasts not louder than a common whistle, when instantly the door of the apartment opened, and there entered Lady Jane Howard, leaning on her female attendant, dressed in attire of princely magnificence. "Lady Jane Howard!" exclaimed Sir Richard, starting up, and struggling with his fettered arms to embrace her. But when the vision met the eyes of Lord Musgrave, he uttered a shuddering cry of horror, and sprung with a convulsive leap back into the corner of the tent. There he stood, like the statue of distraction, with his raised hands pressed to each side of his helmet, as if he had been strenuously holding his head from splitting asunder. [159]

"So! Friend and foe have combined against me!" cried he wildly. "Earth and hell have joined their forces in opposition to one impotent human thing! And what his crime? He presumed on no more than what he did, and could have done; but who can stand against the powers of darkness, and the unjust decrees of heaven? Yes; unjust! I say unjust! Down with all decrees to the centre! There's no truth in heaven! I weened there was, but it is as false as the rest! I say as false!—falser than both!—I'll brave all the three! Ha, ha, ha!"

Douglas had brought Lady Jane the apparel, and commanded her to dress in it; and, perceiving the stern, authoritative nature of the chief, she judged it meet to comply. At first she entered with a languid dejected look, for she had been given to understand something of the rueful nature of the meeting she was called on to attend. But when she heard the above infuriated rhapsody, and turned her eyes in terror to look on the speaker, whose voice she well knew, she uttered a scream and fainted. Douglas supported her in his arms; and Sir Richard, whose arms were in fetters, stood and wept over her. But Musgrave himself only strode to and fro over the floor of the pavilion, and uttered now and then a frantic laugh. "That is well!—That is well!" exclaimed he; "Just as it should be! I hope she will not recover. Surely she will not?" and then bending himself back, and clasping his hands together, he cried fervently: "O mother of God, take her to thyself while she is yet pure and uncontaminated, or what heart of flesh can endure the prospect? What a wreck in nature that lovely form will soon be! Oh-oh-oh!" [160]

The lady's swoon was temporary. She soon began to revive, and cast unsettled looks around in search of the object that had so overpowered her; and, at the request of Sir Richard, who perceived his brother's intemperate mood, she was removed. She was so struck with the altered features, looks, and deportment of the knight, who in her imagination was every thing that was courteous, comely, and noble, and whom she had long considered as destined to be her own, that her heart was unable to stand the shock, and her removal from his presence was an act of humanity. [161]

She was supported out of the tent by Douglas and her female relation; but when Musgrave saw them leading her away, he stepped rapidly in before them and interposed; and, with a twist of his body, put his hand two or three times to the place where the handle of his sword should have been. The lady lifted her eyes to him, but there was no conception in that look, and her lovely face was as pale as if the hand of death had passed over it.

Any one would have thought that such a look from the lady of his love, in such a forlorn situation, and in the hands of his mortal enemy, would have totally uprooted the last fibres of his distempered mind. But who can calculate on the medicine suited to a diseased spirit? The cures even of some bodily diseases are those that would poison a healthy frame. So did it prove in this [162]

mental one. He lifted his hand from his left side, where he had thrust it convulsively in search of his sword, and clapping it on his forehead, he seemed to resume the command of himself at once, and looked as calm and serene as in the most collected moments of his life.

When they were gone, he said to Sir Richard, in the hearing of the guards: "Brother, what is the meaning of this? What English traitor has betrayed that angelic maid into the hands of our enemy?"

"To me it is incomprehensible," said Sir Richard: "I was told of it by my keeper last night, but paid no regard to the information, judging it a piece of wanton barbarity; but now my soul shudders at the rest of the information that he added."

"What more did the dog say?" said Musgrave.

"He said he had heard that it was resolved by the Douglasses, that, if you did not yield up the [163]
fortress and citadel freely, on or before the day of the conception of the Blessed Virgin, on that day at noon the lady of your heart should be exhibited in a state not to be named on a stage erected on the top of the Bush-law, that faces the western tower, and is divided from it only by the moat; and there before your eyes, and in sight of both hosts, compelled to yield to that disgrace which barbarians only could have conceived; and then to have her nose cut off, her eyes put out, and her beauteous frame otherwise disfigured."

"He dares not for his soul's salvation do such a deed!" said Musgrave: "No; there's not a bloodhound that ever mouthed the air of his cursed country durst do a deed like that. And though every Douglas is a hound confest, where is the mongrel among them that durst but howl of such an outrage in nature? Why, the most absolute fiend would shrink from it: Hell would disown it; and do you think the earth would bear it?"

"Brother, suspend your passion, and listen to the voice of reason and of nature. Your cause is lost, [164]
but not your honour. You took, and have kept that fortress, to the astonishment of the world. But for what do you now fight? or what can your opposition avail? Let me beseech you not to throw away the lives of those you love most on earth thus wantonly, but capitulate on honourable terms, and rescue your betrothed bride and your only brother from the irritated Scots. Trust not that they will stick at any outrage to accomplish their aim. Loth would I be to know our name were dishonoured by any pusillanimity on the part of my brother; but desperate obstinacy is not bravery. I, therefore, conjure you to save me, and her in whom all your hopes of future felicity are bound up."

Musgrave was deeply affected; and, at that instant, before he had time to reply, Douglas re-entered.

"Scots lord, you have overcome me," said he, with a pathos that could not be exceeded: "Yes you have conquered, but not with your sword. Not on the field, nor on the wall, have ye turned the glaive of Musgrave; but either by some infernal power, or else by chicanery and guile, the [165]
everlasting resources of your cursed nation. It boots not me to know how you came possessed of this last and only remaining pledge of my submission. It is sufficient you have it. I yield myself your prisoner; let me live or die with those two already in your power."

"No, knight, that must not be," replied Douglas. "You are here on safe conduct and protection; my honour is pledged, and must not be forfeited. You shall return in safety to your kinsmen and soldiers, and act by their counsel. It is not prisoners I want, but the castle of Roxburgh, which is the right of my sovereign and my nation,—clandestinely taken, and wrongously held by you. I am neither cruel nor severe beyond the small range that points to that attainment; but that fortress I will have,—else wo be to you, and all who advise withholding it, as well as all their connexions to whom the power of Scotland can extend. If the castle is not delivered up before Friday at noon, your brother shall suffer,—that you already know. But at the same hour on the day of the [166]
Conception, if it is still madly and wantonly detained, there shall be such a scene transacted before your eyes as shall blur the annals of the Border for ever."

"If you allude to any injury intended to the lady who is your prisoner," said Musgrave, "the cruellest fiend in hell could not have the heart to hurt such angelic purity and loveliness; and it would degrade the honour of knighthood for ever to suffer it. Cruel as you are, you dare not injure a hair of her head."

"Talk not of cruelty in me," said Douglas: "If the knight who is her lover will not save her, how should I? You have it in your power, and certainly it is you that behove to do it; even granting that the stakes for which we fought were equal, the task of redemption and the blame would rest solely with you. And how wide is the difference between the prizes for which we contend? I for my love, my honour, and the very existence of my house and name; and you for you know not what,—the miserable pride of opposition. Take your measures, my lord. I will not be mocked." [167]

Douglas left the apartment. Musgrave also arose and embraced his brother, and, as he parted from him, he spoke these ominous words: "Farewell, my dear Richard. May the angels that watch over honour be your guardians in the hour of trial. You know not what I have to endure from tormentors without and within. But hence we meet not again in this state of existence. The ties of love must be broken, and the bands of brotherly love burst asunder,—nevertheless I will save you —A long farewell my brother."

Musgrave was then conducted back to the draw-bridge, between two long files of soldiers as before, while all the musicians that belonged either to the army or the city were ranked up in a line behind them, on the top of the great precipice that over-hangs the Teviot, playing, on all manner of instruments, "*Turn the Blue Bonnets wha can, wha can*," with such a tremendous din

that one would have thought every stone in the walls of Roxburgh was singing out the bravado.

[168]

CHAPTER VIII.

Qnhat weywerde elfin thynge is thaten boie,
That hyngethe still upon myne gaire, as doeth
My synne of harte? And quhome rychte loth; I lofe
With not les hauckerynge. His locent eyne,
And his tungis maiter comethe on myne sense
Lyke a remembourance; or lyke ane dreime
That had delytis in it. Quhen I wolde say
"Begone;" lo then my tung mistakethe quyte,
Or fanceyinge not the terme, it sayethe "Come
hidder,
Come hidder, crabbed boie, unto myne syde."

Old Play.

That evening, after the departure of the noble and distressed Musgrave, Douglas was sitting all alone musing in a secret apartment of the pavilion, when he heard a gentle tap at the door. "Who's there?" inquired he surlily: "It is I, my lor'," said a petulant treble voice without. "Aha! my excellent nondescript little fellow, Colin Roy, is it you? Why, you may come in." Colin entered dressed in a most elegant and whimsical livery, and, forgetting himself, made the Douglas two or three graceful courtesies instead of bows.

"Aye, hem," said he, "that's very well for the page of a princess. I suppose you have been studying [169] the graces from your accomplished mistress? But where have you been all this while? I have felt the loss of you from my hand grievously."

"I have been waiting on my royal mistress, my lor', informing her of all that is going on at the siege, and of your good fortune in the late captures you have made, wherein she rejoices exceedingly, and wishes you all good fortune and forward success; and, in token of kind remembrance, she sends you this heart of ruby set in gold and diamonds,—a gem that befits your lordship well to wear. And many more matters she has given me in charge, my lor'."

Douglas kissed the locket, and put it in his bosom, and then uttered abundance of the extravagant bombast peculiar to that age. He called her his guardian angel, his altar of incense, and the saint of his devotion, the buckler of his arm, the sword in his hand, and the jewel of his heart. "Do you think, Colin," added he, "that ever there was a maiden born like this royal lady of [170] my love?"

"Why, my lor', I am not much skilled in these matters, but I believe the wench, my mistress, is well enough;—that is, she is well formed. And yet she is but so so."

"How dare you, you piece of unparalleled impudence, talk of your royal mistress in that strain? Or where did you ever see a form or features so elegant, and so bewitchingly lovely?"

"Do you think so?—Well, I'm glad of it. I think she is coarse and masculine. Where did I ever see such a form, indeed! Yes I have seen a much finer limb, and an arm, and a hand too! What think you of that for a hand, my lor'?"—(and with that the urchin clapped his hand on the green table, first turning up the one side of it and then the other.)—"I say if that hand were as well kept, and that arm as well loaden with bracelets, and the fingers with diamond rings, it would be as handsome as your princess's, of which you boast so much,—aye, and handsomer too."

"You are a privileged boy, Colin, otherwise I would kick you heartily, and, moreover, cause you to [171] be whipped by the hand of the common executioner. However, you are a confidant,—all is well from you; and, to say the truth, yours is a very handsome hand for a boy's hand,—so is your arm. But what are they to those of my lovely and royal Margaret?—mere deformity! the husk to the wheat!"

"Indeed, my lor', you have an excellent taste, and a no less gifted discernment!"

"I cannot conceive of any earthly being equalling my beauteous princess, whether in the qualifications of body or mind."

"I rejoice to hear it. How blind love is! Why, in sober reality, there is the Lady Jane Howard. Is there any comparison between the princess and that lady in beauty?"

"She is, I confess, a most exquisite creature, Colin, even though rival to my adorable lady; in justice it must be acknowledged she is *almost* peerless in beauty. I do not wonder at Musgrave's valour when I see the object of it. But why do you redden as with anger, boy, to hear my [172] commendations of that hapless lady?"

"I, my lord? How should I redden with anger? On my honour, craving my Lord Douglas' pardon, I am highly pleased. I think she is much more beautiful than you have said, and that, you should have spoken of her in a more superlative degree, and confessed frankly that you would willingly exchange your betrothed lady for her. I cannot chuse but think her very beautiful; too beautiful, indeed, with her blue eyes, white teeth, and ruddy lips. I dont like such bright blue eyes. I could

almost find in my heart to scratch them out, she is so like a wanton. So you don't wonder at Lord Musgrave's valour, after having seen his mistress? Well, I advise your lordship, your captainship, and your besiegership, that there are some who wonder very much at your want of valour. I tell you this in confidence. My mistress thinks you hold her charms only at a small avail, that you [173] have not *gone into* that castle long ago, and turned out these Englishmen, or hung them up by the necks if they refused. Musgrave went in and took it at once, for the favour of his mistress; because, forsooth, he deemed her worthy of the honour of such a bold emprize. Why, then, do not you do the same? My mistress, to be sure, is a woman,—a very woman; but she says this, that it is superabundantly ungallant of you not to have *gone in* and taken possession of the castle long ago. Do you know that (poor kind creature!) she has retired to a convent, where she continues in a state of sufferance, using daily invocations at the shrines of saints for your success. And she has, moreover, made a vow not to braid her hair, nor dress herself in princely apparel until the day of your final success. Surely, my lor', you ought *to take that castle*, and relieve my dear mistress from this durance. I almost weep when I think of her, and must say with her that she has been shabbily used, and that she has reason to envy Lady Jane Howard even in her captivity."

"Colin, you are abundantly impertinent: but there is no stopping of your tongue once it is set a- [174] going. As to the taking of castles, these things come not under the cognizance of boys or women. But indeed I knew not that my sovereign lady the princess had absconded from the courtly circle of her father's palace, and betaken herself to a convent on my account. Every thing that I hear of that jewel endears her to me the more."

"What? even her orders for you *to go into the castle*, and put out the English? I assure you, my lor', she insists upon it. Whether it is her impatience to be your bride, I know not, but she positively will not be satisfied unless you very soon *go into that castle*, and put the Englishmen all to the outside of it, where you are now; or hang them, and bury them out of sight before she visits the place to congratulate you."

"Boy, I have no patience with you. Cease your prating, and inform me where my beloved mistress is, that I may instantly visit her."

"No; not for the Douglas' estate, which is now in the fire, and may soon be brought to the anvil, [175] will I inform you of that. But, my lor', you know I must execute my commission. And I tell you again, unless you take this castle very soon, you will not only lose the favour of my mistress, but you will absolutely break her heart. Nothing less will satisfy her. I told her, there was a great moat, more than a hundred feet deep, and as many wide, that surrounded the castle, and flowed up to the base of its walls; that there was a large river on each side of it, and that they were both dammed and appeared like two standing seas—but all availed nought. 'There is a moat,' said I; 'But let him go over that,' said she; 'let him swim it, or put a float on it. What is it to cross a pool a hundred feet wide? How did Lord Musgrave pass over it?' 'There are strong walls on the other side,' said I: 'But let him go over these,' said she, 'or break a hole through them and go in. Men built the walls, why may not men pull them down? How did Musgrave get over them?' 'There are [176] armed men within,' said I: 'But they are only Englishmen,' said she; 'Let Douglas' men put their swords into them, and make them stand back. How did Musgrave get in when it was defended by gallant Scots? Douglas is either no lover, or else no warrior,' added she; 'or perhaps he is neither the one nor the other.'"

"Peace, sapling," said Douglas, frowning and stamping with his foot, "Peace, and leave the pavilion instantly." Colin went away visibly repressing a laugh, which irritated Douglas still the more; and as the urchin went, he muttered in a crying whine, "My mistress is very shabbily used! —very shabbily! To have promised herself to a knight if he will but take a castle for her, and to have fasted, and prayed, and vowed vows for him, and yet he dares not go in and take it. And I am shabbily used too; and that I'll tell her! Turned out before I get half her message delivered! But I must inform you, my lor', before I go, that since you are making no better use of the advantage given you, I demand the prisoners back that I lodged in your hand in my lady mistress' [177] name, and by her orders."

"I will do no such thing to the whim of a teasing impertinent stripling, without my lady princess's hand and seal for it," said Douglas.

"You shall not long want that," said Colin; and pulling a letter out from below his sash, he gave it to him. It was the princess's hand and seal,—it being an easy matter for Colin to get what letters he listed. Douglas opened it, and read as follows:

> "Lord Douglas,—In token of my best wishes for your success, I send you these, with greeting. I hope you will take immediate advantage of the high superiority afforded you in this contest, by putting some indelible mark, or public stain, on the lusty dame I put into your hands. If Musgrave be a knight of any gallantry he will never permit it, but yield. As I cannot attend personally, I request that the mode and degree of punishment you inflict may be left to my page Colin. That you have not [178] been successful by such means already, hath much surprised
>
> Margaret."

"This is not a requisition to give you up the prisoners," said Douglas, "but merely a request that the punishment inflicted may be left to you, a request which must not be denied to the lady of my heart. Now, pray, Master Colin Roy MacAlpin, what punishment do you decree for the Lady Jane Howard? For my part, though I intended to threaten the most obnoxious treatment, to induce my opponent to yield, I could not for my dearest interests injure the person of that exquisite lady."

"You could not, in good troth? I suppose my mistress has good reason to be jealous of you two. But since the power is left with me I shall prevent that; I shall see her punished as she deserves:

I'll have no shameful exposures of a woman, even were she the meanest plebeian, but I'll mar her beauty that she thinks so much of, and that *you* think so much of. I'll have have her nose cut off; [179] and two of her fore teeth drawn; and her cheeks and brow scolloped. I'll spoil the indecent brightness of her gloss! She shall not sparkle with such brilliance again, nor shall the men gloat, feasting their intolerable eyes on her, as they do at present."

"Saint Duthoe buckler me!" exclaimed the Douglas,—"what an unnatural tyger cat it is! I have heard that such feelings were sometimes entertained by one sovereign beauty toward another of the same sex; but that a sprightly youth, of an amorous complexion, with bright blushing features and carroty locks, should so depreciate female beauty, and thirst to deface it, surpasses any thing I have witnessed in the nature of man. Go to, you are a perverse boy, but shall be humoured as far as my honour and character as a captain and warrior will admit."

Colin paced lightly away, making a slight and graceful courtesy to the Douglas as he glided out. "What an extraordinary, wayward, and accomplished youth that is!" said the chief to himself. "Is it not strange that I should converse so long with a page, as if he were my equal? There is [180] something in his manner and voice that overcomes me; and though he teazes me beyond endurance, there is a sort of enchantment about him, that I cannot give him the check. Ah me! all who submit themselves to women, to be swayed by them or their delegates, will find themselves crossed in every action of importance. I am resolved that no woman shall sway me. I can love, but have not learned to submit."

Colin retired to his little apartment in the pavilion; it was close to the apartment that Douglas occupied while he remained there, and not much longer or broader than the beautiful and romantic inhabitant. Yet there he constantly abode when not employed about his lord, and never mixed or conversed with the other pages. Douglas retired down to the tower, or King's House, as it was called (from king Edward having occupied it,) at even tide,—but Colin Roy remained in his apartment at the pavilion. Alas! that Douglas did not know the value of the life he left exposed in [181] such a place!

On the return of Musgrave into the castle, a council of all the gentlemen in the fortress was called, and with eager readiness they attended in the hall of the great western tower. The governor related to them the heart-rending intelligence of his mistress being in the hands of their enemies, and of the horrid fate that awaited her, as well as his only brother, provided the garrison stood out. Every one present perceived that Musgrave inclined to capitulate; and, as they all admired him, they pitied his woeful plight. But no one ventured a remark. There they sat, a silent circle, in bitter and obstinate rumination. Their brows were plaited down, so as almost to cover their eyes; their under lips were bent upward, and every mouth shaped like a curve, and their arms were crossed on their breasts, while every man's right hand instinctively rested on the hilt of his sword.

Musgrave had taken his measures, whichever way the tide should run. In consequence of this he [182] appeared more calm and collected at this meeting than he had done for many a day. "I do not, my friends, and soldiers, propose any alternative," said he,—"I merely state to you the circumstances in which we are placed; and according to your sentiments I mean to conduct myself."

"It is nobly said, brave captain," said Collingwood: "Our case is indeed a hard one, but not desperate. The Scots cannot take the castle from us, and shall any one life, or any fifty lives, induce us to yield them the triumph, and all our skill, our bravery, and our sufferings go for nought?"

"We have nothing to eat," said Musgrave.

"I'll eat the one arm, and defend the draw-bridge with the other, before the Scots shall set a foot in the castle," said a young man, named Henry Clavering. "So will I," said another. "So will I; so will we all!" echoed through the hall, while a wild gleam of ferocity fired every haggard countenance. It was evident that the demon of animosity and revenge was now conjured up, [183] which to lay was not in the power of man.

"What then do you propose as our mode of action in this grievous dilemma?" said Musgrave.

"I, for my part, would propose decision and ample retaliation," said Clavering. "Do you not perceive that there has been a great storm in the uplands last night and this morning, and that the Tweed and Teviot are roaring like two whirlpools of the ocean, so that neither man nor beast can cross them? There is no communication between the two great divisions of the Scottish army to night, save by that narrow passage betwixt the moat and the river. Let us issue forth at the deepest hour of midnight, secure that narrow neck of land by a strong guard, while the rest proceed sword in hand to the eastern camp, surround the pavilion of Douglas, and take him and all his associates prisoners, and then see who is most forward in using the rope!"

"It is gallantly proposed, my brave young friend," said Musgrave; "I will lead the onset myself. I do not only ween the scheme practicable, but highly promising; and if we can make good that [184] narrow neck of land against our enemies on the first alarm, I see not why we may not cut off every man in the eastern division of their army; and haply, from the camp and city, secure to ourselves a good supply of provisions before the break of the day."

These were inducements not to be withstood, and there was not one dissenting voice. A gloomy satisfaction rested on every brow, and pervaded every look, taking place of dark and hideous incertitude. Like a winter day that has threatened a tempest from the break of the morning, but becomes at last no longer doubtful, as the storm descends on the mountain tops, so was the scene at the breaking up of that meeting—and all was activity and preparation within the castle

during the remainder of the day.

The evening at last came; but it was no ordinary evening. The storm had increased in a tenfold degree. The north-west wind roared like thunder. The sleet descended in torrents, and was driven with an impetuosity that no living creature could withstand. The rivers foamed from bank [185] to brae; and the darkness was such as if the heavens had been sealed up. The sound of the great abbey bell, that rung for vespers, was borne away on the tempest; so that nothing was heard, save once or twice a solemn melancholy sound, apparently at a great distance, as if a spirit had been moaning in the eastern sky.

Animal nature cowered beneath the blast. The hind left not her den in the wood, nor broke her fast, until the dawning. The flocks crowded together for shelter in the small hollows of the mountains, and the cattle lowed and bellowed in the shade. The Scottish soldiers dozed under their plaids, or rested on their arms within the shelter of their tents and trenches. Even the outer sentinels, on whose vigilance all depended, crept into some retreat or other that was next to hand, to shield them from the violence of the storm. The army was quite secure,—for they had the garrison so entirely cooped up within their walls, that no attempt had been made to sally forth for [186] a whole month. Indeed, ever since the English were fairly dislodged from the city, the Bush-law, and all the other outworks, the attempt was no more dreaded; for the heaving up of the portcullis, and the letting down of the draw-bridge, made such a noise as at once alarmed the Scottish watchers, and all were instantly on the alert. Besides, the gates and draw-bridges (for there were two gates and one draw-bridge at each end) were so narrow, that it took a long time for an enemy to pass in any force; and thus it proved an easy matter to prevent them. But, that night, the storm howling in such majesty, and the constant jangling of chains and pullies swinging to its force, with the roaring of the two rivers over the dams, formed altogether such a hellish concert, that fifty portcullises might have been raised, and as many draw-bridges let down, and the prostrate shivering sentinels of the Scottish army have distinguished no additional chord or octave in the infernal bravura.

At midnight the English issued forth with all possible silence. Two hundred, under the command [187] of Grey and Collingwood, were posted on the castle-green, that is, the narrow valley between the moat and the river Tweed, to prevent the junction of the two armies on the first alarm being given. The rest were parted into two divisions; and, under the command of Musgrave and Henry Clavering, went down the side of each river so as to avoid the strongest part of the Scottish lines, and the ramparts raised on the height. Clavering led his division down by the side of the Teviot, along the bottom of the great precipice, and, owing to the mingled din of the flood and the storm, was never perceived till fairly in the rear of the Scottish lines. Musgrave was not so fortunate, as the main trench ran close to the Tweed. He was obliged to force it with his first column, which he did with a rapidity which nothing could equal. The Englishmen threw themselves over the mound of the great trench, hurling in above their enemies sword in hand, and overpowering them with great ease; then over one breastwork after another, spreading consternation before them and [188] carnage behind. Clavering heard nothing of this turmoil, so intemperate was the night. He stood with impatience, his men drawn up in order, within half a bow-shot of Douglas's pavilion, waiting for the signal agreed on; for their whole energy was to be bent against the tent of the commander, in hopes, not only to capture the Douglas himself, and all his near kinsmen, but likewise their own prisoners. At length, among other sounds that began to swell around, Clavering heard the welcome cry of "Duddoe's away!" which was as readily answered with "Duddoe's here!" and at one moment the main camp was attacked on both sides. The flyers from the lines had spread the alarm. The captain's tent was surrounded by a triple circle of lesser tents, all full of armed men, who instantly grasped their weapons, and stood on the defensive. Many rough blows were exchanged at the first onset, and many of the first ranks of the assailants met their death. But though those within fought with valour, they fought without system; whereas [189] the English had arranged every thing previously; and each of them had a white linen belt, of which the Scots knew nothing; and in the hurry and terror that ensued, some parties attacked each other, and fell by the hands of their brethren. Finding soon that the battle raged before and behind them, they fled with precipitation toward the city; but there they were waylaid by a strong party, and many of them captured and slain. The English would have slain every man that fell into their power, had it not been for the hopes of taking Douglas, or some of his near kinsmen, and by that means redeeming the precious pledges that the Scots held, so much to their detriment, and by which all their motions were paralyzed. Clavering, with a part of the troops under his command, pursued the flyers that escaped as far as the head of the Market-street, and put the great Douglas himself into no little dismay; for he found it next to impossible to rally his men amid the storm and darkness, such a panic had seized them by this forthbreaking of their [190] enemies. Clavering would, doubtless, have rifled a part of the city, if not totally ruined that division of the Scottish army, had he not been suddenly called back to oppose a more dangerous inroad behind.

When Musgrave first broke through the right wing of the Scottish lines, the noise and uproar spread amain, as may well be conceived. The warders on the heights then sounded the alarm incessantly: and a most incongrous thing it was to hear them sounding the alarm with such vigour at their posts, after the enemy had passed quietly by them, and at that time were working havoc in the middle of their camp. They knew not what was astir, but they made plenty of din with their cow-horns, leaving those that they alarmed to find out the cause the best way they could.

The Scottish army that beleaguered the castle to the westward caught the alarm, and rushed to the support of their brethren and commander. The infantry being first in readiness, were first put

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in motion, but, on the narrowest part of the castle green, they fell in with the firm set phalanx of the English, who received them on the point of their lances, and, in a few seconds, made them give way. The English could not however pursue, their orders being to keep by the spot where they were, and stand firm; so that the Scots had nothing ado but to rally at the head of the green, and return to the charge. Still it was with no better success than before. The English stood their ground, and again made them reel and retreat. But, by this time, the horsemen were got ready, and descended to the charge at a sharp trot. They were clad in armour, and had heavy swords by their sides, and long spears like halberds in their hands. The English lines could not withstand the shock given by these, for the men were famishing with hunger and benumbed with cold, the wind blowing with all its fury straight in their faces. They gave way; but they were neither broken nor dispersed. Reduced as they were, they were all veterans, and retreated fighting till they came [192] to the barriers before the draw-bridge; and there, having the advantage of situation, they stood their ground.

The horsemen passed on to the scene of confusion in the camp, and came upon the rear of the English host, encumbered with prisoners and spoil.

When Clavering was called back, Douglas, who had now rallied about one hundred and forty men around him, wheeled about, and followed Clavering in the rear; so that the English found themselves in the same predicament that the Scots were in about an hour before,—beset before and behind,—and that principally by horsemen, which placed them under a manifest disadvantage.

It is impossible to give any adequate idea of the uproar and desperate affray that now ensued. The English formed on both sides to defend themselves; but the prisoners being numerous detained a great part of the men from the combat. A cry arose to kill the prisoners; from whom it first issued no one knew, but it no sooner past than the men began to put it into execution. The [193] order was easier to give than perform: in half a minute every one of the guards had a prisoner at his throat,—the battle became general,—every one being particularly engaged through all the interior of the host, many of them struggling in pairs on the earth, who to get uppermost, and have the mastery. It was all for life, and no exertion was withheld; but, whenever these single combats ended in close gripes, the Scots had the mastery, their bodies being in so much better condition. They made a great noise, both individually and in their files, but the English scarcely opened their mouths; like bred mastiffs, when desperately engaged, they only aimed at the vital parts of their opponents, without letting their voices be heard.

It is vain at this period to attempt giving a better description of the scenes of that night, for the men that were present in the affray could give no account of it next day. But, after a hard encounter and heavy loss, the English fought their way up to their friends before the ramparts, [194] who had all the while been engaged in skirmishing with the foot of the western division, whom they had kept at bay, and thus preserved the entrance clear to themselves and brethren; but ere the rear had got over the half-moon before the bridge, it was heaped full of slain.

There were more of the Scots slain during the conflict of that hideous night than of the English; but by far the greater number of prisoners remained with the former, and several of them were men of note; but such care was taken to conceal rank and titles, after falling into the hands of their enemies, that they could only be guessed at. De Gray was slain, and Collingwood was wounded and taken; so that on taking a muster next day, the English found themselves losers by their heroic sally.

They had, however, taken one prize, of which, had they known the value, it would have proved a counterbalance, for all their losses, and all the distinguished prisoners that formerly told against them. This was no other than the pretended page, Colin Roy, of whose sex and quality the reader [195] has been formerly apprised, and whom they found concealed among some baggage in the Douglas' tent. Grievous was that page's plight when he found himself thrust into a vault below the castle of Roxburgh, among forty rude soldiers, many of them wounded, and others half-naked, and nothing given them to subsist on. Concealment of his true sex for any length of time was now impossible, and to divulge the secret certain ruin to himself and the cause of Douglas.

Next day he pleaded hard for an audience of Musgrave, on pretence of giving him some information that deeply concerned himself; and he pleaded with such eloquence that the guards listened to him, and informed the commander, who ordered the stripling to be brought before him. The next day following was that appointed for the execution of Sir Richard Musgrave. Colin informed the governor that, if he would give him his liberty, he would procure a reprieve for his brother, at least until the day of the Conception, during which period something might occur that [196] would save the life of so brave a youth; that he was the only man on earth who had the power to alter the purpose of Douglas in that instance; and that he would answer with his head for the success,—only the charm required immediate application.

Musgrave said it was a coward's trick to preserve his own life,—for how could he answer to him for his success when he was at liberty? But that no chance might be lost for saving his brother's life, he would cause him to be conducted to Douglas under a strong guard, allow him what time he required to proffer his suit, and have him brought back to prison till the day of the Conception was over, and if he succeeded he should then have his liberty. This was not exactly what Colin wanted: However, he was obliged to accept of the terms, and proceeded to the gate under a guard of ten men. The Scots officer of the advanced guard refused to let any Englishman pass, but answered with his honour to conduct the stripling in safety to his commander, and in two [197] hours return him back to the English at the draw-bridge. No more was required; and he was conducted accordingly to the door of Douglas' tent, which, as he desired, he was suffered to

enter, the men keeping guard at the door.

In the confusion of that morning, Douglas never had missed the page, nor knew he that he was taken prisoner; and when the boy entered from his own little apartment, he judged him to be in attendance as usual. He had a bundle below his arm tied up in a lady's scarf, and a look that manifested great hurry and alarm. The Douglas, who was busily engaged with two knights, could not help noting his appearance, at which he smiled.

"My lord," said the boy, "I have an engagement of great importance to-day, and the time is at hand. I cannot get out at the door by reason of the crowd, who must not see this. Will it please you to let me pass by your own private door into the city?"

[198] Douglas cursed him for a troublesome imp, and forthwith opened the door into the concealed way; and as all who came from that door passed unquestioned, the page quickly vanished in the suburbs of the city.

The officer and his guard waited and waited until the time was on the point of expiring, and at last grew quite impatient, wondering what the boy could be doing so long with the commander. But at length, to their mortal astonishment, they beheld the stripling coming swaggering up from the high street of the city behind them, putting a number of new and ridiculous airs in practice, and quite unlike one going to be delivered up to enemies to be thrown into a dungeon, or perhaps hanged like a dog in a day or two.

The officer knew nothing of the concealed door and passage, and was lost in amazement how the page should have escaped from them all without being visible; but he wondered still more how the elf, being once at liberty, should have thought of coming strutting back to deliver himself up again.

[199] "Where the devil have you been, master, an it be your will?" said the officer.

"Eh? What d'ye say, mun?" said the unaccountable puppy. "What do I say mun!" replied the officer, quite unable to account either for the behaviour of the prisoner or his address; "I say I trow ye hae seen sic a man as Michael Scott some time in your days? Ye hae gi'en me the glaiks aince by turning invisible; but be ye deil, be ye fairy, I sal secure ye now. Ye hae nearly gart me brik my pledge o' honour, whilk I wadna hae done for ten sic necks as yours."

"Your pledge o' honour? What's that, mun? Is that your bit sword? Stand back out o' my gate."

"Shakel my knackers," said the officer laughing, "if I do not crack thy fool's pate! What does the green-kail-worm mean? You, sir, I suppose are presuming to transact a character? You are playing a part in order to get off, but your silly stratagem will fail you. Pray, my young master, what character do you at present appear in?"

[200] "Character me no characters!" said the page,—it is not with you that I transact—nor such as you! Do not you see who I am, and what commission I bear? Bide a great way back out o' my gate an ye please; and show me where I am to deliver this."

"And who is that bald epistle for, master Quipes? Please to open your sweet mouth, and read me the inscription."

"Do you not see, saucy axe-man? Cannot you spell it? 'To James, Earl of Douglas and Mar, with greeting, These.' Herald me to your commander, nadkin; but keep your distance—due proportioned distance, if you please."

"No, no, my little crab cherry; you cheated me by escaping from the tent invisible before, but shall not do it again. We'll get your message done for you; your time is expired, and some more to boot, I fear; come along with us."—And forthwith one of their number waited on the chief with the letter, while the rest hauled off the unfortunate page, and delivered him back to the English.

[201]

CHAPTER IX.

His doublet was sae trim and neat,
Wi' reid goud to the chin,
Ye wad hae sworn, had ye been there,
That a maiden stood within.
The tears they trickled to his chin,
And fell down on his knee;
O had he wist before he kissed,
That the boy was a fair ladye.

Song of May Marley.

Who's she, this dame that comes in such a guise,
Such lace of import, and unwonted speech?
Tell me, Cornaro. For methinks I see
Some traits of hell about her.

Trag. of The Prioress.

In this perilous situation were placed the two most beautiful ladies of England and Scotland, at

the close of that memorable year; and in this situation stood the two chiefs with relation to those they valued dearest in life; the one quite unconscious of the misery that awaited him, but the other prepared to stand the severest of trials. Success had for some time past made a show of favouring the Scots, but she had not yet declared herself, and matters with them soon began to look worse. As a commencement of their misfortunes, on that very night the battle took place, the English received a supply of thirty horse-loads of provisions, with assurances that Sir Thomas Musgrave, the governor of Berwick, was setting out with a strong army to their succour. [202]

The supply was received in this way. There was a bridge over the Teviot, which communicated only with the castle, the north end of it being within the draw-bridge, and that bridge the English kept possession of all the time of the siege. It being of no avail to the Scots, they contented themselves by keeping a guard at the convent of Maisondieu, to prevent any communication between the fortress and the Border. But the English barons to the eastward, whose castles lay contiguous to the Tweed, taking advantage of the great flood, came with a strong body of men, and attacking this post by surprise, they beat them, and, chasing them a considerable way up the river, got the convoy along the bridge into the castle.

This temporary relief raised the spirits of the English, or rather cheered their prospects, for higher in inveterate opposition their spirits could not be raised. On the day following, likewise, a flying party of Sir Thomas Musgrave's horse made their appearance on the height above Hume castle, and blew their horns, and tossed their banners abroad on the wind, that the besieged might see them, and understand that their friends were astir to make a diversion in their favour. [203]

On the same day a new gibbet was erected on the top of the Bush-law, with a shifting wooden battery, to protect the executioners; and all within the castle feared that the stern and unyielding Douglas was going to put his threat respecting the life of Sir Richard Musgrave into execution. Therefore, to prevent their captain from seeing the scene, and, if possible, his mind from recurring to it, they contrived to get a council of war called, at which they intentionally argued and contended about matters of importance, in order to detain him until the sufferings of his brother were past. [204]

The Bush-law, on which the Scots had a strong fortification, rises abruptly over against the western tower of the castle of Roxburgh; they were separated only by the moat, and, though at a great height, were so near each other, that men could with ease converse across, and see distinctly what was done. On the top of this battery was the new gibbet erected, the more to gall the English by witnessing the death of their friends.

At noon, the Scots, to the number of two hundred, came in procession up from the city, with their prisoner dressed in his knightly robes; and, as they went by, they flouted the English that looked on from the walls,—but the latter answered them not, either good or bad. By a circular rout to the westward they reached the height, where they exposed the prisoner to the view of the garrison on a semicircular platform, for a few minutes, until a herald made proclamation, that unless the keys of the castle were instantly delivered at the draw-bridge, the life of the noble prisoner was forfeited, and the sentence would momently be put in execution; and then he concluded by calling, in a louder voice, "Answer, Yes or no—once—twice." He paused for the space of twenty seconds, and then repeated slowly, and apparently with reluctance, "Once—twice —*thrice*,"—and the platform folding down, the victim was launched into eternity. [205]

The English returned no answer to the herald, as no command or order had been given. In moody silence they stood till they witnessed the fatal catastrophe, and then a loud groan, or rather growl of abhorrence and vengeance, burst from the troops on the wall, which was answered by the exulting shouts of the Scots. At that fatal moment Musgrave stepped on the battlement, to witness the last dying throes of his loved brother. By some casualty, the day of the week and month happening to be mentioned in the council hall, in the midst of his confused and abstracted ideas, that brought to his remembrance the fate with which his brother had been threatened. Still he had hopes that it would have been postponed; for, as a drowning man will catch violently at floating stubble, so had he trusted to the page's mediation. He had examined the stripling on his return to the dungeon, but the imp proved froward and incommunicative, attaching to himself an importance of which the captain could not perceive the propriety; yet, though he had nothing to depend on the tender mercies of Douglas, as indeed he had no right, he nevertheless trusted to his policy for the saving of his brother alive; knowing that, in his life, he held a bond round his heart which it was not his interest to snap. [206]

As he left the hall of council, which was in the great western tower, and in the immediate vicinity of the scene then transacting, the murmurs of the one host and the shouts of the other drew him to the battlement, whence his eye momently embraced the heart-rending cause of the tumult. He started, and contracted every muscle of his whole frame, shrinking downward, and looking madly on each hand of him. He seemed in act to make a spring over the wall; and the soldiers around him perceiving this, and haply misjudging the intent of his motion, seized on him to restrain him by main force. But scarcely did he seem to feel that he was held; he stretched out his hands toward his brother, and uttered a loud cry of furious despair, and then in a softer tone cried, "Oh! my brother! my brother!—So you would not warn me, you dog?—Nor you?—Nor you?—No, you are all combined against me. That was a sight to gratify you, was it not? My curse on you, and all that have combined against the life of that matchless youth!" and with that he struggled to shake them from him. "My lord! my lord!" was all that the soldiers uttered, as they restrained him. [207]

At that instant Clavering rushed on the battlement. "Unhand the captain!" cried he: "Dare you, for the lives that are not your own, presume to lay violent restraint on him, and that in the full view of your enemies?"

"I will have vengeance, Clavering!" cried Musgrave,—"ample and uncontrolled vengeance! Where is the deceitful and impertinent stripling that promised so solemnly to gain a reprieve for my brother, and proffered the forfeit of his life if he failed?" [208]

"In the dungeon, my lord, fast and secure."

"He is a favourite parasite of the Douglas; bring him forth that I may see vengeance executed on him the first of them all. I will hang every Scot in our custody; but go and bring him the first. It is a base deceitful cub, and shall dangle opposite to that noble and now lifeless form. It is a poor revenge indeed,—but I will sacrifice every Scot of them. Why don't you go and bring the gilded moth, you kennel knaves? Know you to whom you thus scruple obedience?"

Clavering was silent, and the soldiers durst not disobey, though they obeyed with reluctance, knowing the advantages that the Scots possessed over them, both in the numbers and rank of their prisoners. They went into the vaults, and, without ceremony or intimation of their intent, lifted the gaudy page in their arms, and carried him to the battlement of the western tower, from whence, sans farther ceremony, he was suspended from a beam's end. [209]

Douglas could not believe the testimony of his own senses when he saw what had occurred. Till that moment he never knew that his page was a prisoner. Indeed, how could he conceive he was, when he had seen him in his tent the day after the night engagement? His grief was of a cutting and sharp kind, but went not to the heart; for though the boy had maintained a sort of influence over him, even more than he could account to himself for, yet still he was teasing and impertinent, and it was not the sort of influence he desired.

"I wish it been our blessed Lady's will to have averted this," said he to himself: "But the mischances of war often light upon those least concerned in the event. Poor Colin! thy beauty, playfulness, and flippancy of speech deserved a better guerdon. How shall I account to my royal mistress for the cruel fate of her favourite?"

With all this partial regret, Douglas felt that, by the loss of this officious page of the princess, he would be freed from the controul of petticoat-government. He perceived that the princess lived in concealment somewhere in the neighbourhood,—kept an eye over all his actions and movements,—and, by this her agent, checked or upbraided him according to her whimsical inexperience. Douglas was ambitious of having the beautiful princess for his spouse,—of being son-in-law to his sovereign,—and the first man in the realm; but he liked not to have his counsels impeded, or his arms checked, by a froward and romantic girl, however high her lineage or her endowments might soar. So that, upon the whole, though he regretted the death of Colin Roy MacAlpin, he felt like one released from a slight bondage. Alas, noble chief! little didst thou know of the pang that was awaiting thee! [210]

It will be recollected that, when the Lady Margaret first arrived in the campin the character of Colin her own page, she lodged her maid in the city of Roxburgh, disguised likewise as a boy. With her she communicated every day, and contrived to forward such letters to the Court as satisfied her royal mother with regard to the motives of her absence,—though these letters were, like many others of the sex, any thing but the direct truth. The king was at this period living in retirement at his castle of Logie in Athol, on pretence of ill health. [211]

The name of the maiden of honour thus disguised was Mary Kirkmichael, the daughter of a knight in the shire of Fife. She was a lady of great beauty, and elegant address,—shrewd, sly, and enterprising.

Two days after the rueful catastrophe above related, word was brought to Douglas, while engaged in his pavilion, that a lady at the door begged earnestly to see him. "Some petitioner for the life of a prisoner," said he: "What other lady can have business with me? Tell her I have neither leisure nor inclination at present to listen to the complaints and petitions of women."

"I have told her so already," said the knight in waiting; "but she refuses to go away till she speak with you in private; and says that she has something to communicate that deeply concerns your welfare. She is veiled; but seems a beautiful, accomplished, and courtly dame." [212]

At these words the Douglas started to his feet. He had no doubt that it was the princess, emerged from her concealment in the priory or convent, and come to make inquiries after her favourite, and perhaps establish some other mode of communication with himself. He laid his account with complaints and upbraidings, and, upon the whole, boded no great good from this domiciliary visit. However, he determined to receive his royal mistress with some appearance of form; and, in a few seconds, at a given word, squires, yeomen, and grooms, to the amount of seventy, were arranged in due order, every one in his proper place; and up a lane formed of these was the lady conducted to the captain, who received her standing and uncovered; but, after exchanging courtesies with her, and perceiving that it was not the princess, jealous of his dignity, he put on his plumed bonnet, and waited with stately mien the developement of her rank and errand. [213]

It was Mary Kirkmichael.

"My noble lord," said she, "I have a word for your private ear, and deeply doth it concern you and all this realm."

Douglas beckoned to his friends and attendants, who withdrew and left him alone with the dame, who began thus with great earnestness of manner: "My lord of Douglas, I have but one question to ask, and, if satisfied with the answer, will not detain you a moment. What is become of the page Colin that attended your hand of late?" Douglas hesitated, deeming the lady to be some agent of the princess Margaret's. "Where is he?" continued she, raising her voice, and advancing a step nearer to the captain. "Tell me, as you would wish your soul to thrive. Is he well? Is he

safe?"

"He is sped on a long journey, lady, and you may not expect to meet him again for a season."

"Sped on a long journey! Not see him again for a season! What does this answer mean? Captain, [214] on that youth's well-being hang the safety, the nobility, and the honour of your house. Say but to me he is well, and not exposed to any danger in the message on which he is gone."

"Of his well-being I have no doubt; and the message on which he is gone is a safe one. He is under protection from all danger, commotion, or strife."

"It is well you can say so, else wo would have fallen to your lot, to mine, and to that of our nation."

"I know he was a page of court, and in the confidence of my sovereign and adored Lady Margaret. But how could any misfortune attending a page prove of such overwhelming import?"

"*Was* a page of court, my lord? What do you infer by that *was*? Pray what is he now? I entreat of you to be more explicit."

"The plain truth of the matter is shortly this: The boy fell into the hands of our enemies that night of the late fierce engagement."

At this the lady uttered a scream; and Douglas, dreading she would fall into hysterics, stretched [215] out his arms to support her. "I pity you, gentle maiden," said he, "for I perceive you two have been lovers."

She withdrew herself, shunning his profered support, and, looking him wildly in the face, said in a passionate voice, "In the hands of the English? O Douglas, haste to redeem him! Give up all the prisoners you have for that page's ransom; and if these will not suffice, give up all the lands of Douglas and Mar; and if all these are still judged inadequate, give up yourself. But, by your fealty, your honour, your nobility, I charge you, and, in the name of the Blessed Virgin, I conjure you to lose no time in redeeming that youth."

Douglas could scarcely contain his gravity at this rhapsody, weening it the frantic remonstrance of a love-sick maid; but she, perceiving the bent and tenor of his disposition, held up her hand as a check to his ill-timed levity. "Unhappy chief!" exclaimed she, "Little art thou aware what a gulf [216] of misery and despair thou art suspended over, and that by a single thread within reach of the flame, and liable every moment to snap, and hurl thee into inevitable ruin. Know, and to thyself alone be it known, that that page was no other than the princess of Scotland herself; who, impelled by romantic affection, came in that disguise to attend thee in all thy perils, undertaken for her sake. It was she herself who seized her rival, and placed her in your hands, thus giving you an advantage which force could not bestow. And from time to time has she laid such injunctions on you, written and delivered by her own hand, as she judged conducive to your honour or advantage. If you suffer that inestimable lady to lye in durance, or one hair of her head to fall to the ground, after so many marks of affection and concern for you, you are unworthy of lady's esteem, of the titles you bear, or the honour of knighthood."

When the lady first came out with the fatal secret, and mentioned the princess's name, Douglas strode hastily across the floor of the pavilion, as if he would have run out at the door, or rather [217] fallen against it; but the motion was involuntary; he stopped short, and again turned round to the speaker, gazing on her as if only half comprehending what she said. The truth of the assertion opened to him by degrees; and, it may well be supposed, the intelligence acted upon his mind and frame like a shock of electricity. He would fain have disbelieved it, had he been able to lay hold of a plausible pretext to doubt it; but every recollected circumstance coincided in the establishment of the unwelcome fact. All that he could say to the lady, as he stood like a statue gazing her in the face, was, "Who art thou?"

"I am Mary Kirkmichael of Balmedie," said she, "and I came with the princess, disguised as her attendant. I am her friend and confidant, and we held communication every day, till of late that my dear mistress discontinued her visits. O captain, tell me if it is in your power to save her!"

Douglas flung himself on a form in the corner of the tent, and hid his face with his hand, and at [218] the same time groaned as if every throb would have burst his heart's casement. He had seen his royal, his affectionate, and adored mistress swung from the enemy's battlements, without one effort to save her, and without a tear wetting his cheek; and his agony of mind became so extreme that he paid no more regard to the lady, who was still standing over him, adding the bitterest censure to lamentation. Yet he told her not of her mistress's melancholy fate,—he could not tell her; but the ejaculatory words that he uttered from time to time too plainly informed Mary Kirkmichael that the life of her royal mistress was either in jeopardy or irretrievably lost.

The Douglas saw the lady no more, nor regarded her. He rushed from the tent, and gave such orders as quite confounded his warriors, one part being quite incompatible with another; and, in the confusion, Mary glided quietly away from the scene without farther notice. All the motions of Douglas, for two days subsequent to this piece of information, were like those of a drunken man; [219] he was enraged without cause, and acted without consistency; but the only point towards which all these jarring and discordant passions constantly turned was revenge on the English—deadly and insatiable revenge. When he looked towards the ramparts of the castle, his dark eye would change its colour, and sink deeper under his brow, while his brown cheeks would appear as if furrowed across, and his teeth ground and jarred against one another. His counsels, however, were not, at this time, of a nature suited to accomplish any thing material against his rivals. He meditated the most deadly retaliation, but was prevented before he could put it in practice.

On the following evening, when the disturbance of his mind had somewhat subsided, and appeared to be settling into a sullen depression of spirit, or rather a softened melancholy, he was accosted by a monk, who had craved and obtained admittance—for a deference to all that these people said or did was a leading feature of that age. Douglas scarcely regarded him on his first [220] entrance, and to his address only deigned to answer by a slight motion of his head; for the monk's whole appearance augured little beyond contempt. He was of a diminutive stature, had a slight, starved make, and a weak treble voice. His conversation, nevertheless, proved of that sort that soon drew the attention of the chief.

"May the blessed Virgin, the mother of God, bless and shield you, captain!"

"Humph!" returned the Douglas, noding his head.

"May Saint Withold be your helmet and buckler in the day of battle—"

"Amen!" said the Douglas, interrupting him, and taking a searching look of the tiny being that spoke, as if there were something in the tones of his voice that struck him with emotion.

—"And withhold your weapon from the blood of the good," added the monk, "from the breast of the professor of our holy religion, and dispose your heart to peace and amity, that the land may have rest, and the humble servants of the Cross protection. Why don't you say 'Amen' to this, [221] knight? Is your profession of Christianity a mere form? and are the blessed tenets which it enjoins, strangers to thy turbulent bosom?"

"Humph!" said Douglas: "With reverence be it spoken, monk, but you holy brethren have got a way of chattering about things that you do not understand. Adhere to your books and your beads. I am a soldier, and must stick by my profession, bearing arms for my king and country."

"I am a soldier too," rejoined the monk, "and bear arms and suffer in a better cause. But enough of this. I have a strange message for you, captain. You must know that, a few weeks ago, a beautiful youth came to our monastery seeking supply of writing materials, which he could not otherwise procure. He was a kind and ingenious youth. I supplied him, for I loved him; and I have since seen him sundry times in my cell. But last night, as I was sitting alone, a little before midnight—I am afraid you will not believe me, captain, for the matter of my message is so [222] strange—I had gone over my breviary, and was sitting with the cross pressed to my lips, when behold the youth entered. I arose to receive him; but he beckoned me to keep away from his person, and glided backward. I then recollected that he must be a spirit, else he could not have got in; and, though I do not recollect all that he said, the purport of his message was to the following effect:

"'Benjamin,' said he, 'arise and go to the captain of the Scottish army, whom you will find in great perplexity of mind, and meditating schemes of cruelty and retaliation, which would be disgraceful to himself and to his country. But let him beware; for there be some at his hand that he does not see; and if he dare in the slightest instance disobey the injunctions which you shall from time to time lay on him, his sight shall be withered by a visitant from another world, whose face he shall too well recognize ever again to find rest under a consciousness of her presence. Monk Benjamin, [223] I was not what I seemed. A few days ago I was a lady in the prime of youth and hope. I loved that captain, and was betrothed to him. For his sake I ventured my life, and lost it without a single effort on his part to save me. But his fate is in my hand, and I will use the power. It is given to me to control or further his efforts as I see meet,—to turn his sword in the day of battle,—or to redouble the strength of his and his warriors' arms. My behests shall be made known to him; and if he would avoid distraction of mind, as well as utter ruin, let him tremble to disobey. In the first place, then, you will find him pondering on a scheme for the recovery of my lifeless body,—a scheme of madness which cannot and may not succeed; therefore, charge him from me to desist. You will find him farther preparing an embassy to my father and mother to inform them of the circumstances of my death, and that not in the words of truth. But let him take care to keep that a secret, as he would take care of his life and honour, for on that depends his ultimate success. [224] Tell him farther, from me, to revenge my death, but not on the helpless beings that are already in his power; to pursue with steady aim his primary object,—and his reward shall be greater than he can conceive.'

"Strange as this story may appear, captain, it is strictly according to truth. You yourself may judge whether it was a true or lying spirit that spoke to me."

"Are you not some demon or spirit yourself," said the Douglas, "who know such things as these? Tell me, are you a thing of flesh and blood, that you can thus tell me the thoughts and purposes of my heart?"

"I am a being such as yourself," said the monk,—"a poor brother of the Cistertian order, and of the cloister adjoining to this; and I only speak what I was enjoined to speak, without knowing whether it is true or false. I was threatened with trouble and dismay if I declined the commission; and I advise you, captain, for your own peace of mind, to attend to this warning."

Douglas promised that he would, at least for a time; and the monk, taking his leave, left the earl [225] in the utmost consternation. The monk's tale was so simple and unmasked, there was no doubting the truth of it,—for without such a communication it was impossible he could have known the things he uttered; and the assurance that a disembodied being should have such a power over him, though it somewhat staggered the Douglas' faith, created an unwonted sensation within his breast—a sensation of wonder and awe; for none of that age were exempt from the sway of an overpowering superstition.

[226]

CHAPTER X.

What a brave group we have! That fellow there,
He with the cushion, would outprate the cricket;
The babble of the brook is not more constant,
Or syllabled with such monotony,
Than the eternal tingle of his tongue.

Cor. I'll bid him silence, master;
Or do him so, which likes you.

The Prioress.

We must now leave the two commanders in plights more dismal than ever commanders were before, and return to our warden, the bold baron of Mountcomyn, whose feats form a more pleasant and diverting subject. His warfare all this while was of a predatory nature,—for that his warriors were peculiarly fitted, and at this time they did not fail to avail themselves well of the troubles on the border, and the prevailing power of the Scots alongst its line. The warden pretended still to be acting in concert with Douglas, but his operations were all according to the purposes of his own heart. He cared nothing for the success or the aggrandisement of Douglas; [227] but he had a particular eye to the advancement of his own house, and the honour of his kinsmen. It was therefore a matter of daily consultation with him and his friends, how they should act in conformity with this ruling principle. The probability was against Douglas, that he would ultimately fail in his undertaking, and be stripped of all his dominions. Viewing the matter in that light, it was high time for the Redhough to be providing for himself. On the other hand, should Douglas succeed in his enterprize, and become the king's son-in-law, there was no other way by which the warden could hold his own, save by a certain species of subordination, a submission in effect, though not by acknowledgment. Such matters were perfectly understood by the chiefs in these times, and all who proved refractory were taught in silence to feel the grounds on which they stood, This was, therefore, a most critical period for Sir Ringan. The future advancement of his house depended on every turn of his hand. During all the former part of the siege he had [228] conducted himself with an eye to Douglas' failure, to which he was partly incited by the prophecies of Thomas the Rhymer, and those of his kinsman, Master Michael Scott of Oakwood, whom he believed the most powerful wizard, and the greatest prophet, that ever had arisen since the Rhymer's days.

But, on the return of Charlie of Yardbire and Dan Chisholm from the beleaguering army, the warden got the extraordinary intelligence, that the Lady Jane Howard had fallen into the hands of the Douglas, as well as Musgrave's only brother. These things changed Sir Ringan's prospects of the future in a very material degree, and he pondered on changing his mode of operations. Before doing so, however, he called a council of his kinsmen, and brought the matter again before them. Most of them counselled the continuance of the predatory warfare in which they had been engaged; it had served to enrich them, and had proved, as they reasoned, of more service to the Douglas than if they had joined his host. That it proved of more service to himself [229] and his kinsmen than if they had joined the host, the warden was well aware; but he was not satisfied that the Douglas viewed their mountain warfare as of great consequence to him; and he farther knew, that services were always repaid, not according to the toil and exertion undergone, but according as they were estimated, while that estimation was ever and anon modelled by the apparent motives of the performer.

After much slow and inanimate reasoning on the matter, Sir Ringan chanced, after a minute's deep thought, to say, "What would I not give to know the events that are to happen at Roxburgh between this time and the end of the Christmas holidays?"

"Auld Michael Scott will ken brawly," said Charlie of Yardbire.

"Then, what for shoudna we ken too?" said the knight.

"Aye, what for shoudna we ken too?" said Dickie o' Dryhope.

"They might get a kittle cast that meddled wi' him, an' nae the wiser after a'," said Robert of [230] Howpasley.

"When he was at pains to come a' the way to the castle of Mountcomyn," said Simon Longspeare, "a matter o' five Scots miles ower the moor, to warn our captain, the warden, how to row his bowls, he surely winna refuse to tell him what's to be the final issue o' this daft contest."

"Ane wad think he wadna spare a cantrip or twa," said Sir Ringan; "him that has spirits at his ca', an' canna get them hadden i' wark. It wad be an easy matter for him; an' blood's aye thicker than water."

"Ay, that's a true tale," said Dickie o' Dryhope; "It wad be an easy matter for him, we a' ken that; an' blood's aye thicker than water!"

"If I were to gang wi' a gallant retinue," said Sir Ringan, "he surely wadna refuse to gie me some answer."

"He wad refuse the king o' France," said Robert of Howpasley, "if he warna i' the key for human conversation, an' maybe gar his familiar spirits carry you away, and thraw ye into the sea, or set [231] you down i' some faraway land, for a piece o' employment to them, and amusement to himsel'. He has served mony ane that gate afore now."

"Od I'll defy him," said muckle Charlie of Yardbire. "If my master, the warden, likes to tak me wi'

him for his elbowman, I'll answer for him against a' the monkey spirits that auld Michael has."

"Spoke like yourself, honest Charlie!" said the baron; "and if it is judged meet by my friends that I should go, you shall be one that shall attend me. Certes, it would be of incalculable benefit to me, for all your sakes, to know even by a small hint what is to be the upshot of this business—But should I be taken away or detained—"

"Ay, should he be taken away or detained, gentlemen: think of that, gentlemen," said Dickie o' Dryhope.

"I approve highly of the mission," said Simon Longspeare; "for I believe there is nothing too hard for that old wizard to do, and no event so closely sealed up in futurity, but that he can calculate [232] with a good deal of certainty on the issue. I see that our all depends on our knowledge of the event; but I disapprove of our chief attending on the wizard in person—for in his absence who is to be our commander? And, should any sudden rising of our foes take place, of which we are every hour uncertain, we may lose more by the want of him one hour than we could ever regain."

"Ay, think of that, gentlemen," said Dickie: "My cousin Longspeare speaks good sense. What could we do wanting Sir Ringan. We're all children to him, and little better without him."

"And old children are the worst of all children," said the warden; "I would rather be deaved with the teething yammer than the toothless chatter. Prithee, peace, and let us hear out our cousin Simon's proposal."

The circle of the gallant kinsmen did not like ill to hear this snub on old Dickie. They could not account for the chief's partiality to him; and they were even afraid that, being the oldest man, he should be nominated to the command in the knight's absence. It was however noted by all, that [233] Dickie was not half so great a man in field or foray as he was at board in the castle of Mountcomyn. Only a very few men of experience discerned the bottom of this. The truth was, that Sir Ringan did not care a doit either for Dickie's counsels or his arm, but he saw that his lady abhorred him, and therefore he would not yield to cast him off. His lady was of a high spirit and proud unyielding temper, and the knight could not stand his own with her at all times and seasons; but before his kinsmen warriors he was particularly jealous of his dignity, and would not yield to the encroachment on it of a single item. It was by this kind of elemental opposition, if it may be so termed, that Dickie maintained his consequence at the warden's castle. In the field he was nothing more than a foolish vain old kinsman.

"I propose," said Longspeare," that we send a deputation of our *notable men* to the warlock, of whom we have some of the first that perhaps ever the world produced. As a bard, or minstrel, we [234] can send Colley Carol, a man that is fit to charm the spirits out of the heart of the earth, or the bowels of the cloud, without the aid of old Michael. As a man of crabbed wit and endless absurdity, we can send the Deil's Tam: As a true natural and moral philosopher, the Laird o' the Peatstacknowe: As one versed in all the mysteries of religion, and many mysteries beside, or some tell lies, we can send the gospel friar. All these are men of spirit, and can handle the sword and the bow either less or more: And as a man of unequalled strength and courage, and a guard and captain over all the rest, we can send Charlie o' Yardbire—and I will defy all the kingdoms of Europe to send out sic another quorum either to emperor, Turk, wizard, or the devil himself."

Every one applauded Simon Longspeare's motion, and declared the deputation worthy of being sent out, if it were for nothing but its own unrivalled excellence. Never, they said, since the mind of man was framed, was there such a combination of rare talent in so small a circle. There was none of those nominated for the mission present excepting muckle Charlie Scott. Charlie [235] scratched his head, and said:—"Gude faith, callans, I hae a queer bike to gang wi! he-he-he! I fear we'll get mae to laugh at us than gie us ought: The Deil's Tam an' the metre poet! the fat gospel friar, and the laird o' the Peatstacknowe! I never gaed out on sic a foray as this afore, an' little do I wot how we'll come on. He-he-he! A wheen queer chaps, faith!"

The jocund kinsmen then shouted to Gibby Jordan of the Peatstacknowe to come into the circle, that they might hear what he had to say about going on this celebrated embassy. This gentleman's name had erst been Gordon: By some mistake, either in spelling, or falling into some foul tub by night, for some grounded it both ways, it had been changed on him to Jordan, and, as he had no resource, he was obliged to admit it as legitimate. He was a man of education, and could read, write, and cast up accounts. But his figure, features, and the nasal twine with which he pronounced every word that he spoke, rendered his discourse irresistibly ludicrous. Every one [236] was so ready to give Jordan the information, that he was chosen as one to go on a deputation to Master Michael Scott the warlock, that the laird for a long time could not get a word said; but stood and looked about him, turning always round his long nose to the speaker that was loudest, or him that was poking him most forcibly to obtain attention.

"Gentlemen," said Gibby Jordan, "you mind me of a story that I have heard about a paddock that was lying on the plowed land, an' by comes the harrows, an' they gangs out ower the tap o' the poor paddock, an' every tooth gae her a tite an' a turn ower. 'What's the matter wi' you the day, Mrs Paddock?' says the goodman: 'Naething ava, but rather ower mony masters this morning,' quo' the paddock; 'I wish I were safe i' my hole again, an' let them ring on.' Sae master's, I'll tak the paddock's hint, an' wish ye a' a good morning."

There was no such escape for the honest laird; they surrounded him, and insisted on hearing his [237] sentiments at full length, teasing him till he began to lose his temper, a thing in which they delighted, for the more mischief the better sport for these wild border moss-troopers. But muckle Charlie perceiving this, came up to his side. "Callants, I'm appointit Gibby's guard," said he, "an' his guard I'll be. What the deil has ony o' you to say to him?"

"Only to hear what he thinks o' the journey," was repeated on all sides.

"Gentlemen," said Gibby, "the hale affair brings me a-mind of a story that I hae heard about a wife that had a batch o' chickens. But then, ye maun mind, gentlemen, she had a very great deal o' chickens, I daresay nae fewer than a hunner, for she had sax great cleckings; an' she was unco feared that the gled wad tak them away; sae she wales out a wheen o' the fattest an' the best, an' she sends them out to the cock, that he might herd an' tak care o' them. 'The cock will fleg away the gleds,' quo she, 'an' gar them keep their distance, an' I'll get my braw birds a' saved.' But by comes the greedy gled; an' when the cock saw him he croups an' he currs; an' blithe to keep his [238] ain skin hale, he staps his head in a hole, an' the gled carried off the hale o' his bit charge. Weel, the gled, he fand them sae fat an' sae gusty, that he never linned till he had taen away every chicken that the wife had."

"Where is the moral of that story, laird?" cried they: "We see no coincidence."

"Because ye're blind," said Jordan: "Dinna ye see that Michael's the cock, the deil's the gled, an' ye're the birds. He'll get us first; an' he'll find out that we're sic a wheen rare chaps, that he'll never blin' till he hae ye ilk ane, an' that will be the end o' your daft embassy."

All the rest of the nominated members being sent for expressly from their different posts, they soon arrived, but they seemed every one to be averse to the mission, except Colley the minstrel, who was elevated with the idea of being introduced to the celebrated Master, anticipating something highly romantic, and precisely in his own way. As for Thomas Craik, better known by [239] the singular appellation of the Deil's Tam, he cared not much about any thing, provided he got plenty of drink, mischief, and breaking of heads.

They got all that day to prepare themselves, while Sir Ringan and his friends were considering what they should send as a present to the illustrious necromancer. They weened he despised riches, believing that he could turn small slates to gold by touching them; and, after much consultation, it was resolved to send him a captive maiden and boy, as they had two in the camp, of exquisite loveliness. The maid was the reputed daughter of Sir Anthony Hall, an inveterate enemy to the baron of Mountcomyn, who had burned his castles and plundered his lands; but the warden at length engaging with him hand to hand at the battle of Blaikhope, slew him, and having discomfited his army, he plundered and harried all that pertained to him, at which time he took this beautiful maiden prisoner, whom he treated kindly, and kept as an handmaiden. Her name was Delany; and so lovely was she become in person, and so amiable in her manners, that [240] several of the knight's kinsmen had asked her in marriage. These applications he had uniformly put off, on pretence of his friends degrading themselves by marrying a captive Englishwoman, a term that never sounded in a Scot's ear but with disgust. But, in fact, the warden did not choose that any of them should be so closely connected with an old respectable Northumberland family.

The boy was called Elias, and was the property of Jock o' Gilmanscleuch, having been taken by him in a night foray at Rothbury. When the warden applied to Jock for him, bidding him name his ransom, he answered, that if he wist "Michael wad either mak a warlock o' him, or tak out his harigalds to be a sacrifice to the deil, he wadna gie him up for a' the lands o' Newburgh an' Birkendely." Being pacified on these points as well as matters would bear, the two captives were dressed in elegant robes, and delivered to the embassy; Charlie was deputed their captain and leader; the rest were all to be equals, on the same footing, and to choose their own speakers. [241]

After getting every direction regarding the purport of their mission, the caution and respect which they were to use toward the Master, and the questions they were to get answered, they departed; every one well mounted on an English horse, the friar on his own substantial mule, and such provision with them as they judged necessary. Carol, the bard, had a lyre and a flute. Gibby Jordan, ycleped of the Peatstacknowe, had nothing beside a rusty sword; the friar had an immense wallet below him, judged to be all implements of enchantment; the others had deer or goatskin wallets, stuffed with such things as they deemed necessary; and all of them wore arms, in case of meeting with any unknown interruption. Several of the gallant kinsmen shed tears on taking leave of Delany; who, contrary to what they all expected, seemed full of gaiety, and rather fond of the change than disheartened at it.

Well, away they rode; and, as soon as they were fairly out of sight of the army, every one began [242] to attach himself to Delany more closely than his neighbour. The friar talked to her of penances, and the sins of youth, and the unlimited confidence due to the professors of religion. The bard chanted his wildest and most amorous ditties. Tam punned and quibbled on the words of the rest; and Gibby continued to narrate his long-winded parables, sometimes to one, sometimes to another, as he found them disposed to listen, and sometimes to none at all. As for Charlie, he contented himself with laughing at them all alternately, and occasionally exchanging a word or sentiment with a valued friend of his.

"Corby, what's a' this cocking o' your lugs, an' casting up o' your head for, lad? Ye're gaun the wrang road for a battle e'en now. An let you but see the sword an' pree the spur, ye dog, ye wad carry your master to the deil: an' troth, for ought he kens, ye may be carrying him born-head to his honour just now, ye unconscionable tike that ye are."

Corby first laid back one ear and then the other, which Charlie took for a kind answer; and, [243] patting his mane, he continued: "Na, na, Corby; I ken ye hae nae ill designs; but only ye ken ye like a little mischief, an' a bit splutter now an' than."

"That minds me o' the story o' Janet Sandilands an' her son Jock," said Gibby Jordan the philosopher, "when he ruggit her hair, an' raive her bussing. 'That callant sude hae his hide threshed for lifting his hand to his mother,' said one: 'Na, na,' quo Janet, 'he maunna be threshed;

Jock has nae ill in his mind, only he likes a tulzie.' She that wad hae a close cog sude keep a hale laiggen, Yardbire; for as the auld saying rins, 'Lippen to a Corby, an' he'll pike out your een.'"

"Shame fa' me gin I see the drift o' your philosophy, Peatstacknowe; but as I'm sure it is weel meant, it sanna be ill ta'en. Corby an' me's twa auld friends, an' we hae a great deal to lippen to ane another. But I wish we had this unsonsy job ower, laird—we're gaun on kittle ground."

"It minds me something o' the fisher that ran away after the Willy-an'-the-wisp," said Jordan: "It's [244] a lang story, but it's weel wordy the hearing."

"If it be a *very* lang story, we might as weel crack about something else," said Charlie. "My heart's unco muckle turned on this daft job o' prying into the time that's to come, an' on what we're to say to the warlock. Gude saif us, laird, wha's to be the speaker? I wish that fleysome job maunna light on you? For you see, gin we set the deil's Tam to address him, he'll put him mad at the very first. The poet can bring out naething but rhames o' high flown nonsense; an' for mysel, I'm an unco plain matter-o'-fact man, an' better at good straiks than good words. Sae that the matter maun lie atween you an' the friar. What say you to this, Peatstacknowe?"

"Gude troth, Yardbire, an the task light on either of us, it may weel bring me in mind o' the laird o' Glencarthon, when he stack i' the midden at Saint Johnston, an' tint himsel i' the dark entry. The laird, you see, he comes to the door of a sow-house, an' calls out, 'Good people within there, [245] can you tell me the way to the Queen's hostlery?' 'Oogh?' cried the auld sow. The laird repeated his question quite distinctly, which disturbing some o' the pigs, they came to the back o' the door an' fell a murmuring an' squeaking. 'What do you say?' said the laird in his turn: 'I'll thank you if you will not just speak so vehemently.' The pigs went on. 'Oh, I hear you speak Erse in this house,' said the laird; 'but, no matter: thank you for your information, I will try to work my way.' Now you see, Yardbire, like draws aye to like; an' for the friar, wi' his auld warld says, or me, to address the great Master, it wad be a reversing o' nature an' the very order of things. I hae nae hope o' our good success at a', an it warna for that bonnie Delany. If he's a man, an' no just an incarnate deil, he will be delightit wi' her."

"I wish we had her safely at him, laird," said Charlie; "for, troth, do ye see, thae chaps hing about [246] her, an' look at her as gin they wadna care to eat her."

"She brings me amind o' a weelfaurd dink gimmer that wench," said Jordan, "that I aince saw gaun up Sowerhopeburn. There was a tichel o' wallidraggle tup hoggs rinning after her, an' plaguing her, till I was just grieved for the poor beast. At length down there comes a wheel-horned ram, the king o' the flock, an' he taks up his station by the side o' the bonny thing, an' than a' the young ranigalds slinkit away as their noses had been blooding. Then the bonny she thing got peace, for whenever ony o' the rascallions began to jee up his lug, an' draw near her, ae glent o' the auld fellow's ee stoppit him short. Now, Yardbire, I trow it is a shame to see a pretty maid jaumphed an' jur-mummled in that gate: if you will just ride close up to the tae side o' her, I'll tak up the tither, an' we'll gar them keep a due distance. There's nane o' them dares shoulder you aside."

"I doubt, laird, there is something selfish in that plan o' yours," said Charlie; "ye hae a hankering [247] yonder yourself, but ye darena try to make your ain way without ye get me to back ye. Fight dog, fight bane, Peatstacknowe; gin I be to tulzie for a bonny may, I tulzie for my ain hand."

"It wad be sae weel done to chap them back," said Jordan: "See to the metre poet how he's capering an' turning up his mou': Yon fat hypocrite, the warlock friar, is blinking out frae aneath his sanctified ee-brees like a Barbary ape: An' there's the deil's Tam; od I think he'll hae his lang coulter nose stappit into her lug."

"Ride up, neighbour," quoth Charlie, "an' tell them that face to face. I like nae yethering ahint backs. Ane may ward a blow at the breast, but a prod at the back's no fair. A man wears neither ee nor armour there. Ride up, ride up, neighbour, gin you winna tell them a' you have said, I'll e'en tell them mysel."

"Yardbire, I hope ye're no gaen gyte, to breed despite amang the warden's ambassadors to the deil. Stop till I tell you a queer joke that's come into my mind by your speaking about armour [248] ahint. Last year, when the dalesmen were cried out in sic a hurry for the Durham raide, there was ane o' Fairniehirst's troopers got strong breastplates o' steel made to defend his heart. There was ane Brogg Paterson in Hawick, a wag that I kenned weel, was employed to fit the harnessing to the clothes; and learning that the raide was to be early in the morning, an' nae leisure for shifting, an' seeing the trooper so intent on protecting his heart, instead o' putting the steel plates in the inside o' his doublet, Paterson fastened them in the seat of his trews. After passing the Tine, the Scots encamped within a half moon of an impervious brake, and sent out a party of foragers, among whom was this trooper Turnbull. The party were pursued by a body of English horse, and several of them slain; but Turnbull reaching the brake, plunged into it, horse and man. The horse stuck fast, and just as poor Turnbull was trying to extricate himself, by scrambling over the horse's head, an Englishman came riding fiercely up, and struck him such a blow with [249] his lance behind as would have spitted him to the neck,—but hitting right on the steel plate, he made him fly heels-o'er-head over the brake, and into a place of safety. A comrade perceiving, came to assist him, and found Turnbull lying on the ground, repeating to himself these words with the utmost devotion:—"God bless Brogg Paterson in Hawick! God bless Brogg Paterson in Hawick!" "Wherefore that?" said the other. "Because," said Turnbull, "he kend better where my heart lay than I did."

Charlie laughed so heartily at this jocular tale, that he did not expose Gibby Jordan of the Peatstacknowe to his associates at that time; but keeping behind with him he held him in

conversation, though he saw that his teeth were watering to be near the fair Delany.

They came that night to a place called Trows, on the English side of the border, but adjoining to the very ridge of the fells. The name of the hind who sojourned there was Jock Robson. He had a good stock both of cows and sheep, being so thoroughly a neutral man that both sides spared [250] him, and both sides trusted him. He gave a night's grass to the driven cattle and sheep from each side, and a night's lodging to the drivers; and for this he exacted kane sheep, or a small cow, which none ever grudged him, because they found themselves so much at home in his house. He would assist either party in catching a prey, and either party in recovering it again, taking rewards from both; and, though both the English and the Scots knew of this, they never trusted him the less, for they knew that what he undertook he would fulfil, but no farther; out of your sight, out of your pay and out of your service with Jock Robson.

At this yeoman's habitation our notable embassy arrived at a late hour, for, though scarcely five o'clock afternoon, it was pitch dark. They called at the door, and out came Jock with a light. The first man that he beheld was the friar.

"Saint Mary's jerkin be about us!" cried Jock Robson, half in sport, half in earnest, "and defend us from our auld black minny's delegates. What seeks Lucky Church amang the hills o' Cheviot, wi' [251] her creeds an' her croons, her trumpery, an' her lang tythes o' sheep an' kye, wild deer, and weathershaker, barndoor an' blackhag fowls? Nought for Minny Church an' her bike here, Sir Monk—naething o' our ain breeding—a' comers an' gangers, like John Nisbet's fat sheep. Howsomever, honest bedesman, I speir ye the auld question,

"Come ye as friend, or come ye as fae?
For sic as ye bring, sic sal ye hae!"

"As thy friends do we come, uncourteous hind," said the monk; "and ask only a little of thy bread, and thy strong drink, for the refreshment of our bodies, that are like the grass on the tops of thy mountains, fading ere it be full grown, and require as thou knowest a supply of earthly refreshment as these do the showers of heaven; and also we ask of thee beds whereon we may lie down and rest: and these things thou must not refuse, for we would not that thou shouldst be to us as the children of Amalek and Moab, and those of Mount Seir."

"Ye speak like a rational man, Sir Monk; but wait till I tell ye the truth, that I lurde see the cross [252] on the handle of sword or spear ony time afore that hanging at the paunch of priest. There's mair honour an' generosity ahint the tane than the tither. But yet it shall never be said o' John Robson o' the Trows that he refused a friend quarters on a dark night. He kens ower weel that the king may come in the beggar's way. Gin ye be joking, he can stand a joke wi' ony man; but gin ye be really gaun to hand him as an Amalekite, he wad like to ken what that is, an' what lengths ye mean to gang."

"Thinkest thou that we will come into thy house to take of thy spoil for a prey, and thy maid servants for bond-women, and also thy little ones?" said the friar.

"The deil be there then," cried Jock Robson. "I wadna grudge ye meal an' maut, but or ye lay a hand on ane o' my lasses, or kidnap away my bits o' bairnies frae me, ye sal gang ower my breast, an' that wi' a braid arrow through ilk ane o' you. Be at your shift, bauld priest, here's for ye." [253]

On saying so, he turned hastily about, and the friar that moment clapping the spurs to his mule, gallopped round the corner, leaving the rest to make good their quarters in the best way they could. The mention of the broad arrow made him think it was high time for him to change his ground.

"There rides gospel, guts an' a'," cried Tam Craik, laughing aloud.

The laugh was well known to Robson; for the warden's troopers had been so often there that year, that almost all of them were John Robson's personal acquaintances.

"What?" cried he, turning back his head, "Isna that the deil's Tam that I hear?"

"Ay, what for shoudna it, lad? an' how dare ye fright away our chaplain wi' your bows an' your braid arrows? Gin we had Jock's Marion, the sow-killer's wife o' Jeddart, at ye, wha wad be crousest then, trow ye?"

"Tam, it is weel kend your tongue is nae scandal; but dinna ye lippen ower muckle to your [254] privilege; gin ye be come to quarter wi' me, dinna let me hear sic a hard jibe as that the night again. Come away, however, the warden's men are welcome, as weel they may be this year. Mony a fat mart they hae left i' my hire. I hope ye hae brought a bonny kane the night."

"Ay, by my certie, lad, an' that we hae; here's nae less a kane than Jock's Marion hersel."

"Ye scawed like bog-stalker! skrinkit, skraeshankit skebeld! dare ye to speak that gate to me at my ain door stane? I shall lend you a clout an ye were the king's cousin, an' see if ye dare return the compliment. Wife, bring the buet an' my piked rung here."

"Peace, in the king's name!" cried Charlie Scott.

"And in the name of St David!" cried the friar, returning to the charge on hearing Charlie's voice.

"And in my name!" cried Tam Craik;" an' Gibby Jordan o' the Peatstacknowe's name; and the [255] name o' Jock's Marion, the sow-sticker's wife o' Jeddart. I say unto thee, look here. Here is the kane will please a brave yeoman. Look if this be nae Marion hersel"—and with that he led Delany's palfrey up to the light.

Robson lifted his eyes and saw her, and was so much struck with her dazzling beauty, that he had

not power to address even his beloved friend Charlie Scott, far less any other of his guests, but lifting the maiden down in his arms, he led her in to his dame, and said to one of his lads, "Rin out wi' a light, callant, an' help the troopers to put up their horses."

The horses were soon put up, for every one seemed more anxious than another to get first in to the cheek of Jock Robson's ingle, and have his seat placed next to that of Delany; but the poet being the most agile, and not the least amorous of the group, effected this greatly to his satisfaction.

[256]

CHAPTER XI.

The youngest turned him in a path,
And drew a buirdly brande,
And fifteen of the foremost slewe,
Till back the lave couthe stande.

Then he spurred the grey unto the path,
Till baith her sides they bledde;
"Now, grey, if thou carry nae me away
My life it lies in wedde."

Ballad of Auld Maitland.

We must pass over a great part of the conversation that evening, in order to get forward to the more momentous part of the history of our embassy. Suffice it to say, that the poet was in high glory, and not only delivered himself in pure iambics, but sung several love ditties, and one song of a foray, that pleased Charlie Scott mightily. But Isaac, the curate, has only given a fragment of it, which runs thus:

If you will meet me on the Dirdam waste,
Merry man mint to follow;
I'll start you the deer, and lead you the chace,
With a whoop, and a whoo, and a hollo!
[257]
The deer that you'll see, has horns enow, &c.
Marked wi' red and merled wi' blue, &c.
And that deer he will not turn his tail
For the stoutest hinds that range the dale.
Come then, driver, in gear bedight;
Come bold yeoman, and squire, and knight;
The wind soughs loud on craig and heuch,
And the linn rowts loud in the Crookside cleuch;
Nor tramp of steed, nor jingle of spear,
Will ever be heard by the southern deer:
The streamer is out, and the moon away,
And the morning starn will rise or day.
Then mount to the stirrup, and scour the fell,
Merry man mint to follow;
And over the muir, and the dean, and the dell,
With a whoop, and a whoo, and a hollo!

* * * * * * * * * *

"Thy words and thy song, young man," said the friar, "are like sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal; if laid in the balance, they are lighter than vanity."

"Yours will not prove so," said the poet, "provided you are laid in with them; for, as the old song says,—

'His wit is but weak, father;
His gifts they are but sma';
But the bouk that's under his breast bane,
It grieves me warst of a.'"

[258]

"If thou singest this nonsense of me," said the friar, "lo, I will smite thee upon the mouth; yea, upon the cheek-bone will I smite thee, till thine eyes shall gush out like two fountains of waters." And so saying, he began to look about him for some missile weapon to throw at the bard's face, his breast burning with indignation,—for he loved not the tenor of the poet's conversation to the maid.

Tam and Jordan encouraged the friar to make the assault, in hopes that the poet might be dislodged or affronted; but Yardbire restrained the warmth of the friar, not being aware of his real sentiments, and ordered peace and good fellowship.

Dame Robson covered the hearth with a huge fire; and her husband bringing in a leg of beef, set it upon the table, and bade every one help himself.

"The words of thy mouth are exceeding good, and sweet unto the ear," said the friar, "as

doubtless thy food is to the taste." With that he rose and helped himself to three nice and [259]
extensive slices of raw beef, and these he roasted on the tongs which he had just lifted to smite the poet on the head.

In good truth, though every one cooked his own supper, as was the fashion of that iron time, there was none did it half so nicely as the friar, nor so bunglingly as Jordan, whose supper, though long behind the others in being ready, was so unshapely a piece, and so raw on the one side, that the friar observed, "it was like Ephraim of old, as a cake unturned." Some roasted their meat on old swords, some on spindles, for their hosts took no heed how they were fitted, or in what manner they shifted in these respects; seemingly satisfied that they had plenty for the cooking, and leaving them to cook it or eat it raw, as they chose. The poet made haste, and, first of all, cooked two or three nice slices for the maiden, giving her what she would take before he would taste a morsel himself. Some commended him for this, and others jeered him; but the friar, in his grave moral style, said the severest things of all. From the very commencement of the journey, a jealousy or misunderstanding began to subsist between these two, which never again [260]
subsided till they came to blows.

The poet answered him again with a song:

"Keep ye to your books and your beads, goodman,
Your Ave Marias and creeds, goodman;
For gin ye end as ye're begun,
There will be some crack of your deeds,
goodman."

At length the party retired to rest, all save Jordan and their worthy host. The latter never slept in the night; he had always some watching, walking, or work in hand that suited that season best: and as for Gibby, he determined to sit up all night to watch that the poet made no encroachments on the place of Delany's repose. Robson encouraged his purpose, joined him heartily in conversation, listened to his long-winded stories with apparent delight, and, when all the rest were asleep, wormed the whole business of the embassy out of the shallow laird, who unfortunately testified his fears that they were carrying the lovely maiden and boy to the old warlock to be a sacrifice to the devil. Robson appeared terribly confounded at this peace of [261]
intelligence,—for from the time that he heard it he conversed no more with Jordan. About one in the morning he began to put on his snow-boots, as if preparing for a journey.

"Where are ye going at this time of night?" enquired the laird.

"I maun gang out an' see how the night wears," said Robson; "I hae sax score o' Scots queys that are outlyers. If I let the king's ellwand ower the hill, I'll hae them to seek frae the kips o' Kale."

Gibby accompanied him to the door, hoping the king's ellwand would not be over the hill, for he had no good will to part with his companion. But as soon as Robson turned his eye to the sky, "Ha, gude faith, I maun post away!" said he, "Yonder's the king's ellwand already begun to bore the hill; ay, there's ane o' the goud knobs out o' sight already, an' I hear the queys rowting ower the waterfa' o' the height. Gude morrow t'ye, laird, I'm ower lang here."

Gibby returned in to the blazing fire; and hearing so many persons all snoring in sleep, he caught [262]
the infection, stretched himself upon a divot seat, and joined the chorus with as much zeal as any of them.

Morning came, and our embassy made ready for proceeding on their journey; but Robson still was wanting, at which both his dame and household lads seemed to wonder, otherwise the rest would have taken no notice of it. Gibby told her about the queys that were outlyers, but she only answered him with a hem! and a slight shake of the head. Charlie, who knew his man well, began to smell a rat; and, calling Gibby to the door, he inquired if he had hinted ought of their business to their host. The laird at first denied; but Charlie questioned him till he confessed the whole, at which Charlie was exceedingly angry; and hearing that he had informed him all about the maiden, and of what family she was sprung, he called Gibby a worthless inconsiderate being, and said he had ruined their expedition, for that he knew Robson kept up a correspondence with the Halls, who were broken men, and many of them skulking about the border; that Delany had [263]
uncles, cousins, and a brother living, if she was the man's daughter she was supposed to be, and that these would without fail waylay them, and kill them every man, for the sake of rescuing her. "Robson," said he, "is altogether selfish, and has some end to serve; perhaps to get the maid into his own hands, for he seemed mightily taken with her beauty; and I calculate widely amiss if we are not watched from this house, and whether we return or proceed we shall be attacked in the first strait or lonely place that we come at." Jordan looked exceedingly out of countenance, and every feature of his face altered. "What had I ado to tell the rascal?" exclaimed he, "or wha wad hae thought o' him playing us sic a trick? Twa-faced dog that he is! It wad be weel done to let his liver pree the taste o' steel!"

Charlie made him promise that he would not mention the circumstance to one of the party, as it was only a surmise, and might impede their progress to no purpose; and forthwith they mounted, [264]
armed with such armour as they had, and all, save Gibby Jordan, as cheerful and as jealous of one another as they were on the preceding day. That worthy kept close by the side of muckle Charlie, and looked so sharp about him, that he perceived every shepherd, traveller, and cairn that appeared on the border fells, always testifying his alarm to his friend that perhaps yon was one of the Halls watching.

Charlie had resolved to go by Jedburgh straight for Oakwood castle; but his suspicions of Robson made him resolve to hold more to the eastward, in order to keep the open road. He knew that if

they were watching him, it would be at the fords of Kale or Oxnam, on the Jedburgh road; and by taking the east path, he would not only elude them, but, in case of a pursuit, be near the outposts of the Scottish army.

For a good way they saw nothing, and began to think themselves in safety; but, in coming down Sowerhope-Middle, a little from the point of the debated land, three horsemen appeared to the westward of them. "His presence be about us," said Gibby,—"yonder *are* the Halls now!" Charlie [265] said nothing, but kept watch. One of the yeomen vanished in a twinkling at full speed, the other two came at a brisk canter to our notable embassy.

"What do they mean?" said Jordan: "Do these two fellows propose to conquer us all?"

"It wad appear that they do," said Charlie, "for they come on us without halt or hesitation."

"I hardly think they'll succeed," added Gibby, "although they're twa dangerous looking chaps. For Godsake, Yardbire, tak care o' their back strokes; if they bring you down, our chance will be the waur."

Charlie then called to the rest of his cavalcade, "Friends, here are some strangers come to join us. Tell them nothing either good or bad, but keep on at a round trot. See, we are not far from the towers of Roxburgh. Whatever these men may say to you, make them nothing the wiser."

"I will not so much as say unto them, whence comest thou, or whither art thou going?" said the [266] friar.

"I'll sing them a ditty of beauty and love,
Of the wing of the raven, the eye of the dove,
And beings all purer than angels above."

said the poet.

"Sic a rhame o' nonsense is there!" said Tam Craik: "If ony o' the dogs say an impertinent thing to me I'll gar his teeth gang down his throat like bristled beans."

It was not long before the two moss-troopers joined the party. They were tall athletic men, armed at all points, and their manner had a dash of insulting impertinence in it.

"A good morning, and fair grace to you, noble and worthy gentlemen!" said the foremost: "May we presume to be of the party?"

"You may *presume*," said the deil's Tam, "for that is what befits you; if you are willing to put up with the presumer's reward."

"You are witty, sir, I suppose," said the trooper; "and pray what may that reward be?"

"Yes, I am witty," said Tam; "and my wit is sharp when it is not in its sheath. Do you understand [267] me? As for the reward of presumption, it is in Scotland to be crankit before and kicked behind."

"The road is at least as free to us as it is to you," said the mosstrooper; "and of that we intend to avail ourselves for the present. We go to join the army before Roxburgh, whither are you bound?"

"We follow our noses," said Tam; "but they guide us not to the army before Roxburgh, and into your rearward they caution us not to enter. Raw hides and rank bacon, keep your distance."

While Tam Craik and the trooper were thus jangling on before, Charlie said to Jordan, "Laird, what do think o' yoursel' now? Ye hae played us a fine pliskie wi' your ill tackit tongue! It is my thought that ere we ride a mile and a half we'll be attacked by a hale troop o' horse. That chap that disna speak is ane o' the wale o' the Ha's: I ken him weel for a' his half visor. The other horseman that left them on the height is ower to the fords of Kale, and, if I guess right, he'll [268] appear at yon scroggy bush wi' sae mony at his back that we wad hardly be a mouthfu' to them, an' that in less time than ane wad gang a mile."

"It is an ill business this," said Gibby: "It brings me in mind o'—o' mair than I's name. But, gudesake, Yardbire, an ye be sure he is ane o' the Halls, what for do nae ye rin your sword in at the tae side o' him an' out at the tither? The sooner a knave like that is put down the better."

"Fair occasion, an' face to face, Peatstacknowe, an' ye sanna see Charlie Scott slack; but ye wadna hae me stick a man, or cleave him down ahint his back, an' that without fair warning and fair arming?"

"Ay, honour an' generosity are braw things, but life's a brawer thing an' a better thing than ony o' the twa. For my part, I wad never stop. My very heart flighters when I look at him, an' I amaist think I find his steel quivering at my midriff. I wish I had a drive at him, wi' a chance o' a hale head."—And from that time Gibby leaned himself forward on his saddle, and fixed his large grey [269] eyes on the mosstrooper like a pointer going to fly on his game; and, in that attitude, he rode several times close up to his side, or very nearly opposite to him, laying his hand now and then on his hilt; but Charlie observed that he never looked his foe in the face with threatening aspect, and, perplexed as he was, could not help laughing at Gibby.

Yardbire now putting the spurs to Corby, galloped aslant the brae to a rising ground, whence he could see if any enemy was approaching by the swire from the fords of Kale, as he suspected. He had not well gained the height before he saw a dozen horsemen coming at the light gallop, but one part of the cavalcade considerably behind the others, owing to their being either worse mounted or worse horsemen.

By this time Charlie's own friends were coming round the bottom of the hill below him, quarrelling with the strangers so loudly, that Charlie heard their voices ascending on the gale in

most discordant notes. The deil's Tam and the English trooper had never since their meeting ceased the jibe and the keen retort; but Tam's words were so provokingly severe, that the moss-man was driven beyond all further forbearance. Just when they were at the hottest, the helmets of the front men of the Northumberland cavalcade began to appear in the swire; a circumstance that was well noted by their offended kinsman, but of which Tam was perfectly unconscious. [270]

"Well, now, thou jaundiced looking thief," said the moss-trooper, turning his horse's head towards Tam's left hand, and making him amble and curvette with his side foremost; "thou lean, nerveless, and soul-less jabberer, all tongue and nothing else—I say, what hast thou to say more?"

The alteration in the man's key of voice somewhat astounded Tam; but his perverse nature would not let him soften his reply, although he liked as well to see others fall into a mischief as himself. "Eh? what do I say?" said he; and with that he turned his horse's head to that of the other, making their two noses to meet; and caricaturing the Englishman's capers, he laughed sneeringly and triumphantly in his face. "What do I say? Eh? what do I say? I say I thought I heard wind, and smelled it a wee too. Hagg-hiding fox that thou art! Wild tike of the moors, dost thou think Tam Craik fears thy prancing and thy carrion breath, or ony o' the bur-throated litter of which thou art the outwale? Nay, an capering and prancing show ought of a spirit, I can caper and prance as well as thou. Out on thee, thou bog-thumper, thou base-born heather-blooter, what do *you* say? Or what *dare* you say?" [271]

Tam had by this time drawn his sword completely to cow the Englishman, and put him to silence; —but he saw what Tam did not see, and knew more than he.

"I dare both say and do, and that thou shalt find," said the trooper; and forthwith he attacked Tam with all his prowess, who, not quite expecting such a thing gave way, and had very nearly been unhorsed; he, however, fought stoutly, defending himself, though manifestly at the disadvantage. The brave friar, at the first clash of the swords, wheeled about his mule, and drawing out a good sword from under his frock, (for he wore the sword on the one side and the cross on the other,) he stretched it forth, pointing it as if to thrust it between them. But, addressing himself to the Englishman, he cried with a loud voice, "Put up *thy* sword again into its place, or verily I will smite thee with the edge of *my* sword." [272]

The other Englishman, who had never yet opened his mouth, and who had always kept apart, as if anxious to conceal who he was, now rode briskly up to the fray; and perceiving the quick approach of his friends, and judging his party quite secure of victory, he struck up the friar's sword in apparent derision. But the inveterate laird of the Peatstacknowe had been watching him all this time, as one colley dog watches another of which he is afraid, in order to take him at an advantage, and the moment that his arm was stretched, so that his sword came in contact with the friar's, Gibby struck him behind, and that with such violence that the sword ran through his body. The wounded trooper reined up his steed furiously, in order to turn on his adversary; Gibby reined his up as quickly to make his escape, but the convulsive force of the Englishman threw his horse over, and in its fall it tumbled against the legs of Gibby's horse with such force that it struck them all four from under him, and both he and his rider fell in a reverse direction, rolling plump over the wounded warrior and his forlorn encumbered steed, that was pawing the air at a furious rate. The two horses falling thus on different sides, their iron-shod hoofs were intermixed, and clashing and rattling away in a tremendous manner, tremendous at least to poor Gibby, whose leg and thigh being below his charger, he was unable to extricate himself. "Happ, Davie, happ!" cried he to the steed: "Up you stupid, awkward floundering thief! Happ, Davie, happ!" Davie could neither happ nor weynd, but there he lay groaning and kicking above his master, who was in a most deplorable plight. [273]

Charlie perceiving the commencement of the fray, was all this while galloping furiously toward the combatants. But the battle was of short duration; for the English trooper, seeing his comrade fall he wist not how, and the friar and Tam having both their swords pointed at him, broke furiously through between them and fled towards his companions, Tam being only enabled to inflict a deep wound on the hinder part of the horse as he passed by. [274]

"I have made him to pass away as the stubble that is driven by the whirlwind," said the friar; "yea, as the chaff before the great wind, so is he fled from the arm of the mighty. Brother, I say unto thee, that thou hadst better arise!" continued he, looking upon the disconsolate Jordan; and passing by on the other side with great *ang froid*, he rode up to Delany, the boy Elias, and the poet, the latter of whom had not been engaged, but, drawing his sword manfully, had stood as a guard to the other two.

Tam Craik pursued his enemy, although apparently not with a fixed design of overtaking him; and Gibby, being thus left all alone with the two inverted horses and the incensed moss-trooper, extended his voice to an amazing pitch, for he knew not what state of health and strength his opponent retained. This was a horrid consideration; for if he should disengage himself and get up first, there was an end of him of the Peatstacknowe. His nasal twine was increased by his dread, and he cried so vehemently, that his cries grew like the cries of a peacock. [275]

Charlie Scott rode up to the main group, who continued to advance at a quiet pace, for they knew nothing as yet of the approaching danger. He also called and made signs to Tam Craik to return; and as soon as he came up to them he pointed out their pursuers, and charged them to ride for their lives. "We are betrayed," said he; but the horses of our enemies are jaded, ours are fresh; therefore, brave lads, in our master's name, spare neither spur, nor horse-flesh. Haud on your way, an' never look ower your shoulders: you will find Corby an' me twa gude back friends." [276]

The friar bent himself forward over the mane of his mule, and opening his eyes wide abroad, he put the spurs to his steed, and set off "with the swiftness of the roe-buck or the hart," as he termed it.

The boy pursued hard after him; and the bard, taking hold of Delany's bridle by both reins below the neck, for fear her steed should stumble and throw his lovely rider, bade her whip on and fear nothing, and in this friendly guise they also made good speed. Charlie then galloped back to see if any life remained in his friend Gibby,—for he only saw him at a distance go down in the encounter, without being exactly versed in the circumstances of his overthrow; but he thought he heard one loud squeak arise from the field after the rest had left it, something like that sent forth by the small drone of the bagpipe; and, guessing that the laird was yet alive, he galloped back to see. By the way he met the deil's Tam, who returned with him, and when they came in view of the [277] spot where the two prostrate heroes had been left, they saw a very curious scene, the more curious because it was transacted by our worthy laird in the presiding belief that he was not seen, for he was too much concerned in his own affairs to perceive the approach of his friends. The Englishman's horse making an exertion, by pressing his feet against the ribs of the laird's Davie, by that means pushed himself forward, and Gibby perceived plainly that his enemy was to be first released. The struggles that Gibby then made were enormous. "Happ, Davie, happ!" cried he: "O mother of God, what shall become of me! Happ, Davie, happ, my man; happ, happ, happ!" and, as a last resource, he reared up his body and struck at the Englishman's limb that was above his horse, crying out to Davie to happ, in bitterness of soul. Davie was not long; for the next moment after the Englishman's horse rose, he got up also, his feet then getting to the ground; but the stirrup that had been under him was crushed together, and there his master's foot remained fixed. Gibby was worse than ever. "Wo, Davie, wo! Tproo, ye thief!" cried he. Davie, [278] finding the weight at his side, wheeled about, and dragged the unfortunate laird round across the breast of the trooper Hall, who seized him by the neck. "Was there ever a man guidit this gate!" cried Gibby. "Honest man, an ye please, let gae; it wasna me that hurt ye." The man answered him not; but Davie being scared by the struggle sprung aside, and the Englishman keeping his hold, Gilbert's foot was released by the loss of his boot. He was not long in making a bold effort to rise, and though Hall hung by his neck a little, it had been in the last agony of receding life that he had seized him, and he dropped dead on the green, having both fists clenched on his breast, in the act of still holding his rival.

When Gibby saw how matters stood, he began to value himself on his courage. "I's gar ye! I's gar ye!" cried he, lifting up his sword, and giving the dead man several desperate gashes, and always between every stroke repeating, "H'm! I's gar ye!" His two friends being now hard beside him, [279] the sound of their horses' feet made him start; but lifting his eye, and perceiving who they were, he again repeated his blows, and continued his threats in a louder key.—"H'm! I's gar ye! I's gar ye, billy! I's learn you to throttle me!"

"Fy, lay on, laird!" cried Tam; "dinna ye see that the man's no half dead yet?"

"I think I hae done for him;" said Gibby: "He brings me a-mind o' a wife that had to kill her cat thrice ower. I's learn the best o' the haggies-headed Ha's to meddle wi' me!"

"I think he'll do that ane, however, Gibby; if he had e'en the nine lives o' the wife's cat," said Charlie: "therefore, an ye please, put up your sword, an' mount your horse. It's no a time now to examine whether ye hae behaved in a sodger-like manner wi' that bold trooper. If I wist ye had not, it should be the last hour I should ride in your company—but mount quick an' ride; for see whar the rest o' the Ha's are coming across us. Ilk horse an' man do what he can, or dear will be [280] our raide, an' yours, friend, the dearest of a'."

One look filled Gilbert's eye. He mounted Davie, with the one boot off and the other on, and there was little occasion to bid him ride. Before they turned the corner of the hill, their pursuers came so close on them, that they looked very like cutting off their retreat; but a bog, around which the English were forced to cast a wide circuit, saved our three heroes, and gave them the start, by fully a half mile, of their foes, who still came in a straggling way as their horses could keep up. After a hard chace of two Scottish miles they came up with the friar, whose mule being too heavy loaden had begun to fag. When he saw them gaining on him so hard, he judged that all was over with him, and spurred on his jaded beast in vain. "O that my flesh were as my armour or my clothing," cried he, "that I might put it off at will, and escape from the face of mine enemies. Lo! I shall be left all alone, and surrounded and taken and slain." As he divined, so it fell out; the others were soon by him, and he was left the hindermost. Then they heard him lamenting to [281] himself in his own sublime eastern stile, that he had not the wings of the eagle or the dove, that he might bear away to the mountains and the cliffs of the rocky hills, to elude the dreadful weapons of death, so often reared over his head, and so often warded by the arm of heaven.

"Poor devil!" said muckle Charlie, the tear standing in his eye; "Od I canna leave him after a'. Come what will, I for ane shall stand or fa' wi' him. I whiles think there's mair in that body than we moorland men wot of,—I canna leave him to be cut in pieces."

"O fy, let him tak his chance," said Tam; "let him bide his weird; he deserves it a'. What signifies the creature? He's just a thing made up o' hypocritical rant, empty words, and stuffed paunches. Let him bide the buffet that fa's to his share."

"Ay, what signifies sic a corpulation?" said Jordan. "It will be lang or *he* bring down man an' horse in an encounter. He brings me in mind o' a capon that claps his wings, but craws nane. Let him [282] tak his chance."

"Na, but callans, troth my heart winna let me," said Charlie: "For his good deeds, or his ill anes

he's answerable to heaven, an' neither to you nor me. But he's a fellow creature, an' has nane to look to for help but us at this time. Life's sweet to us a', an' it's unco hard to leave our master's bedesman just to be sacrificed. Therefore, come what will, I'll turn an' lend the friar a hand. As for you twa, ride on; the young couple that are committed to our charge may escape." With that he wheeled Corby's head about, and rode back to meet the gospel friar.

When he met him, the foremost of the riders had advanced within a bow shot, and was fast gaining ground. The friar still continued to spur on, and though his mule likewise continued the motion of one that gallops, the progress that he made was hardly discernible. He had a sort of up and down hobble that was right laughable to behold in one riding for his life. When he saw the [283] dauntless Yardbire return to meet him, with his large seven feet sword drawn, and heaved over his right shoulder, he lifted up his voice and wept, and he said unto him;—"Blessed be thou, my son! The blessing of a man ready to perish light upon thee! And now, lo, I will draw forth my sword and return with thee to the charge, and thou shalt see what a poor bedesman can do."

"It is brawly said, good friar,—but gin ye wad save yoursel' an' me, ride. An we could but mak the end o' the Thief-gate, they should buy our twa lives dear. If thou wilt but exert man an' beast, father, you an' I shall fight, flee, or fa' thegither. But see, we are already overtaken, and in the enemy's hands."

The foremost of the riders was now hard behind them; but, perceiving Charlie, he reined up his horse and looked back for his comrades. The friar gave a glance back, and he said, "Lo, thou art a mighty man of valour, and behold there is but one; do thou fall upon him and smite him; why should one pursue two?"

"I hae heard waur advices frae mair warlike men," said Charlie; "Ride ye on, father, an' lose nae [284] time. Gude faith! I sal gie this ane his breakfast."

Charlie as he said this put the spurs to Corby, and rode full speed against the pursuer. The trooper set himself firm in his stirrups and assumed his defence, for he saw from the prowess of Corby that it was vain to fly. Just as Charlie's mighty sword was descending on his casque, a check that he gave his horse in the hurry of the moment made him rear on end, and Charlie's stroke coming down between his ears, clove his head almost into two halves. The horse reeled and fell; but how it fared with his rider, Charlie never knew; for before he got his horse turned, there were other three of the Halls close at hand. Charlie fled amain. He was nothing afraid of himself, for he knew Corby could outstrip them by one half of the way; but his heart bled for the poor friar, whom he saw he would either be obliged to leave, or fight for him against such odds as it would be madness to withstand. The friar had, however gained the height, and having now a [285] long sloping descent all the way to the Thief-gate-end, he was posting on at an improved pace. Charlie had one sole hope remaining of saving the friar, and that was the gaining the above-mentioned point before they were overtaken. The warriors carried no whips in those days, depending altogether on the ample spur,—therefore Charlie, as a last resource, pulled down a large branch from a hazel tree, and attacked the hinder parts of the father's mule with such a torrent of high-sounding strokes, that the animal, perhaps more sullen than exhausted, seemed to recover new life and vigour, and fled from the assault like a deer, in the utmost terror and dismay. Little wonder was it! He heard the sound of every descending stroke coming on like the gathering tempest; and, clapping his tail close down between his hips, pricking up his long ears, and looking back first with the one eye and then with the other, he went at such a rate that Corby could do little more than keep up with him.

"My swiftness is greater than I can bear," cried the friar, pronouncing the sentence all in [286] syllables for want of breath; "verily I shall fall among the cliffs of the rocks by the side of the highway."

His danger increased with his fears; for the mule perceiving that exertion availed not, and that there was no escaping from the fierceness of his pursuer's wrath, began to throw up his heels violently at every stroke, nevertheless continuing to exert himself between these evolutions. The friar's riding-gear began to get into disorder, and with great difficulty he retained his seat; therefore he cried out with a loud voice, "I pray of thee, my son, to desist, for it is better for me to perish by an enemy's hand than thine; seest thou not my confusion and despair—verily I shall be dashed in pieces against the stones."

The friar saw nought of Charlie's intent, else he would not have besought him so earnestly to desist. The Thief-gate-end was now hard at hand. It is still well known as a long narrow path alongst the verge of a precipice, and all the bank above it was then a thicket of brushwood and [287] gorse, so close that the wild beast of the desart could not pass through it. It was, moreover, shagged with rocks, and bedded with small stones, and the path itself was so narrow, that two horsemen could scarcely ride abreast. By such a strenuous manœuvre on the parts of Charlie and the mule, the two flyers got into this path, without having lost any ground of their pursuers. When Charlie saw this, he began to breathe more freely, and, flinging away his hazel branch, he again seized his mighty weapon in his right hand.

"Let the chields come as close on us now, an they dare," said he.

The mule still continued to eye him with a great deal of jealousy, and perceiving the brandish that he gave his long sword when he said this, he set off again full speed; so that it was a good while before the friar got time to reply. As soon as he got leisure to speak, he opened his mouth and said,—"My son, wilt thou lift up thine arm against a multitude? or canst thou contend with the [288] torrent of the mighty waters?"

"Well, well, they may perhaps lead that winna drive," said Charlie; and he went by the friar at a

light gallop, leaving him behind, who prayed to the other not to leave him nor forsake him; but it was a device of Yardbire's, and a well conceived one. He saw that as long as he kept the rear guard, and rode behind the friar, the men that pursued them would not separate on that long narrow path; therefore he vanished among the bushes, keeping, however, always within hearing of the mule's feet. Accordingly, at the first turn of the road, the foremost of the English troopers, seeing the jolly bedesman posting away by himself, put the spurs to his steed, and made a furious dash at him. The friar cried out with a loud voice; and, seeing that he would be overtaken, he turned round and drew his sword to stand on the defensive; and actually not only bore the first charge of his opponent with considerable firmness, but had "very nigh smitten him between the joints of the harness," as he termed it. It happened, moreover, very singularly, from the [289] perversity of the mule, that in the charge the combatants changed sides, at the imminent peril of the Englishman; for the mule brushed by his horse with such violence, and leaned so sore to the one side, that both the horse and his rider were within an inch of the verge of the precipice.

The friar had no sooner made his way by, than he saw another rider coming like lightning to meet him in the face; but at the same time he heard the voice of Charlie Scott behind him, and the rending crash of his weapon. This cheered the drooping spirits of the brave friar, who had been on the very point of crying for quarter. "They beset me before and behind," cried he, "yet shall my hand be avenged. Come on, thou froward and perverse one." So saying he assumed his guard, and met his foe face to face, seeing he had no alternative. The Englishman drew a stroke, but got not time to lay it on; for just as the mule and his tall horse met, the former, in the bitterness of his ire, rushed between his opponent and the upper bank, and pressed against his fore counters [290] with such energy, that he made the leg next him to slacken, and the horse reared from the other. The intention of the irritated mule was to crush his master's leg, or, if possible, to rub him from off his back; and therefore, in spite of the rein he closed with the Englishman's tall steed in a moment, and almost as swift as lightning. The English moss-trooper had raised his arm to strike, but seeing his horse shoved and rearing in that perilous place, he seized the rein with his sword hand. The mule finding the substance to which he leaned give way, pressed to it the harder. It was all one to him whether it had been a tree, a horse, or a rock; he shouldered against it with his side foremost so strenuously, that in spite of all the trooper could do, the fore feet of his horse on rearing, alighted within the verge of the precipice. The noble animal made a spring from his hinder legs, in order to leap by the obstreperous mongrel; but the latter still coming the closer, instead of springing by he leaped into the open void, aiming at the branches of an oak that grew [291] in a horizontal direction from the cliff. It was an old and stubborn tree, the child of a thousand years; and when the horse and his rider fell upon its hoary branches, it yielded far to the weight. But its roots being entwined in the rifted rock as far as the stomach of the mountain, it sprung upward again with a prodigious force to regain its primitive position, and tossed the intruding weight afar into the unfathomed deep. Horse and rider went down in a rolling motion till they lessened to the eye, and fell on the rocks and water below with such a shock, that the clash sounded among the echoes of the linn like the first burst of the artillery of heaven, or the roar of an earthquake from the depths of the earth.

Charlie Scott gazed on the scene with horror; every feature of his countenance was changed, and every hair on his great burly head stood on end. He gave a look to heaven, crossed himself, and said a short prayer, if a prayer it may be called that consisted only of four syllables. It consisted [292] merely in the pronunciation of a name, too sacred to be set down in an idle tale; but he pronounced it with an emphasis that made it doubly affecting. The friar, on the contrary, astonished at his own prowess, or rather at that of his mule, beheld the scene with wonder, it is true, but also with a shade of ostentation. "I have overthrown the horse and his rider," said he, "and they are sunk down as a stone into the mighty waters." Corby manifested the fright that he was in, by loud and reiterated snortings; the mule also was astonied, and, that he might witness the horrific scene in more perfection, he kept his tail close to the precipice, and looked back.

"Now, by my honour as a man and a warrior, father," said Charlie, "you are a man amang ten thousand. I never knew of a bedesman who behaved so gallantly, nor have I seen a knight behave better. How durst you close so instantaneously and furiously with both these valiant troopers?"

"Thou hadst better put that question to my mule," said the friar,—"for it is a truth that he hath [293] that in him that is the ruin of many people, viz. obstinacy of heart. When he smelleth the battle he disdaineth all parley or courtesy, as thou beholdest, but rusheth upon his adversary like one of the bulls of Bashan."

At that moment the friar's eye caught a glance of several horsemen close upon them, but as they could only come one man rank, they paused at seeing their enemies in quiet possession of the way, and standing in peaceful colloquy, apparently about something else.

"By the life of Pharaoh," said the friar, gazing all around, "I had forgot the man whom I first engaged and smote as he passed by."

"You will see nae mair o' him, father," said Charlie; "I gae him a deadly wound, but the saddle was locked to the horse, and the man to the saddle, and the furious animal has escaped away to the forest with the dead man on its back."

"Thou art indeed a man of valour," said the friar; "and here will we keep our ground. I will do [294] more in our defence than thou hast yet witnessed; therefore, be not afraid, my son, for that sword of thine is a good sword."

"It is a good sword at a straik," returned Charlie; "but it's no very handy at making a defence. But an I get the first yerk of a chield, I'm no unco feared for his return. However, father, this sword, sic as it is, shall be raised in your defence as lang as my arm can wag it. I like the man that will

stand a brush when a pinch comes,—see, thae chaps darena come on us. But, ill luck to the coward! gin they winna come to us, we'll gang to them."

"I will certainly go with thee," said the friar; "but I know the nature of the beast that I bestride, and that it will at the first onset bear me into the thickest of the battle; therefore, be not thou far from me in my need, for, though nothing afraid, yet I know it will carry me into peril. Come, let us go and smite these men with the edge of the sword."

"Gallant friar," said Charlie, "the Thief-road is lang an' narrow, an' there's hardly a bit o't that [295] they can come on us twa in a breast; stand ye still; or be chopping on your way, an' I'll let you see yon lads get a surprise for aince."

"Nay, I will certainly stand with thee in battle," said the friar; "thinkest thou I will stand and be a looker on, when my preserver is in jeopardy? Lo, my heart is as thy heart, my arm as thy arm, and—but I cannot say my horse is as thy horse, for the beast is indeed froward in his ways, and perverse in all his doings."

Charlie hardly smiled at the phrase of the worthy friar,—for he meditated an attack on their pursuers, and his eye kindled with his heart toward the battle. He heaved up his sword-arm twice at its full stretch, to feel if it was nowise encumbered in the armour, and putting Corby in motion, he rode deliberately up to the face of his enemies. The foremost man spoke to him, demanding what he wanted; but he only answered by heaving his sword a little higher, and making his horse mend his pace. In one second after that he was engaged with the first man, and in two seconds [296] the horse and his rider had fallen in the middle of the path. Charlie listed not coming to close quarter; his sword was so long and heavy, that it was quite unhandy in warding the blows of a short and light weapon. His aim, therefore, was always to get the first stroke, which was as apt to light on the horse as the man, and thus down both of them went. Springing by the prostrate warrior, he attacked the second and the third in the same manner, and with the same success, always either cutting down the trooper or cleaving the head of his horse at the first stroke. The path was now in the utmost confusion. Owing to the pause that had taken place, all the riders had come up and crowded each other behind, some crying, "He is a devil!" and others at a greater distance shouting out, "Down with the Scot! down with him!" Charlie regarded not their cries, but laid about him with all his might, till, after striking down three of the foremost and one horse, those next to him were glad to turn in order to effect their escape; but the hindermost on the path refusing for a while to give way, many of their friends fell a sacrifice to Charlie's wrath. He [297] pursued them for a space, and might have cut them off every man, had he been sure that all was safe behind,—but he had rushed by some wounded men and wounded horses, and knew not how matters stood with the friar.

As he dreaded, so it fell out. Two of the Englishmen who had fallen perhaps under their horses, had scrambled up the bosky precipice, and, as he returned, assailed him with large stones, a mode of attack against which he was unable to make the least resistance. Therefore, it was at the utmost peril of his life that he made his way back through the encumbered path to his friend the friar. This latter worthy had found it impossible to lend his friend any assistance. The beast that he bestrode was fonder of rubbing shoulders with a living brute, than a mangled or dead one; so he refused to come nearer the first that fell than about twice his own length, where he stood firm, turning his tail to the scene of battle, and looking back. Our two heroes now set off at full speed [298] after the rest of their party, whom they expected to overtake before reaching the outposts of the beleaguering army.

[299]

CHAPTER XII.

Lord Duffus.—I saw the appearance of a mounted warrior.
Whence did it come, or whither did it go?
Or whom did it seek here?
Hush thee, my lord;
The apparition spoke not, but passed on.
'Tis something dreadful; and, I fear me much,
Betokens evil to this fair array.

Trag. of the Prioress.

The rest of our cavalcade continued to advance at a quick pace, not without anxiety. They were not afraid of their enemies coming behind them, for they had strong faith in the prowess of their friend, as well as his horse Corby. But when they came to the end of the narrow path, called the Thief-gate, there were two roads, and they knew not which of these to follow. As bad luck would have it, they took the most easterly, which led towards Yetholm, and left the Scottish army to the westward. In that path they continued to jog on, turning many a long look behind them for the approach of Charlie; and, at one time, they thought they got a view of him coming at a furious [300] pace all alone; but the rider being at a great space behind them, he was shortly hid from their view in an intervening hollow, and it was long before they saw him any more. They judged that the friar was taken or slain, and began to talk of his loss in a very indifferent manner.

"Alas, how frigid and ungenial must be the hearts of you men in Scotland," said Delany. "Now, of all the men I have met with since I was brought from my own country, there is only one whose death I would more regret than that of the worthy and kind friar. He may have his whims and his peculiarities, but his manner is pleasing, and his speech has a strain of grandeur which I love. Where did he acquire that speech?"

"He gets it frae some auld-fashioned beuk," said Tam, "that he has pored on a' his days, an' translatit out o' other tongues, till he was nearly hanged for it; and it's weel kend that he is now in hiding wi' our warden for fear o' his life, and has been these half dozen o' years; and though he [301] pretends to be only a friar, he was aince a monk o' the first order of St Benedict, and president of a grand college in France."

"I would like to converse with him," said Delany, "for I have always thought that he feigned to be something a degree lower than he is."

"You said there was *but one* you would lament the loss of more," said the poet: "Pray, who may that *one* be?"

"Could you not guess?" returned she.

"How can I?" said he; "but this I know, that to be the favoured one I would dive into the depths of the ocean,—"

"It wad be for fear then," said Tam.

"Or traverse the regions of ice," continued the bard, "or wander barefoot over burning sands, or —"

"O, alak for your poor feet!" said Delany, interrupting him; "but rest satisfied you shall not be put to the test: it is not you."

With such kind of chat did they beguile the way, till Elias, looking back, exclaimed, "Mercy! see what a guise Yardbire is coming in!"

"St Mary protect us!" said the maid; "he must be grievously wounded. See how he rides!" [302]

Every one turned round his horse and looked at the approaching warrior; but it was wearing late, and they could not see with distinctness. The horse was coming rapidly, and with apparent impatience, but Charlie appeared as if he were riding in his sleep. When the horse came down hill he bent forward, and on climbing an ascent he bent back, riding with that sort of motion as if his back or neck were out of joint. The whole group showed manifest signs of fear at the approach of such a hideous apparition; and, quite in earnest, though in a pretended frolic, they wheeled about again, and gallopped away. The ground being uneven, and the night-fall coming on, they soon lost sight of him; and, continuing their career as fast as the road would permit, they seemed inclined to escape from their friend altogether. The maid had just begun to remonstrate on their unfriendly procedure, when they beheld the same unaccountable figure coming at the [303] full gallop close behind them. Seeing that he was determined to be of the party, they suffered him to overtake them quietly. He came driving furiously up till he was in the middle of them, and then paused. No one had the courage to speak to him, for he looked not up, nor regarded any of them. His helmed head nodded on his breast, and his arms hung loosely down by his side, the steel armlets rattling on the cuishes. At one time his horse came so near to that on which Delany rode, that she weened she saw the rider all covered with blood, and screamed out; yet in the twilight she could not be certain. The poet, who was never far from her side, and on whom her voice always acted like electricity, immediately demanded the cause of her alarm.

"O Carol!" said she, in an agitated whisper, "we are haunted. That is a dead man that rides in our company."

If the maid was alarmed, the poet was ten times more so. If she had said that a lion or a bear was in the company, it could not have struck such a chillness to the poor bard's heart; and, after all, it [304] was no wonder, for there is something exceedingly appalling in the idea of having a dead man riding in one's company. The poet felt this in its fullest measure. He held in his horse and attempted a reply, but a dryness pervaded his mouth so much that he could not make himself intelligible. A damp had fallen on the whole party, and a breathless silence prevailed. Tam put the question, so natural, to him as he passed, "Charlie, is this you?"—but none answered or regarded. They were riding up a slanting hill when the bard was first apprised of the nature of their guest, and shortly after the figure coming between him and the evening sky, its motions were altogether so hideous, that he roared out in perfect terror as loud as he could bray, scarce letting one bellow await another. This was still worse than the dumb appalling uncertainty in which they were before involved; till at last Tam, losing all patience, let loose his rage against the poet, calling him a bellowing beast, and many other opprobrious names. This encouraging Gibbie, [305] who had the bard at no good will on account of the damsel, he said he brought him "amind of a story that the fo'k o' Annandale tauld about Andrew Jardine's bull, that was better at booing than breeding." The boy Elias now coming in behind them, and having heard what Delany said, cried softly, "Hush! yeomen! hush! we are haunted; it is a ghost that rides in our company."

They all turned their eyes to the mysterious figure, which they still thought resembled their champion Yardbire, as well as the horse did that which he rode, the redoubted Corby. The horse had started a little forward at the cries of the poet, but when the rest paused the figure seemed to wheel his horse around, and made a dead pause also, standing still with his face toward them, and straight on the path before. Not one durst proceed. The figure neither moved nor threatened, but stood nodding its head on the height at every motion of the steed; yet our party were arrested on their way, nor knew they exactly in what place they were: But from the length of the [306]

way they had come, they were sure they were near the Scottish army on one side or other, and free from any danger of the foes they had left behind them on the Border. None of them were good guides in any case, and a man in fear is neither a fit guide for himself nor others. Fear had the sway, and fear gave the word of command without being disputed. The poet was the first to strike from the beaten path, and it was at no easy pace that he rode. He turned westward, and the rest all followed with main speed. Their progress was soon interrupted by a strong cattle fence made of stakes and the branches of trees interwoven, bespeaking the vicinity of some village, or place of human habitation. They soon broke through the fence, but by bad luck did not take time to make up the breach, which they left open, and posting forward came to a large house amid a number of smaller ones. The poet called for admittance in a moving and earnest stile, and at once resolved to take no denial. Before ever he paused, he told them he and his party [307] had lost their way, and that they had seen a ghost.

"Then you must be some murderers," said the men of the house,—"and here you remain not to-night."

"We belong to the warden of the marches, the brave baron of Mountcomyn," said the poet, "and go on an errand of great import to the army. In that case we might demand what we only ask as a boon, namely, such lodging as the house affords."

"You had better keep that part to yourself," said the men of the house: "Though Sir Ringan is supreme in the middle marches, he is no favourite here. Our master's name is Ker. He is with the Douglas, but may be home to-night. Calm sough and kitchen fare, or ride on."

"It brings me in mind o' an auld proverb," said Gibbie, "that beggars should nae be choisers; sae, honest lads, bring us a light, for our horses are sair tired an' maun be weel put up."

The party, it will be remembered, consisted only of five, exclusive of Charlie and the friar. They had draw up their horses close to the hall door, and were still on horseback when the men turned [308] into the house for a light. The poet, whose eager eyes were still on the watch, chancing to look at the heads of his associates between him and the sky, thought he discovered one too many.

"Surely there are six of us,'said he in a hurried tremulous voice. "Six of us!" said Tam, as doubting the statement.

"Six of us? No, surely?" said Delany.

At that instant a lad came out with a lanthorn, and held it up to look at the party. The poet was nearest the door, and the light shone full on him and the rider that was next him. He cast his eyes on that rider,—but one glance was enough to bedim his eye-sight, if not to scare away his reason. It had the appearance of a warrior sheathed in steel, but all encrusted in a sheet of blood. His mouth was wide open, and his jaws hanging down upon his breast, while his head seemed to be cleft asunder. The poet uttered a loud yell of horror, and, flinging himself from his horse on the side opposite to that on which the phantom stood, he fell among the mud and stones at the door, [309] yet ceased not to reiterate his loud cries like one in distraction. Every one jumped from his horse, and hurried in at the door; the man with the lanthorn also fled, and with the noise and uproar the horses galloped off, saddled and bridled as they were. As the guests ran into the hall, every one asked at all the rest what it was? "What is it?" was all that could be heard; all asking the question, but none answering it. Even the people of the house joined in the query, and came all round the strangers, crying, "What is it?—What is it?"—"I do not know—I do not know, Sir—I do not know upon my word."

"The people are all delirious," said the housekeeper:"—Can no one tell us what it was that affrighted you?—St Magdalene be with us! whom have we here?"

This was no other than the poor bard coming toward the light, creeping slowly on all-four, and still groaning as he came.

"Here's the chap that began the fray," said Tam, "you may speer at him. He rather looks as he [310] were at ane mae wi't. For my part, I just did as the rest did,—ran an' cried as loud as I could. When a dust is fairly begun, I think aye the mair stour that is raised the better. I'll try wha will cry loudest again, an ye like,—or rin round the fire wi' ony o' you, or out through the mids o't either, at a pinch."

Tam turned round his long nose to see if his jest had taken, for he always fixed his eyes stedfastly on one object when he spoke; but he found that his jargon had been ill-timed, for no one laughed at it but himself. The rest were gathered round the bard; some pitying, but more like to burst with laughter at his forlorn state. He fetched two or three long-drawn moans, and then raising himself up on his knees, with his eyes fixed on the light, he rolled over, and fainted.

Delany first stooped to support his head, and was soon assisted by every female in the house, while the men only stood and looked on. By bathing his hands and temples with cold water, they soon brought him out of his faint, but not to his right senses. His looks continued wild and [311] unstable, and ever and anon they were turned to the door, as if he expected some other guest to enter. A sober conference at last ensued; and as no one had seen or heard any thing at this last encounter, save the man that was taken ill, who a few moments before had been heard to say *there were six of them*, all began to agree that he had been seized with some sudden frenzy or delirium; till the lad, who had carried out the light, thrust in his pale face among the rest, and said,—"Na, na, my masters, it is nae for naething that the honest man's gane away in a kink; for, when I held up the bouet, I saw a dead man riding on a horse close at his side. He was berkened wi' blood off at the taes; and his mouth was open, and I saw his tongue hinging out."

It may well be conceived what an icy chillness these words distilled round the heart of every one

present. The effect on our travellers was particularly appalling, from the idea that they were haunted by a phantom from which they could not escape. The whole group closed around the fire, [312] and the strangers recounted to the family the singular occurrence of their having lost two of their number by the way, and been pursued and overtaken by a phantom resembling one of them, and that the hideous spectre was, as it seemed, haunting them still. As they all agreed in the same story, it was not of a nature to be disregarded at a period when superstition swayed the hearts of men with irresistible power. The stoutest heart among them was daunted, and no one durst go out to the vaults to look after his master's cattle, nor to take in our travellers' horses, that were left to shift for themselves during the long winter night.

The next morning, between day-light and the sun-rising, the men began to peep abroad, and the first things they observed were some of the horses of our travellers going about in a careless, easy manner. This they looked on as a good omen, knowing that horses were terrified for spirits; and the men joining in a body, they sallied out to reconnoitre. The horses had fared well, for they had fed at the laird's stacks of hay and corn all night; but as the men were going round to see [313] how matters stood, they perceived a phenomenon, that, if it had not been open day-light, would have scared them from the habitation. This was the identical phantom-warrior still sitting unmoved on his horse, that was helping itself full liberally out of one of the laird's corn-ricks. The eye of day expels the films of superstition from the human eye. The men, after a short consultation, ventured to surround the phantom,—to seize his horse,—(who had given full proof that he at least was flesh and blood;)—and, after a good deal of trembling astonishment, they found that he was actually rode by a dead warrior, whose head was cleft asunder, and his whole body, both within and without the harness, encrusted in blood.

The mystery was soon cleared up; but none then knew who he was. It had become customary in that age for warriors, who went to engage others, on horseback, to lock themselves to the saddle, for fear of being borne out of their seats by the spears of their opponents in the encounter. This [314] was the individual trooper who had come foremost in the pursuit of our party, he whom the friar jostled, and whom Charlie, encountering the moment after, had slain; but his suit of armour having kept him nearly upright in his saddle, his horse had run off with him, and followed after those of our travellers, as every horse will do that is let go on a high-way and gets his will.

Glad were our travellers at an eclaircissement so fairly within the bounds of their comprehension; and when the poet saw the gash made in the helmet, he shook his head, and exclaimed, "Ha! well I wot the mighty hand of Charlie has been here!"

Gibbie remarked that he himself had "killed one very like him, only he was sure his wad never mount horse again." But seeing Tam's ill-set eye fixed on him, he was afraid of something coming out relating to that encounter which he did not wish to hear blabbed; so he changed his tone, and, looking wise, said, "The hale business brings me a-mind of a very good story that happened [315] aince at Allergrain; an' if it be nae true it is behadden to the maker, for the sin o' the lie lyes nae at my door. The story, you see, is this.—There was a man, an' he had a wife; an' they had a son, an' they ca'ed him Jock—"

"Now, d—n your particularity!" said Tam Craik: "think you we have nought else to do but stand beside the bloody man and listen to a long-winded tale like that?"

The poet muttered over some old rhyme in unison with what he heard. If one word spoken chanced to occur in any old rhyme or song that he knew, he went over the sentence to himself, though it had no farther connection with it, or resemblance to it, than merely that word. This made his conversation altogether incomprehensible to those not acquainted with him, but it was always delightful to himself; a chance old rhyme brought to his remembrance, would have pleased him almost in any circumstances, while his words chimed naturally into measure.

Leaving the dead warrior at the house where they lodged for the people to bury as they liked, [316] they proceeded to the army, in hopes of finding Charlie and the friar there; for without them they did not know how to accomplish their mission. These two heroes finding, on asking at a hamlet, that their friends had not passed on the road to Roxburgh, suspected what way they had gone, and turning to the south-east they followed them on the track to Yetholm, but misled them at the house into which they had been chased by the dead man, and rode searching for them the greater part of the night. Next morning they again went in search of them, and came up behind them at the convent of Maisondieu near to the Teviot, where a detachment of the army was stationed; and, after conversing two or three hours on the state of the army and garrison, they proceeded on their journey, and reached the abbey of Melrose that night. There they were welcomed by the brethren, and lodged comfortably. There also they got many strange stories told to them about Master Michael Scott, which made the very hairs of their heads stand on end, and [317] the hearts of the boldest to palpitate. When the friar heard them, he seemed wrapt in deep thought; and he opened his mouth, and said: "If the things that thou hast spoken be according to the light that is in thee, and the truth that is told among men, then this man is not as other men, for the spirit of the immortals is in him, and he communeth with the prince of the power of the air. Nevertheless, I will go unto him, and I will speak to him face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend. Peradventure I shall tell him that which he knoweth not."

When it was told to the abbot Lawrence, that the servants of the warden were come, and that they were accompanied by his chaplain and bedesman, a learned man in all holy things, the father came to bestow upon them his benediction,—for the baron of Mountcomyn had conferred many rich benefices on the abbey. At the first sound of the friar's voice, the abbot started, as if recollecting him; but on looking at the man his hope seemed to die away. Every time, however, [318] that he spoke in his eastern style, the abbot fixed a look on him, as if he would fain have claimed

acquaintance, which the friar perceiving, urged their departure with all the interest he had; and accordingly, about mid-day, they set out for Aikwood-castle, the seat of the renowned magician Master Michael Scott.

Ever since the stern encounter with the English moss-troopers on the Thief-road, Charlie had attached himself close to the friar, imagining that he saw his character in a new light, and that he was one who might either be roused to desperate courage, or impressed with notorious dread; and when he heard him say that he would speak to the enchanter face to face, he admired him still the more; for the business of addressing the Master was that which stuck sorest on the stomach of the doughty Yardbire. As for the poet, he scarcely seemed himself all that day. He looked at the mountains, and the wild romantic rivers branching among them in every direction, with looks of which it was hard to say whether they were looks of vacancy or affection, for he [319] looked sometimes as at objects which he was never to see again. His tongue muttered long rhymes in which his heart had little share; so that Delany was obliged to detach herself from his society, and make up to the friar, whom she now addressed with much affection, and some degree of coquetry:—

"Dearest father, why have you neglected me so much on our journey? Ever since our first stage was got over, you have not deigned to take any notice of me. What have you seen in my conduct that you have thus shunned me? It is in sincerity that I assure you there is no man in whose conversation I so much delight."

"Fairest among maidens!" said the friar, putting his arm gently around her neck, as her palfrey came close up by his side, "say not so, but come near me, I will kiss thee with the kisses of my mouth, for thy love is sweeter to me than the vintage. Behold thou art even like a tower of alabaster shining from among the cedars of Lebanon. Thy bosom resembleth two young roes that [320] are twins, and feed among the lilies of the valley."

"Hold, dear father!" said she, "and do not let your gallantry run away with your good common sense. Yet would I love to hear that language spoken to another, for though it be nonsense it is still beautiful. Tell me, for I long to hear, where, or in what country, you learned to speak in that stile."

"Daughter of my people," said he, "I have learned that language at home and in a far country. In youth and in age hath it been my delight. At noon-tide when the sun shone in his strength, and in the silent watches of the night hath it been my meditation. In adversity hath it been my comfort, and in prosperity my joy; so that now it hath become unto me as my mother tongue, and other language have I none."

"Is it the language of the convent and the priory alone?" said the maid.

"No, thou rose of the desart," said the friar;—"it is not the language indeed, but the stile of language over one half of the habitable world. It is the language of all the kingdoms and countries of the east, from India even unto Ethiopia; and all the way as thou goest down towards [321] the rising of the sun, yea from the river to the ends of the earth it prevaileth. But, O thou fairest among the daughters of women! that language did I not learn in the lands that are watered by the great river, even the river Euphrates. In Ur of the Chaldees have I not sojourned; nor on the mountains of Palestine have I lifted up my eyes. But I learned it from one little book; a book that is of more value to the children of men than all the gold of Ophir. O maiden, could I but make known unto thee the treasures of that book, the majesty of its stile, and the excellency of its precepts, it would make thine heart to sing for joy. If all the writings of this world, yea, if the world itself were to be laid in the balance with that book, they would be found wanting. The mountains may depart, and the seas may pass away, the stars, and the heavens in which they shine, may be removed, but the words of that book shall remain for ever and ever! And this language that I now speak to thee resembleth the words written therein; and I speak them unto [322] thee that thou mayest hear and love them."

"Dear friar, teach me to read and understand that book, for my breast yearneth to know more about it. I am, it is true, not my own at present to give, but I have some forebodings here that tell me I soon shall; and, father, I will serve thee, and be thy handmaid, if thou wilt teach me the words and the mysteries of that little book."

"Alas! and wo is me, for the ignorance of my people!" said he, with the tears streaming over his grim cheek; "they are troubled about that which availeth them nothing, while the way of life is hid from their eyes. Their leaders have caused them to err; and I, even I, have been a dweller in the tabernacles of sin! But the day-star hath shone upon my soul and my spirit: For that have I been persecuted, and hunted as a partridge upon the mountains, chased from the habitations of my brethren, and forced to dwell among a strange and savage people. Yet there are among them whom I love; and could I be the mean of opening thine eyes, and turning thee from darkness unto [323] light, then would I know for what purpose the finger of heaven had pointed out my way to this barren wilderness. Thou can'st not be a servant or a handmaiden unto one who is little better than an outcast and a vagabond on the earth. But better days may come to us both: I am not what I seem; but, maiden, thou mayest trust me. My love for thee surpasseth the love of women, for it is with more than an earthly love that I behold and delight in thee. Come unto me this night, and I will tell thee things that shall make thine ears tingle. The book of wonders is here with me, and thou mayest look thereon and be glad."

The poet and his associates listened to this rhapsody apart.

"What book does he mean?" said the poet: "If it is not True Thomas's book, or the book of Sir Gawin, he must be speaking absolute nonsense. I could recite these to lovely Delany, word for

word; and must this clumsy old friar wile her from me by any better book than these?"

"You are clean mista'en, maister poeter," said Tam; "I ken mair about auld Roger than you do, or than ony that's here. It is a book o' black art that he carries about wi' him, and studies on it night and day. He gat it at a place they ca' Oxford, where they study nought else but sic cantrips. They hae tried to hang him, and they hae tried to cut off his head, and they hae tried to burn him at the stake; but tow wadna hang, water wadna drown, steel wadna nick, and a' the fire o' the land wadna singe ae hair o' the auld loun's head." [324]

"Gude forgie me!" said Charlie: "An that be true, Corby, you and I had maybe mair pith than our ain yon time. I wondered that he rade sae furiously on the drawn swords of men and armour, the auld warlock. He-he-he! we'll aiblins try auld Michael at his ain weapons, an that be the gate."

"Ye maunna lippen ower muckle to a' this," said he of the Peatstacknowe; "else ye may play like Marion's Jock, when he gaed away to douk in Commonside loch. 'It is a hard matter,' says Jock to himself, 'that a' the lave o' Commonside's men can swatter and swim in the loch like sae mony drakes but me. I am fain either to poutter about the side, or down I gang. I can neither sink nor swim; for when I try to get to the bottom to creep, there I stick like a woundit paddock, wagging my arms and my legs, and can neither get to the top nor the bottom. Just half way, there stick I. But I's be even hands wi' them an' mair, an' then I'll laugh at the leishest o' them; for I'll stand, and wade, and gang ower the waves afore them a', aye, and that wi' my head boonmost.' Jock, after this grand contrivance, coudna rest, but off he sets to Hawick, and gets four big blawn bladders; and the next day, when a' the lave went to bathe, Jock he went to bathe amang the rest; and he gangs slyly into a bush by himsel', and ties twa o' the bladders to every foot. 'Now,' thinks Jock, 'I'll let them see a trick.' Sae he slips into the loch, and wades into the deep; but the bladders they aye gart him hobble and bob up and down, till, faith, he loses the balance, and ower he coups. Nane o' them kend o' Jock's great plan, and they were a' like to burst their sides wi' laughing when they saw Jock diving. But when they saw he wasna like to come up again, they swattered away to the place, and there was Jock swimming wi' his head straight to the bottom, and his feet and the four bladders walking a minuay aboon. Now, let me tell ye, an ye lippen to the friar's warlockry, and his enchantments, and divinations, ye trust to as mony bladders fu' o' wind, and down gae a' your heads, and your heels uppermost. Na, na; nane maun try to cope wi' auld Michael." [325] [326]

"I hae heard, indeed, that he coudna brook ony rivalry," said Charlie; "and I hae heard waur instances, and waur stories too, than that o' yours, laird. But let us draw slyly near to the twasome, and make lang lugs, to try if we can learn ony mair about that same beuk. If the friar hae ony power o' enchantment, it is my opinion the first glamour he'll thraw will be ower that bonny wench."

"We ought to keep them asunder by force," said the poet; "it would be a shame and a disgrace to us, if we were to let the auld rogue seduce either her person or her morals." [327]

"Morals?" said Charlie; "I dinna ken about them, for I watna weel what they are; but as to seducing hersel', I think I could answer for auld Roger the friar. I see there's nae man can help liking a bonny lass; but the better a good man likes ane he'll be the mair sweer to do her ony skaith."

"Aye; but then how can an enchanter be a good man?" said the poet.

"That's the thing that puzzles me," said Charlie: "Let us hear what they are on about sae briskly now."

They then drew near, and heard the following words, while the remarks that they made were said aside among themselves.

"My fate, you see, has been a strange one, father. I was separated from my parents so young that I scarcely remember them. But the Scots have been kind to me, and I have loved them. I have never been unhappy, except when long confined to a place, which I dislike exceedingly; and as I have hopes that this change will add somewhat to my freedom, I rejoice in it, without weighing circumstances. If those fond hopes should be realised, I promise to you, father, that the first use I will make of my liberty, shall be to sit at your feet, and learn that wonderful and mysterious book." [328]

"Do you hear that?" said the poet with great emphasis, but in a half whisper; "he has gotten her broken already to learn the book of the black art. Then the deil's bargain and witchcraft comes next; then the harassing of the whole country side, dancing in kirkyards, and riding on the wind; and then, mayhap, the stake and the faggot end the matter that is but just beginning. Alak, and wo is me! I say, in the king's name, and in the warden's, let them be separated."

"Gude sauf us!" exclaimed Charlie. "There's nae man sure o' his life an a' this be true! But a' fair play. Nae self amang us. Hist, and let us hear what he is saying in answer."

"Daughter," said the friar, half crying with joy, "doth not my heart yearn over thee, even as a mother yearneth over the child of her bosom? Lo, I will be unto thee as a father, and thou shalt be unto me as a daughter." [329]

"Hear what the old rascal is saying!" said the poet.

"And behold the fruits of our labours shall spring up into life;"—

"Oh, this is past all sufferance!" said the poet.

—"For, O thou fair one, whose beauty is as the beauty of the morning, and whose innocence

surpasseth that of the kid, or the lamb, or the young roe, when they are playing upon the mountains,"—

"Gude faith, Mr Carol," said Charlie aside, "it's that auld chap that's the poet; an' no you."

"Humph! mere fustian!" said the poet.

The friar still went on:—

—"That beauty will decay, as the rose fadeth on the brows of Shinar or Hermon; and that innocence shall be perverted by the sinful and regardless people among whom thou sojournest, and shall become, as it were, betrothed to sin and corruption; yea, and that eye, that shineth like [330] the dews of the morning, shall be darkened. But, O beloved maiden! there is that in this little book, yea, I say unto thee, even in this old, neglected, and despised book, that, unto those who learn it, shall prove the savour of life unto life; and if thou dost learn and cherish the things contained in this book thou shalt never die!"

"Ay, billy, that is a yanker!" said Tam aside: "When ane is gaun to tell a lie, there's naething like telling a plumper at aince, and being done wi't."

"Now, but hear to the deceitful old rogue," said the poet: "All the books of black art in the world cannot accomplish that. In the name of Saint Barnabas, I say let them be separated!"

"It wad be weel done," said Tam, "if ane durst;"—for he wanted to blow up the poet's wrath, for the sake of a little sport.

"Durst!" said the poet, "durst!—If none other dare, I shall, in spite of all his hellish arts. Durst! [331] that is a good one,—to be dursted with an old sackbut!"

They did not hear what answer Delany made to the extraordinary information, as they took it, that, by learning the little black book, she was to be redeemed from death; for the fierce jealousy of the enamoured bard prevented them. But when they listened again so as to hear distinctly, the friar was still increasing in fervency. All that he said was in raptures of divine ecstacy; while his associates, who knew nothing, and cared as little about these things, understood it in another way.

"For I say unto thee, if thou wilt suffer me to instil these truths into thee, thou shalt both blossom and bring forth fruit abundantly; yea, thou shalt shine as the stars in the firmament of heaven. Seest thou yon sun that walketh above the clouds in majesty and brightness? Beyond yon sun shall thine habitation be fixed; and the blue arch that encircles the regions of the air, which thou hast so often seen studded over with diamonds, shall be unto thee a pavement whereon thou shalt tread. All this and more shalt thou possess, if thou wilt learn and obey the things that are [332] written in this book, where it is said by one that cannot err, 'Lo, I will be always with you, and my arms shall be underneath and around you, and when you are faint and weary I will hide you in my bosom.'"

"For the blood that is in your body dare to attempt such a thing!" cried the enraged poet. "Down with hypocrisy and sensuality together! Hurray for the combat, and God defend the right!"

So, crying as loud as he could yell, he pulled out his sword, and rode furiously up between Delany and the friar, shoving the latter rudely as he passed. The maiden's palfrey sprung away, but the friar's mule only leaned with all his might to the poet's steed as he pressed against him in passing; and feeling his prop give way, he leaned round in the same direction, till his tail was exactly where his head was before; and then, dreading some abhorred exertion, he set his feet asunder, and stood immovable. The poet drew up, and wheeled about, and seeing still the hinder [333] parts of the friar and his beast, he cried, exultingly, "Ay, you are more ready to seduce an innocent and lovely maiden, than to answer for the crime! Vile lump of sin and hypocrisy! turn round and meet me face to face, that I may chastise thee for thy graceless attempt!"

The friar spurred most furiously, but the mule only dashed his head downward and his heels in a contrary direction, and kept his position. All the rest were like to burst with laughter, which still increasing the bard's insolence, he fumed about enchantments and the black art, and dared the friar to turn and look him in the face.

What with one provocation, what with another, the friar's angry passions were roused; and, not being able to make his mule turn round, he drew out his sword, saying at the same time in a voice of great vehemence, "God do so to me and more also, if I make not—"

He got no farther with his speech, for the mule interrupted him. Obstinate as the brute was, the sight of the sword, and the sound of his master's angry voice operated on him like magic. Perhaps [334] he understood that all further opposition was vain,—for in one moment he wheeled around, his eyes gleaming with rage; and pricking up his ears to see where the storm of his and his master's wrath was to alight, he perceived the poet on his tall steed, brandishing his dazzling sword, and forthwith darted at them with the swiftness of an arrow, and a fury not to be checked. There were no more words nor threatenings passed between the enraged combatants; for more space of time there was none before the mule had his shoulder to that of the poet's steed, his teeth fixed in his flank, and was pushing with the fury of an enraged bull.

On the closing of the two steeds the riders likewise engaged, the poet coming on with a downward stroke, which the friar received with great indifference on his sword crossed above his cowl. But knowing well the nature of his beast, he kept up the poet's sword and arm both, until the sides of the two animals were jammed together, as the rider of the mule well knew they [335] would be. By that time the poet's arm was pressed up straight by his ear, and his sword pointed to heaven; and in endeavouring to free his elbow from the hilt of the friar's sword, he lost his

balance. At the same instant their feet encountering in the stirrups, and the friar's being below that of his opponent, he gave him such a ketch with his right foot and sword-arm together, that he made him fly from his horse to a great distance, in a sort of arching direction; and the unfortunate poet, falling on his shoulder and head, was wofully bruised, and utterly discomfited.

But the combat ended not here. The mule still struggled with his adversary, which not only kept his ground, but rather began to force the mule to give way. But the inveterate mongrel was not to be vanquished in that way. He pressed, struggled, and wrought himself round, till he got his tail to the horse's shoulder, and then he attacked him furiously with his iron-heels. The horse being a horse of spirit, and scorning to yield to his long-eared adversary, applied the same offensive [336] weapons with very little ceremony, wincing and screaming all the while, and sometimes making his feet to fly as high as the friar's elbows. The mule fought with desperate energy, but in profound silence. Not so the rider; he spurred, struck with his sword, and cried with a loud voice, "Soh! tproo! thou beast of the pit! sure the spirit of the evil one is in thee! Lo, I shall be beaten to pieces, for the heels of the horses are lifted up against me. By the life of Pharaoh, I will smite thee until thy blood shall be poured out like water,—thou perverse and abominable beast! I say unto thee go forward!"

The voice of the friar, during this passionate declamation, had arisen gradually until the last sentence, which was pronounced in his utmost stile of vehemence. The mule heard this, and saw the uplifted sword; and not awaiting its descent, he sprang forward with main force, but no man will guess the issue.

It may well be conceived, that during this desperate combat between the horse and mule, the [337] onlookers were convulsed with laughter. Charlie Scott, in particular, laughed with a "Ha-ha-ha!" so loud that he made all the woods around to ring, and at every breath exclaimed, "Gude faith, I never saw ought half so grand! Na, never!" Gibbie was advanced a little before the rest, so as to be near the scene of action, which, without doubt, was bringing him in mind of some excellent story, for his mouth was formed like a seam from the one ear to the other. But it is dangerous putting one's self too forward in life, and that the poor laird of the Peatstacknowe soon found. It is well known that between parties so closely connected as the horse and his rider, passion begets passion. The mule, driven altogether furious by the broil, and the rage and spurs of his master, either wished to rub himself rid of him, or deemed that it was to be a battle general; for he no sooner rushed from one fray than he flew to another, quite open-mouthed on Gibbie, and, seizing him by the thigh, he separated one limb of his buffskin breeches and a mouthful of the [338] laird's own skin from their places, in one moment, and the next had his teeth fixed in the flank of the laird's horse. Gibbie cried out against the friar, irritated by pain, as well as the awkward and dangerous situation in which he was thus momently placed. His horse flung—the mule returned the compliment with hearty good will, and glad was Gibbie to escape, which he did with great celerity as soon as he got leisure to use the spurs. The mule ran straight at the next horse, and then at the next again, but all of them scampered off at his approach, and left him master of the field; on which he turned two or three times sullenly round, throwing himself up behind and down before. The friar's wrath was somewhat diverted by the shouts of laughter from his scattered compeers, and he only smiled grimly as he said to his contumacious beast,—"Thou art even a perverse and an evil one; nevertheless thou hast been to me a beast for these many years, and hast borne me in distant pilgrimages, through many perils and dangers; and I will not act the part of the son of Bosor: peradventure thou mayest amend thy ways and do some credit to old [339] age."

The laird in his escape gallopped by the forlorn poet; who, raising up his head, and perceiving the plight of the dismayed and unoffensive wight, scouring off with the one thigh naked and bleeding, burst out into a hysteric giggle between laughing and crying, and repeated some scraps of old rhyme no way connected with the incident. The attention of the party was now turned to him, and the friar's as much as any, who enquired with great simplicity, "My brother, why was thine arm lifted up against me?"

The bard was dreadfully abashed, and out of countenance; and he only answered in rhymes, of which none of them could make any thing:

"His arm was strong, and his heart was stout,
And he broke the tower and he got out;
Then the king he was an angry man,
    And an angry man was he,
And he said, "Go, lock him in prison strong,
    And hunger him till he dee.

[340]

"That was a hard weird, was it not? Ha-ha! there be many such; for

"He had his wale of seven sisters,
    Of lith, and lire, and limb so fair;
But the loathly dame of the Hazelrig,
    She ruined his peace for evermair."

"Lo, my son," answered the friar, "thy thoughts are wandering in a wilderness. I only ask thee wherein I have offended thee. For as mine hand is, so is mine heart; and, as my soul liveth, I know not in what respect I have done thee wrong."

"I have not done thee wrong, fair May,
    I have not done thee wrong,
But the cup of death has passed my lips,

And my life will not be long.

"No, no; dame Delany, you need not bathe my temples. I am not raving. I am not even hurt. The mischievous beast made my horse throw me, but I am nothing the worse."

The friar, not being able to make any thing of the poet himself, applied to the rest, and was soon informed by Tam, that "he was overheard trying to gar the lassie learn the black art, and courting her to nae good; and the poet grew jealous, and was for being revenged." [341]

The friar uttered a loud groan for the ignorance of his associates; but, hopeless of making any thing of them at such a period, he only began to moralise in a general manner. The poet was again gotten to mount; and shortly after they reached the ancient town of Selkirk, where they halted and refreshed themselves at the monastery of the Cistertians. There the laird got his wound dressed, and his dilapidated robes refitted; and that same evening the party reached the castle of Aikwood, the residence of the celebrated wizard Master Michael Scott.

END OF VOL. 1

Footnote

[1] As there can be no doubt of the authenticity of this part of the Curate's tale, these secret passages must have been carried under ground all the way from the castle to the junction of the two rivers; and it is said that a tradition still exists on the spot, that these vaulted paths have often been discovered by former inhabitants.

Transcriber's Notes

This text is a reproduction of the 1822 edition. It includes many dialect and archaic words and spellings, as well as many typographical errors which have not been changed.

On p. 324, the last three letters and comma in "says Jock to himself," are not clearly printed and are conjectural.

The spellings "M'Alpin" and "MacAlpin" are both used.

The spellings "Gibby" and "Gibbie" are both used.

The spellings "lor'" and "lor" are both used.

Consonants are inconsistently doubled in words such as "galloped" or "galloped".

The text includes many examples of inconsistent hyphenation. The following are inconsistently hyphenated or printed as two words:

- a-going
- a-mind
- auld-warld
- bow-shot
- castle-green
- half-moon
- safe-conduct
- to-morrow
- to-night
- cheek-bone

The following are inconsistently hyphenated or printed as one word:

- moss-trooper (or moss-man)
- Yard-bire
- high-way
- sweet-meats

The following are inconsistently printed as one or two words:

- d'ye
- meantime

The text contains the following apparent errors:

- p. 10 mis-spelling "proving succesful"
- p. 36 mis-spelling "glistening with raprures"
- p. 38 duplicate word in "at at the same time"
- p. 61 missing quotation mark in "ye hae some southron spies"
- p. 68 extra quotation mark in "less beard.""
- p. 69 missing quotation mark in "earldom on that head,"
- p. 90 duplicate word in "written a a letter"

- p. 98 missing quotation mark in "content, said Colin:"
- p. 104 wrongly-spaced quotation mark in "Charlie," Thanks t' ye,"
- p. 115 wrongly-spaced quotation mark in "Douglas;" and,"
- p. 141 missing quotation mark in "and I submit to my fate"
- p. 168 mis-spelling "Qnhat"
- p. 172 missing apostrophe "I dont like such"
- p. 178 Missing first quotation mark in "MARGARET.""
- p. 178 Duplicate word in "I'll have have her nose cut off"
- p. 190 mis-spelling "most incongrous thing"
- p. 200 missing quotation mark in "--it is not with you"
- p. 210 missing space in "arrived in the campin"
- p. 215 mis-spelling "shunning his profered"
- p. 220 mis-spelling "returned the Douglas, noding"
- p. 227 comma in place of full stop in "which they stood, This"
- p. 233 wrongly-spaced quotation mark in "Longspeare," that"
- p. 249 missing quotation mark in "lay than I did.""
- p. 254 wrongly-spaced quotation mark in "Tam Craik;""
- p. 261 mis-spelling "this peace of intelligence"
- p. 274 mis-spelling "*ang froid*"
- p. 275 missing quotation mark in "but the horses of our enemies"
- p. 305 colon in place of full stop in "place they were: But from"
- p. 308 single, wrongly-spaced quotation mark in "there are six of us,'said"
- p. 309 wrongly-spaced quotation mark in "housekeeper:"--Can no"
- p. 339 missing quotation mark in "hunger him till he dee."

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