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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. III.

Beshrew me if I dare open it.

FLETCHER.

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# THE THREE PERILS OF MAN.

## CHAP. I.

And he said unto Satan; whence comest thou?  
And he answered, and said, thou knowest it is true,  
That I come from wandering on the earth,  
And from going to and fro on it,  
Like a masterless dog, with my bow-wow-wow.

*Zach. Boyd's Bible.*

At the very time they were disputing about the right of Tam to proceed with his tale, their ears were astounded by a loud hollo! at the gate. Every man's heart leaped for joy, and every one was instantly on his feet; but Charlie was first on the platform, and answered the hollo! with full stentorian voice. The same voice called again,

"A Bellandine."

"Where bye?" answered Charlie.

"By the moon," said the voice.

"And the seven stars!" rejoined Yardbire, clapping his hands, and shouting for joy, "The Warden for ever! My chief for ever! He is the man that cares for his own! Ah! he is the noble master." [2]

Charlie well knew the voice that hailed him. It was that of his friend and companion in arms, Dan Chisholm, whom the Warden had indeed despatched all the way from Northumberland to Aikwood, to see what was become of his embassy, with six-and-twenty chosen troopers. Charlie Scott's arm was a bulwark of strength, and his breast a tower of fidelity, the value of which Sir Ringan knew how to estimate, while his acts of kindness and regard made a deep impression on Charlie's honest unsophisticated heart; and before he would say a word about the situation of either himself or his associates, he caused Dan to inform him of the Warden's fortune and success in their absence. Being satisfied concerning these, he called out,

"What ither uncós, Dan? What mair news are come out?"

"O, God shield you!" cried Dan, "Do nae ye ken that the world's amaist turned up-side-down sin ye left us? The trees hae turned their wrang ends upmost—the waters hae drowned the towns, and the hills hae been rent asunder and riddled up like heaps o' chaff. 'Tis thought that there has been a siege o' hell, and that the citadel has been won, for the deils are a' broken loose and rinnin' jabbering through the land. They hae been seen, and they hae been heard; and nae man kens what's to be the issue, or what's to fa' out neist." [3]

"Blaw lown, Dan; ye dinna ken wha may hear ye," said Charlie. "We hae had hand in these matter oursel's: But for the sake of a' that's dear to you and to us bring gavellocks and ern mells, pinching-bars, and howies, and break open every gate, bar, and door in this castle; for here are we a' imprisoned on the top of it, and famishing to dead wi' hunger and starvation."

"That I will do wi' a' expedition," answered Dan. "It is a shame for the master of the castle to imprison his kinsmen's friends, who came to him in peace and good fellowship. What strength of opposition holds he?" [4]

"Nane, good Chisholm, but these gates. The great Master is himself a prisoner, and suffering with us."

"That dings a'!" said Dan; "I canna understand it! But its a' ane for that; ye maunna stay there. I shall gar his gates flee a' into as mony flinders as there are hairs on his grey beard."

"If you demolish one bar of these gates, young man," cried the Master fiercely, "you do it at your peril."

"So I do, and so I will," answered Dan: "Either bring down my friends and companions to me this instant, or—I have orders,—and here goes."

"Man of mystery and of misery, what dost thou mean?" said the friar. "Lo I have saved thy life; and if thou refuseth to let us escape from the face of death, I will even throw thee from the top of thy tower, and thy blood shall be sprinkled on the wall."

The Master gave him a fierce look, but made no reply. As he strode the battlement, however, he muttered to himself with great violence, "Does the Christian dog dare to beard me thus? To what am I fallen? I am fallen low, but not to this. And not to know what I am! nor what power remains with me? Would that I were in the midst of my arcana and of the spirits once more! Young warrior, use your liberty. Break up and demolish. Set us all free, and see who is the profiter." [5]

Dan scarcely needed such permission. He and twenty others had each a stone of at least half his own weight heaved on his shoulder, which, at a given signal, they all dashed on the gate at once. The bars bent, but nothing gave way; and it was not before the twentieth broadside, in the same

irresistible style, that the cross bars became like a bow and the lock slipped. As for the large bolt, one of the men had climbed over the counter-guard on the shoulders of the rest and drawn it. When they came to the gate of the castle, entrance seemed hopeless. It was steadfast and immovable, the door being double. Dan bellowed for the porter, and asked those on the top what was become of him; but none made answer to his rash question. After waiting a while for it, with his face placed horizontally, he muttered to himself, "Aha! mum there! He has gane nae gude gate, I'll warrant him. It's a queer place this, an' as queer folk about it."

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"What's queer about it, lad," said a strange voice through the key hole, whence it would not speak again.

They had nothing for it but to begin with such awkward mattocks as they had, namely, a score of huge stones; but, to their excessive joy, the doors gave both way at the first assault. This was owing to a most fortunate blunder of the friar, who, during the time he was in possession of the keys, had gone forth to provide for his mule, which he did in an ample manner, but, on returning, had either been unable or unwilling to turn the tremendous locks again into their sockets; and open flew the gates with a jarring sound. Of course, it was not long till our yeomen were thundering at the iron door on the small stair. It was a double door of strong iron bars, and the lock was inclosed between them, so that all attempts to open it appeared fruitless, one man only being able to get to it at once, (that is, one on each side,) and these had no footing. After tugging at it in vain for a space, Dan swore that, to open it, it would be necessary either to begin at the top of the tower and demolish downward, or at the bottom and demolish upward. This appeared a job so tedious to starving people, that it was agreed to feed them with meat and drink through the bars. Every man readily proffered the contents of his wallet; but the getting of these through the bars required ingenuity. They poured the meal through in tubes made of leather, and water and strong drink in the same way; but the flesh could only be got through in long small pieces; and Tam Craik having taken his station at the back of the door, in order to hand up the provisions to his companions, none of the butcher-meat (as it is now called) found its way farther. By the time they had got a supply of meal, water, and distilled liquor, some of Dan's party, by the direction of the Master, went to bring mattocks for raising the stair, and forcing a passage through below the door; others had gone to the brook for more water; so that none remained in the narrow stair save Dan Chisholm and another person.

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By this time there was one who had been silently watching the progress of affairs at Aikwood castle, where he had long been accustomed to reckon on every thing as his own; but now there were some things passed under his potent eye, the true motives for which he could not comprehend, and these actions were still growing more and more equivocal; so he resolved on trusting his sworn vassals no more to their own guardianship, but to take an active management in guiding the events that so deeply concerned his honour and power. Who this august personage was the reader will scarcely guess. He may perhaps discover it in the detail.

It was wearing toward evening, the sun being either set or hid behind dark clouds; for, short as these tales may appear as here related by Isaac the curate, they had taken a day in telling by the wights themselves. The individuals who had been shut up were all light of heart and rejoicing. Delany had fainted in ecstasy, or partly, perhaps, by exhaustion, but was soon recovered by a cup of cold water. They had got plenty of stores laid in for a night and more; so that they were freed from the dread of perishing by starvation, or saving their lives by a resource of all others the most repulsive to humanity. Such was the state of affairs, when the most appalling noise was heard somewhere about the castle,—a noise which neither could be described nor the cause of it discovered. The people below ran out to the court or to the tops of the outer walls, and those above to the battlements—but they saw nothing save the troopers' horses scowering off in all directions, every one of them snorting aloud, and cocking their heads and their tails. Tam Craik and Dan Chisholm were still standing with their noses close to the iron door, and conversing through it. Another trooper stood close at Dan's back; and, when the rushing sound arose, the one said to the other,

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"What the devil is that?"

"Take care wha ye speak about here, friend, or wi' reverence be it spoken," said Tam. Then turning round, he called out, "Yardbire, what hurly-burly is that?"

"I cannot tell," answered Charlie; "only I think the devil be entered into the horses."

Tam, who did not hear distinctly from the top, answered Dan thus: "He says its only the devil entered into the horses." Dan was just about to reply, when the trooper tapped him on the shoulder, and said in a whisper, "Hush, squire! Good Lord! look what is behind us." He looked about, and saw a terrific being standing on the landing-place, beckoning him to come down. From an irresistible impulse, he lost no time in obeying; and, pushing the trooper down before him, he descended the steps. When he came to the bottom he got a full view of the figure, that stood upright between two pilasters, with its face straight to the aperture that lighted the place. One may judge of our yeomen's feelings when they gazed on a being which they always described as follows:

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It appeared about double the human size, both in might and proportion, its whole body being of the colour of bronze, as well as the crown upon its head. The skin appeared shrivelled, as if seared with fire, but over that there was a polish that glittered and shone. Its eyes had no pupil nor circle of white; they appeared like burning lamps deep in their sockets; and when it gazed, they rolled round with a circular motion. There was a hairy mantle hung down and covered its feet that they could not be seen; but Dan saw its right hand, as it pointed to them to retire, every finger of which terminated in a long crooked talon that seemed of the colour of molten gold. It

once opened its mouth, not as if to speak but to breathe, and as it stooped forward at the time, both of them saw it within. It had neither teeth, tongue, nor throat, its whole inside being hollow, and of the colour of burning glass.

It pointed with its right hand across its bosom for them to be gone, and, as they passed by with hurried strides, it drew a stroke with its paw which threatened to send them heels over head down the stair; but it withheld the blow in a moment, as if moved to some higher revenge; and all the way down the great winding stair, it followed and showered on them such a torrent of burning sulphur that they were almost overwhelmed, all the while vomiting it from its burning bosom, with a noise that resembled the hissing of a thousand great serpents. Besides this, on every landing-place there were a pair of monsters placed as guards, immense snakes, bears, tigers, and lions, all with eyes like burning candles. For all these, our two yeomen still kept their feet, which was a wonder, and escaped fairly into the court of the castle.

When they arrived there, every one of their companions had taken leg-bail, and were running as if for death or life; and after what our two champions had seen, there was no occasion to bid them run after the others. Those above heard only the rushing noise, which still increased as long as there was one of those below within the gate, but they saw nothing further,—and wondered not a little when they saw first the horses run away, and then the men after them. When Charlie saw that they *were* gone, and his brother-in-arms Dan leaving the outer-gate the last, he called after him to go *by the mill, and see that Corbie got plenty of water.*

What our prisoners had witnessed was, like every thing else about that castle, quite incomprehensible. Even the great Master himself was manifestly at a loss; when he first heard the sound, and saw the beginning of the confusion, his eyes beamed with exultation. He gave three stamps with his foot, and called aloud, as to some invisible being, in an unknown tongue; but on receiving no answer his countenance fell, and he looked on in gloomy mood.

The flyers vanished after their horses on the hill to the eastward of the castle. Once a few of them rallied and faced about; but on the next one coming up they betook them again to their heels; and thus was our hapless embassy left in the same state as before, save that they were rather in higher spirits, their situation being now known, and instant death averted. After they had refreshed themselves, most of them fell into a slumber; but at length, as the evening advanced, the poet claimed his privilege of telling a story. Some of them proposed that the conversation should be general instead, seeing the great stake for which they contended was now, in all likelihood, superseded. The poet, however, was of a different opinion, on the ground that the highest stake, in his estimation, still remained. "What though my life may not be forfeited," said he, "to feed the hungry and carnivorous maw of this outrageous baconist; although my warm and oozing blood may not be sucked up like the stagnant marsh by bittern vile, or by the tawney snipe; yea, though my joints should not be skatched and collared by the steel, or sinews gnawed up by officious grinder: What's that to me? a gem of higher worth, of richer acceptation, still remains. Beauty unsullied! pure simplicity! with high endowments, in affliction nursed, and cramped by bondage! Oh my very heart yearns to call such a pearl of lustre mine! A kindred soul! A bosom friend! A oh—oh—oach."

Charlie hastened to clap his hand on the poet's mouth, as he burst out a-crying, "Hout, hout, Colly!" said he, "I am quite o' your opinion; but truly this is carrying the joke ower far. I wish ye maunna hae been hauddin rather freely to your head o' thae strong liquors; for the singing crew are a' drowthy deils, ilk ane o' them. Whisht, whisht, and ye sal tell your tale, or sing your sang, which you like; and then you are free to take a collop, or gie a collop, wi' the best o' them."

"I flatter myself that's rather a good thing? Eh?" said the poet.

"What thing?" said the other.

"The song that we overheard just now. Do you know who made that song? Eh?"

"Not I."

"But you have heard our maidens chaunt it,—have you not? God bless them! Sweet, dear, sweet, sweet creatures! Why, Sir, that song happens to be mine; and I think I may say, without vanity, it is as good a thing of the kind as you ever heard? Eh?"

"Faith, I believe it is," said Charlie—not knowing well what to say, for he had heard no song whatever; and then turning to the rest, while the poet was enlarging on the excellency of his song, he said, in an under voice, "Gude faith, the poet's either gaen clean daft, or else he's drunk. What shall I say to him?"

The poet tapped him on the shoulder, seeing he was not paying attention.

"It is not for this, I say, that I judge the piece worthy of attention; nor yet what it shows of ability, hability, docility, or any of the terms that end in *ility*; nor for its allegory, category, or any of the terms that end in *ory*. Neither is it for its versification, imagination, nor any of the thousand abominable terms that end in *ation*. No, sir, the properties of all my songs, I am thankful to Saint Martin, end in *icity* and *uity*. You know the song, Yardbire?"

"O yes. Quite weel."

What do you think of the eleventh verse? Let me see. No, it is the thirteenth verse." "Good Friday! are there so many?" "Hem—m—m. The tenth is, the Ox-eye, I am sure of that. The eleventh is the Mill-stone. The twelfth, the Cloudberry and the Shepherd Boy. The thirteenth, is the Gander and Water-Wagtail. It is the fourteenth. What do you think of the fourteenth? Ay, it is the Gowans and the Laverock that you will like best. You remember that, I am sure?"

"O yes; to be sure I do,"—(Aside,) "Good Lord, the poet's horn mad! Heard ever any body the like o' this?"

"How is this it runs? Ay,

When the bluart bears a pearl,  
And the daisy turns a pea,  
And the bonny lucken gowan  
Has fauldit up his ee,  
Then the laverock frae the blue lift,  
Doops down and thinks nae shame  
To woo his bonny lassie,  
When the kye come hame.

"The song is good, and the music of the song also is delectable," said the friar; "but the voice of the singer is like a sweet psaltery that hath lost a string, and hath its belly rent by the staff of the beater. Lo, I would even delight to hear the song from beginning to end." "Sing it, poet, and let it stand for the tale," cried two of them at once. "That I will not," answered he; "I will tell my tale in my own style, and my own manner, as the rest have done: nevertheless, if my throat were not so dry, I would sing the song." "It is plain what he wants," said Charlie. "'Tis the gate wi' a' the minstrels,—*wet the whistle, or want the spring.*"

Charlie handed him another cup of strong drink, desiring him to take it off and sing. He did the first freely, and attempted the second with equal alacrity; but his voice and memory both failed him by the way, to the great amusement of the whole party,—even the captive boy screamed with laughter, and the great Master was twice constrained to smile. But we must describe this scene as Isaac himself gives it.

The poet was sitting on a bench, with Charlie on the one hand, and Delany on the other; and, fixing his eyes on the ceiling, and clasping his hands, which he heaved up at every turn of the tune, he went on thus:

## THE SWEETEST THING THE BEST THING.

*A SONG.*

### VERSE FIRST.

Come tell me a' you shepherds  
That love the tarry woo',  
And tell me a' you jolly boys  
That whistle at the plow,  
What is the greatest bliss  
That the tongue of man can name,  
'Tis "To woo a bonny lassie  
When the kye come hame."  
When the kye come hame,  
When the kye come hame,  
'Tween the gloaming and the mirk,  
When the kye come hame.

That's the burden, or the quoir, as father Cormack calls it;—the o'erword, like.

### VERSE SECOND.

'Tis not beneath the burgonet,  
Nor yet beneath the crown,  
'Tis not on couch of velvet,  
Nor yet in bed of down;  
'Tis beneath the spreading birch  
In the dell without the name,  
Wi' a bonny bonny lassie,  
When the kye come hame.  
When the kye come hame, &c.

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### VERSE THIRD.

There the blackbird bigs his nest  
For the mate he lo'es to see,  
And on the topmost bough,  
Oh a happy bird is he!  
There he pours his melting ditty,  
And love 'tis a' the theme;  
And he'll woo his bonny lassie  
When the kye come hame.  
When the kye come hame, &c.

### VERSE FOURTH.

When the little wee bit heart  
Rises high in the breast,  
And the little wee bit starn  
Rises red in the east,  
O there's a joy sae dear,  
That the heart can hardly frame,  
Wi' a bonny bonny lassie,  
When the kye come hame.  
When the kye come hame, &c.

### VERSE FIFTH.

Then the eye shines sae bright,  
The hale soul to beguile,  
There's love in every whisper,  
And joy in every smile.  
O wha wad chuse a crown  
Wi' its perils and its fame,  
And miss a bonny lassie  
When the kye come hame.  
When the kye come hame, &c.

[21]

Here the poet warred a long time with recollection, always repeating, "I made the thing, and it is impossible I can forget it—I can't comprehend—" At length he sung the following verse, which he said was the fifteenth.

### VERSE THE FIFTEENTH.

See yonder pawky shepherd,  
That lingers on the hill,  
His ewes are in the fauld  
And his lambs are lying still;  
Yet he downa gang to bed,  
For his heart is in a flame,  
To meet his bonnie lassie,  
When the kye come hame.  
When the kye come hame, &c.

### VERSE SIXTEENTH AND LAST.

Away wi' fame and fortune,  
What comfort can they gie?  
And a' the arts that prey  
On man's life and libertye;  
Gie me the highest joy  
That the heart of man can frame,  
My bonny, bonny lassie,  
When the kye come hame.  
When the kye come hame,  
When the kye come hame;  
'Tween the gloaming and the mirk,  
When the kye come hame.

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"I made the thing," added the poet; "but God knows how I have forgot it. Since I came to the top of this cursed tower, the wind has blown it out of my head." With these words he fell into a profound sleep, which they suffered him to enjoy, before he began his competition. In the meantime, Isaac relates an extraordinary story of a certain consultation that took place in the castle in that very interim, but does not say on what authority he had it, none of the parties yet named having apparently heard it.

The castle of Aikwood, says he, being left as before, an ample and perilous void, some old and frequent inmates took undisputed possession. The leader and convoker of this gang was no other than the Master Fiend who ordered our yeomen out of the castle, and chased them forth, with so little ceremony. In the great Master's study was his gigantic and commanding frame placed at the end of the board, while the three pages, Prig, Prim, and Pricker, were waiting his beck.

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"Come nigh me, my friends," said he; "and read me what is to be done with this king of mighty conjurors now?"

"What thou willest, our Lord and Master," was the reply: "Give the command with the power, and thy pleasure shall be done."

"How canst thou answer for thy negligence in suffering this cowed and canting vagabond to gain admittance here with his saws and parables, his crosiers and his writings?"

"We meant to devour him, but our power extended not to it. Thou hast seen the bones of one whom we suspected."

"You are indolent and wayward slaves. Either separate our greatest vassal on earth from this captious professor, or you shall be punished with many stripes. Our sway is dishonoured if such a man as he is suffered to take shelter under a crosier, and there hold our power at bay,—our control at defiance."—"Return to him that power which since his dejection has been withdrawn, and you are sure of him still. Riches and honours he despises: feasting and wine-bibing he abhors: but for power to do what no other man can perform, he would sell twenty souls, were they in his power of disposal."

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"He is a great man, and well suited for our free independent government. By his principle of insubordination to established authorities, I yet hope to bring all mankind to my own mind and my own country. Read me my riddle, you three slaves. What is the most hateful thing in nature?"

"A saint."

"More ready than right, and more right than ingenious. Show cause."

"Because he is the greatest coward, and all that he does springs from the detestable passion of terror."

"Right. Which being is the most noble?"

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"The opposer of all established authorities ordained by the tyrant of the universe."

"Right! Right! These are the men for me, and of these this Master was a great ensample. Therefore, Separate! Separate! Separate! My elemental power is solemnly engaged; but on the morning of the third day, it shall be given to you to work again at your Master's will. Till that time it will be as well to prevent all ingress and egress here; and at that time I will come again. Speed

you well, nimble noddies; shape well and shard well, and the day is your own. While I transform my shape, sing me the song that I love. Whenever I hear it, my furtherance is the better. The imps complied, and the redoubted fiend laughed till the walls of the castle shook, while those on the top took it for the great bittern of the Hartwood, called there the Bogbumper.

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## HYMN TO THE DEVIL.

SPEED thee, speed thee!  
Liberty lead thee!  
Many this night shall hearken and heed thee.  
Far abroad,  
Demigod!  
What shall appal thee?  
Javel, or Devil, or how shall we call thee?  
Thine the night voices of joy and of weeping,  
The whisper awake, and the vision when sleeping:  
The bloated kings of the earth shall brood  
On princedoms and provinces bought with blood,  
Shall slubber, and snore, and to-morrow's breath  
Shall order the muster and march of death:  
The trumpets shall sound, and the gonfalons flee,  
And thousands of souls step home to thee.  
Speed thee, speed thee, &c.

The warrior shall dream of battle begun,  
Of field-day and foray, and foeman undone;  
Of provinces sacked, and warrior store,  
Of hurry and havoc, and hampers of ore;  
Of captive maidens for joys abundant,  
And ransom vast when these grow redundant.  
Hurray! for the foray. Fiends ride forth a souling,  
For the dogs of havock are yelping and yowling.  
Speed thee, speed thee, &c.

Make the bedesman's dream  
With treasure to teem;  
To-day and to-morrow  
He has but one aim,  
And 'tis still the same, and 'tis still the same.  
But well thou knowest the sot's demerit,  
His richness of flesh, and his poorness of spirit;  
And well thy images thou canst frame,  
On canvas of pride, with pencil of flame:  
A broad demesne is a view of glory,  
For praying a soul from purgatory:  
And, O let the dame be fervent and fair,  
Amorous, and righteous, and husband beware!  
For there's a confession so often repeated,  
The eyes are enlightened, the life-blood is heated.  
Hish!—Hush!—soft foot and silence,  
The sons of the abbot are lords of the Highlands.  
Thou canst make lubbard and lighthead agree,  
Wallow a while, and come home to thee.  
Speed thee, speed thee, &c.

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Where goest thou next, by hamlet or shore,  
When kings, when warriors, and priests are o'er?  
These for thee have the most to do,  
And these are the men must be looked unto.  
On courtier deign not to look down,  
Who swells at a smile, and faints at a frown.  
With noble maid stay not to parle,  
But give her one glance of the golden arle.  
Then, oh, there's a creature thou needs must see,  
Upright, and saintly, and stern is she!  
'Tis the old maid, with visage demure,  
With cat on her lap, and dogs on the floor.  
Master, she'll prove a match for thee,  
With her psalter, and crosier, and Ave Mari.  
Move her with things above and below,  
Tickle her and teaze her from lip to toe;  
Should all prove vain, and nothing can move;  
If dead to ambition, and cold to love,  
One passion still success will crown,  
A glorious energy all thine own!

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'Tis envy; a die that never can fail  
With children, matron, or maiden stale.  
Shew them in dreams from night to day  
A happy mother, and offspring gay;  
Show them the maiden in youthful prime,  
Followed and wooed, improving her time;  
And their hearts will sicken with envy and spleen,  
A leperous jaundice of yellow and green:  
And though frightened for hell to a boundless degree,  
They'll singe their dry perriwigs yet with thee.  
Speed thee, speed thee, &c.

Where goest thou next? Where wilt thou hie thee?  
Still there is rubbish enough to try thee.  
Whisper the matron of lordly fame,  
There's a greater than she in splendor and name;  
And her bosom shall swell with the grievous load,  
And torrents of slander shall volley abroad,  
Imbued with venom and bitter despair:  
O sweet are the sounds to the Prince of the Air!  
Reach the proud yeoman a bang with a spear,  
And the tippling burgess a yerk on the ear;  
Put fees in the eye of the poisoning leech,  
And give the dull peasant a kick on the breech:  
As for the flush maiden, the rosy elf,  
You may pass her by, she will dream of herself.  
But that all may be gain, and nothing loss,  
Keep eye on the men with the cowl and the cross;  
Then shall the world go swimming before thee,  
In a full tide of liberty, licence, and glory!  
Speed thee, speed thee, &c.

Hail, patriot spirit! thy labours be blest!  
For of all great reformers thyself wert the first;  
Thou wert the first, with discernment strong,  
To perceive that all rights divine were wrong;  
And long hast thou spent thy sovereign breath,  
In heaven above and in earth beneath,  
And roared it from thy burning throne,  
The glory of independence alone;  
Proclaiming to all, with fervor and irony,  
That kingly dominion's all humbug and tyranny;  
And whoso listeth may be free,  
For freedom, full freedom's the word with thee!  
That life has its pleasures—the rest is a sham,  
And all that comes after a flim and a flam!  
Speed thee! Speed thee!  
Liberty lead thee!  
Many this night shall hearken and heed thee.  
Hie abroad,  
Demigod!  
Who shall defame thee?  
King of the Elements! how shall we name thee?

As the imps concluded their song, our prisoners on the top of the castle perceived a large rough watch-dog jogging out at the gate of the castle, and following in the direction of the fugitives. When the brute saw that he was perceived he turned round, set up his snout toward the battlements, and uttered a loud bow-wow-wow, which, when the great Master heard, he started to his feet, and, with wild staring looks, and his hair standing on end, took shelter behind the friar."

"Behold thou, and see with thine eyes, that it is only a watch-dog come from the camp of our captain," said the friar. "Lo, thy very nature is changed since first I saw thee."

"Then, would to the gods that I had never seen thee, or that I had seen thee sooner," said the Master; and strode away to discourage any farther reply. The dog followed the fugitives, and bent his course toward the mill.

That being the next inhabited house to the eastward, Dan Chisholm and his yeomen landed all there; and in full assembly he related, to their terror and astonishment, how he had seen the devil himself and several of his monstrous agents, who had chased him from the castle, spuing fire and brimstone on him like a cataract. The rest said, that though they had not seen the devil, they had seen and heard enough to put any rational being out of his senses, and as much as to teach them never to go there again. Dan swore that they were not to be taught any such thing; for, said he, "Our captain's friends, and our own brethren in arms, are most unwarrantably, and I must also say unaccountably, confined there,—and we will either free them or perish in the attempt. I can find plenty of holy men that, with book and candle, can withstand the devil, and shall make him flee from his stronghold like fire from the flint. If I had the gospel friar on the one

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side of him, and Father Brand, or Capuchin Cairnabie, on the other, I shall gar him skip." While Dan was in the middle of this speech, in comes the great rough watch-dog; who, after fawning on some of the warriors as on old acquaintances, took his station in a dark corner of the miller's thronged hall, and began a licking his feet, but at the same time taking good heed to all that passed. It was finally agreed that Dan and a companion should ride straight to Melrose, and represent their case to the holy abbot there, who was devoted to the interests of their captain, and who, it was not doubted, would devise means of expelling the old demon from his guardship, and letting free their friends, who were all baptised men and good Christians. As they formed these sapient devices, many hard things were said of the devil; and our warriors seemed rather inclined to make a laughing-stock of him, till the miller's maid interrupted them with the following question:

"Wha o' you trooper chaps does this maskis dog belang to?"

"To nane o' us," was answered by several at the same time.

"I wish ye wad tent him, then," said she, "for, this wee while bygane, his een hae been glentin like twa blue burnin candles: I wish he be nae a mad ane."

"Sneck doors, and out swords," cried the miller: "We'll hae him proven."

The doors were shut, and the yeomen surrounded the dog with their drawn weapons. The poor beast lay as harmless-like as a lamb, with his head upon his fore feet so as to hide them, turning up his eyes from below his shaggy brows in a beseeching manner, and wagging his tail till it played thump, thump, on the floor. But this did not hinder the miller from reconnoitring, though it gave him rather a favourable opinion of his shaggy guest. "Poor fellow," said the miller, "wha's dog may ye be?" The dog forgot himself; he lifted up his head in a kind acknowledging manner to the miller, who, looking narrowly at him, cried out: "A marvel! a marvel! saw ever ony mortal man the like o' this? Here's a tyke wi' cloven cloots like a gait, fairney cloots and a' thegither. The Holy Virgin be wi' us! I believe we hae gotten the——"

Here the miller was interrupted, without getting the sentence concluded. The dog sprung to his feet, appearing twice as big as when he entered. "Bow-wow-wow!" roared he in the miller's face with the voice of an enraged lion; "Bow-wow-wow!" And as he bayed from side to side on the warrior circle, they all retreated backward till the wall stopped them. Well might they,—for they perceived, by his open mouth, the same appearance that Dan had before witnessed, namely, a stomach and chest of burning flame. "Bow-wow-wow!" reiterated he: "Yough, youph, youph." All fled back aghast; but the attack was of short duration. The miller had a huge fire of seeds, above a burning log of wood, which he had heaped on for the comfort of his guests. When the dog reached that, he broke into it, appearing to bury himself in the coil of fiery dust. It flashed upwards in millions of burning atoms, and in the midst of them up flew the dog out at the top of the lum, with a tremendous "Bow-wow-wow!"

All was silence for a few seconds, while our yeomen stood in a circle, with their weapons drawn, and their backs at the wall, gaping with affright, and staring on one another. "By Saint Thomas, we are haunted!" cried Dan, breaking silence; "That is the same chap I forgathered wi' afore in the staircase of the castle, I ken him by his lowin lungs, though he has changed his shape." He was interrupted by a loud laugh on the top of the house, and a voice that said, in a jeering tone, "Ha, ha, ha! Andrew Chisholm is that you? I have found out a' your plans,—and ride you to Melrose, or ride you to Dryburgh, I'll be there afore you to lend you a lift. Ay, and I'll keep Aikwood castle in spite o' you and a' your master's men."

Dan could not contain his indignation on hearing this brag. He ran forward to the brace, put his neck under it, and turning his nose up the lum (or rustic chimney) answered, "Deil o' that ye're fit to do, auld tyke. Ye're but a liar at best and the father o' liars. Gang and toast heathen bacon in your ain het hame. What seek ye here amang leel men?"

"Weel answered, and like yoursel, Dan!" said one of the yeomen, and slapped him on the shoulder, which rousing his spirit still farther, he added, "Confound you Robin's Geordie o' Feindhope-haugh, what for didna ye strike when the foul thief set up his gousty gab at your nose wi' his impudent bow-wow-wow; I see nae right ony o' God's creatures hae to be hurlbarrowed out o' their standing wi' him."

As he finished the remark, there was something came to the door, and gave two or three rude impatient scratches, exactly in the same manner that a strong dog does that wants to be in. This instantly changed the cheer of our sturdy group, that with one involuntary movement closed round the hearth, as the point the most distant from the door.

"That's him again," said the miller's lass.

"The Lord forbid," said the miller: "I wonder what multure he wants frae me. Though I live on the lands of a Master of Arts, I had nae inkling that I was thirl to hell. Brave lads, can nane of you rhame a mass, a credo, or a paternoster? He is but a coward at best; I hae kend a monk, wi' his crosier and his cowl, chace him like a rabbit."

"I fear we'll prove but lame hands at that," said Dan, "and think we had better sally out on him sword in hand, and see what he can either say or do for himself. But, Chryste, I needna say that, considering that I ken sae weel what his lining's made of."

"I hae a cross and chain in the house," said the miller, "that was consecrated at the shrine of St Bothan; whoever will be our leader shall bear that before him, and we'll bang the auld thief away frae our bigging."

The scratching was renewed with redoubled fury. Our yeomen crowded closer around the fire, till all at once their ears were saluted by a furious "bow-wow-wow" down the lum, which, in spite of their utmost resolution, scattered them like a covey of heath-fowl over which the hawk is hovering, when every one endeavours to shift for itself, and hide in its own heather bush.

Their faces were by this time flushed with shame as well as fear, that they should be thus cuffed about by "the auld thief," as they styled him. Resolved, therefore, to make one great and strenuous effort, the miller brought out his consecrated cross, some tied sticks, and others horn spoons across, till all were armed with the same irresistible symbol, and then they marshalled up before the fire, uncovered their heads, and with the ensigns reared before them, waited for a moment the word of command to march out to the grand attack. The arch fiend, not choosing to wait the issue, raised such a horse laugh on the top of the lum that their ears were deafened with the noise; and clapping his paws that sounded like the strokes of battering ram's horns, he laughed till the upper and nether millstones chattered against each other, and away he bounded through the clouds of the night, apparently in an agony of laughter.

"Aha! there he goes!" said Dan: "There's nae guidance to be had o' him, and as little mense in meddling wi' him."

"Ay, let him e'en gang," said the miller; "he's the warst mouse o' the mill. Ane had better tine the blind bitch's litter than hae the mill singed wi' brimstone. I lurd rather deal wi' the thankless maltster, that neither gi'es coup, neivefu', nor lippie, than wi' him. I have no part of the breviary but a glorious preamble; kneel till I repeat it."

The troopers kneeled round the miller, who, lifting up his hands, said, with great fervour, "O semper timidum scelus! Obstupui, steteruntque comæ et vox faucibus hæsit. O Deus; nusquam tuta fides! Amen." "Amen!" repeated all the group, and arose greatly strengthened and encouraged by the miller's *preamble*.

They spent that night around the miller's hearth, and had a cog of good brose to their supper. The next morning Dan and two associates rode off for Melrose, to lay their case before the friendly abbot, and to beg assistance; which, notwithstanding the devil's brag, they were not afraid of obtaining. But the important events that followed must be related in course, while we return to those friends in their elevated confinement, to whom that night the poet related the following tale.

## CHAPTER II.

*Lord Duf.* Did you not wake them, Cornaro?

*Cor.* Alas! my lord, I could not.

Their slumber was so deep, it seemed to me  
A sleep eternal. Not a sleep of death,  
But of extatic silence. Such a beam  
Of joy and happiness I ne'er beheld  
Shed from the human face.

*The Prioress, a Tragedy.*

### The Poet's Tale.

Fain would I tell my friends and fellow-sufferers of my translation hence. Of all the joys and ecstasies of that celestial clime, ycleped the land of faery; were it not that one is here whose sex forbids it, and whose gentle nature from such a tale would shrink, as doth the flower before the nipping gale. You all have heard of that celestial form, the white lady? And of that wan and beatific presence there lives in my remembrance some faint image of saintly beauty. But list to me, my friends, and do not smile, far less break forth with loud uncourteous neigh, like war horse in the charge,—vile waste of breath! convulsive, unrestrained. But hear the truth: *It was not she who bore me from this land*,—not she, *the white lady*, as all divined. No, it was a form of flesh, and that flesh too of most rare quality. Fair, witching, plump, rosy and amorous; and of unmarred proportions. Sooth, she who lured me from my rustic home no other was than wandering minstrelless, queen to the mightiest harper ever born. Sole empress of a tuneful wayward choir, thoughtless and giddy. But their music stole my very soul away. What could I do but follow it, to listen and to sing. In that bright train I sought the Scottish court, the nobles' hall, and every motely scene of loud festivity throughout the land. There have I heard and seen such scenes of love, of dalliance, and of mirth, of deep intrigue and violent cruelty, as eye of minstrel hath not witnessed. Yes, I have seen things not to be expressed, at least not here. Therefore I'll change the rule this night pursued, of saying what myself have seen and done. The fairy land in which I sojourned was fair Caledon; and there I had my living minstrel joys in high abundance. But I grieve to say, a fatal brawl placed all of us within the line to which the sword of vengeance extends its dreadful sway. Our group dispersed. The soul of melody was then no more! The sounds of harmony divine were hushed; all scattered on the winds of other lands, and other climes, to charm with wailing numbers. Southward I came, amid the border clans to trust my life, men lawless as myself. They once had saved me when a helpless orphan. Whom could I better

trust? And I have found their generosity alone out-done by their own courage. For my adventures, let this sketch suffice. And though not of the fairyland, I will relate a tale, as pure, as wonderful and full of mystery, as if in other worlds I'd learned it. I had it from a simple peasant's mouth, an old grey hind upon the Sidley hills, who vouched its truth. With faltering tongue, and palpitating heart, for love, for life, and all the soul holds dear, I say my tale. O be my soul rapt to the estimate at which I hold the prize, and the divine and holy narrative.

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Once on a time, in that sweet northern land called Otholine, the heathen Hongar landed, and o'er-ran city and dale. The rampart and the flood in vain withstood his might. Even to the base of the unconquered Grampians did he wend with fire and sword; and all who would not kneel, and sacrifice to his strange northern gods, he tortured to the death. Some few renounced the cross, for sordid life, and dread of unheard torments. Men were roasted; matrons impaled; and pure virginity was given up to the rude soldiery to be abused, or humbled as they termed it. Then were they decked with flowers and ornaments, led forth in pairs unto the horrid shrine, and sacrificed to Odin.

At that time there lived three beauteous sisters of the line of mighty kings. They were so passing fair, that all who saw them wondered, and all who wondered loved. Hongar and Hubba, these two heathen brothers, and princes of the Danes, heard of their fame, their beauty, and their excellencies of nature, and sent to seize them in their father's tower, that in the heights of Stormonth stood secure. The castle was surprised, the virgins seized, and carried to the camp. There to their dreadful trial were they brought, and bid to curse the sacred name they feared and worshipped; to renounce the holy cross, and worship Odin, or give up their bodies to shame, to ignominy, and to death on Odin's hideous altar. Marley and Morna both kneeled and intreated, begged a little time to ponder on the dread alternative. But the young sprightly Lena, fairest she of Albyn's virgins, browed the invader's threat with dauntless eye: That eye whose liquid smile in love's sweet converse had been formed to beam.

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"Thou savage heathen!" cried she, "dost thou think to intimidate the royal maids of Caledon to thy most barbarous faith? Tyrant, thou art deceived. I dare thine ire. Thou may'st torment me; for I'm in thine hands, and thy heart ne'er knew pity. Thou may'st tear this tender fragile form with pincing irons. But my soul's purity thou never shall subdue by threat, by engine, or by flame. Thee and thy god I scorn—I curse you both. I lean upon the rock that will not yield; and put my trust in one whose mighty arm can crush thee mid thy idol to an atom. I know he'll save me. He will save us all, if we but trust him without sinful dread. Here, underneath his bleeding cross, I kneel, and cast myself and my poor sisters here, upon his mercy. Here I make a vow to stand for him, and for his sacred truth, and for no other. Now, thou ruthless savage, here I defy thee. Do thy worst to us, and thou shalt see if Jesus or if Odin shall prevail, and who can best preserve their worshippers.

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The heathen brothers smiled; and Hongar said, "How wildly sweet the little Christian looks! I make my choice to humble and prepare her for the base slaves of Odin's warlike halls. Go warriors, lock them up in donjon deep, until the hour of midnight, when the rites of Odin shall begin. Then will we send and bring them to the test; and all shall see whose God is most in might, and who must yield.

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In prison dark the virgins were immured, with sevenfold gates and sevenfold bars shut in. Soon as they were alone, the sisters twain, Marley and Morna, in fond tears embraced their youngest sister, lauded her high soul, and vowed with her to stand, with her to die, unsullied in the faith they had been taught.

Then did they kneel on the cold dungeon floor, and one by one offered their fervent prayers at mercy's footstool. But chiefly were their vows made to the Holy Virgin; for they hoped that she would save their pure virginity from sin's pollution. Never did prayers ascend up to heaven with greater fervency. And as the hour of midnight on them drew, they kneeled; and, side by side, with lifted hands, and eyes turned toward heaven, sang aloud this holy simple hymn to their Redeemer.

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## HYMN TO THE REDEEMER.

SON of the Virgin, hear us! hear us!  
Son of the living God, be near us!  
Thou who art man in form and feature,  
Yet God of glory, and God of nature.  
Thou who led'st the star of the East,  
Yet helpless lay at a Virgin's breast;  
Slept in the manger, and cried on the knee,  
Yet rulest o'er Time and Eternity.  
Pity thy creatures here kneeling in dust;  
Pity the beings in Thee that trust!

Thou who fed'st the hungry with bread,  
And raised'st from the grave the mouldering dead;  
Who walked'st on the waves of the rolling main,  
Who cried'st to thy Father, and cried'st in vain;  
Yet wept for the woes and the sins of man,  
And prayed'st for them when thy life-blood ran;  
With thy last breath who cried'st FORGIVE!  
When bleeding and dying, that man might live!  
Over death and the grave hast the victory won,  
And now art enthroned by the stars and the sun.  
For thy name's glory, hear us, and come,  
And show thy power over idols dumb.

O leave the abodes of glory and bliss,  
The realms of heavenly happiness;  
Come swifter than the gale of even  
On thy lightning's wing, the chariot of heaven;  
By the gates of light and the glowing sphere,  
O come on thy errand of mercy here!

But Lord of glory we know not thee,

We know not what we say;

We cannot from thy presence be,

Nor from thine eye away:

For though on the right hand of God,  
Thou art here in this dark and drear abode:  
Beyond the moon and the starry way  
Thou holdest thy Almighty sway,  
Where spirits in floods of light are swimming,  
And angels round thy throne are hymning;  
Yet present with all who call on thee  
In this world of wo and adversity.

Then, O, thou Son of the Virgin, hear us!  
God of love and of life be near us!  
Our hour of trial is at hand,  
And without thy aid how shall we stand?  
Our stains wash out, our sins forgive;  
And before thee may our spirits live.  
For thee and thy truth be our bosoms steeled:  
O be our help, our stay, our shield:  
Show thy dread power for mercy's sake,  
For thy name, and thy glory, and all is at stake;  
Bow down thy heavens, and rend them asunder,  
And come in the cloud, in the flame, or the thunder.

The trumpets now were sounding, while the host arose from wine and wassail, to prepare the baleful sacrifice of Christian souls. The virgins heard, and trembled as they kneeled; and beautiful Lena raised her slender hands, and prayed, with many tears, that the Almighty would stretch out his right hand and close their eyes in everlasting sleep, to save them from self-slaughter, or the fate they dreaded more.

While yet the words were but in utterance, and ere the vow was vowed, they heard the gates unbarred one after one, and saw the lights glance through the lurid gloom. Each youthful heart turned, as it were, to stone; for well they weened the Danish soldiers came to bring them forth to shame and death. They kept their humble posture, with hands and eyes upraised, for they expected no pity or compassion save from heaven.

The inmost door upon its hinges turned, like thunder out of tune; and, lo! there entered,—no heathen soldier,—but a radiant form covered with light as with a flowing robe. In his right hand he bore a golden rod, and in his left a lamp that shone as bright as the noon-day sun. A thousand thousand gems, from off his raiment, cast their dazzling lustre. Diamonds and rubies formed alternate stars, while all between was rayed and spangled o'er with ever-varying brightness. Round his head he wore a wreath of emeralds; these were set with never-fading green. They deemed he was the great high priest of Odin come to lead them to the sacrifice. But yet his look,

so mild and so benign, raised half a hope within their breasts of pity and regard. They were about to plead; but ere a sound breathed from their lips, the stranger beckoned them to silence. Then, in mild and courteous strain, in their own tongue, he thus accosted them:

"To ONE already have your vows been framed; and would you bow to another? You have pleaded to heaven's high King; and would you plead to man? Rise up, and follow me." The virgins rose; they had not power to stay,—and followed him, alas! they knew not whither. They had no voice to question or complain. Door after door they passed; gate after gate; and still their guide touching them with his golden rod, they closed in jangling fury. Onward still they moved, and met the heathen bands, led by their chiefs, Hongar and Hubba. They were drunk with wine; and loudly did they halloo when they saw their prey escaped, and walking on the street all beauteous and serene: Closing around the fugitives, and jabbering uncouth terms and words obscene, the chiefs opened their arms to seize the helpless three. Just then their guide turned round unmoved, and waving his bright rod, the heathens staggered, uttered mumbling sounds, and, trying vainly to support themselves, reeling they sunk enfeebled to the earth, where all as still and motionless they lay as piles of lifeless corpses. How the virgins wondered at what they saw! and fearless now they followed their bright leader. Next they met the priests of Odin, in their wild attire, marching in grand procession to the scene of mighty sacrifice. Aloft they bore their hideous giant idol; by his sides his loathsome consort and his monster son, Freya and Thor, while all their followers sung this choral hymn in loud and warlike strains:

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## HYMN TO ODIN.

I.

HE comes! he comes!  
Great Odin comes!  
Who can rise or stand before him?  
The god of the bloody field,  
The sword, and the ruddy shield;  
The god of the Danes, let all adore him.

II.

Wake the glad measure to  
The goddess of pleasure too,  
Who fills every hero with joy and with love!  
And hail to dread Thor,  
Great son of great sire,  
The quaffer of gore,  
And the dweller in fire:  
The god of the sun, and the lightnings above.

III.

Prepare! prepare!  
The feast prepare,  
Since mighty Thor our guest shall be:  
Three times three,  
And three times three,  
This day shall bleed for repast to thee!

IV.

Strike the light,  
Make the flame burn bright,  
Since Freya is here who gives delight!  
Three times three,  
And nine times nine,  
This day shall bleed on altar of thine.

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V.

Shout and sing,  
Till the mountains ring!  
The father of men, and of gods the king!  
See him advance  
With sword and lance;  
Billows of life-blood, heroes, bring!

VI.

God of Alhalla's dome!  
God of the warrior's home!  
Who can withstand thee in earth or heaven?  
Bring to his altar then,  
Of Christian dames and men,  
Nine times nine, and seven times seven.

VII.

Bend to your place of birth,  
Children of sordid earth;  
The god of battles your homage disdains.  
Who dare oppose him?  
Christian or Moslem?  
Who is like Odin, the god of the Danes?

The maids and their angelic guide went on following the cross; and as they went, they sung in sweet and humble aspirations the song of the Lamb. They met the gorgeous files. Fair met with fair. The hideous idols sat an hundred cubits high; whereas the cross a maiden's hand upbore. But when they met, the proud and mighty peal, swelling from Odin's worshippers, was hushed as

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with a sob. The hills rang with the sound; and the o'erburdened air bore the last knell up to the skies. It quavered through the spheres, and died in distance, to be heard no more, while nought but the sweet notes the virgins sung rose on the paths of night. The motely mass of heathens stood amazed, and as they stood they listened and they quaked. The words were these at which they paused, and which the virgins sung:

\* \* \* \* \*

Silence the blasphemers thee that defy,  
Strike down the mighty, Son of the Most High;  
Rise in thy power, that the heathen may see,  
What dust are their gods and their glory to thee;  
Raise thy right hand, and in pieces them shiver,  
That to the true God may the praise be for ever.

At every line the bearers and their gods trembled the more, and as the last notes closed, the mighty Odin toppled from his throne, and crashed amid his powerless worshippers. His wooden spouse and son fell with the sire of Gods and men, and in a thousand pieces their gilded frames were dashed. Confusion reigned. The host fled in dismay; but Odin's priests sunk down in low prostration, groaning and howling for the fall of Odin,—the shield and glory of the Danish host. [56]

From out this wild confusion the bright guide conducted the three virgins, to a cave close by the river's brink, and charged them hide until the wrath of the enraged foe should be abated. Here, said he, you are in perfect safety. No one living knows of this retreat. Here sleep and take your rest. May angels watch around your flinty couch. Farewell, I must begone on the employ assigned me by your father and by mine. He left the lamp and went his way. Forthwith they kneeled in prayer, thanking their Saviour for their great deliverance, then laid them down to rest. They kissed the cross, and folded closely in each other's arms, cheek leaning unto cheek, with holy hymns they sung themselves asleep.

Great was the rage among the Danish chiefs, and wide the search for these presumptuous and bold aggressors. The host was all discouraged and amazed, and nought but terror reigned. Earldoms were offered for the audacious maids, dead or alive. But nor alive nor dead could they be found, either by friend or foe. O dreadful were the execrations uttered by the Danes. They called them demons, witches, and the worst of all incendiaries. Well they might. The terror of their arms was broken. Great was the rejoicing mid the hills and glens of Albyn, but the eastern vallies groaned beneath the fury of the savage Dane, and Christian blood was shed on every cross. [57]

The virgins waked at morn, and still the lamp sent forth its feeble glimmer through the cave. The day-beam through the crevice of the rock streamed in and mixed with it. The virgins strove to rise, to speak—to sing a morning hymn. But all their limbs were cold, and their tongues clove fast to their thirsty palates. Lena, first of all the three, upraised her pallid form, and on the lamp turning her drowsy eye, there did it settle, closed, and oped again, but still with faded and uncertain light, as if the mind were lacking. Long she sat, half raised in this uneasy torpid state, —this struggle 'twixt oblivion and life. Oft she assayed her sisters to awake, by naming them; but still as oft the names died in a whisper. By degrees her mind dawned into recollection, as the moon breaks o'er the sullen twilight. Then the wonders, that she had seen o'ernight, aroused her soul to all its wonted energy. She kneeled, and thanked her Maker for the great deliverance to them vouchsafed. And when her sisters woke, they woke to join her in a heavenly song. [58]

"What ails our sister? Here we are in safety. Why does our dear beloved not rest in peace? The night is not far spent: the dawn of morn is yet far distant. O dear Lena sleep. Sleep on, and take your rest. The morning sun is yet beneath the deep. Our limbs are cold; our eyes are heavy; yet we cannot rise, for we are weary, and not half awake."

"Wake, my beloved sisters. It is time. The noon is at its height. See how the sun peeps through the granite cliffs, and on the stream sheds ray of trembling silver. Let us rise and talk of all the wonders we have seen." [59]

Long they conversed in tears of gratitude, still peeping from their cavern, lest the Dane again should find and drag them to the altar. Sore were they pressed by hunger. From the stream they drank abundantly with thankful hearts. But food for many a day and many a night they scarce had tasted, and they longed for it with more than ordinary longing. Night approached; and there they sat, not knowing what to do, a prey to gnawing hunger. At the last, young Lena said, "I cannot ween that heaven hath wrought a miracle for our relief, and for no higher purpose than that we should be left to die of hunger in this dark and hideous den. Again I'll put my life into its hand, and go into the city after twilight in search of bread; and if I die I die: Heaven's will be done." Her sisters looked at her, and blessed her in the holy Virgin's name. They could not bid her go where danger waited, so great, so imminent; and yet they felt they could not press her stay. With cautious eye, and with enfeebled step, trembling she sought the city gate. But when, afar, she saw by torch-light porters striding to and fro, with glittering lances of enormous length, and ponderous battle axes, her heart failed, and she drew back. But then she thought again of those she left behind, and all the throes of perishing with hunger, and resolved to risk all hazards. The huge gate stood open, and strangers went and came. "I'll join," thought she, "this straggling crew, and enter among them; they speak my native tongue. Ah! they must be a band of traitorous base renegades, that have renounced the cross and joined the Dane; else wherefore free to go and come and trade? I'm all unsafe with such. The strangers eyed her with most curious and piercing looks, and whispered as they went. They seemed afraid, and shunned her by [60]



the way, as they who shun a being infected by the pestilence, or spirit from the dead. No one addressed a word to her, but hurried to the gate.

She came alone, for feeble was her step, and her breast palpitating as with throb of burning fever, hopeless of admission. [61]

The porters stared with wide extended gaze, and eyes protruding; but no word they spoke, nor crossed their lances. Straight she entered in. "What can this mean?" thought she; "There is a change since yester-even that it passes thought to comprehend. These keepers are not Danes; I heard them speak in Albyn's ancient tongue; and yet methinks they wear the Danish garb. How's this? that I am free to come and go, as in my childhood, when the land was free?"

She passed the sacred fane, and there beheld crowds entering in; but fast she sped away, weening they went to Odin's cursed rites.

She went to those that sold, and asked for bread. The woman stared at her with silent gaze. She asked again, and straight the huckster fled in floundering haste. Poor Lena stood amazed. "How's this?" said she, "where'er I show my face the people shun me. Here I shall remain, for I am faint with hunger, till I taste some of these cakes, which I can well repay." [62]

She stood not long until she was accosted by holy bedesman, who, with cautious step, and looks of terror, entered, fast repeating his *Ave Maria*. "In the Virgin's name," cried he, "and under sanction of this cross, I charge thee tell who or from whence thou art."

The virgin kneeled, and kissed the holy symbol, but waived direct reply. "I lack some bread to give to those that famish, and I'll pay for that which I receive," was her reply.

"Then 'tis the bread of life that thou dost lack; man's natural food I fear thou can'st not use, for thou art not a being of this world, but savour'st of the grave. Thy robes are mouldy, and fall from off thy frame? Thy lips are parched and colourless. These eyes have not the light of human life. Thou ominous visitant, declare from whence thou art, and on what mission thou com'st to this devoted wasted land?"

Lena looked up. The holy father's face to her appeared familiar. But how great the change since last she saw it. "Father Brand, dost thou not know me?" was her home reply. [63]

With blenching cheek and with unstable eye the father gazed, and, faltering, stammered forth, "No. Jesu Maria, be thy servant's shield! Yes. Now I know thee. Art thou not the spirit of the hapless Ellamere, who was put down within our convent for a wilful breach of its most sacred law? Avaunt! Begone! Nor come thou here t' accuse those that grieved for thee, while they executed just vengeance on thy life. Injurious ghost! Thy curses have fallen heavy on our heads, and brought the wrath of heaven upon our land in tenfold measure. In the Saviour's name, whose delegate I am, I charge thee hence unto thy resting-place,—to that award that heaven's strict justice hath ordained for thee; and come not, with that pale and withering look, more curses and more judgments to pronounce."

"Reach me thine hand," said she, and held her's forth, meaning to work conviction on his mind that she was flesh and blood. Her arm was wan as death itself, emaciated and withered, and furred with lines, livid and colourless, as by corrodent vapours of the grave. The monk withdrew his hand within his frock, shook his grey locks, and, with slow palsied step, moved backward till the threshold stone he gained; then turned and fled amain. The household dame fled also from her inner door, from which she peered and listened, and the wondering virgin again was left alone. She waited there in wild and dumb incertitude a space; then took some bread, some fruits, and baken meat, laid some money down as an equivalent, and went away to seek her dark retreat. [64]

But as she passed the fane, with wary step she ventured to the porch, and, marvelling, heard the whole assembly, joined in rapt devotion, praising the name of Jesus. Close she stood, and, darkling as it was, joined in the choir so much beloved. But all the wonders she so late had seen yielded to this. In one short night, one strange eventful night, such things were done as human intellect, with all its cunning, could not calculate. [65]

She passed the gate. The gaping sentinels stood, as they did before, immoveable, each casting sidelong glances unto his mate, to note who first should fly or call the word. She beckoned them as with intent to speak; but in one moment porters, spears, and axes scattered and vanished in the darksome shade.

Reaching the cave, she found the lamp gone out that their mysterious deliverer had left them over night. First she regaled her sisters' hearts with the miraculous tidings that all the people worshipped Jesus' name without dismay or molestation, who, but the night before, not for their lives durst have acknowledged him: That all seemed free to go and come, and pray to whom they listed. The tale seemed a romance,—a dream of wild delirium. The Danes could not be banished in a night, and all the land cleared of the vile idolatry of Odin. They disbelieved the whole, as well they might, but held their peace, dreading their sister's mind mazed in derangement. Still, as she went on, saying that all whom she had met or seen supposed her one arisen from the dead, or ghost of some departed criminal, strangled for breach of a monastic vow, then did they grasp each other's hands, and weep for their dear sister's sad mishap. They deemed her mad as raving whirlwind, or the music of mountain cataract. Yet she had brought them food of various sorts, which in the dark she gave them; and they fed, or strove to feed,—but small indeed the portion they devoured. [66]

"How's this," cried Morna, "that my little cake grows ne'er the less? Can it be so that we are truly spirits,—ghosts of the three maids that overthrew the Danish god last night? I hunger and I

thirst, 'tis true. Tell me, Can spirits drink the element of water? Certes they may. But then, how did we die, or when? for I cannot remember me of passing death's hideous and dreary bourn, though something of a weary painful dream hangs round my heart."

This vague disjointed speech, the wayward visions of distemperature, struck the two others motionless, and set them on cogitations wandering and wild as meteors o'er a dreary wilderness. The thought of being in a new existence, with all its unknown trials, powers, and limits, their struggling minds essayed in vain to grasp.

Reason returned, but as a step-mother returns to frenzied orphan's dying bed. They felt each other's pulses. There was life,—corporeal life; but still there was a change, which no one chose to mention,—yet a change quite unaccountable for one night's sleep to have effected. From their cavern's porch they viewed the stars of heaven. They were the same as they were wont. They saw the golden wain, the polar plough tilling his ample field with slow unwearied furrow, and the sisters,—the seven lovely sisters of the sky, arching their gorgeous path. Far to the east they spied a star beloved, which in their childhood they oft had watched, and named the "tiger's eye," changing its vivid colours as of yore. And then they wept to think of former days of innocence and joy. And thus in tears, clasped in each other's arms, they laid them down their mazed and oppressed spirits to compose.

While thus they lay, romantic Morna said: "My sisters, it is evident to all that some great change has happed to us last night. We are not what we were. What can it be but change from one existence to another? A mortal creature cannot touch or feel a disembodied spirit; but we know not how spirits feel each other. Sure as life and death hold opposition in this world, from the one into the other we have passed. I feel it in my being. So do you, though unacknowledged. Let us rise and walk as spirits do by night, and we shall see the change in us, not over a whole land in one short night. Come, let us roam abroad. I feel a restlessness,—a strong desire to flit from place to place,—perchance to fly between the mountain and the cloud, and view the abodes of those we love.

This wild romance waked in the virgins' hearts an energy between despair and madness. All extremes erratic and unnatural, on the minds of females, act like the infection of virulent disease. Up they arose, and, stepping from their cavern, took their way along the river's brink. Midnight was past. The tiger's eye had climbed the marble path that branches through the heaven, and goggled forth, now red, now blue, now purple and now green, down from his splendid ceiling far on high. 'Twas like a changeful spirit. In the east the hues of morning rose in towering streaks, as if the Almighty had caused light to grow like cedars from the summits of the hills. It was a scene for spirits! There were three abroad that morn before the twilight rose,—three creatures spiritual, yet made of flesh! First they espied an aged fisherman, who passed without regard. Then did they deem they were invisible, and wilder still their fancies worked. The suburbs now they gained of the resplendent ancient Otholine, the emporium of the east, and hand in hand, with hurried, but enfeebled step, they trode its lanes and alleys. Those who saw them said their motions were erratic, like the gait of beings overcome with wine, or creatures learning to walk for the first time on earth. The early matron, and the twilight groom, fled with hysteric cries at their approach. The gates were left a-jar, the streets a waste: porter and sentinel joined in the flight, and nought but terror and confusion reigned.

The virgin sisters wist not what to do, or what to dread. Within the convent's porch, they halted, turned, and gazed on one another, and wondered what they were, that nature thus shuddered at their approach, and held aloof. Three creatures spiritual yet made of flesh, belonging not to heaven nor earth! but shunned by the inhabitants of both. Just then, while standing in despondency, they heard the grey cock crow; the eldritch clarion note chilled every heart, and twanged on every nerve.

"That is our warning call," wild Morna said: "My sisters now we must hence and begone: that is the roll-call of the murdering spirits. We shall be missed at matins. To your homes! your damp and mouldering homes, ye ghastly shades! The daylight will dissolve you! Does that voice not say so?"

"Hush thee, gentle Morna! drive us not to distraction. Here we'll wait until the convent matin; then we'll ask the holy prioress what things we are. What say you, gentle sisters? can we live outcasts on earth in such incertitude? Our father's towers are distant. We can glide, like passing shades with slow and feeble motion, but nothing more spirits;—can sail the air in skiff of mist or on the breeze's wing. Such powers we have not; and to journey there we lack ability. Here then we stay until we are resolved what strange events have happened to us, to our native land, and church, of late so grievously oppressed."

"Yes, here we'll stay. Come, rouse the porteress! For see the sun tips the far hills with gold, and we shall melt before his tepid ray, all gentle as it is at early morn! My frame is like a mildew. The hoar frost of death hath fallen on it. Oh, for the guide—the angelic youth that left us yester-eve. Ho! daughters of the Cross! If any here hath 'scaped the murderous Dane, come forth and welcome the conquerors of Odin. Ho! within! Wake ere the sun upbraids you. He is up, on service to his Maker, yet you sleep. I say, wake."

"Who calls? What are you there?"

"We know not what we are. For that we come, to see if any here can us resolve. But two short nights ago, we were three maids of royal lineage. Thou stern porteress, come forth and look on us. Canst thou not tell what we are made of? Why stand'st thou aloof?"

"Speak calmly, sister Morna. See she trembles and dares not answer. Gentle dame, we pray

admission to your lady prioress, for sake of him who died upon the cross, whose name we worship." Straight she vanished upon her fearful mission, glad to 'scape from such a colloquy. Soon then arrived the aged prioress, who them approached with dauntless countenance, and, unappalled, asked of their errand. "Venerable dame, dost thou not know, or hast thou never heard of the three maids of Stormont, who of late, led by a heavenly messenger, o'erthrew the god of Denmark, and upheld the cross triumphant o'er the breasts of prostrate heathens?"

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"Ay, I have heard of them; and often joined in prayer and thanksgiving for the deliverance wrought by these royal virgins. That was a conquest that roused the spirit of the Christian to deeds of more than mortal energy, and humbled the proud confidence the Dane placed in his idols. Ay, that was a conquest shall cloud the brow of the idolater while the world stands! But what was it you spoke of yester eve? Either you are deranged, or shallow poor impostors: for that time hath long gone past, and the three wondrous maids were in the sight, and from the middle of that mighty host translated into heaven. Unless you came from thence on sacred mission, and bringest evidence of identity by further miracle, better you had keep silence and depart."

"We are those maids, the maids of Stormont, nieces to the king; and we require of you lodging and fair protection, till we prove our lineage. There is something passing strange hath happed to us. But what the circumstance, or how accordant with the works of God, is far beyond the fathom and the height of our capacity. We are the maids of Stormont. To that truth we will make oath upon the holy cross."

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The prioress crossed herself, commended her to heaven, and, with deep awe and dire astonishment, admitted them. She gazed upon them: their fair cheeks were pale, and their benignant eyes looked through a haze that was not earthly; it was like the blue mists of the dawning. All their robes were of the fashion of a former day; and they were damp and mouldy, falling piecemeal from off their bodies with their rottenness.

"I dread to question you, mysterious things. That you are earthly forms, I see and feel. Whence are you? In what dreary unknown clime have you been sojourning? Or are you risen from out your graves? If you have truth in you, and power to tell it, pray resolve me this; for I am lost in wonder."

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"What we are we know not. For that purpose we came hither, that you might tell us. All we know is this: Last night but one we were the maids of Stormont, doomed to a dreadful fate. An heavenly one came to our rescue; led us through the gates of iron and of brass. Still as we went, we conquered. Ranks of proud idolaters fell prostrate in the dust; and the great god, the mighty Odin, was o'erthrown, and dashed into a thousand pieces. Straight our blessed guide conducted us into a lonely cave close by the river's brink, and bade us sleep and take our rest until the day should dawn and shadows fly away. We slept, and yester-morn, when we awoke, the lamp our guide had left still feebly burned. Impelled by hunger, from our cave we ventured. All people fly from us; the Danes are gone; the name of Christ is mentioned. Nought we see and nought we hear is comprehensible."

"A miracle! a mighty miracle! Within that secret cavern you have slept for days and years, in quiet sweet repose, the lamp of heaven still burning over you, until the day hath dawned,—such day of grace as Scotland hath not seen. The heathen Dane, with all his hideous gods, was vanquished, but days of darkness and contention rose, until this time, when all the glorious rays of mercy and of grace have shed their influence on this benighted persecuted land; and you are waked to enjoy it. Let us go straight to the altar, and beneath the cross join in elated thanksgiving."

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The chancel door opened before the altar. When the three virgins entered in, and saw the figure on the cross, they cried aloud with one combined voice, "'Tis he, 'Tis he! What? Have these heathens dared to lay their impious hands on him? 'Tis he! 'Tis he! Our heavenly guide that saved us from the death. And have they slain him? Has the cursed Dane——"

"Hold, hold, for mercy's sake; you do not know the things you utter. What you look upon, hangs there to represent the death of him who died that man might live."

[77]

"And is it so? Then be our lives sacred unto the service of him who laid his life down for our race, and sent his angel to deliver us, in his own likeness too; for this is he who came to us in great extremity, when we called on the name of our Redeemer in agony of soul."

"Remain with me till our great festival. This miracle must be made known to all that trust in Jesus' name. Meanwhile I will cherish and comfort the beloved of heaven."

The day arrived of the great festival, the anniversary of the overthrow of mighty Odin,—that sublime event that broke the bands of iron and of steel, and threw the gates of superstition open to Albyn's Christian triumph. On that day the king's whole household, nobles of the realm, high dames and commons, abbots, monks, and mendicants, a motely and a countless multitude, assembled early at the monastery of ancient Otholine, to render thanks for their deliverance. Masses were said; and holy hymns of praise ascended to the skies. With one accord, then all the grateful multitude agreed to canonize the three heroic virgins, who, with the aid of angels, had wrought out the Christian's triumph, the beloved of heaven, translated to the blest beatitude, where souls of saints and blessed martyrs dwell, and whose joint prayers might with the holy Virgin much avail.

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A joyful clamour for the ordinance then spread around, so eager were the crowd to kneel and pay their humble adorations to the three maids, translated to the heavens with bodies like their own. Applauses rang; and from behind the altar was given forth a song divine, in which a thousand

voices joined, till all were hushed at this ecstatic strain.

Hail to the happy three!  
Vessels of sanctity!  
Now honoured to stand  
At the Virgin's right hand.  
(Mater Dei!  
Remember me!)  
Remember us all, and send us for good,  
Bone of our bone, and blood of our blood.—  
Song of harp, and voice be dumb!—  
The heaven is oped. They come, they come!

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A bustle rose. The abbot on his knees sunk down and leaned upon the altar-cloth, and only a few voices whispered round, "They come, they come!" The congregation turned their eyes into the chancel, and beheld three virgins, all in robes of purest white, stand over against the altar. The loud choir was hushed, and every brow was forward bent in low obeisance: All believing these three beauteous flowers from paradise had come arrayed in robes of heaven, with angel forms that bloomed like winter roses newly oped, in high approval of the festival, and sacred honours to be paid to them.

The virgins beckoned, raised their flowing veils, and their right hands to heaven. "Stay, they cried, stay the solemnity, ere you profane the name and altar of the God of heaven. Here stand the three unworthy maids of Stormont whom you would deify. Come nigh to us our father and our king, and ye chaste ministers of him we serve: Come nigh, and feel that we are mortal like yourselves, and stop the rite. Pay adoration to that Holy One who pitied us in misery extreme, and you in grievous bonds. There be your vows and worship paid, in which we three shall join. He hath indeed done wondrous things for us, works of amazement, which you all shall hear, and whoso heareth shall rejoice in heart."

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Then came they all unto their father's knee, kneeled and embraced him, while the good old earl shed tears of joy, and rendered thanks to heaven; their sovereign next, their former lovers, friends, and all they knew in that mixed multitude, they did embrace, that no remaining doubt might spring and spread of their identity. It was a joyful meeting, such a one as hath not been in any land for happiness and holy ecstasy. They lived beyond the years of women,—but their lives were spent in acts of holiness, apart from grandeur's train. In curing of the sick, clothing the naked, ministering to all in want and wretchedness, and speaking peace unto poor wandering and benighted souls. Their evening of life was like the close of summer day, pure, placid, and serene,—the twilight long, but when at last it closed, it was with such a heavenly glow, it gave pure prospect of a joyous day to come. Thus ends my legend; and, with all submission, I bow to your awards, and wait my doom.

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### CHAP. III.

*Garolde.* Prick on good Markham. That galled jade of yours  
Moves with a hedgehog's pace. Is this a time  
To amble like a belle at tournament,  
When life and death hang on our enterprize?

*Mark.* We've had long stages, Garolde;  
We must take up. What miscreants have we here?

*The Prioress.*

"Lo, have not I taken great delight in the words of thy mouth?" said the friar, "for it is a legend of purity and holiness which thou hast told, and the words of truth are contained in it. Peradventure it may be an ancient allegory of our nation, in which manner of instruction the fathers of Christianity amongst us took great delight. But, whether it be truth, or whether it be fiction, the tendency is good; and behold, is it not so; do not I even thank thee for thy tale?"

"It is the most diffuse, extravagant, and silly legend that ever was invented by votary of a silly and inconsistent creed," said the Master.

"I side wi' you, Master Michael Scott," said Tam Craik; "I think the tale is nought but a string of bombastical nonsense."

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"Excepting ane about fat flesh, I think I never heard the match o't," said the laird of the Peatstacknowe; "It brings me a-mind o' our host's dinner, that was a' show but nae substance."

"If I foresee aught aright," said the Master, "of many a worse dinner shall I see thee partake, and enjoy the sight."

"Was not that a beautiful and sublime tale, father?" said Delany: "I could sit and listen to such divine legends for ever." The poet's eyes shone with tears when he heard the maid he loved say these words to the friar apart, who answered and said unto her, "Lo, there are many more sublime and more wonderful in thy little book; nevertheless the tale is good for instruction to those that are faithless and doubting."

"Alak! I fear I shall not live to learn and enjoy these. Do not you think, father, that we shall all

perish in this miserable place," added Delany,—“this horrible place of witchcraft and divination?” Charlie Scott stepped forward when he overheard some of these words. “Eh? what was the lassie saying?” said he. “Eh? I’ll tell ye what it is, hinney: I believe ye see things as they are. There’s naething but witchcraft gaun on here; and it is that, and that alone, that a’ our perils and mischances rise frae. Begging your pardon, father, I canna help thinking what I think, and seeing what I see. But, gude faith! we maun blaw lown till we win aff the tap o’ this bigging, if that ever be.”

“My hand hath prevailed against his hand,” said the friar, “and my master over his master; and had it not been for this miserable accident we should have had nothing to fear from his divinations, sublime and mighty as they are. What hath become of the mighty men of valour from the camp of our captain?”

“O there’s nae mortal can tell,” said Charlie: “It was not for naething that Dan and his lads ran off and left us without ever looking ower their shoulders. A’ witchcraft! a’ witchcraft! Ane may stand against muckle, but nae man can stand against that. I wish we were where sword and shield could aince mair stand us in stead. But this I’m sure o’—Now that our situation is kend to our kinsman, it winna be lang before some aid appear. O if it wad but come afore we are driven to that last and warst of a’ shifts to keep in life.”

“We canna live another day,” said Tam: “I therefore propose that the maid and the boy try ilk ane their hand at a tale too, and stand their chances with the rest of us. Their lives are of less value, and their bodies very tender and delicate.”

Every one protested against Tam’s motion with abhorrence; and it was agreed that they would now appeal to the Master who had told the worst tale. Not that the unfortunate victim was to be immediately sacrificed, nor even till the very last extremity; but with that impatience natural to man, they longed to be put out of pain; every one having hopes that his own merits protected himself from danger. Every one also believed that judgment would be given against Tam, except he himself; and that, at all events, such an award would put an end to his disagreeable and endless exultations of voracious delight. They then went before the renowned wizard, and desired him to give judgment who of them had related the worst and most inefficient tale, laying all prejudice with regard to creeds and testimonies aside.

He asked them if they referred the matter entirely to him, or if they wished to have each one a vote of their own? Tam said it was an understanding at first that each should have a vote, and, as he had made up his mind on the subject, he wished to give his. Charlie said it was a hard matter to vote away the life of a friend; and, for his part, he would rather appeal to the great Master altogether. But if any doubts should remain with any one of their host’s impartiality, he thought it fairer that they should cast lots, and hazard all alike. The poet, who had heard the Master’s disapprobation given pointedly of his tale, sided with Yardbire, and voted that it should be decided by lot. Gibbie, though quite convinced in his own mind that he had told the best story, yet having heard the *morality* of it doubted, and dreading on that score to have some voices against him, called also for a vote; for he said the referring the matter to the Master brought him in mind of the story of the fox sitting in judgment, and deciding against the lamb. The friar also said, “Verily, I should give my voice for the judgment of the Master to stand decisive: But, lo! is it not apparent that his thoughts are not like the thoughts of other men? Neither is his mind governed by the motives of the rest of the children of men. I do therefore lift up my voice for the judgment that goeth by lot. I would, notwithstanding of all this, gladly hear what the Master would say.”

“I will be so far just that I shall give you your choice,” said Master Michael Scott: “Nevertheless I can tell you, if there be any justice in the decision by lot, on whom the lot will fall.” A pause of breathless anxiety occurred, and every eye was fixed on the grim and stern visage of the great necromancer, over whose features there appeared to pass a gleam of wild delight. “It will fall,” added he, “on that man of fables and similitudes, who himself bears the similitude of a man, just as the lion’s hide stuffed does the resemblance of a real one. How do you call that beautiful and amiable being with the nose that would split a drop of rain without being wet?”

“Most illustrious knight, and master of the arts of mystery,” said the friar,—“as this man is, so is his name; for he is called Jordan, after the great river that is in the east, which overfloweth its banks at certain seasons, and falls into the stagnant lake called the Dead Sea, whose waters are diseased. So doth the matter of this our friend overflow, pass away, and is lost. But what sayest thou of the default of his story? Dost thou remember that it is not for the best story that we cast lots, but the worst?”

“Ay, that’s weel said, good friar,” said Charlie; “for, trifling as the laird’s story was, I never heard ought sae queer, or that interested ane mair. If there be ony justice in lots, the laird’s safe.”

“Your’s was the best tale, gallant yeoman,” said the Master, “and you may rest assured that you are safe. The dumb judge will not err, and there is one overlooks the judgment by lot, of whom few are aware. I say your’s was the best tale.”

“Thank ye kindly, Master Michael Scott,” said Charlie; “I’m feared ilk ane winna be o’ your opinion.”

The friar then took from the side-pockets of his frock a few scraps of parchment, amounting to fifteen. Twelve of these he marked with a red cross, and three with a black one, to prevent all infernal interference; then rolling them closely up, he counted them all into his cowl before his companions, and, shaking them together, he caused every one to do the same. Then putting the cowl into the virgin’s hand, they desired her to hold it until they drew forth their scraps one by

one. She did so, while her bright eyes were drowned in tears, and each of the candidates put in his hand, selecting his lot.

"Let them be opened, one by one, before all these witnesses," cried the Master; "that no suspicions of foul play whatever may remain."

The friar drew forth his without one muscle of his unyielding features being altered, and turning deliberately about, he opened it before them all. It was red. The friar bowed his head, and made the sign of the cross. Charlie thrust in his hand,—pulled out a ticket,—and tore it open, all in one moment, and with the same impatience that he fought in a battle. His was likewise red.

"Gude faith I'm aince ower the water," said Charlie.

Tam put in his hand with a decision that would have done honour to a better man, the form of his mouth only being a little altered.

"Now, who will take me a bet of a three-year old cout," cried Gibbie, "that the next shall turn out a black one?" and he grinned a ghastly smile, in anticipation of the wished event. Tam kept his hand within the cowl for a good while, as if groping which to select. At length he drew one forth; and before he got it opened, Gibbie's long nose and his own had met above it, so eager was each of them to see what it contained. It was opened. Each of them raised up his face, and looked at the face of his opponent; but with what different expressions of countenance! The cross on the lot was red! Grief, dread, and disappointment were all apparent in the features of poor Jordan, while the exulting looks of his provoking neighbour were hardly to be endured.

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"What think you o' that now, laird?" cried he. "What does that bring you in mind o'? Eh? I say, wha's jugular vein swells highest now; or wha's shoulder-blade stands maist need o' clawing?"

This was rather more than Gibbie was disposed at that juncture to bear; and when Tam, as he concluded, put forth his forefinger to ascertain the thickness of fat on the laird's ribs, the latter struck him with such force on the wrist, that he rendered his arm powerless for a space. He put his hand to his sword, but could not grasp it; while Gibbie, seeing the motion, had his out in a twinkling; and if the staunch friar had not turned it aside, he would have had it through the heart of the deil's Tam in a second, which might have prevented the further drawing of lots for that present time, and thereby put an end to a very critical and disagreeable business. Gibbie was far from being a hot or passionate man; but whether his rage was a manœuvre to put by the decision, or if he really was offended at being handled like a wedder for slaughter, the curate pretends not to guess. He however raged and fumed exceedingly, and tried again and again to wound Tam, while the rest were remonstrating with him; nor would he be pacified, until Tam's disabled arm by degrees regaining somewhat of its pristine nerve, he retreated back towards the battlement for sword-room, and dared the laird to the combat. Gibbie struggled hard; but finding that they were about to let him go, his wrath subsided a little; he put up his sword, and said the whole business reminded him of a story of the laird of Tweelsdon and his two brothers, which he assured them was a prime story, and begged permission to tell it. This was protested against with one voice until the business of the lots was decided, and then all were willing to hear it. "Oh, the lots? that is quite true," said Gibbie: "I declare that business had gone out of my head. Let us see what casts up next." There was a relaxation in every muscle of Gibbie's face as he put his hand into the cowl. But Gibbie's was a sort of a cross face. It did not grow long and sallow as most other men's faces do when they are agitated. The jaws did not fall down, they closed up; so that his face grew a great deal shorter and broader. The eye-brows and the cheek-bones met, and the nose and chin approached to a close vicinity. He drew forth the momentous scrap, and, with fumbling and paralytic hand, opened it before them. The cross was black. He dared not lift his eyes to any face there save to Delany's, and when he saw it covered with tears his looks again reverted that way. This lot it is true was not decisive, yet it placed Gibbie on ticklish ground; it having been agreed, that whoever should draw the two first black crosses, subjected himself to immolation, if the necessity of the case required it. The great Master and Tam were visibly well pleased with the wicked chance that had fallen to the laird. The motives of the former for this delight were quite a mystery to those who beheld it; as for Tam, he seemed determined to keep no more terms with poor Gibbie.

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The poet also drew a red one; and then it was decreed, that the next round Gibbie should have his choice of the time, if he judged it any advantage either to be first or last. He seemed quite passive, and said it was all one to him, he should draw at any time they chose, and desired his friend Yardbire, as he termed him, to choose for him. Charlie said he deemed the first chance the best, as he had then four chances to be right, for one of being wrong; and it would be singular indeed if his hand fixed on a black cross again for a time or two, when more of them might be on an equal footing.

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Gibbie accordingly turned round, and drew out one more of the ominous scraps, opening it under the eyes of all the circle with rather a hopeful look. "If the deil be nae in the cowl, I shall hae a red ane this time," said he, as he unrolled it; but as soon as the head of the cross appeared the ticket fell from his hand; and, as the friar expressed it, there was no more strength remaining in him. "Verily, my son, thy fate is decided," said the latter worthy; "and that in a wonderful and arbitrary manner. As the Master said, so hath it come to pass, although to judge of any thing having been done unfairly is impossible."

"It is absolute nonsense to talk of aught being done fairly in this place," said Charlie Scott: "There's naething but witchcraft gaun. I tell ye a' things here are done by witchery an' the black arts; and after what I heard the king of a' warlocks say, that the lot wad fa' in this way, I winna believe that honest Gibbie has gotten fair play for his life."

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"If you would try it an hundred times over," said the Master, "you would see it turn out in the same way. Did not I say to you that there was a power presided over the decision by lot, which you neither know nor comprehend. Man of metaphors and old wives' fables, where art thou now?" "Keep a gude heart, Peatstacknowe," said Charlie; "perhaps things may not come to the worst. I have great dependence on Dan Chisholm and the warden's good men. I wonder they have not appeared wi' proper mattocks, or ladders, by this time o' the morning."

"If they should," said the Master, "and if we were all set at liberty this minute, he shall remain my bondsman, in place of these two and him of whom your arts have bereaved me. Remember to what you agreed formerly, of which I now remind you."

"I think that is but fair," said the poet.

"I do not know, gentlemen, what you call fair or foul," said Gibbie: "I think there is little that is favourable going for somebody. Of the two evils, I judge the last the worst. I appeal to my captain the Warden." Gibbie's looks were so rueful and pitiable when he said this, that no one had the heart to remonstrate farther with him on the justice or injustice of his doom. The Master and Tam enjoyed his plight exceedingly; the poet rejoiced in it, as it tended to free Delany from a vile servitude; and the friar also was glad of the release of the darling of his younger years, the grand-daughter of Galli the scribe. Charlie and Delany were the only two that appeared to suffer on account of the laird's dismal prospects, and their feelings were nearly as acute as his own. Stories and all sorts of amusements were now discontinued. A damp was thrown over these by the dismal gloom on the laird's countenance, and the congenial feelings of others on his account. The night had passed over without any more visitants from the infernal regions; the day had arisen in the midst of heaviness and gloom; and every eye was turned towards the mill, in the expectation of seeing the approach of Dan and his companions.

## CHAPTER IV.

Ask me not whence I am;  
My vesture speaks mine office.

*Female Parliamenters, a MS. Com.*

After the frightsome encounter at the mill, with "the masterless dog and his bow-wow-wow," Dan and his companions spent a sleepless night, not without several alarms and breathless listenings on the occurrence of any noise without. Few were the nightly journies on the banks of the Etrick in those days, and few the midnight noises that occurred, save from the wild beasts of the forest. There were no wooer lads straying at that still and silent hour, to call up their sweethearts for an hour's kind conversation. Save when the English marauders were abroad, all was quietness by hamlet and steading. The land was the abode of the genii of the woods, the rocks, and the rivers; and of this the inhabitants were well aware, and kept within locked doors, whose lintels were made of the mountain ash, and nightly sprinkled with holy water. Cradle and bed were also fenced with cross, book, and bead; for the inmates knew that in no other way could they be safe, or rest in peace. They knew that their green and solitary glens were the nightly haunts of the fairies, and that they held their sports and amorous revels in the retiring dells by the light of the moon. The mermaid sung her sweet and alluring strains by the shores of the mountain lake, and the kelpie sat moping and dripping by his frightsome pool, or the boiling caldron at the foot of the cataract. The fleeting wraiths hovered round the dwellings of those who were soon to die, and the stalking ghost perambulated the walks of him that was lately living, or took up his nightly stand over the bones of the unhouseholded or murdered dead. In such a country, and among such sojourners, who durst walk by night?

But these were the natural residenters in the wilds of the woodland, the aboriginal inhabitants of the country; and however inimical their ways might be to the ways of men, the latter laid their account with them. There were defences to be had against them from holy church, which was a great comfort. But ever since Master Michael Scott came from the colleges abroad to reside at the castle of Aikwood, the nature of demonology in the forest glades was altogether changed, and a full torrent of necromancy, or, as Charlie Scott better expressed it, of *witchcraft*, deluged the country all over,—an art of the most malignant and appalling kind, against which no fence yet discovered could prevail. How different, indeed, became the situation of the lonely hind. Formerly he only heard at a distance on moonlight eves the bridle bells of the fairy troopers, which haply caused him to haste homeward. But when the door was barred and fenced, he sat safe in the middle of his family circle as they closed round the hearth, and talked of the pranks of *the gude neyboris*. When the speats descended, and floods roared and foamed from bank to brae, then would they perceive the malevolent kelpie rolling and tumbling down the torrent like a drowning cow, or mountain stag, to allure the hungry peasant into certain destruction. But, aware of the danger, he only kept the farther aloof, quaking at the tremendous experiment made by the spirit of the waters. It was in vain that the mermaid sung the sweetest strain s that ever breathed over the evening lake, or sunk and rose again, spreading her hands for assistance, like a drowning maiden, at the bottom of the abrupt cliff washed by the waves,—he *would not* be allured to her embraces.

But what could he do now? His daughters were turned into roes and hares, to be hunted down for sport to the Master. The old wives of the hamlet were saddled and bridled by night, and urged with whip and spur over whole realms. The cows were deprived of their milk,—the hinds cast

their young, and no domestic cat in the whole district could be kept alive for one year. That infernal system of witchcraft then began, which the stake and the gibbet could scarcely eradicate in a whole century. It had at this time begun to spread all around Aikwood; but of these things our Border troopers were not altogether aware. They dreaded the spirits of the old school, the devil in particular; but of the new prevailing system of metamorphoses they had no comprehension.

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Dan and three chosen companions, mounting their horses by the break of day, rode straight for the abbey of Melrose, to lodge their complaint against the great enemy of mankind, and request assistance from the holy fathers in rescuing their friends out of his hands. They reached Darnickburn before the rising of the sun; and just as they passed by a small deep-wooded dell, they espied four horsemen approaching them, who, from their robes and riding appurtenances, appeared to belong to the abbey, and to rank high among its dignitaries. They were all mounted on black steeds, clothed in dark flowing robes that were fringed with costly fringes, and they had caps on their heads that were horned like the new moon. The foremost, in particular, had a formidable and majestic mitre on his head, that seemed all glancing with gems, every one of which was either black, or a certain dazzling red of the colour of flame.

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Dan doffed his helmet to this dignified and commanding personage, but he deigned not either to return our yeoman's low bow, that brought his face in contact with the mane of his steed, or once to cross his hand on his brow in token of accepting the submission proffered. He, however, reined up his black steed, and sat upright on his saddle, as if in the act of listening what this bold and blunt trooper had to say.

"Begging pardon of your grand and sublime reverence," said Dan, "I presume, from your lofty and priest-like demeanour, habiliments, and goodly steed, and also from that twa-horned helmet on your head, that you are the very chap I want. I beg your pardon I canna keep up my style to suit your dignity. But are nae ye Father Lawrence, the great primate, that acts as a kind o' king or captain ower a' the holy men of Scotland, and has haudding in that abbey down by there?"

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"Certes I am Father Lawrence. Dost thou doubt it?"

"No, no; what for should I doubt it when your worship has said it? An we dinna find truth aneath the mitre and the gown, where are we to look for it?"

The sublime abbot shook his head as if in scorn and derision of the apothegm, and sat still upright on his steed, with his face turned away. Dan looked round to his companions with a meaning look, as much as to say, "What does the body mean?" But seeing that he sat still in the act of listening, he proceeded.

"Worthy Sir Priest, ye ken our captain, Sir Ringan Redhough, warden of the Border. He has helpit weel to feather your nest, ye ken."

"He has. There is no one can dispute it," said the abbot, nodding assent.

"Then ye'll no be averse, surely, to the lending o' him and his a helping hand in your ain way."

The priest nodded assent.

"Weel, ye see, Sir Priest, there is a kinsman of our master's lives up by here at Aikwood, a rank warlock, and master o' the arts of witchcraft and divination. He is in compact wi' the deil, and can do things far ayont the power o' mortal man. What do ye think, Sir Priest? he can actually turn a man into a dog, and an auld wife into a hare; a mouse into a man, and a cat into a good glyde-aver. And mair than that, Sir, he can raise storms and tempests in the air; can gar the rivers rin upward, and the trees grow down. He can shake the solid yird; and, look ye, Sir, he can cleave a great mountain into three, and lift the divisions up like as mony gowpens o' sand."

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The stern abbot gave a glance up to the three new hills of Eildon, that towered majestically over their heads; but it seemed rather a look of exultation than one either of wonder or regret.

"Weel, Sir, disna our captain send a few chosen friends, a wheen queer devils to be sure, on a message of good friendship to this auld warlock Master Michael Scott, merely with a request to read him some trivial weird. And what does the auld knave, but pricks them a' up on the top o' his castle, wi' a lockit iron-door aneath them, and there has keepit them in confinement till they are famishing of hunger, and I fear by this time they are feeding on ane another. And the warst o't ava, Sir, is this, I wad break his bolts and his bars to atoms for him, but has nae he the deil standing sentry on the stair, spuing fire and brimstone on a' that come near him in sic torrents that it is like the fa' o' the Grey-mare's-tail. Now, maist reverend and worthy Sir, my errand and request to you is, that, for my master's sake, and for his men's sake, that are a' good Christians, for ought that I ken to the contrary, you will lend us a lift wi' book and bead, Ave Marias, and other powerful things, to drive away this auld sneckdrawing thief, the devil, and keep him away till I get my friends released; and I promise you, in my master's name, high bounty and reward."

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"Ha! is it so?" said the abbot, in a hollow, tremulous voice. "Are my friend and fellow-soldier's men detained in that guise? Come, my brethren, let us ride,—let us fly to their release, and we shall see whose power can stand against our own. For Aikwood, ho!"

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"For Aikwood, ho!" shouted Dan and his companions, as they took the rear of the four sable dignitaries; and striking the spurs into their steeds all at the same time, they went off at their horses' utmost speed, but in a short time the four yeomen were distanced. The black steeds and their riders went at such a pace as warrior had never before witnessed. Up by the side of Hindlyburn they sped, with the most rapid velocity,—over mire, over ditch, over ford, without stay or stumble. Dan and his companions posted on behind, sparing neither whip nor spur, for they were



affronted that these gownsmen should display more energy in their master's cause, and the cause of his friends, than they should do themselves. But their horses floundered, and blew, and snorted, and puffed, and whisked their tails with a whistling sound, and still lagged farther and farther behind.

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"Come, come, callants," cried Dan to his companions, "let us rein up. These bedesmen's horses are ower weel fed for our bog-trotting nags. They fly like the wind. Od, we may as weel try to ride wi' the devil."

"Whisht, whisht," said Will Martin; "I dinna like to mak ower familiar wi' that name now-a-days. We never ken wha's hearing us in this country."

They were nigh to the heights when these words passed, and the four black horsemen perceiving them to take it leisurely, they paused and wheeled about, and the majestic primate taking off his cornuted chaperon, waved it aloft, and called aloud, "For shame, sluggish hinds! Why won't you speed, before the hour of prevention is lost? For Aikwood, ho, I say!" As he said these words, his black courser plunged and reared at a fearful rate; and, as our troopers thought, at one bolt sprung six or seven yards from the ground. The marks of that black horse's hoofs remain impressed in the sward to this day, and the spot is still called *The Abbot's lee*. At least it had been so called when Isaac the curate wrote this history.

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To keep clear of the wood that was full of thickets, they turned a little to the left, and pursued their course; and the ground becoming somewhat firmer, our yeomen pursued hard after them. But on coming over the steep brow of a little hill, the latter perceived a mountain lake of considerable extent that interrupted their path, and, to their utter astonishment, the four black horsemen going straight across it, at about the same rate that the eagle traverses the firmament. "The loch is frozen and bears over," said Dan: "Let us follow them across."

"The loch is frozen indeed," said Will Martin, "but, ony man may see, that ice winna bear a cat."

"Haud your tongue, you gouk," said Dan: "Do ye think the thing that bore them winna bear us?" And as he spurred foremost down the steep, he took the lake at the broad side; but the ice offering no manner of resistance, horse and man were in one moment out of sight. The sable horsemen on the other side shouted with laughter, and called aloud to the troopers, "to venture on, and haste forward, for the ice was sufficiently strong."

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The bold trooper and his horse were extricated with some difficulty, and the monks testifying the utmost impatience he remounted, dripping as he was, and not being able to find the passage across the lake on the ice, he and his companions galloped around the head of it. As he rode, the morning being frosty, he chanced to utter these words: "Heigh-ho, but I be a *cauld cheil!*" Which words, says Isaac, gave the name to that lake and the hill about it to all future ages; and from those perilous days of witchcraft and divination, and the shocking incidents that befel to men, adds he, have a great many of the names of places all over our country had their origin.

The dark horsemen always paused until the troopers were near them, as if to encourage them on, but they never suffered them to join company. When they came over a ridge above old Lindean they were hard upon them, but lost sight of them for a short space on the height; and, coming on full speed, they arrived on the brink of a deep wooded dell, and to their utter astonishment saw the four gownsmen on the other side, riding deliberately along, and beckoning them forward.

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"I am sair mista'en," said Will Martin, "gin thae chaps hae nae gaen over the cleugh at ae bound. An it warna for their habits I wad take them for something nouter good nor cannie."

"Haud your tongue, or else speak feasible things," said Dan; "Can the worthy Father Lawrence, and his chief priors and functionaries ever be suspected as warlocks, or men connected wi' the devil and his arts. If sic were to be the case, we hae nae mair trust to put in aught on this earth. The dell maun be but a step across. Here is a good passable road; come, let us follow them."

Dan led the way, and they dived into the dell by a narrow track, rather like a path for a wild goat than men and horses; however, by leaping, sliding, and pushing one another's horses behind, they got to the bottom of the precipice, and perceiving a path on the other side, they expected to reach the western brink immediately. But in this they were mistaken; abrupt rocks, and impenetrable thickets barred their progress on every side, and they found it impossible to extricate themselves without leaving their horses. They tried every quarter with the same success, and at the last attempted to ascend by the way they came; but that too they found impracticable, and all the while they heard the voices of their fellow travellers chiding their stay from above, and shaming them for their stupidity in taking the wrong path. At one time they heard them calling on them to come this way, here was an excellent out-gate; and when the toiled yeomen stuck fairly still in that direction, they instantly heard other voices urging them to ascend by some other quarter. At other times they thought they heard restrained bursts of giggling laughter. After a great deal of exertion to no manner of purpose, they grew they neither knew what to do nor what they were doing, and at last were obliged to abandon their horses, and climb the ascent by hanging by the bushes and roots of trees. When they emerged from the deep hollow, they perceived eight black horsemen awaiting them instead of four; but as the country around Melrose and Dryburgh swarmed with members of the holy brotherhood of every distinction and rank, the troopers took no notice of it, thinking these were some of the head functionaries come to wait on their abbot. The latter chided our yeomen in sharp and resentful language for their utter stupidity in taking the wrong path, and regretted exceedingly the long delay their mistake had occasioned, his time he said being limited, as was also the time that his power prevailed in a more particular way over the powers of darkness. "For us to go alone," added he, "would signify nothing. The manual labour of breaking through the iron gates we

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cannot perform; therefore, unless you can keep up with us, we may return home by the way we came."

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"I am truly grieved," said Dan, "at our misfortune. We have certainly been more forward than wise, and I fear have marred the fairest chance we will ever have for the deliverance of our friends. But I have a few fellow warriors at the mill who will accompany you for a word of your mouth. I beg that you will not think of returning, for the case brooks no delay. We have lost our horses, and can hardly reach the castle on foot before it be evening. I wot not what we shall do."

"Brethren, I am afraid I must request of you to lend these brave troopers your horses," said the abbot to the four last comers. "My esteem for the doughty champion of my domains is such, that I would gladly do him a favour." "O thank you, thank you, kind sir; we are mair behadden to you than tongue can tell," said Dan. The four new come brethren dismounted at their abbot's request; and, without taking a moment to hesitate, the four yeomen mounted their horses. The abbot Lawrence charged them to urge the steeds to their utmost speed. Away went the abbot and his three sable attendants, and away went the four troopers after them; but from the first moment that they started the latter lost sight of the ground, unless it was, as they thought, about a mile below their feet. The road seemed to be all one marble pavement, or sheet of solid alabaster; there was neither height nor hollow in it that they could distinguish; but the fire flew from the heels of the horses, and sparkled across the firmament like thousands of flying stars. The velocity at which they went was such, that the borderers could not draw their breath save by small broken gulps; but as they imagined they rode at such an immense distance from the ground, they kept firm by their seats for bare life, leaning forward with their eyes and their mouths wide open. Having never in all their lives rode on such a path, they were soon convinced that they could not be riding toward Aikwood, around which the roads were very different. They often attempted to speak to one another, but could not utter any thing farther than one short sound, for the swiftness with which they clove the atmosphere cut their voices short. At length Dan, perceiving his comrade, Will Martin, scouring close by his side, forced out the following sentence piecemeal:

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"Where—the—devil—are we—gaun—now?"

"Straight—to—hell.—What—need—ye—speer?"

"The—lord—for—for—for—bid—Will Martin," was the reply, which has since grown to a proverb.

On they flew, over hill, over dale, over rock and river, over town, tower, and steeple, as our yeomen deemed; but they might deem what they pleased, for they saw nothing except now and then the tails of the churchmen's gowns flapping in the air before them. However, they came to their goal sooner than they expected, and that in a way as singular as that by which they reached it.

The miller at Aikwood-mill had a whole hill of kiln-seeds, or shealings of oats, thrown out in a heap adjoining to the mill. Ere ever our yeomen knew what they were doing from the time they mounted, they were all lying in this immense heap of kiln-seeds, perfectly dizzy and dumfounded, and setting up their heads from among them with the same sort of staring stupid attempt at consideration as the heads of so many frogs which may be seen newly popped up out of a marsh. The bedesmen were a-head of them to the end of the course, and drew up by wheeling their horses round the kiln as if it had been a winning-post; but the yeomen's horses, in making the wheel, threw their riders, one by one, with a jerk over head and ears among the loose heap of seeds, and galloping off around the corner of the hill, they never saw another hair of their tails.

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The miller came running out from his mill with his broad dusty bonnet; the smoky half-roasted kiln-man out from his logie; the mill-maidens came skipping from the meal-trough, as white as lilies; the rest of the warden's men, and the four sable dignitaries of the church came also, and all of them stood in a ring round our dismounted troops, some asking one question, some another, but all in loud fits of laughter. Their wits could not be rallied in an instant; and all that they could do or say was to blow the seeds out of their mouths, with which they were literally filled, and utter some indefinite sentences, such as, "Rather briskish yauds these same!" "May the like o' mine never be crossed by man again!" "Hech! but they are the gear for the lang road!" "What's become o' them? I wad like to take a right look o' them for aince." "Do ye want to look if they have mark o' mouth, Will? You may look at some o' these that came foremost then. Yours are aff wi' their tails on their rigging; there are some cheated if ever you see mair o' them." Will Martin looked at the abbot's horse; but when he saw the glance of his eye, he would not have taken him by the jaws to have looked his mouth for all Christendom.

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The four sable horsemen led the way, and all the yeomen followed on foot, bearing with them such mattocks as they had been able to procure about Selkirk that morning, and away they marched in a body to Aikwood castle. That was a blyth sight to our forlorn and starving prisoners; even Gibbie had some hopes of a release: but whenever Master Michael Scott got a near view of the four sable equestrians, he sunk into profound and gloomy silence, and every now and then his whole frame was observed to give a certain convulsed shake, or shudder, which cannot be described. The rest of the sufferers supposed it to proceed from his rooted aversion to holy and devout men; but they were so intent on regaining their own liberty that they paid little attention to the manner in which he was affected. Father Lawrence bade the men proceed to work, and he would retire into an inner chamber and exercise himself so as to keep from them all sorts of interruption from spirits of whatever denomination, and he pledged himself for their protection. They thanked him, and hastened to execute their design; nor were they long in accomplishing it. By the help of huge scaling hammers they broke down a part of the narrow stair-case, and actually set their friends at liberty. But the abbot enjoined them in nowise to depart, or to do any thing

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contrary to the desire of the mighty Master, while they remained in his premises, else he could not answer for the consequences. This our yeomen readily assented to, and undertook to prevail with their friends to acquiesce in the same measure.

As soon as the iron-door was forced, the abbot Lawrence sent one of his officers to desire Master Michael Scott to come and speak to him privately in the secret chamber. The wizard looked at the messenger as a sovereign does to a minister of whom he is afraid, or a master to a slave, who, he knows, would assassinate him if he could; nevertheless he rose and followed him to his superior. What passed between these two dignified characters it is needless here to relate, as the substance of the matter will appear in the sequel. But the Master returned into the great hall, where the warden's men were by that time all assembled, an altered man indeed. His countenance glanced with a sublime but infernal exultation. His eye shone with ten times the vigour of youthful animation. It was like a dying flame relumined, that flashes with more than pristine brightness; and the tones of his voice were like those of a conqueror on the field of battle. With this voice, and with this mien, he ordered the friar and his ward Delany instantly to quit the castle; and if an hour hence they were found on his domains, he would cause them to be hewed into so many pieces as there were hairs on their heads.

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"Lo thy threats are unto me as the east wind," said the friar: "Yea as the wind that cometh from the desert, and puffeth up the vapours on the stagnant pools of water. If my companions in adversity go, then will I also go along with them. But if they remain, by the life of Pharaoh, so likewise will thy servant; and what hast thou more to say, thou man of Belial?"

The Master shook his grey locks and his dark silvery beard in derision; and Charlie Scott, whose confidence in his friend the friar was now unbounded, stepped up to back what he had said, and to protest against parting company. Dan, however, interfered hastily, and told them he was bound by a promise to the holy father, who had wrought their liberty, to do nothing adverse to the will of the Master, while they remained in his castle and on his domains; and therefore he begged they would comply without more words, and without delay. The friar then consented, much against Charlie's inclination; and taking Delany by the hand, he said: "Lo I will even depart; but I will remain at the ford of Howden-burn until my friends arrive, for then am I from off the territory of this blasphemous and worker of all manner of iniquity. See that you tarry not at the wine, neither let your eyes behold strange women, that it may be well with you." So the two went away, and did as they had said. The friar found his mule in good keeping, and he remained with the maid in a cottage at the fords of Howden-burn, to await the issue of this singular and unfortunate embassy.

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"Now shall I have my will, and do that which seems meet to me," said the Master, as he strode the hall with unrestrained energy. "Did the dolt imagine he could, with his tricks of legerdemain, outdo me in the powers and mysteries of my art? No, that man is unborn! Let him go with his crosiers and his breviaries; I am Michael Scott once again!"

"It is needless to say ought here," said Charlie Scott aside to his companions: "Fock should ken weel what they say, and where they are saying it. But the truth is, that the friar was the greatest man o' the twa; and that auld birkie was right sair cowed in his presence. It is sair against my will that we hae been obliged, by your promise, Dan, to part wi' the gospel friar; for, d'ye ken, I feel amaist as the buckler were ta'en aff my arm, to want him as lang as I am here. What do you think the carl did, Dan? Come here, you and Will, and I'll tell you. When we came here, ye see, the master had a steward, a perfect hound o' hell, wha thought to guide us waur than dogs; and he crossed the friar unco sair, till at length he lost a' patience wi' him, and, lord sauf us! sent him up through the clouds in a flash o' fire; and there has never been mair o' him seen, but some wee bits o' fragments. I can tell you the loss o' sic a man as the friar, out o' sic a place as this, is a loss no easily made up."

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"Have a little patience, brave Yardbire," said Dan: "We have the great and the grave abbot Lawrence in his place. He is our firm friend and our captain's friend, and every thing will now be settled in the most amicable manner."—"That holy father and his assistants are the only hope I hae," returned Charlie: "An it warna for their presence, I wadna stay another half hour in sic a place as this. Ye little ken what scenes we ha'e witnessed during the days and nights that we ha'e been here. However, as I had the charge of the embassage, I will gang and speak to the auld billy. He seems to be in a high key. Master Michael Scott; ye ken that yoursel' and our auld friar, by your trials o' skill in your terrible arts o' witchcraft, brought about an accident that has kept us ower lang here, to the great trouble and inconveniency of our captain, your own brave kinsman. Now, since we are a' at liberty again, we beseech you to give us our answer; and if you canna read the weird that he desires of you, why tell us sae at aince, and let us gang about our business."

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"Gallant yeoman, your request shall be granted without loss of time," said the Master. "But it is the venerable father's request that I should regale my kinsman's people before dismissing them, to make some small return for the privations they have suffered. Be satisfied then to remain for a few hours, till you taste of my cheer; and in the meanwhile I will look into the book of fate, and not only tell you what your captain, Sir Ringan, ought to do, but I will show you demonstratively what he *must* do, if he would succeed in raising his name and his house above that of every Scottish baron." "Thank ye, noble sir," said Charlie: "There shall never be another word about it. If we gain our errand sae satisfactorily at last, I'll count a' that we ha'e bidden weel wared."

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"Noble and worthy Sir, you never yet have said who told the most efficient tale, and unto whom the maiden should belong," said the poet.

"'Twas he, your captain there, who said the tale I most approved, and to him I award my right in

the toy, the trifle you call maiden," returned the Master. "And it is well remembered, squire; amongst you, you deprived me of my steward, a man that could have accomplished a great deal, —I therefore claim this worthy in his stead, as agreed; and glad may he be that he escapes so well."

"I fear I will be a bad cook, and an awkward valet," said Gibbie. "I was never very handy at ought that way. Tam wad answer a great deal better, an it were your will."

"We will have you taught practically, and to profit," said the Master: "The three brethren, attendants on father Lawrence, shall take you to task this instant. They will act as your assistants and masters to-day, and to their hands I recommend you. Be expert, and spare no cost." So saying, he gave three tramps with his heel, as he was wont to do in time past, and instantly the three sable monks stood before him. "Take that comely youth," said he, "and bestow on him a few cogent lessons in the mysteries of the culinary art. You may teach him a few *varieties*." As he said this, there was a malignant smile rather darkened than lighted up his stern features, and on the instant the three monks had Gibbie from the ground; and one holding by each arm and another by both his feet, they rushed out of the hall with him, in the same way that one drives a wheelbarrow. When the men of the embassy heard the three tramps, and the words about the varieties, they looked at one another with rather uneasy sensations. But the presence of father Lawrence, and the other three holy brethren, encouraged them still to acquiesce in the Master's request. [128]

A short time after this, as they were sauntering about the castle, they heard some loud giggling laughter, intermixed with squeaking cries of despair; which last they could well distinguish as proceeding from the lungs of poor Gibbie Jordan; and immediately after that there came among them a huge red capon, fluttering and screaming in a most desperate and deplorable manner, and all the three monks pursuing him with shouts of delight. The feathers were half plucked off him, and his breath quite spent, so that they easily laid hold of him, and carried him away by the neck to have him spitted living, as they said. Our yeomen saw nothing but an overgrown bird, but they heard well that the voice was the voice of Jordan. "These monks are trifling and amusing themselves," said Tam; "we shall get no dinner before night." [129]

The words were hardly well said when the castle bell rung, and in they all rushed to the great hall where stood a plentiful dinner smoking along the board, and the abbot and the Master both seated at the upper end, side by side. Our yeomen thought it extraordinary to see the great warlock and the reverend father in such close compact, but they held their peace. The abbot rose and pronounced a blessing on the food, but it was in an unknown tongue, and little did they wot of its purport. There was great variety on the table of every kind of food, yet there was not one of our yeomen knew of what the greater part of the dishes consisted. But the huge capon stood at the head of the table, and though he had been killed and cooked in a few minutes, the bird looked exceedingly well. The abbot and the Master devoured him with so much zest, that no one liked to call for a piece of him, save Tam Craik, who eat a wing of him; but there was no broad bone in his shoulder, yet Tam declared him the first meat he had ever tasted, save once, in his life. Charlie was placed next the Master, and Dan next the abbot Lawrence. The three monks, attendants on the latter, served the table, but nothing of the new steward made his appearance. The wine and other strong liquors were served round in great abundance, and the quality was so excellent, that, notwithstanding of the friar's charge, every one drank liberally, and soon got into high glee. Whenever the supreme and haughty abbot swallowed a cup of wine, Dan, who sat next him, heard always a hissing sound within his breast, as if one had been pouring water on red hot iron. This startled the trooper terribly for two or three times at first, but his surprise lessened and wore off by degrees as the liquor continued to exalt his spirits. The feast went on, and the wine flowed; but, as on a former occasion, the men ate without being satisfied. The wines and liquor were all however real, and had their due effect, so that the spirit of hilarity rose to a great height. [130]

It was observed that father Lawrence conversed with no one but the Master, and the dialogue they held was all in an unknown tongue, in which tongue also, they sometimes conferred with the servitors. The Master left the table three several times, for he had a charm going on in another part of the castle, and at the third time returned with the black book of fate, the book of the dynasties of men below his arm, and laid it closed on the table before him. [131]

"Now, my brave and warlike guests," said he. "Before I open this awful book, it is meet that every one of you be blind-folded. I ask this for your own sakes. If any one of you were to look but on one character of this book, his brain would be seared to a cinder, his eyes would fly out of their sockets, and perhaps his whole frame might be changed into something unspeakable and monstrous." [132]

"Gude faith, sir Master, I'll haud my een as close as they were sewed up wi' an elshin and a lingel," said Charlie. So said they all, but they were not trusted; the monks were ordered to go round the table and tie every one's eyes closely up; and when this was done, they were desired to lay all their heads down upon their hands on the board, and to sit without moving, whatever they might hear. He then proceeded to open the massy iron clasps, and as soon as they were unloosed, three spirits burst from the book with loud shrieks, and escaped through the barbican. The yells were so piercing that some of our yeomen started from their seats, but dared not lift their heads. "Ah! They are gone," said the Master: "This weird will cost me dear!" [133]

"Fear nothing, but proceed," said father Lawrence.

He opened the book, and three peals of thunder ensued that shook the castle to its foundations, every one of them louder than the last; and though our yeomen sat trembling in utter darkness, they heard voices around them as if the hall had been crowded full of people; among others, they

deemed that they could distinguish the voices of the warden and his lady. They, however, sat still as if chained to their places, awaiting the issue; and, after much noise and apparent interruptions, the great Master read out as follows:

"He for whom this weird is read,  
Be he son of battle bred,  
Be he baron born to peril,  
Be he lord, or be he earl,  
Let him trust his gallant kin,  
And the sword below the skin.  
When the red buck quits the cover,  
When the midnight watch is over,  
Then, whatever may betide,  
Trust the horn, and trust the hide,  
He that drives shall feel the gin,  
But he that's driven shall get in.  
All for whom this weird is read,  
For the living, for the dead,  
From the chief with corslet shorn,  
To the babe that is unborn,  
Let them to the sceptre lean,  
Till the place where they have been  
See their sway expand untroubled,  
Doubled, doubled, nine times doubled;  
First to rise and rule the rings,  
Mixed with blood of mighty kings.  
This is read for princes, peers,  
And children of a thousand years;  
Now begins their puissant story;  
Strike the blow and gain the glory.  
Rise not against feudal union,  
No advance but in communion,  
Though through battle, broil, and murder.—  
Shut the book, and read no further."

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The book was closed, and loud shouts of applause, as from a great multitude, were heard at a distance; as that died away, a peal of thunder burst forth over their heads, which rolled away with an undulating sound, till lost in the regions of the western heavens.

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Our yeomen's eyes were then unbound, and when they looked up the book of fate was removed, and the Master was fallen back on his seat, with his countenance mightily distorted; but the abbot and his attendants would not suffer any to touch him till he recovered of himself. He again rose into high and unwonted spirits; but his elevation was rather like the delirium of a man driven to desperation, than that flow of delightful hilarity, the offspring of a temperate and well regulated mind. The borderers persevered in their libations, and the mirth and noise increased till near the fall of the evening, when Charlie again proposed to go; but the Master protested against it for a short space, adding, that he had to give them a practical lesson how their captain ought to proceed, if he would be the greatest man in Scotland. This was quite sufficient to prevail on Yardbire, and none of the rest appeared much disposed to move.

About this time some of our yeomen, sitting with their faces toward the casement, beheld a novel scene, which they called up the rest to witness. This was the Master's new steward, the late laird of the Peatstacknowe, making his escape from the castle with all possible speed. He was stripped half naked, and bareheaded; had thrown himself over the outer wall, lest he should be seen going by the gate, and was running up the hollow of Aikwood burn, among the trees, to elude discovery. Presently afterwards they beheld two of the monks stretching after him with a swiftness not to be outrun. Poor Gibbie was soon overhied and brought back, not in the most gentle manner; and, instead of carrying him round by the gate, which, having been broken up, stood wide open, they took him by the heels, and threw him over the wall, at the place he had leaped before. Gibbie gave a loud squeak in the air, as he came over the wall with a wheeling motion; and falling on the other side, every one believed that there would not be a whole bone left in his body. Instead of that he sprung to his feet, and ran across the court, saying to himself, "I'll tell you what—It minds me o' hell this place,—if ever there was ane upon earth." He got not time to finish the sentence till he was again seized, and hauled into the castle.

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"Master Michael Scott, I protest in my master's name against this usage of a leal vassal and tiend laird," said Charlie.

"The comely youth is mine by your own agreement," said the Master: "He shall be well seen to. Perhaps I shall only keep him for a season, until better supplied. Be content; the matter is now beyond disputation. In the meantime I will proceed to give you a specimen of my profound art, of which you have now seen many instances; and also of my esteem for your captain, to whom you will be so good as repeat this."

He then went away to his arcana, and brought a bason of liquor, resembling wine, which he sprinkled on all his guests in small proportions, and taking his seat beside the supercilious abbot, the two sat apparently waiting for some grand metamorphosis. The spell, powerful as it was, had not the effect that was surmised. These rude warriors of a former age had principles of virtue and

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honour in their natures that withstood the charms of necromancy,—those charms before which noble dames, cruel laymen, and selfish clergy sunk down confounded and overpowered. The countenances of a few of the troopers were somewhat changed by the spell, assuming thereby a sort of resemblance to beasts, but this their associates only laughed at, deeming it occasioned by the drunkenness of the individuals affected. The two great personages at the head of the table viewed the matter in a different light, and that with evident symptoms of disappointment. They comprehended the reason, for they knew there was but one against which the powers of darkness could not prevail; and, after holding a conversation about it in their own mysterious language, they set about the accomplishment of their desires, for, though a matter of no great avail, the Master could not brook to be balked in any of his works of divination. The purport of this conversation was, what the Master had once proposed before, that the men must be made accessory to their own transformation; and in this project he forthwith engaged with all manner of earnestness.

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## CHAPTER V.

He can turn a man into a boy;  
A boy into an ass;  
He can change your gold into white moneye;  
Your white moneye into brass;  
He can turn our goodman to a beast  
With hoof, but, an' with horn,  
And chap the goodwife in her cheer,  
This little John Barleycorn.

*Old Song.*

The plan of our great necromancer was no other than that of pushing round the wine, and other strong intoxicating liquors, to the utmost extremity; and it is well known that these stimulating beverages have charms that no warrior, or other person accustomed to violent exertions, can withstand, after indulging in them to a certain extent. The mirth and argument, or rather the bragg of weir, grew first obstreperous, afterwards boisterous and unruly, and several of the men got up and strode the hall with drawn swords, without being able to tell with whom they were offended or going to fight. Neither the Master nor the abbot discouraged this turmoil, but pushed round the liquor, till some of the most intimate friends and associates of the party, in the extravagance of intoxication, actually wounded one another, and afterwards blubbered, like children, for vexation. While they were all in this state of unnatural elevation, father Lawrence got up, and addressed himself to the party, for the first time. He represented to them, by striking metaphors, the uncertainty and toil of the warrior's life; and requested all such of them as loved ease, freedom, and independence, to become inmates of his habitation; and during the time of their noviciates, he promised them every good thing. Several of them pretended to snap at the proffer, some on one condition, some on another; but when he presented a scroll of parchment, written in red characters, for their marks or signatures, no one would sign and seal, save Tam Craik, who put his mark to it three times with uncommon avidity, on the positive condition that he was to have as much fat flesh as he could eat for the first three years, at all times that he chose, by day or by night.

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When matters were at this pass, and our brave yeomen could with difficulty rise to their feet, they heard a chorus of sweet and melodious music approaching, which still drew nearer and nearer. This was a treat they little expected in such an habitation; but how much greater was their surprise, when the hall-door was thrown open, and there were ushered in thirty of the most lovely maidens that the eyes of men had ever beheld. They seemed, too, to be all of noble lineage, for they were dressed like eastern princesses, rustling in their silks, and covered over with dazzling gems. The Master welcomed them with stately courtesy, apologizing for the state of his castle, and the necessity they would be under of sitting down and sharing the feast with warriors, who, however, he assured them were all gallant gentlemen, of his own kin, and some of them of his own name. The splendid dames answered, that nothing on earth would give them so much delight as to share the feast with gentlemen and warriors, the natural protectors of their helpless sex, to whom it should be their principal aim to pay all manner of deference.

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As soon as the door was opened, our brave yeomen, with the profound respect that men of their boisterous occupation always pay to female beauty and rare accomplishments, started all to their feet, and made their obeisance. But the worst concern for them was, that they could not stand on their feet. Some of them propped themselves on the hilts of their sheathed swords, leaning the points backward against the wall. Others kept a sly hold of the buff-belt of the comrade next to him; and a few, of whom the poet was one, and Tam another, lost their balance, and fell back over the benches, showing the noble dames the soles of their sandals. All was silence and restraint, and a view of no group could be more amusing; for though our heroes were hardly able to behave themselves with the utmost propriety, yet they were all endeavouring to do it; some keeping their mouths close shut, that no misbecoming word might possibly escape from their lips; some turning up their white faces, manifesting evident symptoms of sickness, and some unable to refrain their joy at this grand addition to their party.

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The first breaking up of the conversation was likewise extremely curious; but it was begun in so many corners about the same time, it is impossible to detail it all. Will Martin, with a lisping

unbrowsed tongue, addressed the one next him to the following effect.

"Fine evening this, noble dame."

"Do you account this so very fine an evening, gallant knight?"

"Hem, hem; glorious roads too; most noble lady,—paced all with—marble, you know. Hem! Came you by the marble path, fair lady? Hem! hem!"

"Not by the marble path, most courteous knight, but on one of alabaster, bordered with emeralds, rubies, and diamonds you know. Hem! hem!"

"May all the powers—Hem—powers of beauty, you know—Ay—hem! and love. Hem! What was I about to say?" [145]

"Could not guess, knight."

"That smile is so sweet. Will such an—hem!—such an angelic creature,—really con—descend to converse familiarly with a plain, homely warrior."

"Your notice does me far too much honour, worthy knight." And so saying she put the tip of her palm gently on the warrior's rough hand. Intoxicated as Will was with wine, he was petrified with astonishment and delight, and could not find terms to express his gratitude and adoration. Many others were likewise by the same time testifying, by their bright and exulting looks, the joy and delight they were experiencing in the conversation of those most beautiful and refined of all earthly objects. Tam Craik beheld, or thought he beheld, his lovely Kell among them, blooming in tenfold loveliness. He was so drunk that he could not articulate one syllable; but he fixed his long coulters-nose and grey eyes steadily in the direction of her face, and put his hand below the table and scratched. [146]

Still the cup and the cates circulated without any respite. The Master and the abbot both called them round and round; and though the lovely and high-born dames tasted sparingly, nevertheless the circumstance of their having touched the cup with their lips was sufficient to induce the enamoured warriors to drink to them in healths deep and dangerous. Reason had long been tottering on her throne with the best of them, but these amorous draughts of homage overthrew her completely, and laid her grovelling in the dust. The heroes fell from their seats first by ones, but ere the last in threes and fours. Still the courteous and sympathetic beauties tried to administer comfort and assistance to their *natural protectors*, by holding up their heads, and chafing their temples; but, in spite of all they could do, total oblivion of passing events ensued to the whole of our incautious troopers.

The next morning presented a scene in the great hall of Aikwood, which, if it cannot be described, neither can it ever be conceived. There lay our troop of gallant yeomen, as good as ever heaved buckler, scattered over the floor; some in corners, some below benches, every one of their eyes sealed in profound slumber though the day was well advanced, and every one having an innamorata in his arms, or clinging close to him of her own accord. At a given signal, the great bell of the castle was rung with a knell that might have wakened the dead. The sleepers raised their drowsy and aching heads all at the same time; and, as was natural, every one turned his eyes first toward the partner of his slumbers. Their sensations may be in some measure conceived, when, instead of the youthful, blooming, angelic beings, whom they had seen overnight, there lay a group of the most horrible hags that ever opened eyes on the light of day. Instead of the light, flowing, and curled hair, there hung portions of grey dishevelled locks. Instead of the virgin bloom of the cheek, and the brilliant enamel of the eye, all was rheum, haggardness, and deformity. Some had two or three long pitted teeth, of the colour of amber; some had none. Their lovely mouths were adorned with curled and silvery mustachios; and their fair necks were shrivelled and seriated like the bark of a pine-tree. Instead of the rustling silks and dazzling jewels, they were all clothed in noisome rags; and, to crown the horror of our benumbed and degraded Bacchanalians, every one of the witches had her eyes fixed on her partner, gleaming with hellish delight at the state to which they had reduced themselves, and the horrors of their feelings. The poet, and two or three others, fell into convulsions; and all of them turned away groaning, and hid their faces from these objects of abhorrence. [147]

The Master came with his enchanted liquor once more, and sprinkled it over the prostrate and humbled group, who were now in that state of mental agony that rendered them indifferent to aught that could occur; and, as he sprinkled them, he said to himself, "I now have the power over you, though you had been seven times anointed in holy church." [148]

"Aye, seven times seven," said a tremendous voice; and the words were followed by a laugh that shook the vault of the hall, which laugh was echoed by three or four accordant voices, and afterwards by all the witches in the apartment. The astounded warriors again raised their heads, and beheld their friend, the abbot, stalking along and along the hall in the midst of them in majesty sublime. He wore the same sable and flowing robes, and the same mitre, that he did on the preceding day; but he was now striding openly in his own character, with his legs shagged and hairy, shaped like those of a goat, and his feet cloven into two distinct and horny hoofs. The three attendants were there also, but they were no more three monks, but the identical, Prig, Prim, and Pricker, the infernal pages of Master Michael Scott. In short, our yeomen discovered, to their utter despair, that they had been riding, eating, and drinking, hand to fist, with the devil in *propria persona*. [149]

Before giving any of them time to recover their senses, he strode up to Dan Chisholm, and stooping over him with exultation, he said, "Did not I tell you, Christian droich, when I bayed you at the mill, that I would be before hand with you at Melrose, and have not I kept my word?" As he [150]

said these words, Dan once more saw down his throat, and beheld the burning flame within. Half-dead with fright, he threw himself back on the floor, and held up one foot and one hand, as his last inefficient defence, on which his infernal Majesty vomited such a torrent of sparkling flame out upon him and his forlorn partners, that they lost all hope of ever again moving from the place where they were.

"Take heart, my brave fellows," said the Master. "This great primate, you see, is no other than the prince of the power of the air, the great controller of the mighty elements, who has honoured us with his company. You are now in his power, and lie at his mercy; but he is more of a gentleman than he is generally represented to be, and will scorn to take advantage of a few poor insignificant creatures, who call themselves Christians, of whose company he is sure before he wants it. He knows you will fume, and bully, and fight for a few short years, sending one another home to his ample mansions in myriads before your time. Both he and I would scorn to take farther advantage of beings so blind ignorant, and inconsistent, than suits our own amusement. We only love to mock you, show you your own littleness, and how easy a prey you would be, were there a being in the universe that watched for ever over your destruction. Cheer up, gallant soldiers! and now for the long-awaited development of mighty moment. I will show you the manner, and very mode, by which your captain must only hope to succeed in his great enterprise."

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He then touched every one of them with the divining-rod that was in his hand, pronouncing at the same time some mystic words, which none of them comprehended. While he was thus occupied, the witches rushed from the hall, and as soon as he had touched the hindmost, he himself also made his escape, and looked from a crevice of an inner wall. The enchantment began immediately to take effect; the warriors rolled about on the floor in strong convulsions, bellowing and flouncing, trying always to run on all-four, and then tumbling over again. At length their noses and chins began to grow forward in hideous disproportion, till their heads began to assume something of the forms of the heads of beasts, and liker to those of calves than any things else. The laughter that pealed from loop-hole, crevice, and barbican, was, at this eventual period, excessive. The devil, the three wicked spirits, the great enchanter, and his conventicle of witches, seemed all to be in convulsions at witnessing how the metamorphosed champions shook their long heads, looked at one another, and tried to speak. How their language changed from long-drawn words, half pronounced, to downright confused bellowings; and how their forms, in the space of a few minutes, gradually assumed those of as many mighty and ferocious bulls.

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"I have now given you your own proper shapes, and showed you in frames suited to your natures," cried the Master, from a crevice.

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"Pass forth, and be gone; and carry my respects to your captain."

Then there was a combined bellow of rage arose in the hall that would have rent any castle to the top but that of Aikwood; and benches, boards, and couches, flew about in flinders on the horns of the furious monsters. Forthwith they rushed out into the great court, and from that to the side of the hill, bellowing, and tearing up the ground with hoof and horn, till the country was alarmed for many miles round; and, believing that all hell was broke loose from the castle of Aikwood that day, they betook them to their heels, and fled away out of sight and out of hearing.

The outrageous drove looked back as they ascended the brae to the eastward of the castle, and saw the devil and the great warlock, standing on the topmost tower, laughing at them; the former appearing of a size and dimensions equal to those of another castle. The grand mitre that he wore on his head, shaped like a crescent to conceal his horns, now moved like a cornuted black cloud amid the firmament; his eyes glimmered like two of the reddest of the stars of heaven; and the sceptre that he waved in his right hand was like a tremendous pine all in flame, or rather like a burning aerial meteor. Our transformed warriors galloped away in terror as fast as cloven hoofs could carry them, with one mighty bison, that had once been Charlie Scott, far a-head of all the rest; for, notwithstanding of all that Charlie had seen and heard in favours of the devil, he felt as much affrighted for him as ever, degraded as he was in form. No wonder was it that our tumultuous group was terrified and galloped off; for at the same time that they saw Satan stretching out his sceptre in his right hand, he held out Tam Craik by the nape of the neck in his left, while the poor fellow was seen sprawling and spurning the air over an unfathomed void. When the arch-fiend made his retreat from among the warriors that morning, in the midst of the confusion he carried Tam off with him, according to compact—fed him for some time on animal food of the richest quality, which, never once satisfying him, the devil grew weary of such a voracious cur, and twisted his neck about.

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The drove was no sooner out of sight, than the Master said to one of his pages, "Pricker, assume thou the habit that thou hadst yester-eve; mount, and ride after these wild cattle, and deliver them over to the charge of their dolt of a confessor. He will try to rescue them from their present degraded and brutal forms, but he will not be able. Spirit, thou sawest a part of the charms performed. Give him the proper directions how to find it out before leaving him. It boots nothing offending my kinsman, the Warden."

Pricker mounted his horse, and rode straight for the fords of Howden-burn, where he knew the friar was awaiting his companions, and meant to have driven them all up before him to the cottage door, where the friar and his fair ward sojourned, and there delivered them over to the care of these two, as a present of fine beeves from the great Master to Sir Ringan Redhough. But before the infernal page overtook them they were all at the door of the cottage, bellowing and kneeling, and trying in vain to make their hard case known to the friar.

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Pricker came up, and saluted the friar, who, observing his clerical habit, returned the compliment



in a hurried and careless manner—for he was confounded by the arrival of so many mad bulls.

"Reverend brother mine," said the page, "I deliver over into thy charge this herd of beautiful cattle, the best breed that ever roamed the forests of Caledon. They are a present from Master Michael Scott to his cousin the Warden of the middle marches. See that you deliver them safe and sound."

"Lo, thou seest with thine eyes, and thou also hearest with the hearing of the ear," said the friar, "that the creatures are outrageous, and not to be governed by the hand of a single man. And thinkest thou a brother of the holy order of Benedict would take a goad in his hand, and ride forth after these bulls of Bashan? Lo, would they not even run headlong upon my mule, and thrust their horns into his side? Thy servant also, and this maiden, would they tread under their feet? Go to! Thou speakest as one lacking understanding." [157]

"I give them in charge to thee, as desired by one with whom it is dangerous to contend," said the page; "and alongst with them this request, that your captain will make away with them as quickly as possible for food to his army."

At these words of the apparent sacristan there was such a roaring and bellowing commenced among the herd, that, for the first time, the friar began to suspect some horrid enchantment, but wist not what to dread. The drove turned round their heads to the speaker,—shook them in disapproval of what he had said, and joined in such a ferocious roar against him, that it was not like ought the friar had ever witnessed among the brute creation before. The metamorphosed troopers, however, knew too well now who Pricker was to attack him, but, turning again round, they came in a row, and kneeled around the friar, looking at him with the most supplicating expressions of countenance that ever cattle put on." [158]

"Lo, methinks I have looked upon these wild beasts of the forest in some of the days that are past," said the friar, "and that their countenances are not entirely unknown to me; though when, or in what place, in that thing my memory upholdeth me not. I pray thee, brother, to declare unto thy servant where thou camest by these beasts of mine acquaintance. If thou art a follower of the worthy Father Lawrence, thou must speak the truth.—Tell me, art thou a Christian?"

The bulls gave not the infernal page time to reply. They turned about, shook their heads, and tossed the earth at him with their horns, raising at the same time such an outcry of rage against him that the friar himself was afraid, and retreated within the door of the cottage; and he thought that, amid their confused bellowings, he could distinguish as it were these words pronounced, "He a Christian! Away with him! Away with him!" [159]

"Lo, what am I to understand by all this?" said the friar.

"Come near unto me, thou man of mystery, that comest like one of the children of Esau, with thy cattle and thy herds, and tell unto thy servant what are these?"

Pricker would not, however, come nigh the friar, but still kept his distance; for against the friar's spiritual armour he durst not engage; but he called out to him, in mockery, "I then declare unto thee, O thou great magician, who camest to cope with the prince of all magicians, Master Michael Scott, that these are thy master's yeomen whom thou leftest with him yesterday. Now, what sayest thou? Hast thou ever witnessed power like this?"

The friar lifted up his eyes to heaven, and tears fell down on his dark beard. "O wretched man that I am!" cried he, "why did I leave my children in the lion's den? yea, even in the den of the great lion. Wo is me, that this breach hath been made among the followers of my Master! But there is One that can yet controul all the powers of darkness, and to Him alone must I apply without delay." [160]

The friar went instantly to his devotions, and performed many rites of a nature too sacred to be here minutely described; yet, after all his exorcisms, the men could not regain their natural shapes, but lay and rolled about on the valley in awful convulsions. The hellish page, who had kept far aloof during the time of the friar's sacred appeal, now came galloping near to enjoy the convulsions of the herd, and the grief and astonishment of the friar; and after mocking for some time, in obedience to the great wizard's command, he called to the friar, and said, "I see he that brought about this wonderful metamorphosis,—for which you shall one day be grateful,—can only effect the counter-charm. Look into the manes on their foreheads, and look narrowly;" and having said these words, he darted off towards Aikwood with the speed of lightning.

The friar did as this flying horseman had directed, and searching the long curled mane between the horns of the first monster that came to his hand, he there found stitched a small scroll of parchment, neatly rolled up, and written in blood. Then he caused them to bring him fire, in which he burnt it, and presently there stood up at his hand one of Sir Ringan Redhough's warriors, in all his arms and accoutrements as he first arrived at the castle of Aikwood. "By the life of Pharaoh!" cried the friar, "surely this excelleth all that I beheld heretofore!" [161]

The spell was now quickly dissolved; but no pen can do any justice to the feelings of our amazed troopers, as they again strode the green in their own forms and vigour, embracing the friar, and thanking him as their deliverer. They returned back over the ridge, not without some dreadful apprehensions, to the mill of Aikwood for their horses, but went no more in view of the portentous castle. They found their horses at good feed; and whenever Charlie saw Corby's skin, that glittered like the plumes of the raven, he cried, "Aha, Corby lad, ye haena wantit either meat or drink, ye rascal! Od ye hae fared better than your master, ye cock-luggit glooming thief; stall up, ye dog, till I caparison you, and then let us bound for the border." [162]

But the most curious and least suspected of all the circumstances attending the horses was, that

Dan Chisholm's horse and those of his three companions, that they left stabled in the deep dell above Lindean, were all found standing at the mill among the rest. The miller could give no farther account about them, than that a lad brought them all tied to one another's tails, and said they belonged to four of the baron of Mountcomyn's men that were gone to Aikwood. "By the Lord Soules," cried Dan, "then it is true that Master Michael Scott said of the devil being more of a gentleman than he had been generally represented. For all the pranks he has played us, I'll think the better of him for this the longest day I have to live. What say you to this, friend Yardbire?"

"I shall be twenty miles off Aikwood at least afore I speak another sentence about either him or some others that I ken o.' Mercy on us! poor Tam Craik! What an end he has made wi' his fat bacon! Hech, but it be a despicable thing to rin open mouth to the—I'll no mention whae—for their greed o' meat. Some may hae gotten nae mair than what they deserved; but as for sachless Gibbie Jordan, he has been right hardly dealt wi'. My heart's unco wae for the poor laird, and I think something should be done to recover him."

"Something *shall* be done for him," said the friar, and that of such momentous consequence, that, if his own iniquities keep him not in bondage, all the powers of the evil one shall be unequal to the task."

After all these horrid perils of weird women and witchcraft thus miraculously overcome, our troop rode straight on to the camp of the Warden, and found him in the vicinity of Wooller, having come into those parts to counteract the rising about Berwick in behalf of the English garrison. And the time being at hand on which he must either do or not do, either join with heart and hand in the cause of the Douglas, or leave him to stand or fall by himself, and abide by the consequences—his impatience for the return of his men from Aikwood castle had been commensurate with the importance that he attached to their mission. But when they informed him of all the wonders they had witnessed, and the transmutations they had seen and undergone—how the warlock and his spirits had raised the tempests, deluged the plains, levelled the forests, and cleft asunder the everlasting mountains, the baron was like one in a trance. It was long before they could make themselves accredited, or impress him with any other idea than that it was a story made up to astonish him. With the feats performed by the friar, he was particularly pleased, and from that time forth paid him more honour than he had ever been seen pay to man. But the precise meaning of the destiny, read for him out of the book of fate, puzzled and interested him most of all. It was dark and full of intricacies; and it was not till after long consultation with wise men, as well as women, that any thing like a guess could be formed of its tendency. By making words and actions to coalesce, a mode of procedure was at the last pitched on as the only one reconcilable with the predictions. This mode will eventually appear without giving the detail at present, and the reader will then be better able to judge whether or not the Redhough and his sages understood the Master's signs and injunctions properly.

## CHAPTER VI.

Here away, there away, wandering Willie,  
Here away, there away, haud away hame.

*Old Song.*

We have now performed the waggoner's difficult and tedious task with great patience, and scarcely less discretion, having brought all the various groups of our *dramatis personae*, up to the same period of time. It now behoves us (that is, Isaac the curate and me,) to return again to the leading event, namely, the siege of Roxburgh.

The state of mind to which the two commanders were now reduced was truly pitiable. Within the castle of Roxburgh, all was sullen gloom and discontent. In one thing, and that only, were they unanimous, which was in a frantic inveteracy against the Scots; and though Musgrave, with the feelings of a man, would gladly have saved those dearest to him in life, yet he found that to have proposed such a thing as yielding to the garrison, would have been but adding fuel to flame in order to extinguish it. Their small supply soon began again to wear short; and, moreover, the privations to which they were subjected, had brought on an infectious distemper among them, of which some died every day; but every item added to their sufferings, fell into the scale against the Scots, and all the cruelties exercised by the latter, in order to break the spirits of their opponents, only militated against themselves. Opposition to the last man was a sentiment nursed in every English bosom within the garrison, with a brooding enthusiasm of delight. There can be no doubt that they felt intensely for their gallant captain, considering the dismal situation in which he stood with respect to their enemies, and the strong hold they had been enabled to keep over his heart. It was probably the burning intensity of these feelings that was the great source of their unhappiness, and gave rise to the fierce spirit of dissension that daily manifested itself. Although they detested the deed the Scots had committed in executing Sir Richard, yet they felt his death a sort of relief, as by it one-half of the cord which their hated adversaries held round the breast of their commander was broken, and there is little doubt that they wished themselves free of Lady Jane Howard, by fair and gentle means if possible, but at all events to be rid of that remaining tie, which almost maddened them to think of

There was one circumstance which of late was to all of them wholly unaccountable. As the day of the Conception of the blessed Virgin approached, the mind of Lord Musgrave, instead of

becoming altogether deranged as they had foreboded, became more and more steady and collected. He watched over every part of the economy within that huge fortress, and gave his orders with punctuality and decision, although with a degree of sternness that had not previously been observed.

The dreaded day of the Conception at length arrived; and, before noon, crowds of the citizens, and people from the surrounding country, began to assemble around the Scottish camp. These were forcibly kept beyond the line of circumvallation, while the regular troops were drawn up in columns both to the east and west of the fortress, and particularly round the gibbet on the Bush-Law. At eleven o'clock the Scottish trumpets sounded; the English soldiers crowded to the battlements around the western tower of the citadel, and Lord Musgrave came up among the rest, arrayed in a splendid suit of light armour, and gallantly attended.

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These battlements and the new gibbet were, as before stated, right opposite to one another, and separated only by the breadth of the moat and a very small slope on the western ascent; so that every object could be distinctly seen from the one place to the other, and, by raising the voice somewhat, a conversation could be carried on across. At the very time that Lord Musgrave thus appeared on the wall, the Lady Jane Howard and Sir *Richard* Musgrave were introduced on the boards of the gibbet. Yes,—read it over again. I say Sir Richard Musgrave, for it was truly he. The Douglas, seeing that he could not prevail, and that the gallant youth was given up by his brother and the English to his fate, could not brook the idea of losing by his death the one-half of the influence he held over Musgrave. But that he might try it by stretching it to the very last, he clothed another culprit in Sir Richard's habiliments, tied a white cloth over his face, let him stand a proclaimed space on the boards with the cord about his neck, and, at the last moment of the given time, there being no parley sounded for the delivering up of the keys of the fortress, the board sunk, and the man died; but Sir Richard was safe in hold.

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He was again produced that day, being the eighth of December, along with Lady Jane. He was dressed in the suit of armour in which he fought on the day he was taken prisoner, and Lady Jane in pure snow-white robes, betokening her spotless virginity. Sir Richard's eye beamed with manly courage, but the fresh hues of the rose on the cheeks of Lady Jane had blanched, and given place to the most deadly paleness. Both hosts were deeply affected with the sight, and on this occasion both felt alike. There was not a heart amongst them that did not overflow with pity at the unhappy fate of the two youthful prisoners, whose dismal doom could now no longer be averted, unless by a sacrifice on the part of the English, with which even the most sanguine of the beleaguering army doubted their compliance.

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The Douglas then caused a herald to make proclamation in a stentorian voice; first stating the cause why he had put off the execution of Sir Richard Musgrave until that day, namely, his anxious desire to save the life of the noble youth, on the ground that the purposed holding out of the garrison till the twenty-fourth was a chimera; and, secondly, declaring that, unless the keys of the castle were previously delivered up to him, precisely at the hour of noon, the noble and gallant Sir Richard, the flower of English chivalry, should be put down; and the beautiful and accomplished Lady Jane Howard, the betrothed bride and devoted lover of Lord Musgrave, subjected to a fate the most humiliating, and the most deplorable, that ever noble maiden suffered, and that in full view of both armies. A loud murmur of detestation sounded from the walls of the castle, but the columns of the Scottish army stood and looked on in mute and tender sorrow. Lord Musgrave placed himself right opposite the prisoners, turned his face straight toward them, and gazed with an unmoved and undaunted air. Sir Richard addressed him in the same sentiments he had formerly expressed, the purport of which was, it will be remembered, the madness and folly of holding out the castle, now when the bright and unequalled prize for which he contended was lost. For his own life, he said, he accounted it as nothing in the scale; but the fate that awaited the lady of his love, who had shewn such devotion to his person and interests, was not to be endured or permitted by any knight of honour. Lady Jane cried out to him to save her from a doom before which her whole soul shrunk; adding, that she had done much, and suffered much, for him, and would he not make one effort, one sacrifice, to save her?

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"Lord Douglas," cried Musgrave, "Will not a formal consignment of all my lands, titles, and privileges in the dominions of England, ransom the lives of these two?"

"Not if they were ten times doubled," returned the Douglas: "Nor shall any earthly thing ransom them, save the full and free possession of the castle of Roxburgh. I have myself suffered a loss at your hands, of which you are not aware; and I long and thirst to revenge it on you and your house."

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"Then my resolution is fixed!" cried Musgrave: "Though all England should deprecate the deed, and though I know my brethren in arms disapprove of it, I must and will redeem the lives of these two. Yes, I will save them, and that without abating one iota from the honour of the house of Musgrave. Not make one effort, Lady Jane? Not one sacrifice to save your honour and life? Effort, indeed, I will make none. But, *without* an effort, I will make a sacrifice of as high estimation for you as ever knight offered up for the lady of his love. Perhaps it may not be in my power to save you; but in the sight of these rival armies,—in yours my only brother and betrothed bride,—and in the sight of heaven,—I offer the last ransom that can be offered by man." As he said these words, he flung himself headlong from the battlement of the western tower, struck on the mural parapet around the lower platform, then on the rampart, from which he flew with a rolling bound, and flashed with prodigious force into the ample moat. There, by the weight of his armour, he sunk forthwith to rise no more. The troops of the rival nations stood aghast, with uplifted hands, gazing on the scene; but no more was to be seen of the gallant Musgrave! A gurgling boil of bloody water arose above him as he sank to the bottom,—and that was the last movement caused

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in this world by one whose life had been spent in deeds of high chivalry and restless commotion.

Excepting one shriek uttered by Lady Jane, the Douglas was the first to break the awful silence, which he did by these words: "There fell a hero indeed! Noble and resolute Musgrave! I cannot but envy you such a chivalrous fate as this!" Many such expressions of enthusiastic admiration burst from both armies, not in shouts of applause, for these were suppressed by sorrow, but in a low and melting pathos that bespoke the soul's regret as well as approval. [175]

When these first expressions of feeling were over, the dark and manly countenance of Douglas sunk into more than usual gloom and dejection. All the advantages given him, and which he had deemed insurmountable by his opponents, were by this desperate act of Musgrave's extinguished. He had now no more power over the English garrison than what he could make good with his sword and his bow. To have executed his threats on Sir Richard, and the lovely and romantic Lady Jane, would only have been an act of poor and despicable revenge, which would have disgusted his own followers, and could in no degree have furthered his cause; so he ordered them back to confinement, with directions that they should be attended according to their rank. [176]

What was next to be done? That was the great question. Douglas never once conceived the idea of giving up the enterprise; for though the princess for whom he had undertaken it was now no more, his broad domains were all engaged. The very existence of the house of Douglas depended on his success; and, besides, the king had more daughters, though none like his beloved and accomplished Margaret. Therefore Douglas had no hesitation regarding the necessity of taking the castle. He was determined to have it. But what to do next, in order to accomplish this determination, was the question. Circumstances were grievously changed with him. The garrison had got a supply across the Teviot-bridge during the time of the flood and the tempest, but the Scots could not ascertain to what amount. Sir Thomas Musgrave had been joined by some troops from the shores of Northumberland, and had issued forth with these and the greater part of the garrison of Berwick, to the amount of 5000 men, in order to make a diversion in favour of the garrison of Roxburgh. This movement by the governor of Berwick disconcerted the Douglas most of all. A party of these marauders had shewed themselves on the height about Hume castle, with trumpets sounding and colours waving in the air. From thence they marched on, keeping the backs of the hills, until they came into the lower parts of Leaderdale, which they harried, burning in their way the town and castle of Ercildon. They next made a movement towards Melrose, meaning to establish themselves in the rear of Douglas, and either to cut off his supplies, or force him to abandon the siege, in order to preserve his own country behind him. But when they came to the river Tweed they were opposed by the brave abbot Lawrence, not the feigned and infernal abbot that our yeomen left at Aikwood, but the real worthy and apostolic Lawrence himself. He had raised all the abbey vassals and retainers, and shewed fairly disposed to dispute the passage of the English over the river. In the meantime he posted message after message to Douglas, to come, or send to his assistance, before the abbey of the holy Virgin, with all its sacred stores, should fall into the hands of their ruthless enemies. [177]

Douglas was hardly put to it. If he drew off from a close blockade, the English were sure to take advantage of his absence, make a sally, and procure plenty of more provisions; and, in that case, his only probable hope of success was cut off. On the other hand, if he suffered himself to be inclosed between two armies, his situation would become every day more precarious, and perhaps in the issue quite untenable. He was, therefore, in a manner forced to the resolution of making an effort to join father Lawrence, and of giving the captain of Berwick battle before he attained possession of the rich monastery of Melrose. [178]

The time was now arrived when the support of Sir Ringan Redhough and his borderers was become absolutely necessary. Without their co-operation in a more close and decisive manner than that in which they had hitherto conducted themselves, he could not now proceed one foot, and his great cause was ruined. He therefore dispatched a pressing message to the chief, conjuring him as his friend and fellow-soldier, either to come and supply his place in the blockade of Roxburgh, or march with all expedition to Melrose, and give battle to the governor of Berwick. The dogged and unyielding Warden returned for answer, that it had always been his chief and undivided aim to act in concert with his noble and gallant friend, and lord superior, the Earl of Douglas and Mar. But that he had a peculiar charge from his Sovereign, of the English marches, which it was his bounden duty to attend to, prior to all other considerations. Whatever he could do conformable with this first duty, should not be wanting. Finally, he sent him word, as he had done formerly, "that if he couldna take the castle, and confessed that he couldna take it, he might send word to him, and he wad take it for him." [179]

"What does the crabbed carle always mean by that answer?" said the Douglas, when it was reported to him: "Perhaps he has some means of communication with those within the fortress, some secret friend in disguise among our enemies. Perhaps he knows of some weak or accessible point among these extensive bulwarks, or perhaps he reckons on some plausible means of surmounting them; for the devil's head is not more fruitful in expedients than his. This is a matter of such importance to me at present, that I must try to probe it to the bottom. Were I sure that he could accomplish his boasted feat, I had better engage him to it with one-third of my dominions; and at all events, I must procure the active assistance of his energetic force at present, whatever may be the equivalent required. Let my white steed Beaver be caparisoned, and my attendants in readiness; I must have an interview with this man of the mountains before I sleep." [180]

The Warden had drawn his force down to Wooller, with the intention of co-operating more effectively with the Douglas. He had heard of the advantages that lord held over his adversaries, but nothing of the late catastrophe by which they were all removed. Deeming therefore that the chances were mainly on the side of the Douglas, he judged it his safest course to act in complete [181]

concert with him. Above all, the words out of the black book of fate had been conveyed to him as read by the greatest magician in the world. From all that could be made out of that mystic rhyme, after long consultation, it appeared that it behoved the Warden and his friends to go hand in hand with Douglas. "Rise not against feudal union—No advance but in communion," were words hardly to be misinterpreted. The words of the prophecy, and the ludicrous metamorphosis were all taken into account, compared, computed, and over again computed,—and the sequel was a decisive resolution to support the Douglas and join issues with him. But, in the meantime, *still to make the most of a bad bargain.*

This resolution had been taken, and so far acted upon, that trusty agents had been despatched all over the country in disguise, to execute a portion of the great concerted plan, when the Douglas, at a late hour in the evening, arrived in the Warden's camp. He then had proofs experimentally of the Warden's caution and vigilance. He came upon his outposts at a great distance from the main body of his army. These withstood his passage, but seeing his retinue so small, for he was attended only by two knights, a squire, and a guide, they conducted him from one post to another, till at length they brought him completely guarded to the Warden's head-quarters; which was nothing more than a lowly cottage at Wooller haugh-head. [182]

The doughty chief and his kinsmen were still sitting in earnest conversation round a rustic table, with a tremendous torch in the middle of it. This was nothing less than a huge broken jar full of refined ox's tallow, and a flow peat stuck to the head in the middle, which being kindled emitted a blaze like a fish light. The gallant kinsmen were in deep consultation anent their grand plan of warlike operations, and the more they conversed about it the more eligible did it still appear to them, and the more deeply did they get interested in it; so that when the knight in waiting announced a stranger who requested an interview with Sir Ringan, every one seemed disposed to refuse him admission. [183]

"Tell him I am engaged," said the Warden.

"O yes. By all means. Tell him we are engaged," said Dickie o' Dryhope.

"If it is another message from the Douglas, I have had enough of him," said the Warden.

"Ay, faith, we have had enough of him," said Dickie.

"It is perhaps from Master Michael Scott!" said Yardbire: "Or maybe himsel, wha kens. Lord sauff us!" "D'ye think sae?" said the Warden, starting to his feet: "That would indeed alter the case!"

"Ay, that would alter the case indeed!" said Dickie, starting to his.

"Who is he? or what is he like?" enquired the Warden.

"Ay, that is the principal thing to be attended to," said Dickie; "What is he like?" [184]

"He is delivered as a knight of most noble bearing and courtly deportment," answered the knight in waiting. "I suppose we must admit him, and hear what he has to say," said the Warden, again taking his seat.

"O yes. By all means. Let us hear what he has to say," said Dickie, sitting down likewise.

As the courtly and athletic form of the Lord Douglas came up the hovel, the Border gentlemen stood all up to receive him, save Sir Ringan, who throwing himself back on his seat, leaned his chin on his hand, and in that indifferent posture awaited till the quality of his guest was made manifest. But no sooner did the voice of Douglas reach his ear, than he rose up to salute and receive him with as much ease as if he had been his daily visitor.

"You are hard of admission, noble Sir Ringan," said he, "thus to let your friends wait at the door of your pavilion, after riding so far in the dark to see you."

"I am chafed with visitors from both countries every hour of the day, Lord Douglas; many of them coming with complaints which it is out of my power to rectify. I have therefore a sly inquisition established around me, that might haply give your Lordship some interruption. But it was your own blame. Had you announced the name of Douglas, that would have opened a lane for you from my farthest outpost to this chair, which I request you to occupy, while I take my place here at your right hand. You are welcome, noble Earl of Douglas and Mar, to our rude habitation. There is no man more so, beneath our sovereign lord the King. I give you and your attendants all kind welcome and greeting." [185]

"You are become as much an accomplished courtier among these wild wastes as you were before an accomplished warrior, Sir Ringan," said Douglas.

"I always make points of speaking as I am spoken to, drinking as I am drunk to, and going to a battle when sent for," said the Warden. "H'm h'm h'm," neighed Dickie o' Dryhope, screwing up his mouth on one side like a shrew: "It is all true our Captain tells you, Lord Douglas. That's his rule. Mh? mh? Mh? H'm h'm h'm." The Douglas cast at Dickie a curious searching glance from his dark eye that was half hid by a shaggy eyebrow; and then turning to Sir Ringan, replied, "I am heartily glad of it, noble Baron of Mountcomyn, it having been for that very purpose I sought this interview with you. Sir Ringan Redhough, you must to battle with me to-morrow." [186]

"With all my heart, my lord," was the reply.

"Come, that is as it should be. We'll no more of it. We *can* have no more of it," said Douglas: "Let us have a flaggon of your best wine to drink success to our arms."

The wine was soon produced, with plenty of other good cheer, with which the Warden's camp was then abundantly stored; and the two chiefs conversed together with as much freedom, and as

little apparent jealousy with regard to rank or fame, as if they had been two brothers. The Douglas delineated his affairs as in that posture in which success could not fail him; at the same time he admitted the ticklish situation in which he stood, owing to the diversion made by the captain of Berwick, and that without an instant effort he would be inclosed between two fires. Sir Ringan answered, that he had heard of the incursion, and therefore he had drawn his troops down from the dales of Northumberland to support his friend and firm ally in any case of necessity; and he concluded by boldly proffering either to supply the Douglas's place in the blockade, or march to the west, and hold Sir Thomas Musgrave in check. Douglas was delighted to find the crabbed, cross-grained Warden, as he was wont to call him, in such a complaisant humour; and testified that delight by many well-turned compliments and encomiums on his vigilance and gallant support. He got introduced to all the gentlemen of the party, with whom he exchanged civilities, desiring them all to regard him as their friend, and one ready to do them a kindness whenever it lay in his power. "And now, Sir Ringan, since you hold the taking of the castle of Roxburgh so light," said he, "I think it is meet that my men and I should march and give battle to Musgrave. Probably you may have taken possession of that troublesome garrison before we return."

"If I do, my Lord of Douglas, I take it for myself," replied Sir Ringan; "and claim all the privileges, rights, and immunities that were to devolve on you as the reducer of it. Now, if I should take the castle of Roxburgh before your return, I suspect you would find it as hard work to expel me, and these Border warriors of mine, as the half-starved English that you have there already. I have all these brave fellows to hold in beef and malt, my Lord of Douglas; and for their sakes I have laid down a golden rule to walk by, which is, *To do nothing for nothing*. If I take the castle of Roxburgh, I take it for myself and them."

Douglas, who knew nothing of the prophecy and injunctions from the book of the destinies of men, became more convinced than ever, that the Warden knew of some flaw or some tangible point in the garrison; and if there existed a knowledge of such a thing, he resolved to avail himself of it by any means. He knew Sir Ringan too well to suppose he would confide his secret to him, without a certainty of reaping due advantage; and that, therefore, it behoved to give him a prevailing interest in it. With this view, he answered him, jocularly: "Though you were to receive all that was promised to me, in the event of my success, you would probably find yourself only a loser by the guerdon."

"Why, are you not to be made the king's son-in-law," replied Sir Ringan? "and thereby the first subject, or rather the first man of the realm; for, by the indolence and retired habits of our sovereign, you would have the whole kingdom at your beck. Call you this nothing, my Lord? Or would it be fair and reasonable,—supposing the thing possible, which I do not pretend to say it is,—that if my warriors and I should put you in possession of all this power, riches, and honours, would it be fair, I say, that we should be again turned out to these Border wastes, to live by our shifts, without reaping any thing of the benefit?"

"Should you take the castle for me, in my absence, noble Sir Ringan, your reward shall be of your own naming."

"Would it not be better, Lord Douglas, that the reward were settled before-hand; and, then, I lose or gain at my own risk and peril. If I deliver you no produce, I ask no pay."

"And what is the reward Sir Ringan would ask for such a piece of incalculable service?"

"My choice of seven baronies on the West Border, to divide amongst these gentlemen commoners, to whose support I owe every thing."

"You are a master worth serving, brave Sir Ringan. But such a grant would break my power on the Border for ever."

"It is that your power on the Border *may not* be broken for ever, Lord Douglas, that I make the proffer. I am safer without the venture. But you are a day's march nearer to the English army,—draw off your men silently before the break of day, and march against it. I shall supply your place at the blockade, to the west of the castle, without loss of time, and answer to you at your return for all ingress or egress that takes place in that division. If Sir Thomas proves hard for you, you have only to keep your men together, and fall back toward the entrenchments. You shall find you have some good back-friends there."

Douglas had determined on no account to let this proffer of the Warden's ingenious head and powerful arm in the taking of the fortress pass without trial; so, without more ado, he called for the friar's tablets, and made out a grant to Sir Ringan, in free present, of the barony and lands of Gilterscleuch, and his choice of seven of the best baronies belonging to the house of Douglas in the districts adjoining to the West Border, in the event of his putting James, Lord of Douglas and Mar, in full possession of the castle of Roxburgh. This grant signed and sealed, the Douglas departed, after pledging the Warden and his friends in a hearty stirrup cup, both chiefs being alike well pleased with the agreement they had entered into. The Douglas posted back to Roxburgh, and reached it just in time to put the western division of his army in motion at break of day; while Sir Ringan made his musters by the light of the moon, and marched off to the siege of Roxburgh.

## CHAPTER VII.

Aboon his skins he sat and rockit,  
And fiercely up his bonnet cockit;  
Then at ha' doors he crouselly knockit  
Withouten dread,  
Till wives and bairns around him flockit,  
But now he's dead.

Then he wad claw, and he wad hustle,  
Till all the skins played rap and rustle;  
While up his thighs, wi' devilish bustle,  
Ran mony a ked;  
Now they hae lost their eume and gustle,  
Sin' Robin's dead.

De'il on the yaud, that I should ban!  
That brak the neck of sic ane man;  
Now wha will wucked dames traupan  
Wi' siccan speed?  
Or drive the hides to them wha tan,  
Sin' Robin's dead?

*Rob Paterson's Elegy.*

On the same day that Douglas marched his men up the Tweed towards Melrose, and the Warden his troopers across the Border to the siege of Roxburgh, a band of twelve men and thirty horses came up out of Eskdale towards Craik-Cross, the most motely group that had ever been seen traversing that wild country. The men were dressed as English peasants of the lowest order, with broad unshapely hats, made of a rude felt of wool and hair mixed; wide coarse jockey-coats that came below their knees; and, instead of loops or buttons, these were bound round the middle with a broad buff-belt; the rest of their dress was all conformable, save that each of them had a noble broad-sword girded by his side. Some of their horses were loaden, some of them half-loaden, and a few had scarcely any thing on their backs at all. But no man will guess what that loading consisted of. Not to keep the reader in suspense, it was of *nolt-hides*; that is, of cow-hides, oxen-hides, bull-hides, and all sorts of hides that ever came from the backs of cattle. There were raw hides and dried hides, black hides and white hides, hides with horns, and hides without horns; and of these consisted their loading, and nothing else.

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The men alighted at Craik-Cross to bait their horses, and the following conversation ensued, which will let the reader into the secret who these skin-dealers were, thus strangely accoutred.

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"Will Laidlaw o' Craik, ye're a gayan auld-farrant chield. Come near me, and sit down, and tell me gin ye can hae ony guess what our master the Warden can be wanting wi' a' thir confoundit ill-smelled hides?"

"I hae puzzled my brain to nae purpose about it, Dan Chisholm; but am convinced it is some way connected wi' the siege of that unlucky castle; and the maist part o' us trows that they are for making raip-ladders, or rather whing-ladders, for climbing ower the wa's; an gin that be the case, Dan, there will mony ane o' us throw away our lives to little purpose."

"Now to hear you talk about fock throwing away their lives! You that wad risk your life for naething but a broken crown every day o' the year. Why, Will Laidlaw, I hae foughten often in the same field wi' you afore this time, and I never saw you set your life at a cow's horn, let be the hide o' ane (for whilk we wad gie a good deal the day.) I hae seen ye ride from your ain party, when that wing wasna hotly enough engaged, and blatter into the very thickest and hettest part o' the field, just girning and laying on like some lang-nosed deil come out o' the pit. But let me tell ye, Will o' Craik, it is a sair fault o' your's, and it is a clagg o' the hale clan,—the deil be your landlord, (as he has already been mine, quietly,) gin the hale tott o' ye be nae ill for saying ae thing an' thinking another. If ane hear a Laidlaw complaining of pinching and poverty, ye may amaist be sure that he has the best stockit mailings, and the best filled beef-barrels in the country. If ye hear him complaining, that the English are herrying the Scots up, stoop and roop, ye may rely on it the Scots hae been getting the upper hand and enriching themsels; and and if ye hear a Laidlaw pretending to be averse to a foray or a battle, ye may depend on it that his very knuckles are itching, and his teeth watering, to be at it.—Na, ye needna waul wi' your muckle een, Will, for ye canna deny the thing; and it is a d—n'd provoking gate ye hae."

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"Hout, dear Dan! we just hae it by kind to try what fock thinks on the subject a wee; to sound them like, afore we tell our hale minds. But a' comes aye freely out ere the hinder-end. But the truth is, about this that we were cracking, ye ken. I dinna mind a bodle what the Warden be gaun to do wi' the skins, provided he keep his promise, and gie me a living English cow for the hides of every three dead anes that I bring him."

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"There it goes now! There you go again! Weel I ken ye carena ae doit about the kye. Ye hae plenty o' baith kye and ewes already, and, on the contrary, ye wad *gi'e them a'* to ken what our chief is gaun to be about wi' thir hides. But it is needless to fight w'ye! Ye canna help that cross gate o' expressing yoursel. Gin ever ye be drowned we may seek you up the water. There's ae thing, Will,—ye may see the Warden means some general good to us a' by this project, whatever it is, for he has sent ae man o' every name to gather up the skins o' his native district. Ae Oliver, ae Armstrong, ae Laidlaw, ae Chisholm, and twa o' the Redhoughs; for ye ken he is always maist behadden to his ain name. But what can be the meaning o' this ugly disguise, I canna form a single conjecture; and he is sae strick about it too, that if ane o' us let oursel be found out, we

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lose a' chance of reward or advantage. Sae, Will, ye're unco weel kend about Craik and Howpasley, and a' the links o' Borthwick, and so am I about Castle-Wearie and Chisholm, and thereabouts. Gang ye into my father's house a' night, and I'll gang to Craik; gather ye up the hides o' Teviot, and I shall take Borthwick in my road. My father will maybe be a wee sweer to take ye in, but ye maun make your way on him the best gate ye can; he has the best stockit pantry on Teviot head, but a bit of a Laidlaw's fault, complaining aye maist when he has least reason. He has a capital stock o' hides, but seeing that English disguise he may deny them; therefore try him first, and if he winna produce them, gang up the burn about half a mile, and in a lown crook, weel hidden frae a' the world, ye'll find a bit housie wi' a dozen o' good hides in it. If he winna gi'e you them at a fair price, ye maun e'en take them for naething, as it is a' for his ain advantage."

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"Na, na, Dan. Weel I wat I'll do nae sic thing! I wadna dispute wi' the auld man, nor anger him for a' the hides in the hale barony."

"There again! Aye the auld man! Now, the Lord forgi'e ye; for ye never met wi' him a' your life but ye baith angered him and disputed wi' him. But nae mair about it. Take ye Sandy Pot o' the Burnfit, the queer hairum skairum devil, Tam Oliver, Bauldy Elliot, and Bauldy Armstrong wi' you; and I'll take Jamie Telfer o' the Dodhead, Jock o' the Delorin, Jock Anderson o' nae place, and Geordie Bryden o' every place, wi' me,—and good luck to the skin trade!"

It was one of those sort of winter days that often occur in January, when the weather is what the shepherds call "in the deathdraw," that is, in a struggle between frost and thaw. There was a dark cloud of rime resting on the tops of the hills, which shrouded them in a veil impervious to vision beyond the space of a few yards, and within that cloud the whole height appeared to be covered with millions of razors, every pile of bent and heath being loaded with ice on the one side, so that each had the exact resemblance to a razor blade, all of which appeared to be cast in the same mould, and of the same beautiful metal. The feet of the horses as they travelled through this made a jingling noise, as if they had been wading among crystal. As they came lower down on the hills the air became softer, and the ground was free of those ice-candles; but an uncommon gloom hung over holm and dale.

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Old Peter Chisholm was walking on the green to the westward of his house, looking at his ewes coming bleating down from among the dark foldings of the rime, and saying to himself, "I wonder what can be word o' thae dirty herd callants the day, that they are letting the sheep come a' stringing in lang raws, and rairing and bleating, into the how o' the water that gate. The country's in a loose state e'now, for the strength is a' out o't; a raid o' thirty stout English thieves wad herry the hale water. An sic were to come this gate the day, my stock wad be a' gane."

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Peter was proud of his ewes for all that, and, giving them a whistle, he threw the plaid over his shoulder, set his broad bonnet up before, and turned about to go home to look after the shepherd lads. As he turned his face to the north, he naturally cast his eye up toward the Limycleuch hills, where it instantly embraced the appalling sight of Will Laidlaw o' Craik, and his disguised compeers, with their fifteen horses, coming stretching down the ridge, right opposite to Pate Chisholm's hirsle of bonny wheel-horned ewes. The old man's eyes were dazzled in his head, and a paralytic affection seized his whole frame. "Lord pity us! Now see what's coming yonder," said Peter: "I tauld them aye what wad happen! but no ane wad heed me! O dool to the day! A man may soon hae muckle, and soon hae naething in this wearifu' country. O Dan, Simon, and Jock, the strength o' my house! wherefore are ye a' gane and left your gear to gang as it came! Dear bought! far sought! and little for the hauding."

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By the time Peter got thus far with his soliloquy he was quite out of breath; for he was not only walking fast, but he was absolutely running towards home, with a sore stoop, and knees bent much forward. Still as he hobbled he continued to apostrophise in short sentences, as he could gather a little breath now and then to utter a small portion of the concatenation of repulsive ideas that presented themselves one after another—"Naething but trash left—Heh-heh—Rob-in-Laid-law!—I hae seen—Heh-heh the—day, but—Heh—that's—gane,—Lasses, too!—Hoh—oh!—O ay!—Half—breed—bring—up—Oh—Dan—Dan, &c. &c. Daughter! Bessy Chisholm—Heh! Are ye therein? May Chisholm—where's your titty? Poor tafferel ruined tawpies! What are ye gaun gairdering about that gate for, as ye didna ken whilk end o' ye were uppermost?" "That's easily kend father. What has come ower ye? Hae ye seen a warlock that ye are gaping and glowing at sic a dismal rate?" "War than ony warlock, ye twa glaikit idle hizzies. Off wi' jerkin and wilycoat, and on wi' doublet, breeks, and buskins instantly. Belt on bow, buckler, and brand, and stand for life, limb, gear, and maidhood, or a's gane in ae kink. O dool be to the day! dool be to the day! What are ye standing glinting, and looking at ane anither there for? Cast your een up to the Carlin-rigg, and see what's coming. A' harried! ravaged! and murdered! Come, come: Don your billies' claes; let us make some show; it will maybe save something. Warn the herd callants; let the stoutest of them arm, and the weakest rin and drive sheep and cattle an' a' out o' sight among the clouds. O dool to the day! Na, na; for a' the houses that are in the country here they come straight! Nae winning by this place."

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The lasses seeing their father in such a querulous mood, and the motely troop fast approaching, acquiesced in his mandate, and without delay mounted themselves each in a suit of their younger brother's clothes, while old Peter stood over them to see that they put all to rights, always giving such directions as these: "Come, come, come! strap, clasp, belt and buckle; and gude-sake fauld up your cuffs. Your arms hing at your shoulder blades as they were off joint. Hout fie! hout fie! Wha ever saw young chields hae sic luchs o' yellow hair hingin fleeing in the wind? Come, come, strap and string down; swaddle it round wi' sax dizzen o' wheelbands, and fasten a steel-belted fur cap ower aboon a'. Yare, yare! Lord sauff us! Here they come! What's to be our fate? Keep

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close for a wee while."

"Hilloa! Wha hauds the house!" was vollied from the door by the deep-toned voice of Will Laidlaw.

"There's nae body in but me, and I downa come to the door. Ye had better ride on," cried old Peter, in a weak tremulous voice.

"Wilt thou answer to thy name, or hast thou a name to answer to?" said Will, feigning to speak the broad Northumberland dialect, which sorted very ill with his tongue: "An thou be'st leel man and true, coome and bid thee guests wailcome. It is God speed, or spulzie wi' thee in three handclaps."

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"Spulzie, quo the man!" exclaimed Peter: "The muckle fiend spulzie the unmannerly gab that spake it!"—and with that he came stooping over his staff, and coughing to the door, speaking in a quavering treble key. "A bonny like purpose! What wad ye spulzie frae a poor auld man that hasna as muckle atween him and the grave as will pay for howking it, and buy a hagabag winding sheet? Spulzie, quo he! That is a good joke!—he—he—he, (cough) hoh—hoh—hoh. I'm sae ill wi' that host! Eh? wha hae we a' here? Strangers, I think!

"Goodman, we were directed to your house for a night's entertainment or two, if you are the old rich yeoman ycleped Patrick Chisholm of Castle-Weary."

"Na, na! I'm nae rich yeoman! I'm naething but a poor herried, forsaken, reduced auld man! I hae nae up-putting for ought better than a flea. Ye had better ride on down to Commonsie. There's plenty there baith for man and horse. Come away, I'll set you down the length o' the ford, and let ye see the right gate."

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"Come neighbours, let us go away as he says, We'll never make our quarters good on this auld carle," said Sandy Pot, in a whisper to his companions: "And troth do ye ken I wad rather lie at the back of the dike, before I imposed myself on ony body. Od my heart's wae for the poor auld niggard."

"Come away, lads, come away," cried Peter. "The days are unco short e'now; ye haena time to put off."

"Stop short there, my good fellow," cried Laidlaw, "We have some other fish to fry with you before we go. I am informed you have a large stock in hand of the goods in which we deal. You have had lucky lifts this year. Plenty of good hides with you?"

"Rank misprision, and base rascally jests on a poor auld man. Not a single hide about the hale town, foreby the ane on my back," cried old Peter.

"My orders are, worthy old yeoman, to give fair prices to such as produce their hides," said Laidlaw. But whoever refuses, I am obliged to search for them; and if I find any I take them at my own price."

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"O dear, honest gentlemen, I downa joke wi' ye: hoh, hoh," coughed Peter. "Gin ye be for a place to stay in a' night, come away as lang as it is daylight."

"Why, with your leave my good fellow, we must lodge with you to-night. Hearth-room and ha'-room, steed-room and sta'-room, is the friendly stranger's right here. Small things will serve: a stone of English beef or so, and two or three pecks of oats."

"Beef, quoth the man? Ye may as weel look for a white corby as beef in my pantry, or aits in my barn. Will ye no come away."

"Not till I makes a search for your nolt hides, honest yeoman. To that am I bound."

The four skin-dealers next the door alighted and went in, leaving their horses with the other two, who went and put them up in a good large stable with plenty of stalls. Peter ran back to the house in perfect agony, speaking to himself all the way. "They are very misleared chaps thae. They maun surely either be Low Dutch, or else sutors o' Selkirk, that they are sae mad about skins. I little wat how I am to get rid o' them."

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The two lasses appeared armed cap-a-pee like two young men; and though Bess was Will Laidlaw's own sweetheart, he did not recognize her through the disguise, neither did she once suspect him. The two made a little swaggering about the *pelt-dealers* as they called them entering the pantry, but not choosing to measure arms with them, the weak suffered the strong to pass; and Will having his cue, soon discovered the huge barrels of beef below the ground, with empty ones above them. Old Peter shed tears of vexation when he saw this huge and highly-valued store was all discovered, but had not a word to say for himself, save now and then "A' fairly come by, and hardly won; and there is nae right nor law that says honest men should be eaten up wi' sorners. May ane speir where ye come frae, or by wha's right ye do this!"

"Why man dost thou no hear and dost thou no see that we're coome joost from Nworthoomberland!"

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"Aha!" thought Peter to himself; "English thieves after a! I had some hopes that I could distinguish Scots tongues in their heads. But a's gane, a's gane!"

"Now auld yeoman, if thou hast a word of trooth in thee, tell us where the hides are, and we will pay thee for them."

"No ae hide about the town. No ane, either little or muckle."

"Why soore am I them coos doodnae coome to thee without heydes, did they? That I can answer

for, they had a' heydes and bonns baith when they came from hwome."

"Waur than ever! Waur than ever!" exclaimed Pate Chisholm to himself as he sought another apartment: "The very men that the kye were reaved frae come to take revenge! Callant, come here and speak wi' me. Haste to a neighbour's house, and raise the fray. We shall never be a' quietly put down wi' half a dozen."

"Dearest father," said May, "I dinna think the men mean ony ill, if ye wad be but civil." [210]

"Civil or no civil, wench, it is as good to have half a dozen armed men lying concealed near us," said Peter: "An we dinna need them, the better. Rin your ways, and gar raise a' the auld men and the young lads in the two neist towns, for there is nae ither left. Pith's good in a' play."

The maid did as she was ordered, and Peter, seeing that no better would be, tried to compel himself to a sort of civility, which, however, sat on him with a very bad grace. But, hides! hides!—nothing but hides was the burden of their enquiries; while Peter durst not for his life produce the hides, deeming that every man would know the hides of his own kine, and wreak tenfold vengeance on himself and household. He knew not, he said, what his son Dan, who took care of all these matters, had made of them,—sold them he supposed to the curriers and sutors of Selkirk,—and more than this Pate would not acknowledge. There was no other thing for it, nor perhaps did Laidlaw want any thing else, than for him and his companions to walk up the burn and make a seizure of the whole of Peter's excellent hides, with which they returned loaden to his dwelling. His confusion and distress of mind were most appalling when Laidlaw spread them all out before him, and asked in a very particular manner to be informed where he had got them. O! Peter knew nothing about them. They were not his at all. He did not know to whom they belonged. But he would not stand to speak, turning his back always on the men, and hasting away, coughing and speaking to himself. He could have seen these presumptuous skin-men roasted on a brander, for they had now put him out of all patience, and all hope! [211]

"Pray thee now, mine good friend, inform me this," said Laidlaw; "Did'st thou nwo get this seame fleckered one, and this brwoad one here, on the third of the last mwonth; and here's wother three, did'st thou nwo get them on the twentieth of the seame mwonth? Now tell me this I say? Why where is thou gwoing groombling into theesel? Turn about thee feace to the heydes, and answer to the pwoint." [212]

"Aff hands is fair play," said old Pate: "I winna be forced wi' ony unmannerly English lown that ever I saw atween the een;" and with that he heaved his staff and struck Laidlaw across the shoulders, and over the steel bonnet repeatedly, who was like to burst with repressed laughter, but still persisted in his queries.

"What ails the owld catwiddied carle," said he, "that he winno answer a ceevil question? I's jwost wanting to tauk to thee aboot boosiness, and thou flees out in a reage and breaks me head. Come tourn again, and tell me when and where thou got'st this one, see, this wheyte one here! What's 't moombling at? Wolt thou tell me the price of them, then?"

"I want to hae naething to do wi' you, and as little to say to you; therefore, gang about your business, and dinna plague a poor auld unfeiroch man. The gate is afore ye, and your company's wanted elsewhere."

Will would take none of those hints; he followed his uncourteous host about and about, till at last he fairly holded him beyond the fire; and then he took his seat over against him and conversed on, while his companions dropped in one by one and joined in it. For a while they got it all to themselves, but at length Pate, not being able to make better of it, suffered himself to be drawn in by degrees to join them, still preserving the same strain of disingeniousness. They asked who the two handsome striplings were that attended him, and spread the board with provisions? He answered that they were two sons of his own. "Sons of thine?" said Laidlaw, "Whoy, what are their neames?" "Simon and John," answered he; "or rather Sim and Jock, for that's how we ca' them." [213]

"Whoy, mon, that is the queerest thing I ever heard," said Laidlaw: "Then thou hast two swons of the neame of Jock, and other two of the neame of Sim, for I saw two of that neame, strapping youths, in the Warden's camp."

Peter wist not well what answer to make; and, therefore, only added, "Ay, Ay! Were you in the Warden's camp? Then tell me, is their ony word frae my son Dan?" [214]

"Ay man, I can tell thee sic news of Dan as thou never heard'st; he has sitten at his supper hand and neve wi' the deil." At these words one of the young men behind them (May Chisholm to wit,) uttered a suppressed scream, and from that moment Will Laidlaw smelled a rat, and soon discovered his own beloved Bess Chisholm standing gazing at him as he related the wonderful story of her brother's adventures with the devil, the warlock, and the three evil spirits; of his race with those infernals along the marble pavement of the air; his transformation into a horned beast; and of his eating and drinking with the prince of darkness. But the two striplings were most of all shocked at hearing of the devil's burning stomach, and how the wine *fizzed* as it went down.

After listening and wondering while all these things were in relation, Bess said to the skin-dealer next to her, who chanced to be Sandy Pot, "Pray, Sir, when you were in the camp of Sir Ringan Redhough, did you note a brave trooper, a friend of ours, named Laidlaw?" [215]

"Oh, yes, that I did," said Sandy: "I know him well." This was a glorious joke for Pot, and his comrades were afraid he would persevere in it till he put their secret out altogether.

"How is he reported in the army?" said she: "Is it still alleged that he is the bravest and most

successful battler in the baron's array?"

"*Bottler*, I suppose you mean," said Sandy, "for as to his battling, God mend that. He is not noted for ought that I ever heard of, except for keeping a flunkey, or a wall-i'-the-chamber, as the Frenchmen ca' it; and it is reported thro' all the army, that that *wally* o' his is an English girl. I can tell you that your neighbour, Will Laidlaw, is notorious for nothing else beside this."

"It is false as thyself, and thy perjured ungenerous nation," said the disguised maiden. "I know my friend to be honour's self, and of a house whose courage and integrity were never called in question. The man that dares to slander him had better do it somewhere else than in my presence, and under my father's roof. But I degraded him myself, by putting his name into the mouth of such a mean forager as thou art! The man whose actions are base, always accuses the brave and generous of deeds such as his own." [216]

"Bless me, what ails the chiel?" said Sandy, laughing good humouredly:—"What's the great ill o' keeping a *wally*? I aince keepit ane mysel, there's nae doubt o't, till my uncle, Gideon Scott, set up his birse, and gart me part wi' the creature."

The rest laughed at Sandy being put out of countenance by the indignant stripling; but Bessy Chisholm turned on her heel, and walked out at the door, muttering expressions about vulgarity, raw hides, and maggots; and Will Laidlaw, not able to contain himself, rose and walked out after her, in a visible state of mental agitation. As he approached the stable door quietly, into which she had turned, he heard her saying to herself. "Laidlaw keep an English mistress in disguise! No, the fellow is a poltroon, and a liar, and I will not believe it." Will entering at that moment, seized her hand between both his, and kissed it, saying, in a passionate style, "My own dear and high-spirited Bess Chisholm still!" [217]

Never was there seen such a statue of amazement! The tones of the voice, now uttered in its natural key, were familiar to her. But the figure that uttered them! To be addressed in that style by a great burly thief of an English skin-buyer, outwent all comprehension. She was in a man's dress, be it remembered,—and there she stood, with her face half raised, her ruddy lips wide apart, and her set eyes of lucent blue showing a mixture of astonishment and disdain. "What? what? Sir," was all that she could say, until the ragamuffin figure reminded her of the weaponshaw at Mountcomyn, and some love-tokens and vows, of which none knew save one. But, with a woman's natural caprice, she now was angry at him in turn having discovered her true sentiments, and refused to acknowledge him as her lover in that hateful disguise, unless the meaning of it was explained to her. He told her, that the meaning of it was unknown to himself; that he took it at his captain's command; but that his fortune depended on the secret being kept. [218]

"There you are safe, at all events," said she; "and it is well you have disclosed yourself in time, for my father has raised the country, and it is not improbable that, before to-morrow, you should have been all dead men."

"I think we have been in greater jeopardies," said he: "But in the mean time keep up your disguise, that my comrades may not discover your sex;—and we two must have some private discourse during the night, for I have much to say to you."

"Not I, master, I winna court ae word wi' a man in the dress of a vulgar English boor; for it is sae hatefu' to me, I can like nought that's within it. Ah me! I wot ill how it is; but I think I hardly detest it sae sair already."

"My bonny, haughty, pawkie, sweet Elizabeth!" cried Laidlaw.—But Isaac the curate says, that, being himself a married man, he could not go on with all the overcharged outrageous stuff that passed between these two fond lovers; so he passes it over, as well as the conversation at their evening meal, which Bess took care to make a plentiful and savoury one; and in the mean time, she was in such high spirits herself, that the troopers, who did not know her, took the young man for the most swaggering puppy they had ever seen. She challenged Sandy Pot to fight her with single rapier, knowing well that Laidlaw would find some means of preventing it; but it was evident that old Peter thought her entirely out of her senses, for he tried to get her away from about the house to the residence of one of the neighbouring gentlemen yeomen for the night, but the experiment was vain. [219]

When he saw such a goodly supper, or dinner, (for they were both in one,) set down to these uncouth, and, to him, unwelcome guests, he could not contain his chagrin, and at first refused to turn out to the board, or partake with the rest. But when he saw that the good fare would all go, he grew as restless as if he had been sitting on pins, till Bess, who knew his way, took him by the arm, and pretended to force him jocularly out to the table. But Peter was not ill to force; for in place of receding, he made all the haste into the head of the board that he could, though at the same time always repeating, "I tell ye, callant, it is downright wastery." He, however, plied as good a knife and as good a horn-spoon as any of them all. [220]

While they were yet busily engaged at their meal, the tramp of horses was heard approaching the door in a cautious and uncertain manner, and by a circuitous way. The two disguised maids, (whom, by-the-by, we should distinguish by the names of Sim and Jock, as they sustained these that night,) were standing eating at the hall-dresser, behind the backs of the troopers; and when the trampling was first heard, Jock grew as pale as death, but Sim, who knew what guests were within, which the other did not know, shewed a courage so undaunted, that it appeared wonderful to all present, save one, but to Jock in particular: "O ho! The nearer night the mae beggars," cried Sim. "Who have we next?" [221]

"That beats ought I ever heard in my life!" exclaimed Pate: "I think the fock be gane distractedly

mad! What brings them a' here? Is there no another ha' house and pantry in the hale country but mine? It is hard to be eaten out o' house and hald wi' sorners and stravaegers this gate. May Liberton's luck befa' the hale o' them. Callant Jock, set by that meat out o' sight." "Stop for a wee bit, an ye like, goodman," said Bauldy Armstrong: "It is best aye to do ae thing afore another."

By this time the dialogue had commenced in the court; Simmy went briskly to the door by himself, and demanded of the strangers who they were, and what they wanted? They answered, with hesitation, that they supposed they had lost their way, and requested to know who held the house, and how it was called? "The house is held by my father, a leel Scottish yeoman," said the youth; "and already full of strangers to the door, as well as every stall of his stable with their horses. Pass on your way, and peace be with you." "Did not I tell you we had *lost* our way," said the first speaker, riding up to the door. "Pray, who are the strangers within? We have lost a party of our friends."

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"The men are from the south, master: free-traders, they may be called. Men of horns, hides, and hair, Sir. You, I suppose, are of the same profession?" "Precisely of the same," said the stranger, alighting from his horse, and entering the house.

He was followed by other two, for there were but four in all, and the fourth was a a boy whom they left holding their horses. When they came in upon Peter and his jolly hide-merchants, they were visibly disappointed, and viewed the grotesque-looking group with marked curiosity. These were not the men they expected to have found, that was evident; but perceiving their English habits, they ventured to address them. They were answered in blunt cutting terms; for our troopers knew, although the disguise prevented their being known again. Having learned the name of the house and its owner, they began forthwith to inquire if any thing of a young nobleman had been seen at that place, with such and such attendants; for they had traced them to that very house, they said, and if the possessors could give no account of them they would be held as responsible. Old Peter said, there were so many people came to that house, that it was impossible he could tell a tale of one of them distinct from another; but the intrepid Sim, knowing his back friends, told him the whole story in a few words, and then asked them in turn what they had to say concerning it.

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"Whoy, I has joost to say this, young chap, that I am to boond thee and all the faymilie, and carry you all to answer before a meeting of the wardens."

"Ay, and it is prwoper reyght and prwoper reason too, that they should, friend," said Laidlaw, pretending to take his part, to see what he would say. Will knew the three men to be three notorious English thieves, of the set of the Halls and Reids, and that they could not, in fact, be sent in search of the Lady Jane Howard; but he could not divine their motive for coming there, or making the inquiry; therefore he took the Northumberland tongue as well as he could, and encouraged them in conversation till a late hour. Yet he could learn nothing; only he was sure they were come about no good end. As for old Peter, when he saw two parties of Englishmen come upon him, and heard that they laid their heads together, he gave himself and all that he had up for lost; and hoping to conciliate their favour in some measure, he actually intreated these last comers to sit down and share of the remnants of their supper, which they did in a right liberal manner, while Peter went out and in to learn the news. He found by this time nine men, well armed, assembled in the barn, that had gathered from the neighbouring houses, whose inhabitants were all bound to rise and assist one another on any emergency. These were mostly old men or very young ones, the flower of the Border districts being all in the Warden's camp. Will likewise informed his sweetheart privately of his suspicions; and perceiving that the strangers were extremely well mounted, and heavily armed, he desired her, if possible, to find means of concealing their horses. This the supposed Sim soon effected. The boy still held them at forage by the side of the old castle-wall; and he being brought in, and set down to supper, some of those in the barn were warned to take the horses quietly to the concealed house up in the hollow burn. They were soon secured there; and the thieves perceiving that no one left the house, never had the smallest suspicion of any trick, the boy being fast asleep behind the board. At length all of them grew drowsy, and began to compose themselves to rest as they best could, save two fond lovers, that were whispering their vows and their secrets to each other in the little chamber mentioned in a former part of this history.

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About midnight, when all was quiet, these two heard the cry of *Welhee! Welhee!* from a neighbouring mountain, which in a short time was returned from two different places in the valley.

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"Now, I will lay my neck in wad," whispered Will to his sweetheart, "that there is a thief-raid to-night; and that these three have either come here to watch you, or to cut your throats in case of resistance; or perhaps they may have indeed lost their party in the mist. But this I ken, neither a Reid nor a Hall ever came thus far into Scotland for good. If the fray rise, take you the command, and fear nothing. My friends and I will defend you, and clear your way."

"But what shall we do, dear Laidlaw, with these three moss-troopers and the boy?"

"We must either slay or bind them the first thing we do, or perhaps leave them to waddle to the hills in their armour on foot the best way they can."

The maiden's heart trembled at the thoughts of what lay before her; as for old Pate, he kept going out and in like a restless spirit; and if he had not lost his daughter, and knew not where she was, he proposed to have fastened doors and windows, and burnt all the nine Englishmen where they lay, for he had no faith in any of them, and weened them all come for the purpose of ruining him. As he was going about preparing matters for this laudable purpose, one of the shepherd lads

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came with the fray, and related a dismal tale. He said, that he and his companions had driven out all the sheep and cattle to the heights among the mist, as they had been commanded; that in the course of the evening they heard many calls and whistles around them; and just as the moon rose, a band of English thieves came round them, and drove them all off towards Bilhope-head. Peter's assembled friends advised him to take the skin-men's fifteen horses, and what remained at home of his own, and ride off and try to recover the prey, without alarming his dangerous guests; but Peter was bent on fastening the doors, and burning them skin and bone, for, he said, they would never get so easily quit of them. The two anxious lovers hearing a bustle without, opened the casement, and overheard a part of these perplexed words and reasonings. Then hastening out to join counsel, they raised the fray openly. The heroic Sim flew to horse, and desired all that were friends to the Scots to follow, while Laidlaw addressed his compeers, saying, "Up, lads, and let us ride; our host must not be herried while we are under his roof."

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"No, no!" exclaimed the thieves, all in a breath; "he must not be herried and we under his roof;" and no one appeared in half such hurry as they were to mount and be gone.

"Stop short, my good fellows, till I speak with you for a minute," said Laidlaw: "Make me sure which side you will take before you go, else one foot you stir not from that fire-side. I know you for Anthony Reid of Whickhope, and those for two of your cousins of Tersithead, and shrewdly suspect you to be at the head of the foray."

Anthony drew his sword: so did Laidlaw. But the English troopers were bold and desperate fellows; and before Laidlaw's friends could gather round him to his assistance, the three having covered themselves with their bucklers, forced their way out, back to back, and ran Sandy Pot through the left shoulder, who pressed on them too rashly. When they missed their horses, and saw that they were clean gone, they foamed like as many furies, and, setting their backs to the wall, swore they would fight it out. The combat might have been attended with much bloodshed, had not all the people rushed from the barn, and overpowered them. They were then taken into the house and bound, while Pot and May Chisholm, alias Jock, were left as guards on them, with orders to kill the first that should offer to loose either himself or any of his companions. This whole scene was quite beyond Peter Chisholm's capacity. He could in nowise conceive how the one party of Englishmen assisted with such energy in detecting and binding the others. Still he was any thing but satisfied; the matter having outgone his comprehension, as well as that of all his associates, save one.

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They now mounted without delay, and rode with all manner of speed toward the Pass of the Hermitage, by which path they supposed the droves must necessarily proceed; and just as they went down the Redcleuch, leading their horses, they saw the cattle passing at the foot of it. The party amounted scarcely to their own number; but the sheep-drivers were not come in view; so they mounted their horses, and instantly mixed with the men behind the drove, without offering to stop the cattle. At the same time they placed a guard of two farther behind, to prevent all intelligence from passing between the two parties. When this was effected, Simmy challenged the cattle as his father's, and desired the drivers to give them up; but to this the captain of the gang, whose name was Gabriel Reid, the younger brother of Anthony, and captain in his absence, only mocked, imitating the sharp treble notes of the petulant youngster, and telling him that he would not give them up for three score such men as *he* was, else he was better than he looked. As he said this, however, he kept a curious eye on the rough exterior of the tall athletic English peasants by whom the youth was surrounded, which Laidlaw perceiving, accosted him in his feigned tone.

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"Whoy, friend, we are countrymen of thee own, and know thee full weel. Thou's Gabriel Reid of Trochend. But thee billy Anty is taken prisoner this seame mworning, and if thou disna gie up the kie, his head will be chappit off, as weel as these of thee twa coosins the Ha's. Sae thou hast ney choice left but to yield up thee ill gotten gain."

"And what dog art thou, that takest part against thee own countrymen?" said Reid.

"Oo, I's a dealer in the leather line, as weel as all my friends there. We have our free passages and warranty for the good of both countries; but we are honest men, and by chance were lodged in the house of the owner of these coos, and must see joostice doone to him. I boond thee brwother with mee own hands."

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"Then the devil bind thee, thou traitor knave! and for thee reward, this to thy harnpan!" said Gabriel, drawing out his sword, and attacking Laidlaw without more ado. Will, who was never backward at a brulzie, received the encounter without flinching, and, calling for fair play and elbow-room, both proceeded to decide the day by single combat, while the rest drew aloof and looked on, encouraging them only with cheers and applausive words. Laidlaw was mounted on Anthony Reid's gallant steed, which Gabriel remarked, and that added to his rancour against the skin-man at least ten degrees. The ground was exceedingly bad, so that they could not wheel for weapon-space without a parley; but neither would ask it. They fought close together, first with their sword-blades, and afterwards, as their horses came in contact, they dashed each other with their hilts. Both were slightly wounded, but Laidlaw rather had the worst of it. "Beshrew thine heart, if thou hast been a skin-merchant all thy life," said Gabriel, as he turned his horse in the path for another encounter. They had now changed sides, and this encounter was longer and more inveterate than the first. Laidlaw not being quite master of his mighty and furious steed, was twice in imminent danger, losing his broad slouched hat in the struggle, the crown of which was cross-barred with steel.

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Poor Sim had changed colours ten times since the combat began; and, on seeing this last struggle, he lost all command of himself, and rushed with his sword drawn to Laidlaw's rescue.

*Himself*, did I say? alas, no one knew the true sex, save her lover, and no one interfered till she was met by an English trooper half-way, who unhorsed and wounded her with as much ease, of course, as she had been a child. Will's eye caught the first glance of her, as she was falling, and galloping up to the rescue, bare-headed as he was, he clove the trooper's burgonet, and slew him at the first stroke. Reid followed him up; but Laidlaw's spirit, now fully proportioned to the high mettle of his steed, was a match for any thing. He rode against his antagonist with all his fury, and having the advantage of the brae, overthrew horse and man, and galloped over them. Then throwing himself from his horse, and seizing the forlorn warrior by the throat, called out with a voice of fury,—"Rescue or no rescue?" "No rescue! Redsdale to the fray!" was the resolute and fatal reply. Will could not stand to reason any more at that time, so, without more ado, he ran him through the body, and flew to the rescue of his beloved and heroic Elizabeth, for there the combat began to thicken. She was on her feet ere he arrived, and well guarded, and, mounting her palfrey, she bade her lover head the fray, and pay no regard to her, for she was nothing the worse. He, however, saw the blood upon her bassonet, and was roused to perfect fury. The battle now became general; but it was no regular engagement, being scattered here and there through all the drove—some fought before the cattle, some behind them, and some in the middle. It was reported, that at one time there were fifteen single combats all going on at the same instant. [234] Therefore, to have been an engagement on a small scale, it proved a very bloody one, many being slain and wounded on both sides. But the tremendous skin-merchants bore down all before them wherever they went. These were inured to battle, while the thieving moss-troopers, as well as the hinds on the Scottish side, were only used to desultory warfare. The bare-headed leather-merchant, in particular, was a dismal sight to the forayers, for having soon rid himself of his first antagonists, he continued galloping about the field wherever he saw two engaged, and cut down all of the adverse party as he went, or rode them down, giving, with every stroke, a hard grin and a grunt. The men thought the devil was come among them, or else that he had fairly taken possession of a skin-merchant; and, giving up the contest, a few of them tried to escape by flight, which they did by quitting their horses, and gaining some inaccessible ground. The drivers of the sheep likewise made their escape, for they found the droves deserted in the Hope. The weakest of the men having been left behind with them, they had come in view of the field of combat, and, marking how it terminated, had sped them away out of danger. [235]

Chisholm's party brought home five prisoners with them, twelve English horses well caparisoned, and all the prey, save one ox that Will Laidlaw had ridden over and slain in the plenitude of his wrath. The Scots had no fewer than nine killed and grievously wounded out of their small party, of whom one of the latter was the brave and lovely Bess Chisholm, who was so faint, that Will was obliged to carry her all the way home on his horse before him, clasped to his bosom, he not failing to kiss her pallid cheek many a time by the way, while all the rest wondered at Laidlaw's great concern about the youth. When Peter saw his child borne into the house pale and wounded, he lost all recollection of the secret of her sex, and cried out "O my poor Bess! my dear daughter! What had I ado making a man of thee! Thy blood is on thy old father's head. "Alas, for my beloved daughter!" [236]

"Daughter!" exclaimed they all again and again, "Daughter!" re-echoed Will Laidlaw, as if he had not known well before. "Daughter?" cried the skin-men: "Have we then been led to the field by a maid? Shame on our heads that suffered the overthrow! against the rules of chivalry as her attempt was! Alas, for the gallant and high spirited young dame!" [237]

They put her to bed, and dressed her wounds, and from all appearances had high hopes that she was more afraid and fatigued than hurt. She soon fell into a quiet slumber, in which they left her, and retired to take some refreshment, and talk over their morning's adventure. It turned out as suggested, that their three prisoners were the three chief men of the gang, who had completely lost themselves and all traces of their companions among the mist; and having heard a report of the seizure formerly made at that place, they cunningly tried to pass themselves off as messengers sent in search of the lost travellers. If they had been with their own party, that would have proved an overmatch for the Chisholms. The Reids and Halls had been herried of their whole live stock by the Warden's people, and learning that the greater part of it was driven up into these mountains, they naturally wanted to make some reprisals and recover their own again. Had it not been for their misfortune in separating, and the exertions of the gallant hide-men, they would have effected their purpose with the utmost ease. It proved a luckless raid for them, for they lost all their horses, the greater part of their men, and the chief, squire Anthony, and six of his friends, were sent prisoners to the castle of Mountcomyn. [238]

The country people at Chisholm's board were loud in praise of the skin-men, and of their trusty and gallant behaviour; in particular, they averred that Laidlaw had killed the half of the thieves with his own hand, for that he rode about the field like a resistless angel, destroying all before him. When Peter heard that he fought so valiantly for the recovery of his stock, and regained his darling daughter's life, his heart warmed toward him, and he bid him ask any thing of him he chose that was in his power to give, and he should not be said nay. Will at once asked the maid whose life he had saved for his wife. Peter hesitated, and said it was hard to bestow the flower of all the Chisholms on an English skin-merchant, a man who seemed to have neither house nor name, or was ashamed to own them. However, as he had proved himself a warrior and a hero, Peter consented, provided the maid grew better, and was herself satisfied with the match. Will said he asked her on no other terms, and went ben to see her before he departed. She was still sound asleep, or pretended to be so; therefore, unwilling to disturb her, he breathed a blessing over her, and impressed two or three warm affectionate kisses on her lips. As he came away he felt a slight pressure of her arms around his neck. [239]

When Sandy Pot learned that the lovely youth with whom he had watched the prisoners all the night and morning of the battle was a maid, and the younger sister of his gallant friend Dan, Sandy's wound grew so ill that he could not be removed, so he remained where he was, and the other four went off with their uncouth loading. They found Dan Chisholm at Hawick waiting for them in the utmost impatience, having collected no fewer than twenty horse-loads of hides, every one of them in size like a hay-stack; and away the motely train marched and joined the Warden on the night after his arrival before the walls of Roxburgh.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

So they shot out and they shot in,  
Till the morn that it was day,  
When mony o' the Englishmen  
About the draw-brigg lay;  
When they hae yoket carts and wains,  
To ca' their dead away,  
And shot auld dikes aboon the lave,  
In gutters where they lay.

*Ball. of Old Mettlin.*

The expedition of the Douglas against Musgrave is, like the innumerable Border battles of that reign, only shortly mentioned by historians; and although it was a notable encounter, and is detailed by Isaac at great length, it lies out of our way here. Let it suffice that they skirmished cautiously for two days with various success, and at last came to an engagement on a field right opposite to the junction of the Tweed and Gala. After a hard fought battle, Douglas' left wing was discomfited; and just as he was arranging his force so as to cover the retreat, an unaccountable confusion was noted among the English ranks, which seemed to be engaged anew, and with one another, there being no other army nigh. Douglas, recalling his routed squadrons, faced about, but advanced with caution, till he saw Musgrave's army broken and flying in all directions. This gallant feat was accomplished by a Sir John Gordon, who was on his way with seven hundred fresh men to the assistance of Douglas; and as he came on the English ranks behind at that important crisis, he broke them at the first onset, and took Sir Thomas Musgrave prisoner with his own hand.

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Thus far the affairs of Douglas wore the aspect of prosperity—but a settled gloom hung over his mind; an oppression of spirits was apparent in every sentence that he uttered and every plan he suggested, and these were far from being traits of his wonted disposition. But the monk Benjamin had been with him again and again!—had been harrassing his soul with commissions and messages from the mansions of the dead; and one night he heard the voice of his lost and dearly regretted princess, speaking to him in his tent, as it were out of the canvas. Still the most solemn injunctions of secrecy were imposed on him, insomuch that he deemed himself not at liberty to open his mind to any one. Besides all this, the disconsolate Mary Kirkmichael had been constantly lingering nigh to him, and always presenting herself in the utmost agony of mind, to make enquiries about her royal mistress. That lady's appearance became so terrible to him that he was unable to bear it, and gave strict charges that she should not be suffered to come within the limits of his camp. But for all that, availing herself of her rank and her sex's privilege, she forced her way to him several times, and at every visit filled his soul with the most racking torments; so that, harrassed with *war* as he was, he found this his first intercourse with *women*, attended with ten times more distracting and grievous perils than the former. While, on the other hand, the heroes that visited the castle of Aikwood, even those who escaped, not including the wretched victims who remained behind, discovered, to their dear bought experience, that there were perils in nature infinitely superior to both.

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It is now absolutely necessary to shorten the curate's narrative, to prevent this work running to an inordinate length; and though two of his tales have been left out already, the great events that follow must also be related in a style abbreviated, though not mangled by indistinctness.

After the intrepid Lord Musgrave had sacrificed his own life in order to save those of his only brother and the lady of his love, Clavering was unanimously chosen captain in his room, and every soldier took a new oath to him to die in defence of the fortress. The commission of which he accepted was a dismal one; but he entered into all the feelings of the famishing inmates in their hatred of the Scots, and implacable enmity against them,—therefore, he was the very man for their purpose.

Every attempt of the besiegers to scale the walls of the castle, or to gain an entrance by fraud or force, had hitherto proved utterly abortive; the determined sons of England laughed at them, regarding them in no other light than as freaks of mere insanity, or the gambols of children. The fortress was impregnable with such heroes within, had they been supplied with sufficient stores of food and of arrows, both of which had long been exhausted; and though a small and welcome supply of the former had been obtained during the tempest and the flood which followed, for which they were obliged to the devil and Master Michael Scott, yet, like all the benefits derived from that quarter, it proved rather more hurtful than advantageous, for they devoured it with such avidity that the distemper, with which they had formerly been visited, broke out among them with greater violence than ever. Yet disregarding all these privations, which a looker-on

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would suppose might naturally tend to break the human heart and daunt the resolution of the boldest,—with famine and pestilence both staring them in the face,—they bound themselves by a new and fearful oath never to yield the fortress to the Scots while a man of them remained alive. Every new calamity acted but as a new spur to their resolution; and their food being again on the very eve of exhaustion, their whole concern was how to procure a new supply. Not that they valued their own lives or their own sufferings,—these had for a good while been only a secondary consideration,—but from the excruciating dread that they should die out, and the Scots attain possession of the fortress before Christmas.

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The warders soon noted the alteration that had taken place in the beleaguering army. They perceived the ground that had formerly been occupied by the Angus men, and the Mar Highlanders, now taken up by the tall, athletic, and careless looking borderers, against whom they found their antipathy was not so mortal: and they had some surmisings of what really was the case, that a strong diversion had been made in their favours, that had drawn off their inveterate and hateful enemy Douglas from the siege. Every hour convinced them farther of the truth of this suggestion; for they perceived a laxness in the manner of conducting the blockade which they had not witnessed for many days, and all their conversation turned on the manner in which they ought to avail themselves of it. The carelessness of the besiegers themselves, or something subordinate thereto, soon furnished an opportunity to them of putting their policy once more to the test, and that by an adventure the most ardently desired. On the second day after the departure of Douglas the warder on the topmost tower perceived, on a rising ground two miles to the southward, about thirty head of cattle, that came gradually in view as a wing of a large drove might be supposed to do; and after they had fed for some time there, two men came before them and chased them back out of sight of the castle, as if a great oversight had been committed by letting them come in view of it. Notice of this important discovery was instantly given to the captain, and the news spreading among the garrison, many a long and longing look was cast from the battlements and loopholes of the high western tower that day. They were not cast in vain. Just toward the fall of evening they perceived a part of the drove appear again only a very short space from the castle, and they likewise perceived by their colours that they were a drove of English beasts which had been brought from their native pastures by the strong hand of rapine, for the supply of this new come border army. They perceived likewise that they approached the army by a concealed way, that the two glances they got of them were merely casual, and that they were very slightly guarded.

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A council of war was immediately called, in which it was agreed, without one dissentient voice, that the garrison should make a sham sally at the eastern draw-bridge, as if with intent to gain the city, in order that they might draw the attention of the besiegers to that point; and in the meantime the captain, with the choicest of the men were to march out by Teviot-bridge, of which the garrison had necessarily the sole possession, and endeavour to seize the prey. Thence they were to proceed westward, and try to elude the enemy's posts, or give them battle, if the former were found to be impracticable; but at all events, either to die or succeed in attaining that valuable supply, or a part of it. The success of the contest now turned on that single point as on a pivot; the balance was against them, but, that turned in their favours by an exertion of warrior prowess, they could then reckon on a complete triumph over their unappeasable foes.

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Besides, every thing seemed to concur in support of their gallant expedition. The nights were dark even beyond their usual darkness at that gloomy season, and the moon did not arise till two in the morning. Both these circumstances were in their favour,—the one in attaining possession of the prey unperceived, and the other in enabling them to fight their way home; for they knew that though they themselves might pass the strong Scottish posts favoured by the deep darkness, still it was impossible to bring the drove through them, and along the bridge, without a hard skirmish. The captain, therefore, gave command to the division left behind, that the more noise they heard of an engagement about the bridge of Teviot, and the gate toward the west, the more they should press their battle eastward, to divert the strength of the army to that quarter. Because on that side the Scots could make no impression, and the English could lose nothing there save a few lives, which they accounted of small avail; but if the expedition to the west failed, their cause was finally ruined.

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That was a busy evening within the walls of Roxburgh, while all was quietness and indifference without. Within there was arming and disarming, for the suits of armour that once fitted these emaciated warriors would not now hang on their frames. There was grinding of swords, pointing of spears and ox-goads, and even the slaughter-houses of the fort were cleared, with a provident concern seldom overlooked by Englishmen; and at eleven o'clock at night, by the convent matin bell, Clavering, with five hundred chosen men, well armed, issued silently from the garrison, creeping along the Teviot-bridge on their hands and knees. From that they proceeded westward in the most profound silence, and so close by the Scottish posts, that they heard them breathing and conversing together. One party crept up all the way within the water-brae, and the other, led by Clavering himself, past through between two Scottish posts, drawing themselves along the ground close on their breasts, and once or twice were obliged to squat close down, and lie silent for a considerable space, while the following dialogue passed between the sentinels.

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"Od, Sandie Scott, think ye it can be true that the English are eating ane another?"

"There's nae doubt o't. I hear that they're snapping up five o' the fattest o' their number every day. They will eat themsels out bit by bit that gate."

"Aih wow, man! I wad rather die o' hunger than pick the banes of ane acquaintance. Bursten devils, that they are!"



"Aha, Sandie, billie, ye dinna ken till ye be tried. A man will do ought or he die o' hunger. An do you ken, Sandie Scott, I think our captain has done wrang in bringing sae mony fat bullocks a' sae near the castle at ae time. Thae hungered louns will hae a haud o' some o' them, and maybe cut a when o' our throats into the bargain, some o' thir dark nights."

"Now, ye see neighbour, I ken sae weel that our master never does the sma'est thing without some design, that I think he wants to wile out the English, and then kill them; and that he has brought a' thir braw stots o'er the border, just on the same principle that a fisher throws a bait into the water."

"Na, na, Sandie, that canna be the case, for he has gi'en strict orders that no ane o' them be suffered to come within sight o' the castle. He just thinks the beasts canna be sae safe ony where else as beside himsel' and his lads. But hunger has sharp een, and I wadna wonder if this drove should lead to some hard tulzie."

"Whisht! Godsake, haud your tongue! What's that I hear?"

"The English, I'll warrant you. If hunger hae clear een, fear has unco lang lugs. What was it that Sandie heard?"

"I heard a kind o' rubbing and thristing, as a fox or a founart had been drawing himsel through a hole aneath the ground. Hilloa! What guard?"

"Howpasley and Gemelscleugh."

"Watch weel. There's something stirring."

"Not a mouse."

"So say the sleeping foresters; but I can tell you, men o' Gemelscleuch and Howpasley, an there be nought stirring aboon the ground, the moudies are very busy aneath it the night. Clap close, and keep an ee on the withergloom. I had a heavy dream at nightfa', and I'm resolved no to close an ee. Come, neighbour, tell a tale, or say a rhame to keep us wauking."

"Have ye heard the new ballant made by the rhiming dominie o' Selchrit, the queerest thing ever was heard? It begins this gate:

The Devil he sat in Dornock tower,  
And out at a slip-hole keekit he,  
And he saw three craws come yont the lift,  
And they winged their flight to the Eildon tree.  
O whow, O whow, quo the muckle deil,  
But yon's a sight that glads my ee,  
For I'll lay the steel-brander o' hell  
There's a storm a-brewing in the west countrie."  
\* \* \* \* \*

"Whisht, for heaven's sake! I heard the tod again, Hilloa! Gemelscleuch to the glaive! Have lug and hawk e'e, or there'll be news afore the morn that's unheard tell o' yet."

"And that there will! Saint David be with us! and the blessed Saint Mary, the mother of God, be with us! Hist havoring, say Benedicite."

At that instant a sharp breeze arose which drowned the noise, and Clavering and his men passed fairly by on their perilous expedition. Beyond the next hollow they found the cattle all lying puffing and dozing on a round hill. An immense drove of them there seemed to be, for the hill appeared to be literally covered, but the night was as dark as pitch, and they could see nothing distinctly. Clavering gave his commands in a whisper to his chief men, to surround the whole drove, and drive them furiously, that by these means they might throw the enemy's lines into confusion. "We have the advantage of the ground," said he; "the bridge is clear, and the gates open. Let us play the men for once, and our difficulties are all over. Providence has favoured us beyond what could have been calculated on. Our force is superior to that of our enemies on this side the river. On whatever side our column is attacked, let us keep a running fight, so as to push on and preserve the prey, and the day is our own: And now, Saint Anthony for the right!"

The men then formed themselves into a crescent behind the cattle six-line deep, and with club, goad, and spear pushed them on. There were a few dour lazy driving runts behind that bore all the thumps, but the bulk were high-spirited, and galloped off on the path toward Roxburgh with the utmost fury, insomuch that the delighted drivers never got a sight of them. They broke through the Scottish lines without either stop or stay. The alarm was instantly given, but a night muster is always attended with some delay. So the English thought,—so they said; and to their great joy they found their suggestions realized; for not till the last cow was past the strong line of posts on the height were they attacked by the Scots. But then, indeed, the Gemelscleuch and Howpasley men set upon them with unparallelled fury, and being every five minutes joined by more of their companions, they pressed hard upon the English, who, being obliged to keep up a retreating battle, fell thick on the brae beyond the bridge. The brave and judicious Longspere himself led the attack, and behaved like a lion; for though wounded in three different places of the body, he fought in the front of the main battle all that night.

The Scots, to the utter amazement of their enemies, never once offered to stop the cattle, but merely attacking the English crescent behind, drove them and cattle and all towards the bridge. This Clavering and his chief men attributed wholly to the surprise by which the Scots were taken;

and when the former saw the dark column of cattle take the bridge, he thanked the God of heaven, the blessed Virgin, and all the saints whose names were known to him, for such a wonderful success and merciful deliverance. The English host then raised such a shout of triumph that the echoes called from the castled towers to the forest, and from the forest to the distant rocks. The Scots soon joined in it with equal enthusiasm; and the two armies then engaged at the eastern gate, also joined their voices to the general chorus. The gray friars of Roxburgh, and the Benedictine monks of Kelso, raised their heads from their flinty pillows, committed themselves to heaven, and deplored the madness and folly of the men of the world. The city dames wept and prayed, and the men ran to head-quarters to learn the cause of the uproar. The sounds were actually heard in the camp of Douglas, at the distance of sixteen miles; and when this was reported to him next morning, he said, "There was the Redhough on the ramparts of Roxburgh!"

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But man's thoughts are vanity! He cannot judge of events so as to calculate on what is to happen from one moment to another: incidents of the slightest moment so often having the effect of overturning the greatest and most momentous enterprizes. Never was there one so nearly overturned as this, although it was not once thought of till afterwards,—and it was on this wise: There was a strong guard of English placed at the south end of the bridge, to guide the foremost of the drove on to it, or help to cut a way for the cattle through such troops as might interpose. The cattle, as was said, came galloping furiously without intervention, and, as if led by an unseen providence, took the bridge with all their vigour, the battle being then raging behind them, and the shouts beginning to rend the sky. This guard had nothing to do, of course, but to open into two lines, and give them head. But at the end of the bridge there was a deep puddle, and among the men there chanced to be a little boy, who was running about and thrashing the cattle as they went through this puddle, which made them spring up the arch with redoubled velocity, which the urchin thought good sport. But in the midst of this frolic he bolted away at once with such velocity that he had almost overthrown one of the men in the file, and as he ran he cried out, "Lord, saw ever ony mortal the like o' that?" "What was it, rash idiot?" said the man. "Grace and mercy, man, did you not see how yon great black stott stood straight up on his hind legs and waded the pool?" said the boy. "Take that to clear your eyes, impertinent brat," said the man, and gave him a blow with his fist that made him run away howling and crying, always repeating as he went, "I'll tell your captain,—now! 'at will I that—now!"

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The combat behind the cattle thickened apace. The English were sore borne down on the hill, but when they came to the little plain at the bridge-end they stood firm, and gave as hard blows as they got. They had fairly gained their aim, and their spirits, so long depressed, mounted to an unusual height. The last lingering hoof of the whole countless drove was now on the arch, and they could calculate on holding out the fortress against their hated foes not only till Christmas, but till that time twelvemonth. Their shouts of joy were redoubled. So also were those of the Scots. "The people are mad!" said they, "thus to shout for their own loss and their own defeat. It is a small trait of the cursed perversity of the whole nation!"

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The English narrowed their front and narrowed their front still as their files found room on the arch of the bridge, which was long and narrow, and very steep at the south end, that rose directly from the plain. But the road up to the castle by the two tremendous iron gates was likewise exceedingly steep, and went by a winding ascent, so that the latter end of the drove, those dull driving ones that bore all the strokes, got very slowly up, and with great difficulty. There was a guard of considerable strength left in this gateway by Clavering, lest any attempt should be made by the enemy to enter in his absence. But these men had strict charges to clear the way for the cattle, and help to drive the foremost ones up the steep. The fore part of the drove however came up the steep with such main fury, that the men were glad to clear a way for them, by flying out of the path, up to the citadel. There was not a man left in the gateway, save two at each of the iron portcullises, and these stood in deep niches of the wall, out of all danger. Each of these men held the end of a chain that was twisted round an immense bolt in the wall,—and these bolts, Isaac says, are to be seen sticking to this day. On untwisting this chain the portcullises fell down, and when they were to raise up it was done with levers. Well, as the two outermost men stood in their niches, holding by the ends of their chains, they observed, that two of the oxen that first came in, nay the very first two that came in, turned round their ugly heads, leaned their sides to the wall, and kept in their places, the one on the one side and the other on the other, till the whole drove passed them. The men could not move from their posts to drive them on with the rest, but they wondered at the beasts; and the one cried to the other, "What can ail them two chaps?" "O them are two tired ones," said the other: "Dom them for two ugly monsters! they look as them hod been dead and roosen again."

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At length, by dint of sore driving and beating, the last hoof of the Warden's choice drove passed inward through the castle gate of Roxburgh, for the maintenance of his irascible enemies. Could any thing be so unfortunate? or how was he to set up his face, and answer to the Douglas now? But the Redhough was determined that he would set up his face and answer to the Douglas and his country too, as well as to his kinsmen and followers, whom he valued highest of all. Just as the last lazy cow crossed the gate, and when the triumphant shouts of the English were at the loudest, the two great lubberly oxen that stood shaking their ugly heads, and leaning against the wall, ripped up their own bellies; and out of two stuffed hides two most ingenious cases, started up two no less men than Sir Ringan Redhough and his doughty friend Charlie Scott of Yardbire. Off went the heads of the two porters in one moment, and down came the portcullis with a thundering rattle, and a clank that made the foundations of the gate shake. "Now, southron lads, haud ye there!" cried the Redhough: "Time about is fair play. Keep ye the outside o' the door threshold as lang as ye hae gart us keep it."

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They next went up and seized the other two porters, whom they saved alive, to teach them how to bolt, bar, open, and shut the gates; but the men had taken the oaths with the rest, and remained obstinate. No threatening could make them move either finger or tongue except in mockery, which provoked the Redhough so that he despatched them likewise. On reaching the great square the Warden found his men in peaceable possession. Six score brave chosen men had entered among the cattle, each in a stuffed ox or cow hide, and had now like their captain cast their sloughs, and stood armed at all points to execute his commands. They found nothing to do, save a prodigious difficulty in working their way from the western to the eastern gate. There were so many turnings and windings; so many doors and wickets; so many ascents and descents,—that an army might have gained possession of the one end and yet have been kept out of the other for years. But the surprise here was so complete, that the Borderers had in fact nothing to do but to keep the possession, thus obtained in so easy and at the same time so gallant a style. The shouts that arose from the western battle had so much encouraged those at the eastern gate, that they had sallied out, and attacking the besiegers sword in hand, had driven them back within their strong line of defence. This retreat was a part of the plan of the Scots, to draw off the remaining force from the gate, and while they were in the hottest of the skirmish, down came Redhough and his lads from the interior of the castle behind them, cut down the few guards about the entrance and the draw-bridge with ease, and having raised that, and shut the double gates on that quarter likewise, he placed the Armstrongs there as a guard, and returned into the interior, still uncertain what enemies he had to combat within.

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This mighty fortress was, from the one drawbridge to the other, a full quarter of a mile in length, walled and moated round, and contained seven distinct squares or castles, every one of which was a fortress of itself. But the strongest of all was the division on the western part, which was denominated the citadel, and had gates and bars of its own, and towers that rose far above the rest. Into this strong place the sole remnant of the English soldiers had retreated, which consisted merely of the guard that kept the western porch and made way for the cattle, a few stragglers beside, and some official people that kept always within. Through every other part of the castle the Scots found free passage; and by the time the moon had been risen for an hour, the shouts of "A Douglas! a Douglas! a Redhough! a Redhough!" were heard from every part of the walls, excepting the western tower. There indeed a faint and subdued shout announced at intervals the name of the King of England, for it was now no more a Musgrave! and as for Clavering they wist not whether he was dead or alive, taken or at liberty.

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When the first ranks of the Englishmen that came up behind the cattle saw the gates shut against them, they took it for some accident, or some mistake that the porters had fallen into, on listening to the shouts of the adverse parties: but after calling and remonstrating to no purpose, they began to suspect that there was treason at the bottom of it, and the whisper of treason spread among that part of the forces which was now forced against the gate. They could do nothing; for they neither had room to fight nor fly, and they knew not whom to suspect, or what had befallen them. As for those at the farther end of the bridge, they were so hotly engaged with their opponents, that they had little time to consider of any thing; but finding themselves fixed to the spot, and no movement making toward the gate, they conceived that something there was wrong, which retarded the regular entrance of the troops for so long a time. They now fought only three to three abreast on the steep arch of the bridge, down which the English drove the Scots six or seven times, the latter always returning to the charge with that vigour which a certainty of success inspires. Clavering fought them in the rear, and in the hottest of the battle still encouraging his men to deeds of desperate valour, little weening how matters went within. But when the names of the Scottish chiefs were resounded from the walls, every heart among the English was chilled, and every arm unnerved in one instant. They had no conception how the thing could have happened; it appeared so far beyond all human power to have effected it, that it was several hours before it gained general credit among them. They had kept the fortress so long, with so little dread of its being wrested from them, and withal suffered so much in it, that they could not believe the evidence of their senses, that by a course of events entirely of their own planning, they should be all without the walls, and the Scots within. It was like a work of enchantment. Like some of the late inconceivable works of the spirits of divination.

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The Scots could make no impression on them upon that long narrow bridge; but they could not long stand cooped up there; and when they saw that all hope was lost of regaining entrance, they threw themselves over a high parapet, and took possession of the steep bank between the bottom of the southern wall and the river Teviot. The river being dammed below, it stood like a frith round the bottom of this bank, which was so steep that they could not stand on it, but were obliged to clamber alongst it on their hands and feet. Escape being impracticable, the Scots suffered them to take possession of that bank undisputed, and to keep it, supposing they must surrender next day; but a great number were slain before the latter end of the train was disentangled of the bridge.

The Scots had now free access to the gate, into which Gemelscleuch and Howpasley were admitted. The Warden embraced them, and thanked them for their wise counsel, as well as their great bravery; and they again set about traversing and surveying the fortress, concerning which Charlie Scott said, "It wad tak a man a year and a day to find out a' the turnings and windings about it."

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The battle at the eastern draw-bridge had continued from midnight without intermission; and after the break of day our chiefs witnessed a scene from the walls that was without a parallel. That division of the Scots army was composed of Douglas' men, being the same troops that were there before, and they were commanded by Sir James Douglas of Dalkeith. That knight got

private intelligence of the Warden's intention to storm the castle, by what means he knew not, but resolved to hold himself in readiness; and, as he was desired, when the sortie was made, he retreated at first, drawing them off from the gate. When the cry arose that the castle was taken, his men became frantic with joy, and resolute on taking ample vengeance on their enemies, they burst upon them without regularity, making great havock, and at the same time throwing away many of their own lives. Sir James with great difficulty restrained them, called a parley, and offered the expelled garrison quarter; but they returned for answer, that they weened he had called the parley to ask quarter of them, and they had determined to refuse it. They concluded by telling him to see to himself, and insult them no more by such messages, for as yet he knew not with whom he was warring. The battle was then renewed by the light of the moon with greater fury than ever; they fought like baited bears, with recklessness of life and the silence of death. Deadly hate was in every thrust, and the last words of every falling warrior were, "Have at them yet."

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When the day light arose, the English fought within a semicircular wall of mangled carcasses; for, grievous to relate, they were not corpses; yet were they piled in a heap higher than a man's height, which was moving with agonized life from top to bottom, and from the one end to the other; for the men having all fallen by sword wounds, few of them were quite dead. The English were now reduced to a small number, yet, in the strife, their ardour seemed to prevail over that of their opponents. The Border chiefs, inured as they were to war, stood amazed, and even shocked, at the scene presented to their view. Yarbire was the first to deprecate it in these words: "Gude faith, Sirs, it strikes me, that this is rather carrying war to an extremity."

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"Rescue! rescue!" shouted the Warden: "Give quarter to these men for my sake. I will pay their ransom myself."

When the Douglas' vassals heard this, they lowered the points of their swords, and drew back from the slaughter, commanding the English to ground their weapons. The latter consulted together for a few minutes, and void of all dread, save that of being obliged to submit to the Scots, they broke with one consent over the pile of human bodies, and, carrying destruction before them, opened a way into the middle of the Scottish columns; nor ceased they fighting until every man of them was cut down. The rest of the English army were in a fold. Escape was impossible. Ten men could have prevented it on all sides, yet for a whole day and night did they hold their tenure of that perpendicular bank, although before the evening many were losing their holds, and rolling into the river from exhaustion. Then the sudden immersion arousing them somewhat from their torpor, scores of them might be seen at a time crawling to the side of the water, and endeavouring to clamber once more up the bank; but at last they sunk back into the deep, and their last breath arose to the surface in small chains of fetid air bubbles. No one knew what became of the young and intrepid Clavering,—at what time, or in what place he fell; and without a head as these men were, it was not till the second morning, when the breath of revenge had cooled, and after much expostulation on the part of the conquerors, that the wretched remnant yielded themselves prisoners of war, and were all suffered to depart on their parole, with high encomiums on their valour. But these commendations were received with the gall of bitterness; and none of them could tell, when they went home, how or by what means they were expelled.

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The Warden and his men now set themselves with all their endeavour to take the citadel; and, feebly as it was defended, it cost them no little trouble. It is probable that it might have held out a few days longer, but when Douglas and his army were seen approaching on their return from the battle, the impatience of the Borderers could be no longer restrained; and Yarbire, with a remnant of his Olivers, Potts, and Laidlaws, scaled the wall in the faces of the enemy, who had scarcely power left to cleave a head without a helmet, and throwing themselves into the square, became masters of the gate in a few minutes; so that before Douglas reached the top of the hill of Barns, his colours were placed on the topmost tower of the citadel.

It may easily be conceived with what joy, wonder, and admiration he gazed on this phenomenon. Joy that his broad lands and possessions were thus insured to him, of which for some time past he scarcely retained a hope; and admiration how that indefatigable chief had accomplished, in a few days, that which he had exerted himself in vain to accomplish for the space of as many months. The idea of being so far outdone in policy was without doubt somewhat bitter to the palate of a Douglas, for never till this day can they brook a competitor in the field; but, considering how matters stood, it would have been the worst of policy to have let such a feeling appear. Douglas therefore testified the highest satisfaction, extolling the Warden's head to conceive and hand to accomplish, in terms such as he had never been heard to utter. "Glorious Redhough! unparalleled Redhough!" exclaimed he again and again: "Thou and thy lads are the men to trust."

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The chief received him at the castle gate, welcoming him in jocular terms of high chivalry to the castle of Roxburgh, which he took care always to denominate "my castle." This was soon noted by the Douglas: and as soon as they entered the governor's house in the citadel, Douglas made over to him, by regular deeds and instruments, the seven first baronies he chose to name. This document, together with the royal charters confirming it, is extant, and in the possession of one of the Warden's lineal descendants at this day. On receiving this grant, signed, sealed, and witnessed, Sir Ringan delivered over the keys of the castle to the Earl of Douglas and Mar, and the two exchanged seats at the table. Douglas also conferred the honours of knighthood on Charlie Scott, Simon Longspeare, and John of Howpasley; while Sir Ringan bestowed one of his new baronies on each of these brave gentlemen in support of their new dignities, burdened only with a few additional servitudes. On his right hand hero, the hereditary claimant of the post of

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honour, he conferred the barony of Raeburn and Craik, that he might thenceforward be the natural head of his hard-headed Oliveres and skrae-shankit Laidlaws. To Longspeare he gave Temadale; and to Howpasley, Phingland and Langshaw. When Charlie first rose from his knee, and was saluted as Sir Charles Scott of Raeburn and Yarbire, he appeared quite cast down, and could not answer a word. It was supposed that his grateful heart was overcome with the thought that the reward bestowed on him by his generous chief had been far above his merits.

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The news of the capture were transmitted to court with all expedition; on which King Robert returned word, that he would, with his queen, visit the Douglas in the castle of Roxburgh, and there, in the presence of the royal family, and the nobles of the court, confer on him his daughter's hand in marriage, along with such other royal grants and privileges as his high gallantry and chivalrous spirit deserved. He added, that he had just been apprized by his consort, that his daughter, the princess Margaret, had been for some time living in close concealment in the vicinity of Roxburgh, watching the progress of her lover with a devotion peculiar to her ardent and affectionate nature. If the Douglas was aware of this, which the King had some reasons for supposing, he requested that he would defer seeing her until in the presence of her royal parents. There was a thrust indeed! An eclairsissement was approaching too much for man to bear.—But that heart-rending catastrophe must be left to the next chapter. In the meantime, for perspicuity's sake, we must relate how this grand device of the Warden's originated, by which the castle was won, and himself and followers honoured and enriched.

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It was wholly owing to the weird read by the great enchanter Master Michael Scott. So that though the reader must have felt (as the editor did in a very peculiar manner,) that Isaac kept his guests too long in that horrible place the castle of Aikwood, it will now appear that not one iota of that long interlude of his could have been omitted; for till the weird was read, and the transformation consummated, the embassy could not depart,—and unless these had been effected, the castle could not have been taken. The editor, for brevity's sake left out both the youth's and maiden's characteristic tales, which shall appear by and by, but more he durst not cancel.

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When the passage out of the book of fate was repeated to Sir Ringan, he never for a moment doubted either its truth or fulfilment, provided he and his friends could discover its true meaning. But the words were wrapt in mystery; and, when conjoined with the enchantment practised on his men, were for a long time so completely unintelligible, that all save Sir Ringan himself, and his echo Dickie of Dryhope, gave up the hope of reconciling the given destiny with reason or common sense. As for the friar, he entered his protest against paying any regard to it from the beginning, on the principle that all the Master's powers and foreknowledge were deputed to him by subordinate and malevolent spirits, and that good could not arise out of evil. The Warden's philosophy, on the other hand, taught him to estimate facts and knowledge as he found them developed among mankind, without enquiring too nicely into the spirit of their origin; for the more deeply that was wrapt in mystery, the more powerful was its sway over his imagination. Charlie Scott felt much disposed to coincide with his master in these principles, but in all deep matters he was diffident in offering his advice or sentiments. He, however, hit upon the right cue in this instance, and that by the most natural combination of ideas that ever presented themselves to mortal man. The right understanding of the prophecy was about to be given up in despair. The intervals of silence during the discussion were becoming longer and longer each time. It was in order to break one of these, rather than to impose his advice on his chief, that Charlie ventured to deliver himself as follows: "Gude faith, my masters, I see nothing for it, but that we get Master Michael Scott to turn us into fat owsen again, or bulls, or stotts, or what ye like. Then the English will drive us a' gladly into the castle for marts to their beef barrels. But when we are fairly in, we wad need the gospel friar to change us to men again, or, gude faith, we wad be in a bad predicament. But I hae some faith to put in auld Michael's power, (as I hae good right,) and gin that could be done as he seemed to hint, by the blood of Bruce! but we wad dowss their doublets for them."

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"Might we not rather disguise ourselves as cattle, cousin?" said Howpasley.

"I have seen our jugglers and mountebank players," said Longspeare, "disguise themselves as a lion, a tiger, a bear, a wolf, and even as a great serpent, and dragon, so that I myself took them for these animals."

"Why then may not we disguise ourselves as oxen, so that we may pass for them in a dark night?" said the Warden.

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"Ay, in a dark night," said Dickie; "what is to hinder us? If we but walk on all four we will pass with hungry men for oxen in a dark night."

Thus was the hint given, which was improved on as above related, till it effected the desired and important event, the taking of Roxburgh castle, and that in the most masterly and prudent style ever conceived by man. They had a small drove of cattle collected, as well as hides; but the disguised ones took care to keep in the front or the middle of these, in short on the side farthest from an Englishman. The one who walked through the dub in an upright posture, had not perceived the shabby boy so near him.

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Abundance of all the good things that the kingdom could produce were now poured into the castle with all expedition; and every preparation made for the reception of the King and Queen of Scotland. The carnage had been so great at the two gates that night the fortress was taken, that the citizens of Roxburgh, as well as the three establishments of monks and friars in the vicinity, besought of Douglas that the slain might not be buried nigh to the city, for fear of infection; and if this was granted, they proffered to be at the sole charge of removing and burying them with all

holy observances. This was readily granted, and they were removed to a little plain behind the present village, where thousands of their bones have lately been dug up. The burying continued for three days.

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## CHAPTER IX.

O I hae seen the gude auld day,  
The day o' pride and chieftain glory,  
When royal Stuarts bore the sway,  
And ne'er heard tell o' Whig nor Tory.  
Though lyart be my locks and gray,  
And eild has crook'd me down,—what matter?  
I'll dance and sing ae ither day,  
That day our King comes o'er the water.

### *Jacobite Song.*

From the time of the taking of the castle until the arrival of King Robert, was an interval of high festivity. The Border chiefs and yeomen went home to their respective places of abode with abundant spoil, having been loaded with rich presents from the Douglas, as well as their share of Sir Ringan's numberless booties, which he always divided among them with great liberality; and it was computed that, in the course of that predatory warfare, he drove thirty thousand domestic animals out of the English territory. The Scottish Border districts were never so well stocked before. For a century previous to that, they had lain waste, having been entirely depopulated, and left no better than a hunting forest. That reign enriched them, and its happy effects have never since been obliterated.

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Among other things that happened in this joyful interval, old Peter Chisholm received a message one day, informing him, that the stranger to whom he had betrothed his daughter would appear next day to claim the fulfilment of his promise.

"They'll eat up every thing that's within the house," said Peter: "If he will have her, it wad suit better for us to meet them at Hawick. The half o' the expences there wad lye to him at ony rate; and if he made weel through wi' his hides, mayhap he wad pay the halewort. He's a brave chield enough, it wad appear; but I wish he had fawn aff the tap o' his humphed ill-smelled hides, and broken the bane o' his neck; for it will be a wae sight to me to see the flower of a' the Chisholms gang away wi' an English cadger. Oh, wae be to the day!"

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"What is a man but his word, father?" said Dan. "I think the gallant way in which the stranger behaved entitles him well, not only to the flower o' the Chisholms, but to the best in the house beside."

"Ay, ay, that's aye the gate! fling away! fling away! till ye'll soon fling away every plack your auld father has gathered for ye. But, hark ye, callant Dan: Gin ye will stand by me, I'll gainsay the fellow yet, and refuse to gie him my Bess."

"Hear what Bess says hersel," said Dan, "and then I'll gie my answer."

Bess was sent for, who declared not only her willingness, but her resolution to abide by her father's agreement; but, added, that if a better came before him, and made her an offer, she would not wait a minute on her leather-merchant.

"Heard ever ony body the like o' that?" said Peter: "What trow ye is the chance for that? How lang hae ye hung on the tree wi' a red cheek an' a ripe lip, and never man to streek out the hand to pu' ye? There was aince a neighbour I had some hopes o'; an' he has a good heart too, for a' his jibes, an' ane durst but tell him!"

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Peter said these last words to himself, as he was turning about to leave the apartment,—for he was at that time forming in his mind one of those superlative schemes which strike dotage as plans of the mightiest and most acute device, but which youth and energy laugh at. This was no other than to be early astir next morning, and, before any of his family was aware, gallop over to Craik, a matter of seven miles, and beg of Will Laidlaw to come and run off with his daughter before she fell into the hands of an English skin-man. This grand scheme he actually put in practice, but met Laidlaw and his jovial party by the way, who wondered not a little when they saw old Pate coming galloping up the Fanesh ridge, having his great pike staff heaved over his shoulder, with which he was every now and then saluting the far loin of his mare, and that with an energy that made all his accoutrements wallop. He never perceived the bridal party till close on them, and till he was asked by half a score voices at once, "What's the great haste, Castleweary! Where are ye gawn at sic a rate sae early in the morning? Are your ha's burnt? Are your cattle driven? Have the Ha's and the Reids been o'er the fells aince mair?" And many other such questions were put, before Peter got a word spoken or a thought thought. He only bit his lip, and looked very angry, at being caught in such a plight. But seeing Will Laidlaw at the head of his kinsmen, he took him aside, and imparted his grand secret. Will's sides were like to burst with laughter. He, however, contained himself, while Peter went on "But ye had better turn a' that clan again, wha hae nought ado at a' wi' us but put things to waste. The less din about the thing the better."

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"But how are we to answer the skin-merchant when he comes then, Castleweary? That

tremendous buyer of hides will hew us all to pieces."

"Ay, ye maun just take a' the blame on yoursels, you and Bess. He'll no mak muckle at the Laidlaw's hands, or he'll do what never ony did afore him."

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"I certainly have the greatest respect for your daughter; but times are hard and dangerous, and I have nae great opinion o' marriage."

"Come, now, I like to hear that; for ye ken fock maun ay read a Laidlaw backward; and if the times are hard, I shall be satisfied with a very small dowry. Perhaps the matter o' ten tup hogs aff the Crib-law, sax owsen aff Hosecot, and—"

"Hold there, my old friend; and I will run all risks, and take away your daughter Elizabeth; let the skin-man look to himself."

"Weel, God bless ye wi' her. Ye'll get the flower of a' the Chisholms, and the best bairn o' the bike."

Bess was a winsome and a blithe bride that day, and though the wounds she received in the engagement with the marauders were not quite whole, she danced the best at the wedding, and was the first that lighted on Craik-green. Dan entertained his fellow-soldiers nobly; but old Peter was terribly in the fidgets, not only at the huge waste of meat and drink that he now saw going on, but for fear of the arrival of the outrageous and ill-used hide-merchant, and never till his dying day could he be brought to identify his son-in-law with the stranger to whom he first promised his daughter. But for many a day, when the dogs barked, he hasted out in great agitation, lest the dealer in skins and his associates should come upon him unawares. Sandie Pott having found a very kind, attentive, and, withal, a very indulgent nurse, in the younger daughter, May Chisholm, there chanced two weddings at Castleweary on the same day.

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Among other matters of that eventful period, Isaac the curate mentions also a petition of the friar to Sir Ringan, that he would use his interest to get the youthful bard, who had come an adventurer into his army, replaced in his rights of the lordship of Ravensworth; and likewise that he would grant him the captive maid, Delany, for his bride. These important connections had never before come to the Warden's ears; and when he heard the extraordinary adventures, and early misfortunes of the twain, he manifested the greatest concern for their welfare. But the maid, by the laws of those days, was the right and property of Sir Charles Scott, who seemed unwilling to part with her, and she not less so to be divided from him, now that his late honours became him so well. This was a distressing consideration to the poet, and he would in nowise leave her, to lay claim to his paternal estate, till he saw how matters would turn in his favour. But the friar still encouraged him, assuring him, "that he should be restored to the house and to the inheritance of his fathers; and that the fairest among the daughters of women, even the sole remaining stem of the house of Galli the scribe, should be unto him as a spouse and a comforter."

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But among all the festivities at Roxburgh, and all the mighty preparations for the reception of royalty, and the spending of the Christmas holidays in such company, the countenance of Douglas was manifestly overcast. He affected mirth and gaiety, but a hideous and terrific gloom frequently settled on his dark manly countenance. The princess's shameful and untimely death hung heavy on his mind, and the secret of it still heavier. His conscience upbraided him, not with any blame in the matter, for he was alike ignorant of the rank and sex of his fantastical page: But her devotion to his cause and person; the manner in which she had exerted herself by putting her rival into his hands; the love-tokens slyly given to him by her own dear self; her admonitory letters; and all her whimsical and teasing inuendos, came over his mind, and combined in rendering her memory ten times dearer to him than ever he conceived that of human being could have been. And then, how was all this requited? By bad humour, disrespect, and a total disregard of her danger and sufferings. The most enthusiastic, affectionate, and accomplished lady of the age in which she lived, was suffered to be put down as a common criminal, without one effort being made to save her; and that delicate and beautiful form thrust down into a common charnel-house among the vulgar dead. Knowing all these things as he did, how could he again behold her royal parents? and knowing all these things as he did, why had he not related the lamentable facts as they had happened, and conducted himself accordingly? There was fixed the acme of his dilemma. The detail of that lady's love and fate rose before his mind's eye, like a dark unseemly arch, of which this was the key-stone; and there was a power stood above it that held his soul in controul, and beyond that he could not pass. Was it indeed true, that the spirit of his royal and beloved mistress walked the earth, and from day to day laid her stern behests upon him? And could it be that such a spirit attended upon him in his most secret retirements; and, though unseen, watched over all his motions, words, and actions? Or how else could the very thoughts and purposes of his heart, together with his most secret transactions, be repeated to him by this holy monk? Nay, though he had never actually seen this apparition, he had heard his mistress's voice one night speaking to him as from behind the hangings, and charging him, as he respected his own and her soul's welfare, to keep her fate concealed from all flesh.

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Whenever the Douglas got leisure to think at all, amid the hurry of his military duties, these cogitations preyed on his mind; and one night when they had thrown him into a deep reverie, the monk Benjamin was announced.

"I cannot see him to-night: Tell him to come and speak with me to-morrow," said Douglas.

"He craves only a few moments audience, Lord of Douglas; and he says, that, unless he is admitted, a visitor of another nature will wait on you forthwith."

"What is the meaning of this?" said Douglas: "Must my privacy be broken in upon, and my mind

placed on the rack, at the pleasure of every fanatical devotee? Tell him that I will not be disturbed to-night. But—I think not what I am saying. Admit him. Well, reverend and holy father—madman rather! What is your important business with me?"

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"That saintly vision has again been with me."

"Out upon thee, maniac and liar! There has been no such thing with thee; and thou hast trumped up a story in order to keep the power of the Douglas under thy ghostly and interested controul."

"If I am a visionary, Lord, it is for thyself to judge. I speak nothing as of myself, but the words of one that has sent me. If thou darest say they are the visions of a maniac, in future I keep them to myself, and do you abide by the consequences."

"Thinkest thou that I will not, or that I dare not abide by any consequences? Hence! Begone!"

"Rash precipitate man! thou shall repent this! What interest can I possibly have in whispering these truths in thine ear? Did I ever ask or hint at a favour from thee? Or was aught ever, save thy own welfare, the purport of my messages? Adieu, my lord! There must another commissioner wait on you presently, and one who will elude the most vigilant of your sentinels."

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"Stay, Benjamin: Thou art, indeed, blameless. If thou hast ought to warn me of, say it and have done, for I am not in a mood to be trifled with."

"I have been bid to caution you to look to yourself, for that there is treason within the walls of this castle. Will you answer me one or two queries truly and seriously, that I may know whether the being that commissioned me be a true spirit or a false one?"

"I will."

"Have you got a private offer to a prodigious amount for the ransom of Lady Jane Howard?"

"Monk, thou hast had this from hell.—I have."

"Which thou hast rejected, with the secret intent of asking her in marriage yourself, should circumstances concur to favour the device?"

"It is false!—false as the source whence thou hadst it."

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"Ah! Then have I done! my informant is a false one."

"Or, if I had, it was some passing thought, which no man can gainsay, and for which none are accountable."

"Neither is it true that you visited her in disguise last night?"

The Douglas gazed upon the monk in silence, with an eye in which there was an unnatural gleam of madness. He drew his breath three times, as if he would have spoken, but made no answer. The monk continued: "If these are truths, then list to the following behest,—if they are false thou needest not regard it: There is a conspiracy among thy people for the rescue of Lady Jane. They have been bribed by unheard-of rewards. Thy guards are of course to be cut down, otherwise the rescue cannot be effected; and if thy own head is added to the convoy, the guardons are all to be doubled."

The Douglas started to his feet, and held up both his hands: "By the blessed Virgin it is true!" exclaimed he—"True every word of it! There have been petitions made to me for the use of certain keys already. Ay, and I have granted some of them too. I see through a part of the conspiracy. But I'll sift the traitors! I'll make carrion of them."

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"If I am rightly informed, it may yet be prevented without being made manifest, which would be greatly preferable. Beware of Kinlossie. And list, for my time is expired: If you value your own name, see not the face of Lady Jane again, till you present her to your sovereign."

The monk retired with precipitation, and left the Douglas overwhelmed with tumultuary and adverse passions. "Still the Lady Jane Howard!" said he to himself: "Nothing but the Lady Jane Howard! Is it possible this can be an agent of hers? But the inference contradicts the whole scope and tendency of his missions. I must investigate this matter without delay." He raised his small bugle to his mouth, for in those days that answered all the purposes of a house bell, and many more. Every officer in castle or camp knew, by the blast blown, when his personal attendance was required. Douglas lifted his to his mouth,—but before he sounded it, the knight in waiting announced "a lady." No bolder heart than that of Douglas beat in a Scottish bosom. Nevertheless it quaked; for he thought of the threatening of the monk, that another commissioner should visit him, whom his guards should not be able to repel. His agitation was now wrought up to the highest pitch, for he attempted to pronounce some words, of which the knight knew not the import,—probably it was a command to expel her, or to call in some guards; but before the order could be understood or complied with, the lady herself entered. "There she is, my lord!" said the knight in a whisper; "and none of us know whence or how she came hither."

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The lady came slowly by, and the knight retired with all speed. She bore indeed the figure and form of the late princess, but the roses of youth and beauty were gone, and in their room a clayey paleness pervaded the features, which were even whiter than the cambric by which the face was surrounded. The figure held up its right hand as it advanced, and fixed its eyes on the earl; but no man to this day ever knew any thing farther of that conference. The knight in waiting, shortly after he had retired, heard a noise within as of a man choking and endeavouring to cry out; and, bringing two more attendants with him, they all three rushed into the apartment, and found the Douglas fallen back on the embroidered couch in a state of mental abstraction, or rather of total insensibility, and the lady was gone. They immediately applied themselves to the restoration of

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their lord, which they effected in a short time. Animation soon returned, but reason wavered in a state of insensibility for several hours. During that period he had for a number of times inquired who admitted that stranger, or who saw her depart? The men assuring him each time, that no one saw her till she was observed standing in the anti-chamber; and that none was either admitted into the citadel or seen depart, save the starveling monk who attended him frequently as his confessor. "There has been another lady," they added, begging admission to your presence for a whole day and night, which has always been refused here, in consequence of your peremptory order. She has at the last resorted to the means always at a woman's command, tears and threatenings; and she vows, that if she is not admitted to an audience, you shall dearly repent it."

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"What, another still?" said the Douglas: "No, I'll see no more women to-day, nor to-morrow, nor next day. Do you know, Eveldon, what I think of women?"

"No, Lord Douglas, but well what I think of them myself, which is, that they are nature's masterpieces."

"The pests of society, Eveldon. I deem them subordinate creatures, created solely for man's disquietude. The warrior is naturally surrounded by dangers; but, till he engages with women, he rises superior to them all; it is then that his troubles and perils begin. No, I'll see no more women to-night."

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"Might I advise, my lord, it would be, that you should give her admission. It appears so strange to see a lovely and most courtly dame standing weeping at your gate. The very commonest of the people sympathise with her, and blame your neglect. Beshrew me, if any knight in the realm would refuse such a suit; no, not the King himself."

"Do you think, Sir John of Eveldon, that I can submit to be ruled by women and their agents? I, who never held them as ought save as beings formed for man's pleasures or his interests. My hands are free of their blood, Sir John,—my heart, if ever it was in bonds, is now emancipated; and yet, by their means, has my life of late been held in thralldom."

"Say that I may admit this dame, my lord."

"Well, be it so, and let us be quit of her. In the mean time, let the guards be tripled, and stand to your arms. I have had strange intelligence to-night; if true, there will be a dangerous commotion in less than an hour hence."

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"The forces of the two kingdoms cannot disturb you here to-night, Lord Douglas."

"See to it,—there is treason within our walls. Who are on guard?"

"The Gordons, and Lindsay of Kinlossie's men."

"The Gordons I can trust,—let the others be changed without delay, Sir John, and see them consorted to the camp.—Call up the Douglasses of the Dales, and let them look to themselves. Admit that petitioner in whom you are so much interested, and call me on the slightest appearance of insubordination."

Sir John did as he was commanded, and forthwith introduced Mary Kirkmichael of Balmedie. The impatience and mortification that the Douglas manifested under this trial is not to be described, for he had promised to give her information of her royal mistress as soon as he had it in his power, and yet he neither had the heart nor the resolution, after the charges he had received of secrecy, to tell her of her mistress' woeful fate. At Mary's first entrance into his presence, she rushed forward and kneeled at his feet, crying, in the most passionate manner, "O, my dear lord, tell me what has become of my mistress. This suspense is dreadful. The castle is now in your hands, and all the prisoners, if such there were; but there are shocking insinuations whispered abroad. Her father and mother are on their way to visit you here; and what shall I say to them for the loss of my dear mistress? O, Lord Douglas, if you know of her, as know of her you must, tell me where I can see her. Dead or alive, let me but see her. Or tell me when I shall see her."

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"Lady, that is more than I can tell you; but if it will give you any heart's ease, as certainly as I speak to you I saw her in this apartment to-night."

"Blessed are the news to me, my lord! But why, then, won't you admit me to her? Send me instantly to her presence, Lord Douglas, for I know she cannot be in any state of concealment in which my company cannot be welcome. I implore of you to send me forthwith to her presence."

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"Send you to her presence? That would be a cruel act! Dame, you and your sex have moved my spirit from its erect and heavenward position. It is like a tree bowed by the wind, and the branch of memory is stripped of its fruit. Did I say I saw the Princess Margaret in this apartment?—You must not credit it. There's an incoherence in the principle, or nature has hasty productions not accounted for. You must not believe it, lady; for till the porter opens the great gate to you, your royal mistress you shall not see again."

"Are not all the gates opened or shut at your controul, my lord? You speak to me in paradoxes. I comprehend it all well enough, however. I will go in or out at any gate; only, in one word, conduct me to my mistress."

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"Hell has no plague like this! No, there are no other fiends that can torment a man in this manner." He blew his bugle.—"Eveldon, conduct this dame to her mistress. She in the great state prison, you know, the receptacle of royalty and thralldom, and let me not hear another word. I'll throw him over the battlements that next mentions the name of a woman to me."

The lady curtsied, and thanked the Douglas; and Sir John, mistaking his lord's frantic sarcasm for

a serious command, hurried Mary Kirkmichael up stairs to the topmost apartment of the great tower, and ushered her in, without farther ceremony, to Lady Jane Howard and her attendant. Lady Jane rose and came running toward them; but, seeing who approached, she started, and retreated to her place. As the two ascended the narrow staircase, there was a great commotion in the square below, therefore, Sir John turned the key and hastened down again. The noise increased, and he heard there was a stern engagement, in which the name of Lady Jane was given as a rallying word on the one side. At the bottom of the stair the conspirators met him, having broken through the ranks in that direction; for the Gordons flew to guard the apartments of the Douglas, not knowing what the object of the insurrection was. Sir John had just time to shut a double-barred door in front of them; and, retreating up one storey, he shouted from the balcony to apprize the Douglas, else the Lady Jane Howard was gone. One from the ranks ran to apprize the captain, but losing himself among the intricacies of the entrance, he shouted out, "Lord Douglas! Lord Douglas!" with the utmost vociferation. The Douglas was sitting in a deep reverie; his drawn sword was lying on the table beside him. He heaved it above his shoulder, and running to the door of the apartment, opened it, and asked the fellow, who was still bawling in the dark, what it was? "'Tis the Lady Jane Howard!" answered he, in the same shouting voice. "Damnation on the tongue that says it!" exclaimed the Douglas in ire: "Am I never more to hear aught repeated but the names of women? Do you know the penalty of that word, recreant? I have sworn to throw you from the battlements, but that shall not prevent me from cleaving you to the earth in the first place. Women! women! Nothing but one woman after another! I'll cut down every man that dares name one to me in that manner!" As he said these words, he rushed toward the soldier with his heavy sword heaved, but the man, flying with all expedition, escaped into the court. The Douglas followed him, and was soon in the midst of a confused engagement; and hearing the conspirators shouting the same name, "Lady Jane Howard!" he took it as in derision, and flew on their ranks with such fury, that every man at whom he struck fell to the ground. The Gordons followed him up, crying "A Douglas!" but the conspirators were the stronger party, and would ultimately have prevailed, had not the Douglasses of the Dales arrived to change guard as formerly ordered; and then, Kinlossie having fallen in an attempt to slay the Douglas, his party surrendered. There was a strong troop of English horsemen waiting on the other side of the Teviot with a raft, to whom she was to have been let down from the wall. But the information lodged by the monk not only frustrated the whole of this desperate expedition of the Howards, but saved the life of Douglas. For the conspirators receiving the unexpected orders to depart to the camp, were driven to make the attempt prematurely; before their measures formerly concocted were ripe for execution.

Of all the circumstances that had hitherto occurred, the reflection upon this bewildered the mind of Douglas the most. The manner in which these secret combinations had been revealed to him filled his heart both with gratitude and amazement; and as all endeavours at reconciling them with nature or reason only increased the mystery, he resolved to shake the load from his spirits and think no more of them. That he might effect this with greater promptitude, he kept his noble kinsmen constantly about him by night as well as by day. The Redhough also returned from his visit to Mountcomyn, as did all the knights and gentlemen commoners of his party from their respective homes, mounted in their most splendid accoutrements, to greet their Sovereign, render him an account of their services, and proffer him due homage. But, among all these Border chiefs, there was none whose appearance attracted so much admiration as that of Sir Charles Scott of Raeburn and Yarbire. Before that time, the only attention he had ever paid to his habiliments, was that of procuring the best suits of armour that could possibly be obtained. As the leader of the Warden's vanguard column, and his right-hand file in line, he knew it behoved him to be well armed, and in that article he was never deficient. But now that he had to appear before his Sovereign in full pride of array, as the knight of Raeburn and the Warden's right-hand man, he deemed it requisite to have an equipment becoming his rank; so he rummaged the old oaken wardrobe and armour-chest at Yarbire, and from the knightly spoils of ages got himself fitted out, by a skilful hand, in a style that amazed all his former compeers. Both himself and his horse Corbie were literally covered with burnished gold; while the playful restiveness of the one, and the manly and almost colossal figure of the other, rendered the appearance of our warrior a sight truly worthy of admiration. The activity and elasticity of all his motions, combined with his invincible muscular strength, and urbanity of countenance and manners, rendered Charlie at all times an interesting object; but till once he appeared in his plumes and light armour studded with gold, no one could have believed that he was so comely and graceful a personage. At the same time the very consciousness of his appearance, and the rank that he was obliged to support, raised his personal carriage and address many degrees, as by a charm; so that whenever the Warden and his train presented themselves, strangers always appeared disposed to move their bonnets to Sir Charles, whom they took for a king, or an earl at the very least.

The arrival of these heroes added a great deal to the hilarity, tilting, and other military amusements at Roxburgh; until at last the 24th of December arrived, and with it the word that the King and Queen were on their way to Roxburgh, and approaching by the wild path of Soutra-edge. There was no bustle at the castle or city of Roxburgh, save by the city dames and maidens, for whom the approaching festival appeared a glorious epocha; for since the days of Edward Longshanks, who kept his court there for some weeks, there had not been a crowned head within the precincts of that illustrious city. Consequently, with these fair denizens, and with the merchants who attended that mart once a year from many of the towns on the Continent, it was a time of hurry and preparation; but with the warriors it was far otherwise. They were ready before; every one being alike anxious to fulfil the part entrusted to him,—so that they had nothing ado but to mount and ride in the order assigned to them.

First of all rode Sir Ringan Redhough, supported by all the gentlemen of the middle and west marches—the Scotts, the Elliots, the Armstrongs, and the Olivers, were the most powerful of these: And next in order came the Laidlaws, the Brydens, the Glendenyngs, and the Potts. After them rode the copper-nosed Kers, the towzy Turnbells, and the red-wudd Ridderfords; for in those days every sept had some additional appellation or by-name. These were also mixed with a number of smaller septs, such as the Robsons, the Dicksons, the hurkle-backed Hendersons, and the rough-riding Riddels; and they were all headed by the doughty Sir Andrew Ker of Aultonburn. Next in order rode Old Willie Wiliecoat, named also *Willie wi' the white doublet*, the ancestor of the Earls of Home,—a brave and dauntless character, who for the space of forty years had been a sight of terror to the English, with his white jacket. With him rode the gentlemen of his own name, the hard-rackle Homes, the dorty Dunbars, the strait-laced Somervilles, and the Baillies. Then came the proud Pringles, a powerful sept, mixed with a countless number of dependent families, headed by Pringle of Galashiels; and after them the Gordons, led by Sir John of that ilk.

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All these held lands of the Douglas, on conditions of certain services; they were nevertheless all independent chiefs, these services performed; but at this time they attended personally, with their kinsmen, to pay their dutiful respects to their Sovereign. Last of all came the Douglasses, in five separate bodies, every one headed by a lord or knight of the name; and these made up one-third of the whole cavalcade, the Earl himself being with the last party of all, and most gallantly attended.

The two parties met at Earlston, but the royal party was nothing in point of bearing and splendour to that of the Douglasses. The King and Queen travelled each in a litter borne by two gallant steeds. These carriages were very splendid in their decorations, and constructed in the same way as a sedan chair, and it was truly wonderful with what velocity they were borne along. They were contrived for the King's use, who had a halt, and could not travel on horseback; and they suited the state of the roads in Scotland at that period exceedingly. Two heralds rode before his Majesty, who introduced the various chiefs to him as he passed, and those others of whose names he enquired, among whom Sir Charles Scott was the first. The Queen and her Maries also saluted him along with the Warden. The whole procession then drew up in files until their Majesties passed, after which they fell all into their places, the order of precedence being then reversed, and the Douglasses next to the Sovereign. There was no time for delay, considering the season, the darkness of the night, and the shortness of the day; so they posted on with all manner of expedition, and yet it was dark before they reached the abbey of Kelso. But all the way, by the cloisters, the bridge, and up the High-street of the city of Roxburgh, there were tiers of torches raised above one another that made it lighter than the noon-day. Never was there such a scene of splendour witnessed in that ancient and noble city; to which the darkness of the canopy above, and the glare of torch-light below, added inconceivable grandeur. It seemed as if all the light and beauty of the universe had been confined within that narrow space, for without all was blackness impervious to the eye, but within there was nothing but brilliancy, activity, and joy. Seven score musical instruments, and as many trilling but discordant voices, yelled forth, from the one end of the street to the other, that old song beginning,

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"The King came to our town;  
Ca' Cuddie, ca' Cuddie!  
The King came to our town,  
Low on the Border."

The trumpets sounded before, and the bugles behind; and the Border youths and maidens were filled with enthusiastic delight at the novelty of the spectacle. They followed with shouts to the castle gate, and then returned to talk of what they had seen, and what they should see on the morrow.

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The royal party was conducted to the citadel, where every thing was in readiness for a grand entertainment; and there the Douglas delivered into the King's hands the keys of the castle of Roxburgh. His Majesty received them most graciously, and thanked him for all the cost, pains, and trouble that he had taken for the good of the realm; and added, that he came prepared in heart and mind to fulfil his engagements to him in return. There was now a manifest embarrassment on the part of the Douglas; his countenance changed, and he looked as he would have asked for the Princess, or, at least, as if some one were wanting that ought to have been there; but after an agitated pause, he could only stammer out, that "he was much beholden to his Majesty, who might at all times command his utmost services without bounty or reward."

"I trust that is not as much as to say that you now decline the stipulated reward for this high service," said the King.

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"Sire, I see none either for your Majesty to give, or your servant to receive," said the Douglas; and at the same time he cast a hasty and perturbed glance at the courtiers and warriors ranged around the hall. The king nodded by way of assent to his hint; and at the same time said to him, aside, "I understand you, Lord Douglas. You will explain this gallantry of yours, in keeping your sovereign's daughter in concealment from her natural guardians, in private to-morrow. But, pray, can we not see our darling to-night?"

"Alas, my liege lord and sovereign," said Douglas, passionately, "sure you jest with your servant, thus to tax him with that of which he is innocent."

The King smiled, and waving his hand jocularly, by way of intimating that he thought his affected secrecy prudence at that time, left him, and forthwith went halting up among the Borderers, to converse with them about the affairs of the English marches. The stately and commanding figure

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of Charlie Scott, who was like Saul among the people, again attracted the King's eyes, and he went familiarly up to him, and said at once, "Well, gallant knight, how have accounts balanced between you and your southern neighbours since last Lammas-tide?"

"Gude faith, my liege lord and king, I can hardly tell you," said Sir Charles, without hesitation: "There hae been some hard yerks gaun; but the last quarter stands rather aboon an average wi' us. It is a kittle bauk that hings o'er the Border, my liege; it is often nae sooner down to the yird than it is up to the starns again."

"Well said, knight! I like your fair wit and free humour," said the King. "So, upon the whole, you judge that the balance preponderates on our side just now?"

"I should think sae, Sire, when sic a clod as this castle of Roxburgh is thrown into the bucket. It is nae witherweight this for the end of a weigh-bauk. A' the kye o' the Seven Dales winna carry the swee to the south side again."

The Queen, hearing her lord conversing so freely and jocularly with this goodly personage, came also up with two of her ladies of honour, in order to put in a word; "for (says Isaac, with great simplicity) women always like to be striking kemps with a handsome and proper man; and the bigger of bone, and the stronger of muscle, the more is he the object of their admiration." [318]

When Sir Charles had finished the last remark, therefore, the Queen smiled complacently in his face, and said, "You must certainly acknowledge, gallant knight, that you have been much indebted to heaven for your singular success in this instance?"

Sir Charles nodded his head. "Its a' that ye ken about it, my lady queen. But saft be the sough that says it. I trow we were mair indebted to some other place in the first instance."

The Queen held up her hands: "Uh! what does the knight mean? Say, my lord, What? What place?" Then turning to Sir Ringan, who was terribly in the fidgets about what had dropped from his kinsman, she added, "I trust our right traist warden and loving cousin did not practise any of the diabolical arts, so prevalent of late, to accomplish his hard task?" And then, with a woman's natural volubility, when once her tongue is set a-going, she added, turning to Charlie, without waiting the Warden's reply, "What place does Sir Charles mean? I hope you would not insinuate that you had any dealings with the spirits of darkness?" [319]

"Not with hell directly, madam," answered Charlie, (for Isaac can never help calling him occasionally by his old title,) "but I canna say that we didna get a strong hint frae ane or twa of its principal agents. No offence, my lady queen. I ken by report, that your Majesty takes supreme delight in religious devotions; and, to tell the truth, I have always had a strong hankering that gate mysel', and hope I will hae till the day of my death. But there is ae thing in the whilk I am greatly altered. Pray, may I take the liberty to ask what is your Majesty's opinion about the deil?"

"Uh! gracious St Mary be with us! What a question, knight! Why, what can I think but that he is the great enemy of God and man, and the author of universal evil?" [320]

"There I think differently," said Charlie, bowing very low: "Always begging my lady queen's gracious pardon, that's the only tenet o' my belief that is altered;—at least an it be nae fairly altered, it is considerably jumbled, and nought like sae steadfast as it was. Always begging your pardon though, madam."

"I am quite confounded," said the Queen. "Pray, warrior, what do you mean?"

"Plainly this, my lady queen; that I think the old gentleman has been sair abused; and that there are some na meikle better than him wha have been a great deal better ca'd. It may sound a little odd in your ears, but I hae now seen him. I hae sat wi' him; I hae eaten, I hae drunken wi' him; and gin it hadna been for the interference of women, we wad hae partit civilly. But whenever they get a finger in a pye, there will be some ane burnt in the opening o't. Always begging your Majesty's pardon, though." [321]

"The Queen crossed herself, and counted her beads; but at the same time bestowed a smile and look of admiration on this extraordinary hero who had accomplished such singular adventures. These encouraging Sir Charles to finish his sentence, he added: "They hae frightit me wi' him lang; and sair has my neb been hauden at the grindstane wi' the fear o' him. I durst hardly say or think that ane of a' the members of my body was my ain wi' perfect terror. But thae days are a' o'er. An' the bedesmen be gaun to fright me ony langer wi' a deil, they maun get a new ane; for the auld ane winna stand his ground to any extent wi' me on that score. He has doubtless some bad qualities; some wicked vagaries about him; but, upon the whole, I have met wi' waur fellows."

This introduction, in spite of Sir Ringan's endeavours to waive the subject, led to the whole narrative of the transactions at Aikwood, of which the Queen and her maidens of honour were never wearied, although at the same time many an Ave Maria and Paternoster the subject cost them. When obliged, from the lateness of the hour, to desist listening to the agitating theme, the Queen was never at rest until it was renewed next day; nor even then till she had gone and visited the great hill of Eildon thus miraculously cleft asunder and divided into three; and even after quaking at the scene, she grew still more importunate in her inquiries, so that there was no satisfying her curiosity on the subject of the enchantments of Master Michael Scott all the time she remained in Roxburgh. [322]

When she retired to her chamber that first night she inquired for a confessor, and the knight in waiting introduced the monk Benjamin; intimating, that since the capture of the castle he had been confessor-general to all within its walls. The Queen's devotions that night were prolonged

until an early hour next morning; nevertheless she arose from her sleep greatly refreshed, and in high spirits, and at the breakfast-table was more than usually gay. Not so with Douglas, over whose countenance, in spite of all exertions to the contrary, hung a heavy gloom, as well as a manifest abstraction of thought. The King, who was a person of strong discernment, observed this, and, from some indefinite dread of the cause, involuntarily partook of the sensation.

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## CHAPTER X.

I want none of your gold, Douglas,  
I want none of your fee,  
But swear by the faith of thy right hand  
That you'll love only me:  
And I'll leave my country and my kin  
And wend along with thee.

*May Marley.*

When the mass, and a plentiful morning meal, were over next day, every one began to prepare for such exercises as the season admitted. All lingered about for some time, but seeing that no orders were likely to be given out for any procession or general rendezvous during the day, which every one had expected, some betook them to the chace, others to equestrian exercises with sword and spear, while the Homes and the Gordons joined in an excursion into English ground, keeping along the southern bank of the Tweed. The King observing them all about to disperse, reminded the Douglas that it was a high festal day; on which the latter made a low obeisance, and remarked, that he was only now a guest in the castle of Roxburgh, and that his honoured liege sovereign was host; that his foresters and sumptuary officers had got timeous notice, and nothing would be lacking that his Majesty could desire for the entertainment of his nobles and friends. The King then caused it to be intimated, that he would be happy to meet all his lords and nobles in the banquet-hall at even-tide, where every knight, gentleman, and yeoman, were expected to attend in their several places, and all should be heartily welcome. "And now, Lord Douglas," said he, leading the way into an anti-chamber, "let us two retire by ourselves, and consult what is to be done next."

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Lord Douglas followed, but ill prepared to answer the inquiries about to be put to him. He had received injunctions of secrecy from one who had in no instance misled him, and to whom he had been of late indebted for the preservation of his life. But how was he now to conduct himself, or how answer his sovereign in any other way than according to the truth as it had been stated unto him? His predicament was a hard one; for he was, in the first place, ashamed of the part he had acted, of never having discovered his royal mistress while attached to his side, notwithstanding of all the evidences in confirmation of the fact, which he had never once seen till too late. And then to have suffered even his mistress' page to fall a victim to such a shameful death, without either making an effort to save him, or so much as missing him from his hand, or mentioning his loss,—were circumstances not quite consistent with the high spirit of gallantry, as well as chivalry, he had displayed at first by the perilous undertaking. Gladly would he have kept his knowledge of the transaction a secret; but then there was the monk Benjamin, who, by some supernatural agency, had been given to understand the whole scope and tenor of it; and there was dame Mary Kirkmichael knew the whole, except the degrading catastrophe, and had unfolded it all to him when it was too late. He run over all these things in his mind, and was as little, as at any previous period, prepared what part to act, when the King turned round, and, in the most anxious and earnest manner, said, "Lord Douglas, where is our daughter?"

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"My liege lord and sovereign, ought not I rather to have asked that question of you?" said the Douglas: "And I would have done it at our first meeting, only that I would not trifle with your feelings on such a serious matter, perceiving that you laboured under a grievous misconception regarding my conduct. You have not, it seems, brought the princess Margaret along with you, as was expected by all my friends and followers?"

"Not by yourself, I am certain. I say, Lord Douglas, where is my daughter? I demand a categorical answer."

"Sire, in what way am I accountable for your daughter?"

"Lord Douglas, I hate all evasion. I request an answer as express as my question. I know my darling child, in admiration of your chivalrous enterprise, resolved, in the true spirit of this romantic age, to take some active part in the perils undertaken solely on her account: I know her ingenuity, which was always boundless, was instrumental in performing some signal services to you; and that finally she attached herself to your side in a disguise which she deemed would ensure her a kind and honourable protection. Thus far I know; and, though the whole was undertaken and transacted without my knowledge, when I was absent in the Highlands, I am certain as to the truth of every circumstance; and I am farther certified that you know all this."

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"Hear me, my liege sovereign. Admitting that your daughter, or any other king's, lord's, or commoner's daughter, should put herself into a page's raiment, and"—

"Silence, lord!" cried the King, furiously, interrupting him: "Am I to be mocked thus, and answered only with circumlocution, notwithstanding my express command to the contrary? Answer me in one word. My Lord of Douglas, where is my daughter?"

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"Where God will, sire," was the short and emphatic reply. The king eyed Douglas with a keen and stern regard, and the eagle eye of the latter met that of his sovereign without any abashment. But yet this look of the Douglas, unyielding as it was, manifested no daring or offensive pride; it was one rather of stern sorrow and regret; nevertheless he would not withdraw it, but, standing erect, he looked King Robert in the face, until the eyes of the latter were gradually raised from his toward heaven. "Almighty Father!" cried he, clasping his hands together,— "Where, then, is it thy will that my beloved child should be? O Douglas! Douglas! In the impatience and warmth of temper peculiar to my race, I was offended at your pertinacity; but I dread it was out of respect to a father's feelings. I forgive it, now that I see you are affected, only, in pity to this yearning bosom, relate to me all that you know. Douglas! can you not inform me what has befallen to my daughter?"

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"No, my liege, I cannot. I know nothing, or at least little save from report; but the little that I have heard, and the little that I have seen, shall never be reported by my tongue."

"Then hope is extinct!" cried the King. "The scene that can draw tears from the stern eye of the Douglas, even by an after reflection, is one unmeet for a parent's ear. The will of the Almighty be done! He hath given and he hath taken away: blessed be his name! But why have the men of my household, and the friends in whom I trusted, combined against my peace?" The King said this in a querulous mood. "Why did you not tell me sooner?" cried he, turning to Douglas, his tone altering gradually from one of penitence and deep humiliation to one of high displeasure: "Why bring me on this fool's errand, when I ought to have been sitting in sack-cloth and ashes, and humbling myself for the sins of my house? These must have been grievous indeed, that have drawn down such punishments on me. But the indifference of those in whom we trusted is the worst of all! O, my child! My darling child, Margaret! Never was there a parent so blest in a daughter as I was in thee! The playfulness of the lamb or the kid,—the affection of the turtle-dove, were thine. Thy breast was all enthusiasm and benevolence, and every emotion of thy soul as pure as the ray of heaven. I loved thee with more than parental affection, and, if I am bereaved of thee, I will go mourning to my grave. Is there no one in this place that can inform me of my daughter's fate? Her lady confidant, I understand, is still lingering here. Send for her instantly. Send for her confessor also, that I may confront you altogether, and ascertain the hideous and unwelcome truth. If I cannot have it here, I shall have it elsewhere, or wo be to all that have either been instrumental in her fate or lax in warding it off! Do you think, Lord of Douglas, that I can be put off with a hum and a haw, and a shake of the head, and, 'it's 'God's will?' Do you think I should, when I am inquiring about my own daughter, whom I held dearest of all earthly beings? No, I'll scrutinize it to a pin's point. I'll wring every syllable of the truth out of the most secret heart and the most lying tongue. I'll move heaven and hell, but I'll know every circumstance that has befallen to my daughter. Send, I say, for her foster-sister and faithful attendant, dame Mary Kirkmichael. Send also for her confessor, and for all to whom she has but once spoken since she arrived here. Why are they not sent for before this time?"

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"My liege lord, restrain your impatience. They are sent for; but they will tell you nothing that can mitigate your sorrow. If it be all true that has been told to me, and that you yourself have told to me, of the disguise the Princess assumed, then is it also true that you will never again see your daughter in this state of existence."

"Ah! is it even so! Then is the flower of the realm fallen! then is the solace of my old age departed! But she is happy in the realms of blessedness. While love, joy, and truth are the delight of heaven, there will my Margaret find a place! O, that she had staid by her father's hand! Why was my jewel entrusted to the care and honour of those who care but for themselves, and who have suffered the loveliest flower of the world to be cropped in its early blossom? nay, left it to be sullied and trodden down in forgetfulness. Lord Douglas, did you see my daughter perish?"

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"Now, my liege lord, can I act the man no longer. Forgive me; and may the holy Virgin, the mother of God, forgive me; for I indeed saw with these eyes that inestimable treasure cut off, without one effort on my part to save her, and without a tear wetting my cheeks."

"Then may all the powers of darkness blast thy soul, thou unfeeling traitor! Thus! thus will I avenge me on the culprit who could give up his sovereign's daughter, and his own betrothed bride, to a violent death, and that without a tear! O thou incarnate fiend! shalt thou not bewail this adown the longest times of eternity? Darest thou not draw against an injured father and king?"

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"Put up thy sword, sire. The Douglas draws not but on his equals, and thou art none of them. Thy person is sacred and thy frame debilitated. He holds thee inviolate; but he holds thee also as nothing!"

"Thou shall know, proud lord, that the King of Scotland fears no single arm, and that he can stand on one limb to avenge the blood of his royal house."

"My gracious lord, this is the mere raving of a wounded spirit, and I grieve that I should have for one moment regarded it otherwise than with veneration. I had deserved to die an hundred deaths, if I had known who the dear sufferer was; but, alas! I know not ought of the sex or rank of my page, who was taken prisoner in the great night engagement. But I can tell you no more, Sire; nor is it needful; you now know all. I am guiltless as the babe unborn of my royal mistress's blood; but I will never forgive myself for my negligence and want of perception; nor do I anticipate any more happiness in this world. I have been laid under some mysterious restraints, and have suffered deeply already. And now, my gracious lord, I submit myself to your awards."

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"Alas, Lord Douglas, you are little aware of the treasure you have lost. Your loss is even greater

than mine. It behoves us, therefore, to lament and bewail our misfortunes together, rather than indulge in bitter upbraiding.

Here they were interrupted by the entrance of the Queen, who brought with her the Lady Jane Howard, dressed in a style of eastern magnificence, to introduce her to the King. The King, amid all the grief that overwhelmed his spirit, was struck with her great beauty, and paid that respect and homage to her which high birth and misfortune always command from the truly great; and the Queen, with the newfangledness of her sex, appeared wholly attached to this captive stranger, and had brought her down at that time to intercede with the King and Lord Douglas for her liberty, loading her with commendations and kind attentions. To check the Queen's volatility of spirits, the King informed her shortly of the irreparable loss both of them had suffered, but the effect was manifestly not at all proportionate to the cause. She appeared indeed much moved, and had well nigh fallen into hysterics; but if her grief was not assumed, it bore strong symptoms of being so. She first railed at, and then tried to comfort the Douglas; but finally turned again to Lady Jane, (who wept bitterly, out of true sympathy, for the Princess's cruel and untimely fate,) and caressed her, trying to console her in the most extravagant terms. The King, on the other hand, sobbed from his inmost soul, and bewailed his loss in terms so pathetic and moving, that the firm soul of Douglas was overcome, and he entered into all his Sovereign's feelings with the keenest sensations. It was a scene of sorrow and despair, which was rather increased than mitigated by the arrival of two more who had lately been sent for. These were the monk Benjamin and the lady Mary Kirkmichael, whom the King began anew to examine, dwelling on every circumstance that occurred during the course of his darling child's extravagant adventure with a painful anxiety. But every now and then he became heated with anger, blaming some one for the want of discernment or respect. When he came to examine the monk, who shewed great energy and acuteness of speech, he lost his temper altogether at some part of the colloquy; but the monk was not to be daunted; he repelled every invective with serenity of voice and manner, and at sundry times rather put the monarch to shame.

"Hadst thou ever an opportunity of confessing and shriving my child, previous to the time she fell into the hands of her enemies, reverend brother."

"No Sire, she never made confession to me, nor asked absolution at my hand."

"And wherefore didst thou not proffer it, thou shriveled starveling? Were there no grants to bestow? no rich benefices to confer for the well-being of a royal virgin's soul, that caused thee to withhold these poor alms of grace? Who was it that bestowed on thy unconscionable order all that they possess in this realm? And yet thou wilt suffer one of their posterity to come into thy cell, to ask thy assistance, without bestowing a mass or benediction for the sake of heaven."

"Sire, it is only to the ignorant and the simple that we proffer our ghostly rites. Those who are enlightened in the truths and mysteries of religion it behoves to judge for themselves, and to themselves we leave the state of their consciences, in all ordinary cases." The monk was robed in a very wide flowing grey frock, and cowed over the eyes, while his thin and effeminate-looking beard trembled adown his breast with the fervency of his address. As he said these last words, he stretched his right hand forth toward the King, and raising the left up behind him, his robe was by that means extended and spread forth in a manner that increased the tiny monk to triple the size he was before. "And for you, King of Scotland," added he, raising his keen voice that quavered with energy, "I say such a demeanour is unseemly. Is it becoming the head and guardian of the Christian church in this realm,—him that should be a pattern to all in the lower walks of life,—thus to threat and fume beneath the chastening of his Maker? You ask me who bestowed these ample bounds on my order? I ask you in return who it was that bestowed them on thy progenitors and thee, and for what purpose? Who gave thee a kingdom, a people, and a family of thy own? Was it not he before whose altar thou hast this day kneeled, and vowed to be for him and not for another? And what he has bestowed has he not a right to require of thee again, in his own time, and in his own way?" The King bowed with submission to the truth of this bold expostulation, and the impetuous and undaunted monk went on: "It is rather thy duty, most revered monarch, to bow with deep humiliation to the righteous awards of the Almighty, for just and righteous they are, however unequal they may appear to the purblind eyes of mortal men. If he has taken a beloved child from thee, rest assured that he has only snatched her from evil to come, and translated her to a better and a happier home. Why then wilt thou not acknowledge the justice of this dispensation, and rather speak comfort to the weaker vessels than give way to ill-timed and unkingly wrath.

"As for thee, noble lord, to the eyes of men thine may appear a hard lot indeed. For the love of one thou adventuredst thy life and the very existence of thy house and name. The stake was prodigious, and when thou hadst won it with great labour and perseverance, the prize was snatched from thy grasp. Thy case will to all ages appear a peculiarly hard one; still there is this consolation in it—"

"There is no grain of consolation in it," said Douglas interrupting him: "There can be none! The blow on my head, and my hopes of happiness, is irretrievable."

"Yes lord, there is," said the monk; "for has it not been decreed in heaven above, that this union was never to be consummated? Man may propose and scheme and lay out plans for futurity, but it is good for him that the fulfilment is vested in other hands than his. This then is consolation, to know that it was predestinated in the counsels of one who cannot err, that that royal maid never was to be thine; and therefore all manner of repining is not only unmanly and unmeet, but sinful. It behoves now thy sovereign, in reward of thy faithful services, to bestow on thee another spouse with the same dowry he meant to bestow on his daughter. And it behoves you to accept of this as

the gift of heaven, proffered to thee in place of the one it snatched from thy grasp. As its agent, therefore, and the promoter of peace, love, and happiness among men, I propose that King Robert bestow upon thee this noble and high born dame for thy consort. Both of you have been bereaved of those to whom you were betrothed, and it cannot fail to strike every one that this seems a fortune appointed for you two by Providence; nor can I form in my mind the slightest objection that can be urged to it on either side. It is desirable on every account, and may be the means of promoting peace between the two sister kingdoms, wasted by warfare and blood, which every true Christian must deplore. I propose it as a natural consequence, and a thing apparently foreordained by my master; and give my voice for it. King and Queen of Scotland what say you?" [342]

"I hold the matter that this holy and enlightened brother has uttered to be consistent with truth, reason, and religion," said the King,— "and the union has my hearty and free approval. I farther promise to behave to this lady as a father to a daughter, and to bestow upon our trusty and leal cousin, the Lord Douglas, such honours, power, and distinction as are most due for the great services rendered to this realm. The match has my hearty concurrence."

"And mine," said the Queen: "I not only acquiesce in the reverend brother's proposal, but I lay my commands on my noble kinsman the Lord Douglas to accept of this high boon of heaven."

"Pause my sovereign lady," said the Douglas, "before you proceed too far. In pity to the feelings that rend this bosom, let me hear no more of the subject at present. In pity to that lovely and angelic lady's feelings, that must be acute as my own, I implore that you will not insist farther in this proposal. Do not wound a delicate female breast, pressed down by misfortunes." [343]

"This is something like affectation, Lord Douglas," rejoined the Queen: "If I answer for the lady Jane's consent, what have you then to say against this holy brother's proposal?"

"Ay, if your Queen stand security for the lady's consent, and if *I stand security for it likewise*," said the monk—"what have you to say against the union then? Look at her again, lord. Is not she *a lovely and angelic* being? Confess the truth now. For I know it to be the truth, that never since you could distinguish beauty from deformity, have your eyes beheld *so lovely and so angelic* a lady? Pressed down by misfortunes, too! Does that not add a triple charm to all her excellencies? You know what has been done for her? what has been suffered for her? what a noble and gallant life was laid down for her? Was such a sacrifice ever made for a lady or princess of your own country? No, never, heroic lord! Therefore bless your stars that have paved out a way for your union with such a *lovely, angelic, and matchless lady*; and take her! take her to your longing and aching bosom." [344]

"Moderate your fervour, holy brother," said the Douglas, "which appears to me rather to be running to unwarrantable extremes. Granting that the lady Jane Howard is perhaps unequalled in beauty and elegant accomplishments——"

"Is she not so? Is she not so?" cried the monk with a fervour that raised his voice to a scream of passion: "Did I not say that she was? And now am I not warranted by your own sentiments, *freely expressed* enough. Sure, lord, you cannot deny that I said, that I told you, the lady was *peerless in beauty and accomplishments*? I knew it, and told you before that she was the *queen of beauty*. Why then do you hesitate, and make all this foolish opposition to an union which we all know you are eager to consummate? Yes; you are: And we all know it. You are!" [345]

"Holy brother, what unaccountable phrenzy has seized upon you," said the Douglas; "and why all this extravagant waste of declamation? Let me not hear another sentence, nor another word on the subject: only suffer me to finish what I had begun. I say then, granting that the lady Jane were peerless in beauty and accomplishments, still there is an impression engraven on my heart that can never be removed, or give place to another; and there will I cherish it as sacred, till the day of my death. And, that no reckless importunity may ever be wasted on me again, here I kneel before the holy rood, which I kiss, and swear before God and his holy angels, that since I have been bereaved of the sovereign mistress of my heart and all my affections,—of her in whom all my hopes of happiness in this world were placed, and who to me was all in all of womankind—that never shall another of the sex be folded in the arms of Douglas, or call him husband! So help me thou Blessed One, and all thy holy saints and martyrs, in the performance of this vow!" [346]

During the time of this last speech and solemn oath, the sobs of the monk Benjamin became so audible that all eyes were turned to him, for they thought that his delicate frame would burst with its emotions. And, besides, he was all the while fumbling about his throat, so that they dreaded he had purposed some mortal injury to himself. But in place of that, he had been unloosing some clasps or knots about his tunick; for with a motion quicker than thought, he flung at once his cowl, frock, and beard away,—and there stood arrayed as a royal bride the Princess Margaret of Scotland! "Journeyer of earth, where art thou now?"

Yes; there stood, in one moment, disclosed to the eyes of all present, *the princess Margaret Stuart herself*, embellished in all the ornaments of virgin royalty, and blooming in a glow of new born beauties."

"Thank heaven I have been deceived!" cried she, with great emphasis; and when she had said this, she stood up motionless by the side of lady Jane Howard, and cast her eyes on the ground. No pen can do justice to the scene. It must be left wholly to conception, after the fact is told that no one present had the slightest conception of the disguise save the Queen, who had been initiated into the princess's project of trying the real state of the Douglas's affections on the preceding night. It was like a scene of enchantment, such as might have been produced at the castle of Aikwood. But a moment ago all was sorrow and despair; now all was one burst of joyful surprise. And, to make it still more interesting, there stood the two rival beauties of Scotland and [347]



England, side by side, as if each were vying with the other for the palm to be bestowed on her native country. But to this day the connoisseurs in female beauty have never decided whether the dark falcon eyes and lofty forehead of the one, or the soft blushing roses and blue liquid eyes of the other, were the most irresistible.

The King was the first to burst from the silence of surprise. He flew to his daughter's arms with more vigour than a cripple could well be supposed to exert, kissed and embraced her, took her on his knee and wept on her neck; then, striking his crutch on the floor, he scolded her most heartily for the poignant and unnecessary pain she had occasioned to him. "And the worst of it is," added he, "that you have caused me show too much interest in an imp that has been the constant plague of my life with her whims and vagaries; an interest, and an intensity of feeling, that I shall be ashamed of the longest day I have to live."

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"Indeed but you shall not, my dear lord and father, for I will now tease another than you, and tease him only to deeds of valour and renown; to lead your troops to certain conquest, till you are fully avenged of the oppressors of your people."

Mary Kirkmichael hung by her seymar and wept. The Douglas kneeled at her feet, and in an ecstasy took her hand and pressed it to his lips. "I do not know whether or not I shall have reason to bless heaven all my life for this singular restoration," said he; "but for the present I do it with all my heart. Tell me, thou lovely cameleon, what am I to think of this? Wert thou indeed, as was related to me, the page Colin Roy Macalpin? He with the carrotty locks and the flippant tongue?"

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"You need not doubt it, lord Douglas. I was. And I think during our first intimacy that I teased you sufficiently."

"Then that delicate neck of yours, for all its taper form and lily hue is a charmed one, and rope proof; for, sure as I look on you now, I saw you swing from a beam's end on the battlement of this same tower."

"Oh! no, no, my lord! It was not I. Never trust this head again if it should suffer its neck to be noosed. *You* suffered it though; that you must confess. And I dare say, though a little sorry, felt a dead weight removed from about your neck. You suffered me to be taken prisoner out of your tent, and mured up among rude and desperate men in a dungeon. It cost me all my wits then to obtain my release. But I effected it. Swung from a beam's end. quoth he! Och! what a vulgar idea! No my lord, the page whom you saw swung was a *tailor's apprentice*, whom I hired to carry a packet up to your lordship, with my green suit of clothes, and a promise of a high place of preferment, and I kept my word to the brat! An intolerable ape it was. Many better lives have been lost in this contention; few of less value—I never deemed he was so soon to be strung, and my heart smote me for the part I had acted. But the scheme of turning monk and confessor suited me best of all: I then got my shackles of mystery riveted on you; and, heavens! what secrets I have found out."

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At this part of the narrative, Isaac the curate bestows a whole chapter and a half on the description of the wedding, and all the processions, games, and feasting that ensued; but as none of these things bore the slightest resemblance to ought that has ever been witnessed in the present age, like a judicious editor I have passed them over. Suffice it that the Border never witnessed such splendor of array, such tournaments, such feasting, and such high wassail. For why? because it never witnessed the marriage of a king's daughter before. The streets of the city, and the square of the fortress, that had so lately been dyed with blood, now "ran red with Rhenish wine." And be it farther known, that Sir Charles Scott and his horse Corbie bore off every prize in the tilting matches, till at last no knight would enter the lists with him; but the fair dames were all in raptures with the gallantry of his bearing, and the suavity of his manners. As for the Queen, she became so much enamoured of the hero, that she was scarcely to be kept in due bounds, and if she had not been advanced in years he might have deemed she was in love with him. In the lists she drew up her snow-white palfrey by Corbie's side, and in the revel hall the royal dame herself was sure to be at the knight's side, except when at table, on pretence of hearing something more about his perils at Aikwood, and in particular about the scene with the beautiful and splendid witches; at which, as Sir Charles related it with abashed countenance, the Queen and her Maries laughed till the salt tears ran from their eyes. As for the description of their appearance the succeeding morning, and the feelings of the warrior, both then and afterward when transformed to a huge bull, these never failed to throw the gamesome group into convulsions of mirth. In short, the knight of Raeburn was of all the gallants quite the favourite at that splendid festival in the hall, as well as the hero in the lists, in which he six times received the prize of honour from the hands of the royal bride and those of lady Jane Howard, who, at the Queen's earnest request was made principal bride's-maid, and presiding lady at the sports.

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But if Charles was the hero of those engaged in the games, his friend the gospel friar was as completely so among the gay onlookers, and created them more sport often than all in the lists. Ever since the various affrays in which his mule had been engaged, and come off with such decided success, the mongrel had learned to value himself solely as a beast of warfare, and no man who rode near him was sure of keeping his seat a minute, especially if he rode a high mettled and capricious charger. By the side of a horse of modesty that bore himself with candour and humility of countenance, the mule was a beast of sociality and decorum; but whenever he saw a steed begin to cut any unnecessary capers, he deemed himself insulted or put to the challenge, and on the instant began to lay back his long ears and switch with his tail, while his grey sunk eyes emitted a hellish gleam. It was no matter at what distance such a horse made his appearance, if the mule disliked his deportment, he would have flown across a whole field to attack and humble him. He had borne his master headlong into so many unpremeditated and

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unwarrantable scuffles since his return from Aikwood, that he had bestowed on him the name of Goliah of Gath; and besides giving him that veteran title, he often averred that he believed one of the necromancer's imps of darkness had taken possession of his beast.

The friar had, however, learned to distinguish all his motions, and knew from these the exact points and stages of his irritation; and when his offence began to reach its acme, he had no other resource than that of wheeling his head forcibly around, and turning his tail toward the object of his displeasure. Without this precaution, the friar would have been carried into the lists every day merely to gratify the spleen of Goliah, who could not endure the curvetting and jangling that was going on there. And even this inverse precaution did not at all times prove effectual, as in the following pleasant instance.

It chanced one day that the knight of Kraeland entered the lists alone, no opponent appearing against him, owing to some mistake made in the arrangement by the officers. He was a goodly youth, but uplifted above the earth with vanity, and of his vapouring and airs there were no end. Imagining that he attracted the eyes of all the beholders, and elated because no one had the courage to appear against him, for so he affected to regard the circumstance, he paraded the circle round and round, brandished his lance, and made his horse to curvette, rear, and wheel, accomplishing many grand evolutions. The lookers on were all beginning to get sick of him, and to view his vaporous manœuvres with disdain, but amongst them all there was none so much moved with spleen as Goliah of Gath. From the first moment that the knight entered the lists that uncircumcised Philistine began to manifest a mortal dislike towards him; the more so it was believed that he was mounted on a milk-white steed, a colour peculiarly disagreeable to the mule's optics. The judges of the games wist not what to do, and appealed to the King, who gave it as his opinion that this unchallenged appearance should be accounted as a victory, and that the knight should take his course in the next round; and the heralds got directions to make proclamation accordingly.

But long before this period the friar had been compelled to turn away the face of Goliah from this scene of vanity, and, as chance would have had it, he was in the innermost circle, so that retreat outward through the innumerable files was utterly impracticable, and there sat the gruff uncourtly form of the gospel friar, with the tail of his beast where the head should have been, to the great amusement of the spectators. For all this the malevolent eye of Goliah, as well accustomed to look backward as forward, perceived all the outrageous rearings and snortings of that proud and gaudy animal, and became moved with so much indignation that he would no longer be restrained, either by bit or spur, soothing or threatening. Just as the herald had taken his place to make proclamation, the mule fell a running backward; and the more fiercely that the friar spurred, and the more bitterly he threatened, the beast of Belial retrogaded the faster, till at last, after two or three intemperate plunges, he got his head straight to the white charger, and then in one moment he was upon him, and had him by the brisket with his teeth. The horse reared furiously, but the mule pressed still closer to him, fixing his long teeth in the horse's shoulder, till on a sudden, in an attempt to clear both Goliah and his rider, or, at least, to leap over the mule's neck, the white steed was overturned, and thrown right on his back, above his overweening rider. All this was transacted in a space of time shorter than the time taken up in reading the relation; and the moment that Goliah of Gath had achieved this overthrow, he wheeled about with a mettledness and inveteracy beyond all description, and attacked the couple with his heels, prostrate as they were, yerk for yerk, indiscriminately. The friar sunk the rowels of his spurs to the head in his sides, and uttered some strong declamatory sentences against him in the style of the nations of the East; but Goliah plied his iron-heels still the faster, although he groaned, as he kicked, in the bitterness of his spirit. The scene was perfectly irresistible, grievous as the consequences threatened to be on the one side. The lists were all in convulsions of laughter, and involuntary shouts of applause shook the storeys of the firmament. The King laughed till he sunk down in his litter, and his attendants had some fears that he would expire in a convulsive fit. The knight of Kraeland was carried out of the lists, maimed, and in a state of insensibility; and the friar, maugre all he could advance in opposition to the award, was proclaimed the victor in that course, and obliged to appear in the next encounter in opposition to the knight who had been the conqueror in the preceding combat.

Had Goliah of Gath restrained his wrath when this conquest was achieved, it would have been all very well, save for Kraeland and his white charger; but the mongrel's wrath once aroused was not easily abated. Therefore, when the friends of the fallen knight and his squire forced the Philistine to forego his attack and battery, his gleaming eyes glanced all around for another proper object whereon to wreak his horrid revenge. Now it so happened, that the Queen and her Maries were all mounted on white palfreys; and as these stood in the inner circles, arching their proud necks, and champing the bits, he was moved with choler against them, and resolved within himself to give them a surprise, and shew them the prowess of a veteran warrior; for, over and above their saucy demeanor, the glaring whiteness of colour that pervaded them and their riders his heart could not endure: And, besides all these, the shouts and laughter of the multitude were thought to have added greatly to his ire. The friar, who knew him well, said so; "for" added he, "the shouts of joy and laughter are unto him as a portion of gall and of worm-wood." Certes, when he was driven from the prostrate champion, by dint of club and lance, he straightway laid back his long ears, and with a swiftness hardly imaginable, scoured the plain to the attack of the dames and their strutting genets. The friar soon perceived the dangerous dilemma into which he was about to be precipitated; and, all unable to restrain this champion of the Philistines, he cried out with a loud voice, "O wretched man that I am! lo, I shall work destruction among the daughters of women! Will no man come to the assistance of those who have no strength of man at all? Wo is me! will the mighty men stand and look on till the daughters of their people are cut off

from the face of the earth?"

Long ere this sentence had proceeded out of the friar's mouth, the work of deray and confusion was begun. The column of white palfreys were routed in one moment, and their gentle and affrighted riders kicked off in pairs, like so many diving swans. Never was there a warrior like Goliath of Gath! for he tore with his teeth, and struck with both hind feet and fore feet, all at the same instant. The Queen of Scotland would in all probability have been laid low with the rest, had it not been for the prowess of her favourite hero, who sprung from Corbie's back, and seized the audacious mule by the bridle. "Smite him, my son!" cried the friar, with a loud voice: "Draw thou forth thy sword, and smite him to the earth, for it is better for him to die than to live."

The mule thought to prove contumacious at the first; but feeling Charlie's powerful grasp, he calmed himself, turned the one ear back, the other forward, and switched his tail, listening with much gratification to the hysterical cries of the discomfited damsels. Not so his master, who was grieved in spirit, and very wroth with his old servant and companion; insomuch that when he alighted from his back, and seized his curb, he exclaimed, "O thou limb of the wicked one! Thou emblem of the evil principle working in the children of disobedience! What shall I do unto thee? Lo, now, if I had a sword in mine hand, would I not strike thy head from off thy body, and cause thee to be buried with the burial of an ass?" The mule let his ears fall down very wide asunder, like the horns of a Lancashire ox, putting on a face of great humility, as he looked out from beneath his heavy eyebrows, with many a sly demure glance at the friar's face. The good man led him around the lists in search of an opening to get out, for he durst not again mount him for fear of being instrumental in some farther outrage among the ranks of the great and the noble. As he passed by the King, his Majesty caused him to be called up into his presence, and asked him what sum it would please him to ask as the price of his mule?

"Verily, my lord, O King," answered the friar, with great readiness, "that beast hath been unto thy servant as a friend and an inheritance. He hath borne me over the mountains of Palestine, and hath drunk from the fords of Jordan, as well as from Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus. Yea, bestriding that woful beast, hath thy servant fought the battles of the cross; and the hooves that have in thy sight been lifted up against the fair and the lovely, the meek and the innocent, have been dyed red in the blood of infidels. Money is of no avail to thy servant; and he cannot part with his old and trusty companion, even though the spirit of those that are cursed from the heavens be in him."

"Then wilt thou come thyself unto me at the Scottish court?" said the King to him, somewhat in his own style,— "and I will cherish both thee and thy doughty companion, and thou shalt minister unto me in holy things, and shalt be unto me as a father, and I and my children will be to thee as sons and as daughters; for my trusty and well tried friend, Sir Ringan of Mountcomyn, saith well of thee and of thy great wisdom, valour, and prudence."

"Verily, most noble King, I have yet many things to accomplish in other lands than this, which, by the strength of the Lord, must be fulfilled; when these are finished, then shall thy servant come unto thee, and visit thee for good."

"And thou shalt be a welcome guest," said the King: "Wear thou this ring for my sake, which I give thee as a pledge of friendship, and of protection through my kingdom. Remain in the lists, for thou hast yet battle to do against two knights of the lance and the sword."

"Lo, I will even strike with the sword and the spear, if my lord the King commandeth it. But I lack armour, and am not a man of war, save when the lives of the innocent or the cause of the cross is at stake. And, moreover, the beast that thou seest is as a beast of the bottomless pit; he hath antipathies and sympathies of his own; and instead of bearing me full force against my opponent, he may carry me to make war against women and children. Nevertheless, I will do all that it behooveth me to do. Who are my adversaries?"—He was told they were the knights of Gemelscleuch and Raeburn.—"Then God do so to me, and more also, if I lift up my hand against any of these my brethren, the men of my right hand, and the preservers of my life. Neither will one of them put his spear in rest against me; so that the battle would perish. Thy servant is not afraid to fight, but as a gladiator he is unwilling to exhibit; therefore my lord, O King, suffer him to depart in peace."

These reasons were cogent, so the King admitted them; and the worthy and heroic friar was suffered to lead off Goliath of Gath, amid thundering shouts of applause.

## CHAP. XI.

This general doctrine of the text explained, I proceed, in what remains of this discourse, to point out to you three important and material considerations concerning the nature and character of woman. These shall be, *1stly*, What she was; *2dly*, What she is; and, *3dly*, What she will be hereafter. And are not these, my brethren, matters of high importance?

*Dickson's Sermons.*

All things of this world wear to an end, saith Isaac; so also did this high Christmas festival within the halls and towers of Roxburgh. The lady Jane had borne a principal share in all the sports, both in and out of doors. In the hall she was led up to every dance, and in the lists she presided as the queen of the games, distributing the prizes with her own fair hands to the Scottish heroes, and, of course, crowning her old friend Charlie with the bays at least once a day. Sir Charles was

a most unassuming character, and seldom adventured on addressing his superiors first. But when once they addressed discourse to him, he never failed answering them with perfect ease and unconcern; and often, as is well known ere this time, with more volubility than he himself approved of. Once, and only once during all these days of his triumph and high honours, did the lady Jane remember him of having brought her into captivity, and of the high bribe he had refused for her liberty. "An' if it be your will, honoured lady, I wish ye wadna say ony mair about that matter," said Sir Charles; "for mony queer fidgetty kind o' feelings I hae had about it sinsyne. And if I had kend then what I ken now,—if I had kend wha I had in my arms, and what I had in my arms, I had nae borne the honours that I wear the day. My heart had some sair misgiving aince about you, when there were hard news gaun of your great jeopardy; but now that you are in sic high favour, I am e'en glad that I brought you, for troth ye hae a face and a form that does ane good to look at."

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The lady Jane only sighed at this address, and looked down, thinking, without doubt, of the long and dismal *widowhood* which it would behoove her to keep for the dismal end of her betrothed knight, and then a virgin widowhood too, which was the worst of all. There was an obscure glimpse of the same sort of ideas glanced on Charlie's mind as he viewed her downcast blushing countenance; and afraid of giving birth to any painful sensations in such a lovely lady's mind, he desisted from further conversation.

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The Queen was still so much interested in that lady as to endeavour by all means to procure her liberty without any ransom, somewhat contrary to her son-in-law's opinion. The Queen reasoned, that she was not a lawful prisoner of war; the Douglas that she was, there being no bond of peace subsisting between the nations, and she entering Scotland with forged credentials, at least signed and sealed in favour of another and non-existing person. She applied to the King, who gave his consent, but, at the same time, professed having nothing to do in the matter. At length she teased Lord Douglas so much that he resolved to indulge her Majesty before the court took leave of him, but to leave it until the very last day. He, however, reckoned before his host; for now that the abbot of Melrose had conjoined him with royalty, he found that he had at the very least two to please instead of one.

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Here, we must, with that regard to veracity which so well becomes every narrator of a true tale, divulge a disagreeable secret; that is, we must delineate truly a trait in the character of our heroine, the lady Douglas, (lately the princess Margaret of Scotland,) which we would rather have concealed, had it been possible to have done so. But she could not conceal it any longer herself,—and why should Isaac and I vex ourselves about it; for one day when Mary Kirkmichael waited on her in her chamber, she found her drowned in tears, and with great perplexity, and no less curiosity, set herself to discover the cause.

"What? My dearest and most noble lady in tears?" exclaimed she. "Now, a plague on these teasing, battling, boisterous, deluding creatures called men, that will not let poor innocent maids alone to live at heart's ease, but hold them thus in constant ferment, married or unmarried! Well did I ween from experience, that the maiden's troubles were the most insufferable to be borne! The neglects—the disappointed hopes—the fears—and, above all, the jealousies! Oh these jealousies! What infernal tormentors they are! But now little wot I what to say, or what to think; for beshrew me if I remember the time when I saw my royal mistress in tears before. Let me recollect. No, not since dame Mary Malcolm's palfrey leaped the ravine before the lords of Huntly and Athol, and yours refused. Then, indeed, you wept; and when I laughed you struck me. Yes, you know you struck me, and that had nearly made matters worse."

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"Pray, madam," said lady Douglas, "could you conveniently command yourself so far as to bring a surgeon here on the instant?"

"A surgeon! Sanct Marie's grace! what is your ailment, my dearest lady?"

"It is not for myself, it is for you I want him. You are very ill of a quinsey, dame, and bleeding below the tongue is necessary. Go bring my father's leech to me, without delay, and come with him."

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"You have not forgot your sweet maiden frolics for all that is come and all that is done. Well, I am glad you are still in that whimsical humour. I was afraid you were grievously vexed or disappointed at something in your new state."

"Step forth, I say, and bring me in a surgeon, for I insist on having you bled under the tongue. You are very ill indeed, and the disease is infectious."

"By my maidhood, and by your own, sweet lady, (the Douglas's I mean,) there shall no leech that ever drew lancet open a vein in my blessed and valuable member. No, not were it to humour a queen, or a *lady Jane Howard*."

"Now, may all the plagues that prey on the heart of woman seize and torment thee if thou hast not guessed the cause of my uneasiness. There's a latent devil within thee that whispers to thy imagination the thoughts that are passing in my heart. O Kirkmichael, I am ill! I have suffered many distresses in my time! many, many distresses!"

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"Yes, indeed you have, my royal mistress! many, many distresses!"

"Bring the surgeon, I say. Cannot you, for the life of you, compose yourself for a little space, when you see me in such distress? Your royal mistress, Mary? I am no royal mistress now! No, I a'nt! Nothing but a plain jog-trot wife of a lord, or earl, or how do you call that beautiful title? While the lady Jane Howard!—Oh Kirkmichael, I cannot tell you the half of what I feel!"

"I know it all. Jealousy! my dear lady, jealousy! Think you I know not what it is to suffer that? Do

you remember young Spinola, that came to our court from the places abroad? He loved me the best after all; I had certain demonstrative proofs of it. But do you know what I suffered? Racks, tortures, strangulations! Fiends tearing out my eyes, pouring hellebore into my ears, and boring through my heart with red hot irons! Not know what jealousy is? Was not I telling your royal self the last minute"—

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"Mary! stop, and be advised. You are very ill."

"I humbly ask forgiveness. I was coming to it. Dear lady, I have noted your trouble these nine days past, and that it was still gaining ground. But I can partly account for it, so that, with a little prudence and patience, it may be removed. Ever since the day on which you was a bride, or the one following perhaps, there has been more court and more flattery paid to the southern beauty than to the northern one. It is the course of nature, madam; you are now a married wife, and your charms must be admired at a distance with respect and awe. The maid must still be courted and flattered. Quite natural, madam, I assure you. Think you any knight durst caper and bow, and prate to the lady Douglas, as they do to *the English puppet*?"

"Mary, I will give you all my wedding apparel for these two last words. Is not she a mere puppet, without soul or magnanimity? But—Mary!—How gladly would I change places with her, Mary! She has conquered after all. Yes: She has conquered Margaret Stuart, there is no denying of it to one's own heart."

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"Gramercy, dearest lady, are you not raving? Has not the noble lord of your adoption proved victorious, and gained you with all honour and approbation?"

"But then the lord of *her* adoption *died* for her, Mary. Think of that. The gallant, faithful, and magnanimous Musgrave *died* for the mistress of his affections. But who died for the poor degraded lady Margaret of Scotland? I am conquered with my own weapons. There is no denying of it! I would rather that one lover had laid down his life for me than have had fifty husbands."

"Palpably wrong! I'll prove it. Fifty husbands! How delightful—Beg pardon, madam."

"I tried the Douglas hardly for it. But he was too selfish, and would not die for me. Base, cruel knight! No, he *would not* die for me; even though I got him to believe that I was put to death, and my ghost haunting him, yet he *would not* kill himself. What a value those monstrous men set upon their lives! Musgrave died. Lady Jane has conquered, and I am *married*! I wish I were dead, Kirkmichael!"

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"'Tis a pity but that you were, madam! If ladies are to live on these terms with the world, they had better be out of it. For you know if the man that one loves best will not condescend always to die when the gratification of his mistress' vanity requires it, why there is an end of all endurance. I managed otherwise with young Spinola."

"Mention the name of your Spinola again to me for the head that stands on your body, since you deprecate the more gentle prescription of bleeding below the tongue; and now find me some anodyne without delay for the distemper that is preying on my vitals. None of your jeers and your jibes, Kirkmichael, for I am not in humour to bear them. The worst thing of all is yet to come. This puppet,—this painted doll,—this thing of wax! after triumphing over me in my own country and among my own people,—after being died for, while I was only lived for,—after being courted, and flattered, and smiled on, while I was only bowed to and gazed on,—after being carressed by my father, and bedaubed with praises by my newfangled and volatile mother,—after all this, I say, there is she going to be set at liberty, and without all question wedded to one of the royal dukes, one of the princes of the blood! How shall the blood of the Bruce and the spirit of the Stuart brook this? Before I heard of that lady's name, I knew not what jealousy was. Ever since that time has she held me in misery. I thought I had once achieved the greatest conquest that ever was accomplished by heroine. And I *did* seize a noble prize! How has it turned out?—in every instance to her honour, and my disparagement. And there, through the unnatural fondness of my doating mother, will she return home, and be courted for her princely fortune, not for her beauty I am sure! But then, they will hear that the bravest and most chivalrous knight in England *died for her*; and as certainly as I speak to you, will she achieve a higher marriage than Margaret, and how shall she ever show her face again?"

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"A higher marriage than you, dearest lady? Then must she be married to some of the kings on the continent, for in all the dominion of England there is not a subject of such power as your lord, the Earl of Douglas and Mar, nor one whose military honours flourish so proudly."

"My lord and husband is all that I could wish in man, only——"

"Only that he is *not dead*. That's all."

"You had better! *Only* I say that he is not a *prince of the blood royal*, Mary. Think of that. There are many such in England. And there to a certainty will my great and only rival be wedded to one of these. The Duke of York or Gloucester, mayhap; or to Prince Henry, the heir of the house of Mortimer, and then she'll be a *queen*! Yes, Kirkmichael! then she will be *queen of England*!—And I—what will I be? No more than plain *Lady Douglas*! The wife of the *Black Douglas*!—Och! what shall I do, Mary? I'll go and wipe my shoes on her as long as I have it in my power."

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"Tarry for a small space; there is time enough for that afterward, my dearest lady. Be staid for a little while, till I tell you a secret. A very important and profound one it is, and it behoves you to know it. There is a certain distemper that young newly married ladies are subjected to, which, is entitled PHRENZY, or some such delightful name. Some call it *derangement of intellect*, but that is too long a name, I hate long names, or very long things of any sort. So you must know, madam, that this delightful trouble, for it is delightful in its way, produces a great deal of animation. It is

quite proper you should know this grand matrimonial secret, madam. This delicious, spirit-stirring trouble then soon goes off, and when it goes all the giddy vapours of youth fly with it. The mirror of the eye is changed, its convex being thence turned inward, reflecting all nature on the soul in a different light from that in which it had ever appeared before; and, at the same time the whole structure and frame of the character is metamorphosed, and the being that is thus transmuted becomes a more rational and respectable creature than it was previously, and at the same time a more happy one, although it must be acknowledged its happiness is framed on a different model. This is my secret, and it is quite proper that every *young* lady who is married should be initiated into it. As for the old ones, they are too wise to be initiated into any thing; or for any thing to be initiated into them."

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"Now, you imagine you have said a very wise thing; and it is not without shrewdness. But I can add a principal part which you have wholly left out, and it is this: When the patient is labouring under this disease, it is absolutely necessary that she be indulged, and humoured in every one of her caprices, else her convalescence is highly equivocal. Don't you acknowledge this?"

"I grant it. And the first case that comes under my care I promise to abide by this prescription."

"That is spoken like yourself,—like the trusty friend and confidante. What then is to be done? for something must be done, and that suddenly."

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"That is easily decided. She must be kept in confinement. Kept here a prisoner at large, until she turn an old maid and lose a few of her fore-teeth. That will be delightful! Eh! Then make her believe all the time that it is a duty incumbent on her to remain in that widowed state for the sake of Musgrave—Hoh! beg pardon, madam!"

"I charge you never to let that triumph of hers sound in my ears again. It creates the same feeling within me as if you informed me that an adder was laced in my stays. Kirkmichael, you never took any thing in hand that you did not accomplish for me. This lady must be retained for the present, till we can determine on some other course. I gave my lord a lesson about it already, but his reply was not only unsatisfactory but mortifying in the extreme. It has almost put me beside myself, and my pride will not suffer me to apply to him again. "My dearest love," said he, "I pray that you will not shew a sense of any inferiority by a jealousy of that unfortunate lady." Inferiority! I never had such a sentiment as a feeling of inferiority! What absurd notions these men imbibe. Is it possible, Mary, that I can have a sense of inferiority?"

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"No, no! quite impossible! Think no more of such antiquated and absurd apothegms as these. I will manage it for you. I take in hand to keep her as long as I live, if that will satisfy you. But are you sure that your brother will not fall in love with her, and marry her, and then she will be queen of Scotland?"

"Ooh!—Oooh! Give me a drink, Mary. I am going into fits! Ooh!—Yes: as sure as you stand there, he will. The prince is his mother all over, newfangled and volatile in the extreme, and amorous to an intolerable degree. Disgustingly amorous, she is the very sort of food for his passion. Then her princely fortune, and the peace of the two realms! Oh! give me another drink, Mary; and bathe my hands—and my brow—That is kindly done. Queen of Scotland! Then I must pay court to her,—perhaps be preferred as lady of the bed-chamber. No, no. To the Scottish court she *must not go!*"

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"Be calm, my sweet lady! I have it. You shall assume your brother's character once more—pay court to her—seduce her, and have her disgraced."

"What did you say, Kirkmichael? repeat that again. What did you say about disgracing? I am so very ill."

"O no! That scheme will not do. It will end ill! it will end ill! You are lady Douglas now, not the maiden princess. Why, I will get her married to one of your footmen for you. That will do."

"Prithee speak of things possible, and within some bounds of probability. If she were but married to a knight but one step below my lord in dignity, I would be satisfied. Nay, were that step only ideal it would give my heart content."

"Is that then so much to make such a pother about? I will accomplish it in two days. So difficult to get a maid of her complexion to marry? Difficulty in fattening—a pig! baiting a hook for a bagrel!—a stickleback!—a perch! I'll do it in two days—in one day—in half a day, else never call me Mary Kirkmichael of Balmedie again. Difficulty in marrying a maid with light blue eyes—golden locks and rosy cheeks—with a languishing smile always on her countenance? and that maid an English one too? Peugh! Goodbye, my lady, Lady Black Douglas. I'm off. (Opening the door again.) It is a shame and a disgrace for any gentleman not to *die* for his mistress! I say it is! Young Spinola would have died for me cheerfully if I would have suffered him,—that he would! Goodbye, madam."

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Mary was as busy all the remaining part of that day as ever was a bee in a meadow. She had private business with the Queen, and had art or interest enough to get two private audiences. She had business with the lady Jane Howard; a word to say to the King, and two or three to the lord Douglas—But it is a great loss that these important disclosures cannot be imparted here,—for every word that she told to each of them was a profound secret! Not a word of it ever to be repeated till death! What a loss for posterity! It had one quality, there was not a word of truth in all this important disclosure; but an ingenious lie by a woman is much more interesting than one of her true stories. There was, however, one of Mary Kirkmichael's secrets came to light, though none of those above-mentioned; and from the complexion of that, a good guess may be made at the matter of all the rest.

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Sir Charles Scott, alias Muckle Charlie of Yardbire, was standing at the head of his hard-headed

Olivers, his grimy Potts, and his skrae-shankit Laidlaws, in all amounting now to 140 brave and well appointed soldiers. He had them all dressed out in their best light uniform, consisting of deer-skin jackets with the hair outside; buckskin breeches, tanned white as snow, with the hair inside; blue bonnets as broad as the rim of a lady's spinning wheel, and clouted single-soled shoes. He was training them to some evolutions for a grand parade before the King, and was himself dressed in his splendid battle array, with his plumes and tassels of gold. His bonnet was of the form of a turban, and his tall nodding plumes consisted of three fox tails, two of them dyed black, and the middle one crimson. A goodlier sight than Sir Charles at the head of his borderers, no eye of man (or woman either) ever beheld. As he stood thus giving the word of command, and brandishing the Eskdale souple by way of example, in the great square in the middle of the fortress, a little maid came suddenly to his side and touched him. Charles was extending his voice at the time, and the interruption made him start inordinately, and cut a loud syllable short in the middle. The maid made a low courtesy, while Charles stooped forward and looked at her as a man does who has dropt a curious gem or pin on the ground, and cannot find it. "Eh? God bless us, what is't hinny? Ye war amaist gart me start."

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"My mistress requests a few minutes private conversation with you, sir knight."

"Whisht dame! speak laigh," said Sir Charles, half whispering, and looking raised-like at his warriors: "Wha's your mistress, my little bonny dow? Eh? Oh you're nodding and smirking, are you? Harkee, It's no the auld Queen, is it? Eh?"

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"You will see who it is presently, gallant knight. It is a matter of the greatest import to you, as well as your captain."

"Ha! Gude faith, then it maunna be neglected. I'll be w'ye even now, lads; saunter about, but dinna quit this great four-nooked fauld till I come back again. Come along, then, my wee bonny hen chicken. Raux up an' gie me a grip o' your finger-ends. Side for side's neighbour like." So away went Sir Charles, leading his tiny conductor by the hand, and was by her introduced into one of the hundred apartments in the citadel.

"Our captain is gaun aff at the nail now," said Will Laidlaw; "Thae new honours o' his are gaun to be his ruin. He's getting far ower muckle in favour wi' the grit fo'k."

"I wonder to hear ye speak that gate," said Gideon Pott of Bilhope: "I think it be true that the country says, that ye maun aye read a Laidlaw backward. What can contribute sae muckle to advance a gentleman and his friends as to be in favour with the great?"

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"I am a wee inclined to be of Laidlaw's opinion," said Peter Oliver of the Langburnsheils, (for these three were the headsmen of the three names marshalled under Sir Charles,)—"Sudden rise, sudden fa'; that was a saying o' my grandfather's, and he was very seldom in the wrong. I wadna wonder a bit to see our new knight get his head choppit off; for I think, if he haud on as he is like to do, he'll soon be ower grit wi' the Queen. Fo'k should bow to the bush they get bield frae, but take care o' lying ower near the laiggens o't. That was a saying o' my grandfather's aince when they wantit him to visit at the castle of Mountcomyn."

"There is he to the gate now," said Laidlaw, "and left his men, his bread-winners, in the very mids o' their lessons; and as sure as we saw it, some o' thae imps will hae his simple honest head into Hoy's net wi' some o' thae braw women. Wha wins at their hands will lose at naething. I never bodit ony good for my part o' the gowden cuishes and the gorget, and the three walloping tod tails. Mere eel-baits for catching herons!"

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"Ay weel I wat that's little short of a billyblinder, lad!" said Peter Oliver; "I trow I may say to you as my grandfather said to the ghost, 'Ay, ay, Billy Baneless, 'an a' tales be true, yours is nae lie,' quo' he; and he was a right auldfarrant man."

But as this talk was going on among the borderers, Sir Charles, as before said, was introduced into a private chamber, where sat no less a dame than the officious and important lady of all close secrets, Mistress Mary Kirkmichael of Balmedie, who rose and made three low courtesies, and then with an affected faltering tongue and downcast look, addressed Sir Charles as follows: "Most noble and gallant knight,—hem—Pardon a modest and diffident maiden, sir knight!—pink of all chivalry and hero of the Border: I say be so generous as to forgive the zeal of a blushing virgin for thus presuming to interrupt your warrior avocations.—(Sir Charles bowed.)—But, O knight—hem—there is a plot laying, or laid against your freedom. Pray may I take the liberty to ask, Are you free of any love engagement?"

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"Perfectly so, madam, at—hem!—"

"At my service. Come that is so far well. You could not then possibly have any objections to a young lady of twenty-one or thereby, nobly descended, heir to seven ploughgates of land, and five half-davochs, and most violently in love with you."

"I maun see her first, and hear her speak," said the knight, "and ken what blood and what name; and whether she be Scots or English."

"Suppose that you *have* seen her and heard her speak," said the dame; "and suppose she was of Fife blood; and that her name was *lady* Mary Kirkmichael: What would you then say against her?"

"Nothing at all, madam," said Sir Charles, bowing extremely low.

"Do you then consent to accept of such a one for your lady?"

"How can I possibly tell? Let me see her."

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"O Sir Charles! gallant and generous knight! do not force a young blushing virgin to disclose

what she would gladly conceal. You *do* see her, Sir Charles! You *do* see her and hear her speak too. Nay, you see her kneeling at your feet, brave and generous knight! You see her *tears* and you hear her *weep*,—and what hero can withstand that? Oh Sir Charles!—

"Hout, hout, hout!" cried Sir Charles interrupting her, and raising her gently with both hands, "Hout, hout, hout! for heaven's sake behave yoursel, and dinna flee away wi' the joke atehgither, sweet lady. Ye may be very weel, and ye are very weel for ought that I see, but troth ye ken a man maun do ae thing afore another, and a woman too. Ye deserve muckle better than the likes o' me, but I dinna incline marriage; and mair than that, I hae nae time to spare."

"Ah, Sir Charles, you should not be so cruel. You should think better of the fair sex, Sir Charles! Look at this face. What objections have you to it, Sir Charles?" [390]

"The face is weel enough, but it will maybe change. The last blooming face that took me in turned put a very different article the next day. Ah, lady! Ye little ken what I hae suffered by women and witchcraft, or ye wadna bid me think weel o' them."

"Well, knight, since I cannot melt your heart, I must tell you that there is a plot against your liberty, and you will be a married man before to morrow's night. It is a grand plot, and I am convinced it is made solely to entrap you to marry an English heiress that is a captive here, who is fallen so deeply in love with you that, if she does not attain you for her lover and husband, her heart will break. She has made her case known to the Queen, and I have come by it: therefore, sir knight, as you value my life, keep this a *profound* secret. I thought it a pity not to keep you out of English connections; therefore I sent for you privily to offer you my own hand, and then you could get off on the score of engagement." [391]

"Thank you kindly, madam."

"Well, Sir. On pretence of an appendage to the marriage of the king's favourite daughter with the greatest nobleman of the land, before the festival conclude, it is agreed on that there are to be a number of weddings beside, which are all to be richly endowed. The ladies are to choose among the heroes of the games; and this lady Jane Howard is going to make choice of you, and the law is to be framed in such a manner that there will be no evading it with honour. You have been a mortal enemy to the English; so have they to you. Had not you better then avoid the connection by a previous marriage, or an engagement say?"

"I think I'll rather take chance, with your leave, madam: Always begging your pardon, ye see. But, depend on it, I'll keep your secret, and am indebted to you for your kind intentions. I'll take chance. They winna surely force a wife on ane whether he will or no?"

"Perhaps not. One who does *not incline marriage*, and has not *time to spare* to be married, may be excused. Tell me, seriously; surely you will never think of accepting of her?" [392]

"It is time to decide about that when aince I get the offer. I can hardly trow what ye say is true; but if the King and the Warden will hae it sae, ye ken what can a body do?"

"Ah, there it is! Cruel Sir Charles! But you know you really have not a minute's *time to spare* for marriage, and the want of *inclination* is still worse. I have told you, sir knight, and the plot will be accomplished to-morrow. I would you would break her heart, and absolutely refuse her, for I hate the rosy minx. But three earldoms and nine hundred thousand marks go far! Ah me! Goodbye, noble knight. Be secret for my sake."

Sir Charles returned to his men in the great square, laughing in his sleeve all the way. He spoke some to himself likewise, but it was only one short sentence, which was this: "Three earldoms and nine hundred thousand marks! Gudefaith, Corbie will be astonished." [393]

It was reported afterwards, that this grand story of Mary's to Sir Charles was was nothing at all in comparison with what she told to lady Jane, of flames and darts, heroism, royal favour, and distinction; and, finally, of endless captivity in the event of utter rejection. However that was, when the troops assembled around the fortress in the evening, and the leaders in the hall, proclamations were made in every quarter, setting forth, that all the champions who had gained prizes since the commencement of the Christmas games were to meet together, and contend at the same exercises before the King, for other prizes of higher value; and, farther, that every successful candidate should have an opportunity of acquiring his mistress' hand in marriage, with rich dowries, honours, manors, and privileges, to be conferred by the King and Queen; who, at the same time gave forth their peremptory commands, that these gallants should meet with no denial, and this on pain of forfeiting the royal favour and protection, not only towards the dame so refusing, but likewise to her parents, guardians, and other relations. [394]

Never was there a proclamation issued that made such a deray among the fair sex as this. All the beauty of the Lowlands of Scotland was assembled at this royal festival. The city of Roxburgh and the town of Kelso were full of visitors; choke full of them! There were ladies in every house, beside the inmates; and, generally speaking, three *at an average* for every male, whether in the city or suburbs. Yet, for all these lovely women of high rank and accomplishments, none else fled from the consequences of the mandate but one alone, who dreaded a rival being preferred,—a proof how little averse the ladies of that age were to the bonds of matrimony. Such a night as that was in the city! There were running to and fro, rapping at doors, and calling of names during the whole night. It was a terrible night for the dressmakers; for there was such a run upon them, and they had so much ado, that they got nothing done at all, except the receiving of orders which there was no time to execute. [395]

Next morning, at eight of the day, by the abbey bell, the multitude were assembled, when the names of the former heroes were all called over, but only sixteen appeared, although twenty-two



stood on the list. The candidates were then all taken into an apartment by themselves, and treated with viands and wines, with whatever else they required. There also they were instructed in the laws of the game. Every one was obliged to contend at every one of the exercises; and the conqueror in each was to retire into the apartment of the ladies, where they were all placed in a circle, lay his prize at his mistress's feet, and retire again to the sports without uttering a word.

The exercises were held on the large plain south of the Teviot, so that they were beheld by the whole multitude without any inconveniency. The flowers of the land also beheld from their apartment in the castle, although no one saw them in return, save the fortunate contenders in the field. The first trial was a foot race for a chain of gold, given by the lady Douglas, and all the sixteen being obliged to run, the sport afforded by the race was excellent; for the eager desire to be foremost acted not more powerfully to urge the candidates to exertion than the dread of being the last, so that the two hindmost were straining every nerve, and gasping as voraciously for breath as the two foremost. Sir Charles Scott took the lead, leaving the rest quite behind, so far that every one thought he would gain with all manner of ease, and they began to hail him as conqueror. But owing to his great weight he lost breath, and in spite of all he could do the poet made by him and won the prize, which he took with a proud and a joyful heart, and laid at the feet of Delany. "Bauchling shurf!" exclaimed Sir Charles, laughing when he saw the poet passing his elbow, "Useless bauchling shurf! an I had kend I wad hae letten ye lie, and been singit to an izle in the low o' Ravensworth."

"Knight, I think ye hae lost," cried one.

"I think sae, too," said Charles. "I liket aye better to rin ahint an Englishman than afore him a' my life."

The next game given out was a trial in leaping, for a pair of bracelets, clasped with gold, and set with jewels, given by the Queen. These also the poet won, and laid at Delany's feet. Sir Charles won three; one for tilting on horseback, one for wrestling, and one for pitching the iron bar, and he laid all the three prizes at the feet of lady Jane Howard. Two lords won each of them two prizes, and other two knights won each of them one; and all, unknown to one another, laid them at the feet of lady Jane Howard.

When the sports of the day were finished, the seven conquerors, all crowned with laurel, and gorgeously arrayed, were conducted to the gallery where the ladies still remained; and after walking round the room to the sound of triumphal music, they were desired to kneel one by one in the order in which they had entered before, and each to invoke his mistress's pity in his own terms. It fell to the poet's lot to kneel first, who stretched forth his hands toward a certain point in the room, and expressed himself as follows: "O lovely darling of my soul! in whom my every hope is centered; at whose feet I laid my honours down. This laurel wreath I also consecrate to thee. By all the love that I have borne for thee, the pains that I have suffered, I conjure you to raise me up, and say thou wilt be mine:—else here I'll kneel till doomsday!"

A pause ensued; the King and his nobles looked on in breathless curiosity, for they knew not where he had bestowed his favours. The dames also gazed in envious silence, and in hopes that the supplicant would be refused. He soon himself began to dread what they hoped; his countenance changed; the wild lustre of his eye faded; and he began to look around to see where he could get a sword on which to fall and kill himself. He cast one other pitiful look to Delany, but she deigned no movement to his relief,—still keeping her seat, though visibly in great agitation. But, at length, when hope was extinct in his bosom, there appeared one to his relief. This was no other than his old rival the gospel friar, who had been admitted in an official capacity, in order to join hands and bless unions if any such chanced to be agreed on. He was standing ruminating behind backs; but seeing the first offer about to be rejected, and aware of the force of example, whether good or bad, and how little chance he had of employment that day if the first effort misgave, he stepped briskly up to Delany, and, taking her hand, said, "Lo, my daughter, have not I travelled for thee in pain, and yearned over thee as a mother yearneth over the son of her youth? Why wilt thou break my heart, and the heart of him that burneth for thy love?" Delany then rose, and with trembling step came toward her lover, led by the grotesque form of the good friar. The tears gushed from the poet's eyes as she lifted the laurel crown from the floor, and replacing it on his head, said, as she raised him up, "Thou hast adventured and overcome. Hence be thou the lord of my heart and affections."

The friar gave them no more time to palaver, but joined their hands, pronounced them a married pair, and blessed their union in the name of the Trinity. Then Sir Charles Scott kneeled, and, casting his eyes gravely toward the floor, said only these words: "Will the lady whom I serve take pity on her humble slave, or shall he retire from this presence ashamed and disgraced."

Woman, kind and affectionate woman, is ever more ready to confer an obligation on our sex than accept of one. Lady Jane arose without any hesitation, put the crown on the knight's head, and, with a most winning grace, raised him up, and said, "Gallant knight, thou wert born to conquer my countrymen and me; I yield my hand and with it my heart." The friar lost no time in joining their hands; he judged it best and safest to take women at their first words; and short time was it till the two were pronounced husband and wife, "and whom God hath joined let no man dare to put asunder. Amen!" said the friar, and bestowed on them an earnest blessing.—Isaac the curate expatiates largely on the greatness and goodness of this couple; how they extended their possessions, and were beloved on the Border. Their son, he says, was the famous Sir Robert of Eskdale, the warden of the marches, from whom the families of Thirlstane, Harden, and many other opulent houses are descended. No union could be more happy; and besides, it rendered the Lady Douglas the happiest of women, and Mary Kirkmichael the proudest.

But to return to the scene in the gallery with the knights and their mistresses. The King and his nobles who accompanied the gallants into the apartment of the ladies, knowing nothing of the choices each had made, expected great amusement from compliances and non-compliances; and at all events, after so fair a beginning, a number of weddings to be the result. Every one of the successful knights expected the same thing; for it is a curious fact, which shows the duplicity of our character in a striking light, that, when the champions were all in the apartment together in the morning, some mentioned one lady as the flower of the land and of all present, some mentioned another, and so on. But no one ever mentioned the names either of *Delany* or *Jane Howard*. Sir Charles indeed mentioned no name, but when each had named a pretended favourite with mighty encomiums, he only added, "I'll no say muckle; but there's ane that I rank aboon a' thae."

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The master of the ceremonies looked round to call the next champion to kneel; but, behold, he was not there! He called the next again. He was gone also! Every one of the knights had vanished, each thinking *himself* slighted by the preference given to Sir Charles Scott, but none knowing that for his sake they were all slighted alike. The noblemen were all in the utmost consternation; the King became highly offended, and said "What is the meaning of this? Have these knights dared to desert their colours on the very eve of action? This is not only an affront put upon us, but upon our fair and noble visitors, of whose honour and feelings we are more jealous than of our own."

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But the friar, who was a man of peace, and disliked all sort of offence, when he saw the King was displeased, took speech to himself, and his speech set all the gallery into a burst of laughter. He was standing in the midst of the floor, with his book in hand, ready and eager to officiate still farther as a knitter and binder; but when he saw the knights all fled, and the King offended, he uplifted both of his hands and one of his feet, standing still on the other, and cried with a loud voice, "Behold my occupation is ended! Woe is me for the children of my people! For the spirit of man is departed away, and he hath no strength remaining. Oh what shall I do for the honour of my brethren! For, lo, the virgins are come to the altar, and there is none to accept of the offering. The men of might are dismissed, yea they are confounded and fled away, and the daughters of the land are left to bewail the months and years of their virginity. Woe is me, for my hand findeth nothing more to do!"

The ladies laughed immoderately at the cases of the forlorn and discomfited knights; for they had witnessed the proceedings, and saw that all their devotions were paid to one object; and as no lady of Scotland had been chosen, one could not envy another,—so they tittered and laughed off the affront as well as they could.

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The friar got passports into England, and after much labour and pain got the poet established in his father's possessions, and acknowledged as the lord of Ravensworth. He also regained for him his lady's possessions on the continent, which the Nevilles retained for the space of two hundred years. That amiable couple cultivated the arts of peace, music, and song, as long as they lived. After these things, the friar was preferred to great emoluments in his old age, and he spent them all in acts of charity and benevolence.

From Roxburgh the royal party proceeded to Melrose, where they remained two days, which they spent partly in devotion and thanksgivings, and partly in viewing the magnificent scenes in the neighbourhood, particularly the great hill of Eildon, so lately reft asunder and divided into three by the power of the elemental spirits. To this awful theme the mind of the Queen still reverted; and, on her last visit to these mountains, she passed through the recent chasms, gazing and trembling at the effects produced by that tremendous convulsion of nature; and, at length, she had spoken and dreamed so much about it, that she proposed to go and visit the castle of Aikwood, and if possible to get a sight of the great enchanter himself, before she left the Border counties, where, she said, she might never be again. Every one tried to dissuade her from the attempt, and the King got into a high passion, but still she could not be driven from her purpose. "As we return to the abbey," said she, "we will go by the ford of Dornick-burn at the foot of the deep dell that you told me of, where the devil first made his appearance on horseback to the four warriors. I should not wonder that we shall see him there again under some disguise."

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"I would not wonder that we should," said Sir Charles: "I have been told that he is sometimes seen there in the shape of a clerk; sometimes as a mariner; and sometimes in the form of the King of Scotland. Always begging your pardon, royal madam."

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"There is no offence, Sir Charles, as long as you do not tell me that he appears in the shape of a Queen. I hope he has never yet been known to assume the shape of a woman."

"He has enow to appear for him in *that* form, which I ken something about to my cost; and which your royal majesty kens mair about than I could have wished. What does your majesty account the greatest peril that man is subject to in this world?"

"Oh war, war, certainly! Nineteen out of twenty of his perils concentrate in that, or are derived from it."

"Ye may be thankfu' ye ken nae mair about it than that, my lady queen! Aince ye gang near the castle of Aikwood ye'll get a little mair experience perhaps. Now ye are determined on ganging there the morn, and I am determined on accompanying you, since you will go. But troth I would be right wae to see my queen turned into a cow, and a little deil set to drive her; or into a grey mare, and a witch or warlock set to gallop on her; or a doe, or a hare, or a she-fox, and a tichel o' tikes set after her to tear her a' to tareleathers. Always begging your pardon, my liege lady."

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As they were chatting on in this familiar and jocular style, they came to the identical little deep

dell, at the meeting of two rivulets, or moorland burns, where the devil and his three attendant imps had appeared to our warriors on their way to Melrose; and, as Dan Chisholm was of the party, the Queen caused him to be called up to describe the whole scene,—with the personal appearance of the arch fiend,—the words he spoke, and also the extraordinary course that he had with him along the marble pavement of the air. All these matters were detailed to her by the trooper with perfect seriousness and simplicity, which made such an impression on the Queen's romantic and superstitious mind, that her countenance altered in every feature, and she was every now and then gazing around as if expecting Satan's personal appearance before them once more. The party were sitting on horseback conversing together, when the sharp eye of Sir Charles, well accustomed to the discernment of all living or moving objects, whether by night or by day, perceived a miserable looking wight approaching them by the very path on which the infernal cavalcade had formerly proceeded. The Queen was talking to Dan, still pushing her inquiries, when Sir Charles touched her gently on the shoulder, and said, "Hush, your majesty. See who is this approaching us by the very road that the deils took? It is a question who we have here. Ane is nae sure of ony shape that appears in sic a place and sic a time as this."

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Then there was such crossing and telling of beads, and calling on the names of saints, took place with the Queen and her ladies, every one of them asking the same question in terrified whispers, "Is it he, think you? Is it he? Oh, is it he?" Then there was a general request made that they should take instant flight, and ride home to the abbey full speed; but an opposition arose to this proposal from a quarter not expected. This was from no other than Sir Charles' English lady, whose education had taught her to despise the superstitions so prevalent in Scotland; and seeing them all about to fly from a poor wo-begone, half-famished wretch, she opposed it with indignation, adding, that she would abide his coming by herself if none else would. Sir Charles was still far from being clear about these matters, hard experience having taught him caution; however, he commended his lady's spirit, and drew up by her side: They rest marshalling behind them, they awaited in a body the coming of this doubtful guest; and every eye being fixed on his motions, so every tongue was busied in giving vent to the spontaneous movements of the mind. "It is a palmer," said one. "It is a warlock," said another. "It is the devil," said a third; "I ken him by his lang nose!" "Aha, my royal and noble dames!" cried Sir Charles exultingly: "If it be nae the deil, it's his man; sae we may expect some important message, either frae his infernal majesty or the great enchanter, for this is no other than his seneschal. My royal liege, this man that you see approaching is no other than Gilbert Jordan, the late laird of the Peatstackknowe, who was drawn by lot to supply the room of the wretch whom our gospel friar sent up through the clouds in a convoy of fire and brimstone. Whether this be Gibbie or his ghaist, it is hard to say; but I ken weel by the coulter nose it is either the one or the other. Your majesty will scrimply believe it, but the last time I saw that carl the deil was hauding him by the cuff o' the neck ower the topmost tower of the castle of Aikwood, and the poor laird was sprawling like a paddock in a gled's claws, when fifty fathom frae the ground. There is nought in nature I expected less to see than that creature again in the land of the living; yet it is actually he himself in flesh and blood, and that is all, for he is worn to skin and bone, and his nose is even longer than it was! Hech, laird, is this you? And are you indeed returned to the Christian world aince mair?"

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"Aye troth, Yardbire, it is a' that's to the fore of me. But who have you got all here? Good-e'en to you, gentles. This brings me in mind of a story, man, that I hae heard about the hunting of Stanebires' cat—"

"Whisht, Gibbie, and gie us nane o' your auld stories about cats even now. This is the Queen of Scots and her attendants. Rather tell us, in one word, how you have made your escape from yon infernal gang in the castle of Aikwood?"

"Aha, Yardbire, that is a tale that winna tell in ae word, nor twa neither; it wad take a winter night in telling, and it is the awesomest ane that ever passed frae the lips o' man; but I am ower sair forespent at this time to begin to it."

"Oh, no!" cried the Queen: "Honest man, do not begin it at present. It shall serve for our evening's amusement, and you shall tell it before your King and his nobles, after you have had such refreshment as you stand in need of." She then caused one of her squires to alight, and mounting the wearied and exhausted laird on his horse, they rode off to Melrose, where, after a plentiful meal, the laird was brought into the apartment where the King, the Queen, the abbot, with the nobles and ladies of the court, were all assembled; and then, at the royal request, he related to them the following narrative.

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## CHAPTER XII.

Commissions and black bills he had,  
And a' the land went hey-gae mad,  
The like was never seen, joe:

\* \* \* \* \*

To dance and caper in the air,  
And there's an end of him, joe.

*Old Jacobite Song.*

Weel, ye see, my masters and mistresses, this is what I never expected to see. There is something

sae grand in being in the presence of a King and Queen and their courtiers, that it brings me in mind of the devil and his agents that I have been in the habit of entertaining for a month bygone. But there is some wee difference in masters for a' that; for, in my late service, if I had been brought in to entertain them, in an instant they would have had me transformed into some paltry animal, and then amused themselves by tormenting that animal to death, by dissecting it while living. But the queerest thing of all was this,—there was aye a spark of life that they could not destroy, which, for all their cruelties, remained active and intelligent as before; and the moment they put that spark of life out of one animal, they popped it into another, and there was I obliged to undergo the same dismemberment and pain once more, and so on for ever. The inflicting of torment was their chief delight, and of that delight there was no satiety,—it seemed still to increase by gratification.

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On the very first day that I entered on my probation they had a feast, as my comrades know, and as I also have good reason to know, for on that day I suffered death nine times; and yet I was Gibbie Jordan again before night. They first turned me into a cock, and after the three pages had chased me round the castle, and thrown stones at me till I was hanging out my tongue, and could not cackle another lilt, they seized me, took me into the scullery, and drew my neck. Ere ever I was aware, they had me transformed into a huge lubberly calf, while one of the hellish pages was dragging me by the neck with a prickly rope made of hurcheon hides, and the two others were belabouring my rump with cudgels. I suspected their intentions, and being still terrified for death, and inclining rather to suffer any thing, I drew back, shook my head, and bellowed at them, while they still redoubled their blows on my carcase, and cursed me. In spite of all I could do, they dragged me gasping into the slaughter-house, kept the knife an excruciating long time at my throat, and then, after piercing the jugular vein, they laughed immoderately to see me running about, bleeding to death, with my glazed stupid eyes; and when, through faintness, I began to flounder and grovel on the floor, they laughed amain, threshed me to make me plunge a little more, and when I could do nothing farther than give a faint baa! they thought that the best sport of all, and mimicked me.

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I had scarcely ceased baaing as a calf, when I found myself a beautiful cappercaillie, winging the winter cloud, and three devils of falcons after me. 'Now,' thinks I to myself, 'If I do not give you the glaiks now, my hellish masters, may I never wap a wing again. By all the powers of swiftness, but I shall try for once if the feathers shall not carry the flesh away.' Sanct Martha, as I did scour the rimy firmament! I took the wind in my tail, but I went with such amazing velocity that I left it behind me, and as I clove it, it seemed to return in my face. I reached the shoulder of a lofty mountain, and then I laid back my wings, and bolted through the air like a flash of lightning. 'O ho! Messrs Hawks, where are you now?' thought I to myself. Good Lord! ere ever I was aware, there was ane o' them gave me a nab on the crown, that dovered me, and gart me tumble heels-o'er-head down frae the shelves of the clouds; and lighting with a dunt on the ground, I had nae shift but to stap my head in a heather bush, and let them pelt at me till I got some breath again. Then I made for a cottage, thinking the inmates could not but pity my condition, and drive the hawks away from me. I took cover among their cabbage, in the sight of both man and wife; but instead of pitying me, the one came with an old spear, and the other with the tongs, to finish my existence,—and always when the falcons came down on me with their talons, the two cried out, "Weel done, little hawkie! Yether him up! puik him weel!" I was forced to take wing again, till at length, through fatigue and want of feathers I dropt close to the castle whence I had set out, and the three falcons, closing with me, first picked out my eyes and then my brains. I was stabbed as a salmon, hunted as a roe-buck, felled as a bull, and had my head chopped off for a drake. The dinner was made up of me. I supplied every dish, and then was forced to cook them all afterward. It was no wonder that I could not partake of the fragments of the meal.

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From the moment that the Christian warriors were all dismissed with disgrace from the castle, the devil became contumacious with the Master, and assayed to carry matters with a very high hand. But he had to do with one that would not succumb, no not in the smallest point, but who opposed him with a degree of virulence of which even the master fiend seemed scarcely capable. It was a scene of constant contention and rage, and the little subordinate demons did not always know which to obey. It was, if it please your Majesties, a scene acted in terrible magnificence, of which I have seen several poor and abortive emblems among mortal men. And henceforth I shall always believe and feel, when I see a family or society constantly involved in disputes, wranglings, and angry emotions, that they are children of the wicked one, and moved by the spirit of discord, that bane of the human race.

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"The worthy gentleman hath said well," said the abbot. "It is a moral truth that can never be too deeply impressed, that *peace and love only lead to happiness*. They are emanations from above, and the contrary passions from beneath. All the fierce and fiery passions of the soul are the offspring of hell fire. But a truce with preaching. Honest friend go on with your strange relation, and acquaint us in what manner his infernal majesty and the king of mortal magicians spent their time."

In constant discord and jarring. The devil challenged the Master with impotency in entertaining a poor crazy monk, and submitting to be protected and even cowed by him; at which the Master took high offence, and retorted in the bitterest terms; while the other always hinted that he would make him repent his intercourse with that preposterous and presumptive fool. So he termed our own worthy friar and head chaplain.

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In one thing only they agreed, and that was in abusing the witches. Never were there poor deluded creatures guided in such a way as they. The devil says to the Master one day in my hearing, "Brother Michael," says he, "I have an act of justice to perform to all our true and trusty

female lieges in this quarter. I gave them my princely word of honour, that on their yielding themselves up souls and bodies to me and to my service, they should all be married, and all to young and goodly husbands too. That having been the principal, and almost the only boon, the good consistent creatures required of me for the sacrifice they made, they must not be disappointed." The Master acquiesced, but at the same time remarked, with what I judged unreasonable chagrin, that when he was keeping his word so punctually, it betokened nothing good for those to whom he kept it.

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Well, we had a witch's wedding every night for nine nights running; but such extreme of wickedness is past all human comprehension, beyond the possibility of description. The marriage ceremony itself, always performed by a demon in the habit of a friar, was a piece of the most horrid blasphemy ever conceived; and every night one of the witches was married to the devil in disguise. Sometimes the bridegroom made his appearance as a gay cavalier, sometimes as a country squire, a foreign merchant, a minstrel, and a moss-trooper. The old wretch of a bride was all painted by some devilish cantrip, and bedecked with false jewels, and though she seemed always aware of the deceit in a certain degree, from former experiences, yet it was wonderful with what avidity each of the old creatures clung to her enamoured and goodly husband! How they mumped and minced in their talking, and ogled with their old grey ropy eyes! And then how they danced! Gracious me, how they flung, and danced among the deils and the warlocks! and capered and snapped their fingers, giving their partners often a jerk on the nose or the temple as they passed and repassed in the reel, as quick as green clocks on a pool. Then the bedding of the brides, these surpassed all description; and as they had me fairly in thrall, I was suffered to witness every thing. The first witch bride was led out at the back door of the castle with much state and ceremony, into a place that had been a bowling green, and in which there was nothing else save a bowling green: Yet, to my amazement, there stood a bower of the most superb magnificence; and there, in a chamber hung with gorgeous tapestry that glittered all with gold and rubies, the loving couple retired to their repose, and to all the delights and joys of so happy an union. Then wishing them the greatest conjugal felicity, all the gallants returned to the castle. But I, being curious to see what would be the end of this grand pavilion in the bowling-green, which I knew must be merely a delusion, avision, a shadow of something that had no stability of existence, went up to the top of the castle, and from a loop-hole sat and watched what was to be the end of this phenomenon. I waited a good long while, and began to think all was real, and that the splendid witch had met with a happy fortune,—for I knew them too well to be all witches from former happy experience. But at length the lusty bridegroom, as I supposed, began to weary of his mate, for I saw the form of the bower beginning to change, and fall flat on the top, and its hue also became of a lurid fiery colour. I cannot tell your Majesties what sort of sensations I felt when I saw the wedded couple sinking gradually down through a bed of red burning fire, and the poor old beldame writhing to death in the arms of a huge and terrible monster, that squeezed her in its embraces, and hugged her, and caressed her till the spark of wretched life was wholly extinguished. I saw distinctly by the light of the flame that surrounded them, and marked every twist of the features, and every quiver of the convulsed limbs; yet these were not more impressive than the joy of the exulting fiend, who continued to caress and kiss his agonized mate to the last, and called her his love, and his darling, and his heart's delight. At length the distortions of the human countenance reached their acme—the shrivelled bosom forgot to throb, and, with the expiry of the mortal spark, the lurid flame that burnt around them also went out, and all was darkness, There was no bower, no chamber, no bridal bed, but a cold winter soil; and I thought that, through the gloom, I perceived the couple still lying on it.

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As I could get no rest all that night for thinking of the terrible scene I had witnessed, as soon as the sun rose next morning I went out to the bowling-green, but found nothing there save the strangled body of the wretched woman,—a dismal and humbling sight,—squeezed almost to a jelly, and every bone broken as if it had been smashed on an anvil. Being curious to examine her robes in which she appeared with such splendour the evening before, and her jewels, part of which I had seen her lay carefully aside, I took every thing up as it lay. Her robes were a small heap of the most wretched rags imaginable: her pearl necklace was a string of dead beetles, and her diamond rings pieces of thread, on which were fastened small knots of clay, and every thing else proportionally mean. While I was standing considering this vile degradation that had taken place, I heard a voice at a little distance that called to me and said, "Gibbie Jordan! Gibbie Jordan! why standest thou in amazement at a true emblem of all worldly grandeur! It is all equally unreal and unsubstantial as that on which thou lookest, and to that it must all come at last."

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'Hout, friend,' thought I, 'it canna surely be a' sae perfectly unreal as this, else what does it signify?' But a' that I could look and glime about, I could never discover the speaker that said this; and when I thought seriously of the matter, I found that it comes a' to the same thing in the end.

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"Honest friend, thou hast again illustrated a momentous moral truth," said the abbot,—"and I thank thee for it. Thou hast the art, in thy simplicity, of extracting more good out of real evil than any expounder of divine truths throughout the land. Thou art both a moral and a natural philosopher, and I intend conferring on thee some benefice under the church, that thy talents may no longer remain locked up in a helmet. Prithee, go on with thy extraordinary narrative; but these witch weddings are too horrible for mortal ears."

Then you may consider, my Lord Abbot, what they were for mortal eyes, especially such a run of them, which were every night varied in their horrors, and terminated in something perfectly distinct from all those preceding. On the second night the bridegroom was a foreign merchant, a

man of bustle and punctuality, who said he could not remain late with his kind convivial friends, and was under the necessity of carrying his bride off at an early hour, having business of importance to transact on the morrow. It was a speculation, he said, on which he calculated making a good profit, and a man who was coming in to have a wife, and in all probability a small family to maintain, required to look after and attend to these matters. The witch caressed him in ecstasy when he made this speech, and proffered to go with him as soon as he chose. She saluted her cronies, and bade them farewell; and although there is no love among those sort of people, yet there was still so much of human nature remaining, that there seemed to subsist a degree of regret that they should never meet again. My own heart was even sore for the wretched beldame; for I had witnessed a scene the preceding night which had been withheld from her view, and those of the other brides that were to be; and I knew that a fate somewhat similar awaited them all. They mounted this one behind the spruce merchant on a tall gallant charger whose eyes gleamed like lightning, and away they set over the leas of Carterhaugh, at a light gallop; but at every bound the swiftness of the steed increased, till it was quickly beyond the speed of the eagle. The witch held like grim death, and would fain have expostulated with the bridegroom on the madness of risking their necks for a little per centage,—but her velocity was such that she could make no farther speech of it, than just a squeak now and then like a shot hare. The reckless merchant flew on, still increasing his rapidity, until he came to the very highest rock of the Harehead linn. The witch knew of the dreadful chasm that was before them, and weening that her husband did not know she uttered a piercing shriek; but the void was only thirty yards across and a hundred deep, so the fearless merchant, meaning to take it at one leap, made his charger bound from the top of the precipice. The infernal courser cleared the linn, but the witch's head failing, she toppled off about the middle space. There were two fishermen spearing salmon in the bottom of the gulf, who saw the phenomenon pass over their heads, and the wife lose her hold and fall off; they heard her likewise saying, as she came adown the air, "Aih, what a fa' I will get!" And as she said, so it fell out; for she alighted on the rocks a short space from the place where they stood, and was literally dashed in pieces; but the steed ran away with the merchant over hill and dale like a thunderbolt, and neither the one nor the other ever looked over his shoulder to see what had befallen the bride.

This continuation of horrors still depriving me of rest, I went into the linn the next morning to look after the corpse; but the three pages, Prig, Prim, and Pricker, were engaged with it, cutting it trimly up, and hanging it on the trees of the linn to be frozen, so that they might thereby be enabled to preserve it for some grand experiment. In the same manner did they serve the remains of all the brides; none of them ever being buried,—but there was one taken away bodily. I shall now, in conformity with your reverence's hint, desist from the description of any more of these weddings, and proceed to the adventure by which I attained my liberty.

I had often attempted this, both by night and by day, but these imps seemed to possess a sort of prescience, for in all my attempts I was seized and maltreated so grossly that I gave up all hopes of escape, otherwise than by some upbreking of the warlock's establishment, and of all such incidents I had resolved to avail myself, and you all see that at last I have succeeded,—which happened on this wise.

Still as Christmas tide drew on, the wranglings between my two chief masters, the devil and the warlock, grew more and more fierce; and as I heard they were obliged to sever before that time, I both hoped and dreaded some terrible convulsion. The fiend, for several successive days, was always hinting to the Master that it now behoved the latter to deliver him up the black book and the divining rod; and he tried to cajole him out of them by fair speeches and boundless promises: but with these requests the Master testified no disposition to comply, and the promises he utterly disregarded, bidding him bestow his promises on those who did not know him. At length the fiend fairly told him, that he must and would have the possession of these invaluable treasures, which ought never to have been put into the hands of mortal man, and that now he would have them if he should tear his heart from his bosom to attain the boon.

I weened that matters were come to that pass now that the Master would be obliged to yield, and that all this show of resistance was only the ebullition of a proud and indignant spirit struggling against the yoke under which it knew it was obliged to bow, like a horse that champs the bit, to the sway of which it knows too well it must submit. In all this, however, I had reckoned before mine host, and knew not the resources of the great magician. Beneath the influence of the cross I found him a child, a novice, a nonentity, unresolved and inconsistent in his actions. But amongst the beings with whom he associated I found him a superior intelligence, a spirit formed to controul the mightiest energies, and not brooking submission to any power unless by compulsion. To my utter astonishment he not only gave the arch-fiend absolute refusal, but haughty defiance; and then it was apparent, that, except from necessity, all forbearance was at an end.

"Preposterous madman! dost thou know whom thou bearest?" said the fiend, gnashing his teeth with rage and thirst of vengeance: "Knowest thou with whom thou art contending, thou maniac?—and that I can wring thy soul out of thy body, consigning the one to the dunghill, and the other to elemental slavery, at my will and pleasure?"

"I defy thee," said the Master: "Do thy worst. He that imparts a moiety of his power to another, must abide by the consequences. Do I not know with whom I am contending? Yes! I know thee! And thou art so well aware that I do, that at this moment thou tremblest beneath my rod. I know thee for a liar, a deceiver, a backbiter, and a spirit of insatiable malevolence. Who can lay one of these charges to my name? Were I immortal as thou art, how I would hurl thee from thy usurped and tyrannic sway over the mighty energies of nature. Were I freed of the incumbrances of mortality,—of blood that may be let out by a bodkin,—bones that may be broken by the tip of an

ox-goad,—and breath that may be stopped by the twang of a bow-string; of vitals, subjected to be torn by disease,—preyed on by hunger, thirst, and a thousand casualties beside:—yes, were I rid of these congregated impediments, as I shall soon be, I would thrust thee down into that subordinate sphere of action to which only thy perverse nature is fitted. This black book and this divining-rod are mine. They were consigned to my hands by thyself and the four viceroys of the elements, and part with them shall I never, either in life or in death; and while I possess them I am thy superior. Begone, and let me hear no more of thy brawling at this time, lest I humble thee, and trample on thee before thy day of power be expired."

This the Master pronounced in loud and furious accents; and as he finished he struck the devil across the gorge with his golden rod. The blow made him spring aloof, and tumble into the air, it had such powerful effect on his frame; and when he stood again on his feet, he roared with rage and indignation, in a voice that resembled thunder. The Master had the black book belted to his bosom, with bands of steel, that were hammered in the forge of hell; and laying his left hand upon that, and brandishing his divining-rod in his right, he dared the fiend to the combat. The latter approached, and poured from his mouth and nostrils such a stream of liquid flame on the magician, that it appeared like a fiery rainbow between them. This greatly incommoded the Master, and made him skip like a mountebank; but it was soon exhausted, and then the fiend threw trees and rocks at him, some of the latter of the weight of five tons. All these the Master eschewed; and though he sought no other weapons but his rod, he brake in upon his antagonist, and chaced him from the field. Then the war of words again commenced, which increased to a tempest of threatening, wrath, and defiance. The arch-demon boasted of his legions, and of their irresistible power; and threatened to bring them all to the contest, and annihilate the Master and his adherents, root and branch.

"I have already said that I fear neither them nor thee," said the Master. "What though thou hast the sovereignty over the element of fire, and all the fierce and indurated spirits that sojourn and ply in the sultry regions of flame, as also of the grovelling spirits of the mould? Have not I at my command those of the air and the water? I can muster against thee the storm, the whirlwind, and the raging tempest, the overwhelming wave, and the descending torrent. These shall extinguish thy meteor hosts, and sweep thy mold-warps from the face of the earth. I am in the midst of my elements here. Thou art out of thine, and that thou shalt feel when thou bringest it to trial."

Thus parted these two once-bound associates, but now jealous and inexorable foes,—a good lesson to all those who form combinations inimical to the laws or authority of the land in which they reside. Like those master-spirits, such are likewise conspirators against rightful sovereignty, although on a smaller scale; and like those whom they imitate, and by whom they are moved, their counsels will always be turned either to foolishness or against themselves.

"The sphere that this man hath filled in society," said the abbot, "is far below that in which he ought to have moved. If his narrative is true, which I can hardly believe, he turns it to most excellent uses; and if it is an apologue, it is one well conceived for the purposes of instruction. Verily, this gentleman hath never moved in his proper sphere."

"I think it is not very unlikely that your reverence says," said Sir Ringan, "for he made no great figure in it. Tho' I had always a partiality for him, I had no great faith in his valour. He would rather have cut down a warrior behind his back than before his face any time. He has made mare quake this night wi' his tale than ever he did wi' his weapon. I entreat ye to get on, laird, and let us hear how they made up matters."

Made up matters, does my chief say? That was a term no more mentioned between them. They separated but to raise their different forces, and meet again with more fury and effect. The Master spoke to his three pages, and asked if they were resolved to stand firm to his interest? They answered, that they would, till the term of their bondage expired.

"Then am I doubly armed!" said the Master, exultingly; "and I will show your tyrant that I can quell his utmost rage. Speed thee, my trusty and nimble spirits; speed to the western and northern spheres, and rouse the slumbering angels of the winds and the waters. Tell them to muster their array, and bear hitherward,—to rear the broad billows of the Atlantic up against the breast of heaven, and to make a bellows of every cloud to gather the winds up behind them. Then bring down the irresistible spirits of the frozen north in ambush,—and who shall stand against their fury! How soon will you execute your commissions?"

"Master, I'll ring the surface of the ocean, from the line to the first field of pickled ice, before the hour-glass is half run."

"Master, I'll look south on the polar star,—call every whale, sea-monster, and ice-shagged spirit by his name, and return to you before the cock-bittern can boomb his vesper."

"And I'll to the moon,  
And the stars aboon,  
And rack my invention  
For the coming contention:  
And the wind and the weet,  
And the snow and the sleet,  
I'll gather and gather,  
And drive them on hither."

With that the three imps departed on their several missions, but not before they had seized me, and bound me to a ring on a turret of the castle. The Master retired into his apartment for some

time, but soon came up to the level space on the top of the castle, our old birth, and strode about in the most violent agitation, but appearing rather to be moved by anger and impatience than by dread. At length, he came up to me, and said, "How now, droich? What thinkest thou of all this?"

I said nothing, for I durst not answer a word.

"Dost thou think," continued he, "that there exists another being, either mortal or immortal, like me, thy master?"

I still durst not answer a word; for if I had said *no*, it would have been blasphemy; and if I had said *yes*, it would have provoked him to do me a mischief; so I looked at my bonds, and held my peace.

"Thou darest not say there is," continued he; "but I know what thou thinkest. Sit thou there in peace till this great trial of power be over; and if thou darest for thy life invoke another name than mine, thou shalt never stir from that spot dead or alive. But if thou takest heed to this injunction, and cease from all petitions to, or mention of, a name which thou mayest judge superior to mine, then shalt thou be set at liberty to join thy friends."

I determined to attend to this,—but he waited not for my answer, but strode away, looking now and then on the book of destiny, and at the western heaven alternately. At length he exclaimed, "Yonder they come! Yonder they rise in grand battalia! Noble and potent spirits! How speedily have you executed your commission. Yonder comes the muster of my array, and who shall stand against them!"

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I looked towards the west when I heard him talking in such ecstasies, but could see nothing save a phalanx of towering clouds, rolling up in wreaths from the dun horizon. I had seen the same scene a hundred times, and could hardly help smiling at his enthusiasm, especially when he went over a long muster-roll of the names of spirits and monsters whom he saw approaching in the cloud. 'It is a sign that warlocks have clear een,' thinks I, quietly, 'for I see nothing but a range of rolling and restless clouds.' However, he was so overjoyed with the sight of this visionary array, that, having no other to communicate with, he came rapidly up to me, and said, "Tell me, droich, didst thou ever witness any thing so truly grand as the approach of this host of mine?"

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"You must first lend me the use of your eyes that I may see them," said I; "for, on my word, I see nothing save two or three files of castled clouds, which I have seen an hundred times."

With that he lent me a blow with his rod, and said, though not apparently in wrath, "Thou hast no brighter eyes, and no brighter conceptions, than a hedgehog, but art a mere clod of the valley, a worm; if I knew of aught lower to liken thee to, I would do it! Dost thou see nothing like fleets and armies approaching yonder? Dost thou not see an hundred and seven of the ships of the ocean above, coming full sail, with colours flying, and canvas spread? Seest thou not also, to the south of these, two files of behemoths, with ten thousand warrior-spirits beside?"

I looked again, and though I was sensible it must be a delusion brought on by the stroke of his powerful rod, yet I did see the appearance of a glorious fleet of ships coming bounding along the surface of the firmament of air, while every mainsail was bosomed out like the side of a Highland mountain. I saw, besides, whole columns of what I supposed to be crocodiles, sharks, kelpies, and water-horses, with a thousand monsters never dreamed of by human being. The Master marked my astonishment, and exulted still the more; and then he desired me to turn round, and look toward the north. At first I could see nothing; but on being touched again with the divining-rod, I shall never forget such a sight as opened gradually to my view. The whole northern hemisphere, from the eastern to the western horizon, was covered with marshalled hosts of the shades of gigantic warriors. They were all mailed in white armour, as if it had been sprinkled with hoarfrost; and their beards, which had the appearance of icicles, hung down, swinging in the wind, like so many inverted forests, stripped of their foliage and bark, and encrusted with ice. They were all mounted on the ghosts of crackens, whales, and walruses: and for bows and quivers each had a blown bladder on his bade as large as the hill of Ben-Nevis. My heart quaked at the view of these tremendous polar spirits, and I said, "Great and magnificent Master, are yon terrible chaps all coming hither?"

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"Certes they are," said he: "Why dost thou ask after having heard my mandate sent forth?"

"Because," said I, "If yon bearded spirits be a' coming here, I wish I were somewhere else, for the like of yon was never beheld by man. If your opponents dare face you, they have a spirit beyond what I can conceive."

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"They will be here, and that instantly," said he, "And lo! yonder they come! I will go down and meet them on the open field. But, in the meantime, I will loose you with my own hands, for who knows what may be the issue of this day; remain where thou art, for here thou shalt be safe, but no where else."

I looked; and as far as my eyes could discern, I saw as it were a thousand thousand sparks of fire rising from the east, that came in a straight line toward me, and with great velocity. As they came nearer I perceived that they were all fiery serpents, with faces like men, and small flaming spears issuing from their mouths, which they held between their teeth, or drew in as they listed. These were led on to the combat by the arch-fiend himself who came at their head in the form of a huge fiery dragon with his iron crown on his head, and wings springing from his shoulders behind, that reached as high as the hill of Blackandro. 'Aih! God guide us!' thinks I to mysel, 'Michael has an awsome adversary to contend with the day!' He was nothing daunted, however, but went boldly down the valley, where he was met by hosts of crawling monsters, such as snakes, lizards, and a thousand others. These I took to be the spirits of the element of earth,—but they were lubbards in

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a field of battle, for, at a brandish of the Master's magical rod, they ran off wagging their tails in such a vengeance of a hurry that they overturned one another.

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The van of Michael's western array had by this time gained the middle sky, and hung boiling and wheeling like a troubled ocean straight above his head and above mine. Its colour was as dark as pitch, but there was now and then a shade of a dead white colour rolled out, and as suddenly again swallowed up in the darkness. I never saw ought so awfully sublime. It had now descended so low, that it hid the polar giants entirely from my view, and the Master kept waving his rod towards it, and clapping his left hand always on the black book, till at length, with the motion of a whirlpool, the cloud came and settled all round him. The fiend and his firebrands perceiving this, darted with the utmost fury into the middle of it, and the most tremendous crash of thunder ensued that ever shook heaven and earth. My eyes were dazzled so that I could not see ought distinctly, but I perceived these flaming meteors glancing and quivering round the verges of the darkness, and ever and anon darting again into it. Seven of these peals of thunder succeeded one another, and then I saw the spirits of flame would overcome, for the darkness began to scatter, and I saw the Master hard bested, defending himself with his rod against a multitude. He then cried with a loud voice, and waved his rod toward the north, and that moment the giant warriors of the polar regions loosed all their quivers at once, and with such effect, that they tossed the opposing legions before them like chaff. The hailstones, the snow, and the sleet, poured upon them thicker and faster, and the wind roared louder than their thunders had done before. There was no more power in their foes to stand before them; they were scattered, driven away, and extinguished. When the Master saw this, he shouted aloud for joy, calling out 'Victory!' and leaping from the ground in ecstasy. But when he was in the very paroxysm of exultation, the great dragon came round with a circular motion behind the castle, and approaching behind the wizard's back before he was aware, seized him by the hair with one paw, and by the iron belt with the other, and bore him off into the air straight upward. The Master struggled and writhed very hard, but never opened his lips. At length, after great exertion, he struck the monster a blow with his rod that made him quit his hold, and fly away yelling after his discomfited legions.

[445]

[446]

The Master fell to the ground from a great height, and lay still, and when I saw no one to come near him, I left the corner where I had hid myself, and ran to his assistance; but he was quite dead. His teeth had severed his tongue in two, and were clenched close together; his eyes were open, and every bone of his body was broken. Having witnessed the unspeakable value of the golden rod, I put out my hand and took hold of it, wanting to bring it away with me, but I might as well have tried to have heaved the castle from its foundations. Besides, when I tugged at it, the dead man turned his eyes toward me with a fierceness that chilled me to the heart, so I fled and came hitherward with all my might. He is lying in a little hidden valley, at the side of the burn, immediately above the castle, with the book of fate locked in his bosom, his rod in his hand, and his eyes open. I have now described to your Majesties this scene exactly as I saw it; but I must also tell you, that when I came to the mill, both the miller and his man, neither of whom knew me, said it had been an awful storm of thunder and lightning. I asked if they perceived nothing about it but a common storm of thunder and lightning? And they said, nothing, save that it was exceedingly violent, and rather uncommon at such a season of the year. I have, therefore, some suspicions that there might be magical delusion operating on my sight; but of this I am certain, that the great enchanter was carried up into the middle space between heaven and earth, fell down, and was killed."

[447]

"I think there can be no doubt," said the King, "that what you have told us is the plain and unvarnished truth, though, perhaps, the rod of divination might open your eyes to see the storm in a different light from that seen by the eyes of common men. Of this there can be no doubt, that the greatest man, and the most profound scholar of the age, has perished in this conflict of the elements. He has not only kept the world in awe, but in dreadful agitation for the space of thirty years; let us, therefore, all go to-morrow and see him honourably interred. I ask no rites of sepulture to be performed over his remains, which, if living, he would have deprecated, only let us all go and see his body reverently deposited in the tomb, lest it be left to consume in the open fields."

[448]

They went, and found him lying as stated, only that his eyes were shut, some of his attendant elves having closed them over night. His book was in his bosom, and his rod in his hand, from either of which no force of man could sever them, although when they lifted the body and these together, there was no difference in weight from the body of another man. The King then caused these dangerous relics to be deposited along with the body in an iron chest, which they buried in a vaulted aisle of the abbey of Melrose; and the castle of Aikwood has never more been inhabited by mortal man.

[449]

THE END.

## 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.

Some characters were not printed clearly:

- p. 79 The letter "i" in "you would deify" was not printed and is conjectural
- p. 131 the line ending "The wines and liquor" does not meet the margin; "liquor" may be plural.
- p. 151 the line ending "of beings so blind" does not meet the margin, and may end in a comma
- p. 274 the colon in "by the Douglas:" is unclear and may be a semi-colon
- p. 307 the semi-colon in "the attempt prematurely;" is unclear and may be a comma

Chapters are inconsistently headed "CHAPTER" or "CHAP."

The text includes the following inconsistent spellings:

- Father Lawrence and father Lawrence
- galloped and gallopped
- Castle-Wearie and Castle-Weary
- Corby and Corbie
- chace and chase

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

- yester eve and yester-eve
- all four and all-four
- arch fiend and arch-fiend
- back friends and back-friends
- bowling green and bowling-green
- coulter nose and coulter-nose
- deep wooded and deep-wooded
- divining rod and divining-rod
- high born and high-born
- high spirited and high-spirited
- hoar frost and hoar-frost
- iron door and iron-door

The following are inconsistently hyphenated or printed as one word:

- daylight and day-light
- Castlewearie and Castle-Wearie
- drawbridge and draw-bridge
- auldfarrant and auld-farrant
- bareheaded and bare-headed
- eyebrows and eye-brows
- outdone and out-done
- staircase and stair-case

The following are inconsistently printed as one or two words:

- fairy land and fairyland
- Gude faith and Gudefaith
- mean time and meantime

The text contains the following apparent errors:

- p. 10 missing apostrophe ("its only the devil")
- p. 17 missing quotation mark ("What do you think")
- p. 25 missing quotation mark ("is the better. The imps")
- p. 30 extra quotation mark ("behind the friar.""")
- p. 46 missing quotation mark ("preserve their worshippers.")
- p. 47 missing quotation mark ("and who must yield.")
- p. 60 missing quotation mark ("all unsafe with such.")
- p. 62 question mark instead of full stop ("off thy frame?")
- p. 68 missing quotation mark ("those we love.")
- p. 79 two instances of missing quotation marks ("Stay, they cried, stay the solemnity,")
- p. 89 missing quotation mark ("your's was the best tale.")
- p. 98 mis-spelling "in the expecsation"
- p. 102 extra space in "the sweetest strain s"
- p. 112 missing quotation mark ("follow them.")
- p. 158 extra quotation mark ("ever cattle put on.""")
- p. 163 mis-placed apostrophe ("that I ken o'")
- p. 163 missing quotation mark ("and that of such momentous")
- p. 168 missing full stop ("them to think of")
- p. 183 extra quotation mark ("Scott" said Yardbire:)"
- p. 189 mis-spelling "possessession"
- p. 196 duplicate word "themsels; and and if ye hear a Laidlaw"
- p. 213 mis-spelling "disingeniousness"
- p. 205 missing quotation mark ("Strangers, I think!")
- p. 206 comma instead of full stop ("he says, We'll never make")
- p. 207 missing quotation mark ("But whoever refuses,")
- p. 222 duplicate word "the fourth was a a boy"
- p. 225 missing space "andbegan"
- p. 237 extra quotation mark ("Alas, for my beloved")
- p. 284 single instead of double quotation mark ("the like o' that?")

- p. 299 missing quotation mark ("begging admission to your")
- p. 321 extra quotation mark ("The Queen crossed herself,")
- p. 331 extra quotation mark ("it's 'God's will?")
- p. 346 extra quotation mark ("new born beauties.""")
- p. 349 full stop instead of comma ("from a beam's end.")
- p. 378 mis-spelling "convalesence"
- p. 379 missing quotation mark ("apply to him again.")
- p. 380 duplicate word "shew a a"
- p. 380 missing quotation mark ("Inferiority!")
- p. 382 missing full stop ("the lord Douglas—But")
- p. 389 missing quotation mark ("Oh Sir Charles!—")
- p. 391 missing quotation mark ("or an engagement say?")
- p. 393 duplicate word "to Sir Charles was was nothing"
- p. 405 duplicate word "she could not not be"
- p. 409 "They" instead of "The" ("They rest marshalling")
- p. 410 mis-spelling "Peatstackknowe"
- p. 411 missing space ("Gibbie,and")
- p. 422 missing space ("a delusion, avision")
- p. 423 comma instead of full stop ("all was darkness, There was no")
- p. 440 duplicate word "brought on by by the stroke"
- p. 447 extra quotation mark ("was killed.""")

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE THREE PERILS OF MAN; OR, WAR, WOMEN, AND WITCHCRAFT, VOL. 3 (OF 3) \*\*\*

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