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“Folding his withered hands, he said, in solemn and trembling tones, ‘Let us pray’” (see page [121](#)).

Adam Hepburn's Vow

A TALE OF KIRK AND COVENANT

BY
ANNIE S. SWAN

WITH FOUR FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS

TWENTY-THIRD THOUSAND

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TO
MY FRIEND
C. M.
AND TO THE DEAR ONES GATHERED ROUND HER
IN HER HAPPY HOME

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CHAPTER I. THE TRAVELLERS.

Towards the close of a bleak grey February afternoon, in the year 1638, a small party of travellers might have been seen approaching Edinburgh by the high road from Glasgow. It consisted of a sturdy brown pony, whereon sat a fair-faced, sunny-haired little girl, whose age could not have exceeded nine years; a bright-faced, bold-looking lad, walking at the animal's head, and having the bridle-rein hung loosely over his arm; and a middle-aged gentleman, whose aspect and attire proclaimed him a clergyman. He walked slowly, a little apart from the others, and his hands were clasped before him, and his eyes bent thoughtfully on the ground. He was a man somewhat past his prime, of a noble and manly bearing, with a fine open countenance, and a speaking eye, wherein dwelt a singularly sweet and benevolent expression.

The shadows of evening were already beginning to gather over the surrounding scene, making objects at a distance somewhat indistinct.

Yet, truly, there was little at that season of the year to refresh the eye or gladden the heart. The icy hand of winter had scarcely yet relaxed its grasp on mother earth; there were no green buds on hedge or tree; no blades of promise springing up by the wayside: all was desolate, bleak, and cold. Yet the newly upturned furrows smelt fresh and sweet, and the purling brooks wandered cheerfully on their way; singing their song of gladness, as if they knew that spring was close at hand. Presently the little party ascended a gentle eminence, and then many lights were seen twinkling not far ahead.

"See, father, are yon the lights of Edinburgh?" exclaimed the lad, in his eagerness letting go his hold on Roger's rein.

The minister raised his head, and a light kindled in his eye as he looked upon the clustering roof-trees and towering spires of the beautiful city.

"Yes, my son, that is Edinburgh," he said in his full, mellow tones. "Thanks be to the Lord who hath brought us thither in safety. Would my little Agnes like to walk now? The evening dews are falling, and methinks a little exercise would do you no harm. Very soon now you will be warmed and cheered by the ruddy glow by Aunt Jean's fireside."

As he spoke, the minister turned to Roger (who at a word from his master stood perfectly still), and gently lifted his little daughter to the ground. It was then seen that her figure was very slight and fragile, her face pale and refined-looking, her whole expression thoughtful and even sad beyond her years.

"Are you wearied, David?" asked the kind father then; but the lad drew himself up proudly, and shook his head.

"Wearied! no, no, father. I could walk back to Inverburn, I believe, without resting."

"Keep within the bounds, my boy," said the minister. "See, lead Roger down to yon little pool, and let him drink. The poor animal is thirsty and wayworn. Then we will make what haste we can into the city, which will of necessity be in somewhat of a turmoil to-night, owing to the many strangers within her gates."

"Father, will there be a great crowd and a noise in Edinburgh?" asked the little Agnes, somewhat timidly and holding yet more closely by her father's hand.

"There will be a crowd, my daughter, but no unseemly noise, I trust. The occasion upon which the nation is assembled in her ancient capital is too solemn for vain clamourings," said the minister, somewhat sadly; and as his eyes once more roamed over the spreading roof-trees of the city, they were filled with tears. The little Agnes, too young to understand the cause of his emotion, still more closely clasped his hand, and looked with awe into his face.

"I wish it would not grow dark so soon, father," said David, now returning from watering the pony. "We will see nothing of Edinburgh till to-morrow."

"But to-morrow, please the Lord, there will be a sight seen in Edinburgh, the like of which there has never been in Scotland," said the minister with kindling eye. "The voice of her people raised in a national testimony against the injustice and oppression of an earthly ruler. May the Heavenly King look down in approval on the faithfulness of the Kirk of Scotland, and give her strength to stand firm to her vow; ay, to seal it if need be with her blood."

The minister spoke with solemnity and passionate earnestness, which impressed his young listeners not a little.

"Father, will the soldiers be out on their horses?" David asked with boyish eagerness; to him the great event to transpire on the morrow meant a gay pageant to delight the eye and stir the

pulse of youth.

"My son, I cannot tell; only I know that peer and peasant, soldier and civilian, minister and ministered unto, will assemble to-morrow on equal ground, animated by one grand purpose, and stirred by a common zeal. May the God of Hosts look down upon and bless the assembled multitudes," replied the minister; and then a silence fell upon the little party which remained unbroken till they entered the city. Even in the outskirts there were not lacking signs of stir and unusual commotion. The streets were thronged with vehicles and foot-passengers, and the very air seemed full of murmurings, telling of a nation's heart stirred to its deepest depths. The young lad and his sister looked about them with lively interest; to them the city was a revelation indeed, in the great contrast it presented to the unfrequented roads and quiet solitudes of their native parish. Darkness had fallen when the minister guided Roger's steps into the Grass-market, where stood the hospitable dwelling which was to shelter them during their sojourn in Edinburgh. It was the abode of the minister's only sister, who was married to a well-to-do merchant, by name Edward Kilgour. Having been duly apprised of his brother-in-law's coming on that day, Edward Kilgour was waiting at the close mouth, anxiously peering up the street, which was now almost in total darkness, there being no appliances then for lighting the thoroughfares and byeways of the city. Hearing the click of the pony's hoofs, he walked a few steps up the street, and then catching sight of the little party, he called out in his cheery tones, "Andrew Gray of Inverburn, and his little ones, if I mistake not!"

"Yes; thus far hath the Lord permitted us to travel in safety, Edward," said the minister. "How is it with thee and thine?"

"All well; Jean a little impatient and fearful about you, as is the way of womenkind," replied the merchant, heartily shaking his brother-in-law by the hand. "But what! David, and little Agnes too! How did their mother ever trust them so far?" he exclaimed, in surprise, at sight of the children.

"She knew them safe with me, Edward, and I thought that the events of to-morrow might, please God, make an impression on their young minds which time would never efface. And the Kirk, I am thinking, will need both old and young to stand firm in her defence ere she be crowned and blessed with liberty," said the minister, with a sigh.

"You speak the truth, Andrew," replied the merchant, soberly. "Well, I will take Roger to his stall and see that he is rubbed down and fed. Do you take the bairns upstairs: you know the way."

The minister nodded, and taking his boy and girl by the hand, led them up the dark close and into a low doorway, which, unless he had been familiar with the way, would have been difficult to find.

Aunt Jean heard their steps on the stair, and presently appeared on the landing with a candle.

"Bless me! Andrew Gray, is that the bairns all the way from the manse of Inverburn?" she exclaimed, her motherly heart warming at sight of them.

"Even so, Jean. There will be room and welcome for them as well as for their father under this roof-tree," answered the minister. "Edward tells me you are well; and, truly, you look it."

"Oh, ay, I am well in body!" she answered, blithely, and stooping she lifted the little Agnes in her motherly arms, and affectionately kissed her cheeks. "Eh, Andrew, this bairn's her mother's living image. How is Ailie and Jane, and that stirring laddie, Andrew? Why did you leave him at home?"

"His master could not spare him, being busy preparing the ground for the seed," replied the minister. "It was a sore disappointment to the lad. He has a constant craving for something new."

By this time they had entered the wide and comfortable kitchen, where the log-fire burned merrily, casting its ruddy glow on the hospitable board spread for the expected guest. A wooden cradle stood in the warmest corner by the ingle-neuk, wherein slept peacefully the one child of the household, a babe of eight months, and the first which had blessed their hearth and home since their marriage, five years before.

The little Agnes looked very long and earnestly into her aunt's face, never remembering having seen her before.

Mrs. Kilgour had been married out of the manse of Inverburn, at which time Agnes was only four years old, but she had never visited it since, and had only once seen her brother's wife, when she accompanied her husband to Edinburgh on his being appointed to represent the Presbytery of Lanark at the General Assembly. Travelling in these days was very slow and laborious, and not unaccompanied by dangers on the roads, owing to the disturbed and unprotected state of the country.

"Ay, but she is like her mother, Andrew," repeated Mrs. Kilgour, as she stooped to unfasten

the child's cloak. "She has her very een; may the spirt of the bairn be her mother's likewise! And this is David! He is greatly grown. I would hardly have known him again! Dearie me, what changes time works on bairns, as on other things!"

"You are right, Jean. How has business been prospering with you throughout the winter?"

"We cannot complain of the measure of prosperity the Lord has vouchsafed to us," Andrew answered Mistress Kilgour. "Edward has had to employ another young lad to help him in his work and still is hard-pressed; but here he comes himself to tell you all about it."

The merchant now entered the kitchen, and hung up his hat on the peg behind the door. Now that the light shone upon him, it revealed a short and somewhat stout figure, clad in homely grey, a broad kindly face adorned by a short brown beard, and made peculiarly expressive by the twinkling of a pair of merry, blue eyes.

He was a Lanark man by birth, but had come to Edinburgh to try his fortunes, and by steady well-doing and shrewd business capacity was likely to succeed.

"And how are they all at Inverburn? Come, tell me about every man, woman, and child in the parish, Andrew," said the merchant. "It's like a gliff of the heather-scented wind to look upon your faces, bairns, and to think you were reared in the shade of the birks of Inverburn!"

The merchant spoke lightly, but a tear started in his honest eye, as he lifted Agnes on his knee, and drew David to his side.

"Deed they must have something to eat first, Edward, my man," interrupted Mistress Kilgour. "Come, bairns, to your milk and bread. It's no like the milk and home-made scones at the manse, but it's the best I have, an' ye get it wi' Auntie Jean's kind, kind love."

They drew in their chairs to the table, and after the minister had asked a fervent blessing on the board, they ate with a will, for their mode of travelling had given them all appetites.

"You are never asking for *our* bairn, Andrew," said the fond mother silyly, when presently the little one stirred slightly in its cradle.

"Truly I forgot, Jean," said the minister, with a smile; "and yet it was among Ailie's last messages--sympathy and love to you about the little one. God grant she may grow up a blessing to you both."

The little Agnes presently slipped from her chair, and, stealing over to the cradle, looked in upon the smiling face of the infant. Her own was suffused with a glow of tender wondering pleasure, which made her aunt look at her again. And when, presently, Mistress Kilgour lifted the child, Agnes kept close by her side, as if the babe were a magnet from which she could not separate herself.

The conversation during supper turned chiefly upon topics connected with the parish of Inverburn, in which both the merchant and his wife were deeply and affectionately interested, for, though they had built up a home in Edinburgh, their hearts were knit to their native glen in the bonds of a deep, enduring love.

While she cleared the table, Mistress Kilgour entrusted the babe to Agnes, who sat on a low stool holding the precious burden in her arms, with a mixture of love, rapture, and pride glorifying her face. Shortly thereafter, it being near eight of the clock, Mistress Kilgour made down beds for the children in the adjoining room, and they retired to rest. Then their elders drew up their chairs to the hearth, and began to speak in low, troubled, anxious tones, telling that the topic was one of vital interest, of terrible importance to them all. Before they separated for the night, the minister read a portion from Scripture, and then they knelt to pour out their hearts' desires before the Lord. The tones of Andrew Gray's voice trembled sore as he prayed with passionate earnestness that the arm of the Almighty would be about the tottering Church of Scotland, and that strength might be given to her people to stand up fearlessly in defence of her liberty and purity, ay, even though they should be required to seal their faithfulness with their blood.

"To-morrow will be a great day for Scotland," he said when he rose to his feet. "Either it will be the beginning of peace or the beginning of many sorrows for God's people. It is in times like these we feel the need of prayer, of constant and pious humbling of ourselves before Jehovah. There is that within me, my friends, which forewarns me that we are about to be visited by fierce and terrible temptations and dispensations. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

Awed by the prophetic earnestness with which their kinsman spoke, the merchant and his wife spoke not, but silently bade him good night. Andrew Gray retired to his own chamber, but not to sleep. He sat long by the uncurtained window, looking out upon the city slumbering peacefully under the fitful February moonlight, as if all unconscious of the issues of the coming

day.

During the silent watches of the night the minister of Inverburn wrestled in prayer for Scotland's Church and people, that they might be upheld and kept faithful in the tumults of the struggle to come.

CHAPTER II.

A NATION'S TESTIMONY.

Chill and grey broke the morning of that memorable day over the city of Edinburgh. The inmates of Edward Kilgour's household were early astir, and the elder folk partook of breakfast by candlelight.

"I suppose your place of business will be closed to-day?" said the minister enquiringly to his brother-in-law.

"Yes; there will be little business done to-day, I fancy, except by the taverns and other places of like resort, which must be open to supply refreshments to the many strangers," replied Edward Kilgour. "There will be a goodly number of Inverburn folks in this morning?"

"Yes, Adam Hepburn of Rowallan, and a party with him, were to start on the evening of the day on which we left," replied the minister. "They would arrive a few hours' later than us--their animals being swifter of foot than our 'Roger.'"

"What is the Laird of Inverburn saying to the Covenant, Andrew?" asked Mistress Kilgour, replenishing her brother's cup with milk, which, with some wheaten cakes, composed his frugal meal.

A slight shade of sadness stole over the minister's fine face.

"Truly, Jean, Sir Thomas Hamilton proves himself a loyal subject and a faithful servant of the king. They tell me he uses the Liturgy in his household devotions, and he has never been in his pew in my church since the proclamation concerning the new book of service. I am told too, on good authority, that my neighbour minister, John Methven of Lochlee, uses it in the services of his church, in accordance with the express desire of the laird who worships there every Sabbath Day."

"John Methven was ever a time-server and a worshipper of rank," said Edward Kilgour, with curling lip. "He would sell conscience and liberty for the smile of a patron so high in station as the Laird of Inverburn."

"Let us not so hardly judge the man, Edward," said the minister, gently. "His motives and his conscience are known only to himself and his God. Yet I fear that when the times of trouble grow hotter in the land, the Church will not find a supporter in the minister of Lochlee."

"What I fear, Andrew," said Mistress Kilgour, with a sigh, "is lest the Laird of Inverburn, not finding you conforming to his desires, may do you injury in the parish, may even turn the people against you."

The minister smiled.

"I am in the Lord's hands, Jean. Except He will, Sir Thomas Hamilton cannot touch a hair of my head, nor even damage my interests in the parish. And my people, thanks be to God, are faithful and honest, and I think have some little love for their minister in their hearts."

"As well they may," said the merchant, fervently.

"The name of Gray has long been honoured in Inverburn, certainly," said the mistress, musingly. "Our forbears have been so many generations in the manse that I think the people would be sad to see a stranger under its roof-tree, or ministering to them in the kirk on the Sabbath Day."

"We will not trouble ourselves with such things to-day, Jean, there being graver issues at stake than the interests of Inverburn, which, though very dear to us, is but a small corner of the Lord's vineyard," said the minister, rising. "While you dress the bairns, Edward and I might walk a little way into the town, and see what is doing. I see the shadows of the night are wearing away from the castle heights, and day breaking in the east!"

Accordingly the twain left the house together, and wended their way through the streets. Even thus early there were many people abroad, some standing in little groups, earnestly discussing the one topic of absorbing interest occupying the minds of citizens and strangers alike. Arm in arm the minister and the merchant walked together in the shadow of the grey turrets of the castle, until they came to the shores of the North Loch, which was tossing uneasily

under the grey and wintry sky. A keen east wind was sweeping up from the Frith, and it had a wailing in its tone as if in warning of a coming storm.

The two pedestrians, alone at that hour by the solitudes of the loch, talked low and earnestly together on the crisis to which affairs in Scotland had now reached. The merchant was a keen Churchman, and a devoted, pious Christian, with a heart ready to suffer and endure for the cause of religion, and a brave, indomitable courage to fight for his principles if required. Needless to say, the friendship between his brother-in-law and himself was warm and sincere, because they had so much in common. Engrossed in conversation, the time passed unheeded, until the solemn strokes of the Tolbooth bell proclaimed the hour of nine.

Then they turned their steps towards the Grassmarket once more, which was now considerably busier than it had been an hour ago. Yet there was no disorder or sign of tumult, nor was the aspect of the people wild or excited. There was an expression of calm yet fixed resolution, especially upon the faces of the older among them, which indicated that no giddy froth of passion, no excitement of a moment moved them. Andrew Gray remarked upon that to the merchant, and expressed his satisfaction at the visible earnestness and quietness of spirit which seemed to be abroad.

When they returned to the house they found the children up and dressed and partaking of their morning meal, good Aunt Jean talking to them all the while.

"Are you going forth to witness for the Covenant with us to-day, Jean?" enquired the minister. The mistress shook her head.

"I cannot well leave my house and my bairn, Andrew, but the Lord knows that I can make my vow at home and keep it as faithfully as I would keep a public testimony," she answered, with a smile and a tear. "But are you going to take both these young things with you to the vast assembly gathered in and about the Greyfriars?"

"For that purpose I brought them on this journey, Jean. As I said to Edward, the proceedings of this day may make an impression on their minds which will never be effaced, and--who knows?--the memory of it may even serve to build them up yet more steadfastly in the faith in days to come. Well, I think we should be going now. The proceedings, I learn, are to begin early, and I would not that we should be at the outside limits of the crowd."

Accordingly Aunt Jean prepared the children for going out of doors, fastening the cloak of the little Agnes very closely about her neck, and adding a scarf of her own to protect the throat against the biting wind of March. David wrapped his plaid about his shoulders in true Highland fashion, put on his bonnet, and, taking in his hand the stout ash stick he had cut in the woods of Inverburn, bravely announced that he was ready. So, followed by kind Aunt Jean's blessing and prayer, the little party left the house and emerged into the busy streets.

Although it was yet early, every thoroughfare was thronged with human beings, some moving on towards the place of meeting, others standing about in little knots discussing the solemn occasion upon which so many were gathered together. Our friends made their way leisurely up the Bow, and were among the earliest to enter the churchyard, and thus were enabled to take up a good position where everything could be seen and heard. The church doors were standing wide open, and it was evidently intended that the chief service should be held within the walls of the sacred edifice itself. The minister of Inverburn, leaving his little ones with their uncle, entered into the church, and met there many of his colleagues in the ministry, as well as others with whom he had some acquaintance.

As the stream of humanity surging towards the churchyard widened and broadened, until it seemed as if there could be no room for even one more, it was hastily decided that the proceedings should take place out of doors, in order to prevent any undue crowding in the church, and to enable as many as possible to hear and take part in the solemn service, which was to precede the signing of the Covenant.

Accordingly a table was set in the middle of the church, and thereon was laid the Bible used in the Greyfriars pulpit, and side by side with it the gigantic sheet prepared to receive the signatures of a nation. Everything being made ready, there gathered about the table the venerable Earl of Loudon, the Earl of Sutherland, Sir Archibald Johnston, the Reverend Alexander Henderson, with many other nobles and ministers and prominent personages.

Beyond that circle was gathered a vast throng, comprising every rank, age, and calling, upon whose faces, lit by a holy enthusiasm, the chill March sunlight played fitfully as it escaped through the refts in the cloudy sky. It was a wondrous sight. There was no noise, no unseemly clamourings or vain babblings; the great concourse seemed to be hushed into solemn expectancy, even the hot blood of the more passionate among them being held in curb by the strange awe-

inspiring nature of this national gathering.

After a confession of national sin, an eloquent sermon was preached to the assembled multitude by one of the most gifted ministers in the Church.

Then amid a strange, deep silence Sir Archibald Johnston slowly and distinctly read aloud to the people the contents of the document to which every loyal Scot was asked to subscribe his name. It was beautifully and reverently compiled, and so simple and clear in its phraseology, that even the youngest and most illiterate person present could not fail to comprehend its meaning. It was simply a protest against all the corruptions and unholy innovations which the king sought to introduce into the service of the Church, and in signing the bond the subscribers pledged themselves solemnly before God to use every lawful means to recover and preserve the early purity and simplicity of worship in the Church of Scotland, and to resist every effort made by the king to introduce an Episcopal form of worship into the land.

When the reading of the Covenant was concluded, the Earl of London addressed the multitude in eloquent, heart-stirring tones, exhorting them to consider well the solemn and binding nature of the oath about to be taken, and impressing upon them the necessity of standing steadfast by their testimony, for not otherwise could that liberty, civil and religious, so dear to every Scottish heart, be restored and maintained in the land. One of the leading and most devoted ministers in the Church then gave utterance to a prayer, which hushed the very breathing of the assembly, and moved them as if by a mighty wind from Heaven. Amid the solemn silence which ensued, the Earl of Sutherland stepped forward, and uplifting his hand he swore the solemn oath, and then affixed the first signature to the Covenant. He was followed by nobles, ministers, citizens, men, women, and children, who subscribed name after name on the great sheet, until it could hold no more. Some, more enthusiastic than their fellows, opened veins in their arms, and wrote their names in their blood.



"Uplifting his hand, he swore the solemn oath"

It was a day such as Scotland had never witnessed before, and which she will never witness again, since, thanks be to God, the need for a national covenanting to protect civil and religious rights is swallowed up in the glorious liberty of these present days.

The impressive proceedings over, the people departed peaceably to their homes.

The minister of Inverburn, with his children, abode another night under Edward Kilgour's

hospitable roof-tree, and early on the second morning the little party set out upon their return journey to their home in the pleasant vale of Inverburn.

CHAPTER III. FOREBODINGS OF EVIL.

It was the month of April, and all Nature was sweetly rejoicing in the wealth and beauty of a perfect spring. While spring is ever a pleasant season in rural districts, it was especially so in that rich and picturesque part of Lanarkshire which included the parish and village of Inverburn. It lay in a secluded and lovely valley, sheltered from the north and east by heather-clad hills, while to the west it commanded a magnificent and wide-stretching view of the Vale of Clyde, at the utmost limit of which the smoke from the populous city of Glasgow obscured the clear brightness of the horizon. Although the parish of Inverburn was by no means small, the village itself consisted only of a small main street and a few straggling houses in the outskirts. The only building of any pretensions was the Hamilton Arms Inn, a substantial two-storey block, with a wide, low doorway and a trellised porch set round with benches, a favourite resort for the villagers on the long summer evenings, when honest Mistress Lyall's parlour became too close and warm to be pleasant. Upon a gentle eminence about a mile removed from the village, the grey turrets of Inverburn, long time the seat of the Hamiltons, peeped out from among its ancestral trees. It was a fine, proud old place, renowned for its beauty and its antiquity even in a district where many a princely heritage reared its stately head. The graceful spire of the parish church intervened, however, between the village and the mansion. It also stood upon a gentle knoll, and was beautifully shaded by the birch trees which were known far and near as the "birks of Inverburn." The manse was close by, a grey and rambling house, just such a one to be hallowed by many precious memories of home and loved ones. It was a common saying that there had been Grays in the manse as long as there had been Hamiltons in Inverburn, so that the one family could claim equal antiquity with its prouder neighbour.

There could be no sweeter spot to live and die in than that old-fashioned country manse, standing so cosily amid its wealth of greenery, the roses and honeysuckle and sweet woodbine clambering about doors and windows with a loving clinging touch. It looked fair indeed that mild April evening, for lilac, laburnum, and hawthorn were in flower in the shrubberies, and primrose and polyanthus blooming in the old-fashioned plots before the door. The air about it was sweet and fragrant indeed; but it was more: it breathed something of the peace which dwelt ever under its roof-tree.

By the open window of the family sitting-room sat a pleasant-faced, sedate-looking young woman, busily engaged embroidering a white frock for a child. She was neatly though plainly dressed, and there was an air of precision and daintiness about her which some women acquire as they grow older, especially if they are unmarried. It was a pleasant face, as I said, yet there was a grave firmness about the mouth, a dauntless gleam in the fine clear brown eye, which betokened that Jane Gray was not without a will of her own. She looked what she was, a firm, prudent, self-reliant woman, who had known the cares as well as the joys of life. To her dying mother Jane Gray had solemnly pledged herself not to quit the roof-tree of the manse so long as her father needed her care. Both the giver and receiver of that promise had felt assured that it would not be long ere she was released from its fulfilment, because the minister of Inverburn was at that time in a precarious state of health.

But, to the joy of those who loved him, certain means prescribed by an Edinburgh physician were blessed to his complete recovery, and he seemed to receive a new lease of life. That made no alteration, however, in the resolution of the elder daughter of the manse. Very faithfully year by year she discharged her duties as mistress of her father's household. She was mother and sister in one to her brothers, and it was a question which was dearer to her heart, the broad-shouldered, bluff-mannered farmer Andrew, or gentle-voiced, scholarly, meek-minded David, minister of the neighbouring parish of Broomhill.

She had watched them go forth to their own homes, with a blessing and a tear, and she had dressed for her bridal her fair and delicate sister Agnes, who had now been for two years the wife of Adam Hepburn of Rowallan. It must not be supposed that Jane Gray had no other alternative but to remain under her father's roof-tree. Nay, it was far otherwise. Many knew and appreciated her sterling worth, and more than one had pleaded for her love. But though there came one at

last who stirred her heart to its deepest depths, she shook her head. She looked at her father's white head and drooping shoulders, thought of his desolate old age, the empty, childless home she would leave behind, and, crushing down the yearnings of her heart, she answered no. Perhaps it was that experience, undreamed of by those to whom she so unselfishly ministered, which had lined her broad brow, and tinged her hair with grey before its time. Her face in its repose was apt to look sad, for it was in the stillness of an evening such as this that Jane Gray's heart was often peculiarly stirred by memories of the past. She laid down her seam at length, and leaning her arm on the sill, looked out into the flower-laden garden, which was sweet with all the lovely bloom of spring.

Just then her reverie was disturbed by a short, sharp whistle, and a light, hurried footfall coming round the approach which led down to the gate, and thence to the public road. And almost immediately a young lad came bounding over to the open window, waving his cap in the air. Jane Gray looked at the young, eager face with a kindly smile, for the eldest son of her brother Andrew was very dear to her heart. He had been sojourning for some months at the manse, his grandfather taking much pride and pleasure in forwarding him in his studies preparatory to his entering the University of Edinburgh or Glasgow, as a student of divinity. It had been his father's desire that he should follow his vocation, and by-and-by succeed him as the farmer of Hartrigge, but the lad had so early shown his distaste for outdoor labour, and his love for books, that it was evident nature intended him for a scholar.

"What is it, Gavin? You seem eager and excited," said his aunt, resuming her work.

"There is a horse and rider coming up the road, Aunt Jane, and I am sure it is the Reverend James Guthrie. It is his horse, I am quite sure, by the white foot and the white star on its forehead. Is grandfather in?"

"Yes, he is in his study; nay, do not disturb him yet, until we make sure you are right," she said, restraining the impetuous boy, as he was about to run off in search of his grandfather. "Stay, and I will walk down with you to the road, and by that time the horse and his rider, whoever he may be, will have reached the gate."

So saying, Jane Gray folded up her work, and in a minute had joined her nephew out of doors. "I cannot think that you can be right, Gavin," she said thoughtfully, "for I remember that Mr. Guthrie intended to be present at a special meeting in Edinburgh this week, and he has not yet had time to return to Stirling and come on so far as this."

"Why, there he is alighting at the gate, Aunt Jane! it is *just* Mr. Guthrie!" exclaimed the lad, and darting forward, he was the first to greet the much-beloved minister of Stirling, and to relieve him of his horse's bridle rein.

A glow of pleasure overspread the face of Jane Gray as she advanced to meet her father's revered friend, who was almost a brother to her, so close and dear was the intimacy between the two families.

"Mr. Guthrie, it is no ordinary pleasure to see you so unexpectedly," she said, as they shook hands; nevertheless her eyes dwelt rather anxiously upon his fine face, for in these troublous and foreboding times the announcement of danger or alarm might come at any moment.

"To me also, Miss Gray; I trust I have arrived to find your honoured father under his own roof-tree.

"Oh, yes; he is busy with his sermon. It is not often a minister is far from home on a Friday evening if he is to supply his own pulpit on the Sabbath Day. We thought you had been in Edinburgh this week, Mr. Guthrie."

"So I have been; and thanks to the Lord's journeying mercies vouchsafed to his unworthy servant, I have again been brought to my father's house in safety. The lad is out of hearing, I see," he added, glancing towards Gavin, who was leading the hot and dusty steed away in the direction of his grandfather's stable, "so I may say that a strange apprehension of evil came upon me in my bed last night, and so strong was the conviction in my mind this morning that I should not long be at liberty, that I was constrained to ride over here to be encouraged and comforted by your father's sweet counsel, and, if need be, bid your family circle, who are as dear to me almost as my own kinsfolk at Guthrie, a last farewell."

The ruddy colour faded out of Jane Gray's cheeks, and her startled eye looked with alarm into the minister's face. She was astonished and relieved at its sweet serenity; evidently his gloomy convictions had not power to rob him of his tranquillity.

"The Lord forbid that a hand should be laid on you, one of His most honoured and valued servants," she said involuntarily; "but pray tell me, Mr. Guthrie, have you had any warnings that the evil men in power are jealous of your influence for good?"

"In Edinburgh, yesterday, I was told that that good and noble lord, Archibald, Marquis of Argyll, will be laid hands upon ere long. If that be so, I cannot hope to escape, for I am doubly guilty of the actions which have doomed him. If it be so, and the Lord call me to bear witness for Him on the scaffold, He will give me strength to crucify the passions and affections of the body, and to glory in suffering for His sake."

The good man's face was suffused with a holy peace and joy, but a shudder ran through Jane Gray's frame, for not yet had the scaffold become so common, and in those brutal times so desirable a mode of exit from this troublous life as it was destined to become ere long in poor stricken Scotland.

"The prayers of God's people can but be offered up on your behalf, Mr. Guthrie. Such as you can ill be spared from the vineyard in these times," said Jane Gray, earnestly. "But now, let us tarry no longer out of doors; I am sure you stand in need of refreshment after your long ride."

Ere he crossed the threshold, the minister, as was his wont, raised his eyes to Heaven and reverently invoked a benediction in the words of the apostle of old: "Peace be to this house."

Having shown her guest into the sitting-room, Jane Gray sent Betty the maid to tap at the minister's door and tell him the Reverend James Guthrie, from Stirling, had arrived at the manse. Betty, or Elizabeth McBean, had served with the Grays since her girlhood, and her love for the family was only exceeded by her intense love and devotion to the Kirk of Scotland, and her intense hatred to every form of religion alien to the sound Presbyterianism of her forefathers.

While Jane Gray with her own hands set about preparing some refreshment for the guest, the minister, her father, left his study with joyful haste, and entering the family room, very warmly greeted his friend and brother-minister, whom he had known and loved these many years. There was a great change in the minister of Inverburn since that memorable time three-and-twenty years before, when he had visited Edinburgh, and witnessed with his brethren for the Covenant in the Kirk of the Greyfriars.

His tall, spare figure was now much stooped, his face worn and wrinkled, his eye, though still bright and clear, far sunken in his head, his long hair and flowing beard as white as the driven snow. He looked a patriarch indeed, and the serene and heavenly expression on his face, his kindly smile, and sweet fatherliness of manner and tone were calculated to inspire the deepest reverence and love.

"Bless the Lord, I am again permitted to look upon your face, my brother!" he said, as he warmly and fervently grasped Mr. Guthrie's hand. "But I trust no untoward circumstances prompt your unlooked-for visit. In these troublous times we are all as watchers on the house-top."

"I was but saying to your daughter, Mr. Gray, that it was a presentiment of evil which brought me here to-night," replied the minister of Stirling. "I only returned from Edinburgh yesterday, and what I heard there augured ill for the peace of Zion. It is rumoured that the Marquis of Argyll is no longer safe, so the king's emissaries are not to be satisfied with common prey."

"I can hardly credit the truth of such rumours, Mr. Guthrie," replied the minister of Inverburn. "Gratitude for past invaluable services should render his person sacred in the eyes of the king."

An expression of mild scorn passed over Mr. Guthrie's face.

"Gratitude is a word not found in the vocabulary of the House of Stuart," he said, quietly. "The Marquis, I am told, leaves for London on Monday, to offer his congratulations to the king on his restoration. I fear me he takes the journey at his own great risk."

"If need be the Lord will hold His sheltering arm over him, Mr. Guthrie," said the minister of Inverburn, cheerfully. "No man, either prince or peasant, shall die before the appointed time. But here comes Jane with your refreshment. I hope it is not your intention to quit the roof-tree of the manse before the dawning of another day."

"If convenient for Miss Jane I will very gladly stay," answered Mr. Guthrie. "As troubles thicken round us, opportunities for sweet counsel together, though more sorely needed, will become more limited, I fear. And now, are all your kinsfolk at Hartrigge and Rowallan well? and is the kirk at Broomhill prospering under David's ministrations?"

"Verily the Lord hath been pleased to greatly bless the lad in his labours," said the minister of Inverburn, in tones of satisfaction. "Here comes young Gavin Gray, in whose studies I take a deep interest. Here Gavin, lad, come and speak to the Reverend Mr. Guthrie, and behold in him the pattern of what I one day hope to see you become."

The bright, happy-faced boy came forward frankly, and was again addressed cordially by the minister of Stirling.

"I have been thinking, father," said Jane Gray's pleasant voice in the doorway, "that Gavin might saddle Donald, and carry word of Mr. Guthrie's visitation both to his father's house, and to his uncle and aunt at Rowallan. Andrew and Susan, I am sure, would be greatly rejoiced to come over to the manse. They could drive round in their little cart to Rowallan, and bring over Adam and Agnes with them."

"A very good suggestion, my daughter," said Mr. Gray. "You hear what your aunt says, Gavin," he added to the lad. "Run and get Donald saddled and if you ride quickly they can all be here before the evening is far spent."

Gavin, nothing loth, at once obeyed his grandfather's behest, and was soon scampering along the road towards Hartrigge.

CHAPTER IV. THE MINISTER'S CHILDREN.

The farm of Hartrigge, where abode the minister's eldest son, was one of the largest holdings on the estate of Inverburn. Andrew Gray had entered it on his marriage, seventeen years before, and was therefore drawing near the expiry of his lease. Having been trained as a practical farmer, he had converted the somewhat poverty-stricken acres into rich and fertile soil. He was a careful, prudent man himself, and, having married Susan Baillie (the daughter of the farmer under whom he had learned his business), one eminently fitted to be a true helpmeet to him in every way, he was a prosperous, and might even be called a rich man.

In disposition he was not nearly so lovable as his brother, the minister of Broomhill. He was by nature rather harsh and stern, and, though his anger was not easily kindled, it was a slow and deadly fire which did not quickly burn out. Had his wife not been of a singularly sweet and amiable temperament, Hartrigge would not have been such a happy, peaceable household as it was. And yet Andrew Gray was a sincerely good man, rather austere in his religious views, perhaps, but ardently attached to the Church of Scotland, and passionately jealous regarding all her ancient privileges. Four children had blessed Hartrigge with the sunshine of their presence--Gavin, the eldest; then Jane, a quiet douce maiden of fourteen; then merry, rattling Sandy; and sweet, winsome, gentle-eyed little Agnes, whom they called Nannie, to distinguish her from her namesake aunt at Rowallan.

Hartrigge was distant about two miles from the manse, the road leading in a southerly direction through rich and beautiful scenery, exquisitely varied by all the changing tints of spring. Here the tender, delicate green of the beech showed in sharp relief against some sombre fir; again the silver buds on the chestnut gleamed side by side with the brighter hue of the larch and the mountain ash. Cowslip and daisy dotted every grassy slope, and the hedgerows already were gleaming white with hawthorn bloom--so early had the summer burst in fragrance on the earth.

About a mile beyond the massive stone gateway which gave entrance to the grounds surrounding the mansion-house of Inverburn, a low white gate shut out intruders from the private road leading to Hartrigge. This familiar barrier Donald took at a bound, and in five minutes afterwards was galloping round the path which cut through the fir wood surrounding the house. It was a substantial dwelling, of plain and sober aspect, befitting its inmates, and, though there was ample garden ground in front, there were no flowers blooming sweetly as in the manse garden. Everything was austere neat, simple, and plain. Gavin rode the pony round to the kitchen door, and, dismounting, tied the rein to a projecting hook placed in the wall for that purpose. Then he bounded into the house, It was milking-time, and the maids were in the byre (cowhouse), and he knew that his mother would be upstairs putting the younger ones to bed, for everything moved by clockwork in that most methodical of houses. The sound of voices in the ben-end (parlour) proclaimed that his father was giving Jeanie her evening lesson, which Gavin boldly interrupted.

"Grandfather sent me to bid mother and you come to the manse, father," he said, impetuously. "Mr. Guthrie from Stirling is here, and would like to see you. And I am to go to Rowallan and tell Uncle Adam and Aunt Agnes to be ready to drive down with you when you come for them."

Andrew Gray closed his book and rose to his feet, with a gleam of interest brightening his rugged face. He was a tall, broad-shouldered man, whose physique was suggestive of giant

strength, while his keen, stern black eye and massive jaw indicated an indomitable will. He was plainly dressed in rough homespun, and looked what he was--a substantial, well-to-do Clydesdale farmer.

"Mr. James Guthrie! Surely his coming was not anticipated, Gavin," he said in tones of surprise. "Was your grandfather very pressing? It is somewhat late to leave the house to-night."

"Yes; I believe it is something special, father, and I must away. Well, Jeanie, have you learned to milk Mysie yet?" he added, teasingly, to the quiet-faced little maiden, who was being initiated into all the household ways.

"Yes, I can milk her fine, Gavin, all but the strippings!" she answered, proudly. "Are you going away already?"

At that moment Mrs. Gray, having heard Gavin's voice upstairs, entered the room. She was a comely, pleasant-faced woman, with shrewd, grey eyes, in which shone a kindly, and at times very humorous gleam. She looked very young to be the mother of her tall son, for her figure was well preserved, and even graceful, her cheeks red and bonnie, as they had been in her girlhood. She appeared much pleased to hear of the invitation to the manse, and at once said they could go, for Sandy and Nannie were asleep, and Margaret, the more responsible of the two maids, could very well see to the house in their absence. So after another teasing word to Jeanie, a run upstairs to look at Sandy and Nannie sleeping in their beds, Gavin mounted Donald again, and turned his head into the field-path which led straight to Rowallan.

If Hartrigge was noted for its simplicity and absence of all outer adornments, Rowallan was renowned for the exquisite beauty of its natural situation and surroundings, as well as for the taste with which the little garden was laid out and kept.

Hartrigge stood upon a somewhat bleak and barren hill. Rowallan was sheltered in a cosy hollow, protected on every side from every wind that blew. It also formed a part of the lands of Inverburn, but was considerably smaller in extent than its neighbour.

And yet it had sufficed as a dwelling-place and livelihood for the Hepburns for generations. There had been an Adam Hepburn in Rowallan as far back as the country folk could remember or tell, and an Adam Hepburn of Rowallan had left his ploughshare at the call of patriotism, and had met his death on the fateful field of Flodden; an Adam Hepburn had signed the Covenant at Edinburgh, three-and-twenty years before, and though he was now gathered to his fathers, there was an Adam Hepburn in Rowallan still. True friends and generous foes the Hepburns had ever been, faithful to their plighted word, scorning the very name of meanness or dishonour. A wild, passionate impetuous temper was the family failing, and yet for deeds done, or words spoken in the heat of anger, they were ever ready to make amends. Although Adam Hepburn was married to Agnes Gray, her brother Andrew, at Hartrigge, had never taken kindly to him. Both were good men, and yet there was a strange antipathy between them, and it was better that they should not meet often. There was nothing of rigid solemn austerity about Adam Hepburn, and he often indulged in good-humoured banter against his brother-in-law's solemnity; yet none could have a truer reverence for things divine than Adam Hepburn. Under the gay exterior there was a deeper, more earnest current of feeling, which kept him in the paths of righteousness and peace. Both Uncle Adam and Aunt Agnes were almost worshipped by the young folk at Hartrigge, and also by the little Hepburns, the children of Adam's brother, who was a well-to-do merchant in the town of Lanark. Even manse Donald himself seemed to know and love the way to Rowallan, for he fairly capered and whinnied with delight when he came in sight of the cosy homestead at the foot of its sheltering hill. It was indeed a sweet spot. The house was whitewashed, and built in a low, rambling style, with many a quaint gable and window, about which crept green and lovely creepers, as well as time-honoured honeysuckle and wild-rose. A little lawn in front sloped down to a broad swift-running stream, which had its being in the hill to the east of the house, and which danced merrily over its pebbly bed on its way to join the noble Clyde. In the stillness of the April evening its bosom was broken by many a circling eddy, where the lusty trout leaped up to catch the buzzing insects which hummed in the drowsy air.

Catching sight of his aunt standing in the doorway, Gavin waved his cap, a salutation to which she replied by fluttering her white handkerchief in the breeze. And as if in response to a word from her, her husband joined her outside, and they came slowly along the path to meet the messenger. They were a goodly pair. Adam Hepburn stood six feet in his stockings, and his tall figure was well-built and splendidly proportioned, while his fine head, with its clustering, chestnut curls, was set firmly on his shoulders, giving the idea of strength and resolution as well as manly beauty. His face was sunny, open, and honest as the day; his keen, blue eye, with its humorous gleam, his firm yet tender mouth, redeemed the face from any harshness which the

strongly-marked features might otherwise have given. His wife had fulfilled all the gentle promise of her girlhood. She was a sweet, shy, shrinking woman, such as makes the sunshine of home for one, but who is lost sight of in the busier ways of life. She was like the gentle lily-of-the-vale, breathing forth in her quiet life an unseen but exquisite perfume, which shed its influence on all around it. Of her husband's strong, deep, yearning love for her I cannot write; it was the passion of his life, and she was indeed the very desire of his heart and the apple of his eye. And she loved him, if less demonstratively, as truly and tenderly as such women do.

"Hullo, youngster, how have you and Donald managed to escape from the manse so late?" queried Uncle Adam when the pony and its rider were within a hundred yards or so of them, while Aunt Agnes gently hoped that he brought no bad news. Gavin delivered his message, which seemed to be very acceptable to both, and they signified their willingness and pleasure to prepare themselves against the arriving of the conveyance from Hartrigge. Then he turned Donald's head once more, and trotted rapidly back to the manse. About eight of the clock the conveyance arrived also, and all the minister's family with the exception of David, whose absence all deplored, were gathered under his roof-tree. Mr. Guthrie had not yet seen the husband whom Agnes Gray had married, and he was greatly taken with his pleasant manner and fine open face. Of the daughters of the manse the younger had ever been his favourite, because she reminded him of a dear sister of his own he had lost in early life. After the usual greetings, the talk turned upon the one absorbing topic of interest--the Church and her affairs, together with the evil doings of the two men, Middleton and Sharp, who held in their hands the reins of Scottish Government, and who seemed determined to exercise their power to the suppression of both civil and religious liberty in the land.

While the minister of Stirling fearlessly expressed his opinion regarding these matters, for all under the roof-tree of the manse were true as steel, it might have been observed with what deep and breathless interest Andrew Gray of Hartrigge hung upon every word, and how, at some revelation of tyranny and injustice hitherto unknown to him, he clenched his hands, and the veins on his forehead stood out like knotted cords. It was easy to see that when the approaching crisis came he would be found in the hottest forefront of the battle.

"I am of opinion, my friends, that there should be a day set apart for the nation to humble herself before the God of nations, lest it be through any backsliding or lukewarmness of her own that these ominous things are happening in her midst," said the minister, thoughtfully; "there had need to be a reviving of the covenanting spirit among us. In these times how many are sitting at their ease in Zion, while her very bulwarks are assailed by the sons of Belial."

"Could you not move such a resolution at the first meeting of your Presbytery, Mr. Guthrie, an example which I also would follow upon the eighteenth of May in my own Presbytery of Lanark?" suggested the minister of Inverburn.

Mr. Guthrie remained for a few minutes silent, while his countenance wore an expression of deep seriousness and settled conviction.

"If I be still in the body and at liberty, brother, I will indeed act upon your suggestion," he said at length.

"Why, Mr. Guthrie, do you fear that you may be laid hands on?" quoth Adam Hepburn, impetuously. "Surely the ill men in power would never venture upon sic an offence."

"There is no offence too heinous to be committed by those who sell their souls to Satan, young man," said the minister, mildly. "Will you bring the Book, Miss Jane, and we will comfort ourselves for a little season with the precious Word of His grace. It may be the last time we will have so sweet a privilege together."

Nothing loth, Jane Gray lifted the Book from its honoured place and laid it before the minister of Stirling. He read an appropriate portion of Scripture, and commented thereon in his own eloquent and persuasive style. Then the minister of Inverburn led the devotions of the little gathering, and so devout and impressive were these exercises that all felt that Jesus was indeed Himself in their midst. The memory of that night remained very sweet and precious in their hearts when Mr. Guthrie's prediction was fulfilled, and there were few opportunities for Christian fellowship permitted to God's people. When they parted for the night Mr. Guthrie bade them all a solemn farewell, knowing in his inmost heart that they should meet no more on earth.

CHAPTER V. THE FIRST MARTYRS.

As several weeks passed, and Mr. Guthrie was still left to peaceable ministrations in his church and parish, his friends at Inverburn began to hope that his direful prophesies regarding his own fate might, after all, prove themselves to be but vain imaginings. The most noble Marquis of Argyll repaired to London according to arrangements, in response to the urgent solicitations of the king that he should present himself at Court, and for a space nothing was heard of him.

In the month of August a number of the ministers met in Edinburgh, by special appointment, for the purpose of drawing up a petition to the king. The Reverend Mr. Gray of Inverburn had hoped and expected to be present at that gathering, but was prevented by a severe chill caught after a long walk in the heat of the day. As it afterwards turned out, it appeared as if the Lord had specially preserved him in safety at home, for no sooner was the conference gathered together in Edinburgh than they were all apprehended, with the exception of one who very miraculously escaped. They were first imprisoned in the Castle of Edinburgh, but Mr. Guthrie was afterwards removed to Stirling Castle, as if to be taunted with his confinement in the place where he had long exercised so much liberty both of person and conscience. And so desolation and mourning fell upon the people of Stirling because of the strange and grievous affliction which had befallen their minister.

A very bountiful harvest blessed Scotland that year; nevertheless it was ingathered with a strange foreboding that ere long the dark cloud of want and misery would overshadow the now plentiful and peaceful land.

One evening early in the bleak month of December, when the minister of Inverburn was returning from visiting a sick parishioner, a shepherd among the hills beyond Rowallan, he met the laird riding between the manse gate and the entrance to Inverburn. Sir Thomas Hamilton was a fine, handsome-looking man, but, owing to his haughty and overbearing manner and his well-known leanings towards the side of Prelacy, he was not greatly beloved in the parish. The minister gravely and courteously saluted him, but, somewhat to his surprise, the laird drew rein, with the intention of speaking to him.

"Good evening, Mr. Gray. I have been to the manse seeking you," he said in his quick, imperious way. "Having missed you there, I am fortunate in meeting you. You were preaching in your own kirk on the Sabbath Day, I am told?"

"I was, Sir Thomas," answered the minister, in tones of mild surprise.

"And they tell me you preached a very disloyal discourse, calculated to stir up strife against the king and his honourable counsellors and representatives in Scotland," said the laird, with a peculiar smile.

"Nay, Sir Thomas; whoever carried such a tale to you grievously and wilfully misrepresented me," said the minister, quietly. "I said that these were woeful and troublous times for the Kirk and country, when such good men as James Guthrie of Stirling were imprisoned for fearlessly advocating the principles of civil and religious liberty, and protesting against the many strange and heathenish innovations which the king, through his representatives, is seeking to force into the worship of the Kirk of Scotland."

"Heathenish! By the powers, Andrew Gray, have a care, and keep a better bridle on thy prating tongue, or it will get thee into mischief yet," said the laird, rudely. "The time is coming when a man may get his mouth closed for less."

"Nay, it now is," said the minister, mournfully. "Truly, I know not whither this poor country is drifting nor what will become of her Church, unless the God of the Covenant stretch out to her a helping hand."

"See here, Andrew Gray," said the laird, leaning down from his saddle and speaking in very significant tones; "you are a prating old fool. Let me advise you, for your own safety and that of your household, to take a leaf out of the book of your neighbour, the minister of Lochlee. He is a wise man, now, who can seal his lips and obey the reasonable desires of the king, without making so much ado."

"You speak truly, Sir Thomas. John Methven is indeed a wise man for this present life, but woe is me for the lustre of his crown in glory. I fear me the fear of man is much more before his mind than the fear of God."

"But tell me, Andrew Gray," said the laird, impatiently, "what harm can there be in using the new prayer book in the service of the Church? It is a very holy and good book, and there is nothing in it even to offend the most fastidious taste."

"It savours too strongly of the popish breviary, Sir Thomas, besides being the thin end of the wedge which will drive the pure worship of God from every Scottish pulpit. As such I humbly pray

it may be as resolutely kept without the church doors as it has been hitherto," returned the minister, fearlessly.

"I tell you, Andrew Gray, it is useless to resist the will of the king, who has might as well as right upon his side. And think you that when such men as Archibald of Argyll are not reckoned too high in influence and station to be punished for treason, that the king will regard with leniency lesser lights like you?"

The minister started.

"Then the spirit of prophecy which was vouchsafed to James Guthrie has had its double fulfilment and His Grace is a fellow-captive with his ministerial brethren?" he said sadly.

"Even so," replied the laird. "I have had intelligence from London that Argyll is confined in the Tower, awaiting trial for treason. I tell you this in confidence, to warn you, Andrew Gray, for, obstinate though you be, I have no desire to see any harm befall your grey hairs. And take my word for it, Episcopacy must sooner or later be established in Scotland, and it is simple madness to attempt to swim against the tide."

With these significant words the Laird of Inverburn gave his horse the rein, and rode rapidly away, leaving the minister to pursue his solitary way in sad meditation over the difficulties and dangers daily thickening round the path of God's people.

Turning a bend in the road, he beheld in the distance the figure of his son David, the minister of Broomhill, advancing to meet him. He was not surprised, having been duly apprised of his intention to come with his wife and child that day to spend a brief season at the manse. David Gray was now a tall and fine-looking man, although his figure was very slim and slenderly built, and his face wore that thoughtful and even careworn aspect common to the scholar and the earnest minister of the Gospel. Although only in his thirty-fifth year, his black locks were already tinged with grey, and there were not a few wrinkles on his high and thoughtful brow.

A warm greeting passed between father and son, mutual inquiries for each other's health and welfare, and then both plunged into the subject which was occupying the minds of all thinking people at that time. They walked slowly on to the manse, engaged in earnest discussion, and were so deeply absorbed that they stood outside the door, heedless of the chill and biting evening air, until Jane Gray, hearing voices, came and peremptorily ordered them in.

In the family room David Gray's wife was sitting by the hearth with her baby on her knee. She was a fair-faced, flaxen-haired young woman, without much depth of character or soundness of understanding. She was the only daughter of a little laird, in the parish of Broomhill, and had been brought up to think of little except her own pretty face. She was not in any way fitted to be the wife of a minister, especially of such a one as David Gray, and many had marvelled at his choice. The Grays had not much approved his marriage with her, but seeing his heart was set upon the maiden, they had kept their thoughts to themselves, and hoped that under his influence Lilian Burnet would become a better woman.

"And how is it with thee, my daughter?" queried the minister of Inverburn in his fatherly manner, and at the same time laying his hand in blessing on the fair head of the child sleeping on her knee.

"Oh I am very well, grandfather," she answered, flippantly; "and glad to come here for a change. David has harped so long about coming to the manse of Inverburn. I wanted to go home to my father's house at Haughhead and let him come alone, but he would not listen to me."

The minister readily guessed the cause of his son's desire to separate his wife as much as possible from the influence of her own kinsfolk. Although they followed an outward form of Presbyterianism they were at heart attached to Episcopacy, solely because it was the form of religion most favoured then by royalty and great folk, for whom the needy Burnets had a great admiration. In the presence of Mrs. David Gray there was not much said anent the affairs of the Church; but as there were many other matters relating to family and social life interesting to them, the conversation did not flag. Also, later in the evening, Adam Hepburn and his wife walked over from Rowallan and joined the family circle at the manse. And so the night sped on swift and pleasant wings.

Next day Betty McBean's brother, a carrier by trade, and who had been at Edinburgh on some errands for various people in the parish, brought word to the manse that the Marquis of Argyll had been brought a close prisoner by sea from London to Leith, and was confined in Edinburgh Castle. So the laird's statement, which Mr. Gray had partly disbelieved, was true after all. It was with deep anxiety that Mr. Gray, in common with all other God-fearing people throughout Scotland, awaited the results which must follow upon these significant proceedings.

On the 13th of February the Marquis of Argyll was arraigned before the bar of the Parliament

in Edinburgh, charged with high treason. The evidence against him was of a very slender character, and was chiefly made up of a number of vile and baseless slanders gathered together for his condemnation. Upon the 20th of the same month the Reverend James Guthrie was put upon his trial, charged with a similar offence. But the real cause of offence against these two great and good men was that they were the two most influential Protestants in Scotland, and must therefore be removed out of the way.

Therefore both, after a mockery of a trial, were put on their defence, which not being satisfactory to their base accusers and unjust and perjured judges, they were both condemned to die, Argyll on the 28th of May, and Mr. Guthrie on the 1st of June. When the grievous news was brought to Inverburn, Mr. Gray at once rose and prepared himself for a journey to Edinburgh, in order to be present with his beloved friend during the last days of his life, to comfort him with the sweet counsel of brotherly and Christian sympathy. Jane Gray saw her aged father depart with some forebodings of mind, and was indeed moved to tears, as she bade him God-speed and farewell.

"Weep not for me, my daughter," said the minister, sadly, "but rather for our harassed and persecuted land. Know, Jane, that except it be of the Lord's good pleasure, wicked men shall not lay a hand upon me. And if his friends desert him in his hour of need, the soul of the Lord's servant may sink within him in his extremity."

Owing to his age and somewhat infirm health, the minister of Inverburn found it impossible to make the journey in one day, and had therefore to rest by the way at the house of a friend, about fifteen miles west from Edinburgh. And on the following morning he rode with speed into Edinburgh, arriving about noon at the house of his brother-in-law, in the Grass-market. His sister Jane was now dead, but her one child, grown to womanhood, ministered with kind heart and capable hands to her father's wants. The minister was warmly greeted by Ailie Kilgour and her father and made heartily welcome under their roof-tree. As was to be expected, the merchant was able to furnish his brother-in-law with all the particulars of the two trials, which had occasioned such excitement and sorrowful indignation in the city. He also assured him that he would have no difficulty in obtaining access to Mr. Guthrie, because he had been allowed to enjoy the fellowship of several friends, as well as some of his kinsfolk from Guthrie. So, before the day was spent, Mr. Gray betook himself to the tolbooth, or gaol, and was without ado admitted to the presence of his condemned friend. As was natural, the minister of Inverburn expected to find him somewhat cast down, for he was not yet stricken in years, and had many sweet ties to bind him to life; but he was agreeably surprised to find him not only composed and cheerful, but encompassed with a holy joy, a blessed and wondrous serenity, which seemed to have been specially vouchsafed to him from above.

"Ah, friend Gray," he said, as he affectionately embraced him, "hast thou come to see how our God can uphold His servants in the very swelling of Jordan? Wicked men can lay hands on and torment this poor body indeed, for which I am not ungrateful, since they will do me a good turn by giving me a quicker introduction to my Father's house, where are many mansions."

In that state of mind Mr. Guthrie continued up to his execution. Nor was the Marquis of Argyll less wonderfully upheld in his extremity. He died upon the Monday with triumphant courage, and it seemed as if the Lord's arm were veritably around him.

On the Friday following Mr. Guthrie followed his illustrious fellow-sufferer into glory. The minister of Inverburn was among those who accompanied him to the scaffold, and who witnessed (not without a passing feeling of envy, that he had reached the end of his troubles) the holy and triumphant joy with which he met the King of Terrors.

His last words, "The Covenants will yet be Scotland's reviving," were destined to be gloriously fulfilled, but not until the blood of the saints, of which his was but the earnest, was made to run like water on the ground.

CHAPTER VI.

A THORN IN THE FLESH.

On a dreary October afternoon in the year 1662, David Gray, the minister of Broomhill, was sitting in the study in his own manse, with his arms leaning on the table, and his face wearing an expression of deep perplexity and care.

That very day had been published the proclamation drawn up by the Privy Council in

Glasgow, commanding the ministers to own the power of the newly-appointed bishops, and to accept anew presentations of their livings at the hands of the prelates within four weeks, on pain of being immediately, with their families, ejected from their manses, livings, and parishes, beyond even the very bounds of their Presbyteries.

In a sore strait was the minister of Broomhill that day. In his own mind there was not the slightest hesitation as to the course to be pursued; he had already refused to own the power of the Bishop of Glasgow, in whose diocese was the parish of Broomhill. The trouble lay not with his own conscience; it was connected with his wife and her kinsfolk, who had already made his life miserable with their reproaches concerning what they termed his obstinacy and bigoted Presbyterianism. She was not yet aware of this new proclamation, and the minister bethought himself that he might try to enlist her sympathies on his side before she was influenced by her friends at Haughhead. Accordingly he rose from his chair, and went to the living-room in search of his wife. Hearing his foot in the passage, his little daughter, now able to run alone, came toddling to meet him, and stooping, the father raised her in his arms and passionately clasped her to his heart. Her little arms met fondly round his neck, her rosy cheek was pressed lovingly to his; the grave disturbed look on her father's face could not awe or frighten the little one, for he was her father still. That sweet caress did the heart of the minister good, and he entered the inner room with a lighter step than that with which he had left his study. Another child, a little son, just three months old, lay in the wooden cradle which the young mother was gently rocking with her foot, while over her sewing she crooned a lullaby to hush the babe to rest. She looked up at her husband's entrance, and slightly smiled in recognition.

"Is the child asleep? can we talk here, Lilian?" he asked in a whisper.

"Yes, he is very sound now, and will not awake for an hour," she answered. "What is it you have to say?"

For answer he drew from an inner pocket a copy of the proclamation and handed it for her perusal. She carelessly glanced it over and laid it aside, while a peculiar little smile touched her red lips.

"I am not surprised; my father has always said the Government would resort to more extreme measures. Well, would it not have been better to have owned the bishop's sway of your free will, without being hunted and compelled to do it like this?" she asked.

The tone of her voice as well as her words went to her husband's heart like a knife. He wearily passed his hand across his brow, and offered up a silent prayer for guidance and strength to stand firm in the struggle he knew was at hand.

"When I refused to own the bishop of my own free will, as you say, Lilian, do you think it a likely thing that such an edict, compiled by a few drunken and infamous men, will compel me to it? Middleton and his underlings have mistaken the men with whom they have to deal," he said, quietly, yet with unmistakable firmness.

His wife lifted her light blue eyes to his face, with a look of incredulous wonder on her own.

"Do you really mean that you would sooner bear the penalty than obey, David Gray?" she asked.

"The penalty I would bear gladly if it did not involve breaking up our home. I doubt not the Lord will guide my feet in the right way. If He shows me that it is my duty to endure hardship for His sake, will my wife not willingly endure with me? On such a vital question, Lilian, we cannot, dare not be divided!" said the minister, hoarsely.

Lilian Gray shrugged her slender shoulders, and an expression of scorn somewhat marred the childish beauty of her face.

"None but a madman, David, would give up a comfortable manse and a good stipend for such a small thing; but doubtless though your folly should render your wife and children homeless, it would not greatly exercise your spirit. But I am glad to think that my father's house will not be closed against me," she said, pettishly, and turned her face away from her husband.

The minister groaned in the anguish of his spirit for his shallow-hearted wife tried him to the utmost limit of endurance. Before he had time to frame an answer to her most unfeeling speech, there came a loud knocking to the outer door, and presently he heard the voice of his father-in-law, Gilbert Burnet of Haughhead, enquiring whether he was within. So he turned upon his heel, and, quitting the room, met his father-in-law in the hall. Opening the study door, he motioned him to enter therein, for he saw well enough that it was the proclamation which had brought him to the manse. Burnet of Haughhead was a little burly man, of very self-important and consequential demeanour, for, in truth, he thought himself of no mean importance in the parish, and considered that he had greatly honoured the minister of Broomhill in giving him his daughter to wife.

"I see by your face, son-in-law, that you have already received notification of the august decree concerning the bishops and the ministers," he said, in a facetious voice. "Ha! ha! they are to be dealt with like refractory schoolboys now--mastered or expelled."

David Gray turned his head away with a swift gesture, for he was tempted to speak somewhat unbecomingly to the father of his wife. Such jesting and mocking allusion to such a serious matter were more than painful to him; nay, he could scarcely endure it in patience.

"Would it not have been a much more satisfactory state of things had you quietly acquiesced in the desires of the king, without having to be brought under this humiliating ban?" said Haughhead presently. "You are still a young man, and ought to have been guided by the counsels of your elders."

"Mr. Burnet, do you think that, though still a young man, I have neither opinions nor conscience of my own?" enquired David Gray, hotly, for his quick temper was touched by the manner and words addressed to him.

"A conscience is a very good thing within certain bounds, young man," said Gilbert Burnet, drily. "I suppose now you will be halting still betwixt two alternatives. Perhaps the wording of the Act is not yet plain enough for your understanding."

"Sir, I know not why you should address such insulting and extraordinary remarks to me. I fear I must have fallen far short of my profession as a minister of the Gospel that you should entertain for me so small a measure of respect," said the minister of Broomhill, with quiet but rebuking dignity. "I am halting betwixt no two alternatives. As I have hitherto refused to acknowledge the bishop as the head of the Church, so I refuse still, at any cost. Come what may, I humbly pray that I may be accounted worthy to suffer for Him who is the true and only head of the Church on earth."

A flush of anger overspread the face of Gilbert Burnet.

"So, sir, it was for this I gave my daughter to you," he said slowly. "Know this, if you still persist in your mad and bigoted resolve, I will remove her and her children to my own house of Haughhead, and you will see them no more."

"You have no power to do that, sir, except Lilian go with you of her own free will," said the minister, quietly. "I cannot think that she would consent to be entirely separated from me."

"We will see, we will see," fumed the irate Laird of Haughhead. "I will away home, and see what her mother says to it; no, I'll not wait to see Lilian, so good day to you, David Gray."

So saying, the Laird abruptly quitted the manse, and rode away in anger to his own house of Haughhead. In his deep perplexity and sadness, the heart of the minister turned with a strange, deep yearning to his own kinsfolk at the manse of Inverburn. So, as the day was not yet far spent, he saddled his sturdy cob, and rode away by the wild hill paths, in the bleak December weather, to his father's house. The way he took was much shorter than the public high road, the distance not exceeding five miles, so that he came within sight of the roofs of Inverburn before darkness fell. He carefully guided his steed down a very steep mountain path, and from the valley into which he descended he had a good view of his brother Andrew's house of Hartrigge on the summit of the opposite height. He could either continue his course along the valley, which would bring him by a somewhat roundabout way to the village, or climb the hill to Hartrigge, and thence reach the high road, a little to the south of the entrance to Inverburn. He bethought him that he might as well look in at Hartrigge, and enquire for the welfare of its inmates; therefore he urged his horse to make the steep ascent, and in a short space of time the animal's hoofs made a clatter on the path outside the house, and brought Andrew Gray to the door.

"David, is that indeed you in person?" he exclaimed in surprise, and hastened to relieve him of his bridle rein. "No ill news, I hope, brings you so far from home this bleak night."

"No worse news than has come to many another household this day, Andrew," replied the minister, with a sigh. "I am on my way to the manse, so you need not stable Charlie. He will stand quiet enough if he hears my voice, or if you could send one of your lads to hold him till I step in and ask for Susan and the bairns, that will suffice."

"Gavin is in the house; he has been biding with us these three days; go in and send him out," said Andrew Gray. But there was no need, for presently the lad Gavin appeared in person at the door, looking surprised and pleased to see his uncle.

"Well, Gavin, lad?" said the minister, kindly, and after shaking him by the hand passed into the house. Mrs Gray rose from her spinning-wheel to greet her brother-in-law, her comely face smiling her hearty welcome. "Come away in, David," she said in her own cheery fashion. "Hoo's a' wi' ye? Is Lily and the bairns well?"

"All well, thank you, Susan," said the minister, bending to pat, first Sandy's woolly head, and

then wee Nannie's sunny curls; and he had a kind word too for douce Jeanie, who was sitting demurely by the spinning-wheel. It was a picture of quiet family happiness and contentment, soon, alas! to be looked for in vain throughout the length and breadth of bonnie Scotland.

"Doubtless you have heard concerning the new proclamation?" said the minister, turning enquiringly to his brother, who had followed him into the room.

Hartrigge nodded, and a gleam shot through his fearless eye, telling that it had roused and stirred his innermost being.

"Have you seen our father to-day?"

"Yes, and I was amazed at his serenity. Jane feels it worse than him, and Betty McBean is the worst of them all. When I was in she was audibly wishing she had her hands about Middleton's neck, and her mouth at Sharp's ear. I'll warrant she wouldna spare them," said Andrew Gray, with a grim smile.

"Eh, man, David, they's awful times for folk tae live in," said Aunt Susan, in a kind of wail. "I declare it makes a body lie doon i' their bed at nicht wi' fear an' tremblin', no kenin' what strange and waefu' thing may happen afore the daw'in'."

"You speak truly, Susan, and I fear the worse is not yet," said the minister, gravely. "My father, then, has quite made up his mind concerning his course of action?" he added to his brother.

"Of course; there is but one way open to every single-hearted servant of God," said Andrew Gray with heaving chest and flashing eye. "I would the day were here, and it is surely coming, when the people of Scotland, roused to a sense of their own wrongs will take arms in defence of their liberties."

"Wheesht, Andrew! Wheesht, wheesht!" said his wife, looking round in terror, as if expecting her husband would be laid hands on then and there for such rebellious words. "Dinna speak that way. We maun bear afore we fecht. Peace is better than war."

"Spoken like a woman, Susan," said her husband, with his grim smile. "But there is peace which means degradation and dishonour, as well as war, which is honourable and richt. Must you go already, David? I wouldna mind yoking the beast and following ye to the manse."

"Let me go too, father," called out Gavin's shrill eager tones from the doorstep, where he had been a breathless listener to what was passing. The lad, young as he was, had as deep and heartfelt an interest in public affairs as his elders, and he was as intelligent in his interest as any of them all.

His father did not say him nay, but directly the minister rode away, sent him to get out their own horse and cart.

Betty McBean answered the minister's knock at the manse door, and at sight of the younger son of the manse, threw up her hands and burst into a loud wail.

"Eh, Maister Dauvit, man, come awa'! It's a waefu' hoose ye're comin' intil the nicht; it'll be the last time ye'll cross in safety the doorstane o' the manse," she exclaimed, incoherently. "Eh, sir, they bluidy and perjured monsters wha hae sold themsels tae Sautan for the persecution o' the servants o' the Maist High. Tae think they wad tak' the very roof-tree frae above focks' heids, the very flure frae under their feet, and cast them oot intae the howlin' wilderness, because they'll no----"

The old woman's incoherent ramblings were here interrupted by Jane Gray, who, hearing the great commotion of Betty's shrill tongue, came out to see what was the matter, and at sight of her brother, her tears also flowed afresh. Her face was pale and anxious-looking, her eyes already red with weeping. The minister of Broomhill held her hand long in his fervent grip, and said tremblingly,

"God go with and comfort you, my sister, as He had need to comfort us all in this desolation."

Then the twain entered the study where their father sat, and at sight of that aged face, so peaceful and benignant in its expression, David Gray felt rebuked and ashamed.

"David, my son, my heart was much with you. You are very welcome to your father's house this night," said the old man, in significant tones.

For a moment David Gray was unable to speak, but sat him down by the hearthstone in utter silence. It was broken at last by the reverent tones of his father's voice.

"If we must go forth from our heritage, David, it is the Lord's will. Let us see to it that, instead of vain grumbling and looking back, we examine ourselves, and be glad that we are accounted worthy. They may take from us our earthly habitations, but, blessed be His name, they cannot rob us of that Heavenly City, whose builder and whose maker is God. How has the proclamation been received in the parish of Broomhill?"

For answer David Gray gladly poured forth into his father's sympathising ears the substance of his father-in-law's remarks, as well as the disposition of his wife's mind respecting the alternatives offered in the Act.

"Verily, she is a thorn in the flesh, and Gilbert Burnet of Haughhead showed his little discretion when he so harrowed up your soul, my son," said the old man, with sorrowful indignation. "But be of good courage. With God all things are possible, and your backsliding wife may yet be the brightest jewel in your crown. My son, I hope the arguments brought to bear upon you will not turn your heart away from the Covenant which, in boyish and trembling handwriting, you attested in the kirkyard of the Greyfriars," he added, with anxious solicitude.

David Gray flung up his head, while his eyes beamed with a new and unmistakable resolve.

"Nay, father; not so lightly have your precepts and example taken hold upon my heart. My wife and children are as dear to me as they are to most men, but the God of the Covenant is dearer still. Therefore, whatever may befall me or mine, I am in the Lord's hands, only desirous that I be accounted worthy to suffer for His sake."

"God grant that the like spirit may be abroad throughout the Lord's Zion, stimulating her ministers to the glory of self-sacrifice rather than to dwell at ease at the expense of conscience," said the minister, in tones of lively satisfaction. "Fear not, my son; the God of Hosts will not desert His covenanted people in their hour of need. Therefore, I say, be of good cheer."

CHAPTER VII. A LONG FAREWELL.

A special meeting of the Presbytery was convened at Lanark during the following week to consider what action the ministers were to take individually and collectively. It was a mere form, because they were unanimous in their resolution to leave all for conscience sake. In the entire Presbytery there was only one exception to be found, viz., John Methven, the minister of Lochlee. He absented himself from the conference of his brethren, an action which, coupled with his attitude in the past, indicated that it was his intention to retain his living at the Government price. The ejected ministers had three weeks wherein to prepare for the sad change in their circumstances and position. Many were at their wits' end, for, as the Act forbade that they should reside within the bounds of their presbyteries, whither could they turn for assistance or shelter? For themselves they felt it not, but what would become of the wives and little ones rendered homeless and destitute in the very outset of a bleak Scottish winter?

Grey, calm, and still broke that November Sabbath morning, the last upon which the ministers were to break the Bread of Life to the people of their choice over the length and breadth of Scotland. In the vale of Inverburn the dawn was preceded by a thick, heavy mist, which hung low over hill and moorland, giving a very dreary aspect to the already too wintry face of Nature. But long before the hour of service it had cleared away, revealing a peaceful, grey sky, relieved by flecks of brightness in the east. Not a breath of air was stirring; a silence as of the grave seemed to brood over the land. Very early the worshippers began to repair to the house of God. They came from far and near that day; the shepherd from his lonely shieling in the mountain solitude, as well as the dweller in the village, was each found in his accustomed place. Long before the bell began to toll, the churchyard had its groups of earnest, sad-faced worshippers discussing in low and fearful tones the evil days which had come upon the land. Very many were too much overcome to be able to speak, for the thought that this was the last Sabbath Day upon which they would hear the voice of their shepherd in his accustomed place was more than they could bear.

Watty McBean, the carrier, and brother to Betty, the manse maid, was bell-ringer and minister's man in the parish. He tolled the bell that day in a slow, solemn, and painful manner, the echo of each stroke being suffered to die away ere it was drowned by another. It was the "burial" bell Watty tolled that day, and surely nothing could be more fitting or more in unison with the feelings of all who heard it.

At the usual hour Mr. Gray entered the church, but it seemed to those who so mournfully and affectionately watched him ascend the pulpit stair, that never had their minister looked so feeble and aged; never had his face seemed so worn and ill. As his sunken eye roamed over the sea of faces gathered round him, his tears suddenly overflowed, and departing from the usual routine of service, he folded his trembling hands, and said in broken and feeble tones, "Let us pray!"

In the manse pew sat Jane Gray, who never since entering the church had once uplifted her face from her hands, and by her side her nephew Gavin, whose young face wore an expression of manly resolution, upon which many remarked.

Adam Hepburn and his wife were also in their places, and there was none absent from the Hartrigge pew, at the head whereof sat Andrew Gray, erect and calm, with his arms folded across his breast, and a hard, stern expression on his face. And although his father's prayer caused many a bursting sob to echo through the church, he sat unmoved, save when his lips convulsively twitched, telling of a storm of passion held in curb. The psalm was the eighty-fourth, the tune Dundee's "wild wailing measure," fitting words, fitting music to express the tumultuous throbbings of the people's heart. The minister then read the seventeenth chapter of John, slowly and with tremulous distinctness, and without remark or comment of any kind. Next they sang again a portion of the ninety-fourth psalm, then the minister gave out his text.

"All these are the beginning of many sorrows."

That sermon was never forgotten by any who heard it. It seemed as if the aged servant of God had risen above the frailty and feebleness of age, for as he proceeded his clear bell-like voice rang through the building with all the eloquence which had made such a stir among the dry bones in the earlier days of his ministry among them. He spoke passionately and prophetically of the sea of troubles upon which the Lord's Zion was now launched, he forewarned them that the time was at hand when they would need to testify to their faithfulness with their blood, yet he bade them be of good cheer, because it was through great tribulation that the brightness of their eternal crown would be gained in joy.

"And now my faithful and well beloved flock, the time has come for me to bid you farewell," he added in conclusion. "In the ordinary course of nature I could not expect to minister to you for a much more lengthened space. As it is, the fiat has gone forth, not from the Eternal King, but from the poor despicable worm who sits upon an earthly throne that you and I, beloved, shall no more worship together within this place. Looking upon its walls to-day for the last time I know how unspeakably dear it is to me. It is peopled with rich and hallowed memories of the past. In this place I have baptised many of you as children, and here, my own children, now worshipping with you, were all consecrated and received into the Lord's Church. Beloved, from Sabbath to Sabbath these many years I have broken the Bread of Life in your midst, and God be my witness that I have expounded the Word to you in accordance with the light vouchsafed to my own soul. I have also had sweet counsel with you in your own homes, in the ordinary course of pastoral visitation, and I call you to witness that in these visitations I have never failed to be faithful in my personal dealings, when I saw it to be for the glory of God, and for the good of souls. Beloved, all that has come to an end. Next Sabbath day neither you nor I will worship within these walls. When or how the doors will again be thrown open for public worship I cannot say. I tremble when I think upon our now desolate Kirk of Scotland, cast out from her heritage, and bidden make her habitation in the wilderness. It is not for me now, and in this place, to say what will be the reward of these sons of Belial, who have wrought this woe in our midst. 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.' Brethren, farewell. I would my tongue could utter what is in my heart this day. It is with no common sorrow I repeat the words; Brethren, farewell."

The minister ceased, and looked with eyes of unutterable love upon the sobbing multitude. There was no dry eye in the assembly, save that of Andrew Gray the younger, and his seemed to burn with a strange and lurid fire. His hands beneath the book board were so firmly clenched together that the nails were sunk into the flesh. In the midst of these audible tokens of grief, the minister raised his trembling hands, and in slow, clear, solemn tones, breathed upon them his last benediction. Then he sank back in the pulpit, wholly overcome.

The scene I have just described was no solitary instance; in its main features it was being enacted that day in almost every kirk and parish in Scotland.

In the church of Broomhill that day David Gray also spoke his last farewell to his flock. His was not in any respect so united a congregation as that of Inverburn. There were many, who, for peace' sake would have had their minister bow to Middleton's decree, and make an outward semblance of acknowledging the bishop. David Gray entered his church that day with a heavy heart, not because of the sacrifice he was about to make--that occasioned him but little concern--but because of his wife's coldness and estrangement evinced towards him since he had announced his fixed determination to abide by the dictates of his own conscience. Upon the plea that the younger child could not be left, she absented herself from the church that Sabbath morning; and the minister was not surprised to behold the Haughhead seat unoccupied likewise. He delivered an impressive and heart-stirring discourse from the words, "He that taketh not his

cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me," and when he concluded many were weeping. They crowded round him as he came out of the vestry, shaking him by the hand and assuring him of their continued and unaltered love, and offering assistance in every form. It was with difficulty he escaped their loving detention, and, making his way through the churchyard, entered his own garden by the private door. He reproached himself that he did not feel a lively satisfaction in the thought that he had renounced so much for conscience' sake; he felt sore angered at himself for his miserable and foreboding thoughts, which weighed him nigh to the very dust. As he set foot upon the threshold of the manse, he felt oppressed by the strange stillness of the house. On ordinary occasions, the prattle of his children's voices was the first sound which greeted him at his own door. As he stepped into the house, he heard a sound, like that of weeping, proceeding from the direction of the kitchen. Somewhat alarmed, he immediately proceeded thither, and found Ellen Carmichael, the maid, sitting apparently in the very abandonment of grief.

"Be quiet, Ellen Carmichael, and tell me the cause of this noise," he said, with some sternness. "And what has become of your mistress and the bairns?"

A fresh burst of tears was Ellen's only answer; but at length she managed to sob out some words which whitened her master's face to the very lips.

"They're awa', sir; a' awa' tae Haughheid. The laird cam' wi' the coach jist efter the kirk was in, an' the mistress gaed awa' in't, wi' the bairns, an' a' her claes an' the bairns' claes, an' she said she wasna' comin' back. An' I, sir, what cud I dae but sit doon an' greet, thinkin' on you comin' home tae this empty an' desolate hoose?"

The minister turned about and walked with unsteady step back to the pleasant family room, where, with his wife and little ones, he had spent so many happy hours. It had a desolate, deserted, dreary look, and the very fire seemed to have died in despair in the grate. He looked about him in a dazed manner, and then sinking into a chair, these words escaped his lips in a deep groan of anguish:

"If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved."

Verily that was a day of sharp and bitter searching for the minister of Broomhill; nevertheless, ere the hushed silence of the night fell, he had found peace in his desolate home.

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. DUNCAN MCLEAN.

In the course of the ensuing week, the last of the honourable family who had so long dwelt beneath the roof-tree of Inverburn manse, quitted its shelter for ever. Pen fails me to describe fitly that sad farewell. It was indeed a very rending of the heart-strings to the venerable minister of Inverburn. In spite of the wording of the Act, that every ejected minister should remove without the bounds of his Presbytery, Mr. Gray and his daughter went no farther than Adam Hepburn's house at Rowallan, where they were very warmly welcomed. So long as was permitted, they would remain among their own kith and kin. The minister of Broomhill found a shelter at Hartrigge, so that united and affectionate family were not as yet separated one from the other.

On the next Sabbath day no kirk bell rang its sweet, familiar chimes through the quiet Sabbath air. The gates of the churchyard remained closed, and the only sign of life about the venerable pile was the cawing of hoarse-throated rooks, which had assembled by scores on the leafless boughs of the "birks of Inverburn," as if met in convocation over this strange and sad Sabbath day. Betty McBean had gone home to her brother Watty's house in the village; and blithe enough he was to see her, being a bachelor, with no womenkind to make a bite for him or to clean up his house. On the Saturday word was carried through the parish by Watty that the Word would be preached next day in the barn at Rowallan by their beloved shepherd, and all whose soul thirsted for the living water were invited to attend. And, lo, at the hour of meeting, so great was the press thronging in Adam Hepburn's barn that it was hastily decided to hold the meeting out of doors. So a kitchen table with a settle behind it was erected as a pulpit in the corn-yard, and from this the minister of Inverburn preached to his flock. Something in the unusual nature of the proceedings seemed to stir all hearts and to imbue them with a holy enthusiasm. Never had the psalm been sung with such deep fervour; never had the attitude of the hearers been so rapt and reverential. There was something in the knowledge that it was against the law that they assembled together which lent a strange, sweet, yet fearful joy to their relish of that Sabbath day.

Hartrigge, with all his family, was there, and the minister of Broomhill also took part in the service. When they separated, just before the twilight, all felt that it had indeed been good for them to be there; and they said one to another, that so long as they could get the Word by walking to Rowallan for it, the king's decree might not prove such a hardship as had been anticipated. But, alas for their vain hopes, their happy congratulations! the day was near at hand when listening to, as well as preaching, the Word was to become a crime worthy of death itself.

The Laird of Inverburn, with Lady Hamilton and the young heir, had driven in their coach that day to Lochlee, to hear John Methven preach. On their way home they passed so many dressed people on the roads, especially as they neared Inverburn, that a suspicion of the truth began to dawn upon the mind of the laird.

Just outside their lodge gates they overtook Watty McBean and his sister Betty, leisurely wending their way homewards. At a word from the laird the coachman pulled up his horses.

"Here, McBean," said the laird, in his peremptory fashion, "tell me why there are so many people on the road at this hour. They look to me as if they had been at kirk somewhere, though very sure am I that none of them worshipped with me to-day at Lochlee."

"Did they no', Sir Thomas? but how should I ken whaur a' the folk hae been wanderin' tae?" asked Watty, innocently. "Mebbe they've been awa' seein' their freens or takin' a bit walk tae theirsels, like Betty an' me."

Very red grew the face of Betty McBean, as she heard her brother utter this deliberate falsehood, and she tugged vehemently at her cap strings, to give some vent to her feelings.

"I believe you are telling me a lie, sirrah!" said the laird, wrathfully, "and if you are it will be the worse for you. Here, you woman, you were the manse maid, I think," he added, directing his remarks to Betty. "Can you tell me whether it be true that your minister is still in the parish, in fact that he is under the roof-tree of Adam Hepburn, at Rowallan?"

"Oh, Sir Tammis, my lord, dinna mak me tell a lee," said Betty piteously; "ye wudna hae me get my auld maister into trouble. He----"

"Betty, if ye dinna haud yer tongue, and come on, it'll be the waur for ye," shouted Watty in her ear, and taking her by the arm, dragged her right away from the coach, and past the gate of Inverburn, without so much as making an apology to the laird.

Sir Thomas looked angry, but his wife sank back, laughing, in the coach, not sorry that Betty had not committed herself.

Lady Hamilton's sympathies were much with the Presbyterians, but she was of too sweet and gentle a disposition to set up her own opinions in opposition to those of her husband.

"Eh, Watty McBean, man, hoo cud ye tell sic a barefaced lee?" queried Betty when her brother released his grip on her arm. "Did the thocht o' the fire and brimstane, which the Word says is the portion o' leers, no pit the fear o' death on yer tongue?"

"Hoot ye silly crater, there's lees *an'* lees!" quoth Watty, with an air of superior wisdom. "Was I gaun to get the minister and the flock into a peck o' troubles wi' my lang tongue? I see I'll need to keep an e'e on you, Betty. Auld though you be, ye hinna muckle gumption."

"Ye're no feared either tae daur [defy] the laird," said Betty, with a sigh.

"I'm no awn the laird naething, and he canna gar me speak against my will," said Watty, calmly; and Betty, completely overcome by her brother's undaunted spirit, relapsed into silence.

For several weeks the parish kirk at Inverburn remained closed, and the people worshipped with the ministers they loved either in barn or outhouse, or, when weather permitted, under the canopy of heaven. Such a state of affairs, which betokened such utter disregard and contempt for the Prelacy, could not long be allowed to continue undisturbed. The next step taken by the bishops was to fill the places of the ejected ministers with curates of their own, so that the parishioners might no longer have the closed doors of the churches to point at as an excuse for their behaviour.

Sir Thomas Hamilton, a staunch loyalist and an intimate friend of the Bishop of Glasgow, offered his shelter and patronage to any gentleman his lordship might elect to minister in the church at Inverburn.

It was on the third Saturday in January that a notice was posted up on the church door intimating that public worship would be resumed next Lord's Day by Mr. Duncan McLean, at the hour of noon.

The bellman was also sent round, and the news well circulated throughout the parish. It occasioned no little excitement and talk; but the people, with the exception of a few of the laird's pensioners in the village, had not the smallest intention of attending upon the curate's ministrations. Service was to be held at three of the afternoon in the sheltered glen behind the

house of Hartrigge, and as Watty McBean expressed it--

"When folk could lift Presbyterian wheat for the gaun [going], it wasna likely they wad be content wi' the curate's pair chaff."

About eleven o'clock on the Sabbath morning, Betty McBean, watching from the window, beheld the coach from Inverburn coming rapidly over the manse brae, towards the village.

"The laird's in't, Watty, an' a jimpy black body, wha'll dootless be the curate, and Peter Rintoull, the bailiff, 's on the box aside the coachman," she cried, excitedly. "I'll bet ye what ye like they'll be comin' seekin' you tae gang up by an' ring the bell."

"Let them come, I'm ready for them," said Watty serenely. "But gang you intae the ben-end [parlour], or yer waggin' tongue'll play mischief."

Only too thankful to be relieved from the necessity of again meeting the laird's questioning gaze, Betty hastily retired into the ben-end just as the coach drew up at the door.

"Watty, Watty McBean!" called out the coachman. "Coomo oot; Sir Tammass wants ye!"

Watty took his pipe from his cheek, and retired slowly out to the door, a very uncouth looking figure in his rough homespun garb, and his unwashed unshaven face surmounted by a dirty red night-cap!

"Why are you not more decently attired, McBean? It is time you were getting ready for the service," said the laird sternly. "This is the new minister of the parish, Mr. Duncan McLean."

"Ay, so I was thinkin'. I canna say I'm prood tae see Mr. Duncan McLean," said Watty, in his canny way, and giving his somewhat loose nether garments an expressive hitch. "If he's come tae a cauld pairt, it's no' his blame, pair chield. I'm thinkin' he'll no' be lang afore he gangs back tae them that sent him."

Mr. McLean looked much surprised, and not too well pleased at the man's freedom of address.

"The man is witless, Mr. McLean, a half crazy loon, whom nobody heeds," the laird explained, and then he turned his stern eye on Watty's unruffled countenance. "Look here, McBean, go into the house and put on your Sabbath garments as fast as you can; and see that you be up to ring the kirk bell at the usual time."

"Eh, me? they telt me the Bishop wad send a bell-ringer an' a minister's man wi' the curate," said Watty, with well-feigned astonishment. "Sir Tammass, it's perfectly unpossible that I could be ready at the time. Just look at me; I've a week's dirt tae scrape aff my skin, no' tae mention that my claes taks an hour tae aire afore I cud pit them on without catchin' my death."

The laird bit his lip.

"This is gross impertinence, McBean, for which, as I sit here, I swear you shall not go unpunished. Once for all, will you or will you not be ready to perform your usual duties in the bell tower and the session house in half an hour?"

"That I winna, Sir Tammass; seein' the lord bishop, or whatever be his title, has made the kirk session of Inverburn null and void, he has made the minister's man null and void too; so Maister McLean maun e'en get a man for hissel," answered Watty, with fearless resolution. Then he fixed his keen eye on the ill-favoured face of the curate, and addressed a concluding remark to him. "Ye hae taen muckle upon yersel', young man, tae step into the honoured shoon o' the Reverend Maister Gray. An' if ye get but a cauld rife hearin' this day ye may blame no' the faithfu' folks o' Inverburn, but them that sent ye."

With which comforting assurance Watty turned about, and entering his own house, shut the door.

"If this is the disposition of the parish, Sir Thomas," said the curate sourly, "I fear stronger measures will be necessary ere long."

"If necessary, doubtless they will be taken, Mr. McLean," said the laird. "But do not be cast down by the insolent utterance of a half-witted fellow like Watty McBean. I cannot think the people of Inverburn will so far forget their respect to me, as well as to those in power, as to follow such an example."

One of the laird's servants was procured to undertake Watty's duties, and the bell was duly rung at the appointed time. But it appeared to convey to the hearts of the people no welcome summons to the House of God. Only a few stragglers, and these persons of no note in the parish, came dropping into the church, and when the hour struck there were not more than thirty persons present, and these included the laird and his retinue from Inverburn. Nevertheless the service was proceeded with, and conducted after the true Episcopal fashion; prayers being read from the new book of service. The curate was humiliated and ashamed, the laird furious, and on their way home to Inverburn the two discussed various plans whereby the people might be

compelled to attend service in the church.

The following morning Sir Thomas started on horseback to make a tour of the tenantry on his estate, in order to see what they had to say in defence of their absence from the church on the previous day. His first place of call was Rowallan, but before he reached the house he met Adam Hepburn leading one of his work-horses to the smithy. Adam doffed his cap to the laird, and stood still, not unprepared for what was coming.

"I have called to see for what reason you absented yourself from Divine service yesterday, Hepburn?" the laird said briefly, and without greeting of any kind. "Do you know that in so absenting yourself you were guilty of a civil offence?"

"I know not as to that, Sir Thomas; but if a man's heart be not in the service, he is better at home," replied Adam, quietly. "And the king has no power over a man's own conscience."

"See here, Hepburn," said the laird; "is that old man, your father-in-law, still under your roof-tree?"

"He is, Sir Thomas," answered Adam, in the same quiet tone.

"You know the wording of the Act which commands that the ejected ministers shall remove themselves without the bounds of the Presbytery? Rowallan is not without these bounds. I have it in my power to have your father-in-law punished, imprisoned if I like, by simply letting my friend the bishop know how his commands are disobeyed."

A dark red flush rose to Adam Hepburn's brow, and he bit his lip. The hot blood of his race sprang up at the laird's threatening and mocking words.

"And you would make betrayal of the old man the price of my non-attendance at the curate's preaching, Sir Thomas," he said with curling lip. "Such a threat is scarcely worthy of your name. I fear that such measures will not avail with the God-fearing people in the parish."

"You defy me then, sirrah; then be prepared to take the consequences," said the laird furiously, and digging his spurs into his horse's sides, turned the animal's head, and rode away full gallop to Hartrigge, only to have his ire additionally kindled there by the cool defiance and dogged determination of Andrew Gray.

CHAPTER IX.

PREPARING FOR EMERGENCIES.

When the laird rode away, Adam Hepburn turned and walked slowly back to Rowallan. He was somewhat disturbed by what he had heard, not on his own account, but on that of the venerable father of his beloved Agnes. When he entered the room where the minister sat with his daughter Jane, Mrs. Hepburn being busy with her household work, both saw that he was troubled about something.

"Have you heard aught about the preaching yesterday, Adam, that you look so grave?" queried the minister.

"Yes; I met the laird down the road, and he seems sore displeased over the thin attendance at Mr. McLean's ministrations yesterday," replied Adam, a little quickly. "He threatened me, too, that unless I attended the services he would get you into trouble, Mr. Gray."

"I said to you, Adam, my son, when you so nobly offered me the shelter of your roof-tree, that it might get you and yours into trouble, harbouring an ejected and rebellious minister," said the old man sadly. "Better let me go forth ere that trouble comes upon your house."

"Go forth! and whither? At your age, and in the dead of winter, to wander in the open air as some are compelled to do would mean certain death," said Adam Hepburn. "No, no; though I am not such a red-hot churchman as Hartrigge, still, whoever seeks to molest you, be he king's or bishop's official, must first deal with me."

Tears started in Jane Gray's eyes as she looked with pride and gratitude at the erect figure and manly face of her brother-in-law. At that minute Agnes, hearing such serious voices, came in from the kitchen, asking what was the matter. Adam Hepburn turned his blue eyes fondly on his wife's sweet pale face, and smiled to reassure her.

"We are like to get into trouble, wife, by our dourness to attend the curate's preaching, that is all," he answered lightly.

A slightly troubled look stole into Agnes Hepburn's gentle eyes.

"I know not why, but I have of late had many dark forebodings, Adam," she said. "These are sad, sad days in which we live, and especially trying for timorous women-folk like me."

"It is your poor health, dear one, that makes you fanciful. No harm can come upon Rowallan so long as my stout right arm retains its cunning," Adam answered, lightly still; but Agnes, shaking her head, stole back to her duties with a heavy heart.

"I am concerned about Agnes, Jane," said Adam Hepburn, turning his troubled eyes on his sister-in-law's face. "She is not well, and in her sleep is restless and troubled, as if haunted by some strange dread; and she is so thin and worn. Looking on her face, at times I am afraid."

"When the spring time is past she will gather strength, please God," said Jane, cheerfully. "Agnes never was strong in the spring time."

"No; and these exciting and troublous times are too severe a strain upon her sensitive heart," said the minister. "As Agnes herself says, they are not for timorous women-folk to live in."

For some weeks they heard no more of the laird or of his threats, although report had it that severe measures were about to be taken to compel the people to respect the authority of the bishops and to attend upon the ministrations of their curates. Ere long these rumours became terrible realities, and a troop of brutal and unprincipled dragoons, under Sir James Turner, was let loose upon the western and southern shires of Scotland, which they scoured in search of the ejected ministers, and of their faithful flocks, who travelled miles to hear them in the mountain solitudes, worshipping with them in temples not made with hands, but which were consecrated to the Lord by the faithfulness and fearless piety of these Christian people. For a time the parish of Inverburn, although very offensive in its treatment of the curate, escaped the severity with which many other parishes, notably those in the shires of Galloway and Dumfries, were visited. It was at length, however, publicly announced from the pulpit that all who failed to attend Divine service on the following Sabbath day would be apprehended and punished either by fine or other penalty, and that all who gave aid to the ejected ministers or who attended upon their services in the open air were liable to be dragged before the High Commission Court, of which Sharp was the head, and there punished according to the prelates' good pleasure.

Adam Hepburn heard unmoved that report, as also did his brother-in-law at Hartrigge, where David Gray, the minister of Broomhill, was still sheltered, almost, however, at the peril of his life. When the dragoons at length came to Inverburn, he hid in the day-time in a cunningly-concealed cave on the face of the hill upon which Hartrigge stood, and the existence of which was known only to a very few. It was in a spot so difficult of access, and was, besides, so well hidden by brambles and nettles and other brushwood, that for a time at least the fugitive was perfectly safe.

When Sir James Turner and his troop arrived at Inverburn, he, with his subordinate officers, was immediately offered shelter by the laird, while the men were drafted upon various households in the village, notably those who were known to be very zealous Presbyterians. Watty McBean's house was taken possession of by four coarse, swearing, drunken soldiers, who raised Watty's ire to the utmost pitch and nearly frightened Betty out of her wits, besides eating her out of house and home.

At nightfall on the day of their arrival, Watty stole away through the fields to Rowallan to give timely warning to its inmates to get the minister removed out of the way before he should be taken prisoner. He crept up to the room window and gave a familiar tap on the lower pane, lest a knocking at the door might alarm the household. Adam Hepburn himself came to the door, and, at a sign from Watty, stepped outside.

"I've jest come tae warn ye, Adam Hepburn, that Turner an' the sodgers came this nicht," he whispered. "An' by what I hear the rascals, wha hae taen my hoose frae me, sayin' tae ane anither, it's oor minister an' the minister o' Broomhill they're after. Hae ye ony means o' getten Maister Gray outen the road?"

Adam Hepburn nodded.

"We knew the soldiers were on their way to Inverburn, and I'll warrant they'll no lay hands on the minister, or they'll be sharper than I think them. Come in, Watty, and speak to Mr. Gray. He's still with us in the house."

"Ye dinna mean to say so!" exclaimed Watty in consternation. "Certy ye're no feared. If ye take my advice ye'll get him awa' intae safe hidin' as sune as possible. I was sayin' tae Bettie I kent a bonnie howdie hole on the Douglas Water doon the Sanquhar road a bit, that it wad puzzle the sodgers tae find."

"Keep your secret for awhile, Watty. It may be useful some day," said Adam Hepburn, and beckoning to Watty, he ushered him into the warm ingle-neuk, where sat the minister of Inverburn in undisturbed serenity, with his daughters by his side.

"Good evening to you, Watty McBean, my faithful friend," said the minister, rising to shake hands with Watty. "What tidings have ye brought?"

"No very braw [nice] for leddie's ears. The sodgers have come upon Inverburn at last, an' gin they bide lang ther'll be neither bite nor sup, nor an article o' gear in the parish," answered Watty dolefully. "The four villains quartered on us have already pocketed my watch an' my mither's spunes, no' tae speak o' Betty's brooch she got frae yer lamented wife."

Agnes Hepburn's pale cheek grew, if possible, a shade whiter, and instinctively her husband moved to the back of her chair, and laid his firm hand on her trembling shoulder as if to re-assure her.

"Adam, if this be so, my place is no longer here!" said the minister rising. "My son, I have already stayed too long, not only at the peril of my own life, but it is imperilling yours likewise. It will be better for me to keep my hiding-place now, both night and day."

"You will lie down first, father, and snatch a few hours rest," said the sweet voice of Adam Hepburn's wife. "At the cock-crowing Adam will awake you, and you can hide until the nightfall."

"Oh, ye'r safe eneuch till the daw'in', sir," Watty assured him. "The laird's wine, an' soft beds, an' routh [abundance] o' breakfast 'll keep Sir Jeems at the big hoose, I'se warrant, till the sun be up."

"Certainly you will do as Agnes says, Mr. Gray?" said Adam, in his decided way. "Now, Watty, if you'll say good-night, and come with me, I'll show you a 'howdie hole' which would match yours on the Douglas Water."

"Guid nicht, then, Maister Gray, an' may the Lord blind the e'en o' the sodgers, and keep you oot o' their clutches," said Watty with fervour. "Mistress Hepburn an' Miss Jean, guid nicht wi' ye baith; an' should ye need a strong arm and a willint heart at any time, to defend ye, mind that Watty McBean's ay ready!"

"Good night, my faithful Watty; and may the Lord give you patience to bear the infliction of the soldiery on your abode. Provoke them not to anger, Watty, I entreat, for I am told that they are very swift to shed blood," said the minister, earnestly.

"I'll thole [bear] as long as I can, I never was a fechter," said the good soul, with a comical smile, and pulling his forelock in token of respect, he followed Adam Hepburn out of doors.

The moon had now risen, and its clear radiance struggled through the rifts in the cloudy sky, and shone weirdly and fitfully on the wintry landscape, making strange fantastic shadows too on the walls of the outhouses grouped about the farmhouse. Adam Hepburn stepped across the courtyard, and opened the barn door. He then motioned to Watty to enter, and after carefully closing the door, lighted the lantern he had brought with him from the house. The barn at Rowallan was a large and commodious place, with a steep ladder-like stair ascending to the granary above. In one corner a small door gave admittance to an inner apartment, something resembling a closet in a house, and into which the chaff was swept after it was separated from the wheat by the flail. At the present time it was, however, almost empty, there being only a slight sprinkling on the wooden floor. Into this place Adam Hepburn threw the light of his lantern, and then looked enquiringly at Watty.

"What do you see there, Watty, anything by ordinar?" he asked.

"Naething but a common chaff-hole," answered Watty, "and no' a very safe hidin'-place, I wad think. The Douglas Water hole beats it yet."

"Come in, though, Watty, and I'll show you something," said Adam, with a smile, and Watty stepped into the place, in which he could scarcely stand upright. Adam then set down his lantern, and with his hands swept aside the chaff, but still Watty saw nothing save a moth-eaten and discoloured wooden floor. But when Adam inserted into some of the seams the strong blade of his gully knife, and Watty saw a distinct movement in the flooring, he began to have an inkling of what was coming. After some little exertion, Adam Hepburn raised a small trap-door, sufficient to admit the body of a man, and Watty peering into the chasm, with excited interest, saw a ladder which appeared to lead into the bowels of the earth.

"Now creep down after me, Watty, and shut the door after you, and I'll show you something worth seeing," said Adam, and Watty made haste to obey. The ladder was of considerable length, but at last Watty felt his feet on the firm earth, and looking about, saw by the light that he was in a subterranean passage, narrow certainly, but of sufficient height to accommodate even Adam Hepburn's tall figure. Still following his guide, Watty walked a little way along the passage, and then found himself in a kind of cave, a wide open space, sufficient to hold about a dozen people. There was a rude couch composed of stones, built in one corner, upon which now had been piled a substantial tick filled with chaff, above which was spread plenty of blankets and thick coverings, which would make a very comfortable resting place, even in winter. A piece of rough matting covered the floor in front of the bed, and there were some benches which formed a table,

or could be used for seats. The floor of the place was perfectly dry, and the atmosphere felt warm and free from dampness. Watty gazed round him in unmitigated astonishment and admiration, and at last gasped out--

"This *is* a howdie hole, an' nae mistak'! Whaur did it come frae, an' wha made it?"

"It has always been here. I believe my great-grandfather, who was killed at Flodden, had something to do with it," replied Adam Hepburn. "At any rate, not a living soul knows of its existence but our own family and you, Watty. But you don't know half its advantages yet. See, the underground passage continues right through here," he added, shedding the light of his lantern into another dark recess; "and what do you think? it runs right through the fields of Rowallan, and under the bed of the Douglas Water, and comes out in the middle of all the brushwood and tangle on the face of the Corbie's Cliff. Ye didna ken there was a hole there, did ye, Watty?"

"No; although I hae speeled [climbed] the Corbie mony a time for nests when I was a laddie," said Watty, solemnly. "It seems as if the Lord had made the place Hissel'."

"Mr. Gray can be made very comfortable here, Watty," continued Adam Hepburn; "and, by the simple pulling of a string I have fastened up in the chaff-hole, I can make a noise which will warn him to escape by the Corbie should the soldiers discover the trap. But I don't think there can be any fear of that."

"No' likely, for I couldna see onything but the flure," said Watty, in much glee; "an' I'm no' blind. Eh, weel, may be mair than the minister 'll be glad o' this grand shelter."

"It is likely the minister of Broomhill will come here under cover of the night some of these days. I would think he was not very safe much longer at Hartrigge," said Adam Hepburn. "Well, Watty, I think we'd better get upstairs again, and you can tell Betty that we are ready for the soldiers whenever they like to come."

"'Deed, Maister Hepburn, I'll no' tell her naething. Weemin folk are no' to be trusted. No' that they mean tae dae mischief; it's jist their tongues, puir craters, fashed [troubled] wi' a weakness, an' they canna help themselves," said Watty, so seriously that his companion could not refrain from laughing.

After some little delay, they again mounted the ladder, and, pushing up the trap-door, emerged into the chaff-hole, and thence out into the open air, where, after a few more words concerning the shelter of the ministers, they parted for the night.

CHAPTER X. ADAM HEPBURN'S VOW.

The business of life seemed to be standing still in Inverburn. Although it was not the season of the year in which much outdoor labour could be accomplished, the barren fields still lay waiting to be upturned by the plough, and all interest in the ordinary routine of work seemed to be absorbed in other things. The morning after the quartering of the soldiery on the householders there were many strange sights and sounds witnessed and heard in the quiet hamlet of Inverburn. Needless to say that the inn was the chief rendezvous, and honest Mistress Lyall had to pour out her ale and whisky, and even her small stock of wine and brandy, without stint or payment. The swearing horde took possession of the bar, and, in the terror of her soul, poor Katie Lyall flew to a neighbour's house, and left them in undisturbed possession. Having drunk their fill, the ruffians made a raid on every house, lifting what valuables they could lay hands upon, and insulting the women, and bringing many a burning blush to the fair cheek of youth. The unarmed and defenceless men folk in the village were only deterred from open resistance by the sight of the long gleaming swords and loaded pistols of the troopers. But curses, not loud but deep, filled the quiet air, and many a manly hand was clenched, many a manly voice uttered a deep and ominous vow of vengeance.

About half-past nine Sir James Turner and his subordinate officers rode down the manse brae, and, drawing rein at the head of the village street, sounded the *reveille*. In a short time the regiment was in marching order, and the horses' heads were turned towards Rowallan. And then many a fervent prayer rose to Heaven that the God of Hosts would throw the strong arm of His defence about Adam Hepburn's house, and shelter its dear inmates from the bloody men. Early that morning Adam Hepburn had walked across the fields to Hartrigge to warn David Gray of his danger, and to bid the inmates of the house be prepared for a visit from the soldiery. He arrived to find the minister of Broomhill quietly seated at breakfast with the family, having just crept up

from his hiding-place. It was at once hastily resolved that, as it was still early, Adam Hepburn and David Gray should creep down into the valley behind Hartrigge, and, keeping within shelter of the trees and brushwood, follow the course of the Douglas Water until they reached the Corbie's Cliff; then, entering the mouth of the subterranean passage, join the minister of Inverburn in his hiding at Rowallan.

The children at Hartrigge, all but Gavin, being too young to understand the peril of the hour, wondered why uncle David bade them farewell so solemnly and with tears in his eyes; and little Jeanie, listening to his last words to her mother, pondered them long in her heart.

"Farewell, Susan, my sister. The Lord requite thee for thy sisterly kindness to me, who, now a wanderer on the face of the earth, can never hope either to acknowledge or repay it. And may the Lord also vouchsafe the wings of His shelter to this house and its inmates, and shield them in the day of trouble."

Mistress Gray wrung the minister's hand, but was unable to speak. Andrew Gray himself accompanied them to the door, but their parting words were interrupted by the shrill echo of the trumpets sounding the *reveille* in the village along the vale. Then Adam Hepburn and the minister understanding that ominous sound, plunged into the thicket, and scrambled down the steep into the richly wooded valley below. Meanwhile the women folk at Rowallan busied themselves with their household tasks, and Agnes at least longing for her husband's return. The nervous fear had so grown upon her of late that she was never a moment at rest, save when he was by her side. As she stepped out into the courtyard with a basin of warm food for the poultry, the clatter of hoofs fell upon her ears, and turning her startled eyes in the direction of the road, she saw what appeared to be a moving mass of steel, glittering in the chill winter sunshine, and coming rapidly towards the house.

With a slight scream she dropped the basin with its contents, and fled into the house. Jane Gray, hearing the noise, came hurrying downstairs, and caught her trembling sister in her arms.

"Agnes, my lamb, what is it? What has so frightened you?" she asked, anxiously.

"The soldiers, Jane! they are here!" exclaimed the terrified girl. "Oh, Jane, hide me from them! I wish Adam had not gone away!"

Even Jane Gray's brave heart quailed at the thought of their defenceless state, but she tried to console and assure her sister.

"Don't be afraid, my dearie, they will never harm two defenceless women, and Adam must now be near home. It is nigh two hours since he went away."

Before she could say more the troops swept across the stack-yard, and drew up with a great clatter before the door. The pawing and snorting of the horses, the rattling of their trappings, and the voices of the men, made a strange and alarming din about the quiet house of Rowallan.

Jane Gray placed her sister in a chair, shut the sitting-room door, and drawing herself up, as if with a sudden courage, went out boldly to the door. She was deadly pale, but her demeanour was outwardly perfectly unmoved.

At sight of the woman, Sir James Turner, a coarse and forbidding-looking man, rode his horse up to the very doorstep, and fixed his insolent eyes on the fair, calm face.

"Well, mistress, this is the rebellious house of Rowallan, is it not? Are you the wife of that notorious Whig, Adam Hepburn, who so persistently disavows the king's commands, and shelters the rebel preachers?"

"This is Rowallan, sir," Jane Gray made answer in a clear, steadfast voice. "But I am not Adam Hepburn's wife. There is none within this house but me and my sister, who is in delicate health. May I appeal to your honour as a soldier and a gentleman not to needlessly distress or alarm us?"

A coarse laugh fell from Turner's lips, which was re-echoed by his subordinates.

"A modest request, truly; I might grant it if I get a kiss from those sweet lips for my payment. But say, is that renegade old man, Andrew Gray, the field preacher, not hidden in the house?"

"He is *not*," said Jane Gray, calmly, while a red spot began to burn hotly on either cheek.

"I am sorry I cannot take your word for it, mistress," said Turner, coolly. "With your permission we will make a search of the house. Here, Dawson and McTavish," he added, turning to a corporal and a sergeant, "dismount, and search the house, and you, Captain Blane, and young Drew, with the others make a thorough inspection of the outhouses. Now, ma'am, let me have a glass of ale or wine to cool my thirst, and show you a loyal subject of the king."

For peace' sake, as well as on the account of her sister, Jane Gray crushed back the indignant refusal burning for utterance, and, holding the door open, briefly bade him enter. She led the way direct to the room where Agnes sat, judging it better that she should be present with her, before the soldiers in their search reached the sitting-room. At sight of the spurred and booted soldier,

with his fierce aspect and forbidding eye, Agnes Hepburn again uttered a slight scream, but Jane hastily laid her hand on her lips.

"Hush, hush, Agnes; Sir James Turner will not harm you. He has but come in for some slight refreshment," she said, hurriedly.

"Is this Adam Hepburn's wife, then?" asked Sir James, with insolent curiosity. "Do not tremble so, my sweet mistress. Unless compelled by duty, I would not lay a finger on you. But come, tell me where your brave husband, and the old man, your father, are in hiding, and we will go away and leave the house in peace."

"I do not know; my husband has not been at home for--for--long," Agnes faltered back, and breathing an inward and passionate prayer that the Lord might detain him on the way until the dragoons had left the place.

"How glibly these pretty lips can utter a falsehood!" said Turner, mockingly. But just then he was somewhat mollified by the sight of a cup of rich Burgundy, which Jane Gray had brought from the cupboard to appease his wrath.

"By the powers, I never tasted the like in a Whig house before!" he said, smacking his lips. "For your courtesy to me, mistress, I will not insist upon your revealing the rebel hiding-place. I know your kind, and how obstinate they can be when they choose; yet I swear that, if Adam Hepburn or the minister be about Rowallan, they shall not escape this day."

The two men who had been searching the house now appeared in the doorway, saying they had met with no success, and that there was no possible corner within the four walls where a fugitive could be hid.

Turner then rose and left the house to superintend the search outside.

With agonised eyes the two women watched from the window, trembling at the long delay the searchers made in the barn.

But at length, to their unspeakable relief, those who had entered it again emerged into the open air, and it was quite evident from their faces that their search had been unsuccessful.

After some little delay and consultation, Turner gave the word of command, and the dragoons sprang to horse once more, and stood ready in the courtyard to depart. Then Turner again approached the door, where the sisters now stood, for they could not rest within.

"Though we have been unsuccessful to-day, mistresses," he said, in an angry tone, "we will yet lay hands upon the renegades. I know not what keeps me from compelling you to divulge the secret of their hiding-place; but, hark! I will not be so lenient when I come back. It's not the first time I have had to make a wench confess at the point of the sword."

At that moment, to the dismay and horror of the women, Wyllie, Adam's collie, came running round from the stack-yard barking furiously. Knowing he had accompanied his master to Hartrigge, they stood in intense and silent agony, momentarily expecting to see Adam stride round the corner, and then----. Jane's lip quivered, Agnes covered her face with her hands, and a low moan escaped her lips.

Turner, thinking his threat had frightened them sufficiently, turned his horse's head, and gave the order to march. The dog, now in a perfect fury, and seeming to have taken a special dislike to the commander, ran barking and snapping at the horse's heels.

"Some of you put a bullet through that yelping cur!" he said, with a great oath. Almost as if understanding the brutal order, Wyllie turned tail and ran to his mistress's side, crouching in at her skirts. Turner's order was obeyed, and two pistols were recklessly fired towards the door, heedless of the danger to the women. They missed their aim, but found a mark in Agnes Hepburn's side. Without a sound she fell at her sister's feet. For a moment Turner looked dumbfounded and as if uncertain what to do; then, with another great oath, he repeated the word of command, and the whole troop rode off towards Hartrigge. Before they were well out of sight Adam Hepburn, just arrived in the underground shelter with David Gray, pushed up the trap-door, and stepped out into his own barn-yard. From the great confusion and marks of hoofs, he at once saw that the dragoons had visited Rowallan in his absence, and, with sinking heart, lest any harm should have befallen his darling, he hurried into the house.

At the door Wyllie met him, and looked up into his face with a piteous moan. The dread stillness in the house almost made the man's heart stand still. He strode through the kitchen, and when he stood upon the threshold of the sitting-room door, what a sight met his view! Upon the couch lay the prostrate form of his wife, and Jane kneeling by her side, apparently laving something with water. But stay; what was that staining the whiteness of the handkerchief? Was it blood?

"My God, Jane, what is this?" he asked, hoarsely, and, with one step, was at the side of the

couch.

Then he saw the wound in his wife's side, from which her life blood was slowly ebbing.

"They have been here! That is their work, Adam!" Jane Gray answered, in a voiceless whisper. "The bullet intended for poor Wyllie pierced her side! Oh, my poor sister!"

Adam Hepburn knelt down by the couch, and, folding his strong arms about the unconscious figure, called his wife by every endearing name to look up to tell him she was not dead. The tones of that well-beloved voice seemed to recall for a brief space the ebbing breath of life.

The long lashes stirred on the white cheek; after a tremor of the lids they were lifted, and the sweet eyes met his in a look of unutterable love. It was the last effort of the feeble strength. In the moment of agony which followed, the breath gently left the lips, the beat of the heart was stilled for ever, and Agnes Hepburn was safe from the trouble to come.

In the deep and awful silence which ensued a strange and terrible change was wrought upon the face of Adam Hepburn. The pleasant lines and curves, which had but added to its beauty, were deepened into the furrows of a desperate resolution. Gently he laid his dead wife back upon the pillow, and, walking over to the hearth, took down his father's sword from its accustomed place on the wall, and returned with it to the side of the couch.

"I call you to witness, Jane Gray, that I swear here, by the body of my murdered wife, that this sword shall never again be allowed to dry in its sheath until it has been wetted with the life blood of as many dragoons as there were years upon my darling's head," he said, in slow, deep, measured tones, and with eyes gleaming with a fierce resolve. "And God do so to me, and more also, if I fail to stand to the very letter of my vow!"

CHAPTER XI. UP IN ARMS.

Twelve o'clock was the usual dinner hour at Hartrigge. In spite of the stirring excitement of that morning, the table was spread punctually at noon, and the family gathered about the board. Before, however, Andrew Gray had finished asking a blessing on the food, the dragoons swept up with a great noise to the front door. Catching sight of a gleaming sword out of the window Jeanie screamed in affright, and her mother's face visibly paled. But little Sandy, in all a child's delight over a gay pageant, scrambled up on the window seat, and fairly jumped with glee at sight of so many prancing steeds. With grave, resolute, undisturbed face, Hartrigge rose from his chair, and turned his eyes upon his trembling wife.

"If I lose my life this day, Susan," he said, quietly, "promise me you will rear the bairns in the true religion, and teach them to love and reverence the Church of Scotland and the faith of their forefathers."

Mistress Gray had no opportunity to reply, for at that moment the door was rudely thrown open, and Turner, with a corporal and sergeant, strode into the room.

"Andrew Gray of Hartrigge?" he said, briefly and imperiously.

"I am Andrew Gray," answered Hartrigge, with corresponding brevity.

"A vile Whig and a bigoted Presbyterian, a rebel against the king, and a harbourer of field preachers and like vermin," continued Turner, in his coarse fashion. "I have just come from Rowallan, but the puling womenfolk there have lost their tongues, and could tell us nothing of those we seek. In the king's name, Andrew Gray, I command you to instantly tell me where your canting old father, and your brother, the minister of Broomhill, are to be found. Remember you stand at peril of your life."

Andrew Gray folded his arms across his chest, and looked his questioner in the face with undaunted eye.

"Very well do I know that I stand at peril of my life," he made answer, calmly. "But I can tell you nothing of those you seek."

"You will not, you mean," cried Turner, passionately. "By heavens, the name of Gray seems inseparable from dogged obstinacy, as well as from rebellion and treason. If I tie up your eyes and point a pistol at your mouth it may refresh your memory."

Hartrigge spoke never a word; his wife sank weeping helplessly into a chair, while the children, all but Gavin, who had left the room, crouched beside her in terror.

"Woman, bid your husband obey orders, unless you want me to leave him to you to bury!" said Turner. "I have already wasted too much precious time among your kind."

But never a word spoke Mistress Gray. Then Turner looked towards his subordinates--

"Bind the obstinate pig-headed Whig," he said, briefly. "If I cannot make him speak, we will take him to those who will."

Susan Gray uttered a loud shriek, and sprang to her husband's side; but she was rudely cast aside, while the officers pinioned Hartrigge's arms.

"Stop that howling, woman, or I will give you something to yelp about! I've a mind to burn your house about your confounded ears, but it would take too much time to-day. Let the prisoner to horse, and let us be off. We have other game to bag before sunset to-day."

As Andrew Gray was about to leave the room he stepped to his wife's side, and hastily bade her be of good cheer, for his time had not come yet; then, looking upon the children with a strange softening in his stern eyes, he waved them an affectionate farewell.

With the little ones clinging to her skirts, Mistress Gray followed the oppressors to the door, and stood watching while they bound her husband on a steed. He again turned his face towards her, and exhorted her to be of good cheer, and keep a firm hold upon her faith in God, until they should meet again. His words were brought to a sudden close by a blow upon the mouth, administered by the corporal, who was fastening him securely to the back of the horse. At sight of the blood, Susan Gray covered her face with her hands, and was afraid to look again. Ere he mounted his horse, Turner peremptorily ordered Mrs. Gray to bring him a tankard of ale, or a cup of wine, a command of which she was too much agitated to take notice. Little Jeanie, however, fearing a new exhibition of the terrible man's wrath, with womanly thoughtfulness ran into the house, and brought out a draught for the general. He smiled grimly as he took it from the slim hands of the little maiden, and having quaffed it, bade her not follow the example of her renegade father; and, mounting his horse, gave the order to march, and the troops, with their prisoner in the midst, rode away from Hartrigge. Just then the lad Gavin came through the kitchen with a flushed eager face, and bearing in his hands an old fowling-piece, chiefly used for scaring rooks and other vermin off the crops.



"Little Jeanie . . . brought out a draught for the general" (see page 92).

"Little Jeanie ... brought out a draught for the general"

"Why, Gavin, laddie, what did ye think to do?" asked his mother, with a mournful smile.

"Are they away, mother? If they had killed my father I would have shot Turner with this. I have been down at the tool house, loading it with some lead I got in my uncle Peter's shop, at Lanark, when I was there with Uncle Adam," replied the lad, fearlessly.

"Then they would have surely killed you, too, my son," replied the mother, shaking her head; though inwardly admiring the spirit of the boy. "Well, well, Gavin, you will need to take care o' us all now that your poor father is away."

"Mother, what do you think they'll do to him?"

"My son, how can I tell? But I dinna feel as if any great harm would come to him, for he says his time is not come yet," replied Mistress Gray. "I think the Lord in His mercy will restore him ere long to his wife and bairns. But now, Gavin, get away by the fields to Rowallan, and see whether all be well there."

Just at that moment, however, a messenger on horseback appeared at the door, conveying the terrible tidings from Rowallan, and bidding Hartrigge and his wife come over at once. Susan Gray, dumb with horror, sat helplessly down, and wrung her hands in despair. Not having heard the right way of the story, her hopes concerning her husband's comparative safety swiftly ebbed away, for since they spared not a defenceless and delicate woman, how could they allow such as Andrew Gray to escape unhurt? So desolation and woe fell upon the houses of Rowallan and Hartrigge, and it appeared as if the Lord had deserted them, and removed the light of His

countenance from His servants.

Meanwhile the regiment had halted on the public road, and after a brief consultation, a portion, under command of Captain Blane, was sent back to Inverburn, where they were to remain for several days, keeping a sharp look-out for the fugitives. They were also empowered to compel all upon whom they could lay hands to attend upon the ministrations of the curate the following Sabbath day. The main body of the troops, with Sir James at their head, then turned southwards, to scour the hill country betwixt Douglasdale and Nithsdale, Turner being anxious to reach his home in Dumfries, from which he had been absent for a considerable space.

In due course they arrived at Dumfries, where Andrew Gray was kept a close prisoner, prior to being sent or taken by Turner before the Commissioner at Edinburgh.

It would have been a swifter and surer plan to have conveyed the prisoner direct to Edinburgh from Inverburn, but Turner expected to lay hands upon some other marked offenders in the southern districts, and to send them in a body under guard to the Commissioners. However, he was unsuccessful, and arrived in Dumfries with his one prisoner, whose only offence was in harbouring field preachers and attending the open-air services.

While Turner rested himself at home, his dragoons were not allowed to be idle, but were despatched in detachments to the various villages and hamlets, to keep the inhabitants faithful in their attendance on the curates, and to extract fines from those who refused, the latter being a very congenial task to the greedy and brutal soldiery.

One cold, bleak morning, when a party of soldiers were maltreating an old man in the village of Dairy, in Kirkcudbrightshire, four of these very wanderers, whom Turner had been seeking, arrived in desperation, seeking shelter and food, and being indignant at the dragoons' behaviour they set upon them, and compelled them to release the old man and give up their arms. Encouraged by their success, they were joined by several villagers, and surprised and overcame another party of dragoons, engaged extracting fines by violence, some little distance away. Further emboldened they marched into Dumfries, took Turner prisoner in his own house, set Andrew Gray at liberty, and constituted themselves into a small army. Thus took place the first rising against the Government, for which Andrew Gray, and many like him, had so ardently longed. With their unwilling prisoner they proceeded northwards, and were joined on the way by others, both on horse and foot. Captain Wallace was chosen as their leader, and by his side rode Andrew Gray, for he was certainly one of the boldest and most resolute among them. Travelling the same route as Turner had come, they entered Inverburn on a Sabbath morning just as service was about to begin. Entering the church, they ejected the curate, but did not take him prisoner, he being beneath their contempt; then they shut the church doors, tore up the book of service in the churchyard, the gates of which they then locked, and proceeded to the village, singing a psalm as they went. At Mistress Lyall's a halt was made for rest and refreshment, and then Andrew Gray rode off rapidly to Hartrigge, to assure his wife of his safety, and tell her their resolve, which was to proceed to Edinburgh, expecting to increase in numbers as they went.

Space will not allow me to dwell long upon the happy meeting at Hartrigge, when the husband and father was so unexpectedly restored to his home. But upon hearing that he was again going forth, Mistress Gray ominously shook her head.

"I'm for peace, Andrew," she said, in a low voice, "an' what's a handful of country folk against the soldiers of the king? Ye'll be slain in cauld blood. Better, far better, bide at hame."

Hartrigge only smiled in a lofty and superior manner at the weakness of the woman, and then inquired concerning the fugitives as well as the folk at Rowallan.

"Grandfather and David are safe enough, but waes me for Rowallan and it's bonnie sweet mistress!" said Susan Gray, with fast filling eyes. "Of course ye canna have heard that Agnes is awa' frae a' the terrors o' these troublous times, and that Adam Hepburn sits a widower by his desolate hearth."

Andrew Gray gave a violent start. It was indeed news to him. Then, with many tears, his wife related the sad story to him, which he heard in absolute silence.

"An' yet ye would still say, Peace, peace! Oh! Susan, woman, I fear ye are a coward at heart!" he said, sternly. "I will to Rowallan; surely Adam Hepburn will be determined to avenge his wife's death."

"Sure enough. He has made his vow, a terrible vow before God, Jane tells me," said his wife. "And when will ye be back to your home again, think you, Andrew?"

"Ah, that I cannot tell. Be of good cheer, Susan, and look well after the house and the bairns. The God of Hosts will preserve me, so long as He sees it to be His good pleasure. So again farewell."

So saying, Hartrigge again bade farewell to his own home, and turned his horse's head towards Rowallan.

Near to the place he saw a figure in the distance, somewhat resembling his brother-in-law, and yet the face seemed greatly changed. When he came nearer, and the figure, recognising him, advanced to meet him, he almost started at the terrible change upon his sister's widowed husband. He had not shaved nor trimmed his beard since his wife's death, and his whole aspect was that of a man whose interest in life was dead. His face was haggard and worn, his eye restless and yearning as if looking ever in vain for some beloved object, his appearance sad and miserable in the extreme.

"You have managed to escape, Andrew," he said, quite quietly, and without evincing either surprise or pleasure.

"Yes, and the Presbyterians are in arms at last; I have travelled with the company from Dumfries, increasing as we came, and there is now an army of nineteen hundred under Captain Wallace's command, lying in the village of Inverburn," responded Hartrigge, slowly. "Our destination is Edinburgh. If you still wish to avenge the murder of your angel wife, now is your time, Adam Hepburn."

Adam Hepburn drew himself up, and the light of a passion terrible to see sprang into his glittering eye. He clenched his right hand, and raised it to heaven.

"Now, O Almighty God, for the fulfilling of my vow," he said, solemnly; then, turning to Hartrigge, briefly announced his willingness and immediate readiness to accompany him. They returned first to inform Jane Gray of their intention; bade her either go to Hartrigge or get young Gavin to abide with her awhile, and not having time to seek the ministers in their shelter, they returned hastily to Inverburn. But Jane Gray immediately proceeded to the hiding-place, and informed her father and brother of the rising of the Covenanters. Then David Gray's eye kindled, and the whole expression of his countenance indicated his desire to go forth with his brethren in defence of the Covenant. Seeing that, the old man blessed him, and bade him go. So David Gray stole by the field paths to the village, and joined the army just as it was setting forth upon its adventurous march.

CHAPTER XII. RULLION GREEN.

Late on the Sabbath evening the Covenanters reached Lanark, where they were well received by the sympathising inhabitants, who made haste to give them food, and offer them shelter for the night. Early on the following day the army assembled in the High Street, preparatory to setting out on their march to Edinburgh. At request of the leaders, the minister of Broomhill ascended the stairs of the Tolbooth, and conducted a religious service, in which the army and the townsfolk took part. After sermon, the Covenant was read, and also a declaration to the effect that it was simply in defence of their liberties that the Presbyterians had taken arms. Then, amid much enthusiasm, and many fervent God-speeds, the little army turned their faces towards the Lothians. It was now the dead of winter, and the weather was dreary and bitterly cold, being alternated by heavy rain storms and blasts of snow. The roads were in a wretched condition, and as the army endeavoured to march straight as the crow flies, they were led through many deep morasses, and had to cross many a swollen and turbid stream, as well as over bleak and exposed hills, where they received the full force of the blast.

To their disappointment and sorrow, they found the folk in the east not so enthusiastic and sympathising as their more impulsive neighbours in the west. In some villages they were received very coldly, and candidly told they were silly fanatics, and as they approached Edinburgh it seemed as if the influences of the Privy Council had extended far beyond the city boundaries, for the people looked yet more askance at the draggled and wayworn Covenanters, and even refused in some instances to relieve their wants. It was to be expected that such receptions would considerably damp the ardour of many, and as they marched, their number visibly decreased. Some stole away under cover of the night, to make what haste they could back to the comparative safety of their homes, and others less cowardly openly avowed their discontent and disappointment, and deserted their brethren in the broad light of day. But the dauntless and resolute spirit of such as Wallace, their leader, Gray of Hartrigge, and the minister of Broomhill, seemed to be only further strengthened and deepened by these reverses, and cheering the little

company on, they bravely continued their march until they came within a few miles of Edinburgh. A halt was then made, and two horsemen despatched to ascertain the disposition of the citizens towards them.

It was yet early in the day when these horsemen returned, with grave countenances and downcast air, telling that they had met with but little cheer. Wallace and Hartrigge hastily rode forward to meet them, and were informed that the city was hostile towards them, the gates being closed, and guns mounted on the walls to resist their entrance.

In some doubt as to the next step to be taken, they rode back to the camp, and a grave consultation was held.

"I am for going on, and forcing an entrance into the city," said Hartrigge, dauntlessly. "It is like playing at warfare to retreat before closed gates and a few guns."

But others, whose discretion was not blinded by zeal, shook their heads, and said it were best to return quietly, and with as much speed as possible, to their homes.

Adam Hepburn took no part in the discussion, but it was easy to see that his soul yearned to shed blood. A look of deep disappointment came upon his haggard face when the majority decided in favour of retreat.

Not being in the slightest degree apprehensive of pursuit by the Government troops, they proceeded leisurely round the eastern slopes of the Pentland hills to the southern side, to begin their march homewards. The day was now closing in; the feeble wintry sun had sunk behind a bank of ominous cloud on the western horizon, and the grey bleak shadows of the night were darkening down. The north wind swept mournfully round the desolate mountain sides, sometimes raising its voice to a wail, as some sharp peak or projecting rock impeded its course.

But suddenly another sound much more ominous than the moaning wind broke upon the startled ears of the faithful band, and to their astonishment they saw what appeared to be a great army pressing rapidly on their rear. Hurriedly the Covenanters set themselves in the order of battle. It was what many among them longed for, and yet unless the God of battles held over them the banner of His defence, and aided them to discomfit their foes, what chance had they, weary, wayworn, with strength far spent by exposure and lack of food, against the dragoons, fresh from the drill and comfortable training of the barracks?

The minister of Broomhill led in fervent prayer, craving victory for the Covenant from the King of Heaven. Then they stood erect, calm, and steadfast, waiting the onslaught of the enemy. The face of Andrew Gray of Hartrigge glowed with the deep enthusiasm of religious zeal, but that of his brother-in-law, Adam Hepburn, was dark with the furious passion of revenge. His eye glittered, his hand trembled as it grasped his father's sword, and in that breathless instant his vow was repeated that the blade should not return to its sheath until it had sucked the life-blood of more than one dragoon.

Like the rush of a mighty wind Dalziel's cavalry came sweeping down upon the right wing of the insurgents' army, which was protected by a party of horse. They were manfully received, and after a vigorous struggle, completely repulsed. The general was amazed at the fighting power of the rebels, whom he had contemptuously imagined to be a gathering of raw country folk, who would turn tail at the first attack of practised soldiery. He hastily organised and led a second attack, which was met and repulsed as before, with considerable loss. Had the insurgents possessed a reserve of cavalry, victory had assuredly been theirs, in spite of the odds against them, but these repeated attacks had slain many of their horse, and those on foot were unequal to a lengthened struggle.

Wildly the din of battle roared in the mountain solitudes, and swiftly, as if in pity, the shadows of the night crept over the bleak hill tops, and up the sombre valleys, until it wrapped conquerors and conquered in its kindly folds. The Covenanters were completely routed, and had the night not speedily fallen, they must have been totally cut to pieces. As it was, fifty of their number lay dead upon the field, besides many wounded, whom they had to leave to their fate. There were also more than a hundred taken prisoners, who envied the untroubled sleep of those who had fallen in the fray. Adam Hepburn, although fighting in the very hottest forefront of the battle, marvellously escaped unhurt.

Dalziel had kept an eye upon him, for he was the most desperate fighter, as well as the surest marksman among the insurgents. He never missed his aim. Twice Dalziel ordered a subordinate to engage him in single combat, or shoot him down from a distance; but the man seemed to bear a charmed life. When the fray was over, Dalziel examined the faces of the prisoners minutely, hoping to find Hepburn among them, but was disappointed. Fleeing among the very last of his brethren from the field, Adam Hepburn came up with his brother-in-law, the minister of

Broomhill, whom he recognised in the darkness by his ministerial garb.

"Is that you, David, safe and sound?" he asked, breathlessly.

"Yes! how is it with you, Adam Hepburn?" asked the minister, anxiously.

"All well; I have found my first taste of warfare very sweet this day, David Gray."

"You fought valiantly, Adam, so much so that I was amazed. How did you escape, being ever, as you were, in the thickest of the fray?"

"I know not; I had no thought of anything but cutting down the enemy and of avenging the blood of my murdered Agnes," said Adam Hepburn, his eyes gleaming in the darkness.

The minister sighed. The blessing of God could not rest upon warfare conducted under such a revengeful spirit, and yet he could scarcely blame the man for the bitterness of his wrath.

"I would much rather that you fought for the Covenant than for revenge, Adam," he said, sadly. "Will it restore to you your beloved? Nay; think for a moment, is the spirit you are cherishing one which her gentle heart would have blessed and approved?"

"You speak as a minister, not as a man, David," said Adam Hepburn, fiercely. "Had your wife been murdered in cold blood, as mine was, think you your soul would not thirst for revenge?"

"Your wife died loving you; you have the comforting assurance that her heart was knit to yours in the bonds of no ordinary affection, and that you will meet in glory," said the minister. "My case is sadder than yours, for my wife, while yet alive, has proved herself dead to me."

Adam Hepburn, though silenced, was not convinced.

"Have you seen Andrew?" he asked, abruptly changing the subject.

"No; I have been anxiously looking out for him, for I saw him wounded in the shoulder. I trust he has not fallen into the hands of the enemy."

"I think not. His horse was spared, and I fancied I saw him ride off the field. Well, our first battle is not such as to encourage our hearts, David," said Adam, with a grim smile.

"No; there will be weeping and desolation in many a home over Rullion Green," the minister answered, sadly. "I saw brave John Neilson of Corsac laid hands upon by the enemy and taken prisoner."

"Ay, and many others, whom God defend and deliver, since no human being can," said Adam. "But hark! what is that?"

The rapid sound of hoofs warned them of the approach either of some flying fugitive or a pursuing enemy, and they hastily crept in among some whin bushes, and held their breath until they should be past. To their great joy, however, it proved to be a couple of their brethren, who had been the last to leave the field of battle. Mutual congratulations were exchanged, and then one of the horsemen, a stout yeoman from the upper part of Nithsdale, urged the minister of Broomhill to take his steed, since his slender frame and not too robust constitution rendered him less fit for a long and toilsome march by foot. David Gray yielded to these entreaties and thankfully mounted the animal, for his strength was already far spent. They then separated, the two horsemen riding forward, as before, and Adam Hepburn and the Nithsdale yeoman, by name Matthew Riddell, following more slowly on foot. It was not safe for more than two to be together, on account of the pursuing and watching dragoons, whom they would be certain to encounter on the way. Thus the broken up and scattered army, who but a few days before had set out from Lanark with high hope beating in their breasts, returned to their homes.

Arrived in the parish of Inverburn, David Gray left his horse at the house of a friendly farmer outside of the village, and lest the dragoons should lay hands upon him, he crept up the valley to Hartrigge, and was the first to carry tidings of Rullion Green to Andrew Gray's wife. He found her about her usual tasks, for though her heart was heavy with foreboding fears, Susan Gray continued mindful of her husband's last words, to look well to her household, and put her trust in God. At sight of the minister, who was woefully weather-beaten and wayworn, she at once guessed that some evil had befallen the little army, of which her husband had been one of the chief supporters.

"Oh, David! I like not the way in which you have come back!" she said, in sad and anxious tones. "But have you not brought Andrew with you?"

The minister shook his head.

"Dalziel with his army fell upon us in the Pentland hills, Susan, and swept away our little band like chaff before the wind. Many lie dead upon the field of Rullion Green; Adam Hepburn and I escaped unhurt. Andrew was slightly wounded, but Adam assured me he saw him ride safely off the field. I doubt not the Lord will bring him in safety to his home. But he will need to travel slowly, and with extreme caution, for the entire route between Edinburgh and Lanark is infested with dragoons."

Susan Gray sank into a chair and burst into tears.

"I warned Andrew that peace was aye better than war, and said that an army like yours could have no chance before the king's soldiers," she said mournfully. "I wonder at you, David, a minister of the Gospel, encouraging them to shed blood."

"I believed that the time had come when resistance was demanded of us by the God of the Covenant, else I had not gone forth with them, Susan," answered the minister. "But now I must away to my hiding, for it is as much as my life is worth to be seen here in the light of day. How is it with my father, and poor Jane, left desolate in the house of Rowallan?"

"Your father is keeping well, and is safe in his hiding yet. Gavin is with his aunt, they were both here yester'een," answered Mistress Gray. "The maids have all run away in terror from Rowallan, and Jane came to tell me she had hired one who came seeking a place two days ago. She has been in the service of the laird, but was dismissed for some offence. Gavin says he likes not her appearance, but Jane seems pleased with her, for she is a good worker, and a prudent person, who is never heard about the place."

"Ah, well, the master himself, I hope and trust, will be home to his own house in a day or two, and yet, he will need to keep himself in hiding, for very sure am I, Susan, that after the valiant front he showed at Rullion Green, and the many dragoons he caused to lick the dust, Adam Hepburn will be a marked man henceforth."

Susan Gray very mournfully shook her head.

"Had ye all bidden peaceably at home, there had been none of this," she said, regretfully. "But men folk maun aye have their way."

The minister smiled; then bidding her and the little ones farewell, he stole away down the glen, and along the bank of the stream, to the hole in the Corbie's Cliff.

Looking carefully round to see that none was in sight, he scrambled up the rocky steep, brushed aside the overhanging branches, and plunged into the darkness of the subterraneous passage. Being now very familiar with the way, he had no difficulty in following the many peculiar windings of the passage, and at length he caught sight of the dim reflection of a lighted lamp in the distance, which warned him that he was nearing his father's shelter.

Lest his sudden appearance in the cave should alarm the old man, he called out "Father!" several times, as he quickly approached, and at the sound of the familiar voice, the old man sprang hastily to his feet, and ran to the mouth of the passage.

"My son, David! praise the Lord!" he exclaimed, while tears of joy coursed down his withered cheeks.

After the first glad greetings were over, David Gray sat down, and briefly rehearsed all that had befallen him since he set out with the Covenanting army for Edinburgh. As was natural, the recital greatly saddened the heart of his aged father, for he had solaced himself in his solitary captivity with glowing visions of the success which would attend his brethren in arms, and of the happy results which might accrue from their vigorous upstanding for the truth.

"It is the Lord's will. Unless of His good pleasure, such things could not be," he said. "The Church requires yet further refining in the fire ere she can be purged from all her iniquities, and can stand with clean hands before her God. But now, my son, you are weary, and stand in much need of rest and refreshment. Both are here."

The cave was indeed now a very comfortable place of abode. By degrees Jane Gray had conveyed many little comforts to her father, among the greatest of which was the lamp, and a store of books. Provisions in plenty were also at hand, and the minister of Broomhill partook of his repast with a keen relish, for he had not broken his fast for many hours. Immediately thereafter he stretched himself on the bed, and soon all his troubles were forgotten in the heavy, dreamless sleep of utter exhaustion.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE NEW MAID.

"What are you doing in the barn at this hour of the day, Martha Miller? Putting off your time loitering about, and all the milk pans standing in the dairy wanting to be scalded. Get about your work without more ado!"

It was Jane Gray who spoke, and her voice and manner were both unusually sharp. Ordinarily, even when reproving, she spoke in a tone of habitual gentleness, holding it

unbecoming for a gentlewoman to exhibit any violence of temper. It was not that she was particularly annoyed at the woman putting off her time, for indeed there was nothing pushing in the house of Rowallan now, but this was the second time she had caught her in the barn, when she had no call to be there, and her suspicions were roused lest she should be trying to discover, or had already discovered, the secret of the chaff hole.

Martha Miller was the new maid, and in appearance a comely, pleasant-looking person, about whom there was nothing suggestive of treachery or double-dealing. She looked straight into the face of her mistress, and dropped an apologetic curtsy.

"I beg pardon, Miss Gray; I was seeking a bite for the hens. I canna get peace about the doors for them," she answered, glibly, and at the same time pointing to the feathered flock, gathered expectantly round the barn door.

"That is just nonsense, Martha Miller. If you run for a bite to them every time they gather at your heels, you'll have your work," retorted Miss Gray, still sharply. "And, you know, I feed them myself every morning; and that they need, and get no more till bedtime."

"I didna' ken, bein' a hoose-servant, ma'am," answered Martha, with apparent humility. "I'll no' dae it again."

Afraid lest, in her turn, she should arouse the suspicions of the maid, Jane Gray did not then enter the barn, but returned to her household duties. In the afternoon, however, when she went for the customary feed of com for the poultry, she hastily looked into the chaff-hole to see if there were any signs of it having been disturbed. But no; the chaff was scattered over the floor, there was no mark of either hand or foot, and the trap-door had evidently not been disturbed.

Considerably relieved, and somewhat blaming herself for her suspicions of the maid, Jane Gray went back to the house; and yet a vague, inexplicable distrust of Martha Miller continued to oppress her soul. She knew her perfectly well. She was the daughter of one of the foresters on the estate of Inverburn, and, before the persecutions, had regularly attended the church with her parents. Jane had not attached any weight to the fact that she had served for two years in the family of the laird, not imagining that Sir Thomas was so bigoted an Episcopalian as to seek to influence his dependents.

She was sitting by her lonely hearth pondering these things in her mind, when there came a low tap at the window. Hastily rising, she peered out, and, with great joy, beheld the face of her brother-in-law, Adam Hepburn.

"Is all safe? Can I come in?"

"All is safe. Inverburn has been quiet for days, and there is not a soldier in the district," she whispered back. "Better go round and enter boldly by the kitchen door, as a master should; it will better impress Martha Miller, the new maid, whom I would not should think we had anything to hide."

Adam Hepburn nodded, walked round about to the barn-yard, where he was joyfully greeted by his faithful collie, and, opening the kitchen door, stalked in. Martha Miller was knitting a stocking by the kitchen hearth, and looked round in no little amazement at sight of the master of Rowallan, whom she knew very well by sight.

"Well, Martha, so you have come to serve at Rowallan," he said, pleasantly. "I heard of it in my absence. I hope we will get on as master and servant. Is your father well?"

"Yes, sir, thank ye," answered Martha, considerably confused by Adam Hepburn's easy manner, and his evident familiarity with all that had transpired during his absence.

"Get on the pot and make me a basin of milk porridge, Martha. I have had a long journey, and am very hungry," he said, quietly, and then joined his sister-in-law in the adjoining room, the door of which he carefully closed.

As Jane Gray was already fully acquainted with the details of Rullion Green, it was not necessary for Adam Hepburn to say anything concerning it, but he had to tell her the story of his own journey home, which had been marked by many perilous vicissitudes and marvellous escapes out of the hands of the enemy. Matthew Riddell, the yeoman, with whom he had travelled, had been laid hands on near Biggar, his own incautiousness and haste to get home having induced him to continue his journey by day, instead of hiding till the friendly darkness fell.

"Is Hartrigge home yet?" Adam asked, suddenly breaking in upon his own narrative.

"No; we were in hopes that you would come together. Susan, poor soul, is in a very anxious frame of mind," answered Jane.

Adam Hepburn looked grave indeed.

"Then I fear he has either been captured or succumbed to his wound. In no other way can I account for his protracted absence. It may be, however, that he is sheltering, for his health's

sake, in some friendly household. We will hope so. But tell me, Jane, have you been sojourning in this lonely house alone since my departure?"

"No; Gavin is with me at night. He went home to-day to see his mother, and, knowing I have no fear, may possibly remain till morning. Adam, do you think it will be safe for you to remain quite publicly at your own house? David seemed to think you would be marked."

"Marked or not, I shall not go into hiding, Jane," he said, quietly. "I have but to slay a few more of these miscreants, and then what is life worth to me?"

"Hush! Adam; the Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away. Save of His will, Agnes could not have died," she said, gently. "The thought that she is safe in our Father's house should be a great comfort to you, as it is to me, for, amid the terrors and anxieties of these days, she suffered a perpetual martyrdom."

Adam Hepburn rose and restlessly paced to and fro the room, his face betraying the many conflicting emotions which surged in his soul. His cruel and ruthless bereavement had shaken his faith to the very foundations, and he could well-nigh have exclaimed with the fool, "There is no God." "Other men have fathers, and mothers, and children, Jane," he said, in quick rebellious tones. "I had only her, and the Almighty knew how dear, how necessary she was to my existence. Wherein had I so grievously sinned that I required such a terrible punishment? Willingly would I have given up houses and lands, cattle and oxen, all, *all* I have in the world, if only *she* had been spared."

"Dear Adam, we may not question the ways of the Lord," said Jane Gray in a low voice. "I think sometimes it is the things we most set our hearts upon in this evil world that are not good for us to have. There is such a thing as making an idol of a human being, my brother, and you know the command is, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.'"

Adam Hepburn remained silent, but was not convinced.

Jane Gray looked sorrowfully into his face, deploring the change this blow had wrought, not only upon the outward man, but upon the inner spirit, sweeping away all the sunny-heartedness, the blithe and kindly charity which had ever characterised him, making him so lovable in every way. She could but pray that God, to whom all things are possible, would temper the wind, and show to the stricken and rebellious heart the sweet bow of promise behind the bitter cloud.

"And how is the curate performing his pastoral duties now?" enquired Adam presently, in a somewhat mocking tone. "Has his eloquence, combined with the more rugged persuasions of the dragoons, induced many more to attend upon his ministrations?"

"Watty McBean was here the other night, and he told me there was a goodly attendance in the kirk last Sabbath Day, chiefly of those timid and not very steadfast folks, whom fear has moved against their wills," Jane made answer. "I wonder now that Watty did not join with the army; he is a very staunch upholder of the Covenant."

"Ay, but he never was a fechter [fighter], as he says," replied Adam, with a slight smile. "Watty is a sly dog. He'll keep himself out of mischief, yet follow the dictates of his own conscience."

At that moment Martha Miller knocked at the door, and entered bearing a small server, on which stood her master's evening meal, a steaming basin of milk porridge, and a bowl of new milk beside it.

At her entrance Adam Hepburn looked keenly into the woman's face, and when she was gone, he turned to his sister-in-law, and said briefly, "I mistrust the countenance of that woman, Jane. Under what circumstances was she dismissed from the services of the laird?"

"I did not pursue the subject with her, Adam. She said she could not agree with her neighbours in the kitchen, and that her ladyship had blamed her for the disturbances there," replied Jane Gray. "Knowing her to be a capable worker, I engaged her gladly; for though she might be of a quarrelsome temper, she could not well fall out with herself, and I am not one to bandy words with a serving woman."

"Keep an eye on her, Jane, and be careful of your words in her hearing. I misdoubt me very much if she be not a spy sent hither by Sir Thomas Hamilton, who in the zeal of his loyalty to the king will not be slow to forget his honour as a gentleman," said Adam slowly. "I lost faith in the laird from that day he threatened me with danger to your father, if I did not turn out to McLean's preaching."

Jane Gray sighed. If foes were to be found in the very household, among those who broke and ate bread at the table, on whom could trust be stayed? Her brother-in-law's words were simply a re-echo of her own doubts and fears, which, however, she kept as yet to herself.

After some further conversation they separated for the night, but Adam Hepburn did not

close an eye, for, under his own roof-tree, his heart was torn anew by the violence of his sorrow, and ached with intolerable yearning for the "touch of a vanished hand, and the sound of a voice that was still!"

On the morrow he went about his duties as usual, superintending the work on the farm, it having been almost at a standstill for many weeks. It was more to keep himself in occupation than out of any interest in the thing, for even the ordinary business of getting and spending had ceased to occupy the minds of men.

That afternoon, when Jane Gray went out as usual to feed her poultry, she had occasion to step round to the corn-yard in search of some young chickens which had deserted their usual roost, and which she feared might become the prey of the foxes that frequently paid a visit to Rowallan, and which that very spring had made off with some of the lambs. Her soft shoes made no noise on the turf, therefore she did not alarm two people sheltering behind a stack of straw, and busily engrossed in conversation. She came upon them quite suddenly, and to her astonishment, who should it be but Martha Miller, the maid, and the curate of Inverburn! Both looked considerably confused, and Martha threw her apron over her head, and turned to go.

"I shall have a word to say to you for this wasting of my time, Martha," her mistress said, pointing towards the house; then turning to the curate, she added, with quiet, yet courteous dignity, "Sir, is it consistent with the gospel you are supposed to preach, to wile a servant-maid away from her household duties almost in the middle of the day, to confer with you in secret like this?"

The curate's sallow face flushed under the scathing rebuke which fell so quietly from those calm, proud lips.

"When I am not permitted to visit members of my flock at their masters' houses, I must perforce see them outside," he answered, with rude boldness, and yet his eyes instinctively sought the ground.

"Sir, I am not aware that the master of Rowallan has ever forbidden you his house," said Jane Gray, still calmly. "The members of the flock surely are ashamed of their shepherd, for Martha Miller has never ceased to disclaim all connection with your ministrations, and I am made aware to-day, for the first time, that she is on speaking terms with you."

"Madam, know you to whom you speak so disrespectfully?" quoth Mr. McLean in wrathful tones. "Know you that it is chiefly owing to my long forbearance with you and yours that the name and the house of Gray have not been totally extinguished?"

A slight smile curved for a moment Jane Gray's resolute lips, and the mild scorn it implied made the spirit of the curate chafe within him.

"Truly grateful are we for your forbearance towards us, Mr. McLean," she answered courteously. "I bid you good afternoon."

So saying, Jane Gray turned about and returned to the house. Upon second thoughts, she took no further notice of the occurrence to Martha Miller, deeming it more prudent to let her imagine it of no importance in the eyes of her mistress. Nevertheless, she redoubled her watchfulness, and took care that there was nothing in her actions to arouse the maid's suspicions. Hitherto, when conveying provisions to the dear ones in hiding, Jane Gray had simply been content to lock the barn door from the inside, and shut herself into the chaff-hole, so that none could possibly be witness to her descent into the cave. But now, after conference with her brother-in-law, they agreed that the safest plan would be for him to rise in the middle of the night and take down the food himself.

These precautions, however, were taken too late; for already the cunning eyes of Martha Miller had penetrated the secret of the chaff-hole.

CHAPTER XIV. BETRAYED.

The soft and beautiful radiance of a mild September morning lay upon the vale of Inverburn. The sky, though not so cloudlessly blue as in the summer time, was bright and clear, and masses of soft, dove-coloured clouds were piled up on the horizon, foretelling the approach of a gentle rain. The rich hues of autumn were now upon the trees. Beech and hazel-nuts were already falling ripely to the ground, the rowans hung rich and red among their graceful leaves, blackberry and wild raspberry were plentiful and luscious, and in very sheltered early nooks the bramble was

black upon the bough. Yes, the fruits which Dame Nature provides with such free and generous hands were not lacking, but what of the more substantial harvest, what of the yellow corn, which in September was wont either to be stacked upon the fields, or standing in rich and golden fulness, awaiting the sickle of the reaper. Ah! what indeed? Had some terrible dearth come upon the land, had a woeful drought withered and parched the fertile Clydesdale acres, and hushed the reapers song into the stillness of despair?

I said in a former chapter that the business of life seemed to be at a standstill in Inverburn. So it was still, and not in Inverburn alone, but throughout the length and breadth of Clydesdale, Liddesdale, and Nithsdale. For miles and miles the fields lay bleak and desolate, their only harvest being a wealth of weeds and thistles, which gave to the once fertile lands the appearance of a wilderness. What devastating breath had passed over the smiling land, what evil scourge had wrought this woeful desolation? The reason was not far to seek.

The emissaries of the Government, into whose hands full power over Scotland had been given, had swept the southern and western counties with a devastating host, who burned, killed, and plundered as they went, and left nothing but a trail of blood behind. And the tillers of the soil, left destitute in many instances of the barest necessities of life, could only bow their heads over the desolation which had come upon them, and be thankful if they escaped with their lives.

And yet, in those days it came to be a question not easily answered, whether life could be called a boon.

It was a Sabbath morning, and that deep, solemn stillness peculiar to the Sabbath seemed to hallow the very air. The birds had hushed their songs of gladness as if in reverence for the holy day, the very voice of the river, rippling on its way, seemed to be subdued into a tender and melancholy cadence, instead of brawling noisily in its rocky bed, and the brown and yellow leaves upon the trees scarcely stirred to the response of the whispering breeze.

While it was yet early, long before the long rays of the noontide sun fell aslant the hills, there might have been seen in various by-paths and unfrequented ways, straggling little groups of two or three individuals all moving in the same direction. Following them, we come at length to a sweet and sheltered glade, by the side of the clear, swift-running Douglas Water. This sylvan retreat, which might have been a fairy's dressing-room, so rich was it in fresh green beauty, was warmly and safely protected by high hills, rising abruptly on either side, but was open at either end, a narrow path going westward to Inverburn, and another eastward, until it converged into what was called the Sanquhar road.

Upon the sloping banks at the base of the hill, and also seated on the greensward and the boulders nearer the edge of the stream, were gathered a goodly company of men, women, and children, of almost every rank, age, and calling. There were shepherds in their tartan plaids, uncouth figures in the homely garb of the outdoor labourer, well-dressed farmers, and a sprinkling of stalwart soldiers, who had escaped the slaughter at Rullion Green. There were also present Graham of Pitoy, with his wife and daughter, and Baxter of Thornilee, both gentlemen of considerable estate in the neighbourhood. Foremost amongst those seated on the hill might have been observed the red head of Watty McBean, which showed in full contrast against the spotless hue of Betty's white cap.

Several horses, which had brought people from a distance, were quietly enjoying a dainty bite at the fresh grass, which grew in luxuriance by the stream, and upon the heights there were some mounted horsemen apparently keeping watch, in order to give timely alarm if any marauders likely to molest the company should appear in sight.

There might have been about five hundred people gathered together, when there appeared round one of the windings of the stream the familiar figure of the minister of Inverburn, leaning upon the arm of his son David. They had just emerged from their hiding in the Corbie's Cliff in order to conduct the service in the glen. Many eyes filled with tears at sight of their beloved minister, and they shook their heads mournfully at the visible change wrought in his appearance by the long months of anxiety and solitary confinement. The minister of Broomhill also looked worn and thin, and his hair was now as white as snow.

When the ministers reached the centre of the little throng, a few minutes were spent in mutual greetings, and then Mr. Gray the elder stepped to the front of the huge boulder which served as a pulpit, and upon which a white cloth was spread, with the Bible above it. Folding his withered hands, he said, in solemn and trembling tones, "Let us pray." It seemed as if Nature hushed her many sounds in unison with the stillness which fell upon the assembled worshippers as the long-loved voice of their minister, in choice and appropriate language, gave utterance to a fervent and expressive prayer to the God of Heaven. A portion of the seventy-ninth psalm was

then read, and sung to the sweet and mournful strain of "Martyrs." The words:

"Against us mind not former sins.
Thy tender mercies show;
Let them prevent us speedily,
For we're brought very low."

were sung with an intense and passionate fervour which told that it was indeed the cry of every heart present, and that it was not mere lip service which had brought them thither, almost at the very peril of their lives.

Turning to the prophetic pages of Isaiah, the minister chose for his text these comforting and appropriate words, "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted; beloved, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires.... In righteousness shalt thou be established; thou shalt be far from oppression, for thou shalt not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near thee."

In his own earnest and persuasive manner the venerable servant of God endeavoured to comfort his flock, assuring them that though they were now passing through the bitter waters of affliction, the Lord would not utterly forget his ancient Zion, but would yet restore her to liberty and peace. As he earnestly exhorted them to continue steadfast in the faith, and to bear manfully their light affliction, which was but for a moment, and would work out its own exceeding weight of glory, his eyes glowed and shone, and his face was transfigured by the light of a holy enthusiasm which shed a warm and cheerful influence upon the hearts of his hearers, and restored their fainting courage, until they felt indeed able to do and dare without faltering for the sake of Him who trod before them the weary vale of persecution and shame.

It was a moving sight to look upon the eloquent face of the preacher, which bespoke the inmost feelings of his soul, and to see his thin white locks fluttering in the breeze, while his wasted hands were alternately folded or upraised to enforce his earnest words. The multitude, hushed into rapt and breathless stillness, were unconscious of a figure stealing swiftly up the glen, until a slight scream fell from the lips of a woman, and Susan Gray of Hartrigge interrupted the sermon by hastily running to meet what appeared to be a wayfaring man, whose ragged garb and miserable appearance proclaimed that he had been long on the road and had suffered many privations. The minister paused, and turned his eyes towards the wanderer, in whose changed countenance he recognised the features of his first-born son.

The unexpected arrival of Hartrigge broke up the conventicle, and his relations, who were all present, flocked round him, while his friends and neighbours pressed closely behind, eager to hear the story of his adventures. But he seemed breathless, and unable to speak for a moment, and then his words were of ominous import.

"It is surely madness to be holding a meeting here, and the dragoons so near! They have pursued me since daybreak, and I have only escaped through being familiar with every by-path on the way. Scatter yourselves quickly, for they will be upon us in a moment. Father and David, let us make haste together to our usual hiding. I have longed for the Corbie's Cliff all day."

Just then a watcher on the western height blew a warning note on the trumpet, and in a few moments the assemblage melted away like mist in the noonday sun.

Jane Gray entreated her brother-in-law, Adam Hepburn, to flee with the ministers and Hartrigge to the friendly shelter of the Corbie's Cliff, but he stoutly refused, saying that the soldiers would not be likely to trouble Rowallan again, seeing they had met with so little success on their previous visit. But Jane herself was not at all sanguine, and as they stole homewards by the most unfrequented field paths, her mind was filled with strange misgivings regarding Martha Miller, the maid, who had gone home to spend the Sabbath day with her parents at the North Lodge, on Inverburn. She was walking a little in advance of Adam, and was the first to ascend the little hill, from which a glimpse of Rowallan could be had. She stood still there, for in the distance she saw the gleam of steel, and a party of horsemen riding rapidly up the road to the farm.

"See yonder, Adam!" she said, in a trembling whisper; "you must flee at once, either to the cave at Hartrigge, or into the Corbie's Hole, if you can reach it unseen."

"What! and allow you, a defenceless woman, to go down alone among these brutal fellows?" inquired Adam, incredulously. "You hardly know what you say, Jane."

"Yes, yes! I know very well; I am not afraid. They will not harm me. I have still some of the Burgundy which wrought the charm on Turner," she answered, hurriedly. "Oh, Adam! do make haste and flee, in case they catch sight of us."

Involuntarily Adam Hepburn grasped his sword, as his eyes turned towards the dragoons. Yet he hesitated; for when there were fifty to one, what would be his chance? Nay, certain death awaited him if he ventured in their midst.

"Run, run, Adam. I entreat you!" exclaimed Jane, in tones of keen distress. "You know there is a price upon your head; and I would not that I should witness a second deed of violence at Rowallan. Run, my brother; we cannot yet spare you from our midst."

"But you, Jane? It is selfish, cowardly, to leave you like this."

"No, no! I repeat, I am not afraid. I can easily frame an excuse for my absence from the place, should they question me. You can safely leave Rowallan in my hands. God gives a deep and peculiar courage even to frail women in these times, and I believe I could influence these men, bad as they are. Only go, for every moment you stay is an agony."

"Well, I will; and God forgive me if I am in the wrong, and may He protect you, my sister," said Adam, hoarsely. Then, with a fervent grip of the hand, they parted; Adam to steal with caution and speed to some safe hiding, and Jane to make her way down to Rowallan. She was a singularly brave and fearless woman, and yet her heart quailed a little as she made haste to get in by the back premises, hoping to reach the house and throw off her cloak before she was observed by the dragoons. She was greatly favoured in that respect, for the soldiers made a halt for some reason or other on the road, and she had slipped unobserved into the house before they rode into the farmyard. She threw off her cloak, tied an apron about her, and busied herself in the kitchen, just as if continuing her usual morning work. But when she heard them ride into the yard, with a great din and clatter, she took such a violent trembling that she was obliged to sit down in order to recover herself. However, when she heard a foot on the step, and a hand on the latch of the door, she regained calmness, and rose to her feet. She had purposely unbarred the kitchen door; therefore, somewhat to his own astonishment, he having been otherwise informed, the captain of the detachment found nothing to impede his entrance. He was still further amazed, on entering the kitchen, to behold a woman there, who turned her fair, calm face to him, as if in questioning surprise.

Captain McNab, though unflinching and uncompromising in the performance of duty, however painful or harsh it might be, was a gentleman, and did not address Jane Gray with that insolent familiarity which had characterised Sir James Turner's questioning.

"Sorry to disturb you, mistress," he said courteously enough. "I am astonished to find you here; we were credibly informed that all the inmates of the house had gone to a field-preaching about a mile distant, and that we should find the coast clear."

"Your informer might be more zealous than trustworthy, sir," Jane Gray made answer quickly, though her heart grew sick with apprehension. Doubtless Martha Miller had been the informant, and how many other secrets had she discovered and divulged?

"It was a wench, one of the serving-maids here, I believe," answered the Captain candidly. "We are in search of four desperate Whigs, two ministers and two farmers; but I think we will lay hands upon them here. Come, tell me, my sweet dame, how can so comely a gentlewoman as you countenance such disreputable rebellion?"

"What you term rebellion, sir, may convey another meaning to my mind," answered Jane Gray. "Pray, would you call it rebellion to desire to exercise liberty in matters pertaining to conscience?"

"Faith, you put it glibly," retorted the Captain, with a smile. "Many of my fellow officers would give but a rough denial to such rebellious words, but I would scorn to make war on women. Well, have you anything to drink in the house? I intended to force an entrance and ransack the cupboards, but it would have a sweeter relish if poured out by those fair hands."

"If you will be good enough to step into the inner room, sir, I will set what I have before you," answered Jane courteously.

"Thanks. I will step out first and see what speed they are making with their search. We have been well guided to the cunning corner which has sheltered the renegades so long, and the parson himself is with us to assist us in our work," said the Captain carelessly. "Faith, madam, I do not wonder that the folk get sick of his snivelling ministrations. He is a mean, despicable dog, whom it would do me good to thrash."

So saying, the Captain sauntered out to the yard again, and Jane Gray, stepping into a little closet, which had a window to the back, saw him enter the barn. Folding her hands, her white lips moved in an agony of prayer, for without a doubt the secret of the chaff hole was a secret no longer, and unless warned by the noise overhead, the fugitives could not possibly escape.

Several minutes passed, and at length Jane saw McLean, the curate, emerge from the barn

with a very disgusted and chagrined expression on his ill-favoured face. He was followed shortly by Captain McNab, who, with his lieutenant, came slowly towards the house.

"They have found the nest, but the birds have flown," he said, in tones of annoyance, as he entered the kitchen. "With your permission, mistress, we will now taste your fare, while my men make a further investigation of the secret passage, which is indeed a cunningly devised hiding. Little wonder it has remained undiscovered so long."

Jane Gray drew a breath of relief, and a silent thanksgiving for deliverance vouchsafed arose to heaven from her grateful heart. She knew at once that the unusual stir and clamouring about the quiet homestead had penetrated the ears of the fugitives in their hiding, and given them timely warning to flee. Once out of the subterranean passage, they were comparatively safe, for there was many a cave and snug corner by the banks of the Douglas Water, where they could shelter till the kindly darkness fell. In about three-quarters of an hour, those who had followed the subterranean passage to its outlet returned to Rowallan, reporting that there was neither sight nor sound of the fugitives to be seen or heard.

Captain McNab, though considerably chagrined, for it would have been greatly to his credit and advantage to have laid hands on so many marked rebels, hid his feelings much better than the curate, who, forgetting his holy office, swore roundly in his disappointment; and vowed increased vengeance on the name and house of Gray. Serene and matchless was the contempt with which Jane Gray regarded him: she never allowed her eyes to rest on his countenance, and never betrayed, by look or gesture, that she heard the rude remarks he addressed to her.

Captain McNab bade Miss Gray a polite farewell, and even apologised for so disturbing her on a Sabbath morning, a courtesy which she gratefully acknowledged with an expressive glance from her fine eyes and a low bow.

Mounting his horse at the door, Captain McNab gave the word of command, and the troop rapidly rode away.

Then Jane Gray, unable to bear the unspeakable relief following upon the great strain upon her nerves, sank down on her knees and burst into tears.

CHAPTER XV. BRAVE TO THE LAST.

Meanwhile Adam Hepburn had stolen across the fields to the glen with the intention of entering the hole in the Corbie's Cliff. He was making his way down the hill-side, keeping cautiously in shelter of the whins and bracken, for the dragoons were in sight, when, to his no small amazement, he saw the two ministers and Andrew Gray of Hartrigge emerge from the mouth of the subterranean passage with a haste which proclaimed that they were pursued. And now truly the poor fugitives were betwixt two fires, for there were dragoons scattered all over the surrounding hills, and some were so near that it was a marvel they were not at once discovered. They had to thank the luxuriance of the brushwood and tangle for affording them a shelter, and, if they could but remain unobserved till nightfall, they could then seek a safer hiding. Adam Hepburn crawled upon his hands and knees down through the thicket, and came up with the others, as they were creeping slowly along, hoping to reach the steep hill behind Hartrigge, where the cave was still undiscovered.

"We were betrayed in our hiding, and were only warned in time to flee by the noise overhead," whispered Andrew Gray. "See yonder!"

Lifting their heads the fugitives saw three dragoons emerge from the mouth of the Corbie's Cliff and look all round them, as if expecting to see those for whom they sought. In mortal terror the miserable Covenanters laid themselves flat down on their faces and pulled the friendly bracken over them, and waited breathlessly, thinking the dragoons would be certain to scour the entire glen.

"If they come I think I could silence the three," said Adam Hepburn, grimly; "only they might, by their cries, bring some of their mounted comrades upon us. They are not far distant, I trow, for I can hear the neighing of their horses even here."

After a few minutes' suspense, the anxious fugitives saw the dragoons re-enter the mouth of the cave; then they slowly crept yet a little farther along the glen, for every moment spent in this comparatively exposed place was not only precious, but laden with deadly peril. At length they arrived unmolested at the base of the steep hill behind Hartrigge, and, as it was crowned with a

thick belt of fir trees, there was no fear of them being seen from above.

The minister of Inverburn, whose feeble strength was now utterly spent through excitement and suspense, had to be half carried up the rocky ascent, but at length all landed safely in the cave. It was but a small place, and very damp; a great contrast in every way to the comfortable hiding at Rowallan. After having recovered a little from his fatigue, the minister of Inverburn folded his hands and returned thanks for their deliverance; but Adam Hepburn sat gloomily in a corner, his hands grasping his sword, for it was foreign to his nature to flee before the enemy, and he felt as if he had sullied his manhood by deserting Rowallan, and leaving Jane Gray to encounter the dragoons alone. And yet there are times when even the bravest soldier is forced to admit that discretion is the better part of valour.

Meanwhile the body of dragoons, under command of Captain Ingram, who had ridden up to the glen to disperse the conventicle, baulked of their prey, had proceeded to Hartrigge, it being the only house in view. Captain Ingram was a very different man from his brother officer, who had so peaceably performed his duty at Rowallan. He was of a short, burly figure, with a countenance much swollen and disfigured by his drunken excesses, and his fiery eye gave some expression to the fierce and choleric nature of his temper. He was utterly void of one kindly feeling or generous impulse, and his troops were famous for their brutal and disgraceful behaviour, it being said of them that they showed no mercy to man, woman, or child.

Mistress Gray, who with her son, Gavin, had been present at the conventicle, had been in the house some little time before the dragoons surrounded Hartrigge.

The little ones, who had remained at home under charge of Jeanie, who was growing more sensible and womanly every day, began to cry at sight of the soldiers, remembering the occasion of their former visit, and how their father had been carried off as a prisoner. Gavin, however, exhibited his usual fearless spirit, and ran to the kitchen cupboard for the old fowling-piece; yet, poor lad, what could he do with it, against the powerful arms of a company of dragoons? Captain Ingram did not trouble to alight, but thundered at the door of the house with the butt-end of his musket, a summons which brought Mistress Gray tremblingly to the threshold.

"Hey, mistress! is this not the house of that vile renegade, Andrew Gray, son of the notorious field-preacher, the minister of Inverburn?" he asked, fiercely.

"It is the house of Andrew Gray," she made answer, sadly. "And I would that he were within its walls. They have not sheltered him these many weary days."

"Are you his wife? and are these his brats?" asked the Captain, pointing to the little ones clinging to her skirts.

She bowed her head, but made no verbal reply.

"Come, tell me, mistress, were you at the field preaching down in the glen yonder, listening to the snivelling of that old renegade, your husband's father?"

"I was there, sir," Susan Gray made answer, firmly, for she saw that it would be useless to deny it.

"Good! we have come upon one Whig dame at last who can speak the truth," said the Captain, in tones of satisfaction. "Come, oblige me still further, mistress, and give me the names of those who were present besides yourself."

"I went to listen to the preaching of the Word, sir, and not to count those who were present," answered Susan Gray, with fearless firmness.

"Well, if you will not tell me that, let me know the secret hiding of those who conducted the service. Come, now, mistress, you are completely in my power, and if you do not speak of your own free will, I may take measures to make you," said the Captain, significantly.

"I cannot tell whither they have fled, sir. I was too much taken up making my own escape, to look to them," she answered quietly.

"Just so. With your permission, mistress, we will have a look through the house, and if any of the renegades be found within, by the powers, I will punish them for your obstinacy," said the Captain, with an oath, and dismounting, he flung his reins to a dragoon, ordered some of them to follow him into the house, and others to make a complete search of the out-houses. Entering the kitchen, the Captain beheld young Gavin standing with the old fowling-piece in his hand, which sight caused him to burst into a loud laugh.

"So, my young friend, you are going to show fight. You are Andrew Gray's son, I take it. Here, Dawson, bind the young chip; we may have to screw the truth out of him by-and-by."

Gavin presented his gun, and drew the trigger, but it was dashed out of his hand, and he was bound hand and foot, and laid on the floor. Then the ruffians continued their search through the house, lifting many valuables as they went, but found no traces of the fugitives, nor any corner

where they could possibly be hid. Those searching outside were equally unsuccessful, and Captain Ingram got into a great rage, and swore some dreadful oaths, which made Susan Gray tremble, and marvel that judgment did not overtake him at once.

Stepping out to the door, he again addressed Mistress Gray, and brutally demanded that she should at once divulge all she knew concerning the movements and probable hiding of her husband and his kindred. But Susan Gray resolutely shook her head, and maintained that she knew not whither they had fled.

"Here, Dawson, bring out that young branch of the rebel tree, and we will try to refresh his memory," said the captain, peremptorily, and young Gavin was presently brought out, and set up against the beech tree in front of the house.

At sight of her first-born son, the dearest of all her children to her heart, Susan Gray grew as pale as death, and leaned against the lintel of the door for support.

Captain Ingram then stepped forward, and pointing his sword at the young lad, swore at him, and bade him at once reveal his father's hiding, or suffer the consequences.

"Think you I would betray my father to save myself, sir?" asked the young Gavin, in a clear and steadfast voice, and his fine eye fearlessly looked into the face of his cruel questioner. "Not though I had twenty lives. I would lose them all rather than be guilty of such black treachery and cowardice."

In her boundless admiration of the courage of the boy, Susan Gray half forgot the agonising fear which rent her motherly heart.

"Sure, we have an out-and-out Covenanter here, boys!" said the Captain, looking round upon his dragoons. "Faith, I have shot many a man for less! but on account of his tender years we will give him another chance for his life."

At these ominous words Susan Gray gave a loud scream, and rushed forward as if to protect her son, but she was rudely pushed back, and sank down on her knees on the ground, uttering broken prayers to God, and almost beside herself in her agony.

"Now, my blithe young rebel," said Captain Ingram, fixing his mocking eyes on Gavin's pale yet steadfast face, "I give you twenty seconds to make up your mind. Reveal your father's hiding, or bear the penalty of your contempt for an officer of the King. Dawson, Baird, and Luttrell, have your muskets charged."

The lad winced slightly at the last words, but only for a moment; then he drew himself up as well as his bonds would allow.

"Life would be no boon at the price you ask," he then made answer, in a low yet firm voice. "You can only kill the body, and my blood will be on your head."

"You hear, mistress?" said Ingram, turning then to the kneeling figure of the mother. "Ten seconds of the twenty are gone. If you will yield the required information his life will be spared."

Susan Gray hesitated a moment. It was an awful moment for her, to be called upon to choose, as it were, betwixt husband and child.

"Mother, mother, don't be tempted!" cried Gavin. "What is my life compared with that of my father and grandfather, and uncle David? Let them shoot. I am not afraid to die. I remember Mr. Guthrie's fearlessness on the scaffold. I understand it now, for God is with me here, close beside me, and I will go straight to glory."

The sublimity of the lad's courage, the pathetic and beautiful faith with which he spoke, moved more than one of these hardened hearts to pity, but it only further enraged their brutal Captain.

"Get into the house, mistress, and shut the door," he said, curtly; "unless you want to see the young rebel receive his baptism of fire."

Susan Gray spoke not, but remained kneeling, with her face hidden in her hands; all feeling seemed to be frozen in her broken heart.

There was a moment's dread silence; then the sharp report of three musket shots, simultaneously fired, rang through the quiet Sabbath air. Then the order was given to march, and the dragoons, having finished their deadly work, turned their horses' heads away from Hartrigge. As they did so, a volume of smoke began slowly to arise from behind the house; they had finished their work of destruction by setting fire to the barn and granary ere they left. Little knew the brave men in hiding what was being enacted at so little a distance from them. The cave was too far away to admit of the sound of voices, or even the trampling of the horses to penetrate their ears, but they heard quite distinctly the report of musketry, and involuntarily all started to their feet.

"That sound comes from the house," said Hartrigge. "I must go and see what is being done

there. I cannot sit here while these miscreants murder my wife and children in cold blood."

Adam Hepburn, only too ready to accompany his brother-in-law, grasped his sword, and the two stole cautiously up the hill in the friendly shelter of the trees. The two ministers, who were unarmed, followed at a little distance, so that, in case of alarm, they might yet make good their escape. The hearts of all four were filled with foreboding and anxious fears, for too well they knew the meaning of that portentous report. Arrived at the summit of the hill, Hartrigge stole a little in advance of Adam Hepburn, and thence could see the road, at the far end of which he caught a glimpse of the rear of the dragoons ere they emerged out upon the public highway. Satisfied that there was nothing to apprehend from them, he went boldly forward, and, emerging from the shadow of the trees, saw a sight which almost made his heart stand still. There on the greensward lay the prostrate form of his firstborn son, with his mother kneeling motionless by his side; the two little bairns were holding each other close and weeping bitterly; and Jeanie, with white face and dry eyes, was bathing a ghastly wound in her brother's left temple.

A moment more and those following more slowly up the hill were startled by the sound of a hoarse and bitter cry. Andrew Gray's iron composure, his absolute self-control were swept away, and, darting forward, he knelt by his murdered boy, calling him by every loving name, in accents of anguish and entreaty. It was in vain: life was gone!

Then there arose upon the wings of the soft September wind the echo of that desolate and anguished cry with which David of old bewailed his firstborn: "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would to God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

CHAPTER XVI. AT THE DAWNING.

Shortly after midnight upon the Monday following that sad Sabbath day, Watty McBean rose up out of his bed, so quietly as not to disturb Betty asleep in the ben-end, and, hastily putting on his clothes, stole out of doors. The harvest moon was at its full, and a light almost as clear as day lay upon the silent earth. The moonlight was very favourable for Watty's purpose, and his face wore a well-pleased expression as he entered the stable where his faithful nag was peacefully asleep. She looked round whinnying at her master's step, but he paid no heed to her. Striking a light, he took from an empty stall which he used as a tool-house a pick and shovel. These he hoisted on his shoulder, and, leaving the stable, stole swiftly up the village street. As he passed Mistress Lyall's he shook his doubled fist at the darkened windows, for in that house several of the dragoons were stationed, under command not to leave the place until they had captured the notorious rebels, who were known to be in hiding in the neighbourhood; also certain words fell from his lips which were scarcely in keeping with his profession as a Christian, or with his old occupation of bell-ringer and minister's man in the parish. Once clear of the village, Watty somewhat slackened his pace, and leisurely ascended the manse brae to the churchyard. On this gentle eminence the air was scarcely so still, for a light breeze stirred the yellow leaves on the birks of Inverburn, and sighed with a mournful cadence through the long grasses waving above the last resting-place of the dead. Passing the manse gate Watty again shook his fist and applied a very expressive epithet to its unconscious inmate, which would have roused the ire of the Reverend Duncan McLean had he heard it. But he was enjoying his well-earned repose, for he had been very zealous for several days in assisting to ferret out rebellious insurgents.

Watty entered the churchyard and stepped lightly over the turf to the green enclosure where slept so many of those who had first seen the light in the manse of Inverburn. Laying down his implements, Watty paused a moment by the double head-stone and wiped his eyes, as he read the name of Gray, so oft repeated--husband and wife, parent and child, one after the other--until certain newly-chiselled words recorded that here also slept--

"AGNES GUTHRIE GRAY,
THE DEAR WIFE OF ADAM HEPBURN, OF ROWALLAN,
WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE UNTIMEOUSLY,
IN THE FLOWER OF HER AGE,
BEING SHOT BY DRAGOONS AT HER OWN DOOR,
ON THE NINTH DAY OF MARCH,

SIXTEEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-THREE,
LEAVING HER SORROWING HUSBAND DESOLATE UPON THE
FACE OF THE EARTH."

As he slowly spelled out these pathetic words, for Watty was no great scholar, tears chased each other down his rugged face, and the heaving of his broad chest told how deep was his emotion. But suddenly recovering himself, and as if ashamed of his weakness, he dashed the tears aside, and stepping back for his pick, began his work--that of digging a grave. It was a strange and weird occupation for that mysterious hour following upon midnight, and Watty might have been excused had he felt a little nervous over his task. But no such foolish fears disturbed him as he quickly and deftly shovelled out the earth; his mind was filled with sad regretful thoughts of the past, mingled with foreboding and anxious previsions of the future. And thus busily occupied, he made great speed with his work. The bell in the tower rang one, and then two, and still Watty did not halt, but ere the solemn hands moved round to three his work was done, for his spade had struck with a dull sound on Agnes Hepburn's coffin lid. Then he jumped out of the new-made grave, put on his coat again, and walked down to the churchyard gate. Just then he heard the first cock-crowing from the curate's hen-roost, and its echo was taken up by chanticleer on a neighbouring farm, announcing to whomsoever might be awake to hear, the dawning of another day. Stepping out of the gate, Watty looked anxiously up the road, and as anxiously down towards the village, fearing lest the marauders under Mistress Lyall's roof-tree should have obtained a scent of this morning's work. For about fifteen minutes Watty endured an agony of impatience and suspense. However, to his unspeakable relief, he beheld something moving at a considerable distance up the road. He at once advanced to meet it, and as he drew nearer he could distinguish four figures walking two abreast, and carrying something between them. They also breathed a sigh of relief at sight of Watty, for in these times, though appointments were made, none could predict what might transpire to prevent their being kept.

"All ready, Watty?" inquired the voice of Andrew Gray, of Hartrigge, the moment they were within speaking distance.

"A' ready," Watty whispered back, and walking to the rear of the little party, he relieved the minister of Inverburn at the end of the coffin. Then slowly, and with measured tread, they moved on to the churchyard gate, up the broad walk, and across the turf to the new-made grave. The coffin was then laid gently down on the grass, and Watty, bending forward, read the name on the plate,

"GAVIN GRAY, AGED 17."

Meanwhile, Adam Hepburn had moved over to the open grave, and was gazing down upon the coffin, which contained the remains of his beloved, with a strange far-off expression on his face. They saw that he had forgotten himself and them, and after waiting a moment, David Gray stepped forward and lightly touched his arm.

"We wait for you, Adam," he said gently. "Will you take the cord at the feet with me?"

Adam Hepburn started violently, and then stepping forward, took the cord held out to him; the minister of Inverburn and Hartrigge himself being at the head. Then very gently they lowered it into the grave, and when it grated upon the other, Adam Hepburn let go his hold, and turned aside with a deep groan. The minister of Inverburn took up a handful of earth, and let it fall loosely on the coffin lid. "Earth to earth, dust to dust, he has changed the corruptible for the incorruptible, and what is our loss is the lad's great gain," he murmured half dreamily. Then he laid his hand on the arm of the bereaved father, over whose rugged face a tremor had passed, like the first wave of a great sea, adding, with gentle force, "My son, come, let us go hence."

"Not yet; I will wait and help Watty," said Andrew Gray, in a hoarse whisper; but already Watty, with strong and willing arm, was rapidly filling up the grave.

"I wonder whose murdered body will next lie here," said Hartrigge, with strange, deep bitterness. "Truly, I think, father, we had need soon to extend our burial space."

"Do not speak so bitterly, my son. Let us be thankful that we have been permitted to give the dear lad honourable and Christian burial, with his forbears," said the old man gently. "If the Lord will, may I be the next to be laid here in peace."

"We'd better get out o' this unless we be tired o' life," said Watty, grimly, pointing with his forefinger to the first streak of dawn on the eastern horizon. "If we dinna get clear off afore the daw'in', some o' the manse folk will be sure to see us."

Mindful of Watty's warning, they prepared to leave the churchyard, and yet they were fain to linger, for many hallowed memories bound them to the place. Ere he turned to go, Andrew Gray

took up the spade and gently beat down the turf on the grave, and his last look at his son's loved resting place was blinded by unwonted tears.

"Watty," said Adam Hepburn, as they walked out to the road, "you had better come with us now, and let us see that boasted hiding of yours on the Douglas Water. If we are to remain in this district it will take a securer shelter than the cave at Hartrigge to hold us."

"I'm willint eneuch to let ye see't; but what if I be caught comin' hame?" queried Watty, cautiously.

"You can gather some grass on the roadside, and say you were seeking a bite for old Kirsty, if they question you," said Adam. "But you can easily be home by half six at the latest, unless indeed the place be all the farther up the water."

"Na, na, it's no' that faur. Weel, I'll just hide my pick and shovel in the hedge, and gang," answered Watty; so the little party once more turned their faces to Hartrigge, where the bereaved mother sat in her desolate house, like Rachel, weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted.

They spoke but little as they walked, for the burden of his thoughts was sufficient for each. The air was now raw and chill, and the light struggling over hill and dale dispelled the tender radiance of the moon and gave an aspect almost wintry to the face of nature. The minister of Inverburn several times shivered and his hacking cough and attenuated appearance indicated that exposure was beginning to tell upon his aged frame. Looking at him, Watty more than once ominously shook his head, and whispered within himself that the minister was not long for this world. Thinking they might with safety venture into the house of Hartrigge for some warm breakfast, Andrew Gray, with his father and brother, turned up the road to the farm, while Adam Hepburn and Watty took their way by a near cut to the glen, which formed the bed of the Douglas Water. Relieved from the slight restraint of the minister's presence, Watty found his tongue, and launched forth into a very vehement tirade against the oppressors of the land, using terms and expressions which in happier times would not have failed to amuse his companion, but which now he passed unheeded. It was seldom indeed that a smile was seen on the face of Adam Hepburn, and since his wife's death no man or woman had ever heard him laugh. The keen and pleasant sense of humour which had given such a relish to his company and speech in days gone by, had deserted him now, and he was in every respect an altered man. None was more mournfully conscious of this change than Watty, who had been wont to have many a bantering jest with the farmer of Rowallan, for whom he had a great liking and respect.

In the glen the sleepy birds were beginning to stir among the boughs, and already the air was full of twitterings, and of the hum of insects early on the wing. A heavy dew had fallen in the night, and hung sparkling like diamonds in the hedgerows and on every blade of grass, making the footing very wet, especially where it grew long and rank, close to the water's edge.

As they passed the mouth of the Corbie's Cliff Watty McBean looked mournfully at the now visible entrance, for the dragoons with their swords had shorn away all the branches and the clinging tangles which had so securely hidden it before. So that no man could possibly hide there now and expect to be undisturbed.

"Eh, that limmer Martha Miller, if I had her I'd pay her out for her treachery!" muttered Watty. "It's just as weel she gaed awa' to her sister in Glesca. She wadna hae been safe muckle longer in the place. It was gettin' ower hot for her."

"Ay, she'll never prosper, Watty. She may grow rich for a time on the spoiling of the neighbours she betrayed, but her punishment will come by-and-by," said Adam, quietly.

"I'm sure I hope sae," returned Watty, fervently. "Weel, here we are. Are ye sure there's naeboddy in sicht?"

"Scarcely here, before five in the morning, Watty," said Adam, with a faint smile. "It is a dark and gloomy retreat this."

He spoke the truth. They had now reached a very deep and narrow part of the glen, the sides of which rose precipitously from the edges of the stream. These abrupt heights were so densely covered with trees, chiefly those dark and gloomy firs common to the mountainous portions of Scotland, that they looked like a solid and impenetrable mass. The water, though narrow, was very deep, and made a hoarse and hollow roaring as it rushed among its rough boulders, which looked as if they had become detached from the rocky heights above and rolled into the bed of the stream. The light admitted from the narrow space between the heights was very insufficient, and only seemed to add to the gloom. Even in summer the sunshine never penetrated the dark retreat, consequently the common wild flowers did not bloom, although ferns and mosses of rich and varied hues and rare and delicate form grew in beautiful luxuriance.

"D'ye see ony place whaur a body micht hide?" queried Watty, with a twinkle in his eye.

"Faith, Watty, I believe anybody might be safe enough where we are standing at this moment. No mounted pursuer, at least, could reach this spot," answered Adam Hepburn.

"Weel, follow me as best ye can, for there's nae road, no' even a sheep-track, to guide ye," said Watty and, immediately plunging into the thicket on the left, he began to scramble up the face of the steep.

It was with some difficulty that his companion followed, but, by swinging himself up by the strong undergrowth, he managed to keep Watty in sight. At length Watty altogether and mysteriously disappeared, and, though he called out to guide his companion to his whereabouts, Adam could not discover him. It was intensely dark, and there was scarcely room to stand upright, so densely did the trees grow together. Presently Watty appeared again, and then Adam saw that he stood in front of an overhanging bank almost concealed by long grass and bracken.

"Crawl in efter me," cried Watty, and, getting down on his hands and knees, he crept under the bank and disappeared. Adam followed his example, and, as Watty immediately struck a light, he saw, to his astonishment, that he was in a roomy cavern, where he could stand upright with the greatest ease.

"Well, Watty, this is a splendid place, and will doubtless be invaluable to us," he exclaimed. "It is well-nigh impossible that any one should discover this. But tell me, how many in Inverburn could point it out?"

"No' a leevin' soul but mysel'. I'll tell ye wha shewed it to me, auld Robbie Harden, mony a year afore he deed, an' I never telt a cratur," Watty assured him, solemnly.

"Ah, that is good! Well, Watty, I am certainly obliged to you for bringing me here," said Adam. "The thing is, I hope I can make my way to it again by myself."

"Oh, that's easy enough. If ye come down noo I'll let ye see the clue," said Watty, and, accordingly, they again scrambled through the thicket to the edge of the stream.

"Ye see that muckle black rock jist like a table," said Watty, pointing to a huge mass lying in the bed of the water. "It's jist directly opposite that. If ye keep straicht up ye canna' miss it."

"All right; I'll remember," said Adam, and the twain then left the ravine and rapidly retraced their steps towards the haunts of men.

It was now about half-past five, so Watty, in alarm lest he should be stopped and questioned, left Adam Hepburn just behind Hartrigge, and taking to his heels, fled with the utmost speed back to the village.

CHAPTER XVII

A SHOCK OF CORN FULLY RIPE.

The body of dragoons stationed in the village of Inverburn were so constantly upon the alert, and swept so wide a range of the surrounding district, that it was well-nigh impossible for the fugitives to leave their hiding either by night or day. They had removed to the safer hiding of Watty's hole in the Witches' Cleugh [glen or ravine], and thither Jane Gray, courageous as usual, carried their provisions, either in the very early morning, or after the moon was up at night. They had made the place as comfortable as it was possible under the circumstances, having formed themselves couches of dried leaves over which were spread the substantial coverings which Jane had carried to them by degrees. She was now abiding constantly at Hartrigge, where all Adam Hepburn's most valuable goods had been removed, and Rowallan shut up. As for the stock, the soldiers had relieved him of any anxiety regarding it by removing it all for their own use and profit. So Rowallan was now a deserted and desolate homestead, about which the owls screeched mournfully at night, and the bats flapped their weird wings unheeded and undisturbed against the shuttered windows.

The people of the village were now driven to church at the point of the sword, consequently the curate's services were no longer disgraced by meagre attendances. As the people listened to the mockery of worship he conducted within the now desecrated walls, they bowed their heads in sorrow and shame, knowing very well that directly the services were over he would be away drinking with the officers of the regiment. His excesses, which were not confined to week-days, had now become a public scandal, so much so, that Sir Thomas Hamilton in disgust had ceased to attend the church of Inverburn, and had returned to the ministrations of John Methven, at Lochlee.

The dragoons, being under command not to quit the place until they had laid hands on the four obstinate and cunning insurgents, who were lurking in the neighbourhood, growing tired of their quarters, began a more vigorous raid on the outlying farmhouses and homesteads, as well as a more thorough exploration of the woods and hills. But though they rode along the very heights above the hiding place of the wanderers they sought, and, dismounting, even made an attempt to explore the very thicket sheltering the cave, their search was unsuccessful.

Being quite aware of the very strict search going on, the fugitives were compelled to abide yet more closely in their shelter. It was now the end of the year, and though as yet little snow had fallen, there had been heavy rain storms accompanied by wild and bitter winds which almost froze the marrow in their bones. It being considered unsafe to make a fire, the fugitives suffered much from the cold, and from the dampness of their hiding-place. The minister of Inverburn, especially, suffered from its effects, and grew so weak that he was scarcely able to stand upright. He also complained of great pain and uneasiness of the chest, which indicated that the long exposure had wrought very evil effects upon his aged and delicate frame.

Towards midnight, one evening early in January, a slight snow being on the ground, and the roads rendered easy footing by a touch of frost, Mistress Gray of Hartrigge, accompanied by Jane, set out to carry provisions to the fugitives. Since her son's death, Susan Gray's feelings concerning the Covenanters and their persecutions had undergone a change. In times gone she had not been a very zealous Churchwoman, and had often remonstrated with her husband concerning what she considered his bigoted and unwise zeal; but now her hatred against the oppressors equalled, if not excelled, that of Andrew. Yet his was the outcome of true religious zeal, while hers was the result of outraged human feelings. And I fear that very many of those who followed the fortunes of the Covenanters were actuated by like feelings with Mistress Gray.

No thought of fear troubled these two women as they traversed their lonely way through the wilds to the Witches' Cleugh. They spoke but little as they went, for the time had now come when talking over troubles only made them seem worse to bear. They found it better to shut them up in their own hearts, and make no moan to the world. The bright light of the moon made the surrounding landscape indescribably beautiful, yet what eye had these two for what in happier times would have afforded them pleasure and delight? To them the beauty of Nature was obscured by the pall of bitter personal sorrow. When they reached the cleugh, Jane Gray put a whistle to her mouth and blew the signal, which those in hiding had learned to know and welcome. Andrew Gray hastened through the thicket to guide them up to the cave; and Jane walked on a little in front, guessing that her brother would have many things to say to his wife, whom he had not seen for some weeks. When they together entered the cavern, which was dimly lighted, quiet but expressive greetings passed between them, but somewhat to Jane's surprise and alarm, her father did not offer to rise and speak to them. She advanced to the side of the low bed, and holding the flickering light above it, saw such a deep and significant change in the dear features, that she could not repress a cry of anguish.

"My father seems very ill. How long has he been thus?" she exclaimed, turning to her brothers. The tones of her familiar and much-loved voice seemed to awaken the old man to struggling consciousness, for he presently stirred, and opened his eyes.

"Is that my daughter's voice?" he asked anxiously.

"Yes, father, I am here," answered Jane, and dropping on her knees, she took the wasted hands in her firm gentle clasp. "Tell me, do you feel much distressed? Do you suffer much pain?"

"Not much pain, only great uneasiness and oppression, my daughter," he answered. "If it be the precursor of my summons home, how gladly do I bear it all, if only my Lord sees fit to call me speedily from these troubles, which I fear I bear with but a poor measure of cheerfulness and patience. But being old and stricken in years, I have not the same endurance with these young men, your brethren."

Jane Gray's eyes filled with bitter tears, and for a space sobs prevented her from speaking. Susan Gray now moved over to the bed, and after looking steadfastly at the old man's face for a brief space, she said decidedly, "Grandfather is very ill. What say you to having him moved to a comfortable bed at Hartrigge?"

For a moment they looked somewhat surprised at her proposal, which involved considerable risk, but she hastened to reassure them.

"The dragoons have grown weary of searching through Hartrigge, and, indeed, I hear, that having become convinced that you are not in the district, they are about to shift their quarters. So I think we needna' fear for them. You could carry him home this very nicht between you, and be back safe in hiding afore the first peep o' day."

"God bless you for your suggestion, Susan," said Jane Gray, gratefully. "It is kind of you to risk your own safety, and that of your bairns and house, for our sakes."

After a brief hesitation it was resolved to act upon Mistress Gray's plan.

The old man being too weak to understand what they were talking about, lay perfectly still, only keeping his eyes fixed upon his daughter's face, as if they loved to dwell there. He seemed surprised when presently they began to roll the coverings round him, but did not ask any questions, nor did they tell him what was about to be done. He was so thin and attenuated that his light weight was as nothing to Andrew Gray, who carried him in his arms as easily as if he had been a child. After a little Adam relieved him, and thus that strange and mournful procession wended its way to the house of Hartrigge. The women-folk hurried on in front, and reaching the house considerably before the others, Jane made haste to get something hot prepared for them, while the mistress hung sheets and blankets at the cheerful kitchen fire, and carried up a shovelful of blazing peats to a little garret room, which was situated in the most remote and the safest part of the house. The bed was ready when the wanderers arrived, and the old man was at once undressed, and having had warm, dry, comfortable underclothing put on, was laid in the clean and cosy bed, where he stretched his limbs gladly, and wearily laid his head on the soft pillow, too thankful to ask where he was, so sweet and grateful was the unwonted comfort to his exhausted and pain-racked frame. His daughter held a warm drink to his lips, which when he had taken, he lay down and fell asleep. Meanwhile, in the chamber below the others were partaking of a hasty repast, wondering much at their own temerity in venturing within the house of Hartrigge, which, in spite of its familiarity, had a strange look, so long was it since their eyes had dwelt upon the interior of a dwelling made with hands. Leaving his food unfinished, Andrew Gray stole up to the chamber where he knew he should find his little ones asleep. As he looked upon the sweet, chubby faces of the two younger ones, and then on Jeanie's paler and more womanly features, his eyes grew strangely dim, and stooping he kissed them one after the other, so lightly that they did not even stir in their sleep. His wife presently joined him, and moving to his side, she leaned her head on his shoulder and he put his arm about her, and they stood for a brief space in utter silence.

The thoughts of each were too deep for words or tears.

"God will take care of you, wife, and keep our bairns," he said at length. "Fain would I tarry, but it is time we were going hence."

She nodded, and leaving the room, they rejoined David Gray and Adam, waiting with some impatience below. Then after many fervent farewells, and many injunctions to send word if any danger were likely to come near Hartrigge, so that, if possible, they might again remove the old man, the wanderers left the cheerful warmth and comfort of Hartrigge, and betook themselves to their bleak hiding in the dens and caves of the earth.

Next morning mistress Gray took little Jeanie aside, and told her that her grandfather was in the garret, and said she had trusted her with the secret, lest she should discover it, and unthinkingly speak of it outside.

Jeanie looked up into her mother's face with a wise, womanly expression, almost sad to see in so young a child.

"Oh, mother, you needna fear for me," she said quietly. "Though you hadna told me, I would have known very well not to tell any one of grandfather being here. But, mother, did he come in the middle of the night, and was father with him? I dreamed that father was standing by my bed last night, and that he kissed me, and was crying when he did it."

"It was nae dream, lassie," said her mother, through her tears; "your poor father was indeed here last night, and kissed and blessed you, and Sandy, and Nannie too."

For several days it seemed as if the minister of Inverburn were likely to recover, under the kind nursing of his daughter at Hartrigge. But the pain in the chest did not abate its severity, and though they did the utmost for him within their knowledge and skill, there was no visible improvement in his condition. They dared not send for a doctor, but had just to use their own means, and pray for a blessing.

In the course of a week, however, it became quite evident to the anxious watchers that death was not far off.

The day came at last when the old man, conscious himself of his approaching end, desired that his children might be gathered about his bed. Jane Gray ran in haste to the Witches' Cleugh, and in the darkening those in hiding stole up to Hartrigge.

When the dying servant of God saw all the faces beloved best on earth gathered round him, a well-pleased expression stole into his face. Looking at his first-born son, he desired him to raise

him a little in the bed, in order that he might better utter his words of blessing and farewell. Then fixing his eyes on Andrew's face, he said, in low and solemn tones:--

"You have ever been a faithful and dutiful son to me, Andrew, for which the Lord will reward you. I have but one word of warning to give regarding the part you will take in the struggle which will shortly rage with hotter violence than it has hitherto done in the land. See to it that you fight for the Covenant with singleness of heart and purpose, out of pure love for its sweet and simple doctrines, and do not allow any personal spleen to mingle with your nobler aim, lest the blessing of the Most High be withheld. To you, David, my son, I have also a word to say. I bid you be of good courage, and fail not to strengthen and encourage your brethren in arms with the ministrations of your holy office whenever time and opportunity permit. And fear not those who can kill the body, for it is written, 'Whosoever shall lose his life for My sake shall find it.' To you, Adam Hepburn, the widowed spouse of my sweet Agnes, and dear to me as my own sons, my words will also be brief. I would seek to remind you that vengeance belongs only to the Lord, and that from high Heaven alone cometh sure retribution for deeds of blood. Therefore I would warn you that you strive to overcome your evil and revengeful passion, reminding you that it is not a spirit which the ransomed soul of your beloved could approve. It is written that he that slayeth with the sword shall perish by the sword. To you, my sweet and well-beloved daughter, Jane, who have indeed followed closely in your mother's footsteps, since the mournful day when that dear saint left this world for a better, I have simply to leave my gratitude and fatherly blessing. Your reward for many deeds and words of love will come by-and-by. And, last of all, Susan, my daughter, I would but call to your remembrance that our God can bind up the broken heart, and that your tears are treasured up against that day when He cometh to judge the quick and the dead. And the parting is but for a little while. Farewell, my children; save for your sakes I am not sorry to quit this earthy tabernacle, and enter upon the inheritance which my sweet Lord has kept for me since before the foundation of the world."

With these words the minister sank back exhausted among his pillows. It must not be supposed that he was able to utter the foregoing sentences as connectedly as they are written. Nay, they were spoken with much difficulty, and many long pauses, and his parched lips had to be continually moistened with the stimulant Jane kept ready at hand. He lay so still after the last words passed his lips that they almost feared he was gone. But at length his eyelids quivered slightly, and then they saw a seraphic smile dawning upon his face, as if some lovely vision had appeared to his soul. His lips moved slightly, and Jane, hastily bending down, caught the faintly whispered words:--

"Coming, O my sweet Lord Jesus!"

So, quietly and painlessly, he fell asleep.

"It is all over," said Hartrigge, huskily.

"For this present life only, Andrew," quietly answered the minister of Broomhill. "And, thanks be to His name, He has spared the green, and taken the ripe."

CHAPTER XVIII. AT HAUGHHEAD.

In the grey twilight of a sweet spring evening, a figure, wearing the garb of a minister, entered the policies surrounding Haughhead, and keeping well within the shadow of the trees, stole across the park to the mansion house. The face of the wanderer was not that of an old man, and yet his hair was as white as snow. He looked worn and delicate, and walked slowly and with a somewhat lingering step, as if he had travelled far, and was very weary.

The house of Haughhead was a building of considerable pretension, and was beautifully situated on a richly wooded slope, directly facing the picturesque village of Broomhill. The grounds were ample and well kept, and looked their best that spring evening, for the trees were bursting into leaf, and the early spring flowers were blooming in the trim borders and among the smooth-grown turf. The wanderer looked about him with a sad and tender interest, for his surroundings were peculiarly familiar, and recalled to his mind many memories of the past. To this place, in the early days of his settlement in Broomhill, he had often come, lured by the sunny gleam in the blue eyes of Lilian Burnet. Through these very green and bosky glades he had wandered, with her light hand clinging to his arm, in the happy, careless days of their courtship; across that very threshold he had led his fair bride, accounting himself that day the happiest man

in broad Scotland. Recalling these happy days, and contrasting them with the desolation which was his to-day, he could have fancied them but the vagaries of his own imagination. Although it was not yet dark outside, lights gleamed in the lower windows of the house, and all the shutters were closed, telling that the inmates had settled themselves within for the night. The minister hesitated for a moment at the base of the broad flight of steps which led up to the door, wavering in his purpose to seek admittance. Finally he stepped aside to one of the lower windows, at which the shutters had not been carefully closed, there being a broad chink left, through which a very good view of the interior of the room might be had. It was a large, pleasant, well-lighted chamber, with a log fire burning cheerfully on the hearth, and giving one the idea of comfort and homeliness. There were several persons in the room. Sitting in her high-backed chair was the prim-looking mistress of Haughhead, busy upon some embroidery. Opposite her, on the hearth, sat Burnet of Haughhead himself, with a small table drawn up before him, and a ponderous volume lying thereon, in whose pages he seemed engrossed. It was not upon these two, however, that the yearning eyes of the minister dwelt. On the hearthrug two little children were busy at their play: two lovely children, a boy and girl, the former, having been very delicate in infancy, only able to toddle on his little legs, and his baby tongue only yet learning the mysterious language of words. A little apart, also busy with her sewing, sat their mother, a lovely creature, to all appearance scarcely yet out of her girlhood, with a round sweet innocent face, as delicate in hue as the tint of the lily and the rose combined, and clear liquid blue eyes, which had evidently never yet been dimmed by bitter tears. She was a picture of serene and happy repose, not a shadow crossed her fair face, and her low humming of a familiar melody seemed to indicate a heart at rest.

Familiar though he was with the shallowness of his wife's nature, David Gray, looking on her face, was amazed. He had expected to see her a little changed; he thought that a small measure of anxiety, a shadow of regret concerning him, might have left its impress on her face. But no, she looked younger, fairer, more free from care than he had ever seen her before. If there had been any lingering hope in his mind that the wife whom he still loved, thought of, or longed for him in her separation, it was dispelled at once and for ever. But for the two little ones playing at her feet, the years of her wifehood might have seemed only the shadow of a dream, so unchanged was she from the light and giddy girl who had ruled the house of Haughhead since her babyhood. Pleasant and suggestive as was the picture in that family room, it caused a deep, deep shadow to come upon the sad face of the minister of Broomhill. He felt himself utterly forgotten by those bound to him by the nearest and dearest of ties. They had put him away out of their hearts and lives as one undeserving of their love. Presently his painful thoughts were interrupted by the gruff voice of Gilbert Burnet, and every word was distinctly audible.

"Give your song words, Lily," he said; "this is just the time of night for music. Is the harp there?"

"Yes, father," the sweet, careless tones made answer, blithely, and David Gray saw her throw aside her work, and approach the corner of the room where the harp stood. Then she sat down, ran her white fingers lightly over the strings, tossed back her sunny ringlets in the coquettish fashion he remembered so well, and then began the sweet, stirring strains of an old ballad, which had ever been a favourite in days gone by. Listening to these sweet strains, the minister of Broomhill seemed to forget himself and his surroundings, until the abrupt cessation of the music, and a loud clapping of hands, caused him to start, and cast another look into the room. The children had now risen from their play, and were clapping their baby hands in glee over the music.

Looking upon their winsome faces, the faces of his own children, given to him by God, taken from him by man, a great wave of anguish, of unutterable yearning, swept over his soul. But he crushed it down, and turning about, stole away from the house by the way he had come. They had forgotten him, they had no need of him; henceforth he was without wife, or children, or home, a wanderer on the face of the earth. They were safe and sheltered under that roof-tree, because its heads had not identified themselves with rebellion and treason, while he was hunted, pursued, and tracked to the dens and caves of the earth, with a price set upon his head. And yet what of that? what though perils by sea and land, perils by persecution, encompassed him, when he possessed the sweet approval of his own conscience, and the ever-present consciousness of the presence and blessing of the Most High? To be accounted worthy had been his earnest cry ere these desolations had fallen upon him, and now was he one to shrink and stand back from the bearing of his cross, however heavy it might be? Nay, but a sweet peace stole into his heart, as these precious words of promise were whispered to him: "And every one that hath forsaken

houses, or brethren, or sister, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life."

Henceforth God and the Covenant were all he had to live and suffer for, all he could call his own indeed upon the earth. Therefore he would go forth gladly with his brethren on the morrow to join the Covenanting army assembling in the south.

Not many days after that, the women folk at Hartrigge were busy about their usual tasks, when a horse and rider came up to the front door, the latter loudly demanding admittance. Jane Gray went out at once, and great was her astonishment to behold Gilbert Burnet, the laird of Haughhead.

"Well, Jane Gray, 'tis a long time since we met," he said, grimly.

"It is, indeed, Mr. Burnet," answered Jane, quietly.

"And many ups and downs have taken place since then, eh?" he asked, more grimly still.

"You speak the truth," said Jane, coldly, not liking very well the manner in which he spoke. "Will you be pleased to alight from your horse, and step in? In my brother's name I can bid you welcome to his house, and his wife will speak to you within. She has been in poor health these few weeks, and is confined to her own chamber."

"I'll not come in to-day," said Haughhead, bluntly. "My business can be done here well enough. It will not take up much of your time."

"My time is at your disposal, Mr. Burnet. We are not hard pressed in these times," she said, with a faint smile.

"No, there is a mighty difference in Hartrigge since I saw it last. A great fool Andrew Gray was to leave his substantial holding and comfortable life for his present precarious existence," said Haughhead. "I suppose he is not about the place."

"No; nor has been for many, many months," answered Jane, briefly.

"Ah, I thought not. It was you I expected to see. Well, I suppose you have heard of the most gracious indulgence granted by the king to the outed and rebellious ministers?"

"Yes; we heard of it some days ago," answered Jane Gray, in a calm and unreadable voice.

"You know the generous terms it offers?" said Burnet, inquiringly. "If they will acknowledge the bishops, they are to be forgiven for past rebellion and inducted into the full enjoyment of their former benefices. If not, they are still to be allowed to preach in the kirks, and can come back to their manses and glebes."

"Yes; we heard that such were the king's terms, Mr. Burnet," said Jane Gray, but did not offer the information he was anxious to obtain.

"What, what are your brothers saying to it? What--in fact, hang it, woman!--will your brother David come back peaceably to Broomhill? You know very well what I want to be at!" said Haughhead, losing his temper and raising his voice.

Jane Gray looked him straight in the face with clear, calm, steadfast eyes.

"I fear not; in fact, Mr. Burnet, I know that the indulgence will make no difference whatsoever to my brother David. On no account will he now accept a living from the hands of a king who has proved himself so utterly unworthy of trust or loyal service. My brother, in common with many other thoughtful men, regards the new proclamation simply as a trap set to ensure the complete downfall of Presbyterianism in Scotland."

It was curious to watch the varying expressions on Gilbert Burnet's face as he listened to Jane Gray's fearless and unmistakable words.

"Gad, Jane Gray! you are not afraid! I should not wonder to see your proud head roll in the dust yet," he said, sarcastically. "Then your brothers will still keep themselves rebels at large, liable to be shot or hanged any day?"

"Until God sees fit to restore to the Church of Scotland a glorious liberty, crowned and sanctioned by His own blessing and approval, my brothers are content to undertake the risks involved by their firm upstanding for the Covenant," answered Jane Gray, with quiet but striking eloquence.

"Then you brothers are arrant fools, and deserve whatever fate may befall them!" fumed Haughhead. "Is David Gray in the neighbourhood? Could I see him? Although I am no bigoted zealot, I can pass my word of honour and keep it, as a gentleman should. He will come by no harm through me. I only desire to speak with him for a little space."

"It is impossible, Mr. Burnet. My brothers, and also my brother-in-law, Adam Hepburn, have left this district, and I know not where they may now be."

"I see you speak the truth. I had a message from my daughter, his wife," said Haughhead, carelessly. "I can deliver it to you. Possibly you may have some opportunity of communicating

with him at no very distant date."

"I shall be very pleased to receive your message, Mr. Burnet, and to deliver it to David when opportunity offers."

"Well, it is just this, that if he will accept the king's generous indulgence and return to the manse of Broomhill, she will come back to him with her children, thus showing herself willing to overlook his long desertion."

Jane Gray drew herself up, and a slight colour rose in her cheek.

"Truly, Mr. Burnet, I think Lilian Gray cannot be a changed woman when she sent such a message to my brother," she said, proudly. "She should rather have couched her message in terms of humility, seeing she so wrongly and unkindly quitted him in the hour of his need."

"That is *your* way of looking at it. We hold that, by his folly, David Gray forfeited all claim on his wife's consideration," retorted Haughhead, angrily. "But it is no use arguing with a Gray, so I will be off, Jane Gray, wishing you a very good day."

"Stay, Mr. Burnet; will you tell me, please, how it is with the little ones, my brother's bairns?" said Jane, laying a pleading hand on his bridle rein. "I have a great yearning to see or hear something of them."

"Oh, they are well, and as bonnie bairns as eyes could wish to see--true Burnets both of them," answered Haughhead, stretching a point just to vex the heart of the woman before him. "Tell David that, and tell him that they'll soon forget they have a father at all."

With which parting shot, which brought an unbidden tear to Jane Gray's eye, the Laird of Haughhead gave his horse the rein and rode rapidly away.

CHAPTER XIX. UNLOOKED-FOR NEWS.

In spite of the many stringent measures taken by the Government to suppress the field preachings and break the spirit of the Covenanters, the persecuted people continued to meet for worship in the mountain solitudes or in the moorland wilds, thus strengthening each others' hearts and hands, and renewing the bond of their precious Covenant, for which these hardships were endured.

Now no conventicle was held unless protected by an armed band ready to give the alarm and fight, if need be, the soldiers who might seek to disturb or disperse them. Consequently skirmishes were of very frequent occurrence, sometimes resulting in victory for the Presbyterians, sometimes in their utter defeat. In these encounters many lost their lives. Often were the heather and the mountain streams dyed with their blood, and yet the army never seemed to diminish in numbers, for there were ever some ready to fill the vacant places of those who had fallen.

The curates still continued to conduct Episcopal services in the kirks, but the supremacy of the bishops seemed no nearer being established in the last, because, with some exceptions, those who attended the ministrations were people of little note or reputation, with perhaps a few whom terror compelled to take their unwilling places in the kirks.

The struggles betwixt the Government and the Scottish Presbyterians had now extended over several years, and seemed yet no nearer a satisfactory termination. The Covenanters, with their intimate knowledge of their native hills and dales, had the advantage over the troopers sent to hunt and destroy them, and some of their mountain fastnesses were more impregnable than a fortified city. In open warfare they might easily have been cut to pieces, but time went on, and except the few skirmishes already referred to, the opponents had never met in battle. Such a state of affairs could not be satisfactory to the King of England, much less so to Lauderdale and the Archbishop of St. Andrews, who were his executors in Scotland.

When every troop of marauding dragoons was empowered to take captive, torture, or kill any man, woman, or child whom they even suspected of being a Covenanter, or of attending the Conventicles; when the property of unoffending individuals was confiscated and distributed among the spoilers; when the dwellings of peaceable country folk were robbed, and often burned to the ground without explanation or excuse; when those who were supposed to have afforded shelter or refreshment to the fugitives were fined and imprisoned without mercy, it might have been thought that there were no severer measures left in the Government repertoire, and that they might have abandoned the persecutions in despair of ever rooting Presbyterian principles

out of Scotland. But as yet the Government had no such intention. Those in power met to discuss, and finally issued orders for the infliction of yet more stringent and cruel treatment upon the rebels. Every forgotten and long-abhorred torture was revived, and used as punishments by the unholy Courts, which made a mockery of administering justice in the land.

Well might the endurance of God's people quail beneath the yoke of the oppressor; well might their hearts be uplifted to Heaven in that despairing cry, "O Lord, how long!"

One evening about the middle of May, in the year 1679, several men were gathered together in a lonely farmhouse among the wilds of Lanarkshire. Among them we recognise Andrew Gray of Hartrigge, and his brother, David, the minister of Broomhill, also other two familiar faces, those of Adam Hepburn of Rowallan, and Watty McBean, the carrier of Inverburn. Having had his houses burned about his ears, his faithful nag and all his valuables stolen, Watty had become, instead of a man of peace, a man of war, and had joined the army lying in the Vale of Avondale. Betty had retired to Hartrigge, which was now entirely left to the women-folk, and was at the utter mercy of the soldiery. But as yet the homestead remained untouched, though fair Rowallan was razed to the ground.

From the appearance of the company gathered in the room, as well as from their remarks, it could be gathered that they were (with the exception of Watty, who would on no account let Adam Hepburn out of his sight) leaders among the insurgents. They were discussing the next steps to be taken by the army, and Sir Robert Hamilton, brother to the Laird of Inverburn, and a staunch, though moderate Presbyterian, was counselling cautious measures, to which Andrew Gray, Adam Hepburn, and some other fiery spirits listened with but a small show of patience, when there came a loud and peremptory knocking at the door. Involuntarily all sprang to their feet, and grasped their swords. If they were discovered, and the soldiers were without, there were twenty valiant and desperate men of them, who would fight dearly for their lives.

Adam Hepburn, sword in hand, fearlessly went to the outer door, and threw it open. In the faint and uncertain beams of the young May moon he saw only a solitary horseman, whose steed was panting and covered with foam, as if it had galloped many miles that day.

"Is this Windyedge, the house of Gideon Dickson?" the horseman asked in a thick whisper.

"Is it friend or foe?" queried Adam, briefly.

"Friend," replied the horseman, as briefly. "Is Sir Robert Hamilton within?"

"He is; but be good enough first to give me your name as a guerdon of your honour," said Adam.

"Tush! man," said the horseman impatiently; "well, John Balfour of Kinloch, synonymous with liberty at any price, is it not?"

Those within, hearing the whispered conference, now came crowding out to the door, and Sir Robert Hamilton, at sight of the figure on the horse, uttered an exclamation of surprise, and at once stepped across the threshold.

"John Balfour! What on earth brings you from Fife to this remote place? No paltry reason, I could swear."

"You speak the truth," returned Balfour grimly. "Is there any fellow who can put up my steed, who is in a sorry plight, poor wretch, as well he may, after his desperate ride. And is there any refreshment to be had within, for I am fainting with hunger and fatigue."

Gideon Dickson, the farmer of Windyedge, came out himself, and taking the exhausted animal's bridle-rein, led him away towards the stable. Then Balfour was conducted into the house, and refreshment immediately set before him. While he partook of his repast he spoke not, and those in the room who had hitherto only known him by hearsay as a fearless soldier, who would fight under the most desperate circumstances, now looked, not without astonishment, upon his person. In figure he was considerably under the middle height, but his frame was powerfully knit, and evidently possessed of great strength. His countenance was by no means prepossessing, being dark and forbidding, while a cast in his eye gave him a peculiarly fierce and unpleasant aspect. When he had finished his repast he looked round upon the assembled company, and then fixing his eyes on the face of Sir Robert Hamilton, briefly asked the question:-

"Are these present to be trusted?"

"Ay, truly," answered Sir Robert. "They are the picked men of our forces; therefore you may fearlessly open your mouth in their midst, John."

"And there are no traitors or spies within hearing?" further queried Kinloch, looking suspiciously round him.

"None; we are gathered here for consultation," replied Sir Robert. "Our forces are lying about

a mile distant, under cover of the Loudon hill."

"That is well. But, tell me, have you had no news, of a very comfortable and pleasant nature, conveyed hither from Fife?" queried Balfour grimly.

Sir Robert shook his head and made answer that they had received no communication whatsoever from the shire of Fife.

"Nothing relating to that arch-fiend, James Sharp, of St. Andrews?"

"Nothing. Come, John, do not keep us in suspense. Can it be that the Lord has permitted judgment to fall on him at last?"

"Even so," said Balfour. "Know, then, that certain faithful servants of the Covenant, meeting the archbishop's carriage on Magus muir, on the third day of this present month, sent the perjured traitor to his just and righteous doom."

Sir Robert Hamilton was struck dumb in the intensity of his surprise and horror, for in a moment the consequences of that rash and indefensible act were made clear to his well-balanced mind. One or two others, notably the minister of Broomhill, also exhibited dismay, but the majority of those present received the news with a lively satisfaction, and even with a species of fierce joy which told that in their zeal they thirsted for blood.

"Who authorised, or led them to such a rash and unwise attack?" queried Sir Robert Hamilton. "They must have been blind and blood-thirsty zealots, surely, who killed a man in cold blood, without giving him a chance to defend himself."

An expression of fierce and bitter scorn crossed the dark face of Balfour as he made answer contemptuously.

"What of the many thousands who have been murdered in cold blood at Sharp's instigation and with his approval? The like mercy he showed to others was meted out to him. For my part, I would that he had ten other lives, to be taken from him in the same summary fashion."

"I am of your opinion, Mr. Balfour," said the deep voice of Adam Hepburn of Rowallan, and Kinloch immediately turned his deep-set eyes with approval on the speaker. Something in the dogged and resolute expression on his fine face, and in the gleam of his keen blue eye, riveted Balfour's attention and caused him to mentally resolve that they should become better acquainted with each other.

"And I, also," chimed in Andrew Gray in his quiet but weighty manner. "There could be no fate too harsh for such a traitor. Verily he has been a Judas in the Kirk of Scotland all his days, and his hands are dyed with the blood of hundreds of innocents whom he has betrayed."

Still Sir Robert Hamilton shook his head, and a troubled and anxious expression continued to dwell on his face.

"Come, tell me, John, who were the perpetrators of this deed of violence?" he asked. "Are any of them personally known to you?"

A grim smile stole into Kinloch's face as he made answer--

"Faith, they were all as well known to me as my own brothers, seeing I was in their midst, as also was my brother-in-law, David Hackstoun of Rathillet."

"David Hackstoun of Rathillet!" ejaculated Sir Robert in tones of utter amazement. "Very sure am I that so sweet and kindly a soul would not lay a hand even on the archbishop."

"Well, like Saul, he looked on, consenting unto his death," said Balfour. "I myself gave the traitor a sword thrust, just to wipe off old scores, but it was not these hands that finished him. Nevertheless, the crime is wholly charged upon my brother-in-law and myself, and I take it there will be a heavy ransom set upon our precious heads. After the deed was done we separated, David Hackstoun and I agreeing to join the forces here; but he would go home to see his wife first, else he had been here with me. It may be that his silly dallying may cost him his life."

"You are right in saying there will be a heavy price set on your heads," said Sir Robert Hamilton; "and, what is more, we will all need to gird about our swords and see to our armour, for now there will be no quarter for any professing Covenanting principles. I prophesy that the king will take steps to terribly avenge his primate's death."

"What of that?" queried Balfour, carelessly. "What ingenuity or revenge could suggest more terrible and bloody oppression than has been pressed on Scotland these past ten years?"

"Well, well, what's done can't be undone," said Sir Robert, with a somewhat mournful smile. "Now, lads, we had better to our discussions again. We were but planning a great field meeting for Sabbath week, at which a Communion Service might be held, and we were somewhat divided as to a suitable place of meeting."

"Are there many soldiers in the district?" asked Balfour.

"Ah, that we cannot tell. They rise mysteriously, as it were out of the bowels of the earth,

when least expected," replied Sir Robert. "But I heard on good authority that that miscreant--for I can call him nothing else--John Graham of Claverhouse is in the west."

"Right well would I like to measure swords with him," said Balfour, with feverish eagerness. "Such a man is not fit to live."

"It's no' very easy gettin' at him," piped the shrill voice of Watty McBean. "I'm tell he rides a muckle black horse the deevil sent him, an' that nae man can owertak' him."

Balfour immediately turned his piercing eyes on Watty's face with a glance which covered him with confusion, for he had been surprised into speech without thinking.

"Be quiet, Watty," said Adam Hepburn promptly, which rebuke caused Watty to slink behind the door, chiefly to escape the gaze of Balfour, whom he had regarded with terror ever since his entrance.

"Those who are best acquainted with the district should be the fittest to choose a place of meeting," said Balfour. "What numbers have you at Loudon Hill?"

"About three hundred, and at a short notice we could speedily double or treble the number. There having been no fighting of late, very many have returned to their homes. Indeed, those with us are chiefly men whose goods have been confiscated and their dwellings pillaged and burned."

"I see no better spot than where our army now lies," said Adam Hepburn. "It is a sheltered and suitable place, and from the top of the hill our watchers could readily descry the enemy approaching from one side, while upon the other that wide and dreary morass is a bulwark in our defence."

"I agree with you," said Sir Robert. "Then we can fix upon the place and day, and send word through the surrounding district."

"Have you forgotten that the anniversary of the king's restoration is to be celebrated throughout Scotland on the 29th of this present month?" asked Balfour.

"No: we have had that under discussion likewise, John," replied Sir Robert, "and we intend to celebrate it in our own fashion. But of that more anon. And now we must separate for the night. My quarters in the meantime are here, John. You had better remain with me in case Rathillet should come hither seeking you. He should be here by the latest to-morrow."

Balfour acquiesced, and, being much fatigued, gladly retired to rest, while the others separated to the various places where they were to obtain shelter for the night.

CHAPTER XX. DRUMCLOG.

All the following day, David Hackstoun of Rathillet was anxiously expected by his brethren in arms, in the vale of Avondale. And when night closed, and there were yet no signs of him, they began to tremble lest some evil had befallen him. Early upon the second morning, however, when that good man and faithful supporter of the Covenanters, Gideon Dickson, the farmer of Windyedge, was leading out his horses as usual to water, he beheld a horseman coming, but slowly and dejectedly, up the road. He at once ran into the house, awakened his distinguished guests, who speedily dressed and got out of doors, just as the horseman rode into the yard.

"David Hackstoun! verily, glad am I to behold your face," said Balfour, advancing to meet him. "We feared, and not without cause, that your unwise delay had cost you dear."

"It was like to be my end," answered Rathillet, with a faint smile, and he was so weary that they had to assist him to alight; then he very cordially greeted Sir Robert Hamilton, with whom he had some slight and very agreeable acquaintance.

"I had a desperate ride, especially betwixt Stirling and Avondale," he said, in answer to their inquiries. "There is a price of 10,000 marks upon my head, and you can readily imagine that there are many greedy vultures on my track. But, truly, I think that as yet the direction of my flight is not known."

"Is there no price upon my head also?" queried Balfour.

"Yes, we are accounted equal prey, but the proclamation is so worded that the rewards fall to whoever shall lay hands on any one of those who were present at or took part in Sharp's assassination," returned Rathillet. "But, come, tell me how is it you are abiding in such apparent ease here? I thought it would have been unsafe to shelter under any man's roof-tree."

"So it is, but this is a very remote place, and difficult of access, and there are many ways of

escape from it," returned Sir Robert Hamilton. "And our brethren in arms are not far distant."

"Ah well, very gladly will I rest awhile with you, for I am as sore spent as ever man was," said Hackstoun. "And never did I expect to reach this place alive. The last place I ventured to ask concerning you was a little moorland shieling, where a woman was dwelling alone. She told me her husband was with the army, and that she was making preparations to retire to her kinsfolk in Hamilton, being in daily terror of a visit from the dragoons, who had shot her sister not many weeks ago, when she was returning from a preaching."

At that moment the mistress of the house, a kindly and hospitable dame, appeared, and bade them come in, as breakfast was prepared on the table. She looked compassionately at the worn and weather-beaten appearance of the new comer, and hastened to get him some cool water from the spring, in which to lave his dusty face and hands. Very grateful were all these comforts to the weary fugitive, and, after heartily partaking of the good dame's fare, he lay down to snatch a few hours' much-needed rest. Later in the day Sir Robert Hamilton and he, after long and earnest discussion, set themselves to compile a declaration, which it was their intention to publish on the day of the king's restoration. On the 28th of May, the day before the celebration, eighty men were chosen from among the ranks of the Covenanters, and with Sir Robert Hamilton at their head marched westwards to Glasgow. Andrew Gray and Adam Hepburn were of the number, and the expedition was much to their liking, but the minister of Broomhill remained behind with the forces, as did Balfour and David Hackstoun, for great risk attended their appearance, seeing so high a price was on their heads. About noon, on the 29th, Sir Robert Hamilton's band rode into the burgh of Rutherglen, where a great semblance of rejoicing was going on over the anniversary of the king's restoration. Many of the people merely took part in the proceedings through fear of the consequence, if they refused, but when the Presbyterians rode so boldly into the town, they took heart, and at once revealed their true principles, by heartily approving and taking part in their proceedings. The little company gathered about the ancient cross, and after burning in the very bonfire which had been kindled in honour of the king, all the Acts he had issued against the Covenanters, Sir Robert Hamilton published to all those gathered together, the declaration which Rathillet and he had drawn up against the Government. They then proceeded to extinguish the bonfires, and sweep away all outward tokens of rejoicing with a fearless boldness, which surprised the trembling burghers of Rutherglen not a little.

They then rode away by the route they had come, but the day now being far spent, several of them proposed to remain over night in Hamilton, calculating that next day, being Saturday, they would have ample time to return to Loudon hill in time for the Conventicle on the Sabbath. They were divided, however and the more prudent among them judging that the troops would speedily follow up to avenge the insult to the king, elected not to halt until they rejoined the army. Fifteen of the bolder spirits held on to Hamilton, and sought quarters there, but at day-break they were hastily roused, and informed that Claverhouse, with his troop in pursuit of them, was close upon the town, and was in a great rage, swearing that not a man of them would escape with his life.

By the time they were accoutred and ready to march, the pursuers had entered the town, but the fugitives escaped by another road, and so obtained a little advantage.

In Hamilton Claverhouse learned of the field meeting to be held the following day at Loudon hill, whereto he chuckled with delight, for the dispersion of a conventicle was work after his own heart.

Fair, calm, and sweet broke that summer Sabbath morning over the beautiful vale of Avondale. The watchers stationed on the hill tops since daybreak could see no sign of the approaching foe, and it was with untroubled and reverently thankful hearts that the faithful people came flocking to hear the preaching of that precious Word, for which all these dangers and anxieties were cheerfully endured. It was a strange, striking, and very pathetic scene, to look upon that gathering of simple country folk, denied the privilege of hearing the pure Gospel preached in its simplicity within the walls of their own kirks, reverently assembled to worship the God of their fathers in a tabernacle of which men could not rob them, even the green slopes of their dear native hills.

The inner circle was composed of women and children, and those among the older men not so well able to defend themselves. Below that was a ring of stout country men, armed with halberds, forks, and other weapons, which they had hitherto used in more peaceable pursuits; while beyond these again was a band of sturdy, well-armed foot-soldiers, finally encompassed by a party of horse. Sir Robert Hamilton, calm, dignified, and self-possessed, sat erect upon his steed, ready at a moment's notice to take command of the little army, while near to him sat David Hackstoun, his fine face wearing an expression of deep and heavenly serenity, which told how

passing sweet to his soul was this hour of communing with his God. Side by side, on a rocky ledge, sat Balfour of Kinloch, and Adam Hepburn of Rowallan, and, I fear me, their hearts were occupied by far other thoughts than the reverent worship of the God of the Covenant. Yet their outward demeanour was decorous enough. There were also several ministers present.

After the singing of a psalm David Gray led the devotions of the assembly, and as his beautiful and appropriate petitions, the deep breathing of his own pure and reverent soul, fell from his lips, tears rolled down the faces of many present, and more than one voice fervently re-echoed his amen.

The reverend Mr. Douglas, who was to preach the sermon, gave out his text, and had but newly addressed himself to his subject, when a carabine shot was fired from the hill-top, a warning salute which had been agreed upon before the service commenced.

They were speedily informed that Claverhouse, with a considerable body of dragoons, was rapidly approaching. Without the faintest sign of confusion, or any exhibition of terror, the little army prepared themselves for battle.

Sir Robert Hamilton took the command, and was assisted by Balfour and Rathillet, as also by some other gentlemen of rank, present on the field.

To their joy they beheld the enemy advancing towards the morass, which would prove a very considerable barrier in their way. Had Claverhouse been familiarly acquainted with the nature of a Scottish morass, or bog, as the country folk term it, he would without doubt have rather taken a more circuitous route to avoid it. The Covenanters stood perfectly still until the dragoons were well into the moss, then singing the favourite seventy-sixth psalm, to the familiar strains of "Martyrs," they steadfastly advanced to engage the foe in conflict. Those left behind prostrated themselves in prayer to the God of Heaven, supplicating victory for the blue banner of the Covenant, waving in the light summer breeze, its white letters, "For Christ's Cause and Covenant," made resplendent by the brilliance of the summer sun. The first volley fired by the Covenanters emptied many a saddle in Claverhouse's ranks, and without giving them time to rally, the brave little band plunged into the morass, and then began a terrible hand-to-hand conflict, which must ensure either complete victory or total defeat.

Sir Robert Hamilton kept to his horse, encouraging his men with his calm, cheerful demeanour, as well as by his steadfast words. As was to be expected, Adam Hepburn fought with desperate valour, and caused Balfour to regard him anew with a peculiar interest. After a brief, but terrible struggle, Claverhouse, seeing the field was utterly lost, hastily retreated with the exhausted remnant of his troops, narrowly escaping with his own life.

Many dead and wounded lay in the morass, but the Covenanters miraculously lost only one man, while five were wounded.

With thankful and triumphant hearts they prepared to return to the base of the hill.

Balfour of Kinloch, finding himself near Adam Hepburn, as they turned to go, touched his arm and said, in his brief fashion, "What is it in you, Adam Hepburn, which makes you fight like Lucifer himself? Where did you get that desperate courage?"

Adam Hepburn stooped to wipe his reeking sword upon the already blood-stained heather, and after a brief pause made answer, grimly:

"Thirteen years ago, Mr. Balfour, I had a wife, who was to me the very apple of my eye. She was my one ewe lamb, all I had upon the earth, and in my absence they murdered her, shot her down in cold blood upon the threshold of the home whose light she was. I came home to find her dying, and I swore over her dead body that this sword should not be suffered to return to its sheath until it had sucked the life blood of as many dragoons as there were years upon her head."

Balfour, though void of any touch of sentiment, stranger as he was to the finer feelings of human nature, felt himself deeply moved as he listened to these hoarse, low-spoken words, and saw the terrible gleam in the flashing eye of Adam Hepburn. "Ay, how old was she?" he asked, curtly.

"Eight-and-twenty years had passed over her head; for the fifth part of that time she had blessed my life," returned Adam Hepburn, drawing his hand across his brow, which was wet with the sweat of the conflict. "Yes, eight-and-twenty years! Seven miscreants did this right arm send to their account not twelve months after, on the field of Rullion Green. Other four have I encountered in single combat, surprising them when I was in hiding in the vale of Inverburn, and always escaping miraculously with my life."

"And to-day?" queried Balfour, curiously, much struck by his companion's words.

"Nine fell before me in the fight this day," said Adam, with fierce exultation. "Ay, my good and trusty blade, eight times yet hast thou to penetrate the breast of the foe, and then,

perchance, thy last resting-place shall be found in the heart of thy poor master himself."

"She must have been a woman above the average, Adam Hepburn, that you should thus dedicate your life to the shrine of her revenge," said Balfour, musingly.

"She was--but there, what need is there for me to say more; was she not my *wife*?" said Adam Hepburn. Then, as if tired of the conversation, he abruptly turned away, and fell to the rear of the army.

They now returned to the base of the hill, where they were warmly welcomed by those who had so anxiously watched the fray from afar, alternately hoping and fearing, and never ceasing in their prayers.

A devout and reverent thanksgiving service was then held, and those who had attended the Conventicle afterwards returned to their homes, with their faith strengthened, and their hearts much encouraged by the favourable events of the day.

CHAPTER XXI. DISUNION.

A conference of the leaders of the victorious Covenanting army was held that same day, to decide the next steps to be taken. Balfour of Kinloch, and others of his fiery temperament, so strongly advocated an immediate march to Glasgow that they set aside the more prudent counsels of their moderate brethren, and accordingly next morning Sir Robert Hamilton led the army towards Glasgow. They were joined on the way by many others, encouraged by the news of the victory at Drumclog, and they entered the town early in the day. Claverhouse, however, had already warned out the garrison, who were ready to receive them, and after a sharp tussle, in which seven or eight of the Covenanters were killed, they hastily beat a retreat, and fled to the town of Hamilton, where they pitched a camp.

The report of their success at Drumclog having already been largely published abroad, considerable numbers of those who had held aloof from the struggling handful who had defied the Government against fearful odds, now came flocking to join them. The blue standard of the Covenant was boldly unfurled on the banks of the noble Clyde, and for a time waved proudly in the summer breeze.

Some of the ministers of the district, who, for the sake of their families and desolate parishes had accepted the indulgence, feeling their hearts stirred by the old enthusiasm, rose up with one accord, and quitting their homes, voluntarily joined their brethren in arms. These were accompanied by numbers of their parishioners, who had previously followed the example of their ministers with regard to the indulgence. While the less narrow-minded among the Presbyterians rejoiced unfeignedly at the augmentation of their numbers, and gladly welcomed these brethren to the camp, there was another party who bitterly protested against the admission of the renegades, as they termed them, to the ranks. Thus the days succeeding Drumclog were spent in useless wrangling, while the Government was hastily organising the forces intended to sweep the rebels off the face of the earth.

One evening, a few weeks after the battle of Drumclog, a number of the officers and other leading men among the Presbyterians, were gathered together for conference in the house of William Wylie, a well-known gentleman, and honourable townsman in Hamilton. Among those present were Sir Robert Hamilton, John Balfour, David Hackstoun, William Carmichael, Adam Hepburn, and Andrew Gray of Hartrigge; the last two mentioned being recognised as leaders among the Covenanters on account of their faithfulness and undaunted valour, proved on many occasions since the first rising in Kirkcudbrightshire.

There were also present a goodly number of that protesting party who had accepted the indulgence, and who were desirous that this struggle should be based solely upon the questions affecting religious liberty, and that, therefore, the king's authority in matters temporal should be acknowledged.

"I hold," said Sir Robert Hamilton, in his clear and decisive way, "that the king has forfeited all claim upon our consideration. I therefore emphatically declare that he has no right nor interest to be acknowledged in our councils and actions. He is at war with the people of Scotland, whom we represent, and therefore we cannot acknowledge his authority in any matter whatsoever."

"Then you would that we should utterly and entirely condemn the indulgence of 1669?" asked

Mr. Welch.

"Undoubtedly," replied Sir Robert, without a moment's hesitation.

"Then by doing so, a slur is cast upon those brethren who have lately joined us," said Mr. Welch. "Yet they were good and true men, who acted upon the promptings of their own conscience, deeming it better to accept the king's offer than to allow the deplorable desolation to continue in their parishes."

"Mr. Welch, we are not met together to discuss the indulgence, and those who partook of its humiliating benefits," said Andrew Gray rising, and speaking with gloomy energy. "This is a council of war, and the sooner we make arrangements whereby our forces can be fairly united, the better it will be for us in the day of battle, now rapidly approaching."

"But it is incumbent upon us first to publish to the world some declaration, showing our reasons for continuing in arms," protested Mr. Welch. "And I hold that we are bound by the spirit and letter of our Covenants, as expressed in the third article thereof, to expressly own the authority of the king."

"It seems to me that we are wasting time in vain talking, sirs," said David Hackstoun of Rathillet, in his mild, sweet manner. "The brethren who are so anxious that we should declare for the king must remember that we have never yet publicly disowned him, although we have publicly disowned the edicts issued at his instigation. Though we may not approve of a man's actions, brethren, we do not necessarily altogether repudiate the man himself."

"Mr. Hackstoun expresses himself very sweetly and kindly," said Mr. Welch. "But in these times we must use words and perform actions so clear that they cannot possibly be misconstrued. And I make bold to hold still that it is incumbent upon us, according to the wording of our solemn league and Covenant, to acknowledge our loyalty to the king in matters temporal, although we protest against the form of Church government and public worship he would forcibly thrust upon us."

"To my mind the temporal and spiritual interests of a people are inseparable one from the other," said Sir Robert Hamilton, and his face betrayed his weariness of the unprofitable discussion. "And I make bold to hold and to move, that the king having set himself in grave opposition to our Lord Christ, and His Church, and having organised and carried on fearful persecution against those people of God in his Scottish dominions, and having further crowned these many grave offences against his kingly prerogative by publicly declaring war against us, we cannot declare ourselves in his favour. Gentlemen, we would be a world's wonder were we first to own his supremacy and then to fight in battle against him."

"With these finely turned phrases Sir Robert Hamilton may satisfy his own conscience," said Mr. Welch, sourly, "but the arguments he advances, if held to, will, I prophesy, occasion many divisions in our ranks."

"It seems to me, gentlemen," said Adam Hepburn, jumping to his feet, and speaking with passionate eagerness, "it seems to me that we resemble a council of madmen rather than grave and sober folk gathered together to discuss the issues of war. With the king's forces almost within sight of us, were it not a fitter thing that we should be either practising in the field or encouraging each other's hands for the immediate struggle, rather than sitting yelping at each other over trifles?"

"Well said, Adam Hepburn!" exclaimed Balfour, whose dark countenance had worn an expression of open disgust and impatience during the discussion. "I was just marvelling in my own mind how much longer this drivelling was to continue. Let us end this idiotic and off-putting discussion, and go forth as one man to the field; else I warn you that woeful will be the retribution which will follow upon the heels of our folly."

"Mr. Adam Hepburn and the Laird of Kinloch have expressed themselves with a force and clearness which must commend their words to the brethren," said Sir Robert Hamilton. "I would therefore move that this discussion be laid aside, and that, burying all differences, which have somewhat marred the harmony of our relationships one with the other, we go forth as one man, having only before us the spirit of these brave words engraven on our standard--'For Christ's cause and Covenant.'"

"There is wide dissatisfaction in the ranks because of the manner in which the chief posts in the army are distributed," said Mr. Welch, persistently. "I would therefore move that all these posts be declared vacant and new officers harmoniously chosen, in order that when the day of battle comes we may not be split up by jealousies and divisions."

A dead silence followed upon this suggestion. It was broken at length by the tones of Sir Robert Hamilton's voice, which betrayed some sharpness and annoyance.

"I, with those present of my mind, am quite willing to agree to Mr. Welch's proposal upon condition that the origin and nature of our disputes and the cause of the changes be fairly and justly stated, in order that the blame of them may rest upon the heads of those who have kindled the quarrel."

"It is not meet that all those worthy men who, as was said before, for conscience' sake accepted the indulgence should be utterly kept in the background," said Mr. David Hume, who had not yet spoken. "I agree with Mr. Welch."

"By the powers, I will listen to no more drivel about the indulgence!" cried Sir Robert Hamilton, starting to his feet. "Gentlemen, I wish you good day, and an amicable settlement and arrangement of these weighty affairs. I will take no further part in such unseemly and unprofitable discussion."

So saying he stalked out of the place, followed by many of his way of thinking, so that the indulgence party had it all to themselves. The trusty leader, feeling himself unjustly and ungenerously set aside, retired somewhat sorrowfully with his immediate friends to the camp on Hamilton Muir. They heard there that the king's forces under the Duke of Monmouth, who had come expressly from London to command the suppression of the rebellion, were close upon the town of Bothwell.

A warning messenger was at once sent to those who had remained in council in the house of William Wylie, and, after some discussion, it was agreed to send a deputation to wait upon the Duke, in order that their grievances might be laid before him.

Early on the Sabbath morning this deputation, which had been promised safe and patient hearing, crossed the bridge over the Clyde at Bothwell and entered the royal camp. The deputation consisted of Mr. David Hume, Mr. Welch, and the Laird of Kaitloch, and when they were shown into the presence of the duke they were much struck by his noble and princely bearing, and by the mild, benevolent expression on his countenance.

He listened courteously to their supplications, which prayed not only for freedom to meet both in general assembly and to worship as they willed in the churches, but also craved indemnity for all who were now or had been in arms against the king.

The duke gave them courteous hearing, but refused them an answer until they should lay down their arms and submit to the king's mercy.

"My Lord Duke," said Mr. Welch, "we cannot give up our liberty so easily, nor so readily own ourselves in the wrong. If your Grace would but give a little heed to the nature of these our supplications, I am sure your Grace would be speedily convinced of their justice and moderation."

"It is impossible for me to give you the promise of satisfaction, save upon the condition that you at once lay down your arms," replied the duke, calmly. "I am sent hither to stamp out this foolish rebellion, and while quite willing to give you every chance to submit ere it be too late, still I cannot delay the performance of the unpleasant but binding duty imposed upon me by my liege, the king. Therefore go back to your friends, and lay my conditions before them. If an answer be not returned to me within half an hour from now I shall take up the gauntlet of defiance you have thrown down, and order my battalions to advance."

As the duke spoke, he looked, not without compassion, upon the little army lying on the moor upon the opposite bank of the river, close to the bridge, which was the sole barrier betwixt it and the overwhelming forces of the king.

The deputation thanked the duke, and withdrew with haste to their own camp, before which they laid his conditions.

The half-hour of grace was speedily frittered away in a renewal of the bitter and unfruitful debates which had already so weakened their unity, and these were continuing when the alarm was given that the enemy was making preparations for immediate battle by planting their cannon on Bothwell bridge.

CHAPTER XXII

BOTHWELL BRIDGE.

The long, yellow rays of the June sunshine fell upon a strange, unwonted scene that Sabbath morning, on the banks of the flowing Clyde. Upon the Bothwell side the king's forces, to the number of 15,000, were marshalled in proud and glittering array. Well might the leaders of the Covenanters look upon them with sinking heart and foreboding eye, for their own little army,

poorly armed, badly trained, and split up by many internal divisions, would, in all probability, be swept away as chaff before the wind. Their position was their chief, nay, almost their only strength. It was assailable only by the narrow bridge, which surely could be held by the bravest among them long enough to give the enemy a serious check. The Covenanters were hastily called to form to resist the attack, but there seemed a strange coldness, an indifference and lukewarmness in the ranks which contrasted sharply with the enthusiastic valour on the day of Drumclog. A number of those who were least untainted by the spirit of jealous dissension voluntarily placed themselves under the leadership of brave Kathillet, and advanced to defend the bridge. It was a terrible and heart-breaking sight to see that dauntless little band, true to the last, marching on to meet the foe, while the great body of their brethren, with sullen faces and indifferent mien, hung back and stood about listlessly, as if quite prepared to see them cut to pieces.

"Is it not enough, Adam Hepburn, to cause a judgment to fall from Heaven, to see yon white-livered and obstinate crew?" exclaimed Andrew Gray, as they were advancing to meet the enemy. "We can expect nothing but defeat to-day. How can God's blessing go with us?"

Adam Hepburn answered not, but the more firmly grasped his trusty blade, and gave a look to his pistols. It was sufficient for him that opportunity was again given to measure swords with the foe, and that to-day he might fulfil his vow to the very letter.

But to Andrew Gray this bitter disunion among the followers of the Covenant was almost like a death-blow, for never once since he first cast in his lot with its fortunes had he swerved from his allegiance to the blue banner, or allowed personal feeling for one moment to interfere with his adherence to the common cause. Bigoted, narrow, prejudiced Presbyterian he might be, but he was at least single-hearted in his love for the Church of his fathers, and true as steel in his upholding of her principles and doctrine.

"I know not why, Adam, but the prevision is strong within me that my hour is come, and that I shall fall this day," he said, in a grave but calm voice. "If it be so you will convey my last messages to Susan and the bairns."

"Surely; but why are you filled with such gloomy forebodings to-day?" asked Adam. "You and I have fought together before now, and save for that scratch you got at Rullion Green, have escaped unhurt."

"Yes, because the time was not yet come," responded Hartrigge. "You will say to Susan, that in the hour of battle I was not unmindful of her, and that through these many weary months of separation she and the bairns have been ever in my thoughts and prayers. She knows my wishes about the upbringing of the bairns. Tell you them that their father died bravely fighting for Christ's cause and Covenant, and that he thought the sacrifice of his life as nothing compared with that sweet cause for which he gave it."

"Here they come!" exclaimed Adam Hepburn, setting his teeth; then the order was given to fire upon the advancing foe, already making a bold effort to cross the bridge. The volley was fired, but there was no time to repeat it, for the enemy came pouring across the narrow defile, and now it was only hand to hand combat, which could keep them back. Brave David Hackstoun, supported by Balfour and Adam Hepburn, were in the very fore front, and many a soldier fell before the dauntless three. Nor was Andrew Gray idle. At the very outset of the fray he received a wound thrust in the left thigh, but continued to fight, although nearly fainting with the pain and loss of blood. It was a fearful sight; the wildest confusion seemed to prevail on the bridge, which speedily began to be rendered almost impassable by the bodies of the fallen. The snorting and pawing of horses, the clashing of swords, the boom of cannon, and the sharp report of musketry, the hoarse wild cries of those maddened with the excitement, mingling with the moans and shrieks of the wounded and dying, filled the air with a din of sound quite indescribable. The clear summer air was obscured by the smoke of the cannon, and at times those sullenly watching the fray from the moor could scarcely discern how went the battle, but they *could* see that the Clyde ran red with blood.



"The wildest confusion seemed to prevail on the bridge" (see page 194).

"The wildest confusion seemed to prevail on the bridge"

Seeing his brother-in-law engaged with a dragoon, and that he was like to fall, Adam Hepburn stepped aside, and thrust the trooper through the heart, just as Hartrigge fell.

"Mortal?" he inquired briefly, bending down over him, thus doubly risking his own life by a moment's swerving from his post.

"Yes, to-night I shall sup with my Lord Jesus, and see my son. Tell his mother," Andrew Gray gasped; then Adam had to see to himself, for he was nearly surrounded. Step by step that brave band was driven from their post, one by one they fell, until but a remnant remained. These at last were finally driven from the last foot of the bridge, and Monmouth ordered his entire battalion to mount the cannon and pass over. The remnant turned to flee, but only those who were on horseback had a chance to escape. Rathillet and Balfour, seeing all was lost, gave spur to their steeds and rode rapidly off the field. Adam Hepburn, with faithful Watty McBean, who was wounded in the shoulder, fled on foot, but being pursued by a party of the Duke's army, were taken prisoners, with hundreds of their brethren fleeing across Hamilton Muir. The soldiery disarmed every man among their prisoners, divested them of half their clothing, and ordered them to lie flat down on the ground, warning them that any movement would be followed by instant death.

"I say, Adam Hepburn, whaur will the minister o' Broomhill be, think ye?" queried Watty, who was lying beside Adam, and groaning grievously with the pain of his wound.

"I have not set eyes on him since before we went into action," said Adam. "Oh, for a horse, Watty, to get clean off this fatal field!"

"Ye may say it. I dinna believe this is mysel'," replied Watty. "I was aye a peaceable man, an' to think I should come to this beats a'. I maun just ease mysel' up a wee an' look roond for the minister."

"Watty, if you do, it will be your death," Adam warned him; but Watty was not to be repressed, and accordingly raised his head. No sooner had he done so, than a bullet came whizzing past his ears, and then another, which did not miss its mark. A deep groan escaped Watty's lips, and he rolled over on his side. In a few minutes all was over, and poor Watty had gone where he would inherit that peace which had been so dear to his soul on earth. Adam Hepburn groaned also, in the bitterness of his soul. Of all his kindred and friends was he alone left upon the face of the earth, a desolate outcast, for whom the prison tortures were in reserve? With his own hand he had cut down seven troopers on Bothwell Bridge; only one more well-aimed stroke, and he had been released from his vow!

Oh, if he had but shot or stabbed the trooper who had disarmed him, instead of tamely submitting, although his own life would have been instantly forfeited, it would have but been an end of all his troubles! But Adam Hepburn had still a desire to live. Although he had no craven fear of death the thought of it was not so pleasant as it was to many of the suffering remnant, whose daily prayer had been that they might be taken from these weary troubles into the rest prepared for those who endure for the Master's sake.

The captain commanding the battalion which made all these captive was about to give orders for a general slaughter, when an aide-de-camp from the Duke brought the command that as many prisoners as possible should be spared alive. But there was a body of cavalry pursuing the fugitives who had escaped on foot, and all they overtook were instantly cut down.

The thirst for blood and vengeance being awakened in the breasts of many of the royal officers and men, the most horrible suggestions were made, such as that all the country, including the towns in the west, should be burned, and a general slaughter made of the people; but the Duke of Monmouth very firmly and indignantly set all these infamous proposals aside, and gave peremptory orders for the exercise of due mercy towards the defeated rebels. He thus showed himself a generous and noble-hearted man, and gave evidence in his actions that it had been against his own desire that he had been compelled to suppress the Covenanters in such a summary fashion. But he could not altogether influence those under him, neither could he see everything with his own eye, and the poor prisoners, at the hands of his subordinate officers, met with but little mercy.

It was decided that the prisoners be conveyed to Edinburgh. They were accordingly tied two and two together, and driven before the soldiery, who treated them with the greatest barbarity.

Adam Hepburn had for his companion the godly Mr. John Kid, one of the most devoted sufferers for the cause.

"This is a grievous day for the name and cause of our sweet Lord, friend," said Mr. Kid, when, after the march was begun, he could get a word spoken.

"It has been a bloody day, indeed!" answered Adam Hepburn. "It had been otherwise had there been fewer vile wranglings in our midst. Saw you not how many stood aloof, and left a handful to defend the bridge?"

"Aye, truly my heart was riven by these sad dissensions among the brethren," said Mr. Kid. "You were not, then, of that protesting party which stood back because certain brethren who had accepted the indulgence were in the ranks?"

"No, truly," replied Adam Hepburn, with a slightly bitter smile. "It was all one to me, who or what fought beside me, so long as I got in grips with the enemy."

"Is it so sweet to you to shed blood, my brother?" inquired Mr. Kid, in a mild tone of surprise. But just then a dragoon rode past, and observing that they talked, gave Mr. Kid a blow across the cheek with the flag of his sword, which caused the blood to flow from his nostrils in a copious stream. Being in bonds, he could not endeavour to staunch it, and was therefore in a pitiable plight, seeing which the soldier, with a loud and brutal laugh, bade him hold his blasphemous tongue, unless he desired another blow to keep it company.

"Oh, that I had my good blade!" exclaimed Adam Hepburn under his breath, and at the same time flashing a glance of intense hatred after the trooper.

"Let him be, poor man. He is like those Jews of old that buffeted our dear Lord, who compassionately prayed, 'Father, forgive them; they know not what they do,'" said Mr. Kid, in a quiet voice. "Shall this poor worm, professing to be His servant, not strive to follow that sweet example?"

Adam Hepburn was silent, for what was there in his stormy and rebellious soul in unison with his companion's sweet forgiveness and merciful compassion?

"Know this, friend, that not many days from now I shall be beyond the reach or power of those who can hurt or kill the body," whispered Mr. Kid, after a brief interval. "In a dream my Lord bade me be of good cheer, for these sufferings should not long continue, but should presently have an ending in His Paradise. Oh, to be there even now! But I would not that my Lord should call me until I have fulfilled my testimony, and borne whatsoever may be required of me for His cause and kingdom here."

Adam Hepburn spoke no word, and his companion, thinking him too much occupied with his own thoughts to be disturbed, presently desisted from his remarks, but comforted himself on the weary way by repeating in a low voice many sweet and precious passages of Scripture calculated to encourage the heart in these present trying circumstances.

Although night fell, the prisoners were not allowed to halt in their march, but were

mercilessly kept on foot and driven before the cavalry towards Edinburgh.

In the grey dawning of the sweet summer morning they came within sight of the grey towers and turrets of the city.

CHAPTER XXIII. IN CAPTIVITY.

The prisons in Edinburgh were so full that they could hold no more. What, then, was to be done with the twelve hundred victims brought from the slaughter at Bothwell Bridge?

The Government ordered that they should be shut into the churchyard of the Greyfriars, and there kept unceasing watch over day and night. So the old burying-ground, made memorable and sacred by another great gathering which had assembled within its boundaries forty years before, was now converted into an open gaol, the horrors of which pen could never describe.

In the Grass-market there abode still Edward Kilgour, the merchant, brother-in-law to the late minister of Inverburn. Although a zealous and worthy Presbyterian, he had never joined with his brethren in arms, but had followed the dictates of his conscience and religion more quietly at home, attending to his business and the affairs of his household, and had thus escaped molestation. He was a man now stricken in years, but was still able to perform the duties of his calling, and attend personally in his place of business. His daughter Ailie, now a middle-aged woman, had remained unmarried for her father's sake, and kept his house.

When they heard of the arrival of the prisoners from Bothwell, they were both much exercised in their minds as to whether any of their Inverburn kinsfolk should be among them.

"I'll go up, Ailie," said the old man, "I'll go up to the kirkyard, and, if permitted to approach the gates, see whether I can discern any of the faces of our dear ones among that pitiful throng. Very sure am I that, unless your cousins Andrew and David and Adam Hepburn were slain on the field, they will be there, for they would never turn their backs upon the foe."

"Do not needlessly expose yourself, father," said his daughter, anxiously. "Though you find any of my cousins there, what profit will it be but only to vex us, seeing we cannot help them?"

"You may be right, but I cannot sit still at home till I learn whether any of them be there," said the old man, quietly, and, getting his plaid about his shoulders, went out upon his quest.

Ailie Kilgour busied herself about the house, but as the time passed she began to grow extremely anxious for her father's return. He had been more than two hours gone, when, to her great relief, she at length heard his foot on the stair. When he entered the house she at once saw that he was greatly troubled, for seldom had she seen him look so grave and yet so agitated.

"Well, father?" she said, inquiringly.

"Let me sit down, my daughter, for I am exhausted with sorrow over what I have seen this day. That the Almighty does not at once interpose in the might of His omnipotent arm is, to my mind, evidence that the Church has required all these fearful sufferings to purify her from her iniquity, and that not yet is she refined enough in the fire to be a meet vessel for her Master's glory."

"Tell me what you saw, father," said Ailie, anxiously.

"Saw, lassie! Ask me rather what I did not see! Hundreds of my fellow-countrymen penned up among the tombs like beasts, without any of the comforts which the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air are allowed to seek for themselves. And, more, they are at the ribald mercy of their vile and brutal sentinels, who never cease to taunt them, asking them what has become of their God, that He does not interpose in their behalf," said the old man, with heaving chest and flashing eye, which told how his whole being was stirred.

"Did they allow you to go near the gates?"

"No; I had to stand a good distance away. No man is allowed to approach the gates, though I saw some pious and kind-hearted women enduring patiently the jibes and insults of the soldiers, thankful that they were allowed to pass some little comforts to the prisoners through the iron bars. It seems that they receive no food save what is grudgingly allowed to be given in this way."

"How terrible!" said Ailie, and her ruddy cheek blanched as the picture of the wretched state of the captives was thus vividly presented to her mind. "But tell me, did you see any one you know there?"

"Yes, I saw the face of your cousin, David Gray, the minister of Broomhill, and he also recognised me. I saw, too, a figure I could swear belongs to Adam Hepburn, though the face was

so changed that I would not have known it," returned the old man, sorrowfully.

Ailie Kilgour reflected a moment in silence, and then spoke in quiet but decided tones.

"Since they allow women to carry necessaries to the prisoners, I will go at once and take some food to my cousins. I am not afraid of the insults of the soldiers, for I can bear much, and make no sign."

"My daughter, I knew your kind heart would be moved to do this thing," said the old man, gladly. "Make haste, then, Ailie, for if ever hunger and want set their mark on human faces I saw it to-day on the wretched countenances of your cousins."

Accordingly, Ailie got some food prepared, and immediately set out for the Greyfriars. As was to be expected, there were many people about, for the unwonted spectacle to be seen in the churchyard drew many to the place, some out of idle curiosity, others out of sorrow and anxiety, lest perchance any relative or friend might be among that miserable throng. The chief entrance to the churchyard was guarded by half-a-dozen soldiers, who alternately amused themselves with the prisoners within and those compassionate people who sought to minister to them from without. The captives, gaunt, hungry-eyed, and eager-looking, were flocking near the entrance, watching with painful intensity the meagre dole of provisions allowed to be passed within the bars.

Ailie Kilgour stood a little back, scanning the faces in the hope that her eyes would presently fall upon that of her cousin, David Gray. Adam Hepburn she did not think she could recognise again, having only seen him on the occasion of his marriage with her cousin Agnes, thirty years before. Seeing an old, worn-looking man, with a thin, haggard face, and flowing white hair, very earnestly regarding her, she looked more particularly at him, and then gave a violent start, for a look of undisguised recognition of her was on his face. Could that old, old man, with the bent head and tottering frame, be her cousin David, whom she had last seen in all the pride and glory of his manhood, not ten years before? The recognition was so marked, and there was something so strangely familiar in the glance of the eye, that she felt she could not be mistaken. She therefore made a sign to him, and advanced towards the gate. Her basket was then rudely snatched from her by a soldier, and emptied of its contents. The tastiest morsels he reserved for his own eating; then, pointing to what lay on the ground, he bade her, with an oath and a coarse laugh, feed the dogs with the crumbs which fell from the master's table.

A sharp retort was on Ailie's lips, for her temper was easily roused, but she resolutely forced it back, and, meekly stooping, picked up the despised articles he had cast down, and passed them through the bars. A sentinel stood close by her side to see that no word was exchanged betwixt her and the prisoners, but he could not prevent them exchanging glances with each other. The plain loaves which the pampered soldier had so contemptuously cast aside were greedily devoured by the starving prisoners. David Gray distributed a portion among those about him and retired with the remainder to a tombstone, whereon sat Adam Hepburn, a picture of utter dejection and despair. As she walked home, Ailie Kilgour's mind was filled with certain plans and thoughts, which as yet she would not even communicate to her father. She was a shrewd, clever woman, and a prudent one as well, who never got herself into any trouble whatsoever through her tongue; therefore she kept all her thoughts that day to herself.

In the course of the week she went down to Leith, ostensibly to visit a kinswoman who dwelt in that town. But instead of directing her steps to the suburbs, where the maiden lady dwelt, she took her way directly towards that busier portion of the town which clustered about the harbour. Arrived there, she sought out the house of an old school companion, who had married the captain of a trading vessel, and who lived on shore during her husband's voyaging betwixt Denmark and Leith. This woman, Mrs. Barclay by name, was strongly attached to Ailie Kilgour, because she had shown her much real kindness in a time of distress, having herself come from Edinburgh to nurse her through a serious illness. Mrs. Barclay was unfeignedly glad to see her, and bade her a warm welcome. After the usual greetings, the talk turned, as was natural, upon the grievous condition of affairs, and the woeful sufferings of the Presbyterians, and especially of those lately taken on the field of Bothwell. In the course of their talk, Ailie informed Mrs. Barclay that her two cousins were among those imprisoned in the Greyfriars, and then asked when Captain Barclay was expected in port.

"On Sabbath morning, if the wind favour him," responded Mrs. Barclay. "And he will be at home for a few days before leaving to fill a cargo at Queensferry for Copenhagen."

"You can guess my interest in enquiring about your husband, Effie," said Ailie Kilgour, with a slight smile. "You have often said you wished you could repay what I did for you. It is in your power now, not only to repay me, but to place me for ever in your debt, if you will persuade your

husband to assist my cousins to escape from the country, that is, if they can by any means get out of their present wretched prison."

"It is a great risk to attempt such a thing, and is accounted a grave offence," said Mrs. Barclay. "Nevertheless, I will very gladly do my utmost. I do not think William will be very difficult to persuade, for he is a real Covenanter at heart."

"Then if I come down again, say upon the Sabbath night, I will see Captain Barclay himself, and get his advice," said Ailie. Then warmly thanking her friend, she went away home. That same day she again prepared a basket of food for the prisoners, and about the sunset proceeded with it to the Greyfriars. Being now known to the sentinels, they did not seek much to molest her, and she was allowed to pass the food through the bars, though one kept guard as formerly, lest any words should pass betwixt them. As Ailie took one small loaf out of the basket, she lifted her eyes to her cousin's face, with a look of such deep and peculiar meaning, that he at once understood he was to keep it to himself, there being something of special importance about it. Having, as was his wont, distributed a portion among a few of his less favoured fellow-sufferers, David Gray rejoined his brother-in-law, who occupied his usual position of listless despairing dejection on one of the tombs. So utterly impossible was it to arouse for a moment his extreme apathy, that David Gray sometimes feared lest Adam's mind had become unhinged by too long dwelling upon one morbid idea. Looking round, to see that none was particularly watching him, David Gray broke in two halves the loaf to which Ailie had directed his attention, and found in the inside a small slip of paper, whereon were some written words, which he immediately perused with feverish eagerness. They ran thus:--

"There are steps being taken for your flight from the country, in the vessel of a friend now lying at Leith. If you can make good your escape, and come here, we will assist you."

"See, here, Adam Hepburn, say, did ever such a thought occur to you?" queried David Gray, furtively slipping the paper into his brother-in-law's hand.

"Yes, the thought of my escape has never once left my mind since we came here," said Adam. "I have gotten the plan matured now, and if you will join me, I think it could be done."

"I am willing and ready," said the minister, eagerly. "What is your plan?"

"I have two, either to boldly scale the wall yonder under cover of the night, and trust to our speed to make good our escape," said Adam, "or else by stratagem creep down to the little gate at the north side, where they consider two guards sufficient. Surely, David, you and I yet could silence a man apiece."

"Desperation lends a new courage to a man when he is in straits," said the minister, thoughtfully. "I would be for trying the north gate in the darkness, but we will wait till Ailie comes again."

On the Sabbath evening, Ailie Kilgour again journeyed to Leith, and found Captain Barclay at home. She also found him sympathetic, and willing to assist, although quite conscious of the risk he incurred in aiding and abetting the escape of Government prisoners. There was one thing in his favour, however, that he was first to convey a cargo from Leith to Hamburg, the Queensferry commission being set aside, so that his passage would be direct from one port to the other.

The harbour and other officials in the employment of the Government were strictly enjoined to rigorously inspect every outward bound vessel, in quest of fugitives, but Captain Barclay did not despair of being able to steal a march upon them in some way or other. He was a bold man, and loved a spice of adventure by sea or land, so Ailie Kilgour knew the matter was safe in his hands.

She was to carry another message to the prisoners next day warning them to try and make good their escape the following night, as Captain Barclay expected to be ready to sail at daybreak on Tuesday morning, and unless they were at hand, could not possibly delay voyaging on their account. Late on the Sabbath evening, Ailie Kilgour and her father were sitting by the kitchen fire, discussing the probability of the prisoners' escape, when they heard a great scuffling on the stair, and a low knocking at the door.

Both started to their feet in alarm, and Ailie, recovering herself first, at once went and undid the bolts. What was her unutterable amazement to behold upon the threshold David Gray and Adam Hepburn!

"Are you pursued?" she asked, in a breathless whisper, and at the same time holding the door wide open.

"Not here; they have lost the scent, and are following us out the Lanark road," they responded. "Except God had veritably helped us this night, by sending down a thick mist when we leaped the wall, we had been both dead men," added David Gray, reverently; then suddenly,

in the painful intensity of his feelings, he bent his head on his hands and burst into tears. Looking upon his emaciated frame, guessing the weakness which encompassed him, they marvelled not at his lack of self-control.

The old man now came forward, and being assured that they were indeed there in the body, and not pursued, he bade them, with tears of joy, welcome to his house.

The night was spent in earnest discussion, as to the next step to be taken on the morrow. Adam Hepburn expressed his readiness to go aboard, since it mattered not what became of him, but David Gray shook his head.

"The Almighty, who covered us this night with the wings of His mist, must have some other work for me here," he said. "My soul does not bid me leave Scotland, and my heart cleaves to mine own kindred, upon whose faces I have not looked for many weary days. Therefore I will travel westward as opportunity offers, knowing that except of my Lord's will the enemy shall not again lay hands on me."

On the morrow Ailie Kilgour produced a seaman's dress, which Captain Barclay had given her for a disguise to one of the prisoners, and when Adam Hepburn had shorn off his beard, and attired himself in this garb, his nearest kindred could not have recognised him. It was then agreed, that instead of stealing to the port in the darkness, he should walk boldly down in the broad light of day, and present himself at the abode of Captain Barclay, who might then take him on board publicly as one of his crew.

So Adam Hepburn bade farewell to his friends in the Grass-market, walked without molestation over to Leith, and was duly taken on board the *Bittern*. The vessel was rigorously inspected before she sailed, but no suspicion being attached to the crew, she was allowed to quit the harbour, and in the dawning of Tuesday morning was out in the open sea.

CHAPTER XXIV. DELIVERED.

As it was by no means safe for David Gray to sojourn with his kinsfolk in Edinburgh, he was anxious to get away as soon as possible. Ailie Kilgour, with a true woman's ingenuity, had decided upon a plan whereby he might make the journey by easy stages, and without molestation, to Inverburn. Nevertheless, she was somewhat afraid to lay it before her cousin, lest he might laugh at her for her pains. After Adam Hepburn's departure, her father and cousin were sitting discussing ways and means by the kitchen fire, when she came in, bearing in her hand an old linsey-woolsey gown and a faded tartan plaid, which had belonged to her mother.

"All these plans you speak of are too dangerous to be undertaken, Cousin David," she said. "What do you say to disguising yourself as a female hawker, and thus pursue your journey, not only with safety, but with profit?"

In spite of the gravity of his position, David Gray burst into a hearty laugh, such as had not passed his lips for many a day.

"Oh, Cousin Ailie, give me a woman for ingenuity!" he exclaimed. "But what would I make of my beard and my white hair?"

"Follow Adam's example and shave your face smooth and clean," said Ailie. "As for your hair, after it is fastened up under a white cap, it will the better help your disguise."

"Are you in earnest, Ailie, woman?" queried her father, in no little amusement.

"Father, I am in dead earnest," she said, soberly. "I have everything to dress him with, and when I run out for needles and cotton, and buttons and other sundries to plenish his basket with, the disguise will be complete."

David Gray had for a moment fancied his cousin merely joking, but seeing she was in earnest, the feasibility and even the wisdom and cleverness of her suggestion appeared to him quite plainly.

"Cousin Ailie, I believe I will try your plan," he said, suddenly. "I will at least put on the disguise and see what manner of a woman I present."

Much pleased, Ailie ran to the adjoining room for the other articles of attire, and brought also her father's shaving things, in order that her cousin might remove his beard. She then retired, and after about half-an-hour they called to her to come and see the disguise. When she looked upon the complete and wonderful transformation it had made, she nearly clapped her hands with delight. The minister was certainly a tall woman, but in every other respect he was the exact

picture of what he wished to represent.

Ailie took her little tartan neckerchief from her shoulders, tied it above the white cap, and then retired back to admire the effect.

"Cousin David, that is just the finishing touch!" she exclaimed, in no small glee. "Your appearance would deceive the cleverest person in the world, I am sure. You look exactly like an aged dame who has weathered a good many storms on the road. If you don't reach Inverburn in safety in my mother's old gown, my name isn't Ailie Kilgour."

"What say you, Uncle Edward?" asked David Gray, turning to the old man.

"Truly, lad, the deception is most wonderful," he replied. "Of course it is hardly a fitting thing for a minister of the kirk to tramp the country in an old wife's gown, but desperate ills need desperate remedies. So I would say, take the lassie's advice, and God go with you."

"Well, I will," said David Gray, "for in my own person and garb I am convinced I should never reach Inverburn alive, nor, indeed, get beyond the environs of Edinburgh."

"You said the pursuers went by the Lanark road," said Ailie. "Your plan will be to go to Stirling, and then across the moors. I daresay you will find the way."

"Easily," responded David Gray, cheerfully. "You are a clever, far-seeing woman, cousin; the thought of such a disguise would never have entered my head."

"It will be a great joy to me, Cousin David, if I am rewarded by saving your life," she said, with a smile and a tear, and so the matter was settled.

All that day David Gray remained in hiding in his uncle's abode, and early on the following morning he bade them both a warm farewell, and set out upon his journey back to his native place. As Ailie watched the gaunt, uncouth-looking figure with the basket and the big cotton umbrella stalking down the street, the very picture of a practised peddling woman, she scarcely knew whether to laugh or cry. So a woman's ingenuity twice outwitted the sharpness of the Government.

We have been long absent from the vale of Inverburn, yet truly nothing of note was happening there, only a dreary and despairing waiting for the dawning of a brighter day, occasionally deepened and intensified by some deed of violence or brutal pillage executed by the dragoons, who infested the entire west of Scotland. Since the fateful day of Bothwell severities had been increased, greater licence given to the soldiery, and less mercy extended to the suffering country folk, whether there were anything against them or not. Along the entire course of the Clyde the country presented a most dismal aspect. In place of smiling homesteads and rich and fertile fields, there was nothing to be seen but smouldering ruins and tract upon tract of desolate wastes, which had not been upturned by the plough for many a year. The population, though now sadly thinned, was in a state bordering upon starvation, everything they had formerly possessed having been stolen from them, and every means of subsistence removed. Yet still it seemed as if the words of Scripture must needs be literally fulfilled, since from him that had not been taken even that which he had. Hundreds had no shelter in the wide earth save that afforded by glens and caves and mountain fastnesses, and even there they were not safe.

The farm of Hartrigge had not escaped these later desolations, for now all that remained of that once substantial and even imposing homestead was one cot-house, which had escaped the flames on account of it being detached from the main buildings, and having thus been overlooked by the ruffians, who, after pillaging the entire place, had set it on fire.

In this humble abode dwelt the widow of Andrew Gray, his sister Jane, and a young lad with his sister, the Sandy and wee Nannie, who had been so dear to their father's heart. Jeanie was now safe with her father and Gavin in that land where eternal peace abides. The bairn's heart seemed to be weighed down by the things happening around her, and she just faded away.

Strange as it may seem, the few yet remaining who loved her on earth saw her depart with gladness, for it had come to that pass in poor stricken Scotland that he who lay down to die was accounted much more to be envied than he who was preserved alive.

One beautiful evening towards the end of July, Susan Gray and her sister-in-law, Jane, were sitting together on the bench outside their cottage door, with their hands lying idle on their laps, a thing they would have accounted a sin in the days of the happy past. But now there was nothing for hands to do, and life was at times a very weariness. These troublous years had wrought a woeful change upon both those women, and had aged them long before their time. Also upon the face of Susan Gray there appeared at times a vague, wandering kind of expression, which seemed to indicate a weakness of the mind, and verily it was not greatly to be wondered at that the nerves of women-folk should be unable to bear the awful strain upon them.

They were not conversing together, for such sorrows as theirs will not bear to be spoken of

by the lips; there was a hopeless, purposeless look about them, which was painful in the contrast it presented to their busy, cheerful energy of long ago.

"See Jane!" said Susan Gray, presently. "Is not that a figure on the road? Is it Sandy or the bairn Nannie? They should be on their way home from the village now."

"No; it is a taller figure than either of the bairns," replied Jane. "It is a woman, and she has a basket on her arm."

"Is she like a gangerel [tramp], Jane? She need hardly come here seeking now," said Susan, listlessly.

"Yes, she looks like that. There are not many of her kind on the roads now," said Jane. Then they relapsed into silence, and so sat until the woman with the basket appeared on the path in front of the cottage door. Susan Gray only gave her a careless look, and then went into the cottage, leaving Jane to deal with her.

"My woman, ye need hardly have come this length with your basket," said Jane Gray, kindly, and looking compassionately at the evidences of fatigue on her face. "The wherewithal is much lacking here now. But sit down on the bench here and rest a while, till I bring you a piece of bread, which, thanks be to God, we can still offer to those in greater need than ourselves."

So saying, she pointed to the bench, and retired into the house. The woman set down her basket, and dropping on the seat, covered her face with her hands, and uttered a low but passionate prayer of thankfulness. In this attitude Jane Gray found her when she again stepped out of doors. She laid her hand on the bent shoulders, and said kindly, "You seem quite overcome. Have you travelled many miles this day?"

Slowly the stranger's head was raised, and a pair of eyes fixed themselves on the kind, womanly face with a glance which stirred her very soul; and, without knowing why, she began to tremble from head to foot.

"Sister Jane, do you not know me?" said the voice of one she had mourned as dead. "Then indeed my disguise is as complete as Ailie Kilgour assured me. I am your brother David!"

Jane Gray uttered a low cry, which brought Susan hurrying out to the door. The moment, however, that her eyes rested keenly and sharply on the stranger's face, they penetrated the disguise, and she exclaimed--

"David Gray, as I am a living woman!"

"Even so; thus far the Almighty has brought me through many perils to my native parish," said the minister of Broomhill, fervently.

Jane, having now recovered her first shock of surprise, embraced her brother with great joy, the tears chasing each other down her cheeks in her emotion. So the name of Gray was not entirely swept off the face of the earth, as they had bitterly imagined, and there was hope for the old house yet. They hastened to take him in, and set refreshment before him, after partaking of which he related to them all that which had befallen him and his brethren since they had last met.

Greatly rejoiced were they to learn of Adam Hepburn's escape, but they shed many tears over their hardships in the prison yard at Edinburgh. As David in low and earnest tones delivered his brother's last message to his widow, the tears flowed from her eyes, but in a gentle rain which brought healing with it. It was for these precious words her widowed heart had long and sorely hungered. It was decided that so long as it was considered safe, he should abide under his disguise with them, though a few trusty brethren in hiding in the district would be duly informed of his safety.

So a little sunshine penetrated the dark cloud, and shed a measure of brightness on the hearth of the poor little cottage at Hartrigge.

CHAPTER XXV.

AIRSMOSS.

Poor Watty McBean's hole in the Witches' Cleugh had indeed been of great benefit to many fugitives, and it had never been empty since the fleeing after the slaughter at Bothwell. During the next day the minister of Broomhill repaired in his disguise to that safe hiding, in order to see the brethren there, and so commune with them regarding their present state, and the future fate or welfare of them and such as them. As he pursued his way leisurely along the sequestered and lonely paths which led to the cleugh, he mused much on the wonderful way in which the Lord had

led him hitherto. He also marvelled within himself that he had been so long spared, and in his heart there was a petition that he might be made willing and glad to continue his suffering and weary way through life, until the Lord should see fit to call him to Himself. These profitable and godly communings were interrupted somewhat summarily by the abrupt appearance of two dragoons, who came rapidly riding up from the direction of the cleugh, and who immediately drew rein at the sight of the woman, as they imagined the wayfarer to be.

"Hulloa, mistress! do you know anything of that confounded lair where so many Whigs sleep in safety?" queried one, fixing his piercing eye on the face of David Gray.

"Truly the Whigs have had many hiding places in this district," he answered, mildly. "To what one do you specially refer?"

"Faith, I hardly know; it is somewhere about these hills or in the valley between," said the dragoon, pointing backward to the cleugh. "We are creditably informed that several very noted rebels were concealed there, and me and my mate swore an oath that we should find the place, which has baffled the king's soldiers so long. We have made a thorough search, but can find no clue."

"I never heard of any place of concealment among those hills," said David Gray. "Those who are so eager to inform sometimes overreach themselves, and----"

"Leave the hag in peace, Munro!" interrupted the younger man, impatiently. "I believe she is right enough, and we were told lies to beguile us. I for one will get away out of this confounded district with what speed I can. My horse is dead lame, see, stumbling through that accursed ravine."

Marvelling much at the very easy manner in which he had escaped questioning, David Gray watched the two ride away, but did not then pursue his way to the cleugh, lest he should unwittingly betray his brethren. But his soul, long separated from such as had suffered like persecutions with him, was yearning for the sweet fellowship of brotherly counsel, both for the strengthening of his own hands and heart, and also to learn, if possible, whether any of the more noted saints were still alive. He felt himself deeply and peculiarly blessed in the communion he was privileged to obtain with that poor remnant of his kinsfolk still dwelling in the parish of Inverburn, and during the evening of that day the women and the young folk at Hartrigge were much edified with his conversation and with his exposition of the Word. It was long, indeed, since such a joy had been vouchsafed to them. Owing to the somewhat limited accommodation of the humble dwelling which now sheltered the Grays, the lad, Sandy, went down to Inverburn to sleep in the house of an old woman, who gladly gave him shelter for his father's sake. Nannie, with her aunts, abode in the kitchen, and the best end was given up to the minister. They retired early to rest, and in spite of the troubles and anxieties which encompassed them, very soon all beneath the roof-tree of the cottage were asleep. The atmosphere had been dull and heavy all day, and the night was dark and starless; the low-hanging, sullen presaging rain, of which the parched earth stood in sore need. About midnight Susan Gray, who slept lightly, was awakened by a sound she had heard so often during these past weary years, that she could not mistake it now. It was the tramp of hoofs, and in a moment a wild fear that even already the minister was betrayed took possession of her soul. Hastily awaking Jane, both strang up, threw on their outer garments, and stealing over to the casement, which was a little ajar to admit the fresh air, they peered fearfully out. The night was utterly, intensely dark, and they could see nothing, but they could hear now both the trampling and the snorting of horses, and also at a little distance the low, eager voices of men. Through the still, soundless air their strained ears caught these words:--

"He shall not escape us this time, I swear! Egad! it was a clever disguise!--a wench's idea, without doubt. To think that old hag we met peddling her wares in Walston was that veritable heretic David Gray, and we knew it not! It is enough to make a man ashamed of himself!"

Swiftly and silently Jane Gray stole across the narrow passage to the inner room, and awakened her brother, who was enjoying a very sound and refreshing repose. By the time she had made him aware of the danger at hand, the troop had quite surrounded the house, and a great noise broke the stillness of the summer night.

David Gray sprang from his bed to the floor, thinking his hour was come. And yet, was it but to be slain in cold blood like this that the Lord had let him get clear away both from the slaughter at Bothwell and the wearisome captivity of the Greyfriars?

In that moment of agonising suspense and apprehension, when he was striving to prepare for death, even with a soul yearning for life, his eye, as if guided by some unseen power, fell upon the wide, old-fashioned chimney, and in a moment his resolution was taken. Even when the foot of the enemy was on the very threshold of the outer door, the fugitive wrapped a plaid about his

white night-clothes, and, committing himself to the God who had so often delivered him, he hastily scrambled up the chimney and out on to the roof. Jane Gray did not see him perform this extraordinary action, she having gone to accost, and, if possible, conciliate and delay, the officer at the outer door.

Without hesitating a moment, knowing he would speedily be observed on the roof, David Gray lay himself flat down, and, sliding down to the eaves, dropped to the ground in front of a mounted dragoon. The apparition in waving white garments terrified the horse, and caused him to rear and plunge wildly, so that his rider was almost unseated. In the momentary confusion that ensued the fugitive took to his heels, and in a brief space was out of sight and beyond pursuit. Meanwhile, quite unconscious of this miraculous escape, Jane Gray was endeavouring to parley with the officer at the door.

"Sorry to disturb your repose, sweet mistress," he said. "If you will but deliver up that renegade, David Gray, who is sheltering here, we will go away and leave you in peace."

"David Gray!" ejaculated Jane Gray, faintly; "what men-folk have we under this roof-tree, sir? The only stranger here is a relative, who has travelled a great distance on foot to sojourn awhile with us, if that be a fault in your eyes."

"Does the stranger wear a linsey-woolsey gown, a tartan plaid, and a white cap, and peddle ribbons and laces to the country lasses, eh?" queried the captain, with grim humour. "To show you that we do not doubt your word, bring out the old lady, so that we may pay our respects to her. Methinks we have met before."

At her wits' end, Jane Gray turned about and went into the room, which, to her astonishment, seemed to be empty. The captain followed her, and, not finding the fugitive there, strode into the kitchen. Susan Gray and Nannie were there, and it needed but one glance at their faces to tell him that neither was the person he sought.

"Your kinswoman has hidden herself, I perceive," he said, grimly. "You had better bid her come forth, or I will give orders to set the place on fire. I have no time to dally here; it is time all honest folk were in bed."

"We are guiltless of hiding him you seek, sir," said Jane Gray, no longer attempting to deny that her brother had been sheltering with them. "And, truly, where in this small abode could he hide? It is a mystery to me where he has gone, unless, indeed, the Lord hath miraculously aided his escape."

At that moment one of the dragoons came hurrying in to say that the prisoner had without doubt made his escape from the roof, and was already beyond pursuit. Then the captain fell into a great rage, and cursed and swore in a manner which made the women-folk tremble. And truly it was a sore disappointment to the man to have had so valuable and notable a Covenanter within his very reach, and yet to be baulked so simply. In his fury he was like to have taken the lives of the fugitive's kinswomen, but was persuaded by a more merciful subordinate to let them be in peace. Nevertheless, he caused lighted brands to be held to the thatched roof of the cottage, and, being dry as tinder, it immediately took fire.

In a short space of time the darkness of the night was illumined by the flames of the burning cottage, and the three defenceless women, now rendered indeed utterly homeless, hastily gathered such small but valuable things as they could carry, and, withdrawing themselves a little, watched the rapid destruction of the only shelter they could call their own on the face of the earth. Yet they could not feel utterly cast down, since God had so marvellously delivered the dear fugitive out of the hands of the pursuer once more. The captain and his troop immediately rode away down to the village, to inflict themselves on such of the inhabitants as could yet give them bite and sup and shelter for the night. Meanwhile David Gray fled, under the grateful cover of the darkness, by the familiar field-paths to poor Watty's famous hiding, where he knew he should find both shelter and comforting welcome from his brethren. His long residence in the cleugh had made him so familiar with it, that even in the darkness he had no difficulty whatever in finding the thicket which hid the cave. And yet he had to creep slowly and with caution, for the nettles and brambles and brushwood proved very formidable to his uncovered limbs, and his feet were already bleeding from coming into contact with the stones as he made his rapid flight from the cottage. As he came up nearly to the mouth of the cave, he gave a long, low whistle, which Jane had told him was a signal understood by those in hiding. In a few minutes it was answered by a similar sound, and the brushwood was carefully swept aside from the mouth of the cave, and he saw the figure of a man.

"Who comes?" a voice said, in an anxious whisper.

"A brother in sore straits, whom the Lord, of His good pleasure, hath this night marvellously

delivered," answered David Gray, and at that the man standing at the mouth of the cave stretched out his hand and drew the new-comer into the dimly-lighted recess beyond. In this place there were no fewer than seven persons, both old, young, and middle-aged, whose faces were thin and worn, as if they had suffered much privation. They looked with no little astonishment upon the strangely-attired figure which appeared so suddenly in their midst, and one, an elderly man, of very grave and reverent aspect, after looking intently on his face, jumped up and grasped him by the hand.

"David Gray, an I mistake not, whom I last saw in grips with the enemy at Bothwell Brig!" he exclaimed.

"And whom the Lord hath marvellously preserved from that woeful day to this," supplemented David Gray. "Little did I think last time we met, Mr. Donald Cargill, that we should look upon each other's faces again, and in this place of all places."

"Verily, strange are the vicissitudes of the scattered remnant of the Lord's Zion," said Mr. Cargill. "I have been obliged to keep in hiding these few days, being sore pursued by a troop of dragoons for preaching at Lanark and at various other places in Clydesdale; but come, tell us what hath befallen thee of late, and by what means thou art come hither in this strange attire."

Nothing loth, David Gray entered upon the recital of his exciting experiences during the last two months, and when he had finished, Mr. Cargill had his story to tell, and in this pathetic and mournfully interesting talk the night speedily wore away. Although Mr. Cargill had been obliged to flee for his life to the shelter of the cleugh, it was impossible for one of his ardent and restless spirit to remain long inactive. As soon as they heard from a trusty reporter, who carried them both provisions and news from Inverburn, that the hot pursuit was slackened in the neighbourhood, he announced his intention of going forth once more to the preaching of the Word.

Fired by the eloquence and zeal of the old man, and feeling himself much persuaded to testify in public once more, David Gray petitioned that he might be allowed to go forth in company with him. So the twain quitted their hiding, and travelled eastwards towards Edinburgh, preaching as they went, and meeting with many perils, out of which they had many marvellous deliverances, which would occupy too long a space to recount. In the spring of 1680, new life was infused into the scattered and sometimes fainting remnant, by the return to Scotland of that eloquent preacher and godly man, Richard Cameron, who had been persuaded to retire to Holland for a time previous to the Battle of Bothwell.

In his exile his heart had never ceased to yearn over his suffering native land, and the desire to cast in his lot with his persecuted brethren became so strong at length, that it could not be set aside. It was with great joy that the few earnest souls still left welcomed him back to their midst, and Donald Cargill and David Gray immediately joined themselves to him, and the three went about continually preaching and exhorting the people to hold fast to their faith, for the cause for which they suffered was just and righteous, and must in the end prevail.

It was not long ere these faithful and undaunted men became specially observed of those in high places, and they were vigorously and relentlessly pursued from place to place, but managed to elude the vigilance of those following so continuously in their track. Among Cameron's most close and faithful adherents was brave Hackstoun of Rathillet, who, since Bothwell, had been a wanderer on the face of the earth, having given up all for Christ's sake.

One summer's day a small party of horsemen rode into the little town of Sanquhar, and startled the good folk both by their wayworn and haggard appearance and by their proceedings.

They drew rein at the market cross, and Richard Cameron, their leader, dismounted and slowly read a declaration denying the right of Charles to the throne of Scotland, stigmatising him as a tyrant and perjurer, and solemnly declaring war against him for all time coming.

That done, they rode away as rapidly and mysteriously as they had come, and did not halt till they reached a lonely spot among the hills, where they ventured to rest awhile.

"After what we have done this day," said Mr. Cameron, wiping the midsummer heat from his brow, "I fear it will no longer be safe for us to continue together; and besides, I cannot but think that were we to separate away in different directions we could the better break the bread of life to our starving brethren. What say you, Mr. Cargill? Were it not better that each man of us should go his own way, preaching and exhorting wherever the Lord giveth time and opportunity?"

"Truly, brother, your suggestion savours of wisdom and prudence," said Mr. Cargill, with approval. "But ere we separate we had better agree as to a time when we can again meet together to compare our experiences and strengthen each other's hands for renewed conflict."

"I fear me, brethren, that the end is nigh at hand for more than one of us," said the sweet voice of David Hackstoun. "I, at least, have been visited of late with very precious presentiments of a speedy release from these troubles. Therefore I would say it matters little whether we be together or separate, seeing that, save it be the Lord's time, no evil can befall us."

"Strange that Mr. Hackstoun's presentiments should have visited me likewise," said Richard Cameron. "I am convinced that my race is nearly run; therefore, during what little space is still vouchsafed to me on this earth, I would continue my Lord's work with renewed vigilance, lest when He cometh He should find his unworthy servant asleep."

"As regards Mr. Cargill's proposal that we should make an agreement to meet, I fear that would be useless," said David Gray. "I think we should but wish each other God speed, and leave our future meeting in God's hands. Doubtless, if it be His good pleasure, He will bring us together again in due season, if not here, in His own kingdom, whither we are all hastening with more or less speed."

This latter suggestion was approved, and, after holding a solemn farewell service together, they parted, not knowing whether they should look upon each other's faces again. Mr. Cameron travelled westward to New Monkland, preaching boldly as he went, to the no little comfort of the few to whom the pure Word was yet precious. Hackstoun and David Gray, with a few others, kept together in the south; but hearing, not many days after, that a heavy price was set on Cameron's head, and that he was being vigilantly pursued, they conferred together and decided to retire to the west and band themselves about him, so that, in the event of the enemy falling upon him, there might be some to defend him and render him deliverance out of their hands. Accordingly, a guard under Rathillet travelled across the familiar, and now sacred, ground in the south-western district, and came up with Cameron in Avondale, near the memorable field of Drumclog. To their joy, they found Mr. Cargill with him, and on the Sabbath day a solemn service was held, in which all the ministers took part. Mr. Cameron preached the sermon from the words, "Be still, and know that I am God," and as the eloquent and stirring words fell from his lips, it was noted that his countenance seemed lighted with a radiance not of earth. After the service Mr. Cargill went his way farther west, after agreeing that he should meet Cameron and the rest at Dermeid Muir on the following Sabbath day. During the next few days Cameron's conversation was that of a man who was not long for this world, and he never ceased to exhort those with him to continue steadfast yet a while, for Scotland's deliverance was at hand. He prophesied that the reign of bloodshed and terror would speedily be over, and that the Lord's Zion would ere long be rebuilt upon the ruins of her past and present desolation. On the Wednesday of that week he was sojourning in the house of a godly man at Meadowhead, on the Water of Ayr, and to him and the folk with him in the house he expressed his conviction that the Lord would, in a few hours' time, require him to seal his testimony with his blood. Hearing some report of a troop under Bruce of Earlshall making vigilant search for him and his party, Cameron and his friends agreed to retire to the wild moorland which stretched for many miles between Cumnock and Muirkirk. It was a vast and dreary wilderness, covered with heather and bracken, unrelieved by a green tree or a nodding floweret even in the midsummer time, when all Nature was rejoicing in her wealth and beauty. Towards the east end of this moor Cameron and his friends, being sore fatigued with a long march in the burning heat of the day, lay themselves down awhile to rest. In this solitude they were surprised by the enemy--a large number of soldiers under Earlshall--who came sweeping across the moor with a fury and speed which made it quite impossible for the faithful little band to escape. There was nothing for it but to fight, which the brave remnant immediately decided to do, and quietly but resolutely looked to their arms, and set themselves in order for the fray. It was a pitiable sight upon which the summer sun beat that July afternoon--that handful of God's people dauntlessly facing a goodly regiment of dragoons, all fresh and eager for the fight. Ere the enemy was quite upon them, Cameron led the devotions of his brethren, and in his prayer said, with great fervour, "Lord, spare the green and take the ripe."

Then they exchanged a hand clasp and a solemn farewell, pledging each other to meet in glory.

It was a desperate fight.

The Covenanters fought with conspicuous gallantry, and, even after brave Cameron fell, they continued the conflict over his dead body.

Seeing that there was no hope of victory, and that Rathillet and some others were already taken captive, David Gray, in a last extremity, leaped upon the back of a horse whose rider had been slain, and, rapidly galloping off the field, made his escape. Only one or two others were equally fortunate, and so once again the Covenanters were swept away before the oppressors like

chaff on a windy day.

Richard Cameron's remains were carried to Edinburgh, and his head was fixed on the Netherbow port, where it was left to moulder and blacken in the sun. Rathillet, after the usual mockery of a trial, was subjected to terrible and searching tortures, which he bore with a firmness which astonished those who had seen evidence of his sweet yielding nature. His troubles were finally ended on the scaffold, and he went to receive his exceeding great reward. Thus it seemed as if this most precious blood of the Covenant, yea, every drop of it, must be spilled upon the ground, ere the hour of Scotland's deliverance had come.

By slow degrees, and through many strange perils, David Gray wandered wearily back to his native parish. There were times when the weight of his many sorrows was like to overwhelm him, and when he could have cried out for the inheritance in heaven, to which so many of his brethren had already been admitted.

Lurking in the wild solitudes of the mountains, depending for his sustenance upon a few ears of corn, or some of the wild fruits of the earth, it was little wonder if at times his soul fainted within him, and he felt impelled to question the wherefore of these tribulations. In his weakness he was also frequently tempted fiercely by Satan to abjure the cause for which he suffered, and to purchase life and immunity from persecution at the Government price. But by God's grace he was enabled to pass unscathed through these fiery trials, and when at last he crept, a worn and wasted shadow, up his native vale, and sought the shelter of the witches' cleugh, his heart was once more at rest, and abiding steadfastly on the Lord Christ. There were yet some fugitives in Watty's hiding-place, and out of her undying love for the cause, Jane Gray still, when opportunity offered, and when she possessed the wherewithal, stole thither with some relief. Great was her astonishment and joy to behold there her brother David, whom they had of late quite given up as dead. The sight of a familiar and loved face restored anew David Gray's courage and confidence, and he prayed earnestly to be forgiven his temptations to backsliding, with which he had been so sore beset in his desolation.

In spite of the increased vigilance of the oppressors, meetings were still held on the hill-sides and in sheltered nooks, for there yet remained some who would do and dare anything to hear the faithful preaching of the Word.

Very often David Gray led these services, and at last it got noised abroad that he was at large in the district of Inverburn, which, coming to Claverhouse's ears, made him swear a great oath that he should have his head. But although on several separate occasions he had him almost in his clutches, the Lord interposed, and in many marvellous ways vouchsafed deliverance to His faithful servant. About that time it became almost an impossibility to hold a conventicle, for it was certain to become a massacre, so largely were the country districts infested with dragoons, yet there was indeed very little of the old leaven of the Covenant now left in the flesh, for the new generation which had arisen since the first glorious uprising for the cause was lukewarm and indifferent, and too much taken up with the things of the world to concern themselves much with religious matters.

Within two years after Bothwell a great grief fell upon the few yet remaining faithful to the old cause.

When James II. ascended the throne, after the death of Charles, he published an Act of Toleration, on the conditions of which many persecuted wanderers were induced to return to their homes, and even some ministers to their parishes. It was as deep a snare in its way as the indulgence of Charles had been, its ultimate object being to establish Papacy in Scotland. Into this net many fell, and it indeed seemed as if the martyrdom of the saints were to have no good harvest in the land. But it being now the darkest hour, the dawning was at hand.

Grown somewhat weary of life in their native land, and being sore exercised and perplexed by the condition of religious affairs therein, David Gray, with some others, made it a matter of prayerful consideration whether they should not retire to the Continent for a space, and labour for the Master there. The conventicles, which could only now be held at long intervals, and under strict secrecy, were thinly attended, and not productive of any wide-spreading good, also the end of the struggle seemed at hand, in the utter extermination of the scattered remnant still faithful to the old doctrines and principles, so that it indeed appeared as if there were no more work left for them to do in Scotland.

After due deliberation, therefore, David Gray resolved to escape out of the country. Attiring himself in his former disguise, with which his sister Jane provided him, he travelled on foot without molestation to Newcastle-on-Tyne, where, after some little delay, he obtained shipment in a trading vessel to Rotterdam, and there we lose sight of him for a while.

CHAPTER XXVI

REST.

The golden radiance of a summer sunset lay upon the vale of Inverburn. The year was in its prime, and everywhere the wealth of her beauty was scattered with no stinted hand. The harvest was ripe for the sickle in the fertile lowlands, and even on the bleaker uplands there was a lovely yellow tinge on the standing corn, which promised an early reaping. Yes, there were peace and plenty in the smiling land once more, for the long reign of bloodshed and terror was over, the house of Stuart had fallen to rise no more, buried in the ruins of its own iniquity, and a wise, just and upright ruler now wielded the sceptre on the throne of England.

There were not altogether lacking evidences of the dark days which had been. Here and there, on some sunny slope or in some sheltered valley, a black and mouldering ruin indicated where the spoiler had waved his destroying brand, and there yet remained many a broad acre left untilled, because those whose inheritance it was had been destroyed, root and branch, old and young, until not a living representative was left.

But in the main, Scotland had returned to her old-time peace and prosperity; again the voice of the husbandman was heard in the fields, again the women folk went about their daily tasks without fear or trembling, and last, and best of all, the kirks were open on the Sabbath Day once more, for the free and pure worship of the Most High.

The village of Inverburn that summer evening presented much the same appearance as it did when first we made acquaintance with it. The pleasant voices of the children at their play filled the summer air, on the cottage doorsteps or in the trellised porches the women sat at their knitting or spinning, while the broad benches in the doorway of the hostelry had each their complement of sturdy yeomen discussing, over their foaming tankards, the events of the day or the graver memories of the past. About the hour of sundown there was observed, coming slowly along the wide and pleasant road from Lanark, two pedestrians, for whose coming the villagers waited with that keen curiosity so characteristic of country folk. They walked very slowly, as I said, and though one appeared to be of tall and erect figure, the other was much bent, and walked leaning heavily on his companion's arm. Just as they entered upon the village street, and speculation began to run higher regarding them, the attention of the idlers was distracted for a little space by the clatter of hoofs in the opposite direction, and presently a horse and rider came rapidly down the slope and drew rein in front of the inn. The horseman was a young man of goodly stature and fine appearance, with a boyish, open countenance, and a winning, fearless eye.

"Guid e'en, Sandy Gray!" cried one or two with familiarity which was pardonable, seeing they had known the lad from his infancy, and some of them his godly forbears before him.

"Guid e'en!" he answered back frankly. "Here, Willie, my man," he added to a curly-headed urchin playing on the step, "run in and tell your mother I want to see her about ale for the reapers."

"Ay, man, is the hairst [harvest] ready on Hartrigge?" queried one of the older men. "Mony a day I bound a stent [sheaf] behind your faither on the rigs o' Hartrigge."

"Ay, Robin, ye'd better come up and bind a stent after me, then, just for auld lang syne," said the young man and a slight shade crossed his sunny face.

At that moment the two pedestrians came directly opposite the inn door and there stopped. Sandy Gray wheeled round his horse, and regarded them with a curiosity almost as great as that exhibited by his neighbours. Their attire was such as these simple villagers had never before seen, being distinctly foreign in its fashion, a thing sufficient in itself to invest the strangers with extraordinary interest. Sandy Gray courteously saluted them, and then one spoke, and it seemed to the young man that the first word awakened some chord in his heart which had long been asleep.

"Pray, can you tell me, young sir, if there be any of the name of Gray still to the fore in this parish?"

The young man gave a violent start, and a wild hope sprang up in his heart.

"Yes, I am a Gray; I am Alexander Gray of Hartrigge, son of that Andrew Gray who fell at Bothwell, and whose forbears were so long ministers of this parish," he said, with trembling eagerness. "And you! you! I am not mistaken now that I see your faces. I remember you quite

well--Uncle David and Uncle Adam, thank God!"

"Can it be possible that I look upon the face of my brother's son? Now the Lord be praised!" exclaimed the more aged and infirm of the two, and, advancing, he held out two trembling hands to his nephew, which the young man, alighting from his horse, warmly grasped, while the tears rained down his cheeks. Then he turned to Adam Hepburn, whose face betrayed his deep satisfaction, though his joy did not find such ready expression.

The villagers, who had watched this scene with consuming interest, now rose with one accord, and with a cheer came flocking about the returned wanderers, for those who had not been personally acquainted with these two sufferers knew their names as household words.

"And now tell me, lad," said the aged minister, when he could free himself from these friendly welcomes and again speak with his nephew, "you spoke of Hartrigge. Can it be that I have returned to find a Gray in Hartrigge still?"

"Yes, yes; I live there, Uncle David; and my mother and dear Aunt Jane also are in the place," he answered, and the minister did not notice that he did not say they dwelt in the house. "Nannie is married now, and, Uncle Adam, she is living at Rowallan, of which her husband, Walter Fleming, is the farmer."

"And there is an Agnes Gray at Rowallan as well as a Gray in Hartrigge!" said the minister. "You hear that, Adam? the old stock is not dead yet, but has developed once more into a goodly tree, for which, O my God, I thank Thee."

"An Agnes Gray at Rowallan yet, did you say?" asked Adam Hepburn, dreamily. "But there was no Rowallan when I left, only the blackened ruins of the homestead. What changes are these?"

"The old laird is dead, and that dear, blessed saint, Lady Hamilton, has rebuilt Hartrigge and Rowallan and would not let a foot but ours upon their thresholds," said the young man. "But come; we cannot stand here all night. Come away home. Oh, what a night this will be beneath the roof-tree of Hartrigge! Here, Uncle David, get on Jess's back, and Uncle Adam and I will walk beside you, and so we will soon be home."

The minister accordingly gladly mounted the animal, and Sandy took the bridle rein over his arm, and the little party moved off up the manse brae, followed by the cheers of the delighted villagers.

As they passed the manse and the kirk they involuntarily stood still, and the minister took his hat from his waving white locks and bent his head a moment on his breast, while Adam Hepburn fixed his eyes on one green spot under a spreading yew tree, as if they would fain dwell there for ever. Then they went on again, and the minister told his nephew in a few brief words how they had been blessed to meet in Holland, and had been vouchsafed a measure of prosperity and usefulness there, but how their hearts had ever yearned for their native land, until the time came they could return to it without fear.

This talk occupied all the way to the farm, at which young Sandy was not sorry, for he did not desire as yet to be more closely questioned regarding his own household at Hartrigge.

The farm at Hartrigge now presented a very fine and striking appearance, the new steading [farm buildings] and commodious dwelling-house, standing so imposingly on the brow of the hill, being thrown into strong relief by the brilliant green of the summer foliage and the bright golden hue of the ripening grain.

At the foot of the little hill, sheltering cosily under the fir-wood, there stood a neat cottage with a garden-plot in front, which was gay with summer bloom. Just as the little party came in sight on the private road a woman's figure came to the door, and shading her eyes with her hand, looked long and intently at it, greatly wondering what it meant. She was a sweet and comely-looking person, though long past her prime, and her fair, calm face bore the impress of many sorrows, yet peace dwelt abidingly upon it now.

She presently turned about, called to some one within, and another figure, much older and feebler looking, and wearing a widow's garb, joined her on the step. And thus they were standing when the party came up.

"Susan! Susan! it is the answer to our many prayers!" said Jane Gray, tremblingly. "If these be not David and Adam, our exiled wanderers, my eyes strangely deceive me."

Then she sat down on the bench at the door and burst into tears.

Why should I linger over that sacred meeting? Could any human pen do it justice? I think not.

After a little Sandy touched the arm of his Uncle David, and begged him to come away up with him to the house, and the others would follow. He gave the old man his arm, and they ascended the hill, walked slowly (too slowly for Sandy's impatient feet) through the fir-wood, and

round to the front of the house. Then, with trembling hand, Sandy opened the door and led his uncle in. In the pleasant family room in the ruddy evening glow there was a sweet and restful picture. On the hearth there stood a cradle, and in a low chair near to it the figure of a woman--a young woman--too young almost, one might have thought, to be a wife and mother.

"Is that you, Sandy? Don't make a noise, dearie, for baby has been so troublesome, and is just asleep."

It was a voice of winning and exquisite softness, and when presently the speaker rose, the old man saw a sweet and lovely young creature, with a fair, rose-tinted face, and deep, tender blue eyes, which reminded him of those blue eyes which had charmed him long ago.

"Is this your wife, my lad? You kept this pleasant surprise to the last," said he, with a sweet smile, and advanced with extended hands.

"Yes, my wife, Uncle David, but something, nay a great deal more," said the young man, hardly knowing what he said. "Oh, uncle, uncle! it is your own daughter Lilian who is my wife, and our little son yonder is named David Gray, out of our love for you. Lily, my dear, my love, this is your father, come home from exile, as we have so long hoped and prayed he would."

For a moment father and daughter stood still, and then these words fell from the old man's lips, in accents of trembling joy--

"It is enough. Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace!"

* * * * *

I cannot linger over these happy moments, so fraught with deepest joy, and yet so shadowed by undying memories and unutterable yearnings for those who were not! Before many minutes were passed they missed Adam Hepburn from their midst, and looking from their southern window they saw him wending his solitary way towards Rowallan. And they let him go in peace, knowing the unutterable yearnings of his soul.

* * * * *

So gleams of sunset joy were vouchsafed to these beaten pilgrims, whose way through life had been so long under shadow of the cloud. And there were Grays again in Hartrigge and Rowallan, and it was hoped that there would be a Gray again in the manse and kirk of Inverburn, when the little David, destined from his birth for the ministry, should be grown to manhood. The family of Burnet of Haughhead was now extinct, save for Sandy Gray's wife. The spoiled daughter of the house had not long survived the death of her boy, who succumbed to his constitutional weaknesses at the age of fifteen. Gilbert Burnet and his wife were dead also, and Haughhead in the hands of a distant connection, who was proved to be the nearest male heir. While any of her Burnet kindred lived, Lilian Gray would never have been permitted to follow her mother's example, and marry a Gray. Her happy home was a haven of peace and rest to her father, who grew young again in heart in her blithe companionship. How dear each was to the other, or what unutterable thanksgiving dwelt continually in their hearts, I cannot tell you. Adam Hepburn spent his time betwixt Hartrigge and Rowallan, but as was natural, was oftenest at the latter place. He was a quiet, gentle, unobtrusive old man, who seemed to live much in the past. He appeared like one who had no hold upon this present life, but who was simply sojourning at a wayside inn, waiting and waiting for a summons to come farther on. But is it not so with us all? The old fiery spirit seemed to be utterly quenched, but no man or woman ever heard him allude to the stormy or terrible past, and when the events of these stirring times were made the subject of conversation, or even distantly alluded to, he never failed to at once separate himself from the rest. He spent much of the time in the churchyard, and would sit for hours upon his wife's grave, with his well-worn Bible for a companion, an object of strange compassion to all who saw him there, and who knew the story of his life-long faithfulness to the memory of one woman.

One sweet summer evening they missed him from among the happy circle at Hartrigge, and knowing he was not at Rowallan, they grew alarmed at last at his long absence, and went in search of him. As was natural, they turned their steps first to the "auld kirk-yaird." He was sitting there, in a down-bent posture, his head almost touching his knees, and his face hidden on the pages of the open Book. David Gray stepped to his side, and touching his arm, said very gently--

"Adam, my brother, it is growing late; come away home."

There was no motion in the silent figure, which sat so still as to alarm them. Then David Gray slipped his hand beneath the bent head, and lightly laid it on the breast, but there was no motion there.

"He has passed away from us," said the minister, tremblingly, "and this night has looked once more upon the face of his beloved, after these forty weary years. It was the hour and the place he longed for. I have often heard him say it. Let us give thanks to our God for His abundant lovingkindness vouchsafed to our weary brother this night."

Ended now the storm of life, ended the long desolation, the bitter yearnings, which had these many years riven that lonely heart. Ended, too, his brief lingering in the sunset at the wayside inn; and for Adam Hepburn now came the eternal enjoyment of that sweet rest which remaineth for the people of God.

THE END

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*** END OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ADAM HEPBURN'S VOW ***

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ADAM HEPBURN'S VOW: A TALE OF KIRK
AND COVENANT ***

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