



ST. CLAIR OF THE ISLES ;

OR, THE

OUTLAWS OF BARRA.

A SCOTTISH ROMANCE.

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ST. CLAIR OF THE ISLES.

CHAPTER I.

'BREAK, ye rude waves of the Northern Sea! Break on the tower of M'Leod. Like the rock on which it is founded, it mocks your efforts. Lonely and forsaken, its halls are desolate, and its chambers the retreat of birds who mistake its galleries for the recesses of the mountains. Soon, soon shall they afford refuge to the eagle, who under his wing shall rear the bloody arm on which shall hang the future fate of Scotland.'

Rising from one of his prophetic dreams, thus spoke the seer of Roskelyn Glen, his affrighted spirit projecting his eye-balls, his cheeks pale, his lips livid, and his grey hair stiffened and erect.

Again entranced he lay, when wildly starting, he continued—'And ye lofty turrets of Roskelyn's wide domain, your pride shall bow, till the disgrace of your ancient house becomes its highest glory.'

He ceased for some moments, then again exclaimed—'Ah me! sad sight! on what a field of blood will shine the glorious sun! See! the parties meet! hark to the clashing of their spears! they strike, they sink, they fall! again they rise; again renew the attack with more than mortal fury!—they bleed!—their spears are broken! they draw their swords! their armour is cleft in twain! the bloody arm triumphs, and Scotland is once more free from the tyrant yoke of England.'

Such was the vision that intruded itself on the ancient seer, who, faint and powerless, when nature recovered her usual tone, craved a draught of water from two youthful shepherds who had witnessed the prophetic speeches which he had uttered; then praying them to lead him to his humble home, he stretched on his couch, and endeavoured to collect his wandering spirit.

The seer composed to rest, the shepherds left him. 'Donald,' said Robert, as they walked forward, 'in good troth, but I tremble in every limb; what think you of what we have heard? I pray ye heed it well.'

'I will,' answered Donald. 'When the spirit speaks thus in inspired men, we should indeed mark it; but a close mouth makes a wise head. The prediction seemed to allude, in part, to the house of our noble lord, and to mention that, might involve us in ruin.'

'Troth might it; my advice is to consult the holy monk, John of Inveresk; we can give him the account together, and he will advise for the best.'

'Right, Robert; I like your counsel well; we will away thither. The seer spoke of the counsel of M'Leod,—know ye where that is situated?'

'Not in the Lowlands, as I should conjecture,' answered Donald. 'The seer himself is of the western isles—'tis probably there; but what think ye of the eagle who shall rear the bloody arm?'

'Nay, I know not; our poor country is never free from warfare. Some deadly battle is surely foretold, and all we can say is, the will of Heaven must be fulfilled. It may, perhaps, never take place in our time, for these inspired men see forward for many years.'

Thus conversing, by the close of the day they reached the chapel of Inveresk, where they relieved their minds to the monk. He heard them with attention, and took their depositions down in writing; then giving them his blessing, dismissed them with a strict injunction to conceal what they had heard,

as it could answer no purpose to disclose it, but might breed confusion, by inflaming weak minds; that the will of Heaven, would be, in its own time, undoubtedly accomplished, and that all erring humanity could effect, was to receive its decrees with resignation.

CHAPTER II.

DURING the latter years of James I. of Scotland, in an ancient fortress, situated in the island of Barra,* resided St. Clair Monteith, an outlaw. Young, open, and generous, he was universally beloved, not only by the poor inhabitants of Barra, but throughout the island which he sometimes indiscriminately visited, and from whence the power of James himself could scarcely, against his will, have forced him.

St. Clair Monteith, or St. Clair of the Isles, as he was more commonly called, was at the period of his outlawry, not more than twenty-two. He had been bred and trained to arms by his uncle Monteth, who, at his death, left him considerable possessions in the south of Scotland, but which, on his outlawry, had been seized by the strong hand of power, and the produce devoted to the use of his enemies. Confined by the royal mandate, to the isle of Barra, he had taken up his residence in an old fortress, called the tower of M'Leod, where, could he have forgotten past events, he might have lived happily, for he had four companions, well born and valiant, who had voluntarily shared his misfortunes and disgrace. To these, at different times, others in similar circumstances, though without the sentence of the law, had joined; so that St. Clair, if occasion needed, wanted neither commanders nor men, for in his com-

* One of the Hebrides.

panions he had chiefs, and in every islander a willing soldier. The court of Scotland well knew his power; but as he was peaceable, no means were used to check it, either from fear or prudence. The money he had brought to the island on his first outlawry he had spread with a liberal hand; and for cattle, or other necessaries, which he had since purchased, he had given orders to the amount on an agent in the vicinity of Edinburgh.

The outlaws, companions of St. Clair, were first, Sir James Ross, a valiant knight and noble gentleman, the companion of St. Clair's youthful days, and the sworn friend of his riper years. Allan Hamilton, a similar character, learned and reflective, a disposition which he had yet more cultivated since his residence at Barra. The Chevalier de Bourg, a French knight, generous and volatile, who, involved in St. Clair's disgrace, had voluntarily shared his captivity, rather than attempt an escape to his native country. The last was James M'Gregor, bold, undaunted, and revengeful where he was displeased, but willing to sacrifice his life and fortune in the cause of honour or friendship. The gentlemen, as well as St. Clair, were bachelors; and though for some time the rocks of Barra had in general confined them, they looked forward to the time when they should burst their bonds, and again become active members of society.

The characters who had at different times joined them were of divers kinds; but in general men of talents, and well born, who had either left their country from difference of political opinion, family quarrels, debt, or other cause, and as the name and character of St. Clair were well known, had enlisted under his banner; these last amounted to twelve; the whole inhabitants making seventeen.

CHAPTER III.

'FILL your goblets; nay, fill to the brim, my pledge is—May the generous soul prosper, and the oppressor sink into deserved infamy! Nay, drink to the dregs; which though we are outlaws, we are men. From eighteen to twenty-one the world plundered and laughed at me; now, though they still plunder me, they tremble at my name, for fear of what may come. At the final account, which priests say we must all give, let the widow I have wronged, the orphan I have oppressed, or the virgin I have betrayed, stand forth and bruit it in my face.'

'Your inclinations, St. Clair, did not naturally lead to these points,' answered the Chevalier de Bourg; 'but woe to you, if broken heads and an invincible spirit are included in the acts of condemnation! Never since you were sixteen have I seen you so quietly inclined, as since James did us the favour of ordering us here.'

'The reason is obvious,' replied St. Clair; 'from my earliest youth my heart was alive to gratitude; and do not our poor neighbours here, and the inhabitants of the adjacent isles, all love and regard us? I am therefore careful to support a conduct proper to justify their opinion; and, by my soul! if I knew one among us stoop to meanness or dishonour, my voice and arm should be the first to banish him from our society.'

'Your wishes have hitherto been our law; and strictly observed,' answered one of the number.

'Tis well! then let the proud court of Scotland bow to the barren rocks of Barra, and confess the superiority of nature's commoners. Not only your own honour demands our acting as we have hitherto done, but also common prudence; for in our old dwelling here, though it be crumbling with age, and

perishing with neglect, we are as secure as in a strong defended castle, for there is not one of our neighbours but would fight, bleed, or die for us.'

'True,' said M'Gregor; 'yet I have often thought that it would be prudent to repair our fortress, and increase our number of inmates, James may not always be so pacific, and in case of danger we are but seventeen.'

'Perish the thought,' replied St. Clair; 'seventeen men are enough to procure all the necessaries we want. In all our contests hitherto, seventeen men have been enough for victory; and in case we fall, seventeen men are enough to die.'

'That's readily allowed,' said Ross, 'yet methinks M'Gregor advises well; your enemies are powerful, and will never think themselves secure while you have life.'

'Perhaps so,' answered St. Clair; 'but my unhappy fortune has already involved too many of my friends; but our die is cast and must be abided, for those gentlemen that have voluntarily joined us, like ourselves, I surmise, they have some strong quarrel with the world; but for the islanders, they have none; they labour in the manner of their fathers, and are content with the station allotted them. Shall we then break on their quiet? No, surely let them vegetate in happy obscurity; labour and peace for them—the battle of life and jollity for us; but see, the goblets stand; drink round—drown reflection.'

The party drank.—'I espouse St. Clair's opinion,' said Hamilton; 'we are inmates enough for peace, and in case of danger, the standard of St. Clair would collect an army.'

'For men,' said de Bourg, 'act as you please, I am as willing to fight, nay, to die, in a good cause, as another; but for a Frenchman of my age and constitution to be stewed up, like a monk in a cell, is too much. A few women now would render all easy.'

'Women!' repeated St. Clair; 'by heaven!

chevalier, when you introduce them, ye lose me; bring me toads, serpents, tigers, devils, fiends, but spare me from women. Are ye tired of quiet that ye name them? Bring women, and you bring dissensions never to be appeased, and all the concomitant horrors of quarrels, blood, and murder. No, we will have no mistresses but the bottle—no crime but drunkenness.'

'St. Clair is right,' answered Hamilton; 'women would but breed contention, and more men confusion. If we live like monks, at least we are merry ones, and our penance is easy.'

'Well observed, wisdom,' said one of the party, who had lately come to the island; 'from you I expected as much, but from St. Clair's complexion, far otherwise. Had ye never mothers, or did ye never love?'

'A mother I undoubtedly had,' replied St. Clair; a burning blush mantling through his dark complexion, and overshadowing his manly features; 'but she was a wolf, and so fierce and inhuman that she not only refused to nourish my infancy, but would, if possible, have devoured me in my riper years. Like other fools, too, I fell in love; that is, the glittering crest of a serpent caught my eye, and I pursued it till it fixed a sting in my heart. For awhile I yielded to my folly; but at length, calling reason to my aid, I made a strong effort, and plucked at once the venom from my heart.'

The horn at the gate of the fortress at that moment gave notice of strangers, who proved to be some herdsmen from Lochabar, from whom St. Clair had received oxen and sheep, not only for the use of the fortress, but also to help the poor islanders, who had been greatly distressed during the winter, which had been uncommonly severe. For the value of these he had given an order on an agent near Edinburgh, but who had declined accepting the draft, saying that he had received orders from the Earl of Roskelyn to disre-

gard any such as might be sent him from St. Clair, whose estate the king had awarded to his sole use.

St. Clair rose hastily from the table, his face flushed with anger, and his eyes sparkling with indignation. 'The miscreant!' exclaimed he; 'by my soul; I will once more proclaim villain, even to the tyrant's face. 'Tis not the order of James that shall confine me to Barra; with the first fair wind I will away to Scotland, and retrieve mine own, or die.'

Ross, Hamilton, De Bourg, and M'Gregor, laid their hands upon their swords: 'Let good or ill befall,' exclaimed they in one voice, 'we go with you, neither shall you fall alone, nor unrevenged.'

'Nay, we will all go,' added some of the party that had joined them; 'St. Clair must leave none of his friends behind.'

St. Clair looked affectionately round him. 'Do not unman me,' said he, 'no man whose life is in danger shall leave the island. The present quarrel is mine only, and I alone will meet it.'

'By my honour you shall not,' replied Ross; 'if you resolve to brave destruction, I will share the danger.'

The whole party interrupted Ross with a cry to the same purport. 'Men, friends,' exclaimed St. Clair, 'can you wish me to live dishonoured, that you use the only means that can dissuade me from my purpose?'

'No,' replied M'Gregor, 'but providence is sometimes better than courage: to go now to the court of Scotland, would be to brave danger, to die the death of fools. Think you, St. Clair, that vengeance sleeps? or that the death of the Duke of Albany, his sons, and that of the Earl of Lenox is forgotten? No, the world yet remembers that the tyrant sent in triumph to the widowed countess, the bleeding heads of her sons, of her father, and of her husband, preserve your life, then, and those of your friends, for a better cause than petty animosity. Stay till you

shall be called upon in the cause of your country, and live or fall nobly.'

'And let the villain Roskelyn revel in my wealth, and even refuse to pay those just debts which necessity forces me to contract?'

'Could you gratify your enemies more than by subjecting yourself to the penalty annexed to your returning from your outlawry?' asked Hamilton.

St. Clair paused. 'I will think till to-morrow,' answered he: 'Monteith must live with honour or he must cease to live.'

'Perish the paltry consideration of distinct property among us,' said Ross. 'What man here has not shared St. Clair's? and what right has he to claim a superiority of friendship over us? The man who cannot receive an act of kindness, is unworthy to confer one.'

One of the party named Randolph, who was immediately acquainted with all St. Clair's misfortune, then spoke. He was elder brother to M'Gregor, of the same character, but more deeply coloured.

'The tide of passion must have its way,' said he, 'and those who attempt to stem its course may be likened to those who reason with madmen. St. Clair, we all know, values not his own life, but he will be careful of those of his friends. Ross, Hamilton, de Bourg, and M'Gregor, must therefore remain with him in Barra. For me, held here by no law, unknown at the Court of James, and a stranger to John of Roskelyn, I am a proper messenger to carry St. Clair's demand. Myself, and another in similar circumstances, will repair to the south with his order: and from the result of our errand, he can form his future designs.'

All approved of this measure except St. Clair; but the danger of his friends abated his ardour, and made him deliberate on the subject.

'For this time give way,' said Ross, 'if Randolph brings not back an answer to your wishes, every voice, as well as arm, is in your favour. We will raise

the men of the islands, and away to Scotland; call together the vassals of your uncle's house, those of mine, and of all our friends; then claim our freedom, rights, and property; obtain them, or perish in the attempt.'

This arrangement was warmly seconded, that Monteith was forced to yield, and that perhaps the more willingly, as he conceived that Randolph, being a stranger, incurred no danger. All the party who were free, claimed the privilege of accompanying Randolph, who, at length, instead of one companion, was obliged to accept of three; and having made a provision for the journey, and being wellarmed, they resolved to adventure with the first fair wind to Scotland, in one of the fishing-boats that lay on the coast.

In the intervening time, a private consultation had taken place between Ross, Hamilton, M'Gregor, and Randolph, in which the three first empowered the last to claim, on their respective estates, what sums of money were due to them and to give their discharge; for the property of Monteith, as principal, had, alone been confiscated.

CHAPTER IV.

ALL being prepared, Randolph and his companions, simply clothed as men of the common rank, departed, St. Clair giving them a letter to this purport:—

TO THE AGENT CARNEGIE.

'Whereas, I some time since sent an order on you for the payment of twenty marks, which sum you have refused to discharge; this is to command the payment of sixty, a small sum compared to what you have of mine in your hands; see therefore that it be paid, or I shall be necessitated to enforce the

demand in person atonce from the villain who usurps my right, and from you, the despicable tool of his treachery.

ST. CLAIR MONTEITH.

The journey, after they reached the mainland of Scotland, was long; but they lost no time on their way, and reaching Edinburgh, they presented St. Clair's letter to the agent. He perused it with visible emotion; but carefully examining the messengers, and finding nothing in their personal appearance to alarm his fears, he answered them haughtily, ordering them to attend on the morrow at Roskelyn.

'Troth, master, will we,' replied Randolph, assuming a language suitable to his habit, 'and I hope you will then dispatch our business, for we are not used to dance attendance, like courtly lackeys, and cannot easily break it. We ask, I presume, nothing but what is the brave St. Clare's right, and it would not be honestly or mannerly to refuse it, as that might give him the trouble to come himself.'

'Insolent varlet;' replied Carnegie, 'know you that St. Clair dares not show his face in Scotland, under forfeiture of his life?'

'Marry, I know not the place where St. Clair dares not show his face; and for his life, whoever attempts that, with all submission, will rouse a hornet's nest.'

'Do you threaten, vallain?' said Carnegie.

'Marry, heaven forbid' answered Randolph; 'we poor lads of the isles are not given to threaten; we are not courtiers, masters; we are more for deeds than words.'

Carnegie viewed the party suspiciously. 'I will consult the lord of Roskelyn,' said he; 'meet me at his castle to-morrow, at noon.'

So saying, he left them; and they retired to procure rest and refreshment.

Careful to their appointment, Randolph and his

companion reached Roskelyn at the appointed hour. For a considerable time they waited in the outward court, subjected to the gaze and rude jests of the lackeys, who usually imitating the manners of their masters, and wanting their education and rank, convert pride and haughtiness into vulgar rudeness and illiberal insolence.

At length they were summoned into the great hall, where, seated on costly chairs, covered with rich embroider, sat the Lord of Roskelyn, and his haughty, but beautiful countess, surrounded by a numerous train of ladies and attendants.

Judging by the rudeness of the strangers' appearance, they were astonished to see them show no signs of admiration or restraint at the grandeur and pomp around them; for Randolph entered with a careless unembarrassed air, his cap upon his head, and his left arm wrapped in his plaid.

'You come from the outlaw St. Clair,' said the earl; 'know you the consequence of making a demand of property no longer his; ever mine by right, but now mine both by justice and the will of the king?'

'Marry, I understand not that,' replied Randolph: 'it may however be the courtly fashion; but in the isles, no king has a right to rob a man of his own.'

'Rude clown,' said Carnegie, who stood at a humble distance from the earl, 'know you to whom you speak thus rudely, and in whose presence you stand, that you do not move your cap?'

'I speak to John of Roskelyn, I trow; I told you before, I knew no courtly fashions. I wear my cap, for I took cold by waiting so long among the lackeys in the entry.'

'The lackeys are surely good enough company for thee,' said the Lady Roskelyn; 'but thou hast learned insolence from thy employers.'

'I came not to talk with women,' replied Ran-

dolph; 'I am afraid of their tongues. Will the demand of St. Clair be paid?'

'It will not,' answered Roskelyn; 'and mark my words, rogue—if thou dost not depart hence immediately, I will punish thee for thy insolence.'

'Punish me,' repeated Randolph; 'if all rogues were punished, honest men would have their right.'

'Wilt thou, once more I repeat, take thy answer and begone, ere I punish thee for thy daring?'

'A time will come for repentance for all,' answered Randolph, contemptuously, throwing down his glove.

So saying, without waving his cap, or bending his body, he and his companions prepared to leave the room.

'Come back,' cried Roskelyn.

'What meanest thou by throwing down thy glove? Thou surely, hind as thou art, cannot carry thy insolence far enough to defy me?'

'I mean,' answered Randolph, 'that who will may pick it up; and should any one defy me, though it were even John of Roskelyn, I would answer as a man.'

'Villain! thou art not what thou seemest,' exclaimed Roskelyn.

'My good lord,' said the countess, 'why lose your temper with this wretch, who, rude as the caterenes* among whom he dwells, is sent purposely to affront you? give him in charge to your vassals: in the prison of the castle let him learn respect.'

'In the halls of the castle; nay lady, in your bridal chamber learn you that truth and modesty is the crown of a woman; and that she who prostitutes her person, though under the sanction of marriage, is little better than a harlot.'

'Insufferable insolence!' exclaimed Roskelyn; 'seize and bear these men to the prison of the tower.'

* Highland banditti.

I repeat it, they are not what they seem, and the public tranquillity may require them to be punished.'

'And who will punish us?' replied Randolph; 'not John of Roskelyn, I trow; his fears won't let him, whatever his inclination may be. Come lead the way,' continued he, addressing his companions; 'the air of this perfumed hall is too heavy for me. I love a purer atmosphere.'

'Away with him; I will hear no more,' cried Roskelyn.

'Marry, but you will, and shortly too; you have a long account to discharge.'

The attendant prevented more by attempting to seize Randolph and his companions; but drawing their broad swords from under their garments, they cleared the way to the gates, where, mounting their horses, they soon lost sight of the towers of Roskelyn, and using their utmost speed, reached the Frith of Forth, which having crossed, they proceeded to St. John's Town, Perth, where they refreshed themselves and their beasts, considering themselves secure from the pursuit of Roskelyn.

The business they had to transact for Ross, Hamilton, and M'Gregor, now alone prevented their return to the island. That of Ross was in the shire of Inverness: that of M'Gregor nearly in the same place: and Hamilton's near where they then were.

A few days completed the last named: they then journeyed to Inverness, and received various sums for Ross; but the person Randolph was the most anxious to see, was his eldest brother, Sir Alexander M'Gregor, who at this time happened to be absent as far distant as Teviotdale, upon the English borders.

Since the outlawry of his younger brother James, Sir Alexander had received his revenues with unblemished honour, and protected his property from depredation, Randolph's wish, however, to see him, was not solely on account of pecuniary concerns, but

also to consult him on the measures the outlaws should pursue, as he had no doubt but St. Clair would be deaf to all but revenge.

After consulting with his companions, they dispatched a trusty messenger to bear a letter to Barra, which was to inform St. Clair that their absence would be unavoidably protracted two months longer; but fearful of exasperating him, they palliated as much as possible the conduct of Roskelyn; and concluded by entreating him to bear all with patience until their return, which was only delayed by their wish to consult Sir Alexander M'Gregor on the proper steps to pursue.

This point arranged, they departed for the south, clothed and accoutred in a manner suitable to their rank: and reaching Teviotdale, enjoyed the satisfaction of meeting with the elder M'Gregor.

A wary politician, as well as a brave warrior, Sir Alexander for the present disapproved all hostile measures, as he conceived they must ultimately end in ruin. 'James,' said he, 'is daily more obnoxious to the people; but for the present, surrounded with power, all attempts would be vain. St. Clair's cause is just, and I would willingly hazard my life to reinstate him in his right; but let us act with prudence, and though we delay the blow, let it be decisive when it falls. My fortune he is welcome to share; and let him not hesitate, for I feel assured the day will come when he can repay all his friends.'

As Alexander M'Gregor meant speedily to return to the Highlands, Randolph and his companions awaited his leisure, in order to accompany him; so that their stay from Barra, by the length of their journey, the delay, business, and other unavoidable causes, had been prolonged to near four months, three of which had elapsed since they quitted Roskelyn.

All being prepared, they took their way homeward; the elder M'Gregor with four domestics, and Ran-

dolph and his companions, in all forming a company of nine.

On the second evening, passing a desolate and extensive moor, a horseman passed them, his clothes and accoutrements richly emblazoned with the arms and devices of the house of Roskelyn.

'Give you good even,' said Randolph: 'you ride hastily—serve you the Earl of Roskelyn?'

'No, the dowager countess is my lady. She is behind in a covered litter.'

'A rich mistress, friend: and fame says one amongst the fairest of our Scottish dames.'

'Truth was she, and even now might vie with most, not more than forty summers having passed over her.'

'You may then expect a new lord; for personal attractions, added to her wealth, she cannot fail of suitors.'

'She hath not, but their suit is vain; all her affections appear wedded to her grandson, the young Montrose of Roskelyn, who, for the last two months, has been her guest at Eusdale; she is now conducting him home.'

'The child must be young,' answered Randolph, 'methinks it is not long since the earl was wedded.'

'It is nearly three years,' replied the man; 'but he hath not more than two months completed his first year: yet it is a fine hearty lad. But farewell, masters: the evening draws on, and I ride forward to procure entertainment befitting the quality of the noble guest.'

So saying, he set spurs to his beast, and soon lost sight of the party. Randolph at the same time made a stop, and exclaimed—

'Brother, revenge is in our power. St. Clair shall be free, for you will not surely refuse to join in a plan that cannot fail to liberate him.'

'I see none that is at present likely to effect that purpose,' said M'Gregor: 'if you depend on the

dowager of Roskelyn, she is among the greatest of his enemies.'

'I know that well—I expect nothing from her; but what think you of making the young Montrose the hostage for his father's honour? Once in the islands, Roskelyn, nor even James himself, dare attack the outlaws; or should they, they could away to Norway, and be secure from danger.'

'By mine honour 'tis a noble daring if it could be done with safety.'

'Safety!' repeated Randolph; 'armed as we are, we need not fear treble our number; the night draws on, too, and our persons are unknown; and for the present it will only be surmised an incursion of the English for the sake of ransom.'

M'Gregor, after some consideration, agreed to the plan, if it should seem practicable; and calling his party together, they were acquainted with the scheme in agitation, and sworn to secrecy.

The business was scarcely arranged when the cavalcade approached: four horsemen rode before the litter, six behind, and two on each side; a number thought fully adequate, as the country was then at peace. Randolph, as projector of the plan, rode first, and ordered them to halt, which they refused: but rushing forward, he in a moment threw down the driver, and a scene of confusion ensued; for uncertain of the strength of their assailants, their fears, and the darkness of the night, multiplied their number.

'Let no man stir,' exclaimed Randolph; 'we mean no injury; our business is a few words with the countess; we will effect our purpose, or perish—opposition is useless.'

The domestics were true to their trust, until seeing some of their companions fall an easy prey to the superior skill and valour of Randolph and his party, they fled, or crying for mercy, threw down their arms. Randolph then approached the litter, in which was seated the Dowager of Roskelyn and three fe-

male attendants, one of whom held the young Montrose upon her knees, in so sound a sleep that all the confusion had not awakened him.

The Lady Roskelyn was busied in taking off her bracelets and jewels to present to the supposed robbers; but putting back her hand, Randolph said—

‘Keep your trinkets, lady: the young Lord of Roskelyn is our aim: he shall, however, be safely returned for ransom, and carefully nurtured during the intervening time.’

So saying, he stretched out his arms for the child: but Lady Roskelyn, throwing herself on her knees, entreated him to relinquish his purpose. Her prayers were vain, for Randolph was deaf to her entreaties, and callous to her tears; and ordering the trembling woman who held the child to reach him, she reluctantly complied. Wrapping the infant within his cloak, and pressing him to his rough breast, he said to the lady—

‘Fear not for the boy: did our hearts want affection, even as much as yours has hitherto done, this child is secure from danger: for interest, the force of which you are well acquainted with, will keep him safe.—Farewell.’

‘Say then where you bear him,’ exclaimed she, in an agony of grief, ‘that the demanded ransom may be prepared and sent.’

‘To England, rest satisfied with the promise obtained.’

So saying, he gave the word to his companions, who, turning their horses, retook their way towards the English border, the better to deceive and prevent pursuit.

After a journey of some miles, the party commodiously concealed between two mountains, sent forward one of their companions to procure wine, meat, and bread, which Randolph offered the infant when he awoke at daybreak.

Looking round, for a few moments, he cried bitterly, but in a short time appeared sensible of the

caresses of his hardy nurse, examined him carefully, played with his sword, and at length took the food offered him.

‘By mine honour,’ said Sir Alexander, laughing, ‘nature made a strange mistake when she deemed thee a warrior, for thou art one of the most expert nurses I ever saw.’

‘By Heaven!’ exclaimed Randolph, ‘if not corrupted by the court, and the pride and arrogance of his family, I’ll warrant he’ll be a noble fellow; he drinks wine already like an outlaw; methinks he resembles St. Clair.’

After more conversation of the same nature, they all partook of some refreshment; then remounting their horses, which they had left to graze, they took the way to Dumfries, the young Lord of Roskelyn placed before Randolph, apparently well pleased with the novelty of all around him.

Taking a short repose at Dumfries, they proceeded to Kirkcudbright, where, finding a vessel bound for Port Patrick, they immediately embarked, and with a fair wind reached Ireland.

Fearful of injuring the infant’s health by continued travelling, they devoted a few days to rest: during which time they engaged a careful nurse to attend him. They then procured a second vessel to convey them to Barra, leaving Sir Alexander and his attendants, who, after remaining a few weeks in Ireland, returned to his paternal home.

During this interval, the news of the loss of the child had reached his parents; messengers were despatched in all quarters, in order to obtain information, and particularly to England, where they had no doubt he had been conveyed; for the most distant idea of his being taken for the purpose of liberating St. Clair never intruded; and though the Earl of Roskelyn had no doubt but Randolph and his companions were not what their dress appeared to denote, yet the length of time since their departure,

and their destination to the islands, and the capture of his child on the English borders, completely baffled all suspicion respecting them, and forced him to yield to time the development of what he could not comprehend.

In daily expectation of the ransom for the child being claimed, the countess, in the interim, gave birth to the second son, who, though not able to banish a remembrance of their loss, at least alleviated its bitterness.

CHAPTER V.

RANDOLPH and his companions having reached the shores of Barra, the party landed; and leaving the nurse to follow, took their way to the fortress, Randolph carrying the young Roskelyn, who was grown so attached to him that he preferred him to any other person.

In their passage from the shore they met a piper, whom Randolph ordered to precede them, playing one of his most lively airs; and thus arranged, they reached the tower of M'Leod.

St. Clair and his companions were in the hall, when the mingled sounds of the pipe, a loud exclamation of triumph, and the horn at the gate, struck his ear. 'By Heaven!' cried he, starting up, 'tis surely Randolph; but why such sounds of satisfaction is beyond my comprehension.'

As he spoke he rushed forward, but was met at the entrance by Randolph, who exclaimed—'Triumph, St. Clair! I bring thee a noble prisoner, a mine of wealth: and what is still more precious, I have wrung the hearts of all thine enemies. Nay, man, never gape with wonder—hold out thine arms, and receive my charge—'tis a noble gift—no less, by my soul! than the heir of the house of Roskelyn, the young Montrose.'

St. Clair appeared transfixed with astonishment, his eyes rivetted on the child, but drew back his hands as though they had recoiled from a serpent. 'It is impossible!' at length cried he: 'but even supposing it as you say, what is the child of John of Roskelyn to me?'

'What a question!' answered Randolph; 'the son of John of Roskelyn is to thee wealth, liberty, rank, and fortune restored.'

'I know not how,' replied St. Clair; 'but prithee, Randolph, explain this mysterious jest, for I am convinced it is a jest.'

'Tis the most true one, then,' answered Randolph, 'thou didst ever hear. In few words Roskelyn behaved like a villain, and fortune threw revenge in my way, in the person of this boy, whom thou mayest be assured his parents will be glad to regain at the expense of all they have purloined from thee.'

'Poor child!' exclaimed St. Clair, emphatically, 'art thou too doomed to suffer for the crimes of thy parents?'

'Suffer!' repeated Randolph; 'no sufferings are attached to the part he has to act, and as to the family of Roskelyn, their punishment is deserved.'

'It is,' answered St. Clair; 'but excuse me, Randolph, I will never owe the recovery of my rights to this child.'

Randolph looked displeased.—'Thus it is,' said he, 'that over-officious friendship is ever repaid.'

'Dear Randolph,' exclaimed St. Clair, 'I feel the extent of your friendship in its full force; but consider with what eyes I must view this child; on one side, the offspring of pride, dissimulation, and avarice; on the other, of treachery, meanness and falsehood.'

'By my life,' said Ross, 'if the boy inherits those qualities, they bear good features.'

'He strikingly resembles St. Clair,' said Hamilton.

'Truly doth he,' observed the chevalier. 'Harkee St. Clair! Is there any natural cause for the likeness?'

'A truce with jests,' replied St. Clair: 'for pity's sake, Randolph, explain this business.'

Randolph then related the whole account of his expedition, including the small hopes Alexander entertained of success in an attempt, at the present period, to recover St. Clair's property; and concluded by saying, that thinking it prudent to sink that of Montrose for Roskelyn. 'On our arrival in Ireland, I gave him in lieu that of Randolph Monteith: and, in faith, I think you may be proud of your son.'

Whatever St. Clair's thoughts were, he suppressed them, only saying,—'I should be sincerely sorry, if, by this business, as the persons of children alter greatly, he should hereafter be disowned by his family, and declared an impostor.'

'That I defy them to do,' replied Randolph; 'nature herself has stamped his birth-right beyond all power of dispute:' so saying, he stripped up the young Montrose's sleeve, and showed his right arm, which was wine-marked, of the colour of blood, from the wrist to the elbow.'

'A providential mark,' said St. Clair, 'and as you say, cannot fail to identify him at any future period—as for taking ransom, I decline it. But more of this subject hereafter; come on—our cellar shall testify that we rejoice at your return; even Roskelyn shall be forgotten: this night we give to joy. To-morrow we will talk of business.' So saying, they seated themselves at table, and gave the evening to conviviality until they retired to rest.

Even the wine had not power to banish from the mind of St. Clair what had passed. In the lonely quiet of his chamber every unpleasant occurrence returned with redoubled violence; he felt, as he had before truly said, the full force of Randolph's friend-

ship, which had made him stoop to a deed he deemed dishonourable, but which Randolph thought no more of than taking a captive in battle. 'Ah, St. Clair,' said he mentally, 'how art thou fallen! pupil of the valiant and noble Monteith, wouldest thou be worthy thy tutor to owe thy freedom to a child? Revenge for which my heart thirsts: I would have the vengeance of a man.—Oh, fortune! give me but once the means to meet this Roskelyn hand to hand, without the minions that protect him, and if I do not prove his blood base and mine true, may the curse remain upon me for ever!'

How to act in respect to the child he knew not—to return him was impossible, without involving Randolph in disgrace, and himself in a quarrel with one who had so truly exerted his friendship for him, and indeed with all his companions: for they appeared to consider such a prisoner as Montrose of the utmost consequence, as at any time he would enable either themselves or St. Clair to make their own terms.

On the ensuing day a distant apartment in the fortress was appointed for the child and his nurse. St. Clair, however, felt the most lively vexation on being necessitated to pass for his father; but Randolph having made such declaration to his nurse, it became absolutely necessary to continue the deception, lest a change might excite suspicion.

In a short time the young Randolph, as he was called, became the favourite of the whole party, except St. Clair, who always viewed him with a mixture of concern; and if not with dislike, a sentiment nearly resembling it, for he recalled to his memory many unpleasant circumstances. Such, however, is the power of infancy and innocence over a heart naturally kind, that he frequently forgot his disgust, to answer his infantine caresses; but the tender name of father, which the young Randolph began to articulate plainly, ever acted like an electric shock, and never failed to awaken all the discordant passions of his soul.

Young Roskelyn had been about two months at Barra, when one of his fishing vessels brought a stranger, who inquired for St. Clair; and being admitted into the fortress, Monteith was astonished to see a young lad whose appearance bespoke him to be far superior to their general visitors.

He was formed with the slightest, but most graceful symmetry; and his face exhibited a model of natural beauty, at once bespeaking sweetness and dignity. On his entrance, bowing his head,—‘My business,’ said he, ‘is with the chief, St. Clair Monteith,—I pray you direct me to him.’

‘I am so called,’ replied Monteith; ‘and pleasant, I ween, must the business be that is borne by such a messenger.’

‘I trust so; five weeks since I left the court of Scotland, and before my departure, was entrusted with a small casket to deliver here, if occasion suited. To effect this, I have crossed from Ross-shire, and rejoice to have executed the task requested.’ So saying, he delivered a small box, carefully sealed, into the hands of St. Clair, who said—‘Gentle youth, you can perhaps inform me of the contents, and favour me with the names of those who sent it?’

‘My orders went no farther than to deliver it,’ answered he; ‘perhaps more information may be contained within; so please you I will retire while you examine it.’

‘Not so,’ answered St. Clair: ‘I pray you be seated.’ So saying, he broke the seal, and opened the casket, where, to his great astonishment, the first article that presented, was a gold chain that had appertained to his uncle Monteith, with various other jewels: under these a purse containing sixty marks, and at the bottom of the casket a letter to this import:—

‘The enclosed jewels and money, appertaining to St. Clair Monteith, are remitted to him by a friend. For the present he is requested to bear his situation with patience, as any attempt to leave the islands

would end in his destruction, his enemies only wanting a pretence to take a life which keeps them in perpetual dread of their own. By the messenger let him remit some trifling memorial that the casket has been received.

‘Strange!’ exclaimed St. Clair,—‘that the jewels were my uncle’s and afterwards mine, is most true; but how these should escape the general wreck, is beyond comprehension: the money, too. Indeed, my good youth, thou must tell me who this unknown friend is, that, if ever occasion serves, I may thank him.’

‘I am a lad, chief, but I can keep a secret like a man; and pardon me, but it becomes you not to tamper for a friend’s secrets.’

‘Truly said, my brave boy; but there is no middle way; John of Roskelyn, nor the agent Carnegie, have nothing to do with this business, I ween?’

‘Nothing, on mine honour.’

‘Yet my whole property is in their hands.’

‘It is; but it is impossible for them to sell or alienate it.’

‘Undoubtedly not; but then it becomes the property of another, and I have no right—’

‘You have a just right to what I have brought, and most probably will hear again from the same quarter; but your friend must choose another messenger, for I love not to be too closely questioned.’

‘The gift, for I consider it no other, would lose half its value, by any other hand—thy spirit charms me. But say, I pray thee, as thou camest from the court, how tends all there?’

‘Not pleasantly, the king is at variance with many of his nobles, who lament the loss of the old regent. The Earl of Roskelyn, three months since, lost his son near the English borders, and has since obtained no tidings of him.’

‘A severe grief,’ said St. Clair.

‘Yes, to the earl and dowager: but the Lady Roskelyn bears it bravely.’

'Tis well! yet a mother's feelings are said to be the most acute.'

'True; but if I mistake not, the Lady Roskelyn was never famed for the softer qualities of her sex.'

'Justly observed; I find thou knowest her, her face and heart are at variance; the first is fair and beautiful—the second hard, false, and ungrateful.'

'You speak feelingly, chief; the world says she treated you ungratefully.'

'Thou art a shrewd youth. What age art thou?'

'Nineteen.'

'Thou appearest not near so much. I fear to offend by questions, but hast thou preferment near the court?'

'No—I love it not; even this island is more pleasant to me than the court of James.'

'That is strange; but thou wilt hereafter think otherwise; a few years over, and the down of manhood on thy chin, the courtly dames will emulate each other for thy favour.'

'And when they have gained it, throw me away from them for the first fool who has more wealth or rank than myself. Think you not so, chief?'

'Faith! like enough: but notwithstanding thy youth, thou appearest to be forewarned, and must therefore act with caution.'

'I mean it: the woman on whom I bestow my heart shall give proofs, not only that she prefers me to all others, but if occasion so wills it, shall be content to share poverty, sorrow, and unmerited disgrace with me: she shall likewise yield up without a sigh the vanities of the world, for the privilege of reigning sole empress over my heart.'

'Thou art a romantic lad, and thinkest like nineteen; but when thou meetest this phoenix, I pray thee give her this chain, and tell her that St. Clair honours her above all women.'

'Not so: have you forgotten that she is to be superior to a love of trinkets? That gold chain, in the

exhausted state of your finances, may be more usefully employed. I will take only a ring, or some article of small value, to convey to your friend, that he may know I have executed his commands.'

'Thou shalt: but for myself, I insist that thou takest a memorial of me: were I more fortunate, I would wish thy further acquaintance: as it is, I need no more companions in sorrow: but should ill fortune ever so far assail thee as to render so poor a friend necessary, I prithee note in thy memory St. Clair.'

'I will,' answered the youth, kissing his hand. 'Time and chance happeneth to all: and fear not, the fortune of Monteith will again change. That he hath friends to whom his happiness is truly dear, rest assured, and who will lose no opportunity to forward his interest.'

'Why not gratify my curiosity by naming those friends?' said St. Clair: 'at least tell me thy name.'

'Ambrose—parents I have none, but a tyrannic guardian embitters my days.'

'Poor youth: but thou hast a friend, for him thou namest mine is doubtless thine, by the trust reposed in thee.'

'He is: but alas, his means are limited as my own; could he act according to his wishes, not only wealth and rank would be St. Clair's, but every worldly blessing.'

'I thank thee for him: but thy fascinating discourse hath made me regardless of the rights of hospitality: I will present thee to my friends, and thou must gratify us by tarrying a short time with us to repose thyself.'

'It is impossible: I must away to-morrow.'

'I grieve at it: take this ring, I pray, for a token to my unknown friend, and tell him that St. Clair's life gains value from his affection. For thyself, I insist thou wearst this chain—nay, I will not be refused,' added he, throwing it round his neck. 'In faith, thy complexion might vie with the snow of our

mountains, for it shames that of the fairest maiden I ever saw.'

'Nay, chief,' replied the youth, blushing, 'reproach me not with what I cannot help: if I cannot otherwise gain a more manly appearance, I will try the wintry snows of Barra, and the summer sun.'

'And welcome shalt thou be: but come—our board await; thou wilt neither find courtly provision nor a courtly welcome, only plain food, and rude, honest hearts, more ready to act than to promise.'

So saying, St. Clair led the way to the hall, where he introduced the youthful Ambrose to his companions, who received him with the kindness and cordiality his errand demanded.

CHAPTER VI.

ST. CLAIR placed his guest by his side at the social board, and the rest being seated around, they vied with each other in attention to the stranger, who ate and spoke little. The meat being withdrawn, in vain they urged him to take wine; he said it made him sick and feverish, and all their repeated instances could obtain was to make him mingle a small quantity with the water he drank.

The chevalier sat next him, and appeared to view him with an attention that evidently gave him pain; and at length, addressing him, he said—'In faith, sweet youth, I have seen some of the fairest hands in the French, the English, and the Scottish courts, but thine exceeds them all.'

'I love not compliments,' replied the youth, 'and should least have expected to find them at Barra.'

'Truth ought to be met with everywhere,' replied De Bourg.

'I must endeavour then to bronze my complexion, if it will save me from unpleasant remarks.'

'The chevalier is a Frenchman,' said St. Clair; 'and thou doubtless hast heard, Ambrose, they inherit from nature the gift of flattery; besides, 'tis so long since he possessed the virtue of modesty, that he hath forgotten it, and can make no allowance for thine.'

'I will take lessons from thee, thou woman-hater; but the hour will come when I shall see thee as docile to the sex as I myself am inclined to be.'

'I know not when; my heart is whole now, and I will take care to preserve it so.'

Ross, Hamilton, and the rest, then joined in the conversation, on various topics. The stranger appeared well acquainted with every subject, and possessed of a thorough knowledge of the court and its dependants, but gave his opinion with modesty and reserve.

They sat till the night was far advanced, when St. Clair showed his guest to an apartment in the fortress, when, taking his hand, he wished him a good rest.

At an early hour St. Clair arose, the occurrences of the former day having kept him waking. The Earl of Roskelyn, his inveterate enemy, his countess, or the dowager, he too well knew to expect anything from them: and who else could be in possession of his jewels?

Thus thinking, he walked down to the sea-shore, where, to his great astonishment, he beheld the little fishing-vessel that had brought the stranger, quitting the coast, being already at some distance from the land. Gazing at it, to his further amazement he discovered on the deck the youthful Ambrose, who waved his white hand, and then as if to testify his friendship, laid it on his breast. St. Clair involuntarily raised his as if to pray his return, but in vain: the vessel pursued her way, though the strained eyes of St. Clair could discover the graceful form of the youth in the same posture, while she remained in sight.

Vexed and lost in a labyrinth of conjecture, he

returned to the fortress, and calling together his friends, informed them of the strange departure of Ambrose. Their opinions were various: some regarded him as a spy sent by the house of Roskelyn, and congratulated St. Clair and themselves that the child had not been seen by him. Others deemed his errand merely as he himself had given out, from a concealed friend of St. Clair's, in which opinion himself joined, only the private departure of Ambrose made him somewhat waver.

'My opinion differs from you all,' said the chevalier, 'you think like men and warriors: I consider the subject as a Frenchman, and an admirer of beauty, and my surmise was not lost, I am convinced, on Ambrose, as he calls himself. I was somewhat at first inclined to think St. Clair was in the secret, but am now convinced of the contrary. The feminine lightness of figure, the extraordinary beauty of features, the delicacy of complexion, the softness of the eyes, the ivory whiteness and form of the hands; and if all these do not confirm it, the palpitation of my own heart, when I sat next this Ambrose, convinced me that our visitor is either a woman or an angel in disguise.'

'Ridiculous!' cried St. Clair, 'for what purpose should a woman, and such a woman, come to the Isle of Barra?'

'In troth to comfort thee,' replied the chevalier, 'Oh! would to fortune she had come on such a charitable errand to me; hadst thou possessed I ought but a heart of stone, thou must have discovered the secret.'

A short consideration made many of the party espouse this opinion, nor did they fail to attribute the sudden departure to a fear of discovery, which the ardent gaze of the chevalier might have rendered probable.

St. Clair treated the whole with ridicule, though the suspicions of De Bourg were not without their effect

upon his mind, and he was no sooner alone, than he walked to the chamber where the stranger had reposed.

Here fresh astonishment awaited him, for on the table lay the golden chain, and by it the tablets of Ambrose, in which were written:—

Oppressed by your generosity, which in the present state of your affairs is mistimed, I return your gift, not for want of value for the donor, but because you may appropriate it in a manner more consonant to my wishes. In the meantime be assured that your friends will be anxious for your welfare, among them none more so than

AMBROSE.

St. Clair, puzzled with various conjectures, endeavoured to recall to mind the discourse he had when alone with the youthful stranger, and which rather confirmed than refuted the chevalier's conjectures; yet, unwilling to give in to an idea that caused him increased vexation, he endeavoured to banish it from his mind.

'No, no,' said he, 'the supposition is vague and ridiculous, and built merely on the beauty of the boy's face and the delicacy of his person—his manners too are effeminate, but then his understanding appears strong and cultivated. He has also imbibed romantic notions of love and friendship; the latter, his leaving the fortress privately, rather than take the chain, must evidently prove.—No, if I could think this stranger a woman, I would decline using the money so remitted. The jewels to a certainty confirm my right; and I will not, for the absurdity of De Bourg, deprive myself of what is at this time so essential.'

As no more was heard of the stranger, and as his mysterious visit was followed by no particular consequence, he insensibly became daily less thought of in the fortress. The active mind, however, of St. Clair was neither insensible nor forgetful of the kindness he had received from his unknown friend, nor of the injuries he had received from the house of

Roskelyn ; and, ardently as he wished to repay the first, no less ardently did he long to revenge the latter.

An epidemic sickness, that had for some months ravaged the neighbouring isles, at this period reached Barra, and all the kindness of the inhabitants of the fortress was called forth to assist the distressed sufferers.

Though fearless of danger, the infection at length reached them, and the tower of M'Leod, in its turn, became a receptacle of sick warriors. Death daily attacks the weak and powerful : and amongst the first who fell a sacrifice was the friendly Randolph, a loss that was speedily followed by two more of the party that had joined the outlaws.

Even James M'Gregor himself, though much distressed at his brother's death, did not apparently feel it so severely as did St. Clair ; he watched his friend day and night with unwearyed assiduity, and saw the deadly ravages of disease with an anguish he could not entirely conceal from the sufferer, who himself died as he lived, insensible of danger and fearless of death.

'St. Clair,' said he, some hours before his decease, 'my strength fails me, but my heart is still the same ; one of its warmest wishes is, that thou mayst be avenged of the house of Roskelyn ; promise me, therefore, that thou wilt not deprive thyself of the means which fortune made me the instrument of putting into thy hands. When occasion serves, thou canst bring forward the boy ; or if a length of time should first elapse ; thou wilt have the satisfaction of controverting nature, and, if he doth not inherit too much of his father and mother, of making him a brave fellow, and an honest man ; and these qualities once having taken root, they may find some trouble to displace them. As to the arrangement of my property, that I have settled with my brother, and entirely to his liking ; and I only require a promise from thee to act according to my wishes, after

which I shall have nothing to do but to resign myself to the fate which awaits me. Yet St. Clair, if hereafter spirits live, in the hour of retribution remember that of Randolph shall hover over thee. Give me thy hand, and promise.'

St. Clair swore to act according to the desire of Randolph, who, after shaking hands with all the residents at the fortress, composed himself for some hours, when, turning suddenly, and seeing St. Clair pensively sitting by his side, he said,—'Monteith, thou art as weak as a woman : had I fallen in the field, thou wouldst not have been thus sad ;—away with grief ; death is the common lot of all, and to a mind resolved, less painful than thou thinkest. Farewell !'

Such were the last words of Randolph, his companions standing round his couch in deep dejection. 'Art thou then indeed gone?' said St. Clair ; 'would that my fortune was for ever Roskelyn's sooner than I should have seen this day !'

CHAPTER VII.

THE young heir of Roskelyn, or Randolph as he was called, now two years old, was strong, hard, and playful as the mountain kid : too young to recall to his memory the luxurious indulgence at the castle of his father, the sum of all the greatness he wished or desired, was confined to Barra. His young heart attached to Randolph, who warmly returned his affection, he had been accustomed to run constantly after him, and not only plainly articulate his name, but could also express his own wants and wishes. His custom was at early morn, to escape, if possible, from his nurse, and hasten to Randolph's chamber, when, if the door was closed, he beat until it was opened to him, or if unbarred, he climbed upon the couch, and awakened the rough warrior with his

caresses. Insensible of the loss of his friend, the morning succeeding his death, he followed his usual custom—the chamber was unbarred, and on the couch lay the lifeless body of Randolph; he climbed up, and with infantine fondness endeavoured to awaken him by his playful caresses, till at length, weary with the unavailing effort, he laid his head upon his bosom, and fell asleep. In this situation he was found by St. Clair, who entering the chamber of his friend, was astonished to find him so accompanied.

A sentiment of affection which he had never before felt for the infant, arose in his bosom, and gently awaking him, he was asked what he did there.

‘Warm Randolph,’ replied he, shuddering with the cold that had communicated itself to his own body; ‘he won’t speak.’

‘Boy,’ said St. Clair, scarcely restraining a starting tear, ‘whence inheritest thou that sentiment of gratitude?’

‘Wake Randolph,’ continued the child, gazing at him, ‘he won’t love me now.’

‘For his sake I could almost love thee,’ said St. Clair; and taking him in his arms, he hastened away to his nurse, whom he chided for her neglect, in suffering him to wander from her; ordering her at the same time to wash him, to prevent, if possible, the infection.

From this day it appeared that the chief and young Randolph were more warmly attached to each other, so that the first would sometimes say,—‘Randolph, boy, was thy friend both living and dead; for he loved thee living, and by his death has insensibly transferred that affection to me.’

The attachment of the islanders to the chief and his friends, was strongly exemplified at the funeral of Randolph and the two inmates of the fortress, who dying within a few days of each other, one solemnity served for all. Not only the inhabitants of Barra attended, but also several hundreds from

the adjacent isles repaired thither in whatever vessels they could procure. A priest also attended from Kismul; and all prepared, the bodies were deposited in the highest part of the island.

The funeral procession was commenced by pipers playing martial tunes; after which was borne the armour of Randolph, with his spear and sword reversed; then walked the priest; next came the bodies, borne by men who had served in battle; after them followed the inhabitants of the fortress, armed, but their heads uncovered, and their swords pointed to the earth; and lastly, the numerous visitors that had assembled on the occasion, with their heads bare, and who at intervals filled the air with piercing and monotonous yells of mourning. The bodies deposited, the earth sprinkled with sacred water, and the holy rites ended, they all returned to the fortress, where a plentiful entertainment was provided; which having partaken of, and reposed in the best manner they could during the night, they arose at early dawn, and the labour rendered light by numbers, they erected a monument of such stones as the island afforded, placing at the top a rude cross, formed of the same materials, to defend those it covered from the power of evil spirits. Pleased with their friendship and attachment, St. Clair and his companions detained them two days, after which every one took his way to his respective home.

The first effusions of grief over, M’Gregor one day addressing the party, said—‘One duty yet remains unperformed to our beloved Randolph. With his tremulous hand he wrote a testament, which myself and Hamilton signed. I will take this opportunity to read it.’

So saying, he unfolded a parchment, and read as follows:

Whereas I, Randolph M’Gregor, being called by the will of God to lay down myself in a sick bed, un-

fitting a warrior, but best as he decrees it, I will that my worldly property be disposed as follows:—My brothers, Alexander and James, being well provided with the gifts of fortune, the first from his father, the second by his uncle, I give the whole of my estates, bequeathed me by my patron, Randolph Bruce, unto St. Clair Monteith, for his natural life; and at his death, to his son; my namesake, the young Randolph—so that if ever I have injured that child I may make whatever restitution is in my power. My armour I bequeath to my brother Alexander, my spear and spurs to James, and my sword and shield to St. Clair; praying them to bear my death as becomes men and soldiers that trust to live again—in which I hope I die.

RANDOLPH M'GREGOR.

St. Clair heard the will in silence, and appeared lost in thought.

'St. Clair,' said Ross, 'rise from this grief that clouds thy future prospect. Men, thou knowest, are mortal, and born to die.'

'Men are indeed mortal, and while they are so, they must feel,' replied St. Clair. 'I revere the memory of Randolph, and his intention in my favour, but will never profit by it.'

'And so be foresworn,' answered M'Gregor. 'Randolph injured not his family by the bequest, as what he inherited was from Randolph Bruce, who answered for him at the font; thou must therefore keep thy promise to him, or forfeit thy honour.'

'Why, good heaven!' exclaimed St. Clair, 'didst thou form me with a mind to confer benefits, yet doom me only to receive them? Oh, Randolph! would I slept at peace with thee, thou zealous and true friend! but wretch that I am! I am condemned to waste my days in illness and inglorious ease.'

For some time a heavy gloom hung over the inhabitants of the fortress; it at length, however, be-

gan to subside, but least so in St. Clair, whose efforts to appear cheerful were evidently forced.

Some fishermen, who occasionally traded to the main land of Scotland, at this time brought intelligence that a grand tournament of three days duration was to be held at Perth, in honour of the queen, at which the flower of the Scottish nation, as well as foreigners, were expected to be assembled. St. Clair declared nothing should prevent him going; and to calm the apprehensions of his companions for his safety, he promised to go disguised, and to enter into no quarrel that might endanger his safety.

Though no one approved of the plan, yet the heavy apprehensions that hung over him inclined him to consent, in hopes that it might tend to dissipate it, provided he would select some of his friends to accompany him. This, however, he warmly declined; but after some consultation on the subject, it was agreed that Ross and de Bourg should be of the party, and three others of their companions that were unrestrained by law, that in case of danger, they might inform M'Gregor and Hamilton, who could, at a short notice, raise a number of men: which, added to their having the young heir of Roskelyn in their power, might free them from their enemies. The business arranged, they sailed to the isle of Mull, where St. Clair, Ross, and de Bourg took the habits of knights, and their companions those of their squires: and crossing to the main land, passed themselves for Danes, who were curious to see the tournament.

Purchasing chargers, they continued their way, and arrived one day before the celebration of the entertainment at Perth, where keeping close, and at some distance from the town, they caused no suspicion.

The morning of the tournament was ushered in by music and every demonstration of joy that could be devised; and at the hour of ten, the whole court and all the knights assembled on an extensive plain near

the city, to begin the sport. The queen and the ladies sat in front, on raised seats, according to their rank and dignity. On one side was placed the king, his courtiers, attendants, and the umpires; on the other, the knights and visitors who came to view the tilting; in front of whom were the first candidates for fame and honour.

St. Clair and his friends gazed fearlessly around: their faces concealed by their visors, they without restraint remarked and recognised several, yet remained themselves unknown. At some distance from the queen sat the dowager of Roskelyn, and her daughter-in-law the young countess. St. Clair, in the glance he cast around, fixed his eyes momentarily on them, but withdrawing them with a sentiment of contempt, directed his attention to other objects.

The Earl of Roskelyn, as he was not among the courtiers or umpires, St. Clair concluded was among the champions, and curiously examined each to discover him.

The sport at length commenced, and several knights, both Scottish and foreign, tried their skill and fortune with various success, until at length a young Scottish knight gallantly accoutred in black embossed armour, advanced, and by the herald proclaimed Queen Jane, wife of King James I. of Scotland, the fairest of women, defying all to combat who averred to the contrary.

An English knight accepted the challenge, asserting the superiority of the countess of Salisbury, and the combat began. Equal prowess and dexterity for a time kept the spectators in suspense, but the English knight at length gave way, and the Scot was declared victor. A French knight then took the vanquished's place, but was equally unsuccessful as his predecessor, being obliged to confess the charms of his fair mistress, the duchess of Bedford, sister to the Duke of Burgundy, eclipsed by those of the Scottish queen.

Elate! with his triumph, the young knight, taking the arms of the vanquished, and kneeling, laid them at the queen's feet.

'Rise, Sir Knight of Lorn,' said she, 'though you have chosen a face and person unequal to contend with the peerless beauties of France and England, yet you have supported your claim nobly, and I thank you. Your gallantry must please all women, and well I know there is one who can repay the obligations I owe you. Sir James Stuart, brother to the Lord of Lorn, of the noble house of Darnley, though himself a younger branch, both from birth and accomplishments, may aspire to the highest and fairest of the Scottish maids.'

A profound silence reigned throughout the assembly: the dowager and the young maid knelt at the queen's feet who condescendingly commanded them to rise, and prepared to address them.

'Monteith,' exclaimed de Bourg, in a low voice, but with marked astonishment, 'art thou blind? my eyes cannot surely deceive me. Do we not in the heirsch of Kintail recognise thy friend Ambrose?'

St. Clair started. 'It is impossible,' answered he, forgetting the disgust occasioned by the sight of the countess, and gazing ardently on the scene before him. 'By Heaven! 'tis like—yet it cannot be. Peace, de Bourg—attend to her voice—if she speaks, I cannot be deceived.'

'To the Dowager of Roskelyn,' said the Queen, 'the court owes many thanks, for introducing to it one of the fairest ornaments of the country, the heirsch of Kintail. To keep her near us is one of our warmest wishes, and if she would accept a husband from the hand of the Queen of Scotland, I should be happy to present her my knight, Sir James Stuart.'

The young heirsch, for some moments appeared confused: but by the time the queen ended, seemed to collect herself, and raising her downcast eyes, fixed them with dignified composure, first on the queen,

and then on the knight of Lorn. 'Gracious lady,' said she, addressing the queen, 'on this subject I have been long persecuted, and having repeatedly, without subterfuge, declared my repugnance to the Lady Roskelyn, who, because Sir James Stuart is her relation, or for some other cause, wishes me to espouse him. Now in the presence of the whole court of Scotland, and, of all the nobles from foreign courts, the claim is again brought forward, either because your grace meant to do me public honour, or because the Lady Roskelyn, presuming on your grace's power, thought that a maid's courage could not support her in so full an assembly, and that my consent must therefore be unavoidably obtained. To Sir James Stuart I owe my thanks for his first address, as his distinguishing me from the other women was a compliment I feel the weight of: but I gave him then my answer, and his persecution since becomes neither a noble gentleman nor a brave and courteous knight. Pardon me, my liege, I am rude, being mountain-born and bred, and become not the manners of the court: and cannot, nay, will not give my hand without my heart; and my heart will never beat in unison with that of the knight of Lorn.'

'Amazement!' exclaimed Monteith to de Bourg. 'By my soul, 'tis the same!—a woman, and what a woman! an angel in mind and person.'

'Ambrosine,' said the dowager of Roskelyn, 'know you in whose presence you stand, that you speak thus boldly, and with unthankfulness dash back the happiness offered by the gracious queen?'

'If, indeed,' resumed the queen, 'your heart was engaged, there might be a subject of excuse; but the Lady Roskelyn assures me to the contrary.'

'The Lady Roskelyn,' replied Ambrosine, 'though deeply skilled in worldly knowledge, has yet, my liege, to learn to read the human heart.'

'Bold, perverse girl,' said the Dowager, 'would you infer to her grace, that you have engaged your

affections? If you have done so to one worthy of you, declare it! if to some low-born wretch, you are beneath my care.'

'When, lady, did you ever find me regardless of either my rank in life, or the duties annexed to it? Never will Ambrosine of Kintail prostitute her person by an ill-assorted marriage, nor ever give her heart to one of baser blood than that which flows in her own veins.'

'Enough,' said the king, 'you vex the maid; she is fair enough to demand a ten years seige, and then, by my faith! the man would be well repaid who won her.'

'We will then,' replied the queen, 'grant her a truce: on maturer thoughts, she will, I trust, yield to our wishes.'

'To none, so please your grace, in which the Knight of Lorn hath a share.' So saying Ambrosine followed the Lady Roskelyn to her seat, and the jousting commenced, which, after lasting till the day was far advanced, the king, queen, and court retired to a grand entertainment provided on the occasion. St. Clair and his companions also retired.

'Well,' said De Bourg, 'how fare you, St. Clair? how beats your heart?'

'In faith, sickly; I am overpowered by surprise and curiosity. I would, if possible, disbelieve my sight; yet the proof is so strong, it is impossible.'

'Fortune, thou seest, Monteith, in spite of thy enemies,' said Ross, 'drops in thy lap.'

'In a very humiliating manner,' replied St. Clair. 'Doubtless this fair maid, if it be indeed the identical Ambrose, hearing of my distresses, contrived a way to relieve them, a curse on my wayward fortune for subjecting me to such disgrace.'

'Marry! I know but one disgrace in the business, and that is throwing away such a heart as hers upon such a piece of living lumber as thou art.'

'Oh me! ridiculous fool! could she love a man she never saw?'

'Nay, I know not,' said Ross, 'how that may be; but I think with de Bourg, that love alone could influence a woman to act as she has done. If thou hast indeed won her heart, gain her hand—it will be glorious revenge on the Lady Roskelyn.'

'I' replied St. Clair! 'no; no more love for me.'

'And why, I pray ye?' said Ross. 'Is not this heiress of Kintail as fair as your once boasted Ellen?'

'Granted; she is too fair, and apparently too good, for the wife of a ruined outlaw, even if she were willing, which I am far from supposing.'

'Ask her the question, man,' said the chevalier.

'Yes, and be denied like a fool; no, no, de Bourg, I must first borrow some of thy characteristic impudence.'

'Oh, to fortune that I could impart a portion!—such a woman! by Heaven, she inspires me!—Ambrosine; there is music in the very name; were I in thy place, I would sing it to a hundred different tunes; I would write sonnets to her eyes, her nose, her hands, her hair, and defy any man to the death, who should but dare to say there was a single defect in her whole composition.'

'Noted you the wife of John of Roskelyn?' said Monteith. 'From the slight glance I caught, neither her beauty nor spirits appeared lessened by the loss of her son.'

'I did,' replied Ross; 'she seemed uncommonly cheerful. I ever told thee, St. Clair, that *that* woman had no heart; but, fascinated with her beauty, thou wert regardless of more substantial qualities.'

'I confess it; but it was merely the ebullition of eighteen: I felt for her not love, but frenzy; and the paroxysm once passed, my mind was again itself. I blushed for my folly, and would have given my life to retrieve it.'

'I wonder how the heiress of Kintail came to fall into the hands of the dowager,' said De Bourg.

'That I know not, except that I have heard there

was once a great intimacy between the Lady Kintail and the dowager,' replied St. Clair. 'Sir John was a brave man, and even of the heiress I have heard much, not only in the shire of Ross, but also in the isle of Sky.'

'Mean you of her beauty, or the qualities of her mind?'

'Of both. My uncle Monteith was well beloved by Sir John, but death broke off the connexion: he died after my uncle—I should conjecture, not more than two years since.'

'What expect you from to-morrow's sport?' said De Bourg.

'I know not—I should like to try a breathing, lest our arms gets rusty: but as yet have seen no opponent worth meeting, except this knight of Lorn.'

'I heard to-day,' said Ross, 'that he is the particular favourite of the queen, and that she neglects no means to promote his fortune; hence her wish to unite him to the heiress. We will, however, if we find occasion, try a few turns to-morrow.'

'Agreed,' said St. Clair, 'though this day has brought forth a discovery that cannot, I think, be equalled by any event of the succeeding one.'

CHAPTER VIII.

At an early hour the outlaws hastened to the field of sports. The company was assembled, and the victor of the former day, the knight of Lorn, again proclaimed the charms of his sovereign unrivalled. Twice the trumpet sounded, and no one entered the lists against him; at the third charge it was answered from another part of the field, and suddenly St. Clair stepped forward.

'Sir Knight,' said he, affecting a foreign accent, 'are you a lover, and yet stand forth the champion

of another lady? If you see not in Ambrosine all perfection, you deserve her not. I affirm she is secondary to no woman.'

'I see in the heiress of Kintail the beloved of my soul,' replied Sir James, 'I would willingly devote my life to her service; but in my royal mistress I contemplate a goddess, whom at a distance I revere and adore.'

'Well then, Sir Knight, my gage against yours; nor goddesses nor queens direct my sword; neither do I acknowledge the charms of any of our Danish virgins—no, no, even those of the heiress of Kintail, but of Ambrosine, the Highland maid, with an angel's form and a hero's spirit; therefore back to your seat, and if I unhorse you not in three turns, the disgrace be mine.'

'Sooner said than done,' replied Sir James, 'though you challenge me unfairly, using the name of her I love, but have with you, Sir Knight.'

So saying, they spurred their coursers, and attacked each other with a fury increased by pride and emulation; but the skill of the knight of Lorn was not to be put in competition with the strength, activity, and knowledge of Monteith, who true to his word, in the third turn unhorsed his adversary.

'Did not I tell you,' said Monteith, ironically, but still maintaining his foreign accent, 'that queens and goddesses must yield to the Highland maid? are you for another encounter? or have ye enough?'

'Not so,' replied Sir James; 'to my last breath I will maintain the charms of the Scottish queen unrivalled.'

So saying, he drew his sword, but only to experience fresh disgrace, for, in spite of his utmost efforts, he was disarmed with such violence, that the king commanded him, on his favour, not to hazard a third encounter.

No cries of triumph, nor any sound of satisfaction marked Monteith's victory, for the Scottish nobles, discomfited at the disgrace of the queen's knight by a

stranger, swore to avenge him; while Monteith, alone in the ring, his visor still down, thus addressed them:

'Nobles and Knights! a stranger among ye, I have no wish to carry off unearned the palm of victory. I am not yet breathed; Ambrosine still hangs upon my sword; let me not earn honour so easily.'

'We meant it not,' said the knight of Fraquair, riding forward: 'we all allow the beauty of the fair heiress, but the queen of Scotland yields to none.'

'That time will show,' replied Monteith. 'Come on; the charms of Ambrosine, though known but yesterday, might sinew a weaker arm than mine.'

A giant strength appeared to animate the graceful but manly body of Monteith, for in a few minutes he gave his opponent such a severe fall, that he declined all further contest: nor were three that afterwards replaced him more fortunate, for they experienced an equal disgrace.

'Now have with thee, though thou wert the devil,' cried a knight, riding forward whom Monteith knew instantly for the Lord Roskelyn. 'Hitherto thou hast borne it bravely—the Queen of Scotland nerves my arm, as thou sayest of Ambrosine; therefore beware, thou foreign boaster.'

The heart of St. Clair beat high, but, preserving his feigned accent and manner, he said:—

'Alas, poor queen! I would she had a better champion. But, Sir Knight, you are now perhaps to exhibit your prowess before the chosen of your heart; if so, let her see that you are not only able to love, but, if occasion need, to protect her.'

The person of Roskelyn was strongly formed and active, yet he was not equal to enter the lists against Monteith; for though he for some time appeared to support the conflict with great skill, he at length shared the fate of those that preceded him, being unhorsed with such violence that he was unable to renew the contest.

'If it be thus in jest,' said Clair, 'we should be

unequal opponents in a serious contest. I grieve that you have not more bodily strength, as some day you may find occasion for it.'

No other champion presenting the queen, the sports were adjourned until the morrow; Monteith first taking the weapons of the vanquished, and laying them at the feet of Ambrosine.

'Sir Knight,' said she, 'I can scarcely return you thanks for a compliment that will make me many foes. You are apparently strong, skilful, and experienced in warlike encounters, and will doubtless find divers occasions to distinguish yourself against your enemies; but even in that case, I pray ye, remember mercy as the most glorious quality in a conqueror, and Ambrosine will always recollect the undeserved honour you have paid her with gratitude.'

'Lady,' answered Monteith, still in a feigned accent, 'while I remember Ambrosine, I must remember mercy—and who that has once seen so fair a maid, can forget her; a maid who, to the perfection of beauty, adds the higher qualities of the mind; who unbiassed by rank, power, or wealth, seeks out the oppressed, and soothes them with the soft language of consolation.'

'You rate me above my deserts,' answered she, blushing; 'but I thank you. Prosperous gales waft ye safe to the Danish shore, where some fair maid, I trust, will pay the debt of Ambrosine.'

'I seek no return, lady—I dare not love; but if ever Ambrosine should need a knight, remember she hath one who is ready to sacrifice his life in her service.' So saying, St. Clair remounted his courser, and with his friends, left the field of sports.

On the ensuing morning, Monteith, Ross, and De Bourg, were the first that entered the lists, proclaiming by the herald the merit and beauty of Ambrosine, declaring themselves her knights, and defying all who refused to acknowledge her claim; none, however, were found to oppose them, for the

defeats of the second day had damped all valour, and made the whole assembly resolve not to encounter the strange knight, or his companions, who they doubted not were as dangerous as himself.

'Fair one,' said the king, 'your knights multiply—in case of danger, methinks your name might raise me an army.'

'A number of champions, my liege, are no boast to a simple maid like me,' replied Ambrosine. 'One true knight is all my heart hath a right to expect.'

'And why will you not see that favoured knight in Sir James Stuart?' said the king.

'Because my heart refuses to acknowledge him,' said she. 'I have always found it a faithful counsellor, and like not to act against its dictates.'

'Beware, lest it at length deceive you. You have bold and powerful champions in these Danes,—know ye them?'

'I am personally acquainted with no Dane, my liege.'

The sports of that day, as all declined encountering the strange knight, were few, so that all returned at an early hour to the feasting provided, and which was to close the entertainment.

St. Clair and his companions immediately left Perth, and took the way to Edinburgh, in order to execute a plan which they had formed; and reposing themselves in a cottage by the way, on the following morning they pursued their journey.

In the environs of Edinburgh dwelt Carnegie, on a small estate which had been part of the patrimony of St. Clair, and which in the division of his right, had been given for the residence of the acting agent of the unjust decree.

Thither the outlaws, at the close of the day, directed their steps, and demanding entrance at the gate, were speedily admitted by the domestics, who had no idea of other intruders than some of the nu-

ble knights who were returning from the tournament, and who might have business with their master.

The pretended esquires were left at the gate, but Monteith, Ross, and De Bourg, were ushered into the hall, where Carnegie, nothing doubting they were visitors from whom either his pride, avarice, or perhaps both, might be gratified, rose to receive them with all the sycophant humility he was accustomed to use to those he considered as his superiors.

'Noble knights,' said he, 'you honour my dwelling; I pray ye be seated, remove your helmets, and take such refreshment as my house affords.'

The knights bowed, but remained silent.

'Ye went out sportively inclined, and returned the same,' said Carnegie. 'Ye will, however, take refreshment, when ye may perhaps please to disclose yourselves; for wine, it is said, gladdeneth the soul, and openeth the heart of man.'

The knights laughed, but made no reply; while Carnegie called to his men, who, to the number of four, entered with wine and food.

De Bourg, who was unknown to Carnegie, then raised his visor, and taking a bumper of wine, said—'Carnegie, I'll give thee a health; nay, fill thy goblet to the brim, for, by my soul! I will stick my dagger in the man's heart who refuses it.'

Carnegie looked somewhat alarmed, but concluding the whole a jest, did as he was commanded.

'St. Clair Monteith, then,' said De Bourg, 'and confusion to his enemies.'

Carnegie started, and dropped the cup, while his domestics, no less alarmed, attempted to advance towards the door. 'Stir not, for your lives,' said Ross, opposing their passage: 'if ye remain quiet, ye are safe, but death attends resistance: remain in your places, and hear all in silence.'

'Nay the pledge, the pledge!' cried De Bourg, filling another cup, and presenting it to Carnegie.

'Marry, should it choke thee it may save thee from a more unworthy end.'

Trembling in every limb, Carnegie drank the pledge and then remained silent.

'Carnegie,' continued De Bourg, 'thou art a nice fellow, and one of thy sayings I will treasure in my memory: 'Wine gladdeneth the soul, and openeth the heart of man!' Now, to open thy heart is my immediate business. Hark thee, Carnegie, thou hast considerable arrears of St. Clair's in hand—these must away with me to Barra, or by my father's soul! thou thyself shalt go in their stead.'

Carnegie turned pale. 'Indeed, Sir Knight,' said he, 'you treat me harshly—'tis by the king's own order I receive the revenues of the chief St. Clair, for the Lord of Roskelyn.'

'What right has the king to seize on what is not his own?' replied De Bourg. 'Mark, Carnegie, I speak no treason; but if any other man had done this, he would have been a knave. For the lord of Roskelyn, he is an arrant varlet; and for thee, thou art—nay, never tremble or look pale—thou art safe, man, if thou dost well; but we have tarried long enough; come, give me the money, or prepare to accompany us; we have men at the gate, and yet stronger reinforcement at a short distance.'

'Patience, good sir—patience, and hear me. Not more than six months since, I accounted with the lord of Roskelyn, and at this time have not more than two hundred and fifty marks of the chief Monteith's in my hands; should I pay that to strangers, which ye are to me, it might be thought I invented a story to appropriate the money to my own use.'

'Had ye then Monteith's order, ye would be safe from blame,' said De Bourg.

'Not so: it could only testify that I paid it perforce.'

'And that these fellows can witness for thee,' said De Bourg.

'Tis not sufficient to ensure him belief,' said St. Clair, lifting up his helmet. 'Behold I am here, thou poor knave, and now what subterfuge hast thou?'

Carnegie trembled. 'I will fetch what money I have,' said he, 'so please you to write me a discharge.'

'I will accompany thee,' said De Bourg. 'By heaven I will not lose sight of thee.'

So saying, he accompanied Carnegie into an inner apartment, where, unlocking a strong chest, he showed De Bourg several bags, each of which was marked with the name of the different estate whose revenue it contained. Four of these appertained to St. Clair, and which, with a heavy sigh, Carnegie delivered to De Bourg, who peremptorily demanded if there was no more.

'No, by the Virgin and blessed angels!' replied Carnegie: 'there is the whole now in my hands.'

'Pish, man!' replied De Bourg, 'what are virgins to thee! and for angels, unless they are golden ones, thou heekest them as little.'

'What then shall I swear by?' said Carnegie.

'Faith, by nothing—varlet that thou art, I would not damn thee; thou mayest yet live to make a monk, and by enriching some monastery with thy ill-gotten gold, die surrounded by bald pates singing requiems to thy departing spirit; but look to it, for thy soul once beyond the holy walls, the devil will have a hard struggle for his own.' So saying, followed by Carnegie, he joined St. Clair and Ross in the hall.

'Bring me ink, and I will write a discharge for the sum I receive,' said St. Clair. 'But mark me well, and tell the same to Roskelyn, that the next time ye give me this trouble, ye get not off so easily. Tell James of Scotland, if he wishes to chastise me, I am to be found at Barra.'

St. Clair then wrote the acquittal, and striking Carnegie on the back with the flat of his sword, he said—'Remember this lesson, and profit by it. Fare-

well.' With these words they left the dwelling without opposition, and joining their friends, travelled during the night with the utmost speed; in the morning concluding themselves safe from pursuit.

Carnegie was too much alarmed and panic-struck to leave his dwelling until the ensuing morning, when, somewhat re-assured by finding all quiet about his environs, he ventured to mount his horse, and, attended by his four domestics, hastened to the castle of Roskelyn.

CHAPTER IX.

ON reaching Roskelyn, Carnegie found that the lord of the domain had arrived late the evening before, and being admitted into the hall, found him seated with the countess, his wife, the dowager, his mother, and the heiress of Kintail.

Carnegie's looks were indicative that all was not well, and Lord Roskelyn addressing him, immediately asked the cause. To his great astonishment he learned what had passed with the outlaws, and from the description, had no doubt but the Danish strangers were the same. The disgrace of his defeat in the jousting, the contemptuous manner of his opponent, his boldness in demanding his own, all conspired to awaken his fears, and to wound the pride of Roskelyn, who, with the most deadly imprecations, vowed revenge.

The dowager said little, but appeared confused and grieved, while the young countess, with a glance of contempt at her lord, only wished that Heaven had made her a man, in which case she would neither have suffered personal disgrace, nor have been outwitted by St. Clair Monteith.

Such was the effect that Carnegie's account had upon three of the party, while on the fourth, Am-

brosine, it had a contrary effect, exciting only her mirth, and causing her to laugh so heartily, as to draw upon her the rebukes of the whole family.

'Out upon you, rude girl!' said the dowager. 'You said truly that you were mountain-born and bred, but why an affair, so replete with vexation to us, should be a cause of mirth to you, I cannot comprehend.'

'I pray you pardon me,' replied Ambrosine; 'women, you know, are naturally pleased with brave men, and that such a one as St. Clair should succeed, delights me.'

'Delights you!' repeated the dowager: 'this is surely too much to avow in the presence of the injured party.'

'Heaven forefend that I should increase the vexation of any person that was injured!' answered Ambrosine. 'Lord Roskelyn comes not under that description.'

'Wonder not at Ambrosine!' said the countess, spitefully. 'Have you forgotten the attention the villain paid her at the tournament? To a young maid, unaccustomed to the attentions of men, carrying away the claim of beauty, was so flattering a compliment, that I should not be surprised to see her throw herself into the arms of her champion.'

'And should they open to receive me,' answered Ambrosine, 'I should be an object of universal envy. The proud dames of the fertile south, stretched on silken beds, by their listless lords, would envy the wife of Monteith, amidst the barren rocks of Barra, defended by the arms of a hero.'

'Think you so?' replied the countess scornfully; 'how comes it then that he hath not wedded?—the world says that he hath already loved.'

'I have heard so, but I believe it not. Boys and girls form strange fancies, and call it love! but when reason and age give maturity to their knowledge, such trifles are no longer thought of, or at least only remembered with disgust.'

'St. Clair's passion was said not to be of that light nature,' replied the countess, with visible pique.

'At least then,' answered Ambrosine, 'he bears disappointment well. On a hero like Monteith, a slight passion, or a love unjustly treated, would make no impression beyond the passing hour; but one deserving his heart and worthily returned, would take a root never to be effaced but with life itself.'

'On my word,' said the dowager, 'had you ever seen Monteith before the tournament, when I am convinced you saw not his face, I should say you were preposterous enough to love him.'

'I shall never love a man for his face; I could as well love a statue or a picture. Even from my infancy I have been charmed with valiant actions; and when our minstrels were accustomed to sing of noble deeds, my heart used to swell almost too large for my bosom.'

'I will away to Edinburgh,' said Lord Roskelyn; 'the king is returned thither—he will not suffer his commands to be broken with impunity.'

So saying, he called for his retinue, and taking horse, lost no time in hastening to the city.

He found the king assembled in council with his nobles, and immediately preferred his complaint, and which was heard with a mixture of surprise and anger; the first at the boldness of the outlaws; the second at the little heed they paid to the sentence passed against them.

'Call together,' said the king, 'a competent force, and hasten to bring those traitors before me; we will show them we are not to be insulted with impunity.'

Sir Alexander Livingstone, though no friend to Monteith, was too good a politician not to see the danger and difficulty of such an enterprise.

'My liege,' said he, 'strong and ferocious as wolves, the islanders are good friends, but dreadful enemies; and though, if an insurrection should happen, there is no doubt they would be subdued, yet the toil would be great, and the expense heavy; and

whether it be worth while to incur it, I leave to your grace's better judgment.'

'There is great truth and reason in what thou sayest, Livingstone,' replied the king; 'but thou dost not consider my contemned authority, and the wounded feelings of Roskelyn.'

'I do, my liege, and think that could Monteith have been taken here, his life would have been a necessary sacrifice to ensure future tranquillity; but as the business now stands, I hold my first opinion.'

On a further consultation, the advice of Livingstone was adopted, at least until such times as means could be devised to get him into their hands.

In the meantime, safe from danger, and laughing at what had passed, Monteith, Ross, De Bourg, and their companions, reached the coast, and speedily sailed to Barra, where they were warmly received by their friends, who had not been free from alarm during their absence. What also gave the whole party pleasure, was the revived spirits of St. Clair, who appeared to have thrown off the heavy gloom that hung over him before his departure. The little Randolph hung about his neck, and by a thousand kisses welcomed his return, while St. Clair pressed him in his arms, saying:—

'Boy, either thy face and manners partake of the deepest hypocrisy, or thou wilt neither resemble father nor mother.'

About a month after their return, St. Clair signified an inclination to go to the isle of Skye, in which excursion he was accompanied by De Bourg and M'Gregor. After passing some time there, they crossed the narrow frith to Kintail, where, in the ordinary guise of travellers, they visited the castle of the heiress. Making such common questions as might give no suspicion, they learned that their fair mistress was almost idolized among her vassals; that by the will of her mother, she was left, for the years of her minority, in the charge of the Dowager of

Roskelyn, with whom they expected her soon to visit her paternal dwelling.

'Is it long since you saw your mistress?' said St. Clair, carelessly addressing the domestic.

'Not more than six months,' replied he; 'but her stay was short—Lady Roskelyn was impatient to return to the south, and even left the lady Ambrosine for the last month; but she joined her at Inverness.'

'The identical time,' said St. Clair, in a low voice, to De Bourg; then addressing the man, he added—'you expect her speedily to return—said you not so?'

'Daily; several arrangements specified in Lady Kintail's testament, remain to be fulfilled, and she must come to execute them.'

Having satisfied their curiosity, they retired; and after some conversation, it was resolved they should again visit Kintail before their return to Barra, but in the meantime to tarry in the isle of Skye.

By passengers that were continually crossing the frith, they, in about ten days, learned that the heiress of Kintail was arrived at her castle, and that, by the orders of Lady Roskelyn, great preparations were making to entertain a gallant company, which entertainment, some whispered, would terminate in the marriage of the heiress.

'If her heart is willing,' said St. Clair, 'happy may she be! but, by my soul! if otherwise, not Lady Roskelyn, nor all her friends to back her, shall force the sweet maid.'

De Bourg burst into a fit of laughter.

'Give me tigers, fends, serpents, devils—anything but women!' exclaimed he. 'Oh, how I like to see a fellow brought to his senses.'

'To lose them rather,' replied Monteith, 'laugh, De Bourg, I give thee free license—thou art welcome—I deserve it all; but say, canst thou allow nothing for repentance? nay, to gratify thee at once,

man, were I master of my fortune, I would lay it at the feet of Ambrosine; but, as it is, I decline all but friendship.'

'Commend me to the friendship of a fellow of twenty-seven, like thee, and a girl of nineteen, like Ambrosine,' cried De Bourg. 'By Heaven! if thou carriest not off this heiress, I will proclaim thee a poltroon.'

'Then thou undoubtedly wilt do so,' replied Monteith; 'could I give her happiness, my heart and hand would be ready; but to overwhelm her with my disgrace and poverty, is both against my honour and inclination.'

CHAPTER X.

THE information which the outlaws had received of the heiress being arrived at her castle of Kintail was true, and many visitors of the highest rank were expected to join them in a few days.

Some evenings after their arrival, one of the vassals entering the hall where the dowager and Ambrosine were seated at supper, informed them that three minstrels requested to be admitted.

'They are old men,' added he, 'and have in their youth served in the wars, for two are lame, and the third is disfigured by the loss of an eye. But truly they play rarely; one on the small pipes, another on the harp, and the third with the blind eye, sings better than any minstrel I ever heard.'

'So much for their merits,' said Ambrosine; 'I pray you give them meat, and, with Lady Roskelyn's leave, admit them. My heart is heavy, and music may banish thought.'

'And why should your heart be heavy?' said the dowager. 'Youth, wealth, and beauty are yours, and one of the first knights in Scotland is willing to devote a life to you.'

'If he is inclined to continue his folly, I cannot at present prevent it; but were it only for the persecution I should hate him.'

At that moment the lackey entered with the minstrels; they appeared, as he said, to have been sorely wounded, for two walked with difficulty, and the third wore an enormous patch, to conceal the loss of an eye. They were, however, clean and respectfully clad, and their grey hairs and beards demanded respect and compassion.

The Dowager of Roskelyn was too haughty to exchange words with creatures she regarded so far beneath her; but Ambrosine's heart, at once unassuming and gentle, struck with their appearance—'poor fellows! give them,' said she to the lackey, 'each a bumper of wine—it will comfort their age and renovate their spirits.'

The lackey did as he was commanded, and the musicians beginning to play, the blind minstrel sung the coronation of Robert Bruce, the Lady Buchan, the Battle of Bannockburn, and various others, all of which his companions accompanied with their instruments, until at length he paused and asked what he should sing next.

'Lady Roskelyn will choose,' said Ambrosine; 'you have a goodly collection, and shall stay awhile at the castle.'

'Nay,' replied the Dowager. 'I care not what—name some.'

'Will you, lady,' said the minstrel, 'Hardicanute, the Lady Barberry, the Danish defeat, or—'

'These are old,' said the Dowager, interrupting him; 'know ye nothing new? none of the court songs?'

'None, Lady,—they suit not my voice; but we have an Erse song that pleaseth much; it is called the banished man and the angel—shall I sing that?'

'If you will—but I hate the language, and do not comprehend it altogether; therefore give us first the argument.'

'Willingly, lady. In the reign of one of our Scotch kings (I know not which), some men, unjustly treated, were banished to an island on the western coast, and left a prey to the most poignant vexation. The song consists of an account of their being visited by an angel, who not only came to relieve their wants, but left an impression of gratitude on their hearts never to be erased.'

Ambrosine started at the beginning of the argument, but at the conclusion interrupted the minstrel, and with her cheeks dyed with blushes, said—'I pray you sing not that—I know it well—there is something in it respecting a damsel who forgot the decorum of her sex—I like it not.'

'You mistake, lady; in the conduct of the maid there was nothing at which the chastity of a sainted virgin need blush; and—'

'Out upon the filthy fellow!' interrupted the Dowager; 'would he shock our ears with his unchaste ditties?'

'No so; the purest maid of Scotland was not more praiseworthy than the damsel—but the young lady mistakes the song for some other.'

'No, not so,' replied Ambrosine; 'to prove that I know it, did not the banished man want to bribe the angel, and to make her tipsy?'

'No, on my life, lady!' replied the minstrel, scarce refraining from laughter: 'they knew her not, at the time; but, once discovered, they worshipped her.'

'Oh! I can tell you every word,' answered Ambrosine. 'Say what you please, they wanted to bribe her with a chain of gold; and there was one impudent fellow, with great eyes, who frightened her away at daybreak. Was it not so?'

'Something like it, I believe, lady,' answered the minstrel, glancing at one of his companions; 'but were all to be judged by him?'

'Nay, I know not.'

Here the Dowager turning to Ambrosine said—
'We will retain these minstrels—they will furnish amusement for our noble guests.'

Ambrosine made no reply, but remained with her eyes cast down, and averted from the musicians.

The minstrels received the Lady Roskelyn's order to stay with thanks, and having been supplied by the vassals with food, retired to an apartment allotted to them.

In the meantime, Ambrosine was overwhelmed with confusion, for on a near examination she had recognized in the minstrels three of the outlaws, and particularly in the singer, the chief Monteith—a discovery which would have escaped her, they were so carefully disguised, had he not himself made the avowal, by alluding to what had passed at Barra. How to conduct herself respecting them she knew not; to betray them to the dowager was an act she would sooner have yielded her life than have been guilty of; yet to connive at their stay in the castle was contrary to the maidenly modesty that reigned in her bosom. That she loved Monteith beyond all men, was most true; and at the close of the tournament, when he addressed her, she recognized him in the Danish knight, and was most happy when she learned by Carnegie of his departure.

Though she ardently wished to speak to Monteith, yet the construction that she was convinced must be put on her visit to Barra filled her with confusion; yet, determined not to consent to their stay in the castle, she resolved to overcome it, and at once to satisfy the decorum of her sex, by commanding his absence, and to satisfy her fears for his safety by causing him to return to the fortress.

CHAPTER XI.

AMBROSINE, accustomed to a country life, rose early; while the dowager, following the manners of the court, slept late. The former, therefore, resolving to take advantage of the opportunity that occurred, ordered the minstrels to be called to play during her breakfast, dismissing the other attendants. On finding her commands obeyed, and herself alone with the musicians, her confusion for some moments was so great as to deny her utterance, until Monteith, stepping forward, said—

‘Pardon, fair Ambrosine, a deception of which gratitude is alone the cause. With hearts warm with love and friendship for our benefactor Ambrose, what was our rapture to recognize him in the heiress of Kintail. To express our thanks in so public an assembly was impossible, which induced us to practise the subterfuge we have now made use of. I return, sweet maid, the dress which gained value by your gift.’—So saying, he laid a bag at her feet; ‘but the obligation is written upon my heart in characters never to be effaced.’

Ambrosine somewhat collected herself during the time that Monteith spoke, and with dignified modesty, replied—

‘I am convinced my conduct must appear extraordinary, and needs interpretation; but the secret is with men of honour, and consequently safe. My father,’ continued she, ‘first interested me for St. Clair Monteith: he spoke of him as the victim of the pride and vice of his mother, and a monument of the disgraceful weakness of his father: as the pride of his uncle’s age, and, but for some youthful imprudences, an honour to his name and country. Misfortunates and valour are interesting to women. I wished to see Monteith, but no opportunity hap-

pened until about two years since, when after my father’s death, I accompanied my mother to Lewis. One morning sailing to Barnera with a youthful party on a pleasure excursion, one of my companions fixed my attention by pointing out the chief himself, who, with several of his friends, was also just landing on the coast. They passed us with the common salutation of touching their caps, and I saw them no more till I saw them at Barra.’

‘I remember it well,’ said St. Clair; ‘but blind infidel that I was, I noticed no particular object. Ambrosine once seen, is not formed to be overlooked.’

‘You have not forgotten to compliment,’ said she; ‘but excuse me—I wish to take advantage of this opportunity, in some measure, to exculpate my own conduct, and also to satisfy the curiosity which I am convinced you must have on the subject.’

Monteith and his companions bowed, and remained silent.

‘Soon after our return to Kintail, I lost my mother: distantly allied by blood, but nearer by the friendship of their early days, she left to the dowager of Roskelyn the care of my minority; and the last duties performed, I was for the first time conducted to the south of Scotland.

‘When I became an inmate of the castle of Roskelyn, Monteith there was a constant theme, and, had I not before formed a decided opinion of him, I should, from accounts, have considered him a decided monster.

‘A considerable time previous to this event, Monteith had sent an order for sixty marks on his estate; it was refused with insult; and hearing the account, I racked my imagination how to do an act which I knew my honoured father, had he lived, would not have disapproved. I refer to advancing the sum in a manner to ensure its being received. I neither loved the dowager nor the countess of Roskelyn;

and for the earl, at once the tool of his aspiring mother, and the slave of his arrogant wife, I felt a sentiment to which I can give no other name than contempt.

'The loss of the young Montrose for some time sat heavily on the dowager and the earl; but though I could not refuse them commiseration, I felt their punishment just. For the young countess, possessed of no affection beyond that for herself, she awakened all the dislike my heart was capable of feeling, by the unconcern she showed on the occasion. Indeed I ever thought she loved not the unfortunate infant; her complexion, and also that of the earl, is fair, and their eyes blue; that of the young Montrose was a clear brown, and his eyes black; hence she was accustomed to call him a true Monteith, or any name to the same allusion which she considered as contemptuous; while in reality he was a boy that the proudest mother might have clasped to her bosom with transport, and, to have judged from infancy, have gloried in the reflection of what he promised to be, when time should have stamped him man.'

As the refreshing showers of heaven fall upon parched land, so did the words of Ambrosine on the heart of Monteith, who viewed her with assentiment of respect and admiration he never before experienced.

'My story beguiles me,' said she, and I stray from my subject. The earl's refusal to pay the demand of sixty marks, as I heard it accurately related, filled me with anger and contempt; and some time after, feigning a dislike to some jewels I wore, I persuaded the countess to exchange with me for those I brought to Barra, and which I had accidentally heard from an old domestic, were originally yours. You are now master of the whole secret, except the means I used to visit the fortress.

'The countess dowager, at my request, accompanied me to Kintail; but after a few days stay, finding it gloomy, she visited her friends in the vi-

cinity of Inverness. During her absence I executed my project, by engaging a small vessel appertaining to my nurse's husband, which conveyed me safely to you, and afterwards home. Such is my story; I confess I stepped over the boundaries prescribed my sex; but the motive excuses me to myself, and I trust will also to you.'

'As sinners think of the blessed spirits who leave their heavenly abode to administer peace and consolation to sinking souls, so doth Monteith consider Ambrosine. Oh! maid, most honoured! I have no words to express my gratitude and veneration. The slave of folly, the dupe of a face without a heart, to have been an object of attention to such a mind as thine, I blush for myself; but, gaining consequence by the distinction, I will endeavour to deserve it.'

'To pretend a disregard to the safety of Monteith, whom I shall ever be happy to rank among my friends, would be a pretention to female refinement which I do not possess. He is not safe at Kintail, and if he will listen to the voice of reason, will immediately return to Barra. Nay, chief, at the word safety, you look as if you scorned it; I must therefore use another incentive. 'Tis against the honour of a maid like me, to connive at young men being in the castle disguised. The punctilious refinements of my sex I do not comprehend, but the road to honour is plain, and never willingly shall Ambrosine deviate from its path.'

'Painful as these commands may be, they shall be obeyed,' said Monteith; 'for the honour of Ambrosine is dearer than the blood that warms my heart.'

'I thank you,' replied she, 'we shall meet again; but gratify me, I pray you, by taking back the money; I need it not, and a time will come for payment.'

'Dearest maid, you forget that in my journey from the south, I robbed myself in the person of

Carnegie, and I am yet so well supplied, that you must pardon me for declining your kindness. For the jewels I must still remain your debtor.

'To contend with you on the subject will, I see, be useless; but remember, I pray you sirs, that you have all a friend, should occasion need; and now, however unwillingly, I must bid you farewell.'

Monteith gazed on her in silence, but De Bourg, throwing himself at her feet, said—'Lady, you have honoured us by calling us your friends; surely you have not less kindness for that name than the blind and lame minstrels whom you condescended to invite for a while to remain at the castle.'

'The chevalier De Bourg, if I recollect right,' said Ambrosine, smiling.

De Bourg bowed.

'Indeed, chevalier,' continued she, 'were you both blind and lame, I know not whether I should suffer your stay; as it is, it is impossible—nay, I owe you a return, for I protest you drove me from the fortress some hours before I intended, and now I do but the same by you.'

'A plague on the imprudence of my eyes!' replied he; 'for that offence, if I do not put them under such discipline, that those of the most demure monk in Scotland shall not outdo them; they shall never more dare glance at beauty, except in an oblique direction.'

'I dare not ask,' said Monteith, 'even the respite of a few hours; yet our disguise baffles detection, and I wish to ask of Ambrosine a question of some moment.'

'Ask it now. Nay, you hesitate,' added she, after a short pause; 'of what nature can it be, not to be disguised before friends so sincere as those before us.'

'My question, lady, concerns only your own happiness; Monteith will never forget he is a banished man.'

The animated face of Ambrosine suddenly became serious. 'That reproach was unmerited,' said she; 'but stay, if you please, until to-morrow morn, and then heaven send you fair winds and a safe return to Barra! I grieve to receive you in a manner so unworthy of you, but necessity must plead my excuse.' So saying, she held her hand alternately to each of the outlaws, and then, with a step as light as that of a fabled sylph or fairy, left the hall.

'By my soul,' said M'Gregor, 'I will never marry! the graces of all the women I ever saw, collected, would not equal the beauties of this maid.'

'True,' replied De Bourg: 'how have we heard the beauties of Ellen chanted forth, and what fools have we been for that jilt, who, compared to this maid, is no more than one of nature's every day productions, while she is a masterpiece of all that is beautiful and excellent!'

'By my life, but ye are both in love!' said Monteith; 'and, in good faith, if ye need another fool to the number, add St. Clair. Oh, Ellen! Ellen! never till this day did I feel the extent of my obligation to thee.'

'The devil you did not!' replied M'Gregor. 'I understand not that.'

'No!' answered Monteith: 'did she not surfeit me with ingratitude, folly, and falsehood, leaving me a heart free for an affection which, though I will never indulge, must be the pride and glory of my life.'

During the rest of the day, the minstrels were so diligent in the duties of their profession, that they appeared never to have followed any other, and so far gained the good-will of the dowager, that she repeated her commands for their remaining at the castle after supper. After supper, Ambrosine approached them, as if to order some particular song, said in a low voice to Monteith—'If you have anything to communicate to me, I shall be in the south gallery when the bell tolls the hour of midnight.'

The evening concluded, and the dowager and vassals retired to rest, Monteith hastened to the appointment, where, after waiting near half an hour, he was joined by Ambrosine, who brought with her a lighted taper.

'For this condescension much thanks,' said he; 'what I have to say will not long detain you, and I should have departed heavily had I not been permitted to ask a question, which, though our new acquaintance may not authorize, your candour will, I trust, excuse.'

'In meeting you thus, replied she, 'I feel I act improperly, as a young unprotected maiden, whose actions, as well as her mind, should be free from reproach; but I know my own heart, and trust in the integrity of yours. Speak freely, therefore, all you wish to-night, and cross the frith at early dawn, be it only to free me from the anxiety I experience while you are here.'

'Your wishes are commands, dearest maid: my life, heretofore of no value, will gain estimation in my own eyes, by the consideration that you are interested for me.'

'Every hour,' said she, 'may bring the expected guests, in which case I could not support the dread of a discovery; and though I have no doubt your friends and the islanders would use every means in their power, yet they could neither secure you from treachery, which, if all other means should fail, would be had recourse to, nor me from the disgrace of your being disguised in my castle.'

Monteith, almost unknown to himself, had taken the hand of Ambrosine. 'Pardon me,' said he, 'but who are your expected guests?'

'The Lord and Lady Roskelyn, and the whole of their courtly friends. They mean to pass a month here.'

'Comes the knight of Lorn with them?'

'I know not, but I expect so; he is the dowager's shadow.'

'The dowager is not his magnet, fair Ambrosine! May I take the liberty of a friend, and ask you if you can love him?'

'I love him not; his perseverance is useless; he comes on a fruitless errand, and will return disappointed.'

'The dowager has caused a report to be spread among your vassals, that you came here to be wedded.'

'She will then have the trouble to tell them that the marriage is postponed till I am in the humour; I know her well, but am neither to be frightened nor soothed into compliance. Know ye of the attack the queen gave in to on the first day of the tournament?'

'It was then when I first recognized you, or rather the chevalier, for I felt inclined to disbelieve the evidence of my senses.'

'I wonder not at it. It was a business arranged among them to take me by surprise in so public an assembly, but the scheme failed. The queen is partial to the knight of Lorn, and wishes to enrich him at my expense. The dowager too has motives, the one to bring wealth into her family, as the knight is her relation, the other to ingratiate herself with the queen, who pays her distinguished attention.'

'My question is answered; from what I heard at the tournament, I judged Sir James Stuart was not in possession of your heart. The dowager is designing and deep in policy, where she wishes to gain her end: and, pardon me, the gentle Ambrosine will be no match for her arts.'

'She dares not use them: but even should she, I am here surrounded by the vassals of my father's house, whom, if occasion needed, I would call together, and let her see that whatever I may be in the castle of Roskelyn, I am mistress here.'

'Nobly resolved! But say, sweet maid, in such a case, whose arm would be nerved so strongly as that

of Monteith? Methinks the name of Ambrosine gives me a giant strength; and must I leave you undefended to persecution and insult?

Ambrosine made no reply, but Monteith continued—

'Dearest Ambrosine, friend of my soul! I speak not to dissuade you from marriage, but it must be to a man worthy of so estimable a heart, one equally loving and beloved; then will Monteith claim him as a brother, and, in the happiness of Ambrosine, endeavour to forget his own misfortunes.'

'Monteith,' said she, 'I will never marry.'

'Oh yes!' replied he; 'Ambrosine is formed to make the best and first of men happy; to live in honour, and to die surrounded by her children, at once the stay and pride of her age.'

Ambrosine was moved at St. Clair's energy. 'Is this happiness to be found at court?' said she, in a tremulous tone.

'It is to be found wherever you reside,' replied Monteith, 'be it in a court, or in a cottage.'

'In a court I will never seek it. But, deceiver that you are,' added she, 'you were not content in the payment of the exact sum—the contested chain I found concealed in the bag; and, to show you that I know how to receive a favour, I accept it—it shall be a pledge between us; and as there is no man's assistance, in case of necessity, that I would so soon claim as yours, when I return it, it shall be either to demand your presence or counsel. Here, I am convinced, there is no danger; what there may be on our return to the south, I know not, though I do not fear.'

'A thousand blessings for this assurance,' replied he, kissing her hand. 'Oh, Ambrosine! I will now hasten back to Barra, and once remember I am a banished man.'

'The decrees of James are not those of fate,' replied she.

'True: but I have a deeper sorrow—an outcast to my family and name—that disgrace can never be overcome.'

'Where lies the disgrace, but in your own idea?' replied she; 'such weakness is beneath Monteith. I pray you rise superior to it. I have pledged my word to claim your assistance; give me your honour, that should you need it, you will claim mine; my revenues are large, and I pray you command them. Hazard no more such encounters as that with Carnegie; nay, in this you must oblige me, or our contract is void.'

Monteith thus entreated, made the promise required, and pressing Ambrosine's hand, first to his lips, and then to his heart, he tore himself from her, and left the gallery.

He immediately joined M'Gregor and de Bourg, and hastening to the frith, they crossed to the isle of Skye, from whence they sailed to Barra.

CHAPTER XII.

CHARMED with the music of the minstrels, the dowager called for them at the hour of dinner, when one of the domestics, being sent to seek them, brought word they were nowhere to be found. This omission of their duty made but little impression; but when night came, and also the ensuing day, without bringing them, the dowager ordered a diligent search to be made, lest they should have conveyed aught of value from the castle. Nothing being missing, the surprise in a few days subsided, though it was a cause of wonder that they departed without the pay they had so justly earned.

Some few days after, arrived the noble cavalcade, which consisted of the families of Roskelyn and Stuart. The young heiress received the guests with

a grace and politeness peculiar to herself, though the combined efforts of both families, added to all the entreaties and address of Sir James himself, could effect nothing in his favour; and after a stay of a month, the party returned to Roskelyn, accompanied by the dowager and the heiress.

As Ambrosine conjectured, the persecution respecting the knight of Lorn was there renewed with greater importunity. The queen also sent for her to Stirling, and pressed her to determine in his favour, or to declare whether her heart felt a predilection for any other, adding, that her best friend, the dowager of Roskelyn, was as anxious for the marriage as herself; and also assured her, that had the lady Kintail being living, she would have warmly adopted it.

'Tis most probable my mother might have done so,' replied the heiress, 'for the lady Roskelyn had great power over her, and she herself was more attached to the splendour of public life than I am; but had she even adopted the same measures, I should still have exercised a free will, in a business of so much importance, as my own future happiness. My father, I am convinced, had he lived, would have left me at liberty: he knew my heart, and that the honour of my family and name was as dear to me as himself. The dowager of Roskelyn hath indeed power over me for near two years; but if that is exerted too far, she may reduce me to the necessity of adopting some hasty measure, or to take refuge in a convent from her tyranny; in either of which cases she will be more to blame than I. No decided step will I take during my minority, unless compelled, and then self-defence is the first and strongest law of nature.'

'You refuse decidedly, then?' replied the queen; 'but you have not answered to the question of your heart being engaged.'

'Pardon me,' said Ambrosine, 'I revere your grace as Queen of Scotland, and not as my confessor.'

'You are too shrewd and assuming for a young maid,' said the queen; 'and I have condescended too far, and will trouble myself no more in the business.'

'I thank your grace, and shall be happy to spare you the trouble.'

So saying, Ambrosine made her obeisance, and left the apartment.

In the meantime the outlaws safely reached Barra, where the confinement was now doubly irksome to Monteith. Ambrosine, in spite of all his efforts, became his daily and nightly thoughts: that he had forfeited his liberty, and lost his fortune for an ungrateful woman, stung him with double violence, when he reflected that it had also debared him from offering his heart to a maid whose mind, as well as person, could have made him completely happy. The frivolities and vanity of the one, and the dignified and unassuming manners of the other, were strongly contrasted in his thoughts; and the remembrance of his first love, which used ever to be recalled to his memory with anger and bitterness, now lost its acrimony, and sunk into that calm contempt that scarcely ever intruded on his fancy, unless to raise the virtues of Ambrosine by the comparison. Much as her loved her, her honour was yet dearer to him than the possession of her person; and he resolved, at all events, never to forget himself so far as to make her the wife of an outlaw.

De Bourq and the rest of the party laughed at his scruples; they all truly wished the happiness of St. Clair, but thwarting the favourite views of the house of Roskelyn gave them yet superior delight. The heir already in their possession, and Monteith once married to the heiress of Kintail, their power, not only in the islands, but also in Ross-shire, where her possessions lay, would be unbounded. While they resolved in their minds the utility of the plan, and the weight and consequence it would give Monteith,

he considered only her welfare and honour. Happy he thought he could make her, as he would willingly have devoted his life to that purpose; but his heart sunk at the unmerited disgrace she must share, and the warm imagery of love, with all its glowing fascination, vanished, leaving only a gloomy retrospection of the past. Sometimes he resolved to leave his country, and in the service of some foreign prince to gain fame and fortune; but to leave Ambrosine a defenceless prey to persecution, and himself to espouse quarrels in which his heart had no share, and to fight for a hireling's price, never failed to crush the idea as it rose, and for the present, at least, made him resolve to remain at Barra.

In this state three months passed, when one morning a stranger was announced at the fortress; inquiring for Monteith, he was immediately admitted.

'I bring a trinket and a letter,' said he; 'which I was commanded to deliver into the hands of the chief. I have used much despatch in travelling from Roskelyn, for I was nobly paid, and will only wait for an answer to return.'

St. Clair scarcely heard what he said, before tearing open the letter, he read as follows:—

I am beset with fools, and surrounded with knaves, and am resolved to bear it no longer. Use all prudence, for I would not avoid a small evil at the expense of a greater. I put no superscription or name, in case of loss or other failure, but you will know the writer by the token. Adieu.

At the conclusion Monteith paused until the messenger recalled him to recollection, by asking him for a reply.

'Return, my good friend, with all speed,' replied Monteith; 'but I have a messenger that will be more swift than you; however, should you reach Roskelyn before him, the answer is—all is well, and fear not.'

The outlaws then gave him refreshment, and St. Clair making him an ample present, he hastened him away.

Willing as they all were to volunteer in this cause, it was thought necessary for two of the principals to remain at Barra, and drawing lots for that purpose, the chance fell upon M'Gregor and Hamilton, Monteith, Ross, and De Bourg, with the companions who had attended them at the tournament, then immediately engaged a vessel, and the wind serving, safely reached the port of Ardnamurchan, where they landed, and purchasing horses, continued their way with unremitting speed, until they arrived at a small hamlet within six miles of Roskelyn. There they left their horses; and according to a hasty plan they had formed at Barra, Monteith, Ross, and De Bourg, clad themselves in palmer's weeds, and so otherwise disguised their persons, that it was next to impossible their nearest friends should know them, unless previously apprised of the deception. At a little distance they were followed by their companions, who, dressed in the habiliments of herdsmen, called themselves brothers returning from the Highlands, where they had been to take possession of a small patrimony.

On reaching the vicinity of Roskelyn, the friends of the outlaws took up their residence in a cottage, in order, as they said, to recover from their fatigue, while the pretended pilgrims proceeded to the castle, entreating admittance and refreshment for the love of the blessed St. Cuthbert, to whose shrine they were travelling, in order to expiate the sins of their youth.

The vassals immediately admitted the supposed pilgrims into an outward hall among the domestics, where they were furnished with such food as cold charity allows.

Thankful of anyhow having gained an entrance, they soon by careless questions, and attention to the

discourse of the vassals, learned that Sir James Stuart was then at the castle, the Lord and Lady Roskelyn with the court at Stirling, and that the dowager and her young charge were, on their return, to depart for Berwick.

'Well, to be sure,' said one of the lackeys, 'it is a strange business, but according to the old saying, one man's meat is another's poison, for a more gallant or a handsomer knight than Sir James Stuart doth not tread Scottish ground.'

'However true that may be,' replied a female servant, that sat spinning, 'she is his equal every way, for a fairer maid neither England nor Scotland can produce; and if she don't like him, that alters the case. I see no reason why she should be sent to a nunnery, marry, because the dowager says she has some lover in secret. She had better go to a nunnery herself, for there be liars abroad if she hath not more occasion to mourn the sins of her youth than the Lady Ambrosine.'

'Oh! but a convent will soon bring her to reason,' answered he: 'she hath naturally a merry heart, and the moping of the nuns won't suit her, so that she will be glad to change them for Sir James. I'm sure you would yourself, Bridget.'

'That's more than you know, fool: but if I was in her place, I would do neither. One night when I attended her to bed, I told her as much; but, poor soul! she only sighed and said—'Alas! I have no one to receive me, Bridget.'

At that moment being the hour for supper, the lackeys went to their respective duties, and the maid was left alone with the pilgrims.

'Holy St. Cuthbert,' said De Bourg, in a sanctified drawing tone, 'have ye forgotten, brethren, the dream I related to ye the night I fell asleep at the foot of St. Bridget's shrine?'

Monteith made no reply, but Ross, supposing he had some motive in the question, answered—'No,

truly, brother, it was a wonderful inspiration, and you should be careful to obey its dictates.'

'I mean it—pardon me, fair maid, the question, but either my ears deceived me, or some one called you Bridget?'

'My name is Bridget, pilgrim: but why ask you?'

'From no vain motive; St. Bridget hath been my patroness from my youth; at her feet have I wearied her with petitions, and at her altar have I offered my prayers; then by her side have I slept, till, sinner that I am, my wanderings carried me from her, and she sought another votary. Passing lately through Ross-shire, while my brethren prostrated themselves before St. Duthac, I sought out my saint, and, overcome with involuntary sleep, sunk at the foot of her altar, when methought she stood before me, and striking me with a branch she held in her hand, called thrice in a severe and solemn tone of voice—'Solomon, Solomon, Solomon! recreant that thou art, after so long an absence, why visitest thou me? trembling at her frown methought I entreated her pardon, when, assuming a milder air, she said—Once more then I try thee—observe my words; and when thou meetest a maiden who shall bear my name, give her in token from me, the ruby ring thou wearest on thy finger, and tell her that my commands are that she disclose the present to no one but a true virgin, under twenty years of age, of high blood, and the only child of her father, which virgin shall further instruct her in my wishes.'

'Holy saints!' exclaimed the maid, 'my name is Bridget sure enough; but why her saintship should be so kind to me I cannot tell.'

'Tis not for you to judge,' replied De Bourg. 'If you can truly assure me your name is Bridget, and that you will strictly obey her commands, I will execute my commission.'

'Gracious goodness! ye may search the book; I

was baptised at the church of Holyrood, in the city of Edinburgh.'

'No, I will take your word: I cannot suppose you would seek to deceive me. Brother,' addressing Monteith, 'give me the ring. Fearful, after so solemn an injunction of losing the identified jewel, I gave it into the trust of my brother, who is more careful than myself.'

Monteith immediately gave him a ring which he had received among the jewels from Ambrose.

'Take it, maiden,' said De Bourg; 'but observe the conditions—disclose the mission to no one but a true maiden, under twenty, of high blood, and the only child of her father, and, according to the holy Bridget, you shall then hear further. Know you any such?'

'Marry, I must consider: there's my dear friend Barbara Macgowrie—she is under twenty; and her own father's mother was second cousin, by father's side, to M'Lean, who served in King Robert's wars.'

'I think not she is a true maid,' said De Bourg. 'Is she the only child of her father?'

'Holy goodness, no! there be nine of them; but as for the scandal of John Anderson, I am sure it is false, for she has told me a thousand times.'

'Her word is not to be taken: you must heed how you transgress the commands of the holy Bridget; for, if you do, you will hear no more, and also incur her severe displeasure.'

'The goodness forbid: I fear I shall be obliged to keep the secret for I know no one who exactly answers the description.'

'You must then have patience; the saint who sent the ring can also send a maid proper to reveal it to. Hath the Lady Roskelyn a daughter?'

'No, she hath only a son; she is not herself more than four-and-twenty, and the dowager hath no child but the Lord Roskelyn. Oh, the goodness!' exclaimed she, after a pause, 'what a fool am I; if

there is not the Lady Ambrosine, who I will be bound to swear, is a true virgin, and the only child of her father, the Lord of Kintail.'

'Tis doubtless the very maid St. Bridget intended,' replied De Bourg, in his sanctified tone. 'If she be what you say, disclose it to her, but with prudence and secrecy.'

A few moments after, Bridget was called to her household duties, when De Bourg, repeating his command, and she her promise of observance, left them.

'A thousand thanks to thy inventive genius, dear Solomon!' said Monteith; 'but for it, though we are in the house, we should have found innumerable difficulties in letting her know it.'

'A lie, quotha!' replied De Bourg; 'the foundation of the story is true—I only heightened the colouring, and added a few incidents.'

'What then,' said Ross, laughing, 'in truth, the holy Bridget visited thy dreams?'

'In faith hath she,' replied he, 'for when I was a lad in France, the name of my first love was Bridget; at her feet I sighed and sued, and racked my brains and emptied my purse to obtain her favour, but, alas! once gained, the inconstancy of man assailed me, and travelling to Normandy, for a whole year I neglected my love; so that when I returned I found she had chosen a better votary, for the duke of Burgundy had taken my place—so far historical, the rest apocryphal; and marry, St. Bridget will serve you a good turn, I hope; in which case you will owe her a wax-taper of a pound weight at least.'

'And truly will I pay her, so thou wilt place it before her shrine,' replied Monteith. 'But to a more material subject; what think you of the conduct of the dowager to Ambrosine?'

'Tis worthy of the rest of her deeds,' answered Ross: 'incapable of bending the will of the heiress to her wishes, she would, if possible, embitter two of

the best years of her life ; but thou hast not the heart of a man, if thou dost not prevent it.'

'Ross, I dare not be a villain : Heaven witness for me, that, had I worlds, I would share them with so noble-minded a maid : but to reward her generous friendship with disgrace, I cannot bear.'

'Hist !' interrupted De Bourg, 'some one comes, screw up the muscles of your face to the extreme point of hypocrisy, and tune your voices to the same note.'

The intruder was one of the vassals, who come to shew the pilgrims to a chamber, allotted for such guests, in the left tower of the castle, and where, furnishing them with clean straw and coverlids, he left them.

CHAPTER XIII.

INTERESTED as the pilgrims were to procure an interview with Ambrosine, the impatience of Bridget equalled theirs, and hastening to the apartment of the heiress, she found her seated in deep reflection.

'Sweet lady,' said she, 'you were ever kind and good, and I have news to tell you.'

'To tell me, Bridget ! prithee then relate it.'

'There be three pilgrims come to the castle to-night ; they travel to Durham, to the shrine of St. Cuthbert.'

'Heaven speed them ; I hope the saint will protect them on their journey, and reward their piety, is this all thy news !'

'No, lady ; the blessed St. Bridget herself hath sent me a message.'

'A message to thee ; I pray thee to what purport ?'

'Yes, lady, even to such a poor lowly damsel as myself ; and I was to declare it to no one but a true

maid under twenty, and who was the only child of her father ; and now, lady, as I am sure that must be you, I will reveal it.'

'What knave has persuaded thee to believe such folly ?'

'No folly, lady ; and for knaves, if the pilgrims be knaves, they must be pretty ones ; their faces indeed are hardly to be seen for their hair, and the great hats they wear slouched over their foreheads,—but they look like lords, at least ; and for one of them, he would be the king of the world. As I stooped to pick up my thread, I caught a better view of his face—such fine black eyes, lady, and such a very fine shaped nose I never saw before.'

'They have beguiled thee with their hypocrisy,—give me my night-rail—I will away to bed—vexation hath made me heavy.'

'Dear lady, ere you go, hear what I have got to say, as you alone can inform me what St. Bridget's commands are for me. Sinner that I am, should I disregard her token, I dare not go to bed.'

'Her token ?' replied Ambrosine ; 'prithee Bridget, what token hath she sent thee ; a pair of striped garters, a sweet-cake in the shape of a heart, or the parings of her nails in a silk bag to wear about thy neck, to drive away evil spirits ! if the last, I pray thee haste to put it on, that thou mayest not be so easily duped.'

'You have a merry heart, lady, whatever betides you ; but, pardon me, 'tis sinful to jest on such subjects. The blessed Bridget commanded one of the pilgrims in a dream to give me neither more nor less than this beautiful ring.'

'Gracious Heaven !' exclaimed Ambrosine, snatching the ring, 'is William returned from the commission I sent him upon ?'

'No, lady ; had he, right well do I know he would have been here, not only for your sake, but for mine.'

'True,' answered Ambrosine, pausing; 'it is impossible he should. But these pilgrims, thou sayest, are men of noble port, one of them particularly?'

'Yes, lady; the silent one is so tall and stately, that when he stood by the vassals of the house, he seemed to look down upon them: and surely if strangers had come in, they would have drawn back, and have supposed him lord of the castle, at least; in good truth, I felt ashamed to see them seated in the outward hall.'

'Bridget, I must see these pilgrims.'

'You, lady! will you then tell me farther of the saint?'

'Undoubtedly, if she communicates it to me. Where are the Dowager and the knight of Lorn?'

'In the great hall, at supper.'

'Where are the pilgrims?'

'In the travellers' chamber in the left tower: shall I order them to attend you, lady?'

'Not for your life, Bridget; this business must be private; the family retired to rest, we will adventure to the tower, and hear farther of thy fate and mine.'

'Think you then, lady, that these men be diviners?'

'No; yet if I mistake not the future happiness or misery of my life depends upon one of them, and 'tis necessary I consult him thereon, yet see thou keep it secret.'

'I will; but pray do not forget, lady, to ask him farther respecting the commands of St. Bridget to me.'

'Undoubtedly not, though I can in part already inform thee. If thou keepest this secret with truth and honour, it is the will of the holy Bridget that you wed William, and that I give thee a marriage portion.'

'Holy Virgin!' exclaimed she, 'reward the bless-

ed saint for her goodness to me, and you also; but did you dream it, lady?'

'It matters not now for you to know how I gained the information I possess, so thou gettest a good husband and a marriage portion; but, should a word escape thee, 'tis all void.'

'Never fear me, lady,' said Bridget; 'I would sooner be dumb as a monk than hazard such a loss.'

'Tis well; here take thy ring, but for the present show it to no one; and for the white robe I wore yesterday, take that—for thou mayest convert it into a wedding garment; nay, no thanks—defer them, I pray thee; hie thee into the castle, and carefully observe when all are gone to rest; and bring me intelligence, and also a fresh taper to light us to the strangers.'

'Shall you not fear to venture to the tower to-night, lady?'

'Surely not; if thou fearest remain behind.'

'Marry, heaven forbid! I would follow you to the world's end; St. Bridget, I have no doubt, will guide us through every danger.'

'Haste thee away then, but be cautious; I will extinguish my taper, as if I were retiring to rest, and will wait thy return in darkness.'

Bridget did as she was commanded; a husband and a marriage portion were objects too material to be lost for so trivial a duty; and, though she longed to relate the high favour she was in with the saint, yet she resolved to restrain herself until either the pilgrims or Ambrosine set her tongue at liberty on the subject.

Ambrosine left alone, could scarcely believe it possible that the outlaws should have reached Roskelyn in so short a space of time. The conduct of Monteith at Kintail, and the almost incredible speed he had used, flattered her that she was not indifferent to him. 'Oh!' said she, 'should it be the fortune of mine to retrieve the character of my sex in the

mind of so noble a man, how gladly should I relinquish all the false glare of the court for the dreary rocks among which he dwells!

Such were the reflections of Ambrosine till Bridget joined her, when she informed her all was quiet in the castle, and the lights extinguished; after a short consultation, they took the way to the tower where the pilgrims lodged.

As they passed through the lower galleries of the castle and crossed the courts, the owls and bats, disturbed by the glare of the taper from their ivy haunts on the turrets, hooted and skimmed around them, to the great annoyance of Bridget, who, considering them as the harbingers of goblins or devils, did not cease a moment in recommending herself in silent prayer to her patron saint; while Ambrosine passed fearlessly and lightly forward, waving the taper to defend herself from the too near approach of such intruders.

On reaching the tower, Ambrosine left Bridget below, and with less firmness ascended the stairs, and gaining the apartment, hesitated whether she should knock. At length, with forced courage, she struck gently at the door, and was instantly answered by Monteith, who demanded who was there. Certified by the voice of St. Clair, she replied—'Ambrosine of Kintail, who wishes to hold a short conference with the pilgrims whom she will wait for in the lower apartment.'

Before Ambrosine could descend, the door was unbarred, and she saw the outlaws all completely clothed, though without their cloaks; and seated on benches in the apartment, had their swords unsheathed before them, and daggers in their girdles.

She shuddered at the sight, but St. Clair advancing re-assured her—'First of women!' said he, 'why have you ventured here at this hour? to-morrow might have been more convenient, than crossing the castle in the dead of the night, as you must have done. We have devised the means of staying an-

other day; de Bourg will feign sickness, and the rights of hospitality cannot be denied us.'

Ambrosine held out her hand. 'I grieve,' said she, 'to give you this trouble, and tremble lest I should involve you in danger; but, young and defenceless, I have no one to take my part, and have only a respite of a few days allowed me, to determine whether I will wed the knight of Lorn, or pass the remaining two years of my minority in the convent of Franciscan nuns at Berwick. The knight I think not of, nor have I any decided aversion to a convent, except that of the Minoreesses, whose abbess I well know to be a creature of the dowager's, and I have no doubt would make my situation very disagreeable there. What I would entreat is, that you would assist me in getting hence. On the north side of the Tay, at the foot of the Grampian hills, there is a monastery of black monks, and also a convent of nuns, who would doubtless receive me, for a good consideration, until I could claim my own.'

Monteith pressed her hand to his heart in silence, while De Bourg and Ross swore to die in her defence.

'Heaven forbid,' said she, 'I should need so dangerous proof of your friendship! prepare but fleet horses—I can ride with the best of ye, and we will soon be safe from pursuit.'

'We are,' replied Monteith, 'already provided: they are not more than six miles from hence, and can easily be brought hither; one for you is alone wanting, and that we will immediately procure.'

'Need you money?' said she.

'No,' interrupted De Bourg; 'I am cash-bearer, and the trash is plenty.'

'Tis well,' replied she; 'I must hasten, for time wastes. To-morrow, at the hour of midnight, cross the court that leads to this tower, and under the portal on the right hand is a small door, which opens to the chapel; you may easily unbar it, and in the

aisle await my coming. The lamp that constantly burns before the altar will give you sufficient light, and I shall bring a taper, as I cannot pass the avenues of the castle in darkness.'

'Suffer me to accompany you through them,' said St. Clair.

'For your life enter not the interior of the dwelling,' replied Ambrosine; 'fear not for me—I am safe. There is a passage through the sacristy which leads to the outside of the rampart wall, by which I mean to escape; and in the wood adjoining you may conceal your horses. But adieu, I must away, as I much question whether St. Bridget herself hath been able to preserve her poor votary from the horrors of fear, during the short interval she hath waited at the entrance of the tower.'

So saying, she held her hand to each, but last to Monteith, who, clasping it, and taking his sword, declared he would see her across the court. Ambrosine would have denied, but St. Clair insisted; she gave him the taper, when, placing her arm under his, he descended the stairs, where they found the trembling Bridget awaiting the return of her mistress.

'Bridget,' said Ambrosine, 'all is well; remember the promise of secrecy; not only thy fate but mine depends upon it.'

Bridget made no reply, but by a bend of the knees, so great was her astonishment to see her mistress accompanied by the handsome pilgrim, who now appeared a thousand times more so, when his head was uncovered, and his form undisguised by the palmer's cloak.

Passing through the courts, the owls and bats again annoyed them: Monteith used the same means to keep them off, as Ambrosine had before done, and considered her with admiration, devoid of that puerile weakness, which in spite of his former love for Ellen, he could not even then avoid thinking, partook of folly and affectation.

On reaching the lower gallery, Ambrosine stopped, and would have bidden him farewell, but, holding her hand, he entreated her to stay a few moments, placing the taper in a recess, and Bridget retiring a few paces, he said—'Flattered by a reflection that you consider me as a friend, pardon the question; but is there no plan that could be formed better than your wasting two of the best years of your life in a convent, and from whence you are not certain but the partiality of the queen for the dowager of Roskelyn and the knight of Lorn, might force you?'

'I see all my danger, but I know no alternative,' replied she; 'know you of any?'

'Alas, no!' answered he, with a heavy sigh. 'Oh, Ambrosine, could I recall the past! but the wish is vain—sorrow is mine for ever.'

'Say not so; when we last met, you questioned me closely; shall I use the same freedom with you?'

'Assuredly; I will show you my heart as openly as 'tis before the Creator who made it.'

'You asked me if I loved the knight of Lorn; I replied, truly, that I did not; now, answer to me—love you still the lady Roskelyn?'

'No, on my soul and honour! three years has she been to me as nothing; in the first paroxysm of my disappointment I hated her—in the second I thought of her with contempt; but now without either. If I remember her at all, it is with satisfaction that she has spared me the greatest of all my misfortunes, that of being her husband.'

'I am a strange, bold girl, but pardon me—love you any one else?'

'Ambrosine, I am a banished man, and dare not love.'

'Ridiculous refinement; to punish your enemies in the most effectual manner, would be to let them see you happy, in spite of their machinations; but we must part—the day will soon dawn. Fail not to

be with your companions in the chapel at midnight, and leave the rest to fortune; but ere we part say—know you the way back to your friends?’

‘I do—I observed it well; I was also here once in my boyish days, with my uncle Monteith.’

‘Farewell, then,’ said she; ‘remember to-morrow night, and Heaven guide you.’

‘Angels, with hearts pure as your own, watch round you;’ answered he, pressing her hand to his lips, and preparing to leave her.

‘Will you not take the taper?’ said she, detaining him.

‘No. Oh, Ambrosine!’ replied he, with an emotion he could not repress, again seizing and kissing her hand; ‘would I had known thee sooner, or never—’

‘Finish not the sentence,’ said she, jestingly: ‘know you not the proverb—Better late than never? But once more, farewell.’

Monteith made no reply, but leaving the court, gained the tower, where his companions awaited him.

Ambrosine, in the meantime, with Bridget, crossed through the interior of the castle in silence. They were, however, somewhat alarmed in passing the Dowager’s chamber to hear her dog bark; but using their utmost speed, they soon reached the apartment of Ambrosine, where she detained Bridget during the remainder of the night, or rather morning.

CHAPTER XIV.

BRIDGET, on being requested, readily gave Ambrosine an oath of secrecy, who then informed her that her lover William had been the messenger to fetch the pilgrims, though she evaded saying from whence they came. Ambrosine also repeated her promise of giving her a marriage-portion, and commanded

her, if she was successful in leaving the castle on the ensuing night, to demand her dismissal, and, first making William her spouse, to travel to Kintail, where, to ensure her a proper reception, she gave her an order under her own hand, and money also to defray her journey thither; then collecting her most valuable jewels, she laid herself down to rest, with Bridget by her side. The latter, though the flattering idea of being under the immediate protection of a saint was somewhat diminished, yet consoled herself so well with the patronage of the heiress, that she soon fell asleep. Not so Ambrosine; the bold step she had taken, under a firm reliance on Monteith’s honour, and the almost certainty that he loved her, kept her awake, and she looked forward with the pleasurable hope of making him amends for all the evils of fortune, and of constituting the happiness of the only man that could make her so.

In the morning De Bourg feigned sickness so artfully that he was permitted to remain in the apartment allotted to the travellers; Ross, the better to support the deception, remained with him; while Monteith joined his companions at the cottage, and gave them charge to fetch the horses from where they had left them, and also to purchase one for Ambrosine.

Twice in the day, under pretence of carrying something to the sick pilgrim, they were visited by Bridget, who brought them intelligence that at noon the same day William had arrived safe.

De Bourg, perceiving that Bridget treated him with more distance than his companions, from the remembrance of the saint, said—‘My dear maid, look not at me with that averted eye, lest ye make me guilty of forswearing St. Bridget for ever, in which case the sin will be yours, not mine. I vow to you, that, satisfied with the candour and beauty of your countenance, I should at once have disclosed the business to you, without any subterfuge; but the over-caution of my companions prevented it, and re-

duced me to have recourse to a deception, for which even at that time my heart reproached me; condemn me not, therefore, for their fault.'

Bridget accepted the apology.

'Nay then,' added he, 'give me your hand, and a kiss of reconciliation, I insist. Miserable man that I am! I have neither rings, chains, lockets, crosses, nor trinkets, fit to present to a maiden; but the will, with a generous mind like thine, Bridget, will be taken for the deed; suffer me, therefore, I pray thee, to beg thee to accept this piece of gold for my sake.'

'Indeed, generous sir, I cannot; the Lady Ambrosine pays me nobly; if she will suffer me, I will live and die with her.'

'Thou art a good girl,' answered he: 'but thou dost not pardon me unless thou takest my present; for, though it is not a trinket for thee to wear, thou mayest hereafter drill a hole through it, and hang it round thy eldest son's neck; I promise thee it will be of wonderful efficacy in making him cut his teeth.'

Monteith and Ross both laughed, nor could Bridget forbear—'From which of thy saints doth it possess that virtue?' said St. Clair.

'What is that to thee, infidel?' answered De Bourg. 'I am punished for thy guilt.'

'Nay, Bridget will accept thy present,' said Monteith, 'and also the same from me and Ross, so that the elder child may not have the advantage of the two that succeed.'

'Ye are merry hearts, sirs,' said Bridget; 'my lady willed me to ask you if you remembered the way to the chapel?'

'We do,' replied Monteith; 'bear to her our best wishes—we will not fail her.'

During the whole of the day, Ambrosine kept her apartment as much as possible, without appearing particular, for conscious of her intention, she thought that the knight of Lorn and the dowager

viewed her with scrutinizing eyes, and towards evening, complaining of indisposition, she retired early.

It was an hour beyond midnight, before all was quiet in the castle, when, taking her jewels, she resolved to adventure. Bridget, who had been weeping all the forenoon, would fain have accompanied her, but that she peremptorily refused, for, however she wished a female companion, she well knew it would impede their flight; repeating, therefore, her command for her to wed William as soon as possible, and to repair to Kintail, she took her taper, and dismissing Bridget to rest, left the chamber. With a light but trembling step she passed the gallery where her own chamber was situated, and crossing the great stairs that led to the grand apartment, she entered the gallery appertaining to the dowager and her retinue.

She recollected the barking of the dog the preceding night with some alarm; but now all appeared quiet around her, until leaving the suit of apartments to descend to the lower story, she thought she heard a step above, and the whispering of distant voices, which the echo of the high roof conveyed to her ear. Thoroughly alarmed, yet too far advanced to draw back, she extinguished her taper, and proceeded in silent haste through the lower galleries into the first court, when, by the imperfect light of the moon, she discovered a man leaning against one of the buttresses. Her alarm, however, was of short duration for, directed by her white garments, he advanced.

'Dearest Ambrosine,' said Monteith, 'I have suffered more than I can describe by your stay; a few minutes more, and I should have endeavoured to seek you in the castle.'

'Peace, on your life,' said she, in a low voice; 'I fear I am pursued, and that the extinguishing of my taper has alone prevented me being overtaken.'

Monteith clasped her hand, and hastening forward, said—'They must be bold fellows who take

you from me; methinks in this cause I could encounter an army. And now surely there is no cause to fear; we are six, and well armed, are equal to treble our number.'

As he spoke, they reached the door of the chapel, when Ambrosine turning, saw a light crossing the outward gallery of the court, and the moment after, heard voices articulating her name. Trembling almost to fainting she threw herself into Monteith's arms.

'Oh, fly, St. Clair,' said she, 'I conjure thee! I have brought thee here to death (for thy enemies will prevail), wretch that I am, when would have given my life to have saved thine.'

'Beloved of my soul!' said St. Clair, forgetting both prudence and caution, and clasping her to his heart, 'fear not; all will be well; your distress can alone unnerve my arm.'

As he spoke he bore her into the chapel, where he informed his companions of the danger, and bade them stand prepared, as he feared their enemies were too near to be avoided.

The light which beamed through the door of the chapel, and which Monteith in his haste had left unclosed, directed their pursuers, who, a moment after, rushed in, to the number of ten, at the head of whom were the knight of Lorn and Lady Roskelyn.

Monteith instantly placed Ambrosine, who scarcely breathed, on the steps of the altar, and with his companions, unsheathed his sword, advancing in a posture of defence. The vassals had been hastily called, and most of them being unarmed, drew back at so formidable a sight; but Sir James, who at his entrance caught a glimpse of Ambrosine in the arms of Monteith, coming forward, and singling him out, said—'if thou art worthy the love of the heiress of Kintail, thy single arm to mine.'

'Willingly,' said St. Clair; 'tis not the first time

thou and I have met; thou owest a fall to the Danish knight—take death from the arm of Monteith.'

'Monteith!' exclaimed Sir James, starting, and drawing back some paces, leaning on his sword.

'It is Monteith,' said the dowager, 'the daring outlaw, who, regardless of his king, sets his commands at defiance, and tramples on the rights of the Lord of Roskelyn; and now, to complete the measure of his guilt, not only commits theft in the person of the heiress, but also adds the crime of sacrilege.'

'Talk you, unfeeling woman, of rights destroyed, when you look at me?' replied Monteith. 'The knight speaks nobly; hand to hand let us decide it; if I fall, so rest my soul, as I free him from my death! and as my blood flows, lady, remember it hath no disgrace but what it inheriteth from you.'

The dowager trembled, and leant on one of the attendants, while Sir James drew farther back.

'Nay, sir knight, shun me not. See you that monument,' continued he, pointing to one of the late lord Roskelyn; under it lies the husband of that woman; may his spirit witness the combat, and if there be dishonour, that it sits not on the shield of Monteith! You tremble, vain woman, and turn pale: you—you talk of sacrilege! you who have profaned every duty, sacred and human! Your first fault was venial, but your next was of the dye of hell; and here I warn you to repentance—here, before the altar of your God, and of my God, and before the tomb of your husband and of my father.'

'Gallant Monteith,' said the knight of Lorn, throwing down his sword, 'if it be possible, grant me thy pardon! The tale of St. Clair's wrongs, sorrows, and oppressions, I have heard indistinctly, but till this hour never knew their amount.'

'Nor do you now, brave Stuart,' replied Monteith, following his example, and throwing down his weapon; 'command my life—at the call of friend

ship it shall freely come forth ; but for Ambrosine, she hath a dearer claim—she shall be free ; for though a banished man must not love her, he can still protect her.’

‘Valiant chief, I yield : when I add to your misfortunes, may they revert on my own head.’ Then, turning to the dowager, he added—‘dismiss your vassals, lady ; neither you nor I shall gain honour by this business. For you, St. Clair, you must yield to necessity ; but should opportunity ever offer, remember you have a friend in James Stuart.’

As he spoke, he held out his hand, which Monteith receiving, said—‘I thank ye, noble knight, and if you can accept that of an outlaw, command mine.’

‘And will you suffer him,’ said the dowager, addressing Sir James, ‘to bear away Ambrosine ? Is this the assistance I claimed from you ?’

‘Lady,’ replied he, ‘the story of St. Clair Monteith, though his person was unknown to me, has long been familiar to my ear, and made the impression which we feel from fabled sorrow and oppression. I find the truth of what I before heard, certified by him, and denied by you ; and never shall my sword be raised against him. For your designs in my favour, much thanks ; but I relinquish all claim to the Lady Ambrosine, and entreat she may speak her own intention and wishes, in which I swear to coincide.’

Ambrosine, somewhat recovered by the amicable conversation that had passed, stood up, and said :—

‘Sir James, a better love than mine hangs over you ; you may be blessed to the extent of your wishes ! For me, here, at the holy altar, I declare, in the presence of the blessed saints, that I will have no husband, unless it be Monteith, and, if he refuses me, to live and die a virgin. For the present, it is my intention to take refuge in a convent, for I like not the court, nor the guardianship of the dowager of

Roskelyn. If I remain single two years, she may receive my revenues during that period ; if I marry, I shall claim them, as by my father’s testament the right is only mine from the day of marriage, payable to my own discharge, and no other.’

‘Fortune attend you !’ replied Sir James, ‘Lady Roskelyn, I withdraw ; I will no more to do in this business.’

So saying, he left the chapel.

‘Poltroons !’ exclaimed the dowager, turning to the vassals, ‘why stand ye like statues ? call your comrades ; though a woman, I am not to be braved thus.’

‘The man that offers to stir, dies,’ said Monteith. ‘Your rage and force are equally vain ; Ambrosine shall be secured from your malice ; come, sweet maid,’ added he, placing her arm under his, and taking his sword in his right hand, ‘you shall be our pilot ; fear not—they must fight well who robs us of so fair a prize.’

So saying, he took the way from the chapel through the sacristy, preceded by De Bourg, with a taper, and followed by the rest of his companions.

They lost no time in gaining the wood, and mounting their horses ; Monteith wrapped his palmer’s cloak round Ambrosine, at once to conceal her figure and to shield her from the cool morning air ; at the same time, tying the hat over her face, he said :

‘In faith, Ambrosine, thou bafflest my skill,—I cannot make thee less lovely.’

Conscious they should be pursued, and also aware that the greater part of the vassals of the house, buried in sleep, would take some time in preparation, they used their utmost speed, Ambrosine keeping pace with the foremost. As they conjectured their enemies would pursue northward, they took their way to the south, and by ten in the morning reached Selkirk, where, procuring some refreshment for themselves and their beasts from a cottage, they con-

tinued to Drumlanrig, where they reposed for a few hours, when they pursued their way to the coast, where they embarked in a vessel bound to Carrickfergus, at which place they considered they should be safe from pursuit.

In the meantime the dowager had despatched messengers different ways, but particularly to the north, in order to gain intelligence of the heiress; but in vain: none could be obtained, and increased vexation was alone the result of the inquiry, not only to her, but to lord and lady Roskelyn, who hastened home on the first intelligence they received of what had happened.

Bridget was also questioned, but true to her trust, she confessed only that she visited the pilgrims with Ambrosine, but denied that she considered them in any other light. This confession she was reduced to make by the dowager, who declared that the night preceding the flight of Ambrosine, a light shining through the lattice over the door of her chamber, and her dog barking, she had hastily risen, and to her great amazement seen the heiress and Bridget passing through the gallery with a taper.

The circumstance, however, made but a transient impression, as Ambrosine frequently sat till very late in the upper gallery that faced the sea, admiring the view by the light of the moon.

The restraint of Ambrosine, and her unusual thoughtfulness the ensuing day, were not lost on the dowager; it awakened her suspicion, and she communicated what she had seen the night before to Sir James Stuart, and entreated him to watch with her the ensuing night. An hour after midnight, Ambrosine passed with the taper, and, to their farther astonishment, alone; on which the knight in silence pursued her; but, being deceived by her extinguishing the light, he was bewildered in the way, and obliged to return to the dowager's chamber. Alarmed at the knight's report of Ambrosine's caution, she

immediately accompanied him in the pursuit, awakening the vassals who slept in that department of the castle. Calling loudly on Ambrosine, they hastened through the galleries; but her speed had exceeded theirs, and she had in all probability escaped undiscovered, had not the light from the chapel directed their steps: opposition was, however, fruitless, and the dowager only was punished with hearing harsh truths, which rankled and festered in her heart; while the knight of Lorn, at once convinced of the impossibility of gaining Ambrosine from so formidable a rival, nobly gave up his pretensions.

The disinterested conduct of Sir James gave much displeasure to the family of Roskelyn; but satisfied with the applause of his own heart, he left the castle, and, in the pleasures and bustle of the court, soon forgot his disappointment.

CHAPTER XV.

THE travellers, on landing at Carrickfergus, concluding themselves safe from danger, tarried a few days to repose from their fatigue; Ambrosine purchasing a change of apparel, and engaging a female attendant.

One day, Monteith being alone with her, she said, — 'St. Clair, though our actions be pure as those of angels, what thinkest thou the world will say of a damsel of my age, wandering by land, and voyaging by sea, with such a set of bold fellows as thee and thy comrades?'

'Ambrosine,' replied he, 'do not awaken unpleasant reflections; thy honour is dearer to me than my life, and never will I suffer it to be sullied by the breath of scandal.'

'Then wilt thou need as many arms as the giant Briareus, and as many lives as he had heads, yet find

them all too few; besides, thinkst thou that the retailers of slanders will choose in this case to display their talents before thee? No; I must expiate this mad freak in a convent: where thinkst thou I shall be placed—in England, Ireland, or Scotland?

'Alas! I shudder at the bare thought of parting from you; but it must be: choose where you will, I will see you safe, and then what farther business hath Monteith with life?'

The depression with which he spoke sunk to the heart of Ambrosine.

'Monteith,' said she, turning from him to conceal the burning crimson that covered her neck and bosom, 'dost thou love me?'

'Love thee!' repeated he, all caution banished by the question; 'no, the word is too poor, and bears no similitude to my feelings; thou art dearer to me than life or light; I adore thee!'

'Then must I go to a convent?'

'Alas! I know not. I am but man. Spare me, Ambrosine, from a temptation too hard to resist.'

'Monteith,' said she, raising her soft blue eyes to his, 'have ye no room for me to dwell at Barra?'

'Angelic tempter!' exclaimed he, clasping her with his arm, 'thou dwellest in my heart, and never shall it know another love. But to take thee to Barra—impossible! thee, to waste thy youth and beauty amidst the savage mountains of the Hebrides.'

'There is no criterion for taste,' answered she, 'But enough; I will away to the first convent; I have stepped over the boundaries prescribed my sex, and thou lovest me not.'

'Cruel and unjust accusation! Nay, thou knowest otherwise; and that, did I possess a diadem, it could only gain value by being shared with thee.'

'Then pride is stronger than love in thy heart. Remember, Monteith, that love had conquered pride in mine, or I had never come to Barra, or claimed thy protection at Roskelyn.'

Generous maid! never can it be forgotten. Oh, Ambrosine! wherever thou goest, thou wilt ever be my daily thoughts and my nightly dreams; in the singing of birds I shall recognize the notes of thy sweet voice, but never shall I see thy counterpart, unless it be in a better and a happier world.'

'That I love you, Monteith, I, alas! have given proofs beyond all denial; and we but court pain to prolong a separation which inevitably must take place. In the vicinity of Belfast there is a convent of Benedictine sisters; and thither will I with tomorrow's dawn.'

'Hateful thought! must we so soon part?'

'You said so,' answered she.

'Dearest maid, cruel in your kindness: the effort must be yours; I can never make it.'

'Nay then, how should I, that am a weak woman? But my mind is fixed, and shall remain firm to its purpose.'

De Bourg and Ross entering, prevented more discourse. Monteith appeared out of spirits during the evening, and Ambrosine retired early to rest.

In the morning they were but just assembled when Ambrosine entered accoutred for a journey.

'Good day,' said she, addressing them; 'I go to Belfast: ye are not old, but ye are dear friends; prolong not, I pray ye, the taking leave, for, though ye may bear it like heroes, I shall feel it like a woman.'

They all crowded round her, one asking the reason of such sudden haste, another entreating her to defer her intention, a third praying a respite of a day; while De Bourg, pressing her hand respectfully to his lips, at once dropped a tear on it, and muttered a curse on folly and false honour.

Ross and Monteith stood apart. Advancing towards the first, Ambrosine said:—

'Accept at once, Sir James, my thanks and farewell; let not, I conjure you, your impetuous valour

lead you into dangers. Your enemies may, indeed, awhile triumph, but the sun of prosperity will again shine upon St. Clair.

As she concluded, her voice was less articulate, and a sickly paleness overspread her complexion.

'Oh, Ambrosine!' exclaimed Monteith, clasping her in his arms, 'beloved of my soul, it is impossible; I can sooner yield my life; thou makest me a villain; thou must never leave me. Say, angel that thou art, canst thou condescend to be the wife of a banished man?'

Ambrosine made no reply, but withdrew herself from his arms; and with her face dyed with blushes, left the apartment.

Monteith instantly followed her.

'Ambrosine,' said he, 'I dare not reflect; I, that would willingly make thee empress of the whole world, have nothing to offer thee but a heart, and that bleeding with a thousand wrongs.'

'I will endeavour to heal them, Monteith.'

Monteith kissed off a tear that hung on her cheek, and, while clasped to his heart, he pressed to let the rites of the church immediately make them one.

Conscious of the impropriety of her situation, she complied; and at an early hour the ensuing morning they were united in a small chapel at Carrickfergus, her female attendant and their mutual friends being present.

The rites ended, Monteith embraced his beautiful bride. 'Though James of Scotland,' said he, 'hath driven me forth an outlaw, at this moment I am richer far than he, for Heaven hath given me an angel: and, when I forfeit my trust, may all the sorrows I have encountered be redoubled upon my head for ever.'

Aware of the uneasiness their companions at Barra must suffer on their account, they resolved to hasten thither as speedily as possible. Ambrosine voyaging with them with the utmost cheerfulness; in the

company of Monteith regardless of every other object in the creation, and he, in her gentle converse, forgetting he was a banished man.

CHAPTER XVI.

DURING their voyage, St. Clair had wished to inform Ambrosine of the capture of the heir of Roskellyn, but a promise the residents of the fortress had unanimously made, not to disclose the secret without the concurrence of each other, restrained him; yet, to prevent her being surprised by the sight of a child at her arrival, he one day before his companions said—'Pardon me, dear Ambrosine, but I have used one deception towards you; I have a young boy at Barra, for whom I must bespeak your affection.'

'Indeed!' replied she, somewhat surprised; but, smiling, she added—'Then 'tis part of my duty, I suppose, to love him; Monteith is a man of honour, and has doubtless done *his* by the mother.'

'His mother is far from hence, and never more do I wish to behold her.'

'Doth she need pecuniary assistance?' said Ambrosine.

'No; she revels with the richest dames of the south. I am bound by promise to my companions not to be more explicit, but, on my arrival, they will doubtless set me free: for, with one heart, Ambrosine, we must have but one mind.'

On their arrival at Barra they were received with transport, but particularly Ambrosine, whom they all regarded as the instrument of their friend's happiness and future prosperity.

Scarcely were the travellers seated, and refreshment placed before them, when the little sturdy Randolph ran in; and, seeing Monteith, climbed

upon his knees, and saluted him with the name of father. Monteith tenderly kissed him, saying—

‘Thou comest unexpectedly. I wished, first,’ added he, ‘to have entered into some explanation with Ambrosine.’

As he spoke he placed the young Randolph on her knee, but was astonished to see her pale, and scarcely able to support herself upon her seat.

‘Ambrosine,’ cried he, in a voice of alarm, ‘why thus disordered? the sight of the infant surely could not cause it? Thou knowest I told thee—’

‘Monteith,’ said she, hastily interrupting him, ‘art thou a man of honour?’

‘Have I lived to hear thee doubt it?’ answered he.

‘Then whence comes it this boy is here?’ said she, fixing her eyes strongly upon him.

‘Tis what I wished to explain to thee, but was not at liberty without the consent of my companions.’

‘Monteith,’ said she, in a solemn voice, ‘when I first loved thee, it was not for thy person, for then, in truth, I had never seen thee; but when my father spoke of thy unmerited persecutions, and the sorrows that had attended thee, even from thy infancy, I involuntarily wept, and knew not that I was nourishing the first seeds of love. When he spoke of thy courage and noble daring, my heart swelled, and I wished thee success in all thy undertakings; and, when he deplored the impetuosity of thy temper, which led thee into youthful errors, I endeavoured to palliate and excuse them.’

Monteith took her hand, and attempted to reply, but she prevented him by saying—‘Suffer me to conclude; I will then listen with the obedience I owe thee. It was no light passion that could influence me to act as I have done to gain thy heart and hand. No, Monteith, it is an affection interwoven with my very existence; and when I no longer *dare* love thee, I must cease to live. Nay, interrupt me not; let

them banish thee to the frozen shores of Lapland, or to the scorching climes of India, thither will Ambrosine attend thee, in poverty, sickness, or unmerited disgrace; but if *real* dishonour comes, Ambrosine dies, and Monteith is again free.’

The whole party viewed her with admiration, Monteith with a sentiment of respect that increased his affection.

‘My beloved,’ said he, ‘you suspect me of some unworthy act, yet explain it not.’

‘How comes it then,’ replied she, ‘that I find the heir of Roskelyn in the isle of Barra?’

‘Know ye the boy?’ said Monteith.

‘I do; even without the testimony of his arm, which, being covered, I have not seen. When in the castle of Roskelyn, he was my favourite companion, and by his fondness for me appeared to consider me more nearly allied to him than his mother.’

‘The boy had judgment,’ said Monteith; ‘our secret discovered, my companions will explain the whole, and endeavour to recover your good opinion.’

The outlaws then related the means by which Montrose had fallen into their hands. ‘Had the grief of his parents been such as I think mine would have been for the loss of such a child,’ said St. Clair, ‘no personal advantage could have obliged me to detain him; but on my enquiry, even when I first saw you, Ambrosine, you remarked his mother’s want of feeling.’

‘It is too true,’ replied she, ‘I pray ye all pardon me; but, though I could wish this deed undone, I cannot but confess that good, rather than evil, may result from it. Come then, my poor boy,’ said she, taking him to her bosom, ‘thou shalt not want a mother. Canst thou call me mother?’

Randolph attempted to repeat the word; it was his first effort to articulate the name, and he failed; but, attracted by her smiles and kindness, he wound

her golden tresses round his chubby fingers, and repeatedly kissed her lips and forehead.

The marriage of Monteith was not only celebrated in the island, but also in all those around; and if, therefore, Ambrosine found herself an object of attention at Kintail and the court of Scotland, at Barra she was regarded as a queen, and revered as a goddess.

As the household economy is ever best conducted by a female, the fortress speedily began to assume a new aspect; the inhabited part was repaired, and Ambrosine despatched a vassal to Kintail, ordering such furniture to be sent as made it commodious to them all. She also despatched letters by the same conveyance to her vassals, desiring them to celebrate her marriage at her own expense, and to pay no sums but to her receipt, which by her father's will, as heiress, she was empowered to give, even independently of her husband. She also requested that, when William and Bridget should come to Kintail, they might repair by the first vessel to Barra.

The polished and active mind of Ambrosine, by insensible degrees, smoothed the roughness of the manners of her companions, who were all so respectfully attentive to her wishes, that she would sometimes say—'Surely there is not a woman in this country, nor I believe in any other, so happy as myself; for I have the best husband in the world, and a family of the most affectionate brothers.'

When the weather was fair, she sailed with them among the islands, and partook of their amusement; in the dreary season she sung, or tuned her lute or harp, to beguile their hours. Their table, ever covered with plenty, was now arranged with skill; and, beguiled by other pursuits, they lost the custom of drinking wine to excess, so that de Bourg was accustomed to declare, that he should dedicate his leisure hours to writing a treatise on temperance, and address it to the court of Scotland.

These pleasurable hours were broken upon by information they received from William and Bridget, who reached them during the gloom of winter, that the dowager and the lord Roskelyn, by repeated appeals, had at length succeeded in persuading the king to send a force sufficient to bring the whole of the inhabitants of the fortress to Edinburgh, a plan, which was, however, deferred till the ensuing spring.

CHAPTER XVII.

MONTEITH and his companions laughed at the menacing danger. 'By Heaven,' said he, 'if they do come, we will dust their jackets, and send them back to James with a lesson, for which he will be the better as long as he lives. The only point in which I am vulnerable is Ambrosine, who is not formed to encounter the inconveniences to which I have subjected her.'

'Judge for thyself,' replied she gaily; 'when I resolved on such a desperate action as passing my life with thee, I made up my mind to all the trifling alarms that I might possibly encounter. When I enervate thee with fear, reproach me, but till then, let me enjoy the reputation of courage.'

'That thou art superior to all women, I have not to learn,' replied Monteith; 'but with a heart as gentle as that of the dove, however well thou mayest conceal it, thou wilt suffer much.'

'Granted that it may be so,' said she; 'many a man hath done as much in battle, yet, by the assistance of a bold exterior, has passed for a hero; but, to show you that I have reflected on this subject, I must inform you of a project I have devised, but leave it to your better judgment to adopt or decline it, as you think proper. William and his bride, who brought us the news of the intended attack, have

warmly entreated to remain with us, and as I know the fidelity of both, I am willing to accept the offer. Let him be despatched to Kintail, and from the armoury there, load a vessel with whatever ye may think necessary, that the enemy may not find us so defenceless as they expect.'

Though Monteith, some months back, had declined all arrangements for strengthening the fortress, he now, as well as his companions, was of a different opinion.

'I am turned miser,' said he, 'and think the casket that contains my treasure cannot be too strong to secure it.'

From the first interview St. Clair had with the feigned Ambrose, she had engaged his esteem, and the discovery of De Bourg had almost, unknown to himself, given softer feelings to that sentiment; but when, adorned with her sex's charms, he saw her at the tournament, where with native dignity she answered the queen, by a bold refusal of the knight of Lorn, his heart became her willing captive, though resolved to combat his passion, rather than to suffer her to share his disgrace. Her dependence on his honour, by claiming his protection to rescue her from the arts of the dowager of Roskelyn, and her subsequent conduct, when assured he truly loved her, rivetted his affection; and unable to combat it, he felt it was more easy to resign his life than to part from her. Marriage, which is said to calm the effervescence of passion, in St. Clair had a different effect; and the blooming Ambrose coming to relieve his wants at Barra, the lovely Ambrosine bearing away the prize of beauty at the court of Scotland, or the heiress of Kintail, gracing the noble hall of her ancestors, did not appear half so lovely in his eyes as the wife of the outlaw Monteith, clad in a simple Highland vest, a short petticoat, with her hair wanting in the wind, as she climbed the mountains in smooth paths, holding the young Randolph by the

hand, or in rougher ways, with sportive playfulness threw him over her shoulder, and agile as the deer, ran till she gained the summit.

Since Randolph M'Gregor's death, St. Clair, as before observed, had become warmly attached to his young namesake; but the affection Ambrosine testified for him, and his childish gratitude in returning it, speedily gave him redoubled interest in the heart of Monteith, so that he would sometimes say, as he caressed the rosy boy—'Thy mother, as she calls herself, hath communicated some of her fascinating power to thee, for, in spite of my resolution, and the invincible enmity I bear thy parents, I love thee, Randolph.'

In the meantime the spring advanced, and the attack upon the isles with a strong force was loudly rumoured abroad. Monteith and his companions neglected nothing to secure themselves from danger; William, and some of the friends of the outlaws, had brought from Kintail all they thought necessary for defence, while others had sailed among the isles and made known the threatened danger to the inhabitants, who, almost to a man, had sworn to die in their cause, rather than yield.

An event which in other circumstances would have given Monteith the most supreme delight, now alone overwhelmed him with grief; his idolized Ambrosine was within a few weeks of making him a father, and his fears on her account inspired sentiments that the king, and the whole power of Scotland, were not able to have created in his undaunted bosom. Herself, on the contrary, laughed, sung, and jested as usual, and by every means in her power endeavoured to convince him that her mind was perfectly at ease, even respecting his own personal safety.

One morning in the month of June, sentinels which they had kept for some time on the watch-tower, gave notice that four vessels, though at a considerable distance, were sailing towards the coast.

Not doubting but these contained their threatened foes, the inhabitants of the fortress arose hastily, and ringing the alarm-bell, speedily found themselves reinforced by numbers, each man pressing to be directed how he might be employed most effectually for the common benefit; some were immediately stationed to guard the fortress, others embarked in large sea-boats, on the opposite side of the island from the invaders, and hastened to Kismul, Vatersa, and the adjacent isles, from whence, before noon, they returned so deeply laden with men, that they appeared momentarily in danger of sinking. In the meantime, Monteith and his companions, completely armed, prepared to meet their enemies on that part of the coast towards which they appeared to direct their course.

Throughout the whole preparation, Monteith and his friends contemplated the behaviour of Ambrosine with wonder and admiration; it was calm and dignified; and though her cheek glowed not with its usual red, no word to testify fear escaped her.

'Beloved of my soul,' said Monteith, embracing her, 'to what a state has participating in my fate reduced thee?'

'To a state,' replied she, 'which I would not forego to be the mistress of empires. Fear not for me; I will away, and, as my first duty, entreat the protection of God for my husband and his brave friends; my second care shall be, with the assistance of Bridget and my maidens, to prepare a feast befitting warriors weary with battle. Go then,' added she, undauntedly, 'go to conquest! my heart rises superior to the weakness of my sex; the Power who gave me such a husband as Monteith, will neither suffer me to be a widow, nor the eldest-born of my hopes to be a fatherless orphan.'

'Heroic woman!' exclaimed Monteith, 'thy words might make a coward brave: farewell—take heed to thyself: as for St. Clair's life, it hangs not

on so poor a tenure as the power of James—he lives or dies with thee; so saying, he turned from her, and, at the head of his friends, left the fortress. William was in the party of St. Clair; he was the son of an ancient vassal of the house of Roskelyn, who, well acquainted with the story of Monteith's oppressions, had aroused all the ardour of his son in the cause. From Ralph, the father of William, Ambrosine had first learned which were the particular jewels of Monteith, and, by the advice of the old man, she had made him her messenger to the isle of Barra; nor had she cause to repent the trust, for, though warmly attached to Bridget, he had preserved the secret of his destination even from her. At the time of Ambrosine's flight, Ralph was at Stirling, attending the earl and countess, but on his return, consented to what Ambrosine requested, and seeing the young people united, dismissed them, though privately, to Kintail.

William, anxious to deserve the kindness of the chief, pressed to be near him, while Bridget, unequal to imitate the conduct of her mistress, clung to his garments, wrung her hands, and shrieked aloud.—'Fie upon you, woman!' said Ambrosine, with more severity than she had ever before assumed: 'call you that noise grief, or love for your husband? Believe me, 'tis neither, but mere selfishness; for love would teach you to compose, not to ruffle the spirits of a man at such a moment of danger. Come,' added she, with more softness, 'give me your hand; equal sufferers in this cause, we will condole and comfort each other.' So saying, she led the weeping Bridget within the fortress, and commanded the gates to be securely closed.

Though she had supported the conflict nobly in sight of the warriors, for some time after her entrance, her spirits sunk, and she remained in silent anguish; at length, shaking off the lethargy of sorrow, she retired to her apartment, whence, after re-

maining some time, she came forth, and with composure, gave her attendants orders to prepare refreshment for their numerous friends. Taking young Randolph by the hand, she then mounted to the watch-tower, from whence she discovered that the vessels of the enemy had reached the coast on the one side, while on all the open parts of the island the sea-boats were busied in landing men they had brought from those adjacent.

Freed from all other observation, with young Randolph's arms clasped around her neck, Ambrosine gave free vent to the anguish that overpowered her, while he, charmed with the sight of the burnished weapons glittering in the sun, alternately kissed off her tears, and clapping his hands in transport, exclaimed—'Let me go to them! let me go to them!'

In the meantime, Monteith having arranged his men, and divided them into parties, each of which was commanded by one of his friends, found that his force amounted already to eight hundred, and that he might speedily expect many more; and though such a number, collected in haste, could be but indifferently armed, yet each carried some weapon of defence, and on the whole made an appearance formidable to a power that, however well armed and disciplined, did not equal them in number.

Monteith's little army took their station at some distance from the coast, until they had suffered a part of their enemies to land; then advancing towards them, he demanded the cause of their coming, and commanded them to desist from their disembarkation, under pain of an instant attack.

'We come,' replied Sir John Murray, who commanded the expedition, and saw with dismay the strength of his opposers, 'in the name of the king of Scotland, to arrest, by his authority, the five outlaws, Monteith, De Bourg, Hamilton, Ross, and M'Gregor, and likewise whoever may be found abetting them in the fortress of Barra.'

'Marry, then,' interrupted De Bourg, 'but you will see some devilish warm work; but here we are, win us and wear us. By Jove! when ye lead us captives into Edinburgh, but it will be glorious sport! James will hold his head a foot higher than he was wont.'

Monteith, without noticing the answer of De Bourg, replied—'For the commands of the king of Scots, we feel no other sentiment than contempt; he knows his power in the court of Scotland, but he has yet to learn that of the men he hath unjustly banished in this and the neighbouring isles. Repeated insults have not yet made us forget we are Scots; but let him beware how he proceeds too far, lest he force us to convince him that the Danes and Norwegians have not yet forgotten their ancient claim to these islands. So much for your king; but for the unhappy men engaged in this expedition, I feel pity; they know not the danger of the attempt, and I cannot, without sorrow, find myself under the necessity of shedding the blood of my countrymen. We will, however, take no unfair advantage; my power, you see, is already strong, and as the wind drives the sand of the forest in banks, so, in like manner, will the rumour of this intrusion collect, and bring to our coast of Barra men from every isle.'

'Ye then refuse peremptorily to yield to the king's mandate,' said Sir John Murray.

'We do,' answered Monteith. 'I have also warned you of the magnitude of your danger, from which, if you choose to desist, retire in safety to your vessels; but if ye resolve on the attempt to execute your king's commands, behold us ready; disembark the rest of your men—we fear ye not, but stand prepared to decide the contest.'

The determined manner of Monteith, and the power which surrounded him, made Sir John Murray pause, but the strict commands he had received left him no choice to act. 'Ye offer nobly, chief,' replied he;

'I would we were friends! but it cannot be—our lives would pay the forfeiture of our trust.'

'Tis well,' said Monteith; 'we allow ye yet half an hour; the mid-day sun shall behold the conflict.' Monteith then broke off the conference, and turning to his friends, arranged his men.

The Scots forces made a far more formidable appearance than those of Monteith; but the fire and ardour of the chief appeared to have communicated itself to his followers, and the given time being elapsed, he led them to the conflict.

'Follow me, brave islanders,' said he; 'we will shew these unhappy slaves of James's power what a body of friends and free men can effect. The sun is now at its height, and if we drive them not back to their ships ere it sinks beneath the horizon, disgrace be ours! come on! follow me! the word is victory or death.'

Thus speaking, followed by his men repeating his words, he rushed upon his foes with such impetuosity that they were immediately thrown into confusion, and with a quick eye singling out their chief—'Commander,' said he, 'your arm to mine—should either fall, the contest will be the sooner decided.'

Thus challenged, Sir John Murray could not decline the combat; but the skill and strength of Monteith speedily brought him to the earth, and so severely wounded in the right arm, that he could not raise his sword. 'Take your life,' said St. Clair, 'and let some of your men bear you to your vessel—we will take no prisoners.' Then rushing into the thickest of the fight, with the assistance of his friends, the discomfited Scots, deprived of their chief, speedily began to give way, and flying before the islanders, endeavoured to gain their ships. 'They fly, they fly,' exclaimed St. Clair, 'like affrighted deer before the hunters! drive them to their ships, but remember mercy—lift your hands against none but those who resist; suffer them to take their wounded from the

field; seek out our friends in the same sad state, and bear them to the fortress; our gentle hostess there shall tend their sick bed.'

'You bleed, St. Clair,' said Ross; 'are ye much hurt?'

'Pish, man! I have only a scratch in the hand! young Randolph's bone knife would have made as deep a wound. I rejoice to see my friends safe: not any, I trust, are wounded to death.'

The Scots lost no time in using the permission granted them, and taking up their wounded, they bore them to their ships, while the islanders, on their part, carried theirs, only ten in number, to the fortress.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WITH strained eyes and beating heart, Ambrosine remained on the tower until the parties met, when unable to bear the sight, she concealed her fears in her chamber, where she remained until the cry of triumph reached the gates of the fortress, then, descending to the hall, she received the wounded, and giving them in charge to those who had guarded the tower, to bind their wounds, she herself went round, recruited their spirits with wine, and such food as was proper for them to receive. She was thus employed when St. Clair and his friends returned, and her task completed, she flew to receive them.

'By Heaven,' said he, snatching her to his breast, 'had I never seen thee till this minute, thou hadst gained my heart; thou art formed for a soldier's wife.'

'I thank Providence for the distinction; but say, how are our friends? Monteith, art thou safe? Alas! here is blood upon thy sleeve.'

'Our friends, except those thou hast seen, thank Heaven, are well: for myself I was never better:

what has passed was mere boy's play. On the fall of their leader, Sir John Murray, they fled to their vessels like hunted deer to the covert.'

'Alas!' replied she, 'is he slain?'

'No, my best love, merely wounded in the arm: but come—such food as we have, let us share with our friends.'

'Pardon my forgetfulness, but all is ready within: both men and maidens act as cooks: the ovens and pots of the fortress are filled with our stores.'

'I thank you for your care; our friends shall refresh themselves with what we have now; to-morrow some beasts shall be slaughtered to supply the deficiency.'

The whole party kept watch during the night: and in the morning they had the satisfaction to see their enemies at a considerable distance from the coast.

As the news spread of the attack upon the residents of Barra, during that day the more distant islanders continued to pour in; these were also regaled at nearly the expense of the whole of their stock, and early the second morning after the contest they took leave of the outlaws, swearing to live or die in their defence.

The news of the defeat of the king's forces speedily reached the court, to the great vexation of the sovereign and many others: and Sir John Murray, though still very weak and lame in the arm, was ordered before the council to give an account of the expedition, which, terminating according to the former opinion of Sir Alexander Livingstone, that politician was, perhaps, not displeased to find his disregarded advice thus verified.

'My liege,' said Sir John Murray, 'without having beheld the conflict, you can form an idea of such desperate enemies. Strong as lions, and ferocious as tigers, they rushed upon us on every side, their fearful yells spreading dread into the heart, and confusion into the head of every Scottish sol-

dier. Undisciplined, and strangely accoutred, their weapons were as various as their features: some carried swords, others bows, some spears and pikes, others clubs or battleaxes, and where those failed, bars of iron of different lengths, which, tremendous to behold, levelled all that opposed them. Swords were our only defence, for our bows were useless, as they attacked us so closely, that we had no room to act. To the chief, Monteith, the islanders look up with reverence, and the most enthusiastic veneration; for, though formed both by person and education to grace the higher ranks of life, he accommodates himself to their manners, and, by a gracious, though dignified familiarity, commands at once both their love and obedience.'

'What loss of men have ye sustained?' said the king.

'An hundred wounded, and thirty slain; and generosity obliges me to declare that, but for the lenity of the victors, our loss had been trebled, for, wounded and disarmed by the chief, he might, had he so chosen, have slain me. I must also do the same justice to the rest of the outlaws, for, following the example of their leader, during the whole conflict, they cried aloud—'Spare all that resist not! drive them to their vessels.'

'The varlets!' said the king, 'Who will volunteer in this cause? I will unkennel the foxes, if it cost me a thousand men! What say you, Sir James Stuart? Will you take a command in the next expedition?'

'Excuse me, my liege—in every other cause my life is yours, but I cannot unsheath my sword against Monteith, whom I grieve to see languish under your grace's displeasure.'

'I expected not this,' said the king. 'The traitors shall not, however, escape. The fortune of Monteith was, on their outlawry, alone confiscated, see now that those of his companions be the same,

as that also of the heiress of Kintail. Livingstone, observe that this be done.'

'My liege,' replied Livingstone, 'pardon me: but have you considered the consequence of his command when executed? We have already witnessed the power of Monteith. In this case the clans of Ross, Hamilton, M'Gregor, and Kintail, will combine with those who have already joined them, and, woe to our country! ravage us with civil wars, and calling our forces to the North, to oppose this formidable league, leave the South an open prey to the English, who, notwithstanding the present peace, will hardly fail to seize so favourable an opportunity to take advantage of our intestine broils.'

Sir James Stuart and several other nobles joining their opinion with Livingstone's the council broke up, leaving the business undecided.

In a private conversation which Livingstone afterwards had with the king, he so clearly pointed out the danger of confiscating the wealth of the outlaws, that the plan was resigned, that of St. Clair excepted, which remained in its former state.

The news of what had passed at Barra gave additional bitterness to the heart of the earl of Roskelyn, and to that of his haughty countess. With the latter, the fascinations of power and rank had begun to lose their charms and novelty; and, as Ambrosine had once remarked, though stretched on her silken couch, she could now almost envy the wife of the outlaw St. Clair. Perhaps the principal motive for this change was jealousy; her heart sickened at the account that had transpired of their mutual happiness; and though she had rejected Monteith, it awakened all the rancour of her depraved heart, to hear he was so entirely devoted to another. For the dowager, she had lived a life of greater retirement than she was accustomed, since meeting Monteith in the chapel. Sir James Stuart, she had no doubt, would disclose what had passed

there; and the same pride which had made her sacrifice every duty to its gratification, now galled her with perpetual thorns, lest she should see the fabric of vanity and falsehood destroyed, and her shame and cruelty revealed to the whole world.

CHAPTER XIX.

PEACE restored, the accustomed harmony reigned at the fortress: and the usual time being elapsed, Ambrosine gave birth to a daughter, even before that event could have been hoped by the anxious Monteith, who trembled at the danger to which she was exposed.

On St. Clair's entering her chamber, Randolph, who had long been watching an opportunity, slipped in, and, fearful of being turned out, hid himself behind the arras. Monteith flew to his idolized wife, and blessed Heaven for her safety, with a transport that banished all remembrance of past suffering.—'Prithee, Monteith,' said she, with her usual gaiety, 'spare the raptures, though when I tell thee 'tis only a girl, they will naturally cease; for my part, I am so provoked, that thou mayest e'en nurse her thyself.'

'Willingly,' replied he, folding the infant to his heart. 'Methinks she already resembles thee, in which case she will be dearer to me than all the boys in the world, without that advantage.'

'That will be no recommendation to me,' answered she. 'I that had flattered myself with bearing a son like thee, to have nothing but a paltry girl—out upon her—I will none of her!'

Young Randolph, who, in the satisfaction of the moment, had been overlooked in his concealment, from whence, though he covered his body, his head was poked out, at the last words of Ambrosine, cried

out,—‘Give her to me, give her to me—I will have her myself, and love her dearly.’

Laughing at the intruder, Monteith called him from his corner, and placing him, by the desire of Ambrosine, on the couch, he alternately admired and kissed the infant.

‘Prophetic be thy words, Randolph!’ said Ambrosine; ‘the ways of Heaven are not for men to discern; for who can say that hereafter, but this babe may give sons to the house of Roskelyn, and thus restore to its proper channel the rights of her father?’

‘Thou art romantic, Ambrosine, and in thy affection for Randolph, forgettest the hated blood from whence he sprung.’

‘Monteith,’ replied she, ‘thou inheritest not the vice of thy parents, neither, I hope, will he.’

Fearful of Ambrosine being too much disturbed, Bridget came to remove Randolph, whose cries at the separation resounded through the fortress.

A priest being fetched from Kismul, the young stranger received the name of Phillippa; and Ambrosine’s health restored, she gained fresh charms in the eyes of her enraptured husband, as she nurtured the first pledge of their love at her truly maternal bosom.

Phillippa had not completed her second year, before Ambrosine gave birth to a son, which, while it claimed an equal right to the affection of his parents with the first-born, appeared to possess no superiority; not only Phillippa, but Randolph, maintaining their place in the affection of Monteith and Ambrosine; and though Phillippa viewed the young stranger with an eye of jealousy, she speedily became reconciled, making only this distinction when she lisped out their names—‘My little brother James, or my dear brother Randolph.’

For four years after the birth of Monteith’s son, all remained so quiet at Barra, that the residents could

almost have forgotten they were outlaws; plenty flourished around them, which with open hands they shared with all. If any of the poor islanders lost a cow, a goat, or a sheep, they had only to make the loss known at the fortress, and it was speedily replaced.

The agent of Ambrosine regularly remitted her revenues, which, together with those of Ross, Hamilton, and M’Gregor, all of which Sir Alexander collected, amply supplied them; Monteith only sometimes feeling a pang of discontent and wounded pride that he was withheld from contributing his part; this, however, he was necessitated to conceal from his wife, who ever appeared distressed at his making a distinction in regard to their separate property.

Though peace reigned at the island, it was more enforced by the increased commotions that distracted the kingdom, than from any good will towards the outlaws. The discontents between the king and his nobles daily strengthened; fearful, therefore of kindling a flame in the islands, which he might find it difficult to extinguish, he, by the advice of the most prudent of his council, resolved to take no further cognizance of the outlaws, leaving them for the present, in inoffensive and peaceful security.

CHAPTER XX.

ABOUT six weeks after the feast of Christmas, in the year one thousand four hundred and thirty-seven, seven years after the attack upon the outlaws, as they were sitting one evening in social converse, the loud blast of the horn gave notice that strangers were at the gate. The dreary time of the year made a visit unexpected at the island, and it was conceived that it must be business of moment that could bring any one at a season when the coast was so subject to storms. Hastening to the gate, they found Sir Alexander

M'Gregor; and the cordial embrace of friendship having taken place, the veteran took his seat, and, first drinking a goblet of wine, addressing them thus:—

'Your oppressor is fallen! James, the haughty James, is gone to his native earth.'

All started. 'Dead!' interrupted Monteith; 'you astonish me; he was in the prime of life and health, most visibly betokening a length of days.'

'Neither health nor strength can secure a man from falsehood and murder. Sir Robert Grahame, whom he banished, has wrought his fall; he bereft him of his inheritance, and Sir Robert hath bereft him of life.'

'Unhappy James!' said Monteith; 'though thou wert mine enemy, I grieve thy fall in such unmanly sort; but pray you, Sir Alexander, give us what particulars have reached you.'

Sir Alexander then informed them, that Walter, earl of Athole, Sir Robert Grahame, and divers others, having plotted the king's death, chose the feast of Christmas, which was held at Perth, to execute their purpose; that they assailed him in his chamber where, after bravely defending himself, he had fallen, having first received twenty-eight wounds in various parts of his body.

'Alas! unhappy man,' said Ambrosine, 'his faults be forgotten, and his good deeds only remembered.'

'Amen:' said Monteith; 'tis a foul act, and will stamp everlasting disgrace on the blood of its perpetrators. Was the queen with him?'

'She was, and had not escaped death, but for one of Sir Robert's sons, who cried shame upon the deed.' She received two wounds. The brother of the earl of March was slain in defending the king: and the fair Catherine Douglas, one of the queen's ladies, had her arm broken.

All the residents at the fortress expressed the utmost

detestation of the deed—'Now hang the man!' said De Bourg, 'had he died in his bed peaceably, I would have been the first to sing Te Deum; but nature revolts against so atrocious an act. Are the murderers taken?'

'They are, and a most cruel death awaits them—tortures which to relate, you would think could only be invented by the agents of hell. The queen-mother immediately called a parliament, for the young James had only attained his seventh year.'

'In whom will the regency be vested?' said St. Clair.

'In Archibald, earl of Douglas, as it is supposed, though he is not yet formally appointed to the government.'

'Amidst all this confusion,' said Ambrosine, 'I have one cause to be thankful to Heaven, which is that Monteith and all our friends have been so long at peace, and confined by the wintry winds so many months at Barra, without other employ than telling long tales, and nursing my children.'

'Why so?' inquired Monteith.

'Thy enemies are bitter; and, though they could not have proved guilt upon thee, they might have blackened thy fame, with accusing thee of a knowledge of this atrocious act.'

'The lady Ambrosine's observation is just,' said Sir Alexander. 'Leave all, Monteith, yet to time, and, believe me, thy enemies' day passed, thou shalt yet have thine.'

'Though I once felt anger against the queen,' said Ambrosine, 'my heart bleeds for her; alas! who shall comfort her?'

'Marry,' said De Bourg, 'the knight of Lorn shall comfort her; 'tis not every woman who is so fastidious as the heiress of Kintail.'

'Out upon thee, slanderer!' replied she; 'why speakest thou thus?'

'Because, in cases of love, I have an eye like a

hawk, a kind of natural divination, which never yet failed ; think you not so lady ?

‘Nay, I will not vouch for thy skill ; but now thou recallest it to my memory, I once thought thy eyes the most evil ones I ever saw.’

‘Even that circumstance, lady, stamped the truth of my skill. Monteith in vain raked his wooden head, to find out among his court-friends who had done him so essential a piece of kindness ; his companions, myself excepted, did the same, and with equal wisdom. I, on the contrary, judged truly at the first glance and——’

‘Enough on the subject,’ interrupted Ambrosine : ‘’tis the hour of supper. The death of James, though our enemy, hath left an uneasy impress on my spirits : Heaven be merciful to his unprepared soul, and send repentance to his murderers !’

Sir Alexander tarried but a few days at the fortress, being anxious to learn how all would be arranged for the new government. He promised, however, to see them soon again, or, at least, to send them intelligence if any thing very material occurred.

No transaction of any consequence took place in the state of Scotland for near a year, when the earl of Douglas died, and Sir Alexander Livingstone was appointed to succeed in the government of the kingdom, and to have the executive power, while William Crichton was chosen chancellor, and consequently had the direction of the civil courts. This division of power was productive of the most unpleasant consequences, as the governor and chancellor were at perpetual variance, so that, for a time, there was no appearance of either law or government throughout the country, the most atrocious acts being committed with impunity, and the kingdom one continual scene of confusion and bloodshed.

Monteith and his friends felt no inclination to take the part of either faction : power was the aim of each :

and they resolved to leave to the heads of the respective parties the struggle to obtain it.

Thus resolved, and cut off from the noise and tumult by their situation, the instruction of the children became the business and amusement of the whole party. Randolph improved rapidly, not only in learning, but in the accomplishments befitting his rank, and the manly exercises which might hereafter be requisite to him. Philippa, four years younger, was the immediate care of her mother, and promised in the bud, the same personal beauty and character. James Monteith had also begun his studies ; and Ambrosine nurtured at her breast a second son, named St. Clair, after his father.

Thus were they situated for six years, during which period the news had reached them that the queen had wedded Sir James Stuart, and with it a piece of intelligence still more interesting. The knight of Lorn, as one of the first instances of the power he had gained by the marriage, had so nobly exerted himself for Monteith, that he procured from Sir Alexander Livingstone a reversal of the decree that confiscated his estates to the use of the Lord of Roskelyn : but the outlawry still remained, as Livingstone feared, in a time of such universal tumult, the additional weight such a man might give to any party he choose to espouse.

Ambrosine, as she saw the satisfaction Monteith received from his estates being restored, was likewise highly gratified, though she did not scruple to avow the pleasure it gave her, that the law offered him a sufficient reason for continuing on the land free from danger.

‘My beloved,’ said he, ‘surely thou art the first woman that ever rejoiced at being confined in so desert a spot, when possessed of youth and beauty to grace a court : nay, I marvel that even time hath not wearied thy constancy.’

‘Dost thou speak from thy own feelings ?’

'No, on my soul: not fourteen years since, when thou gavest thyself to my arms, and I received thee as the choicest gift of heaven, wert thou in my eyes half so lovely as at this moment: but to see thee cut off from a society thou wert formed to adorn, and to know that thou hast forfeited the world for me, doth frequently give me a pang.'

'By my life, Monteith,' replied she, 'it never yet cost me a sigh. Reach me my lute: I will sing thee a song I made on the subject:—

Within this fortress' mould'ring wall,
And blest in humble life,
My heart recoils at grandeur's call,
And gaudy courtly strife.

Ah! what to me were wealth and power,
Bereft of St. Clair's love?
My rebel heart would mourn the hour
When grandeur banish'd love.

Reverse the scene. In quiet life
Each day doth rise with joy:
Each morning smile on St. Clair's wife,
Nor care nor grief annoy.

The flattering slaves of courtly fame
Cannot my envy move:
My heart will beat at St. Clair's name,
Nor grandeur banish love.

The addition of Monteith's wealth gave him the power of increasing his benevolence, which now became more active than ever; and, about two years after the recovery of his fortune, a storm having done considerable damage among the isles, particularly at Benbecula, the chief, accompanied by Ross, repaired thither to see what assistance could be given to the inhabitants.

The charitable errand performed, they were expected to return in a few days; but the given time having elapsed without their arrival, some anxious

fears began to take possession of Ambrosine and the party left behind. Time strengthened this uneasiness; and a vessel was despatched with William, to Benbecula, with orders to touch at the neighbouring islands if no intelligence was there obtained of Monteith and Ross. In the meantime, Ambrosine's fears were too great to be concealed; she buried herself in the solitude of her chamber, without other companions but Bridget, Randolph, and her children; giving way to the anguish that overwhelmed her—'Alas! alas!' cried she, as she wept over the loved pledges of past happiness, 'ye have cost me dear; but for ye I had accompanied Monteith, and lived or died with him. Wretch that I am, doomed to survive him! for, hard as will be the struggle, I must as yet support this hated life for thy sake, Phillippa, beloved of thy father; for thine, James, his living image; and for thee, thou smiling innocent St. Clair, who hast most wrought me this sorrow by causing me to stay at Barra.'

'Mother,' said Randolph, the tears flowing from his eyes, 'what have I done that you name me not?' 'My beloved boy,' exclaimed she, throwing her arms round his neck, 'no love, nor duty, that I owe to these, will I neglect to thee.'

Randolph returned her embrace—'Give not way to grief,' said he; 'my father will return; some mishap hath alone delayed his coming. Should William bring no news, suffer me to go—I would travel through the world to find him.'

'Alas! my child,' replied she, with a look of anguish, 'it must then be the world of waters; too surely the vessel has foundered, and calling down the blessing of Heaven on Ambrosine and his children, his brave soul hath yielded up its earthly struggle.'

'Dear mother, think not so; the fishermen who steered their little vessel are so accustomed to sail among these islands, that it is next to an impossi-

bility than any accident should happen in such fine weather.'

The return of William confirmed their fears; he brought no tidings, except that, after a stay of two days at Benbecula, Monteith and Sir James Ross left the island in the vessel that brought them, attended by the same two men who navigated it thither; but they had touched at no other of the islands; nor had the islanders seen any vessel during the period, save one under Danish colours, which for some days had hovered about the opposite coast.

In a consultation that took place between Hamilton, De Bourg, M'Gregor, and their companions, on the subject, their opinions were various, though that most prevalent was, that Monteith had perished; the long interval of quiet he had enjoyed from his enemies banishing all suspicion concerning them.

Randolph, who, from the company of informed men, and the pains taken in his education, was more reflective than most lads of his age (now seventeen), was admitted to the consultation, and with a firmness that astonished the whole party, held the opinion he had advanced to Ambrosine, that Monteith had not perished.

'Are my dear father's enemies dead,' said he; 'if they are not, the recovery of his property has stimulated them to revenge. Oh God!' exclaimed he, with vehemence, 'perhaps they may have beguiled and slain him; if so, young as I am—I pray you jeer not at my youth—I devote my life to avenge him.'

'Jeer thee, brave boy!' said M'Gregor, 'a curse on him that doth! Methinks the spirit of my brother Randolph dwells in thee; and, as he adopted thee, so do I.'

'I am a fortunate lad,' replied Randolph, looking gratefully around, 'for I have many fathers; but who can speak comfort to the wounded heart of my

mother, or who train the youth of my brothers to be worthy their father?'

'We devote ourselves to that duty,' exclaimed, in one voice, M'Gregor, Hamilton, and De Bourg; 'never shall they, during our lives, want the attention of a parent.'

'For myself,' said Randolph, with some confusion, 'though from my father I never heard it, nor from ye, nor from the affection of my dear mother, have I ever had reason to lament it; yet I judge that I have not that near claim which my sister Phillippa, or my brother James and St. Clair can boast.'

The utmost confusion for a moment marked the features of all.

'What mean you, Randolph?' said M'Gregor.

'I mean,' replied he, 'that though my claim be as near to my honoured father, yet it hath not that advantage on the side of the dear lady who calls me her son.'

'And who hath entered into these disquisitions with thee?' said Hamilton.

'No one; but from my infancy, I understood by the nurse that my mother was dead; peace be with her! for much I fear she was not like the lady Ambrosine; had she, my father must at some time have named her.'

'Few women are equal to the wife of Monteith,' said Hamilton; 'but let this assurance satisfy, that no dishonour rests upon thy birth: hereafter thou mayest know more.'

'I thank you, and am satisfied; ye have dispelled a mist from my mind.'

'And thou hast raised one in mine,' said De Bourg, who had been apparently lost in thought; 'though I think it very improbable that Monteith should have fallen into the power of his enemies, yet it is possible, and by heaven I will spare no pains to discover it; I will away to Scotland and be satisfied.'

'Now, if you think so,' said M'Gregor, 'we will all go.'

'Not so; too many would but mar my purpose. Hamilton and you remain here, that if we find it necessary ye may collect our force: some one else will volunteer to accompany me.'

Before any one could reply, De Bourg having scarcely concluded, Randolph exclaimed--

'I pray, if ye love me, let me go; whose right is so near as mine?'

'My good lad, there are many objections against thy going,' said Hamilton.

Randolph looked distressed.

'Ye fear me, because I am yet a boy,' replied he: 'but in this case, I trust I should possess the courage of a man.'

'I do not doubt it; but a motive of consequence requires thee to remain at Barra.'

'Can any motive be stronger than the duty of a son to a father?' replied Randolph.

'Perhaps not: but that very duty must restrain thee.'

A stroke on the chamber-door broke off the discourse. On being opened, Ambrosine entered, leaning on her daughter Phillippa. For some days she had declined seeing even the residents of the fortress, who were shocked at the alteration that grief had made in her appearance: her face was pale, her eyes sunken, her form bent, and her whole frame denoted that, though she evidently struggled to keep her sorrow within the bounds of reason, that it preyed upon her life, and must inevitably destroy her.

'My friends,' said she, 'more than fourteen happy years have I passed among ye: but the loss of Monteith hath, alas! broken the willing chain that held me at Barra. With my children I will away to Kintail and devote the sorrowful remainder of my life to educating them befitting so brave and noble a father. Yet, as life is uncertain, I have written a

testament; and to you, my friends, Hamilton, De Bourg, M'Gregor, and his brother, Sir Alexander, left the guardianship of my boys. For Phillippa, she is yet a more sacred trust; she will need the support and advice of a patron. Had ye wives, the choice would be at once fixed; but as ye have not, select for her, in case of my death, such of your female relations as you deem most honourable, for should disgrace assail, never will my spirit rest.'

The sobs of Phillippa interrupted her mother, and the residents in vain endeavoured to conceal their emotion, while Randolph clasped his arms round the daughter of Monteith, and mingled his tears with hers.

'Children,' at length resumed Ambrosine, 'fie on this weakness! I shall not die the sooner for expressing my wishes. For you, Randolph, observe me well, and, as your soul shall answer at the great and final account, remember what I shall now request of you.'

Randolph threw himself at her feet. 'Oh, mother, most beloved and honoured, speak,' said he; 'I will obey your commands, if you be spared to our prayers and wishes, with double pleasure; but if you be transmitted to your kindred angels, with the same reverence that I would, should you be there permitted to enforce the remembrance.'

'Enough, the vicissitudes of man are many, and those of your life may be various. You love Phillippa better than either James or St. Clair; therefore to your especial affection I recommend her. Advise her youth, and direct her steps to happiness; and should you ever meet a villain who thinks of her with dishonour, plunge a dagger into his heart.'

Phillippa hung down her head, though unconscious of the purport of her mother's words.

'James and St. Clair,' continued Ambrosine,

'will also need your friendship ; withhold it not, so shall ye sit with honour in the seat of your fathers.'

'Dear mother,' replied Randolph, 'think not that I love not James and St. Clair ; by my life, I do must truly ; but Phillippa is my only sister, and I loved her so well before they were born, that my heart had scarcely any affection left to bestow ; and by my soul's hope of everlasting peace, never will I enjoy happiness that she doth not share.'

'My much esteemed lady,' said De Bourg, 'though you have spoken thus solemnly, I trust there are many happy years in store for you.'

Ambrosine raised her eyes in anguish,

'Happiness,' replied she, 'is torn from me for ever ; the first fair wind I will away to Kintail, remember me, as I will ye all as my best friends. To your care I leave my dear Randolph, who, I trust, will prove worthy your love.'

'What have I done that you banish me from your presence ? 'tis not my fault that I am not your child not even Phillippa loves you better than I do.'

'Do not increase my emotion, Randolph—my heart needs no additional pang. Necessity compels me to act thus, as thou mayest sometime hence know ; but while life remains, thou wilt find me with arms open to receive thee, and a heart ready to return thy affection.'

After some more discourse, Phillippa withdrew, and with her Randolph, when the conversation turned upon the future disposal of that youth, Ambrosine leaving all to their own arrangement, they resolved that no alteration should take place in their measures till more fully certified by time, of Monteith's death ; De Bourg forbearing to mention the resolution he had made of going to Scotland, fearful of encouraging false hopes.

Two days after, Ambrosine and their children, attended by Bridget and William, left the island. The separation was painful to all, particularly to Ran-

dolph, who in vain struggled to conceal his emotion, and having accompanied them on board, on his return climbed an eminence, in order to watch the vessel while she remained in sight.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE departure of Ambrosine appeared to renew the loss of Monteith to the inhabitants of the fortress. The intention of de Bourg furnished the conversation of the evening ; and selecting a single companion, named Frazer, he resolved to depart on the morrow. To elude suspicion, he blackened his hair and brows, which were naturally fair, and assumed the dress of a common highlandman, as also did his companion. Randolph, who found it vain to entreat to accompany him, had ceased to request it, though he particularly attended to their intentions and destination.

His character, hitherto open, appeared for some days after the departure of de Bourg, to become reserved : he remained much alone, and lost the glow of high health that used to bloom on his cheeks ; he however made no complaint, and Hamilton and M^rGregor attributing the change to the loss of Ambrosine and her children, paid no attention, as they concluded that time alone would remove his uneasiness. The restraint laid upon him, was in reality the cause of the alteration they perceived ; it continually preyed upon his fancy, and bewildered his thoughts, to conjecture the reason of his being detained : he easily discovered that some mystery concerned himself, but it was too carefully concealed from him to form the most distant idea of the truth. He had long known that Ambrosine was not his mother, but he loved her no less on that account ; and the assurance that he had received, that no

disgrace was attached to his birth, highly gratified him. But if so, thought he, why is my mother never named? If she was virtuous, though lowly born, the name of Monteith was enough to make her birth forgotten. That my father must have loved is past dispute: yet he is neither capricious, unjust, nor cruel, and I in vain attempt to account for his conduct. A motive of consequence detains me at Barra, says De Bourg, strong indeed must that motive be, when it takes place of the objection and duty of a son. Had they condescended to disclose it, it might have restrained me: but now it is repugnant to nature, which calls upon me to seek my father, whom I cannot think has perished at sea. The house of Roskelyn, and the old court of Scotland, well I know are his enemies: but where or how the enmity arose I know not, though I have no dispute of the injustice done my father, who himself possesses the soul of honour.

Such in part were the reflections of Randolph, who, with the thoughtless inexperience of youth, resolved to escape from the island and seek Monteith, even in the dwelling of his enemies. He had indistinctly heard at times of the disguises assumed by St. Clair and his companions, and resolved to have recourse to the same expedient, by concealing himself under a feigned character, to gain, if possible, the intelligence he wished.

Unsuspected by the residents of the fortress, he, in less than a week, found an opportunity to put his design into execution; for a small vessel laying off the coast, he arose one morning early, and going on board, sailed with the fishermen to the port of Ardamurchan. The flight of Randolph was not discovered for some hours, but once known, caused universal confusion; the clothes he wore were all he had taken, and though they surmised he had some few demis of gold in his pocket, as he was always liberally supplied, yet they knew they could not be

many, and must be soon expended, in a country to which he was an entire stranger. That he would take the way to Edinburgh or Roskelyn, to join De Bourg, they had no doubt, but felt the improbability of his performing such a journey, so ill provided. His flight too broke upon all the schemes they had formed; for should he be discovered, they could only reap disgrace instead of the advantage they had promised themselves from detaining him: an advantage, however, much lessened by the loss of Monteith. After mature consideration, one of the inmates of the fortress went in pursuit of the runaway, with a commission to pass first into Inverness-shire, and take the counsel of Sir Alexander M'Gregor on the subject.

The vessel in which Randolph had sailed to Ardamurchan speedily returned to Barra, and brought a letter to the outlaws—they hastily tore it open, and found these words:

Beloved and ever-honoured friends—Forgive the first act of my life which hath been contrary to your commands. To you I owe the second duty, but to my father the first; and, while my heart whispers he may yet live, I cannot resist the strong impulse of seeking him. I know you will dwell on my youth and inexperience: but surely, at seventeen, the son of Monteith, educated by men like those of the fortress, should be capable of more than a lad who hath not possessed such advantages. Fear not therefore for me, though dropped as it were into a new world: I experience no dread—my heart beats light. Should my errand be successful, with what joy shall I return to Barra! Should our fears be confirmed, that my honoured parent be indeed lost to us for ever, as to those most worthy to supply his place, will I fly to you, and study, by future obedience, to obliterate from your remembrance this disobedient act.

RANDOLPH MONTEITH.

'By my soul,' said M'Gregor, 'this boy's obstinacy makes him more estimable; soon may he return, for too surely do I feel his errand will be fruitless.'

'A sight of his arm would at once make him known to his parents,' replied Hamilton; 'but that being covered, the discovery is not probable, should they even meet.'

'Be that as it may, we must leave the event to chance,' replied M'Gregor; 'it will be less trouble for Roskelyn to educate ten sons like himself, than to obliterate from the mind of Randolph the sentiments he had imbibed from the family of Monteith, and to see his heir with such feelings will sting his mean heart to the quick, and afford us a noble revenge; would that Monteith had lived to share it!'

In the interval of confusion at Barra, de Bourg and his companion had reached the city of Edinburgh. The contentions of party yet ran high, and intestine broils, unchecked by the minority of the king, still disgraced and deluged the land with blood. De Bourg hastened to Roskelyn, and taking up his abode in a cottage, soon gained an opportunity to see Ralph, the father of William.

The chevalier, after relating the loss of Monteith, declared the suspicions he entertained, that he had fallen into the power of his enemies; and pressed Ralph, by all he held sacred, to inform him whether, by any word or action, that might have dropped from the family of Roskelyn, he could judge if these suspicions were well founded.

Ralph heard him with visible emotion, but declared his firm belief of their innocence.

'The Lord Roskelyn,' said he, 'is now here, and so also are the Dowager, and the young lord and Lady Matilda, her grandchildren. As for the countess, she is at the old castle at upper Lorn, which she inherited from her father. To say the truth, I am old, or by the holy Virgin! this castle should be no

service for me; for we have such turmoils and disputes, as render it, even to the vassals, a hell upon earth.'

'What disputes!' said De Bourg; 'I thought the lord Roskelyn kept out of all party contentions.'

'In faith, good sir, he has had too many contentions at home to need any abroad; and, for the last twelve years, they have increased so rapidly, that at length the castle would no longer hold them. The noble Monteith has had a blessed escape, and my lord is severely punished for his share of the treachery, for if ever fiend dwelt in a woman's form, it is in that of the countess.'

'Would you infer,' said De Bourg, 'that family contentions are the cause of Lady Roskelyn's absence?'

'In faith are they; she hath neither the duty of a wife nor the affection of a mother. In consequence of a quarrel that took place some four months since, she quitted the castle, leaving her children, the lord John and the lady Matilda, with their father.'

'How fares the dowager in this confusion?'

'Age comes upon her apace, and the sins of her youth intrude upon her fancy; she hath, therefore, endowed two chapels, the one to St. Magdalen, the other to the Virgin.'

'Marry, she doth well,' replied De Bourg, 'to procure friends for the time to come, for surely she will need them at the final account.'

Ralph then informed the chevalier that the earl had not left Roskelyn for the last eight months; adding, that if an event of such consequence as seizing Monteith had been designed, or had taken place, some action or word must have transpired to disclose it.

De Bourg acquiesced in the justice of the observation with a sigh, and shaking the old man by the hand, informed him that the following day he should depart; but that previous to his return to the island, he should visit Kintail, as he much feared the wife of Monteith would not long survive her loss.

Randolph, on leaving Barra, had resolved to pursue the steps of de Bourg; he well knew the cavalier was too good-humoured, and too sincerely his friend, to be long angry with him. After landing at Ardnamurchan, he resolved to enquire his way forward toward the capital—knowing that he then should be but a short distance from Roskelyn. Reaching the port in the afternoon, he proceeded but a few miles, when, finding a single cottage, he resolved to seek a lodging for the night, for, as far as his eye could stretch, he could discern no other dwelling. Striking against the door, a rough voice asked who was without.

‘A stranger youth,’ replied Randolph, ‘who entertains food and lodgings for the night.’

The door was opened by a man of the middle age, of the largest size, rough in appearance, and clad in a coarse garb. He bade the youth enter, and viewing him attentively, after a pause, he bade him welcome. By the side of the fire sat an old woman meanly clad, and whose meagre, harsh, and wrinkled exterior, gave to Randolph the first ill impression he received of age, which he ever before had viewed with particular reverence. She was preparing for the supper, but, on his entrance, reached a stool and placed it by the hearth.

The person of Randolph claimed the attention of his hosts; his open, noble mien, and well-formed limbs, gave him the appearance of being at least two years older than he really was; his raiment, though plainly made, was of the finest materials; and the commanding dignity of his manner and address such as neither simple garments nor affected poverty could conceal.

‘You are a young traveller, my gentle guest,’ said the host; ‘you come not far, I ween?’

Randolph paused; never before had he found it necessary to lie, and blushing, he answered—‘I come from Inverness, and travel to Edinburgh.’

‘A long journey, master: you will need a horse,’
‘I am strong, and accustomed to walk, and find it no toil.’

‘Aye, but ’tis a weary way, and will need both perseverance and money.’

‘The first I hope I possess; for the latter I am but thinly provided.’

‘I’ll warrant your parents were right sorry to part with you,’ said the old woman.

Randolph loved not to be thus questioned; but, unwilling to incur suspicion by declining to reply, he answered—‘My family’s grief and my own were equal.’

The supper being placed upon the board prevented more discourse, and, though served in the roughest fashion, its contents bespoke that want dwelt not among the inmates of the cottage.

Supper ended, M’Lellan, the host, produced a keg of spirits, of which he in vain pressed his young guest to partake.

‘I thank ye,’ said Randolph, ‘I like it not; my welcome hath already exceeded my expectation. Permit me to make what acknowledgment is in my power.’

So saying, he drew a small bag from his pocket, and presented a demy to his hostess.

‘Holy father,’ cried she, ‘I have no change for such a piece.’

‘I need it not,’ said Randolph; ‘I must intrude upon you for a bed and breakfast to-morrow.’

‘Right welcome, master,’ replied M’Lellan. ‘Know you the road you must take?’

‘No; you will be kind enough to direct me.’

‘I will take you a few miles on your long journey.’

‘I thank you, and will now retire to rest.’

‘Do so; we will rise early. Mother,’ added he, addressing the old woman, ‘light young master to his chamber.’

The dame obeyed, and Randolph retired to rest.

CHAPTER XXII.

THOUGH Randolph was early stirring, he found his host already risen and gone out. The old woman was preparing breakfast, and, in a short time, M'Lellan returned. The meal being ended, they departed, the host leading the youth over the mountains for the space of three miles; then, pointing out the road, he bade him farewell.

As Randolph pursued his way, the country was mountainous, dreary, and unpeopled; but, unaccustomed to villany, he knew no fear. He had proceeded about two miles, when, from the hollow of one of the mountains, he saw two men approach. On meeting, one said—'Good day, young master. We are poor fellows: can you give us a little money to help us on our way?'

Though their appearance was by no means prepossessing, Randolph was too much unacquainted with the world to think they were robbers; he therefore replied—'I possess but little, but a part I will willingly give you.'

He drew his purse, and presented a small piece to the man, the first speaker says—

'In faith, a noble boy; but, master, we must have more; this is not sufficient to supply our wants.'

The manner of the robbers conveyed to the mind of Randolph an idea of the truth, and made him recollect that he had no arms, or if he had, that he was no match for two such muscular villains, who, he perceived, had both swords and dirks.

'You ask too much,' replied he; 'what I could spare I gave willingly; you must apply elsewhere for more.'

'We will go no farther; so no delay,' said one, drawing his dirk, and presenting it to his breast. 'We are not given to joke; we judge you are a runaway, so you can but return home for a fresh supply.'

As the first spoke the other drew his sword and repeated the demand in a yet more peremptory manner.

Randolph's anger was aroused, and, with a spirit beyond his years, he snatched the dirk from the robber that held it to his breast, and taking a sudden aim, struck it through his right arm. His villainous accomplice immediately levelled a blow at the youth's head with his sword, and struck him to the ground, where he lay senseless. While the wounded robber tied up his arm, his comrade rifled the pockets of Randolph, and, in all probability would have stripped and slain him, had they not perceived on the hill above them some horsemen, who, they feared, might discover them; so hastening away with the purse, they left the youth bleeding on the ground.

The horsemen, though they had not seen the act, on reaching the spot, perceived the yet senseless body; and, raising him, they bound up the wound in his head, and actuated by humanity, placed him on one of their horses, which they led gently forward, looking for some dwelling where they might procure assistance. Winding around a mountain for about two miles, they at length reached a valley, at the extreme part of which stood an ancient castle, strong, but of no great extent; there, sounding the horn at the gate, they craved admittance for the wounded stranger.

'This is no hospital,' replied a surly porter, 'ten miles farther there is a monastery, where the monks have nothing else to do but to pray and tend to sick.'

'Shame on you,' replied one of the horsemen; 'see you not that the youth must die, if speedy help be not procured? We judge he hath fallen among robbers, for we found this dirk lying by him, but the wound in his head is apparently the cut of a sword; his clothes bespeak him above the common rank.'

'Then why take ye not care of him yourselves?' replied the porter.

'We are strangers in this part of the country—merchants travelling from Inverness to Berwick.'

'Marry, you deal in sorry merchandize,' replied he; 'you will find no sale for sick or wounded here: you must carry him to another market.'

The sight of the horsemen at the gate, and the report of a dying youth, assembled all the domestics, who, however, were unanimous in refusing to admit a stranger, until a young damsel, advancing, said—'Delay a moment—I will endeavour to obtain leave, our mistress surely cannot shut the gates against such an unfortunate sufferer.' So saying, she hastened into the castle, and speedily returned, attending a lady, who after viewing the youth with cold curiosity, and questioning the merchants with haughty and repulsive dignity, ordered him to be admitted and led to one of the chambers appropriated to the domestics of the castle.

The merchants, satisfied with having procured him protection, departed; while Randolph, restored to recollection, heard with disgust the difficulty his humane preservers met with to gain him admittance; but, too weak to express resentment, he entered the dwelling, leaning on the friendly Jean, who had exerted herself in his favour, and one of the male domestics, who conducted him to a chamber.

Placing him on a couch, while the man dressed the wound in his head, Jean ran to fetch him a cup of wine; and, somewhat restored, he was questioned whether he had received any other hurt; he assured them to the contrary; and, leaving him to his repose, they quitted the apartment.

For some days Randolph found himself unable to rise; during which time no attention on the part of the friendly Jean was wanting. At length strong enough to leave his bed, he ardently longed for a complete re-establishment, in order to be able to pursue his way, fearful of missing the chevalier, but, destitute of money, he was puzzled to devise the means.

On resuming his clothes which lay in the chamber, he was astonished to find beside them the dirk, which he recollected to have heard the merchants say was found by his side, and which he had no doubt was that with which he had struck the robber. 'Glad as I should be of a weapon,' said he, mentally revolving on the subject, 'I will none of this: the dirk of an assassin suits not the hand of the son of Monteith.'

As he reflected, his eyes were fixed upon the dagger, when suddenly a universal trembling shook his whole frame, he breathed with difficulty, his eyes projected beyond their sockets, and every function of life seemed suspended: somewhat recovered from his emotion, he rushed upon the dagger, and, clasp- ing it in his clenched hand, he sunk upon a seat, and gave a loose to all the bitterness of grief.—'Gracious God!' exclaimed he, wildly pressing the dagger to his lips, 'and is it indeed thus? hath my noble and beloved parent fallen by the villainous hand of an assassin? Oh, why is this? Honour and probity are said to be protected by Heaven; if so, why did he fall? was no eye awake to preserve him from rapine and murder? The odds must have been great, indeed, when Monteith and Ross fell: wretched lad that I am, to lose a father and a friend by such accursed hands! Oh, Justice! Justice! give to him who hath the best claim, the means, the power, the strength to revenge his death, and to sheath *this* dagger home to the murderer's heart!'

The dirk, at first almost unheeded by Randolph, suddenly, as he looked upon it, rivetted his whole attention: a hundred times in his infancy, fixed in its sheath, had he played with it, too surely identified by the initials of Randolph M'Gregor, from whom it had reverted to Monteith, who constantly wore it in his girdle.

Grief, and the confusion of his thoughts, for some time made him incapable of forming any decisive opinion; at length, however, he resolved to keep the

discovery he had made secret, and, instead of seeking the chevalier, to re-measure his steps, and hasten for counsel to Barra.

A thought struck him of going first to Kintail, where his affections most led him; but to bear such news to his mother, as he termed her, was impossible, and banished the idea as speedily as it arose.—‘No,’ said he, ‘never may she know it, unless a revenge befitting the atrocity of the deed precede the recital.’

Lost in thought he was insensible of the entrance of the youthful Jean, who came to bring him refreshment. ‘Holy Mary!’ exclaimed she, ‘are you worse? your looks frighten me. I have brought you food and wine; I pray you take some; it will revive you.’

‘I thank you, but cannot,’ returned Randolph; ‘I am sick at heart.’

‘Nay, then,’ said she, ‘your fever is returned; your face is crimson: surely our lady is cruel not to call in some skillful leech to attend you; I will go and beg her to send for one.’

‘No, good Jean, I am in truth better: a sudden recollection crossed my mind and agitated my spirits.’

‘The vassals think you have eloped from the house of your father,’ said she; ‘if so, when you are recovered, you can return; they will forget their sorrow on seeing you safe.’

‘Alas; I have no father,’ said Randolph, bursting into tears.

‘Dear youth, take not on thus heavily; neither have I a father, and my mother is far from me. Would I had never left her to follow the countess, whose ungracious temper makes me feel my loss every hour.’

‘I grieve at it; I judge you mean your mistress; I saw her on entering the castle. By what I can remember of her person, she was the fairest woman I ever saw, one excepted.’

‘She is, though past the bloom of youth; but, for all her beauty and her riches, I would rather be as I am, simple Jean Grant, than the countess of Roskelyn, were I obliged to take her heart with her person.’

Randolph started—‘The Countess of Roskelyn!’ repeated he; ‘is the Countess of Roskelyn the lady of this castle?’

‘Yes, truly,’ replied Jean; ‘why do you express such wonder?’

‘Wonder! no,’ answered Randolph, scarcely able to conceal his astonishment! ‘I have heard of the earl, but thought he dwelt near Edinburgh.’

‘And so he doth,’ replied she: ‘but some family difference made the countess leave the castle of Roskelyn.’

‘Is she here without friend or companion?’ said Randolph: ‘if so, she will speedily return, I judge.’

‘She appears in no haste; the world says, she was never partial to the lord of Roskelyn, but, beguiled by grandeur, gave her hand without her heart.’

‘Hath she children?’

‘Yes, two; the lord John and the lady Matilda; but I must away; I pray ye, let me see you take some food before I go.’

‘I cannot; let me not detain you; I grieve to cause you such trouble, without a means of return.’

‘You are unkind to speak thus; I only vex my power is so small, and that you have not the benefit of better skill.’

‘I thank you, and can never forget but that for you I had, in all probability, lost my life; for without your interference, I had never gained admittance.’

‘Name it not; farewell—I will return as speedily as possible.’

Randolph was not displeased to be left to himself; the discovery that he was in a dwelling appertaining to his father’s most implacable enemy, as he con-

sidered him, and as such he conjectured, his own, filled him with various reflections. Since the discovery of the dirk, his heart had, in a great measure exculpated the Lord of Roskelyn of treachery towards Monteith; but, on a second consideration, the weapon being found so near the dwelling of the countess, staggered him, as his father had not been heard of since he quitted Benbecula. Weak as he was, his first resolution had been to return immediately to the island; but now, on more mature reflection, he resolved to profit by his situation, and, if possible remain a few days at the castle, in order to observe carefully all that passed.

In the mean time, the young Jean, caught by the graceful person of Randolph, was exerting all her influence with the countess.—‘He was friendless,’ she said, ‘and stripped by the robbers, was destitute of the means of reaching Edinburgh. Indeed, noble dame,’ added she, ‘he seems of gentle kin; for his manners are so mild, yet so dignified, that he might grace any situation. I would that you would condescend to question him; I answer, the result will be in his favour.’

‘I have already more knaves than please me,’ replied the countess; ‘thinkst thou I shall entertain another to please thee?’

‘To please me?’ Heaven forefend! I wish no knaves, lady.’

‘Then learn silence. Is the lad ready to go hence?’

‘No; he was this very day like to die.’

‘Whence comes he?’

‘Beyond Inverness; an orphan, lady.’

‘For what does he go to Edinburgh?’

‘He did not say; but as I should guess, to procure employ; and truly he cannot long need it, for never did I see so noble a countenance.’

‘A goodly recommendation to a fool’s heart; no wonder it found so easy a passport to thine.’

‘Doth beauty reach only fool’s hearts, lady?’ replied Jean pertinently.

Lady Roskelyn fixed her eyes on the damsel, who modestly cast hers down. To avow the truth, she had selected Jean to attend her, for the simplicity of her manners; but, though her strongest characteristic was innocence, yet it was unmix’d with folly or ignorance. To nature she owed much, to education little! but, blessed with a pleasing person, and a humane heart, she deserved a better mistress than the lady Roskelyn.

‘You grow too flippant, wench,’ answered the lady, appropriating to herself the meaning of Jean’s question; ‘when the boy is able, let me see him.’

The friendly heart of Jean was so rejoiced at this condescension, that it immediately obliterated from her mind the former ungraciousness of her mistress, having no doubt but that she must view Randolph with the same partial eyes as herself, and consequently grant him the protection which she supposed he so much needed.

CHAPTER XXIII.

JEAN hastened to Randolph’s chamber, where she related the permission she had obtained; but far from appearing delighted at the favour, he seemed lost in thought, and in vain attempted to pretend a satisfaction he did not feel; for the more he reflected, the more the murder of Monteith overpowered every other consideration, and his answers were at once vague and abstracted from the purpose.

Jean looked at the food she had before brought, and found it untouched, and with great persuasion, prevailed on him to drink a cup of wine. They then conversed together until the evening drew in, when her duty again called her to the countess.

Randolph's thoughts were so busied in the unpleasant circumstances of the day, that he was scarcely sensible of the lapse of time. Repeatedly had he thrown himself upon the couch, and as frequently risen, and unable to sleep, had watched the rising of the moon from his window.

Suddenly the sky became obscured; torrents of rain poured down, universal darkness reigned around him, and the inhabitants of the castle were apparently buried in sleep. His chamber was even with an outward court, to which his window opened, and where he stood gazing at or rather listening to the storm, when suddenly a gleam of light shone on the opposite side of the castle, and a moment after, three men crossed the court. Randolph listened attentively, but they were silent, and the light of the torch which the one carried, flashed on the countenance of his companion, and rendering his features distinguishable, Randolph, to his infinite surprise, recognized his host, M'Lellan.

The hour and the silence with which they passed, gave rise to some unfavourable thoughts in Randolph's mind, and watching, he saw them pass an opening on the opposite side, where the beams of the torch were soon lost to sight.

In the morning, the youth waited with extreme impatience for the usual visit of Jean, who, however, did not appear until past the hour of noon.

Randolph first replied to her questions, then, with more adroitness, or rather art, than he had ever before used, he insensibly changed the discourse to his meeting the robbers, and to his previously passing the night at the cottage of M'Lellan.

'At the cottage of M'Lellan?' repeated Jean, with visible emotion; 'are you sure it was there you slept the night before you met the robbers?'

'Yes: his mother called him by that name at supper. He is a muscular hard-featured man, do you know him?'

Jean looked cautiously around—'I know not how,' said she, 'but I regard you as a brother, I am sure you will never betray the confidence I place in you. Were I once more safe in my mother's humble dwelling at Roskelyn, the wealth of Scotland should not again tempt me to quit it. That M'Lellan is a villain, I have no doubt, for I have frequently heard it whispered among the vassals; but I shall surprise you more when I tell you, that he is very often here, and admitted to long conferences with the countess.'

'But why should the vassals think him a villain, Jean?'

'Nay, I know not,' replied she, hesitating; 'but I should not wonder if he was concerned with the robbers who had so nearly murdered you.'

Jean's observation had its full effect on the mind of Randolph; he recollected some circumstances which he thought justified her suspicions, as the questions put to him on the evening at the cottage—some significant looks which passed between the mother and son, when he gave them the demy from his purse; and yet what more strongly corroborated it than either of the above circumstances was the care that M'Lellan took to direct him to keep the lower way, which was not only intricate and lonely, but, as the domestic who dressed his wound informed him, was considerably more round about than if he had taken the open path, which was on the side of the mountain. Granting these suspicions were well founded, he was scarcely a doubt but that M'Lellan must have been a party in the murder of Monteith—a reflection which overpowered every other sentiment, and made him burst into tears. The sympathizing heart caught the infection; she mingled her tears with his, and endeavoured to comfort him, by saying that, even supposing M'Lellan to be concerned with the villains who robbed him, at least he was now safe within the walls

of the castle, where whatever might be M'Lellan's real character, he did not dare show it.

'Alas! I think not of myself,' replied he: 'an object more dear to my heart engrosses all my thoughts. You have said, dear Jean, that you regard me as your brother; I will confide in you as a sister.'

He then informed her that, some weeks before, he had lost his father in so secret a manner, that he resolved to go in search of him; that, in the dirk of the assassin, he instantly recognised the weapon worn by his parent—a proof too certain that the same villain had been concerned in his death.

Though Randolph was thus explicit, he neither told the name of his family nor whence he came, but concluded by conjuring her, if she knew ought of M'Lellan to corroborate his suspicions, that she would declare it.

'Swear then,' said she, 'that you will never disclose what I shall unfold to you.'

'Never, by my life; nay, by my soul! therefore dear Jean, speak.'

'Be not so hasty; what I have to say cannot relate to you, though it will show the reason I have to think so ill of M'Lellan. About six weeks since, I happened to fix the robe of the countess not to her liking; she had for more than a month before, been uncommonly harsh and peevish, and on this occasion struck me repeated blows. I had no refuge but tears, and I wept during the whole day, and at night could not sleep, but sat at the window, thinking of Roskelyn, and repining at my mother's folly, who, for the sake of gain, had placed me with the haughty countess. My chamber is not far distant from the portal, and, an hour before midnight, I heard a noise at the outward gate; the horn was sounded with violence, and the old porter arose cursing the intruders in so loud a voice, that I could distinctly hear him.

'The gate was at length unbarred, and a man entered, whom, by a torch which old Sandy held to his face, I clearly recognised for M'Lellan, having seen him twice before in conference with the countess. Though it was the dead of night, he insisted on her being called, and was at length obeyed, by the old porter beating at my chamber-door for that purpose, when, wrapping a plaid over my garments to conceal that I had not been undressed, I awoke the Lady Roskelyn, who instantly arose, and scarcely taking time to put on sufficient raiment, hastened to the hall, where M'Lellan awaited her alone. On entering, she bade me begone, in an authoritative tone; but such was her impatience to enter on the subject, that she said, ere I closed the door—'Is it done?' to which M'Lellan answered—'It is!' and I heard no more.

'Alas! alas! exclaimed Randolph, in an agony of grief, 'it was the murder of my father they spoke of.'

'Not so,' interrupted Jean, thinking that sorrow had disordered his senses; 'what could the countess have to do with the murder of your father? Nay, compose yourself, or I will say no more.'

Randolph, though agonized like one stretched on the rack conquered his feelings and prayed her to continue.

'I confess,' resumed she, 'that my curiosity was roused, and stealing gently upstairs to the corridor that surrounds the top of the hall, I could see, though not hear, what passed. The countess presented a purse to M'Lellan, and soon after went to a massy chest that stands in a recess, from whence she took a bunch of keys, which she also gave into his hands, when, making his obedience, he left her. For some time after his departure, she sat lost in thought; then hastily paced up and down the hall, in visible agitation, until fearing she might call for me suddenly, I went down and waited her com-

mands ; I might, however, have spared myself the trouble, for she retired no more that night.'

'The weight of blood hung on her soul,' said Randolph, 'and will plunge it into everlasting perdition.'

'No blood, I trust, was spilled : for on the ensuing night, at nearly the same hour, M'Lellan returned, and with him five men, guarding a man of noble deportment, but whose face I could not discern.'

Randolph could scarce restrain his impatience, but grasping her hand, prayed her to continue.

'I have little more to say. The domestics had all been ordered to retire early to rest ; but perhaps, I was not the only one whom curiosity kept watching for, on the ensuing day, an air of mystery hung on all the domestics.'

'Accursed night ! and doubly accursed the hands that shed his blood ! too surely he was then slain.'

'No, no : he was brought through the court of the castle, and taken to the watchtower, of which those were doubtless the keys that M'Lellan received from the countess the night before.'

'Oh God ! it is possible he may yet live ;' exclaimed Randolph, in a transport of joy.

Jean looked astonished. 'I should judge so ; for a guard dwells still in the tower, and they would hardly lose their time in watching a dead body ; but you are too soon depressed, and too soon elated ; this stranger can be nothing to you.'

'Perhaps not ; but are you sure he is still here ?'

'Most certain, though no one is admitted but M'Lellan and his crew, who, I have heard old David and others say, were no better than common robbers, the remains of the rebellious band of Robert Grahame, who was some years since executed for the murder of the late king.'

At that moment Jean was loudly called for, when Randolph entreated her, for the love of heaven, to be silent in respect of what had passed.

On the whole, Randolph's heart was somewhat lightened ; it was possible his father yet lived, if, in reality, he was the prisoner alluded to by Jean. There were, however, many circumstances to damp this hope, as, how could a lawless *land banditti* enthrall him on the sea ?—what had become of Sir James Ross ?—or, was the house of Roskelyn so inveterate in its enmity, why was he only in the custody of the countess ?

Though these reflections were, on the whole, a considerable drawback on the satisfaction he experienced, yet a part of his woe was alleviated : and for the first time, during several hours, he ate of the food that had been brought him.

CHAPTER XXIV.

IN the mean time, the countess was bestowing on the innocent Jean every bitter invective her malicious mind could invent : she had called for her thrice, and her being found in Randolph's apartment furnished matter sufficient for reproach, till, having wearied herself, (for she gained no reply but tears,) she called one of her vassals, and commanded the stranger to be brought before her.

Randolph entered into her presence with the most fixed hatred, and with the deadly idea of revenge ; but whether her beauty, which was still dazzling, or the secret impulse of nature, he softened his resentment, he thought, as he looked on her, it was impossible she should be so guilty as his imagination suggested.

'Young man,' said she, addressing him, 'when I admitted you into my dwelling, from motives of humanity, I did not expect you to appropriate the whole time of the silly damsel whom I employ in attending upon my own person.'

'If I have offended, lady, I crave your pardon; confined by the wound I received, if at any time I have detained Jean in listening to my complaints, mine alone be the blame.'

'What age are you?'

'Somewhat turned of seventeen.'

'You are surely more.'

'I would then, lady, that my experience and acquirements equalled my looks.'

'What is your name, and of what family are you?'

Randolph, who had considered such questions might be asked him, replied, though he blushed as he spoke—

'My name is Randolph; my family a younger branch of that of M'Gregor.'

'Why have you left your paternal home?'

'To seek preferment; the loss of my father made exertion necessary.'

'To those who placed you in the way to achieve your purpose, could you be a true and faithful lad?'

'Yes, provided I loved them.'

'The merit would be less then, if thou didst not. Could'st thou love me?'

'Considering only your face, lady, methinks I could worship you.'

Lady Roskelyn's leading trait was vanity; the reply of Randolph, therefore, taken in the literal sense, at once rendered her his friend.

'Well then,' replied she, 'endeavour to regain thy health, and I will engage thee in my train.'

'I thank you, lady.'

Jean was delighted to have procured the protection of the countess for Randolph; nor was the youth himself displeased, as he had no doubt, that, if once admitted among the vassals of the house, he should find an opportunity to satisfy himself if it was really Monteith that was detained in the watchtower.

On leaving the countess, he retired to his chamber,

where, ruminating on what had passed, he could not avoid the following reflections:—'Confined within the narrow limits of the island of Barra, how anxiously did I wish to see the world! Alas! how bitter the specimen I have already experienced! Robbed and wounded by the hands of villains; obliged to descend to lies and art to conceal a name on which I fix my highest glory, and to wear a face of dissimulation and satisfaction to a woman, who, perhaps, hath had a principal hand in the distresses, if not the death, of my honoured parent.'

A thought then again crossed the mind of Randolph, to hasten back to Barra for a force sufficient to release Monteith; but the uncertainty that it was really him checked the intention:—

'Besides,' thought he, 'while I am gone he may be conveyed where I may never again discover him, or perhaps slain; and here, should I fail to set him free, I can at least evince my love, and die with him.'

The vassals of the countess were too numerous for the addition of one comrade to cause either wonder or jealousy, and particularly as Randolph confined himself to his chamber until his wound should be completely healed.

Randolph's thoughts during this period never wandered from his main design; he had watched two evenings, and at nearly the same hour seen men cross the court, and whom he had now conjectured to be designed to relieve the guard kept upon the prisoner; resolved to be certain, he, on the third night, taking his dirk, followed them through several windings, concealing himself occasionally behind the buttresses of the castle; at length he found his conjectures confirmed; for the three men having entered the watchtower, speedily after the same number came out bearing a torch, which, shewing their faces, Randolph again recognized among them M'Lellan.

The youth's disposition was naturally hasty and

passionate ; and his education had been such, that valour and honour, in his opinion, should be the first traits to distinguish manhood. Situated therefore as he was, he suffered severely from the constraint he was obliged to put on, by concealing himself at such a moment ; but prudence, not only on his own account, but on that of Monteith, required it ; and he suffered the villains to pass without notice.

Randolph walked round the tower, but no light was discernible, except in the lower apartment, where the youth conjectured the guard was placed ; and climbing up to the grated window, found his supposition verified, for, before a blazing fire on the hearth, sat the three men whom he had seen enter, and, on a table, their broadswords unsheathed, and a jug of wine, of which they had apparently drunk so freely that their snoring assured him there was no danger of his being discovered.

Descending from the window, he fixed his eyes on the higher chamber and gave a loud whistle ; but all was silent as death, and, fearful of creating an alarm, which could be productive of no real utility, he at length retired to his apartment.

On the ensuing day he mixed among the vassals, and, crossing one of the galleries, encountered M'Lellan, who had just been honoured with a conference with the countess. The villain started at sight of the youth ; for, employed only at the tower, he seldom entered the castle but for provision, and then held little converse with the domestics : he was therefore unacquainted with the youth's admittance.

Randolph felt at once the necessity of dissimulation, and replied to his questions with apparent openness : M'Lellan expressed his sorrow at his being wounded, and particularly inquired whether he should recognize the villains who attacked him ? Randolph repressed his feelings, though his heart beat high. — 'How is it possible for me to recollect them ?' said he ; 'do you allow nothing for the confusion of my

mind at that moment ? they were common robbers, I deem, who have no settled home ; and to seek them would be useless.'

'Ay, if you knew them not,' answered M'Lellan, regaining his courage ; and hastily wishing the youth restored to health, he left him.

Randolph, during this interval, was not unmindful of Jean ; for her he felt a grateful affection, which led him to wish her under the protection of the wife of Monteith. For the maid, her sentiments were mingled with one more tender : the manner of Randolph, his person and attention to her, had all conspired to interest her inexperienced heart, and to give it a feeling she had never before felt.

The agitation of Randolph respecting the prisoner banished sleep from his eyelids, and rising early he resolved to walk round and examine every avenue to the castle. It had originally been strongly fortified ; but time, and the little attention paid to it for some years, had caused it to fall to decay, so that he readily conjectured that, could the prisoner once be liberated, the means to complete his escape would not be difficult. Randolph's curiosity satisfied respecting the internal strength of the castle, he resolved to view the outside. Passing, therefore, the gates, he walked round the walls, and thence ascending the mountain at the bottom of which he had been attacked, he sat himself down to revolve on the means to pursue. For some time, his head sunk on his breast, he remained lost in thought, when suddenly he was recalled to recollection by two horsemen in the beaten path some fathoms beneath him, calling to ask whether there was any dwelling within a short distance where they could procure refreshment for themselves and horses. Randolph started, raised his eyes, and, regardless of the space between himself and the travellers, with the agility of a mountain-deer, at once glided down the steep, with an emotion that neither left him the power to think nor to speak.

'Is it possible? can I believe my sight? Randolph! How earnest thou hither?' exclaimed one of the strangers in astonishment, leaping from his horse.

'Blessed, blessed chance!' cried Randolph, in a transport, seizing his hand. 'Dear De Bourg, Heaven surely sent you. I shall yet be the happiest lad alive.'

'By my soul, I am lost in surprise!' said the chevalier. 'Where hast thou been? how earnest thou here? thy looks are pale and sickly. How do our friends at Barra?—are they with thee? where dost thou dwell?'

'Chevalier,' answered Randolph, blushing, 'not long after your departure I fled from Barra, in hopes of joining you, to seek my father! but, not far from this spot, was robbed and wounded. I am now a resident in the castle in the valley appertaining to the Countess of Roskelyn.'

'The Countess of Roskelyn,' replied De Bourg, with astonishment; 'wonders multiply, hast thou seen her?'

'Yes; some merchants with difficulty, after I was wounded, procured me admittance; and I am now engaged in her train.'

'And hast thou, degenerate boy, submitted to so menial a step? if so, thou art worthy thy fate. De Bourg and thou art henceforth strangers.'

'My name and family are unknown,' answered Randolph, with warmth; 'and proud and valiant as I know the chevalier De Bourg to be, in this case he would have been as mean as the boy Randolph.'

'Good lad,' replied De Bourg, softened rather than displeased with the spirit of his reply, 'excuse my impatience; I love thee too well to think thee dishonoured with calmness.'

Randolph threw himself on the Chevalier's neck, saying, in broken accents, 'I hope—I trust my beloved father yet lives; I have great reason to suppose him a prisoner in the castle: that circumstance

alone hath made me a dependant on the house of Roskelyn, in the expectation of its being ascertained whether my suspicions were true or false. Say, chevalier, would you not have done the same?'

'By my soul, in such a cause, I would be a slave to the meanest reptile God ever created; but, dear Randolph, pity my impatience, and give me an immediate account. If what thou advancest be productive of good, and we owe the blessed discovery to thee, from that hour I acknowledge thee my superior, for my search hath been vain, and sick with vexation, I have lain three weeks in a fever, within a few miles of Stirling.'

'I grieve to hear it. This is the first day I have walked forth from the castle: but let us sit down and I will inform you of every particular.'

'De Bourg and his companion, leaving their horses to graze, took their places by the youth, who related all that had befallen him since he left the island.'

De Bourg was well pleased to find that no discovery respecting the birth of Randolph had taken place; and yet more so, that there was a probability that Monteith survived, though he was by no means as sanguine as the youth.

'However,' observed he, 'tis clear that there is a prisoner, and, from the known disposition of the countess, no doubt, one unjustly oppressed. We will, therefore, at all events, set him free: the chance of its being St. Clair is well worth the attempt. But now, my dear boy, let us mingle prudence with our joy; your absence may cause suspicion; return and be carefully observant of all that passes: we will, in the meantime, examine all the outworks of the castle for some place to enter, for we are not strong enough to use open force, therefore must have recourse to art.'

'When shall I see you again?' said Randolph.

'To-morrow morn at the same hour; no material

event can, in the meantime, take place without our knowledge, for thou wilt watch within, and I without.'

Before they separated, De Bourg taking his purse, — 'Randolph,' said he, 'thou art moneyless; and though it may be unnecessary, yet 'tis best to be provided: and rest assured, for thy perseverance and conduct through this business, though thou shouldst ever be mistaken respecting the prisoner being Monteith, yet henceforth De Bourg will forget the boy in the man Randolph, and, as such, claim his friendship.'

Little more passed ere they parted; Randolph returning with a light step to the castle, while De Bourg and his companion conversed more fully on the discovery he had made.

CHAPTER XXV.

IN the course of the day Randolph was again admitted to the presence of the countess, who pleased with his good mien, ordered him a suit emblazoned with the arms of Roskelyn. Randolph blushed as he heard the command given, but his confusion passed unnoticed, and he was admitted to the honour of presenting her wine at dinner. Again left to himself, he waited for the night with impatience; but all attempts at discovery were fruitless, and after passing many sleepless hours he hastened to his appointment.

De Bourg and his companion were already there. They informed him they had carefully examined the outward walls of the castle, and, at no great distance from the tower, had discovered a part fallen to decay, where they could easily enter and wait for him at the turn of midnight. All arranged, they departed; and, as before, Randolph returned unnoticed, or at least, disregarded.

In the course of the day, the innocent Jean having, by some means, incurred the displeasure of her arrogant mistress, Randolph was witness to a scene of violence and passion of which he could before form no idea.

A thought then struck him that, if he was successful, with the assistance of De Bourg, in liberating the prisoner, on his flight being discovered, the anger of the countess would entirely fall upon Jean, as the primary cause of his having gained admittance into the castle. This reflection occupied his imagination some time, and gave him increase of vexation. To make her the companion of his flight was impossible, and to leave her to the malice of the tyrant, was a torment to his generous mind. At length hastily adopting what he thought a midway, he enclosed half the money he had received from De Bourg, and procuring the materials for writing, addressed her thus:—

DEAR JEAN,—You have said you consider me as a brother; accept, therefore, the enclosed, as from one who loves you besitting that name; it will serve, I trust, to convey you to your mother in safety. For I cannot endure the reflection of leaving you in the power of the haughty countess. And be assured, if I live, you shall again hear of your grateful friend,

RANDOLPH.

This task executed, he enclose the note with the money; and in the evening, taking Jean aside, he said—'Dear maid, I have a request to make, it is, that you would take charge of this packet until tomorrow, when, if I do not reclaim it, break the seal, but, if you have the smallest esteem for Randolph, keep the contents secret.'

Jean took the packet. 'I will truly do so, if you wish it,' answered she: 'but why do you not rather

tell me what it contains, than refer me until to-morrow ?

‘For a reason which you will then know, it is on a subject on which I cannot speak.’

‘Surely you do not mean to leave us ?’

‘Question me not, dear Jean, but rest assured your happiness will ever be near to the heart of Randolph, and that, if we now part, we shall soon meet again.’

As he spoke, he affectionately pressed her hand, and hastened away before she could reply.

The appointed hour of midnight at length arrived. In silence and darkness Randolph watched from his chamber ; and as usual, saw the guards, as he judged them, pass the court, and among them M'Lellan. Waiting a few minutes, until, he supposed they had reached the tower, he left his apartment and followed.

The tower was at a considerable distance from the inhabited part of the castle, and Randolph had nearly reached the half-way, when to his infinite vexation, he turned suddenly on one of the relieved guards, who was retiring to rest for the night. The man carried a torch, by the light of which Randolph with amazement, recognized the features of the assassin who had wounded him previous to his being admitted into the castle. Rage in his heart banished every other sensation, and he remembered only that one of his oppressors, or, perhaps, the murderer of his father, stood before him. The villain, equally astonished, first recovered his surprise.

‘Boy,’ said he, arrogantly, ‘what doest here at this hour ? the countess shall know of thy midnight walks.’

‘What dost thou here, villain ?’ replied Randolph, thrown off his guard by passion : ‘the countess shall to-morrow also know that her roof affords shelter to an assassin.’

‘Ah, ah ! say you so,’ replied he, throwing down

his torch which flamed upon the ground, and drawing his sword, he made a stroke at Randolph, who, springing aside, avoided the blow, and, before the villain could again raise his weapon, rushed upon him, and plunged his dirk into his bosom, saying, as he gave the stroke—‘Have at thee, thou false knave ; tis the dagger of Monteith, and his son sheathes it in thy murderous heart.’

Justice directed the hand of Randolph, and revenge nerved his arm with strength and resolution beyond his age, the stroke being so truly directed that the assassin immediately fell to the earth.

Though prudence might have instigated Randolph to repeat the blow, his heart recoiled at the thought ; trampling, therefore, on the torch, to prevent its leading to a discovery, he took the weapon of his fallen enemy, and repaired to the aperture where De Bourg and his companion Frazer were to await him. They were already there. The emotion of the youth was not lost upon them. In a few words he gave them to understand the cause, which they felt redoubled the danger of delay. Hastening forward, Randolph, as they had previously devised, struck upon the door of the tower, while De Bourg and his companion stood behind the portal, M'Lellan from within, demanded who came so late, and their business.

‘Have you forgotten my voice ?’ answered Randolph. ‘My business is respecting the prisoner. Know ye not that I am now in the service of the countess ? Open the door.’

‘Marry, a young knave in office,’ muttered M'Lellan to his companions, in a low voice. ‘Doth the wind sit in that quarter ? The world says false, or the countess is no nun ; and this sudden trust bespeaks that she hath a keen eye for a smooth face and a well-turned leg.’

‘Since I have known he was in this castle,’ replied one of his companions, ‘my mind hath plaguily mis-given me. I would Barnaby had struck surer the first day we met.’

'Fish! there is no danger; he is always in our power. I am convinced he hath no suspicion.'

'Will you admit me, or am I to return again to the countess?' said Randolph, again striking the door.

'A curse upon him! how consequential he is. But I shall let him know I am as great a man as himself in the castle, and so he may tell his mistress,' said M'Lellan.

As he spoke he unbarred the gate; but, before he could either express his power or his displeasure, Randolph, followed by De Bourg and Frazer, rushed in, and hastily closed the door. Though the villains were taken by surprise, their natural ferocity did not desert them; they attacked the intruders with a spirit befitting a better cause; but in so small a chamber as that of the entrance of the tower, which was not more than eight feet square, the conflict was soon decided: M'Lellan fell; and one of his comrades being disabled in the arm, the third sued for mercy. De Bourg, demanded the keys, which were given from under M'Lellan's garment, they left Frazer to guard below, and commanded the man who had received the least injury to lead to the apartment of the prisoner.

The fellow, entirely subdued, preceded them in sullen silence; but reaching the second story, where Randolph conjectured the prisoner to be confined, he had no longer patience, but, snatching the keys, himself opened the door, though his hand trembled with apprehension and pleasure; the first, lest it should not be the person he wished; the second, with the excess of satisfaction occasioned by the hope of its being in reality Monteith.

The door unlocked and unbolted, they entered. The prisoner had heard the conflict, and, far from suspecting the real cause, conjectured that the business for which he was detained was now to be completed, and prepared to meet his fate with fortitude.

Advancing, therefore, to meet them,—'Agents of hell,' said he, 'I am ready; set me free from this thralldom, but be assured, a day of retribution will come, when ye will surely repay the blood of Monteith.'

'Monteith! father!' exclaimed Randolph, rushing into the chamber, and with frantic energy claspng St. Clair's neck, 'are you indeed restored to me? My dear mother and Phillippa will once more be happy.'

'Gracious powers, Randolph! Is it possible? Do not my eyes deceive me? De Bourg, too! and no more! Is this real, or is it the wandering of my sickly fancy?'

'Dear St. Clair,' replied De Bourg, 'thanks be to Heaven, 'tis true substantial happiness. An hour since I would have given my life to have realized this scene, which we owe to Randolph: but come—no time is to be lost; take this sword,' presenting one he had taken from M'Lellan; 'danger yet hangs over us, but we will clear it or die: Monteith is now our leader, and fear cannot assail us.'

St. Clair, weakened with sorrow and suffering, leaned for a moment on the sword—'Say,' answered he, 'but that Ambrosine lives, and again shall you see Monteith himself; if she is lost, I can die here—there is no need of going farther.'

'No, surely, not for a man who loves only himself,' replied De Bourg; 'but for one who considers what his friends have ventured in his cause he will repay the debt to the uttermost. Ambrosine, a short time since, though plunged in grief for thy supposed death, survived.'

'Survived!' repeated St. Clair; 'how cold the word! but lead on—though enervated, I can still follow the call of honour.'

St. Clair grasped the weapon, and followed De Bourg. They found M'Lellan dead, and his comrade, though faint with the loss of blood, seated on a bench, in the action of binding up his wound.

After securing the door of the tower on the outside, they hastened to the breach in the castle wall : which passing, they found four horses that De Bourg had provided, and fastened in an adjacent thicket ; these they instantly mounted, and departed full speed.

'By my life,' said St. Clair, as they rode forward, 'I cannot even yet think myself awake ; rescued so suddenly, and by so small a force, almost exceeds belief ; tell me, know ye aught of Ross ? is he returned to Barra ?'

'Not when we left the island,' replied De Bourg, 'which is some weeks since. Thou lightenest my heart by the supposition that he still lives.'

'Heaven forefend that he should not ! But tell me truly, how doth my wife—my children ?'

'Thy wife and children were overwhelmed with sorrow when I last saw them ; thy return will, I hope, banish their grief. Ambrosine hath left Barra and retired to Kintail ; and thus doubly have we felt thy loss.'

'Let us away thither : the first moment of liberty be hers—the next is due and shall be paid at Barra.'

'Thinkest thou there is no danger of a pursuit from the house of Roskelyn ? If thou dost, tempt it not, but retire to the island ; I will be the joyful messenger to Kintail.'

'There is no fear, De Bourg ; thy friend St. Clair, who laughed at the attacks of men, hath been beguiled, disgraced, and foiled, by the arts of a woman.'

'Pish, man ! and so was Sampson ; but thou art more fortunate, for thou hast escaped with thy strength, though thou didst fall into the power of Delilah.'

'Tis too long a story to relate as we proceed, and my curiosity and impatience at least equal thine,' replied St. Clair. 'I think thou saidst I owed much to Randolph ; how that may be, I know not ; but the hour will, I trust, come, when I may pay the debt.'

Using the utmost diligence until the morning was far advanced, they reached the dwelling of a peasant, where they procured refreshment for themselves and horses ; during which interval De Bourg related all that had passed at Barra—the common distress for the loss of himself and Ross—his own journey to Edinburgh—flight of Randolph and its subsequent consequences, which had terminated so happily ; softening only the distressed state of Ambrosine.

'My dear boy,' said Monteith, 'truly might De Bourg declare my obligations to thee ; thou hast already realized what my fondest hopes wished to see accomplished, and I scarcely regret a misfortune which has at once proved thy affection and thy valour.'

'And now,' said Randolph, 'that you have heard my disobedience palliated, and my small merits magnified, by the partiality of De Bourg, will you not, dear father, relate to us how you fell into the hands of your enemies, and whether we may hope again to see our noble friend, Sir James Ross, without which our happiness will be incomplete ?'

'Remembrance, brave boy, is yet too painful ; give me a few days, and I will satisfy your curiosity in every particular. Sir James Ross, I trust to Heaven, will return safe ; he is doubtless now in Denmark ; but once again united to such a phalanx of friends, 'tis not the little subtle arts of a woman, nor of her banditti combined, which shall withhold him from hearts so true, and arms so brave, as those at the fortress.'

Their beasts recruited, and themselves refreshed with such food as the cottage afforded, they resumed their journey, and travelling all day and the ensuing night, before noon on the second day they reached the neighbourhood of Kintail, where De Bourg, and also Randolph, trembling for the life of Ambrosine, entreated Monteith not to surprise her by his presence hastily, but to suffer them to break the first intelligence, in some manner less hazardous to her agonized feelings.

Monteith, at the request, viewed them in silent anguish—'You have deceived me!' exclaimed he; 'my Ambrosine, my wife, is perhaps no more! She is, if living, superior to the feminine follies of her sex; and the sight of St. Clair, though it may surprise, cannot shock her. Ah! if she be indeed dead, what have I to do with life? the load will be too much to bear!'

'St. Clair,' replied the chevalier, 'though the grief of Ambrosine, when she departed for Kintail, was such as alarmed us all for her life, yet it was the sorrow befitting her general character; and blest, above the lot of men, with such a wife, shall your reason sink beneath hers? Fie on it! if she survives, she will blush to hear it. Methinks I see her now, as she bade us farewell; her mind still possessed all its active power, and, though bent with sorrow like a reed in a storm, she remembered she had other claims on her heart than those of Monteith, and, while she clasped his children to her bosom, vowed to endeavour to bear life for their sakes.'

'Angelic woman! De Bourg, condemn not my weakness, but pity me; act as thou thinkest best, but remember my impatience.'

De Bourg assured him he would not forget it; and, speeding forward, they reached the avenues of the castle of Kintail, where Monteith and Frazer promised to remain, while De Bourg and Randolph went on to the mansion, to apprise Ambrosine of the welcome tidings.

CHAPTER XXVI.

'CHEVALIER,' said Randolph, as they proceeded, 'my heart fails, my legs tremble, and though blest, as I thought, to the extent of my wishes, in the recovery of my father, a secret dread hangs over me; should sorrow have undermined the life of my mother, he will never survive, and I shall be doubly an orphan.'

'I am infected with the same fear,' said de Bourg, 'and, equally for his sake as for hers, kept him from too sudden a surprise.'

Thus conversing, they reached the gate, where they were met by the old steward. Declaring to him their business was with the Lady Kintail, his eyes filled with tears, and viewing them with a look of sorrow, he said—

'Alas! you cannot see her: she hath no longer any earthly business.'

'Dead!' exclaimed De Bourg, turning pale, while Randolph, equally alarmed leaned against the portal for support.

'No,' replied the old man, 'not dead, but beyond all hope: her children weep day and night, and her domestics devote those hours they should pass in sleep, to supplicate the Holy Virgin in her favour: but in vain, I fear, are our prayers: life only lingers like the flame of a lamp whose oil is exhausted. Calm and resigned, no complaint escapes her; but if perchance, weary nature finds a short respite in sleep, she then calls upon her dead lord, and by her words, refers to the love she bore him living.'

'Good old man, I pray you call Bridget, tell her 'tis De Bourg and Randolph that crave to see her.'

The steward obeyed. At sight of the chevalier and Randolph, Bridget wept and wrung her hands, but somewhat recovered, she informed them that the wife of Monteith was already advised of the chevalier's journey to Elinburgh, and the subsequent flight of Randolph, by Sir Alexander M'Gregor, and the messenger who had been sent from Barra; that both had tarried some days at Kintail, from whence they had returned to the island much dispirited by the hopeless situation of the heiress, and uncertainty respecting the chevalier and Randolph.

Scarcely attending to what she related, the desired to be admitted to see the wife of Monteith, and

being announced, proceeded to her apartment: Bridget saying, as she led the way—'Alack, sirs, prepare yourselves for sorrow; for you will behold but the wreck of my dear mistress.'

On entering the apartment, though prepared, they started back. On a couch, supported, was the still lovely Ambrosine, her eyes sunken, her lips livid; and her alabaster skin alone covering the beautiful symmetry of form and feature, that mortal decay could only destroy; on one side knelt Phillippa, on the other James, and at her feet sat the young St. Clair.

'My dear friends,' said she, 'how kind ye are to come at this distressful hour! my heart ardently longed to be thus satisfied; the most anxious fears have distressed me on your account.'

Without speaking, Randolph threw himself by Phillippa, and, weeping, concealed his face on the couch, while de Bourg, taking the hand of Ambrosine, was some time equally unable to reply.

'The generous motive that directed your journey, de Bourg,' continued she, 'and the filial one that prompted your flight my dear Randolph, have made an impression on my heart, to be effaced only by death; but, alas! I am too well aware of the inefficacy of your search, to feel the least disappointment at your want of success.'

'Dear lady, take comfort; all hope is not lost.'

'No,' answered she, smiling, 'we shall meet again; I shall myself find Monteith, the husband of my love, the man alone for whom I wished to live. Ah! chevalier, blame not; I have striven to overcome this selfish grief, but it will not be; the oak is fallen, and the weak ivy naturally sinks to the earth. You speak not, Randolph,' added she, after a pause, 'dear boy, come near, take my blessing and my thanks, for the affection that prompted you to seek Monteith.'

Randolph raised her hand to his lips—'Beloved

mother,' replied he, in broken accents, 'it was Heaven that prompted me to seek my father.'

'It was, my son; for an affectionate and grateful heart is the gift of God.'

Pleasurable as were the tidings of de Bourg and Randolph, they feared to disclose them, lest the almost exhausted spirit of Ambrosine should, on the smallest exertion, take its flight, never to return.

'Lady,' at length said De Bourg, 'we owe Randolph a debt we can never repay; his search hath been more fortunate than mine, for he hath found—'

Ambrosine started, and hastily interrupting the chevalier, she said—'Speak, I conjure you; hath he discovered the body of St. Clair? have the waves yielded him up to my prayer? if so, our dust shall mingle: and, at the great day, when the grave shall open and disgorge its dead, our spirits shall rise together.'

He she spoke, her sunken eyes sparkled, and her fragile form appeared to gain strength from the idea.—'Oh! if indeed you have been so blest,' added she, 'once more let me see him; nor time nor change, fearful as death may be, can make me shrink from Monteith, the lord of my affection, the father of my children.'

'Lady,' replied De Bourg, 'this agitation will destroy you; Monteith lives.'

'Lives!' exclaimed she, wildly gazing around her, 'Monteith lives! de Bourg is no liar; Monteith lives! Away with these hateful sables! Monteith lives! give me my wedding garments; I will away to meet him!' As she spoke, she made an effort to rise; but nature was too far exhausted, and she sank senseless on her pillow.

For some moments the utmost despair reigned; all thought her gone for ever, at length slowly recovering, she apparently strove to collect herself.—'I am strangely weak,' at length said she: 'I dreamed that ye said Monteith still lived!'

'Dear mother,' answered Randolph, 'your dream will be verified.'

'Verified!' repeated she, fixing her eyes strongly upon him, with fearful earnestness: 'verified did you say? Observe me, Randolph—I have reached that moment when the world fades from the sight, and truth alone stands the test; answer me, therefore, as your soul shall answer its worldly transgressions, whether what you have advanced is not merely fabricated to palliate the anguish of the moment?'

'No, by my hopes of happiness, by your life, and all I hold most dear, my father lives.'

'Your father!' replied Ambrosine, her imagination again wandering from the purpose; 'what is your father to me?'

'Dear lady, endeavour to collect yourself,' said De Bourg: 'by my soul and honour, my friend Monteith, your husband, lives.'

'Oh, for a strong reviving potion,' cried Ambrosine, 'that would enable me to support life till we once more meet, that I might yield my breath in his arms!'

'Be the consequence what it may, Monteith shall instantly be admitted,' said the chevalier, 'should she expire without seeing him, never should I pardon myself for this delay, stay then here, Randolph, I will return with him immediately.'

For some minutes after the departure of De Bourg, Ambrosine lay with every semblance of death; at length reviving, she looked round, and asked for the chevalier.

'He is gone on a welcome errand,' said Randolph, 'bear up, dear mother—he will speedily return, but if you love me, endeavour to take some cordial, that may assist in supporting your spirits in this happy interview.'

'You have not then deceived me,' said she: 'Monteith is indeed among the living! Fie on this

weakness; methought my heart had forgotten to beat, yet now my bosom will scarcely contain it.'

Phillippa held a cup of wine to her mother.

'My child,' said she, 'let me receive it from Randolph; I will drink it to his health;—May sorrow never assail him, and every just wish of his heart be gratified.'

In the mean time, de Bourg had joined Monteith and his companion; his features were too indicative of grief, for St. Clair to hazard a question, and, judging the worst, he leaned against a tree in silent expectation.

'Monteith,' said De Bourg, 'come on; no time is to be lost; prepare yourself for a sight that will rend your heart: but conceal your anguish as much as possible in her presence, for the balance of life and death are so exactly poised, that a hair would turn the scale.'

'I will, my friend,' replied Monteith, in a smothered voice, and with forced composure; 'but you may as well bid me forget the warmth of the sun, as to tell me to be less sensible of the value of Ambrosine.'

A melancholy silence took place, which neither seemed inclined to interrupt, while they passed to the castle.

When the chevalier was again admitted to the lady's chamber, he found her more composed, and supported by Randolph, in eager but silent expectation. On his entrance, her strained sight appeared to look beyond him, while clasping her hands with impatience, she cried—'He comes not; barbarous deception! am I so sunk in your opinion, that you treat me like a wayward child? Oh Monteith! Monteith! didst thou indeed live, who would dare to deceive me thus?'

'Life of my life, and dearer to my soul than the light of day, or the blood that warms my heart, thy husband is here,' said Monteith, entering the cham-

ber, but starting back at the sight of her altered form, and stopping motionless at the foot of her couch. The name of St. Clair escaped her lips; she stretched forth her hands, and made an effort to rise, but sunk senseless into his arms.

Monteith at first thought her dead, and gave way to the anguish of his heart, while in vain Bridget, and de Bourg entreated him to retire.

'Never,' exclaimed he, with vehemence; 'we will never separate. Oh, my love! my wife! may the infernal fiend that caused thy sufferings, be accursed! I could forgive all but this.'

Ambrosine slowly revived; all remained silent; and, as a mother watches the first-born of her hopes, so did Monteith hang over his idolised Ambrosine, fearful to breath, lest his words should dissolve the flattering wish of once more hearing her speak.

'It is then indeed true that thou art restored to me,' at length said she; 'and happy to see thee once more, I cannot now consider the means; but thou wilt not again forsake me?'

St. Clair supported her in his arms, her cheek reclined on his bosom, and her eyes fixed on his face. Though Ambrosine was so much exhausted, she appeared serene and composed; and all leaving the chamber except Monteith, Phillippa, and Bridget, she still leaning on his bosom, dropped insensibly asleep.

'Praised be Heaven,' said Phillippa, softly, 'my dear mother slumbers, for the first time these two days; her sleep, too, appears more tranquil than it hath been for many weeks.'

On awakening, her spirits appeared more collected, and she took food; but her extreme weakness left scarcely any hope of her recovery.

De Bourg, willing to share his satisfaction with friends, resolved to depart immediately for the island; but Frazer requesting that commission, the chevalier remained at Kintail, and he sailed the ensuing day for Barra.

CHAPTER XXVII.

WHILE Monteith and his companions were pursuing their way to Kintail, the dwelling of the countess was a scene of dismay and confusion. The villain whom Randolph had wounded in the inner court, by slow degrees recovered from the fainting which the wound at first occasioned, crept to the tower, as the nearest place to obtain admittance. Barnaby, though sinking with loss of blood, attempted to obey, but found the task beyond his power, as De Bourg, as well as barring the door, had also locked it, and taken away the keys. Thus circumstanced, there were no means left but to alarm the inmates of the castle, and Barnaby's weakness made such an exertion almost impossible; obliged, however, by necessity to make the attempt, he, with the utmost difficulty, reached the first inhabited part of the dwelling, though the effort occasioned him the most violent agonies. The alarm given, it soon reached the countess. All the vassals knew that a prisoner was detained in the tower, his name and quality being all she wished to conceal, and from thence arose her care in not suffering his person to be seen, lest by any chance he might be recognized.

As the fangs of the enraged lion are directed against all whom he meets, so did the violence of the countess assail all within her domain. At first she could not credit the account; but, throwing a loose garment about her, hastened for confirmation to the tower, when, causing the doors to be broken, the sight of M'Lellan's body, and the languishing state of his companions, convinced her of the truth.

Humanity was with her a secondary object; simply, therefore, ordering Barnaby's wound to be bound up, she commanded that he should be brought back, in order that she might question them together.

Dismissing her attendants to wait on the outside—
‘There is treachery in this case,’ said she. ‘How could a sufficient force to break into the tower enter the precincts of the castle without knowledge? how gained they admittance here? and of what number did they consist?’

‘I saw but three; one of them was the youth you keep in the castle, but who fought like a devil that had been nurtured in blood from his cradle.’

‘Three!’ repeated the countess with astonishment; ‘three! and were ye such poltroons to be conquered by three men?’

‘Poltroons,’ said one of the fellows, surlily; ‘is the body of M’Lellan, and our wounds, a proof of cowardice?’

‘The boy was alone, when he stabbed me within the second court,’ said Barnaby.

‘The boy!’ replied the countess; ‘to what boy do ye allude?’

‘Why, to him you call Randolph, the son of the prisoner; he said, as he struck me, that the son of Monteith sheathed his dagger in my heart.’

‘His son! impossible! ’tis false! he hath no son of that age.’ Then going to the door, she called to the attendants who waited without, and ordered some of them to bring Randolph before her.

The vassals returned after a fruitless search, and informed her that the youth had doubtless fled, and apparently had not laid down to rest that night.

The countess stamped and gnashed her teeth with rage. ‘Fool that I was,’ exclaimed she, ‘to be duped by a boy, that was doubtless sent hither merely as a spy, with the fictitious tale of being wounded.’

She then inquired every particular respecting the conduct of those who liberated Monteith; for disappointed in her own views, she little regarded the sufferings of the men who had been the instruments of her injustice.

Great was her rancour against the whole party

concerned, even Monteith himself became a secondary object, in her revengeful mind, to Randolph. That he was Monteith’s son she regarded as a mere subterfuge, invented to answer some purpose in the stratagem which had caused her such vexation. As Randolph had justly guessed, Jean was the marked victim of her resentment; she accused her of being privy to all that had passed, and of fabricating the story of Randolph’s wound, to facilitate his entrance into the castle. Jean, with more spirit than she was wont, denied the charge, and called the domestics who had dressed the wound in Randolph’s head, and several others that had seen it; and of which they gave such full testimony, that the countess could not refuse it belief.—‘That Randolph knew M’Lellan, I am sure,’ said Jean, in reply to some of the interrogatories put to her by the countess; ‘for he slept at his cottage even on the night before his coming hither; and that he suspected him to be a party concerned with those that robbed him, I also know; but no further.’

Nothing tending to give the countess any satisfactory information, she at length dismissed her vassals; and, left alone, in the frenzy of passion, rent her hair and garments, and, venting curses on Monteith and his family, vowed to pursue them to the grave. To follow her late prisoner, she considered as useless; for, being uninformed of Ambrosine’s residing at Kintail, she had no doubt he had made directly to the coast, and embarked for Barra; neither was it a cause in which she chose to employ domestics, being fearful of exposing herself, as well as uncertain of the number they might have to cope withal; for, though but three appeared, she doubted not but that a far larger body had been engaged in the conspiracy.

‘Disappointed, foiled, laughed at,’ said she, ‘the scorn of the haughty Monteith and his happy wife, whom he is now hastening to clasp in his arms, and

relate to her my folly—fool, fool that I was, when in my power, not to strike a poinard through his heart ! Is it for this that I forgot my rank, and became the employer of the gang of M'Lellan, himself a known villain, and the outcast vassal of my father's house ? Had he not been slain, I should have judged he betrayed me : but all bespeaks that impossible, and I am the dupe of a boy !'

Thus did she vent her ineffectual rage, the venomous stings of her temper and conscience recoiling, scorpion-like, on her own heart.

Jean, on the first alarm at the tower, and the reported flight of Randolph, had torn open the packet he had left with her ; and though she foresaw the storm that hung over herself, and, taught prudence by the art that surrounded her, carefully concealed both the letter and the money, anxiously wishing for some means of using the latter, to convey her from the service of the countess.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE health of Ambrosine for many days remained in so precarious a state that the fears of her friends suffered no abatement. Monteith never quitted her, and the rough warrior was lost in the tender, careful, and affectionate husband ; whatever his hand presented, however repugnant to her inclinations, she received ; and viewing his anxious gaze when she declined the food or cordial offered her, she struggled to swallow them even when her heart recoiled. She spoke but little, but her anxiety for Monteith was visible in every action : if she slept, his hand was clasped in hers—his garment wound about her arm, or her head reclined on his bosom, as if to ascertain his presence ; thus, by almost insensible degrees, her strength began to renovate, and hope to revive

in the bosom of her friends. The first subject on which she expressed her wishes was, that St. Clair should return to Barra, where he would be safe from the machinations of his enemies ; but this he peremptorily refused—'I have nothing to fear from the state,' replied he ; 'and it is not the power of the house of Roskelyn that can injure me, surrounded by your vassals, and so near the friendly islanders.'

Ambrosine pressed the subject no farther, but was daily wishing for strength to return to the fortress—'I should there,' said she, 'be speedily restored ; the voyage would be most salutary to me ; nor will my mind be satisfied till I once more enjoy the life which the society of so many years hath endeared to me.'

Her strength at length permitting her to leave her couch, Monteith would often bear her in his arms to a terrace of the castle which fronted the sea, and where the breezes, congenial to her constitution, daily appeared to renovate the faded roses of her cheeks. Able to walk, leaning on her husband or her children, no persuasion could divert her from the desire of returning to Barra : and some few days more being given for preparation, a vessel was provided, in which they embarked, attended by Bridget and some few domestics.

However attentive Monteith had been to his wife, the situation of Sir James Ross had employed many of his hours ; and previous to his departure to Barra, consulting with de Bourg and Randolph, they agreed to engage a vessel to convey the two latter to Denmark, in search of Sir James ; Monteith giving them every information in his power as, that the ship which had betrayed them was of that country, and pursued its way thither with Ross, to whom they said no evil was intended, only to keep him a while from raising an alarm.

Elated with their former success, de Bourg and

Randolph departed in high spirits, well furnished with money, and attended by William and twelve islanders, on whose courage and fidelity they could rely.

The return of the family of Monteith to Barra caused the utmost joy. The arrival of Frazer with the welcome news of Monteith's safety, had delayed the departure of Sir Alexander M'Gregor, who now shared in the general satisfaction. This pleasure was still increased by the end of ten days, by the arrival of the vessel which had taken de Bourg and Randolph in search of Sir James, and which now brought him with them, to share the common joy.

All were too happy to enter into long explanations, Ross simply informing them that, on being separated from Monteith, he was taken to Elsinour, where he was liberated and left without money. After a stay of six weeks, he prevailed on the captain of a trading vessel, bound to Scotland, to take him on board: and touching at the Orkneys in their way, to his surprise and satisfaction, he encountered de Bourg and Randolph, who came aboard to make enquiries respecting him, when, having fulfilled his engagements to the captain, he joined them and returned.

The rejoicing having somewhat subsided, and the usual tranquillity restored, Randolph, one evening, as the family were sitting in social converse, addressing Monteith, said—'My dear father, that you were betrayed into the power of the house of Roskelyn, I well know; but the particulars am yet to be informed of. On your first escape, and during my mother's illness, and in the absence of Sir James, questions would have been impertinent; but now we are happy enough to see you seated among us, and our dear mother daily approaching nearer her accustomed health, may I beg some time that you will favour us with the relation.'

'Willingly, my dear boy; but before I enter in-

to the recent injuries I have received, it will be necessary to give thee a yet longer account of the injuries of that family. Thou knowest me only, Randolph, as the outlaw St. Clair; my history must elucidate the subject, and make thee a judge between the house of Roskelyn and myself. Let no prejudice in my favour influence thee, but consider the subject as if I were John of Roskelyn, and he Monteith.'

'I shall be vexed,' said Randolph, 'if my curiosity should make you recall former sorrow.'

'Nay, Randolph, not so; thy conduct hath stamped thy claim to my everlasting gratitude as well as affection, and never will I forget it. Whatever may be my fate, thy days shall not pass ingloriously. Soon, my boy, shalt thou mingle in the busy scenes of the world, and, with that courage and conduct which I foresee thou wilt possess, build for thyself a fame more noble than many a long list of progenitors ever yet bestowed. Any fool, Randolph, may be born noble, but he is only truly so, whose deeds ennoble himself.'

'The utmost wish of my heart, dear father, is to be worthy of you, and the partial friends that have formed me from infancy. Wherever you command. I will go with pleasure; but Barra must be the only place where choice and affection lead me.'

'I believe thee, and to-morrow will begin my tale; to-night it is too late; beside, events so long past need some recollection.' The discourse then reverted to other subjects, and, after having passed the evening cheerfully, they all retired to rest.

CHAPTER XXIX.

RANDOLPH'S curiosity was excited, he wished to know the particulars of the enmity between the

house of Roskelyn and Monteith—an enmity that no time appeared to lessen, and that he well knew, was the cause of his father's banishment.

St. Clair's family he had never heard mentioned, more than the name of his uncle Monteith, whom he ever spoke of with reverence and gratitude; but the name of his parents had never, to Randolph's recollection, escaped him—a circumstance which astonished him as much as the profound silence and secrecy that were ever held respecting his own mother.

After dinner the ensuing day, the whole party being assembled, St. Clair said—

'I have not forgotten my promise. My story is well known to my companions, Ross, de Bourg, M'Gregor, and Hamilton, for I involved them in my misfortunes. Sir Alexander, and some few others of our inmates, also know it: but the friendship that unites us requires that I should be equally communicative to all. In my story I have many follies to relate—many actions that youth and inexperience can alone excuse: and remark, Randolph, what I once thought the most severe misfortune of my life, hath proved the source of all my happiness, hath rendered even banishment delightful, and made a paradise of the island of Barra.'

Thus premising his relation, he began as follows:—

'The earliest period of my life, which my memory can trace, with any precision, was at Toray, in the isles of Lewes, when I was about five years old, and called St. Clair M'Crae. My father possessed a small portion of land, a comfortable cottage, and an excellent fishing vessel in which he occasionally traded to the coast of Scotland, the Orkneys, and even to Norway. Though his manners were rough, he was in truth an honest man. My mother was of a higher cast; she had been serving-woman to a lady

of the south, and the little my father possessed had been the reward of her attentions. An only child is usually humoured and spoiled, by its mother; this, however, was not my case. I was, as she said, so very unlike every thing she wished, so different from the delicate children she had been accustomed to, in the court and city, that she could not endure me. With my father I was more fortunate; he called me a sturdy dog, and his heart's pride, and, before I had seen my seventh year, I had accompanied him to Norway, and repeatedly to the coast of Scotland. My character was naturally passionate blunt and fearless; if offended, I did not hesitate to strike those who were my superiors in age, so that I frequently got well drubbed—a circumstance which, however, far from affecting my courage, rather acted as an incentive to increase it. Inured to cold and hardship, I knew them only by name: for I was insensible of their effects. Active as the mountain-deer, the most inaccessible heights of the rocks and hills were familiar to me; so that, by the time I had reached my twelfth year, I became a kind of leader, if I may so call it, to the lads of Toray. This distinction was not only owing to my disposition, but perhaps to the situation of my parents, who were accounted more affluent than any in our vicinity.

'With a chosen few of my comrades, one of our favourite diversions was hunting; and being, from my first remembrance, particularly fond of my bow, I had become a tolerable marksman; added to which, being well acquainted with the haunts of the deer, we were frequently successful, though our good fortune was usually attained with considerable labour and fatigue. These successes had gained us some celebrity, and not a little flattered our vanity.

'Returning from a trading voyage on the coast of Inverness, where I accompanied my father, we brought from thence a noble passenger, no other than

the gallant chief Monteith. He had been a soldier of the cross, in the Holy land; and newly returned, after an absence of several years visited his estates, seeking into the distresses of his vassals, relieving the distressed, and punishing the oppressors, according to the tenor of his oath.

His estates in Scotland were large; in the islands contracted; but, however small, he observed, the possessors were equally entitled to justice, the distribution of which he entrusted to no hireling. Sworn enemy of pomp, he travelled only with two domestics, with whom he crossed over in our vessel to Lewes.

'In this short voyage, fortune was my friend. By some means I attracted the notice of the chief, who asked me various questions, to which I answered so satisfactory, that before we reached home, I was no inconsiderable favourite. On our arrival, as he had no dwelling on the island, he asked my father if he could accommodate him for a day or two—an honour which the good man was far from declining. This was the first instance I had seen of my mother's humility, and which she now showed by chiding my father, when alone, for his folly in undertaking to entertain such a noble guest; however, as it was already settled, she was obliged to arrange every thing as well as she could for his reception. In this business none was more active than myself; the character of the chief for bravery had gained my admiration, and his affability had won my heart, so that I was resolved to show him how sensible I was of the honour he conferred on our dwelling.

'As we reached home in the evening, the chief, taking some refreshment, retired to rest, as did the whole family; but my mind was too busily employed to let me sleep soundly: rising, therefore at early dawn, I collected my companions, and telling them the occasion, entreated their assistance to procure a deer, to entertain our noble guest.

'I happened to be beloved enough to prevail; and to the number of twelve, we hastened to our haunts, where, by our cries arousing our game, we pursued it till near mid-day when the deer entering a narrow defile, I drew my bow, and struck an arrow through its throat. Elated with success, we joined to carry our burden, and had just descended the mountains, when we were met by the chief Monteith, who had been riding round the vicinity. He halted on our approach, and asked us what we carried? when one of my comrades, not suspecting his rank, from the plainness of his habit, hastily answered—'Tis only a deer St. Clair M'Crae hath slain to make welcome a noble guest that is at his father's dwelling.'

'Young man,' said the chief, addressing me, 'your father knew not of his enterprise; for he hath sought you this morning.'

'When he sees such good cheer, he will pardon me,' answered I, bluntly.

'I trust he will,' replied he; 'there is some money, too, for thee; as I appear to have been the cause of thy absence, let it join with the deer in pleading for thee.'

'I did not kill it to sell,' answered I, with an emotion that did not escape him, and turning from his offered gift.

'What then?' said the chief.

'Why, to make you welcome; had it been to carry to market, I would not have taken the trouble.'

'The chief smiled—'Well, then,' answered he, 'thy companions will, I hope, accept my present; thanks will be all I shall offer to thee.'

'And more than I ask; if it pleases you I shall be satisfied.'

'We then hastened home, my comrades elated with the money, and I at least a foot taller, in my own opinion, from the refusal to accept it.

'In the evening, my father being on board his vessel, unloading goods, and I remaining at home, the

chief requested my mother to suffer me to converse with him for an hour. Proud as I was of this distinction, my mother by no means appeared to approve it; she said my rudeness would speedily disgust him; but fearful of offending by a refusal, I was permitted to attend. Our best apartment was appropriated to his use, and he sat at a small table, with a jug of wine before him. Making me take a cup, he drank to my health, and conversing on different subjects, I soon forgot the distance between us, and became as free and communicative as with my fellows. He asked me of our family, and for what profession my father designed me.

‘To follow his own,’ I replied; ‘but I like it not. If I live to be a man, I will be a soldier, and either more than St. Clair M’Crae, or nothing.’

‘To this hour I remember the look the chief gave me; it, however, had in it no severity to abash me, and asking him questions respecting battles in which he had been engaged, he informed me with a kindness that completed the satisfaction his conversation gave me.

‘On the ensuing morning, with my comrades, I again went to hunt. The chief willing to witness our dexterity, followed on horseback; and, leaving his beast at the bottom of the mountain, accompanied us on foot. Though not sufficiently active to keep up with us, for he was near fifty, he, from a height, witnessed the sport. Fortune again stood my friend, and I struck a deer; but my arrow had scarcely fixed, and we had secured our prey, when I sorely repented my skill; for out of one of the hollows of the dell leaped a young fawn, who fearlessly approached its wounded dam. The moment before, my utmost ambition had been to shew my dexterity to the chief, but the sight of the fawn drove him clear from my thoughts: I drew the arrow from the wound, but in vain—the stroke had been too sure, and the animal’s limbs already trembled with

the last pang of nature. I snatched up the fawn; my companions carried the doe, and we quitted the mountain. The chief had reached the valley as soon as ourselves. ‘You draw the bow bravely, St. Clair,’ said he, addressing me; ‘hereafter, in such skilful hands, it may prove a tremendous weapon against the enemies of your country.’

‘I will never more draw it against a deer,’ replied I: ‘see if I have not slain the mother of this poor beast; I had rather have been without venison to the day of my death.’

‘You must adopt the orphan,’ answered the chief ‘feed it with milk—it will do well.’

‘Aye, if I could procure it; but my mother will not give it me; she boxed my ears the other day for giving a bowl to Donald Stragie, and, worse than that, hath locked the buttery ever since.’

‘The chief laughed. ‘Hadst thou,’ said he, ‘rather have thy ears boxed than the buttery door locked?’

‘Marry had I; for women’s blows break no bones; and, as my father says, they are no disgrace; for lap-dogs will bark at lions: fastening the buttery door is of much more consequence; for let who will want, I cannot now give them a sup.’

‘Well, then,’ replied he, ‘I must adopt the orphan myself; come on—we will devise means hereafter.’

‘The same day, after dinner, I attended the chief in a walk; and, meeting a herdsman, he bought a cow, which he gave me for any use I chose to appropriate it.

‘After a stay of some days, the chief, who meant to visit some of the adjacent isles, prepared to depart; and, to my great delight, requested my parents to suffer me to attend him, saying he would bring me home on his return. This request it was impossible to refuse to a man of his rank, though I could not but perceive it was by no means agreeable

to my parents; however, of that I thought but little, and departed with a joyful heart, with my protector.

During his journey an event happened that conduced to strengthen the friendship the good man had already conceived for me. A wound he had received some years before, which had been improperly healed, broke out afresh, and, for a considerable time bore a very alarming appearance; so that it obliged us to leave the islands and cross to Scotland for advice. I watched him during the whole progress, and will truly confess, from affection: so that when, in performance of his promise, he spoke of returning me to my father, I entreated, with the utmost earnestness, to be only suffered to remain till he was well. Yielding to my request, he sent a messenger with an excuse, and we continued our way to his paternal estate in Perthshire.

The chief Monteith was an only son; but his father marrying some years after the death of his mother, a daughter nearly twenty years younger than himself was the fruit of his second union. After being many years in the service of his country, he went to Spain, from whence he embarked for the Holy Land; and after some years returned to his native land, where he found his parents dead, and his only sister Marian, wedded to the Earl of Roskelyn (father to the present Earl), and mother to a promising lad of ten years old.

The chief was a bachelor, and his estate entirely at his own disposal: the Lady Roskelyn, therefore, who, from his partiality to her, and their near affinity of blood, judged herself the indubitable heir, paid him particular attention.

His wound had rendered him incapable of riding, he, therefore, travelled slowly in a horse litter, while I rode by his side. You may more easily judge than I describe my feelings at first sight of the grandeur and extent of the castle of Monteith. In the valley beneath the castle, is a religious house, built and en-

dowed by Monteith's mother, for twelve fathers, how informed of our arrival, came out at the head of some hundreds of the vassals, to meet and welcome their chief. The good man stopped the litter, and spoke to all within his reach, but more particularly noticed an aged man, whose white beard reached to his middle, and whom I afterwards understood was a native of Sunderland, and said to be possessed of the gift of second sight. Many years before he had been steward to the household: but, for the last ten, incapable of business, had ceased from care, and lived at ease in the castle. His appearance and age commanded respect, and the chief not only addressed him, but shook him by the hand. The old man's eyes sparkled with affection and gratitude, and he walked by the side of the litter till we reached the dwelling.

A few days quiet and proper attendance tended greatly to the restoration of Monteith. I had been his assiduous nurse during his illness; and, as noble minds are ever grateful, such was his attachment to me, that I was continually suffered to remain in his chamber, where he would laugh at my blunt sallies, and by his freedom encourage them.

We had been about fourteen days at the castle, when the Earl and Countess of Roskelyn arrived, for, apprised of the chief's illness, they resolved not to fail in that attention which avarice prompted. His reception of them was such as a good heart and an unsuspecting mind suggested, and to their young son, John, he paid particular attention, though to his father, he complained of the effeminacy of his manners, and the want of care in his education.

As the chief was sufficiently recovered to dine in the hall, to show honour to the noble guests, many more vassals than were accustomed to attend, waited on the board. On these select occasions, the venerable steward Andrew never failed to fulfil his old duty of presenting the cup to his master, and which to have refused him, as the chief observed, would

have been such an affront to his years as he would neither commit nor countenance.

'On the day of their arrival the dinner had passed with apparent satisfaction and hilarity in all parts. I stood among the vassals without being commanded or offering to serve the guests, when the chief beckoning me—'My good lad, give me a cup of wine; the Lady Roskelyn must honour the oldest vassal of her father's house, the worthy Andrew, with receiving one from him.'

'I hastened to fulfil the command given. Andrew at the same time, with his tremulous hand, presenting a goblet to the countess, who gave as a pledge—'Prosperity and never-fading honour to the house of Monteith.'

'The high roof of the hall re-echoed with the acclamation of the vassals, the minstrels prepared to play, and the chief with a smile of satisfaction, thanked his sister, when on a sudden, the mirth was changed to alarm, by the ancient Andrew falling on the marble pavement, his palsied limbs shaking with convulsions, and his features distorted with agony.

'The Virgin and holy saints direct us;' exclaimed the vassals, dropping on their knees: 'the spirit is upon him: touch him not.'

'Give him air—crowd not around him,' said the chief; 'tis doubtless one of those paroxysms to which aforetime he hath, as I have heard, been accustomed. Seat him on a chair; nay, I will have it so; his aged limbs will be bruised against the pavement.'

'The chief was immediately obeyed. For some moments the old man continued to struggle, when, on a sudden, he became placid, his glazed eyes fixed on his master, to whose chair I had clung from fear, and, rising as it were, above the weakness of his age, his voice became loud and sonorous; and such was the impression I received from his words, that never shall I forget them.

'The beast of the field and the wolves of the

mountain nourish and suckle their young; the birds of the air feed their brood and shelter them under their wings; but a wanton woman casteth forth her children even as summer flies do their eggs in the shambles.'

'The old man ceased, his eyes closed, and neither breath nor motion betokened life.

'Out upon the hypocritical defamer of women,' exclaimed the countess, though she trembled as she spoke: 'let him be conveyed to his chamber, and utter his falsehoods at leisure, so he pollute not our ears.'

'Sister,' replied the chief, with marked severity, 'the oldest vassal of your father's house, did not even his age amount to fourscore and eight years, deserves more charity. If Heaven speaks through these inspired men, all we can do is to listen with reverence.'

'The Lady Roskelyn made no reply, but, by the crimson of her cheek, showed, the conflict of passions that raged within her bosom.

'Again the old man's breast heaved, and again his eyes opened, and fixing them as before, upon the chief he continued—'See the hand of Heaven! it points the way! it mocks at the cunning of men; vice shall live in fear: and right and truth prevail. The master hath his own! but, alack! alack! with what an unthrifty hand he spreads his store! and ingratitude and avarice shall again triumph, till the red mane shall bite the ground under the feet of the willing captive!'

'The aged Andrew again ceased, an awful silence reigned throughout the hall, when, after a long pause, he again started and broke into speech.

'Hark: the sound of pleasure re-echoes through the halls of Monteith; the minstrels sing to the sound of the bagpipe, the harp, and the clarishoe! Widows and orphans weep with joy! Universal gladness reigns, and deadly foes quaff wine from the same friendly goblet!'

'Old Andrew ceased, and in a few minutes his features sunk into their usual state; but, like a man suddenly awakened from sleep, he gazed round him with a vacancy that shewed his recollection of worldly objects was not returned. Feeble as an infant, his limbs refused their office; and he was at length removed with care and tenderness to his chamber.

'For the first part of the prophecy, I cannot but think it hath been verified in myself; but, for the latter, it is involved in darkness, and, no doubt, if ever it comes to pass, not in my days; but, if reserved to my children, more welcome than to myself.

'For some time after Andrew had been carried out and the vassals withdrawn. All continued silent. The chief had ordered me to remain, and, considering me as a boy to whom no heed need be paid, spoke freely before me. 'Sister,' said he, addressing the countess, 'what think you now of old Andrew? If he feigns, in faith he acts with such an exact similitude to nature, that he hath caused an emotion within my bosom that neither the enemies of my country, nor the foes of the blessed cross ever had to boast, for I even yet tremble, and big drops of sweat fall from my brow.'

'The Earl of Roskelyn made no reply, but appeared lost in thought.

'Dear brother,' replied the countess, in some measure endeavouring to recover her spirits, I perhaps judged Andrew harshly; for, never before witnessing such an event, it startled me.'

'More discourse passed on the subject, and before the evening the usual hilarity prevailed. The chief desired me to see Andrew.

'My good lad,' said he, to me, 'thou hast been a tender keeper; look in, I pray thee, on my old friend; and though thou shouldst not be so successful as with myself, thou hast a monitor within that will repay thy attention.'

'My own inclination seconded the chief's request. I hastened to the chamber of the old man, whom I found in a sound and quiet sleep, and attended by two of the vassals.

CHAPTER XXX.

'On the ensuing morning, the chief visited Andrew in his chamber. He was then collected, but appeared to have no remembrance of what had passed; yet, grateful for the attention paid him by his master, he respectfully raised his hand to his lips. For two days no material alteration took place; on the third it was evident that the hand of death was upon him: for, though no violent pain had followed the convulsions he suffered in the hall, yet that strong emotion had been too much for his feeble strength to support, and he expired the fourth day after, sensible to his last hour, and mingling with the prayers he put up for his own soul, others for his noble master, and the general welfare of the house of Monteith. This venerable domestic's death was lamented by the chief like that of an old friend; and commanding him to be laid in the chapel, he ordered a monthly mass to be said for his soul's rest.

'In the meantime, as boys naturally associate, Lord John and myself became in some measure companions, he being not more than two years younger than myself. Nature and education had, however, drawn a marking line between us; he was fair, I was brown, he was delicate, I was robust; pampered and nursed from his cradle, he shrunk at every blast, and dreaded a shower of rain as much as doth a cat. For myself, inured to the war of elements, they neither hurt my spirits nor my health; and cold, hunger, or thirst, if felt one hour, were with me forgotten as soon as removed. Our tempers were

equally dissimilar; he had been accustomed to vassals humble as slaves, who, from his infancy had submitted to all his caprices, which, strengthened by time, had rendered him perverse, vindictive, and tyrannical; for me, habituated to the ill-humour of my mother, the rough kindness of my father, and to attend on myself; or, if I took an unwarrantable liberty with my companions, sure of being handsomely drubbed; nay, if I had struck the old dog, of being bitten; the case was quite different. My temper, naturally passionate, was kept within the bounds of reason; and I was careful of giving offence. I was, however, when provoked, as perverse and saucy as most; and naturally strong, even before I left Lewes, few boys of my own age choose to enter the list of combat with me.

'With the Lord John I bore even more than I had been accustomed to. I respected him as the nephew of my beloved patron, and sometimes thought, if he had been better tempered, I could have loved him sincerely.

'I have dwelt thus long on this subject, because a trifle that followed led to a discovery that otherwise might never have been revealed.

'We had been playing one afternoon in the hall, when among other pastimes, I took him on my back, and, regardless of his weight, paced up and down full speed. We had amused ourselves in this manner for some time, when, watching an opportunity, he procured a large thorn, which having secretly fastened to his heel, he gave me a sharp spur on the leg. I have already said I was passionate, and that forbearance was not among the catalogue of my merits: I therefore took no time for reflection; had he been heir apparent to the crown of Scotland, I should have acted the same.

'You have treated me like a sorry beast,' said I, with anger, 'for none else need the spur; and in return I will play you a jade's trick.'

'So saying, I made a plunge and threw him on the marble pavement, regardless of the consequence. My heart, however, in a moment smote me; but the deed was done—his face was covered with blood, and his cries resounded through the hall, but not only brought several of the vassals, but also the Lady Roskelyn.

'With every exaggeration a little mind could invent, he related what had happened; while I stood in silence, listening not only to him, but to the reproaches of his mother, who was not sparing of her invectives.

'*'Beggarly knave,'* said she, 'how didst thou dare to strike my son? I will have thee scourged to death.'

'*'Strike your son!'* repeated I; 'I should be ashamed to strike such a butterfly; but though I let him ride me like a horse, I did not choose to be used like an ass.'

'He did thee too much honour to use thee in any manner,' replied she; 'my brother will now see his folly in noticing such scurvy varlets as thou art, who prove but monuments of his weakness.'

'Whoever calls the chief foolish or weak,' said I, passionately, 'is a false liar; never shall his kindness to me bring disgrace on him.'

'Not till thou comest under the hands of the executioner; which the more speedy that may happen, the better for mankind.'

'Marry, your own silken son may better deserve the hand of the executioner than me,' answered I, with blunt sauciness. 'Lord John of Roskelyn doth not dread disgrace more than St. Clair M'Crae.'

'Than whom?' eagerly repeated she, with considerable emotion.

'St. Clair M'Crae,' echoed I, undauntedly; 'I am not ashamed of my name, nor shall I eat my words, though you are a lady; we have none in the isle of Lewes, so I have not learned to fear them.'

'You may perhaps conjecture this insolence increased her anger, but it had a contrary effect; for the flush of passion gave way to a sickly pale, and had she not seated herself on a chair, she had fallen. She fixed her eyes on me with fearful earnestness, her lips trembled, but no word escaped them; and such was her whole appearance, that what her violence would never have effected, her looks instantly obtained; for young, inexperienced, and rudely bred as I was, they sunk into my heart, and seemed to thrill it with horror.

'The chief and Lord Roskelyn were not in the castle during the confusion, but on their return were informed of it, with all the bitterness that the malice of Lady Roskelyn could invent. My patron listened to it with astonishment.—Such conduct, he said, was so different to my general character, that he could scarcely have given it credit from any other person than his sister.

'I was ordered into his presence, a step that all the art of the Lady Roskelyn could not prevent, and, on entering the hall, found the whole party arranged to condemn me.

'St. Clair,' said the chief, with more severity than I had ever before seen him assume, 'I am at once grieved for thee and for myself; for thee first, that thou couldst forget thyself so far as to use my nephew so roughly, and disregard his age and strength, which are both inferior to thine; and to add to thy guilt, by thy insolence to my sister, the mother of him thou hast injured. For myself, I am vexed to have been so mistaken; I would have pledged my life on thy courage and humanity; and, at fifty, I love not to be the dupe of a green head like thine.'

'He paused, as if he expected my answer, but I made none, and he continued—'Thou must prepare to return home. Two of my vassals shall see thee restored to thy father, whom I shall not inform of

this folly, for he is an honest man, and it would vex him; but I pray thee think of it, and remember that valour is disgraced by malicious actions, and by seeking unequal contests. Farewell—I shall not forget thy attention to me during my journey and will order thee a memorial to prove that I am not ungrateful.'

'The chief ceased. My heart swelled almost to bursting, but, too proud to let a tear escape me, I with some difficulty replied—'I am ready to depart when you list, and need no one to conduct me. For malicious acts, or seeking unequal opponents, I am unacquainted with either. If you think me guilty, it is enough; I shall gladly depart. Recompense I will none; my heart dictated my actions, and when I saw you well, repaid me.'

'The chief turned aside, and the words, 'strange boy,' escaped him. I touched my cap to him only, and had crossed the hall in order to leave it, when he called suddenly—'Come back, St. Clair, thou owest me an explanation of thy conduct, and I demand it.'

'You should have asked before you condemned me,' said I; 'Lord John can resolve you.'

'Dear brother,' said Lady Roskelyn, who had not before spoken, 'dismiss him at once; his presence gives me pain; he only seeks to impose further on your unsuspecting nature.'

'Influenced by the obstinacy of my temper, though I had again prepared to leave the hall, Lady Roskelyn's words again arrested my steps.

'Not so, sister,' answered the chief; 'I would willingly act uprightly. St. Clair's reproof is just; I should not have condemned him unheard.' Then turning to me he added—'Nay, I insist on thy coming back, to give the explanation I asked: but say, for I now first discover it, from what cause art thou lame? and whence are thy tartans bloody?'

'Ask your nephew,' answered I.

'The chief turned to Lord John, but he was silent : and his mother again requested her brother to dismiss me.

'Monteith made no reply ; but, rising from his seat, detained me in his strong grasp.'

'By my soul,' said he, 'I will be satisfied ! therefore answer me, from whence comes this blood?'

'Like a fawn in the gripe of a lion, contest was useless ; and drawing aside my tartan, I shewed my knee, inflamed by a wound just below it.

'Oh, the arch deceiver !' exclaimed the Lady Roskelyn, 'he hath done this himself, on purpose to lay the fault on my son.'

'Indeed, uncle,' said John, 'I only gave him a little spur with a thorn, but not enough to hurt his knee so much.'

'At length,' said the chief, 'truth is coming ; but I am already nearly satisfied ;' then, turning to a domestic who waited, he commanded him to call the leech who attended his household, when, placing me in his own seat, he ordered him to examine my leg. The leech, at the first view, declared it was dangerously inflamed, and from the appearance of the wound had doubtless some splinter or other substance within it, which must needs be extracted before ought could be done.

'The chief's face flushed with anger, and the Lord Roskelyn looked reproachfully on his son, who began weeping ; while his mother, finding no honour likely to result on her darling, led him from the hall, and was speedily followed by her lord.

'I shuddered at the sight of the polished instrument which the leech held in his hand, and drew back till the chief, assuming a reproachful air, said—'Is it possible, St. Clair, that a bold fellow like thee should tremble at the sight of a lancet? Marry, I should as soon have expected thee to tremble at a lady's bodkin.'

'The chief's raillery had the effect he intended

I immediately held out my leg, and suffered the leech to lay open the wound, from whence he extracted a thorn of near an inch in length, and which the motion of walking had caused to perforate deeply into the flesh.

'The operation over, the chief, for the first time, embraced me—'St. Clair,' said he, 'thou art a brave but an obstinate boy ; but from this hour I will never judge harshly : yet in this case my judgment rather than my heart, was in fault.'

'The honour of having the approbation of so good and so great a character overpowered me, and, grasping his hand, I burst into tears.—'I have indeed been to blame,' said I, 'but pain and passion overpowered me, and made me treat him so rudely, for which I am now sincerely sorry.'

'I trust,' replied he, 'it will prove a useful lesson ; his mother will entirely corrupt him with her fondness, and lord Roskelyn possesses not strength of mind sufficient to resist her ; but lean on the men and hie thee to thy chamber ; rest is now all that is needful. I will see thee speedily.

'What passed between the chief and his family I never exactly knew ; but he so warmly espoused my cause, and words ran so high between them, that the Lord and Lady Roskelyn left the second day after.

'A few days restored me to my usual agility, and to more than my usual favour with the chief, who, I afterwards found, had resolved, from that time, to take me under his especial protection. He condescended himself to teach me the science of manly defence, and the use of arms ; and six hours daily did he make me devote to the study of literature, of which I was before totally ignorant ; placing me for that purpose, under the care of the friars of the neighbouring monastery.

One day that the chief was teaching me the broadsword in the hall, M'Crae was announced, and instantly ordered to be admitted. Though I re-

joined to see him, my satisfaction was mixed with fear, lest he should want to take me back to the island on his return. The chief received him with the cordiality of a friend; ordered him refreshment and saying, as he conversed with him—'In faith, M'Crae, 'tis well you are come to teach us our duty, for I could almost forget St. Clair is not my son, and, in return, he hath almost learned to consider me as a father.'

'M'Crae, confounded with the kindness of the chief to himself, and his familiarity with me, hesitated, appeared confused, and whispered with some secret errand he knew not how to disclose, and which visibly affected his spirits. At length, he stammered out—'So please you, noble sir, my boy hath too long intruded on your goodness; his mother is impatient to see him.'

'To see me!' repeated I, with my accustomed bluntness; 'which way doth the wind blow now? she used to say the house was heaven when I was abroad.'

'The chief smiled, and M'Crae could not refrain from laughing: 'No wonder,' said he, 'thou art a boisterous fellow, and never failed to put her a house in confusion ten times a day.'

'I fear I shall offend the same way on my return,' answered I.

'Retire for a while, St. Clair; I have business with thy father,' said the chief.

'I obeyed and left the hall, when, resuming the discourse, he continued—M'Crae, I love thy son, and wish to make him a brave fellow; but though I will purchase no man's child, yet, regarding him as I do, I cannot be unkindful of his father. Thy vessel is small: let it be sold, and I will enable thee to buy another of double her burden. I have also land nearly adjoining to thine at Toray; to me it is of little value; thou art welcome to use twenty acres of it. In case of my death, I will forthwith make thee a grant thereof.'

'The surprise of M'Crae left him no room for speech; he gazed at Monteith, as if he doubted the evidence of his senses—'Why, what now, man?' continued the chief; 'dost thou dispute my word, that thou lookest like one astounded?'

'Pardon me, noble sir,' replied M'Crae, 'your goodness took from me the power to express my gratitude. St. Clair is a brave boy, and would be no disgrace to a nobler father than myself.'

'Come, 'tis an agreement then—the boy shall see you yearly; though I may be his friend, he shall not forget that you are his father. Choose a good strong vessel—money shall not be wanting: we will sail in her among your first passengers to Lewes.'

'M'Crae's heart, naturally honest, was overpowered by the chief's generosity.

'So may my soul prosper hereafter,' said he, 'if I speak not truly! were the choice mine I would joyfully resign the boy to your care; but as it is, I am bound by an oath not to part with him.'

'Bound by an oath!' answered Monteith, in a voice of astonishment; 'what, to your wife, I trow? But I yield: yet remember, true affection should have tempted you to accept my offer. However, as I love not to raise expectations to cast them down by disappointment, I repeat, purchase the vessel, and take the land I before offered; but on this condition, that thou holdest it in trust for thy son, St. Clair.'

'M'Crae threw himself at the chief's feet, and clasped his garment, but could not speak. At that moment one of the fathers of the monastery entered the hall; his name was Thomas, and, added to a strong and cultivated understanding, he possessed a penetrating and sound judgment, accompanied with a thorough knowledge of the human heart. Seeing the posture of the chief and M'Crae, he drew back, and would have quitted the hall, but Monteith recalled him, and in a few minutes related what had

passed, premising the relation by saying—'I wish, father, to have purchased this honest man's son, but he declines my offer. If the wish was sinful, I have endeavoured to make an expiation, and thou art come in time to be umpire between us.'

'Father Thomas listened with attention to the recital, which the chief gave with accuracy; and on the conclusion said—'But what man hath a right to exact an oath from a father to keep his son in an inferior line of life, when fortune, honour, and probity, conjoin to place him higher? yet an oath is sacred, and if not extorted for bad purposes, should be held even at the expense of life; for it is registered in heaven, and witnessed by the saints.'

'It was registered in hell, and witnessed by devils!' said M'Crae. 'Like Eve, Katie tempted me to sin; and now, to complete the measure of my iniquity, the curse of ingratitude is upon me.'

'If thou hast done evil, repentance is yet in thy power, my son,' said father Thomas; 'look well to thine own heart: should thy oath be good, I charge thee, by our Holy Maker, and for the future welfare of thine eternal soul, to let no lucre or persuasion wrest it from thee; but if it be a sinful oath, discharge thy conscience, lest it plunge thee into everlasting perdition.'

M'Crae's firm features unbent, and his ruddy complexion became a faded yellow.

'Holy friar,' said he, hastily, 'I am not the father of the boy!'

'Away with such a subterfuge!' said the chief: 'I will no more: I forgive thy refusal, but falsehood I cannot brook.'

'How know you he speaks falsely?' said the friar: 'his heart is open to God, and he alone can judge it.'

'Pardon me,' answered Monteith, 'I will away; so that, if ye desire, ye may discourse more at leisure. M'Crae, fare ye well.'

'Noble master, I conjure you stay. Should I forfeit my oath, say, father, can the sin be forgiven?'

'If it be a just oath, and taken for honest purposes, I again conjure thee to hold it sacred; but if one prompted for dishonest and vile designs, tear it from thy soul, and throw thyself on the mercy of thy Creator; at the foot of the altar, myself and my brethren will pray for thee, and our supplications and thy repentance shall ascend together.'

'God grant it!' replied M'Crae; 'but, father, I shall by the relation be treated as an impostor; and the noble chief himself will accuse me of falsehood, and condemn me to punishment; for I shall throw shame on some of the noblest blood of Scotland, and perhaps be sentenced to the horrors of a dungeon.'

'The chief again attempted to leave the hall, but M'Crae entreated his stay, while the friar answered—'The chief, or I mistake his character, is too just to condemn on light conjecture; and for the shame thou alludest to, let it fall where 'tis due; sin fouls the noblest blood as much as it does the basest; and should even the arm of power assail thee, so thou savest thine own soul, all else is trivial; for even in the dungeon's gloom the spirit of peace and comfort shall hover over thee.'

'A secret dread still appeared to impress the mind of M'Crae—'Promise me, noble master, your pardon,' said he, addressing the chief, 'and also your patience, for I have a long story to relate.'

'It can be of no avail to promise thee pardon for what I can have no interest in; but, however, if it is conducive to thy satisfaction, I promise.'

'I thank you, noble sir; I feel you will condemn me for a liar, but, by my soul, I will speak nought but the truth.'

'Monteith, who at the beginning of the discourse expected only some trivial relation of no concern, had insensibly become interested, and bade him begin without fear.'

'M'Crae prepared to obey, but the friar prevented him by first drawing the cross from his side, and saying—'Behold his sacred symbol of our everlasting hope; it is made of wood taken from the blessed sepulchre at Jerusalem; lay it to thy lips and swear to advance nothing but truth in what thou art about to relate.

'M'Crae pressed the cross to his lips, took the vow, and entered on the relation. 'But 'tis too late to begin it now,' said St. Clair; 'I will, therefore, defer it until to-morrow.'

The whole party appeared disappointed, but particularly Randolph; and though many of the party knew the story partially, not one had before heard it regularly or accurately detailed; they, therefore, waited the ensuing day with impatience, when St. Clair resumed his narrative.

CHAPTER XXXI.

'My friends,' said St. Clair, 'I must now, for a time, continue my relation, if not in the exact words of M'Crae, at least to their purport:—

'I was born,' said he, 'in the shire of Caithness. My father and Katie Lawrie's were neighbours. I loved her from her childhood, and I believe she did the same by me; but our dispositions were different. I offered to wed her, and labour to support her, as our fathers had done before for their wives and families. But Katie would not listen to it: she was for waiting until she got together some money to begin the world with; and one of her sisters being engaged to attend a lady in the south, no persuasions could prevent Katie from accompanying her. We, however, swore to be true to each other, and breaking silver between us, separated.

'After Katie's departure, I engaged in a trading

vessel, and soon became a good seaman; and succeeded so far as to collect a small sum towards our future establishment, which I did not fail to inform her of by letter. She congratulated me on my success, conjured me to be diligent if I wished to gain her hand; and finally informed me that she had been engaged into the service of the widow of the chief Monteith, who, with her daughter, was then at Edinburgh.

'Mean you my mother-in-law and sister?' said the chief, interrupting the relation.

'I do,' answered he; 'you, noble master, were then in the Holy Land: your father had been dead some years; and the dame and the lady Mariam were for the first time in the city.

'From this period I often heard news of Katie by various messengers; and also that the Lady Monteith was dead, and that her daughter still remained at Edinburgh.

'Thus passed four years, when I received a letter from Katie by a special messenger; it was to press me to come immediately to espouse her, as she had hopes of procuring the means of fixing us comfortably for life.

'Though much astonished at this letter, I obeyed the request it conveyed; and, returning with the messenger, he conducted me to a lone house in the suburbs of the city, where I had not remained long before Katie joined me; but, by St. Mary, so fine a lady that I scarcely knew her. We were, however, glad to see each other; and among more news, she informed me that her young lady was to be married to the Lord Roskelyn, on his return from France, where some months before he had attended an embassy.'

'Not to weary you, we were wedded: and soon after Katie began to be communicative. She, however, first swore me to secrecy, and then informed me, that if I strictly observed her injunctions, our

fortune would be made. Alas! I fear to continue, for you will doubt my truth; yet it is of no advantage to me to lie.

The chief bade him continue without dread, and after some hesitation, he resumed his narrative.

'Katie at length informed me that the lady Mariam was pregnant.

'Hell and destruction!' interrupted the chief, 'this is too much; thou false villain, I will tear the lie from thy perjured heart! Not a maid in all Scotland was more highly prized for beauty than my sister, and her chastity more than equalled her bodily endowments.'

M'Crae trembled, but friar Thomas re-assured him.

'I pray you peace and patience,' said he, addressing the chief. 'Let the man relate his story, should it be false, rage can come hereafter. Should he speak truth, and his veracity be acknowledged, how will you blush for having been thus hasty.'

The chief made no reply, and the friar requested Mr. M'Crae to continue.

Katie said that Lady Mariam had long been courted by the Lord Roskelyn; that their marriage had only been delayed by her mother's death, and in the intervening time, he had been ordered to France on a secret mission, which could not be refused without dishonour; that after his departure the Lady Mariam found herself with child, and distracted with grief and shame, but vowed to destroy herself rather than outlive the disgrace.

'And now, M'Crae,' added Katie, 'you shall hear what is expected from us. In little more than a month the pains of childbirth will fall on my mistress: before which time she will hasten here where all can be transacted with secrecy; and she can as speedily as possible, be conveyed back to her own dwelling.'

'Though I believe not a syllable of this tale,' interrupted the chief, 'canst thou tell me where was situated the dwelling of my sister Mariam at that time?'

'It was,' replied M'Crae, 'on the left side of the Holyrood house; an avenue of trees led to the dwelling, which was small, and had been purposely hired for the Lady Mariam's mother, who came to the city on purpose to consult the physicians.'

'So far,' answered the chief, 'thou art rightly informed, as I have heard it described; go on.'

'Katie,' resumed M'Crae, 'then related all the arrangements they had made, and concluded by saying—'The disgrace, if any, M'Crae, must be mine, for we must acknowledge the child. Thou art totally unknown in the city, and whether thou camest yesterday or a twelvemonth back, no one will take the pains to enquire.'

'I now understood why I had been so hastily sent for, and found interest rather than love had been Katie's motive.

'In the course of a few days, she entirely relinquished her attendance at the Lady Mariam's where she had before gone daily. I was sent thither to say she was confined by illness: this message she ordered me to deliver to the domestics, for them to repeat to their mistress. I did as I was ordered, and, in return, was ordered to attend the lady. On my admittance I repeated what I had been told; to which she answered with great kindness, that she would see my wife herself in the course of the day; gave me at the same time a demy, and desired that she might want for no care. I at this visit particularly noticed the person of the Lady Mariam; her features were noble and commanding, and her port so tall and dignified, that the enlargement of her shape might have escaped a keener observer than myself, particularly as she wore a loose robe which fell from her shoulders to her feet.

'True to her word, she came to see Katie daily, frequently dismissing her attendants and staying for hours. She came one morning more early than usual, and, as I could conjecture, in great pain ; of which, however she showed no sign while dismissing her attendants, desiring them to return at noon.

'She retired immediately to bed : the chamber was darkened, and I was sent to a distant part of the town for a midwife, to whom Katie told me to say my wife was in labour. I did so, and she accompanied me home. In about three hours a boy was born, when, according to the instructions received, I gave the good wife a piece of money, and dismissed her.

'On the return of the Lady Mariam's domestics, Katie, with a feigned sorrow, informed them that her dear mistress had been suddenly taken ill, and had lain down on her poor bed, where she wished to remain quiet for a few hours : then desired they would return again in the evening ; and for the present dismissed them.

'In the mean time, the child was carefully removed out of sight, into a loft above the chamber, and where, though I handled him roughly, I was chief nurse. By my faith, he was a brave boy, and as I beld him, his little hands clasped my fingers, and his black eyes fixed on my face, I could not help saying, there was a thousand times more sin in denying such a lad than in begetting him.

'The chief, who evidently listened with forced composure to M'Crae's relation, here again interrupted him.—'For what purpose thou hast fabricated this tale, I know not : but of that hereafter. What, I pray thee, became of this wonderful child, this begotten of thine own brain ?'

'So may my soul remain for ever in peace or misery, if you see him not in St. Clair !' replied M'Crae.

'The priest crossed himself ; the chief started ;

but instantly recovered himself, he replied, with a smile of contempt and ineredulity—'By my soul, M'Crae, thou art an ingenious fellow ! I could not have thought that thou possessed such inventive faculties ; but in this case they are misemployed. I confess I was inclined to love and favour thy son ; but thy anxiety to make him mine, by transplanting him into my family by the dishonour of my sister, hath destroyed the illusion : thou needest therefore proceed no further—I have heard enough.'

'Not so,' replied father Thomas, 'I pray you hear all.'

'As you please. Proceed, M'Crae : thou liest with the effrontery of a courtier, and that too without blushing.'

'M'Crae hesitated : but the injunctions of the friar at length encouraged him to proceed.

'In the evening the domestics were again told that the Lady Mariam was still sick, but ordered to procure a covered litter to carry her home, which was accordingly done at a late hour ; Katie attending her, and leaving the babe to me, saying all that would be necessary till her return would be to give it milk, which she left for that purpose.

At an early hour she returned, and paid more minute attention to the child than I was capable of ; but before noon she again visited the lady, who acted her part so well, that her real situation was never suspected. About fourteen days after, during which period Katie had attended her mistress some hours every day, she returned one evening in high spirits. She drew forth a well-furnished purse, and giving it into my hands, said—'I have not only this for the present, but a promise of more in future : we must, however, away, for my mistress's fears distract her, lest this business should by any means be discovered.'

'Why, surely,' replied I, 'she doth not mean to give up the child for ever ?'

'Marry, but she doth,' replied Katie ; 'and what

is that to thee, as long as thou art well paid? and of that there is no doubt, for her own sake.'

'Nay, but Katie,' said I, 'on the lord of Roskelyn's return, he will most probably wed her.'

'Doubtless he will; but you know little of the Lady Mariam; not more famed for beauty than for chastity, she would sooner die than yield up the reputation of either; therefore this boy will never be acknowledged.'

'Now the devil take me quick!' returned I, 'if I was the lord of Roskelyn, if I would wed such a woman, if, added to her beauty, she were princess of Scotland. What, give up her child! a curse on such mothers!'

'More discourse passed; but the result was, that three days after we left the city, the child being first baptized as my son, and the Lady Mariam never once seeing him before our departure.

'We travelled by easy journeys into Inverness-shire, where after some stay I purchased a small vessel that lay on the coast, as a seafaring life was more agreeable to my wishes. In this vessel I went to Lewes, where I afterwards fixed with my wife. We frequently heard of the Lady Mariam, (soon after Lady Roskelyn,) who never failed to send us a good present every year or two; and this continued till you, noble master, came to Lewes.

'And now, I conclude, thou hast done,' said the chief; 'tis a well-connected story, to be sure, and I give thee all due credit for thy invention.'

'I have not yet done,' replied M'Crae; 'what I have more to relate may make you, in some measure, retract your opinion of my falsehood.

'My wife was vexed, that you, sir, were our guest. She feared a discovery, but I thought that impossible; yet, when I saw the fancy you took to the boy, I could not help judging the hand of Providence was in it. We trembled to let him go with you, but did not dare refuse: and here he met the Lady Roskelyn.'

'He did so,' replied the chief; 'and were it only from her conduct towards him here, I am convinced that there is no affinity of blood between them; for she viewed him with particular dislike.'

'Alas!' answered the friar, 'that is no proof; few people love those they have grossly injured.'

'The messenger that you were pleased to send,' returned M'Crae, 'filled both myself and wife with the most distressing anxiety, as we feared that at the castle of Monteith, St. Clair might meet his mother, to whom, though his person might be unknown, the name of St. Clair M'Crae would not fail to discover him. In this dilemma we were uncertain how to act, when, about a month since, we received a letter from Lady Roskelyn, by a vessel that touched at Lewes.'

'Have ye that letter?' hastily returned the chief.

'I have,' replied M'Crae; 'it may give me a credit you deny my words:' so saying, he drew it from his pocket, and presented it to Monteith.

'The chief's face flushed with a deep crimson on viewing the handwriting; on perusing, he found as follows:—

'KATIE M'CRÆ,—I judged that my kindness and liberality to you for so many years had secured your friendship and observance; if so, whence comes it that I find the boy St. Clair at the castle of Monteith? If you value my future favour, send your husband immediately to fetch him home: no man has a right to detain the son of another. If you have the will, you cannot fail of the means to obey me; which if you do not, we are henceforward strangers.

M. B.

'If I find you observant, you shall hear from me speedily.'

'The chief laid down the letter and calmly desired M'Crae to proceed, if he had aught else to relate.

‘M’Crae replied, that on the receipt of the letter he had a severe dispute with his wife, who accused me of being the sole cause of Lady Roskelyn’s anger, and insisted on his immediately fetching St. Clair home.—‘And now, noble master,’ added he, ‘though you have accused me with falsehood, and seeking to impose St. Clair on you, I declare, before God, that I am innocent of both: your kind and noble offers stung me to the heart, for I was conscious how little I deserved them; yet, but for the admonition of this holy friar, I should have still concealed the secret in my own bosom. I seek not, nor wish reward; my wife will daily upbraid me; Lady Roskelyn will perhaps pursue me to destruction; but I have done my duty, and that must be my consolation.’

‘M’Crae,’ replied the chief, ‘I am lost in perplexity, but will, if possible, search this business to the bottom. If thou hast dealt falsely by me, look to the consequence; if thou hast not, thy fortune I take upon myself. For the present, if thou valuest my friendship, keep all secret from St. Clair, and remain for some days at the castle.’

‘M’Crae promised obedience, and soon after dismissed him to repose after his journey.

CHAPTER XXXII.

‘AFTER M’Crae’s departure, the strange tale he had related furnished a long conversation for the chief and father Thomas. The latter appeared to give entire credit to the relation—the former, on the contrary, had it not been for the letter, would have disbelieved the whole; but that circumstance was too strong to be overlooked; for, without some powerful motive, why should the boy St. Clair interest the proud and highly placed Lady Roskelyn?’

‘By my honour I will be satisfied;’ said the chief. ‘Should M’Crae speak true, the levity of my sister is the least of her guilt: to cast off her child, and doom him to a life of meanness; to bar him from his birthright, to conceal her own shame—out upon her! I grieve to think she partakes of my father’s blood.’

‘His birth,’ replied the friar, ‘as no just cause prevented the marriage of the parties, he is the lawful heir of the house of Roskelyn.*’

‘True; but I cannot yet fix an implicit belief on the tale; however, while I detain M’Crae, do thou hasten to the island, acquaint his wife of the discovery, but let her not know by whom it was made; from her behaviour we shall be the better enabled to judge.’

‘In the interval of the father’s absence, M’Crae remained at the castle, and behaved to me as usual. I remarked, however, a change in the conduct of the chief; not that he was less kind, but he was more thoughtful, and appeared at times to consider my person with the most fixed attention. One day, being with him in the gallery where the portraits of his ancestors were hung, he particularly placed me by that of his father, and after a few moments’ consideration, exclaimed—‘By Heaven, ’tis almost proof!’

‘On the return of father Thomas, he had a long conference with the chief, whom he informed that he had accused Katie M’Crae with secreting the heir of a noble family, and threatened with the weight of the law, and the anathema of the church, unless, by a full disclosure of all she knew, she saved herself from the penalty. Katie thus pressed, had

* Children born out of wedlock, by the law of Scotland, can be made legitimate or lawful by the subsequent marriage of the mother of the child with the father: and this sort of legitimation entitles the child to all the rights of lawful children.—*Erskine’s Institutes*.

no subterfuge remaining, but threw herself at the feet of the friar, not only confirming all that M'Crae had before advanced, by her verbal testimony, but also by the oath required. In farther corroboration, she likewise produced several letters from the countess, in all of which the boy St. Clair was mentioned, though none of them particularly entered into the subject.

'This relation nearly obliterated all doubt from the mind of the chief: yet, still unwilling to consider his sister in so odious a point of view, he ordered me to prepare to attend him to Roskelyn.

'Though ignorant of the reason, I obeyed: and, with some few domestics, we travelled to the castle.'

'The family was absent on an excursion of pleasure, and we waited three days for their return, when the Lord Roskelyn first arrived. He was a weak but honest man, and left to the dictates of his own heart, would, I have no doubt, have acted uprightly; but, the infatuated slave of his wife, her art moulded him at will.

'The dissention that had taken place two months before at the castle of Monteith made a visit unexpected; and the chief was received with uncommon satisfaction.

Dining alone in the hall with the earl, and the repast ended, as they pledged each other in repeated goblets, the chief began a discourse concerning the embassy in which the Lord of Roskelyn had been engaged to France, prior to his marriage; from which, reverting to the Lady Roskelyn he said:—

'My sister, at that period, was very young, the death of my mother-in-law, and my absence, left her under too little restraint; human nature is frail; however, Roskelyn, thou wert an honourable fellow, and acted as every honest man should on such an occasion.'

'The earl blushed deeply.

'To be the brother of the brave Monteith, was my ambition,' answered he, 'and believe me, the vexation I suffered from my protracted stay filled me with the utmost anxiety.'

'It was indeed vexatious,' replied the chief, regarding the earl's words as in some degree a confirmation of his suspicions; 'more especially as it subjected your first-born to injustice.'

'Roskelyn started, and appeared covered with confusion; he had, however, too much honour, or too little art, to deny what, by the chief's words, he appeared so well acquainted with, and after a moment's hesitation, replied—'Dear brother, this is an unpleasant subject to be renewed after so many years, and for which I have made every atonement in any power.'

'Yes, to my sister; but to your unoffending boy something is surely due.'

'Monteith,' replied the earl, 'where you procured this information I know not, but be assured it is mixed with falsehood. The child died as soon as born, in which case, common prudence dictated concealment.'

'Roskelyn's manner convinced the chief he had been abused, and he was on the point of undeceiving him, when a noise of horses was heard in the court; and the moment after, Lady Roskelyn entered. Surprised, though rejoiced to see her brother, particularly as she supposed me returned with M'Crae, she gave him a hearty welcome: but her satisfaction was of short duration, for, addressing her, he continued the subject, saying—

'A business of the utmost consequence brought me hither; no less, sister, than the right of your son, St. Clair. Human nature is fallible; and shame, to a noble mind, is worse than death, yet, Mariam, even these considerations must not render us unjust, or regardless of the most sacred duties. Nay,

shrink not ; I feel too much for you, to add reproach to your own feelings. Do justice, even now and behold among the first of your vindicators, Monteith ; and, by my soul, the man that dares to wag his finger in scorn, shall either take or lose a life.

'The internal struggles of the Lady Roskelyn, thus taken by surprise, were too great to suffer her to articulate ; she sunk on the bosom of her lord, and concealed her face.

'Brother,' said Roskelyn, 'have mercy ; you are indeed misinformed.'

'I am not misinformed,' replied the chief, 'the strong and haughty mind of Mariam would not sink thus under falsehood ! Come, come, my sister—step over false shame, and be truly a mother ; the laws of your country are on your side, those of God and justice on those of your child. Let the world say that, in an unguarded moment, you forgot what was due to yourself, but never suffer them to say you possessed so little nature as to abandon your infant.'

'Lady Roskelyn did not raise her head, but, in a low voice, said to her husband—

'Lead me forth, I pray you ; I will talk with my brother to-morrow.'

'The chief was ever of opinion, that had the discovery been then pursued, she would have made an ample confession ; but the tenderness of her husband and the lenity of her brother, spared her, and she was conducted to her chamber. Would you believe that this artful and unprincipled woman, when, recovered from her first surprise, absolutely denied any knowledge of the business, further than she declared the chief's partiality for the boy St. Clair, had induced his parents to fabricate what she styled so infamous a lie, in order to ingratiate him still more ; that, in regard to the letters that had passed between her and Katie M'Crae, they only

tended to denote a mistaken predilection towards an undeserving and ungrateful object ; and that her last, which ordered my return home, was alone dictated by prudent motives, which induced her not to calmly endure the prospect of the estate belonging to her house being lavished on a stranger?

'The pliant Roskelyn yielded credit to his wife's protestations. He was well aware of her being pregnant while he was in France ; but that the infant had died in its birth, he implicitly trusted to her observations ; not so the chief ; he saw through the duplicity, and much family contention ensued, but which was productive of nothing but an everlasting disunion between the parties.

'In the first effervescence occasioned by this rupture, the chief purposed to brave the shame of the world, and declare his sister's disgrace and inhumanity ; but a short reflection altered his determination, and made him resolve on silence.

'A family renowned for centuries for the honour of its males, and the chastity of its females, to be thus at once contaminated with levity and unprincipled barbarity, was too much to think of with patience, and at length made him devise a new expedient.

'He immediately left the castle, and, hiring apartments in the city, assumed a conduct that, however flattering to me, he did not then explain. I ate at the same table, accompanied him wherever he went ; and, to complete my satisfaction, the name of St. Clair M'Crae was changed to that of St. Clair Monteith.

'King James the First was at that period a captive in England, and the government of Scotland in the hands of Robert Duke of Albany. One public day of audience, I accompanied the chief to the court, and was not a little surprised when ordered to attend him in the presence-chamber. The venerable Duke of Albany was seated on a chair of state, but at sight of the chief, immediately called him forward.

‘Monteith,’ said he, ‘thou art welcome; I never expected to see thee more; say, how can we bribe thee to visit us sometimes? A man like me at the close of life, wishes to see his friends about him.’

‘Gracious sir,’ replied Monteith, ‘your words while they reproach my neglect, are still more flattering to me; and believe me, that however negligent in form, my duty to the Duke of Albany hath never slept. Should he need an arm or a life, no man in Scotland shall be more ready than Monteith.’

‘I believe thee,’ replied the Duke, ‘and from no man in Scotland would I sooner claim the promise: so far, then, we are equal; but what lad hast thou there?’ for unacquainted with forms, I had advanced with him. ‘In faith,’ continued he, ‘he is thine own; for he hath the port, the complexion, and the eyes of a Monteith.’

‘My noble lord, you have judged too hastily. A true soldier of the cross, I never was a father. This boy, the innocent victim of a cruel mother and of a weak father, I wish to appropriate to myself; and, as I think he possesses the seeds of probity and valour, at present to give him my own name, and at my death, my fortune, provided your consent can be obtained, to confirm and sanction the deed.’

‘The Duke appeared astonished; but, in truth, he was not more so than myself; and, regardless of the presence in which I stood, I exclaimed—

‘Oh, my noble master, sooner would I give up the satisfaction of ever seeing you more, rather than see you dead, though the wealth of nations should be my portion.’

‘The chief smiled at my earnestness, and bade me peace. The duke replied—

‘Is this a hasty resolution, Monteith? If it is, give it a second consideration; you cannot adopt this youth without injuring your nearest ties of blood. You must, however, pass the evening with me, when we will converse more at large on this business.’

‘We remained during the audience, and at the close of day, leaving me at home, the chief again attended the duke, when he was honoured with a long and private conference; during which he laid the whole business before him, entreating him to spare the honour of this house the shame of a public disclosure, and make me amends for the injustice of my parents, by passing an act to enable him to adopt me.

‘The reasons of the chief were at length admitted and, a short time after, I was by law appointed to bear the arms of Monteith, and also declared heir to that house.

‘These events were so astounding to me that they almost appeared like a dream; the chief became daily more attached to me, and I loved and revered him beyond all earthly beings.

‘On our return to the castle, he one day said to me—

‘My good boy, though I regard you henceforward as my son, you must not forget your duty to M’Crae: he is not your father, but you owe him obligations which can only be repaid by the attention of a child. From a careful observance of your character, I have adopted you; betray not my judgment, but act worthy of the name I have given you.’

‘M’Crae not my father!’ replied I with astonishment; ‘then who, I pray you, is?’

‘That hereafter thou shalt know; for the present, thou must acknowledge me as such, though I have no right to the title.’

‘I would you had—I never shall love one so well.’

‘That your observance will show. Your childhood hath been neglected; let your more advanced years be so well employed in study, that the mispent time may be redeemed.’

‘On our arrival at home, the chief kept his word most punctually with M’Crae, whom he dismissed

with money to purchase a larger vessel, and also made him a grant of the land before mentioned.

'Though I loved M'Crae, and felt sorry to see him depart, yet I must candidly acknowledge I was not displeas'd to hear I was not his son : and though I endeavour'd to gain the secret from him, he was too faithful to the chief to satisfy my curiosity.

'I was now immediately under the eye of Monteith, and studied with the utmost assiduity, so fearful was I of displeasing him. In these studies I became acquainted with Ross, Hamilton, Randolph; and James M'Gregor, whose society hath proved a source of comfort in my misfortunes; notwithstanding which I shall ever regret having involved them in my calamities.

'From the family of Roskelyn we were totally estranged : but the chief frequently heard of the contemptuous expressions they used in speaking of his partiality for me—a partiality that furnished a universal subject of wonder for a considerable time.

'I visited M'Crae yearly, at which period I never failed to sail among the islands, and by the bounty of the chief, which enabled me to be generous, cultivated that friendship and attachment among the inhabitants that hath since proved so serviceable to me.

'Thus passed the time until I was nineteen, when I accompanied the chief to the siege of Berwick, and in the subsequent contests that followed with the English.

'No material circumstances took place during this campaign, but the burning of the town of Penrith by the Scots, and that of Dumfries by the English; at the latter of which I formed an acquaintance which I must more particularly relate.

'A detachment of our army at that time lay in ambush at a short distance from Dumfries, watching the motions of the enemy, when the sight of the flames reached us. The chief commanded me to ad-

vance at the head of three hundred men to assist the sufferers. At our approach the marauders hastily retreated, and I was fortunate enough to render some services, that afterwards were overpaid with the most flattering thanks.

'At the extremity of the town, where the flames rag'd with the utmost fury, at a casement I discovered a young girl wringing her hands and imploring assistance, though in the general confusion her words were lost in air. I took no time for reflection, but, with the warmth of youth, entered the house. The smoke nearly stifled me, and the flames which I rushed through, burned my face and hands so severely, that I yet bear the scars. Intent, however, on executing my purpose, they did not deter me from pursuing my way, and I reached some stairs, which led to the chamber where I had perceived the young girl at the window. She was still there, but by this time nearly senseless, and having hastily risen, was almost unclothed. I tore a plaid from my shoulders and enveloped her in it; then, taking her in my arms, hastily descended, and was lucky enough to effect her escape at the expense of the few hurts before mentioned. As I rushed from the house I was so nearly suffocated that I fell senseless on the ground. She was in the same state; but the fresh air speedily recovered us, when I was overwhelmed with the thanks of not only the maid I had rescued, but also with those of her father, Sir David Stuart.

'Ellen was at that time not more than sixteen, and in my eyes, the fairest creature they had ever beheld until I saw thee, my Ambrosine; then, my love—'

'In truth,' interrupted Ambrosine, laughing, 'thou didst well to throw in that palliative, for thou art aware that women never forgive a slight upon their beauty. But proceed : I yield to Ellen the prize of Loveliness, as I bore off the prize most estimable to my heart.'

‘Monteith kissed his wife’s hand and continued— ‘Ellen was young and beautiful : my heart was warm and undefended ; therefore, though a short space cured the outward burns of my skin, the internal burns I had received were not so easily healed.

‘The chief applauded me highly, and I began to be held in some estimation by many who heretofore had paid me no attention.

‘On our return to the castle of Monteith we found father Thomas absent. He had heard that Katie M’Crae languished in a decline ; and willing to witness if the prospect of death had made any alteration in what she had before declared, he hastened to her.

‘Her dying breath confirmed her former asseverations, and he returned with the testimony signed the evening before her dissolution.

‘The affection I felt for Ellen made me ardently wish to know to whom I owed my birth ; yet no word had ever yet transpired ; but the honour of the name of Monteith, and the courage which the world chose to give me credit for, preserved me from reproach.

‘Sir David Stuart dwelt in Inverness-shire, at the Castle of the Valley. Thrice had I been there with the chief, who saw and approved my passion for Ellen, though he insisted I should show myself worthy the name I bore, before I presumed to think of marriage. This command, however unwillingly, I obeyed and my passion was confined to my heart, or, at least, only expressed by my actions.

‘At this period many Scots were serving in France under the command of the Duke of Touraine ; thither did the chief send me to gain, as he said, experience. James and Randolph M’Gregor were my companions, and there we became acquainted with De Bourg.

‘The campaign being ended, the chevalier, whose friendship we had been happy enough to gain, sold his patrimony, and accompanied us to Scotland. The chief was delighted with his character, and he remained our much-honoured and welcome guest for some time.

‘Scarcely had I been three months at home when my noble, my dearest friend, declined : it was, however, a decline worthy the life it followed—it was the evening of a well-spent day, whose setting sun bespoke a glorious rising : my only father died in my arms. He left me unconditional heir of his vast possessions, all of which I would have gladly yielded to have prolonged his life ! Pardon me : the remembrance yet unmans me, for, as my obligations to him were beyond all computation, so was my affection in its return.

‘Monteith was silent, and the discourse ceased till the ensuing evening, when he resumed his story.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

‘PREVIOUS to my ever-honoured friend’s death, in the presence of Father Thomas, he informed me of all I have now related to you, adding, as he concluded— ‘The honour of my family hath made me weak enough to conceal this base and dishonest action, for which, St. Clair, I have made thee all the amends in my power. Had I had recourse to law, the event would have been uncertain, for such testimonies as those of M’Crae and his wife would have possibly availed but little against the asseverations of the Earl and Countess of Roskelyn. If, therefore, I might advise thee, be satisfied with what thou hast, if they let thee enjoy it in quiet : but if not, thou art free to make what use thou pleasest of the intelligence I have revealed. Nature may, perhaps, at some future period, resume her rights in the bosom of thy mother : but should it not, remember that the same Power who guided me to find thee on the coast of Toray, can direct thee to a yet better parent.’

‘Such were the words of the chief, who died two days after the disclosure. Ardently as I wished to

know my family, how did I shudder on the review ! and for the present with a kind of conscious shame, resolved, as Monteith had advised, to bury the secret in my own heart.

'To my brother John, gladly would I have yielded the fortune of my birthright ; but to be foiled and unacknowledged for no crime of my own, required some share of philosophy to bear.

'The will of the noble chief was so perfect in all its forms, that vain was the cavil of the law to dispute its validity ; and my unnatural mother, whatever she felt, was *then* obliged to acquiesce in silence.

'Six months after Monteith's death, my father, or rather the Earl of Roskelyn, fell into a lingering sickness ; and in a storm that happened the winter after my uncle's death, the honest M'Crae perished : and with him (Katie being dead) I lost the last living witness of my real birth.

'The Earl of Roskelyn's malady proved fatal, and John succeeded him. For myself, I had no cause to lament him, nor did I attempt a semblance of grief which I could not feel.

'The time now authorized me to visit Ellen, and I resolved to offer her my hand and heart ; for which purpose I hastened to her father's castle. All there was grief and desolation ; and it was with difficulty I prevailed to see her, when, with the utmost confusion, she informed me that her father's revenues, which were small, had some years since been mortgaged for four thousand marks ; which sum, the creditor having called in, and Sir David being unable to pay, he had seized upon the whole domain, and they were on the point of retiring to the small house at Dumfries, from whence I had rescued her at the conflagration. My heart was hers ; I therefore regarded my property the same ; and begging her to be patient for a short time, I left her.

'In the hall I found the myrmidons of the law, taking an account of the furniture of the castle. My

person was well known, and the generosity of my uncle, whom the world in general supposed to be my father, was universally talked of. I therefore addressed the principal, and offered my security for the debt and what expense had been incurred, on condition they directly left the dwelling, promising payment in ten days. My offers were not rejected, and acknowledgments on both sides were immediately drawn ; and before Sir David or his daughter was acquainted with the business, the whole party had left the castle.

'Sir David, on inquiry, I found with his daughter, arranging some private papers previous to their departure. I entreated admittance, and with a satisfaction which I neither attempted nor could conceal, said—'My dear Sir David, I pray you cease your task—your tormentors are gone ; there is your acquittal ; let this disagreeable business be for ever forgotten.'

'The old man appeared astonished, while Ellen, with an emotion of joy and gratitude, would have thrown herself at my feet, but I raised her in my arms.

'"Generous, noble young man!" said Sir David, "in saving the life of my child, you also saved mine ; and now you give us the means of life, how can I ever requite obligations of such magnitude ?

'I still clasped Ellen's hand ; by an involuntary motion I bent my knee before her father.—'My venerable friend !" replied I, "suffer me to aspire to this maid : if I can win her heart, and your consent, the business of my life shall be to make her happy."

'Ellen blushed, but not with displeasure ; and the reply of Sir David was such as I then wished ; in short, behold me, in idea, the happiest of men.

'Not to dwell on a subject, that now fills me with disgust to repeat, I was a warm and not an unthriftily-lover : our marriage was, however, to be delayed till the mourning for the chief was expired. Both Sir

David and Ellen supposed me his son : and, as it was of no moment, I let them remain in that error.

All at this period was preparation for the return of James into Scotland, after his having been detained prisoner in England almost twenty years. The first nobles were hostages for the sum required for his ransom, and I commanded the party that escorted the commissioners to York, in order to complete the treaty for his liberation and marriage. From thence we continued our route to London, when the king, being wedded to Lady Jane Beaufort, returned to Durham, where he was exchanged for the hostages, and in great pomp entered Scotland, attended by the chief nobility of both kingdoms.

For some time nothing was heard but mirth and rejoicing ; all the beauties of the country repaired to the city, and seemed to vie with each other in displaying their charms to their sovereign. Among the foremost of these was Ellen, universally admired and followed ; but as my heart portrayed all truth and perfection, suspicion held no place in it. She entered with avidity into all the gaieties of the city, and the simplicity of her character gave way to dress, coquetry and grandeur. I should perhaps speak more justly, if I said the manners of the town awoke the dormant qualities of her mind, which, I have since had sufficient conviction, were naturally corrupt and depraved.

One of the king's hostages dying in England, was replaced, as by agreement, with one of equal rank : and again I had the command of the escort to Durham. This business employed some time. On my return, I found Sir David and his daughter had retired to their Castle. Some half-words that reached me in a less confidential mind might have inspired suspicion ; but I regarded them only as the effect of envy at superior merit, until de Bourg and Ross both assured me, it was the received opinion that Ellen, dazzled with the wealth and superior rank of the Earl of Roskelyn, received his addresses ; and that he was

even then a visitor at their dwelling. Infatuated with love, I threw the whole blame on her father, and resolved to lose no time in hastening to her, assured, that, once supported by my presence, she would assert her own affection and my prior claim.

I immediately took the way to Sir David's, and, on reaching the castle, though the apartments were illuminated, I was informed by the vassals that Sir David and his daughter had left it the day before. Highly dissatisfied with this reply, I took no time for rest, but proceeded to the Castle of Monteith, where I had appointed to meet Ross, Hamilton, de Bourg and James M'Gregor. To them I imparted what had passed, and claimed their assistance and advice as to what measures to pursue.

The result of these deliberations was, to try once more to gain admittance, which, if we found impracticable, at all hazards to see and converse with Ellen.

This plan arranged, we departed with a small retinue. Again I demanded admittance at the castle of Sir David, and was again refused, though at the same time I saw some of the vassals of the Lord Roskelyn at the gate. My rage was now at its height : I rode back and joined my comrades, who warmly entered into my affronts. Sir David was too old to meet my anger, and Lord Roskelyn not only appeared below it, but was also, I felt with horror, my brother.

We rode leisurely along, conversing on what had passed, when, on a declivity beneath us, we saw a company of horsemen, gaily accoutred, and among them two women, one of whom I recognized by her air for Ellen, as I did some of the men for the mingled vassals of the houses of Stuart and Roskelyn, by the emblazonment of their habits. Prudence is not the characteristic of youth. Half frantic at the sight, and my comrades warmly entering into my feelings, we vowed revenge ; and therefore, taking a circuit of the height on which we were, at the entrance of the valley suddenly met and surprised them.

‘Two vassals preceded the party, after which rode Sir David, and to my great astonishment, Lady Roskelyn, followed by the Earl and Ellen. The party of Sir David and Roskelyn for numbers, doubled ours; but to make up that deficiency, we were better armed, and, accustomed to the rude encounters of war, were strangers to fear. My friends closed the path, so that no one could pass, while I rode up, and addressing Sir David, demanded a conference with him.

‘The old man hesitated, looked confused, and entreated me to call on him on the morrow; but this I peremptorily denied, well knowing, that if I let that opportunity escape, all future attempts to see him would prove fruitless.

‘Lady Roskelyn appeared trembling and irresolute; she, I believe, had not seen me since my boyish days, and perhaps fearing to rouse my passion, to say harsh truths, remained silent.

‘Ellen was pale, and seemed ready to fall from her horse; while Lord Roskelyn, with haughty pride, approaching me, asked how I dared to bar the way.

‘John of Roskelyn,’ replied I, ‘if you know not ere this, my claim to Ellen Stuart, know it now. She is mine by her own free will and the consent of her father, and the man who attempts to annihilate that claim must either lose or take a life.

‘The son of M’Crae,’ returned he ironically, ‘can have no claim to the daughter of Sir David Stuart; yet, though thou art far beneath my sword, I will not bear thy arrogance.’

‘Though raging with anger, the bitterness of contempt for a moment predominated, and, fixing my eyes with significant earnestness on the Lady Roskelyn, I replied—

‘In faith, like enough; M’Crae, though not of noble blood, was likely a gallant fellow, and fine ladies have sometimes strange fancies; Katie M’Crae

was not my mother, and might serve her mistress in more ways than one. ‘Tis a cunning man that knows his own child, and those who were not otherwise told might as soon take me for the heir of Roskelyn as thyself.’

‘Out upon thee, slanderer,’ exclaimed the Lady Roskelyn; ‘thank God, the king is returned, and will see justice done. The partiality of the Duke of Albany, and, since his death, that of his son Murdoch, hath nourished this insolence in thee.’

‘I pray ye mother cease,’ said John of Roskelyn, ‘this is no time for words;’ then addressing me, he added—‘Let the women and Sir David pass, then I can decide this contest.’

‘Willingly I consent to the last condition; but by my soul, Ellen returns not to the Castle till I have spoken with her; so arrange it to thy liking.’

‘Thus then,’ said he, drawing his sword, and attacking me with a violence which I returned with equal heat: his vassals endeavoured to join him, but were kept off by my friends. Passion on both sides was too high to suffer the contention to be lasting, and I disarmed and slightly wounded my adversary.

‘Take your son, woman,’ exclaimed I, addressing Lady Roskelyn; ‘though you can forget your child, I cannot forget my brother.’

‘She made no reply; the domestics busied themselves in binding up her son’s wound, and prepared to bear him to the castle. I still insisted on conversing with Ellen, who either had, or pretended to have swooned, and was supported by one of the vassals, who had lifted her from her horse.

‘My party kept that of Roskelyn in awe. I approached, her eyes were still closed, and I was not likely to obtain any reply, when a sudden resolution excited me; it was to bear her away to the castle of Monteith, and there to end the contention by being united to her by the rites of the church—a step my self-love flattered me she would gladly acquiesce in.

'This resolve was instantly executed. I lifted her from the ground, and with the assistance of one of my men, placed her gently before me on my charger, and, in spite of the threats and entreaties of her father; the impotent rage of Roskelyn, the virulence of his mother, or the faint opposition of their vassals, bore her away, escorted by my friendly comrades.

'Notwithstanding every persuasion, and repeated asseverations of being compelled to act as I had done, she remained silent for some miles. At length we reached a lone spot near Kenardie, halting at a small house inhabited by a vassal of Sir James Ross, where we prepared to refresh and rest for the night, the evening being far advanced. Soon after our entrance, my comrades left me alone with Ellen, whom I once more entreated to break the cruel silence she had so long preserved: repeating, that necessity alone had obliged me to have recourse to violence; that she was dearer to me than life; and if, as she had frequently declared, I was equally so to her, to consent the following day, at the first church we reached, we might be united.

'She heard me through without interruption, then replied, though she blushed and cast down her eyes as she spoke—'I need not tell you, St. Clair, that my inclination followed the will of my father, when he consented to give you my hand; but then both he and myself considered you, if not by marriage, at least the son of the noble chief Monteith. We have been deceived; you owe your being to a common trader, or fisherman, who practising on the chief's weakness, succeeded to adopt you; and for the prosperity you now hold, by the forbearance of the house of Roskelyn, be assured it will speedily be claimed, and yourself condemned to your original state. Our contract is therefore void; I render you back your vows; be you equally generous, for we can never be more nearly connected than at this moment.'

'Naturally haughty, and loving to excess, you may better imagine than I can describe the effect this speech had on me; it proved at once that, for myself, I was of no estimation in her eyes; but, as the heir of Monteith only had been received, until a wealthier fool offering, I necessarily gave place.

'Stung with this reflection, my pride supported me. 'Tis well, Ellen,' I replied; 'I thank you for this early proof of your prudence. Some time hence, had we been united, it might have given me pain. That I am not the son of Monteith, you are well informed; but you must seek another father for me than M'Crae, to whom I owe in truth some great obligations, though not of the filial kind, and which I commend you to require an explanation of from Lady Roskelyn.'

'The coolness with which I spoke astonished and confused her.

'If, said she, 'you are not the son of M'Crae, why not declare it? cast back the reproach where 'tis due, and openly reveal your family.'

'Whatever secret reasons appeared strong enough to induce the noble Monteith to adopt me, might surely, in a bosom interested in my favour, announce that he deemed me at once worthy his name and fortune; but never shall either be prostituted to purchase a hand without a heart. Monteith rejects that which would be denied to St. Clair M'Crae, your vows are again yours, lady, and my heart shall be mine own, until it meets a more disinterested partner.'

'Ellen, no doubt, had prepared herself for supplications, and abject submission; she was therefore at once disappointed and vexed.

'The Lord of Roskelyn,' said she, with manly openness, woos me for his bride, and can you suppose I will offend my father, and cast from me rank and affluence, for one who, wrapped in mystery, refuses the explanation I ask?'

‘I do not desire it,’ replied I; ‘but remember this truth. Ellen—however you may be the *nominal*, you will never be the *real* countess of Roskelyn.’

‘That is not in your power to prevent,’ replied she, ‘unless you kill me.’

‘No, on my honour and faith,’ answered I, laughing, ‘not only your life, but also that of your destined husband is safe from me, provided he observes a line of conduct which I approve.’

‘Think you,’ replied she, with increased passion, ‘that the Lord of Roskelyn will be dictated to by you? And for me, bear me back to my father, or you shall bitterly repent this insolence.’

‘At the first streak of day,’ replied I, ‘all shall be ready for that purpose. Had you favoured me with a few words at our meeting this morning, you would have been spared this affront, which I now repent as much as you can condemn.’

‘Think you I will pass the night among a licentious crew of robbers, and particularly with one who, with the violence of a ruffian, hath set law at defiance, and torn me from my father’s protection?’

‘Contempt was stronger in my breast than anger, and I replied with provoking coldness—‘Sleep in security, fair Ellen; not the slumbers of holy vestals shall be more sacred than thine; nay, to reassure thee, and remove all distrust from thy mind, know, that were we two *now* cast on a desert shore, unmarked by the foot of man, our race should end with us, rather than I break on thy quiet.’

‘This speech appeared to provoke her beyond any thing that had passed; for she burst into tears. The sight, I confess, staggered my courage; but summoning all the fortitude I possessed, I resolved to perish rather than show myself the slave of arrogance and avarice; I, however, entreated her to compose herself, and take some refreshment.’

‘The torrent having somewhat subsided, she at length said more calmly—‘However duty may im-

pel a child to submit to a parent, yet surely, St. Clair, you owe me an explanation to what I asked. If you are wronged, why not proclaim it? or, if secret reasons preponderate, they surely could not extend to me.’

‘Nor did they; but you should have questioned, instead of accused. Had any one condemned, or even judged *you*, could I have acted thus? Surely no.—Ellen, the heiress of a throne, or the daughter of a cottager, would have had equal claim on *my* heart; I should have loved her for herself alone, not for the paltry distinctions of birth or fortune.’

‘Our discourse was considerably longer, but all to the same purport, for however I suffered internally, I appeared to bear it unmoved, until at length we parted for the night.’

‘On informing my friends what had passed and that I resolved to bear Ellen back the ensuing morning, they applauded the measure; and, lest we should meet with any disagreeable encounter in the performance of our design, Hamilton and Ross collected fifty of their vassals, who dwelt at a short distance; and thus prepared, all was ready at daybreak.’

‘Ellen soon after appeared. She was more calm, but sullen; and, taking some slight refreshment, mounted the horse provided for her. I begged two of my friends to attend on each side her beast; and, for myself, I rode first, and led the cavalcade.’

‘Alack, poor Ellen!’ interrupted Ambrosine; ‘now, St. Clair, am I convinced that thou didst never truly love her; for, hadst thou, thou wouldst have doubted, demurred, questioned, and endeavoured to find out excuses for her conduct; not like a rigid, inexorable judge, at once have pronounced a decree from whence there was no appeal. In truth, had it been me, thou shouldst have found the difference.’

‘Faith, I believe it,’ replied De Bourg; ‘but he had been accustomed to treat her like a petted wayward child: and when she offended him, he roused

all the mastery he possessed to punish her. Oh the follies that I have witnessed, that love, or its cousin-german, insanity, hath made him commit! not a dotard of eighty, who languishes for an heir from a wife of eighteen, could have exceeded him; believe me, he is a partial historian: but I can refresh his memory. It was not four thousand marks that cleared Sir David; for, to my knowledge, in other debts, he paid double that sum: add to this, not a travelling silk merchant, or Jew dealer in trinkets, visited the city, but Ellen sighed, languished, and pined for velvets, satins, silks, laces, rings, bracelets, and necklaces, until she had drained his pockets, and his uncle's coffers, to obtain them. Marry, hadst thou wedded her, thy first child ought to have been born ready dressed and dizen'd out for its christening.'

'Though I cannot entirely disprove this,' replied Monteith, laughing, 'it is not generous, chevalier, to tear up follies so long expiated and forgiven.'

'Who told thee they were forgiven?' replied De Bourg; 'a whole life is not too long' for the expiation.'

'Who told me!' repeated Monteith, 'marry, an internal evidence, which thy gross nature cannot comprehend. Did I not expiate the follies of my boyish days in purgatory here, till Heaven, of its mercy, sent pardon and happiness in the form of Ambrosine?'

'A truce, good sirs,' said she, 'my interruption hath broken up the story. I pray thee, Monteith, proceed.'

'Not to-night, my love,' replied he: 'I am weary of the monotony of my own voice, and regard it as some expiation for former errors, to be obliged to repeat them.'

'Be it so,' replied she. 'Randolph, reach me my harp: and thou Phillippa take thy lute: we will endeavour to harmonize thy father's feelings.'

Ambrosine was immediately obeyed; and the

power of music so beguiled the hours, that curiosity was suspended, and Monteith's story not regretted.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ON the ensuing evening Randolph, who was the most anxious to hear Monteith's relation, prayed him to continue, which he did as follows:—

'Behold us then journeying to the castle of Sir David; Ellen escorted by Ross and Hamilton, myself in the front, and carefully avoiding to look at the fatal beauty, whom I had resolved to tear from my heart.'

'Towards evening we reached the castle, and sounding the horn, the gates were opened, and I demanded to speak to Sir David.'

'The old man, accompanied by Lady Roskelyn, and surrounded by his vassals, immediately attended. The Lord Roskelyn, I found, was confined by his wound. I first spoke.'

'Sir David,' said I, 'I come to crave your excuse for the warmth of yesterday; I laboured under a mistake that I would you had suffered your daughter to rectify, without obliging me to have recourse to violence. I, however, return her safe, as she herself can testify.'

'Say, Ellen,' said Sir David, 'doth he speak truly; do I receive thee safe, my child?'

'From personal violence I have escaped,' replied she, with bitterness; 'but have been treated with insolence, contempt, and disrespect.'

'How, I pray you, fair maid?' answered I. 'You first condemned me unheard, and then asked questions I did not choose to answer, but referred you to the Countess of Roskelyn. Say, lady, did I not well? our private history is not for all ears.'

'The anger of Lady Roskelyn at this speech, exceeded all bounds; but it found vent in words, she

bestowing on me every invective that illiberality and malice could suggest. To this burst I gave way, or, rather, fanned the flame: for, finding she had railed herself out of breath, I bowed and thanked her, saying I received her chidings as the rebuke of a parent.

'Villainous deceiver!' exclaimed she, 'the kingdom of Scotland shall not hold thee and me: at the foot of the throne of James the First, will I cry aloud for justice on thee.'

'At the foot of the altar, lady, though not much used to pray, will I entreat, not for justice, but for pardon for you, lest at the throne of a greater sovereign than James, we should be doomed to separate kingdoms to all eternity. A few words more, and I have done. Beat at your breast, and awaken sleeping nature! repent, and I will predict, the path of rectitude will restore what, I am convinced, for many years hath been a stranger to you—peace and security. For you, Ellen,' continued I, turning to her, 'I leave you in the road to wealth; I wished to have led you into that of happiness, but I knew not that you were vernal enough to be purchased; had you more dexterously concealed it, and I had found that nothing short of being a countess would have made you happy, I might, while I fondly believed myself beloved, have strove to procure you that rank, as well as many other follies I have given into; but I thank you; you tore off the mask in time, and I resign you without a sign.'

'As I concluded, I hastily remounted my horse, and left the court of the castle where this conference had taken place.

'Though I had hitherto borne all highly, love and vengeance at once distracted my bosom; in three days, a burning fever raged in my veins, and, for fourteen more, confined me to my bed. My senses restored, I blushed at my folly, and resolved not to let my enemies triumph in my weakness. Accompanied by my constant friends, I crossed to France.

where we passed some months, and where I recovered sufficiently to assume the appearance, if not the reality, of tranquillity.

'While in Paris I received letters by an especial messenger sent by Sir Alexander M'Gregor; these were not only to inform me, but also my friends, that a criminal suit had been entered against us by Sir David Stuart, for forcibly carrying off his daughter, (who was now wedded to the Earl of Roskelyn), and detaining her a whole night, during which, though she escaped with honour, she suffered the most cruel anxiety and fear. There was likewise against me a second complaint; this was exhibited by the Dowager of Roskelyn and her son; it set forth that I, in connection with a low-born man, named M'Crae, by falsehood and unlawful arts, had practised and wrought upon the weakness of the late chief Monteith, and so far beguiled him, as at length to persuade him to make me heir to his possessions; praying to have his will annulled, and made void; and that also an injunction might be issued, forbidding me, on the highest penalties, any longer to use a name I so highly disgraced. In addition to this intelligence, Sir Alexander informed us we were cited to appear in six weeks to answer these accusations, and (three of which were already elapsed); and that a non-appearance would subject us to the forfeiture of our estates, and to our being declared outlaws.

'This intelligence, on my own account, would have given me but little uneasiness; but the idea of having thus involved my friends almost distracted me.

'We lost no time, but hastened home. The Parliament was held at Perth, where we surrendered, to answer the crimes alleged against us.

'The appointed day arrived: the king, and some of the first nobles, sat as our judges. My having been favoured by the Duke of Albany, without another cause, would have been sufficient to condemn

me; but my enemies did not trust to that, for my judges were the picked friends of the houses of Stuart and Roskelyn.

'Myself and my companions were brought forward, and Sir David's accusation first preferred. To support this, it was absolutely necessary to call in the evidence of Ellen and the Dowager.

'To end this part of my relation, the court, after some little demur, proceeded to pronounce the penalty of the crime. I was sentenced to a fine of six hundred marks; my companions to one of a hundred each.

'Such was the result of the first accusation. On the second, which took place on the ensuing day, I stood alone as a culprit; but my constant friends were as near me as possible.

'The Dowager of Roskelyn, first gave in her testimony against me. She recapitulated the arts used by M'Crae, his wife, and myself, in order to ingratiate me in the favour of the late chief, to the detriment of her, his sister, and of his nephew, the present Lord of Roskelyn.

'How conscious is guilt! during the whole time she spoke, her eyes were fixed on the ground, and her voice and complexion testified the conflict she felt within.

'John of Roskelyn's complaint was but the echo of his mother's. I revelled, he said, in the wealth of his uncle, and disgraced a name never before dishonoured.

'In answer to these accusations, I now held myself free to declare all I knew, and which I corroborated by the testimony of friar Thomas, and the oaths signed by M'Crae and his wife. The paternal affection of the chief was also testified by my friends, but nothing appeared to throw guilt upon so fair a fame as that of the Dowager of Roskelyn. The oaths of M'Crae and his wife were merely regarded as fabricated to deceive the chief, and the asseverations

of friar Thomas treated as a gross and purchased deceit. In short I was condemned to surrender all that the chief had bequeathed me, to relinquish his name, and be outlawed for life to the Western Isles.

Randolph, whose heart beat high at the recital of his father's wrongs, could bear no more, but starting up, exclaimed,—'Now; shame and disgrace be mine if I follow not that Lord Roskelyn through the world! My brother James, and also the young St. Clair, as their years increase will catch my ardour, and revenge their father, or die.

Though pleased with the affection the heart of Randolph bespoke, Monteith replied with marked earnestness—'Randolph, my arm is yet strong enough to defend itself; but note me well, if thou attemptest ought against the Lord of Roskelyn, my curse will rest on thee.'

Randolph started, and looked astonished, but made no reply.

'Remember,' continued Monteith, with more gentleness, 'that he is my brother—the same blood purples our veins—one mother bore us; and be assured, the time will yet come, when thou wilt see her unforced, do justice. Have I not already my revenues restored? and I have no doubt time will accomplish the rest.'

'Pardon me,' replied Randolph; 'they must love a father less than I do, who can bear of such expressions unmoved.'

'I thank thee, my generous boy; thou thinkest with the warmth of youth—I begin to judge with the coolness of age, I pity the Lord of Roskelyn—he hath already his punishment. But to proceed.

'The sentence was no sooner pronounced than I was commanded to deliver up my sword; for as I had voluntarily surrendered, it had not been taken from me.

'To be disarmed was a disgrace I did not chose to submit to.

‘My sword,’ said I with heat, ‘belonged to my ever-honoured and lamented uncle, the chief Monteith, and never will I resign it.’

‘Yield the sword,’ repeated the king: ‘if it belonged to the chief Monteith, it now appertains to the Earl of Roskelyn; therefore to his hands resign it.’

‘John of Roskelyn, with visible exultation, advanced towards me. I took no time for reflection—my passions were my masters; and had even James himself, at that moment, come in contact with me, I had acted the same: I seized Roskelyn, and threw him with violence from me.’

‘Dastard knave!’ exclaimed I, ‘learn thy distance, did I think my blood of the quality of thine, I would seek to prove it bastard. Earn the sword of Monteith,’ continued I, unsheathing it; ‘to gain it thou must take a life.’

‘Alas! my passion involved my friends in my misfortunes; drawing my weapon appeared the signal for all to do the same, and the hall of justice in a moment became a scene of confusion. The courtly moths instantly fluttered round the torch of royalty as though we meant to extinguish it; and the cry of treason! treason! in voices rendered shrill by fear, as those of women, echoed through the court.’

‘A detachment of soldiers immediately rushed in with Sir Duncan Keith at their head. The veteran had served with my uncle, and I was well known to him. His party surrounded us, and a parley ensued when we were all ordered to resign our weapons—a command we refused to obey.’

‘Never,’ exclaimed I, ‘shall it be said that the pupil of the gallant Monteith laid down his sword at the command of a tyrant. Should I act so unworthily, truly should I prove myself an alien to his name and blood. To the name of Roskelyn I resign all claim; and, so help me heaven: if I would not

sooner be for ever M’Crae, than take the accursed title, if I were to resemble those who now bear it.

‘A cry to wrest our weapons from us was again repeated, and again we persisted to die with them in our grasp. Among the soldiers we had all been universally beloved; therefore, though they surrounded us, no attempt was made to annoy us. Sir Duncan Keith, approaching the king, spoke to him in a low voice, but with much energy; to which he at length answered, though with heat—

‘Act as you please;’ or words to that import.

‘Sir Duncan then advancing towards us, said—‘I grieve to see men, heretofore so warmly attached to their country and king, so far forget themselves as to have recourse to such desperate measures. Ye are but five, and your lives would be only the sacrifice of a moment; yet, through an unwarrantable pride, ye would sooner lose them than obey the commands of your sovereign. For me, I set the example of peace; I sheath my sword, and order my soldiers to do the same.’

‘Sir Duncan, as he spoke, replaced his weapon in the scabbard, as did also his men—an example that was instantly followed by myself and friends, and, without further contention, we were committed to his care, at the common guard.’

‘The whole country expected that our punishment would have been nothing less than death, but if the mercy of James did not spare us, the prudence of his ministers prevailed, to save the effusion of blood such a step would have occasioned.

‘After much deliberation, we were all condemned to banishment in the island of Barra, and to suffer all the pains and penalties of outlaws, should we return from thence: but my estate was alone decreed forfeit, according to the former sentence.

‘A strong detachment of soldiers escorted us to our destination in the tower of M’Leod, where we

found a garrison of twelve men, placed there as our guards.

'Here our conductors left us; and we had not been landed a week, before my old comrades and friends, who had heard of my disgrace, came from every quarter. Our guard appeared inclined to shew us their power, but with some little assistance were soon silenced and disarmed; after which we put them on board a vessel, and sent them back to Scotland.

'As we remained perfectly quiet, no notice was taken of this affront until the ensuing year, when a larger party was sent; these we disposed of in the same manner, making them the bearers of this message—That, left to ourselves, we were disposed to peace, but would not quietly submit to masters.

'Some trifling effort were afterwards made to subject us; but failing of success, they were discontinued; and here ends my history till I met my Ambrosine.'

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE ensuing afternoon, in terms passionate as the effusions of a first affection, did Monteith relate the course of his love for Ambrosine, which Randolph but imperfectly knew.—'The jewels she first brought,' said he, 'were left in the castle of Monteith, and from thence taken by Roskelyn or his wife; but welcome were they to the baubles, since they brought me acquainted with thee, my love.

'The depredations on the domain are, I doubt not, great; and, should I never return to see them, will, I trust, be repaired by those I leave behind; however, I am not without hope; time and chance happen to all; and I yet flatter myself to pass the days of my old age in the hall of my honoured uncle, and to have my bones deposited by his side.'

Monteith then minutely recapitulated every event until the time he and his friend were surprised and made prisoners. 'Our business being concluded,' continued he, 'we departed from Benbecula, in order to return to Barra. The party consisted only of Sir James Ross, myself, and the men we took to navigate our vessel.

'We had not long left the island when we observed a ship under Danish colours right in our course. Though the wind was fair, she appeared to sail heavily and make no way. When we drew near her, a great confusion appeared on board, and, on being hailed by our men, they replied their vessel had sprung a leak, and that, not having a sufficient number of hands to keep the water from rising, it gained upon them very fast; they, therefore, implored our assistance, which, they affirmed, would speedily free them from danger.

'Their claim on our pity and succour was too strong to be denied. Ross, myself, and one of our men, leaped on board, leaving our swords in our own vessel. Two of the Danes led the way to the hole; but we were no sooner between decks than we were surrounded by ten armed men, who sprung upon us, saying we were prisoners. Sir James and myself instantly drew our dirks, and wounded three of the assailants; we were, however, soon overpowered by numbers and disarmed. Thus, Randolph, I lost the dirk that gave thee such alarm.

'Raging almost to madness, I demanded for what purpose this treachery was practised; but they carefully evaded answering all questions, only saying, that no further violence was intended, unless they were compelled to it by any attempt to regain our liberty.

'They then left us under a guard of six men, while some of them forced the men that remained on board our vessel to enter theirs. We were soon after informed by the leader of the villains, whom I after-

wards knew to be M'Lellan, that our destination was different; Sir James and the men being designed for Denmark, while myself and six of the perfidious crew were to be landed at Adnamurchan. Not till I received this intelligence did I suspect the house of Roskelyn to be concerned in this dark transaction; but this at once unravelled the mystery, and led me to suspect that murder was to conclude the business.

'Opposition and complaint were useless. To Ross, who I trusted would at some future period reach the island, I commended my wife and children: and, after having embraced, we separated.

'Re-embarking on board our own vessel, the Dane left us; and with my six guards only, I reached the destined port. On landing we walked some miles over a lone and desolate tract when we reached a cottage, which was that of M'Lellan, where we found only an old woman, and two more of the crew.

'I was shown to a chamber, and food brought; but no means of escape appeared possible, for my guards constantly relieved each other in their watches on the outside of the house.

'The noise of the mirth, occasioned by intoxication and mingled triumph, continued some hours: and by what discourse I heard, I am convinced the party was of that daring and bloodthirsty set, known in the Highlands by the appellation of *Katturins*.

'Near the close of the day, M'Lellan, I found, left them; for being only in the next apartment, I could hear almost every word. He however returned early in the morning; and, from what I could gather, I was to be removed on the ensuing night.

'During the day I tried the effect of promised bribes upon M'Lellan; but my offers were of no avail, and I was forced to submit.

'In the evening I left the cottage, attended by six guards; and towards midnight we reached the castle of the valley, which I judged, from its lonely situation, to be intended for my prison or the scene

of my death. Sir David had been dead some years, and that domain, with its small revenues, had fallen to the Lady Roskelyn.

'On our entrance I saw no one but the old porter at the gate, M'Lellan leading the way to the hall, where I expected at least to find the whole family assembled, but was much astonished to see only the countess.

'Though many years had elapsed since I saw her, her beauty was yet dazzling, but no trace of that innocence which first caught my heart remained; her manners are bold and assuming, and the only expression of her eye, pride and contempt. Though the symmetry of her features remain, they are strongly marked by the tyrant passions that reign within her.

'On our entrance into the hall, she ordered the guard to retire.

'Is it possible,' said she, her eyes sparkling with malicious joy, 'that the valiant and undaunted St. Clair, who sets kings at defiance, and laughs at their power, should be conquered by a woman? Revenge is now mine, and canst thou expect mercy?'

'I neither ask nor expect it,' I replied, 'and would sooner perish than receive a favour from thee.'

'What, not for the sake of the heiress of Kintail—the gentle, love-sick Ambrosine, the wife of thy bosom?'

'Woman,' interrupted I, 'learn to respect virtues thou canst not comprehend. For the heiress of Kintail, or rather, as thou sayest, for the wife of my heart, dearer to me than the blood that gives it motion, gladly would I sacrifice all but honour; and thou can never assimilate.'

'Remember,' said she, passionately, 'that thou art in my power; and let that knowledge teach thee prudence, lest I be tempted to use it.'

'Do so; call in thy myrmidons—they are worthy their employer; but where is John of Roskelyn? is

he sunk so low as to delegate thee to transact this business?"

"Neither John of Roskelyn nor his aspiring chaste mother have to claim aught in this enterprise; 'tis my own, and I glory in it. They, it is true, have, ere now, sighed and wished Monteith in their power; but I pursued the means, and have accomplished my purpose."

"True, you have, by fraud and meanness; what is to follow?"

"That, even by myself, is undetermined. Meanness I deny; and stratagem was necessary. The brave and wise do not always attack a lion openly, but sometimes entangle him in a net, or foil him in a trap."

"Much more discourse of the same tendency passed between us, but to no purpose, except increasing the bitterness on both sides, until at length, she rose in great heat, and going to the door of the hall, called M'Lellan, who immediately obeyed the summons. I was conducted to the watch-tower, and a guard set over me."

"During the time I remained a prisoner, I saw the countess several times. My food was regularly served, and good of its kind, and a supposition I at first imbibed, that they meant to poison me, insensibly wore off; but imprisonment, and the anxiety of my mind in respect of my wife, and children, and friends, insensibly preyed on my spirits, and would inevitably have destroyed me, had not Heaven sent succour in the person of our beloved Randolph."

"I well know M'Lellan was absent one night while I was confined, and which, I conclude, was that on which he and Randolph met. He himself informed me that he had been vassal to Sir David, but for some years, had been at his own disposal."

"My liberation you well know; I shall therefore conclude with saying, that, though I trust the lesson I have received will not harden my heart, it will teach me to give a moment to reflection before I act."

"Dear father, I thank you," said Randolph, as Monteith concluded: "what the countess's future intentions were respecting you, I cannot conjecture, murder I think it could not be, or she would not so long have delayed it."

"It hath been agreed in all ages," replied Monteith, laughing, "that woman's actions are frequently impenetrable; if so we in vain endeavour to discover the source of hers: perhaps, also, they were undermentioned."

"Thank Heaven, it is over," replied Randolph. "My obligations to that poor damsel that attend lady Roskelyn never can be forgotten; and I would now again willingly enter her hated dwelling, to rescue poor Jean from tyranny."

"Thou hast indeed great obligations to the maid," replied Monteith, "she attended thee during thy confinement, and a sort of mutual confidence, I think, took place between ye."

"On my part, in nothing material," answered Randolph: "but through her I first gained intelligence of you, for which I shall always love her dearly."

"A hard-favoured damsel, rather crooked, and about thirty, is she not?" said de Bourg, gravely; "I think as I was sauntering about the castle, I saw such a one at the gate."

"Oh, no," replied Randolph warmly, "she cannot, I think, be more than my own age: her form is straight as a Highland pine, and her face almost as handsome as Philippa's."

Philippa blushed—"And you love her as well," returned she, in a tone of reproach, "nay, better, or you would not have said you would again visit that hateful castle for her sake."

"Dear Philippa, ought I not to do so? for to her, in all probability, I owe my life, and perhaps yet more, glancing his eyes towards Monteith. "I indeed think myself very ungrateful; had it been

thee, my sister, no power on earth should have kept me so long away.'

The whole party were silent, attending to the discourse of Randolph and Phillippa.—'These feelings,' continued the youth, 'prove the force of blood, of which I have heard and read so much.'

'It rather proves the force of nature,' replied the chevalier, with an arch smile.

'Is it not the same thing?' replied Randolph.

'Not quite,' said De Bourg; 'but I prithee, enter no more into thy schemes of knight-errantry this year; thou gavest the girl money to take her to her friends, and there, for the present, let the business rest.'

'I must perforce,' said Randolph, 'but I forgot not my obligations, and long to return them.'

'In what manner?' inquired the chevalier.

Randolph hesitated.—'In truth, chevalier,' said he, 'I believe you are jesting; but I long to return them as they deserve; I should like to see Jean out of danger, and free from want.'

'In the arms of a worthy and deserving husband,' said De Bourg.

'I never thought of that,' replied Randolph, 'but indeed it would be most desirable; would to Heaven she was wedded to some honest man, that would make her happy.'

'Nay, then,' replied De Bourg, drily, 'if such are your wishes, I will predict that your knight-errantry will sleep till next year.'

'Chevalier,' resumed Randolph, 'on my life, I do not comprehend you.'

'Heed him not,' said Ambrosine, laughing, 'he doth not comprehend himself. The afternoon is fine; Phillippa and James will walk with thee on the shore, and enjoy the sea-breeze.'

They cheerfully consented, and the party divided in different pursuits, leaving Ross, Hamilton, M'Gregor, De Bourg, Monteith, and his wife to themselves,

CHAPTER XXXVI.

'By my life,' said De Bourg, as soon as they were alone, 'but Randolph's question was to the purpose. What the countess's future intentions were toward you, I cannot conjecture; murder, I am convinced it could not be. As I before said, Monteith, thou art a partial historian; if thou canst, for once, prithee, be ingenuous and developè this mystery.'

'De Bourg,' replied he, 'to my friends I have no concealments, nor, indeed should I, and to any of our comrades, after the many instances I have had of their attachment, and the sincere proof of their secrecy in respect to Randolph; but the truth is, I have a story to disclose, which for worlds I would not have known to that youth, as hereafter, when informed of his real birth, it would cover him with shame. Truly if any tint could appear through my dark complexion, I should blush for—'

'Not thyself, I hope, St. Clair,' said De Bourg, laughing.

'No; though I have no virtue to boast on that account, for as I felt no temptation, there was no merit in withstanding the tempter. What I shall relate, I pray you, let ever remain a secret in your own bosoms; Randolph already knows too many of the ill qualities of the countess, for shame to be added to the account, when he learns she is his mother.'

'On the second night after my arrival at the castle, I was again conducted to the hall, where, as before, I found the countess; her manners were less haughty, and she entered into conversation with a freedom that astonished me.

'Monteith,' said she, 'thou hast laughed at my weakness and derided my power; I was therefore

resolved to convince thee, that I was not so insignificant an enemy as thou thoughtest. Neither the Dowager nor Roskelyn know of this enterprise; and, by the blessed saints, I mean thee no personal injury.'

'Then why detain me here?' replied I.

'Didst thou not detain me,' said she, 'in a worse place, and where my virgin fame might have fallen a sacrifice.'

'To my shame I confess it: but no advantage was taken of thy situation.'

'No; thou offeredst to wed me at the first church in our way: was it not so?'

'It was: but what doth this recapitulation of follies tend to?'

'Thou seest my memory yet retains the circumstance, though so many years have elapsed.'

'More happily forgotten than called to remembrance.'

'I think not so; St. Clair, thou wert even then a better warrior than a wooer, or thou hadst not taken a maiden's answer so hastily.'

I stood in silent astonishment. After a short pause, she continued—'To look on thee Monteith, no one would conclude outlawry a severe punishment; for thou art scarcely changed. What thinkest thou of me?' either the world flatters, or I still retain some of the charms that caught thy heart at Dumfries.'

'My taste in beauty is changed,' replied I, coldly; 'I am therefore no judge.'

'A wife of sixteen years cannot blind thy sight, I know mankind better. No one can blame thee for marrying the heiress of Kintail; but, St. Clair even then thy heart was never hers.'

'Were a man to avow that falsehood,' replied I, warmly, 'I would proclaim him a liar. Ambrosine alone was then dearer to me than life or liberty; and time and possession, instead of lessening, have in-

creased my affection; so that, were we both at this moment free, and she deprived of wealth, beauty, and all the natural graces that raise her above her sex, for her heart and disposition alone would I press her to my bosom, and share the power of empires with her, did I possess them.'

'The countess reddened, but appeared to struggle to suppress her passion. 'I but intrude upon you with my folly,' said she; 'would you wish to retire?'

'I would wish first,' answered I, 'to know why I am detained here? I have injured no one, particularly you; if you suppose I have, point out the remedy.'

'Monteith,' replied she, rising, and laying her hand on my arm, while her eyes were strongly fixed on my face, 'canst thou point out a remedy for my father's folly, thine own pride, and my infatuation, which fixed me for life in splendid misery?'

'I felt like one struck with lightning. 'Lady,' replied I, recoiling from her touch, 'tis natural that fathers should wish their children great. For my pride, as you call it, let it be ever forgotten; your refusal hath been productive of such happy consequences to me, that I shall for ever revere and bless the occasion; and for infatuation, there could be none in a connection that gave you an adoring husband and children, one of whom, I am convinced, will stand forth hereafter, unrivalled in honour.'

'You know not John—he is the counterpart of his father: and for Matilda, though at present gentle, unassuming, and affectionate, her character is not yet fixed. To love the children, Monteith,' continued she with energy, 'it is necessary to esteem their father.'

'You will laugh when I tell you that I would sooner have been in the front of a battle than engaged in this discourse. 'I can be no judge,' said I, 'in affairs of this nature; but the combined honour

of the houses of Roskelyn and Stuart will doubtless lead you in a more proper path than can be pointed out by Monteith, or, if you please, by M Crae, the outlaw.'

'Perish the name!' said she, 'and with it the accursed phantom pride that ever fixed me a Roskelyn! St. Clair,' added she, with softness, 'thou once said, thou wishest to lead me in the path of happiness: is the road for ever barred? can it never more be open to Ellen?'

'I trust it may; but I intrude on your patience; I will retire.'

'Say, rather, I intrude on you. Is it possible that the man, who hath so often sworn everlasting love and truth to me alone, should be so insensible to my happiness?'

'I turned from her with disgust, and approaching the door, called aloud upon M'Lellan, ordering him to lead the way to the tower.

'The countess remained in silent rage; M'Lellan obeyed; and thus ended our second conference.

'Now, marry,' said De Bourg, 'hadst thou not called in M'Lellan to defend thy virtue, I know not what might have been the consequence; why, thou stock, thou man of marble, had I been in thy place, I would have returned home in a week; nay, hadst thou loved thy wife, thou couldst never have acted so foolishly.'

'Why what would you have done?' said Ambrosine.

'Done!' repeated the chevalier; 'why, in the first place, I would not have affronted a fair lady: Joseph is no prototype for me: my garment should never have witnessed against me; a man may as well be blamed for something as for nothing.

'In faith I believe thee,' said Hamilton. 'But proceed, Monteith; the infamy of that woman is almost without example—at her age, too, when it might be supposed that the warmth of youth had given place to matronly feelings.'

'Poor woman,' said Ambrosine, 'a slave to her vices, they reign with uncontrolled power over her; had she met with a husband, who, by knowing what was due to his own honour, had, in the early period of their marriage, curbed her follies, she might have proved a better wife, a more tender mother, and a more respectable member of society.'

'Thank Heaven, that task was not reserved for me,' answered Monteith; 'outlawry, imprisonment, nay, death itself, would be preferable to passing even a short period with a woman of such unlicensed passions. But to proceed, though I shall shorten the infamous relation as much as possible.'

'We had, after this, several conferences, the purport of which, I truly believe, M'Lellan suspected, from some sly words that escaped him. At times she was calm and soothing; at others, the natural bent of her disposition predominated, and she threatened to give me up to the dowager and her son. My conduct was, indeed, more calculated to increase than assuage her anger; and I have no doubt but that a secret death would have concealed her shame and my imprisonment, had not Randolph and our friends released me.

'In one of our conferences, she went so far as to say, that she despised and detested her lord; threw the blame on me for not preventing her marriage, and placed all her subsequent imperious conduct to disappointed love and revenge; cursed my wife; and finally offered to fly with me to any part of the world I chose.

'No gratitude softened my refusal, but horror gave bitterness to my words; and with roughness I bade her remember that she was my brother's wife.

'Your brother!' repeated she with acrimony; 'doth he deserve that title, or doth the dowager deserve the name of mother? for the first *believed*, the justice of your claim, while he contested it; and the last *knows* its justice, while she *denies* it. I remem-

ber thou saidst, I might be the *nominal*, but never the *real* countess of Roskelyn; I acknowledge that truth, and feel my borrowed honours sit so heavily upon me, that I would willingly resign them.'

'You have no right,' answered I; 'your children are born to expect them, and never shall my claim disturb their possessions; for I abjure the name of Roskelyn for ever, both for me and mine.'

'I thank you for them,' answered she, contemptuously; 'in *my* hands is the only proof that can injure them, there it shall remain.'

'We parted with mutual discontent on both sides; and after this discourse, I enjoyed the satisfaction of not seeing her for a whole week. At the end of that period, she again informed me, that she should give me up to the family of Roskelyn: at least inform them that I was in her power.'

'Do so,' replied I; 'but remember, James is no more; and the young king already begins, I understand, to think for himself; my estates have been restored, and, though even secret murder should remove me, I have sons to claim my right, and who hereafter, I have no doubt, will have courage to defend it; my death, therefore, can be of no avail to the house of Roskelyn; neither do I think the dowager or her son would stain their hands with my blood, however they might wish to devote me to poverty and shame. The deed must therefore rest with thee, and let it be speedy; thou hast myrmdons ever ready, and this castle will be the proper scene, as it hath heretofore been of my folly and thy ingratitude.'

'Reproach me, Monteith!' exclaimed she; 'a thousand times more welcome to my ears is the sound of reproach than contempt; nay, I will assist thy memory: thou savedst my life at Dumfries; in this hall didst thou pay my father's debts, and afterwards a double sum at Edinburgh; in this hall didst thou plight to me thy faith, and I did accept it; and

in this hall, in an accursed hour, did I break my faith to thee, and gave my hand where I could not bestow my heart. Canst thou say more? In the castle of Roskelyn,' continued she, 'covered with jewels, I was miserable; my heart, in spite of myself, was Monteith's; and, however double the acrimony, I endeavoured to conceal the painful truth, the warmth with which Ambrosine spoke of thee, stung me to madness; and truly did she say, that '*the proud dames of the south, under their silken canopies, would envy the wife of the outlaw of Barra.*'

'I weary myself in repeating the extravagances of this woman; suffice it, they were all of the same purport, either raging with passion and revenge, or in her milder moments, offering meliberty, on condition of being my companion.'

'The last three weeks, however, her conduct was more reserved and thoughtful; and no doubt, her mind was employed how to dispose of me, that her disgrace might never be discovered. She may, however, rest in security. Never again will I shame myself by the recital; and, for Randolph's sake, let us, if possible, bury her frailties in oblivion.'

'Willingly on my part,' said Ross, 'for the only injury I sustained in the business, save my fears for you, were a few days of hunger.'

While Monteith was relating to his friends the derogatory conduct of the countess, Randolph, with Philippa and James, had climbed a hill on the seashore, where James diverted himself with the exercise of his bow, while the two former sat upon the height, viewing the vast expanse of sea and sky,— 'Brother,' said Philippa, 'why art thou serious above thy usual custom? thou wishedest to hear my father's story, and, though he has been unjustly treated, there is nothing now to grieve thee; for we have him safe at home, and I doubt not but that he will be careful in future.'

'I trust he will,' answered Randolph.

'What then makes thee sigh, and caused thee to be so silent as we walked ?'

'Nay, I know not : my own folly, perhaps.'

'Whate'er it be, if it makes thee sad, I will gladly bear a part—may I not know the cause ?'

'Sweet sister,' replied Randolph, 'I shame almost to tell thee my thoughts, though I know, at my request, thou wilt not reveal them, as they might displease my father.'

'Never to injure thee, Randolph ; but perhaps thou hast mistaken something, for I am convinced thou art, if possible, lately doubly beloved by both our parents.'

'Yet, Phillippa, is it not strange that, in the recital of the events of my father's life, he never mentioned my mother ? Was she such a character that his heart shrunk at the idea, and his tongue refused to mention her name ? What is still more strange, he doth not appear to have had any former attachment, except his predilection in favour of the countess of Roskelyn.'

'It is strange, indeed,' answered she ; 'some reason, though doubtless not a material one, occasioned the omission. In my early youth, I ever thought my mother was thine ; but, after thy departure she undeceived me ; but, finding me curious, she cut the matter short, by saying—' Randolph is worthy thy most sisterly affection : his blood is noble on the side of his mother, as well as of his father, and never, I predict, will he disgrace it.'

'If so,' answered Randolph, 'the more wonderful it should be concealed ; yet our friends, when I mentioned the circumstance once to them, assured me the same.'

'I will relate to thee an observation I made during my mother's sickness, which has led me to form a conjecture, which I, however, never before disclosed. Sir Alexander M'Gregor visited us ; and to him she recommended us all, but most particularly

thee.—'See,' said she, 'my noble friend, that dear boy hath his right, if ye would that Monteith's soul and mine should rest : for his claim on the house of M'Gregor, if he prove the generous lad I think him, never will he accept it.' Sir Alexander swore to what my mother required ; but no further explanation took place : but it hath given me an idea that I will disclose to thee ; What claim canst thou have on the house of M'Gregor, unless by thy mother ? and tenderness, or some other cause, may make our father cautious of naming her before James M'Gregor, whose sister, I conclude, she was.'

'Dearest Phillippa, thy understanding far outstrips thy years ; for I have no doubt thou hast judged rightly and the thought gives me pleasure : what also corroborates the surmise, is, that I am named after Randolph.'

James Monteith, weary with his sport, at that moment joined them, and they retook their way to the fortress, both entirely convinced, that their sagacity had discovered the secret that had so long puzzled the mind of Randolph to develope.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

WHILE peace, health, and harmony, reigned among the inhabitants of the rude and uncultivated coast of Barra, sorrow, disease, and death, visited the gilded chambers of the castle of Roskelyn. For after the escape of Monteith from the power of the countess, her vexation and despair were in some measure diverted into another channel, by a messenger arriving to inform her, that her son lay at the point of death, from an epidemic fever.

To the great joy of Jean, she departed on the ensuing day, but reached the castle only in time to

hear the groans of her agonized lord, and the cries of his mother ; who, two hours before her arrival, had witnessed the death of the heir to their vast possessions. Though the countess possessed none of the tender feelings which distinguished a mother, the death of her son gave a blow to her consequence, which made her at once weep for him and for herself ; should her lord likewise die, an event she before was regardless of, the loss of her son had placed an insuperable bar to her future power ; for, as the estate was confined to the male line, the Lady Matilda could only claim a fortune befitting her rank and name ; 'tis true, she herself might yet bear children ; but as, for the last twelve years, no event of that sort had taken place, she despaired of so desirable a circumstance.

The death of Lord John sat heavily on the heart of his father ; but yet more so on the dowager, who, now approaching to sixty, began to find that her days were numbered, and that a review of her past life afforded no consolation either for the present or for the future. For her son's wife, she loved her not ; even their similarity of disposition made them foes ; for, both haughty, vindictive, and overbearing, neither would yield sway to the other. No sooner, therefore were the rites of the church performed, and the dead youth deposited with the ashes of his ancestors, than the dowager retired to an estate she had in the vicinity of Stirling, and there alone brooded over her sorrows.

Not so the countess ; a short time removed from her even the semblance of sorrow ; and her lord, still a slave to the fascination of her charms, again submitted to the yoke of her tyrant spirit.

Fearful lest he, by some other less palliating means, might learn the capture of Monteith, she herself informed him of it, and also of his subsequent flight ; but the motive she gave for her conduct was far wide of truth. Vexed, she said, at being at vari-

ance with her lord, she was resolved to shew him that his interest was still dear to her, by seizing of his greatest enemy, whom she meant to resign to him, had she not been disappointed by his escape.

'Right glad am I that he did so,' replied the Earl ; 'the estate of Roskelyn is enough for me : by will he is truly my uncle's heir ; and for some cause we are afflicted ; let us tempt the anger of heaven no farther.'

Whatever were the intentions of the countess, who still languished for revenge, she, for the present, concealed her rancour, and seemed to act in perfect acquiescence with her lord.

The confusion over which the death of Lord John occasioned, Jean requested her dismissal, which was granted with some difficulty by her mistress, who, however, ere they parted, proved the truth of the adage, that guilt is ever suspicious ; for, looking on her sternly, she said—' Let whatever passed during my absence from the castle of Roskelyn be a secret, or thou and I are foes.'

The first gust of grief passed, the Lord Roskelyn formed a plan for visiting England—a scheme that entirely met with the approbation of the countess, as it would enable her to display that grandeur which constituted the whole of her happiness.

Lord Roskelyn's motives were different ; he had spared no pains or expense many years before, and had even sent messengers over the neighbouring kingdom, to make inquiry after his son, but all without effect ; and though he could not flatter himself with being more successful, yet he resolved to make the trial, were it only to divert his mind from the loss he had recently sustained.

During their absence, Lady Matilda was to be placed with the dowager ; and all being prepared, with a splendour befitting the countess's wishes, six months after their son's death, they took their way to England.

In the meantime Monteith was informed by Sir Alexander M'Gregor of all that had passed; but did not rejoice at the death of his enemy's child, but he plainly foresaw that whenever he choose to bring Randolph forward, he would be received as the immediate gift of Heaven.

Three years passed, which completed the manly person of Randolph. Tall and well-formed, his body was strong and active, and his features such as at once commanded esteem and respect; while his temper, not to disgrace so fair an exterior, was brave, noble, generous, and humane. The friends of his youth were still beloved with the same ardour; but his partiality for Phillippa was still more evident, and such as could not have failed to have given pain to Monteith and his wife, had they not foreseen from it the most flattering consequences.

The graces of Phillippa also began to be known far beyond the narrow bounds of Barra, while she herself, like the unconscious rosebud, bloomed only among the kindred of her parent tree, nor wished to diffuse her charms beyond it.

In the youthful James and St. Clair, Monteith could not fail to retrace his own boyish days; the same person, the same character, distinguished them: so that he would sometimes say to his wife, 'By heavens! Ambrosine, were I inclined to say thou playdest me false, these boys would give me the lie to the whole world, which would sooner believe them not to be thine than mine; for thy alabaster skin, thy soft blue eyes, and thy amber locks, thou hast bestowed on Phillippa alone.'

'In that case, then, fortune hath been doubly kind,' she replied; 'for they not only save my reputation, but are what I warmly wished. Randolph also favours thee strongly; but thou and he are true Monteiths, as his mother used to observe of him: but that is easily accounted for: ye both resemble the dowager, except that dame Nature, considering her sex, hath bestowed on her a fairer complexion.'

The rude wind and a threatening sky one evening having forced a small vessel to seek shelter in the haven of Vatersa, the crew and passengers came on shore, when one of the latter asked several questions respecting Monteith and his family, of whom, he said, he had heard much, and that he should have thanked rather than lamented the storm, had it brought him to the knowledge of one he was so anxious to see.

'Marry, master,' replied one of the islanders, 'and ye would have made you right welcome, for he hath a princely spirit; so, in faith, have they all; for, as we say in the islands—'Go to Barra sad, ye will come back glad.' Not a nobler heart ever beat in a human bosom; and, for his wife and children, they are the flowers of the country; I'll be bold to say, all Scotland cannot match the lads; then, for the Lady Phillippa, kings might stake their crowns for her good-will.'

'My good fellow, thou inflamest my curiosity. Is there no way to reach the island? the distance is short.'

'Not more than two miles to the tower of M'Leod; and if so be that thou art willing, I have a stout sea-boat, that shall safely carry you.'

'I thank you, and will accept your offer.' So saying, he gave a piece of gold to the islander, who prepared his boat, which the stranger entering with two of his followers, they soon reached Barra.

'Now, my friend, I must farther trouble you to greet the chief from me. Say that a stranger from the Orkneys, Lord of Ronaldsa, prays his hospitality this rough night.'

'Marry will I; but, were you not a lord, he might perhaps like you better; for he hath had some scurvy tricks played him by some of your brethren: yet, as you are an islander, that may make a difference.'

'I trust it will; bear ye the message—I will here wait your return.'

The islander immediately hastened to the fortress where he had no sooner delivered his errand, than St. Clair sent Randolph and James to bid the stranger welcome.

Of the outlaws of Barra the Lord of Ronaldsa had heard much; but his expectation fell far short of the reality, for he found men whose understanding would have bettered the councils of their country, whose manners might have graced its courts, and whose skill and bravery would have led its armies to conquest.

His own disposition was noble and courteous; he therefore soon conciliated the friendship of his hosts and the evening passed gaily. At supper they were joined by the Lady Ambrosine and Phillippa, the former of whom repeated his welcome with a grace he had seldom witnessed.

The repast ended, the wife of Monteith, at her husband's request, took her harp, as Phillippa did her lute, which accompanying with their voices, the Lord of Ronaldsa exclaimed, in a rapture—'By Heaven, I would give half my lands to be an outlaw among ye: When James the first sent ye hither, he doomed ye to paradise, not to punishment.'

'How can it be otherwise,' replied De Bourg, bowing to Ambrosine and her daughter, 'when we dwelt with angels?'

'True,' said Monteith, laughing; 'but he sent no angels with us; they were the gift of Heaven.'

'Would to fortune, then,' answered the chevalier, 'that Heaven had been more bountiful in the number!'

Ambrosine again tuned her harp and sung, as did also Phillippa, with Randolph and her brother James, till near the hour of midnight, when Ambrosine, rising, said—'The night is far spent, and our noble guest, from the fatigues of the day, must be weary.'

'Lady,' replied he, 'when I came hither this

evening, I thought I was so; but ye possess the power of turning pain to pleasure; for I never felt less fatigue in my life than at the present moment.'

Ambrosine bowed, and, with her daughter, retired, while Monteith attended his guest to his chamber, and wished him good repose.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

FOR some days the weather proved stormy—a circumstance the Lord of Ronaldsa was not sorry to profit by, to prolong his stay at Barra. Young, rich, and uncontrolled master of himself, he felt a strong predilection for the inhabitants of the fortress, and most particularly for Phillippa; so that he seized the opportunity to entreat the interest and consent of the chief and Ambrosine to addressing their daughter.

'My Lord,' answered Monteith, 'you do me honour, and I feel the obligation as I ought; for you generously wave the distance between your rank and the daughter of a banished man. Of the Lord of Ronaldsa, though not before personally known, I have heard much, and my consent cannot fail to sanction your wishes, should you succeed in gaining that of my daughter. Young and unaccustomed to any company but that of her own family and my friends, who to her are as so many fathers, I rather fear she will for the present decline all change. I will, however, frankly lay your merits before her, and give her my opinion; but the decisive reply must come from herself; for in the state of marriage, which of all others I have found most happy, I conceive the parties as the first and most proper agents.'

Ambrosine coincided with her husband, and received the thanks of the Lord of Ronaldsa, who felt they had said all that a man of probity could expect from the parents of a beloved child.

To break the business to Philippa was the task of the lady Ambrosine, who, being alone with her daughter the ensuing morning, said carelessly—'The weather still detains our noble guest; what thinkest thou of him, Philippa?'

'He is a handsome and portly man,' replied she; 'think you not so, mother?'

'I do,' answered Ambrosine.

'Bridget tells me,' resumed Philippa, 'that he has been lavish in his generosity to the men and maidens of the fortress, and that his followers speak of him as an honour to his rank.'

'Though I like not my guests to pay for their entertainment,' replied Ambrosine, 'yet his conduct betokens an open heart; and when a noble's vassals speak well of him, 'tis a good sign.'

'They also say,' continued Philippa, 'that he is greatly beloved in the Orkneys, for his liberality and kindness: all of which accounts have tended to make me respect him.'

'They have the same effect upon me,' replied Ambrosine.

'Then,' said Philippa, 'he presumes not on his rank; he apparently honours my father, and looks upon you with an admiration which makes me love him.'

'I rejoice to find you in this opinion,' replied Ambrosine; 'for he thinks equally well of you.'

'Dear mother, I am glad to hear it; did he say so to you?'

'Yes, and to your father. So well he thinks of you, Philippa, that he yesterday made to your father an offer of taking you for his bride.'

'His bride?' repeated Philippa with astonishment, and a quick but hesitating voice; 'his bride. In truth, I would the winds had borne him anywhere but to Barra, if, in requital for my father's hospitality, he wishes to take away his daughter.'

'You speak without reflection; his offer, whether you accept or decline it, does you honour.'

'Dear mother, I decline it then if you please; I shall never again see him with patience.'

'That as you list, so that you see and treat him as your father's guest.'

'Nay, now,' said Philippa, 'you speak as if you were displeased; I pray ye pardon me; I would love him if I could, but—'

'But what, Philippa? didst thou not say he was handsome and portly?'

'Ye—ye—yes,' said she hesitating, 'but that was only on a cursory view: I think he is much too fair for a man, and his blue eyes, though large, are heavy; and—he is not near so tall as Randolph.'

'I did not indeed observe him so accurately; but, supposing those defects to exist, if they are defects, they neither lessen the generosity thou talkest of, nor the honour that thou saidst graced his rank.'

'No; but if he had an end to gain, the one may easily be explained; and of his honour, we have only the testimony of his followers.'

'They seldom exaggerate the virtues of their masters,' answered Ambrosine; 'didst thou not also say, that thou didst respect him for his kindness to his dependants in the Orkneys?'

'That we are not assured of, dear mother.'

'If you were you could then love him,' said Ambrosine, 'especially as he appears to honour thy father, and to admire me.'

'Dear lady, I fear not; I never can love any man sufficiently to leave you.'

'That objection might be removed, by our occasionally residing with each other; what say you to that?'

'Nothing—only that I love him not, nor ever can.'

'That answer is decisive; well, since neither the person nor deserts of the lord of Ronaldsa meet thy liking, wilt thou tell me thy criterion of merit and

beauty, that I may hereafter judge, when I meet a man that may suit thee?"

'Dear mother, you mock me; I can admire no man that doth not resemble my father or Randolph.'

'The model is then fixed I find,' replied Ambrosine.

'I dread my father will be displeased with me, in which case I shall hate the lord of Ronaldsa: but if you, dear lady, would speak a little in my favour, he would at once excuse me.'

Monteith at that moment entered the chamber.—'If I do not intrude upon you,' said he, 'I come to inquire whether you have consulted Phillippa on the business of yesterday?'

Phillippa turned away her blushing face in silent confusion.

'I have,' answered Ambrosine; 'and before she knew the lord of Ronaldsa's offers, she decked him with every grace and virtue: those once known, she stripped him again so completely that not a vestige of either remained. In short, he suits not her fancy: she will have no husband that doth not resemble thee or Randolph.'

'Dear mother,' said Phillippa, 'you are not very angry, or you would not jest; why should not my liking accord with yours?'

'I grieve, Phillippa, thou dost not see this young lord with the eyes I wish,' answered Monteith, 'for I truly believe him as virtuous as noble: and we should take him to be assured he was truly so, before we entrusted the happiness of our child to his keeping. Reconsider this business—there is no haste: I should joy to bestow thee on a brave and noble husband.'

'Not on him, dear father!' exclaimed she; 'I wish to live and die with you.'

'My love,' replied Monteith, 'marriage is a duty which we owe to our families and to society; and the

securest asylum for a young and virtuous woman is the arms of a beloved and affectionate husband. Should Heaven please to remove thy mother and me, thou wilt need that protection.'

'The saints forbid that I should live to see that day!' replied she; 'but should it be so, dear father, have I not brothers? Randolph would sooner perish than let any one offend me.'

'The die is cast,' said Monteith, in a low voice, to his wife: 'heaven bring it to a happy issue!' Then turning to his daughter, he added—'We love thee too well, Phillippa, to do more than advise in this business. I shall truly return to the Lord of Ronaldsa thy answer; but, though thou canst not see him as a lover, remember he is my friend.'

Phillippa promised obedience: and kissing her parents, begged leave to retire—a request that was immediately granted.

'The die is indeed cast, as thou observest,' said Ambrosine to Monteith. 'Never, as I should judge, will that dear child love any other than Randolph; innocent and unsuspecting of guile, her heart readily declares its dictates, which, if it be for her own and his happiness, I should rejoice to see accomplished.'

CHAPTER XXXIX.

ON leaving her parents Phillippa hastened through the gallery of the fortress to her chamber, but, in the midway, was met by Randolph. In the confusion of the moment, she would have passed: but accosting her, he said—'My dear sister, you are in tears: tell me, I conjure you, the cause; are you ill, or has ought happened to our parents or friends?'

'No; I am not quite well—something hath vexed me; I shall be better speedily. I will retire to my chamber, and collect my spirits.'

'Tell me first what has agitated thee thus? Nay, I will know,' added he, detaining her. 'Thy eyes are swollen with weeping.'

'Nothing: a trifle not worth thy knowing.'

'Then why so cautiously conceal it? I am curious. Intrust me, I pray thee, with this trifle.'

Phillippa blushed. 'The Lord of Ronaldsa—' said she, hesitating.

'Speak—what of him?' said Randolph, impetuously.

'He hath—nay, I shame to tell thee—'

'Shame to tell me!' replied Randolph: 'shame to tell me!' repeated he; 'for Heaven's sake, speak; thou distractest me!'

'The Lord of Ronaldsa hath vexed me to death.'

'Then I will vex him to death,' loosing her garment, which he before held, and grasping his sword. 'Sorrow light on him. Is this a requital for my father's hospitality?'

As he concluded he attempted to quit her, but, snatching his tartan, she said—'Thou art too hasty, and misconceived me. Lord Ronaldsa hath done nothing worthy anger.'

'Nothing worthy my anger!' repeated he. 'Why, didst thou not say he had vexed thee to death, and did I not see thy tears? Thou triflest with me, Phillippa.'

'No, on my life: but it is so awkward to tell thee that—that he hath—'

'What hath he done or said?' interrupted Randolph, impatiently.

'He hath had,' replied she, blushing, 'the impertinence to—'

Randolph snatched his tartan from her grasp, and was again hastily leaving the gallery, when, running after him, she added, 'To ask my father's consent to make me his bride.'

'To make thee his bride! his bride, didst thou say?' his hand falling from his sword, and stopping

short, as if recalled to sudden recollection:—'His bride! I think thou saidst?—nothing more?'

'Nothing more!' repeated she. 'Was not that enough, that he should wish to take me from—my parents?'

Randolph paused. 'Dear sister,' at length said, he, 'what did they say to the offer?'

'They wished me to love him, but I could not; and so, with their usual tenderness they excused me.'

'They are, indeed, kind; but the Lord of Ronaldsa is both handsome and a gallant man.'

'I care not what he is, so he leaves us speedily. Dost thou, too, wish me to wed this strange man? Fie upon thee, Randolph! I thought thou lovedst me better.'

'I love thee a thousand times more than myself, dear Phillippa; but, though I never before reflected on the subject, thou must sometime marry, and I should, therefore, wish to see thee the wife of a noble and good man, which the Lord of Ronaldsa is said to be.'

Phillippa's tears again flowed—'What necessity is there,' said she, 'that I should wed at all? can I not live with my parents and brothers all my life? But thou, selfish Randolph, art afraid I should be troublesome to thee; thou also, I suppose must some time marry: then thou wilt think no more of thy sister.'

'When I cease to think of thee, I shall cease to think at all. Dry thy tears; our parents will never wish thee to wed against thy liking. As to the Lord of Ronaldsa, he will leave as soon as the weather permits.'

'I will pray for a favourable wind,' answered she, 'not that I bear him any anger, but rather good will, provided he would be kind enough not to love me.'

Randolph made no reply.

'You do not speak,' continued she, 'nay, then, I see you are displeased with me. It was enough to have crossed my parents, without having your anger added to it.'

'Sweet Phillippa,' answered he, clasping his arms about her, 'I never felt displeased with thee in my life.'

'Well, then,' replied she, kissing his cheek, 'we are friends, and I am happy. I will retire to my chamber; only remember, Randolph, should my father consult thee, take thy sister's part; for I would sooner die than wed this Lord of Ronaldsa.'

Randolph promised observance, and she left him. For a considerable time after, he walked up and down the gallery, with his arms folded, and in deep reflection, but, seeing Monteith and the Lord of Ronaldsa on the shore, he descended and joined them.

Monteith had declined the young Lord's alliance in his daughter's name, but in such gentle and palliating terms, that though he felt grieved at the disappointment, no displeasure could be mixed with it.

As Randolph approached them, Ronaldsa said to Monteith—'Noble chief, although I cannot aspire to the happiness of being of your kindred, I claim an interest in your son: I am not many years his elder, and I will love him for his sister's sake.'

Randolph was confused.

'Generous lord,' replied he, 'I will love you for your own; my sister Phillippa is too young as yet to estimate your worth.'

Monteith was pleased to see them friends, and saying all that he supposed might contribute to their mutual esteem, they walked to the fortress.

At dinner, an appearance of restraint was visible in Ronaldsa, Phillippa, and Randolph, though each esteemed the other; it, however, insensibly wore off; and, towards evening, the wind proving fair,

the first-named proposed to leave the island the ensuing day; Monteith insisted to the contrary; and all conspiring to banish the recent disappointment from the mind of the guest, the evening passed agreeably.

On withdrawing to their chambers, Randolph threw himself on the bed, but instead of composing himself to rest, passed the night in a frame of mind he had never before experienced; a thousand tormenting ideas arose on his fancy and banished sleep, until the morning bell called together the residents of the fortress, and warned him to rise, when, with pale cheeks and a fevered brain, he descended to the hall.

On his entrance, his altered countenance caught the eye of Phillippa.—'Dear brother,' said she, 'what ails thee? thy face is pale, and thy eyes sunk; thou art not well; I pray ye, look at him dear mother.'

Randolph forced a smile.—'Phillippa,' replied he, 'I had evil dreams last night, and they have made me pale.'

'Ridiculous! thou mockest me.'

'Nay,' replied he, 'say not so; didst not thou answer me thus, some mornings back, when I thought thee ill?'

'Yes; but thou carest not for dreams, and I am sure thou art sick.'

'Not unless you can persuade me to be so; for I feel no inconvenience; so I pray you, dear sister, to let it rest till I complain.'

All observed the changed looks of Randolph, but, as he denied it, remained silent: though Monteith and his wife, who both watched him narrowly, observed he did not partake of the repast, yet he evidently endeavoured, by a forced cheerfulness, to make it pass unnoticed.

The breakfast concluded, drawing Monteith aside he said—'Dear father, may I crave a private con-

versation with you for a short time? I have a proposal to make, which, I trust, will meet your approbation.

Monteith assented; and leaving the party, he quitted the hall, followed by Randolph.

On entering a chamber, Monteith waited for Randolph to begin; but for a time, he appeared irresolute; at length he said—'Forgive me, dearest, best of parents! but I wish to leave the fortress.'

'To leave the fortress,' replied Monteith, with astonishment; 'from what cause, I pray you, and that too so suddenly?'

'I am of an age to shew myself worthy the father who gave me life, and who has rendered that life estimable by his kindness. The Lord of Ronaldsa says, that a projected marriage between the young king of Scots and Mary the niece of Charles the Bold, hath rendered the English suspicious and ripe for fresh commotions, should it take place: in which case Monteith's son hath to earn a right to the noble name he bears.'

'My brave lad, thou meetest my wishes; but all is yet quiet: should it prove otherwise, thou shalt win honour and wear it. I daily expect Sir Alexander M'Gregor; in case of war thou shalt commence thy career under his banner.'

'The Lord of Ronaldsa will leave us in a day or two; could I not, dear father, go with him?'

'Thou astonishest me; what have we done, that thou art in such haste to leave us? till this hour I thought we were all dear to thee; but I was mistaken.'

'Dear!' repeated Randolph; 'heaven knows how dear! more precious to my heart than life or liberty!'

'Then why leave us till necessity calls?'

'For the love of heaven press not my stay; I am unworthy your affection: I hate myself.'

Somewhat of the true cause struck across the

mind of Monteith. 'Nay, then,' replied he, 'thou shalt away with Sir Alexander, whom I expect the first fair wind; but till then, be patient. For thy reasons I ask no more: I would be a father, not an inquisitor.'

Randolph threw himself at Monteith's feet, and pressed his hand to his lips.

'Randolph,' continued the chief, 'the road to honour is sometimes painful, but the end achieved, the reward is certain. Thou art young, and any error or folly contracted in thy boyish days will be obliterated in the active life thou wilt embrace.'

Randolph trembled, lest a secret which only his heart whispered, and of which the most transient idea made him shudder, had transpired, and become known to the chief; but, finding his demeanour calm, he replied—'I trust it will; Randolph will act worthy his blood, or cease to live.'

Monteith embraced him. 'Well,' said he, 'now let the matter rest; I expect thy obedience in waiting for Sir Alexander: but should there be no opportunity to distinguish thyself, when may we expect thee back to Barra?'

'When I deserve that happiness I can return with honour,' replied Randolph.

'Thy absence will not then belong,' said St. Clair, 'and should, at any time, these womanish weaknesses oppress thee, remember my words, (and I am not given to flatter,) we shall meet in a more propitious hour, when, if thou art not happy, it will be thine own fault.'

As Monteith concluded, he left the apartment before Randolph could reply.

'Best of men,' exclaimed he, 'how dost thou try to palliate and soothe an emotion, which, though thou seest, thou canst not conjecture the cause! No, thy heart is too pure to guess at such depravity; till yesterday, myself could not have suspected it. Would that Sir Alexander were come, and the

cruel, but necessary separation over! then Philippa, sister, most beloved, never shall my eyes behold the happy scene of my boyish days till thou art wedded. Lie still thou throbbing heart; know honour for thy master; for I *will* conquer thee or perish.'

For some time he remained alone, struggling to compose his agitation, and at length succeeded sufficiently to return to the hall.

Monteith saw, with satisfaction, that his spirits were more calm: for he entered into conversation with the lord of Ronaldsa, and asked his destination when he reached Scotland.

'Though no courtier,' replied Ronaldsa, 'I shall first visit Stirling, where I believe the young king now is. My arm and fortune are devoted to his cause; for the oppression of his nobles during his minority has filled me with detestation and contempt. The chancellor and the governor are both declared traitors, and from the king they can expect no favour.'

Randolph informed him that he had obtained his father's consent to list under the banner of Sir Alexander M'Gregor; in which case, he hoped they should meet again.

Ronaldsa seconded the wish; and the elders entering into details of the contests in which they had been engaged, the young men, warmed at the recital, for a time forgot, the one his recent disappointed and the other his recent anxiety.

Though the weather proved clear, and the wind favourable, Monteith prevailed with the Lord of Ronaldsa to remain a few days longer, during which period Sir Alexander M'Gregor arrived. He was received with joy by the whole party, and, somewhat recovered from his fatigue, entered into a full account of the contentions which reigned through Scotland.

Livingstone, he informed them, had fallen upon the scaffold: the queen-mother was dead: and James,

now eighteen, had taken into his own hands the supreme power, and consented to espouse, on the recommendations of Charles, king of France, the daughter of the Duke of Guelders—a step which would not fail to awaken the jealousy and ancient animosity of the English.

'I rejoice to hear it,' answered Randolph, 'as our swords will not then rust in their scabbards. Lord Ronaldsa and myself will start for fame together; and much rather would I be engaged with foreign foes than in those civil commotions that so often distract the country.'

'To your care, Sir Alexander,' said Monteith, 'I resign Randolph: he hath completed his twentieth year, and, eager for glory, I know not where he can sooner achieve it, than under your banner.'

'Right welcome shall he be,' answered M'Gregor, 'heretofore beloved for your sake, Monteith, and my brother's—hereafter for his own.'

As the veteran spoke he held out his hand to Randolph, who from Phillippa's words, had long persuaded himself he was allied to the M'Gregors, and raising the chief's hand to his lips, replied—'I trust I shall neither disgrace the name of Monteith, nor that of M'Gregor.'

'I will answer thou wilt not,' replied Sir Alexander, 'nor any other name, however great.'

'Noble chief,' said Ronaldsa, addressing St. Clair, 'I am a soldier of fortune: I have no father, nor warlike relative to direct my steps. Your kindness hath taught me to be intrusive; I would your noble friend would admit me to his party.'

'Sir Alexander,' said Monteith, 'I present another petitioner, the Lord of Ronaldsa. I wished to call him son, but it cannot be; he is, however, high in my esteem, and his friendship does me honour.'

'Then will his friendship do me honour also,' replied Sir Alexander, taking the young lord's hand. 'Monteith, we shall now only wait for thee and thy

brave comrades: but as thou hast borne it nobly, shrink not now—the hour of triumph and liberty is at hand.

‘My mind whispers that it is,’ answered St. Clair: ‘Our hearts will, however, be with you.’

‘Father,’ said the youthful James Monteith, ‘I have had proof that you can forgive a runaway; I feel inclined to put your goodness to the test a second time.’

‘My dear lad,’ replied Monteith, ‘though I like thy ardour, in this case I charge thee obey me: thou art yet too young for the field, and in an encounter with men, mightest be disgraced by a defeat when neither courage nor skill might be wanting, but only the strength of maturer years.’

‘Truly observed,’ said Sir Alexander: ‘a short time, James, may give thee thy father for a leader; till then be patient.’

The discourse now became universal, and many of the residents of the fortress, who were not detained by law, resolved to take an active part in the expected war, and for which there were already great preparations made throughout Scotland.

After supper Sir Alexander informed them that Lord Roskelyn was returned from England: that his lady and himself were at continual variance; and that, in consequence, he had refused to let the Lady Matilda be removed from the dowager, who was said to devote herself to privacy and works of charity.

‘Nay, then,’ said De Bourg, ‘let the devil mourn, lest he be cheated of his due. But fifty chapels and a hundred convents cannot obliterate her guilt. She is, however, a proof that, though sin may be passing sweet to the taste, ’tis as hard of digestion as lead.’

‘What think the world of the Lady Matilda?’ said Ambrosine to Alexander.

‘Judging from her youth,’ replied he, ‘they augur well at present: they bespeak her beautiful, gentle, and humane.’

‘Marry,’ said De Bourg, ‘I wonder from whom she inherited the last qualities.’

‘From heaven,’ replied Ambrosine: ‘all evil men have not bad children, nor all virtuous parents good ones. A wiser head than ours directs the whole. Adversity is a useful lesson: and the proud house of Roskelyn is, I hope, humbled for wise purposes. May the errors of the present possessors be buried with them, and the remembrance be effaced by the virtues of those who succeed: But come, Philippa, we will retire, and leave our friends to converse on their future prospects.’

So saying, she rose, and bidding all a good night, left them.

CHAPTER XL.

As Philippa sat alone with Ambrosine she said,— ‘Dear mother, think you not it would have been better for my brother Randolph to have remained at home some time longer, as then he might have had James for his companion in arms?’

‘Your father judges that James has not yet arrived at the strength necessary for defence; think you that plea would serve for Randolph?’

‘I believe not,’ replied Philippa; ‘but should we be so blest as to see my father at liberty, as Sir Alexander seemed to conjecture, Randolph would then have had him for a leader; in the meantime he could have—’

‘Remained at home,’ interrupted Ambrosine, ‘and thou couldst have taught him to sew; and had he been ingenious, he might in time have improved sufficiently to make tartans and vests for the whole fortress, and thus have saved the expense of a tailor—thinkst thou not he would have been most notably employed?’

'Dear mother, I meant no offence; you love Randolph as well as I, though you speak thus.'

'I love him too well, Phillippa, to wish him to idle his time in vain and inglorious fancies, and speak of him as I hereafter would of James and St. Clair; for sooner would I be said to be the proud mother of one dead hero, than the blushing mother of ten cowards.'

'Randolph will never be a coward; his search for his father hath already proved his character: would I were a boy, then should I go with him.'

'Thou wilt see him with double pleasure, should he return decked with honours bravely earned.'

'Heaven forefend that he should be slain! my heart sickens at the bare surmise—never more should I be happy; yet hath he vexed me more within these few last days, than he hath ever before done in his whole life.'

'How, I pray you?' demanded Ambrosine.

'I know he is displeas'd that I have refus'd the lord of Ronaldsa, and that makes him shun me. In truth, had a princess been offer'd to him, and he had not lov'd her, I would have been the first to take his part, and to deprecate the anger of others against him.'

'I do not doubt it,' said Ambrosine; 'but it is the duty of brothers to wish their sisters suitably wedded; and no objection could be found against Ronaldsa, couldst thou have lov'd him.'

'You lov'd my father above all men, and so must I the man I wed, or never wed at all.—I shall never forget your goodness, in suffering me to refuse him: I hope I shall never offend you while I live.'

'I am sure thou wilt not premeditately; but retire to rest, my love; I hear the guests rising in the hall; Heaven bless and guard thee!'

'The Virgin bless and guard your slumbers, dearest, best of parents,' returned Phillippa, kissing her, 'and make me worthy such a mother!'

Some few days after, the wind proving favour-

able, the whole party prepared to depart. Ambrosine bade Randolph farewell with her usual fortitude, though, as she embraced him, he felt a tear on his cheek.

'Go, my dear youth,' said she, 'I trust to honour and happiness. Long, long it may be ere we meet again, but remember thou hast in me a mother who hath lov'd thee from thy infancy, and who will ever act worthy that sacred title.'

Randolph kiss'd her hand, and bent his knee before her.

'When I forget your goodness may heaven forsake me!' said he. 'My sweet sister Phillippa is too much affected. Oh, Lady the love you bare me transfer for a while wholly to her, and teach her by your example, to bear an absence, however necessary, painful to me as death.'

Phillippa cover'd her face with her hands, but no word or sound of sorrow escap'd her.

'Sister,' resum'd Randolph, approaching her, 'I pray thee speak to me; let me bear thy good wishes with me, or I shall not prosper.'

Phillippa threw herself into his arms.

'Dearest, best of brothers,' said she, 'would at this moment I possess'd the power to add the amount of my days and happiness to the account of thine! but as that may not be, shouldst thou be devoted to the battle's rage, remember Barra and thy sister.'

Phillippa would have proceed'd, but her heart was too full for utterance, and she fainted on the bosom of her mother.

Monteith instantly took her in his arms, and bore her to her chamber, followed by Ambrosine; but speedily returning, and observing the strong emotion on the features of Randolph, he said gaily—

'Thank heaven the women are gone! for a man fights but coldly whose sword is muffled in a petticoat. Randolph, farewell! we part as men; when we meet again I trust to see a hero.'

Randolph returned his embrace ; and after clasping James and St. Clair to his bosom, he followed Sir Alexander and the party from the fortress.

They immediately embarked, and the wind proving favourable, they reached the main land in safety.

Though the wind continued fair for some time after the departure of Sir Alexander and his companions, yet, in about ten days the sky became overcast, and the waves vying in height with the mountains, presented a spectacle of affright and horror, from the pieces of wrecked vessels, barrels, and drowned bodies, which were thrown on the shore.

Commanding the rites of sepulture to be paid to the dead, Monteith and his companions ordered large fires to be made on the heights of the island ; and regardless of the storm, paraded the coast, to discover if any thing presented wherein they could be of service. On the second day, they descried a small vessel, which the waves at one moment appeared to throw up to the sky, and the next to precipitate into unfathomable abyss.

It evidently strove to reach the coast ; but all efforts were unavailing, nor could the islanders afford other assistance than, by their fire and flags, pointing out the most secure parts to the land. All direction was however vain ; the vessel was the sport of the waves, and at length struck on a rock at some distance from the island.

Though wrecked upon the most dangerous part of the coast, the humanity of the inhabitants mastered all selfish fear ; and Monteith, with his companions launching a strong sea boat, leaped on board, and as well as the waves would permit, steered towards them.

With infinite labour they reached the vessel, and fortunately saved the crew, consisting of five persons.

Before they again reached land, the vessel, which

was a small Danish trader, went to pieces. Having moored their boat, they conducted the strangers, who appeared common mariners, to the fortress, where they ordered them refreshment and to be conducted to rest.

Towards evening the storm began to abate ; and the friends supped joyously, from the reflection that they had saved five men, who, without their efforts, must ere that have been numbered with the dead.

The lady Ambrosine was also apparently cheerful ; but she sighed often, from the recollection that she might, but for the special protection of Heaven, have been at that moment a sorrowing widow.

The conflict her mind had sustained, when informed that Monteith and his friends had adventured out to sea, was not lost on Phillippa, who considered her behaviour with wonder and admiration ; for no word or complaint escaped her, though her pale cheek and strained eyes, bent towards the coast, showed where all her thoughts were centered.

As Phillippa looked on her thus fixed, she said, with tearful eyes—' Dear mother, give sorrow words, or it will break your heart ; look not towards the sea—it increases your uneasiness. The winds blow not so tempestuously ; the waves, I think, are not so rough : my father will, I trust, return in safety.'

' I trust he will ; but should he not, the deed will wait his soul to happiness. The debt of nature must be paid, Phillippa ; and whether now, or a few years hence, Heaven best knows.'

Watching from the fortress, they at length saw the boat reach the coast. Ambrosine, in silent joy and thankfulness, descended to the hall, while Phillippa, regardless of the bleak winds that whistled round her, or the falling rain, rushed out to meet her father, crying—' Welcome, welcome ! hasten forward, that my mother may be convinced you are safe ; she hath been the image of death during your absence.'

Monteith did not need twice pressing, but was agreeably surprised to meet Ambrosine at the entrance of the fortress. A soft smile playing upon her features, and throwing her arms around him, she said cheerfully—'Truant that thou art, thou hast alarmed me: but the past sorrow is lost in the present joy; I trust ye have adventured to some advantage.'

Monteith informed her of their success, and led her to the hall, where his companions joined them.

The ensuing morning, one of the strangers being unable to rise, St. Clair visited him in his chamber, and bade him want for nothing the fortress afforded. De Bourg accompanied the chief in this visit, while Ambrosine, and the rest of the inmates conversed with those that were more recovered in the hall.

The manner of the chief and De Bourg emboldened their guest to talk with freedom. A thousand times he thanked them for his preservation, and for their kindness and humanity. 'Noble masters,' continued he, 'I am no traveller. This was my first voyage; and no wealth shall ever tempt me to make another. I took grain to Denmark, and was bringing back iron, when this fearful storm beset us. By what I judge, I am in one of the Western Isles, but know not which.'

'Thou art in the tower of M'Leod, in the Isle of Barra,' said Monteith.

The man started. 'I pray ye, good sirs, pardon me; did ye not say the tower of M'Leod?'

'I did: but why ask you?'

'Pardon me, sirs, and I will tell you; but say, is this tower inhabited?'

'Seest thou not it is?' replied De Bourg.

'Yes truly; but many years ago, I heard a prophecy respecting the tower of M'Leod, though I then knew not where it was situated.'

'Did the prophecy say thou wert to be saved there?' said De Bourg, incredulously.

'No; I understood it not; but it surely alluded to higher blood than mine. It was the prediction of a seer of Roskelyn Glen, a native of the Isles. My father was a vassal of that house, and we thought it not prudent to reveal it.'

The curiosity of Monteith and De Bourg was raised. 'What, I pray you, did he say?' inquired Monteith.

'I cannot remember the exact words, for many years are past; but myself and one of my comrades, who heard the prophecy, declared it truly at the time to the priest at Inveresk. He wrote it carefully down, and no doubt it is now in the church books: but he bade us say nothing, as God's will would be fulfilled in his own time: and that revealing it might occasion evil.'

'What was the purport of it?' interrupted De Bourg, impatiently.

'The seer said,' resumed the man, 'that the tower of M'Leod was desolate, and only the habitation of birds; but that it soon would become the dwelling of an eagle, who, under his wings, should rear a bloody arm, on which should hang the future fate of Scotland.'

Monteith and De Bourg looked at each other with astonishment. 'Proceed,' said the first; 'what more?'

'He said,' resumed the man, 'what I have never before dared to name, that the proud house of Roskelyn should bow, till its greatest disgrace became its highest glory. He next spoke of a dreadful and bloody battle, and was so fearfully agitated, that, by my faith, my hair raised the cap off my head.'

'Is the account true?' said Monteith.

'Most true,' replied the man, 'or may heaven forsake me!'

'What is your name?' said Monteith.

'My name is Donald M'Kenzie, I was then a young man; it may be some twenty-two years since,

for I remember it was just before the Lord of Roskelyn wedded the daughter of Sir David Stuart.'

'This matter is strange enough,' said De Bourg, carelessly; 'and thy companion that also heard the prophecy, is he also living?'

'He is, and even yet he dwells on the state of Roskelyn.'

'This prophecy, thou sayest, is in the priest's book at Inveresk: but is it so wrapped up in mystery, that it may never be developed?'

'Truly, I should think so,' answered Donald, 'was it not for the truth respecting the Lord of Roskelyn's house,'

'Well, haste thee to regain thy strength,' said Monteith; 'we will contribute something towards repairing thy losses ere thou depart.'

With these words Monteith and De Bourg left him, and joined their companions in the hall, they having dismissed the mariners to the care of the domestics.

De Bourg immediately related the strange conversation that had occurred with Donald.—'By my soul,' said he, 'I should believe the whole to be a lie, but that I cannot suppose the fellow would have been shipwrecked on purpose to carry on the joke: again, should he by any means, which however does not appear, know St. Clair, and that the eagle is the ancient device of the house of Monteith, yet it is impossible he should surmise ought of Randolph, who is palpably meant by the bloody arm.'

'It is wonderful,' said Ambrosine; 'and I cannot help thinking that it bears some similitude to the words of the seer of the castle of Monteith, who alluded to a victory to be obtained by a *willing captive*.'

'By my faith,' said Monteith, 'but ye are turning soothsayers. What good spirits assist our Randolph, I care not; I trust he will be quit of evil ones;

a clear conscience and a strong sword are all that is necessary for a brave man. However, for the present let the matter rest; if ever we go to the Lowlands, we will satisfy ourselves if the report of the prophecy being inserted in the priest's books be true. What to me gives the strongest colour is, that I well remember our old steward Andrew had a brother who dwelt in the glen of Roskelyn; he was a man totally abstracted from the world, devoting himself to acts of piety, and leading a hermit's life, and was also, like Andrew, said to possess the gift of prophecy. All I would entreat is, that this event may remain unknown to the younger part of the family.'

The caution of Monteith was approved by all; and Ross, addressing him, said—'You have had your discoveries, and so have we: in the confusion of yesterday, I never recognized, among the men we rescued, one of the Danish crew that entrapped us; but to day I instantly recollected him; the fellow was a subaltern, and not among our assailants, which he informs me were entirely composed of M'Lellan's party.'

'Could he give you any new information respecting the business?' replied St. Clair.

'Yes: M'Lellan entirely transacted the whole: the countess was too good a politician to appear in it. M'Lellan told the captain of the Dane that we were traitors, whom he was employed by the state to seize, but that we were so powerfully supported in the islands, it was impossible to be achieved, unless by fraud, which might easily be effected, as we were continually sailing about the adjoining coast. Whether the captain believed this account, I know not; but his connivance was purchased by a present of nobles and demies, for which he took M'Lellan and his men on board: what passed afterwards needs no repetition.'

Phillippa with her brother, at that moment join-

ing them, the conversation ceased. Some days after, the shipwrecked men left them, in a vessel that put into Vatersa. The inhabitants of the fortress presented each with a small sum, but to Donald a sufficiency to make up his loss.

In the mean time, Sir Alexander and his party landed safely and proceeded to Stirling, to offer their services to the young king.—'I loved not his father,' said Sir Alexander, 'but he is gone to his account; and for this youth, the true heir of our kingdom, I will at once devote my arm and fortune. Should he hereafter prove a tyrant, I will forsake him; the fault will be his, not mine: I shall have done my duty to my country, and stand acquitted to God and my own conscience.

As they were to pass near the castle of Monteith, St. Clair prayed them to remain there a short time. The ruin and desolation that reigned around and within the noble mansion, struck them with sorrow, but Sir Alexander commanding several repairs to be made, it, before their departure, bore a more habitable appearance.

One of Randolph's first cares was to seek out the religious house in the valley, where, to his great satisfaction, he found father Thomas, still living, though bent with age, and his few scattered hairs and beard white as wool, or thistle-down. Randolph kneeled and received his benediction: but, when informed he was the son of St. Clair, the old man fell upon his neck and wept aloud.—'My son,' exclaimed he, 'mayst thou possess the bravery and humanity of thy father! but remember to temper courage with prudence, and to spread thy bounty with an open but not a prodigal hand. Oh, that my aged eyes could once more behold him! so long a banishment hath, I doubt not, surely changed him.'

'His friends say otherwise, father: his port is noble and erect, and his features bespeak him not more than my elder brother.'

'To Heaven be the praise, that hath not suffered his enemies to bereave him of life: I pray thee, bear him my blessing; to my last hour will I remember him in my orisons.'

'Dear father,' replied Randolph, 'the king's minority past, we nourish the most sanguine hopes of his liberation, and that of his companions, not one of whom will accept it singly.'

The friar was not soon weary of conversing with Randolph, who, on his part, regarded him with the reverence due to his habit, and as one of his fathers most respected friends; and, after passing some hours with him, left him, with a promise to see him daily while he remained at the castle.

CHAPTER XLI.

AFTER a stay of fourteen days, Sir Alexander desired his party to prepare for their departure; and, on the ensuing morning, they took the road to Stirling.

Arrived within two miles of Stirling, the sound of the bugle-horn struck on their ears, and a short time after, a stag passed them, so closely pursued by the hunters, that he rushed into a wide and rapid river, and swam over. Some of the dogs followed; but even the keenest of the sportsmen checked their horses, one excepted, who rode foremost, mounted on a beautiful and spirited hunter, and who, either from want of power to curb him, or from being warmed beyond prudence in the chase, leaped down an acclivity and took the water. Sir Alexander and his party had drawn aside to give them way, and to see the sport; but their attention was in a moment directed into another channel. The hunter who had leaped into the river, scared at the rapidity of the current, yielded to it.

and making a plunge, in a moment disengaged himself of his rider. The instant before a silent consternation had hung on all; but, on this sight, a universal cry of horror resounded from every quarter.

'The King! the king will be drowned!' exclaimed the whole party, rushing to the banks: but the danger repressed courage, while each looked on his fellow to offer succour. On the general outcry, Sir Alexander and his friends had approached, when, with an instantaneous movement, they saw Randolph throw himself from his horse, tear off his upper garment, and rush into the water. Again all was mute astonishment, though mingled with fear and admiration. Randolph swam with such dexterity, that soon enabled him to make a snatch at the king's mantle which, girded round him, alone appeared above water. The first effort proved vain, but the second was successful; when Randolph, finding that he had still some knowledge, said—'Fear nothing, my liege—I will save or perish with you;' so speaking, he supported him above water, until a sandbank, which reached out into the river, stopped their progress, and which, by turning the current of the water, enabled Randolph, though with infinite difficulty, to make good his landing, keeping hold of the king's mantle till he succeeded in getting him on the bank.

Randolph, though nearly exhausted, gave him all the succour in his power, so that, before the party of huntsmen and the company of Sir Alexander had reached them, the king opened his eyes, and being wrapped in the plaids of his surrounding nobles, was borne from the spot to the first dwelling. Randolph with his companions followed, and waited till they heard he was recovered, after which they proceeded to Stirling.

Sir Alexander was before inclined to be partial to Randolph; but from this act he favoured a decided

opinion that he was born, not only to be distinguished by rank, but also by valour and humanity. The Lord of Ronaldsa too, and all his companions, spoke highly of the action, while himself appeared unconscious of doing ought save a common duty.

The next day, at an early hour, a messenger arrived to Sir Alexander, who was known to some of the courtiers. He came by order of the king, and, in his name, requested his attendance, and also that of his young friend, whose name, however, they were unacquainted with. Sir Alexander received the summons with pleasure; and, calling for Randolph, they departed with the messenger.

By the way, he informed them that the king still remained at the house to which he had been taken the preceding day, and which appertained to the dowager countess of Roskelyn.

Sir Alexander started at this information, while Randolph, suddenly halting, his face flushed with crimson—'Noble Veteran,' said he, 'you will bear my duty to the king; my life, if need be, is at his command; but I cannot, with patience, see a woman who has so grossly and cruelly injured my father.'

'Randolph,' answered Sir Alexander, 'in the absence of your father, consider me in his place; were he here his command would be obedience. You must and shall see the young king. For the dowager, think of her as you list; but remember that age, and the world reports, repentance goad her. I am no priest, but the labour of a life might not have placed you in so distinguished a point of view as the single act of yesterday. Who knows what heaven may next design? The sight of a grandson may effect a revolution beyond your hope. You owe this duty to your father, if for yourself you decline it.'

'Sir Alexander,' replied Randolph, 'you shall be obeyed. Lead on—I follow; but if I see her, it will be with repugnance and hatred.'

'Pish!' said Sir Alexander, pleased to have so

easily vanquished his scruples; 'she is an old woman, and not expected to move those tender passions which would flutter about your heart at the sight of youth and beauty.'

'How could I avoid regarding the woman who gave birth to my honoured father, without respect and love, were she not the most abandoned and cruel of monsters?'

Again Randolph slackened his pace, and again Sir Alexander urged him with motives which he could not refute, till they found themselves at the gate of the dowager's mansion, where they were instantly admitted.

The king, informed of their arrival, ordered them to be conducted to the hall, where he sat, surrounded by the first nobles of his court, who had hastened from Stirling to pay their duty, and congratulate him on his safety. Among them were his hostess the dowager, and her granddaughter Matilda, the first of whom, even yet graceful and of noble demeanour, did the honours of her house with the dignity peculiar to herself. She well knew the partiality of the house of M'Gregor for Monteith; but this was an occasion in which the disputes of families could not occur; and as all saw in the youth, whom they supposed his son or near relative, the preserver of the king's life, she welcomed both with apparent pleasure and kindness.

Randolph, spite of his prepossession against her, could not see her without emotion; her extreme likeless to his father, her gray hairs, and even the tone of her voice, interested him; but steeling his heart with the remembrance of her crimes, he followed Sir Alexander to the chair in which the king sat.

The young monarch was yet pale and faint, but, as they bent the knee before him, said—'Arise, I pray ye, I yesterday felt I was but a boy, while your son, Sir Alexander, proved himself a man.'

'My gracious liege,' replied the veteran, 'the sorrow of yesterday is lost in the happiness of to-day. I rejoice at the success of my friend, but cannot claim the interest of a parent. He is not my son: but his arm and life are devoted to the service of James the Second.'

'And I accept them,' replied the king. 'He is not your son you say, Sir Alexander; that, however, lessens not my obligations to him; he must be my friend. Say, who is his father?'

'A worthy, brave, but unfortunate man, my liege; and this his son Randolph is entrusted to my care, to begin his career in arms in your grace's cause.'

'Randolph,' said the king, addressing him, 'I know not how to express my thanks; but the world shall see that James the Second forgets not his gallant preserver. For the present, say how I may oblige you. Speak freely. The man here that envies your fortune is his king's enemy.'

'My gracious lord,' replied Randolph, 'you overrate my merit. By being suffered to serve you my utmost ambition will be satisfied.'

'Not so,' replied the king; 'thou art too modest. But think not,' continued he gaily, 'that, though I lack beard, I lack power. My enemies' power is past—it ceased with my infancy; and I will punish my oppressors and reward my friends, so that my subjects may have the alternative to choose. Say, then, Randolph—for we part not thus—what can I do to repay the debt I owe thee? My father gave me life, but thou preservest it.'

'My liege,' answered Randolph, 'for myself I have no wants.'

'For thyself!' repeated the king. 'Hast thou, then, wants for others? Speak freely: I again request—nay, command it. I taxed thy humanity highly, when thou venturedst thy life for me; tax my power to repay the obligation.'

'My liege,' replied Randolph, 'there is a favour but of such magnitude I dare not ask it.'

'Nay. I will know it. Is it the hand of a fair lady, thy superior in rank and fortune? if so, thy king can and will portion thee. Hast thou not heard I am speedily to be wedded? thou shalt take the same day—'

'No, my liege. It is a favour dearer than life, or health, or any worldly blessing.'

'Say it then,' interrupted the king, impatiently.

'It is, my liege,' replied he, throwing himself at the king's feet, 'the liberation of my father, St. Clair Monteith, and his gallant companions, Ross, Hamilton, M'Gregor, and De Bourg, all of whom now suffer under your grace's displeasure in the isle of Barra.'

'Not under my displeasure, I knew it not. But see to the Dowager of Roskelyn,' interrupted he. 'She faints. Bear her into the air. She looks sick to death.'

Randolph involuntarily advanced some steps towards the dowager; but suddenly stopping, he yielded the charge to others who came forward to assist her.

The dowager recovered ere they bore her from the hall; and, though pale and languid, said—'I pray your grace excuse me, and continue the discourse my weakness broke upon. My faintness is merely the tribute of age; it will speedily wear off.'

'I trust it will, my noble hostess,' said the king. Then turning to Randolph, he added—'Did I understand you right? Prisoners in the isle of Barra! and, as I should judge by their names, men of rank! On what account were they sent thither?'

Before Randolph could reply, Sir Alexander, advancing, said—'Not prisoners, my liege, but banished men. The story is too long to relate to your grace now; but I will pledge my life upon their honour, and that you will never have cause to repent your favour.'

As Sir Alexander spoke, the direction of his eye turned upon the Dowager, and her emotion, which was yet strongly apparent, convinced the young king she was by some means concerned in the relation. He therefore replied—'We will hear the account at more leisure. Say, how long is it since their exile?'

'Some four-and-twenty years, my liege,' replied Sir Alexander.

'The time is sufficient to expiate even a heavy guilt. At your request they are free, Randolph. Bear to them my pardon. But I expect their personal acknowledgments.'

'They will pay them,' replied Randolph, again throwing himself at the king's feet, and in the moment of rapture raising his hand to his lips. 'Randolph is devoted to his king for ever,' added he; 'in his cause, nor difficulty, nor death itself, in its most fearful form, shall bar my passage. The love of my royal master will be an impenetrable shield, and the wrongs of my country a sharp sword, that will at once defend me against all opponents. Oh, that at this moment I could communicate to the heart of every Scot, an equal ardour to that which now burns in mine! then should our haughty English foes flee, as heretofore they did at Bannockburn, before the valiant Robert.'

The king raised Randolph, whose noble and manly appearance, rendered doubly interesting by the subject which animated him, drew forth the commendations of the whole assembly; even the dowager herself smothered a sigh, and almost repented that she could not own so gallant a relative.

'See,' said the king, turning to his nobles, 'that the pardon be immediately made out. Randolph will be impatient to depart. This shall be my farewell; but I trust he will not tarry. For Sir Alexander M'Gregor, if he be not more pleasantly engaged, I trust he and his friends will attend me to Stirling, where I propose to return to-morrow.'

'To the world's end, my liege,' replied Sir Alexander; 'like Randolph, I am bound to you for ever.'

'I thank you. Prosperous gales attend thee, Randolph! The pardon, under my hand and seal, shall be sent thee forthwith.'

So saying, the king rose, and the assembly broke up: Randolph returning with Sir Alexander to Stirling.

During the day, Randolph could scarcely contain his joy: he laughed, he sung, and no sooner reached their destination than he embraced Sir Alexander. —'My noble friend,' exclaimed he, 'to you I owe this blessing: but for your admonitions, I had declined to see the king, and thus had lost this glorious opportunity.'

Sir Alexander returned his salute with equal warmth. 'Randolph,' replied he, 'thou out-runnest my wishes:—by this brave act thou hast at once redeemed thy friends, and triumphed over the unnatural dowager; didst thou not see how her conscious heart sunk, and, for a short space, suspended the motions of life?'

'I did, and could scarcely refrain flying to her assistance; but a momentary recollection of my father's wrongs arrested my steps, and I left her to her attendants.'

'I could,' said Sir Alexander, 'almost envy you being the messenger of these glad tidings to Barra; at least I shall long to participate in the general joy: prudence, however, as well as the king's request, will detain me here, as I had rather myself be the relater of past events, than trust them to a less honest historian. Bear to all my warmest wishes, and say to St. Clair, that, in any account I may give the king, I shall simply confine myself to his story; for future *developments*, I leave them to him, to be brought forward as time and convenience may suit.'

Randolph promised observance: and, though

there was a couched mystery in the message of Sir Alexander to St. Clair, yet so much were his thoughts employed in the happiness of his friends, that he overlooked it.

Ronaldsa and the rest of the party joined their congratulations to those of the veteran; and Frazer, who some years before had accompanied De Bourg in search of Monteith, entreating to join Randolph in his welcome errand to the island, they prepared for their departure, waiting impatiently till the pardon, properly executed, arrived.

Towards the close of the day their wishes were gratified; and, unmindful of night or danger, departed for the isle of Barra.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE young king, as he proposed, left the dwelling of the dowager the ensuing morning, and returned to the castle of Stirling, where the same day Sir Alexander, in brief terms, related the oppressions of his friend, St. Clair.

The king heard him with interest and attention, but gave no decided opinion at the time, though the respect with which he treated the relater, gave him reason to augur a favourable issue.

The sight of the youth Randolph, the honour which he had gained by saving the king, his noble person, his open mien, but, above all, the filial affection he had shown for his banished father, had sunk deep into the heart of the dowager of Roskelyn; and, under pretence of illness, she, after his departure, had retired to her chamber, entreating even the lady Matilda to leave her to her repose. The whole of the day she secluded herself from company; but the ensuing morning, in the hall, paid the honours due to her royal guest before his depar-

ture. Left alone with the lady Matilda, who was near seventeen, she endeavoured to collect her scattered thoughts, and, by conversing on different subjects, to divert her mind from the point to which it seemed invariably to turn. 'Matilda, my love,' at length said she, 'you possess not your usual gaiety; either the hurry occasioned by our noble guest hath been too much for your spirits, or my sudden illness hath bereaved you of them.'

'Neither, dear lady,' replied Matilda; 'if I am thoughtful, I am not sad; I rejoice that the king is safe; and my fears for you are vanished by seeing you well.'

'You allow you are thoughtful, if not sad,' replied the dowager: 'from what cause are you so?'

'The vicissitudes of the last three days have afforded me room for reflection: the young king so near death: so providentially saved by this gallant stranger, who could forego every advantage to gain the liberation of his father and friends. Oh, had my brother lived to be such a man, how would my heart have swelled with delight to have heard his praises!'

The dowager turned aside and suppressed a tear, but did not speak.

Matilda, warm with the subject, did not observe her emotion, but continued—'Oh, how must his father glory in him, so young and yet so brave! While the dastard followers of the king stood trembling on the banks, he rushed in and saved him.'

'Matilda,' replied the dowager, 'know ye not that he is the son of the most inveterate enemy of our house?'

'No, lady; he surely cannot be the son of that Monteith, or M'Crae, of whom I have heard imperfect accounts: any one may swear by his looks, his blood was right noble: yet, if he be his son—but it cannot be so; for, from what I have collected, he was an impostor.'

'The wisdom of James the First,' answered the

dowager, 'condemned his father to banishment: I should not have conjectured he could have had a son so old as this Randolph; but 'tis plain I was mistaken. By the favour of the present king, he will again come forth to distress your father and disgrace me: and, in the person of this proud boy, triumph over the heirless house of Roskelyn.'

'Dear lady, I trust not; Randolph looks mild and unassuming; often have I wished to hear the whole account of his father; but my parents chide me; you perhaps will be more kind.'

'You will never hear it from me, Matilda: be satisfied with what you already know; you would not surely take part with the enemies of your father?'

'Heaven forbid! I will endeavour to teach my heart to think of them with dislike and anger, unless they repent; and pray to the Virgin to turn them to friends.'

'Tis your duty to hate them,' replied the dowager, with bitterness.

'Alas! I know not how: I have heard my mother talk of hatred, but cannot comprehend it. If any one offends me, I weep; but, if doing them personal injury were to gain me worlds, I could not teach that lesson to my heart. Vengeance, lady, I have read, belongs to Heaven alone: and, in its own good time, it will doubtless fall on the head of the guilty.'

The dowager startled—'It hath fallen!' replied she, with an involuntary emotion that alarmed Matilda. 'A youth of distrust and fear, an age of despair and mingled repentance, and of death of falsehood and horror.'

Matilda was shocked; but, in the innocence of her heart, attributed the dowager's emotion to another source.—'Lady,' replied she, 'Heaven may send these cruel enemies of our house true and unfeigned repentance; in which case, hope will sooth the horrors they sustain.'

'Matilda,' said she, recovering her confusion, 'name the disagreeable business no more; it hath been the bane of my life.'

'Heaven remove it!' replied she, kissing the dowager's hand; 'I pray ye pardon me; I meant no ill; the appearance of that youth alone occasioned it.'

'Again that youth,' returned the dowager, peevishly: 'surely you love the boy!'

Matilda's face crimsoned with the dye of anger and modesty; but pausing a moment, she replied:—'Yes, as I love all mankind—no more; but were he not, as you say, the enemy of our house, had I a brother, or should Heaven hereafter ordain me to be the mother of a son, then would I pray for them to equal Randolph in bravery, affection, and duty.'

'Matilda,' said the countess, 'I will retire; do thou in the meantime amuse thyself with thy lute; or, attended by some of the vassals, ride and recruit thy spirits by air and exercise.'

'I will employ my time as fancy best directs,' answered she: 'at dinner I trust you will be better, the guests have wearied you, and the quiet of your chamber may wear off the impression.' So saying, she attended the dowager to her apartment, and afterwards retired alone to the chapel, at a short distance from the mansion.

Matilda's mind was gentle as her person was beautiful: she loved her family, but, with an understanding above her early years, internally lamented many of its errors; the weakness of her father, though her piety considered it as merely good humour and want of exertion, she was entirely aware of. At the vindictive, revengeful, and haughty spirit of her mother, she trembled; and, at the pride of the dowager to her dependants, her meek spirit recoiled. To the Holy Virgin, at the foot of the altar, she recommended all, praying for blessings on them, and pardon for their enemies;

and, finally rising with a mind fortified with devotion, she returned to the dwelling.

In the meantime, the dowager had been a prey to the anguish occasioned by her former guilt. She paced her chamber with a hurried step, and, lost in reflection, for some time, could fix her mind to no certain point. At length throwing herself on a chair, she said, with anguish—'It is impossible—the road to rectitude is for ever closed to me. To have acknowledged my frailty at the time, however painful, would long ere this have been forgotten! and I might have descended quietly to the grave, amidst the prayers and blessings of a brave and lovely progeny, who are now doomed to think with detestation on me, and invoke curses on my grey hairs. I saw in Randolph's keen and searching eye, and in the glances of disdain with which he surveyed me, that he was no stranger to his father's wrongs. Matilda, too, in spite of the prejudice implanted in infancy, sees him with a partiality that I can scarcely condemn. Oh, would to heaven that my heart in youth had not been deaf to the voice of nature, or that it had continued so for ever!'

As she spoke, her eyes fixed on a portrait of her husband that hung in the chamber; warmed by imagination, she fancied he looked reproachfully on her. 'Roskelyn,' said she, addressing it, 'couldst thou speak thou wouldst reproach me with thy heirless house; the repeated falsehoods, and even oaths, with which I bound myself to perdition, and thee perhaps to purgatory, for having weakly yielded belief to a wicked woman, against the evidence of truth and honour. Chastity how dearly have I purchased thy semblance! but the deed is past recall, and misery is my doom for ever!'

On the entrance of Matilda, she found her grandmother still agitated; unsuspecting of the real cause, she tried to sooth her, and at length succeeded so far as to make her at least assume the semblance of tranquillity.

CHAPTER XLIII.

RANDOLPH, accompanied by Frazer, lost no time in reaching the port of Ardamurchan, where he engaged a ship and sailed for Barra. The evening was closed when they arrived, and they landed without being noticed by the islanders, and gained the fortress, where Randolph, snatching the horn at the gate, blew a blast so loud and shrill, that the inhabitants, who were seated at supper, all started, and some instinctively laid their hands upon their swords. The alarm, however, was of short duration; for the cry of 'Welcome! welcome! 'tis young master Randolph!' resounded in a moment from every quarter.

'Randolph! impossible!' exclaimed Monteith, advancing; but before he could reach the entrance of the hall, he was met by the youth whose mind, too highly raised by joy to admit of words, threw himself into his arms, and embraced him with such unbounded transport, that the chief almost feared his senses were deranged.

The words of 'Dear boy,' 'good brother,' 'friend,' 'Randolph,' greeted him on every side; but replying to none, and disengaging himself from the arms of Monteith, he tore open his breast, drew forth a parchment, and presented it to the chief.

The conduct of Randolph rendered all mute as himself with astonishment, till St. Clair, starting at sight of the royal signet on the parchment, tore it open, and read:—

Know all men by these presents, that I, James the Second, King of Scotland, being indebted to Randolph Monteith for no less than the preservation of my life, have, at his especial request, he refusing all other reward, granted to his prayers a

free and unlimited pardon to his father, St. Clair Monteith, and his adherents James Ross, Allan Hamilton, James M'Gregor, and Philip de Bourg, now in banishment on the island of Barra; restoring them to their honours, and requiring only in return their duty as faithful subjects.

Given at the Palace of Stirling, April 6th, 1448.
James the Second, King.

On hearing the pardon, the frenzied transport of Randolph, appeared, in some measure, transferred to all. Some congratulated, some questioned, and others embraced him, all eager to learn the particulars of so happy an event; but their anxious curiosity defeating its purposes. Randolph, in the interim, becoming more collected, threw himself at the feet of the Lady Ambrosine, who, pressing him to her bosom, called down the blessing of heaven upon his head. Phillippa hung on his neck, while her brothers, James and St. Clair, clasped his arms, and, thus surrounded by the whole party, he found himself in the most enviable of all situations—the liberator of his family, and the benefactor of his friends.

'Father, brothers, friends,' at length exclaimed he, 'I am happy: my heart overflows. I would not exchange this moment for a monotonous life of a hundred years. For the first time I joy to see my mother's and sister's tears: they are tears of satisfaction: never, never may they weep for any other cause!'

'By heaven!' said Monteith, 'we love misfortune like men, but we receive joy like children. Take each a goblet of wine; the pledge—King James, and our deliverer, Randolph.'

The chief was obeyed: each drank the pledge: even Ambrosine and Phillippa could not decline it: and, the first transport moderated, they took their seats.

'Prithee,' said De Bourg, 'dear Randolph, tell

us how all this happened. The recital will restore us to reason.'

'Not to-night, chevalier; I am too happy to be sufficiently collected; be satisfied with knowing it is reality: to-morrow is soon enough for particulars.'

'Not so,' answered Monteith: 'like De Bourg, I shall be in a fever with expectation before to-morrow; and so will all our friends: in which case, thy story will be of no use to deaf ears.'

'Frazier hath been Randolph's companion,' said M'Gregor, 'from him we will entreat the relation.'

All joining in this request, Frazier complied, and informed them of every particular since they left Barra.

Randolph, in the meantime, was seated between Ambrosine and Phillippa; he held a hand of each, and, in answer to the praises they bestowed upon him, raised them frequently to his lips, in the joy of his heart forgetting even the horror he had conceived at the thought of loving Phillippa beyond the bounds of brotherly affection.

The relation ended, congratulation and praise again took place, till Randolph cut them short by reminding them, that the more speedy they were in paying their duty to the king, the more welcome it would be. 'For me,' said he, 'I will away again to-morrow. After the favour conferred upon me, I should be unpardonable to neglect any proof of attachment. We shall, I trust, meet again at Stirling.'

'Not so,' answered Monteith: 'we will all away together. What sayest thou, Ambrosine, when canst thou be ready to depart?'

'Even when you list,' replied she; 'I consider myself a soldier's wife, whose duty it is to be ever ready. If the fastidious dames of the court find us a few years behind the fashion, they will laugh; but what we need in mode, we will make up in happiness; and surely the balance will be in our favour.'

'The lady Ambrosine will ever be the same,' said Hamilton.

'In faith, will she,' returned Monteith, 'the shafts of time have flown over her person with as little effect as those of confinement have over her mind, neither of which eighteen years have had the power to change.'

'The courtly air hath begun to reach you already,' replied she; 'for you flatter like prime ministers; but enough of this trifling; we will be ready when you please: you will arrange the business that may be necessary.'

'I will,' replied Monteith; 'our cattle, and what stock may be found here, we will leave to William, to distribute among our poorer neighbours, whom I will visit the first opportunity. For the present, the domestics of the fortress shall remain, and, as they are truly faithful, shall afterwards join us, either at Kintail or Monteith, if you be willing.'

'I am pleased with the arrangement. My preparations, and those of Phillippa, will soon be made: for the present let us retire. Randolph and Frazier need rest. We will meet early to-morrow.'

All agreed, and an immediate separation took place for the night. The events of the evening, however, deprived the greater part of rest; and the tumult of joy somewhat subsided in Randolph's bosom, all his former fears resumed their place, and he resolved, whatever it might cost him, to use all his persuasion to forward a marriage between Phillippa and the Lord of Ronaldsa; to engage himself in the most active manner for the defence of his country; to obliterate the remembrance of his unintentional error even from himself, by a life of honour; or to seek death in the field of glory.

In the morning, all met with more calmness, and, exerting themselves in preparation, quitted Barra. William being left in trust for the islanders.

A brisk gale brought them safe to the port, where, procuring horses, they proceeded to Monteith, where they were received as men risen from the dead, by the

vassals who survived, but most particularly by father Thomas, who, delighted to hear of their return, with an effort not to be expected from his years, came out at the head of the dependants, to meet and welcome them.

Monteith embraced him, and presented his wife and children, whom the old man alternately admired and blessed, till at length turning to St. Clair, he said—'Great have been your vexations, my son, but great have been your blessings also; a fairer family never graced a monarch's board; may their virtues equal your warmest wishes, and gild the evening of your days with a splendour sufficient to make you forget past sorrows!'

One day given to repose, they proceeded the next to Stirling, where the king yet remained, resolved to make their duty the first object of their care.

CHAPTER XLIV.

ARRIVED at the palace, they were joined by Sir Alexander M'Gregor, who said he would immediately inform the king of their arrival, and return his answer respecting either their present or future attendance. The king was seated amidst his nobles, giving audience to the ambassador of France, who brought him congratulations on his intended alliance with Mary, the daughter of the Duke of Guelders.

The business terminated, and the ambassador withdrawn, Sir Alexander, approaching the throne, informed the king that his friends were arrived, and craved leave to pay their duty.

'By mine honour,' said the king, 'but they have lost no time; this haste pleases me well. Let them enter; but to Randolph be the distinction paid of their introduction.'

Sir Alexander obeyed; and though Randolph would

fain have excused himself from the office imposed on him, yet all pressing obedience to the king's command, he advanced first into the presence-chamber.

Reaching the foot of the throne, all bent the knee, Randolph saying—'My liege, I present my parents and friends, whose deeds more than their words will, I trust, testify their gratitude.'

'I doubt it not,' answered the king. 'I pray ye rise. In the confusion and wars that threaten us, I cannot spare a company of such gallant men; women, too,' continued he, fixing his eyes on Ambrosine and Phillippa, 'the fairest my eyes ever beheld. In faith, if my father had the heart to banish those, he possessed more resolution than his son will ever have to boast.'

'My liege,' replied Monteith, 'your father had not that cruelty. This lady,' taking Ambrosine's hand, 'hath been, or she flatters, a willing prisoner almost eighteen years.'

'Monteith, as I should judge,' said the king, 'from his likeness to Randolph.'

'The same, and your grace's devoted servant.'

'I thank you,' replied he. 'Your wife and daughter then, I guess?'

'Yes, my liege.'

'Eighteen years, did you say, your companion in banishment? In truth, lady, your face and form might give the lie to the world, who would never credit your being a wife at that period.'

'A good husband, my liege, is a preservative against wrinkles. While women love, they wish to please; and in the solitude of Barra no contentions arose to disturb our tranquillity.'

'Speedily do I expect my bride,' said the king.

'You will oblige me by gracing our court on her arrival. Lady,' added he, turning to Phillippa, 'she is of your age; and if she possesses but half your personal advantages, I shall be happy.'

'My liege,' answered Phillippa, modestly, 'could

my wishes or prayers prevail, she should not only be the fairest, but the best of women; that she might be worthy the distinguished fate allotted her.'

'I thank you.' Then turning to Monteith and his friends, he added, 'I crave your excuse, but the fault is in yourselves. If ye wish me to pay you proper attention bring not those magnets with you.'

He then received the thanks of all with grateful ease and kindness; and entering into discourse, informed them that the English, in strong force, had committed several outrages on the borders.

'My liege,' replied Monteith, 'myself and friends, crave a respite of one month, after which our lives are devoted to your service. So long a banishment hath rendered us almost strangers at home.'

The king acquiesced, and the court soon broke up.

The following day Ross, M'Gregor, Hamilton, and De Bourg, returned with St. Clair and his family to the castle of Monteith, leaving Randolph and Ronaldsa to accompany Sir Alexander to the English borders.

The power of example was not without its effect on Phillippa, who, though she felt as much sorrow at parting from Randolph as when he left Barra, yet it was more confined to her own bosom; and, throwing a plaid of her own work over his shoulders she said—'Go, my beloved brother, and Heaven guard and direct thee! but, ere thou rushest into needless danger, let this tartan remind thee of thy sister Phillippa.'

Randolph pressed her to his bosom, and tore himself from her embrace in silence. Like the poisoned garment of Hercules, the plaid appeared to penetrate to his heart, and he was more than once tempted to cast it from him: a moment's reflection restrained him.—'Tis but the gift of a sister,' said he, mentally; 'I will rise above such weakness. In every chequer I can trace her lovely fingers: and, should I ever forget myself, the initials of the rever-

enced names of Randolph and Monteith, with the device of the golden eagle, which I dare not disgrace will recall me to duty and honour.'

The party at Monteith gave but one day to repose, when they took their way to their several domains, first agreeing to meet in the same spot as speedily as possible. St. Clair's destination was Kintail and the isles, in which he was accompanied by de Bourg.

At the request of Monteith, Ambrosine, after his departure with her children, attended the court of Stirling, where at that period, the nobility of the whole kingdom were assembled; and, among them the lord of Roskelyn, his wife, and mother.

Though polite and gracious to all the king particularly distinguished the family of Monteith, a distinction that caused some jealousy, but in no bosom so much as that of Lady Roskelyn, who saw with the bitterest rancour and hatred, the triumph of her rival, not only in royal favour, but also in grace and loveliness; and surrounded by children whose youthful appearance promised to transmit to posterity, at once the dignity and valour of their father, and the sweetness and beauty of their mother.

The Lord of Roskelyn viewed them also with jealousy: but his disposition in some measure resembling his father's, savoured more of weakness than of wickedness, and deprived of the stimulant of the dowager's remonstrances, which had entirely ceased since the death of the Lord John, and, by experience, acquainted with the malignancy of his wife, his feelings were confined to his own bosom, and caused him only, as he considered the sons of Monteith, to sigh anew for the loss of his own.

The dowager saw them with sentiments different from either; her pride disappointed by the death of her grandson, the inherent love of transmitting her honours and her name to posterity, caused a

revolution in her heart, that virtue and nature had in vain striven to effect; and proudly now would she, had such a claim been practicable, at a less sacrifice than the dreadful avowal of her guilt and cruelty, have acknowledged them her lawful descendants.

'Lady,' said the king to Ambrosine, 'your husband, I presume, is a truant from home, or we should have seen him.'

'My liege,' answered she, 'both love and duty would have brought him hither, had he not been so; he is gone to Kintail, as are his friends to their different estates, but they will speedily return.'

'Our friend Randolph is with Sir Alexander,' resumed he. 'In this his first campaign, your heart is not without fears on his account?'

'Hope overbalances fear, my liege; Randolph, I trust, will return with honour; 'tis time he should take an active part in the service of his country. My sons, James and St. Clair, think of his departure with envy, though their father hath promised the first that he shall not long remain inactive.'

'Lady,' said the king, 'you are worthy to be the mother of heroes, who can thus nobly devote them to the general good.'

'My liege, a mother's right in her sons is secondary; the girls be mine; I will teach them those duties I endeavour to practise; but for the boys the cares of childhood passed, their education should devolve on their father. Monteith, my lord, I trust you will find a brave man, and his sons otherwise, I would forget the mother and disclaim them.'

'If I have sons,' said the king, 'I would you should have the care of their infancy, lady; your understanding would make them enthusiasts in the cause of glory, and your beauty and sweetness imprint your lessons on their hearts.'

Ambrosine passed over the compliment with cheerful politeness; and, the court over, returned to the apartments she occupied.

Sir Alexander and his party, in the meantime, proceeded to join Sir John Douglas, who was marching for England. Reposing within a short distance of Roskelyn, Randolph could not resist the inclination of enquiring after his friend Jean; and, taking Ronaldsa with him, as being unknown, they proceeded to the castle. On enquiry among the vassals for the maiden Jean, who some years before attended on the countess, Ronaldsa was informed that she resided with her mother, a short distance from the castle; and, at his request, they pointed out the cottage.

This information procured, they proceeded thither, when Randolph, striking at the door, the well remembered voice of Jean bid them enter. Surprise deprived the maid of utterance; but, though her satisfaction was extreme, it was restrained by the situation of her mother, who, supported in her chair, appeared overwhelmed with sickness.

'Dear Jean,' said Randolph, 'I rejoice to see you; yet, if this be your mother, we meet in a sorrowful hour.'

'Gracious master,' answered Jean, 'for you are, I now well know, of noble blood, the sight of you gladdens my heart. Dear mother,' added she, turning to her suffering parent, 'this is that suffering Randolph who was so kind to me when I was with the countess, and who, even now, after so long a time, hath not forgotten me; but, by St. Mary! if his features had not been imprinted on my heart, I should not have known him, he is grown so tall and portly.'

The sight of one of whom the old matron had heard so much, appeared to alleviate the pangs she endured. 'Noble sir,' said she, 'my thanks and blessings rest upon you; the money your goodness gave pre-

served life in my shattered framelonger than it would have lingered; and Jean left the countess without anger.'

'I rejoice to hear it; I have not forgotten my obligations to her, though I fear, in so long an interval, she never expected to see me more.'

'In truth, I did not,' replied Jean, 'and I grieved at it.'

'The neglect was unavoidable,' answered he: 'I go now to meet our enemies on the English borders: and, as the event of such encounters is uncertain, resolved to see you by the way. The bounty of my parents hath enabled me to testify my gratitude: and on consulting my mother, she requests that you would henceforward consider her as your friend: and if not attached to your cottage at Roskelyn, repair to Monteith, where you shall find my words verified,

As Randolph spoke, he approached the dame, and dropped his purse into her lap. 'I must not be refused,' said he: 'this will enable you to reach Monteith.'

'Holy Mother: you are too good,' replied she, hastily: 'but pardon my boldness, and suffer me to look on the plaid in which you are wrapped.'

'Willingly,' answered he: 'tis the gift of a sister dearer to me than aught in life but honour.'

'A golden eagle, and the letters R. M.,' said the old woman: 'these, then, belong to the house of Monteith, gentle sir, do they not?'

'They do: but why do you ask?' replied he.

'My gracious master, my motive is not merely curiosity. I inherited from my mother, a silken handkerchief which bears this same golden eagle, and though not the letters R. M., those of M. M., and which she came by in a mysterious manner.'

Randolph's curiosity was completely raised. 'Shew it me, good dame,' said he.

'Alas,' replied she, 'my folly hath bereaved me of it: but I will relate by what means we became

possessed of it. My mother dwelt in the city of Edinburgh. She was one day fetched by a man in a sailor's habit, to attend his wife. She accompanied him: and, though the chamber was darkened, she was convinced the female was not the sailor's wife: for her linen, she could feel, was of the finest texture, and the mantle which was thrown over her was of velvet. The woman who attended her said she was his sister: and the business ended by the birth of a boy, my mother was dismissed, being first paid by the man.

'Previous to leaving the room, instead of her own handkerchief, she tied on one which had been thrown from the neck of the mother of the infant, and it was near a month before she discovered the theft she had unwillingly been guilty of. She then hid to the house, but the sailor and his wife were gone, nor could she gain any tidings of them: she however carefully preserved the handkerchief during her life, and at her death left it to me, thinking it might lead to a discovery of moment to some noble family.'

Randolph had no doubt of the concealed person being the present dowager of Roskelyn, and the infant then born, St. Clair. 'But how did you lose the handkerchief, my good dame?' said he.

'I did not lose it,' answered she. 'After the death of my mother, I wedded, and my husband dying some few years after, I was engaged to suckle the eldest-born of the Earl of Roskelyn, the sweet Montrose, of whom you have doubtless heard—'

'Not much,' interrupted Randolph; 'but to the handkerchief, dame—the house of Roskelyn interests me not, and time is short.'

'In confidence, then,' answered the dame, 'I told the story to the young countess of Roskelyn, and she never let me rest till she obtained the handkerchief: by her eagerness to have it, I thought she guessed at the owner.'

Ronaldsa reminded Randolph that their time of absence was nearly elapsed, when asking only a few

minutes, he demanded of the matron whether she experienced the protection of the Lady Roskelyn. Being answered in the negative, he added—'No tie then detains you at Roskelyn: haste therefore to the castle of Monteith: ye have money for that purpose, and will there find an asylum. Relate this story to my father, or to his lady: they are better acquainted than I am with the secrets of the family, and should any inquiry into this business be necessary, they will make it. Farewell: the confusions that vex us once over, I trust we shall meet in happiness.' So saying, he shook both by the hand, and, amidst the blessings of the matron and the tears of Jean, left the cottage.

Mounting their horses, they soon reached Edinburgh, and, the following morning, proceeded towards the borders.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE anger of the English, kindled by the increased friendship of France and Scotland, began now not only to threaten, but also to spread desolation. The town of Dumfries was fired, in an attack commanded by the Earl of Salisbury; and that of Dunbar shared the same fate, by a party appertaining to the Earl of Northumberland.

The Scots, in return, under the command of Sir John Douglas, entered England, burned Alnwick, and plundered the adjacent counties.

Fresh levies being necessary to both parties, a short cessation of arms ensued: and the Scottish party, under Sir Alexander M'Gregor, returned to Stirling, where the king remained. All the nobility unemployed in active service, flocked round the sovereign: and, among others, the family of Roskelyn, who, though vexed at the apparent partiality for Mon-

teith, were too proud to shew the feelings they endured, and which absenting themselves on so public an occasion would plainly have revealed.

Monteith and his friends were not yet returned, and the Lady Ambrosine remained with the court, when, one morning, the whole city was put into consternation, by the report of an army being in full march from the north, and which from the heights they could discover, by their burnished weapons, covering at times the plains, or, at others winding round the hills, made them appear a mass of moving matter.

Alarmed at his intelligence, all felt it according to their different characters, the dastardly climbing the eminences to view the danger at a distance, while the more valiant girded on their swords to repel it. Among the latter were Randolph and Ronaldsa; though both remarked the tardiness of Sir Alexander, and that the animation that usually enlivened his features in cases of danger, went now no farther than a sarcastic smile at the fears of some and the preparations of others.

'This formidable power,' said Sir Alexander, 'is yet a considerable distance, and our army is prepared to meet danger, should it approach. The Lord of Ronaldsa and Randolph, are both brave fellows and good horsemen: let them away and reconnoitre this enemy, and bring us such intelligence as may enable us to meet them in a proper manner.'

The king acquiesced, and the young men, pleased with the commission, departed, and ere nightfall, came sufficiently near, not only to know the number of the party that had given them such alarm, but to be informed of their destination, in a parley they held with the commanders.

Fraught with this intelligence, Randolph and his friend returned to Stirling, where they found the council assembled. Covered with dust and perspi-

ration, the young men entered; but, before either spoke, the intelligence of their features foretold their errand.

'My mind is already relieved,' said the king; 'the looks of both betoken good. Speak, Randolph, what is the number of this formidable power? from whence do they come? and by whom are they commanded?'

'My liege,' replied Randolph, 'in the front march six hundred of the vassals of Kintail and Monteith, followed by one thousand hardy men from the Western Isles, both commanded by my honoured father and the chevalier De Bourg.

'The right wing consists of five hundred men, dependants of the domain of Ross, led by their noble chief, Sir James.

'The left wing contains the same number, commanded by the brave Allan Hamilton; and the whole is closed by six hundred, led by the brother of Sir Alexander, James M'Gregor: in all, my liege, three thousand two hundred men.'

'And for what come they thus formidably?' demanded the king.

'To defend their country, and, if need be, with their bodies to make a rampart round their sovereign, and perish to a man in his defence.'

'You have spoken then with them?'

'Yes, my liege, and bring from their commanders this message—that they will encamp in the dell, four miles from the town, and wait your grace's orders.'

'We will meet them there,' replied the king. Then turning to Sir Alexander, he added—'Chief, this is a pleasurable surprise, or I would not forgive you the deception, for I think you knew it.'

'I did, my gracious lord: for this purpose only my friends hastened from the court: but even Randolph was ignorant of their intention.

'Was the Lady Ambrosine acquainted with it?' said the king.

'She was, my liege; and, lest the busy rumour of her husband's collecting men should reach your ear through the medium of slanderous enemies, she remained at Stirling with her children, a voluntary hostage for his honour.'

'A noble lady!' said the king; 'she realizes what we read of Roman women: haste ye to her dwelling, and entreat her to accompany us to meet the chief.'

The veteran accepted the commission, and the court broke up. Among the courtiers attached to the Lord of Roskelyn, there was not wanting some who endeavoured to dissuade the king from meeting the party of Monteith and his friends; but he was deaf to their remonstrances, and a gallant cavalcade assembled and proceeded to the dell.

The tops of the houses of Stirling were covered, and the road lined with spectators: a guard rode first to clear the way: after which followed music: then the officers of state: and then the sovereign: on his right hand the lady Ambrosine, on his left Phillippa. Next followed Sir Alexander M'Gregor, Randolph, and Ronaldsa; then the sons of Monteith, and the nobles of the kingdom, attended by a numerous and splendid retinue.

It may be conjectured, the Lord of Roskelyn was not among the number; with his countess he had retired to the house of the dowager, where curiosity was sufficiently active to make them privately view the cavalcade.

The sight had different effects on the party. The warm and innocent heart of Matilda alone openly revealed its sentiments.

'Oh, what noble, gallant men!' exclaimed she; 'what beautiful women; see how the king smiles upon them; no wonder—were I in his place, I would bestow my hand and heart as willingly on that young maid as—'

'I bestow that blow on thee,' interrupted the Lady

Roskelyn; 'a curse on the whole party! forward, minx as thou art, repeat my words, lest I curse thee.'

'Nay, patience, Ellen,' said the Lord of Roskelyn; 'you forget yourself; Matilda knows them not, and curses befit not such youthful lips.'

'Curse on them twofold!' repeated she, madly, 'and a treble curse on the day which I became a Roskelyn!—See, see the proud wife of the outlaw Monteith on the right hand of the king: and see how she smiles! Oh, for a dagger to plunge in her exulting heart!'

'Lady Roskelyn,' said the dowager, haughtily, 'these fancies become not a wife who respects her husband's honour; my son was the man of your choice.'

'Your son was the man of my choice; your eldest son, lady—can you deny that?'

The dowager's spirit was as vindictive as that of the Lady Roskelyn, though she held it in more command; and stung with the freedom of her daughter-in-law's speech, she replied—'Such humours are not befitting the world's eye; they are marks of a husband's pusillanimity. In such case, confinement, a zealous confessor, strict diet, and constant penance, would do well to bring the mind to a proper state.'

'Ha! ha! ha! when devils preach, let puny sinner's laugh. Ha! ha! ha! do you talk of a husband's pusillanimity? you, who have broken through every duty, do you talk of confinement, zealous confessors, and a strict diet? Of constant penances, you are indeed a judge; for I am well convinced you have endured them many years, and will to your last hour.'

'Dearest mother,' said Matilda, 'let me attend you to your apartment; I will soothe you to sleep with my harp.'

'Sooner shalt thou soothe the turbulence of the sea; away, base girl! thou hast not yet cursed my enemies.'

'I pray you, Ellen, give way,' said Roskelyn: 'Matilda advises well; let me lead you forth.'

Lady Roskelyn flew from him with mingled anger and disdain, while the dowager regarded both with contempt, and said—'When husbands condescend too much, they give their wives a power that renders them ridiculous: could I have expected to see my son thus treated by the daughter of Sir David Stuart, I would have avoided the connection as I would the pestilence.'

'I conjure you, mother, cease; my wife is not well, and you but increase her agitation, and will disorder yourself.'

'If her head should ache, we will bind it,' said Lady Roskelyn, 'with a curious handkerchief I have in my possession, black and scarlet, wrought in the corner with the device of Monteith, and the initials M. M., formally in the possession of a midwife, who attended the wife of M'Crae.'

This blow on the dowager was unexpected: though so many years back she well recollected the handkerchief that had been lost; and she had hoped, after so long an interval, it was totally unknown.

'When you condescend to speak intelligibly,' replied the dowager, 'I will commune with you; until then, it is useless. For you, Roskelyn, when you have taught your wife the duty due to you, and the respect necessary to me, I shall be ready to receive you.'

With these words she quitted the apartment, leaving Matilda in tears, the Lord Roskelyn in silent consternation, and his countess too much involved in her own vexation to give heed to either.

The horses ready, the lady Matilda, with tears embraced her grandmother; and, joining her parents, they quitted Stirling.

The dowager, left alone, her proud and active spirit endured a severe conflict: the mention of the handkerchief, lost so many years before at the house of M'Crae, drove her almost to madness, as it convince-

ed her she was in the power of her daughter-in-law: not that she feared any disclosure on her part, as it must tend to lessen her own consequence, but that it subjected her to insult and scorn, which she could not brook. The weakness of her son, in yielding blind obedience to his wife, next wrought upon her fancy, and, though his conduct was not more so than that of his father had been in regard to herself, she saw it through a different medium, and considered it as pusillanimous and despicable. Matilda alone interested her; for, though their characters were as opposite as the eagle and the dove, yet the gentleness of the one had insensibly stifled the violence of the other, and entirely gained her affection; removing her, therefore, was another insult beyond forgiveness: yet to counterbalance this affection in the dowager's estimation, she was only a girl, and her name would be lost in marriage; consequently the property she had been years accumulating (for the late earl of Roskelyn left great sums in her own power) would only contribute to enrich some other family.

To contrast the family of Roskelyn, that of Monteith rose in her memory; self-ennobled and brave, the chief was universally regarded as a man superior to his fellows, the idolizing husband of a wife beyond comparison good and fair—neither by word nor action lessening the consequence of each other.

Randolph came next, with James and St. Clair: the first had begun the career of glory, and promised to yield to none. James, young as he was, already looked the chief, and was said to burn with impatience to emulate his father and brother; while the young St. Clair, inferior to neither in future promise, appeared only to need years to equal his elders.

The beauty of Phillippa, which was a universal theme, was not without a place in her remembrance; as she conjectured that, added to the consequence of her father, it must match her into one of the first families in the kingdom; but even that was a second

dary consideration; and Phillippa and Matilda fell into the shade before the superior claims of the three boys, who might transmit her boasted name and rank to posterity.

Agitated with these reflections, she at length retired to rest: but though her body was wearied and sunk into inactivity, her mind still dwelt on its former pursuits, and rendered her rest broken and unrefreshing. M'Crae and his wife first mingled with her dreams; but waking, and striving to overcome the impression, she again composed herself to sleep. The second was more fearful. Death, as represented by painters and poets, a form of uncovered bones, with eyeless skull, and holding in his hand a scythe, appeared to advance towards her couch, but was restrained by her husband, who cried with a mournful voice to the spectre—'*Yet, yet a little time, I conjure thee;*' while her brother, the late chief Monteith, on the other hand, said audibly—'*Woman, awake, prepare!*'

Her fears rendered the sentence unfinished; she awoke trembling in every limb, the cold dews of perspiration standing in drops on her brows. 'Gracious Virgin! how terrible!' said she; and, throwing herself from her bed, she gazed round the apartment, for the moment expecting to see her dream realized: the horrors were however, confined to her own bosom; and calling to her waiting-woman, who slept in the next chamber, she resolved to retire no more that night.

The rising of the sun tended, in some measure, to calm the dowager's spirits; and her family remarked no change from her usual conduct: the dream was however impressed upon her memory too deeply to be forgotten.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE king and his party advanced within a mile of

the dell, when they saw a company of five horsemen approaching, and whom they soon recognized for Monteith, Ross, De Bourg, Hamilton, and M'Gregor, entirely unattended.

Reaching the king's company, they saluted the sovereign, who checking his horse, said—'You are right welcome: but why meet me here? we meant to join you at your camp.'

'My liege,' replied Monteith, 'we learned with pride and satisfaction, your grace's intentions; but suspecting that some of our enemies might endeavour to impose your ear with doubts of our loyalty, we resolved thus to come forth, and if any suspicion rested on your mind, to put ourselves alone into your power.'

'Monteith,' replied the king, 'your deeds and those of your friends, give the lie to your enemies' words; I will judge for myself, and venture to predict I shall never repent the step I have taken on your account.'

Monteith and his friends bowed, and at his request, led the way to the camp, where they were received with repeated exclamations.

'Long live James the Second! Perish the enemies of the King of Scotland! Led on by our valiant commanders, we will conquer or die!'

The king walked through the whole camp, and expressed his thanks to all, desiring that whatever might be wanting in clothes, weapons, or accoutrements, might be supplied from the public stores.

After remaining some time with the party, the king and his cavalcade returned to Stirling, Monteith attending him, leaving the command for a few hours with his companions.

On their return, they again passed the dwelling of the dowager, and again distracted the mind of the countess, who remained at the window. No word, however, escaped her, till the whole party had passed, when, starting from her seat, she said—'My

lord, I will away for Roskelyn to-night: Matilda shall accompany me; for you, at your own time, you will follow.'

Roskelyn, though displeased, gave way; yet, needing the courage to contend with so vindictive a spirit, he simply acquiesced, and bade her use her pleasure.

Informed of the arrangement, the anger of the dowager appeared to change its object; she reproached her son for his want of spirit, and vowed an implacable enmity to the countess; finally quitting him, bade him, with passion, take the consequence.

Roskelyn, goaded by two such furies, would almost have given his life to be clear of both; but, yielding to the power of his wife, he prepared to accompany her.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE party of Monteith, recruited by a few days' rest, it was resolved they should march forward to the English borders. A select council sat daily; and Monteith and his friends, as they were known, became more estimable to their sovereign.

One evening previous to their departure, the king being in his closet, with only the chancellor, an attendant informed him that a woman of noble port, but whose face was concealed by the mourning weeds she wore, craved admittance to his presence. The king ordered her to be brought in, when, the attendant being withdrawn, he requested her to inform him of the business which had induced her to break on his privacy.

'My liege,' replied she, 'I have a story of sin and shame to relate, which might make any woman pause, and which nothing but the pangs of conscience could force me to reveal.'

'Lady,' replied the king, 'your voice is familiar to my ear; would it be too much to ask to see your face?'

'My lord, I came prepared. A fear of the world hath hitherto been the bane of my life; to avoid disgrace, I have plunged into guilt, which, without repentance, must condemn me to everlasting perdition. A few words to your highness, and I have done with it for ever; behold then the Dowager of Roskelyn,' said she, throwing back the covering from her face; 'she comes to reveal the shame which forty-five years she hath striven to conceal. My liege, spare me particulars; but by all the saints and holy hosts of angels! I blush to confess that St. Clair Monteith is my son, my eldest born, by the Lord of Roskelyn. In an hour of weakness, I yielded before marriage, and with cruelty denied my child to conceal my disgrace; even to my lord I never retracted the falsehood I at first told him, that the unhappy boy died at its birth, lest his paternal feelings should cause him to acknowledge him to the world, and thus avow my want of chastity. To my second son, now called Lord Roskelyn, I have been more explicit, though never entirely so; and we both, by our conduct, appeared to know a secret which we dreaded to disclose to each other.'

'Of this tale, lady, I have heard,' answered the king; 'but without this declaration of your own, should have felt compunction to bring the subject forward to the world; I, however, rejoice to find you inclined to do justice, and make restitution.'

'My lord, restitution is impossible; I have been the bane of my son's life, and never more dare I meet his eye: I first deprived him of his birthright; next of the woman on whom he had fixed his affection; but there his good spirit predominated; for I bereft him of a fiend, and he found an angel. Next by the persecutions he endured, in the heat of youth he forgot himself in the presence of your father, and

incurred banishment, involving his friends in the same disgrace; from which the conduct of his son hath alone rescued him. Can such deeds, my lord, be forgiven? if they can, 'tis not by mortal, but by heavenly spirits.'

'Monteith is noble, lady; and noble minds bear not enmity with true repentance.'

'Oh my liege, you know not half: insulted, deprived of what his uncle Monteith left him, his property plundered, his person seized by a false pretence whilst sailing among the islands, and detained a considerable time a prisoner at the castle of the countess of Roskelyn; but Heaven prevented the stroke that must have plunged us for ever past hope! his life was spared; and I see him surrounded by children, at once beautiful and brave; while my second son hath only a daughter, whose name will be lost in marriage.'

The king, though young, readily surmised the pride of family, as well as repentance, to have no small share in the countess's avowal.—'Lady,' said he, 'depend, justice shall be done. Monteith departs with his friends and his men to-morrow; at Edinburgh he proposes to rest a few days; and there, if you please, we will confer further on this business. I answer for his respect to you, and pray your presence. Some means may be used to render all easy; the lady Matilda, for example, wedded to my friend Randolph: what think you of that? though cousins, the consent of the church might be obtained.'

'I think of it, my liege, as a proposal from heaven; and could it be brought to a happy issue, should regard you as the blessed agent.'

'I will use my endeavour. Retire, lady, and compose your spirits; 'tis never too late to act well. Three days hence, fail not to meet us at Edinburgh.'

'Blessings and peace rest on your highness! I obey.' So saying, she left the king's presence.

The king made no mention to Monteith, or to any one, of what had passed ; but arriving at the city, resolved to discuss the business without loss of time.

On the second evening after the arrival at the city, the Lord and Lady Roskelyn, the Lady Matilda, the Dowager, Monteith, Ambrosine, Randolph, and Phillippa, received a summons to attend the sovereign without failure in the evening. Those orders were unknown to the separate families, and the purport unsuspected by all but the dowager.

All attended but the Lady Roskelyn, the conflict of whose mind had brought on a fever : and nothing but the king's especial command could have obliged the dutiful Matilda to leave her. Monteith and his family first arrived, and found the king and the chancellor, with three of the first law lords ; but for the moment, they entered into no explanation. Next came the dowager, in the mourning weeds she had assumed, and which caused great surprise to the family of St. Clair. They remarked that the king received her with distinguished kindness, and were not without fear that her arts were again to be employed to their annoyance.

Last came the Lord of Roskelyn and his daughter. The first started on seeing the party ; but, collecting his spirits, he advanced and apologized for the countess, by pleading her illness.

A silence unpleasant to all, succeeded, and which was first broken by the king. 'My noble friends,' said he, 'I have a business to discuss this night, which needs no hearers but those immediately concerned, and the opinions of a few men most conversant in the laws of the country. My respect for the house of Roskelyn is great, and my obligations to Monteith and his son Randolph are also great. If possible, I will hold the scale impartially between ye. The Dowager of Roskelyn here, impelled by age and repentance, wishes, ere she dies, to do an act of justice ; and, for that purpose comes forward to de-

clare the truth ; and will here swear, in the presence of the Holy Virgin and angels, that St. Clair, commonly called Monteith, is her eldest-born son by the late Earl of Roskelyn, but, from motives of shame, his birth was concealed from the world. A mother's oath is strong ; and, if I mistake not, there be other, though weaker testimonies of this truth, as I have heretofore heard. Speak, Roskelyn, and deny or confirm my words.'

'Your words are most true, my liege. St. Clair is my eldest brother, and, by the laws of my country, the lawful heir of Roskelyn. On this I am ready to take the holy sacrament, should I die the hour following.'

Lord Roskelyn appeared struck beyond the power of speech ; but Monteith advancing forward, said—'My gracious lord, I grieve that you have been troubled with a business which I never more can engage in. For myself and children, I for ever disclaim all right to the estate and name of Roskelyn, and will by law sign an irrevocable deed to that purpose. The Lord of Roskelyn may yet have a son, and whom I shall glory to acknowledge.'

'Never, never,' exclaimed Roskelyn, sinking on his knee. 'Generous St. Clair, I dare not say brother, your conduct overpowers me : take, take your right ; henceforward all I ask is obscurity.'

Monteith raised him to his embrace—'Brother,' repeated he, 'let all passed be forgotten.'

The dowager oppressed with the scene almost to fainting, said, with a faltering voice—'St. Clair, my son, let me not die without your forgiveness !'

Monteith turned towards her—'Lady,' replied he, 'I rejoice to say I have a mother.'

'Truly did the king say thou wert noble,' answered she. 'In this the first embrace and blessing I give thee, what a weight of sin appears lifted from my soul. Bring me thy wife, thy children ; oh, how have I longed to claim kindred with them !'

The Lady Ambrosine bent her knee, as did Randolph, James, and Phillippa. The dowager then embrace'd all with transport—'Neglected branches of a noble tree,' said she, 'long may ye flourish, and transmit to posterity a name disgraced only by my failure. Yet, though ye have bloomed in the desert, the careful hand of culture hath not been waiting; and the lessons of Barra will not be forgotten in the halls of your fathers. Yet say, St. Clair,—here, in the king's presence, I claim a promise,—though you reject for yourself the name and lands of Roskelyn, yet, should my son John die without male issue, that you will suffer them to be received and held by the lawful heir; for, so well have I seen in Randolph the duty of your children, that never, I judge, without your consent will they accept it.'

'I repeat,' replied St. Clair, 'that for myself and children, I disclaim it for ever: but more of this hereafter; the time presses, and family concerns become secondary to the public welfare.'

'On the return from the campaign,' said the king, 'all may be rendered easy. For example, a union of the families would, I think, be most desirable. What say you, Lord Roskelyn, and you, my brave friend?'

'I will be guided by your highness,' answered Lord Roskelyn.

'My liege,' said Monteith, 'in the idleness of peace it will be soon enough to talk of these matters. Put not love into my boys' heads, I pray you: it will drive out valour.'

'We will defer it, then,' returned the king, smiling. 'Come, Lady Roskelyn, resume your wonted spirits: all, I am convinced, will go to your wishes. There is no shame in having given birth to a brave man.'

'Your grace's notice honours me,' answered she. 'This duty done, I have no further business with the world, and will away to a convent.'

'Not so, dear mother,' replied Ambrosine, taking her hand; 'you owe us a long debt of love, and we owe you a long debt of duty and affection. I pray you, let us strike a balance. The house of your honoured father cannot be hateful to you; accompany us to Monteith. In playing the hostess to so respectable a guest, I shall be beguiled of half my sorrow, and the cares of my children will divert yours.'

'Ambrosine,' replied the dowager, 'may I say daughter? receive my thanks; but your kindness stings me to the heart; is it possible you can forget—'

'I forget everything but the present happiness,' interrupted she, 'and which will be incomplete if you refuse my request. Monteith will join in the entreaty; and if he fails, I will claim the interest of our kind sovereign himself.'

'You have it, sweet lady,' replied the king, 'your eyes and words bear a power not to be resisted, and the dowager must perforce comply.'

'I pray ye, good mother,' said Monteith, 'become acquainted with my family; I will wager my life that on my return, I will find you satisfied with them.'

'I doubt it not; but there kindness will but add fresh pangs to my heart. I will, however, go, if you indeed wish it.'

'I do, from my soul,' replied he, respectfully raising her hand to his lips: 'Ambrosine possesses a witching power, and will beguile unpleasant remembrances; for at Barra, after her arrival, the days passed with me as swiftly as hours, and the years as days.'

'In truth,' said the king, 'you will make us young men mad to be wedded, if, after so long a union, the fascination still remains.'

'May your grace be as happy as myself in a wife,' replied Monteith.—'But come,' added he, to the

lord of Roskelyn, 'my brother here looks sad, and there is no occasion for grief.'

'Sweet maid,' said Ambrosine, advancing with Phillippa to the Lady Matilda, 'my daughter and you must be acquainted; will you not acknowledge your new relations?'

Matilda, though pale and agitated on account of her father, pressed Ambrosine's hand to her lips. 'Lady,' said she, 'if I may, I will love you dearly, my heart bounded when I saw you first, though our consanguinity was then unknown to me.'

Phillippa, with affection, saluted her cousin, and an entire reconciliation affected, the king arose, saying—'By my life, would men act uprightly, the law would be the poorest of all professions; for see, we have concluded a business that might have employed all the lawyers in Scotland, until it had transposed the property of both parties into their own pockets.'

All then took leave of the sovereign, and retired to their respective habitations.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

MONTEITH, on his return home with his family, found his friends assembled: they were greatly astonished at the recital of what had passed, and expressed their entire approbation of the conduct of the chief. Randolph being engaged with Ronaldsa in their professional duties, and the young people with their mother, they entered fully into the future arrangements respecting that youth.—'This campaign over,' said Monteith, 'in which I trust he will distinguish himself, he shall be truly informed of his birth. As my son, I shall ever regard him; and rejoice that, by the reconciliation of to-night, his future duty will not keep us strangers, unless

indeed, his father should be so exasperated at the trick played him, as to break our new-made friendship.'

'Of that,' replied De Bourg, 'there is little danger; his own interest, and the satisfaction of being father to so noble a youth, will obliterate all other considerations.'

'With his father, I think they will; but, for his mother, I know not.'

'Why, in faith,' said Ross, 'in her case I can form no judgment: his visit to her castle, and his liberation of you, are awkward circumstances to overcome; for she may suppose him better informed than he really is.'

'At all events,' observed Hamilton, 'he hath seen her real disposition, and will be guarded against her arts.'

'He will,' answered M'Gregor; 'but now to another subject. De Bourg and I have this day, for want of other employment, rode to Inveresk, and, with the curiosity of old women, inquired into the story told us by Donald M'Kenzie.'

'And ye returned with old women's payment,' said Monteith; 'your labour for your pains.'

'Not so,' replied he; 'strange as it may appear, the prediction is inserted in the church book, the year before our banishment to Barra, and the names of the men who witnessed it signed thereunto. The old friar who inserted it hath been dead twelve years; and on farther inquiry, the seer of Roskelyn Glen, we learned, had been deceased near twenty. For farther satisfaction, I copied the words from the book.'

Monteith read and returned the writing. 'If we believe in prophetic dreams,' said he, 'this augurs well; for my part, I trust only to a good cause, a strong arm, and a sharp sword.'

'You now,' said M'Gregor, 'begin to find the advantage of having had Randolph in your posses-

sion : could the dowager have conceived there was an heir to Roskelyn alive, she had never made this avowal.'

'I should suppose not,' replied he; 'but let us be satisfied that she hath at length done justice, without examining the matter too closely.'

'Thou art right,' said De Bourg—'for my part, so sincere is my forgiveness, that, if I survive her, I shall not hesitate, at my own proper charge, to have a mass said for her soul!'

'If scarcity enhances value, thy prayers must be above all price,' replied Ross—'prithee, when went thou to shrift?'

'Marry, not longer ago than thyself; canst thou particularize the time?'

'In faith, no; the accounts will therefore be long, and the priest need pray for patience.'

'Pish, man! to hear thee, but not to hear me! I shall comprise all in a few words—'Father,' I shall say, 'I have a bad memory, and one sin hath driven another out of my mind. Tell me, I pray ye, who is *your* patron saint?'

'St. Ursula, son,' he may reply; 'but why do you ask?'—'St. Ursula, holy virgin! she hath also been my chosen patroness from my infancy, and——'

'Now, marry,' interrupted Monteith, 'thou hast forgotten St. Bridget: dost thou turn apostate, and deny her?'

'No, in faith; but human knowledge is fallible, and the best may sometimes waver.—Now, I pray ye, leave the priest, the saint, and me, to ourselves.—'Dear father,' I shall continue, 'that holy virgin who would cut off her nose and lips to preserve her chastity——'

'Is not a virgin for thy purpose, nor for thy priest's neither, I will be sworn,' said M'Gregor; 'but go on.'

'Tis impossible, if you thus break on the confes-

sion; such impiety merits the inquisition.—Where was I?'

'Thou wert attacking the chastity of St. Ursula,' replied Ross.

'Well then, to proceed.—'Father, I pray ye, purchase for the holy maid, in my name, a necklace, a golden buckle for her waist, or a comb for her hair, and entreat her interest for me.'

'Thou hadst better have bought her a new nose and upper lip,' said Hamilton—'these would have embellished her more than jewels; but prithee, let us have the priest's answer.'

'Why, the priest answers like a man of sense, and one who feels for the infirmities of others.—'Son,' will he reply, poisoning my purse, 'thy penitence ought not to savour of lightness, for thy sins are heavy. A bad memory is not, however a crime, but a misfortune, I charge thee take heed in future, or it will cost thee a more weighty penance to obtain favour of my patroness.' Thus ends my confession, and my conscience is left as clear——'

'As that of thy confessor,' interrupted Monteith, '—so let them rest together. Now to business: are ye all prepared to depart?'

All replied in the affirmative; and they were soon after joined by Ambrosine, who, in spite of her outward calmness, felt some severe internal pangs at the approaching separation.

While all were thus engaged, Randolph had returned, and, meeting Phillippa alone, entered into conversation with her—'If this be the happiness I promised myself from the repeal of my father's banishment,' said she, 'I would to Heaven we were all safe again in the isle of Barra. My mother, in spite of her apparent unconcern, I am convinced trembles for my father; and, should he fall, will never survive it; in which case we shall be doubly orphans; I, alas! at one blow, may lose parents, brothers, all!'

'What a direful catastrophe hast thou supposed,

Phillippa! I trust we shall return safe, and, round our winter's fire, laugh at thy fears, sweet sister.'

'No; for if thou dost, thou wilt be estranged from us; thou art to wed our newly-acknowledged cousin.'

'I know not what power on earth can estrange me from a home so dear: but who said so, I pray thee?'

'Did not the king speak of a union between the two families?'

'True; but more consents are necessary than the king's to unite them: why should the chance fall upon me? have I not brothers?'

'But thou art the eldest.'

'The lady Matilda and I shall never be nearer related, though I confess her fair to admiration; neither perhaps would she be willing.'

'Poor thing! she perhaps would scarcely be consulted; her father agreed at once, and I saw pleasure sparkle at the proposal in the eyes of the dowager. I love not such ways of trafficking for the affections of women; in truth, 'tis treating them like cattle, or old garments.'

'Thou canst not say so in thine own case, Phillippa; for if respectful love may win a heart, Ronaldsa in time must win thine.'

'Why didst thou name him, when thou knowest I love not to hear of him?'

'Hast thou seen any one since thou left Barra that thou couldst love better?'

'No; all strange men are equal to me: in the dear circle at the island all my affections are centred, and I fear I never again shall see such happy hours. In fine weather, our morning entertainment on the water; our afternoon walks; and our evening's music, when thy voice mingled with mine—I had not a wish unsatisfied. Dost thou not regret them, Randolph?'

The question brought remembrances to the heart

of Randolph that overwhelmed it with affection and softness.

'Dear sister,' replied he, 'they were indeed happy hours; but we were then children, and other pursuits now demand our attention.'

'Ay, thine and my father's; and now poor James hath caught this hateful rage for war: I would the saints would inspire the hearts of all men with more love to each other, that the cruel effusion of blood might be spared!'

CHAPTER XLIX.

WHILE all was peace and affection in the dwelling of Monteith, Roskelyn, with a still agitated mind, took the way to his castle. Though his wife by her violence, he had no doubt, had forced the dowager to this discovery, yet he was convinced her rage would be beyond all bounds; and, accustomed to yield to the storm, he already trembled at its approach, while Matilda rode by his side in silence, and was not divested of the same fears.

On reaching the castle they were informed that the countess requested their presence. Curious to learn the purport of the extraordinary summons which they had received, she had risen, and, though confined to her chamber, waited their return with impatience. Concealment was impossible; and though, in fact, Roskelyn was less guilty than either his wife or mother, he felt as though himself was the greatest culprit.

The tale revealed, though in the most gentle terms, had all the effect he expected; malice and despair sat on the brow of the countess, while she gnashed her teeth with anguish, and with impotent rage, tore her hair. To this paroxysm succeeded a torrent of words, levelled at once at her lord and his mother. 'The chaste matron,' said she, 'the daugh-

ter and the sister of the chiefs of the house of Monteith, hath then avowed her infamy! she who could forget every feeling of a mother—she who assisted by base arts to entrap me into a marriage with her youngest son, while the eldest sued at my feet! Fool, fool that I was, the deserved requital has fallen upon me!"

'Dear mother,' said Matilda, 'do not agitate yourself thus. Neither your fortune nor your name will suffer by this discovery. My uncle hath disclaimed both.'

'Thy uncle! say that word again and I strike thee at my feet. Come, girl, be dutiful, and curse them. Thou evadedst it at Stirling.'

'Indeed I cannot. You terrify me to death.'

Lady Roskelyn raised her hand to strike, when her lord put his daughter aside. 'Retire, Matilda,' said he, 'this is no scene for a young maid.'

'She shall not go,' screamed the countess. 'At her peril let her stir.'

As she spoke she endeavoured to pass her lord; but restraining her, he said—'Ellen, your conduct, though late, hath awakened manhood in my soul. I am master here. Go, Matilda, and return not till I command.'

Matilda obeyed, and the Lady Roskelyn astonished, replied—'Thou master here! thou, John of Roskelyn! thou, poor dependant on thy brother's bounty! Didst thou possess the spirit of a man, thou wouldst have dashed the insolent offer back in his throat; but thou fearest him.'

'Not half so much as I fear thee, vindictive woman. Thy tyrant reign is past. I throw thy slavery off for ever. Command is mine—thy part obedience.'

'Obedience to thee—never! Go thou, ere thou talkest of command, and take lessons of the brave, the unparalleled Monteith; and when thou reblest him, thou shalt meet obedience.'

'Thou counselest well; I mean it. His example

to-day hath given vigour to my heart. And in return do thou observe the gentle, the unassuming Amorosino, whose sweet spirit hath preserved in her countenance all the charms of her youth. Copy her closely. See her smiles on her husband, the affection with which she looks on her children. Imitate those, I say, Ellen, and thou shalt deserve a tenderness hitherto misplaced.'

In all the discourse that had passed, no word appeared to wound so deeply as the allusion to Amorosino. Passion rendered her speechless; her face suddenly became black, her eyes projected, and the blood issued in a torrent from her mouth.

Alarmed, the Lord Roskelyn called assistance, and retired, unable to bear so dreadful a spectacle, for it was plain her violence had broken a blood-vessel. His mind wounded by the scene he had undergone before the king, he was not in his usual frame of temper to bear her upbraids; but he exerted himself too late; for custom and indulgence had nurtured her vices till they were incorrigible.

That she had never loved him, was too plain to be overlooked even by himself: but the reflection had been mitigated until the last two disputes, by the supposition that she had entertained no other partiality; much less did he suspect for St. Clair, of whom she had ever spoken with rancour and vehemence. Her conduct, too, contrasted with that of the wife of Monteith, also conspired to make him feel her tyranny.

Though moved by her situation, he kept from her chamber, but he made perpetual inquiries respecting her health: and on the ensuing morning, hearing she was better, ordered Matilda to attend him in the hall. 'My child,' said he, 'for a while I leave Roskelyn. Every active man in the kingdom must wish to do his part to expel the common enemy and it becomes me not to be exempt from my share of the danger. I mean to collect my vassals, and away

to the borders. In the meantime bestow every care and attention on your mother; but if she forgets herself as heretofore, I charge you to hasten to the dowager, let her be where she will. I have this night written to her for that purpose. Lest, from a false tenderness, you neglect to obey this injunction, I have ordered two of my most trusty vassals to observe all that passes; so that I shall not be easily deceived, and you will meet my anger if I am not obeyed.'

Matilda sunk at her father's feet. 'Oh, my lord, I conjure you,' cried she, 'rush not into those horrid encounters, if there be no stronger tie, for the sake of your child. My mother will be sorry for her violence now the paroxysm is past. I pray ye go to her.'

'No, Matilda: my presence would rather retard than forward her recovery. Monteith yet leaves all in the common cause. I have no tie but thee; and should I fall, this night have I, by a testament, secured thy fortune. The man who could refuse the just claim he hath on the domain of Roskelyn is truly noble, Matilda, a prejudice sinks before such conduct. He is thy guardian; or, if he falls, his wife. Thy welfare is now my only care.'

Matilda again attempted to persuade her father to see the countess, but in vain; and, dismissing her to her chamber, he arranged all for the interval of his absence; and, three days after, he left Roskelyn with two hundred men, to join the party which had preceded him.

At the appointed day Monteith and his friends left the city, and travelled towards the borders. Previous to their departure, the chief, with Randolph and James, went to bid the dowager farewell—a token of duty she was far from expecting, and which gave her great satisfaction. She promised to pass the interval of their absence at the castle of Monteith, and with tears and blessings bade him and her grandson farewell.

At the separation, Ambrosine, as usual, betrayed no sign of discomposure; she pressed her husband, Randolph, and James, alternately in her arms.—'Heaven guard and speed you!' said Ambrosine. 'A short time, I trust, and we shall meet in peace and happiness.'

Having previously taken leave of the king, she departed the same day her husband left the city, for the castle of Monteith, with Phillippa and St. Clair. She found Jean and her mother already arrived; and appropriating an apartment for the elder, entertained Jean among her own waiting women. The story of the handkerchief she treated lightly, telling both mother and daughter that the child had since been acknowledged, and all mystery long ceased respecting him.

Some days after, the dowager, according to her promise, arrived: and though at first the remembrance of her former conduct oppressed her, yet the care and attention of Ambrosine lessened it daily; and, treated with a respect she had never been accustomed to from the lady Roskelyn, she felt increased satisfaction at the recital she had made. Phillippa soon bore an equal share with Matilda in her affection; and for her brother, considering him as the youngest of three sons, she declared she took his fortune upon herself, and would pay to the young St. Clair, as far as in her power, the debts she owed to his father.

Among those that rejoiced at the change that had taken place, none felt greater satisfaction than father Thomas; he not only congratulated the parties at the castle, but for several days, with his brethren, held solemn thanksgivings in the chapel.

The countess of Roskelyn, though unable to leave her chamber, was somewhat recovered. The intelligence of her husband joining the army filled her with astonishment, as did also his quitting the castle without bidding her farewell: she plainly saw that

her passion had carried her too far : but depending on his former weakness, had no doubt of subduing his anger on his return. She also heard, with an acrimony that had nearly renewed her disorder, that the dowager was at Monteith ; and sinking from the frenzy of passion into that malignant state of envy which preys upon the heart, she shunned all company, even that of her daughter ; and, yielding to the envenomed canker that consumed her vitals, her body became thin and bent, her skin yellow and shrivelled and her fine eyes sunken. The change in her person did not escape herself ; it added to her other torments, and daily increased the evil that she wished to surmount.

CHAPTER L.

THE party of Monteith and his friends had reached the shire of Dumfries, when they were joined by the Lord Roskelyn, who asked to be admitted of their party, with an open freedom that gained him a ready welcome ; after which they proceeded to join the main army, commanded by George Douglas, Earl of Ormond, and Wallace of Cragie. The English in the meantime had crossed the Solway Firth, and ravaged that part of the country ; but, hearing of the approach of the Scottish army, called in their marauding parties, and fixed their camp on the banks of the river Sark. Their advance guard was commanded by Magnus, an experienced warrior, who had been trained to arms in the French wars, and who, from the colour and bushiness of his beard was called in derision, by the Scots—Magnus with the red mane ! He was a soldier of fortune, and demanded no other reward for his services from the English court, than that he should enjoy all he could conquer in Scotland. The centre of the English army

was commanded by the Earl of Northumberland, and the rear by Sir John Pennington.

The Scots were likewise in three divisions : The right wing was commanded by Wallace : the centre by the Earl of Ormond : and the left wing by the Lords Maxwell and Johnstone.

The party of Monteith and his friends were also separated ; that of the chief, with Randolph James, and Roskelyn, with their men, into the right wing ; those of Ross and M'Gregor into the centre : and those of Hamilton, with De Bourg and Ronaldsa, into the left division.

A decisive battle was resolved on by both parties, and all was prepared on each side. The earl of Ormond harangued the troops, and fired them with resentment against the English, whom he accused of treachery and want of faith, in constantly breaking the truce made with the Scots.

Previous to the encounter, Monteith gave some general directions to Randolph and James ; to the first of whom he entrusted the command of a hundred of his picked men ; and for the last, in this his first onset, he ordered him to keep near himself.—‘ Randolph, my brave lad,’ said he, embracing him, ‘ my heart whispers me, that thou wilt this day distinguish thyself in a manner I shall exult to see ; but, remember, prudence is as necessary to a soldier as valour. In the battle, think not of me : for, though disuse may have rusted my arms, the fervour of former years shall this day wipe off the spots. The only one I fear for is the Lord of Roskelyn ; he is not used to these contests ; the late vexation he hath endured may make him regardless of life : should it so happen that you be near him disregard him not.’

The signal for battle given, the right wing, commanded by Wallace, rushed forward upon the enemy but were received with so dreadful a discharge from the English archers, that their impe-

tuousity must have been checked, had not their leader called upon them to trust to their swords and spears, and follow him. Monteith and his comrades seconded his example.

'Come on, my brave friends!' exclaimed he to his men: 'my word hath ever been—'Victory or death!' and I will not now retract it. These English fight well at a distance; we will try their mettle nearer.'

So saying, the whole party rushed upon the advanced guard commanded by Magnus: and a most fearful slaughter ensued on both sides, as each fought with the greatest animosity. Wallace performed prodigies of valour, nor was Monteith inferior to him in skill or courage; they spread desolation around, and were foremost in the road to death. In the confusion, the Lord of Roskelyn was wounded, beaten down, and had been slain but for Monteith, who, seeing his danger, rushed forward, and with his broadsword struck off the arm raised against him; then giving him in charge to a party of his men, he cried hastily—'Bear off the Lord of Roskelyn to the camp; he is wounded, but, I hope not to death.'

Again Monteith entered into the thickest of the fight. Passing Randolph, he observed his quick eye singling out the boldest victims, and eager in the pursuit of glory. In the heat of the fight, he encountered Magnus; wedged on either side with their several parties, neither gave place. Magnus raised his sword, which fell on the shield of Randolph with a clattering sound: at the same time saying—'Give way, boy; cross not the path of men or thus I annihilate thee!'

Monteith saw, and, perhaps, for the first time, trembled at danger. He spurred forward to assist his adopted son: but, ere he could reach him, the combat had attained its height. Fearful of lessening the glory of Randolph, he gazed without inter-

ference. The blows of Magnus were heavy, but, undaunted, the youth redoubled his activity; and each darting forward at once with their spears, the horses of both were slain and their weapons broken.

'Oh, that the battle hung on his onset!' cried Magnus; 'tis a brave boy, and I could grieve to slay him. Give way, noble lad! thou shalt obtain honourable terms.'

Magnus, as he spoke, bent forward, as, for a moment, did Randolph, to recover breath: but the next, attacking him with his sword, he replied—

'I mean it, valiant Magnus: come on—thou or I must yield! either thou shalt conquer the boy, or the boy conquer the man.'

The conflict on foot was terrible; every blow appeared the final stroke. The harness which defended the right arm of Randolph was broken, as was that of Magnus in various places. In vain the veteran strove, by a well-aimed blow, to end the conflict: Randolph, at length, by a decisive stroke, laid his experienced enemy at his feet.

The cries of both parties rent the air: that of Magnus with despair; that of the Scots with triumph. The young Randolph was naked to the shoulder, and the mark which nature gave was mistaken for blood.

'Ruin! ruin!' cried the followers of the English leader. 'Our commander is fallen. Hope is lost! Away!'

The Scots, elated by the fall of so formidable an opponent, exclaimed—'Victory! victory! the red man is fallen! the bloody arm triumphs! And Scotland shall be free from the tyrant yoke of England!'

'Bear your leader from the field,' cried Randolph, —'accused be he who makes so noble a warrior prisoner. Bear him away, I say: nay, gently—did I love my country less I could weep at this victory.'

Twisting his plaid round his arm, Randolph again rushed into the battle, which had now become universal, and, for a time, was obstinately contested on

both sides, but finally ended by the party of Sir John Pennington being routed. The centre, commanded by the Earl of Northumberland, shared the same fate. Sir John Pennington was taken prisoner, as was also the Lord Percy, in endeavouring to forward his father's escape, together with Sir Robert Harrington, and others. The English, discomfited by the loss of their leaders, fled towards the Solway, where, the river being swelled by the tide, numbers were drowned, their loss, from the event of this battle, consisting of three thousand men, with the greatest booty that had ever fallen into the hands of the Scots since the battle of Bannockburn.

On the part of the Scots the loss was six hundred, but no one of note fell, except the valiant Wallace, who died three months after of the wounds he had received in battle.

The conflict over, mutual congratulations took place; but none shared a greater degree of glory than Monteith and his friends, several of whom were wounded, but slightly; and, a time given for repose, they resolved to leave the borders, where all was quiet, and had every appearance of remaining so.

The conquest of Magnus, who died as his men were removing him from the field, had given a glory to Randolph, which enrolled his name amongst those of the most distinguished warriors: and Monteith exulted in the idea of the glorious revenge he should take of his heretofore enemies, by presenting them with so honourable an heir.

The lord of Roskelyn, whose wound was severe, was near a month before he could be removed; during which interval, Monteith, with an affection that covered his brother with shame, declined returning to the city. His comrades also remained with him; for, in a private conference, they had agreed that, should the lord of Roskelyn's wound take an unfavourable turn, he should not die without the satisfaction of knowing and acknowledging his son—an

information they otherwise meant to delay till the family was more fully assembled. To their wishes, at the end of three weeks he was convalescent, and they prepared to depart; but on the evening before, finding himself alone with St. Clair, he thus addressed him:

'It is with confusion and shame I receive your attentions. One only step can reconcile me to myself: let me restore your domains, and take a younger brother's portion.'

'Roskelyn,' answered Monteith, 'we have both room for forgiveness. If hereafter I should need yours, do not withhold it.'

'By my soul, I will not; but you never injured me.'

'You speak beyond your knowledge; the conduct of my family might have provoked retaliation from a milder spirit than mine.'

'In truth, it might,' replied Roskelyn, warmly: 'and my wife, I am now well assured, loved you: your long residence in her castle hath often staggered me; but if this my suspicion be true, it is a triumph unbecoming Monteith; and, though I am sunk, yet you must hereafter answer it.'

'Roskelyn,' returned Monteith, calmly, 'I will answer it now. As to my confinement in the Castle of the Valley, it is the only act I cannot sincerely forgive; for the uncertainty of my fate had nearly plunged my wife in the grave; in which case thy family and mine had been foes for ever. During my absence she, my children and friends, employed all my thoughts; and had the charms of all women been united in thy wife, they would have made no impression on my heart. I plainly tell thee, I saw her with hatred and abhorrence; and if thou doubtst my honour, will confirm my words by the most sacred oath thou canst require.'

'Enough,' replied Roskelyn; 'forgive me: the action was indeed unpardonable, and as she related

it, her motives to me ambiguous : however, I thank Heaven, thou escapedst safe from harm; and, if it will not give thee too much vexation, oblige me with thy account of the transaction.'

Monteith willingly complied, and related his own capture by the Dane : his being conveyed to the castle by M^r Lellan : and finally, his delivery, through the means of young Randolph : he, however, carefully avoided all that might awaken the jealousy of Roskelyn, or taint the chastity of his wife's conduct.

Roskelyn heard him with astonishment : he had no idea of the plan having been so deeply laid, and protested ignorance of the whole till after Monteith's escape.—'I shudder to add,' said he, 'that I fear murder might have terminated this business but for that noble lad, Randolph. Oh, Monteith, Heaven to thee hath been peculiarly gracious : what is banishment with such a wife and children ! kings might look down from their thrones on thee with envy !'

'Thou sayest truly ; and so sensible am I of my happiness that, even from the first hour I loved Ambrosine, never, even in infancy, have my thoughts strayed from her : and now, as when decked in all her virgin charms, is she, in my eyes, the fairest and best of women ; and should Heaven—the bare thought makes me a coward—snatch her first to itself, never shall my heart or arms be polluted with another love.'

'Yet in youth, St. Clair,' said Roskelyn, 'thy heart was more susceptible ; for example, thou lovedst Ellen ; and for Randolph, by his age, he is not, I judge, the son of the heiress of Kintail.'

'Pish, man, thou art no confessor ! yet I will thus far set thee right ; I never truly loved till I knew Ambrosine ; for Randolph, I swear to thee, his birth is right lawful, and he shall be heir to my domains !'

'And nobly will he transmit your name to posterity,' answered Roskelyn. 'The king's offer of uniting our families pleases me well ; what say you to it ?'

'We will unite them, if affection and occasion suit ; but of this hereafter. I would that thy wife would suffer the lady Matilda to be acquainted with Phillippa.'

'She shall be so, on our return,' answered Roskelyn—'I will no longer be the dastardly slave of that tyrannical woman's caprices.'

At that moment some of the friends entered, and the conversation became general ; and the lord Roskelyn, a few days after, being able to sit on his horse, they retook their way to the capital.

CHAPTER LI.

THE interval of Monteith's absence had at first passed heavily with his family, but the result of the battle of Sark, dispersed their fears and revived their hopes, as, by a messenger, he informed them that he should speedily return.

The bravery of Randolph was repeated to them by a hundred mouths, and highly applauded by all, so that the dowager felt daily gratification from the avowal she had made. A report that the troops were on their return to the city, where they were to be disbanded, had reached them, and caused the lady Ambrosine to propose to the dowager a journey to Edinburgh, to meet and welcome their friends. This was agreed on, and all departed for that purpose.

Three days after their arrival they received the gladsome tidings that the troops were only at the distance of a few miles, when the party resolved to meet them. The dowager and Ambrosine rode first, and after them Phillippa and St. Clair, followed by the domestics ; and, to their great satisfaction, had not proceeded above four miles when they discovered, from a height, the troops advancing in a hollow beneath. First marched the minstrels, playing mar-

tial music; next came the various divisions under their respective commanders, before each of whom was borne some trophy won in battle.

The keen eye of Randolph first discovered the party, and pointed it out to Monteith, saying—'I would wager my life that yonder is my beloved mother and sister: doubly precious are the comforts of home after these rude encounters, and trebly dear the sweet inmates of domestic life.'

Monteith acquiesced in Randolph's opinion, that it was his family that approached; and, spurring their horses, they speedily reached them.

Both leaped from their horses, and Ambrosine throwing herself from the saddle into her husband's arms, cried—'Welcome! welcome!' being all that joy had left her power to articulate.

Randolph instinctively flew to Phillippa, who clasped his neck, breathless, and almost senseless with pleasure.

'My Ambrosine,' exclaimed Monteith, 'this is indeed a surprise; but thus you ever outstrip my wishes.'

'Welcome! most welcome!' repeated she, grasping her husband's hand, and tears, in spite of her utmost efforts, flowing from her eyes, 'may this be the last time we ever separate! But joy hath rendered us both ungrateful: see, the dowager hath honoured us so far as to accompany me in this meeting.'

'Lady,' said Monteith, turning to his mother. 'this is a favour so unexpected, that you must pardon my unwilling neglect; for, in truth, I did not see you. Suffer me,' said he, lifting her from her horse, 'to thank you for a condescension that does me so much honour.'

'St. Clair,' replied she, embracing him, 'could more blessings be heaped upon thee, I would pray for them; but, my son, thy happiness I think as complete as possible for that of men. For me, too,

the attentions of thy wife and children appear to have renovated my youth, and led me into the true road to peace; for thy house is heaven, and thy wife the ministering spirit.'

'Lady,' replied St. Clair, gaily, 'did I not tell you it would be thus? the Circe hath laid her spells on you, and never will she loose the charm she hath spread over your senses.'

'I trust she will not,' replied the dowager; 'for 'tis the sweetest charm my heart ever felt.'

'Heaven then continue it!' answered Monteith, joining hands of his wife and the dowager—'we owe each other, good mother, a long debt of affection; may the lives of both be spared till it be paid!'

The dowager was moved even to tears.—'My son,' said she, 'how have I abused you! an hundred years of kindness could not expiate my conduct.'

'It is expiated, dear lady; those who have always had a good mother, cannot so truly appreciate, as I do, the value of that tender relative.—Nay, Phillippa, dost thou not welcome me? Beware of Randolph I charge thee: he is a dangerous fellow, and must not be trifled with, as heretofore.'

'A thousand, thousand times welcome!' said Phillippa, repeatedly embracing her father; 'oh, what a happy moment is this; methinks the happiest of my life.'

The young St. Clair then embraced his father, when they were joined by Roskelyn, James Monteith, and the rest of their friends. The dowager was at once astonished and delighted to see the friendship that apparently reigned between her sons, and after embracing Roskelyn, they remounted their horses and joined their troops, which had halted for a short refreshment.

The first rapture of meeting past, they rode through the ranks, when the vassals of Kintail, elated at the sight of their generous mistress, surround-

ed her, clapping their hands, and expressing their satisfaction by repeated acclamations and blessings. Waving her hand to procure silence, she at length succeeded when she thus addressed them—'My good friends, my heart is too full at the present moment to thank you as I ought, for the brave support you have afforded my beloved husband in the battle of Sark : but, believe me, I feel it with gratitude, and trust to repay the obligation. The justice of our noble sovereign hath revoked the sentence that confined us to Barra : and, I hope, we shall henceforth be better neighbours at the castle Kintail, where we purpose to spend a part of our time, and where I shall not only be always glad to see my friends, but also remove any pecuniary difficulty they may labour under, from sickness or other unavoidable distress. For such brave men as have fallen in this conflict, and which I joy to hear are few, their wives and children devolve to me, and to my utmost will I supply the loss they have sustained. As the troops will, I hear, be speedily disbanded, I conclude by wishing you all to hasten home: for I judge by myself how welcome the sight of husbands and sons must be after such an absence.'

Acclamation and praises again rent the air. To Ambrosine they afforded no triumph: but the proud heart of the dowager exulted as she passed through the ranks, to hear the encomiums passed on her as the parent of Monteith.—'Tis the dowager of Roskelyn ! our chief's mother : ' said the men of Monteith ; 'in faith he inherits her lofty port : his eyes and brows too are the same. Happy Lady, if you be a proud mother, who can wonder, when you have given to the world one of the noblest of men.'

The dowager, moved at once by the example of Ambrosine and by the words of the vassals, replied—'I thank ye all : the same as the heiress of Kintail hath promised to her vassals, accept from me :

I owe that duty to my father's house, and to the affection I bear my son.'

Again the plaudits echoed through the troops, which when somewhat subsided, St. Clair, addressing his men, said—'My mother hath been beforehand with me in the duty I proposed to take on myself ; but I rejoice at it, as I leave you in abler and better hands than mine ; with one who will show you, that she truly shares the blood of her noble father and ever-honoured brother. I rejoice also, as it leaves me more ample means to testify my gratitude to my long-tried and faithful associates, the brave islanders, to whom I owe obligations which never can be repaid, and which, when I forget, may Heaven forsake me.'

The islanders were not more backward in testifying their acknowledgments than their comrades had been ; and the first effusion somewhat subsided, Roskelyn and the other chiefs followed the example set by the family of Monteith, promising friendship to their men, and provision to the wives and children of those who had fallen in battle.

The scene of exultation passed, they proceeded to the city, when the chiefs immediately waited on the king, who received them with the distinction their valour demanded.

The duty paid to the sovereign, the Lord Roskelyn took the way to his castle, where he was received with satisfaction by Matilda, who informed him of the decline that consumed her mother ; and also that she refused all company, and even sometimes for days obstinately declined to see her.

The Lord of Roskelyn had not so far forgotten his affection, to bear the account unmoved : he flew to his wife's apartment, but started on observing the change that so short a time had made in her person ; and, testifying his sorrow at her situation, entreated that all past animosities might be forgotten.

'Aye, when I forget to live,' replied she, 'the

family of Monteith have empoisoned the air I breathe even buried in the solitude of my chamber, their accursed triumphs reach my ear. The vain-glorious lad, too, that bastard Randolph, is now the idol of the day; my soul sickens at the folly of the king.'

'In faith, thou art too prejudiced, Ellen,' replied he; 'Monteith hath been grossly injured, and his conduct is such as must gain him the approbation of all good men! but for him at the battle I had lost my life.'

'Better to have lost it, than to have owed it to him,' replied she, passionately. 'Ob, for one hour in which I might involve them all in dismay and ruin! gladly, joyfully would I perish with them!'

The Lord Roskelyn was vexed to find that sickness had made no alteration in the bitter spirit of his wife; and, fearful of a repetition of the horrid scene he had before witnessed, he soon after left her.

On the ensuing day he took Matilda to Edinburgh, to pay her duty to her grandmother. She saw the tenderness of Ambrosine for her children without envy; but an involuntary tear flowed as she contrasted her conduct with that of her own mother.

'Sweet niece,' said Ambrosine, embracing her, 'your father is now indeed truly kind; this is a satisfaction the more welcome as it was unexpected.'

Monteith next embraced her, and presented her to his sons and Phillippa, who all followed his example; and, after a stay of some time, they parted, mutually satisfied with each other.

Previous to their departure, Monteith, addressing Roskelyn and the dowager, said—'We mean to depart hence in a few days: our mother hath already promised to accompany us home; and I must request that you also, brother, favour us for a short time, as I have a conference to hold with you of the utmost importance to both, but most particularly to yourself. For the countess, her ill state of health deprives us of that hope; but you will double the obligation, if you bring the Lady Matilda with you.'

Roskelyn, for himself, accepted the invitation: but on the part of Matilda, appeared irresolute.

'Surely she may attend me,' replied the dowager, 'if you be afraid to tell your wife she is at the castle of Monteith.'

Roskelyn adopted the idea with a blush, and taking leave, left them.

'Now, in faith, mother,' said Monteith, 'you are too hard; think you not my brother hath enough with that vindictive, turbulent woman, without reproach?'

'Tis his own fault,' replied she—'had he at first exerted a proper spirit, she would never have been so complete a tyrant—she would never have dared to act thus with you.'

'Thank Heaven, I was spared the trial; for, by my life, I would sooner encounter an host of foes than combat her diabolical spirit. I never yet fled from an enemy, but, were she my opponent, I think I should leave her a clear field.'

'You overrate your modesty,' said De Bourg—'you would first have had a hard struggle for mastery.'

'No, in truth, I should yield it up for a lost business, and seek in some other country that peace my own denied me.'

'I am of my father's opinion,' said Randolph,—'I would fly such a woman, as I would the pestilence.'

'Pish, ye are cowards!' replied De Bourg—'but what think ye of the lady Matilda?'

'She inherits none of her mother's evil qualities,' said the dowager, 'and is so gentle that I must wonder her mother's humours have not proved fatal to her: but what think you of her Randolph?'

'I think her most amiable, lady, from what I can judge from so short an acquaintance; and, better known, might almost consider her a sister.'

'Almost a sister; nothing more, Randolph?' repeated the dowager.

'Nothing more; nay, in truth, not so much; for I shall never love one so well as Philippa.'

The words of Randolph escaped before he was aware; and, suddenly checking himself he remained silent.

'Yet in all probability, you will sometime wed: in which case, your wife must not be secondary.'

Randolph blushed deeply. 'I spoke of sisters,' said he—'In all probability I shall never marry; my mind must change greatly before that event happens.'

'Never!' repeated Monteith, laughing—'I once formed such a resolution, but Ambrosine made me glad to retract it.'

'And, when I meet an Ambrosine, I shall be equally glad,' answered Randolph, more gaily; 'so I pray to remain single till that time.'

The dowager was not quite satisfied with the reply: but her happiness was so much greater than she had for years experienced, that all trivial objects gave way to it.

The troops soon after being disbanded, the party left the city, and returned to the castle of Monteith.

CHAPTER LII.

NOT long after their arrival, they were joined by Ross, M'Gregor, Hamilton, and Sir Alexander; De Bourg having accompanied them.

It was resolved on the arrival of Roskelyn, to bring forward the discovery so interesting to him and Randolph, and which, they surmised, might have different effects on the parties concerned. The point, however, above all others, was obtained, and which had never been expected—the public avowal of the legitimacy of Monteith; his liberation from banishment had also been effected by the same object,

though by different means than were at first proposed. Of the future affection of Randolph, no one entertained the smallest distrust: his attachment to the whole of the family was truly filial; so that, the bar once removed, there could be no doubt that he would proclaim his affection for Philippa.

Some days after their arrival at Monteith the dowager, in a private conversation with her son and Ambrosine, informed them that it was her intention, as their eldest sons would be sufficiently provided for, to take on herself the establishment of the young St. Clair, and, by an irrevocable deed, constitute him heir to the estates in her own power. The deed, she said, was already drawn, and ready for signature, and should be that day executed.

Monteith's honour was too great to suffer her to execute a deed which she might hereafter wish revoked.—'Good mother,' replied he, 'though thoroughly sensible of your goodness, let me entreat you to delay it a few days; I have something to communicate on the arrival of my brother, that may make a change in your opinion.'

'Not so,' said she, 'you have for yourself, and indeed for your children, disclaimed the domain of Roskelyn, but you have no power to bind them to forfeit their right: and, previous to my leaving the city, I do not hesitate to say, that I had an interview with the king and chancellor, both of whom have pledged me their words to see hereafter, should they outlive Roskelyn, your children reinstated in their rightful possessions, without which my soul will never rest; nor ought you, from a false pride, in duty to prevent it.'

'Agreed,' replied he, 'if Roskelyn dies without heirs. Should he have a son, remember, lady, the contract is void.'

'You act wilfully, but I submit; for there is small probability of his having more children.'

Monteith then again pressed her to delay execut-

ing the deed for a few days, to which she at length unwillingly consented.

In the meantime all the former fears of Randolph again rose in his bosom ; and, seeking an opportunity to converse alone with Monteith, he warmly pressed him, if the country should remain in peace, to suffer him to seek glory in some foreign land, that might be glad to accept his services. Monteith, who easily developed his reason, consented, on condition that a month should first elapse, when he left him to his liking.

The lord of Ronaldsa remained in the city with some troops not yet disbanded ; he had behaved with distinguished courage in the field ; and, though he would still have rejoiced to receive the hand of Phillippa, no longer pressed it, convinced that the effort would be fruitless.

Randolph sincerely esteemed him, yet scarcely knew the nature of his own feelings ; sometimes he wished him wedded to Phillippa ; but the thought was ever followed by an aguish coldness, which made him recoil, and forced him to have recourse to reflections that called forth the glow of honour and probity on his cheeks.

More than once he had ventured to plead for his absent friend ; but the soft reproaches of Phillippa, and the tears she shed at his unkindness, made him feel that those conversations were better avoided, as they only tended to increase what he thought his guilt and dishonour.

At length a messenger arrived to inform them that the Lord of Roskelyn approached, when Monteith, with his sons and friends, went out to meet and bid him welcome. The union of the brothers caused universal joy ; music sounded from every quarter ; the priests, with Father Thomas, supported by a junior brother, at their head, singing *Te Deum*, met them at the end of the avenue, while the crowding vassals, with loud acclamations, mingled in the concert.

At the portal they were received by the noble hostess, who bade him welcome with the true frankness of a sister.

'Brother,' said she, 'I but half rejoice to see you, for you bring not the lady Matilda with you.'

'Sweet sister,' said he, 'let the omission bring no blame on me ; her mother's commands and her own wishes detain her, and I combated them not.'

'The countess is, I trust, in better health, then ?' said Ambrosine, as Roskelyn led her to the hall.

'I can scarcely reply to that question,' answered he—'her looks are ill, but she says her health is better ; and in reference to Matilda, she is entirely changed, for she scarcely suffers her from her sight.'

'That is no wonder ; she is formed to be her mother's pride and happiness.'

'I thank you for her, lady ; she is indeed mild and unassuming, and will hereafter, I trust, cultivate your favour.'

'She hath it already ; I only wish to be more acquainted.'—As they spoke they entered the hall, where Roskelyn, having paid his duty to the dowager, was received warmly by the whole party.

Mutual congratulations over, a sumptuous repast was served, and the goblet went gaily round, till the vassals being withdrawn, Monteith filled a bumper to the health of the Lord of Roskelyn, and their new cemented friendship : at the same time vowing that it should never be broken by him.

Roskelyn drank the pledge, and a short pause ensued, when Monteith, addressing the dowager, said—'Pardon me, lady, for reverting to past time, but remember you the seer Andrew ?'

'I do,' answered she : 'even at this moment his prediction is in my thoughts. It is accomplished : music resounds through the halls of Monteith, and sworn foes drink from the same friendly bowl ; yet I comprehend not what was meant by the red mare, who should bite the ground under the feet of a willing captive.'

'The name given in derision by the soldiers to Magnus, struck as maternal on the mind of Randolph; but the allusion to him was dark, and the impression momentary.

'It may hereafter be explained, lady,' answered Monteith to his mother. 'There was also another prediction, some years after, inserted in the priest's books of Inveresk, by two vassals of my brother's, both of whom yet live.'

'What was it, I pray you?' said Roskelyn.

'It related merely to the same event as the former; you may see it at the monastery at your leisure. The second prediction, though to the same purport was in different terms; it spoke of a victory gained by a bloody arm: the first of a willing captive.

Randolph started.

'I remember that well,' replied the dowager: 'I pray you proceed.'

'My brave nephew slew the red mane!' exclaimed Roskelyn: 'and his arm, I heard, was dyed in blood: yet he is no captive; the allusion therefore fails.'

'It doth not,' replied Monteith, rising from the lower end of the board, where Randolph sat next him. 'Who can answer that question but the outlaws of Barra?'

'That can I,' answered Sir Alexander M'Gregor; 'Randolph was my captive. Assisted by my brother. I took him when he was so young, that his mind retained no impression. We gave him to St. Clair Monteith, who adopted him: and my brother so well loved the boy, that, at his death, he left him heir to his estates.'

'This is most true,' said Monteith; 'and time together with his honour and affection, hath so woven him into my heart, that mine own children hold not a higher place in my love. 'Till this hour he was a stranger to this secret, which I wished to reveal before friends. Say, think you I have done my duty?'

'Most truly,' answered Roskelyn. Then turning

to Sir Alexander, he added—'I pray you excuse me; but is he English, or know you his friends?'

'I do,' replied the veteran, 'they are noble Scots and I mean to restore him.'

Randolph started up—'If my father means to disclaim me,' said he, warmly, 'I will no other, the world is before me: I will quit Scotland for ever.'

'You are wrong, noble youth,' answered Roskelyn—'you may bring peace to a parent's breast. Proudly must they acknowledge one, who, though so young, is so forward in the road of honour! Vain hope! who can recall the dead? Oh, if my son—'

'Behold him here!' interrupted Monteith, emphatically, at the same time laying his hand on Randolph's shoulder.

Astonishment dwelt on the features of all unacquainted with the secret, and deprived them of the power of utterance.

'Aye,' added Sir Alexander, 'behold the young Montrose of Roskelyn, taken from his grandmother on the moor near the English border!'

Roskelyn was too much oppressed to speak; but the dowager, more collected, replied—'if he be indeed my grandson, he bears a natural mark.'

'He doth,' said Monteith—'his arm is wine or blood stained from the wrist to the elbow, which, shewing in the field when his armour was broken, was mistaken for the latter.'

Roskelyn gazed on the youth, as if he had never seen him before: at length, clasping his hands, he answered—'Heaven is just. Oh, Monteith, I forgive thee all but robbing me of the affection of my son!'

'Randolph,' said Sir Alexander, 'will never forget his duty, though, for the present, he is too lost in wonder to perform it. Bear up, Roskelyn—all is for the best. Thy son, bred in a court, had been a moth, a butterfly, while fostered in the rude winds of the Western Isles, he hath learned to be a man.'

Randolph could not collect himself sufficiently to

act as duty should have prompted, when Ambrosine approached him, saying in a low voice,—‘Beloved youth, consider Monteith and myself still as parents; but to the Lord of Roskelyn thou owest thy birth, and nature hath claims not to be denied by a heart like thine.’

‘Lady, I am yours for ever,’ replied Randolph, in the same tone. ‘Teach me, mould me to your will!’

Ambrosine led him to Roskelyn, who snatched him to his heart, exclaiming—‘Brother, how severely hast thou been revenged! I have my right; take thou thine. I resign the domain of Roskelyn without a pang.’

Randolph returned his father’s embrace, and repeatedly received his blessing.

‘Another duty is yet to pay to our kind mother,’ said Ambrosine. ‘A grandson still, lady: and if ye can love him better, I pray ye do. He justly deserves it.’

The dowager embraced Montrose: yet a look of incredulity still marked her features. ‘If it be not too much, I conjure you, let me see your arm.’

Randolph, for a moment, wished the mark obliterated: but gave the satisfaction she required.

‘Monteith,’ said the dowager, ‘whatever I may think of this act, I own myself too guilty to complain.’

‘Lady,’ said Sir Alexander, ‘Monteith hath neither merit nor guilt to claim in this business.—Lord Roskelyn, if your memory bears so far back, remember you the men who came from St. Clair, with an order for money upon Carnegie?’

‘I do,’ replied he, ‘and also remember they were rudely treated.’

‘They were,’ answered Sir Alexander, ‘and the M’Gregors are not to be affronted with impunity; chance threw the opportunity of revenge in Randolph’s way—I joined in the cause, and Montrose became the victim of—’

‘His father’s folly and injustice,’ interrupted Roskelyn: ‘but away with unpleasant remembrances.’

‘Randolph M’Gregor’s soul,’ said Monteith, ‘was the seat of the most exalted friendship; though happily not involved in my disgrace, for he was at the time absent, yet he shared our captivity, and did for me an act, which for himself he would have declined.’

‘Ah, well, though so long since, do I remember that fearful evening,’ said the dowager, ‘when Montrose was taken from me; yet I cannot entirely comprehend the motives.’

‘The motives, lady,’ replied James M’Gregor, ‘were various; ample revenge was amongst the foremost: the infant might have been made the price of our freedom, had we been so inclined. Monteith’s was the only dissenting voice against the act—he wished the boy to be restored unconditionally; but his opinion was over-ruled, and he was forced to yield. We mutually took an oath to support each other in the cause, and to keep it secret.’

‘Ay, Roskelyn,’ said Hamilton, ‘we resolved to put it out of your power to breed us up an enemy in your son; therefore educated him ourselves, and now glory in our pupil.’

‘In faith do we, for myself and sons,’ said Monteith, interrupting him, ‘I told you I resigned the domain of Roskelyn. It is Randolph’s, and rather would I that he should enjoy it than any man under heaven: nay, in justice it is his, for, had I been the acknowledged heir of Roskelyn, I had never inherited the estates of Monteith, which my uncle gave as a compensation for the deprivation I had sustained.’

The discourse was considerably longer; and, in appearance, the most abstracted person was Randolph, who sat lost in thought; a pause taking place, Randolph appeared to collect himself, and,

approaching Roskelyn, said—'Pardon me if, yet awhile I err in those marks of duty which I owe you hereafter I trust to shew that they neither originate in ingratitude, or in want of affection. With your leave I will retire for an hour. My head is even yet giddy with surprise : that time given to reflection, I shall be more myself.'

Roskelyn pressed his hand, and bade him use his pleasure ; when, having left the hall, Monteith immediately arose, and apologizing to his guest for a short absence, followed him. He overtook him on the portal.

'Randolph,' said he, 'I can enjoy no happiness while thou art sad. I have merely done an act of justice. Could I, for the glory of being thought thy father, bereave thee of thy birthright?'

'Alas!' answered Randolph, 'in losing the name of Monteith, my being seems annihilated. Would I had been slain before this cruel secret was divulged.'

'Say not so. The Lord of Roskelyn's name is free from reproach ; and the late discovery will diffuse a vigour into his conduct he never before possessed.'

'But the countess,' said Randolph ; 'can I pay to that woman the duty due to another?'

'Pish, man ! Though I like not to tear up subjects that should be forgotten,' said Monteith, 'remember mine, and thou hast the advantage. Consider, hast thou, in this discovery, no one reason for exultation?'

'Father,' replied Randolph, 'you probe my heart ; what was the pride of my life, I am forced to relinquish. My beloved Phillippa, like myself, appeared heart-struck with this discovery.'

'Aye, because, like thyself, she took no time to consider the advantages that might accrue from it ; on second thoughts, seest thou none?'

Randolph snatched Monteith's hand. 'Noble,

best beloved of men ! were you indeed my father !' said he ; 'if you consent—if Phillippa—'

'Well,' interrupted Monteith, gaily, 'I will not pretend to misunderstand thee ; if thou hast eloquence to persuade Ambrosine, let Phillippa be the pledge of friendship between us. But I neglect the duties of hospitality ; join us as speedily as convenience suits.'

As Monteith spoke he shook Randolph warmly by the hand, and hastily left him.

Randolph found his thoughts relieved. To be Monteith's son was indeed to his heart most desirable ; and that advantage would lose none of its value by owing it to Phillippa. These reflections gave him new life. He retired to his chamber, where, after remaining an hour, he returned to the hall with a mien so enlivened, that all congratulated him on the change.

His first duty paid to Lord Roskelyn, he seated himself by his side ; and so far ingratiated with his father, that the past omission was forgotten. At the time of retiring to rest, he attended him to his chamber, and received those testimonies of affection that had been restrained before so full an assembly.

Randolph's heart was touched ; he returned his father's caresses, and vowed him future affection and obedience. Roskelyn's satisfaction was unbounded : to find a son after such an absence, and a son his whole country concurred in admiring, was a joy almost too great for nature to support ; he pressed him in his arms, wept with pleasure on his neck, and bade him command all he had freely, as the greatest satisfaction he could feel was to make him happy. Randolph kissed his hand ; and, the first effusion of paternal affection over, said—'My dear father, to contend with the noble Monteith, when he is resolved, would be as unavailable as to strive with the waves of the sea, or, in truth, we ought to yield up the domain of Roskelyn, which, in justice, is his ;

however, to draw a line of some justice between us, I pray you let the revenues of the many years he was deprived of the estates of Monteith, be made up: they are not justly ours, and will hang heavy on my heart.'

'My dear son,' replied Roskelyn, 'I have, before my departure for this happy visit, given orders for that purpose, and would willingly add the domain of Roskelyn; even then, with such a son as thee, I should think myself the richest man in Scotland.'

'There is yet one thing,' said Randolph, 'that gives me pain; I fear my mother's hatred to the house of Monteith will lead her to expect from me a conduct towards them which I cannot submit to. In all duty I will obey her, but must forget to live before I forget to love them.'

'It shall not be required; in all befitting her sex and rank she shall command, but henceforth I will be master of my own.'

'There was a proposal,' said Randolph, 'before this discovery took place, to unite the families; I would it might still take effect.'

'As how, my son?'

'The Lady Ambrosine,' replied Randolph, 'I need not say, hath a daughter, whose beauty is her smallest perfection; and she alone can make me happy.'

'Then may she be thine, and heaven bless your union. My consent you need not doubt, nor, I trust, Monteith's; for it will cement the family in bonds which will never be broken.'

Randolph returned thanks to his father, and after conversing till the night was far advanced, left him.

CHAPTER LIII.

AT an early hour Montrose called on his father, and

they then adjourned to the hall. Breakfast over, Roskelyn drawing Monteith and his wife apart, made the proposal for his son. Monteith smiled, but, with Ambrosine, gave his entire concurrence.

The family divided into different pursuits, Ambrosine and Philippa retired, but were speedily joined by the chief.—'I come a petitioner to ye,' said he—'I have received an offer for Philippa, which I trust she will not refuse; at least, I hope she will give it a larger consideration than she did the suit of the lord of Ronaldsa.'

'Dear father,' said she, 'I had hopes these vexations would no more return; for it distresses my heart not to act to your wishes; and yet indeed I can never marry!'

'Never is a long period,' replied Ambrosine; 'I know the party; he is unexceptionable in the eyes of all your friends, and one whose vows few women would refuse.'

'I would he would bear them to where they would be more welcome! Methinks he has chosen an ill hour, when our family is busied with the late discovery: for my part, I think of nothing else: sleep hath not since visited my eyelids!'

'Nay,' said Monteith, 'Montrose hath this union as much at heart as myself; wilt thou converse with him on the subject?'

'No, I pray you, dear father; he hath often wished to sacrifice me to Ronaldsa, though he knew I loved him not, and now means to persecute me with some of his new connexions.—I have been wicked,' added she, weeping; 'for, I shame to say, I loved Randolph best of all my brothers, and I am properly punished. Last night my heart bled for his distress; but this morning he appears perfectly satisfied; no doubt he will soon forget us all.'

'I do not believe it,' said Ambrosine; 'but you stray from the subject; you cannot form a decided opinion, with justice, without seeing the party.'

'Dear mother,' answered she, 'never on any other subject shall you complain of my disobedience; but on this, I pray ye, spare me; person, rank, wealth, nay, even merit, cannot alter my resolves!'

'I grieve to hear it,' said Monteith, 'and feel disappointed, as will also my brother Roskelyn, who warmly wished to cement the union of the two families by this tie.'

'What tie, father?' replied Phillippa, with astonishment.

'Nay, my good girl,' returned he gravely, 'never shall it be said that any family motive influenced me, where thy happiness was concerned: I am indeed grieved for the youth; for, in truth, he hath loved thee since his early infancy; and when he spoke of uniting thee to Ronaldsa, his heart and honour were not in unison.'

'Dear father,' said she, blushing; 'but did you indeed mean Randolph?'

'Undoubtedly; but thou wouldst not give me time for explanation; talk farther on this business with thy mother, and she will convey thy denial to our Randolph in softer terms than I might use; for well I know it will vex him almost to death.'

As Monteith spoke he quitted them, when Phillippa, throwing her arm round her mother, said—'I would sooner die than vex Randolph!—Is not my father cruel, lady, to deceive me so? I thought he meant some fearful, strange man, like Ronaldsa.'

Ambrosine could not suppress a smile. 'A part of thy objections are then done away,' said she.—'At that moment a gentle stroke on the chamber-door announced an intruder: it was Randolph.—'Beloved friends,' said he, 'in your presence my heart seeks to find a resting-place; and my most honoured father Monteith, for I can call him by no other name, told me ye were alone, and would pardon me.'

'Willingly: I joy to see your mind more collected than yesterday.'

'It is; but the happiness of my life must ever depend upon the house of Monteith. My dear Phillippa hath been in tears; perhaps you have told her my wishes, lady, and she declines them; if so, I pray you let the subject cease; for true affection deals not in persecution.'

'Randolph,' replied Phillippa, 'is it right to doubt my affection? More justly ought I to doubt thine, who could wish to unite me to Ronaldsa.'

'Ah, Phillippa, hadst thou seen my heart!'

'We know it now, my dear youth,' said Ambrosine: 'let that suffice. Phillippa, I shall say to thy father, thou wilt consider on the business he spoke on this morning: say, is it not so?'

'As your kindness shall direct, dear mother.'

'Well then, for the present, I leave ye: the entertainment of our guests must be attended to, and the dowager hath been left since breakfast.'

Montrose so warmly urged his suit, that Phillippa's objections were soon vanquished: and the happiness of the family increased by her avowal that she should no longer contend against the commands of her father.

The utmost joy reigned within the castle, and the days passed in feasting and pleasure. One night, a domestic entered hastily, whispered the chief, who immediately left his guests, and found the Lord of Ronaldsa supporting a fainting female.

'Ronaldsa, my brave youth,' said Monteith, 'what means this; bring ye us a wife? If so, she is welcome.'

'My noble friend,' replied Ronaldsa, 'no wife, but a cruelly used daughter, who claims your protection, if her father should have left you.'

Monteith snatched the torch from the table where it stood. 'Amazement! Matilda!' exclaimed Monteith, 'at this time of night too, without female attendants, and pale, sick, and disordered! what may this mean?'

'Tis no time for relation,' replied Ronaldsa, 'for two days and nights she hath been on horseback, without rest or food, save some macthet and wine, which I almost forced her to take: let it suffice—you know the Lady Roskelyn. If you doubt my honour, I am here.'

'I do not doubt it; but astonishment overpowers me. 'Call,' said he, to one of his vassals, 'the Lady Ambrosine, who will prescribe for this poor sufferer.'

'Is my father here, dear uncle?' said Matilda.

'He is; but he had better not know of your arrival till to-morrow, when your strength may be recruited, and both better prepared for the meeting.'

'I thank you—it will indeed be best.'

As she spoke Ambrosine joined them: her surprise equalled her husband's: but ordering refreshment and rest for her, she coincided in her husband's opinion of remaining silent till the morning.

A general order being given for the arrival of strangers not to be noticed, no word transpired.

CHAPTER LIV.

IN the morning Matilda was so far recruited, that she entreated her father would visit her: praying at the same time, the presence of her uncle, with the dowager, Ambrosine, and Philippa.

Astonished at what he heard, Roskelyn flew to her, and giving scarcely a moment to her changed appearance, demanded how she came to forsake the protection of her mother.

'My life upon her truth!' said Ambrosine: 'give her time, and she will explain all to your satisfaction.'

'Dear father, I am not to blame, and will truly relate all that has happened. My mother, though

confined to her chamber, has been well acquainted with all that has passed, and among other circumstances was told that you wished to unite me to young Monteith: a union which, she vowed, was there no other way to prevent, she would slay me with her own hand.

'This violence began even the day you left us; that same afternoon she informed me her cousin, Sir John Stuart, would that night sup at Roskelyn. He came; and his attentions were so pointed, that I could not misunderstand their meaning. They however, gave me but little concern: for I well knew you would not approve of such an alliance. On the morrow, my mother gave me to understand he was the man she had chosen for me; that resistance was fruitless, and that I should be privately married in the chapel of Roskelyn. In vain I pleaded your absence, and my denial served but to increase her anger. She said, that Sir John Stuart was her nearest of blood, and had the most right to me, her only child. Her words made me sorrowful! but I assumed courage sufficient to say, no power should force me to wed without your consent.

'Sir John was constantly with us, and she never suffered me from her sight, or I should have endeavoured to fly to you. One morning the Lord of Ronaldsa was announced; my mother whispered to her cousin, who left the hall; and then ordered Ronaldsa in.

'Having paid his respects, he said he came to crave her commands, as he was to depart in three days for Monteith, where he understood you then were.

'She replied she had none; but that he might inform you, all were well at home.

'I regarded this as the only opportunity I should have, and resolved not to let it escape: therefore, under pretence of more light to work in my embroidery, I took my seat at the window at the extremi-

ty of the hall. As the Lord of Ronaldsa passed me, he bowed ; and, rising, I said aloud—' I pray you present my duty to my lord and father ;' then added in a lower tone—' Tell him to fly to his child, or she is undone.'

' Though the utmost astonishment marked his features, he replied—' I will bear your message truly lady ;' and again bowing, he left us.

' Near evening, my mother said she should ride to Leith, and bade me prepare to accompany her. I foresaw some scheme, but was far from suspecting the extent : I, however, was obliged to attend her. Sir John Stuart and four of his men alone escorted us, and it was beyond the hour of vespers before we reached the chapel, which stands at a short distance from the shore.

' The lone situation, the hour, the company, all filled me with dread. I was scarcely able to stand.

' Dear mother,' said I, ' 'tis past evening prayer : I pray you enter not the chapel.'

' Foolish girl,' replied she, ' come on ; this hour decides thy fate : my enemies shall not triumph in my death, for the wealth of Roskelyn shall enrich the sunken fortunes of my father's house.' As she spoke, she drew my arm under hers ; Sir John took the other, and resistance was vain ; we entered the chapel, which was only enlightened by a few tapers, which served to show a priest, standing at the altar, holding a book. The whole of the plan now struck me. Among the vassals of my father's house, such a scheme of violence would have been impracticable but here I had no friends, and must fall an easy prey.'

Roskelyn, whose anger was raised to a pitch of fury, could hear no more ; in the bitterness of his heart, he invoked a curse on the head of the woman he had so many years idolized, and vowed never more to hold converse or friendship with her.

In the warmth of the moment, Monteith applaud-

ed his intentions, but Ambrosine, chiding both, said—' Remember, she is mother of two children, who do honour to human nature.—Proceed, dear niece—say only, did you escape the accomplishment of the wicked design ? and all will be more calm to wait the conclusion.'

' Do so,' said Monteith : ' but shrink not, Matilda : thou hast friends to repay the injury ten-fold. If thy enthrallment was completed, blood shall obliterate the affront, and set thee free from such accursed vows !'

' The virgin be praised, no sacred ties bind me,' replied she ; ' from them my soul is clear ; though, alas ! I fear not from blood !'

' Proceed, my love,' said Ambrosine : ' if the blood of the guilty has fallen, innocence sought it not, and the forfeiture be on their own heads !'

' We entered the chapel,' resumed Matilda, ' and were instantly joined by an old priest, who loudly declaimed against disobedience ; but I was too much agitated either to pay attention to his discourse, or profit by his instruction. I vehemently protested against their intentions, and called upon the priests to answer before Heaven their forcing a child to wedlock against the will of her father. They were deaf to my remonstrances, or too well instructed and paid to listen to them. I was dragged to the altar : the priest opened his book ; my mother called on him to use despatch : Sir John seized my hand, which I struggled to get loose : and the sacrilegious rites began. Patience had forsaken me, and my reason would speedily have followed, had not my mind suddenly been diverted into another channel. Sir John Stuart's men stood on the outside of the chapel, from whence the sound of contention and struggling caught my ear ; and, the moment after, six armed men rushed in and ran up to the altar.

' What do ye here, at this late hour ?' said the principal. ' Secrecy and darkness betoken guilt.

A daughter of the house of Roskelyn hath need of neither. Speak, lady,' said he, turning to me, 'why is your father absent at such a moment? Act ye against his will?'

'My spirits appeared instantly to return. I recognized the Lord of Ronaldsa, and felt relieved from danger. My mother spoke, but was almost inarticulate from passion. 'My lord,' said I, 'my father is far distant. My mother disregards the cries of her child; and I have no friend!'

'Your uncle's friend, lady, is devoted to serve you. Speak how it may be done, and you shall be obeyed.'

'Oh, if it were possible to bear me to him! There only can I be safe!'

'Come on, then,' said he, snatching my hand from the hand of Sir John Stuart, who still held it. 'Fear nothing. I will conduct you safe to his arms.'

'Surprise, as I conjecture, had hitherto kept Sir John silent; and my mother, (I tremble at the recollection,) overpowered with weakness and rage, leaned over the altar for support, her features swollen with passion, and every limb agitated.—Heaven forgive me for being the cause of her anger! it was an involuntary offence, and proceed from fatal necessity.'

'Matilda,' interrupted the Lord of Roskelyn impatiently, 'conclude thy story, and to prayers afterwards.'

'I will; but indeed the conflict was terrible; Sir John, with many invectives, half drew his sword; but either fear, or the anathema which the two priests denounced against such deeds, prevented him using it; and Ronaldsa and his men, whose weapons were all unsheathed, surrounding me, I was in a moment borne from the chapel.'

'I heard my mother scream, and would fain, on a second thought, have turned back: but, in this case, my deliverer was deaf to my entreaties; I was placed on my own horse, and we instantly departed.'

'We had proceeded a short way, when we discovered Sir John and his men in pursuit of us. The Lord of Ronaldsa commanding four of his men to pursue their way with me, made a stand; and in a moment I heard the clashing of swords; but my guides urged such speed that we soon lost the sound.'

'We had advanced two miles, when the Lord of Ronaldsa and his followers rejoined us. I was unable to testify my fears; and no explanation took place.'

'Early next morning, we were forced to rest and feed our beasts, and he obliged me to take some refreshment, and then, at my request, informed me that he had wounded Sir John Stuart, though not to death.'

'Of my mother he knew nothing since we left her in the chapel. He also told me that, on the day he received the message from me at Roskelyn, he despatched letters to my uncle with the purport, as he was not himself prepared to depart immediately.'

'None such have arrived,' said Monteith, 'or we should have lost no time in hastening to you.'

The fatigue I underwent during the journey was fearful; for I refused to make more stay than was necessary. Such is my account, dear father; say you are not displeased with me.'

Roskelyn embraced his daughter, as did the whole party; after which, Monteith and his brother left them to inquire farther particulars of Ronaldsa.

'Dear lady,' said Matilda, addressing Ambrosine, 'did you not allude to my mother having two children?'

Ambrosine informed her of her affinity to Randolph. 'Can it be possible,' exclaimed she, 'that I have a brother; and such a brother! When this is known, who will dare to insult Matilda?'

Ambrosine said—'Matilda, you have found a brother, but he will rob you of half your wealth.'

'No, lady, he will increase it beyond all price.'

'Oh! how I long to see him—to tell him how sin-

cerely I love him! Sweet Phillippa, though the advantage be mine, I almost pity you for losing such a brother.'

Phillippa blushed, but made no reply.

'Is there no relationship as near and dear as that of sister?' said the dowager: 'if there be, Phillippa may perhaps hereafter claim that to Montrose.'

'I understand you, lady: Phillippa will be my sister,' said she, throwing her arms round my neck: 'and I will love her dearly. Methought, last night, I was the unfortunate of all creatures: but this morning I am one of the most happy.'

'If, among the relations I possess, I feel sorrow and pity for any,' said Ambrosine, 'it is for the countess of Roskelyn, who voluntarily deprives herself of enjoyment that gladden every other heart.'

'Fie upon her!' replied the dowager, 'name her not. I rejoice to see my son Roskelyn hath at length shaken off the fascination that so long hath disgraced him.'

'My poor mother, alas! I fear,' said Matilda, 'is fast hastening to the grave: never shall I forget her countenance at the chapel—so pale and discoloured; I would I had gone back! yet sickness and a view of death seemed rather to render her more firm to her purpose than to move her from it.—Dear lady,' added she, taking the dowager's hand, 'remember her only as the mother of the gallant Montrose, and all other remembrances will give place.'

Ambrosine was charmed with the duty of Matilda, and observing that she still looked pale and languid, with the dowager, soon after retired, leaving Phillippa alone to attend her.

CHAPTER LV.

THOUGH Monteith and Roskelyn had no doubt of the veracity of Matilda, they resolved to hear the account of Ronaldsa; and both paying him such thanks as the service rendered required, entreated him to favour them therewith. With the candour and openness that ever accompany true honour, he immediately complied, and began as follows:

'I need not repeat why I remained in the city, the disbanding of the troops not being completed. Daily some were discharged, and received a sum sufficient to take them home to their families: among those was one, whom on paying him his stipend, I immediately recognized for the son of a vassal of my deceased father, who for some offence had been banished the island. The poor fellow finding he was known, appeared confused: but, as the son could not with justice be condemned for the error of his father, and had moreover, been severely wounded in the battle of Sark, I spoke to him with a kindness that speedily obliterated unpleasant remembrances. His father, he informed me, had been in England, where he engaged in the service of Sir John Stuart, who was now in Scotland, on a visit at the castle of Roskelyn. He added, that his father had never been happy since he left Ronaldsa, and, in short, testified so much attachment to his native land, and the service he had been accustomed to, that I was wont to tell him, as *he* had been a brave soldier, I pardoned his father for his sake, and that he might return to his country and old allegiance, as speedily as he found it convenient. The gratitude of the youth, whose name is Robert, was unbounded; he fell at my feet, and the whole concluded by my engaging him to remain in my service.

'On the ensuing day, I received the personal thanks of the father, whose wife I found was yet at Ronaldsa: and, giving him a small sum, I bade him hasten thither, telling him all past was forgotten, and, if deserving, he should find me his friend.

'The master-key to the human heart, when not entirely corrupt, is gratitude; and though undesignedly, I had opened his, he threw himself at my feet, and begged me to counsel him in what he was about to transact; as he knew I was, if not materially concerned, at least attached to a family of near affinity to those whom it would affect. In short, he informed me, that his master, Sir John Stuart, had come from England in consequence of an invitation from the countess of Roskelyn, to wed her daughter; but that the young lady refused, the match being the project of the countess, unknown to her lord.

'I confess I scarcely at first gave credit to what I heard: I however questioned him narrowly, and at length learned, that the countess having no son, was said to be resolved that the wealth of her daughter should centre in her own family. Pardon me, but, from some circumstances I had heard relative to the temper of the countess, I was not prepossessed in her favour: and interrogating the man farther, with promises to reward him, if he merited my protection, he added, that Sir John Stuart had a small vessel off the harbour at Leith; and, did not the lady Matilda consent willingly, such means, he suspected, would be used, as must enforce compliance. Having learned all I could, I dismissed him with a present, telling him to be careful in conveying me all the information he could: and, for that purpose, I sent his son Robert to be in the vicinity of the castle.

'Giving the night to reflection, I resolved, though unknown to the countess, to visit Roskelyn, under the pretence of inquiring whether she had any commands to her lord. There I received a short hint

from the lady Matilda, who appeared agitated and pale, which resolved me to become an active agent in the business.

'On my return to the city, I instantly wrote an account to the chief Monteith, at the same time assuring him that I would consider myself, as far as possible, the brother of the family, until the lord of Roskelyn or himself should arrive.'

'Yet I have received no such letters,' interrupted the chief.

'The reason I cannot conjecture,' replied Ronaldsa; 'for I despatched the advice by the most trusty of my vassals—a man whose honesty hath never been impeached.'

'Tis strange,' answered Roskelyn; 'but I pray ye proceed.'

'I will. The father of Robert, anxious to win my favour, even that night, after I had been to Roskelyn, sent his son, who called me from my bed, to inform me that from some cause, but what his father knew not, the business was suddenly hastened—the vessel was ordered to be prepared; and he suspected from words that had dropped from Sir John, that a marriage was to take place immediately; after which they were to embark for England till the first confusion arising from such a step had subsided. The lady Matilda, he added, was still firm in her refusal; but the countess, if possible, appeared more and more resolved; and the match was too advantageous to Sir John to be declined.

'However I might feel that I had no right to interfere, I considered there was none near of kindred on the spot, and therefore resolved to take the measures I thought necessary. Robert assured me, should there be occasion, his father would join me; and that, for himself, he was devoted to my service; to these men I added four more, whom I stationed the ensuing morning in the woods of Roskelyn. In the afternoon I joined them, when I learnt from Ro-

bert, that all the baggage of Sir John Stuart had that day been conveyed on board his vessel, and his men were ordered to be ready early in the morning to attend him.

'Robert was our spy, and at sunset he joined us, almost breathless with haste, informed us the countess, with lady Matilda and Sir John, were set out on horseback for Leith. We lost no time, but spurring our beasts, followed, and reached them some few minutes after they entered the solitary chapel that stands near the shore. I rushed in, and saw force was offered to obtain the lady Matilda's vows; no father or brother's presence sanctioned the act, and the duty of a man called upon me to protect her.'

'Generous Ronaldsa,' interrupted Roskelyn, 'how can I ever sufficiently thank you?'

'Name it not: I was happy to rescue her. The countess, apparently sinking on the pavement, called upon her to return, but I refused to let her comply: and placing her upon her horse, which stood at the entrance of the chapel, we lost no time. Sir John speedily followed; his men, by the interference and persuasion of Robert's father, had hitherto made no resistance. He called upon me to defend myself, but soon fell, as I fear, mortally wounded, though I concealed that circumstance from the lady Matilda. I much feared she would have sunk under the fatigue she underwent, but I could not persuade her to rest by the way. I sent one of my vassals to the soldiery, with a letter to the principal commander in my absence, desiring him to detain them a few days. Robert and his father, with my own men, attended us; but for the safety of the poor fellow who was to have conveyed my letter to the chief, I have the most anxious fears, for I know him to be faithful. You now are informed of every particular: if what I have done meets your approbation, I am satisfied; if otherwise, my motives, which were disinterested, must excuse me.'

The praises which Monteith and Roskelyn bestowed on Ronaldsa gratified the youth, who was speedily informed of the discovery respecting Randolph, and their intention to unite the families in yet stricter bonds by marriage.—'Thou must do me the justice, noble youth,' said the chief, 'to avow I wished to call thee my son; and would now that I had another daughter, who might be more sensible of thy deserts than Phillippa! but, accustomed from her cradle to Montrose, he became, even unknown to herself, master of her heart.'

'Generous chief, I thank you,' replied Ronaldsa, 'and perforce must yield to what cannot be avoided; of all men, I am least inclined to envy the friend whom I regard above all others.'

Montrose, who, with James Monteith, De Bourg, and others, had risen early to the chase, at that moment entered the hall. Informed of what had passed, all highly applauded Ronaldsa, while Montrose, embracing him, said—'Dear friend, pardon me; I am an innocent rival: my heart and that of Phillippa, like two of the southern rosebuds, grew together by the mere impulse of nature; and to separate one, I am convinced, would have been death to the other.'

'Happy may you be!' replied Ronaldsa; 'the love which meets no return fades, as doth the tree which meets no kindly rain to nourish its root: that I could have devoted my life to the lady Phillippa is most true; but her inclinations were uncongenial, and I shall now rejoice to see her happy to her own wishes. Though born in the frozen isles of Orkney, I have a warm heart, Montrose; and am resolved never to wed, unless I can gain a heart in return for mine.'

'Fairly determined,' replied Monteith; 'I honour thy resolution, and predict it will lead to happiness.'

The conversation was interrupted by the entrance

of one of the vassals, who informed the chief that a messenger, exhausted with the speed he had made, craved admittance on business of the utmost import.

Monteith commanded him to be brought in, when a peasant appeared, and, presenting a letter to the chief, said—'Noble master, the true bearer of these despatches lies dangerously ill, within a few miles of Falkirk, where he was thrown from his horse, and so violently bruised on the head, that, for near two days, he lay without recovering his reason; on the first return of which he conjured me, his host, to bear these letters to you, and commendations from his noble lord.'

'My letters!' exclaimed Ronaldsa; 'they have indeed come late; but, my honest friend,' added he, addressing the peasant, 'thy zeal is the same: let my faithful servant lack no kindness or help; and here is my purse to repay thy care—I pray thee is he better?'

The stranger replied in the affirmative, and Monteith giving him into the care of his vassals, ordered him to be particularly attended to.

The letters to Monteith accorded exactly with what Ronaldsa had related; and the thanks of the lord of Roskelyn were again renewed, till they became painful to the youth. De Bourg at length, with his usual humour, interrupting the discourse.—'Pish!' said he, 'empty thanks may be compared to tantalising a hungry fellow with a fair feast, carved in wood, or moulded in wax, beautiful to the eye, but repugnant to the stomach. In this case, were I the Jason who had borne off the golden fleece, by my life, nothing less than keeping the prize should satisfy me.'

'De Bourg,' replied Monteith, 'either thy honesty, or the impudence of thy country, makes thee declare openly what others only think or wish: but enough on the subject; Ronaldsa blushes like a girl, a denial to thy opinion.'

'Not so,' said De Bourg: 'you may be a good soldier, St. Clair, but for knowledge of the human heart, you are a mere greenhorn; when men blush, it is from the warmth of their hearts: when they turn pale, it is from a contrary emotion; and my purse to thine, in this case, I have guessed rightly: Ronaldsa shall be umpire between us.'

'Agreed,' replied Monteith.

'Nay then, chevalier,' said Ronaldsa, 'the purse is yours. If I did blush, it was not the result of coldness; I have not, in faith, contemplated the beauties of the amiable and gentle Matilda for two days with impunity; and, could I hereafter win her heart, and gain the approbation of her father, I should still be happy.'

'I never lost a purse so willingly in my life,' answered Monteith: 'but what says my brother, and our Montrose, to this business?'

'Why in faith,' replied Roskelyn, 'I can only say that if the parties agree, I will swear that the castle of Monteith abounds with blessings, since it hath given me two of the most gallant lads in Scotland.'

'And I,' said Montrose, embracing Ronaldsa, 'shall accomplish my long-wished purpose by a means that will give joy, instead of sadness, to my heart—that of claiming Ronaldsa as a brother.'

The young lord returned the salute, when Montrose claimed permission to see his sister, which was immediately granted.

'Nay, come with me, Ronaldsa,' said he: 'thou hast at least acted a brother's part by Matilda, and may surely claim a brother's thanks.'

Ronaldsa needed no second invitation, and they adjourned to the gallery, where causing Matilda to be informed they waited to see her, she, with her cousin, speedily joined them.

The artless joy with which Matilda received her brother, and the blushing thanks she bestowed on

Ronaldsa, were not without their effect on both their hearts : the first found her, in his mind, superior to all the women he had ever seen, the lady Ambrosine and Phillippa excepted ; while Ronaldsa, at every glance saw fresh charms, which made her in his eye, superior to either ; he compared her person mentally with that of Phillippa, and found it on the whole equally beautiful, and more to his liking, from the gentleness of her demeanor, and the gratitude she expressed towards him.

Matilda, though weak and languid, joined the party at dinner. The anger of the lord of Roskelyn against his countess caused him now to be in no haste to make her a sharer in his satisfaction, and Montrose felt at once too happy at Monteith, and too much displeasure against her, to press his father to hasten his departure.

CHAPTER LVI.

IN the bosom of friendship and the soft enthrallment of mutual love, some days had passed at the castle of Monteith, when the peace was broken on by an especial messenger with despatches, informing the lord of Roskelyn that his countess lay at the point of death. The dutiful Matilda not only testified, but in reality felt, more grief on the occasion than any other person ; but the lord of Roskelyn had lately gained a perseverance not to be easily moved, and he resolutely refused to let her leave Monteith.

Accompanied only by Montrose and Ronaldsa, with their dependants, he departed on his journey ; and, leaving the young lord in the city, he, with his son, proceeded to the castle of Roskelyn : but, ere he reached it, the black banner, waving over the gate, foretold their errand was fruitless.

‘ Gracious Heaven ! ’ exclaimed he, ‘ it is indeed

thus ! Unhappy Ellen, the saints be merciful to thy soul ! I trust thy punishment was on earth ; for thou hast died unblest with the tidings that thou wert mother to such a son.’

Montrose, however he might think of his mother living, in death felt the claims of nature on his heart. — ‘ Dear father,’ said he, ‘ in this case I know not how to speak comfort ; but if from your children a double share of duty can soften the loss, both Matilda and myself will pay it.’

‘ I doubt it not,’ replied Roskelyn ; ‘ cruel and unfeeling as was thy mother, in spite of my reason I loved her, yet, after her conduct to Matilda, resolved to live with her no more.’

On reaching the castle, they found the countess had died the evening before. On losing Matilda in the chapel of Leith, she had experienced a second paroxysm from the ruptured blood-vessel, but had been conveyed back to Roskelyn in a litter, where, after languishing some days, her revengeful and vindictive spirit had taken its everlasting flight. Even in the sorrow of the moment, the exultation of the lord of Roskelyn could not be entirely suppressed, when he announced the youthful Montrose as his son to his vassals. In their hearts, whatever might be their outward semblance, pleasure reigned ; for the countess was too much disliked to be truly mourned by her dependants, and the open mien and mild demeanour of Montrose gave the promise of a kind ruler.

Ronaldsa, who in the city had learned the death of the countess, hastened to join his friends at Roskelyn, where he remained till the rites of the church, and the duties of the dead, were fulfilled ; after which they resolved to return to Monteith.

On inquiry, they learnt that Sir John Stuart, though severely wounded, had survived and returned to England—an information that gave pleasure to all.

Passing Stirling, they paid their duty to the sovereign, who testified his satisfaction at the events which had transpired, and congratulated them on the intended union of their families, promising that he would interest himself to procure the consent of the church.

Apprised by a messenger of the death of the countess, they, on their arrival at Monteith, found the first effusion of Matilda's grief settled into a calm melancholy. At first she had accused herself of hastening her mother's death; but the second paroxysm seizing her at the chapel of Leith being concealed from her knowledge, the mild admonitions of Ambrosine had in time their full effect; and, daily assisting for a month in the mass that was said for her soul's rest, she at length became composed.

Monteith who saw that all parties would be better for a change of place, and the variety of travelling, proposed a journey to Kintail, which was accordingly agreed on and executed.

From thence they proceeded to the fortress, spreading comfort and assistance among the islanders, who declared that, from this visit, they were convinced that their beloved chief, uncorrupted by courts, had not forsaken them. From the Hebrides they sailed to the Orkneys, where, after passing a short time at the castle of Ronaldsa, they returned to Scotland, visiting the estates of their several friends in the way.

The dowager accompanied them during the whole excursion; frequently declaring, that such happiness had lately been her lot, that she looked upon herself as the most blessed of all parents. To her intentions in regard to the young St. Clair, she firmly adhered, making him heir to all she possessed, as she truly observed, the demesnes of Roskelyn were amply sufficient for Montrose, and those of Monteith for her grandson James.

Matilda was not deaf to the vows of Ronaldsa, though she claimed a year's probation to be given

to the memory of her mother—an arrangement in which Ambrosine supported her, and in which Montrose, however against his will, was obliged to coincide. That time elapsed, in which the consent of the church was obtained, the parties were united in the presence of the king, who loaded them with gifts, and showed them every mark of honour and respect.

Universal rejoicings through the different domains took place; the brothers, united by the marriage of their children, bespoke a tie doubly strengthened, and which way yet more strongly cemented, in the course of a year, by the birth of a son to Montrose. By the request of Roskelyn, the child bore the name of Randolph, in commemoration that his father had so long and honourably used it.

Matilda also became a mother; and never had she cause to repent her confidence in Ronaldsa, who mild as brave in the husband never forget the lover.

The dowager, during her life, passed some months every year with her different relatives, bettered by their example, more prepared, and less afraid to die.

Amidst the rising virtues and bravery of their children, Monteith and Ambrosine grew insensibly old, the pride of their vassals, the scourge of the oppressor, and the protectors of the needy; like meteors, drawing a bright track to direct their posterity to follow.

The friends of Monteith were seldom many months absent from him, though Ross, Hamilton, and M'Gregor, resided on their different domains; to the last of whom Montrose generously insisted on giving up the bequest of Randolph, but which was as generously refused.

De Bourg remained the chief's constant companion, increasing years damping none of his natural vivacity.

Roskelyn, enervated in youth by the false tenderness of his mother, from the example of Monteith, shook off his weakness, and became truly dear to the chief, and honoured and beloved by his son.

For Montrose and Phillippa, from their infancy warmly attached to each other, marriage only joined their hands, whose hearts long before had been united; no discordant passions vexed them; but, after the example of Monteith and Ambrosine, each ruling without either feeling the sway, mutual truth, faith, and love, sanctioned the pleasures of their youthful days, and rivetted an affection, which neither time, chance, nor age, could destroy.