

with some attention; and then addressing Halbert in a stern and severe voice, said, "Young man, if thou wouldst not have us suspect thee of some strange double-dealing in this matter, let us instantly know whence thou hadst this token, and how it possesses an influence on Sir Piercie Shafton?"—It would have been extremely difficult for Halbert, thus hard pressed, to have either evaded or answered so puzzling a question. To have avowed the truth might, in those times, have occasioned his being burnt at a stake, although, in ours, his confession would have only gained for him the credit of a liar beyond all rational credibility. He was fortunately relieved by the return of Sir Piercie Shafton, himself, whose ear caught, as he entered, the sound of the Sub-Prior's question.

Without waiting until Halbert Glendinning replied, he came forward, whispering to him as he passed, "Be secret—thou shalt have the satisfaction thou hast dared to seek for."

When he returned to his place, there were still marks of discomposure on his brow; but, becoming apparently collected and calm, he looked around him, and apologized for the indecorum of which he had been guilty, which he ascribed to sudden and severe indisposition. All were silent, and looked on each other with some surprise.

The Lord Abbot gave orders for all to retire from the apartment, save himself, Sir Piercie Shafton, and the Sub-Prior. "And have an eye," he added, "on that bold youth, that he escape not; for if he hath practised by charm, or otherwise, on the health of our worshipful guest, I swear by the alb and mitre which I wear, that his punishment shall be most exemplary."

"My lord and venerable father," said Halbert, bowing respectfully, "fear not but that I will abide my doom. I think you will best learn from the worshipful knight himself, what is the cause of his distemperature, and how slight my share in it has been."

"Be assured," said the knight, without looking up, however, while he spoke, "I will satisfy the Lord Abbot."

With these words the company retired, and with them young Glendinning.

When the Abbot, the Sub-Prior, and the English knight were left alone, Father Eastace, contrary to his custom, could not help speaking the first, "Expound unto us, noble sir," he said, "by what mysterious means the production of this simple toy could so far move your spirit, and overcome your patience, after you had shown yourself proof to all the provocation offered by this self-sufficient and singular youth?"

The knight took the silver bodkin from the good father's hand, looked at it with great composure, and, having examined it all over, returned it to the Sub-Prior, saying at the same time, "In truth, venerable father, I cannot but marvel, that the wisdom implied alike in your silver hairs, and in your eminent rank, should, like a babbling

hound (excuse the similitude), open thus loudly on a false scent. I were, indeed, more slight to be moved than the leaves of the aspen-tree, which wag at the least breath of heaven, could I be touched by such a trifle as this, which in no way concerns me more than if the same quantity of silver were stricken into so many groats. Truth is, that from my youth upward, I have been subjected to such a malady as you saw me visited with even now—a cruel and searching pain, which goeth through nerve and bone, even as a good brand in the hands of a brave soldier shears through limb and sinew—but it passes away speedily, as you yourselves may judge."

"Still," said the Sub-Prior, "this will not account for the youth offering to you this piece of silver, as a token by which you were to understand something, and, as we must needs conjecture, something disagreeable."

"Your reverence is to conjecture what you will," said Sir Piercie; "but I cannot pretend to lay your judgment on the right scent when I see it at fault. I hope I am not liable to be called upon to account for the foolish actions of a malapert boy?"

"Assuredly," said the Sub-Prior, "we shall prosecute no inquiry which is disagreeable to our guest. Nevertheless," said he, looking to his Superior, "this chance may, in some sort, alter the plan your lordship had formed for your worshipful guest's residence for a brief term in this tower, as a place alike of secrecy and of security; both of which, in the terms which we now stand on with England, are circumstances to be desired."

"In truth," said the Abbot, "and the doubt is well thought on, were it as well removed; for I scarce know in the Hallidome so fitting a place of refuge, yet see I not how to recommend it to our worshipful guest, considering the unrestrained petulance of this headstrong youth."

"Tush! reverend sirs—what would you make of me?" said Sir Piercie Shafton. "I protest, by mine honor, I would abide in this house were I to choose. What! I take no exceptions at the youth for showing a flash of spirit, though the spark may light on mine own head. I honor the lad for it. I protest I will abide here, and he shall aid me in striking down a deer. I must needs be friends with him, an he be such a shot; and we will speedily send down to my Lord Abbot a buck of the first head, killed so artificially as shall satisfy even the reverend Kitchener."

This was said with such apparent ease and good-humor, that the Abbot made no farther observation on what had passed, but proceeded to acquaint his guest with the details of furniture, hangings, provisions, and so forth, which he proposed to send up to the Tower of Glendearg for his accommodation. This discourse, seasoned with a cup or two of wine, served to prolong the time until the reverend Abbot ordered his cavalcade to prepare for their return to the Monastery.

"As we have," he said, "in the course of this

our toilsome journey, lost our meridian,* indulgence shall be given to those of our attendants who shall, from very weariness, be unable to attend the duty at prime,† and this by way of misericord or indulgentia."‡

Having benevolently intimated a boon to his faithful followers, which he probably judged would be far from unacceptable, the good Abbot, seeing all ready for his journey, bestowed his blessing on the assembled household—gave his hand to be kissed by Dame Glendinning—himself kissed the cheek of Mary Avenel, and even of the Miller's maiden, when they approached to render him the same homage—commanded Halbert to rule his temper, and to be aiding and obedient in all things to the English Knight—admonished Edward to be *discipulus impiger atque strenuus*—then took a courteous farewell of Sir Piercie Shafton, advising him to lie close, for fear of the English Borderers, who might be employed to kidnap him; and having discharged these various offices of courtesy, moved forth to the court-yard, followed by the whole establishment. Here, with a heavy sigh approaching to a groan, the venerable father heaved himself upon his palfrey, whose dark purple housings swept the ground; and, greatly comforted that the discretion of the animal's pace would be no longer disturbed by the gambades of Sir Piercie and his prancing war-house, he set forth at a sober and steady trot upon his return to the Monastery.

When the Sub-Prior had mounted to accompany his principal, his eye sought out Halbert, who, partly hidden by a projection of the outward wall of the court, stood apart from, and gazing upon the departing cavalcade, and the group which assembled around them. Unsatisfied with the explanation he had received concerning the mysterious transaction of the silver bodkin, yet interesting himself in the youth, of whose character he had formed a favorable idea, the worthy monk resolved to take an early opportunity of investigating that matter. In the meanwhile, he looked upon Halbert with a serious and warning aspect, and held up his finger to him as he signed farewell. He then joined the rest of the churchmen, and followed his Superior down the valley.

CHAPTER XX.

I hope you'll give me cause to think you noble,
And do me right with your sword, sir, as becomes
One gentleman of honor to another;
All this is fair, sir—let us make no days on't,
I'll lead your way.

LOVE'S PILGRIMAGE.

The look and sign of warning which the Sub-Prior gave to Halbert Glendinning as they parted, went to his heart; for although he had profited

* The hour of repose at noon, which, in the middle ages, was employed in slumber, and which the monastic rules of nocturnal vigils rendered necessary.

† Prime was the midnight service of the monks.

‡ *Misericord*, according to the learned work of Fosbrooke on

much less than Edward by the good man's instructions, he had a sincere reverence for his person; and even the short time he had for deliberation tended to show him he was embarked in a perilous adventure. The nature of the provocation which he had given to Sir Piercie Shafton he could not even conjecture; but he saw that it was of a mortal quality, and he was now to abide the consequences.

That he might not force these consequences forward by any premature renewal of their quarrel, he resolved to walk apart for an hour, and consider on what terms he was to meet this haughty foreigner. The time seemed propitious for his doing so without having the appearance of wilfully shunning the stranger, as all the members of the little household were dispersing either to perform such tasks as had been interrupted by the arrival of the dignitaries, or to put in order what had been deranged by their visit.

Leaving the Tower, therefore, and descending, unobserved as he thought, the knoll on which it stood, Halbert gained the little piece of level ground which extended betwixt the descent of the hill, and the first sweep made by the brook after washing the foot of the eminence on which the Tower was situated, where a few straggling birch and oak trees served to secure him from observation. But scarcely had he reached the spot, when he was surprised to feel a smart tap upon the shoulder, and, turning around, he perceived he had been closely followed by Sir Piercie Shafton.

When, whether from our state of animal spirits, want of confidence in the justice of our cause, or any other motive, our own courage happens to be in a wavering condition, nothing tends so much altogether to disconcert us, as a great appearance of promititude on the part of our antagonist. Halbert Glendinning, both morally and constitutionally intrepid, was nevertheless somewhat troubled at seeing the stranger, whose resentment he had provoked, appear at once before him, and with an aspect which boded hostility. But though his heart might beat somewhat thicker, he was too high-spirited to exhibit any external signs of emotion.—"What is your pleasure, Sir Piercie?" he said to the English knight, enduring without apparent discomposure all the terrors which his antagonist had summoned into his aspect.

"What is my pleasure?" answered Sir Piercie; "a goodly question after the part you have acted towards me!—Young man, I know not what infatuation has led thee to place thyself in direct and insolent opposition to one who is a guest of thy liege-lord the Abbot, and who, even from the courtesy due to thy mother's roof, had a right to remain there without meeting insult. Neither do I ask, or care, by what means thou

British Monachism, meant not only an indulgence or exoneration from particular duties, but also a particular apartment in a convent, where the monks assembled to enjoy such indulgences or allowances as were granted beyond the rule.

hast become possessed of the fatal secret by which thou hast dared to offer me open shame. But I must now tell thee, that the possession of it hath cost thee thy life."

"Not, I trust, if my hand and sword can defend it," replied Halbert.

"True," said the Englishman, "I mean not to deprive thee of thy fair chance of self-defence. I am only sorry to think, that, young and country-bred as thou art, it can but little avail thee. But thou must be well aware, that in this quarrel I shall use no terms of quarter."

"Rely on it, proud man," answered the youth, "that I shall ask none; and although thou speakest as if I lay already at thy feet, trust me, that as I am determined never to ask thy mercy, so I am not fearful of needing it."

"Thou wilt, then," said the knight, "do nothing to avert the certain fate which thou hast provoked with such wantonness?"

"And how were that to be purchased?" replied Halbert Glendinning, more with the wish of obtaining some farther insight into the terms on which he stood with this stranger, than to make him the submission which he might require.

"Explain to me instantly," said Sir Piercie, "without equivocation or delay, by what means thou wert enabled to wound my honor so deeply—and shouldst thou point out to me by so doing an enemy more worthy of my resentment, I will permit thine own obscure insignificance to draw a veil over thine insolence."

"This is too high a flight," said Glendinning, fiercely, "for thine own presumption to soar without being checked. Thou hast come to my father's house, as well as I can guess, a fugitive and an exile, and thy first greeting to its inhabitants has been that of contempt and injury. By what means I have been able to retort that contempt, let thine own conscience tell thee. Enough for me that I stand on the privilege of a free Scotchman, and will brook no insult unreturned, and no injury unrequited."

"It is well, then," said Sir Piercie Shafton; "we will dispute this matter to-morrow morning with our swords. Let the time be daybreak, and do thou assign the place. We will go forth as if to strike a deer."

"Content," replied Halbert Glendinning: "I will guide thee to a spot where an hundred men might fight and fall without any chance of interruption."

"It is well," answered Sir Piercie Shafton. "Here then we part.—Many will say, that in thus indulging the right of a gentleman to the son of a plod-breaking peasant, I derogate from my sphere, even as the blessed sun would derogate should he condescend to compare and match his golden beams with the twinkle of a pale, blinking expiring, gross-fed taper. But no consideration of rank shall prevent my avenging the insult thou hast offered me. We bear a smooth face, observe me, Sir Villagio, before the worshipful inmates

of yonder cabin, and to-morrow we try conclusions with our swords." So saying, he turned away towards the Tower.

It may not be unworthy of notice, that in the last speech only, had Sir Piercie used some of those flowers of rhetoric which characterized the usual style of his conversation. Apparently, a sense of wounded honor, and the deep desire of vindicating his injured feelings, had proved too strong for the fantastic affectation of his acquired habits. Indeed, such is usually the influence of energy of mind, when called forth and exerted, that Sir Piercie Shafton had never appeared in the eyes of his youthful antagonist half so much deserving of esteem and respect as in this brief dialogue, by which they exchanged mutual defiance. As he followed him slowly to the Tower, he could not help thinking to himself, that, had the English knight always displayed this superior tone of bearing and feeling, he would not probably have felt so earnestly disposed to take offence at his hand. Mortal offence, however, had been exchanged, and the matter was to be put to mortal arbitrament.

The family met at the evening meal, when Sir Piercie Shafton extended the benignity of his countenance and the graces of his conversation far more generally over the party than he had hitherto condescended to do. The greater part of his attention was, of course, still engrossed by his divine and imitable Discretion, as he chose to term Mary Avenel; but, nevertheless, there were interjectional flourishes to the Maid of the Mill, under the title of Comely Damsel, and to the Dame, under that of Worthy Matron. Nay, lest he should fail to excite their admiration by the graces of his rhetoric, he generously and without solicitation, added those of his voice; and after regretting bitterly the absence of his viol-de-gamba, he regaled them with a song, "which," said he, "the inimitable Astrophel, whom mortals call Philip Sidney, composed in the nonage of his muse, to show the world what they are to expect from his riper years, and which will one day see the light in that not-to-be-paralleled perfection of human wit, which he has addressed to his sister, the matchless Parthenope, whom men call Countess of Pembroke; a work," he continued, "whereof his friendship hath permitted me, though unworthy, to be an occasional partaker, and whereof I may well say, that the deep afflictive tale which awakeneth our sorrows, is so relieved with brilliant similitudes, dulcet descriptions, pleasant poems, and engaging interludes, that they seem as the stars of the firmament, beautifying the dusky robe of night. And though I wot well how much the lovely and quaint language will suffer by my widowed voice, widowed in that it is no longer matched by my beloved viol-de-gamba, I will essay to give you a taste of the ravishing sweetness of the poesy of the un-to-be-imitated Astrophel."

So saying, he sung without mercy or remorse

about five hundred verses, of which the two first and four last may suffice for a specimen—

"What tongue can her perfections tell,
On whose each part all pens may dwell!
* * * * *
Of whose high praise and praiseful bliss,
Goodness the pen, Heaven paper is;
The ink immortal fame doth send,
As I began so I must end."

As Sir Piercie Shafton always sung with his eyes half shut, it was not until, agreeably to the promise of poetry, he had fairly made an end, that looking round, he discovered that the greater part of his audience had, in the meanwhile, yielded to the charms of repose. Mary Avenel, indeed, from a natural sense of politeness, had contrived to keep awake through all the prolixities of the divine Astrophel; but Mysie was transported in dreams back to the dusty atmosphere of her father's mill. Edward himself, who had given his attention for some time, had at length fallen fast asleep; and the good dame's nose, could its tones have been put under regulation, might have supplied the bass of the lamented viol-de-gamba. Halbert, however, who had no temptation to give way to the charms of slumber, remained awake with his eyes fixed on the songster; not that he was better entertained with the words, or more ravished with the execution, than the rest of the company, but rather because he admired, or perhaps envied the composure, which could thus spend the evening in interminable madrigals, when the next morning was to be devoted to deadly combat. Yet it struck his natural acuteness of observation that the eye of the gallant cavalier did now and then, furtively as it were, seek a glance of his countenance, as to discover how he was taking the exhibition of his antagonist's composure and serenity of mind.

"He shall read nothing in my countenance," thought Halbert, proudly, "that can make him think my indifference less than his own."

And taking from the shelf a bag full of miscellaneous matters collected for the purpose, he began with great industry to dress hooks, and had finished half-a-dozen of flies (we are enabled, for the benefit of those who admire the antiquities of the gentle art of angling, to state that they were brown hackles) by the time that Sir Piercie had arrived at the conclusion of his long-winded strophes of the divine Astrophel. So that he also testified a magnanimous contempt of that which to-morrow should bring forth.

As it now waxed late, the family of Glendearg separated for the evening; Sir Piercie first saying to the dame, that "her son Albert—"

"Halbert," said Elspeth, with emphasis, "Halbert, after his goodsire, Halbert Brydone."

"Well, then, I have prayed your son, Halbert, that we may strive to-morrow, with the sun's earliness, to wake a stag from his lair, that I may see whether he be as prompt at that sport as fame bespeaks him."

"A.as! sir," answered Dame Elspeth, "he is but too prompt, an you talk of promptitude, at

any thing that has steel at one end of it, and mischief at the other. But he is at your honorable disposal, and I trust you will teach him how obedience is due to our venerable father and lord, the Abbot, and prevail with him to take the bow-bearer's place in fee; for, as the two worthy monks said, it will be a great help to a widow-woman."

"Trust me, good dame," replied Sir Piercie, "it is my purpose so to indoctrinate him, touching his conduct and bearing towards his betters, that he shall not lightly depart from the reverence due to them.—We meet, then, beneath the birch-trees in the plain," he said, looking to Halbert, "so soon as the eye of day hath opened its lids."—Halbert answered with a sign of acquiescence, and the knight proceeded, "And now, having wished to my fairest Discretion those pleasant dreams which wave their pinions around the couch of sleeping beauty, and to this comely damsel the bounties of Morpheus, and to all others the common good-night, I will crave you leave to depart to my place of rest, though I may say with the poet,

'Ah rest!—no rest but change of place and posture:
Ah sleep!—no sleep but worn-out Nature's swooning;
Ah bed!—no bed but cushion filled with stones:
Rest, sleep, nor bed, await not on an exile.'

With a delicate obeisance he left the room, evading Dame Glendinning, who hastened to assure him he would find his accommodations for repose much more agreeable than they had been the night before, there having been store of warm coverlets, and a soft feather-bed, sent up from the Abbey. But the good knight probably thought that the grace and effect of his exit would be diminished, if he were recalled from his heroics to discuss such sublunary and domestic topics, and therefore hastened away without waiting to hear her out.

"A pleasant gentleman," said Dame Glendinning; "but I will warrant him an humorous*—And sings a sweet song, though it is somewhat of the longest.—Well, I make mine avow he is goodly company—I wonder when he will go away."

Having thus expressed her respect for her guest, not without intimation that she was heartily tired of his company, the good dame gave the signal for the family to disperse, and laid her injunctions on Halbert to attend Sir Piercie Shafton at day-break, as he required.

When stretched on his pallet by his brother's side, Halbert had no small cause to envy the sound sleep which instantly settled on the eyes of Edward, but refused him any share of its influence. He saw now too well what the spirit had darkly indicated, that, in granting the boon which he had asked so unadvisedly, she had contributed more to his harm than his good. He was now sensible, too late, of the various dangers and in-

* Humorous—full of whims—thus Shakespeare, "Humorous as winter."—The vulgar word humorous comes nearest to the meaning.

conveniences with which his dearest friends were threatened, alike by his discomfiture or his success in the approaching duel. If he fell, he might say personally, "Good-night all." But it was not the less certain that he should leave a dreadful legacy of distress and embarrassment to his mother and family,—an anticipation which by no means tended to render the front of death, in itself a grisly object, more agreeable to his imagination. The vengeance of the Abbot, his conscience told him, was sure to descend on his mother and brother, or could only be averted by the generosity of the victor.—And Mary Avenel—he should have shown himself, if he succumbed in the present combat, as inefficient in protecting her, as he had been unnecessarily active in bringing disaster on her, and on the house in which she had been protected from infancy. And to this view of the case were to be added all those embittered and anxious feelings with which the bravest men, even in a better or less doubtful quarrel, regard the issue of a dubious conflict, the first time when it has been their fate to engage in an affair of that nature.

But however disconsolate the prospect seemed in the event of his being conquered, Halbert could expect from victory little more than the safety of his own life, and the gratification of his wounded pride. To his friends, to his mother and brother—especially to Mary Avenel—the consequences of his triumph would be more certain destruction than the contingency of his defeat and death. If the English knight survived, he might in courtesy extend his protection to them; but if he fell, nothing was likely to screen them from the vindictive measures which the Abbot and convent would surely adopt against the violation of the peace of the Hallidome, and the slaughter of a protected guest by one of their own vassals, within whose house they had lodged him for shelter. These thoughts, in which neither view of the case augured aught short of ruin to his family, and that ruin entirely brought on by his own rashness, were thorns in Halbert Glendinning's pillow, and deprived his soul of peace and his eyes of slumber.

There appeared no middle course, saving one which was marked by degradation, and which, even if he stooped to it, was by no means free of danger. He might indeed confess to the English knight the strange circumstances which led to his presenting him with that token which the White Lady (in her displeasure as it now seemed) had given him, that he might offer it to Sir Pierce Shafton. But to this avowal his pride could not stoop, and reason, who is wonderfully ready to be of counsel with pride on such occasions, offered many arguments to show it would be useless as well as mean so far to degrade himself. "If I tell a tale so wonderful," thought he, "shall I not either be stigmatized as a liar, or punished as a wizard?—Were Sir Pierce Shafton generous, noble, and benevolent, as the champions of whom we hear in romance, I might indeed gain his ear, and, without demeaning myself, escape from the

situation in which I am placed. But as he is, or at least seems to be, self-conceited, arrogant, vain, and presumptuous—I should but humble myself in vain—and I will not humble myself!" he said, starting out of bed, grasping his broadsword, and brandishing it in the light of the moon, which streamed through the deep niche that served them as a window; when, to his extreme surprise and terror, an airy form stood in the moonlight, but intercepted not the reflection on the floor. Dimly as it was expressed, the sound of the voice soon made him sensible he saw the White Lady.

At no time had her presence seemed so terrific to him; for when he had invoked her, it was with the expectation of the apparition, and the determination to abide the issue. But now she had come uncalled, and her presence impressed him with a sense of approaching misfortune, and with the hideous apprehension that he had associated himself with a demon, over whose motions he had no control, and of whose powers and quality he had no certain knowledge. He remained, therefore, in mere terror, gazing on the apparition, which chanted or recited in cadence the following lines—

"He whose heart for vengeance sued,
Must not shrink from shedding blood;
The knot that thou hast tied with words,
Thou must loose by edge of sword."

"Avant thee, false spirit!" said Halbert Glendinning; "I have bought thy advice too dearly already—Begone in the name of God!"

The Spirit laughed; and the cold unnatural sound of her laughter had something in it more fearful than the usually melancholy tones of her voice. She then replied,—

"You have summon'd me once—you have summon'd me twice,
And without e'er a summons I come to you thrice;
Unask'd for, unask'd for, you came to my glen;
Unsed and unask'd I am with you again."

Halbert Glendinning gave way for a moment to terror, and called on his brother, "Edward! waken, waken, for Our Lady's sake!"

Edward awaked accordingly, and asked what he wanted.

"Look out," said Halbert, "look up! seest thou no one in the room?"

"No, upon my good word," said Edward, looking out.

"What! seest thou nothing in the moonshine upon the floor there?"

"No, nothing," answered Edward, "save thyself resting on thy naked sword. I tell thee, Halbert, thou shouldst trust more to thy spiritual arms, and less to those of steel and iron. For this many a night hast thou started and moaned, and cried out of fighting, and of spectres, and of goblins—thy sleep hath not refreshed thee—thy waking hath been a dream.—Credit me, dear Halbert, say the *Pater* and *Credo*, resign thyself to the protection of God, and thou wilt sleep sound and wake in comfort."

"It may be," said Halbert slowly, and having

his eye still bent on the female form which to him seemed distinctly visible.—"It may be—But tell me, dear Edward, seest thou no one on the chamber floor but me?"

"No one," answered Edward, raising himself on his elbow; "dear brother, lay aside thy weapon, say thy prayers, and lay thee down to rest."

While he thus spoke, the Spirit smiled at Halbert as if in scorn! her wan cheek faded in the wan moonlight even before the smile had passed away, and Halbert himself no longer beheld the vision to which he had so anxiously solicited his brother's attention. "May God preserve my wits!" he said, as, laying aside his weapon, he again threw himself on his bed.

"Amen! my dearest brother," answered Edward; "but we must not provoke that Heaven in our wantonness which we invoke in our misery.—Be not angry with me, my dear brother—I know not why you have totally of late estranged yourself from me—It is true, I am neither so athletic in body, nor so alert in courage, as you have been from your infancy; yet, till lately, you have not absolutely cast off my society—Believe me, I have wept in secret, though I forbore to intrude myself on your privacy. The time has been when you held me not so cheap; and when, if I could not follow the game so closely, or mark it so truly as you, I could fill up our intervals of pastime with pleasant tales of the olden times, which I had read or heard, and which excited even your attention as we sat and ate our provision by some pleasant spring—But now I have, though I know not why, lost thy regard and affection.—Nay, toss not thy arms about thee thus wildly," said the younger brother; "from thy strange dreams, I fear some touch of fever hath affected thy blood—let me draw closer around thee thy mantle."

"Forbear," said Halbert—"your care is needless—your complaints are without reason—your fears on my account are in vain."

"Nay, but hear me, brother," said Edward. "Your speech in sleep, and now even your waking dreams, are of beings which belong not to this world, or to our race—Our good Father Eustace says, that howbeit we may not do well to receive all idle tales of goblins and spectres, yet there is warrant from holy Scripture to believe, that the fiends haunt waste and solitary places; and that those who frequent such wildernesses alone, are the prey, or the sport, of these wandering demons. And therefore, I pray thee, brother, let me go with you when you go next up the glen, where, as you well know, there be places of evil reputation—Thou carest not for my escort; but, Halbert, such dangers are more safely encountered by the wise in judgment, than by the bold in bosom; and though I have small cause to boast of my own wisdom, yet I have that which ariseth from the written knowledge of elder times."

There was a moment during this discourse, when Halbert had well-nigh come to the resolution of disburdening his own breast, by intrusting Edward with all that weighed upon it. But when

his brother reminded him that this was the morning of a high holiday, and that, setting aside all other business or pleasure, he ought to go to the Monastery and shrive himself before Father Eustace, who would that day occupy the confessional, pride stepped in and confirmed his wavering resolution. "I will not avow," he thought, "a tale so extraordinary, that I may be considered as an impostor or something worse—I will not fly from this Englishman, whose arm and sword may be no better than my own. My fathers have faced his betters, were he as much distinguished in battle as he is by his quaint discourse."

Pride, which has been said to save man, and woman too, from falling, has yet a stronger influence on the mind when it embraces the cause of passion, and seldom fails to render it victorious over conscience and reason. Halbert, once determined, though not to the better course, at length slept soundly, and was only awakened by the dawn of day.

CHAPTER XXI.

Indifferent, but indifferent—pshaw, he doth it not
Like one who is his craft's master—ne'er the less
I have seen a clown confer a bloody coxcomb
On one who was a master of defence.

OLD PLAY.

With the first gray peep of dawn, Halbert Glendinning arose and hastened to dress himself, girded on his weapon, and took a cross-bow in his hand, as if his usual sport had been his sole object. He groped his way down the dark and winding staircase, and undid, with as little noise as possible, the fastenings of the inner door, and of the exterior iron grate. At length he stood free in the court-yard, and looking up to the tower, saw a signal made with a handkerchief from the window. Nothing doubting that it was his antagonist, he paused, expecting him. But it was Mary Avenel, who glided like a spirit from under the low and rugged portal.

Halbert was much surprised, and felt, he knew not why, like one caught in the act of a meditated trespass. The presence of Mary Avenel had till that moment never given him pain. She spoke, too, in a tone where sorrow seemed to mingle with reproach, while she asked him with emphasis, "What he was about to do?"

He showed his cross-bow, and was about to express the pretext he had meditated, when Mary interrupted him.

"Not so, Halbert—that evasion were unworthy of one whose word has hitherto been truth. You meditate not the destruction of the deer—your hand and your heart are aimed at other game—you seek to do battle with this stranger."

"And wherefore should I quarrel with our guest?" answered Halbert, blushing deeply.

"There are, indeed, many reasons why you should not," replied the maiden, "nor is there one of avail wherefore you should—yet nevertheless, such a quarrel you are now searching after."

"Why should you suppose so, Mary?" said Halbert, endeavoring to hide his conscious purpose—"he is my mother's guest—he is protected by the Abbot and the community, who are our masters—he is of high degree also,—and wherefore should you think that I can, or dare, resent a hasty word, which he has perchance thrown out against me more from the wantonness of his wit, than the purpose of his heart?"

"Alas!" answered the maiden, "the very asking that question puts your resolution beyond a doubt. Since your childhood you were ever daring, seeking danger rather than avoiding it—delighting in whatever had the air of adventure and of courage: and it is not from fear that you will now blench from your purpose—Oh, let it then be from pity!—from pity, Halbert, to your aged mother, whom your death or victory will alike deprive of the comfort and stay of her age."

"She has my brother Edward," said Halbert, turning suddenly from her.

"She has, indeed," said Mary Avenel, "the calm, the noble-minded, the considerate Edward, who has thy courage, Halbert, without thy fiery rashness,—thy generous spirit, with more of reason to guide it. He would not have heard his mother, would not have heard his adopted sister, beseech him in vain not to ruin himself, and tear up their future hopes of happiness and protection."

Halbert's heart swelled as he replied to this reproach. "Well—what avails it speaking?—you have him that is better than me—wiser, more considerate—braver, for aught I know—you are provided with a protector, and need care no more for me."

Again he turned to depart, but Mary Avenel laid her hand on his arm so gently that he scarce felt her hold, yet felt that it was impossible for him to strike it off. There he stood, one foot advanced to leave the court-yard, but so little determined on departure, that he resembled a traveller arrested by the spell of a magician, and unable either to quit the attitude of motion, or to proceed on his course.

Mary Avenel availed herself of his state of suspense. "Hear me," she said, "hear me, Halbert!—I am an orphan, and even Heaven hears the orphan—I have been the companion of your infancy, and if you will not hear me for an instant, from whom may Mary Avenel claim so poor a boon?"

"I hear you," said Halbert Glendinning, "but be brief, dear Mary—you mistake the nature of my business—it is but a morning of summer sport which we propose."

"Say not thus," said the maiden, interrupting him, "say not thus to me—others thou mayest deceive, but me thou canst not—There has been that in me from the earliest youth, which fraud flies from, and which imposture cannot deceive. For what fate has given me such a power I know not; but bred an ignorant maiden, in this sequestered valley, mine eyes can too often see what

man would most willingly hide—I can judge of the dark purpose, though it is hid under the smiling brow, and a glance of the eye says more to me than oaths and protestations do to others."

"Then," said Halbert, "if thou canst so read the human heart,—say, dear Mary—what dost thou see in mine?—tell me that—say that what thou seest—what thou readest in this bosom, does not offend thee—say but *that*, and thou shalt be the guide of my actions, and mould me now and henceforward to honor or to dishonor at thy own free will!"

Mary Avenel became first red, and then deadly pale, as Halbert Glendinning spoke. But when, turning round at the close of his address, he took her hand, she gently withdrew it, and replied, "I cannot read the heart, Halbert, and I would not of my will know aught of yours, save what besseems us both—I can only judge of signs, words, and actions of little outward import, more truly than those around me, as my eyes, thou knowest, have seen objects not presented to those of others."

"Let them gaze then on one whom they shall never see more," said Halbert, once more turning from her, and rushing out of the court-yard without again looking back.

Mary Avenel gave a faint scream, and clasped both her hands firmly on her forehead and eyes. She had been a minute in this attitude, when she was thus greeted by a voice from behind; "Generously done, my most clement Discretion, to hide those brilliant eyes from the far inferior beams which even now begin to gild the eastern horizon—Certes, peril there were that Phebus, on-shone in splendor, might in very shamefacedness turn back his car, and rather leave the world in darkness, than incur the disgrace of such an encounter—Credit me, lovely Discretion—"

But as Sir Piercie Shafton (the reader will readily set down these flowers of eloquence to the proper owner) attempted to take Mary Avenel's hand, in order to proceed in his speech, she shook him abruptly off, and regarding him with an eye which evinced terror and agitation, rushed past him into the tower.

The knight stood looking after her with a countenance in which contempt was strongly mingled with mortification. "By my knighthood!" he ejaculated, "I have thrown away upon this rude rustic Phidélé a speech, which the proudest beauty at the court of Felicia (so let me call the Elysium from which I am banished!) might have termed the very matins of Cupid. Hard and inexorable was the fate that sent thee thither, Piercie Shafton, to waste thy wit upon country wenches, and thy valor upon hob-nailed clowns! But that insult—that affront—had it been offered to me by the lowest plebeian, he must have died for it by my hand, in respect the enormity of the offence doth countervail the inequality of him by whom it is given. I trust I shall find this clownish roisterer not less willing to deal in blows than in taunts."

While he held this conversation with himself, Sir Piercie Shafton was hastening to the little tuft of birch-trees which had been assigned as the place of meeting. He greeted his antagonist with a courtly salutation, followed by this commentary: "I pray you to observe, that I doff my hat to you, though so much my inferior in rank, without derogation on my part, inasmuch as my having so far honored you in receiving and admitting your defiance, doth in the judgment of the best martialists, in some sort and for the time, raise you to a level with me—an honor which you may and ought to account cheaply purchased, even with the loss of your life, if such should chance to be the issue of this duello."

"For which condescension," said Halbert, "I have to thank the token which I presented to you."

The knight changed color, and grinded his teeth with rage—"Draw your weapon!" said he to Glendinning.

"Not in this spot," answered the youth; "we should be liable to interruption—Follow me, and I will bring you to a place where we shall encounter no such risk."

He proceeded to walk up the glen, resolving that their place of combat should be in the entrance of the Corri-nan-shian; both because the spot, lying under the reputation of being haunted, was very little frequented, and also because he regarded it as a place which to him might be termed fated, and which he therefore resolved should witness his death or victory.

They walked up the glen for some time in silence, like honorable enemies who did not wish to contend with words, and who had nothing friendly to exchange with each other. Silence, however, was always an irksome state with Sir Piercie, and, moreover, his anger was usually a hasty and short-lived passion. As, therefore, he went forth, in his own idea, in all love and honor towards his antagonist, he saw not any cause for submitting longer to the painful restraint of positive silence. He began by complimenting Halbert on the alert activity with which he surmounted the obstacles and impediments of the way.

"Trust me," said he, "worthy rustic, we have not a lighter or a firmer step in our court-like revels, and if duly set forth by a silk hose, and trained unto that stately exercise, your leg would make an indifferent good show in a pavin or a galliard. And I doubt nothing," he added, "that you have availed yourself of some opportunity to improve yourself in the art of fence, which is more akin than dancing to our present purpose?"

"I know nothing more of fencing," said Halbert, "than hath been taught me by an old shepherd of ours, called Martin, and at whiles a lesson from Christie of the Clinthill—for the rest, I must trust to good sword, strong arm, and sound heart."

"Marry and I am glad of it, young Audacity (I will call you my Audacity, and you will call me your Condescension, while we are on these terms

of unnatural equality), I am glad of your ignorance with all my heart. For we martialists proportion the punishments which we inflict upon our opposites, to the length and hazard of the efforts wherewith they oppose themselves to us. And I see not why you, being but a tyro, may not be held sufficiently punished for your outrecrudance, and orgillous presumption, by the loss of an ear, an eye, or even a finger, accompanied by some flesh-wound of depth and severity, suited to your error—whereas, had you been able to stand more effectually on your defence, I see not how less than your life could have atoned sufficiently for your presumption."

"Now, by God and Our Lady," said Halbert, unable any longer to restrain himself, "thou art thyself over presumptuous, who speakest thus daringly of the issue of a combat which is not yet even begun—Are you a god, that you already dispose of my life and limbs? or are you a judge in the justice-air, telling at your ease and without risk, how the head and quarters of a condemned criminal are to be disposed of?"

"Not so, O thou, whom I have well permitted to call thyself my Audacity! I, thy Condescension, am neither a god to judge the issue of the combat before it is fought, nor a judge to dispose at my ease and in safety of the limbs and head of a condemned criminal; but I am an indifferent good master of fence, being the first pupil of the first master of the first school of fence that our royal England affords, the said master being no other than the truly noble, and all-unutterably skilful Vincentio Saviola, from whom I learned the firm step, quick eye, and nimble hand—of which qualities thou, O my most rustical Audacity, art full like to reap the fruits so soon as we shall find a piece of ground fitting for such experiments."

They had now reached the gorge of the ravine, where Halbert had at first intended to stop; but when he observed the narrowness of the level ground, he began to consider that it was only by superior agility that he could expect to make up his deficiency in the science, as it was called, of defence. He found no spot which afforded sufficient room to traverse for this purpose, until he gained the well-known fountain, by whose margin, and in front of the huge rock from which it sprang, was an amphitheatre of level turf, of small space indeed, compared with the great height of the cliffs with which it was surrounded on every point save that from which the rivulet issued forth, yet large enough for their present purpose.

When they had reached this spot of ground, fitted well by its gloom and sequestered situation to be a scene of mortal strife, both were surprised to observe that a grave was dug close by the foot of the rock with great neatness and regularity, the green turf being laid down upon the one side, and the earth thrown out in a heap upon the other. A mattock and shovel lay by the verge of the grave.

Sir Piercie Shafton bent his eye with unusual seriousness upon Halbert Glendinning, as he asked him sternly, "Does this bode treason, young man? And have you purpose to set upon me here as in an emboscata or place of vantage?"

"Not on my part, by Heaven!" answered the youth: "I told no one of our purpose, nor would I for the throne of Scotland take odds against a single arm."

"I believe thou wouldst not, mine Audacity," said the knight, resuming the affected manner which was become a second nature to him; "nevertheless this fosse is curiously well shaped, and might be the masterpiece of Nature's last bedmaker, I would say the sexton.—Wherefore, let us be thankful to chance or some unknown friend, who hath thus provided for one of us the decencies of sepulture, and let us proceed to determine which shall have the advantage of enjoying this place of undisturbed slumber."

So saying, he stripped off his doublet and cloak, which he folded up with great care, and deposited upon a large stone, while Halbert Glendinning, not without some emotion, followed his example. Their vicinity to the favorite haunt of the White Lady led him to form conjectures concerning the incident of the grave—"It must have been her work!" he thought: "the Spirit foresaw and has provided for the fatal event of the combat—I must return from this place a homicide, or I must remain here for ever!"

The bridge seemed now broken down behind him, and the chance of coming off honorably without killing or being killed (the hope of which issue has cheered the sinking heart of many a duellist), seemed now altogether to be removed. Yet the very desperation of his situation gave him, on an instant's reflection, both firmness and courage, and presented to him one sole alternative, conquest, namely, or death.

"As we are here," said Sir Piercie Shafton, "unaccompanied by any patrons or seconds, it were well you should pass your hands over my sides, as I shall over yours; not that I suspect you to use any quaint device or privy armor, but in order to comply with the ancient and laudable customs practised on all such occasions."

While, complying with his antagonist's humor, Halbert Glendinning went through this ceremony, Sir Piercie Shafton did not fail to solicit his attention to the quality and fineness of his wrought and embroidered shirt—"In this very shirt," said he, "O mine Audacity!—I say in this very garment, in which I am now to combat a Scottish rustic like thyself, it was my envied lot to lead the winning party at that wondrous match at ballon, made betwixt the divine Astrophel (our matchless Sidney), and the right honorable my very good lord of Oxford. All the beauties of Felicia (by which name I distinguish our beloved England) stood in the gallery, waving their kerchiefs at each turn of the game, and cheering the winners by their poudits. After

which noble sport we were refreshed by a suitable banquet, whereat it pleased the noble Urania (being the unmatched Countess of Pembroke) to accommodate me with her fan for the cooling my somewhat too much inflamed visage, to requite which courtesy, I said, casting my features into a smiling, yet melancholy fashion, 'O divinest Urania! receive again that too fatal gift, which not like the Zephyr cooleth, but like the hot breath of the Sirocco, heateth yet more that which is already inflamed.' Whereupon, looking upon me somewhat scornfully, yet not so but what the experienced courtier might perceive a certain cast of approbative affection—"

Here the knight was interrupted by Halbert, who had waited with courteous patience for some little time, till he found, that far from drawing to a close, Sir Piercie seemed rather inclined to wax prolix in his reminiscences.

"Sir Knight," said the youth, "if this matter be not very much to the purpose, we will, if you object not, proceed to that which we have in hand. You should have abidden in England had you desired to waste time in words, for here we spend it in blows."

"I crave your pardon, most rusticated Audacity," answered Sir Piercie; "truly I become oblivious of every thing beside, when the recollections of the divine court of Felicia press upon my wakened memory, even as a saint is dazzled when he bethinks him of the beatific vision. Ah, felicitous Felician! delicate nurse of the fair, chosen abode of the wise, the birthplace and cradle of nobility, the temple of courtesy, the fane of sprightly chivalry—Ah, heavenly court, or rather courtly heaven! cheered with dances, lulled asleep with harmony, wakened with sprightly sports and tourneys, decorated with silks and tissues, glittering with diamonds and jewels, standing on end with double-piled velvets, satins, and satinettas!"

"The token, Sir Knight, the token!" exclaimed Halbert Glendinning, who, impatient of Sir Piercie's interminable oratory, reminded him of the ground of their quarrel, as the best way to compel him to the purpose of their meeting.

And he judged right; for Sir Piercie Shafton no sooner heard him speak, than he exclaimed, "Thy death-hour has struck—betake thee to thy sword—Via!"

Both swords were unsheathed, and the combatants commenced their engagement. Halbert became immediately aware, that, as he had expected, he was far inferior to his adversary in the use of his weapon. Sir Piercie Shafton had taken no more than his own share of real merit, when he termed himself an absolutely good fencer; and Glendinning soon found that he should have great difficulty in escaping with life and honor from such a master of the sword. The English knight was master of all the mystery of the *stoccata*, *im brocata*, *punto-reverso*, *incartata*, and so forth, which the Italian masters of defence had lately introduced into general practice. But Glendin-

ning, on his part, was no novice in the principles of the art, according to the old Scottish fashion, and possessed the first of all qualities, a steady and collected mind. At first, being desirous to try the skill, and become acquainted with the play of his enemy, he stood on his defence, keeping his foot, hand, eye, and body, in perfect unison, and holding his sword short, and with the point towards his antagonist's face, so that Sir Piercie, in order to assail him, was obliged to make actual passes, and could not avail himself of his skill in making feints; while, on the other hand, Halbert was prompt to parry these attacks, either by shifting his ground, or with the sword. The consequence was, that after two or three sharp attempts on the part of Sir Piercie, which were evaded or disconcerted by the address of his opponent, he began to assume the defensive in his turn, fearful of giving some advantage by being repeatedly the assailant. But Halbert was too cautious to press on a swordsman whose dexterity had already more than once placed him within a hair's-breadth of death, which he had only escaped by uncommon watchfulness and agility.

When each had made a feint or two, there was a pause in the conflict, both as if by one assent dropping their swords' point, and looking on each other for a moment without speaking. At length Halbert Glendinning, who felt perhaps more uneasy on account of his family than he had done before he had displayed his own courage, and proved the strength of his antagonist, could not help saying, "Is the subject of our quarrel, Sir Knight, so mortal, that one of our two bodies must needs fill up that grave? or may we with honor, having proved ourselves against each other, sheathe our swords and depart friends?"

"Valiant and most rustical Audacity," said the Southron knight, "to no man on earth could you have put a question on the code of honor, who was more capable of rendering you a reason. Let us pause for the space of one venue, until I give you my opinion on this dependence,* for certain it is, that brave men should not run upon their fate like brute and furious wild beasts, but should slay each other deliberately, decently, and with reason. Therefore, if we coolly examine the state of our dependence, we may the better apprehend whether the sisters three have doomed one of us to expiate the same with his blood—Dost thou understand me?"

"I have heard Father Eustace," said Halbert, after a moment's recollection, "speak of the three furies, with their thread and their shears."

"Enough—enough," interrupted Sir Piercie Shafton, crimsoning with a new fit of rage, "the thread of thy life is spun!"

And with these words he attacked with the utmost ferocity the Scottish youth, who had but just time to throw himself into a posture of defence. But the rash fury of the assailant, as

* Dependence—A phrase among the brethren of the sword for an existing quarrel.

frequently happens, disappointed its own purpose; for, as he made a desperate thrust, Halbert Glendinning avoided it, and ere the knight could recover his weapon, requited him (to use his own language) with a resolute *stoccata*, which passed through his body, and Sir Piercie Shafton fell to the ground.

CHAPTER XXII.

Yes, life hath left him—every busy thought,
Each fiery passion, every strong affection,
All sense of outward ill and inward sorrow,
Are fled at once from the pale trunk before me;
And I have given that which spoke and moved,
Thought, acted, suffer'd as a living man,
To be a ghastly form of bloody clay,
Soon the foul food for reptiles.

OLD PLAY.

I BELIEVE few successful duellists (if the world successful can be applied to a superiority so fatal) have beheld their dead antagonist stretched on the earth at their feet, without wishing they could redeem with their own blood that which it has been their fate to spill. Least of all could such indifference be the lot of so young a man as Halbert Glendinning, who, unused to the sight of human blood, was not only struck with sorrow, but with terror, when he beheld Sir Piercie Shafton lie stretched on the greensward before him, vomiting gore as if impelled by the strokes of a pump. He threw his bloody sword on the ground, and hastened to kneel down and support him, vainly striving, at the same time, to stanch his wound, which seemed rather to bleed inwardly than externally.

The unfortunate knight spoke at intervals, when the syncope would permit him, and his words, so far as intelligible, partook of his affected and conceited, yet not ungenerous character.

"Most rustical youth," he said, "thy fortune hath prevailed over knighthood skill—and Audacity hath overcome Condescension, even as the kite hath sometimes hawked at and struck down the falcon-gentle.—Fly and save thyself!—Take my purse—it is in the nether pocket of my carnation-colored-hose—and is worth a clown's acceptance. See that my mails, with my vestments, be sent to the Monastery of Saint Mary's"—(here his voice grew weak, and his mind and recollection seemed to waver)—"I bestow the cut velvet jerkin, with close breeches conforming—for—oh!—the good of my soul."

"Be of good comfort, sir," said Halbert, half-distracted with his agony of pity and remorse. "I trust you shall yet do well—O for a leech!"

"Were there twenty physicians, O most generous Audacity, and that were a grave spectacle—I might not survive, my life is ebbing fast.—Commend me to the rustical nymph whom I called my Discretion—O Claridiana!—true empress of this bleeding heart—which now bleedeth in sad earnest!—Place me on the ground at my length, most rustical victor, born to quench the pride of

the burning light of the most felicitous court of Felician—O saints and angels—knights and ladies—masques and theatres—quaint devices—chain-work and broidery—love, honor, and beauty!

While muttering these last words, which slid from him, as it were unawares, while doubtless he was recalling to mind the glories of the English court, the gallant Sir Piercie Shafton stretched out his limbs—groaned deeply, shut his eyes, and became motionless.

The victor tore his hair for very sorrow, as he looked on the pale countenance of his victim. Life, he thought, had not utterly fled, but without better aid than his own, he saw not how it could be preserved.

"Why," he exclaimed, in vain penitence, "why did I provoke him to an issue so fatal! Would to God I had submitted to the worst insult man could receive from man, rather than be the bloody instrument of this bloody deed—and doubly cursed be this evil-boding spot, which, haunted as I knew it to be by a witch or a devil, I yet chose for the place of combat! In any other place, save this, there had been help to be gotten by speed of foot, or by uplifting of voice—but here there is no one to be found by search, no one to hear my shouts, save the evil spirit who has counselled this mischief. It is not her hour—I will essay the spell howsoever; and if she can give me aid, she shall do it, or know of what a madman is capable even against those of another world!"

He spurned his bloody shoe from his foot, and repeated the spell with which the reader is well acquainted; but there was neither voice, apparition, nor signal of answer. The youth, in the impatience of his despair, and with the rash hardihood which formed the basis of his character, shouted aloud, "Witch—Sorceress—Fiend!—art thou deaf to my cries of help, and so ready to appear and answer those of vengeance? Arise and speak to me, or I will choke up thy fountain, tear down thy holly-bush, and leave thy haunt as waste and bare as thy fatal assistance has made me waste of comfort and bare of counsel!"—This furious and raving invocation was suddenly interrupted by a distant sound, resembling a holla, from the gorge of the ravine. "Now may Saint Mary be praised," said the youth, hastily fastening his sandal, "I hear the voice of some living man, who may give me counsel and help in this fearful extremity."

Having donned his sandal, Halbert Glendinning, hallooing at intervals, in answer to the sound which he had heard, ran with the speed of a hunted buck down the rugged defile, as if paradise had been before him, hell and all her furies behind, and his eternal happiness or misery had depended upon the speed which he exerted. In a space incredibly short for any one but a Scottish mountaineer having his nerves strung by the deepest and most passionate interest, the youth reached the entrance of the ravine, through which

the rill that flows down Corri-nan-shian discharges itself, and unites with the brook that waters the little valley of Glendearg.

Here he paused, and looked around him upwards and downwards through the glen, without perceiving a human form. His heart sank within him. But the windings of the glen intercepted his prospect, and the person, whose voice he had heard might, therefore, be at no great distance, though not obvious to his sight. The branches of an oak-tree, which shot straight out from the face of a tall cliff, proffered to his bold spirit, steady head, and active limbs, the means of ascending it as a place of out-look, although the enterprise was what most men would have shrunk from. But by one bound from the earth, the active youth caught hold of the lower branch, and swung himself up into the tree, and in a minute more gained the top of the cliff, from which he could easily descry a human figure descending the valley. It was not that of a shepherd, or of a hunter, and scarcely any others used to traverse this deserted solitude, especially coming from the north, since the reader may remember that the brook took its rise from an extensive and dangerous morass which lay in that direction.

But Halbert Glendinning did not pause to consider who the traveller might be, or what might be the purpose of his journey. To know that he saw a human being, and might receive, in the extremity of his distress, the countenance and advice of a fellow-creature, was enough for him at the moment. He threw himself from the pinnacle of the cliff once more into the arms of the projecting oak-tree, whose boughs waved in middle air, anchored by the roots in a huge rift or chasm of the rock. Catching at the branch which was nearest to him, he dropped himself from that height upon the ground; and such was the athletic springiness of his youthful sinews, that he pitched there as lightly, and with as little injury, as the falcon stooping from her wheel.

To resume his race at full speed up the glen, was the work of an instant; and as he turned angle after angle of the indented banks of the valley, without meeting that which he sought, he became half afraid that the form which he had seen at such a distance had already melted into thin air, and was either a deception of his own imagination, or of the elementary spirits by which the valley was supposed to be haunted.

But to his inexpressible joy, as he turned round the base of a huge and distinguished crag, he saw, straight before and very near to him, a person, whose dress, as he viewed it hastily, resembled that of a pilgrim.

He was a man of advanced life, and wearing a long beard, having on his head a large slouched hat, without either band or brooch. His dress was a tunic of black serge, which like those commonly called hussar-cloaks, had an upper part, which covered the arms and fell down on the lower; a small scrip and bottle, which hung at his back, with a stout staff in his hand, completed

his equipage. His step was feeble, like that of one exhausted by a toilsome journey.

"Save ye, good father!" said the youth. "God and Our Lady have sent you to my assistance."

"And in what, my son, can so frail a creature as I am, be of service to you?" said the old man, not a little surprised at being thus accosted by so handsome a youth, his features discomposed by anxiety, his face flushed with exertion, his hands and much of his dress stained with blood.

"A man bleeds to death in the valley here, hard by. Come with me—come with me! You are aged—you have experience—you have at least your senses—and mine have well-nigh left me."

"A man—and bleeding to death—and here in this desolate spot!" said the stranger.

"Stay not to question it, father," said the youth, "but come instantly to his rescue. Follow me—follow me, without an instant's delay."

"Nay, but, my son," said the old man, "we do not lightly follow the guides who present themselves thus suddenly in the bosom of a howling wilderness. Ere I follow thee, thou must expound to me thy name, thy purpose, and thy cause."

"There is no time to expound anything," said Halbert; "I tell thee a man's life is at stake, and thou must come to aid him, or I will carry thee thither by force."

"Nay, thou shalt not need," said the traveller; "if it indeed be as thou sayest, I will follow thee of free-will—the rather that I am not wholly unskilled in leech-craft, and have in my scrip that which may do thy friend a service—Yet walk more slowly, I pray thee, for I am already well-nigh forespent with travel."

With the indignant impatience of the fiery steed when compelled by his rider to keep pace with some slow drudge upon the highway, Halbert accompanied the wayfarer, burning with anxiety, which he endeavored to subdue, that he might not alarm his companion, who was obviously afraid to trust him. When they reached the place where they were to turn off the wider glen into the Corri, the traveller made a doubtful pause, as if unwilling to leave the broader path—"Young man," he said, "if thou meanest aught but good to these gray hairs, thou wilt gain little by thy cruelty—I have no earthly treasure to tempt either robber or murderer."

"And I," said the youth, "am neither—and yet—God of Heaven!—I may be a murderer, unless your aid comes in time to this wounded wretch!"

"Is it even so," said the traveller; "and do human passions disturb the breast of nature, even in her deepest solitude?—Yet why should I marvel that where darkness abides the works of darkness should abound?—By its fruits is the tree known—Lead on, unhappy youth, I follow thee!"

And with better will to the journey than he had evinced hitherto, the stranger exerted himself to the uttermost, and seemed to forget his own fatigue in his efforts to keep pace with his impatient guide.

What was the surprise of Halbert Glendinning, when, upon arriving at the fatal spot, he saw no appearance of the body of Sir Piercie Shafton! The traces of the fray were otherwise sufficiently visible. The knight's cloak had indeed vanished as well as his body, but his doublet remained where he had laid it down, and the turf on which he had been stretched was stained with blood in many a dark crimson spot.

As he gazed round him in terror and astonishment, Halbert's eyes fell upon the place of sepulture which had so lately appeared to gape for a victim. It was no longer open, and it seemed that earth had received the expected tenant; for the usual narrow hillock was piled over what had lately been an open grave, and the green sod was adjusted over all with the accuracy of an experienced sexton. Halbert stood aghast. The idea rushed on his mind irresistibly, that the earth-heap before him enclosed what had lately been a living, moving, and sentient fellow-creature, whom, on little provocation, his fell act had reduced to a clod of the valley, as senseless and as cold as the turf under which he rested. The hand that scooped the grave had completed its work; and whose hand could it be save that of the mysterious being of doubtful quality, whom his rashness had invoked, and whom he had suffered to intermingle in his destinies?

As he stood with clasped hands and uplifted eyes, bitterly ruing his rashness, he was roused by the voice of the stranger, whose suspicions of his guide had again been awakened by finding the scene so different from what Halbert had led him to expect.—"Young man," he said, "hast thou baited thy tongue with falsehood to cut perhaps only a few days from the life of one whom Nature will soon call home, without guilt on thy part to hasten his journey?"

"By the blessed Heaven!—by our dear Lady!" ejaculated Halbert—

"Swear not at all!" said the stranger, interrupting him, "neither by Heaven, for it is God's throne, nor by earth, for it is his footstool—nor by the creatures whom he hath made, for they are but earth and clay as we are. Let thy yea be yea, and thy nay, nay. Tell me in a word, why and for what purpose thou hast feigned a tale, to lead a bewildered traveller yet farther astray?"

"As I am a Christian man," said Glendinning, "I left him here bleeding to death—and now I nowhere spy him, and much I doubt that the tomb that thou seest has closed on his mortal remains!"

"And who is he for whose fate thou art so anxious?" said the stranger; "or how is it possible that this wounded man could have been either removed from, or interred in, a place so solitary?"