

"Am I to bring her hither, please your reverence?"

"Hither, you malapert knave?" said the churchman; "remember you to whom you speak?"

"No offence meant," replied Christie; "but if such is not your will, I would carry her to Avenel Castle, where a well-flavored wench was never unwelcome."

"Bring the unfortunate girl to her father's, and break no scurril jests here," said the Sub-Prior—"See that thou guide her in all safety and honor."

"In safety, surely," said the rider, "and in such honor as he outbreak has left her.—I bid your reverence farewell, I must be on horse before cock-crow."

"What, in the dark!—how knowest thou which way to go?"

"I tracked the knight's horse-tread as far as near to the ford, as we rode along together," said Christie, "and I observed the track turn to the northward. He is for Edinburgh, I will warrant you—so soon as daylight comes I will be on the road again. It is a kenspeckle hoofmark, for the shoe was made by old Eckie of Cannobie—I would swear to the curve of the cawker." So saying, he departed.

"Hateful necessity," said Father Eustace, looking after him, "that obliges us to use such implements as these! But, assailed as we are on all sides, and by all conditions of men, what alternative is left us?—But now let me to my most needful task."

The Abbot elect accordingly sate down to write letters, arrange orders, and take upon him the whole charge of an institution which tottered to its fall, with the same spirit of proud and devoted fortitude wherewith the commander of a fortress, reduced nearly to the last extremity, calculates what means remain to him to protract the fatal hour of successful storm. In the meanwhile Abbot Boniface, having given a few natural sighs to the downfall of the pre-eminence he had so long enjoyed amongst his brethren, fell fast asleep, leaving the whole cares and toils of office to his assistant and successor.

CHAPTER XXXV.

And when he came to broken brigs,
He slack'd his bow and swam;
And when he came to grass growing,
Set down his feet and ran.

GIL MORRICE.

WE return to Halbert Glendinning, who, as our readers may remember, took the high road to Edinburgh. His intercourse with the preacher Henry Warden, from whom he received a letter at the moment of his deliverance, had been so brief, that he had not even learned the name of the nobleman to whose care he was recommended. Something like a name had been spoken indeed, but he had only comprehended that he was to meet the chief advancing towards the south, at

the head of a party of horse. When day dawned on his journey, he was in the same uncertainty. A better scholar would have been informed by the address of the letter, but Halbert had not so far profited by Father Eustace's lessons as to be able to decipher it. His mother-wit taught him that he must not, in such uncertain times, be too hasty in asking information of any one; and when, after a long day's journey, night surprised him near a little village, he began to be dubious and anxious concerning the issue of his journey.

In a poor country, hospitality is generally exercised freely, and Halbert, when he requested a night's quarters, did nothing either degrading or extraordinary. The old woman, to whom he made this request, granted it the more readily, that she thought she saw some resemblance between Halbert and her son Saunders, who had been killed in one of the frays so common in the time. It is true, Saunders was a short square-made fellow, with red hair and a freckled face, and somewhat bandy-legged, whereas the stranger was of a brown complexion, tall, and remarkably well-made. Nevertheless, the widow was clear that there existed a general resemblance betwixt her guest and Saunders, and kindly pressed him to share of her evening cheer. A pedlar, a man of about forty years old, was also her guest, who talked with great feeling of the misery of pursuing such a profession as his in the time of war and tumult.

"We think much of knights and soldiers," said he; "but the peddler-coffe who travels the land has need of more courage than them all. I am sure he maun face mair risk, God help him. Here have I come this length, trusting the godly Earl of Murray would be on his march to the Borders, for he was to have gusted with the Baron of Avenel; and instead of that comes news that he has gone westlandways about some tuzlie in Ayrshire. And what to do I wot not; for if I go to the south without a safeguard, the next bonny rider I meet might ease me of sack and pack, and maybe of my life to boot; and then, if I try to strike across the moors, I may be as ill off before I can join myself to that good Lord's company."

No one was quicker at catching a hint than Halbert Glendinning. He said he himself had a desire to go westward. The pedlar looked at him with a very doubtful air, when the old dame, who perhaps thought her young guest resembled the umquille Saunders, not only in his looks, but in a certain pretty turn to slight-of-hand, which the defunct was supposed to have possessed, tipped him the wink, and assured the pedlar he need have no doubt that her young cousin was a true man.

"Cousin!" said the pedlar, "I thought you said this youth had been a stranger."

"Ill hearing makes ill rehearsing," said the landlady; "he is a stranger to me by eye-sight, but that does not make him a stranger to me by blood, more especially seeing his likeness to my son Saunders, poor bairn."

The pedlar's scruples and jealousies being thus removed, or at least silenced, the travellers agreed that they would proceed in company together the next morning by daybreak, the pedlar acting as a guide to Glendinning, and the youth as a guard to the pedlar, until they should fall in with Murray's detachment of horse. It would appear that the landlady never doubted what was to be the event of this compact, for, taking Glendinning aside, she charged him, "to be moderate with the pair body, but at all events, not to forget to take a piece of black say, to make the auld wife a new rokelay." Halbert laughed and took his leave.

It did not a little appal the pedlar, when, in the midst of a black heath, the young man told him the nature of the commission with which their hostess had charged him. He took heart, however, upon seeing the open, frank, and friendly demeanor of the youth, and vented his exclamations on the ungrateful old traitress. "I gave her," he said, "yester-e'en nae farther gane, a yard of that very black say, to make her a couvreface; but I see it is ill done to teach the cat the way to the kirk."

Thus set at ease on the intentions of his companion (for in those happy days the worst was always to be expected from the stranger), the pedlar acted as Halbert's guide over moss and moor, over hill and many a dale, in such a direction as might best lead them towards the route of Murray's party. At length they arrived upon the side of an eminence, which commanded a distant prospect over a tract of savage and desolate moorland, marshy and waste—an alternate change of shingly hill and level morass, only varied by blue-stagnant pools of water. A road scarcely marked winded like a serpent through the wilderness, and the pedlar, pointing to it, said—"The road from Edinburgh to Glasgow. Here we must wait, and if Murray and his train be not already passed by, we shall soon see trace of them, unless some new purpose shall have altered their resolution; for in these blessed days no man, were he the nearest the throne, as the Earl of Murray may be, knows when he lays his head on his pillow at night where it is to lie upon the following even."

They paused accordingly, and sat down, the pedlar cautiously using for a seat the box which contained his treasures, and not concealing from his companion that he wore under his cloak a pistol hanging at his belt in case of need. He was courteous, however, and offered Halbert a share of the provisions which he carried about him for refreshment. They were of the coarsest kind—oatbread baked into cakes, oatmeal slaked with cold water, an onion or two, and a morsel of smoked ham completed the feast. But such as it was, no Scotsman of the time, had his rank been much higher than that of Glendinning, would have refused to share in it, especially as the pedlar produced, with a mysterious air, a tup's horn, which he carried slung from his shoulders, and which, when its contents were examined, pro-

duced to each party a clamshell-full of excellent usquebaugh—a liquor strange to Halbert, for the strong waters known in the south of Scotland came from France, and in fact such were but rarely used. The pedlar recommended it as excellent, said he had procured it in his last visit to the braes of Doune, where he had securely traded under the safe-conduct of the Laird of Buchanan. He also set an example to Halbert, by devoutly emptying the cup "to the speedy downfall of Anti-Christ."

Their conviviality was scarce ended, ere a rising dust was seen on the road of which they commanded the prospect, and half a score of horsemen were dimly descried advancing at considerable speed, their casques glancing, and the points of their spears twinkling as they caught a glimpse of the sun.

"These," said the pedlar, "must be the out-scourers of Murray's party; let us lie down in the peat-hag, and keep ourselves out of sight."

"And why so?" said Halbert; "let us rather go down and make a signal to them."

"God forbid!" replied the pedlar; "do you ken so ill the customs of our Scottish nation? That plump of spears that are spurring on so fast are doubtless commanded by some wild kinsman of Morton, or some such daring fear-nothing as neither regards God nor man. It is their business, if they meet with any enemies, to pick quarrels and clear the way of them; and the chief knows nothing of what happens, coming up with his more discreet and moderate friends, it may be a full mile in the rear. Were we to go near these lads of the laird's belt, your letter would do you little good, and my pack would do me muckle black ill; they would twirl every steek of claites from our back, fling us into a moss-hag with a stone at our heels, naked as the hour that brought us into this cumbered and sinful world, and neither Murray nor any other man ever the wiser. But if he did come to ken of it, what might he help it?—it would be accounted a mere mistake, and there were all the moan made. O credit me, youth, that when men draw cold steel on each other in their native country, they neither can nor may dwell deeply on the offences of those whose swords are useful to them."

They suffered, therefore, the vanguard, as it might be termed, of the Earl of Murray's host to pass forward; and it was not long until a denser cloud of dust began to arise to the northward.

"Now," said the pedlar, "let us hurry down the hill; for to tell the truth," said he, dragging Halbert along earnestly, "a Scottish noble's march is like a serpent—the head is furnished with fangs, and the tail hath its sting; the only harmless point of access is the main body."

"I will hasten as fast as you," said the youth; "but tell me why the rearward of such an army should be as dangerous as the van?"

"Because, as the vanguard consists of their picked wild desperates, resolute for mischief, such as neither fear God nor regard their fellow-cra-

tures, but understand themselves bound to hurry from the road whatever is displeasing to themselves, so the rear-guard consists of misproud serving-men, who, being in charge of the baggage, take care to amend by their exactions upon travelling merchants and others, their own thefts on their master's property. You will hear the advanced *enfants perdus*, as the French call them, and so they are indeed, namely, children of the fall, singing unclean and fulsome ballads of sin and harlotrie. And then will come on the middle-ward, when you will hear the canticles and psalms sung by the reforming nobles, and the gentry, and honest and pious clergy, by whom they are accompanied. And last of all, you will find in the rear a legend of godless lackies, and palfrriers, and horse-boys, talking of nothing but dicing, drinking, and drabbing."

As the pedlar spoke, they had reached the side of the highroad, and Murray's main body was in sight, consisting of about three hundred horse, marching with great regularity, and in a closely compacted body. Some of the troopers wore the liveries of their masters, but this was not common. Most of them were dressed in such colors as chance dictated. But the majority, being clad in blue cloth, and the whole armed with cuirass and back-plate, with sleeves of mail, gauntlets, and poldroons, and either malled hose or strong jackboots, they had something of a uniform appearance. Many of the leaders were clad in complete armor, and all in a certain half-military dress, which no man of quality in those disturbed times ever felt himself sufficiently safe to abandon.

The foremost of this party immediately rode up to the pedlar and to Halbert Glendinning, and demanded of them who they were. The pedlar told his story, the young Glendinning exhibited his letter, which a gentleman carried to Murray. In an instant after, the word "Halt!" was given through the squadron, and at once the onward heavy tramp, which seemed the most distinctive attribute of the body, ceased, and was heard no more. The command was announced that the troop should halt here for an hour to refresh themselves and their horses. The pedlar was assured of safe protection, and accommodated with the use of a baggage horse. But at the same time he was ordered into the rear; a command which he reluctantly obeyed, and not without wringing pathetically the hand of Halbert as he separated from him.

The young heir of Glendearg was in the meanwhile conducted to a plot of ground more raised, and therefore drier than the rest of the moor. Here a carpet was flung on the ground by way of table-cloth, and around it sat the leaders of the party, partaking of an entertainment as coarse, with relation to their rank, as that which Glendinning had so lately shared. Murray himself rose as he came forward, and advanced a step to meet him.

This celebrated person had in his appearance,

as well as in his mind, much of the admirable qualities of James V. his father. Had not the stain of illegitimacy rested upon his birth, he would have filled the Scottish throne with as much honor as any of the Stewart race. But History, while she acknowledges his high talents, and much that was princely, nay, royal, in his conduct, cannot forget that ambition led him farther than honor or loyalty warranted. Brave amongst the bravest, fair in presence and in favor, skilful to manage the most intricate affairs, to attach to himself those who were doubtful, to stun and overwhelm, by the suddenness and intrepidity of his enterprises, those who were resolute in resistance, he attained, and as to personal merit certainly deserved, the highest place in the kingdom. But he abused, under the influence of strong temptation, the opportunities which his sister Mary's misfortunes and imprudence threw in his way; he supplanted his sovereign and benefactress in her power, and his history affords us one of those mixed characters, in which principle was so often sacrificed to policy, that we must condemn the statesman while we pity and regret the individual. Many events in his life gave likelihood to the charge that he himself aimed at the crown; and it is too true, that he countenanced the fatal expedient of establishing an English, that is a foreign and a hostile interest, in the councils of Scotland. But his death may be received as an atonement for his offences, and may serve to show how much more safe is the person of a real patriot, than that of the head of a mere faction, who is accounted answerable for the offences of his meanest attendants.

When Murray approached, the young rustic was naturally abashed at the dignity of his presence. The commanding form and the countenance to which high and important thoughts were familiar, the features which bore the resemblance of Scotland's long line of kings, were well calculated to impress awe and reverence. His dress had little to distinguish him from the high-born nobles and barons by whom he was attended. A buff-coat, richly embroidered with silken lace, supplied the place of armor; and a massive gold chain, with its medal, hung round his neck. His black velvet bonnet was decorated with a string of large and fair pearls, and with a small tufted feather; a long heavy sword was girt to his side, as the familiar companion of his hand. He wore gilded spurs on his boots, and these completed his equipment.

"This letter," he said, "is from the godly preacher of the word, Henry Warden, young man? is it not so?" Halbert answered in the affirmative. "And he writes to us, it would seem, in some strait, and refers us to you for the circumstances. Let us know, I pray you, how things stand with him."

In some perturbation, Halbert Glendinning gave an account of the circumstances which had attended the preacher's imprisonment. When he

came to the discussion of the *hamfasting* engagement, he was struck with the ominous and displeased expression of Murray's brows, and contrary to all prudential and politic rule, seeing something was wrong, yet not well aware what that something was, had almost stopped short in his narrative.

"What ails the fool?" said the Earl, drawing his dark-red eyebrows together, while the same dusky glow kindled on his brow—"Hast thou not learned to tell a true tale without stammering?"

"So please you," answered Halbert, with considerable address, "I have never before spoken in such a presence."

"He seems a modest youth," said Murray, turning to his next attendant, "and yet one who in a good cause will neither fear friend nor foe.—Speak on, friend, and speak freely."

Halbert then gave an account of the quarrel betwixt Julian Avenel and the preacher, which the Earl, biting his lip the while, compelled himself to listen to as a thing of indifference. At first he appeared even to take the part of the Baron.

"Henry Warden," he said, "is too hot in his zeal. The law both of God and man maketh allowance for certain alliances, though not strictly formal, and the issue of such may succeed."

This general declaration he expressed, accompanying it with a glance around upon the few followers who were present at this interview. The most of them answered—"There is no contravening that;" but one or two looked on the ground, and were silent. Murray then turned again to Glendinning, commanding him to say what next chanced, and not to omit any particular. When he mentioned the manner in which Julian had cast from him his concubine, Murray drew a deep breath, set his teeth hard, and laid his hand on the hilt of his dagger. Casting his eyes once more around the circle, which was now augmented by one or two of the reformed preachers, he seemed to devour his rage in silence, and again commanded Halbert to proceed. When he came to describe how Warden had been dragged to a dungeon, the Earl seemed to have found the point at which he might give vent to his own resentment, secure of the sympathy and approbation of all who were present. "Judge you," he said, looking to those around him, "judge you, my peers, and noble gentlemen of Scotland, betwixt me and this Julian Avenel—he hath broken his own word, and hath violated my safe-conduct—and judge you also, my reverend brethren, he hath put his hand forth upon a preacher of the gospel, and perchance may sell his blood to the worshippers of Anti-Christ!"

"Let him die the death of a traitor," said the secular chiefs, "and let his tongue be struck through with the hangman's fiery iron to avenge his perjury!"

"Let him go down to his place with Baal's priests," said the preachers, "and be his ashes cast into Tophet!"

Murray heard them with a smile of expected

revenge; yet it is probable that the brutal treatment of the female, whose circumstances somewhat resembled those of the Earl's own mother, had its share in the grim smile which curled his sun-burnt cheek and its haughty lip. To Halbert Glendinning, when his narrative was finished, he spoke with great kindness.

"He is a bold and gallant youth," said he to those around, "and formed of the stuff which becomes a bustling time. There are periods when men's spirits shine bravely through them. I will know something more of him."

He questioned him more particularly concerning the Baron of Avenel's probable forces—the strength of his castle—the dispositions of his next heir, and this brought necessarily forward the sad history of his brother's daughter, Mary Avenel, which was told with an embarrassment that did not escape Murray.

"Ha! Julian Avenel," he said, "and do you provoke my resentment, when you have so much more reason to deprecate my justice! I knew Walter Avenel, a true Scotsman and a good soldier. Our sister, the Queen, must right his daughter; and were her land restored, she would be a fitting bride to some brave man who may better merit our favor than the traitor Julian."—Then looking at Halbert, he said, "Art thou of gentle blood, youn man?"

Halbert, with a faltering and uncertain voice, began to speak of his distant pretensions to claim a descent from the ancient Glendonwynes of Galloway, when Murray interrupted him with a smile.

"Nay—nay—leave pedigrees to bards and heralds. In our days, each man is the son of his own deeds. The glorious light of reformation hath shone alike on prince and peasant; and peasant as well as prince may be illustrated by fighting in its defence. It is a stirring world, where all may advance themselves who have stout hearts and strong arms. Tell me frankly why thou hast left thy father's house?"

Halbert Glendinning made a frank confession of his duel with Piercie Shafton, and mentioned his supposed death.

"By my hand," said Murray, "thou art a bold sparrow-hawk, to match thee so early with such a kite as Piercie Shafton. Queen Elizabeth would give her glove filled with gold crowns to know that meddling coxcomb to be under the sod.—Would she not, Morton?"

"Ay, by my word, and esteem her glove a better gift than the crowns," replied Morton, "which few Border lads like this fellow will esteem just valuation."

"But what shall we do with this young homicide?" said Murray; "what will our preachers say?"

"Tell them of Moses and of Benaiah," said Morton; "it is but the smiting of an Egyptian when all is said out."

"Let it be so," said Murray, laughing; "but we will bury the tale, as the prophet did the body,

in the sand. I will take care of this swankie.—Be near to us, Glendinning, since that is thy name. We retain thee as a squire of our household. The master of our horse will see thee fully equipped and armed."

During the expedition which he was now engaged in, Murray found several opportunities of putting Glendinning's courage and presence of mind to the test, and he began to rise so rapidly in his esteem, that those who knew the Earl considered the youth's fortune as certain. One step only was wanting to raise him to a still higher degree of confidence and favor—it was the abjuration of the Popish religion. The ministers who attended upon Murray and formed his chief support amongst the people, found an easy convert in Halbert Glendinning, who, from his earliest days, had never felt much devotion towards the Catholic faith, and who listened eagerly to more reasonable views of religion. By thus adopting the faith of his master, he rose higher in his favor, and was constantly about his person during his prolonged stay in the west of Scotland, which the intractability of those whom the Earl had to deal with, protracted from day to day, and week to week.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Faint the din of battle bray'd
Distant down the hollow wind;
War and terror fled before,
Wounds and death were left behind.

PENROSE.

THE autumn of the year was well advanced, when the Earl of Morton, one morning, rather unexpectedly, entered the ante-chamber of Murray, in which Halbert Glendinning was in waiting.

"Call your master, Halbert," said the Earl; "I have news for him from Teviotdale; and for you too, Glendinning.—News! news! my Lord of Murray!" he exclaimed at the door of the Earl's bedroom; "come forth instantly." The Earl appeared, and greeted his ally, demanding eagerly his tidings.

"I have had a sure friend with me from the south," said Morton; "he has been at Saint Mary's Monastery, and brings important tidings."

"Of what complexion?" said Murray, "and can you trust the bearer?"

"He is faithful, on my life," said Morton; "I wish all around your Lordship may prove equally so."

"At what, and whom, do you point?" demanded Murray.

"Here is the Egyptian of trusty Halbert Glendinning, our Southland Moses, come alive again, and flourishing gay and bright as ever, in that Teviotdale Goshen, the Halldome of Kennaquhair."

"What mean you, my lord?" said Murray.

"Only that your new henchman has put a false tale upon you. Piercie Shafton is alive and well; by the same token that the gull is thought to be

detained there by love to a miller's daughter, who roamed the country with him in disguise."

"Glendinning," said Murray, bending his brow into his darkest frown, "thou hast not, I trust, dared to bring me a lie in thy mouth, in order to win my confidence?"

"My lord," said Halbert, "I am incapable of a lie. I should choke on one were my life to require that I pronounced it. I say, that this sword of my father was through the body—the point came out behind his back—the hilt pressed upon his breast-bone. And I will plunge it as deep in the body of any one who shall dare to charge me with falsehood."

"How, fellow!" said Morton, "wouldst thou beard a nobleman?"

"Be silent, Halbert," said Murray, "and you, my Lord of Morton, forbear him. I see truth written on his brow."

"I wish the inside of the manuscript may correspond with the superscription," replied his more suspicious ally. "Look to it, my lord, you will one day lose your life by too much confidence."

"And you will lose your friends by being too readily suspicious," answered Murray. "Enough of this—let me hear thy tidings."

"Sir John Foster," said Morton, "is about to send a party into Scotland to waste the Halldome."

"How! without waiting my presence and permission?" said Murray—"he is mad—will he come as an enemy into the Queen's country?"

"He has Elizabeth's express orders," answered Morton, "and they are not to be trifled with. Indeed, his march has been more than once projected and laid aside during the time we have been here, and has caused much alarm at Kennaquhair. Boniface, the old Abbot, has resigned, and whom, think you, they have chosen in his place?"

"No one, surely," said Murray; "they would presume to hold no election until the Queen's pleasure and mine were known?"

Morton shrugged his shoulders—"They have chosen the pupil of old Cardinal Beaton, that wily determined champion of Rome, the bosom-friend of our busy Primate of Saint Andrews. Eustace, late the Sub-Prior of Kennaquhair, is now its Abbot, and, like a second Pope Julius, is levying men and making musters to fight with Foster if he comes forward."

"We must prevent that meeting," said Murray, hastily; "whichever party wins the day, it were a fatal encounter for us—Who commands the troop of the Abbot?"

"Our faithful old friend, Julian Avenel, nothing less," answered Morton.

"Glendinning," said Murray, "sound trumpets to horse directly, and let all who love us get on horseback without delay—Yes, my lord, this were indeed a fatal dilemma. If we take part with our English friends, the country will cry shame on us—the very old wives will attack us with their rocks and spindles—the very stones of

the street will rise up against us—we cannot set our face to such a deed of infamy. And my sister, whose confidence I already have such difficulty in preserving, will altogether withdraw it from me. Then, were we to oppose the English Warden, Elizabeth would call it a protecting of her enemies, and what not, and we should lose her."

"The she-dragon," said Morton, "is the best card in our pack; and yet I would not willingly stand still and see English blades carve Scots flesh—What say you to loitering by the way, marching fair and easy for fear of spoiling our horses? They might then fight dog fight bull, fight Abbot fight archer, and no one could blame us for what chanced when we were not present."

"All would blame us, James Douglas," replied Murray; "we should lose both sides—we had better advance with the utmost celerity, and do what we can to keep the peace betwixt them.—I would the nag that brought Piercie Shafton hither had broken his neck over the highest heuch in Northumberland!—He is a proper coxcomb to make all this bustle about, and to coax him perhaps a national war!"

"Had we known in time," said Douglas, "we might have had him privily waited upon as he entered the Borders; there are strapping lads enough would have rid us of him for the lucre of his spur-whang.* But to the saddle, James Stewart, since so the phrase goes. I hear your trumpets sound to horse and away—we shall soon see which nag is best breathed."

Followed by a train of about three hundred well-mounted men-at-arms, these two powerful barons directed their course to Dumfries, and from thence eastward to Teviotdale, marching at a rate which, as Morton had foretold, soon disabled a good many of their horses, so that when they approached the scene of expected action, there were not above two hundred of their train remaining in a body, and of these most were mounted on steeds which had been sorely jaded.

They had hitherto been amused and agitated by various reports concerning the advance of the English soldiers, and the degree of resistance which the Abbot was able to oppose to them. But when they were six or seven miles from Saint Mary's of Kennaquhair, a gentleman of the country, whom Murray had summoned to attend him, and on whose intelligence he knew he could rely, arrived at the head of two or three servants, "bloody with spurring, fiery red with haste." According to his report, Sir John Foster, after several times announcing, and as often delaying, his intended incursion, had at last been so stung with the news that Piercie Shafton was openly residing within the Halldome, that he determined to execute the commands of his mistress, which directed him, at every risk, to make himself master of the Euphuist's person. The Abbot's unceasing exertions had collected a body of men almost

equal in number to those of the English Warden, but less practised in arms. They were united under the command of Julian Avenel, and it was apprehended they would join battle upon the banks of a small stream which forms the verge of the Halldome.

"Who knows the place?" said Murray.

"I do, my lord," answered Glendinning.

"Tis well," said the Earl; "take a score of the best mounted horse—make what haste thou canst, and announce to them that I am coming up instantly with a strong power, and will cut to pieces without mercy, whichever party strikes the first blow.—Davidson," said he to the gentleman who brought the intelligence, "thou shalt be my guide.—Hie thee on, Glendinning—Say to Foster I conjure him, as he respects his mistress's service, that he will leave the matter in my hands. Say to the Abbot, I will burn the Monastery over his head, if he strikes a stroke till I come—Tell the dog, Julian Avenel, that he hath already one deep score to settle with me—I will set his head on the top of the highest pinnacle of Saint Mary's, if he presume to open another. Make haste, and spare not the spur for fear of spoiling horse-flesh."

"Your bidding shall be obeyed, my lord," said Glendinning; and choosing those whose horses were in best plight to be his attendants, he went off as fast as the jaded state of their cavalry permitted. Hill and hollow vanished from under the feet of the chargers.

They had not ridden half the way, when they met stragglers coming off from the field, whose appearance announced that the conflict was begun. Two supported in their arms a third, their elder brother, who was pierced with an arrow through the body. Halbert, who knew them to belong to the Halldome, called them by their names, and questioned them of the state of the affray; but just then, in spite of their efforts to retain him in the saddle, their brother dropped from the horse, and they dismounted in haste to receive his last breath. From men thus engaged no information was to be obtained. Glendinning, therefore, pushed on with his little troop, the more anxiously, as he perceived other stragglers, bearing Saint Andrew's cross upon their caps and corselets, flying apparently from the field of battle. Most of these, when they were aware of a body of horsemen approaching on the road, held to the one hand or the other, at such a distance as precluded coming to speech of them. Others, whose fear was more intense, kept the onward road, galloping wildly as fast as their horses could carry them, and when questioned, only glared without reply on those who spoke to them, and rode on without drawing bridle. Several of these were also known to Halbert, who had therefore no doubt, from the circumstances in which he met them, that the men of the Halldome were defeated. He became now unspeakably anxious concerning the fate of his brother, who, he could not doubt, must have been engaged in the affray. He

* Spur-whang—Spur leather.

therefore increased the speed of his horse, so that not above five or six of his followers could keep up with him. At length he reached a little hill, at the descent of which, surrounded by a semi-circular sweep of a small stream, lay the plain which had been the scene of the skirmish.

It was a melancholy spectacle. War and terror, to use the expression of the poet, had rushed on to the field, and left only wounds and death behind them. The battle had been stoutly contested, as was almost always the case with these Border skirmishes, where ancient hatred and mutual injuries made men stubborn in maintaining the cause of their conflict. Towards the middle of the plain, there lay the bodies of several men who had fallen in the very act of grappling with the enemy; and there were seen countenances which still bore the stern expression of unextinguishable hate and defiance, hands which clasped the hilt of the broken falchion, or strove in vain to pluck the deadly arrow from the wound. Some were wounded, and, cowed of the courage they had lately shown, were begging aid, and craving water, in a tone of melancholy depression, while others tried to teach the faltering tongue to pronounce some half-forgotten prayer, which, even when first learned, they had but half understood. Halbert, uncertain what course he was next to pursue, rode through the plain to see if, among the dead or wounded, he could discover any traces of his brother Edward. He experienced no interruption from the English. A distant cloud of dust announced that they were still pursuing the scattered fugitives, and he guessed that to approach them with his followers, until they were again under some command, would be to throw away his own life, and that of his men, whom the victors would instantly confound with the Scots against whom they had been successful. He resolved, therefore, to pause until Murray came up with his forces, to which he was the more readily moved, as he heard the trumpets of the English Warden sounding the retreat, and recalling from the pursuit. He drew his men together, and made a stand in an advantageous spot of ground, which had been occupied by the Scots in the beginning of the action, and most fiercely disputed while the skirmish lasted.

While he stood here, Halbert's ear was assailed by the feeble moan of a woman, which he had not expected to hear amid that scene, until the retreat of the foes had permitted the relations of the slain to approach, for the purpose of paying them the last duties. He looked with anxiety, and at length observed, that by the body of a knight in bright armor, whose crest, though soiled and broken, still showed the marks of rank and birth, there sat a female wrapped in a horseman's cloak, and holding something pressed against her bosom which he soon discovered to be a child. He glanced towards the English. They advanced not, and the continued and prolonged sound of their trumpets, with the shouts of the leaders, announced that their powers would not be in-

stantly reassembled. He had, therefore, a moment to look after this unfortunate woman. He gave his horse to a spearman as he dismounted, and, approaching the unhappy female, asked her, in the most soothing tone he could assume, whether he could assist her in her distress. The mourner made him no direct answer; but endeavoring, with a trembling and unskilful hand, to undo the springs of the visor and gorget, said, in a tone of impatient grief, "Oh, he would recover instantly could I but give him air—land and living, life and honor, would I give for the power of undoing these cruel iron platings that suffocate him!" He that would soothe the sorrow must not argue on the vanity of the most deceitful hopes. The body lay as that of one whose last draught of vital air had been drawn, and who must never more have concern with the nether sky. But Halbert Glendinning failed not to raise the visor and cast loose the gorget, when, to his great surprise, he recognised the pale face of Julian Avenel. His last fight was over, the fierce and turbid spirit had departed in the strife in which it had so long delighted.

"Alas! he is gone," said Halbert, speaking to the young woman, in whom he had now no difficulty of knowing the unhappy Catherine.

"Oh, no, no, no!" she reiterated, "do not say so—he is not dead—he is but in a swoon. I have lain as long in one myself—and then his voice would arouse me, when he spoke kindly, and said, Catherine, look up for my sake—And look up, Julian, for mine!" she said, addressing the senseless corpse; "I know you do but counterfeit to frighten me, but I am not frightened," she added, with an hysterical attempt to laugh; and then instantly changing her tone, entreated him to "speak, were it but to curse my folly. Oh, the rudest word you ever said to me would now sound like the dearest you wasted on me before I gave you all. Lift him up," she said, "lift him up, for God's sake!—have you no compassion! He promised to wed me if I bore him a boy, and this child is so like to its father!—How shall he keep his word, if you do not help me to awaken him?—Christie of the Clinthill, Rowley, Hutcheon! ye were constant at his feast, but ye fled from him at the fray, false villains as ye are!"

"Not I, by Heaven!" said a dying man, who made some shift to raise himself on his elbow, and discovered to Halbert the well-known features of Christie; "I fled not a foot, and a man can but fight while his breath lasts—mine is going fast.—So, youngster," said he, looking at Glendinning, and seeing his military dress, "thou hast ta'en the basnet at last? it is a better cap to live in than die in. I would chance had sent thy brother here instead—there was good in him—but thou art as wild, and wilt soon be as wicked as myself."

"God forbid!" said Halbert, hastily.

"Marry, and amen, with all my heart," said the wounded man, "there will be company enow without thee where I am going. But God be

praised I had no hand in that wickedness," said he, looking to poor Catherine; and with some exclamation in his mouth, that sounded betwixt a prayer and a curse, the soul of Christie of the Clinthill took wing to the last account.

Deeply wrapped in the painful interest which these shocking events had excited, Glendinning forgot for a moment his own situation and duties, and was first recalled to them by a trampling of horse, and the cry of Saint George for England, which the English soldiers still continued to use. His handful of men, for most of the stragglers had waited for Murray's coming up, remained on horseback, holding their lances upright, having no command either to submit or resist.

"There stands our Captain," said one of them, as a strong party of English came up, the vanguard of Foster's troop.

"Your Captain! with his sword sheathed, and on foot in the presence of his enemy? a raw soldier, I warrant him," said the English leader. "So! ho! young man, is your dream out, and will you now answer me if you will fight or fly?"

"Neither," answered Halbert Glendinning, with great tranquillity.

"Then throw down thy sword and yield thee," answered the Englishman.

"Not till I can help myself no otherwise," said Halbert, with the same moderation of tone and manner.

"Art thou for thine own hand, friend, or to whom dost thou owe service?" demanded the English Captain.

"To the noble Earl of Murray."

"Then thou servest," said the Southron, "the most disloyal nobleman who breathes—false both to England and Scotland."

"Thou liest," said Glendinning, regardless of all consequences.

"Ha! art thou so hot now, and wert so cold but a minute since? I lie, do I? Wilt thou do battle with me on that quarrel?"

"With one to one—one to two—or two to five, as you list," said Halbert Glendinning; "grant me but a fair field."

"That thou shalt have.—Stand back, my mates," said the brave Englishman. "If I fall, give him fair play, and let him go off free with his people."

"Long life to the noble Captain!" cried the soldiers, as impatient to see the duel, as if it had been a bull-baiting.

"He will have a short life of it, though," said the sergeant, "if he, an old man of sixty, is to fight for any reason, or for no reason, with every man he meets, and especially the young fellows he might be father to.—And here comes the Warden besides to see the sword-play."

In fact, Sir John Foster came up with a considerable body of his horsemen, just as his Captain, whose age rendered him unequal to the combat with so strong and active a youth as Glendinning, was deprived of his sword.

"Take it up for shame, old Stawarth Bolton," said the English Warden; "and thou, young man, tell me who and what thou art?"

"A follower of the Earl of Murray, who bore his will to your honor," answered Glendinning,—"but here he comes to say it himself, I see the van of his horsemen come over the hills."

"Get into order, my masters," said Sir John Foster to his followers; "you that have broken your spears, draw your swords. We are something unprovided for a second field, but if yonder dark cloud on the hill edge bring us foul weather, we must bear as bravely as our broken cloaks will bide it. Meanwhile, Stawarth, we have got the deer we have hunted for—here is Pierce Shafton hard and fast betwixt two troopers."

"Who, that lad?" said Bolton; "he is no more Pierce Shafton than I am. He hath his gay cloak indeed—but Pierce Shafton is a round dozen of years older than that slip of rognery. I have known him since he was thus high. Did you never see him in the tilt-yard or in the presence?"

"To the devil with such vanities!" said Sir John Foster; "when had I leisure for them or any thing else? During my whole life has she kept me to this hangman's office, chasing thieves one day and traitors another, in daily fear of my life; the lance never hung up in the hall, the foot never out of the stirrup, the saddles never off my nags' backs; and now, because I have been mistaken in the person of a man I never saw, I warrant me, the next letters from the Privy Council will rate me as I were a dog—a man were better dead than thus slaved and harassed."

A trumpet interrupted Foster's complaints, and a Scottish pursuivant who attended, declared "that the noble Earl of Murray desired, in all honor and safety, a personal conference with Sir John Foster, midway between their parties, with six of company in each, and ten free minutes to come and go."

"And now," said the Englishman, "comes another plague. I must go speak with yonder false Scot, and he knows how to frame his devices, to cast dust in the eyes of a plain man, as well as ever a knave in the north. I am no match for him in words, and for hard blows we are but too ill provided.—Pursuivant, we grant the conference—and you, Sir Swordsman" (speaking to young Glendinning), "draw off with your troopers to your own party—march—attend your Earl's trumpet.—Stawarth Bolton, put our troop in order, and be ready to move forward at the wagging of a finger.—Get you gone to your own friends, I tell you, Sir Squire, and loiter not here."

Notwithstanding this peremptory order, Halbert Glendinning could not help stopping to cast a look upon the unfortunate Catherine, who lay insensible of the danger and of the trampling of so many horses around her, insensible, as the second glance assured him, of all and for ever. Glendinning almost rejoiced when he saw that

the last misery of life was over, and that the hoofs of the war-horses, amongst which he was compelled to leave her, could only injure and deface a senseless corpse. He caught the infant from her arms, half ashamed of the shout of laughter which rose on all sides, at seeing an armed man in such a situation assume such an unwonted and inconvenient burden.

"Shoulder your infant!" cried the harquebusier.

"Port your infant!" said a pikeman.

"Peace, ye brutes," said Stawarth Bolton, "and respect humanity in others if you have none yourselves. I pardon the lad having done some discredit to my gray hairs, when I see him take care of that helpless creature, which ye would have trampled upon as if ye had been littered of bitch-wolves, not born of women."

While this passed, the leaders on either side met in the neutral space betwixt the forces of either, and the Earl accosted the English Warden: "Is this fair or honest usage, Sir John, or for whom do you hold the Earl of Morton and myself, that you ride in Scotland with arrayed banner, fight, slay, and make prisoners at your own pleasure? Is it well done, think you, to spoil our land and shed our blood, after the many proofs we have given to your mistress of our devotion due to her will, saving always the allegiance due to our own sovereign?"

"My Lord of Murray," answered Foster, "all the world knows you to be a man of quick ingine and deep wisdom, and these several weeks have you held me in hand with promising to arrest my sovereign mistress's rebel, this Piercie Shafton of Wilverton, and you have never kept your word, alleging turmoils in the west, and I wot not what other causes of hinderance. Now, since he has had the insolence to return hither, and live openly within ten miles of England, I could no longer, in plain duty to my mistress and queen, tarry upon your successive delays, and therefore I have used her force to take her rebel, by the strong hand, wherever I can find him."

"And is Piercie Shafton in your hands, then?" said the Earl of Murray. "Be aware that I may not, without my own great shame, suffer you to remove him hence without doing battle."

"Will you, Lord Earl, after all the advantages you have received at the hands of the Queen of England, do battle in the cause of her rebel?" said Sir John Foster.

"Not so, Sir John," answered the Earl, "but I will fight to the death in defence of the liberties of our free kingdom of Scotland."

"By my faith," said Sir John Foster, "I am well content—my sword is not blunted with all it has done yet this day."

"By my honor, Sir John," said Sir George Heron of Chipchase, "there is but little reason we should fight these Scottish Lords e'en now, for I hold opinion with old Stawarth Bolton, and believe yonder prisoner to be no more Piercie Shafton than he is the Earl of Northumberland; and you

were but ill advised to break the peace betwixt the countries for a prisoner of less consequence than that gay mischief-maker."

"Sir George," replied Foster, "I have often heard you herons are afraid of hawks—Nay, lay not hand on sword, man—I did but jest; and for this prisoner, let him be brought up hither, that we may see who or what he is—always under assurance, my lords," he continued, addressing the Scots.

"Upon our word and honor," said Morton, "we will offer no violence."

The laugh turned against Sir John Foster considerably, when the prisoner, being brought up, proved not only a different person from Sir Piercie Shafton, but a female in man's attire.

"Pluck the mantle from the queen's face, and cast her to the horse-boys," said Foster; "she has kept such company ere now, I warrant."

Even Murray was moved to laughter, no common thing with him, at the disappointment of the English Warden; but he would not permit any violence to be offered to the fair Molinara, who had thus a second time rescued Sir Piercie Shafton at her own personal risk.

"You have already done more mischief than you can well answer," said the Earl to the English Warden, "and it were dishonor to me should I permit you to harm a hair of this young woman's head."

"My lord," said Morton, "if Sir John will ride apart with me but for one moment, I will show him such reasons as shall make him content to depart, and to refer this unhappy day's work to the judgment of the Commissioners nominated to try offences on the Border."

He then led Sir John Foster aside, and spoke to him in this manner:—"Sir John Foster, I much marvel that a man who knows your Queen Elizabeth as you do, should not know that, if you hope anything from her, it must be for doing her useful service, not for involving her in quarrels with her neighbors, without any advantage. Sir Knight, I will speak frankly what I know to be true. Had you seized the true Piercie Shafton by this ill-advised inroad; and had your deed threatened, as most likely it might, a breach betwixt the countries, your politic princess and her politic council would rather have disgraced Sir John Foster than entered into war in his behalf. But now that you have stricken short of your aim, you may rely on it you will have little thanks for carrying the matter farther. I will work thus far on the Earl of Murray, that he will undertake to dismiss Sir Piercie Shafton from the realm of Scotland.—Be well advised, and let the matter now pass off—you will gain nothing by farther violence, for if we fight, you as the fewer and the weaker through your former action, will needs have the worse."

Sir John Foster listened with his head declining on his breastplate.

"It is a cursed chance," he said, "and I shall have little thanks for my day's work."

He then rode up to Murray, and said, that, in deference to his Lordship's presence and that of my Lord of Morton, he had come to the resolution of withdrawing himself, with his power, without farther proceedings.

"Stop there, Sir John Foster," said Murray, "I cannot permit you to retire in safety, unless you leave some one who may be surety to Scotland, that the injuries you have at present done us may be fully accounted for;—you will reflect, that by permitting your retreat, I become accountable to my Sovereign, who will demand a reckoning of me for the blood of her subjects, if I suffer those who shed it to depart so easily."

"It shall never be told in England," said the Warden, "that John Foster gave pledges like a subdued man, and that on the very field on which he stands victorious.—But," he added, after a moment's pause, "if Stawarth Bolton wills to abide with you on his own free choice, I will say nothing against it; and, as I bethink me, it were better he should stay to see the dismissal of this same Piercie Shafton."

"I receive him as your hostage, nevertheless, and shall treat him as such," said the Earl of Murray. But Foster, turning away as if to give directions to Bolton and his men, affected not to hear this observation.

"There rides a faithful servant of his most beautiful and Sovereign Lady," said Murray aside to Morton. "Happy man! he knows not whether the execution of her commands may not cost him his head; and yet he is most certain that to leave them unexecuted will bring disgrace and death without reprieve. Happy are they who are not only subjected to the caprices of Dame Fortune, but held bound to account and be responsible for them, and that to a sovereign as moody and fickle as her humorous ladyship herself!"

"We also have a female Sovereign, my lord," said Morton.

"We have so, Douglas," said the Earl, with a suppressed sigh; "but it remains to be seen how long a female hand can hold the reins of power in a realm so wild as ours. We will now go on to Saint Mary's, and see ourselves after the state of that House.—Glendinning, look to that woman, and protect her.—What the fiend, man, hast thou got in thine arms?—an infant, as I live!—where couldst thou find such a charge, at such a place and moment?"

Halbert Glendinning briefly told the story. The Earl rode forward to the place where the body of Julian Avenel lay, with his unhappy companion's arms wrapped around him like the trunk of an uprooted oak borne down by the tempest with all its ivy garlands. Both were cold dead. Murray was touched in an unwonted degree, remembering, perhaps, his own birth. "What have they to answer for, Douglas," he said, "who thus abuse the sweetest gifts of affection?"

The Earl of Morton, unhappy in his marriage, was a libertine in his amours.

"You must ask that question of Henry Warden, my lord, or of John Knox—I am but a wild counsellor in women's matters."

"Forward to Saint Mary's," said the Earl, "pass the word on—Glendinning, give the infant to this same female cavalier, and let it be taken charge of. Let no dishonor be done to the dead bodies, and call on the country to bury or remove them.—Forward, I say, my masters!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Gone to be married!—Gone to swear a peace!
KING JOHN.

THE news of the lost battle, so quickly carried by the fugitives to the village and convent, had spread the greatest alarm among the inhabitants. The Sacristan and other monks counselled flight; the Treasurer recommended that the church plate should be offered as a tribute to bribe the English officer; the Abbot alone was unmoved and undaunted.

"My brethren," he said, "since God has not given our people victory in the combat, it must be because he requires of us, his spiritual soldiers, to fight the good fight of martyrdom, a conflict in which nothing but our own faint-hearted cowardice can make us fail of victory. Let us assume, then, the armor of faith, and prepare, if it be necessary, to die under the ruin of these shrines, to the service of which we have devoted ourselves. Highly honored are we all in this distinguished summons, from our dear brother Nicholas, whose gray hairs have been preserved until they should be surrounded by the crown of martyrdom, down to my beloved son Edward, who, arriving at the vineyard at the latest hour of the day, is yet permitted to share its toils with those who have labored from the morning. Be of good courage, my children. I dare not, like my sainted predecessors, promise to you that you shall be preserved by miracle—I and you are alike unworthy of that especial interposition, which in earlier times turned the sword of sacrilege against the bosom of tyrants by whom it was wielded, daunted the hardened hearts of heretics with prodigies, and called down hosts of angels to defend the shrine of God and of the Virgin. Yet, by heavenly aid, you shall this day see that your Father and Abbot will not disgrace the mitre which sits upon his brow. Go to your cells, my children, and exercise your private devotions. Array yourselves also in alb and cope, as for our most solemn festivals, and be ready, when the tolling of the largest bell announces the approach of the enemy, to march forth to meet them in solemn procession. Let the church be opened to afford such refuge as may be to those of our vassals, who, from their exertion in this day's unhappy battle, or other cause, are particularly apprehensive of the rage of the enemy. Tell Sir Piercie Shafton, if he has escaped the fight—"

"I am here, most venerable Abbot," replied Sir Piercie; "and if it so seemeth meet to you,