

thinks.—Begone; return twice as wealthy as thou wert before yesterday, and torment me no more with questions, complaints, or thanks; they are alike odious to me."

"It's a' gowd, by Heaven!" said Elliot, having glanced at the contents; and then again addressing the Hermit, "Muckle obliged for your good-will; and I wad blithely gie you a bond for some o' the siller, or a wadset ower the lands o' Wideopen. But I dinna ken, Elshie; to be free wi' you, I dinna like to use siller unless I kend it was decently come by; and maybe it might turn into scatestones, and cheat some poor man."

"Ignorant idiot!" retorted the Dwarf; "the trash is as genuine poison as ever was dug out of the bowels of the earth. Take it—use it, and may it thrive with you as it hath done with me!"

"But I tell you," said Elliot, "it wasna about the gear that I was consulting you,—it was a braw barn-yard, doubtless, and thirty head of finer cattle there werena on this side of the Cat-rail; but let the gear gang,—if ye could gie me but speerings o' puir Grace, I would be content to be your slave for life, in any thing that didna touch my salvation. O, Elshie, speak, man, speak!"

"Well, then," answered the Dwarf, as if worn out by his importunity, "since thou hast not enough of woes of thine own, but must needs seek to burden thyself with those of a partner, seek her whom thou hast lost in the West."

"In the West? That's a wide word."

"It is the last," said the Dwarf, "which I design to utter;" and he drew the shutters of his window, leaving Hobbie to make the most of the hint he had given.

The west!—the west!—thought Elliot; the country is pretty quiet down that way, unless it were Jock o' the Todholes; and he's ower auld now for the like o' thae jobs.—West!—By my life, it must be Westburnflat. "Elshie, just tell me one word. Am I right? Is it Westburnflat? If I am wrang, say sae. I wadna like to wyte an innocent neighbor wi' violence—No answer?—It must be the Red Reiver—I didna think he wad hae ventured on me, neither, and sae mony kin as there's o' us—I am thinking he'll hae some better backing than his Cumberland friends.—Fareweel to you, Elshie, and mony thanks—I downa be fashed wi' the siller c'en now, for I maun awa' to meet my friends at the Trysting-place—Sae, if ye carena to open the window, ye can fetch it in after I'm awa'."

Still there was no reply.

"He's deaf, or he's daft, or he's baith; but I hae nae time to stay to claver wi' him."

And off rode Hobbie Elliot towards the place of rendezvous which he had named to his friends.

Four or five riders were already gathered at the Trysting-pool. They stood in close consultation together, while their horses were permitted to graze among the poplars which overhung the

broad still pool. A more numerous party were seen coming from the southward. It proved to be Earnscliff and his party, who had followed the track of the cattle as far as the English border, but had halted on the information that a considerable force was drawn together under some of the Jacobite gentlemen in that district, and there were tidings of insurrection in different parts of Scotland. This took away from the act which had been perpetrated the appearance of private animosity, or love of plunder; and Earnscliff was now disposed to regard it as a symptom of civil war. The young gentleman greeted Hobbie with the most sincere sympathy, and informed him of the news he had received.

"Then, may I never stir frae the bit," said Elliot, "if auld Elleslaw is not at the bottom o' the haill villany! Ye see he's leagued with the Cumberland Catholics; and that agrees weel wi' what Elshie hinted about Westburnflat, for Elleslaw aye protected him, and he will want to harry and disarm the country about his ain hand before he breaks out."

Some now remembered that the party of ruffians had been heard to say that they were acting for James VIII. and were charged to disarm all rebels. Others had heard Westburnflat boast, in drinking parties, that Elleslaw would soon be in arms for the Jacobite cause, and that he himself was to hold a command under him, and that they would be bad neighbors for young Earnscliff, and all that stood out for the established government. The result was a strong belief that Westburnflat had headed the party under Elleslaw's orders, and they resolved to proceed instantly to the house of the former, and, if possible, to secure his person. They were by this time joined by so many of their dispersed friends, that their number amounted to upwards of twenty horsemen, well mounted, and tolerably, though variously, armed.

A brook, which issued from a narrow glen among the hills, entered, at Westburnflat, upon the open marshy level, which, expanding about half a mile in every direction, gives name to the spot. In this place the character of the stream becomes changed, and from being a lively brisk-running mountain torrent, it stagnates, like a blue swollen snake, in dull deep windings, through the swampy level. On the side of the stream, and nearly about the centre of the plain, arose the tower of Westburnflat, one of the few remaining strongholds formerly so numerous upon the borders. The ground upon which it stood was gently elevated above the marsh for the space of about a hundred yards, affording an esplanade of dry turf, which extended itself in the immediate neighborhood of the tower; but, beyond which, the surface presented to strangers was that of an impassable and dangerous bog. The owner of the tower and his inmates alone knew the winding and intricate paths, which leading over ground that was comparatively sound, admitted visitors to his residence. But among the party which were assembled under Earnscliff's

directions, there was more than one person qualified to act as a guide. For although the owner's character and habits of life were generally known, yet the laxity of feeling with respect to property prevented his being looked on with the abhorrence with which he must have been regarded in a more civilized country. He was considered among his more peaceable neighbors, pretty much as a gambler, cock-fighter, or horse-jockey, would be regarded at the present day; a person, of course, whose habits were to be condemned, and his society, in general, avoided, yet who could not be considered as marked with the indelible infamy attached to his profession where laws have been habitually observed. And their indignation was awakened against him upon this occasion, not so much upon account of the general nature of the transaction, which was just such as was to be expected from this marauder, as that the violence had been perpetrated upon a neighbor against whom he had no cause of quarrel,—against a friend of their own,—above all, against one of the name of Elliot, to which clan most of them belonged. It was not therefore, wonderful, that there should be several in the band pretty well acquainted with the locality of his habitation, and capable of giving such directions and guidance as soon placed the whole party on the open space of firm ground in front of the Tower of Westburnflat.

CHAPTER IX.

So spak the knight; the geant sed,
Lead forth with thee, the sely maid,
And mak me quite of the and sch;e;
For glansing ee, or brow so brent,
Or cheek with rose and lilye blent,
Me lists not fight with the.

ROMANCE OF THE FALCON.

The tower, before which the party now stood, was a small square building of the most gloomy aspect. The walls were of great thickness, and the windows, or slits which served the purpose of windows, seemed rather calculated to afford the defenders the means of employing missile weapons, than for admitting air or light to the apartments within. A small battlement projected over the walls on every side, and afforded farther advantage of defence by its niched parapet, within which arose a steep roof, flagged with grey stones. A single turret at one angle, defended by a door studded with huge iron nails, rose above the battlement, and gave access to the roof from within, by the spiral staircase which it enclosed. It seemed to the party that their motions were watched by some one concealed within this turret; and they were confirmed in their belief, when, through a narrow loophole, a female hand was seen to wave a handkerchief, as if by way of signal to them. Hobbie was almost out of his senses with joy and eagerness.

"It was Grace's hand and arm," he said; "I can swear to it among a thousand. There is not the like of it on this side of the Lowdens—We'll

have her out, lads, if we should carry off the Tower of Westburnflat stane by stane."

Earnscliff, though he doubted the possibility of recognising a fair maiden's hand at such a distance from the eye of the lover, would say nothing to damp his friend's animated hopes, and it was resolved to summon the garrison.

The shout of the party, and the winding of one or two horns, at length brought to a loophole, which flanked the entrance, the haggard face of an old woman.

"That's the Reiver's mother," said one of the Elliots; "she's ten times waur than himsell, and is wyted for muckle of the ill he does about the country."

"Wha are ye? What d'ye want here?" were the queries of the respectable progenitor.

"We are seeking William Gramme of Westburnflat," said Earnscliff.

"He's no at bame," returned the old dame.

"When did he leave home?" pursued Earnscliff.

"I canna tell," said the portress.

"When will he return?" said Hobbie Elliot.

"I dinna ken naething about it," replied the inexorable guardian of the keep.

"Is there anybody within the tower with you?" again demanded Earnscliff.

"Naebody but mysell and bandrons," said the old woman.

"Then open the gate and admit us," said Earnscliff; "I am a justice of peace, and in search of the evidence of a felony."

"Deil be in their fingers that draws a bolt for ye," retorted the portress; "for mine shall never do it. Thinkna ye shame o' yourself, to come here siccan a band o' ye, wi' your swords, and spears, and steel-caps, to frighten a lone widow woman?"

"Our information," said Earnscliff, "is positive; we are seeking goods which have been forcibly carried off, to a great amount."

"And a young woman, that's been cruelly made prisoner, that's worth mair than a' the gear, twice told," said Hobbie.

"And I warn you," continued Earnscliff, "that your only way to prove your son's innocence is to give us quiet admittance to search the house."

"And what will ye do, if I carena to thrav the keys, or draw the bolts, or open the grate to sic a clamjamfrie?" said the old dame, scoffingly.

"Force our way with the king's keys, and break the neck of every living soul we find in the house, if ye dinna gie it ower forthwith!" menaced the incensed Hobbie.

"Threatened folks live lang," said the hag, in the same tone of irony; "there's the iron grate—try your skeel on't, lads—it has kept out as gude men as you, or now."

So saying, she laughed, and withdrew from the aperture through which she had held the parley.

The besiegers now opened a serious consultation. The immense thickness of the walls, and the small size of the windows, might, for a time, have even resisted cannon-shot. The entrance was secured, first, by a strong grated door, composed entirely of hammered iron, of such ponderous strength as seemed calculated to resist any force that could be brought against it. "Pinches or fore-hammers will never pick upon't," said Hugh, the blacksmith of Ringleburn; "ye might as weel batter at it wi' pipe-staples."

Within the doorway, and at the distance of nine feet, which was the solid thickness of the wall, there was a second door of oak, crossed, both breadth and lengthways, with clenched bars of iron, and studded full of broad-headed nails. Besides all these defences, they were by no means confident in the truth of the old dame's assertion, that she alone composed the garrison. The more knowing of the party had observed hoof-marks in the track by which they approached the tower, which seemed to indicate that several persons had very lately passed in that direction.

To all these difficulties was added their want of means for attacking the place. There was no hope of procuring ladders long enough to reach the battlements, and the windows, besides being very narrow, were secured with iron bars. Scaling was therefore out of the question; mining was still more so, for want of tools and gunpowder; neither were the besiegers provided with food, means of shelter, or other conveniences, which might have enabled them to convert the siege into a blockade; and there would, at any rate, have been a risk of relief from some of the marauder's comrades. Hobbie grinded and gnashed his teeth, as, walking round the fastness, he could devise no means of making a forcible entry. At length he suddenly exclaimed, "And what for no do as our fathers did lang syne? Put hand to the wark, lads. Let us cut up bushes and briers, pile them before the door and set fire to them, and smoke that auld devil's dam as if she were to be reested for bacon."

All immediately closed with this proposal, and some went to work with swords and knives to cut down the alder and hawthorn bushes which grew by the side of the sluggish stream, many of which were sufficiently decayed and dried for their purpose, while others began to collect them in a large stack, properly disposed for burning, as close to the iron-grate as they could be piled. Fire was speedily obtained from one of their guns, and Hobbie was already advancing to the pile with a kindled brand, when the surly face of the robber, and the muzzle of a musketoon, were partially shown at a shot-hole which flanked the entrance. "Mony thanks to ye," he said, scoffingly, "for collecting sac muckle winter silding for us; but if ye step a foot nearer it wi' that lunt, it's be the dearest step ye ever made in your days."

"We'll sune see that," said Hobbie, advancing fearlessly with the torch.

The marauder snapped his piece at him, which,

fortunately for our honest friend, did not go off; while Earnscliff, firing at the same moment at the narrow aperture and slight mark afforded by the robber's face, grazed the side of his head with a bullet. He had apparently calculated upon his post affording him more security, for he no sooner felt the wound, though a very slight one, than he requested a parley, and demanded to know what they meant by attacking in this fashion a peaceable and honest man, and shedding his blood in that lawless manner?

"We want your prisoner," said Earnscliff, "to be delivered up to us in safety."

"And what concern have you with her?" replied the marauder.

"That," retorted Earnscliff, "you, who are detaining her by force, have no right to inquire."

"Aweel, I think I can gie a guess," said the robber. "Weel, sirs, I am laith to enter into deadly feud with you by spilling any of your bluid, though Earnscliff hasna stopped to shed mine—and he can hit a mark to a goat's breadth—so, to prevent mair skaith, I am willing to deliver up the prisoner, since nae less will please you."

"And Hobbie's gear?" cried Simon of Hackburn. "D'ye think you're to be free to plunder the faulds and byres of a gentle Elliot, as if they were an auld wife's hen's-cavey?"

"As I live by bread," replied Willie of Westburnflat—"As I live by bread, I have not a single clood o' them! They're a' ower the march lang syne; there's no a horn o' them about the tower. But I'll see what o' them can be gotten back, and I'll take this day twa days to meet Hobbie at the Castleton wi' twa friends on ilka side, and see to mak an agreement about a' the wrang he can wyte me wi'."

"Ay, ay," said Elliot, "that will do weel enough." And then aside to his kinsman, "Murrain on the gear! Lordsake, man! say nought about them. Let us but get pur Grace out o' that auld hellicat's clutches."

"Will ye gie me your word, Earnscliff," said the marauder, who still lingered at the shot-hole, "your faith and troth, with hand and glove, that I am free to come and free to gae, with five minutes to open the grate, and five minutes to steek it and to draw the bolts? less winna do, for they want creishing sairy. Will ye do this?"

"You shall have full time," said Earnscliff; "I plight my faith and troth, my hand and my glove."

"Wait there a moment, then," said Westburnflat; "or hear ye, I wad rather ye wad fa' back a pistol-shot from the door. It's no that I mis rust your word, Earnscliff; but it's best to be sure."

"Oh, friend," thought Hobbie to himself, as he drew back, "an I had you but on Turner's-holm,* and naebody by but twa honest lads to see

* There is a level meadow on the very margin of the two kingdoms, called Turner's-holm, just where the brook called Crissop joins the Liddel. It is said to have derived its name from being a place frequently assigned for tournaments, during the ancient Border times.

fair play, I wad make ye wish ye had broken your leg ere ye had touched beast or body that belonged to me!"

"He has a white feather in his wing, this same Westburnflat, after a'," said Simon of Hackburn, somewhat scandalized by his ready surrender.—"He'll ne'er fill his father's boots."

In the meanwhile, the inner door of the tower was opened, and the mother of the freebooter appeared in the space betwixt that and the outer grate. Willie himself was next seen, leading forth a female; and the old woman, carefully bolting the grate behind them, remained on the post as a sort of sentinel.

"Oney ane or twa o' ye come forward," said the outlaw, "and take her frae my hand hail and sound."

Hobbie advanced eagerly to meet his betrothed bride. Earnscliff followed more slowly, to guard against treachery. Suddenly Hobbie slackened his pace in the deepest mortification, while that of Earnscliff was hastened by impatient surprise. It was not Grace Armstrong, but Miss Isabella Vere, whose liberation had been effected by their appearance before the tower.

"Where is Grace? where is Grace Armstrong?" exclaimed Hobbie, in the extremity of wrath and indignation.

"Not in my hands," answered Westburnflat; "ye may search the tower, if ye misdoubt me."

"You false villain, you shall account for her, or die on the spot," said Elliot, presenting his gun.

But his companions, who now came up, instantly disarmed him of his weapon, exclaiming, all at once, "Hand and glove! faith and troth! Hand a care, Hobbie: we man keep our faith wi' Westburnflat, were he the greatest rogue ever rode."

Thus protected, the outlaw recovered his audacity, which had been somewhat daunted by the menacing gesture of Elliot.

"I have kept my word, sirs," he said, "and I look to have nae wrang amang ye. If this is no the prisoner ye sought," he said, addressing Earnscliff, "ye'll render her back to me again. I am answerable for her to those that aught her."

"For God's sake, Mr. Earnscliff, protect me!" said Miss Vere, clinging to her deliverer; "do not you abandon one whom the whole world seems to have abandoned."

"Fear nothing," whispered Earnscliff, "I will protect you with my life." Then turning to Westburnflat, "Villain!" he said, "how dared you to insult this lady?"

"For that matter, Earnscliff," answered the freebooter, "I can answer to them that has better right to ask me than you have; but if you come with an armed force, and take her awa' from them that her friends lodged her wi', how will you answer that?—But it's your ain affair—Nae single man can keep a tower against twenty—A' the men o' the Mearns downa do mair than they dow."

"He lies most falsely," said Isabella; "he carried me off by violence from my father."

"Maybe he only wanted ye to think sac, hiny," replied the robber; "but it's nae business o' mine, let it be as it may.—So ye winna resign her back to me?"

"Back to you, fellow! Surely no," answered Earnscliff; "I will protect Miss Vere, and escort her safely wherever she is pleased to be conveyed."

"Ay, ay, maybe you and her hae settled that al ready," said Willie of Westburnflat.

"And Grace?" interrupted Hobbie, shaking himself loose from the friends who had been preaching to him the sanctity of the safe-conduct, upon the faith of which the freebooter had ventured from his tower.—"Where's Grace?" and he rushed on the marauder, sword in hand.

Westburnflat, thus pressed, after calling out, "Godsake, Hobbie, hear me a gliff!" fairly turned his back and fled. His mother stood ready to open and shut the grate; but Hobbie struck at the freebooter as he entered, with so much force, that the sword made a considerable cleft in the lintel of the vaulted door, which is still shown as a memorial of the superior strength of those who lived in the days of yore. Ere Hobbie could repeat the blow, the door was shut and secured, and he was compelled to retreat to his companions, who were now preparing to break up the siege of Westburnflat. They insisted upon his accompanying them in their return.

"Ye hae broken truce already," said old Dick of the Dingle; "an we takna the better care, ye'll play mair gowk's tricks, and make yourself the laughing-stock of the hail country, besides having your friends charged with slaughter under trust. Bide till the meeting at Castleton, as ye hae greed, and if he disna make ye amends, then we'll hae it out o' his heart's blood. But let us gang reasonably to wark and keep our tryst, and I se warrant we get back Grace, and the kye an' a'."

This cold-blooded reasoning went ill down with the unfortunate lover; but, as he could only obtain the assistance of his neighbors and kinsmen on their own terms, he was compelled to acquiesce in their notions of good faith and regular procedure.

Earnscliff now requested the assistance of a few of the party to convey Miss Vere to her father's castle of Ellieslaw, to which she was peremptory in desiring to be conducted. This was readily granted; and five or six young men agreed to attend him as an escort. Hobbie was not of the number. Almost heart-broken by the events of the day, and his final disappointment, he returned moodily home to take such measures as he could for the sustenance and protection of his family, and to arrange with his neighbors the farther steps which should be adopted for the recovery of Grace Armstrong. The rest of the party dispersed in different directions, as soon as they had crossed the morass. The outlaw and his mother

watched them from the tower, until they entirely disappeared.

CHAPTER X.

I left my lady's bower last night—
It was clad in wreaths of snow,—
I'll seek it when the sun is bright,
And sweet the roses blaw.

OLD BALLAD.

INCENSED at what he deemed the coldness of his friends, in a cause which interested him so nearly, Hobbie had shaken himself free of their company, and was now on his solitary road homeward. "The fiend founder thee!" said he, as he spurred impatiently his over-fatigued and stumbling horse; "thou art like a' the rest o' them. Hae I not bred thee, and fed thee, and dressed thee wi' mine ain hand, and wouldst thou snapper now and break my neck at my utmost need? But thou'rt e'en like the lave—the farthest off o' them a' is my cousin ten times removed, and day or night I wad hae served them wi' my best blood; and now, I think they shew mair regard to the common thief of Westburnflat than to their ain kinsman. But I should see the lights now in Hengh-foot—Wae's me!" he continued, recollecting himself, "there will neither coal nor candle-light shine in the Hengh-foot ony mair! An it werena for my mother and sisters, and poor Grace, I could find in my heart to set spurs to the beast, and loup over the scaur into the water to make an end o't a'."—In this disconsolate mood he turned his horse's bridle towards the cottage in which his family had found refuge.

As he approached the door, he heard whispering and tittering amongst his sisters. "The deevil's in the women," said poor Hobbie; "they would nicker, and laugh, and giggle, if their best friend was lying a corp—and yet I am glad they can keep up their hearts sae weel, poor silly things: but the dirdum fa's on me, to be sure, and no on them."

While he thus meditated, he was engaged in fastening up his horse in a shed. "Thou maun do without horse-sheet and surcingle now, lad," he said, addressing the animal; "you and me hae had a downcome alike; we had better hae fa'en in the deepest pool o' Tarras."

He was interrupted by the youngest of his sisters, who came running out, and speaking in a constrained voice, as if to stifle some emotion, called out to him, "What are ye doing there, Hobbie, fiddling about the naig, and there's a ne frae Cumberland been waiting here for you this hour and mair? Haste ye in, man; I'll take off the saddle."

"Ane frae Cumberland!" exclaimed Elliot; and putting the bridle of his horse into the hand of his sister, he rushed into the cottage. "Where is he? where is he?" he exclaimed, glancing eagerly around, and seeing only females; "Did he bring news of Grace?"

"He doughtna bide an instant langer," said the sicker sister, still with a suppressed laugh.

"Hout fie, bairns!" said the old lady, with something of a good-humored reproof, "ye shouldna vex your billy Hobbie that way.—Look round, bairn, and see if there isna a ne here mair than ye left this morning."

Hobbie looked eagerly round. "There's you, and the three titties."

"There's four of us now, Hobbie, lad," said the youngest, who at this moment entered.

In an instant Hobbie had in his arms Grace Armstrong, who, with one of his sister's plaids around her, had passed unnoticed at his first entrance. "How dared you do this?" said Hobbie.

"It wasna my fault," said Grace, endeavoring to cover her face with her hands to hide at once her blushes, and escape the storm of hearty kisses with which her bridegroom punished her simple stratagem.—"It wasna my fault, Hobbie; ye should kiss Jeanie and the rest o' them, for they hae the wyte o't."

"And so I will," said Hobbie, and embraced and kissed his sisters and grandmother a hundred times, while the whole party half-laughed, half-cried, in the extremity of their joy. "I am the happiest man," said Hobbie, throwing himself down on a seat almost exhausted.—"I am the happiest man in the world!"

"Then, O my dear bairn," said the good old dame, who lost no opportunity of teaching her lessons of religion at those moments when the heart was best open to receive it.—"Then, O my son, give praise to Him that brings smiles out o' tears and joy out o' grief, as He brought light out o' darkness, and the world out o' naething. Was it not my word, that if ye could say His will be done, ye might hae cause to sae His name be praised?"

"It was—it was your word, grannie; and I do praise Him for His mercy, and for leaving me a good parent when my ain were gane," said honest Hobbie, taking her hand, "that puts me in mind to think of Him, baith in happiness and distress."

There was a solemn pause of one or two minutes employed in the exercise of mental devotion, which expressed, in purity and sincerity, the gratitude of the affectionate family to that Providence who had unexpectedly restored to their embraces the friend whom they had lost.

Hobbie's first inquiries were concerning the adventures which Grace had undergone. They were told at length, but amounted in substance to this:—That she was awaked by the noise which the ruffians made in breaking into the house, and by the resistance made by one or two of the servants, which was soon overpowered; that, dressing herself hastily, she ran down-stairs, and having seen, in the scuffle, Westburnflat's vizard drop off, imprudently named him by his name, and besought him for mercy; that the ruffian instantly stopped her mouth, dragged her from the house, and placed her on horseback, behind one of his associates.

"I'll break the accursed neck of him," said Hobbie, "if there werena another Græme in the land but himsell!"

She proceeded to say, that she was carried southward along with the party, and the spoil which they drove before them, until they had crossed the Border. Suddenly a person, known to her as a kinsman of Westburnflat, came riding very fast after the marauders, and told their leader, that his cousin had learnt from a sure hand that no luck would come of it, unless the lass was restored to her friends. After some discussion, the chief of the party seemed to acquiesce. Grace was placed behind her new guardian, who pursued in silence, and with great speed, the least frequented path to the Hengh-foot, and ere evening closed, set down the fatigued and terrified damsel within a quarter of a mile of the dwelling of her friends. Many and sincere were the congratulations which passed on all sides.

As these emotions subsided, less pleasing considerations began to intrude themselves.

"This is a miserable place for ye a'," said Hobbie, looking around him; "I can sleep weel enough mysell outby beside the naig, as I hae done mony a lang night on the hills; but how ye are to put yourself up, I canna see! And what's waur, I canna mend it; and what's waur than a', the morn may come, and the day after that, without your being a bit better off."

"It was a cowardly cruel thing," said one of the sisters, looking round, "to harry a puir family to the bare wa's this gate."

"And leave us neither stirk nor stot," said the youngest brother who now entered, "nor sheep nor lamb, nor aught that eats grass and corn."

"If they had ony quarrel wi' us," said Harry, the second brother, "were we na ready to hae fought it out? And that we should have been a' frae hame, too,—ane and a' upon the hill—Odd, an we had been at hame, Will Græme's stomach shouldna hae wanted its morning; but it's biding him, is it na, Hobbie?"

"Our neighbors hae taen a day at the Castle-ton to gree wi' him at the sight o' men," said Hobbie, mournfully; "they behaved to have it a' their ain gate, or there was nae help to be got at their hands."

"To gree wi' him!" exclaimed both his brothers at once, "after siccan an act of stouth-ribe as hasna been heard o' in the country since the auld riding days!"

"Very true, billies, and my blood was e'en boiling at it; but—the sight of Grace Armstrong has settled it brawly."

"But the stocking, Hobbie?" said John Elliot; "we're utterly ruined. Harry and I hae been to gather what was on the outby land, and there's scarce a clot left. I kenna how we're to carry on—We maun a' gang to the wars, I think. Westburnflat hasna the means, e'en if he had the will, to make up our loss; there's nae mends to be got out o' him, but what ye take out o' his bones. He has na a four-footed creature but the

vicious blood thing he rides on, and that's sair trashed wi' his night wark. We are ruined scap and roop."

Hobbie cast a mournful glance on Grace Armstrong, who returned it with a downcast look and a gentle sigh.

"Dinna be cast down, bairn," said the grandmother, "we hae gud friends that winna forsake us in adversity. There's Sir Thomas Kittleloof is my third cousin by the mother's side, and he has come by a hantle siller, and been made a knight-baronet into the bargain, for being a ne o' the commissioners at the Union."

"Hé wadna gie a bodle to save us frae famishing," said Hobbie; "and, if he did, the bread that I bought wi't would stick in my throat, when I thought it was part of the price of puir auld Scotland's crown and independence."

"There's the Laird o' Dunder, a ne o' the auld-est families in Tiviotdale."

"He's in the tolbooth, mother—he's in the Heart of Mid-Louden for a thousand merk he borrowed from Saunders Wyliecoat the writer."

"Poor man!" exclaimed Mrs. Elliot, "can we no send him something, Hobbie?"

"Ye forget, grannie, ye forget we want help ourselfs," said Hobbie, somewhat peevishly.

"Troth, did I, hinny," replied the good-natured lady, "just at the instant; it's sae natural to think on a ne's blude relations before themselves.—But there's young Earnscliff."

"He has ower little o' his ain; and siccan a name to keep up, it wad be a shame," said Hobbie, "to burden him wi' our distress. And I'll tell ye, grannie, it's needless to sit rhyming ower the style of a' your kith, kin, and allies, as if there was a charm in their braw names to do us good; the grandees hae forgotten us, and those of our ain degree hae just little enough to gang on wi' themselves; ne'er a friend hae we that can, or will, help us to stock the farm again."

"Then, Hobbie, we maun trust in Him that can raise up friends and fortune out o' the bare moor, as they say."

Hobbie sprung upon his feet. "Ye are right, grannie!" he exclaimed; "ye are right. I do ken a friend on the bare moor, that baith can and will help us—The turns of this day hae dung my head clean hirdie-girdie. I left as muckle gowd lying on Mucklestane-Moor this morning as would plinish the house and stock the Hengh-foot twice ower, and I am certain sure Elshie wadna grudge us the use of it."

"Elshie!" said his grandmother in astonishment; "what Elshie do you mean?"

"What Elshie should I mean, but canny Elshie, the Wight o' Mucklestane?" replied Hobbie.

"God forfend, my bairn, you should gang to fetch water out o' broken cisterns, or seek for relief frae them that deal wi' the Evil One! There was never luck in their gifts, nor grace in their paths. And the hail country kens that body Elshie's an urco man. O, if there was the law,

and the douce quiet administration of justice, that makes a kingdom flourish in righteousness, the like o' them suldna be suffered to live! The wizard and the witch are the abomination and the evil thing in the land."

"Troth, mother," answered Hobbie, "ye may say what ye like, but I am in the mind that witches and warlocks havena half the power they had lang syne; at least, sure am I, that ae ill-deviser, like auld Elliclaw, or ae ill-doer, like that d—d villain Westburnflat, is a greater plague and abomination in a country-side than a haill curnie o' the warst witches that ever capered on a broom-stick, or played cantrips on Fastern's E'en. It wad hae been lang or Elshie had burnt down my house and barns, and I am determined to try if he will do aught to build them up again. He's weel kend a skilfa' man ower a' the country, as far as Brough under Stanmore."

"Bide a wee, my bairn; mind his benefits havena thriven wi' a' body. Jock Howden died o' the very same disorder Elshie pretended to cure him of, about the fa' o' the leaf; and though he helped Lambside's cow weel out o' the moor-ill, yet the loupin-ill's been sairer amang his sheep than ony season before. And then I have heard he uses sic words abusing human nature, that's like a fleecing in the face of Providence; and ye mind ye said yourself, the first time ye ever saw him, that he was mair like a bogle than a living thing."

"Hout, mother," said Hobbie, "Elshie's no that bad a chield; he's a grewsome spectacle for a crooked disciple, to be sure, and a rough talker, but his bark is waur than his bite; sae, if I had anes something to eat, for I havena had a morsel ower my throat this day, I wad streek myself down for twa or three hours aside the beast, and be on and awa to Mucklestane wi' the first skreigh o' morning."

"And what for no the night, Hobbie," said Harry, "and I will ride wi' ye?"

"My naig is tired," said Hobbie.

"Ye may take mine then," said John.

"But I am a wee thing wearied myself."

"You wearied?" said Harry; "shame on ye! I have kend ye keep the saddle four-and-twenty hours thegither, and ne'er sic a word as weariness in your wame."

"The night's very dark," said Hobbie, rising and looking through the casement of the cottage; "and, to speak truth, and shame the deil, though Elshie's a real honest fallow, yet sornegate I would rather take day-light wi' me when I gang to visit him."

This frank avowal put a stop to farther argument; and Hobbie, having thus compromised matters between the rashness of his brother's counsel, and the timid cautions which he received from his grandmother, refreshed himself with such food as the cottage afforded; and, after a cordial salutation all round, retired to the shed, and stretched himself beside his trusty palfrey. His brothers shared between them some trusses

of clean straw, disposed in the stall usually occupied by old Annape's cow; and the fema.es arranged themselves for repose as well as the accommodations of the cottage would permit.

With the first dawn of morning, Hobbie arose; and, having rubbed down and saddled his horse, he set forth to Mucklestane-Moor. He avoided the company of either of his brothers, from an idea that the Dwarf was most propitious to those who visited him alone.

"The creature," said he to himself, as he went along, "is no neighborly; ae body at a time is fully mair than he weel can abide. I wonder if he's looked out o' the crib o' him to gather up the bag o' siller. If he hasna done that, it will hae been a braw windfa' for somebody, and I'll be finely flung. Come, Tarras," said he to his horse, striking him at the same time with his spur, "make mair fit, man; we maun be first on the field if we can."

He was now on the heath, which began to be illuminated by the beams of the rising sun; the gentle declivity which he was descending presented him a distinct, though distant view of the Dwarf's dwelling. The door opened, and Hobbie witnessed with his own eyes that phenomenon which he had frequently heard mentioned. Two human figures (if that of the Dwarf could be termed as such) issued from the solitary abode of the Recluse, and stood as if in converse together in the open air. The taller form then stooped, as if taking something up which lay beside the door of the hut, then both moved forward a little way, and again halted, as in deep conference. All Hobbie's superstitious terrors revived on witnessing this spectacle. That the Dwarf would open his dwelling to a mortal guest, was as improbable as that any one would choose voluntarily to be his nocturnal visitor; and, under full conviction that he beheld a wizard holding intercourse with his familiar spirit, Hobbie pulled in at once his breath and his bridle, resolved not to incur the indignation of either by a hasty intrusion on their conference. They were probably aware of his approach, for he had not halted for a moment before the Dwarf returned to his cottage; and the taller figure who had accompanied him, glided round the enclosure of the garden, and seemed to disappear from the eyes of the admiring Hobbie.

"Saw ever mortal the like o' that!" said Elliot; "but my case is desperate, sae, if he were Beelzebub himself, I see venture down the brae on him."

Yet, notwithstanding his assumed courage, he slackened his pace, when, nearly upon the very spot where he had last seen the tall figure, he discerned, as if lurking among the long heather, a small black rough-looking object, like a terrier dog.

"He has nae dog that ever I heard of," said Hobbie, "but mony a deil about his hand—Lord forgie me for saying sic a word!—It keeps its grund, be what it like—I'm judging it's a badger; but whae kens what shapes thae bogles will take

to fright a body? it will maybe start up like a lion or a crocodile when I come nearer. I see'en drive a stane at it, for if it change its shape when I'm ower near, Tarras will never stand it; and it will be ower muckle to hae him and the deil to fight wi' baith at ance."

He therefore cautiously threw a stone at the object, which continued motionless. "It's nae living thing after a'," said Hobbie, approaching, "but the very bag o' siller he flung out o' the window yesterday; and that other queer lang creature has just brought it sae muckle farther on the way to me." He then advanced and lifted the heavy fur pouch, which was quite full of gold. "Mercy on us!" said Hobbie, whose heart fluttered between glee at the revival of his hopes and prospects in life, and suspicion of the purpose for which this assistance was afforded him. "Mercy on us! it's an awfu' thing to touch what has been sae lately in the claws of something no canny. I canna shake myself loose o' the belief that there has been some jookery pankery of Satan's in a' this; but I am determined to conduct myself like an honest man and a good Christian, come o't what will."

He advanced accordingly to the cottage door, and having knocked repeatedly without receiving any answer, he at length elevated his voice and addressed the inmate of the hut. "Elshie! Father Elshie! I ken ye're within doors, and yanking, for I saw ye at the door-check as I cam ower the bent; will ye come out and speak just a gliff to ane that has mony thanks to gie ye?—It was a' true ye tell'd me about Westburnflat; but he's sent me back Grace safe and skaitless, sae there's nae ill happened yet but what may be suffered or sustained. Wad ye but come out a gliff, man, or but say ye're listening? Aweel, since ye winna answer, I see'en proceed wi' my tale. Ye see I hae been thinking it wad be a sair thing on twa young folk, like Grace and me, to put off our marriage for mony years till I was abroad and came back again wi' some gear; and they say folk maunna take booty in the wars as they did lang syne, and the queen's pay is a sma' matter; there's nae gathering gear on that—and then my grandame's auld—and my sisters wad sit peengin' at the ingle-side for want o' me to ding them about—and Earnscliff, or the neighborhood, or maybe your ain sell, Elshie, might want some good turn that Hob Elliot could do ye—and it's a pity that the auld house o' the Heugh-foot should be wrecked a'thegither. Sae I was thinking—but deil hae me, that I should say sae," continued he, checking himself, "if I can bring myself to ask a favor of ane that winna sae muckle as ware a word on me, to tell me if he hears me speaking till him."

"Say what thou wilt—do what thou wilt," answered the Dwarf from his cabin, "but begone, and leave me at peace."

"Weel, weel," replied Elliot, "since ye are willing to hear me, I see make my tale short. Since ye are sae kind as to say ye are content to lend me as muckle siller as will stock and plensh

the Heugh-foot, I am content, on my part, to accept the courtesy wi' mony kind thanks; and troth, I think it will be as safe in my hands as yours, if ye leave it flung about in that gate for the first loon body to lift, forbye the risk o' bad neighbors that can win through steekit doers and lockfast places, as I can tell to my cost. I say, since ye hae sae muckle consideration for me, I see be blithe to accept your kindness; and my mother and me (she's a liferenter, and I am fiar, o' the lands o' Wideopen) would grant you a wadset, or an heritable bond, for the siller, and to pay the annual-rent half-yearly; and Saunders Wyllecoat to draw the bond, and you to be at nae charge wi' the writings."

"Cut short thy jargon, and begone," said the Dwarf; "thy loquacious bull-headed honesty makes thee a more intolerable plague than the light-fingered courtier who would take a man's all without troubling him with either thanks, explanation, or apology. Hence, I say, thou art one of those tame slaves whose word is as good as their bond. Keep the money, principal and interest, until I demand it of thee."

"But," continued the pertinacious Borderer, "we are a' life-like and death-like, Elshie, and there really should be some black and white on this transaction. Sae just make me a minute, or missive, in ony form ye like, and I see write it fair ower, and subscribe it before famous witnesses. Only, Elshie, I wad wuss ye to pit naething in't that may be prejudicial to my salvation; for I'll hae the minister to read it ower, and it wad only be exposing yourself to nae purpose. And now I'm ganging awa, for ye'll be wearied o' my cracks, and I am wearied wi' cracking without an answer—and I see bring ye a bit o' bride's-cake ane o' thae days, and maybe bring Grace to see you. Ye wad like to see Grace, man, for as dour as ye are—Eh, Lord! I wish he may be weel, that was a sair grane! or, maybe he thought I was speaking of heavenly grace, and no of Grace Armstrong. Poor man, I am very doubtfu' o' his condition; but I am sure he is as kind to me as if I were his son, and a queer-looking father I wad hae had, if that had been e'en sae."

Hobbie now relieved his benefactor of his presence, and rode blithely home to display his treasure, and consult upon the means of repairing the damage which his fortune had sustained through the aggression of the Red Reiver of Westburnflat.

CHAPTER XI.

Three ruffians seized me yester morn,
Alas! a maiden most forlorn:
They choked my cries with wicked might,
And bound me on a palfrey white:
As sure as Heaven shall pity me,
I cannot tell what men they be.

CHRISTABELLE.

THE course of our story must here revert a little, to detail the circumstances which had placed Miss Vere in the unpleasant situation

from which she was unexpectedly, and indeed unintentionally liberated, by the appearance of Earnscliff and Elliot, with their friends and followers, before the Tower of Westburnflat.

On the morning preceding the night in which Hobbie's house was plundered and burnt, Miss Vere was requested by her father to accompany him in a walk through a distant part of the romantic grounds which lay round his castle of Ellieslaw. "To hear was to obey," in the true style of Oriental despotism; but Isabella trembled in silence while she followed her father through rough paths, now winding by the side of the river, now ascending the cliffs which serve for its banks. A single servant, selected perhaps for his stupidity, was the only person who attended them. From her father's silence, Isabella little doubted that he had chosen this distant and sequestered scene to resume the argument which they had so frequently maintained upon the subject of Sir Frederick's addresses, and that he was meditating in what manner he should most effectually impress upon her the necessity of receiving him as her suitor. But her fears seemed for some time to be unfounded. The only sentences which her father from time to time addressed to her, respected the beauties of the romantic landscape through which they strolled, and which varied its features at every step. To these observations, although they seemed to come from a heart occupied by more gloomy as well as more important cares, Isabella endeavored to answer in a manner as free and unconstrained as it was possible for her to assume, amid the involuntary apprehensions which crowded upon her imagination.

Sustaining with mutual difficulty a desultory conversation, they at length gained the centre of a small wood, composed of large oaks, intermingled with birches, mountain-ashes, hazel, holly, and a variety of underwood. The boughs of the tall trees met closely above, and the underwood filled up each interval between their trunks below. The spot on which they stood was rather more open; still, however, embowered under the natural arcade of tall trees, and darkened on the sides for a space around by a great and lively growth of copse-wood and bushes.

"And here, Isabella," said Mr. Vere, as he pursued the conversation, so often resumed, so often dropped, "here I would erect an altar to Friendship."

"To Friendship, sir!" said Miss Vere; "and why on this gloomy and sequestered spot, rather than elsewhere?"

"O, the propriety of the *locale* is easily vindicated," replied her father, with a sneer. "You know, Miss Vere (for you, I am well aware, are a learned young lady), you know, that the Romans were not satisfied with embodying, for the purpose of worship, each useful quality and moral virtue to which they could give a name; but they, moreover, worshipped the same under each variety of titles and attributes which could give a dis-

inct shade, or individual character, to the virtue in question. Now, for example, the Friendship to whom a temple should be here dedicated, is not Masculine Friendship, which abhors and despises duplicity, art, and disguise; but Female Friendship, which consists in little else than a mutual disposition on the part of the friends, as they call themselves, to abet each other in obscure fraud and petty intrigue."

"You are severe, sir," said Miss Vere. "Only just," said her father; "a humble copier I am from nature, with the advantage of contemplating two such excellent studies as Lucy Iderton and yourself."

"If I have been unfortunate enough to offend, sir, I can conscientiously excuse Miss Iderton from being either my counsellor or confidant."

"Indeed! how came you, then," said Mr. Vere, "by the flippancy of speech, and pertness of argument, by which you have disgusted Sir Frederick, and given me of late such deep offence?"

"If my manner has been so unfortunate as to displease you, sir, it is impossible for me to apologize too deeply, or too sincerely; but I cannot confess the same contrition for having answered Sir Frederick flippantly when he pressed me rudely. Since he forgot I was a lady, it was time to show him that I am at least a woman."

"Reserve, then, your pertness for those who press you on the topic, Isabella," said her father, coldly; "for my part, I am weary of the subject, and will never speak upon it again."

"God bless you, my dear father," said Isabella seizing his reluctant hand; "there is nothing you can impose on me, save the task of listening to this man's persecutions, that I will call, or think, a hardship."

"You are very obliging, Miss Vere, when it happens to suit you to be dutiful," said her unrelenting father, forcing himself at the same time from the affectionate grasp of her hand; "but henceforward, child, I shall save myself the trouble of offering you unpleasant advice on any topic. You must look to yourself."

At this moment four ruffians rushed upon them. Mr. Vere and his servant drew their hangings, which it was the fashion of the time to wear, and attempted to defend themselves and protect Isabella. But while each of them was engaged by an antagonist, she was forced into the thicket by the two remaining villains, who placed her and herself on horses which stood ready behind the copse-wood. They mounted at the same time, and, placing her between them, set off at a round gallop, holding the reins of her horse on each side. By many an obscure and winding path, over dale and down, through moss and moor, she was conveyed to the Tower of Westburnflat, where she remained strictly watched, but not otherwise ill-treated, under the guardianship of the old woman, to whose son that retreat belonged.—No entreaties could prevail upon the hag to give Miss Vere any information on the

subject of her being carried forcibly off, and confined in this secluded place. The arrival of Earnscliff, with a strong party of horsemen, before the tower, alarmed the robber. As he had already directed Grace Armstrong to be restored to her friends, it did not occur to him that this unwelcome visit was on her account; and seeing at the head of the party, Earnscliff, whose attachment to Miss Vere was whispered in the country, he doubted not that her liberation was the sole object of the attack upon his fastness. The dread of personal consequences compelled him to deliver up his prisoner in the manner we have already related.

At the moment the tramp of horses was heard which carried off the daughter of Ellieslaw, her father fell to the earth, and his servant, a stout young fellow, who was gaining ground on the ruffian with whom he had been engaged, left the combat to come to his master's assistance, little doubting that he had received a mortal wound. Both the villains immediately desisted from farther combat, and, retreating into the thicket, mounted their horses, and went off at full speed after their companions. Meantime, Dixon had the satisfaction to find Mr. Vere not only alive, but unwounded. He had overreached himself, and stumbled, it seemed, over the root of a tree, in making too eager a blow at his antagonist. The despair he felt at his daughter's disappearance, was, in Dixon's phrase, such as would have melted the heart of a whin stone, and he was so much exhausted by his feelings, and the vain researches which he made to discover the track of the ravishers, that a considerable time elapsed ere he reached home, and communicated the alarm to his domestics.

All his conduct and gestures were those of a desperate man.

"Speak not to me, Sir Frederick," he said impatiently; "you are no father—she was my child, an ungrateful one I fear, but still my child—my only child. Where is Miss Iderton? she must know something of this. It corresponds with what I was informed of her schemes. Go, Dixon, call Ratcliffe here.—Let him come without a minute's delay."

The person he had named at this moment entered the room.

"I say, Dixon," continued Mr. Vere, in an altered tone, "let Mr. Ratcliffe know, I beg the favor of his company on particular business.—Ah! my dear sir," he proceeded, as if noticing him for the first time, "you are the very man whose advice can be of the utmost service to me in this cruel extremity."

"What has happened, Mr. Vere, to discompose you?" said Mr. Ratcliffe, gravely; and while the Laird of Ellieslaw details to him, with the most animated gestures of grief and indignation, the singular adventure of the morning, we shall take the opportunity to inform our readers of the relative circumstances in which these gentlemen stood to each other.

In early youth, Mr. Vere of Ellieslaw had been remarkable for a career of dissipation, which, in advanced life, he had exchanged for the no less destructive career of dark and turbulent ambition. In both cases he had gratified the predominant passion without respect to the diminution of his private fortune, although, where such inducements were wanting, he was deemed close, avaricious, and grasping. His affairs being much embarrassed by his earlier extravagance, he went to England, where he was understood to have formed a very advantageous matrimonial connexion. He was many years absent from his family estate. Suddenly and unexpectedly he returned a widower, bringing with him his daughter, then a girl of about ten years old. From this moment his expense seemed unbounded, in the eyes of the simple inhabitants of his native mountains. It was supposed he must necessarily have plunged himself deeply in debt. Yet he continued to live in the same lavish expense, until some months before the commencement of our narrative, when the public opinion of his embarrassed circumstances was confirmed, by the residence of Mr. Ratcliffe at Ellieslaw Castle, who, by the tacit consent, though obviously to the great displeasure of the lord of the mansion, seemed, from the moment of his arrival to assume and exercise a predominant and unaccountable influence in the management of his private affairs.

Mr. Ratcliffe was a grave, steady, reserved man, in an advanced period of life. To those with whom he had occasion to speak upon business, he appeared uncommonly well versed in all its forms. With others he held little communication; but in any casual intercourse or conversation, displayed the powers of an active and well-informed mind. For some time before taking up his final residence at the castle, he had been an occasional visitor there, and was at such times treated by Mr. Vere (contrary to his general practice towards those who were inferior to him in rank) with marked attention, and even deference. Yet his arrival always appeared to be an embarrassment to his host, and his departure a relief; so that, when he became a constant inmate of the family, it was impossible not to observe indications of the displeasure with which Mr. Vere regarded his presence. Indeed, their intercourse formed a singular mixture of confidence and constraint. Mr. Vere's most important affairs were regulated by Mr. Ratcliffe; and although he was none of those indulgent men of fortune, who, too indolent to manage their own business, are glad to devolve it upon another, yet, in many instances, he was observed to give up his own judgment, and submit to the contrary opinions which Mr. Ratcliffe did not hesitate distinctly to express.

Nothing seemed to vex Mr. Vere more than when strangers indicated any observation of the state of tutelage under which he appeared to labor. When it was noticed by Sir Frederick, or any of his intimates, he sometimes repelled their remarks haughtily and indignantly, and sometimes endeavor-

ered to evade them, by saying, with a forced laugh, "That Ratcliffe knew his own importance, but that he was the most honest and skillful fellow in the world; and that it would be impossible for him to manage his English affairs without his advice and assistance." Such was the person who entered the room at the moment Mr. Vere was summoning him to his presence, and who now heard with surprise, mingled with obvious incredulity, the hasty narrative of what had befallen Isabella.

Her father concluded, addressing Sir Frederick and the other gentlemen, who stood around in astonishment, "And now, my friends, you see the most unhappy father in Scotland. Lend me your assistance, gentlemen—give me your advice, Mr. Ratcliffe. I am incapable of acting, or thinking, under the unexpected violence of such a blow."

"Let us take our horses, call our attendants, and scour the country in pursuit of the villains," said Sir Frederick.

"Is there no one whom you can suspect," said Ratcliffe, gravely, "of having some motive for this strange crime? These are not the days of romance, when ladies are carried off merely for their beauty."

"I fear," said Mr. Vere, "I can too well account for this strange incident. Read this letter, which Miss Lucy Ilderton thought fit to address from my house of Ellieslaw to young Mr. Earnscliff, whom, of all men, I have a hereditary right to call my enemy. You see she writes to him as the confidant of a passion which he has the assurance to entertain for my daughter; tells him she serves his cause with her friend very ardently, but that he has a friend in the garrison who serves him yet more effectually. Look particularly at the pencilled passages, Mr. Ratcliffe, where this meddling girl recommends bold measures, with an assurance that his suit would be successful anywhere beyond the bounds of the barony of Ellieslaw."

"And you argue, from this romantic letter of a very romantic young lady, Mr. Vere," said Ratcliffe, "that young Earnscliff has carried off your daughter, and committed a very great and criminal act of violence, on no better advice and assurance than that of Miss Lucy Ilderton?"

"What else can I think?" said Ellieslaw.

"What else *can* you think?" said Sir Frederick; "or who else could have any motive for committing such a crime?"

"Were that the best mode of fixing the guilt," said Mr. Ratcliffe, calmly, "there might easily be pointed out persons to whom such actions are more congenial, and who have also sufficient motives of instigation. Supposing it were judged advisable to remove Miss Vere to some place in which constraint might be exercised upon her inclinations to a degree which cannot at present be attempted under the roof of Ellieslaw Castle—What says Sir Frederick Langley to that supposition?"

"I say," returned Sir Frederick, "that al-

though Mr. Vere may choose to endure in Mr. Ratcliffe freedoms totally inconsistent with his situation in life, I will not permit such license of innuendo, by word or look, to be extended to me, with impunity."

"And I say," said young Mareschal of Mareschal-Wells, who was also a guest at the castle, "that you are all stark-mad to be standing wrangling here, instead of going in pursuit of the ruffians."

"I have ordered off the domestics already in the track most likely to overtake them," said Mr. Vere; "if you will favor me with your company, we will follow them, and assist in the search."

The efforts of the party were totally unsuccessful, probably because Ellieslaw directed the pursuit to proceed in the direction of Earnscliff Tower, under the supposition that the owner would prove to be the author of the violence, so that they followed in a direction diametrically opposite to that in which the ruffians had actually proceeded. In the evening they returned, harassed, and out of spirits. But other guests had, in the meanwhile, arrived at the castle; and, after the recent loss sustained by the owner had been related, wondered at, and lamented, the recollection of it was, for the present, drowned in the discussion of deep political intrigues, of which the crisis and explosion were momentarily looked for.

Several of the gentlemen who took part in this divan were Catholics, and all of them staunch Jacobites, whose hopes were at present at the highest pitch, as an invasion, in favor of the Pretender, was daily expected from France, which Scotland, between the defenceless state of its garrisons and fortified places, and the general disaffection of the inhabitants, was rather prepared to welcome than to resist. Ratcliffe, who neither sought to assist at their consultations on this subject, nor was invited to do so, had, in the meanwhile, retired to his own apartment. Miss Ilderton was sequestered from society in a sort of honorable confinement, "until," said Mr. Vere, "she should be safely conveyed home to her father's house," an opportunity for which occurred on the following day.

The domestics could not help thinking it remarkable how soon the loss of Miss Vere, and the strange manner in which it had happened, seemed to be forgotten by the other guests at the castle. They knew not that those the most interested in her fate were well acquainted with the cause of her being carried off, and the place of her retreat; and that the others, in the anxious and doleful moments which preceded the breaking forth of a conspiracy, were little accessible to any feelings but what arose immediately out of their own machinations.

CHAPTER XII.

Some one way, some another—Do you know
Where we may apprehend her!

THE researches after Miss Vere were (for the sake of appearances, perhaps) resumed on the succeeding day, with similar bad success, and the party were returning towards Ellieslaw in the evening.

"It is singular," said Mareschal to Ratcliffe, "that four horsemen and a female prisoner should have passed through the country without leaving the slightest trace of their passage. One would think they had traversed the air, or sunk through the ground."

"Men may often," answered Ratcliffe, "arrive at the knowledge of that which *is*, from discovering that which is *not*. We have now scoured every road, path, and track leading from the castle, in all the various points of the compass, saving only that intricate and difficult pass which leads southward down the Westburn, and through the morasses."

"And why have we not examined that?" said Mareschal.

"Oh, Mr. Vere can best answer that question," replied his companion, dryly.

"Then I will ask it instantly," said Mareschal; and, addressing Mr. Vere, "I am informed, sir," said he, "there is a path we have not examined, leading by Westburnflat."

"Oh," said Sir Frederick, laughing, "we know the owner of Westburnflat well—a wild lad, that knows little difference between his neighbor's goods and his own; but, withal, very honest to his principles: He would disturb nothing belonging to Ellieslaw."

"Besides," said Mr. Vere, smiling mysteriously, "he had other tow on his distaff last night. Have you not heard young Elliot of the Houghfoot has had his house burnt, and his cattle driven away, because he refused to give up his arms to some honest men that think of starting for the king."

The company smiled upon each other, as at hearing of an exploit which favored their own views.

"Yet, nevertheless," resumed Mareschal, "I think we ought to ride in this direction also, otherwise we shall certainly be blamed for our negligence."

No reasonable objection could be offered to this proposal, and the party turned their horses' heads towards Westburnflat.

They had not proceeded very far in that direction when the trampling of horses was heard, and a small body of riders were perceived advancing to meet them.

"There comes Earnscliff," said Mareschal; "I know his bright bay with the star in his front."

"And there is my daughter along with him," exclaimed Vere, furiously. "Who shall call my suspicions false or injurious now? Gentlemen—

friends—lend me the assistance of your swords for the recovery of my child."

He unsheathed his weapon, and was imitated by Sir Frederick and several of the party, who prepared to charge those that were advancing towards them. But the greater part hesitated.

"They come to us in all peace and security," said Mareschal-Wells; "let us first hear what account they give us of this mysterious affair. If Miss Vere has sustained the slightest insult or injury from Earnscliff, I will be the first to revenge her; but let us hear what they say."

"You do me wrong by your suspicions, Mareschal," continued Vere; "you are the last I would have expected to hear express them."

"You injure yourself, Ellieslaw, by your violence, though the cause may excuse it."

He then advanced a little before the rest, and called out with a loud voice—"Stand, Mr. Earnscliff; or do you and Miss Vere advance alone to meet us. You are charged with having carried that lady off from her father's house; and we are here in arms to shed our best blood for her recovery, and for bringing to justice those who have injured her."

"And who would do that more willingly than I, Mr. Mareschal?" said Earnscliff, haughtily—"than I, who had the satisfaction this morning to liberate her from the dungeon in which I found her confined, and who am now escorting her back to the castle of Ellieslaw?"

"Is this so, Miss Vere?" said Mareschal.

"It is," answered Isabella, eagerly,—"*it is* so; for Heaven's sake sheathe your swords. I will swear by all that is sacred, that I was carried off by ruffians, whose persons and object were alike unknown to me, and am now restored to freedom by means of this gentleman's gallant interference."

"By whom, and wherefore, could this have been done?" pursued Mareschal.—"Had you no knowledge of the place to which you were conveyed?—Earnscliff, where did you find this lady?"

But ere either question could be answered, Ellieslaw advanced, and, returning his sword to the scabbard, cut short the conference.

"When I know," he said, "exactly how much I owe to Mr. Earnscliff, he may rely on suitable acknowledgments; mean time," taking the bridle of Miss Vere's horse, "thus far I thank him for replacing my daughter in the power of her natural guardian."

A sullen bend of the head was returned by Earnscliff with equal haughtiness; and Ellieslaw, turning back with his daughter upon the road to his own house, appeared engaged with her in a conference so earnest, that the rest of the company judged it improper to intrude by approaching them too nearly. In the meantime, Earnscliff, as he took leave of the other gentlemen, belonging to Ellieslaw's party, said aloud,—"*Al* though I am unconscious of any circumstance is

uct that can authorize such a suspicion, I