

cannot but observe, that Mr. Vere seems to believe that I have had some hand in the atrocious violence which has been offered to his daughter. I request you, gentlemen, to take notice of my explicit denial of a charge so dishonorable; and that, although I can pardon the bewildering feelings of a father in such a moment, yet, if any other gentleman" (he looked hard at Sir Frederick Langley) "thinks my word and that of Miss Vere, with the evidence of my friends who accompany me, too slight for my exculpation, I will be happy—most happy—to repel the charge as becomes a man who counts his honor dearer than his life."

"And I'll be his second," said Simon of Hackburn, "and take up ony twa o' ye, gentile or semple, laird or loon; it's a' ane to Simon."

"Who is that rough-looking fellow?" said Sir Frederick Langley, "and what has he to do with the quarrels of gentlemen?"

"I see be a lad frae the Hie Te'iot," said Simon, "and I see quarrel wi' ony body I like, except the king, or the laird I live under."

"Come," said Mareschal, "let us have no brawls—Mr. Earnscliff, although we do not think alike in some things, I trust we may be opponents, even enemies, if fortune will have it so, without losing our respect for birth, fair play, and each other. I believe you as innocent of this matter as I am myself; and I will pledge myself that my cousin Ellieslaw, as soon as the perplexity attending these sudden events has left his judgment to its free exercise, shall handsomely acknowledge the very important service you have this day rendered him."

"To have served your cousin is a sufficient reward in itself.—Good evening, gentlemen," continued Earnscliff, "I see most of your party are already on their way to Ellieslaw."

Then saluting Mareschal with courtesy, and the rest of the party with indifference, Earnscliff turned his horse and rode towards the Heughfoot, to concert measures with Hobbie Elliot for farther researches after his bride, of whose restoration to her friends he was still ignorant.

"There he goes," said Mareschal; "he is a fine, gallant young fellow, upon my soul; and yet I should like well to have a thrust with him on the green turf. I was reckoned at college nearly his equal with the foils, and I should like to try him at sharps."

"In my opinion," answered Sir Frederick Langley, "we have done very ill in having suffered him, and those men who are with him, to go off without taking away their arms; for the Whigs are very likely to draw to a head under such a sprightly young fellow as that."

"For shame, Sir Frederick!" exclaimed Mareschal; "do you think that Ellieslaw could, in honor, consent to any violence being offered to Earnscliff, when he entered his bounds only to bring back his daughter? or, if he were to be of your opinion, do you think that I, and the rest of these gentlemen, would disgrace ourselves by assisting in such a transaction? No, no, fair play

and auld Scotland fer ever! When the sword is drawn, I will be as ready to use it as any man; but while it is in the sheath, let us behave like gentlemen and neighbors."

Soon after this colloquy they reached the castle, when Ellieslaw, who had been arrived a few minutes before, met them in the court-yard.

"How is Miss Vere? and have you learned the cause of her being carried off?" asked Mareschal, hastily.

"She is retired to her apartment greatly fatigued; and I cannot expect much light upon her adventure till her spirits are somewhat recruited," replied her father. "She and I were not the less obliged to you, Mareschal, and to my other friends, for their kind inquiries. But I must suppress the father's feelings for a while to give myself up to those of the patriot. You know this is the day fixed for our final decision—time presses—our friends are arriving, and I have opened house, not only for the gentry, but for the under spur-leathers whom we must necessarily employ. We have, therefore, little time to prepare to meet them.—Look over these lists, Marchie (an abbreviation by which Mareschal-Wells was known among his friends). Do you, Sir Frederick, read these letters from Lothian and the west—all is ripe for the sickle, and we have but to summon out the reapers."

"With all my heart," said Mareschal; "the more mischief the better sport."

Sir Frederick looked grave and disconcerted. "Walk aside with me, my good friend," said Ellieslaw to the sombre baronet; "I have something for your private ear, with which I know you will be gratified."

They walked into the house, leaving Ratcliffe and Mareschal standing together in the court.

"And so," said Ratcliffe, "the gentlemen of your political persuasion think the downfall of this government so certain, that they disdain even to throw a decent disguise over the machinations of their party?"

"Faith," Mr. Ratcliffe, answered Mareschal, "the actions and sentiments of your friends may require to be veiled, but I am better pleased that ours can go barefaced."

"And is it possible," continued Ratcliffe, "that you, who, notwithstanding your thoughtlessness and heat of temper (I beg pardon, Mr. Mareschal, I am a plain man)—that you, who, notwithstanding these constitutional defects, possess natural good sense and acquired information, should be infatuated enough to embroil yourself in such desperate proceedings? How does your head feel when you are engaged in these dangerous conferences?"

"Not quite so secure on my shoulders," answered Mareschal, "as if I were talking of hunting and hawking. I am not of so indifferent a mould as my cousin Ellieslaw, who speaks treason as if it were a child's nursery rhymes, and loses and recovers that sweet girl, his daughter, with a good deal less emotion on both occasions, than

would have affected me had I lost and recovered a greyhound puppy. My temper is not quite so inflexible, nor my hate against government so inveterate, as to blind me to the full danger of the attempt."

"Then why involve yourself in it?" said Ratcliffe.

"Why, I love this poor exiled king with all my heart; and my father was an old Killiecrankie-man, and I long to see some amends on the Unionist courtiers, that have bought and sold old Scotland, whose crown has been so long independent."

"And for the sake of these shadows," said his monitor, "you are going to involve your country in war, and yourself in trouble?"

"I involve? No!—but, trouble for trouble, I had rather it came to-morrow than a month hence. Come, I know it will; and, as your country folks say, better soon than syne—it will never find me younger—and as for hanging, as Sir John Falstaff says, I can become a gallows as well as another. You know the end of the old ballad;

Sae dauntonly, sae wantonly,
Sae rantingly gaed he,
He played a spring, and danced a round,
Beneath the gallows tree."

"Mr. Mareschal, I am sorry for you," said his grave adviser.

"I am obliged to you, Mr. Ratcliffe; but I would not have you judge of our enterprise by my way of vindicating it; there are wiser heads than mine at the work."

"Wiser heads than yours may lie as low," said Ratcliffe, in a warning tone.

"Perhaps so; but no lighter heart shall; and, to prevent it being made heavier by your remonstrances, I will bid you adieu, Mr. Ratcliffe, till dinner-time, when you shall see that my apprehensions have not spoiled my appetite."

CHAPTER XIII.

To face the garment of rebellion
With some fine color, that may please the eye
Of fickle changelings, and poor discontented,
Which gape and rub the elbow at the news
Of hurlyburly innovation.

HENRY THE FOURTH, Part II.

THERE had been great preparations made at Ellieslaw Castle for the entertainment on this important day, when not only the gentlemen of note in the neighborhood attached to the Jacobite interest, were expected to rendezvous, but also many subordinate malcontents, whom difficulty of circumstances, love of change, resentment against England, or any of the numerous causes which inflamed men's passions at the time, rendered apt to join in perilous enterprise. The men of rank and substance were not many in number; for almost all the large proprietors stood aloof, and most of the smaller gentry and yeomanry were of the Presbyterian persuasion, and therefore, however displeased with the Union, unwill-

ing to engage in a Jacobite conspiracy. But there were some gentlemen of property, who, either from early principle, from religious motives, or sharing the ambitious views of Ellieslaw, had given countenance to his scheme; and there were, also, some fiery young men, like Mareschal, desirous of signalizing themselves by engaging in a dangerous enterprise, by which they hoped to vindicate the independence of their country. The other members of the party were persons of inferior rank and desperate fortunes, who were now ready to rise in that part of the country, as they did afterwards in the year 1715, under Forster and Derwentwater, when a troop, commanded by a Border gentleman, named Douglas, consisted almost entirely of freebooters, among whom the notorious Luck-in-a-bag, as he was called, held a distinguished command. We think it necessary to mention these particulars, applicable solely to the province in which our scene lies; because, unquestionably, the Jacobite party in the other parts of the kingdom, consisted of much more formidable, as well as much more respectable materials.

One long table extended itself down the ample hall of Ellieslaw Castle, which was still left much in the state in which it had been one hundred years before, stretching, that is, in gloomy length, along the whole side of the castle, vaulted with ribbed arches of freestone, the groins of which sprung from projecting figures, that, carved into all the wild forms which the fantastic imagination of a Gothic architect could devise, grinned, frowned, and gnashed their tusks, at the assembly below. Long narrow windows lighted the banqueting-room on both sides, filled up with stained glass, through which the sun emitted a dusky and discolored light. A banner, which tradition averred to have been taken from the English at the battle of Sark, waved over the chair in which Ellieslaw presided, as if to inflame the courage of the guests, by reminding them of ancient victories over their neighbors. He himself, a portly figure, dressed on this occasion with uncommon care, and with features, which, though of a stern and sinister expression, might well be termed handsome, looked the old feudal baron extremely well. Sir Frederick Langley was placed on his right hand, and Mr. Mareschal of Mareschal-Wells on his left. Some gentlemen of consideration, with their sons, brothers, and nephews, were seated at the upper end of the table, and among these Mr. Ratcliffe had his place. Beneath the salt-cellar (a massive piece of plate which occupied the midst of the table) sate the *sine nomine turba*, men whose vanity was gratified by holding even this subordinate space at the social board, while the distinction observed in ranking them was a salvo to the pride of their superiors. That the lower house was not very select must be admitted, since Willie of Westburnfat was one of the party. The unabashed audacity of this fellow, in daring to present himself in the house of a gentleman, to whom he had just offered so flagrant

an insult, can only be accounted for by supposing him conscious that his share in carrying off Miss Vere was a secret, safe in her possession and that of her father.

Before this numerous and miscellaneous party was placed a dinner, consisting, not indeed of the delicacies of the season, as the newspapers express it, but of viands, ample, solid, and sumptuous, under which the very board groaned. But the mirth was not in proportion to the good cheer. The lower end of the table were, for some time, chilled by constraint and respect, on finding themselves members of so august an assembly; and those who were placed around it had those feelings of awe with which P. P., clerk of the parish, describes himself oppressed, when he first uplifted the psalm in presence of those persons of high worship, the wise Mr. Justice Freeman, the good Lady Jones, and the great Sir Thomas Truby. This ceremonious frost, however, soon gave way before the incentives to merriment, which were liberally supplied, and as liberally consumed by the guests of the lower description. They became talkative, loud, and even clamorous in their mirth.

But it was not in the power of wine or brandy to elevate the spirits of those who held the higher places at the banquet. They experienced the chilling revulsion of spirits which often takes place, when men are called upon to take a desperate resolution, after having placed themselves in circumstances where it is alike difficult to advance or to recede. The precipice looked deeper and more dangerous as they approached the brink, and each waited with an inward emotion of awe, expecting which of his confederates would set the example by plunging himself down. This inward sensation of fear and reluctance acted differently, according to the various habits and characters of the company. One looked grave; another looked silly; a third gazed with apprehension on the empty seats at the higher end of the table, designed for members of the conspiracy whose prudence had prevailed over their political zeal, and who had absented themselves from their consultations at this critical period; and some seemed to be reckoning up in their minds the comparative rank and prospects of those who were present and absent. Sir Frederick Langley was reserved, moody, and discontented. Ellieslaw himself made such forced efforts to raise the spirits of the company, as plainly marked the flagging of his own. Ratcliffe watched the scene with the composure of a vigilant but uninterested spectator, Mareschal alone, true to the thoughtless vivacity of his character, eat and drank, laughed and jested, and seemed even to find amusement in the embarrassment of the company.

"What has damped our noble courage this morning?" he exclaimed. "We seem to be met at a funeral, where the chief mourners must not speak above their breath, while the mutes and the saulies (looking to the lower end of the table) are

carousing below. Ellieslaw, when will you lift? * where sleeps your spirit, man? and what has quelled the high hope of the Knight of Langley-dale?"

"You speak like a madman," said Ellieslaw; "do you not see how many are absent?"

"And what of that?" said Mareschal. "Did you not know before, that one-half of the world are better talkers than doers? For my part, I am much encouraged by seeing at least two-thirds of our friends true to the rendezvous, though I suspect one-half of these came to secure the dinner in case of the worst."

"There is no news from the coast which can amount to certainty of the King's arrival," said another of the company, in that tone of subdued and tremulous whisper which implies a failure of resolution.

"Not a line from the Earl of D—, nor a single gentleman from the southern side of the Border," said a third.

"Who is he that wishes for more men from England," exclaimed Mareschal, in a theatrical tone of affected heroism,

"My cousin Ellieslaw! No, my fair cousin, if we are doomed to die."

"For God's sake," said Ellieslaw, "spare us your folly at present, Mareschal."

"Well, then," said his kinsman, "I'll bestow my wisdom upon you instead, such as it is. If we have gone forward like fools, do not let us go back like cowards. We have done enough to draw upon us both the suspicion and vengeance of the government; do not let us give up before we have done something to deserve it. What, will no one speak? Then I'll leap the ditch the first." And, starting up, he filled a beer-glass to the brim with claret, and waving his hand, commanded all to follow his example, and to rise up from their seats. All obeyed—the more qualified guests as if passively, the others with enthusiasm. "Then, my friends, I give you the pledge of the day.—The independence of Scotland, and the health of our lawful sovereign, King James the Eighth, now landed in Lothian, and, as I trust and believe, in full possession of his ancient capital!"

He quaffed off the wine, and threw the glass over his head.

"It should never," he said, "be profaned by a meaner toast."

All followed his example, and, amid the crash of glasses and the shouts of the company, pledged themselves to stand or fall with the principles and political interest which their toast expressed.

"You have leaped the ditch with a witness," said Ellieslaw, apart to Mareschal; "but I believe it is all for the best: at all events we cannot now retreat from our undertaking. One man alone" (looking at Ratcliffe) "has refused the pledge; but of that by and by."

Then rising up, he addressed the company in a

* To lift, meaning to lift the coffin, is the common expression for commencing a funeral.

style of inflammatory invective against the government and its measures, but especially the Union; a treaty, by means of which, he affirmed, Scotland had been at once cheated of her independence, her commerce, and her honor, and laid as a fettered slave at the foot of the rival, against whom, through such a length of ages, through so many dangers, and by so much blood, she had honorably defended her rights. This was touching a theme which found a responsive chord in the bosom of every man present.

"Our commerce is destroyed," hallooed old John Rewcastle, a Jedburgh smuggler, from the lower end of the table.

"Our agriculture is ruined," said the Laird of Brokengirth-flow, a territory, which, since the days of Adam, had borne nothing but ling and whortle-berries.

"Our religion is cut up, root and branch," said the pimple-nosed pastor of the Episcopal meeting-house at Kirkwhistle.

"We shall shortly neither dare shoot a deer nor kiss a wench, without a certificate from the presbytery and kirk-treasurer," said Mareschal-Wells.

"Or make a brandy jeroboam in a frosty morning, without a license from a commissioner of excise," said the smuggler.

"Or ride over the fell in a moonless night," said Westburnflat, "without asking leave of young Earnscliff, or some Engliified justice of the peace: thae were gude days on the Border when there was neither peace nor justice heard of."

"Let us remember our wrongs at Darien and Glencoe," continued Ellieslaw, "and take arms for the protection of our rights, our fortunes, our lives, and our families."

"Think upon genuine Episcopal ordination, without which there can be no lawful clergy," said the divine.

"Think of the piracies committed on our East-Indian trade by Green and the English thieves," said William Willieson, half-owner and sole skipper of a brig that made four voyages annually between Cockpool and Whitehaven.

"Remember your liberties," rejoined Mareschal, who seemed to take a mischievous delight in precipitating the movements of the enthusiasm which he had excited, like a roguish boy, who, having lifted the sluice of a mill-dam, enjoys the clatter of the wheels which he has put in motion, without thinking of the mischief he may have occasioned. "Remember your liberties," he exclaimed; "confound cess, press, and presbytery, and the memory of old Willie that first brought them upon us!"

"Damn the ganger!" echoed old John Rewcastle; "I'll cleave him wi' my ain hand."

"And confound the country-keeper and the constable!" re-echoed Westburnflat; "I'll weize a brace of balls through them before morning."

"We are agreed, then," said Ellieslaw, when the shouts had somewhat subsided, "to bear this state of things no longer?"

"We are agreed to a man," answered his guests.

"Not literally so," said Mr. Ratcliffe; "for though I cannot hope to assuage the violent symptoms which seem so suddenly to have seized upon the company, yet I beg to observe, that, so far as the opinion of a single member goes, I do not entirely coincide in the list of grievances which has been announced, and that I do utterly protest against the frantic measures which you seem disposed to adopt for removing them. I can easily suppose much of what has been spoken may have arisen out of the heat of the moment, or have been said perhaps in jest. But there are some jests of a nature very apt to transpire; and you ought to remember, gentlemen, that stone-walls have ears."

"Stone-walls may have ears," returned Ellieslaw, eyeing him with a look of triumphant malignity, "but domestic spies, Mr. Ratcliffe, will soon find themselves without any, if any such dares to continue his abode in a family where his coming was an unauthorised intrusion, where his conduct has been that of a presumptuous meddler, and from which his exit shall be that of a baffled knave, if he does not know how to take a hint."

"Mr. Vere," returned Ratcliffe, with calm contempt, "I am fully aware that as soon as my presence becomes useless to you, which it must through the rash step you are about to adopt, it will immediately become unsafe to myself, as it has always been hateful to you. But I have one protection, and it is a strong one; for you would not willingly hear me detail before gentlemen, and men of honor, the singular circumstances in which our connexion took its rise. As to the rest, I rejoice at its conclusion; and as I think that Mr. Mareschal and some other gentlemen will guarantee the safety of my ears and of my throat (for which last I have more reason to be apprehensive) during the course of the night, I shall not leave your castle till to-morrow morning."

"Be it so, sir," replied Mr. Vere; "you are entirely safe from my resentment, because you are beneath it, and not because I am afraid of your disclosing any family secrets, although, for your own sake, I warn you to beware how you do so. Your agency and intermediation can be of little consequence to one who will win or lose all, as lawful right or unjust usurpation shall succeed in the struggle that is about to ensue. Farewell, sir."

Ratcliffe arose, and cast upon him a look, which Vere seemed to sustain with difficulty, and, bowing to those around him, left the room.

This conversation made an impression on many of the company, which Ellieslaw hastened to dispel, by entering upon the business of the day. Their hasty deliberations went to organize an immediate insurrection. Ellieslaw, Mareschal, and Sir Frederick Langley were chosen leaders, with powers to direct their farther measures. A place of rendezvous was appointed, at which all agreed to meet early on the ensuing day,

with such followers and friends to the cause as each could collect around him. Several of the guests retired to make the necessary preparations; and Ellieslaw made a formal apology to the others, who, with Westburnflat and the old smuggler, continued to ply the bottle stanchly, for leaving the head of the table, as he must necessarily hold a separate and sober conference with the coadjutors whom they had associated with him in the command.

The apology was the more readily accepted, as he prayed them at the same time, to continue to amuse themselves with such refreshments as the cellars of the castle afforded. Shouts of applause followed their retreat, and the names of Vere, Langley, and, above all, of Mareschal, were thundered forth in chorus, and bathed in copious bumpers repeatedly, during the remainder of the evening.

When the principal conspirators had retired into a separate apartment, they gazed on each other for a minute with a sort of embarrassment, which, in Sir Frederick's dark features, amounted to an expression of discontented sullenness. Mareschal was the first to break the pause, saying with a loud burst of laughter,—"Well! we are fairly embarked now, gentlemen—*vogue la galère!*"

"We may thank you for the plunge," said Ellieslaw.

"Yes; but I don't know how far you will thank me," answered Mareschal, "when I show you this letter which I received just before we sat down. My servant told me it was delivered by a man he had never seen before, who went off at the gallop, after charging him to put it into my own hand."

Ellieslaw impatiently opened the letter, and read aloud—

Edinburgh.—

HOND. SIR,—Having obligations to your family, which shall be nameless, and learning that you are one of the company of adventurers doing business for the house of James and Company, late merchants in London, now in Dunkirk, I think it right to send you this early and private information, that the vessels you expected have been driven off the coast, without having been able to break bulk, or to land any part of their cargo; and that the west-country partners have resolved to withdraw their name from the firm, as it must prove a losing concern. Having good hope you will avail yourself of this early information, to do what is needful for your own security, I rest your humble servant,

NHIL NAMELESS.

*For RALPH MARESCHAL, of Mareschal-Wells,
—These, with care and speed.*

Sir Frederick's jaw dropped, and his countenance blackened, as the letter was read, and Ellieslaw exclaimed,—"Why, this affects the very mainspring of our enterprise. If the French fleet, with the King on board, has been chased off by the

English, as this d—d scrawl seems to intimate, where are we?"

"Just where we were this morning, I think," said Mareschal, still laughing.

"Pardon me, and a truce to your ill-timed mirth, Mr. Mareschal; this morning we were not committed publicly, as we now stand committed by your own mad act, when you had a letter in your pocket apprizing you that our undertaking was desperate."

"Ay, ay, I expected you would say so. But, in the first place, my friend Nihil Nameless and his letter may be all a flam; and, moreover, I would have you know that I am tired of a party that does nothing but form bold resolutions over night, and sleep them away with their wine before morning. The government are now unprovided of men and ammunition: in a few weeks they will have enough of both: the country is now in a flame against them; in a few weeks, betwixt the effects of self-interest, of fear, and of lukewarm indifference, which are already so visible, this first fervor will be as cold as Christmas. So, as I was determined to go the vole, I have taken care you shall dip as deep as I; it signifies nothing plunging. You are fairly in the bog, and must struggle through."

"You are mistaken with respect to one of us, Mr. Mareschal," said Sir Frederick Langley; and, applying himself to the bell, he desired the person who entered to order his servants and horses instantly.

"You must not leave us, Sir Frederick," said Ellieslaw; "we have our musters to go over."

"I will go to-night, Mr. Vere," said Sir Frederick, "and write you my intentions in this matter when I am at home."

"Ay," said Mareschal, "and send them by a troop of horse from Carlisle to make us prisoners? Look ye, Sir Frederick, I for one will neither be deserted nor betrayed; and if you leave Ellieslaw Castle to-night, it shall be by passing over my dead body."

"For shame! Mareschal," said Mr. Vere, "how can you so hastily misinterpret our friend's intentions? I am sure Sir Frederick can only be jesting with us; for, were he not too honorable to dream of deserting the cause, he cannot but remember the full proofs we have of his accession to it, and his eager activity in advancing it. He cannot but be conscious, besides, that the first information will be readily received by government, and that if the question be, which can first lodge intelligence of the affair, we can easily save a few hours on him."

"You should say *you*, and not *we*, when you talk of priorities in such a race of treachery; for my part, I won't enter my horse for such a plate," said Mareschal; and added betwixt his teeth, "A pretty pair of fellows to trust a man's neck with!"

"I am not to be intimidated from doing what I think proper," said Sir Frederick Langley; "and my first step shall be to leave Ellieslaw. I have

no reason to keep faith with one" (looking at Vere) "who has kept none with me."

"In what respect," said Ellieslaw, silencing, with a motion of his hand, his impetuous kinsman—"how have I disappointed you, Sir Frederick?"

"In the nearest and most tender point—you have trifled with me concerning our proposed alliance, which you well knew was the gage of our political undertaking. This carrying off and this bringing back of Miss Vere,—the cold reception I have met with from her, and the excuses with which you cover it, I believe to be mere evasions, that you may yourself retain possession of the estates which are her's by right, and make me, in the meanwhile, a tool in your desperate enterprise, by holding out hopes and expectations which you are resolved never to realize."

"Sir Frederick, I protest, by all that is sacred"—

"I will listen to no protestations; I have been cheated with them too long," answered Sir Frederick.

"If you leave us," said Ellieslaw, "you cannot but know both your ruin and ours is certain; all depends on our adhering together."

"Leave me to take care of myself," returned the knight; "but were what you say true, I would rather perish than be fooled any farther."

"Can nothing—no surety convince you of my sincerity?" said Ellieslaw, anxiously; "this morning I should have repelled your unjust suspicions as an insult; but situated as we now are"—

"You feel yourself compelled to be sincere?" retorted Sir Frederick. "If you would have me think so, there is but one way to convince me of it—let your daughter bestow her hand on me this evening."

"So soon?—impossible," answered Vere; "think of her late alarm—of our present undertaking."

"I will listen to nothing but to her consent, plighted at the altar. You have a chapel in the castle—Doctor Hobbler is present among the company—this proof of your good faith to-night, and we are again joined in heart and hand. If you refuse me when it is so much for your advantage to consent, how shall I trust you to-morrow, when I shall stand committed in your undertaking, and unable to retract?"

"And am I to understand, that, if you can be made my son-in-law to-night, our friendship is renewed?" said Ellieslaw.

"Most infallibly, and most inviolably," replied Sir Frederick.

"Then," said Vere, "though what you ask is premature, indelicate, and unjust towards my character, yet, Sir Frederick, give me your hand—my daughter shall be your wife."

"This night?"

"This very night," replied Ellieslaw, "before the clock strikes twelve."

"With her own consent, I trust," said Mare-

schal; "for I promise you both, gentlemen, I will not stand tamely by, and see any violence put on the will of my pretty kinswoman."

"Another pest, in this hot-headed fellow," muttered Ellieslaw; and then aloud, "With her own consent? For what do you take me, Mareschal, that you should suppose your interference necessary to protect my daughter against her father? Depend upon it, she has no repugnance to Sir Frederick Langley."

"Or rather to be called Lady Langley? faith, like enough—there are many women might be of her mind; and I beg your pardon, but these sudden demands and concessions alarmed me a little on her account."

"It is only the suddenness of the proposal that embarrasses me," said Ellieslaw; but perhaps if she is found intractable, Sir Frederick will consider"—

"I will consider nothing, Mr. Vere—your daughter's hand to-night, or I depart, were it at midnight—there is my ultimatum."

"I embrace it," said Ellieslaw, "and I will leave you to talk upon our military preparations, while I go to prepare my daughter for so sudden a change of condition."

So saying, he left the company.

CHAPTER XIV.

*He brings Earl Osmond to receive my vows,
O dreadful change! for Tancred, haughty Osmond.*

TANCRED AND SIGISMUNDA.

MR. VERE, whom long practice of dissimulation had enabled to model his very gait and footsteps to aid the purposes of deception, walked along the stone passage, and up the first flight of steps towards Miss Vere's apartment, with the alert, firm, and steady pace of one who is bound, indeed, upon important business, but who entertains no doubt he can terminate his affairs satisfactorily. But when out of hearing of the gentleman whom he had left, his step became so slow and irresolute, as to correspond with his doubts and his fears. At length he paused in an ante-chamber to collect his ideas, and form his plan of argument, before approaching his daughter.

"In what more hopeless and inextricable dilemma was ever an unfortunate man involved!—Such was the tenor of his reflections.—"If we now fall to pieces by disunion, there can be little doubt that the government will take my life as the prime agitator of the insurrection. Or, grant I could stoop to save myself by a hasty submission, am I not, even in that case, utterly ruined? I have broken irreconcilably with Ratcliffe, and can have nothing to expect from that quarter but insult and persecution. I must wander forth an impoverished and dishonored man, without even the means of sustaining life, far less wealth sufficient to counterbalance the infamy which my countrymen, both those whom I desert and those whom I join, will attach to the name of the political renegade. It is not to be thought of. And yet, what

choice remains between this lot and the ignominious scaffold? Nothing can save me but reconciliation with these men; and, to accomplish this, I have promised to Langley that Isabella shall marry him ere midnight, and to Mareschal, that she shall do so without compulsion. I have but one remedy betwixt me and ruin—her consent to take a suitor whom she dislikes, upon such short notice as would disgust her, even were he a favored lover—But I must trust to the romantic generosity of her disposition; and let me paint the necessity of her obedience ever so strongly, I cannot overcharge its reality.”

Having finished this sad chain of reflections upon his perilous condition, he entered his daughter's apartment with every nerve bent up to the support of the argument which he was about to sustain. Though a deceitful and ambitious man, he was not so devoid of natural affection but that he was shocked at the part he was about to act, in practising on the feelings of a dutiful and affectionate child; but the recollections, that, if he succeeded, his daughter would only be trepanned into an advantageous match, and that, if he failed, he himself was a lost man, were quite sufficient to drown all scruples.

He found Miss Vere seated by the window of her dressing-room, her head reclining on her hand, and either sunk in slumber, or so deeply engaged in meditation, that she did not hear the noise he made at his entrance. He approached with his features composed to a deep expression of sorrow and sympathy, and, sitting down beside her, solicited her attention by quietly taking her hand, a motion which he did not fail to accompany with a deep sigh.

“My father!” said Isabella, with a sort of start which expressed at least as much fear as joy or affection.

“Yes, Isabella,” said Vere, “your unhappy father, who comes now as a penitent to crave forgiveness of his daughter for an injury done to her in the excess of his affection, and then to take leave of her forever.”

“Sir? Offence to me! Take leave forever! What does all this mean?” said Miss Vere.

“Yes, Isabella, I am serious. But first let me ask you, have you no suspicion that I may have been privy to the strange chance which befell you yesterday morning?”

“You, sir?” answered Isabella, stammering between a consciousness that he had guessed her thoughts justly, and the shame as well as fear which forbade her to acknowledge a suspicion so degrading and so unnatural.

“Yes!” he continued, “your hesitation confesses that you entertained such an opinion, and I have now the painful task of acknowledging that your suspicions have done me no injustice. But listen to my motives. In an evil hour I countenanced the addresses of Sir Frederick Langley, conceiving it impossible that you could have any permanent objections to a match where the advantages were, in most respects, on your side. In

a worse, I entered with him into measures calculated to restore our banished monarch, and the independence of my country. He has taken advantage of my unguarded confidence, and now has my life at his disposal.”

“Your life, sir?” said Isabella, faintly.

“Yes, Isabella,” continued her father, “the life of him who gave life to you. So soon as I foresaw the excesses into which his headlong passion (for to do him justice, I believe his unreasonable conduct arises from excess of attachment to you) was likely to hurry him, I endeavored, by finding a plausible pretext for your absence for some weeks, to extricate myself from the dilemma in which I am placed. For this purpose I wished, in case your objections to the match continued insurmountable, to have sent you privately for a few months to the convent of your maternal aunt at Paris. By a series of mistakes you have been brought from the place of secrecy and security which I had destined for your temporary abode. Fate has baffled my last chance of escape, and I have only to give you my blessing, and send you from the castle with Mr. Ratcliffe, who now leaves it; my own fate will soon be decided.”

“Good Heaven, sir! can this be possible?” exclaimed Isabella. “Oh, why was I freed from the restraint in which you placed me? or why did you not impart your pleasure to me?”

“Think an instant, Isabella. Would you have had me prejudice, in your opinion, the friend I was most desirous of serving, by communicating to you the injurious eagerness with which he pursued his object? Could I do so honorably, having promised to assist his suit?—But it is all over. I and Mareschal have made up our minds to die like men; it only remains to send you from hence under a safe escort.”

“Great powers! and is there no remedy?” said the terrified young woman.

“None, my child,” answered Vere, gently, “unless one which you would not advise your father to adopt—to be the first to betray his friends.”

“Oh, no, no!” she answered, abhorrently yet hastily, as if to reject the temptation which the alternative presented to her. “But is there no other hope—through flight—through mediation—through supplication?—I will bend my knee to Sir Frederick!”

“It would be a fruitless degradation; he is determined on his course, and I am equally resolved to stand the hazard of my fate. On one condition only he will turn aside from his purpose, and that condition my lips shall never utter to you.”

“Name it, I conjure you, my dear father!” exclaimed Isabella. “What can he ask that we ought not to grant, to prevent the hideous catastrophe with which you are threatened?”

“That, Isabella,” said Vere, solemnly, “you shall never know, until your father's head has rolled on the bloody scaffold; then, indeed, you will learn there was one sacrifice by which he might have been saved.”



Miss Vere

"And why not speak it now?" said Isabella; "do you fear I would flinch from the sacrifice of fortune for your preservation? or would you beneath me the bitter legacy of life-long remorse, so oft as I shall think that you perished, while there remained one mode of preventing the dreadful misfortune that overhangs you?"

"Then, my child," said Vere, "since you press me to name what I would a thousand times rather leave in silence, I must inform you that he will accept for ransom nothing but your hand in marriage, and that conferred before midnight this very evening!"

"This evening, sir!" said the young lady, struck with horror at the proposal—"and to such a man!—A man!—a monster, who could wish to win the daughter by threatening the life of the father—it is indeed impossible."

"You say right, my child," answered her father, "it is indeed impossible; nor have I either the right or the wish to exact such a sacrifice—It is the course of nature that the old should die and be forgot, and the young should live and be happy."

"My father die, and his child can save him!—but no—no—my dear father, pardon me, it is impossible; you only wish to guide me to your wishes. I know your object is what you think my happiness, and this dreadful tale is only told to influence my conduct and subdue my scruples."

"My daughter," replied Ellieslaw, in a tone where offended authority seemed to struggle with parental affection, "my child suspects me of inventing a false tale to work upon her feelings! Even this I must bear, and even from this unworthy suspicion I must descend to vindicate myself. You know the stainless honor of your cousin Mareschal—mark what I shall write to him, and judge from his answer, if the danger in which we stand is not real, and whether I have not used every means to avert it."

He sat down, wrote a few lines hastily, and handed them to Isabella, who, after repeated and painful efforts, cleared her eyes and head sufficiently to discern their purport.

"Dear cousin," said the billet, "I find my daughter, as I expected, in despair at the untimely and premature urgency of Sir Frederick Langley. She cannot even comprehend the peril in which we stand, or how much we are in his power.—Use your influence with him, for Heaven's sake, to modify proposals, to the acceptance of which I cannot, and will not, urge my child against all her own feelings, as well as those of delicacy and propriety, and oblige your loving cousin,—R. V."

In the agitation of the moment, when her swimming eyes and dizzy brain could hardly comprehend the sense of what she looked upon, it is not surprising that Miss Vere should have omitted to remark that this letter seemed to rest her scruples rather upon the form and time of the proposed union, than on a rooted dislike to the

suitor proposed to her. Mr. Vere rang the bell, and gave the letter to a servant to be delivered to Mr. Mareschal, and rising from his chair, continued to traverse the apartment in silence and in great agitation until the answer was returned. He glanced it over, and wrung the hand of his daughter as he gave it to her. The tenor was as follows:—

"My dear kinsman, I have already urged the knight on the point you mention, and I find him as fixed as Cheviot. I am truly sorry my fair cousin should be pressed to give up any of her maidenly rights. Sir Frederick consents, however, to leave the castle with me the instant the ceremony is performed, and we will raise our followers and begin the fray. Thus there is great hope the bridegroom may be knocked on the head before he and the bride can meet again, so Bell has a fair chance to be Lady Langley *à très bon marché*. For the rest, I can only say, that if she can make up her mind to the alliance at all—it is no time for mere maiden ceremony—my pretty cousin must needs consent to marry in haste, or we shall all repent at leisure, or rather have very little leisure to repent; which is all at present from him who rests your affectionate kinsman,—R. M."

"P. S.—Tell Isabella that I would rather cut the knight's throat after all, and end the dilemma that way, than see her constrained to marry him against her will."

When Isabella had read this letter, it dropped from her hand, and she would, at the same time, have fallen from her chair, had she not been supported by her father.

"My God, my child will die!" exclaimed Vere, the feelings of nature overcoming, even in *his* breast, the sentiments of selfish policy; "look up, Isabella—look up, my child—come what will, you shall not be the sacrifice—I will fall myself with the consciousness I leave you happy—My child may weep on my grave, but she shall not—not in this instance—reproach my memory." He called a servant.—"Go, bid Ratcliffe come hither directly."

During this interval, Miss Vere became deadly pale, clenched her hands, pressing the palms strongly together, closed her eyes, and drew her lips with strong compression, as if the severe constraint which she put upon her internal feelings extended even to her muscular organization. Then raising her head, and drawing in her breath strongly ere she spoke, she said with firmness,—

"Father, I consent to the marriage."

"You shall not—you shall not—my child—my dear child—you shall not embrace certain misery to free me from uncertain danger."

So exclaimed Ellieslaw; and, strange and inconsistent beings that we are! he expressed the real though momentary feelings of his heart.

"Father," repeated Isabella, "I will consent to this marriage."

"No, my child, no—not now at least—we will humble ourselves to obtain delay from him; and

yet, Isabella, could you overcome a dislike which has no real foundation, think, in other respects, what a match!—wealth—rank—importance.”

“Father,” reiterated Isabella, “I have consented.”

It seemed as if she had lost the power of saying anything else, or even of varying the phrase which, with such effort, she had compelled herself to utter.

“Heaven bless thee, my child!—Heaven bless thee!—And it will bless thee with riches, with pleasure, with power.”

Miss Vere faintly entreated to be left by herself for the rest of the evening.

“But will you not receive Sir Frederick?” said her father anxiously.

“I will meet him,” she replied, “I will meet him—when I must, and where I must; but spare me now.”

“Be it so, my dearest: you shall know no restraint that I can save you from. Do not think too hardly of Sir Frederick for this,—it is an excess of passion.”

Isabella waved her hand impatiently.

“Forgive me, my child—I go—Heaven bless thee. At eleven—if you call me not before—at eleven—I come to seek you.”

When he left Isabella she dropt upon her knees—“Heaven aid me to support the resolution I have taken—Heaven only can—O, poor Earnscliff! who shall comfort him? and with what contempt will he pronounce her name, who listened to him to-day and gave herself to another at night! But let him despise me—let her so than that he should know the truth—Let him despise me; if it will but lessen his grief, I should feel comfort in the loss of his esteem.”

She wept bitterly; attempting in vain, from time to time, to commence the prayer for which she had sunk on her knees, but unable to calm her spirits sufficiently for the exercise of devotion. As she remained in this agony of mind, the door of her apartment was slowly opened.

CHAPTER XV.

The darksome cave they enter, where they found
The woful man, low sitting on the ground,
Musing full sadly in his sullen mind.

FERRY QUEEN.

The intruder on Miss Vere's sorrows was Ratcliffe. Ellieslaw had, in the agitation of his mind, forgotten to countermand the order he had given to call him thither, so that he opened the door with the words, “You sent for me, Mr. Vere.” Then looking around—“Miss Vere, alone! on the ground! and in tears!”

“Leave me—leave me, Mr. Ratcliffe,” said the unhappy young lady.

“I must not leave you,” said Ratcliffe; “I have been repeatedly requesting admittance to take my leave of you, and have been refused, until your father himself sent for me. Blame me

not, if I am bold and intrusive; I have a duty to discharge which makes me so.”

“I cannot listen to you—I cannot speak to you, Mr. Ratcliffe; take my best wishes, and for God's sake leave me.”

“Tell me only,” said Ratcliffe, “is it true that this monstrous match is to go forward, and this very night? I heard the servants proclaim it as I was on the great staircase.—I heard the directions given to clear out the chapel.”

“Spare me, Mr. Ratcliffe,” replied the luckless bride; “and from the state in which you see me, judge of the cruelty of these questions.”

“Married! to Sir Frederick Langley! and this night! It must not—cannot—shall not be.”

“It must be, Mr. Ratcliffe, or my father is ruined.”

“Ah! I understand,” answered Ratcliffe; “and you have sacrificed yourself to save him who—But let the virtue of the child atone for the faults of the father—it is no time to rake them up. What can be done? Time presses—I know but one remedy—with four-and-twenty hours I might find many—Miss Vere, you must implore the protection of the only human being who has it in his power to control the course of events which threatens to hurry you before it.”

“And what human being,” answered Miss Vere, “has such power?”

“Start not when I name him,” said Ratcliffe, coming near her, and speaking in a low but distinct voice. “It is he who is called Elshender the Recluse of Mucklestane-Moor.”

“You are mad, Mr. Ratcliffe, or you mean to insult my misery by an ill-timed jest.”

“I am as much in my senses, young lady,” answered her adviser, “as you are, and I am no idle jester, far less with misery, least of all with your misery. I swear to you that this being (who is other far than what he seems) actually possesses the means of redeeming you from this hateful union.”

“And of ensuring my father's safety?”

“Yes! even that,” said Ratcliffe, “if you plead his cause with him—yet how to obtain admittance to the Recluse!”

“Fear not that,” said Miss Vere, suddenly recollecting the incident of the rose; “I remember he desired me to call upon him for aid in my extremity, and gave me this flower as a token. Ere it faded away entirely, I would need, he said, his assistance: is it possible his words can have been aught but the ravings of insanity?”

“Doubt it not—fear it not—but above all,” said Ratcliffe, “let us lose no time—Are you at liberty and unwatched?”

“I believe so,” said Isabella; but what would you have me to do?”

“Leave the Castle instantly,” said Ratcliffe, “and throw yourself at the feet of this extraordinary man, who, in circumstances that seem to argue the extremity of the most contemptible poverty, possesses yet an almost absolute influence over your fate.—Guests and servants are deep

in their carouse—the leaders sitting in conclave on their treasonable schemes—my horse stands ready in the stable—I will saddle one for you, and meet you at the little garden-gate—O, let no doubt of my prudence or fidelity prevent your taking the only step in your power to escape the dreadful fate which must attend the wife of Sir Frederick Langley.”

“Mr. Ratcliffe,” said Miss Vere, “you have always been esteemed a man of honor and probity, and a drowning wretch will always catch at the feeblest twig.—I will trust you—I will follow your advice—I will meet you at the garden-gate.”

She bolted the outer-door of her apartment as soon as Mr. Ratcliffe left her, and descended to the garden by a separate stair of communication which opened to her dressing-room. On the way she felt inclined to retract the consent she had so hastily given to a plan so hopeless and extravagant. But as she passed in her descent a private door which entered into the chapel from the back stair, she heard the voice of the female servants as they were employed in the task of cleaning it.

“Married! and to see bad a man—Ehwoh, sirs! any thing rather than that.”

“They are right—they are right,” said Miss Vere, “any thing rather than that.”

She hurried to the garden. Mr. Ratcliffe was true to his appointment—the horses stood saddled at the garden-gate, and in a few minutes they were advancing rapidly towards the hut of the Solitary.

While the ground was favorable, the speed of their journey was such as to prevent much communication; but when a steep ascent compelled them to slacken their pace, a new cause of apprehension occurred to Miss Vere's mind.

“Mr. Ratcliffe,” she said, pulling up her horse's bridle, “let us prosecute no farther a journey which nothing but the extreme agitation of my mind can vindicate my having undertaken—I am well aware that this man passes among the vulgar as being possessed of supernatural powers, and carrying on an intercourse with beings of another world; but I would have you aware I am neither to be imposed on by such follies, nor, were I to believe in their existence, durst I, with my feelings of religion, apply to this being in my distress.”

“I should have thought, Miss Vere,” replied Ratcliffe, “my character and habits of thinking were so well known to you, that you might have held me excused from crediting any such absurdity.”

“But in what other mode,” said Isabella, “can a being, so miserable himself in appearance, possess the power of assisting me?”

“Miss Vere,” said Ratcliffe, after a momentary pause, “I am bound by a solemn oath of secrecy—You must, without farther explanation, be satisfied with my pledged assurance, that he does possess the power, if you can inspire him with the will; and that, I doubt not, you will be able to do.”

“Mr. Ratcliffe,” said Miss Vere, “you may yourself be mistaken; you ask an unlimited degree of confidence from me.”

“Recollect, Miss Vere,” he replied, “that when, in your humanity, you asked me to interfere with your father in favor of Haswell and his ruined family—when you requested me to prevail on him to do a thing most abhorrent to his nature—to forgive an injury and remit a penalty—I stipulated that you should ask me no questions concerning the sources of my influence—You found no reason to distrust me then, do not distrust me now.”

“But the extraordinary mode of life of this man,” said Miss Vere; “his seclusion—his figure—the deepness of misanthropy which he is said to express in his language—Mr. Ratcliffe, what can I think of him if he really possesses the powers you ascribe to him?”

“This man, young lady, was bred a Catholic, a sect which affords a thousand instances of those who have retired from power and affluence to voluntary privations more strict even than his.”

“But he avows no religious motive,” replied Miss Vere.

“No,” replied Ratcliffe; “disgust with the world has operated his retreat from it without assuming the veil of superstition. Thus far I may tell you—he was born to great wealth, which his parents designed should become greater by his union with a kinswoman, whom for that purpose they bred up in their own house. You have seen his figure; judge what the young lady must have thought of the lot to which she was destined—Yet habituated to his appearance, she showed no reluctance, and the friends of—the person whom I speak of, doubted not that the excess of his attachment, the various acquisitions of his mind, his many and amiable qualities, had overcome the natural horror which his destined bride must have entertained at an exterior so dreadfully inauspicious.”

“And did they judge truly?” said Isabella.

“You shall hear. He, at least, was fully aware of his own deficiency; the sense of it haunted him like a phantom. ‘I am,’ was his own expression to me,—I mean to a man whom he trusted,—‘I am, in spite of what you would say, a poor miserable outcast, fitter to have been smothered in the cradle than to have been brought up to scare the world in which I crawl.’ The person whom he addressed in vain endeavored to impress him with the indifference to external form, which is the natural result of philosophy, or, to treat him to recall the superiority of mental talents to the more attractive attributes that are merely personal. ‘I hear you,’ he would reply, ‘but you speak the voice of cold-blooded stoicism, or, at least, of friendly partiality. But look at every book which we have read, those excepted of that abstract philosophy which feels no responsive voice in our natural feelings. Is not personal form, such as at least can be tolerated

without horror and disgust, always represented as essential to our ideas of a friend, far more a lover? Is not such a mis-shapen monster as I am excluded, by the very fiat of Nature, from her fairest enjoyments? What but my wealth prevents all—perhaps even Letitia, or you—from shunning me as something foreign to your nature, and more odious, by bearing that distorted resemblance to humanity which we observe in the animal tribes that are more hateful to man because they seem his caricature?"

"You repeat the sentiments of a madman," said Miss Vere.

"No," replied her conductor, "unless a morbid and excessive sensibility on such a subject can be termed insanity. Yet I will not deny that this governing feeling and apprehension carried the person who entertained it to lengths which indicated a deranged imagination. He appeared to think that it was necessary for him, by exuberant, and not always well-chosen instances of liberality, and even profusion, to unite himself to the human race, from which he conceived himself naturally dissevered. The benefits which he bestowed, from a disposition naturally philanthropic in an uncommon degree, were exaggerated by the influence of the goading reflection, that more was necessary from him than from others,—lavishing his treasures as if to bribe mankind to receive him into their class. It is scarcely necessary to say, that the bounty which flowed from a source so capricious was often abused, and his confidence frequently betrayed. These disappointments, which occur to all, more or less, and most to such as confer benefits without just discrimination, his diseased fancy set down to the hatred and contempt excited by his personal deformity.—But I fatigue you, Miss Vere?"

"No, by no means; I—I could not prevent my attention from wandering an instant; pray proceed."

"He became at length," continued Ratcliffe, "the most ingenious self-tormentor of whom I have ever heard; the scoff of the rabble, and the sneer of the yet more brutal vulgar of his own rank, was to him agony and breaking on the wheel. He regarded the laugh of the common people whom he passed on the street, and the suppressed titter, or yet more offensive terror, of the young girls to whom he was introduced in company, as proofs of the true sense which the world entertained of him, as a prodigy unfit to be received among them on the usual terms of society, and as vindicating the wisdom of his purpose in withdrawing himself from among them. On the faith and sincerity of two persons alone, he seemed to rely implicitly—on that of his betrothed bride; and of a friend eminently gifted in personal accomplishments, who seemed, and indeed probably was, sincerely attached to him. He ought to have been so at least, for he was literally loaded with benefits by him whom you are now about to see. The parents of the subject of my story died within a short space of each other. Their death

postponed the marriage, for which the day had been fixed. The lady did not seem greatly to mourn this delay,—perhaps that was not to have been expected; but she intimated no change of intention, when, after a decent interval, a second day was named for their union. The friend of whom I spoke was then a constant resident at the Hall. In an evil hour, at the earnest request and entreaty of this friend, they joined a general party, where men of different political opinions were mingled, and where they drank deep. A quarrel ensued; the friend of the Recluse drew his sword with others, and was thrown down and disarmed by a more powerful antagonist. They fell in the struggle at the feet of the Recluse, who, maimed and truncated as his form appears, possesses, nevertheless, great strength, as well as violent passions. He caught up a sword, pierced the heart of his friend's antagonist, was tried, and his life, with difficulty, redeemed from justice, at the expense of a year's close imprisonment, the punishment of manslaughter. The incident affected him most deeply, the more that the deceased was a man of excellent character, and had sustained gross insult and injury ere he drew his sword. I think, from that moment, I observed—I beg pardon—The fits of morbid sensibility which had tormented this unfortunate gentleman, were rendered henceforth more acute by remorse, which he, of all men, was least capable of having incurred, or of sustaining when it became his unhappy lot. His paroxysms of agony could not be concealed from the lady to whom he was betrothed; and it must be confessed they were of an alarming and fearful nature. He comforted himself, that, at the expiry of his imprisonment, he could form with his wife and friend a society, encircled by which he might dispense with more extensive communication with the world. He was deceived; before that term elapsed, his friend and his betrothed bride were man and wife. The effects of a shock so dreadful on an ardent temperament, a disposition already soured by bitter remorse, and loosened by the indulgence of a gloomy imagination from the rest of mankind, I cannot describe to you; it was as if the last cable at which the vessel rode had suddenly parted, and left her abandoned to all the wild fury of the tempest. He was placed under medical restraint. As a temporary measure this might have been justifiable: but his hard-hearted friend, who, in consequence of his marriage, was now his nearest ally, prolonged his confinement, in order to enjoy the management of his immense estates. There was one who owed his all to the sufferer, an humble friend, but grateful and faithful. By unceasing exertion, and repeated invocation of justice, he at length succeeded in obtaining his patron's freedom, and reinstatement in the management of his own property, to which was soon added that of his intended bride, who, having died without male issue, her estates reverted to him, as heir of entail. But freedom, and wealth, were unable to restore the equipoise of his mind; to the former

his grief made him indifferent—the latter only served him as far as it afforded him the means of indulging his strange and wayward fancy. He had renounced the Catholic religion, but perhaps some of its doctrines continued to influence a mind, over which remorse and misanthropy now assumed, in appearance, an unbounded authority. His life has since been that alternately of a pilgrim and a hermit, suffering the most severe privations, not indeed in ascetic devotion, but in abhorrence of mankind. Yet no man's words and actions have been at such a wide difference, nor has any hypocritical wretch ever been more ingenious in assigning good motives for his vile actions, than this unfortunate in reconciling to his abstract principles of misanthropy a conduct which flows from his natural generosity and kindness of feeling."

"Still, Mr. Ratcliffe—still you describe the inconsistencies of a madman."

"By no means," replied Ratcliffe. "That the imagination of this gentleman is disordered, I will not pretend to dispute; I have already told you that it has sometimes broken out into paroxysms approaching to real mental alienation. But it is of his common state of mind that I speak; it is irregular, but not deranged; the shades are as gradual as those that divide the light of noonday from midnight. The courtier who ruins his fortune for the attainment of a title which can do him no good, or power of which he can make no suitable or creditable use, the miser who hoards his useless wealth, and the prodigal who squanders it, are all marked with a certain shade of insanity. To criminals who are guilty of enormities, when the temptation, to a sober mind, bears no proportion to the horror of the act, or the probability of detection and punishment, the same observation applies; and every violent passion, as well as anger, may be termed a short madness."

"This may be all good philosophy, Mr. Ratcliffe," answered Miss Vere; "but excuse me, it by no means emboldens me to visit, at this late hour, a person whose extravagance of imagination you yourself can only palliate."

"Rather, then," said Ratcliffe, "receive my solemn assurances, that you do not incur, the slightest danger. But what I have been hitherto afraid to mention, for fear of alarming you, is, that now when we are within sight of his retreat, for I can discover it through the twilight, I must go no farther with you; you must proceed alone."

"Alone?—I dare not."

"You must," continued Ratcliffe; "I will remain here and wait for you."

"You will not, then, stir from this place," said Miss Vere; "yet the distance is so great, you could not hear me were I to cry for assistance."

"Fear nothing," said her guide; "or observe, at least, the utmost caution in stifling every expression of timidity. Remember, that his pre-

dominant and most harassing apprehension arises from a consciousness of the hideousness of his appearance. Your path lies straight beside you half-fallen willow; keep the left side of it; the marsh lies on the right. Farewell for a time. Remember the evil you are threatened with, and let it overcome at once your fears and scruples."

"Mr. Ratcliffe," said Isabella, "farewell; if you have deceived one so unfortunate as myself, you have for ever forfeited the fair character for probity and honor to which I have trusted."

"On my life—on my soul," continued Ratcliffe, raising his voice as the distance between them increased, "you are safe—perfectly safe."

CHAPTER XVI.

—'Twas time and grief
That framed him thus: Time, with his fairer hand,
Offering the fortunes of his former days,
The former man may make him.—Bring us to him,
And chance it as it may.

OLD PLAY.

THE sounds of Ratcliffe's voice had died on Isabella's ear; but as she frequently looked back, it was some encouragement to her to discern his form now darkening in the gloom. Ere, however, she went much farther, she lost the object in the increasing shade. The last glimmer of the twilight placed her before the hut of the Solitary. She twice extended her hand to the door, and twice she withdrew it; and when she did at length make the effort, the knock did not equal in violence the throb of her own bosom. Her next effort was louder; her third was reiterated, for the fear of not obtaining the protection from which Ratcliffe promised so much, began to overpower the terrors of his presence from whom she was to request it. At length, as she still received no answer, she repeatedly called upon the Dwarf by his assumed name, and requested him to answer and open to her.

"What miserable being is reduced," said the appalling voice of the Solitary, "to seek refuge here? Go hence; when the heath-fowl need shelter, they seek it not in the nest of the night-raven."

"I come to you, father," said Isabella, "in my hour of adversity, even as you yourself commanded, when you promised your heart and your door should be opened to my distress; but I fear"—

"Ha!" said the Solitary, "then thou art Isabella Vere? Give me a token that thou art she."

"I have brought you back the rose which you gave me; it has not had time to fade ere the hard fate you foretold is come upon me!"

"And if thou hast thus redeemed thy pledge," said the Dwarf, "I will not forfeit mine. The heart and the door that are shut against every other earthly being, shall be open to thee and to thy sorrows."

She heard him move in his hut, and presently

afterwards strike a light. One by one, bolt and bar were then withdrawn, the heart of Isabella throbbing higher as these obstacles to their meeting were successively removed. The door opened, and the Solitary stood before her, his uncouth form and features illuminated by the iron lamp which he held in his hand.

"Enter, daughter of affliction," he said,—"enter the house of misery."

She entered, and observed, with a precaution which increased her trepidation, that the Recluse's first act, after setting the lamp upon the table, was to replace the numerous bolts which secured the door of his hut. She shrank as she heard the noise which accompanied this ominous operation, yet remembered Ratchliffe's caution, and endeavored to suppress all appearance of apprehension. The light of the lamp was weak and uncertain; but the Solitary, without taking immediate notice of Isabella, otherwise than by motioning her to sit down on a small settle beside the fire-place, made haste to kindle some dry furze, which presently cast a blaze through the cottage. Wooden shelves, which bore a few books, some bundles of dried herbs, and one or two wooden cups and platters, were on one side of the fire; on the other were placed some ordinary tools of field-labor, mingled with those used by mechanics. Where the bed should have been, there was a wooden frame, strewn with withered moss and rushes, the couch of the ascetic. The whole space of the cottage did not exceed ten feet by six within the walls; and its only furniture, besides what we have mentioned, was a table and two stools formed of rough deals.

Within these narrow precincts Isabella now found herself enclosed with a being, whose history had nothing to reassure her, and the fearful conformation of whose hideous countenance inspired an almost superstitious terror. He occupied the seat opposite to her, and dropping his huge and shaggy eyebrows over his piercing black eyes, gazed at her in silence, as if agitated by a variety of contending feelings. On the other side sate Isabella, pale as death, her long hair uncurled by the evening damps, and falling over her shoulders and breast, as the wet streamers droop from the mast when the storm has passed away, and left the vessel stranded on the beach. The Dwarf first broke the silence with the sudden, abrupt, and alarming question,—“Woman, what evil fate has brought thee hither?”

“My father's danger, and your own command,” she replied faintly, but firmly.

“And you hope for aid from me?”

“If you can bestow it,” she replied, still in the same tone of mild submission.

“And how should I possess that power?” continued the Dwarf, with a bitter sneer; “is mine the form of a redresser of wrongs? Is this the castle in which one powerful enough to be sued to by a fair suppliant is likely to hold his residence? I but mocked thee, girl, when I said I would relieve thee.”

“Then must I depart, and face my fate as I best may.”

“No!” said the Dwarf, rising and interposing between her and the door, and motioning to her sternly to resume her seat—“No! you leave me not in this way; we must have farther conference. Why should one being desire aid of another? Why should not each be sufficient to itself? Look round you—I, the most despised and most decrepit on Nature's common, have required sympathy and help from no one. These stones are of my own piling; these utensils I framed with my own hands; and with this”—and he laid his hand with a fierce smile on the long dagger which he always wore beneath his garment, and unsheathed it so far that the blade glimmered clear in the fire-light—“With this,” he pursued, as he thrust the weapon back into the scabbard, “I can, if necessary, defend the vital spark enclosed in this poor trunk, against the fairest and strongest that shall threaten me with injury.”

It was with difficulty Isabella refrained from screaming out aloud: but she *did* refrain.

“This,” continued the Recluse, “is the life of nature, solitary, self-sufficing, and independent. The wolf calls not the wolf to aid him in forming his den; and the vulture invites not another to assist her in striking down her prey.”

“And when they are unable to procure themselves support,” said Isabella, judiciously thinking he would be most accessible to argument couched in his own metaphorical style, “what then is to befall them?”

“Let them starve, die, and be forgotten; it is the common lot of humanity.”

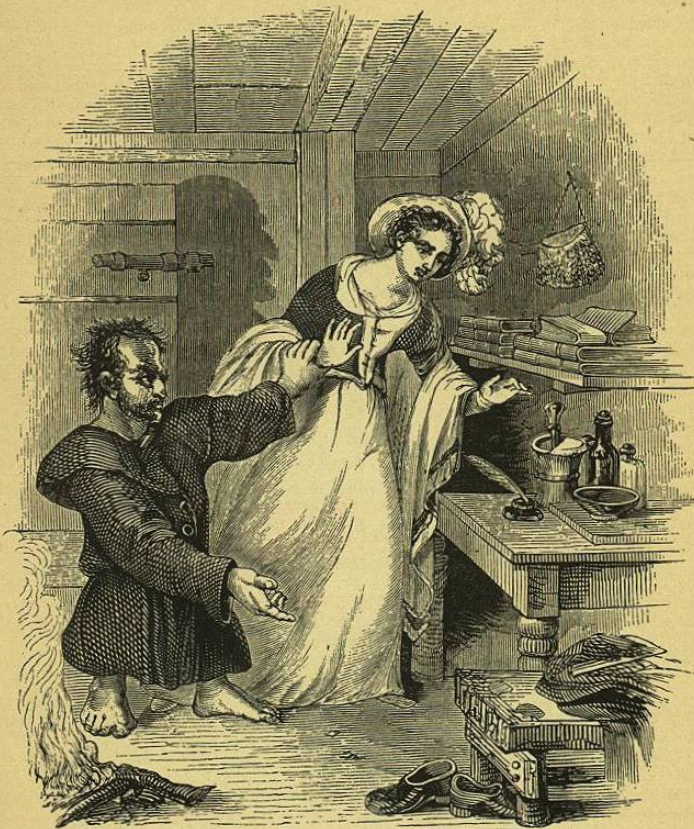
“It is the lot of the wild tribes of nature,” said Isabella, “but chiefly of those who are destined to support themselves by rapine, which brooks no partner; but it is not the law of nature in general; even the lower orders have confederacies for mutual defence. But mankind—the race would perish did they cease to aid each other.—From the time that the mother binds the child's head, till the moment that some kind assistant wipes the death-damp from the brow of the dying, we cannot exist without mutual help. All, therefore, that need aid, have right to ask it of their fellow-mortals; no one who has the power of granting can refuse it without guilt.”

“And in this simple hope, poor maiden,” said the Solitary, “thou hast come into the desert, to seek one whose wish it were that the league thou hast spoken of were broken for ever, and that, in very truth, the whole race should perish? Wert thou not frightened?”

“Misery,” said Isabella, firmly, “is superior to fear.”

“Hast thou not heard it said in thy mortal world that I have leagued myself with other powers, deformed to the eye, and malevolent to the human race as myself? Hast thou not heard this?—And dost thou seek my cell at midnight?”

“The being I worship supports me against



“No,” said the Dwarf. “No, you leave me not in this way; we must have farther conference.”