

course, and ere long they arrived at the Tower of Glendearg.

It was at the sight of this little fortalice that the misery of her lot pressed hard on the poor Lady of Avenel. When by any accident they had met at church, market, or other place of public resort, she remembered the distant and respectful air with which the wife of the warlike baron was addressed by the spouse of the humble feuar. And now, so much was her pride humbled, that she was to ask to share the precarious safety of the same feuar's widow, and her pittance of food, which might perhaps be yet more precarious. Martin probably guessed what was passing in her mind, for he looked at her with a wistful glance, as if to deprecate any change of resolution; and answering to his looks, rather than his words, she said, while the sparkle of subdued pride once more glanced from her eye, "If it were for myself alone, I could but die—but for this infant—the last pledge of Avenel"——

"True, my lady," said Martin hastily; and, as if to prevent the possibility of her retracting, he added, "I will step on and see Dame Elspeth—I kene her husband weel, and have bought and sold with him, for as great a man as he was."

Martin's tale was soon told, and met all acceptance from her companion in misfortune. The Lady of Avenel had been meek and courteous in her prosperity; in adversity, therefore, she met with the greatest sympathy. Besides, there was a point of pride in sheltering and supporting a woman of such superior birth and rank; and not to do Elspeth Glendinning injustice, she felt sympathy for a woman whose fate resembled her own in so many points, yet was so much more severe. Every species of hospitality was gladly and respectfully extended to the distressed travellers, and they were kindly requested to stay as long at Glendearg as their circumstances rendered necessary, or their inclination prompted.

CHAPTER IV.

Ne'er be I found by thee unawed,
On that thrice hallow'd eve abroad,
When goblins haunt from flood and fen,
The steps of men.

Collins's Ode to Fear.

As the country became more settled, the Lady of Avenel would have willingly returned to her husband's mansion. But that was no longer in her power. It was a reign of minority, when the strongest had the best right, and when acts of usurpation were frequent amongst those who had much power and little conscience.

Julian Avenel, the younger brother of the deceased Walter, was a person of this description. He hesitated not to seize upon his brother's house and land, so soon as the retreat of the English permitted him. At first he occupied the property in the name of his niece, but when the lady proposed to return with her child to the mansion of its fathers, he gave her to understand that Avenel being a male fief, descended to the brother, instead of the daughter, of the last possessor. The ancient philosopher declined a dispute with the emperor who commanded twenty legions, and the widow of Walter Avenel was in no condition to maintain a contest with the leader of twenty moss-troopers. Julian was also a man of service, who could back a friend in case of need, and was sure, therefore, to find protectors among the ruling powers. In short, however clear the little Mary's right to the possessions of her father, her mother saw the necessity of giving way, at least for the time, to the usurpation of her uncle.

Her patience and forbearance was so far attended with advantage, that Julian, for very shame's sake, could no longer suffer her to be absolutely dependent on the char-

ity of Elspeth Glendinning. A drove of cattle and a bull (which were probably missed by some English farmer) were driven to the pastures of Glendearg; presents of raiment and household stuff were sent liberally, and some little money, though with a more sparing hand; for those in the situation of Julian Avenel could come more easily by the goods, than the representing medium of value, and made their payments chiefly in kind.

In the meantime, the widows of Walter Avenel and Simon Glendinning had become habituated to each other's society, and were unwilling to part. The lady could hope no more secret and secure residence than in the Tower of Glendearg, and she was now in a condition to support her share of the mutual housekeeping. Elspeth, on the other hand, felt pride, as well as pleasure, in the society of a guest of such distinction, and was at all times willing to pay much greater deference than the Lady of Walter Avenel could be prevailed on to accept.

Martin and his wife diligently served the united family in their several vocations, and yielded obedience to both mistresses, though always considering themselves as the especial servants of the Lady of Avenel. This distinction sometimes occasioned a slight degree of difference between Dame Elspeth and Tibb; the former being jealous of her own consequence, and the latter apt to lay too much stress upon the rank and family of her mistress. But both were alike desirous to conceal such petty squabbles from the lady, her hostess scarce yielding to her old domestic in respect for her person. Neither did the difference exist in such a degree as to interrupt the general harmony of the family, for the one wisely gave way as she saw the other become warm; and Tibb, though she often gave the first provocation, had generally the sense to be the first in relinquishing the argument.

The world which lay beyond was gradually forgotten by the inhabitants of this sequestered glen, and unless when she attended mass at the Monastery Church upon some high holiday, Alice of Avenel almost forgot that

she once held an equal rank with the proud wives of the neighbouring barons and nobles who on such occasions crowded to the solemnity. The recollection gave her little pain. She loved her husband for himself, and in his inestimable loss all lesser subjects of regret had ceased to interest her. At times, indeed, she thought of claiming the protection of the Queen Regent (Mary of Guise) for her little orphan, but the fear of Julian Avenel always came between. She was sensible that he would have neither scruple nor difficulty in spiriting away the child, (if he did not proceed farther,) should he once consider its existence as formidable to his interest. Besides, he led a wild and unsettled life, mingling in all feuds and forays, wherever there was a spear to be broken; he evinced no purpose of marrying, and the fate which he continually was braving might at length remove him from his usurped inheritance. Alice of Avenel, therefore, judged it wise to check all ambitious thoughts for the present, and remain quiet in the rude, but peaceable retreat to which Providence had conducted her.

It was upon an All-Hallow's eve, when the family had resided together for the space of three years, that the domestic circle was assembled round the blazing turf-fire, in the old narrow hall of the Tower of Glendearg. The idea of the master or mistress of the mansion feeding or living apart from their domestics, was at this period never entertained. The highest end of the board, the most commodious settle by the fire,—these were the only marks of distinction; and the servants mingled, with deference indeed, but unproved and with freedom, in whatever conversation was going forward. But the two or three domestics, kept merely for agricultural purposes, had retired to their own cottages without, and with them a couple of wenches, usually employed within doors, the daughters of one of the binds.

After their departure, Martin locked, first, the iron gate; and, secondly, the inner door of the tower, when the domestic circle was thus arranged. Dame Elspeth sat pulling the thread from her distaff; Tibb watched the

progress of scalding the whey, which hung in a large pot upon the *crook*, a chain terminated by a hook, which was suspended in the chimney to serve the purpose of the modern crane. Martin, while busied in repairing some of the household articles, (for every man in those days was his own carpenter and smith, as well as his own tailor and shoemaker,) kept from time to time a watchful eye upon the three children.

They were allowed however, to exercise their juvenile restlessness by running up and down the hall, behind the seats of the elder members of the family, with the privilege of occasionally making excursions into one or two small apartments which opened from it, and gave excellent opportunity to play at hide-and-seek. This night however the children seemed not disposed to avail themselves of their privilege of visiting these dark regions, but preferred carrying on their gambols in the vicinity of the light.

In the mean while, Alice of Avenel, sitting close to an iron candlestick, which supported a misshapen torch of domestic manufacture, read small detached passages from a thick clasped volume, which she preserved with the greatest care. The art of reading the lady had acquired by her residence in a nunnery during her youth, but she seldom, of late years, put it to any other use than perusing this little volume, which formed her whole library. The family listened to the portions which she selected, as to some good thing which there was a merit in hearing with respect, whether it was fully understood or no. To her daughter, Alice of Avenel had determined to impart their mystery more fully, but the knowledge was at that period attended with personal danger, and was not rashly to be trusted to a child.

The noise of the romping children interrupted, from time to time, the voice of the lady, and drew on the noisy culprits the rebuke of Elspeth.

"Could they not go farther a-field, if they behaved to make such a din, and disturb the lady's good words?" And this command was backed with the threat

of sending the whole party to bed if it was not attended to punctually. Acting under the injunction, the children first played at a greater distance from the party, and more quietly, and then began to stray into the adjacent apartments, as they became impatient of the restraint to which they were subjected. But, all at once, the two boys came open-mouthed into the hall, to tell that there was an armed man in the spence.

"It must be Christie of Clint-hill," said Martin, rising; "what can have brought him here at this time?"

"Or how came he in?" said Elspeth.

"Alas! what can he seek?" said the Lady of Avenel, to whom this man, a retainer of her husband's brother, and who sometimes executed his commissions at Glendearg, was an object of secret apprehension and suspicion. "Gracious heavens!" she added, rising up, "where is my child?" All rushed to the spence, Halbert Glendinning first arming himself with a rusty sword, and the younger seizing upon the lady's book. They hastened to the spence, and were relieved of a part of their anxiety by meeting Mary at the door of the apartment. She did not seem in the slightest degree alarmed or disturbed. They rushed into the spence, (a sort of interior apartment in which the family eat their victuals in the summer season,) but there was no one there.

"Where is Christie of Clint-hill?" said Martin.

"I do not know," said little Mary; "I never saw him."

"And what made you, ye misleard loons," said dame Elspeth to her two boys, "come yon gate into the ha', roaring like bull-segs, to frighten the ledy, and her far frae strong?" The boys looked at each other in silence and confusion, and their mother proceeded with her lecture. "Could ye find nae night for daffin but Hallowe'en, and nae time but when the ledy was reading to us about the holy Saints? May ne'er be in my fingers, if I dinna sort ye baith for it!" The eldest boy bent his eyes on the ground, the younger began to weep, but

neither spoke ; and the mother would have proceeded to extremities, but for the interposition of the little maiden.

“ Dame Elspeth, it was *my* fault—I did say to them, that I saw a man in the spence.”

“ And what made you do so, child,” said her mother, “ to startle us all thus ?”

“ Because,” said Mary, lowering her voice, “ I could not help it.”

“ Not help it, Mary !—you occasioned all this idle noise, and you could not help it ? How mean you by that, minion ?”

“ There really was an armed man in the spence,” said Mary ; “ and because I was surprised to see him, I cried out to Halbert and Edward”——

“ She has told it herself,” said Halbert Glendenning ; “ or it had never been told by me.”

“ Nor by me neither,” said Edward, emulously.

“ Mistress Mary,” said Elspeth, “ you never told us any thing before that was not true ; tell us if this was a Hallowe’en cantrip, and make an end of it.” The Lady of Avenel looked as if she would have interfered, but knew not how ; and Elspeth, who was too eagerly curious to regard any distant hint, persevered in her inquiries. “ Was it Christie of the Clinthill ? I would not for a mark that he were about the house, and a body no ken where.”

“ It was not Christie,” said Mary ; “ it was—it was a gentleman—a gentleman with a bright breast-plate, like what I hae seen langsyne, when we dwelt at Avenel”——

“ What like was he ?” continued Tibb, who now took share in the investigation.

“ Black-haired, black-eyed, with a peaked black beard,” said the child, “ and many a fold of pearly round his neck, and hanging down his breast ower his breast-plate ; and he had a beautiful hawk, with silver bells, standing on his left hand, with a crimson silk hood upon its head”——

“ Ask her no more questions, for the love of God,” said the anxious menial to Elspeth, “ but look to my

leddy !” But the Lady of Avenel, taking Mary in her hand, turned hastily away, and walking into the hall, gave them no opportunity of remarking in what manner she received the child’s communication, which she thus cut short. What Tibb thought of it appeared from her crossing herself repeatedly, and whispering into Elspeth’s ear, “ Saint Mary preserve us !—the lassie has seen her father !”

When they reached the hall, they found the lady holding her daughter on her knee, and kissing her repeatedly. When they entered, she again arose, as if to shun observation, and retired to the little apartment where her child and she occupied the same bed.

The boys were also sent to their cabin, and no one remained by the hall fire save the faithful Tibb and Dame Elspeth, excellent persons both, and as thorough gossips as ever wagged a tongue.

It was but natural that they should instantly resume the subject of the supernatural appearance, for such they deemed it, which had this night alarmed the family.

“ I could hae wished it had been the deil himself—be good to and preserve us !—rather than Christie o’ the Clint-hill,” said the matron of the mansion, “ for the word runs rife in the country, that he is ane of the maist masterfu’ thieves ever lap on horse.”

“ Hout-tout, dame Elspeth,” said Tibb, “ fear ye naething frae Christie ; tods keep their ain holes clean. You kirk-folk make sic a fasherie about men shifting a wee bit for their living ! Our border-lairds would ride with few men at their back, if a’ the light-handed lads were out o’ gate.”

“ Better they rade wi’ nane than distress the countryside the gate they do,” said Dame Elspeth.

“ But wha is to haud back the southron then,” said Tibb, “ if ye take away the lances and broad-swords ? I trow we auld wives couldna do that wi’ rock and wheel, and as little the monks wi’ bell and book.”

“And sae weel as the lances and broad-swords hae kept them back, I trow!—I was mair beholden to ae Southron, and that was Stawarth Bolton, than to a’ the border-riders ever wore St. Andrew’s cross—I reckon their skelping back and forward, and lifting honest men’s gear, has been a main cause of a’ the breach between us and England, and I am sure that cost me a kind good man. They spoke about the wedding of the Prince and our Queen, but it’s as like to be the driving of the Cumberland folk’s stocking that brought them down on us like dragons.” Tibb would not have failed in other circumstances to answer what she thought reflections disparaging to her country folk; but she recollected that Dame Elspeth was mistress of the family, curbed her own zealous patriotism, and hastened to change the subject.

“And is it not strange,” she said, “that the heiress of Avenel should hae seen her father this blessed night?”

“And ye think it was her father then?” said Elspeth Glendinning.

“What else can I think?” said Tibb.

“It may hae been something waur, in his likeness,” said Dame Glendinning.

“I ken naething about that,” said Tibb,—“but his likeness it was, that I will be sworn to, just as he used to ride out a-hawking; for having enemies in the country, he seldom laid off the breast-plate: and for my part,” added Tibb, “I dinna think a man looks like a man, unless he has steel on his breast and by his side too.”

“I have no skill of your harness on breast or side either,” said Dame Glendinning, “but I ken there is little luck in Hallowe’en sights, for I have had ane mysell.”

“Indeed, Dame Elspeth?” said old Tibb, edging her stool closer to the huge elbow-chair occupied by her friend, “I should like to hear about that.”

“Ye maun ken then, Tibb,” said Dame Glendinning, “that when I was a hempie of nineteen or twenty, it wasna my fault if I wasna at a’ the merry-makings time about.”

“That was very natural,” said Tibb; “but ye hae sobered since that, or ye wadna haud our braw gallants sae lightly.”

“I have had that wad sober me or ony ane,” said the matron. “Aweel, Tibb, a lass like me wasna to lack wooers, for I wasna sae ill-favoured that the tikes wad bark after me.”

“How should that be,” said Tibb, “and you sic a weel-favoured woman to this day?”

“Fie, fie, cummer,” said the matron of Glendearg, hitching her seat of honour, in her turn, a little nearer to the cuttie-stool on which Tibb was seated; “weel-favoured is past my time of day; but I might pass then, for I wasna sae tocherless but what I had a bit land at my breast-lace. My father was portioner of Littledearg.”

“Ye hae tell’d me that before,” said Tibb; “but anent the Hallowe’en?”

“Aweel, aweel, I had mair joes than ane, but I favoured nane o’ them; and sae, at Hallowe’en, Father Nicholas the cellarer—he was cellarer before this father, Father Clement, that now is—was cracking his nuts and drinking his brown beer with us, and as blithe as might be, and they would hae me try a cantrip to ken wha suld wed me; and the Monk said there was na ill in it, and if there was, he would assoil me for it. And wha but I into the barn to winnow my three weights o’ naething—sair, sair my mind misgave me for fear of wrang-doing and wrang-suffering baith; but I had aye a bauld spirit. I had not winnowed the last weight clean out, and the moon was shining bright upon the floor, when in stalked the presence of my dear Simon Glendinning, that is now happy. I never saw him plainer in my life than I did that moment; he held up an arrow as he passed me, and I swarf’d awa wi’ fright. Muckle wark there was to bring me to mysellagain, and sair they tried to make me believe it was a trick of Father Nicholas and Simon between them, and that the arrow was to signify Cupid’s shaft, as the Father called it; and mony a time Simon wad threep it to me after I was married—

gude man, he liked not it should be said that he was seen out o' the body!—But mark the end o' it, Tibb; we were married, and the grey-goose wing was the death o' him, after a'!"

"As it has been of ower mony brave men," said Tibb; "I wish there wasna sic a bird as a goose in the wide world, forby the clecking that we hae at the burnside."

"But tell me, Tibb," said Dame Glendinning, "what does your ledly aye do reading out o' that thick black book wi' the silver clasps?—there are ower mony gude words in it to come frae ony body but a priest—An it were about Robin Hood, or some o' David Lindsay's ballants, ane wad ken better what to say to it. I am no misdoubting your mistress nae way, but I wad like ill to hae a decent house haunted wi' ghaists and gyre-carlines."

"Ye hae nae reason to doubt my ledly, or onything she says or does, Dame Glendinning," said the faithful Tibb, something offended; "and touching the bairn, it's weel kend she was born on Hallowe'en was nine years gane, and they that are born on Hallowe'en whiles see mair than ither folk."

"And that wad be the cause, then, that the bairn didna mak muckle din about what it saw?—if it had been my Halbert himself, forby Edward, who is of softer nature, he wad hae yammered the hail night of a constancy. But it's like Mistress Mary has sic sights mair natural to her."

"That may weel be," said Tibb; "for on Hallowe'en she was born, as I tell ye, and our auld parish priest wad fain hae had the night ower, and All-Hallow day begun. But for a' that, the sweet bairn is just like ither bairns, as ye may see yoursell; and except this blessed night, and ance before when we were in that weary bog on the road here, I kenna that it saw mair than ither folk."

"But what saw she in the bog, then," said Dame Glendinning, "forby moor-cocks and heather-blutters?"

"The wean saw something like a white ledly that weised us the gate," said Tibb, "when we were like to hae perished in the moss-haggs—certain it was that Shagram reisted, and I ken Martin thinks he saw something."

"And what might the white ledly be?" said Elspeth; "hae ye ony guess o' that?"

"It's weel kend that, Dame Elspeth," said Tibb; "if ye had lived under grit folk, as I hae dune, ye wadna be to seek in that matter."

"I hae aye keepit my ain ha' house abune my head," said Elspeth, not without emphasis, "and if I havena lived wi' grit folk, grit folk have lived wi' me."

"Weel, weel, dame," said Tibb, "your pardon's prayed, there was nae offence meant. But ye maun ken the great ancient families canna be just served wi' the ordinary saunts, (praise to them!) like Saunt Anthony, Saunt Cutlibert, and the like, that come and gang at every sinner's bidding, but they hae a sort of saunts or angels, or what not, to themsells; and as for the White Maiden of Avenel, she is kend ower the hail country. And she is aye seen to yammer and wail before ony o' that family dies, as was weel kend by twenty folk before the death of Walter Avenel, haly be his cast!"

"If she can do nae mair than that," said Elspeth, somewhat scornfully, "they needna make mony vows to her, Itrow. Can she make nae better fend for them than that, and has naething better to do than wait on them?"

"Mony braw services can the White Maiden do for them to the boot of that, and has dune in the auld histories," said Tibb, "but I mind o' naething in my day, except it was her that the bairn saw in the bog."

"Aweel, aweel, Tibb," said Dame Glendinning, rising and lighting the iron lamp, "these are great privileges of your grand folk. But Our Lady and Saunt Paul are good enough saunts for me, and I'se warrant them never leave me in a bog that they can help me out o', seeing I send four waxen candles to their chapels every Candlemas; and if they are not seen to weep at

my death, I'se warrant them smile at my joyful rising again, whilk Heaven send to all of us, Amen."

"Amen," answered Tibb, devoutly; "and now it's time I should hap up the wee bit gathering turf, as the fire is ower low."

Busily she set herself to perform this duty. The relict of Simon Glendinning did but pause a moment to cast a heedful and cautious glance all around the hall, to see that nothing was out of its proper place; then wishing Tibb good-night, she retired to repose.

"The deil's in the carline," said Tibb to herself, "because she was the wife of a cock-laird, she thinks herself grander, I trow, than the bower-woman of a lady of that ilk!" Having given vent to her suppressed spleen in this little ejaculation, Tibb also betook herself to slumber.

CHAPTER V.

A priest, ye cry, a priest!—lame shepherds they,
How shall they gather in the straggling flock?
Dumb dogs which bark not—how shall they compel
The loitering vagrants to the master's fold?
Fitter to bask before the blazing fire,
And snuff the mess neat-handed Phillis dresses,
Than on the snow-wreath battle with the wolf.

Reformation.

THE health of the Lady of Avenel had been gradually decaying ever since her disaster. It seemed as if the few years which followed her husband's death had done on her the work of half a century. She lost the fresh elasticity of form, the colour and the mien of health, and became wasted, wan, and feeble. She appeared to have no formed complaint; yet it was evident to those who looked on her, that her strength waned daily. Her lips at length became blenched and her eye dim; yet she

spoke not of any desire to see a priest, until Elspeth Glendinning in her zeal could not refrain from touching upon a point which she deemed essential to salvation. Alice of Avenel received her hint kindly, and thanked her for it.

"If any good priest would take the trouble of such a journey," she said, "he should be welcome; for the prayers and lessons of the good must be at all times advantageous."

This quiet acquiescence was not quite what Elspeth Glendinning wished or expected. She made up, however, by her own enthusiasm, for the lady's want of eagerness to avail herself of ghostly counsel, and Martin was despatched with such haste as Shagram would make, to pray one of the religious men of Saint Mary's to come up to administer the last consolations to the widow of Walter de Avenel.

When the Sacristan had announced to the Lord Abbot, that the Lady of the umquhile Walter de Avenel was in very weak health in the Tower of Glendearg, and desired the assistance of a father confessor; the lordly monk paused on the request.

"We do remember Walter de Avenel," he said; "a good knight and a valiant; he was dispossessed of his lands, and slain by the Southron—May not the lady come hither to the sacrament of confession? the road is distant and painful to travel."

"The lady is unwell, holy father," answered the Sacristan, "and unable to bear the journey."

"True—ay—yes—then must one of our brethren go to her—Knowest thou if she hath aught of a jointure from this Walter de Avenel?"

"Very little, holy father," said the Sacristan; "she hath resided at Glendearg since her husband's death, well nigh on the charity of a poor widow, called Elspeth Glendinning."

"Why, thou knowest all the widows in the countryside?" said the Abbot. "Ho! ho! ho!" and he shook his portly sides at his own jest.