

"the departed saint, God sain her! used to say were so good"—not the ale, nor any other cates which poor Elspeth's stores afforded, could prevail on the Sub-Prior to break his fast.

"This day," he said, "I must not taste food until the sun go down, happy if, in so doing, I can expiate my own negligence—happier still, if my sufferings of this trifling nature, undertaken in pure faith and singleness of heart, may benefit the soul of the deceased. Yet dame," he added, "I may not so far forget the living in my cares for the dead, as to leave behind me that book, which is to the ignorant, what, to our first parents, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil unhappily proved—excellent indeed in itself, but fatal, because used by those to whom it is prohibited."

"O, blithely, reverend father," said the widow of Simon Glendinning, "will I give you the book, if so be I can wile it from the bairns; and indeed, poor things, as the case stands with them even now, you might take the heart out of their bodies, and they never find it out, they are sae begrutten."*

"Give them this missal instead, good dame," said the Father, drawing from his pocket one which was curiously illuminated with paintings, "and I will come myself, or send one at a fitting time, and teach them the meaning of these pictures."

"The bonnie images," said Dame Glendinning, forgetting for an instant her grief in her admiration, "and weel I wot," added she, "it is another sort of a book than the poor Lady of Avenel's; and blessed might we have been this day, if your reverence had found the way up the glen, instead of Father Philip, though the Sacristan is a powerful man too, and speaks as if he would gar the house fly abroad, save that the walls are gay thick. Simon's forebears (may he and they be blessed!) took care of that."

* *Begrutten*—over-wept.

The Monk ordered his mule, and was about to take his leave; and the good dame was still delaying him with questions about the funeral, when a horseman, armed and accoutred, rode into the little court-yard which surrounded the Keep.

CHAPTER IX.

For since they rode among our doors
With splent on spauld and rusty spurs,
There grows no fruit into our furs;
Thus said John Up-on-land.

Barnatyme MS.

THE Scottish laws, which were as wisely and judiciously made as they were carelessly and ineffectually executed, had in vain endeavoured to restrain the damage done to agriculture, by the chiefs and landed proprietors retaining in their service what were called Jackmen, from the *jack*, or doublet quilted with iron, which they wore as defensive armour. These military retainers conducted themselves with great insolence towards the industrious part of the community—lived in a great measure by plunder, and were ready to execute any commands of their master, however unlawful. In adopting this mode of life, men resigned the quiet hopes and regular labours of industry, for an unsettled, precarious, and dangerous trade, which yet had such charms for those once accustomed to it, that they became incapable of following any other. Hence the complaint of John Upland, a fictitious character, representing a countryman, into whose mouth the poets of the day put their general satires upon men and manners:

They ride about in such a rage,
By forest, frith and field,
With buckler, bow, and brand.

Lo ! where they ride out through the rye !
The Devil mot save the company,
Quoth John Up-on-land.

Christie of the Clint-hill, the horseman who now arrived at the little tower of Glendearg, was one of the hopeful company of whom the poet complains, as was indicated by his "splent on spauld," (iron-plates on his shoulder,) his rusted spurs, and his long lance. An iron scull-cap, none of the brightest, bore for distinction a sprig of the holly, which was Avenel's badge. A long two-edged straight sword, having a handle made of polished oak, hung down by his side. The meagre condition of his horse, and the wild and emaciated look of the rider, showed their occupation could not be accounted an easy or a thriving one. He saluted Dame Glendinning with little courtesy, and the Monk with less ; for the growing disrespect to the religious orders had not failed to extend itself among a class of men of such disorderly habits, although it may be supposed they were tolerably indifferent alike to the new or the ancient doctrines.

"So, our Lady is dead, Dame Glendinning?" said the jack-man ; "my master has sent you even now a fat bullock for her mart—it may serve for her funeral. I have left him in the upper cleuch, as he is somewhat ken-speckle,* and is marked both with cut and birn—the sooner the skin is off, and he is in saultfat, the less like you are to have trouble—you understand me ? Let me have a peck of corn for my horse, and beef and beer for myself, for I must go on to the Monastery—though I think this Monk here might do mine errand."

"Thine errand, rude man!" said the Sub-Prior, knitting his brows—

"For God's sake !" said poor Dame Glendinning, terrified at the idea of a quarrel between them,—“O Christie ! it is the Sub-Prior—O reverend sir, it is

* *Ken-speckle*—that which is easily recognized by the eye.

Christie of the Clint-hill, the laird's chief jack-man ; ye know that little havings can be expected from the like o' them."

"Are you a retainer of the laird of Avenel ?" said the Monk, addressing himself to the horseman ; "and do you speak thus rudely to a brother of Saint Mary's, to whom thy master is so much beholden ?"

"He means to be yet more beholden to your house, Sir Monk," answered the fellow ; "for hearing his sister-in-law, the Widow of Walter of Avenel, was on her death-bed, he sent me to say to the Father Abbot and the brethren, that he will hold the funeral-feast at their convent, and invites himself thereto with a score of horse, and some friends, and to abide there for three days and three nights,—having horse-meat and men's-meat at the charge of the community ; of which his intention he sends due notice, that fitting preparation may be timeously made."

"Friend," said the Sub-Prior, "believe not that I will do to the Father Abbot the indignity of delivering such an errand. Think'st thou the goods of the church were bestowed upon her by holy princes and pious nobles, now dead and gone, to be consumed in revelry by every profligate layman who numbers in his train more followers than he can support by honest means, or by his own incomings ? Tell thy master, from the Sub-Prior of Saint Mary's, that the Primate hath issued his commands to us that we submit no longer to this compulsory exaction of hospitality on slight or false pretences. Our lands and goods were given to relieve pilgrims and pious persons, not to feast bands of rude soldiers."

"This to me !" said the angry spearman, "this to me and to my master ?—Look to yourself then, Sir Priest, and try if *Ave* and *Credo* will keep bullocks from wandering and hay-stacks from burning."

"Dost thou menace the holy Church's patrimony with waste and fire-raising," said the Sub-Prior, "and that in the face of the sun ? I call on all who hear me

to bear witness to the words this ruffian has spoken. Remember how the Lord James drowned such as you by scores in the black pool at Jeddart. To him and to the Primate will I complain." The soldier shifted the position of his lance, and brought it down to a level with the Monk's body.

Dame Glendinning began to shriek for assistance. "Tibb Tacket! Martin! where be ye all?—Christie, for the love of God, consider he is a man of holy kirk!"

"I care not for his spear," said the Sub-Prior; "if I am slain in defending the rights and privileges of my community, the Primate will know how to take vengeance."

"Let him look to himself," said Christie, but at the same time depositing his lance against the wall of the tower; "if the Fife men spoke true who came hither with the Governor in the last raid, Norman Leslie has him at feud, and is like to set him hard. We know Norman a true blood-hound, who will never quit the slot. But I had no design to offend the holy father," he added, thinking perhaps he had gone a little too far; "I am a rude man, bred to lance and stirrup, and not used to deal with book-learned men and priests; and I am willing to ask his forgiveness and his blessing, if I have said aught amiss."

"For God's sake, your reverence," said the widow of Glendearg apart to the Sub-Prior, "bestow on him your forgiveness—how shall we poor folks sleep in security in the dark nights, if the Convent is at feud with such men as he is?"

"You are right, dame," said the Sub-Prior, "your safety should, and must be in the first instance consulted.—Soldier, I forgive thee, and may God bless thee and send thee honesty!"

Christie of the Clint-hill made an unwilling inclination with his head, and muttered apart, "that is as much as to say, God send thee starvation.—But now to my master's demand, Sir Priest? What answer am I to return?"

"That the body of the widow of Walter of Avenel," answered the Father, "shall be interred as becomes her rank, and in the tomb of her valiant husband. For your master's proffered visit of three days, with such a company and retinue, I have no authority to reply to it; you must intimate your Chief's purpose to the Reverend Lord Abbot."

"That will cost me a farther ride," said the man, "but it is all in the day's work.—How now, my lad," said he to Halbert, who was handling the long lance which he had laid aside; "how do you like such a play-thing?—will you go with me and be a moss-trooper?"

"The saints in their mercy forbid!" said the poor mother; and then, afraid of having displeased Christie by the vivacity of her exclamation, she followed it up by explaining, that since Simon's death she could not look on a spear or a bow, or any implement of destruction, without trembling.

"Pshaw!" answered Christie, "thou should'st take another husband, dame, and drive such follies out of thy thoughts—what say'st thou to such a strapping lad as I? Why, this old tower of thine is fencible enough, and there is no want of cleuchs, and crags, and bogs, and thickets, if one was set hard; a man might bide here and keep his half-score of lads, and as many geldings, and live on what he could lay his hand on, and be kind to thee, old wench."

"Alas! Master Christie," said the matron, "that you should talk to a lone woman in such a fashion, and death in the house besides!"

"Lone woman!—why, that is the very reason thou should'st take a mate. Thy old friend is dead, why good—choose thou another of somewhat tougher frame, and that will not die of the pip like a young chicken.—Better still—Come, dame, let me have something to eat, and we will talk more of this."

Dame Elspeth, though she well knew the character of the man, whom in fact she both disliked and feared, could not help simpering at the personal address which he thought proper to make to her. She whispered to the

Sub-Prior, "ony thing just to keep him quiet," and went into the tower to set before the soldier the food he desired, trusting, betwixt good cheer and the power of her own charms, to keep Christie of the Clint-hill so well amused, that the altercation betwixt him and the holy father should not be renewed.

The Sub-Prior was equally unwilling to hazard any unnecessary rupture between the community and such a person as Julian of Avenel. He was sensible that moderation, as well as firmness, was necessary to support the tottering cause of the Church of Rome; and that, contrary to former times, the quarrels betwixt the clergy and laity had, in the present, usually terminated to the advantage of the latter. He resolved, therefore, to avoid further strife by withdrawing, but failed not, in the first place, to possess himself of the volume which the Sacristan carried off the evening before, and which had been returned to the glen in such a marvellous manner.

Edward, the younger of Dame Elspeth's boys, made great objections to the book being removed, in which Mary would probably have joined, but that she was now in her little sleeping-chamber with Tibb, who was exerting her simple skill to console the young lady for her mother's death. But the younger Glendinning stood up in defence of her property, and with a positiveness which had hitherto made no part of his character, declared, that now the kind lady was dead, the book was Mary's, and no one but Mary should have it.

"But if it is not a fit book for Mary to read, my dear boy," said the Father gently; "you would not wish it to remain with her?"

"The lady read it," answered the young champion of property; "and so it could not be wrong—it shall not be taken away.—I wonder where Halbert is?—listening to the bravading tales of gay Christie, I reckon—he is always wishing for fighting, and now he is out of the way."

"Why, Edward, you would not fight with me, who am both a priest and an old man?"

"If you were as good a priest as the Pope," said the boy, "and as old as the hills to boot, you shall not carry away Mary's book without her leave. I will do battle for it."

"But see you, my love," said the Monk, amused with the resolute friendship manifested by the boy, "I do not take it; I only borrow it; and I leave in its place my own gay missal, as a pledge I will bring it back again."

Edward opened the missal with eager curiosity, and glanced at the pictures with which it was illustrated. "Saint George and the dragon—Halbert will like that; and Saint Michael brandishing his sword over the head of the Wicked One—and that will do for Halbert too. And see the Saint John leading his lamb in the wilderness, with his little cross made of reeds, and his scrip and staff—that shall be my favourite; and where shall we find one for poor Mary?—here is a beautiful woman weeping and lamenting herself."

"That is Saint Mary Magdalen repenting of her sins, my dear boy," said the Father.

"That will not suit *our* Mary; for she commits no faults and is never angry with us, but when we do something wrong."

"Then," said the Father, "I will show you a Mary, who will protect her and you, and all good children. See how fairly she is represented with her gown covered with golden stars."

The boy was lost in wonder at the portrait of the Virgin, which the Sub-Prior turned up to him.

"This," he said, "is really like our sweet Mary; and I think I will let you take away the black book, that has no such goodly shows in it, and leave this for Mary instead. But you must promise to bring back the book, good Father—for now I think upon it, Mary may like that best which was her mother's."

"I will certainly return," said the Monk, evading his answer, "and perhaps I may teach you to write and read such beautiful letters as you see there written, and to

paint them blue, green, and yellow, and to blazon them with gold."

"Ay, and to make such figures as these blessed Saints, and especially these two Marys?" said the boy.

"With their blessing," said the Sub-Prior, "I can teach you that art too, so far as I am myself capable of showing, and you of learning it."

"Then," said Edward, "will I paint Mary's picture—and remember you are to bring back the black book; that you must promise me."

The Sub-Prior, anxious to get rid of the boy's pertinacity, and to set forward on his return to the convent, without having any farther interview with Christie the galloper, answered by giving the promise Edward required, mounted his mule, and set forth on his return homeward.

The November day was well spent ere the Sub-Prior resumed his journey; for the difficulty of the road, and the various delays which he had met with at the tower had detained him longer than he proposed. A chill easterly wind was sighing among the withered leaves, and stripping them from the hold they had yet retained on the parent trees.

"Even so," said the Monk, "our prospects in this vale of time grow more disconsolate as the stream of years passes on. Little have I gained by my journey, saving the certainty that heresy is busy among us with more than his usual activity, and that the spirit of insulting religious orders, and plundering the Church's property, so general in the eastern districts of Scotland, has now come nearer home."

The tread of a horse which came up behind him, interrupted his reverie, and he soon saw he was mounted by the same wild rider whom he had left at the tower.

"Good even, my son, and benedicite," said the Sub-Prior as he passed; but the rude soldier scarce acknowledged the greeting, by bending his head; and dashing the spurs into his horse, went on at a pace which soon left the Monk and his mule far behind. "And

there," thought the Sub-Prior, "goes another plague of the times—a fellow whose birth designed him to cultivate the earth, but who is perverted by the unhallowed and unchristian divisions of the country, into a daring dissolute robber. The barons of Scotland are now turned masterful thieves and ruffians, oppressing the poor by violence, and wasting the Church, by extorting free-quarters from Abbeys and Priories, without either shame or reason.—I fear me I shall be too late to counsel the Abbot to make a stand against these daring *sorners*.*—I must make haste." He struck his mule with his riding-wand accordingly; but, instead of mending her pace, the animal suddenly started from the path, and the rider's utmost efforts could not force her forward.

"Art thou, too, infected with the spirit of the times?" said the Sub-Prior; "thou wert wont to be ready and serviceable, and art now as restive as any wild jackman or stubborn heretic of them all."

While he was contending with the startled animal, a voice, like that of a female, chanted in his ear, or at least very close to it,

"Good evening, Sir Priest, and so late as you ride,
With your mule so fair, and your mantle so wide;
But ride you through valley, or ride you o'er hill,
There is one that has warrant to wait on you still.

Back, back,
The volume black!

I have a warrant to carry it back."

The Sub-Prior looked around, but neither bush nor brake was near which could conceal an ambushed songstress. "May our Lady have mercy on me!" he said;

* To *sorne*, in Scotland, is to exact free quarters against the will of the landlord. It is declared equivalent to theft by a statute passed in the year 1445. The great chieftains oppressed the Monasteries very much by exactions of this nature. The community of Aberbrothwick complained of an Earl of Angus, I think, who was in the regular habit of visiting them once a-year, with a train of a thousand horse, and abiding till the whole winter provisions of the convent were exhausted.