

"It is I," replied the harsh and yet slow voice of the steward Dryfesdale.

"You cannot enter now," returned the youth. "And wherefore?" demanded Dryfesdale, "seeing I come but to do my duty, and inquire what mean the shrieks from the apartment of the Moabitish woman. Wherefore, I say, since such is mine errand, can I not enter?"

"Simply," replied the youth, "because the bolt is drawn, and I have no fancy to undo it. I have the right side of the door to-day, as you had last night."

"Thou art ill-advised, thou malapert boy," replied the steward, "to speak to me in such fashion; but I shall inform my Lady of thine insolence."

"The insolence," said the page, "is meant for thee only, in fair guerdon of thy discourtesy to me. For thy Lady's information, I have answer more courteous—you may say that the Queen is ill at ease, and desires to be disturbed neither by visits nor messages."

"I conjure you, in the name of God," said the old man, with more solemnity in his tone than he had hitherto used, "to let me know if her malady really gains power on her!"

"She will have no aid at your hand, or at your Lady's—wherefore, begone, and trouble us no more—we neither want, nor will accept of, aid at your hands."

With this positive reply, the steward, grumbling and dissatisfied, returned down stairs.

#### CHAPTER XXXII.

It is the curse of kings to be attended  
By slaves, who take their humors for a warrant  
To break into the bloody house of life,  
And on the winking of authority  
To understand a law.

KING JOHN.

THE Lady of Lochleven sat alone in her chamber, endeavoring with sincere but imperfect zeal, to fix her eyes and her attention on the black-lettered Bible which lay before her, bound in velvet and embroidery, and adorned with massive silver clasps and knops. But she found her utmost efforts unable to withdraw her mind from the resentful recollection of what had last night passed betwixt her and the Queen, in which the latter had with such bitter taunt reminded her of her early and long-repentant transgression.

"Why," she said, "should I resent so deeply that another reproaches me with that which I have never ceased to make matter of blushing to myself? and yet, why should this woman, who reaps—at least, has reaped—the fruits of my folly, and has jostled my son aside from the throne, why should she, in the face of all my domestics, and of her own, dare to upbraid me with my shame? Is she not in my power? Does she not fear me? Ha! wily tempter, I will wrestle with thee strongly, and with better suggestions than my own evil heart can supply!"

She again took up the sacred volume, and was

endeavoring to fix her attention on its contents, when she was disturbed by a tap at the door of the room. It opened at her command, and the steward Dryfesdale entered, and stood before her with a gloomy and perturbed expression on his brow.

"What has chanced, Dryfesdale, that thou lookest thus?" said his mistress—"Have there been evil tidings of my son, or of my grandchildren?"

"No, Lady," replied Dryfesdale, "But you were deeply insulted last night, and I fear me thou art as deeply avenged this morning—Where is the chaplain?"

"What mean you by hints so dark, and a question so sudden? The chaplain, as you well know, is absent at Perth upon an assembly of the brethren."

"I care not," answered the steward; "he is but a priest of Baal."

"Dryfesdale," said the Lady, sternly, "what meanest thou? I have ever heard, that in the Low Countries thou didst herd with the Anabaptists preachers, those boars which tear up the vintage—But the ministry which suits me and my house must content my retainers."

"I would I had good ghostly counsel, though," replied the steward, not attending to his mistress's rebuke, and seeming to speak to himself. "This woman of Moab—"

"Speak of her with reverence," said the Lady; "she is a king's daughter."

"Be it so," replied Dryfesdale; "she goes where there is little difference betwixt her and a beggar's child—Mary of Scotland is dying."

"Dying, and in my castle!" said the Lady, starting up in alarm; "of what disease, or by what accident?"

"Bear patience, Lady. The ministry was mine."

"Thine, villain and traitor!—how didst thou dare—"

"I heard you insulted, Lady—I heard you demand vengeance—I promised you should have it, and I now bring tidings of it."

"Dryfesdale, I trust thou ravest?" said the Lady.

"I rave not," replied the steward. "That which was written of me a million of years ere I saw the light, must be executed by me. She hath that in her veins that, I fear me, will soon stop the springs of life."

"Cruel villain!" exclaimed the Lady, "thou hast not poisoned her?"

"And if I had," said Dryfesdale, "what does it so greatly merit? Men bane vermin—why not rid them of their enemies so? in Italy they will do it for a cruizedor."

"Cowardly ruffian, begone from my sight!"

"Think better of my zeal, Lady," said the steward, "and judge not without looking around you. Lindsey, Ruthven, and your kinsman Morton, poniarded Rizzio, and yet you now see no blood on their embroidery—the Lord Sempli

stabbed the Lord of Sanquhar—does his bonnet sit a jot more awry on his brow? What noble lives in Scotland who has not had a share, for policy or revenge, in some such dealing?—and who imputes it to them? Be not cheated with names—a dagger or a draught work to the same end, and are little unlike—a glass phial imprisons the one, and a leathern sheath the other—one deals with the brain, the other sluices the blood—Yet, I say not I gave ought to this lady."

"What dost thou mean by thus dallying with me?" said the Lady; "as thou wouldst save thy neck from the rope it merits, tell me the whole truth of this story—thou hast long been known a dangerous man."

"Ay, in my master's service I can be cold and sharp as my sword. Be it known to you, that when last on shore, I consulted with a woman of skill and power, called Nicneven, of whom the country has rung for some brief time past. Fools asked her for charms to make them beloved, misers for means to increase their store; some demanded to know the future—an idle wish, since it cannot be altered; others would have an explanation of the past—idler still, since it cannot be recalled. I heard their queries with scorn, and demanded the means of avenging myself of a deadly enemy, for I grow old, and may trust no longer to Bilboa blade. She gave me a packet—'Mix that,' said she, 'with any liquid, and thy vengeance is complete.'"

"Villain! and you mixed it with the food of this imprisoned Lady, to the dishonor of thy master's house?"

"To redeem the insulted honor of my master's house, I mixed the contents of the packet with the jar of succory-water: They seldom fail to drain it, and the woman loves it over all."

"It was a work of hell," said the Lady Lochleven, "both the asking and the granting.—Away, wretched man, let us see if aid be yet too late!"

"They will not admit us, madam, save we enter by force—I have been twice at the door, but can obtain no entrance."

"We will beat it level with the ground, if needful—and, hold—summon Randal hither instantly.—Randal, here is a foul and evil chance befallen—send off a boat instantly to Kinross, the Chamberlain Luke Lundin is said to have skill—Fetch off, too, that foul witch Nicneven; she shall first counteract her own spell, and then be burned to ashes in the island of Saint Serf. Away—away—Tell them to hoist sail and ply oar, as ever they would have good of the Douglas's hand!"

"Mother Nicneven will not be lightly found, or fetched hither on these conditions," answered Dryfesdale.

"Then grant her full assurance of safety—Look to it, for thine own life must answer for this lady's recovery."

"I might have guessed that," said Dryfesdale, sullenly; "but it is my comfort I have avenged mine own cause, as well as yours. She hath

scoffed and scripped at me, and encouraged her saucy minion of a page to ridicule my stiff gait and slow speech. I felt it borne in upon me that I was to be avenged on them."

"Go to the western turret," said the lady, "and remain there in ward until we see how this gear will terminate. I know thy resolved disposition—thou wilt not attempt escape."

"Not were the walls of the turret of egg-shells, and the lake sheeted with ice," said Dryfesdale. "I am well-taught, and strong in belief, that man does nought of himself; he is but the foam on the billow, which rises, bubbles, and bursts, not by its own effort, but by the mightier impulse of fate which urges him. Yet, lady, if I may advise, amid this zeal for the life of the Jezebel of Scotland, forget not what is due to thine own honor, and keep the matter secret as you may."

So saying, the gloomy fatalist turned from her, and stalked off with composure to the place of confinement allotted to him.

His lady caught at his last hint, and only expressed her fear that the prisoner had partaken of some unwholesome food, and was dangerously ill. The castle was soon alarmed and in confusion. Randal was despatched to the shore to fetch off Lundin, with such remedies as could counteract poison; and with farther instructions to bring Mother Nicneven, if she could be found, with full power to pledge the Lady of Lochleven's word for her safety.

Meanwhile the Lady of Lochleven herself held parley at the door of the Queen's apartment, and in vain urged the page to undo it.

"Foolish boy!" she said, "thine own life and thy Lady's are at stake—Open, I say, or we will cause the door to be broken down."

"I may not open the door without my royal mistress's orders," answered Roland; "she has been very ill, and now she slumbers—if you wake her by using violence, let the consequence be on you and your followers."

"Was ever woman in a strait so fearful!" exclaimed the Lady of Lochleven—"At least, thou rash boy, beware that no one tastes the food, but especially the jar of succory-water."

She then hastened to the turret, where Dryfesdale had composedly resigned himself to imprisonment. She found him reading, and demanded of him, "Was thy fell potion of speedy operation?"

"Slow," answered the steward. "The hag asked me which I chose—I told her I loved a slow and sure revenge. 'Revenge,' said I, 'is the highest-flavored draught which man tastes upon earth, and he should sip it by little and little—not drain it up greedily at once.'"

"Against whom, unhappy man, couldst thou nourish so fell a revenge?"

"I had many objects, but the chief was that insolent page."

"The boy!—thou inhuman man," exclaimed the lady; "what could he do to deserve thy malice?"



"He rose in your favor, and you graced him with your commissions—that was one thing. He rose in that of George Douglas also—that was another. He was the favorite of the Calvinistic Henderson, who hated me because my spirit disowns a separated priesthood. The Moabitish Queen held him dear—winds from each opposing point blew in his favor—the old servitor of your house was held lightly among ye—above all, from the first time I saw his face, I longed to destroy him."

"What fiend have I nurtured in my house!" replied the Lady. "May God forgive me the sin of having given thee food and raiment!"

"You might not choose, Lady," answered the steward. "Long ere this castle was builded—ay, long ere the islet which sustains it reared its head above the blue water, I was destined to be your faithful slave, and you to be my ungrateful mistress. Remember you not when I plunged amid the victorious French, in the time of this lady's mother, and brought off your husband, when those who had hung at the same breasts with him dared not attempt the rescue?—Remember how I plunged into the lake when your grandson's skiff was overtaken by the tempest, boarded, and steered her safe to the land. Lady—the servant of a Scottish baron is he who regards not his own life, or that of any other, save his master. And, for the death of the woman, I had tried the potion on her sooner, had not Master George been her taster. Her death—would it not be the happiest news that Scotland ever heard? Is she not of the bloody Guisain stock, whose sword was so often red with the blood of God's saints? Is she not the daughter of the wretched tyrant James, whom Heaven cast down from his kingdom, and his pride, even as the king of Babylon was smitten?"

"Peace, villain!" said the Lady—a thousand varied recollections thronging on her mind at the mention of her royal lover's name; "Peace, and disturb not the ashes of the dead—of the royal, of the unhappy dead. Read thy Bible; and may God grant thee to avail thyself better of its contents than thou hast yet done!" She departed hastily, and as she reached the next apartment, the tears rose in her eyes so hastily, that she was compelled to stop and use her kerchief to dry them. "I expected not this," she said, "no more than to have drawn water from the dry flint, or sap from a withered tree. I saw with a dry eye the apostasy and shame of George Douglas, the hope of my son's house—the child of my love; and yet I now weep for him who has so long lain in his grave—for him to whom I owe it, that his daughter can make a scoffing and a jest of my name! But she is *his* daughter—my heart, hardened against her for so many causes, relents when a glance of her eye places her father unexpectedly before me—and as often her likeness to that true daughter of the house of Guise, her detested mother, has again confirmed my resolution. But she must not—must not die in my house, and

by so foul a practice. Thank God, the operation of the potion is slow, and may be counteracted. I will to her apartment once more. But oh! that hardened villain, whose fidelity was held in such esteem, and had such high proof of! What miracle can unite so much wickedness and so much truth in one bosom!"

The Lady of Lochleven was not aware how far minds of a certain gloomy and determined cast by nature, may be warped by a keen sense of petty injuries and insults, combining with the love of gain, and sense of self-interest, and amalgamated with the crude, wild, and indigested fanatical opinions which this man had gathered among the crazy sectaries of Germany; or how far the doctrines of fatalism, which he had embraced so decidedly, sear the human conscience, by representing our actions as the result of inevitable necessity.

During her visit to the prisoner, Roland had communicated to Catherine the tenor of the conversation he had had with her at the door of the apartment. The quick intelligence of that lively maiden instantly comprehended the outline of what was believed to have happened, but her prejudices hurried her beyond the truth.

"They meant to have poisoned us," she exclaimed in horror, "and there stands the fatal liquor which should have done the deed!—Ay, as soon as Douglas ceased to be our taster, our food was likely to be fatally seasoned. Thou, Roland, who shouldst have made the essay, wert readily doomed to die with us. Oh, dearest Lady Fleming, pardon, pardon, for the injuries I said to you in my anger—your words were prompted by Heaven to save our lives, and especially that of the injured Queen. But what have we now to do? that old crocodile of the lake will be presently back to shed her hypocritical tears over our dying agonies.—Lady Fleming, what shall we do?"

"Our Lady help us in our need!" she replied; "how should I tell?—unless we were to make our plaint to the Regent."

"Make our plaint to the devil," said Catherine, impatiently, "and accuse his dam at the foot of his burning throne!—The Queen still sleeps—we must gain time. The poisoning hag must not know her scheme has miscarried; the old envenomed spider has but too many ways of mending her broken web.—The jar of succory water," said she—"Roland, if thou be'st a man, help me—empty the jar on the chimney or from the window—make such waste among the viands as if we had made our usual meal, and leave the fragments on cup and porringer, but taste nothing as thou lovest thy life. I will sit by the Queen, and tell her at her waking, in what a fearful pass we stand. Her sharp wit and ready spirit will teach us what is best to be done. Meanwhile fill farther notice, observe, Roland, that the Queen is in a state of torpor—that Lady Fleming is indisposed—that character" (speaking in a lower tone) "will suit her best, and save her wits some

labor in vain. I am not so much indisposed, thou understandest."

"And I?" said the page—

"You?" replied Catherine, "you are quite well—who thinks it worth while to poison puppy-dogs or pages?"

"Does this levity become the time?" asked the page.

"It does, it does," answered Catherine Seyton; "if the Queen approves, I see plainly how this disconcerted attempt may do us good service."

She went to work while she spoke, eagerly assisted by Roland. The breakfast table soon displayed the appearance as if the meal had been eaten as usual; and the ladies retired as softly as possible into the Queen's sleeping apartment. At a new summons of the Lady Lochleven, the page undid the door, and admitted her into the anteroom, asking her pardon for having withstood her, alleging in excuse, that the Queen had fallen into a heavy slumber since she had broken her fast.

"She has eaten and drunken, then?" said the Lady of Lochleven.

"Surely," replied the page, "according to her Grace's ordinary custom, unless upon the fasts of the church."

"The jar," she said, hastily examining it, "it is empty—drank the Lady Mary the whole of this water?"

"A large part, madam; and I heard the Lady Catherine Seyton jestingly upbraid the Lady Mary Fleming with having taken more than a just share of what remained, so that but little fell to her own lot."

"And are they well in health?" said the Lady of Lochleven.

"Lady Fleming," said the page, "complains of lethargy, and looks duller than usual; and the Lady Catherine of Seyton feels her head somewhat more giddy than is her wont."

He raised his voice a little as he said these words, to apprise the ladies of the part assigned to each of them, and not, perhaps, without the wish of conveying to the ears of Catherine the page-like jest which lurked in the allotment.

"I will enter the Queen's bedchamber," said the Lady Lochleven; "my business is express."

As she advanced to the door, the voice of Catherine Seyton was heard from within—"No one can enter here—the Queen sleeps."

"I will not be controlled, young lady," replied the Lady of Lochleven; "there is, I vow, no inner bar, and I will enter in your despite."

"There is, indeed, no inner bar," answered Catherine, firmly, "but there are the staples where that bar should be; and into those staples have I thrust mine arm, like an ancestress of your own, when, better employed than the Douglasses of our days, she thus defended the bedchamber of her sovereign against murderers. Try your force, then, and see whether a Seyton cannot rival in courage a maiden of the house of Douglas."

"I dare not attempt the pass at such risk," said the Lady of Lochleven: "Strange, that this Princess, with all that justly attaches to her as blameworthy, should preserve such empire over the minds of her attendants.—Damsel, I give thee my honor that I come for the Queen's safety and advantage. Awaken her, if thou lovest her, and pray her leave that I may enter—I will retire from the door the whilst."

"Thou wilt not awaken the Queen?" said the Lady Fleming.

"What choice have we?" said the ready-witted maiden, "unless you deem it better to wait till the Lady Lochleven herself plays lady of the bedchamber. Her fit of patience will not last long, and the Queen must be prepared to meet her."

"But thou wilt bring back her Grace's fit by thus disturbing her."

"Heaven forbid!" replied Catherine; "but if so, it must pass for an effect of the poison. I hope better things, and that the Queen will be able when she wakes to form her own judgment in this terrible crisis. Meanwhile do thou, dear Lady Fleming, practise to look as dull and heavy as the alertness of thy spirit will permit."

Catherine knelt by the side of the Queen's bed, and, kissing her hand repeatedly, succeeded at last in awakening without alarming her. She seemed surprised to find that she was ready dressed, but sat up in her bed, and appeared so perfectly composed, that Catherine Seyton, without farther preamble, judged it safe to inform her of the predicament in which they were placed. Mary turned pale, and crossed herself again and again, when she heard the imminent danger in which she had stood. But, like the Ulysses of Homer,

"—Hardly waking yet  
Sprung in her mind the momentary wit,"

and she at once understood her situation, with the dangers and advantages that attended it.

"We cannot do better," she said, after her hasty conference with Catherine, pressing her at the same time to her bosom, and kissing her forehead; "we cannot do better than to follow the scheme so happily devised by thy quick wit and bold affection. Undo the door to the Lady Lochleven—She shall meet her match in art, though not in perfidy. Fleming, draw close the curtain, and get thee behind it—thou art a better fire-woman than an actress; do but breathe heavily, and, if thou wilt, groan slightly, and it will top thy part. Hark! they come. Now, Catherine of Medicis, may thy spirit inspire me, for a cold northern brain is too blunt for this scene!"

Ushered by Catherine Seyton, and stepping as light as she could, the Lady Lochleven was shown into the twilight apartment, and conducted to the side of the couch, where Mary, pallid and exhausted from a sleepless night, and the subsequent agitation of the morning, lay extended so listlessly as might well confirm the worst fears of her hostess.



"Now, God forgive us our sins!" said the Lady of Lochleven, forgetting her pride, and throwing herself on her knees by the side of the bed; "it is too true—she is murdered!"

"Who is in the chamber?" said Mary, as if awaking from a heavy sleep. "Seyton, Fleming, where are you? I heard a strange voice. Who waits?—Call Courcelles."

"Alas! her memory is at Holyrood, though her body is at Lochleven.—Forgive, madam," continued the Lady, "if I call your attention to me—I am Margaret Erskine, of the house of Mar, by marriage Lady Douglas of Lochleven."

"Oh, our gentle hostess," answered the Queen, "who hath such care of our lodgings and of our diet—We cumber you too much and too long, good Lady of Lochleven; but we now trust your task of hospitality is well-nigh ended."

"Her words go like a knife through my heart," said the Lady of Lochleven—"With a breaking heart, I pray your Grace to tell me what is your ailment, that aid may be had, if there be yet time."

"Nay, my ailment," replied the Queen, "is nothing worth telling, or worth a leech's notice—my limbs feel heavy—my heart feels cold—a prisoner's limbs and heart are rarely otherwise—fresh air, methinks, and freedom, would soon revive me; but as the Estates have ordered it, death alone can break my prison-doors."

"Were it possible, madam," said the Lady, "that your liberty could restore your perfect health, I would myself encounter the resentment of the Regent—of my son, Sir William—of my whole friends, rather than you should meet your fate in this castle."

"Alas! madam," said the Lady Fleming, who conceived the time propitious to show that her own address had been held too lightly of; "it is but trying what good freedom may work upon us; for myself, I think a free walk on the greensward would do me much good at heart."

The Lady of Lochleven rose from the bedside, and darted a penetrating look at the elder valedictory. "Are you so evil-disposed, Lady Fleming?"

"Evil-disposed indeed, madam," replied the court dame, "and more especially since breakfast."

"Help! help!" exclaimed Catherine, anxious to break off a conversation which boded her schemes no good; "help! I say, help! the Queen is about to pass away. Aid her, Lady Lochleven, if you be a woman!"

The Lady hastened to support the Queen's head, who, turning her eyes towards her with an air of great languor, exclaimed, "Thanks, my dearest Lady of Lochleven—notwithstanding some passages of late, I have never misconstrued or misdoubted your affection to our house. It was proved, as I have heard, before I was born."

The Lady Lochleven sprang from the floor, on which she had again knelt, and, having paced the

apartment in great disorder, flung open the lattice, as if to get air.

"Now, Our Lady forgive me!" said Catherine to herself. "How deep must the love of sarcasm be implanted in the breasts of us women, since the Queen, with all her sense, will risk ruin rather than rein in her wit!" She then adventured, stooping over the Queen's person, to press her arm with her hand, saying at the same time, "For God's sake, madam, restrain yourself!"

"Thou art too forward, maiden," said the Queen; but immediately added, in a low whisper, "Forgive me, Catherine; but when I felt the hag's murderous hands busy about my head and neck, I felt such disgust and hatred, that I must have said something, or died. But I will be schooled to better behavior—only see that thou let her not touch me."

"Now, God be praised!" said the Lady Lochleven, withdrawing her head from the window, "the boat comes as fast as sail can send wood through water. It brings the leech and a female—certainly, from the appearance, the very person I was in quest of. Were she but well out of this castle, with our honor safe, I would that she were on the top of the wildest mountain in Norway; or I would I had been there myself, ere I had undertaken this trust."

While she thus expressed herself, standing apart at one window, Roland Græme, from the other, watched the boat bursting through the waters of the lake, which glided from its side in ripple and in foam. He, too, became sensible, that at the stern was seated the medical Chamberlain, clad in his black velvet cloak; and that his own relative, Magdalen Græme, in her assumed character of Mother Niceneven, stood in the bow, her hands clasped together, and pointed towards the castle, and her attitude, even at that distance, expressing enthusiastic eagerness to arrive at the landing-place. They arrived there accordingly, and while the supposed witch was detained in a room beneath, the physician was ushered to the Queen's apartment, which he entered with all due professional solemnity. Catherine had, in the meanwhile, fallen back from the Queen's bed, and taken an opportunity to whisper to Roland, "Methinks, from the information of the threadbare velvet cloak and the solemn beard, there would be little trouble in haltering yonder ass. But thy grandmother, Roland—thy grandmother's zeal will ruin us, if she get not a hint to dissemble."

Roland, without reply, glided towards the door of the apartment, crossed the parlor, and safely entered the antechamber; but when he attempted to pass farther, the word "Back! Back!" echoed from one to the other, by two men armed with carbines, convinced him that the lady of Lochleven's suspicions had not, even in the midst of her alarms, been so far lulled to sleep as to omit the precaution of stationing sentinels on her prisoners. He was compelled, therefore, to return to the parlor, or audience-chamber, in which he

found the Lady of the castle in conference with her learned leech.

"A truce with your cant phrase and your solemn foppery, Lundin," in such terms she accosted the man of art, "and let me know instantly, if thou canst tell, whether this lady hath swallowed aught that is less than wholesome?"

"Nay, but, good lady—honored patroness—to whom I am alike bondsman in my medical and official capacity, deal reasonably with me. If this, mine illustrious patient, will not answer a question, saving with sighs and moans—if that other honorable lady will do nought but yawn in my face when I inquire after the diagnostics—and if that other young damsel, who I profess is a comely maiden—"

"Talk not to me of comeliness or of damsels," said the Lady of Lochleven, "I say, are they evil-disposed?—In one word, man, have they taken poison, ay or no?"

"Poisons, madam," said the learned leech, "are of various sorts. There is your animal poison, as the lepus marinus, as mentioned by Dioscorides and Galen—there are mineral and semi-mineral poisons, as those compounded of sublimate regulus of antimony, vitriol, and the arsenical salts—there are your poisons from herbs and vegetables, as the aqua cymbalarie, opium, aconitum, cantharides, and the like—there are also—"

"Now, out upon thee for a learned fool! and I myself am no better for expecting an oracle from such a log," said the Lady.

"Nay, but if your ladyship will have patience—if I knew what food they have partaken of, or could see but the remnants of what they have last eaten—for as to the external and internal symptoms, I can discover naught like; for, as Galen saith in his second book *de Antidotis*—"

"Away, fool!" said the Lady; "send me that hag hither; she shall avouch what it was that she hath given to the wretch Dryfesdale, or the pilnie-winks and thumbikins shall wrench it out of her finger-joints!"

"Art hath no enemy unless the ignorant," said the mortified Doctor; velling, however, his remark, under the Latin version, and stepping apart into a corner to watch the result.

In a minute or two Magdalen Græme entered the apartment, dressed as we have described her at the revel, but with her muffler thrown back, and all affectation of disguise. She was attended by two guards, of whose presence she did not seem even to be conscious, and who followed her with an air of embarrassment and timidity, which was probably owing to their belief in her supernatural power, coupled with the effect produced by her bold and undaunted demeanor. She confronted the Lady of Lochleven, who seemed to endure with high disdain the confidence of her air and manner.

"Wretched woman!" said the Lady, after essaying for a moment to bear her down, before she addressed her, by the stately severity of her

look, "what was that powder which thou didst give to a servant of this house, by name Jaspe. Dryfesdale, that he might work out with it some slow and secret vengeance?—Confess its nature and properties, or, by the honor of Douglas, I give thee to fire and stake before the sun is lower!"

"Alas!" said Magdalen Græme in reply, "and when became a Douglas or a Douglas's man so unfurnished of his means of revenge, that he should seek them at the hands of a poor and solitary woman? The towers in which your captives pine away into unpitied graves, yet stand fast on their foundation—the crimes wrought in them have not yet burst their vaults asunder—your men have still their cross-bows, pistols, and daggers—why need you seek to herbs or charms for the execution of your revenges?"

"Hear me, foul hag," said the Lady Lochleven, "but what avails speaking to thee?—Bring Dryfesdale hither, and let them be confronted together."

"You may spare your retainers the labor," replied Magdalen Græme. "I came not here to be confronted with a base groom, nor to answer the interrogatories of James's heretical leman—I came to speak with the Queen of Scotland—Give place there!"

And while the Lady Lochleven stood confounded at her boldness, and at the reproach she had cast upon her, Magdalen Græme strode past her into the bedchamber of the Queen, and, kneeling on the floor, made a salutation as if, in the Oriental fashion, she meant to touch the earth with her forehead.

"Hail, Princess!" she said, "hail, daughter of many a King, but graced above them all in that thou art called to suffer for the true faith—hail to thee, the pure gold of whose crown has been tried in the seven-times heated furnace of affliction—hear the comfort which God and our Lady send thee by the mouth of thy unworthy servant. But first"—and stooping her head she crossed herself repeatedly, and, still upon her knees, appeared to be rapidly reciting some formula of devotion.

"Seize her, and drag her to the massy-moore!—to the deepest dungeon with the sorceress, whose master, the Devil, could alone have inspired her with boldness enough to insult the mother of Douglas in his own castle!"

Thus spoke the incensed Lady of Lochleven, but the physician presumed to interpose.

"I pray of you, honored madam, she be permitted to take her course without interruption. Peradventure we shall learn something concerning the nostrum she hath ventured, contrary to law and the rules of art, to adhibit to these ladies, through the medium of the steward Dryfesdale."

"For a fool," replied the Lady of Lochleven, "thou hast counselled wisely—I will bridle my resentment till their conference be over."

"God forbid, honored lady," said Doctor Lundin, "that you should suppress it longer—nothing



may more endanger the frame of your honored body; and truly, if there be witchcraft in this matter, it is held by the vulgar, and even by solid authors on Demonology, that three scruples of the ashes of the witch, when she hath been well and carefully burned at a stake, is a grand Catholicon in such matter, even as they prescribe *crinis canis rabidi*, a hair of the dog that bit the patient, in cases of hydrophobia. I warrant neither treatment, being out of the regular practice of the schools; but, in the present case, there can be little harm in trying the conclusion upon this old necromancer and quacksalver—*flat experimentum* (as we say) *in corpore vili*."

"Peace, fool!" said the Lady, "she is about to speak."

At that moment Magdalen Græme arose from her knees, and turned her countenance on the Queen, at the same time advancing her foot, extending her arm, and assuming the mien and attitude of a Sibyl in frenzy. As her gray hair floated back from beneath her coif, and her eye gleamed fire from under its shaggy eyebrow, the effect of her expressive, though emaciated features, was heightened by an enthusiasm approaching to insanity, and her appearance struck with awe all who were present. Her eyes for a time glanced wildly around as if seeking for something to aid her in collecting her powers of expression, and her lips had a nervous and quivering motion, as those of one who would fain speak, yet rejects as inadequate the words which present themselves. Mary herself caught the infection as if by a sort of magnetic influence, and raising herself from her bed, without being able to withdraw her eyes from those of Magdalen, waited as if for the oracle of a Pythoness. She waited not long, for no sooner had the enthusiast collected herself, than her gaze became intensely steady, her features assumed a determined energy, and when she began to speak, the words flowed from her with a profuse fluency, which might have passed for inspiration, and which, perhaps, she herself mistook for such.

"Arise," she said, "Queen of France and of England! Arise, Lioness of Scotland, and be not dismayed though the nets of the hunters have encircled thee! Stoop not to feign with the false ones, whom thou shalt soon meet in the field. The issue of the battle is with the God of armies, but by battle thy cause shall be tried. Lay aside, then, the arts of lower mortals, and assume those which become a Queen! True defender of the only true faith, the armory of heaven is open to thee! Faithful daughter of the Church, take the keys of Saint Peter, to bind and to loose!—Royal Princess of the land, take the sword of Saint Paul, to smite and to shear! There is darkness in thy destiny;—but not in these towers, not under the rule of their haughty mistress, shall that destiny be closed.—In other lands the lioness may crouch to the power of the tigress, but not in her own—not in Scotland shall the Queen of Scotland long remain captive—nor is the fate of the

royal Stewart in the hands of the traitor Douglas. Let the Lady of Lochleven double her bolts and deepen her dungeons, they shall not retain thee—each element shall give thee its assistance ere thou shalt continue captive—the land shall lend its earthquakes, the water its waves, the air its tempests, the fire its devouring flames, to desolate this house, rather than it shall continue the place of thy captivity.—Hear this, and tremble, all ye who fight against the light, for she says it, to whom it hath been assured!"

She was silent, and the astonished physician said, "If there was ever an *Energumene*, or possessed demoniac, in our days, there is a devil speaking with that woman's tongue!"

"Practice," said the Lady of Lochleven, recovering her surprise; "here is all practice and imposture—To the dungeon with her!"

"Lady of Lochleven," said Mary, arising from her bed, and coming forward with her wonted dignity, "ere you make arrest on any one in our presence, hear me but one word. I have done you some wrong—I believed you privy to the murderous purpose of your vassal, and I deceived you in suffering you to believe it had taken effect. I did you wrong, Lady of Lochleven, for I perceive your purpose to aid me was sincere. We tasted not of the liquid, nor are we now sick, save that we languish for our freedom."

"It is avowed like Mary of Scotland," said Magdalen Græme; "and know, besides, that had the Queen drained the draught to the dregs, it was harmless as the water from a sainted spring. Trow ye, proud woman," she added, addressing herself to the Lady of Lochleven, "that I—I—would have been the wretch to put poison in the hands of a servant or vassal of the house of Lochleven, knowing whom that house contained? as soon would I have furnished drug to slay my own daughter!"

"Am I thus bearded in mine own castle?" said the Lady; "to the dungeon with her!—she shall abide what is due to the vender of poisons and practiser of witchcraft!"

"Yet hear me for an instant, Lady of Lochleven," said Mary; "and do you," to Magdalen, "be silent at my command.—Your steward, lady, has by confession attempted my life, and those of my household, and this woman hath done her best to save them, by furnishing him with what was harmless, in place of the fatal drugs which he expected. Methinks I propose to you but a fair exchange when I say I forgive your vassal with all my heart, and leave vengeance to God, and to his conscience, so that you also forgive the boldness of this woman in your presence; for we trust you do not hold it as a crime, that she substituted an innocent beverage for the mortal poison which was to have drenched our cup."

"Heaven forefend, madam," said the Lady, "that I should account that a crime which saved the house of Douglas from a foul breach of honor and hospitality! We have written to our son

touching our vassal's delict, and he must abide his doom, which will most likely be death. Touching this woman, her trade is damnable by Scripture, and is mortally punished by the wise laws of our ancestry—she also must abide her doom."

"And have I then," said the Queen, "no claim on the house of Lochleven for the wrong I have so nearly suffered within their walls? I ask but in requital, the life of a frail and aged woman, whose brain, as yourself may judge, seems somewhat affected by years and suffering."

"If the Lady Mary," replied the inflexible Lady of Lochleven, "hath been menaced with wrong in the house of Douglas, it may be regarded as some compensation, that her complots have cost that house the exile of a valued son."

"Plead no more for me, my gracious Sovereign," said Magdalen Græme, "nor abase yourself to ask so much as a gray hair of my head at her hands. I knew the risk at which I served my Church and my Queen, and was ever prompt to pay my poor life as the ransom. It is a comfort to think, that in slaying me, or in restraining my freedom, or even in injuring that single gray hair, the house, whose honor she boasts so highly, will have filled up the measure of their shame by the breach of their solemn written assurance of safety."—And taking from her bosom a paper, she handed it to the Queen.

"It is a solemn assurance of safety in life and limb," said Queen Mary, "with space to come and go, under the hand and seal of the Chamberlain of Kinross, granted to Magdalen Græme, commonly called Mother Nicneven, in consideration of her consenting to put herself, for the space of twenty-four hours, if required, within the iron-gate of the Castle of Lochleven."

"Knavel!" said the Lady, turning to the Chamberlain, "how dared you grant her such a protection?"

"It was by your Ladyship's orders, transmitted by Randal, as he can bear witness," replied Doctor Lundin; "nay, I am only like the pharmacopoliast, who compounds the drugs after the order of the mediciner."

"I remember—I remember," answered the Lady; "but I meant the assurance only to be used in case, by residing in another jurisdiction, she could not have been apprehended under our warrant."

"Nevertheless," said the Queen, "the Lady of Lochleven is bound by the action of her deputy in granting the assurance."

"Madam," replied the Lady, "the house of Douglas have never broken their safe-conduct, and never will—too deeply did they suffer by such a breach of trust, exercised on themselves, when your Grace's ancestor, the second James, in defiance of the rights of hospitality, and of his own written assurance of safety, pomarded the brave Earl of Douglas with his own hand, and within two yards of the social board, at which he had

just before sat the King of Scotland's honored guest."

"Methinks," said the Queen, carelessly, "in consideration of so very recent and enormous a tragedy, which I think only chanced some six-score years ago, the Douglasses should have shown themselves less tenacious of the company of their sovereigns, than you, Lady of Lochleven, seem to be of mine."

"Let Randal," said the Lady, "take the hag back to Kinross, and set her at full liberty, discharging her from our bounds in future, on peril of her head.—And let your wisdom," to the Chamberlain, "keep her company. And fear not for your character, though I send you in such company; for, granting her to be a witch, it would be a waste of fagots to burn you for a wizard."

"The crest-fallen Chamberlain was preparing to depart; but Magdalen Græme, collecting herself, was about to reply, when the Queen interposed, saying, "Good mother, we heartily thank you for your unfeigned zeal towards our person, and pray you, as our liege-woman, that you abstain from whatever may lead you into personal danger; and, farther, it is our will that you depart without a word of farther parley with any one in this castle. For thy present guerdon, take this small reliquary—it was given to us by our uncle the Cardinal, and hath had the benediction of the Holy Father himself;—and now depart in peace and in silence.—For you, learned sir," continued the Queen, advancing to the Doctor, who made his reverence in a manner doubly embarrassed by the awe of the Queen's presence, which made him fear to do too little, and by the apprehension of his lady's displeasure, in case he should chance to do too much—"for you, learned sir, as it was not your fault, though surely our own good fortune, that we did not need your skill at this time, it would not become us, however circumstanced, to suffer our leech to leave us without such guerdon as we can offer."

With these words, and with the grace which never forsook her, though, in the present case, there might lurk under it a little gentle ridicule, she offered a small embroidered purse to the Chamberlain, who, with extended hand and arched back, his learned face stooping until a physiognomist might have practised the metoposcopic science upon it, as seen from behind betwixt his gambadoes, was about to accept of the professional recompense offered by so fair as well as illustrious a hand. But the Lady interposed, and, regarding the Chamberlain, said aloud, "No servant of our house, without instantly relinquishing that character, and incurring withal our highest displeasure, shall dare receive any gratuity at the hand of the Lady Mary."

Sadly and slowly the Chamberlain raised his depressed stature into the perpendicular attitude, and left the apartment dejectedly, followed by Magdalen Græme, after, with mute but expressive gesture, she had kissed the reliquary with



which the Queen had presented her, and, raising her clasped hands and uplifted eyes towards Heaven, had seemed to entreat a benediction upon the royal dame. As she left the castle, and went towards the quay where the boat lay, Roland Graeme, anxious to communicate with her if possible, threw himself in her way, and might have succeeded in exchanging a few words with her, as she was guarded only by the dejected Chamberlain and his halberdiers, but she seemed to have taken, in its most strict and literal acceptation, the command to be silent which she had received from the Queen; for, to the repeated signs of her grandson, she only replied by laying her finger on her lip. Dr. Lundin was not so reserved. Regret for the handsome gratuity, and for the compulsory task of self-denial imposed on him, had grieved the spirit of that worthy officer and learned mediciner—"Even thus, my friend," said he, squeezing the page's hand as he bade him farewell, "is merit rewarded. I came to cure this unhappy Lady—and I profess she well deserves the trouble, for, say what they will of her, she hath a most winning manner, a sweet voice, a gracious smile, and a most majestic wave of her hand. If she was not poisoned, say, my dear Master Roland, was that fault of mine, I being ready to cure her if she had?—and now I am denied the permission to accept my well-earned honorarium—O Galen! O Hippocrates! is the graduate's cap and doctor's scarlet brought to this pass! *Frustra fatigamus remediis agros!*"

He wiped his eyes, stepped on the gunwale, and the boat pushed off from the shore, and went merrily across the lake, which was dimpled by the summer wind.\*

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

Death distant!—No, alas! he's ever with us,  
And shakes the dart at us in all our actions:  
He lurks within our cup, while we're in health;  
Sits by our sick-bed, mocks our medicines;  
We cannot walk, or sit, or ride, or travel,  
But Death is by to seize us when he lists.

THE SPANISH FATHER.

FROM the agitating scene in the Queen's presence-chamber, the Lady of Lochleven retreated to her own apartment, and ordered the steward to be called before her.

"Have they not disarmed thee, Dryfesdale?" she said, on seeing him enter, accoutred, as usual, with sword and dagger.

"No!" replied the old man; "how should they?—Your ladyship, when you commanded me

\* A romancer, to use a Scottish phrase, wants but a hair to make a tether of. The whole detail of the steward's supposed conspiracy against the life of Mary, is grounded upon an expression in one of her letters, which affirms, that Jasper Dryfesdale, one of the Laird of Lochleven's servants, had threatened to murder William Douglas (for his share in the Queen's escape), and avowed that he would plant a dagger in Mary's own heart.—*CHALMERS' Life of Queen Mary*, vol. i., p. 278.

to ward, said nought of laying down my arms; and, I think none of your menials, without your order, or your son's, dare approach Jasper Dryfesdale for such a purpose.—Shall I now give up my sword to you?—it is worth little now, for it has fought for your house till it is worn down to old iron, like the pantler's old chipping-knife."

"You have attempted a deadly crime—poison under trust."

"Under trust?—hem!—I know not what your ladyship thinks of it, but the world without thinks the trust was given you even for that very end; and you would have been well off had it been so ended as I proposed, and you neither the worse nor the wiser."

"Wretch!" exclaimed the Lady, "and fool as well as villain, who could not even execute the crime he had planned!"

"I bid as fair for it as man could," replied Dryfesdale; "I went to a woman—a witch and a Papist—If I found not poison, it was because it was otherwise predestined. I tried fair for it—but the half-done job may be clouted, if you will."

"Villain! I am even now about to send off an express messenger to my son, to take order how thou shouldst be disposed of. Prepare thyself for death, if thou canst."

"He that looks on death, Lady," answered Dryfesdale, "as that which he may not shun, and which has its own fixed and certain hour, is ever prepared for it. He that is hanged in May will eat no flumes\* in midsummer—so there is the moan made for the old serving-man. But whom, pray I, send you on so fair an errand?"

"There will be no lack of messengers," answered his mistress.

"By my hand, but there will," replied the old man; "your castle is but poorly manned, considering the watches that you must keep, having this charge—There is the warder, and two others, whom you discarded for tampering with Master George; then for the warder's tower, the baillie, the donjon—five men mount each guard, and the rest must sleep for the most part in their clothes. To send away another man, were to harass the sentinels to death—unthrifty misuse for a household. To take in new soldiers were dangerous, the charge requiring tried men. I see but one thing for it—I will do your errand to Sir William Douglas myself."

"That were indeed a resource!—And on what day within twenty years would it be done?" said the Lady.

"Even with the speed of man and horse," said Dryfesdale; "for though I care not much about the latter days of an old serving-man's life, yet I would like to know as soon as may be, whether my neck is mine own or the hangman's."

"Holdest thou thy own life so lightly?" said the Lady.

\* Pancakes.

"Else I had recked more of that of others," said the predestinarian—"What is death?—it is but ceasing to live—And what is living?—a weary return of light and darkness, sleeping and waking, being hungered and eating. Your dead man needs neither candle nor can, neither fire nor feather-bed; and the joiner's chest serves him for an eternal frieze-jerkin."

"Wretched man! believest thou not that after death comes the judgment?"

"Lady," answered Dryfesdale, "as my mistress, I may not dispute your words; but, as spiritually speaking, you are still but a burner of bricks in Egypt, ignorant of the freedom of the saints; for, as was well shown to me by that gifted man, Nicolaus Schœfferbach, who was martyred by the bloody Bishop of Munster, he cannot sin who doth but execute that which is predestined, since—"

"Silence!" said the Lady, interrupting him.—"Answer me not with thy bold and presumptuous blasphemy, but hear me. Thou hast been long the servant of our house—"

"The born servant of the Douglas—they have had the best of me—I served them since I left Lockerbie: I was then ten years old, and you may soon add the threescore to it."

"Thy foul attempt has miscarried, so thou art guilty only in intention. It were a deserved deed to hang thee on the warder's tower; and yet in thy present mind, it were but giving a soul to Satan. I take thine offer, then—Go hence—here is my packet—I will add to it but a line, to desire him to send me a faithful servant or two to complete the garrison. Let my son deal with you as he will. If thou art wise, thou wilt make for Lockerbie so soon as thy foot touches dry land, and let the packet find another bearer; at all rates, look it miscarries not."

"Nay, madam," replied he—"I was born, as I said, the Douglas's servant, and I will be no corbie-messenger in mine old age—your message to your son shall be done as truly by me as if it concerned another man's neck. I take my leave of your honor."

The Lady issued her commands, and the old man was ferried over to the shore, to proceed on his extraordinary pilgrimage. It is necessary the reader should accompany him on his journey, which Providence had determined should not be of long duration.

On arriving at the village, the steward, although his disgrace had transpired, was readily accommodated with a horse, by the Chamberlain's authority; and the roads being by no means esteemed safe, he associated himself with Auchtermuchty, the common carrier, in order to travel in his company to Edinburgh.

The worthy waggoner, according to the established custom of all carriers, stage-coachmen, and other persons in public authority, from the earliest days to the present, never wanted good reasons for stopping upon the road, as often as he would: and the place which had most captivation

for him as a resting-place was a change-house, as it was termed, not very distant from a romantic dell, well known by the name of Keiry-craigs. Attractions of a kind very different from those which arrested the progress of John Auchtermuchty and his wains, still continue to hover round this romantic spot, and none has visited its vicinity without a desire to remain long and to return soon.

Arrived near his favorite *houff*, not all the authority of Dryfesdale (much diminished indeed by the rumors of his disgrace) could prevail on the carrier, obstinate as the brutes which he drove, to pass on without his accustomed halt, for which the distance he had travelled furnished little or no pretence. Old Keltie, the landlord, who has bestowed his name on a bridge in the neighborhood of his quondam dwelling, received the carrier with his usual festive cordiality, and adjourned with him into the house, under the pretence of important business, which, I believe, consisted in their emptying together a mutchkin stoup of usquebaugh. While the worthy host and his guest were thus employed, the discarded steward, with a double portion of moroseness in his gesture and look, walked discontentedly into the kitchen of the place, which was occupied but by one guest. The stranger was a slight figure, scarce above the age of boyhood, and in the dress of a page, but bearing an air of haughty aristocratic boldness and even insolence in his look and manner, that might have made Dryfesdale conclude he had pretensions to superior rank, had not his experience taught him how frequently these airs of superiority were assumed by the domestics and military retainers of the Scottish nobility—"The pilgrim's morning to you, old sir," said the youth; "you come, as I think, from Lochleven Castle—What news of our bonny Queen?—a fairer dove was never pent up in so wretched a dovecot."

"They that speak of Lochleven, and of those whom its walls contain," answered Dryfesdale, "speak of what concerns the Douglas; and they who speak of what concerns the Douglas, do it at their peril."

"Do you speak from fear of them, old man, or would you make a quarrel for them?—I should have deemed your age might have cooled your blood."

"Never, while there are empty-pated coxcombs at each corner to keep it warm."

"The sight of thy gray hairs keeps mine cold," said the boy, who had risen up and now sat down again.

"It is well for thee, or I had cooled it with this holly-rod," replied the steward. "I think thou be'st one of those swashbucklers, who brawl in alehouses and taverns; and who, if words were pikes, and oaths were Andrew Ferraras, would soon place the religion of Babylon in the land once more, and the woman of Moab upon the throne."

"Now, by Saint Bennet of Seyton," said the



youth, "I will strike thee on the face, thou foul-mouthed old railing heretic!"

"Saint Bennet of Seyton!" echoed the steward; "a proper warrant is Saint Bennet's, and for a proper nest of wolf-birds like the Seytons!—I will arrest thee as a traitor to King James and the good Regent.—Ho! John Auchtermuchty, raise aid against the King's traitor!"

So saying, he laid his hand on the youth's collar, and drew his sword. John Auchtermuchty looked in, but, seeing the naked weapon, ran faster out than he entered. Keltie, the landlord, stood by and helped neither party, only exclaiming, "Gentlemen! gentlemen! for the love of Heaven!" and so forth. A struggle ensued, in which the young man, chafed at Dryfesdale's boldness, and unable with the ease he expected, to extricate himself from the old man's determined grasp, drew his dagger, and with the speed of light, dealt him three wounds in the breast and body, the least of which was mortal. The old man sunk on the ground with a deep groan, and the host set up a piteous exclamation of surprise.

"Peace, ye brawling hound!" said the wounded steward; "are dagger-stabs and dying men such rarities in Scotland, that you should cry as if the houses were falling?—Youth, I do not forgive thee, for there is nought betwixt us to forgive. Thou hast done what I have done to more than one—And I suffer what I have seen them suffer—it was all ordained to be thus and not otherwise. But if thou wouldst do me right, thou wilt send this packet safely to the hands of Sir William Douglas; and see that my memory suffer not, as if I would have loitered on mine errand for fear of my life."

The youth, whose passion had subsided the instant he had done the deed, listened with sympathy and attention, when another person, muffled in his cloak, entered the apartment, and exclaimed—"Good God! Dryfesdale, and expiring!"

"Ay, and Dryfesdale would that he had been dead," answered the wounded man, "rather than that his ears had heard the words of the only Douglas that ever was false—but yet it is better as it is. Good my murderer, and the rest of you, stand back a little, and let me speak with this unhappy apostate.—Kneel down by me, Master George—You have heard that I failed in my attempt to take away that Moabitish stumbling-block and her retinue—I gave them that which I thought would have removed the temptation out of thy path—and this, though I had other reasons to show to thy mother and others, I did chiefly purpose for love of thee."

"For the love of me, base poisoner!" answered Douglas, "wouldst thou have committed so horrible, so unprovoked a murder, and mentioned my name with it?"

"And wherefore not, George of Douglas?" answered Dryfesdale. "Breath is now scarce with me, but I would spend my last gasp on this

argument. Hast thou not, despite the honor thou owest to thy parents, the faith that is due to thy religion, the truth that is due to thy king, been so carried away by the charms of this beautiful sorceress, that thou wouldst have helped her to escape from her prison-house, and lent her thine arm again to ascend the throne, which she had made a place of abomination?—Nay, stir not from me—my hand, though fast stiffening, has yet force enough to hold thee—What dost thou aim at?—to wed this witch of Scotland?—I warrant thee, thou mayest succeed—her heart and hand have been oft won at a cheaper rate than thou, fool that thou art, would think thyself happy to pay. But, should a servant of thy father's house have seen thee embrace the fate of the idiot Darnley, or of the villain Bothwell—the fate of the murdered fool, or of the living pirate—while an ounce of ratsbane would have saved thee?"

"Think on God, Dryfesdale," said George Douglas, "and leave the utterance of those horrors—Repent, if thou canst—if not, at least be silent.—Seyton, aid me to support this dying wretch, that he may compose himself to better thoughts, if it be possible."

"Seyton!" answered the dying man; "Seyton! Is it by a Seyton's hand that I fall at last?—There is something of retribution in that—since the house had nigh lost a sister by my deed." Fixing his fading eyes on the youth, he added, "He hath her very features and presence!—Stoop down, youth, and let me see thee closer—I would know thee when we meet in yonder world, for homicides will herd together there, and I have been one." He pulled Seyton's face, in spite of some resistance, closer to his own, looked at him fixedly, and added, "Thou hast begun young—thy career, will be the briefer—ay, thou wilt be met with, and that anon—a young plant never throve that was watered with an old man's blood.—Yet why blame I thee? Strange turns of fate," he muttered, ceasing to address Seyton, "I designed what I could not do, and he has done what he did not perchance design.—Wondrous, that our will should ever oppose itself to the strong and uncontrollable tide of destiny—that we should strive with the stream when we might drift with the current! My brain will serve me to question it no farther—I would Schaefferbach were here—yet why?—I am on a course which the vessel can hold without a pilot.—Farewell, George of Douglas—I die true to thy father's house." He fell into convulsions at these words, and shortly after expired.

Seyton and Douglas stood looking on the dying man, and when the scene was closed, the former was the first to speak. "As I live, Douglas, I meant not this, and am sorry; but he laid hands on me, and compelled me to defend my freedom, as I best might, with my dagger. If he were ten times thy friend and follower, I can but say that I am sorry."

"I blame thee not, Seyton," said Douglas, "though I lament the chance. There is an over-

ruling destiny above us, though not in the sense in which it was viewed by that wretched man, who, beguiled by some foreign mystagogue, used the awful word as the ready apology for whatever he chose to do—we must examine the packet."

They withdrew into an inner room, and remained deep in consultation, until they were disturbed by the entrance of Keltie, who, with an embarrassed countenance, asked Master George Douglas's pleasure respecting the disposal of the body. "Your honor knows," he added, "that I make my bread by living men, not by dead corpses; and old Mr. Dryfesdale, who was but a sorry customer while he was alive, occupies my public room now that he is deceased, and can neither call for ale nor brandy."

"Tie a stone round his neck," said Seyton, "and when the sun is down, have him to the Loch of Ore, heave him in, and let him alone for finding out the bottom."

"Under your favor, sir," said George Douglas, "it shall not be so.—Keltie, thou art a true fellow to me, and thy having been so shall advantage thee. Send or take the body to the chapel at Scotland's wall, or to the church of Ballingry, and tell what tale thou wilt of his having fallen in a brawl with some unruly guests of thine. Auchtermuchty knows nought else, nor are the times so peaceful as to admit close looking into such accounts."

"Nay, let him tell the truth," said Seyton, "so far as it harms not our scheme.—Say that Henry Seyton met with him, my good fellow;—I care not a brass boddle for the feud."

"A feud with the Douglas was ever to be feared, however," said George, displeasure mingling with his natural deep gravity of manner.

"Not when the best of the name is on my side," replied Seyton.

"Alas, Henry, if thou meanest me, I am but half a Douglas in this emprise—half head, half heart, and half hand.—But I will think on one who can never be forgotten, and be all, or more, than any of my ancestors was ever.—Keltie, say it was Henry Seyton did the deed; but beware, not a word of me!—Let Auchtermuchty carry this packet" (which he had resealed with his own signet) "to my father at Edinburgh; and here is to pay for the funeral expenses, and thy loss of custom."

"And the washing of the floor," said the landlord, "which will be an extraordinary job; for blood, they say, will scarcely ever cleanse out."

"But as for your plan," said George of Douglas, addressing Seyton, as if in continuation of what they had been before treating of, "it has a good face; but, under your favor, you are yourself too hot and too young, besides other reasons which are much against your playing the part you propose."

"We will consult the Father Abbot upon it," said the youth. "Do you ride to Kinross to-night?"

"Ay—so I purpose," answered Douglas; "the

night will be dark, and suits a Luffled man.\*—Keltie, I forgot, there should be a stone laid on that man's grave, recording his name, and his only merit, which was being a faithful servant to the Douglas."

"What religion was the man of?" said Seyton; "he used words which make me fear I have sent Satan a subject before his time."

"I can tell you little of that," said George Douglas; "he was noted for disliking both Rome and Geneva, and spoke of lights he had learned among the fierce sectaries of Lower Germany—an evil doctrine it was, if we judge by the fruits. God keep us from presumptuously judging of Heaven's secrets!"

"Amen!" said young Seyton, "and from meeting any encounter this evening."

"It is not thy wont to pray so," said George Douglas.

"No! I leave that to you," replied the youth, "when you are seized with scruples of engaging with your father's vassals. But I would fain have this old man's blood off these hands of mine ere I shed more—I will confess to the Abbot to-night, and I trust to have light penance for ridding the earth of such a miscreant. All I sorrow for is, that he was not a score of years younger—He drew steel first, however, that is one comfort."

#### CHAPTER XXXIV.

Ab, Pedro.—Come you here with mask and lantern,  
Ladder of ropes and other moonshine tools—  
Why, youngster, thou mayst cheat the old duenna,  
Flatter the waiting-woman, bribe the valet;  
But know, that I her father play the Gryphon,  
Tameless and sleepless, proof to fraud or bribe,  
And guard the hidden treasure of her beauty  
THE SPANISH FATHER.

THE tenor of our tale carries us back to the castle of Lochleven, where we take up the order of events on the same remarkable day on which Dryfesdale had been dismissed from the castle. It was past noon, the usual hour of dinner, yet no preparations seemed made for the Queen's entertainment. Mary herself had retired into her own apartment, where she was closely engaged in writing. Her attendants were together in the presence-chamber, and much disposed to speculate on the delay of the dinner; for it may be recollected that their breakfast had been interrupted. "I believe in my conscience," said the page, "that having found the poisoning scheme miscarry, by having gone to the wrong merchant for their deadly wares, they are about to try how famine will work upon us."

Lady Fleming was somewhat alarmed at this

\* Generally, a disguised man; originally one who wears the cloak or mantle muffled round the lower part of the face to conceal his countenance. I have on an ancient piece of iron the representation of a robber thus accoutred, endeavoring to make his way into a house, and opposed by a mastiff, to whom he is vain offers food. The motto is *aperit dona fides*. It is part of a fire-grate said to have belonged to Archbishop Sharpe.