

modating himself; "betwixt your Bess of Bedlam pranks, and your dam's frenzies, a man might live quieter in the devil's ken than here."—And he again resumed the broken jug out of which he had been drinking.

"And wha's this c't?" said the mad woman, dancing up to Jeanie Deans, who, although in great terror, yet watched the scene with a resolution to let nothing pass unnoticed which might be serviceable in assisting her to escape, or informing her as to the true nature of her situation, and the danger attending it.—"Wha's this o't?" again exclaimed Madge Wildfire. "Douce Davie Deans, the auld doited whig body's daughter, in a gipsy's barn, and the night setting in! This is a sight for sair een!—Eh, sirs, the falling off o' the godly!—and the t'other sister's in the Tolbooth of Edinburgh; I am very sorry for her, for my share—it's my mother wusses ill to her, and no me—though maybe I hae as muckle cause."

"Hark ye, Madge," said the taller ruffian, "you have not such a touch of the devil's blood as the hag your mother, who may be his dam for what I know—take this young woman to your kennel, and do not let the devil enter, though he should ask in God's name."

"Ou ay; that I will, Frank," said Madge, taking hold of Jeanie by the arm, and pulling her along; "for it's no for decent Christian young leddies, like her and me, to be keeping the like o' you and Tyburn Tam company at this time o' night. Sae gude-e'en, t'ye, sirs, and mony o' them; and may ye a' sleep till the hangmen wauken ye, and then it will be weel for the country."

She then, as her wild fancy seemed suddenly to prompt her, walked demurely towards her mother, who, seated by the charcoal fire, with the reflection of the red light on her withered and distorted features marked by every evil passion, seemed the very picture of Hecate at her infernal rites; and, suddenly dropping on her knees, said, with the manner of a six years' old child, "Mam-mie, hear me say my prayers before I go to bed, and say God bless my bonny face, as ye used to do lang syne."

"The deil flay the hide o' it to sole his brogues wi'!" said the old lady, aiming a buffet at the supplicant, in answer to her deuteous request.

The blow missed Madge, who, being probably acquainted by experience with the mode in which her mother was wont to confer her maternal benedictions, slipped out of arm's length with great dexterity and quickness. The hag then started up, and, seizing a pair of old fire-tongs, would have amended her motion, by beating out the brains either of her daughter or Jeanie (she did not seem greatly to care which), when her hand was once more arrested by the man whom they called Frank Levitt, who, seizing her by the shoulder, flung her from him with great violence, exclaiming, "What, Mother Damnable—again, and in my sovereign presence!—Hark ye, Madge of Bedlam! set to your hole with your playfellow, or we shall

have the devil to pay here, and nothing to pay him with."

Madge took Levitt's advice, retreating as fast as she could, and dragging Jeanie along with her into a sort of recess, partitioned off from the rest of the barn, and filled with straw, from which it appeared that it was intended for the purpose of slumber. The moonlight shone, through an open hole, upon a pillion, a pack-saddle, and one or two wallets, the travelling furniture of Madge and her amiable mother.—"Now, saw ye e'er in your life," said Madge, "sae dainty a chamber of deas? see as the moon shines down sae caller on fresh strae! There's no a pleasanter cell in Bedlam, for as braw a place it is on the outside.—Were ye ever in Bedlam?"

"No," answered Jeanie faintly, appalled by the question, and the way in which it was put, yet willing to soothe her insane companion, being in circumstances so unhappily precarious, that even the society of this gibbering madwoman seemed a species of protection.

"Never in Bedlam!" said Madge, as if with some surprise.—"But ye'll hae been in the cells at Edinburgh?"

"Never," repeated Jeanie.

"Weel, I think the daft carles the magistrates send naebody to Bedlam but me—thae maun hae an unco respect for me, for whenever I am brought to them, they aye hae me back to Bedlam. But troth, Jeanie" (she said this in a very confidential tone), "to tell ye my private mind about it, I think ye are at nae great loss; for the keeper's a cross-patch, and he maun hae it a' his ain gate, to be sure, or he makes the place waur than hell. I often tell him he's the daftest in a' the house.—But what are they making sic a skirling for?—Deil ane o' them's get in here—it wadna be mensefu! I will sit with my back again the door; it wina be that easy stirring me."

"Madge!"—"Madge!"—"Madge Wildfire!"—"Madge devil! what have ye done with the horse?" was repeatedly asked by the men without.

"He's e'en at his supper, puir thing," answered Madge; "deil an ye were at yours, too, an it were scauding brimstane, and then we wad hae less o' your din."

"His supper!" answered the more sulky ruffian—"What d'ye mean by that?—Tell me where he is, or I will knock your Bedlam brains out!"

"He's in Gaffer Gablewood's wheat-close, an ye maun ken."

"His wheat-close, you crazed jilt!" answered the other, with an accent of great indignation.

"O, dear Tyburn Tam, man, what ill will the blades of the young wheat do to the puir nag?"

"That is not the question," said the robber; "but what the country will say to us tomorrow, when they see him in such quarters?—Go, Tom, and bring him in; and avoid the soft ground, my lad; leave no hoof-track behind you."

"I think you give me always the fag of it, whatever is to be done," grumbled his companion.

"Leap, Laurence, you're long enough," said the other; and the fellow left the barn accordingly, without farther remonstrance.

In the meanwhile, Madge had arranged herself for repose on the straw; but still in a half-sitting posture, with her back resting against the door of the hovel, which, as it opened inwards, was in this manner kept shut by the weight of the person.

"There's mair shifts by stealing, Jeanie," said Madge Wildfire; "though whiles I can hardly get our mother to think sae. Wha wad hae thought but mysell of making a bolt of my ain back-bane? But it's no sae strong as thae that I hae seen in the Tolbooth at Edinburgh. The hammermen of Edinburgh are to my mind afore the world for making stancheons, ring-bolts, fetter-bolts, bars, and locks. And they arena that bad at girdles for carcakes neither, though the Cu'ross hammermen hae the gree for that. My mother had ance a bonny Cu'ross girdle, and I thought to hae baked carcakes on it for my puir wean that's dead and gane nae fair way—but ye maun a' dee, ye ken, Jeanie—You Cameronian bodies ken that brawlies; and ye're for making a hell upon earth that ye may be less unwillin' to part wi' it. But as touching Bedlam that ye were speaking about, I se nae'er recommend it muckle the tae gate or the other, be it right—be it wrang. But ye ken what the sang says." And, pursuing the unconnected and floating wanderings of her mind, she sang aloud—

"In the bonny cells of Bedlam,
Ere I was aye and twenty,
I had hempen bracelets strong
And merry whips, ding-dong,
And prayer and fasting plenty."

"Weel, Jeanie, I am something herse the night, and I canna sing muckle mair; and troth, I think, I am gann to sleep."

She drooped her head on her breast, a posture from which Jeanie, who would have given the world for an opportunity of quiet to consider the means and the probability of her escape, was very careful not to disturb her. After nodding, however, for a minute or two, with her eyes half-closed, the unquiet and restless spirit of her malady again assailed Madge. She raised her head, and spoke, but with a lowered tone, which was again gradually overcome by drowsiness, to which the fatigue of a day's journey on horseback had probably given unwonted occasion.—"I dinna ken what makes me sae sleepy—I amaist never sleep till my bonny Lady Moon gangs till her bed—mair by token, when she's at the full, ye ken, rowing aboon us yonder in her grand silver coach—I have danced to her my lane sometimes for very joy—and whiles dead folk came and danced wi' me—the like o' Jack Porteous, or ony body I had ken'd when I was living—for ye maun ken I was ance dead mysell. Here the poor maniac sang, in a low and wild tone,

"My banes are buried in yon kirkyard
Sae far ayont the sea,
And it is but my blithesome ghaist
Tha's speaking now to thee."

"But, after a', Jeanie, my woman, naebody kens weel wha's living and wha's dead—or wha's gone to Fairyland—there's another question. Whiles I think my puir bairn's dead—ye ken very weel it's buried—but that signifies naething. I have had it on my knee a hundred times, and a hundred till that, since it was buried—and how could that be were it dead, ye ken?—it's merely impossible."—And here, some conviction half-overcoming the reveries of her imagination, she burst into a fit of crying and ejaculation, "Wae's me! wae's me! wae's me!" till at length she moaned and sobbed herself into a deep sleep, which was soon intimated by her breathing hard, leaving Jeanie to her own melancholy reflections and observations.

CHAPTER XXX.

Bind her quickly; or, by this steel,
I'll tell, although I trust for company.
FLETCHER.

THE imperfect light which shone into the window enabled Jeanie to see that there was scarcely any chance of making her escape in that direction; for the aperture was high in the wall, and so narrow, that, could she have climbed up to it, she might well doubt whether it would have permitted her to pass her body through it. An unsuccessful attempt to escape would be sure to draw down worse treatment than she now received, and she therefore resolved to watch her opportunity carefully ere making such a perilous effort. For this purpose she applied herself to the ruinous clay partition, which divided the hovel in which she now was from the rest of the waste barn. It was decayed and full of cracks and chinks, one of which she enlarged with her fingers, cautiously and without noise, until she could obtain a plain view of the old hag and the taller ruffian, whom they called Levitt, seated together beside the decayed fire of charcoal, and apparently engaged in close conference. She was at first terrified by the sight; for the features of the old woman had a hideous cast of hardened and inveterate malice and ill-humor, and those of the man, though naturally less unfavorable, were such as corresponded well with licentious habits, and a lawless profession.

"But I remembered," said Jeanie, "my worthy father's tales of a winter evening, how he was confined with the blessed martyr, Mr. James Renwick, who lifted up the fallen standard of the true reformed Kirk of Scotland, after the worthy and renowned Daniel Cameron, our last blessed banner-man, had fallen among the swords of the wicked at Airmoss, and how the very hearts of the wicked malefactors and murderers, whom they were confined withal, were melted like wax at the sound of their doctrine: and I bethought mysell, that the same help that was w' them in

their strait, wad be wi' me in mine, an I could but watch the Lord's time and opportunity for delivering my feet from their snare; and I minded the Scripture of the blessed Psalmist, whilk he insisteth on, as weel in the forty-second as in the forty-third psalm. 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.'

Strengthened in a mind naturally calm, sedate, and firm, by the influence of religious confidence, this poor captive was enabled to attend to, and comprehend a great part of an interesting conversation which passed betwixt those into whose hands she had fallen, notwithstanding that their meaning was partly disguised by the occasional use of cant terms, of which Jeanie knew not the import, by the low tone in which they spoke, and by their mode of supplying their broken phrases by shrugs and signs, as is usual amongst those of their disorderly profession.

The man opened the conversation by saying, "Now, dame, you see I am true to my friend. I have not forgot that you *planted a chury*,* which helped me through the bars of the Castle of York, and I came to do your work without asking questions; for one good turn deserves another. But now that Madge, who is as loud as Tom of Lincoln, is somewhat still, and this same Tyburn Neddie is shaking his heels after the old nag, why, you must tell me what all this is about, and what's to be done—for d—n me if I touch the girl, or let her be touched, and she with Jim Rat's pass, too."

"Thou art an honest lad, Frank," answered the old woman, "but e'en too good for thy trade; thy tender heart will get thee into trouble. I will see ye gang up Holborn Hill backward, and a' on the word of some silly loon that could never hae rapped to ye had ye drawn your knife across his weasand."

"You may be balked there, old onc," answered the robber; "I have known many a pretty lad cut short in his first summer upon the road, because he was something hasty with his flats and sharps. Besides, a man would fain live out his two years with a good conscience. So, tell me what all this is about, and what's to be done for you that one can do decently?"

"Why, you must know, Frank—but first taste a snap of right Hollands." She drew a flask from her pocket, and filled the fellow a large bumper, which he pronounced to be the right thing.—"You must know, then, Frank—wunna ye mend your hand?" again offering the flask.

"No, no,—when a woman wants mischief from you, she always begins by filling you drunk. D—n all Dutch courage. What I do I will do soberly—I'll last the longer for that too."

"Well, then, you must know," resumed the old woman, without any further attempts at proptiation, "that this girl is going to London."

* Concealed a knife.

Here Jeanie could only distinguish the word sister.

The robber answered in a louder tone, "Fair enough that; and what the devil is your business with it?"

"Business enough, I think. If the b—queers the noose, that silly cull will marry her."

"And who cares if he does?" said the man.

"Who cares, ye donnard Neddie! I care; and I will strangle her with my own hands, rather than she should come to Madge's preferment."

"Madge's preferment! Does your old blind eyes see no farther than that? If he is as you say, d'ye think he'll ever marry a moon-calf like Madge? Ecod, that's a good one—Marry Madge Wildfire!—Ha! ha! ha!"

"Hark ye, ye crack-ropo padder, born beggar, and bred thief!" replied the hag, "suppose he never marries the wench, is that a reason he should marry another, and that other to hold my daughter's place, and she crazed, and I a beggar, and all along of him? But I know that of him will hang him—I know that of him will hang him, if he had a thousand lives—I know that of him will hang—hang—hang him!"

She grinned as she repeated and dwelt upon the fatal monosyllable, with the emphasis of a vindictive fiend.

"Then why don't you hang—hang—hang him?" said Frank, repeating her words contemptuously. "There would be more sense in that, than in wreaking yourself here upon two wenches that have done you and your daughter no ill."

"No ill?" answered the old woman—"and he to marry this jail-bird, if ever she gets her foot loose!"

"But as there is no chance of his marrying a bird of your brood, I cannot, for my soul, see what you have to do with all this," again replied the robber, shrugging his shoulders. "Where there is ought to be got, I'll go as far as my neighbors, but I hate mischief for mischief's sake."

"And would you go nae length for revenge?" said the hag—"for revenge—the sweetest morsel to the mouth that ever was cooked in hell!"

"The devil may keep it for his own eating then," said the robber; "for hang me if I like the sauce he dresses it with."

"Revenge!" continued the old woman; "why, it is the best reward the devil gives us for our time here and hereafter. I have wrought hard for it—I have suffered for it—and I have sinned for it—and I will have it,—or there is neither justice in heaven nor in hell!"

Levitt had by this time lighted a pipe, and was listening with great composure to the frantic and vindictive ravings of the old hag. He was too much hardened by his course of life to be shocked with them—too indifferent, and probably too stupid, to catch any part of their animation or energy. "But, mother," he said, after a pause, "still I say, that if revenge is your wish, you should take it on the young fellow himself."

"I wish I could," she said, drawing in her breath, with the eagerness of a thirsty person while mimicking the action of drinking—"I wish I could—but no—I cannot—I cannot."

"And why not?—You would think little of peaching and hanging him for this Scotch affair.—Rat me, one might have milled the Bank of England, and less noise about it."

"I have nursed him at this withered breast," answered the old woman, folding her hands on her bosom, as if pressing an infant to it, "and, though he has proved an adder to me—though he has been the destruction of me and mine—though he has made me company for the devil, if there be a devil, and food for hell, if there be such a place, yet I cannot take his life.—No, I cannot;" she continued, with an appearance of rage against herself; "I have thought of it—I have tried it—but, Francis Levitt, I canna gang through wi'—Na, na—he was the first bairn I ever nursed—ill I had been—and man can never ken what woman feels for the bairn she has held first to her bosom!"

"To be sure," said Levitt, "we have no experience; but, mother, they say you ha'n't been so kind to other bairns, as you call them, that have come in your way.—Nay, d—n me, never lay your hand on the whittle, for I am captain and leader here, and I will have no rebellion."

The hag, whose first motion had been, upon hearing the question, to grasp the haft of a large knife, now unclosed her hand, stole it away from the weapon, and suffered it to fall by her side, while she proceeded with a sort of smile—"Bairns! ye are joking, lad—wha wad touch bairns? Madge, puir thing, had a misfortune wi' ane—and the t'other"—Here her voice sunk so much that Jeanie, though anxiously upon the watch, could not catch a word she said, until she raised her tone at the conclusion of the sentence—"So Madge, in her daffin', threw it into the Nor'-lock, I trow."

Madge, whose slumbers like those of most who labor under mental malady, had been short, and were easily broken, now made herself heard from her place of repose.

"Indeed, mother, that's a great lie, for I did nae sic thing."

"Hush, thou hellicat devil," said her mother—"By heaven! the other wench will be waking too."

"That may be dangerous," said Frank; and he rose, and followed Meg Murdockson across the floor.

"Rise," said the hag to her daughter, "or I sall drive the knife between the planks into the Bedlam back of thee!"

Apparently she at the same time seconded her threat by pricking her with the point of a knife, for Madge, with a faint scream, changed her place and the door opened.

The old woman held a candle in one hand, and a knife in the other. Levitt appeared behind her, whether with a view of preventing, or assisting

her in any violence she might meditate, could not be well guessed. Jeanie's presence of mind stood her friend in this dreadful crisis. She had resolution enough to maintain the attitude and manner of one who sleeps profoundly, and to regulate even her breathing, notwithstanding the agitation of instant terror, so as to correspond with her attitude.

The old woman passed the light across her eyes, and, although Jeanie's fears were so powerfully awakened by this movement, that she often declared afterwards, that she thought she saw the figures of her destined murderers through her closed eyelids, she had still the resolution to maintain the feint, on which her safety perhaps depended.

Levitt looked at her with fixed attention; he then turned the old woman out of the place, and followed her himself. Having regained the outward apartment, and seated themselves, Jeanie heard the highwayman say, to her no small relief, "She's as fast as if she were in Bedfordshire.—Now, old Meg, d—n me if I can understand a glim of this story of yours, or what good it will do you to hang the one wench and torment the other; but, rat me, I will be true to my friend, and serve ye the way ye like it. I see it will be a bad job; but I do think I could get her down to Surfleet on the Wash, and so on board Tom Moonshine's neat lugger, and keep her out of the way three or four weeks, if that will please ye—But d—n me if any one shall harm her, unless they have a mind to choke on a brace of blue plums.—It's a cruel bad job, and I wish you and it, Meg, were both at the devil."

"Never mind, hinny Levitt," said the old woman; "you are a ruffler, and will have a' your ain gate—She shanna gang to heaven an hour sooner for me; I carena whether she live or die—it's her sister—ay, her sister!"

"Well, we'll say no more about it; I hear Tom coming in. We'll couch a hogshead,* and so better had you." They retired to repose accordingly, and all was silent in this asylum of iniquity.

Jeanie lay for a long time awake. At break of day she heard the two ruffians leave the barn, after whispering to the old woman for some time. The sense that she was now guarded by persons of her own sex gave her some confidence, and irresistible lassitude at length threw her into slumber.

When the captive awakened, the sun was high in heaven, and the morning considerably advanced. Madge Wildfire was still in the hovel which had served them for the night, and immediately bid her good-morning, with her usual air of insane glee. "And d'ye ken, lass," said Madge, "there's queer things chanced since ye hae been in the land of Nod. The constables hae been here, woman, and they met wi' my minnie at the door, and they whirl'd her awa to the Jus-

* Lay ourselves down to sleep.

lice's about the man's wheat.—Dear! thae English churls think as muckle about a blade of wheat or grass, as a Scotch laird does about his mankins and his muir-poots. Now, lass, if ye like, we'll play them a fine jink; we will awa out and take a walk—they will mak unco wark when they miss us, but we can easily be back by dinner time, or before dark night at ony rate, and it will be some frolic and fresh air.—But maybe ye wad like to take some breakfast, and then lie down again? I ken by mysell, there's whiles I can sit wi' my head in my hand the haill day, and havena a word to cast at a dog—and other whiles, that I canna sit still a moment. That's when the folk think me warst, but I am ay canny enough—ye needna be feared to walk wi' me."

Had Madge Wildfire been the most raging lunatic, instead of possessing a doubtful, uncertain, and twilight sort of rationality, varying, probably, from the influence of the most trivial causes, Jeanie would hardly have objected to leave a place of captivity, where she had so much to apprehend. She eagerly assured Madge that she had no occasion for farther sleep, no desire whatever for eating; and, hoping internally that she was not guilty of sin in doing so, she flattered her keeper's crazy humor for walking in the woods.

"It's no a' thegither for that neither," said poor Madge; "but I am judging ye will win the better out o' thae folk's hands; no that they are a' thegither bad folk neither, but they have queer ways wi' them, and I whiles dinna think it has ever been weel wi' my mother and me since we kept sic-like company."

With the haste, the joy, the fear, and the hope of a liberated captive, Jeanie snatched up her little bundle, followed Madge into the free air, and eagerly looked round her for a human habitation; but none was to be seen. The ground was partly cultivated, and partly left in its natural state, according as the fancy of the slovenly agriculturists had decided. In its natural state it was waste, in some places covered with dwarf trees and bushes, in others swamp, and elsewhere firm and dry downs or pasture grounds.

Jeanie's active mind next led her to conjecture which way the high-road lay, whence she had been forced. If she regained that public road, she imagined she must soon meet some person, or arrive at some house, where she might tell her story, and request protection. But, after a glance around her, she saw with regret that she had no means whatever of directing her course with any degree of certainty, and that she was still in dependence upon her crazy companion. "Shall we not walk upon the high-road?" said she to Madge, in such a tone as a nurse uses to coax a child. "It's brawer walking on the road than among thae wild bushes and whins."

Madge, who was walking very fast, stopped at this question, and looked at Jeanie with a sudden and scrutinizing glance, that seemed to indicate complete acquaintance with her purpose. "Aha,

lass!" she exclaimed, "are ye gawn to guide us that gate?—Ye'll be for making your heels save your head, I am judging."

Jeanie hesitated for a moment, on hearing her companion thus express herself, whether she had not better take the hint, and try to outstrip and get rid of her. But she knew not in what direction to fly; she was by no means sure that she would prove the swiftest, and perfectly conscious that in the event of her being pursued and overtaken, she would be inferior to the madwoman in strength. She therefore gave up thoughts for the present of attempting to escape in that manner, and, saying a few words to allay Madge's suspicions, she followed in anxious apprehension the wayward path by which her guide thought proper to lead her. Madge, infirm of purpose, and easily reconciled to the present scene, whatever it was, began soon to talk with her usual diffuseness of ideas.

"It's a dainty thing to be in the woods on a fine morning like this! I like it far better than the town, for there isna a wheen duddie bairns to be crying after ane, as if ane were a world's wonder, just because ane maybe is a thought bonnier and better put-on than their neighbors—though, Jeanie, ye suld never be proud o' braw claihs, or beauty neither—wae's me! they're but a snare.—I anes thought better o' them, and what came o't."

"Are ye sure ye ken the way ye are taking us?" said Jeanie, who began to imagine that she was getting deeper into the woods and more remote from the high-road.

"Do I ken the road?—Wasna I mony a day living here, and what for shouldna I ken the road? I might hae forgotten too, for it was afore my accident; but there are some things ane can never forget, let them try it as muckle as they like."

By this time they had gained the deepest part of a patch of woodland. The trees were a little separated from each other, and at the foot of one of them, a beautiful poplar, was a hillock of moss, such as the poet of Grasmere has described. So soon as she arrived at this spot, Madge Wildfire, joining her hands above her head, with a loud scream that resembled laughter, flung herself all at once upon the spot, and remained lying there motionless.

Jeanie's first idea was to take the opportunity of flight; but her desire to escape yielded for a moment to apprehension for the poor insane being, who, she thought, might perish for want of relief. With an effort, which in her circumstances might be termed heroic, she stooped down, spoke in a soothing tone, and endeavored to raise up the forlorn creature. She effected this with difficulty, and, as she placed her against the tree in a sitting posture, she observed with surprise, that her complexion, usually florid, was now deadly pale, and that her face was bathed in tears. Notwithstanding her own extreme danger, Jeanie was affected by the situation of her companion; and the rather, that, through the whole train of her wavering and inconsistent state of mind and the

conduct, she discerned a general color of kindness towards herself, for which she felt gratitude.

"Let me alone!—let me alone!" said the poor young woman, as her paroxysm of sorrow began to abate—"Let me alone—it does me good to weep. I canna shed tears but maybe be anes or twice a year, and I ay come to wet this turf with them, that the flowers may grow fair, and the grass may be green."

"But what is the matter with you?" said Jeanie—"Why do you weep so bitterly?"

"There's matter enow," replied the lunatic,—"mair than ae puir mind can bear, I trow. Stay a bit, and I'll tell you a' about it; for I like ye, Jeanie Deans—a'body spoke weel about ye when we lived in the Pleasaunts—And I mind ay the drink o' milk ye gae me yon day, when I had been on Arthur's Seat for four-and-twenty hours, looking for the ship that somebody was sailing in."

These words recalled to Jeanie's recollection, that, in fact, she had been one morning much frightened by meeting a crazy young woman near her father's house at an early hour, and that, as she appeared to be harmless, her apprehension had been changed into pity, and she had relieved the unhappy wanderer with some food, which she devoured with the haste of a famished person. The incident, trifling in itself, was at present of great importance, if it should be found to have made a favorable and permanent impression in her favor on the mind of the object of her charity.

"Yes," said Madge, "I'll tell ye a' about it, for ye are a decent man's daughter—Douce Davie Deans, ye ken—and maybe ye'll can teach me to find out the narrow way, and the straight path, for I have been burning bricks in Egypt, and walking through the weary wilderness of Sinai, for lang and mony a day. But whenever I think about mine errors, I am like to cover my lips for shame."—Here she looked up and smiled.—"It's a strange thing now—I hae spoken mair gude words to you in ten minutes, than I wad speak to my mother in as mony years—it's no that I dinna think on them—and whiles they are just at my tongue's end, but then comes the Devil, and brushes my lips with his black wing, and lays his broad black loof on my mouth—for a black loof it is, Jeanie—and sweeps away a' my gude thoughts, and dits up my gude words, and pits a wheen fule sangs and idle vanities in their place."

"Try, Madge," said Jeanie,—"try to settle your mind and make your breast clean, and you'll find your heart easier.—Just resist the devil, and he will flee from you—and mind that, as my worthy father tells me, there is nae devil sae deceitful as our ain wandering thoughts."

"And that's true too, lass," said Madge, starting up; "and I'll gang a gate where the devil daurna follow me; and it's a gate that you will like dearly to gang—but I'll keep a fast haud o' your arm, for fear Apollyon should stride across the path, as he did in the Pilgrim's Progress."

Accordingly she got up, and, taking Jeanie by the arm, began to walk forward at a great pace;

and soon, to her companion's no small joy, came into a marked path, with the meanders of which she seemed perfectly acquainted. Jeanie endeavored to bring her back to the confessional, but the fancy was gone by. In fact the mind of this deranged being resembled nothing so much as a quantity of dry leaves, which may for a few minutes remain still, but are instantly discomposed and put in motion by the first casual breath of air. She had now got John Bunyan's parable into her head, to the exclusion of everything else, and on she went with great volubility.

"Did ye never read the Pilgrim's Progress? And you shall be the woman, Christiana, and I will be the maiden, Mercy—for ye ken Mercy was of the fairer countenance, and the more alluring than her companion—and if I had my little messan dog here, it would be Great-heart, their guide, ye ken, for he was e'en as bauld, that he wad bark at ony thing twenty times his size; and that was e'en the death of him, for he bit Corporal MacAlpine's heels ae morning when they were hauling me to the guard-house, and Corporal MacAlpine killed the bit faithfu' thing wi' his Lochaber axe—dell pike the Highland banes o' him!"

"O fie! Madge," said Jeanie, "you should not speak such words."

"It's very true," said Madge, shaking her head; "but then I maunna think o' my puir bit doggie, Snap, when I saw it lying dying in the gutter. But it's just as weel, for it suffered baith cauld and hunger when it was living, and in the grave there is rest for a' things—rest for the doggie, and my puir bairn, and me."

"Your bairn?" said Jeanie, conceiving that by speaking on such a topic, supposing it to be a real one, she could not fail to bring her companion to a more composed temper.

She was mistaken, however, for Madge colored, and replied with some anger, "My bairn? ay, to be sure, my bairn. Whatfor shouldna I hae a bairn, and lose a bairn too, as weel as your bonny tittle, the Lily of St. Leonard's?"

The answer struck Jeanie with some alarm, and she was anxious to soothe the irritation she had unwittingly given occasion to. "I am very sorry for your misfortune—"

"Sorry? what wad ye be sorry for?" answered Madge. "The bairn was a blessing—that is, Jeanie, it wad hae been a blessing if it hadna been for my mother; but my mother's a queer woman.—Ye see, there was an auld carle wi' a bit land, and a gude clat o' siller besides, just the very picture of old Mr. Feeblemind or Mr. Ready-to-halt, that Great-heart delivered from Slaygood the giant, when he was rifling him and about to pick his bones, for Slaygood was of the nature of the flesheaters—and Great-heart killed Giant Despair too—but I am doubting Giant Despair's come alive again, for a' the story-book—I find him busy at my heart whiles."

"Weel, and so the auld carle," said Jeanie, for she was painfully interested in getting to the truth of Madge's history, which she could not but

suspect was in some extraordinary way linked and entwined with the fate of her sister. She was also desirous, if possible, to engage her companion in some narrative which might be carried on in a lower tone of voice, for she was in great apprehension lest the elevated notes of Madge's conversation should direct her mother or the robbers in search of them.

"And so the auld carle," said Madge, repeating her words—"I wish ye had seen him stoiting about, aff ae leg on to the other, wi' a kind o' dot-and-go-one sort o' motion, as if ilk ane o' his twa legs had belanged to sindry folk—but Gentle George could take him aff brawly—Eh, as I used to laugh to see George gang hip-hop like him!—I dinna ken, I think I laughed heartier then than what I do now, though maybe no just sae muckle."

"And who was Gentle George?" said Jeanie, endeavoring to bring her back to her story.

"O, he was Georgie Robertson, ye ken, when he was in Edinburgh; but that's no his right name neither—His name is—But what is your business wi' his name?" said she, as if upon sudden recollection. "What have ye to do asking for folk's names?—Have ye a mind I should scour my knife between your ribs, as my mother says?"

As this was spoken with a menacing tone and gesture, Jeanie hastened to protest her total innocence of purpose in the accidental question which she had asked, and Madge Wildfire went on, somewhat pacified.

"Never ask folk's names, Jeanie—it's no civil—I hae seen half a dozen o' folk in my mother's at anes, and ne'er ane o' them ca'd the ither by his name; and Daddie Ratton says, it is the most uncivil thing may be, because the baillie bodies are aye asking fashious questions, when ye saw sic a man, or sic a man; and if ye dinna ken their names, ye ken there can be nae mair speer'd about it."

"In what strange school," thought Jeanie to herself, "has this poor creature been bred up, where such remote precautions are taken against the pursuits of justice? What would my father or Reuben Butler think, if I were to tell them there are sic folk in the world? And to abuse the simplicity of this demented creature! Oh, that I were but safe at hame amang mine ain leal and true people! and I'll bless God, while I have breath, that placed me amongst those who live in His fear, and under the shadow of His wing."

She was interrupted by the insane laugh of Madge Wildfire, as she saw a magpie hop across the path.

"See there!—that was the gait my auld joe used to cross the country, but no just sae lightly—he hadna wings to help his auld legs, I trow; but I behaved to have married him for a' that, Jeanie, or my mother wad hae been the dead o' me. But then came in the story of my poor bairn, and my mother thought he wad be deaved

wi' its skirling, and she pat it away in below the bit bourock of turf yonder, just to be out o' the gate; and I think she buried my best wits with it, for I have never been just mysel since. And only think, Jeanie, after my mother had been at a' these pains, the auld doited body Johnny Drotle turned up his nose, and wadna hae aught to say to me! But it's little I care for him, for I have led a merry life ever since, and ne'er a braw gentleman looks at me but ye wad think he was gann to drop off his horse for mere love of me. I have ken'd some o' them put their hand in their pockets, and gie me as muckle as sixpence at a time, just for my weel-faurd face."

This speech gave Jeanie a dark insight into Madge's history. She had been courted by a wealthy snitor, whose addresses her mother had favored, notwithstanding the objection of old age and deformity. She had been seduced by some profligate, and, to conceal her shame and promote the advantageous match she had planned, her mother had not hesitated to destroy the offspring of their intrigue. That the consequence should be the total derangement of a mind which was constitutionally unsettled by giddiness and vanity, was extremely natural; and such was, in fact, the history of Madge Wildfire's insanity.

CHAPTER XXXI.

So free from danger, free from fear,
They crossed the court—right glad they were.

CHRISTABEL.

PURSuing the path which Madge had chosen, Jeanie Deans observed, to her no small delight, that marks of more cultivation appeared, and the thatched roofs of houses, with their blue smoke arising in little columns, were seen embosomed in a tuft of trees at some distance. The track led in that direction, and Jeanie, therefore, resolved, while Madge continued to pursue it, that she would ask her no questions; having had the penetration to observe, that by doing so she ran the risk of irritating her guide, or awakening suspicions, to the impressions of which, persons in Madge's unsettled state of mind are particularly liable.

Madge, therefore, uninterrupted, went on with the wild disjointed chat which her rambling imagination suggested; a mood in which she was much more communicative respecting her own history, and that of others, than when there was any attempt made, by direct queries, or cross-examinations, to extract information on these subjects.

"It's a queer thing," she said, "bat whiles I can speak about the bit bairn and the rest of it, just as if it had been another body's, and no my ain; and whiles I am like to break my heart about it—Had you ever a bairn, Jeanie?"

Jeanie replied in the negative.

"Ay; but your sister had, though—and I ken what came o't too."

"In the name of heavenly mercy," said

Jeanie, forgetting the line of conduct which she had hitherto adopted, "tell me but what became of that unfortunate babe, and—"

Madge stopped, looked at her gravely and fixedly, and then broke into a great fit of laughing—"Aha, lass,—catch me if you can—I think it's easy to gar you trow ony thing.—How suld I ken ony thing o' your sister's wane? Lassies suld hae naething to do wi' weans till they are married—and then a' the gossips and cummers come in and feast as if it were the blithest day in the world.—They say maidens' bairns are weel guided. I wot that wasna true of your tittie's and mine; but these are sad tales to tell.—I maun just sing a bit to keep up my heart—It's a sang that Gentle George made on me lang syne, when I went with him to Lockington wae, to see him act upon a stage, in fine clothes, with the player folk. He might hae dune waur than married me that night as he promised—better wed over the mixen* as over the moor, as they say in Yorkshire—he may gang farther and fare waur—but that's a' ane to the sang,—

'I'm Madge of the country, I'm Madge of the town,
And I'm Madge of the lad I am blithest to own—
The Lady of Beeve in diamonds may shine,
But has not a heart half so lightsome as mine.

'I am Queen of the Wake, and I'm Lady of May,
And I lead the blithe ring round the May-pole to-day;
The wild-fire that flashes so fair and so free,
Was never so bright, or so bonny, as me.'

I like that the best o' a' my sangs," continued the maniac, "because he made it. I am often singing it, and that's maybe the reason folk ca' me Madge Wildfire. I aye answer to the name, though it's no my ain, for what's the use of making a fash?"

"But ye shouldna sing upon the Sabbath at least," said Jeanie, who, amid all her distress and anxiety, could not help being scandalized at the deportment of her companion, especially as they now approached near to the little village.

"Ay! is this Sunday?" said Madge. "My mother leads sic a life, wi' turning night into day, that ane loses a' count o' the days o' the week, and disna ken Sunday frae Saturday. Besides, it's a' your whiggery—in England, folk sings when they like—And then, ye ken, you are Christiana and I am Mercy—and ye ken, as they went on their way they sang."—And she immediately raised one of John Bunyan's ditties:—

"He that is down need fear no fall,
He that is low no pride,
He that is humble ever shall
Have God to be his guide.

'Fulness to such a burthen is
That go on pilgrimage;
Here little, and hereafter bliss,
Is best from age to age.'

"And do ye ken, Jeanie, I think there's much truth in that book, the Pilgrim's Progress. The boy that sings that song was feeding his father's

* A homely proverb, signifying better wed a neighbor than one fetched from a distance.—Mixen s'gnifies dunghill.

sheep in the Valley of Humiliation, and Mr. Great-heart says, that he lived a merrier life, and had more of the herb called heart's-ease in his bosom, than they that wear silk and velvet like me, and are as bonny as I am."

Jeanie Deans had never read the fanciful and delightful parable to which Madge alluded. Bunyan was, indeed, a rigid Calvinist, but then he was also a member of a Baptist congregation, so that his works had no place on David Deans's shelf of divinity. Madge, however, at some time of her life, had been well acquainted, as it appeared, with the most popular of his performances, which, indeed, rarely fails to make a deep impression upon children, and people of the lower rank.

"I am sure," she continued, "I may weel say I am come out of the city of Destruction, for my mother is Mrs. Bat's-eyes, that dwells at Deadman's corner; and Frank Levitt, and Tyburn Tam, they may be likened to Mistrust and Guilt, that came galloping up, and struck the poor pilgrim to the ground with a great club, and stole a bag of silver, which was most of his spending money, and so have they done to many, and will do to more. But now we will gang to the Interpreter's house, for I ken a man that will play the Interpreter right weel; for he has eyes lifted up to heaven, the best of books in his hand, the law of truth written on his lips, and he stands as if he pleaded wi' men—Oh, if I had minded what he had said to me, I had never been the castaway creature that I am!—But it is all over now.—But we'll knock at the gate, and then the keeper will admit Christiana, but Mercy will be left out—and then I'll stand at the door, trembling and crying, and then Christiana—that's you, Jeanie—will intercede for me; and then Mercy—that's me, ye ken—will faint; and then the Interpreter—yes, the Interpreter, that's Mr. Staunton himself—will come out and take me—that's poor, lost, demented me—by the hand, and give me a pomegranate, and a piece of honeycomb, and a small bottle of spirits, to stay my fainting—and then the good times will come back again, and we'll be the happiest folk ye ever saw."

In the midst of the confused assemblage of ideas indicated in this speech, Jeanie thought she saw a serious purpose on the part of Madge, to endeavor to obtain the pardon and countenance of some one whom she had offended; an attempt the most likely of all others to bring them once more into contact with law and legal protection. She, therefore, resolved to be guided by her while she was in so hopeful a disposition, and act for her own safety according to circumstances.

They were now close by the village, one of those beautiful scenes which are so often found in merry England, where the cottages, instead of being built in two direct lines on each side of a dusty high-road, stand in detached groups, interspersed not only with large oaks and elms, but with fruit-trees, so many of which were at this time in flourish, that the grove seemed enameled

with their crimson and white blossoms. In the centre of the hamlet stood the parish church, and its little Gothic tower, from which at present was heard the Sunday chime of bells.

"We will wait here until the folk are a' in the church—they ca' the kirk a church in England, Jeanie, be sure you mind that—for if I was gaun forward among them, a' the gaitts o' boys and lasses wad be crying at Madge Wildfire's tail, the little hell-rakers! and the beadle would be as hard upon us as if it was our fault. I like their skirling as ill as he does, I can tell him; I'm sure I often wish there was a het peat down their throats when they set them up that gate."

Conscious of the disorderly appearance of her own dress after the adventure of the preceding night, and of the grotesque habit and demeanor of her guide, and sensible how important it was to secure an attentive and patient audience to her strange story from some one who might have the means to protect her, Jeanie readily acquiesced in Madge's proposal to rest under the trees, by which they were still somewhat screened, until the commencement of service should give them an opportunity of entering the hamlet without attracting a crowd around them. She made the less opposition, that Madge had intimated that this was not the village where her mother was in custody, and that the two squires of the pad were absent in a different direction.

She sat herself down, therefore, at the foot of an oak, and by the assistance of a placid fountain, which had been dammed up for the use of the villagers, and which served her as a natural mirror, she began—no uncommon thing with a Scottish maiden of her rank—to arrange her toilette in the open air, and bring her dress, soiled and disordered as it was, into such order as the place and circumstances admitted.

She soon perceived reason, however, to regret that she had set about this task, however decent and necessary, in the present time and society. Madge Wildfire, who, among other indications of insanity, had a most overweening opinion of those charms, to which, in fact, she had owed her misery, and whose mind, like a raft upon a lake, was agitated and driven about at random by each fresh impulse, no sooner beheld Jeanie begin to arrange her hair, place her bonnet in order, rub the dust from her shoes and clothes, adjust her neck-handkerchief and mittans, and so forth, than with imitative zeal she began to bedizen and trick herself out with shreds and remnants of beggary finery, which she took out of a little bundle, and which, when disposed around her person, made her appearance ten times more fantastic and apish than it had been before.

Jeanie groaned in spirit, but dared not interfere in a matter so delicate. Across the man's cap or riding hat which she wore, Madge placed a broken and soiled white feather, intersected with one which had been shed from the train of a peacock. To her dress, which was a kind of riding-habit, she stitched, pinned, and otherwise secured,

a large furbelow of artificial flowers, all crushed, wrinkled, and dirty, which had at first bedecked a lady of quality, then descended to her Abigail, and dazzled the inmates of the servants'-hall. A tawdry scarf of yellow silk, trimmed with tinsel and spangles, which had seen as hard service, and boasted as honorable a transmission, was next flung over one shoulder, and fell across her person in the manner of a shoulder-belt, or baldrick. Madge then stripped off the coarse ordinary shoes, which she wore, and replaced them by a pair of dirty satin ones, spangled and embroidered to match the scarf, and furnished with very high heels. She had cut a willow switch in her morning's walk, almost as long as a boy's fishing-rod. This she set herself seriously to peel, and when it was transformed into such a wand as the Treasurer or High Steward bears on public occasions, she told Jeanie that she thought they now looked decent, as young women should do upon the Sunday morning, and that, as the bells had done ringing, she was willing to conduct her to the Interpreter's house.

Jeanie sighed heavily, to think it should be her lot on the Lord's day, and during kirk-time too, to parade the street of an inhabited village with so very grotesque a comrade; but necessity had no law, since, without a positive quarrel with the madwoman, which, in the circumstances, would have been very unadvisable, she could see no means of shaking herself free of her society.

As for poor Madge, she was completely elated with personal vanity, and the most perfect satisfaction concerning her own dazzling dress, and superior appearance. They entered the hamlet without being observed, except by one old woman, who, being nearly "high-gravel blind," was only conscious that something very fine and glittering was passing by, and dropped as deep a reverence to Madge as she would have done to a countess. This filled up the measure of Madge's self-approbation. She minced, she ambled, she smiled, she simpered, and waved Jeanie Deans forward with the condescension of a noble *chaperone*, who has undertaken the charge of a country miss on her first journey to the capital.

Jeanie followed in patience, and with her eyes fixed on the ground, that she might save herself the mortification of seeing her companion's absurdities; but she started when, ascending two or three steps, she found herself in the churchyard, and saw that Madge was making straight for the door of the church. As Jeanie had no mind to enter the congregation in such company, she walked aside from the pathway, and said in a decided tone, "Madge, I will wait here till the church comes out—you may go in by yourself if you have a mind."

As she spoke these words, she was about to seat herself upon one of the grave-stones.

Madge was a little before Jeanie when she turned aside; but, suddenly changing her course, she followed her with long strides, and, with every feature inflamed with passion, overtook and

seized her by the arm. "Do ye think, ye ungrateful wretch, that I am gaun to let you sit down upon my father's grave? The deil settle ye doun, if ye dinna rise and come into the Interpreter's house, that's the house of God, wi' me, but I'll rive every dud aff your back!"

She adapted the action to the phrase; for with one clutch she stripped Jeanie of her straw bonnet and a handful of her hair to boot, and threw it up into an old yew tree, where it stuck fast. Jeanie's first impulse was to scream, but conceiving she might receive deadly harm before she could obtain the assistance of any one, notwithstanding the vicinity of the church, she thought it wiser to follow the madwoman into the congregation, where she might find some means of escape from her, or at least be secured against her violence. But when she meekly intimated her consent to follow Madge, her guide's uncertain brain had caught another train of ideas. She held Jeanie fast with one hand, and with the other pointed to the inscription on the grave-stone, and commanded her to read it. Jeanie obeyed, and read these words:—

"THIS MONUMENT WAS ERRECTED TO THE MEMORY OF DONALD MURDOCKSON OF THE KING'S XXVIL, OR CAMERONTIAN RESIDENT, A SINCERE CHRISTIAN, A BRAVE SOLDIER, AND A FAITHFUL SERVANT, BY HIS GRATEFUL AND SORROWING MASTER, ROBERT STAUNTON."

"It's very weel read, Jeanie; it's just the very words," said Madge, whose ire had now faded into deep melancholy, and with a step which, to Jeanie's great joy, was uncommonly quiet and mournful, she led her companion towards the door of the church.

It was one of those old-fashioned Gothic parish churches which are frequent in England, the most cleanly, decent, and reverential places of worship that are, perhaps, anywhere to be found in the Christian world. Yet, notwithstanding the decent solemnity of its exterior, Jeanie was too faithful to the directory of the presbyterian kirk to have entered a prelatial place of worship, and would, upon any other occasion, have thought that she beheld in the porch the venerable figure of her father waving her back from the entrance, and pronouncing in a solemn tone, "Cease, my child, to hear the instruction which causeth to err from the words of knowledge." But in her present agitating and alarming situation, she looked for safety to this forbidden place of assembly, as the hunted animal will sometimes seek shelter from imminent danger in the human habitation, or in other places of refuge most alien to its nature and habits. Not even the sound of the organ, and of one or two flutes which accompanied the psalmody, prevented her from following her guide into the chancel of the church.

No sooner had Madge put her foot upon the pavement, and become sensible that she was the object of attention to the spectators, than she resumed all the fantastic extravagance of deportment which some transient touch of melancholy had banished for an instant. She swam, rather

than walked up the centre isle, dragging Jeanie after her, whom she held fast by the hand. She would, indeed, have fain slipped aside into the pew nearest to the door, and left Madge to ascend in her own manner and alone to the high places of the synagogue; but this was impossible, without a degree of violent resistance, which seemed to her inconsistent with the time and place, and she was accordingly led in captivity up the whole length of the church by her grotesque conductress, who, with half-shut eyes, a prim smile upon her lips, and a mincing motion with her hands, which corresponded with the delicate and affected pace at which she was pleased to move, seemed to take the general stare of the congregation, which such an exhibition necessarily excited, as a high compliment, and which she returned by nods and half-courtesies to individuals amongst the audience, whom she seemed to distinguish as acquaintances. Her absurdity was enhanced in the eyes of the spectators by the strange contrast which she formed to her companion, who, with dishevelled hair, downcast eyes, and a face glowing with shame, was dragged, as it were, in triumph after her.

Madge's airs were at length fortunately cut short by her encountering in her progress the looks of the clergyman, who fixed upon her a glance, at once steady, compassionate, and admonitory. She hastily opened an empty pew which happened to be near her, and entered, dragging in Jeanie after her. Kicking Jeanie on the shins, by way of hint that she should follow her example, she sunk her head upon her hand for the space of a minute. Jeanie, to whom this posture of mental devotion was entirely new, did not attempt to do the like, but looked round her with a bewildered stare, which her neighbors, judging from the company in which they saw her, very naturally ascribed to insanity. Every person in their immediate vicinity drew back from this extraordinary couple as far as the limits of their pew permitted; but one old man could not get beyond Madge's reach, ere she had snatched the prayer-book from his hand, and ascertained the lesson of the day. She then turned up the ritual, and, with the most overstrained enthusiasm of gesture and manner, showed Jeanie the passages as they were read in the service, making, at the same time, her own responses so loud as to be heard above those of every other person.

Notwithstanding the shame and vexation which Jeanie felt in being thus exposed in a place of worship, she could not and durst not omit rallying her spirits so as to look around her, and consider to whom she ought to appeal for protection so soon as the service should be concluded. Her first ideas naturally fixed upon the clergyman, and she was confirmed in the resolution by observing that he was an aged gentleman, of a dignified appearance and deportment, who read the service with an undisturbed and decent gravity, which brought back to becoming attention those younger members of the congregation who

had been disturbed by the extravagant behavior of Madge Wildfire. To the clergyman, therefore, Jeanie resolved to make her appeal when the service was over.

It is true she felt disposed to be shocked at his surplice, of which she had heard so much, but which she had never seen upon the person of a preacher of the word. Then she was confused by the change of posture adopted in different parts of the ritual, the more so as Madge Wildfire, to whom they seemed familiar, took the opportunity to exercise authority over her, pulling her up, and pushing her down with a bustling assiduity, which Jeanie felt must make them both the objects of painful attention. But, notwithstanding these prejudices, it was her prudent resolution, in this dilemma, to imitate as nearly as she could what was done around her. The prophet, she thought, permitted Naaman the Syrian to bow even in the house of Rimmon. Surely if I, in this straight, worship the God of my fathers in mine own language, although the manner thereof be strange to me, the Lord will pardon me in this thing.

In this resolution she became so much confirmed, that, withdrawing herself from Madge as far as the pew permitted, she endeavored to evince, by serious and composed attention to what was passing, that her mind was composed to devotion. Her tormentor would not long have permitted her to remain quiet, but fatigue overpowered her, and she fell fast asleep in the other corner of the pew.

Jeanie, though her mind in her own despite sometimes reverted to her situation, compelled herself to give attention to a sensible, energetic, and well-composed discourse, upon the practical doctrines of Christianity, which she could not help approving, although it was every word written down and read by the preacher, and although it was delivered in a tone and gesture very different from those of Boanerges Stormheaven, who was her father's favorite preacher. The serious and placid attention with which Jeanie listened, did not escape the clergyman. Madge Wildfire's entrance had rendered him apprehensive of some disturbance, to provide against which, as far as possible, he often turned his eyes to the part of the church where Jeanie and she were placed, and became soon aware that, although the loss of her head-gear, and the awkwardness of her situation, had given an uncommon and anxious air to the features of the former, yet she was in a state of mind very different from that of her companion. When he dismissed the congregation, he observed her look around with a wild and terrified look, as if uncertain what course she ought to adopt, and noticed that she approached one or two of the most decent of the congregation, as if to address them, and then shrunk back timidly, on observing that they seemed to skun and to avoid her. The clergyman was satisfied there must be something extraordinary in all this, and as a benevolent man as well as a good Christian pastor, he resolved to inquire into the matter more minutely.

CHAPTER XXXII.

—There governed in that year
A stern, stout churl—an angry overseer.

CHABBA

WHILE Mr. Staunton, for such was this worthy clergyman's name, was laying aside his gown in the vestry, Jeanie was in the act of coming to an open rupture with Madge.

"We must return to Mummer's barn directly," said Madge; "we'll be over late, and my mother will be angry."

"I am not going back with you, Madge," said Jeanie, taking out a guinea, and offering it to her; "I am much obliged to you, but I mean gang my ain road."

"And me coming a' this way out o' my gate to pleasure you, ye ungratefu' cutty," answered Madge; "and me to be brained by my mother when I gang hame, and a' for your sake!—But I will gar ye as good—"

"For God's sake," said Jeanie to a man who stood beside them, "keep her off!—she is mad." "Ey, ey," answered the boor; "I hae some guess of that, and I trow thou be'st a bird of the same feather.—Howsomever, Madge, I redd thee keep hand off her, or I'se lend thee a whister-poop."

Several of the lower class of the parishioners now gathered round the strangers, and the cry arose among the boys, that "there was a-going to be a fite between mad Madge Murdockson and another Bess of Bedlam." But while the fry assembled with the humane hope of seeing as much of the fun as possible, the laced cocked-hat of the beadle was discerned among the multitude, and all made way for that person of awful authority. His first address was to Madge.

"What's brought thee back again, thou silly donnot, to plague this parish? Hast thou brought ony more bastards wi' thee to lay to honest men's doors? or does thou think to burden us with this goose, that's as gare-brained as thyself, as if rates were no up enow? Away wi' thee to thy thief of a mother she's fast in the stocks at Barkston town-end—Away wi' ye out o' the parish, or I'se be at ye with the ratan."

Madge stood sulky for a minute; but she had been too often taught submission to the beadle's authority by ungentle means, to feel courage enough to dispute it.

"And my mother—my puir ould mother, is in the stocks at Barkston!—This is a' your wyte Miss Jeanie Deans; but I'll be upsides wi' you, as sure as my name's Madge Wildfire—I mean Murdockson—God help me, I forget my very name in this confused waste."

So saying, she turned upon her heel, and went off, followed by all the mischievous imps of the village, some crying, "Madge, canst thou tell thy name yet?" some pulling the skirts of her dress, and all to the best of their strength and ingenuity, exercising some new device or other to exasperate her into frenzy.

Jeanie saw her departure with infinite delight, though she wished, that, in some way or other, she could have requited the service Madge had conferred upon her.

In the meantime, she applied to the beadle to know, whether "there was any house in the village where she could be civilly entertained for her money, and whether she could be permitted to speak to the clergyman?"

"Ay, ay, we'se ha' reverend care on thee; and I think," answered the man of constituted authority, "that, unless thou answer the Rector all the better, we'se spare thy money, and gie thee lodging at the parish charge, young woman."

"Where am I to go then?" said Jeanie, in some alarm.

"Why, I am to take thee to his Reverence, in the first place, to gie an account o' thyself, and to see thou comena to be a burden upon the parish."

"I do not wish to burden any one," replied Jeanie; "I have enough for my own wants, and only wish to get on my journey safely."

"Why that's another matter," replied the beadle, "and if it be true—and I think thou dost not look so polrumpious as thy playfellow yonder—Thou wouldst be a mettle lass enow, an thou wert enog and snod a bit better. Come thou away, then—the Rector is a good man."

"Is that the minister," said Jeanie, who preached—

"The minister? Lord help thee! What kind o' presbyterian art thou!—Why, 'tis the Rector—the Rector's sell, woman, and there isna the like o' him in the county, nor the four next to it. Come away—away with thee—we maunna bide here."

"I am sure I am very willing to go to see the minister," said Jeanie; "for, though he read his discourse, and wore that surplice as they call it here, I canna but think he must be a very worthy God-fearing man, to preach the root of the matter in the way he did."

The disappointed rabble, finding that there was like to be no farther sport, had by this time dispersed, and Jeanie, with her usual patience, followed her consequential and surly, but not brutal, conductor towards the rectory.

This clerical mansion was large and commodious, for the living was an excellent one, and the advowson belonged to a very wealthy family in the neighborhood, who had usually bred up a son or nephew to the church, for the sake of inducting him, as opportunity offered, into this very comfortable provision. In this manner the rectory of Willingham had always been considered as a direct and immediate appanage of Willingham-hall; and as the rich baronets to whom the latter belonged had usually a son, or brother, or nephew, settled in the living, the utmost care had been taken to render their habitation not merely respectable and commodious, but even dignified and imposing.

It was situated about four hundred yards from the village and on a rising ground which sloped

gently upward, covered with small enclosures, or closes, laid out irregularly, so that the old oaks and elms, which were planted in hedge-rows, fell into perspective, and were blended together in beautiful irregularity. When they approached nearer to the house, a handsome gateway admitted them into a lawn, of narrow dimensions, indeed, but which was interspersed with large sweet-chestnut trees and beeches, and kept in handsome order. The front of the house was irregular. Part of it seemed very old, and had, in fact, been the residence of the incumbent in Romish times. Successive occupants had made considerable additions and improvements, each in the taste of his own age, and without much regard to symmetry. But these incongruities of architecture were so graduated and happily mingled, that the eye, far from being displeased with the combinations of various styles, saw nothing but what was interesting in the varied and intricate pile which they displayed. Fruit-trees displayed on the southern wall, outer stair-cases, various places of entrances, a combination of roofs and chimneys of different ages, united to render the front, not indeed beautiful or grand, but intricate, perplexed, or, to use Mr. Price's appropriated phrase, picturesque. The most considerable addition was that of the present Rector, who, "being a bookish man," as the beadle was at the pains to inform Jeanie, to augment, perhaps, her reverence for the person before whom she was to appear, had built a handsome library and parlor, and no less than two additional bedrooms.

"Mony men would ha' scrupled such expense," continued the parochial officer, "seeing as the living man go as it pleases Sir Edmund to will it; but his Reverence has a canny bit land of his own, and need not look on two sides of a penny."

Jeanie could not help comparing the irregular yet extensive and commodious pile of building before her, to the "Manse," in her own country, where a set of penurious heritors, professing all the while the devotion of their lives and fortunes to the presbyterian establishment, strain their inventions to discover what may be nipped, and clipped, and pared from a building which forms but a poor accommodation even for the present incumbent, and, despite the superior advantage of stone-masonry, must, in the course of forty or fifty years, again burden their descendants with an expense, which, once liberally and handsomely employed, ought to have freed their estates from a recurrence of it for more than a century at least.

Behind the Rector's house the ground sloped down to a small river, which, without possessing the romantic vivacity and rapidity of a northern stream, was, nevertheless, by its occasional appearance through the ranges of willows and poplars that crowned its banks, a very pleasing accompaniment to the landscape. "It was the best trouting stream," said the beadle, whom the patience of Jeanie, and especially the assur-