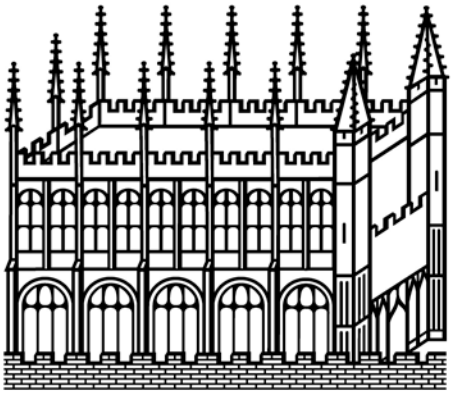

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ST JOHNSTOUN;

OR,

JOHN, EARL OF GOWRIE.

Shall crimes and tyrants cease but with the world?
CAMPBELL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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ST JOHNSTOUN;

OR,

JOHN, EARL OF GOWRIE.

CHAPTER I.

Love is, or ought to be, our greatest bliss;
Since every other joy, how dear soever,
Gives way to that, and we leave all for love.
At the imperious tyrant's lordly call,
In spite of reason and restraint we come—
Leave kindred, parents, and our native home.

Lady Jane Gray.

VERY different, however, were the sensations that assailed the graver and more thinking mind of the Earl, from those which actuated his brother, and the load seemed only taken from off the spirits of the Master, to be laid upon his own. For although, in the letter he had received from the King on his

arrival at Falkland, he could not precisely shape to himself any definite cause of alarm, yet he felt a degree of agitation, when his thoughts recurred to it, that seemed a presentiment of evil, which in reality was yet to be singularly fulfilled. This unaccountable impression on his nervous system, gave rise to a restlessness, which frequently prompted him to walk forth by himself, that his musings might be undisturbed. It was in a mood of oppressive sadness, that the Earl strolled forth one evening toward the North Inch; the town having two plains, one on the north, and another on the south, called Inches, (or islands,) from their being partly surrounded by water.

The sun was hidden, but the sultriness of the evening was not relieved by this circumstance; for there was a sulphureous smell in the air, and a red and lurid tint in the low hanging clouds, that gave promise of a coming storm.

The Earl looked around him, and observed that all living creatures within his sight

appeared impressed with this expectation.—The women, on the beautiful level green he was approaching, were busily employed in running from one quarter to another, gathering up the snow-white clothes, which they had been drying on its flowery turf; while the sheep and cattle in the adjacent fields were seeking shelter from the hedges and trees, and standing in groups on the leeward side of every little knoll or bush. The sea-fowl were winging their way to their native rocks in the ocean, and uttering, as they flew, the wildest and most discordant cries; and the tide being full to the brim, the river, on whose brink Gowrie was walking, began first to be agitated, and then to toss its waves with a turbulent and troubled motion, while large drops of rain descended to meet its upturned broken waters. The Earl was about to take shelter from the storm in a deserted shieling, occasionally used by the salmon fishers, when he discerned, amid the louring obscurity, that a small boat had left the opposite side of the Tay, and was

struggling through the river toward him; anxiety to see it reach the shore in safety kept him, in spite of the violence of the rain, rooted to the spot. The billows now rolled like those of the ocean, but still the sturdy strokes of the rower impelled the boat nearer and nearer, until, in a few minutes, it reached the shore where he stood, and he observed that it contained, besides the boatman, two women, who, from their gowns of Dundee grey serge, and their party-coloured worsted plaids, drawn over their heads, appeared to be peasants. They sat in the stern, each with a small light basket on her arm, covered with green leaves, and secured with twigs, in the way that gardeners pack fruit.

The tide, as we have said before, was up, and the depth of the water at the edge of the bank considerable. The boatman stood up, and flinging a rope on shore, called loudly to the Earl to catch and hold it; Gowrie immediately seized the rope, and exerting his powerful strength, kept the boat

near enough to the edge for the man to leap ashore. But at this moment, a thunder cloud burst just above them, and they were enveloped in a sheet of fire, which completely stunned them for a second. But during that second, the women had started both to the same side of the little bark, and overset it; and when Gowrie recovered his sight, which the glare of the lightning had dazzled, he saw that one of them was clinging to its side, and that the other, kept up by her clothes, was still floating at a few yards distance. They were his fellow creatures, and helpless women, thus exposed to instant death, and with the rapidity of the lightning which had caused the accident, the Earl leaped into the river, and notwithstanding the encumbrance of his dress, swam toward her who was farthest off, and dragging her by the garments to the side, delivered her to the boatman, who was calling loudly to the other woman to hold on a little longer, while he seated the one he had received upon the grass, where the exertions

of the Earl speedily placed the other by her side; not, however, in a sitting posture like her companion, for animation was entirely suspended. The Earl knew not what to do.—They were at a considerable distance from any house, and the rain still continued to pour down in torrents. He bethought himself of the shieling, in which it had been his intention to shelter himself; and taking the lifeless girl (for such she appeared,) in his arms, he desired the boatman to follow with the other, and carried her to the hut. Placing her on the ground, he sat down himself, and raising her head, laid it on his knee, while he disencumbered it of the plaid, that being fastened under the chin had slipped forward and covered her face, and which having thrown back, he shed the long dark tresses of hair from her pale countenance. But who shall describe the tumult of mingled sensations which overwhelmed him, when he beheld in the peasant girl his beloved Agnes, —her whom he had believed separated from him by the wide ocean, and mourned as lost

to him forever! He could scarcely believe himself awake; and in the bewilderment of the moment, bent his eyes upon her face again and again, fearing it was not in very deed herself, but some one nearly resembling her, for whom his disordered brain was mistaking her. But when Alice presently crawled to the hut, and began to bewail her mistress, he seemed to awake as from a trance, to view the sad reality before him; for he began to dread that she would never more recover from the long and deep swoon into which weakness and terror had thrown her. Alice opened the gown of Lady Agnes at the collar, and rubbed her hands and arms, which lay extended by her sides in utter lifelessness, while the Earl wrung the water from her hair. At length they perceived her bosom begin to heave with returning breath, and though slowly recovering, her fair and perfect features were slightly tinged with the hues of life. Alice no sooner saw that her lady was recovering, than she cried out,—"Do not leave her, my lord,

and I will quickly return with assistance;" and darting from the hut without waiting for an answer, seemingly no way impeded by her heavy and dripping garments, she flew toward the town. Agnes was not yet sensible, and her respiration was for some time a continuation of long-drawn sighs. The Earl raised her head from his knee, and placed it on his bosom, with all the tenderness of a parent who watches over a sick child; and impelled by an irresistible impulse, he imprinted a long and fervent kiss upon her forehead. In defiance of all the perplexing circumstances that surrounded him, his heart had never experienced such joy; nay, he seemed almost to regret the return of that strength that removed her from his arms, and at length restored her to a full consciousness of her situation. But during the struggle of uncertain existence, words too unequivocal, and an unrepressed transport that diffused itself over her languid features, had answered to his passionate avowal, that he lived alone for her, and

betrayed beyond recal the secret she had hitherto so cautiously guarded.—They now irrevocably pledged their faith to each other —and their state, for ten short minutes, resembled that of disembodied spirits united in paradise; for no thought of worldly care entered into hearts filled with the bliss of reciprocal love.—But this could not last; and the very questions it was so natural for Gowrie to ask in explanation of her sudden appearance, and her answers thereto, served in some measure to dispel the illusion, and bring her back to reason. It caused to mingle also with the Earl's tender and happy sensations,—uncontrolled indignation at the base conduct of Rathsay, and the unworthy advantage the King had taken of his royal authority. These thoughts were, however, put to flight for a short time by the return of Alice, accompanied by her step-mother, a decent matronly woman, who brought with her a change of clothes for Lady Agnes, and a cordial, of which she made her swallow a small quantity. The Earl had learned from

Agnes, that it was at the dwelling of this woman she had taken up her abode; and he quitted her to allow the change of her wet clothes, while he returned to his own house for the same purpose. And taking leave of him for a time, it may not be amiss to relate here what had passed at Craigmillar, after the visit of the Jesuit.

The day so wished for by Lady Agnes and her handmaiden drew to a close, during which, Alice had again and again practised the part assigned her, and reiterated her assurances of success. At length, when the dusky light was scarce sufficient to admit of distinguishing objects, Alice blew loudly and shrilly on the silver call, which summons was instantly answered by the appearance of their customary attendant; who had no sooner entered, than she set up a sound of wailing and lamentation.

"Do but come with me to the inner apartment," she said, addressing the man, and thrusting the lamp into his hand, while she dragged him toward her lady's room,

which, supposing her dead, or that some accident had happened to her, he entered precipitately without question; but he had no sooner done so, than, in the twinkling of an eye, she closed the door on him, and drove the large wooden bolt into its staple. Then running to the largest of the trunks, which, as before related, were placed in the outward room, she, in a tone of almost unintelligible and hysterical joy, beseeched her mistress to rise quickly from her hiding place, and accompany her down stairs. Nor was there occasion to repeat her request; for the furious strokes at the door, which threatened every moment to beat it from its hinges, and the deep oaths of the man they had thus deceived, sounded too terrific to be heard with composure; and after taking the precaution of locking the outward door, Lady Agnes and Alice flew down the stairs of the Keep, and seeing no one in the adjoining court, which was perfectly still and silent, they rapidly crossed it to the same small door in the wall, by which they

had formerly entered, and which they had scarce passed, when they recognized the voice, and, through the gloom of the evening, the tall figure of the same person who at first led them to the Castle. Lady Agnes, appalled with the dread of some farther plot against her liberty, drew back, and hastily seized Alice by the arm. The man perceiving this retrograde motion, and comprehending its meaning, advanced toward them.

"Fear nothing, lady," he said, "I perceive you know me to be the person who accompanied you hither, but I then acted under the same delusion with yourself. I now have my instructions direct from the lips of your sure friend at Holyrood, and you are consequently safe under my guidance. Come on, then, in God's name, and do not let us lose this favourable hour to make good our retreat before the moon rises."—Thus encouraged and admonished, those whom he addressed gave him no farther occasion to complain of the tardiness of their movements, for the joy of her escape lent strength

and speed to the limbs of Agnes; and leaning on the arm of Alice, she had reached the outward gate of the Hostel at Loretto, before the moon emerged from her ocean bed.

Laurence (for it was he) stopped here. "Lady," said he to Agnes, "I must crave your pardon for desiring you to remain in this place till I have first entered the house, from which I shall return instantly to conduct you in."

Our Lady of Loretto, who had never been favoured with a visit from her hopeful son since his return to Scotland, save when he made some rapacious demand upon her purse, now no sooner set her eyes upon him, than she exclaimed, vehemently, "What! are ye there again? I thought ye would hae waited till our removal, and contented ye wi' the possession of the hostel, without making mair demands upon its scanty profits; but I tell ye it is vain; not another coin can——"

"Nay, mother," returned Laurence, very unceremoniously clapping his hand upon

her mouth to prevent further remonstrance, "understand me; I come now rather to put money into thy pocket, than to take it out; for here are two forlorn damsels at the door of this thy domicil, who will make thee handsome acquittal, if thou wilt assign them for this night the little matted chamber on the left of the ingle, and wait upon them thyself, without exposing them to the view of thy domestics."

"What!" returned his mother, while her eyes flashed indignation, "hae ye nae other place to harbour sic as I'll warrant me these be, but ye maun disgrace the house o' your ain mother? Out upon them! for if they dare to enter here, I will presently have them expelled the house. Ay, I will wait upon them with a murrain! begone, therefore, directly, and come not here again until ye have a better errand."

"Well, then," replied Laurence, "you will lose your share of the profit which would accrue from their finding shelter here, for you are altogether mistaken in them;

they are friends of Master Austin, who, for some private reason of their own, desire to remain here in quiet till the evening of to-morrow; and for whose accommodation, he promises liberally to satisfy you."

"If that, in sooth, be the case, let them come in," said our landlady, greatly mollified by the mention of profit, which she never allowed to slip through her fingers, when she could attain it in an honest way. —"Let them come in," she continued, "and I will make them welcome." And she instantly repaired herself to the gate, and ushered Lady Agnes and her maid into the small apartment, mentioned particularly by Laurence; because in it there was a concealed door that led into an underground part of the old building, which had been left open in case of its ever being converted into cellars; which, however, never having happened, the circumstance of its existence was known to few. Laurence had instructed Lady Agnes on her way where

to find this door, in case of her being traced to the hostel.

Our landlady, after conducting them to this chamber, speedily made her re-appearance with such refreshments as their walk, and the comparative lightness of their hearts, rendered very acceptable.

" Ye look unco wearied, puir young thing," said our hostess, addressing Lady Agnes, " and the best thing for that is a gude saft bed, and a wee soup o' sack posset.—There's the bed," said she, pointing to one which appeared perfectly neat and comfortable, " and ye shall get the posset as soon as I hae prepared it," she continued, giving way to her natural good humour, on perceiving the artless expression of Lady Agnes's countenance, and the decent appearance of Alice. The former thanked her for her civilities, but declined giving her the trouble of preparing the posset; at the same time assuring her, rest and quiet was all she required.

"And quietness ye will be sure o'," replied our hostess; "for my gudeman, being a minister o' the blessed evangel, allows of nae brangling here; and, in sooth, when we gie up the hostel, we are like to be sair missed on that account, for his reverence aye gars peace be observed in this house."

"Are you about to leave this inn then?" said Lady Agnes, merely that she might answer something to her loquacious landlady.

"Yes," she replied, assuming a look of gratified pride as she spoke—"our gude King, whae is pleased to think very muckle o' his reverence, has been pleased to appoint him to the Kirk o' Cauldbraes, a' the way in Angus-shire, and we are to flit there some weeks after this; and mair fitting it will be, I trow, for his reverence to live in his ain manse than in an hostel; yet I'm fearing," she continued, "it winna be sae profitable a concern as this, though this is no what it has been neither within thae

few months past, for a reason it serves naething to mention; and it will, nae doubt, be a hantle easier life, forby the credit o' it, and sae I maun jeest reconcile mysel to it. —But," she continued, "I see ye are sair wearying for your bed, and sae gude rest and gude night;" and she left them.

"Draw the bolt in the door, good Alice," said Lady Agnes, "while we examine the outlet the young man informed us of; for, though my apprehensions of being traced are not great, I shall sleep the sounder for knowing that concealment is in our power."

They accordingly soon discovered the door to which they were directed; but though this place of retreat kept their minds easy during that night and the following day, they fortunately had no occasion to avail themselves of it, for they passed quietly away; and on the next evening Laurence arrived. But he was so unlike himself, that his mother did not at first recognize him. He had exchanged the gay clothing of the Earl's servitor for a pea-

sant's suit of Dundee grey; and his broad brimmed beaver, and black feather, for a huge blue bonnet, and appeared now as a peasant of the better class. He carried a bundle in his hand, which privately delivering to his mother, he informed her that it contained a suit of rustic clothing for each of the young women, who had accompanied him on the previous night, in which he desired her to say he requested they would array themselves as expeditiously as they could, that they might be ready to depart with him.

"I dinna ken," said his mother in reply, after he had again enjoined secrecy with regard to her guests,—"I dinna ken what a' this hidlings is about; but I ken if it were na for honest douce Maister Austin, I wad hae naething to do wi' it."

She however carried the bundle to Lady Agnes, and delivered her son's message. The request it conveyed was quickly complied with; and after bestowing some re-

muneration on our hostess, and enjoining secrecy as to what had passed, Lady Agnes soon found herself seated with Alice in the boat of Nicol Partan, the bow being occupied by Laurence; and was, after a short time, landed on the shore of Fife, at a spot less frequented by passengers than the common landing places; whence, travelling sometimes on foot, and sometimes on horseback, they at length, on the third day, reached St Johnstoun, where it had been settled by the Jesuit, that Lady Agnes was to take up her abode in the house of the stepmother of Alice, where she was most respectfully, as well as kindly and hospitably received; passing among the neighbours of Dame Norton as a distant relation of Alice, who, being in delicate health, had come thither for a change of air.

The repose which Lady Agnes enjoyed in this neat and comfortable cottage, would have been complete, but for the suspense she suffered with regard to what might be

the determination of her uncle on his arrival, respecting her future prospects, and the dread she experienced lest Rathsay should by any means discover the place of her retreat. This last fear operated so forcibly on her for a short time after her arrival at St Johnstoun, as to keep her a prisoner within doors. She was, however, soon prevailed on, by the entreaties of Alice and her step-mother, to indulge herself in short walks, which, from perceiving that her changed attire prevented her from being an object of curiosity, she was emboldened gradually to extend to the beautiful environs of the town. For so completely were both mistress and maid metamorphosed by their coarse woollen dress, and their faces concealed by their tartan screens, that they at length feared no discovery.

In these strolls, Agnes had several times seen Gowrie, and her steps were frequently directed to the South Inch, in the neighbourhood of his residence; for the sentiment which possessed the heart of the for-

lorn Agnes, occupied it, in defiance of reason, to the exclusion of every other, save devotion, with which it mingled. Nor could Alice be insensible to the different expression of her countenance when she chanced to see him, even at a distance, and when her tardy feet were forced to retread the homeward path without having caught a glimpse of him. The present residence of Lady Agnes, though soothing to her feelings, was, however, highly dangerous to her resolves; for the praises of the Earl, which daily sounded in her ears, and the occasional sight of him, joined with a secret conviction that the shade of sadness which she observed to overcast his brow, was occasioned by sorrow for her absence, served to fill her mind with gratified feelings, to make her shrink from too severe a scrutiny of her sentiments, and even shudder at the idea of being removed from a place where she was surrounded by these perilous indulgences, and to prepare her mind in some measure for that discovery of her sentiments which

took place in the shieling on her return from a garden, which lay on the opposite side of the Tay, where she had purchased two small baskets of fruit, one of which, to suit her appearance, was carried by her, when first seen in the boat by Gowrie.

CHAPTER II.

——All the jolly chase is here,
With hawk, and horse, and hunting spear;
Hounds are in their couples yelling,
Hawks are whistling, horns are knelling.

SCOTT.

As the time approached which the Jesuit anticipated would enable him to accomplish the principal object of his mission to Scotland, he became daily more anxious for its completion. All things appeared to favour his cruel and crafty design; and he was half tempted to think that the circumstance of the King's having so opportunely discovered the locket, had been directed by some over-ruling power to facilitate the execution of his intentions. Nor did he pause to consider, that, if such agency were in-

deed employed, it could only be by the Prince of Darkness. And indeed it may be doubted if the certainty of this, and of his own everlasting perdition, would have had power sufficient to prevent him from following the path he had marked out for himself, with firm and undaunted steps; so completely seared and hardened was his perverted mind against all that could throw any obstacle in the way of his grasping ambition.

Numberless were the schemes that had suggested themselves to the Jesuit, since his arrival in Scotland, for the destruction of Gowrie. He had constantly, however, rejected all which did not involve the fame as well as the life of that nobleman, foreseeing, as our readers already know, that his death, by the hand of an assassin, would not answer the purpose intended, of reflecting dishonour on the Presbyterians, whom he so strenuously supported. No sooner, then, did he hear of the King's being outvoted at Montrose, and the part which

Gowrie had taken there, than he began to form hopes that his Majesty would shortly be glad to embrace any opportunity of ridding himself of one who was likely to prove so troublesome in thwarting his plans of church government. In this belief he had been confirmed, since Rathsay, finding him so expert at intrigue, and so useful to himself in the affair of Lady Agnes, had treated him with confidence, and repeated to him the King's sentiments with respect to the Earl. It had, therefore, been his constant study to contrive means by which the displeasure of James might be augmented; and the discovery of the locket coming so opportunely, had given him, as has been seen, an advantage of introducing himself to a share of notice and favour, which he continued to turn to the best account, by constantly prompting Rathsay to work upon the mind of his Majesty, by such surmises and dark inuendoes, as were at any time sufficient to poison it, and make him abet

the most sanguinary deeds, although far from being by nature of a cruel disposition. For this purpose, Rathsay had not failed to represent to the King, that the popularity of the Earl, and the state he took upon him, were sapping the very foundation of his rights, and paving, in all probability, the way for a treasonable usurpation of his throne, which, failing James and his issue, the Earl of Gowrie had some pretensions to inherit by female descent. These representations, in which Herbal joined, whose former love of the Lady Beatrix was now turned to the most deadly hate of herself and her family, added fuel to fire in the breast of James, already burning with rage against the Master of Ruthven, and disposed him to agree to any plan which might secure his death, and involve Gowrie in such disgrace as would put him also within his power.

Such a scheme being, therefore, suggested by the Jesuit to Rathsay, he, in concert with Herbal, unfolded it to the King. But as all the information at present necessary

to our story will be learned from the report of Rathsay to the Jesuit, after his interview with his Majesty, wherein the method of proceeding was finally settled, we shall give it in his own words.

"You have been with the King, on the subject of our cogitations then," said the Jesuit, when he met Rathsay to learn the result.

"Bravo!" replied the King's page; "all goes well; 'though faith it was more than I expected when first I mentioned to him the part it would be necessary for him to take in the drama. He shewed himself abundantly willing that those whom his suspicious nature hath, with our help, magnified into traitors of the most atrocious kind, should suffer the penalty of their crimes, but flinched devilishly at the thoughts of being present when it was inflicted, lest his royal person should be subjected to injury. I have, however, with much difficulty overcome his fears, by impressing on his mind the impossibility of such mischance from the

numbers acting on his side; and, by shewing him the plan of the apartment with which you furnished me, where the matter is to be brought to an issue, and making him understand that his being placed in the closet during the transaction, will remove him from every chance of risk.—And now for a trip to Strathearn to concert measures with the Laird of Tullibrandon, who will be too glad of a hint, that, by being at St Johnstoun on the day appointed, he may assist in the ruin of Gowrie; and through him we shall secure his brother, Sir Mungo Munroe, and his kinsman, Sir David, who, on the promise of dividing Gowrie's estates in Perthshire among them, and the prospect of obtaining the influence in the town of St Johnstoun, and the shire of Perth, which they have so long coveted, will be ready to risk life and property."

"You did not fail to remind his Majesty, I hope," said the Jesuit, "that the attainting of Gowrie will supersede the necessity of paying the sum advanced by the late Earl

while treasurer, for which his Majesty hath become bound ?"

" I did not neglect it, believe me; but there was small occasion to remind him of that, which, if I mistake not," returned Rathsay, " is a leading argument with his Majesty for the Earl's destruction, though a secret one; for where think you is he to come by the sum of forty-eight thousand pounds to make good his promise? Yet he would have us to suppose that it is justice alone that prompts him to acquiesce in the death of Ruthven, not having it in his power to attain this end in a public manner; and feeling himself justified by the belief, which he is so fond of repeating, that sovereigns are accountable to God alone for their decisions."

" This tells well," replied the Jesuit; " but will he not waver, think you, before the time arrives ?"

" Why," returned Rathsay, " no woman certainly was ever more timorous or undecided; but I shall endeavour to leave him as little time for change of sentiment as

possible. I will straight to Strathearn, and though, for fear of accidents, I will not unfold the whole of the plot to the Laird of Tullibrandon, letting him only understand that his assistance may become necessary; yet will I allow his Majesty to imagine him master of his designs, and in that supposition he dares not retract, lest the laird and his kindred should, when disappointed, divulge the secret."

"Do you in reality feel any fear of trusting the whole matter, then, to the Laird of Tullibrandon?" inquired the Jesuit.

"Why, I believe there would not be much cause for apprehension, considering his hatred of the Ruthvens," returned Rathsay; "but it is as well to deal cautiously; for I always keep in view, that after Huntly rendered our Royal Master that piece of service upon the Earl of Murray, he found it difficult enough to keep his neck out of the noose. I shall therefore content myself with promising the Laird, in the King's name, the bribes I have already mentioned,

provided he will, as I said before, be at St Johnstoun on the day fixed, to assist his Majesty in aught wherein his services may be required. In the mean time, I leave Herbal at the King's elbow, who is, I think, possessed by the very fiend of malice, and who will not suffer his purpose to cool.—Farewell, then, Master Austin, whom I expect to see, for the assistance you are to render on this occasion, shortly promoted to that rank thy merits deserve.—Farewell, I say—We meet at Falkland three days hence, when, if Gowrie knows aught of the hiding-place of Lady Agnes, I will shortly wring the secret from his hypocritical heart."

An hour had not expired after this conversation, when Rathsay was on his way to Falkland, where, the better to colour his proceedings, the King gave him certain commands to see executed before his own arrival, and from which place he had easy communication with the Laird of Tullibrandon, who, as he had justly anticipated, entered eagerly into the engagement required of him.

On the King's arrival at Falkland, therefore, he found all his agents in readiness to act their parts, and waiting alone for the moment pointed out to accomplish their purpose. Here the Jesuit had an interview with Laurence, and informing him that the time was now arrived for him to exert himself, that he might obtain the promised rewards, he demanded of him that he should possess himself of the key of a certain turret in the Earl's mansion at St Johnstoun, in order to deliver it to him on the day appointed, which Laurence engaged to accomplish, without fear of failure.

On the night preceding the day mentioned in the invitation to Gowrie by his Majesty, as that on which the hunting of the buck was to take place in the extensive park of Falkland, a numerous assemblage of noblemen and gentlemen arrived at the little village of the same name, that they might be in readiness for the next day's diversion, where every house and shed was occupied by themselves, their servants, and horses.

It was here that the Master of Ruthven, accompanied by two servants, alighted between five and six o'clock on the morning of that day, in a scene of bustling preparation highly animating to a true sportsman, and which could not have failed to inspire him with his accustomed glee, had his mind not so anxiously dwelt upon the probable reception he was to meet from his Majesty; and had he not felt an uneasy sense of degradation, annexed to the circumstance of remaining at a small public house in the village with his horses and attendants, instead of occupying his former accommodations at the Palace, which, however, his high spirit would not allow him to attempt, unless he had first been reinstated in that place he had before held in his Majesty's household and favour, and which he could not sometimes avoid secret misgivings he should never again occupy.

Immediately on his arrival at the hamlet, the Master of Ruthven despatched a servant to give him warning of his Majesty's

movements. Meanwhile, he paced the road in front of the village, marking what people of note were there, from the liveries worn by their servants, who were waiting in front of the cottages the coming forth of their masters; and ever and anon he cast a look toward the direction in which his scout must return.

It was while thus impatiently waiting his arrival, that there issued from the door of one of the low dormitories a young lad, of at most sixteen years of age, and of uncommonly handsome features, whose tall and slender figure appeared, from having shot up too rapidly, rather to be deficient in strength than grace; his movements indicating that elegance and freedom of motion, which, although not always the concomitant of superior rank, is yet, where it appears, a pretty certain indication of it. There was a something indescribably prepossessing in his boyish countenance, which seemed to promise a future character of manliness, candour, and generosity. He began, on emerging from the hut, to examine a beautiful young filly, which

a servant was leading backward and forward before the door, and which, it could not escape the most careless eye, belonged to himself, from the air of triumph with which he viewed her and her showy new trappings,—for it was with that peculiar look of gratification, which seldom, in boyhood, fails to accompany a consciousness of possessing such things as assimilate boys with men. No sooner, however, did he perceive the Master of Ruthven, than he stopped short in the middle of some direction he was giving the servant, and starting off, bounded toward him. He grasped the Master's hand, and shaking it heartily, while his sloe-black eyes sparkled with joy, he exclaimed,—

"How rejoiced I am to see you!—But where is my lord your brother?—I hope he is to be at the hunt to-day?"

The negative which was pronounced by the Master in answer to this interrogation, appeared considerably to damp the spirit of the young gentleman.

"Now that is really vexatious,—for here

have I come all the way from Edinburgh to see him, having a favour to beg of him, and he is not coming, after all!"

"As I imagine it somewhat in which you are much interested," said Ruthven, "you had better go forward to St Johnstoun with me after the hunt, and speak with my brother there."

"Ah! I hardly know how I shall accomplish that," replied the young man, "for I must be to-morrow on my road to Berwickshire; my father writes to me that my pedagogue at Gunsgreen is complaining grievously of my absence, and, as he appears somewhat angry, I ought to have gone this day. I cannot, however, return without seeing my Lord of Gowrie, so I must e'en to St Johnstoun, and trust to my mare to bring me as far back on my road to-night—and she'll do it, I'll warrant her, without so much as a turned hair.—Do but look at her—Is she not a beautiful creature?"

The Master of Ruthven highly delighted the animated youth by assuring him that

he had highly admired his horse before he knew to whom it belonged, and that he expected to see him cut a conspicuous figure in the day's sport.

"Why, I hope she will neither disgrace me nor herself," said he; "but I never hunted her before, and, to speak sooth, I don't care how seldom I am on her back, for all I like her so well, for I want to go abroad where you were, to finish my studies, and that's what I am going to the Earl about. If he will but persuade my father, I am sure he will consent, and my lord has promised to come to Fast Castle the first time he is at Dirlton."

Ruthven took it upon him to assure his young friend of his brother's good offices with his father, and perceiving at some distance the servant returning from the Palace, he bade him a hasty farewell for the time, and walking forward to meet his messenger, learned that his Majesty was come forth to the stable-yard.

The reception he was to meet had hour-

ly, as the time drew near for putting it to the test, become more problematical in the ideas of the Master; and so keen were the indignant emotions which took possession of his mind, when he considered that his disgrace might be just about to be consummated by the public expression of his Majesty's displeasure before the assemblage of people now to witness their interview, that it is probable his internal agitation would have been infinitely less had his steps then been tending to the scaffold. Yet nothing of this was visible in his outward appearance as he approached the King, who was about to mount his horse;—on the contrary, when he was within a few yards of the spot where his Majesty stood, who evidently saw him, and awaited his coming up, his step became more firm, his head more erect, and there was a proud dignity in his eye and on his brow, that appeared to belong to a different class of character from his own, and was not its natural expression, but brought there apparently by his fixed determination not to

flinch from the worst that might befall. He had only cast one glance on the countenance of the King, however, when this expression, which touched the very verge of defiance, instantly faded from his own,—for the face of Majesty was dressed in the most encouraging smiles, and, overcome by this apparent generosity, so little anticipated at the moment, he approached his Sovereign with an obeisance more respectful and lower than it had ever been. This was universally remarked, and differently construed, by the lookers on, according to the ideas of each; but by Rathsay, who stood, with Herbal, near to the King, it was beheld with marked disdain.

"See," said he, contemptuously, to his companion, "how his spirit crouches and humbles itself to solicit favour."

"Yes, yes," replied Herbal, "the prostration is sufficiently profound, but I trust ere night to see it lower.—I have hitherto furnished him with amusement; but this day the fabric of vain-glory they have rear-

ed for themselves shall fall upon them, and bury them in its ruins—Yea, even," he continued, while his countenance darkened with fiendish malice, "though I should myself perish with them!"

"Be not so vehement," said Rathsay, "lest we should be overheard; stick but to your resolution, however, as firmly as I shall adhere to mine, and, with the assistance of that fellow Austin, who, if I mistake not, is not unversed in such affairs, we may promise ourselves complete success."

The Master of Ruthven, without regarding any who stood near, addressed himself to his Majesty.—"I am charged," he said, "with the Earl my brother's dutiful apologies to your Highness for not accepting your Majesty's gracious invitation to join in this day's sport, being prevented therefrom by the earnest entreaties of two respectable citizens of St Johnstoun, who have prayed him to be present at the marriages of their daughters, which take place there this morning."

"Na, my lord is right," said James, with the greatest condescension, at the same time laying his hand familiarly on the shoulder of Ruthven, and withdrawing him step by step from the hearing of those around—"my lord is right thus to humour the honest citizens, and we heartily accept o' his excuses; but, as he hasna come to us, methinks sma' persuasion wad carry us to visit him, after the sports o' the day are ended."

Ruthven, though somewhat surprised at this sudden and unexpected proposal, was yet so delighted thereby, that he answered his Majesty eagerly, that if he would condescend to accept such welcome as the shortness of the notice allowed, he would answer for his brother and himself, that never visit of a sovereign would be more gratefully received.

It was therefore settled by the King, that his Majesty should repair to St Johnstoun after the hunt, accompanied, on account of the suddenness of the visit, by only a small

number of his retinue; and he continued, without reverting in the slightest manner to what had so recently passed at Holyrood, to converse with the Master on subjects connected with the day's diversion, till all assembled round him became weary of the protracted conference, as deferring their amusement.

At length his Majesty's horse was ordered forward, who, by his impatient pawings, curvettings, archings of his neck, and tossing to and fro of the lofty plume of feathers fixed in his forehead band, seemed not to have been the one of all the assemblage that best endured the delay. His Majesty had no sooner taken his seat in the saddle, than Ruthven despatched one of his attendants to inform the Earl of Gowrie of his Majesty's intended visit, accompanied by a few followers, as also of the gracious reception he had met from the King; accompanying this message with earnest injunctions to the man to urge his horse to the greatest speed, that all the preparation might

be made for the Royal Guest which the time would permit.

While the King and Ruthven had been holding conference, the Jesuit and old Heronshaw were waiting in readiness to follow his Majesty, at a distance too great to overhear their conversation, yet near enough to mark their countenances and gestures, which they viewed with very different feelings.

"Is na that the Maister o' Ruthven comin up sae crousely to the King?" demanded the old man, as he espied him when he first appeared in the space in front of the stables.

The Jesuit answered in the affirmative, and remarked how well he seemed to be received.

"De'il, but it's ill believing a' bruits!—for," he continued, lowering his voice with his accustomed caution, although no one was within hearing, "there was a sough gaed here amang the King's followers that he was clean decourted; and I began to misdoubt me that the puir laddy had some ene-

my about the King's hand that had shotten him out, because he aiblins wadna dance after their pipe, or mayhap, what wad hae been a waur story, faith! that he had been ower muckle taen notice o' wi' the Queen's Majesty, like the bonny yearl that we ance spak about, ye mind."

"Yes, I remember me of your story, and the ballad you repeated to me," replied the Jesuit.

"Weel, but I'm right glad to see it is na sae," continued Heronshaw; "for, look, d'ye see that—how kindly the King's Majesty is clappin his shouther?"

The Jesuit did see it, and viewed the caress of James as one of the most consummate pieces of dissimulation he had ever witnessed during his extensive experience in the crooked paths of deceit; and he continued, as long as the conversation between them lasted, to watch every turn of the King's features, every false smile, and every look of hollow encouragement, with that proud contempt with which the grand Ene-

my of mankind may be supposed to view the mean and pitiful arts of the subordinate spirits of evil that entrap his victims; and so blind was he to his own demerits, that he felt proud of the distinction he drew between himself and the Sovereign he now looked upon.

"Paltry dissembler!" said he to himself; "well hath Henry of France denominated thee, 'Captain of Arts, and Clerk of Arms,' who can thus stoop, with sovereign power at thy command, to dress thy face in borrowed smiles to one, whose imputed offence were sufficient to rouse the veriest coward to open vengeance! It is not thus my soul would stoop—No!—once possessed of kingly power, I had in this been a Herod, and my wife a Mariamne!"

As he looked from the King on Ruthven, some touch of pity seemed to vibrate at his heart.

"There thou standest," he thought, "poor victim! strong in opening manhood, with the promise of many coming years in

thine athletic limbs, thy countenance ruddy with health, and bright with renovated hope; but that goodly fabric must be levelled with the dust, that out of it I may raise a structure that shall make the world admire!"

Here the Jesuit's thoughts were interrupted by the vehement exclamations of old Heronshaw.—"Odds my life!" said he, "I wish his Majesty wad tak some other time for his cracks wi' the Maister!—for, though I'm an unco friend to him and his noble house, that hae been sae muckle the instruments o' rooting out the delusions o' the Pope, that's nae gude reason that we should be letting the best o' the mornin ower afore we begin our wark, especially whan there's to be sic noble game a-foot; for I gaed mysel yestreen wi' Roland Hit-the-Mark to track the hart, that's to find the sport for the day,—and, by judgment o' his foot, tines, gait, beatings, breakings, and rubbings, he is ane o' the mucklest and strongest we hae ever hunted in thir parts; and

here we stand, till the tykes are fit to hang theirsels in the couples !"

He was thus proceeding in his complaint, when his Majesty broke off his conference with the Master, and, though now nearly fourscore years, he instantly mounted his horse with the agility of youth, and set off after the King at the gallop, accompanied by the Jesuit, who carried the white falcon on his fist, without which his Majesty never rode forth.

Near to his Sovereign's person, and apparently high in favour, was Ruthven. Never had his bosom bounded with joy more heartfelt. Nor was this entirely a selfish feeling—His generous nature rejoiced most on account of his Royal Mistress. For what did the King's favour to himself express, but a full conviction that his surmises had been injurious to her, and a wish to sink in oblivion all that had passed,—nay, even a desire of recompensing, by redoubled favour, the temporary disgrace his misconception had caused him to inflict.

Thus argued the deceived and misjudging young man. The sense of dishonour that had haunted his spirit, and the regret that he felt at being the cause of vexation and unhappiness to the Queen, fled before his renovated fame, as the vagaries of a feverish brain at the return of health; and his whole deportment forcibly expressed a manly confidence in the sincerity of his Majesty, and a light-hearted joy, that beamed upon all around him.

The morning was beautiful, and all nature seemed cheered and animated by the cloudless luminary, whose splendour it partook, from the dew-drop on the point of each blade of grass, which it turned into brilliants, to the summit of the loftiest hill seen in the distance, whence it was chasing the early mists, while it surrounded it with a halo of glory. The whole scene was magnificent and exhilarating;—the neighings and trampings of the numerous gallant steeds, with their showy and complicated trappings, which,

though heavy and cumbersome, added, by their many bright ornaments that sparkled and glittered in the sun, to the splendour of the scene—the impatient and joyous clamour of the deer-hounds, and the excited spirits of the sportsmen,—all combined to render it gay beyond description. And this appearance was redoubled, when the magic of those feelings began to operate on the numerous train, in which, for a space, they were lost to all other recollections in the inebriating ecstacy of the chase; for the deer, when roused, fully equalled the expectation of old Heronshaw in size and strength, and starting off, while he threw his wide antlers in the air, soon cleared, by nimble bounds, all the impediments thrown in his way by the huntsmen, who had cast branches of trees in his path, to prevent his distancing the dogs, in the beginning of the chase, and being once quit of these hindrances, darted forward with the swiftness of the wind, three only of his followers being enabled, by the fleetness of their horses, to

keep sight of him. The foremost of the three was the same young man with whom Ruthven parted when he presented himself to the King, and who, forgetting or being ignorant of the etiquette which prevented any one from riding in advance of his Majesty, kept the lead on his active filly, that, with his light weight, appeared, as Apollo's horse of yore, to have wings added to her speed. The other two were his Majesty and Ruthven; —for the horsemanship of the King at this period, being then in the prime of manhood, formed a complete contrast to the account given of it in his latter years by Roger Coke, who describes him to have become so lazy and unwieldy, that, as they set him on, so would he ride, without poising himself on the saddle; he was, on the contrary, at this time, what he had every right to be, from the long and diligent apprenticeship he had served to the exercise, an expert rider; for, though not gifted with the firmest nerves on other occasions, he made up for that deficiency by the extreme eagerness with which

he was possessed when following the diversion to which he had almost exclusively, since the age of thirteen, devoted all that portion of his time which was not actually occupied, while under the tuition of Buchanan, in acquiring the learning on which he so much prided himself, or, since that period, in composing those books written by him previous to his thirty-fourth year. At the period we are commemorating, therefore, he rode boldly, and Ruthven, being aware how much he at all times prided himself on being first, kept just far enough behind, that he might not be the cause of depriving him of his favourite boast.

At length the hart, after displaying all those subtle wiles which shew their amazing instinct,—such as casting himself on his belly, (called making breaches,) as if weary and over-chased, and then taking suddenly a contrary course to that in which he is winded, that his breath may scatter, and the dogs be at fault,—exhibited all the signs and tokens of failing strength;—he hung

down his head, holding his nose near the ground, until, hearing the dogs behind him, although evidently reeling on his legs, he lifted his head once more, and bounding forward, forsook the wooded part of the park, and taking to the open glade, was pursued so near by the King and Ruthven, that they could perceive his tongue drawn within his mouth, his nostrils distended, and that he was every moment stumbling and sliding,—signs fatally prophetic of his exhausted state. But notwithstanding these appearances, when the dogs came up he made a noble stand, till proving too numerous and powerful, they tore him quickly to the earth, when Ruthven's young friend, who was already on the spot, leaped from his horse, and dealing him the final death-blow, raised his hunting-horn to his lips, and sounded the retreat, at the moment his Majesty came up, with the Master, who had now ridden forward, and whom he had not, in the joy and hurry of the moment, so much as perceived to be in his vicinity. Ruthven

was on his feet in an instant to assist the King in dismounting. The lad seemed somewhat abashed, when, on raising his eyes, he beheld the King; but, without the least tincture of awkwardness, he, according to the usage of the period, cut off directly the hinder right foot of the deer, and kneeling, presented it, along with his own hunting-faulchion, to James, who took it eagerly, at the same time casting a look of displeasure on the young man, as he proceeded to use it, in making a slit so deep and long in the breast of the animal, that he was up to the elbows in grease and blood, and his hands in its bowels before its heart had ceased to palpitate, or its sides to heave; in which employment, and in cutting up the venison, he continued so busy, that he appeared to notice no one, save two menials who had come up, and to whom he now and then uttered directions, as they assisted him in dismembering the animal. Nor, when this task was ended, did he forget to refresh his favourite dogs, which, calling around him,

he fed with bread and cheese, tempered by his own royal hands with the warm blood of the deer, which mixture he laid on its skin, to be licked off by his best beloved hounds, while the huntsmen distributed among the less favoured, the head, neck, and brain; the heart of the deer being reserved, according to general use, as the perquisite of the blood-hound who led the way to its lair, these dogs being used for that purpose, because they do not give tongue.

No sooner was his Majesty at leisure, than turning to Ruthven, he said, somewhat sharply, "Ken ye whae that striplin is, that sae irreverently pressed in before his Sovereign Prince, and took the tout out o' our horn, whan we ware just at his side?"

Although Ruthven was, as he imagined, so lately delivered from the King's displeasure himself, yet he could not avoid saying somewhat in vindication of his young friend.

"He is the son of the Laird of Restalrig, may it please your Majesty," replied his

advocate; "and I am certain did not perceive the approach of your Majesty, in the joy of being first in the chase. He is very young and inexperienced; but I am sure would not have done aught he considered displeasing to your Majesty."

"What!" said the King, with increased pettishness; "he is the son, then, o' that rudas auld carle, Robert Logan, whae harboured the villain Bothwell in his nest o' treason on the sea rock, and refused to gie him up to our council! By my saul, crossing our royal pleasure comes natural, it is like, to the whalp o' sic a kennel."

The Master was vexed to perceive the unfortunate effect this circumstance appeared to be taking on the King. For he was evidently struggling with his wrath, and had every symptom of bursting into one of those ungovernable fits of passion to which he so frequently gave way, when the dogs either failed to kill the buck, or, as was now the case, when he was offended by not being allowed to put the finishing stroke to

the animal himself. Ruthven, therefore, withdrew himself from his Majesty's sight, giving way to some of his other attendants, who pressed forward to assist him to mount.

James had no sooner seated himself in his saddle, than he announced his intention of proceeding to St Johnstoun; and dismissed all his retinue, except the Duke of Lennox, the Earl of Mar, Sir Thomas Erskine the Earl's brother, with Rathsay and Herbal; being, on all occasions, in the practice of retaining the two latter near his person. These, followed by the Jesuit with the hawk, and the attendants of those who were with the King, took the road to St Johnstoun; while all the others, who had been present at the day's hunt, dispersed on their different ways; and Ruthven, seeking out the young heir of Restalrig, informed him, much to his consternation, of the displeasure James had manifested against him, advising him not to present himself again at that time in the King's sight.—

"But," continued he, "do not make yourself too uneasy on account of this accident, for his Majesty will entirely forget it himself, after he hath killed another buck; for I verily believe, that no man easier forgets an offence, provided he is not kept in remembrance of it by the evil offices of designing people. But let me advise you, my friend, on another occasion, to beware of being first in at the death, when his Majesty is in the field."

"I shall take your advice," said the young man, "of not remaining to augment his displeasure in the first place, and set forward to St Johnstoun, unlucky wight that I am, and endeavour to see the Earl before his Majesty arrives."

"Strike off," said the Master, "from the high road for a short distance, and I will presently follow you, after I have asked permission of his Majesty to go on, that I may aid my brother in his fitting reception."

The young gentleman accordingly set

spurs to his horse, and quitting the direct road, was quickly out of sight; but was shortly after overtaken by Ruthven, who had obtained the leave which he requested of his Majesty, whom he perceived still to be in a moody humour. As soon as the King lost sight of Ruthven, he signified to the Duke of Lennox, that he wished to have some private conversation with him, and quitting those who rode with them, he said, "Hae ye, my Lord Duke, noticed ony thing strange the day anent the bearing o' the Master o' Ruthven?"

"Nothing," said the Duke, "except that he appeared to me in unusual high spirits."

"Ay, ay, man," returned his Majesty, "that's just what I mean. I thought he had gaen daft athegether; and then he spak about sic queer stories. He tells me that he found a man slinking about St Johnstoun, with a muckle pot o' broad-pieces o' goud hidden aneth his cloak, and he hath keepit him till I come to redd out the matter; and I'm gaun to find out whare he came

frae, for I jealouse that he is ane o' thae seminary priests that hae fashed the land sae muckle already.—But to speak sooth, I thought at first the Maister was demented."

"It is, indeed, a strange story," said the Duke; "and unless I had so well known the Earl and the Master, I should have conceived some evil to be lurking under it, so improbable does it sound; but, surely, unless your Majesty were inclined to honour my Lord of Gowrie with a visit, this matter might be managed without your royal presence."

"Sooth might it," returned James; "but the Maister is very pressing that I should get the pose mysel; and the gate is no' far; but look that ye dinna speak o' it."

The Duke promised to obey the injunction not to mention the cause of the journey; and seeing that his Majesty was determined to go forward, offered no further remonstrance, although, as he had said, the story appeared so improbable, that he could not help thinking it covered some previous

design on one side or other. Leaving them to prosecute their journey to St Johnstoun, we shall next relate what had passed there, after the meeting of Gowrie and Lady Agnes.

CHAPTER III.

I've been surprised in an unguarded hour,
But must not now go back; the love that lay
Half smother'd in my breast, has broke through all
Its weak restraints, and burns in its full lustre.
I cannot, if I would, conceal it from thee.

ADDISON.

THE feelings that took possession of Lady Agnes and the Earl of Gowrie, after their meeting in the shieling, were such as the immortal bard represents those of our first parents to have been, when they had partaken of the forbidden fruit. It was ecstatic bliss—the knowledge of all that in this world could confer happiness on either—the delightful certainty of strong and reciprocal affection. This unalloyed felicity was, however, of short duration. They had done that at last, against which the prin-

ciples of their hitherto firm and upright minds had pronounced;—

> " But past, who can recal? or done, undo?
> Not God Omnipotent, nor Fate!"

The Earl, though strongly feeling this, had, on hearing the avowal of Agnes, lost all wish to contend further with his reason, and might have addressed her in the spirit of those affecting words of love, used by him whom woman first tempted; and which penetrate to the bottom of the soul,—

> " However I with thee have fix'd my lot,
> Certain to undergo like doom: if death
> Consort with thee, death is to me as life!"

Gowrie was not deceived; but, conquered by the mighty effects of his passion, the conflict had ceased, and he had formed a new determination, that Agnes, loving and beloved, should no more be abandoned by him whom she had constituted her protector, when she acknowledged him the chosen of her heart.

Full of these thoughts, and longing to have his doom confirmed, he had no sooner changed his wet clothes, than, wrapping himself in a large cloak, and substituting a plain bonnet for his own ornamented beaver, he passed through the gardens of his castle, as the way in which he was least likely to be observed by his attendants, and sought the habitation of Dame Norton, in the outskirts of the town, on the north side. The door was opened by the good woman herself, who, on his inquiring for her stepdaughter Alice, courteously invited him to enter. He followed her into a small room, which served for the kitchen and bed-chamber of its owner, according to the common practice still observed among the lower class in Scotland, of having a sort of wooden box for a bedstead, which shuts with sliding pannels during the day. This small apartment was kept in the most perfect neatness; its floor was swept and sanded, and its wooden furniture preserved in its pristine whiteness, by means of diligent scour-

ing. The brisk flashes of the small wood fire, which was recently kindled to prepare the evening meal, glanced and gleamed upon the few brass and pewter utensils, that were brightly polished, and neatly arranged. A group of the finest flowers produced in the little garden of the cottage, placed in water, and a wicker cage with a blackbird, whose head was now, by the premature duskiness of the place where he hung, lodged under his wing, completed the ornamental part of the furniture; while a large Bible, lying open on the table, in which were a pair of spectacles, shewed what had been the study of the dame, and gave ample proof that she held a different faith from her step-daughter. The Earl looked around him, while old Mable went to call Alice. All seemed to speak of peace, serenity, and humble comfort; and he sighed profoundly as he confessed to himself, that it would have been more for the happiness of Agnes and himself, had they been born to such a lowly

fate, provided their religious belief had been the same.

Alice appeared in a few minutes from the apartment of her mistress, and seemed to feel no surprise at the sight of the Earl, when he raised the bonnet from his brow, and inquired for her lady, at the same time expressing a wish to be admitted to her presence.

Alice replied, "That her lady had not appeared to suffer any inconvenience from her late accident, since her change of garments."—And going to acquaint her with the Earl's wish, presently returned to conduct him to the small parlour, where Lady Agnes was sitting.

The little casement of the apartment was open, and the air which it admitted, now cooled and freshened by the rain, was strongly impregnated by the flowers of an encroaching honeysuckle, through which was seen a small portion of the azure heavens, from which the clouds had now passed away.

Agnes was leaning her elbow on the window, with her forehead resting on her hand, and her white and taper fingers thrown across it, so as to shade her eye-lids. Two steps conducted Gowrie to where she sat, and without withdrawing her hand from her eyes, she held out the other one toward him. The action was one which might not uncharitably have been construed into that of affected prudery in any common-minded woman; but she was not such; and the Earl at once read in it all the shame and regret that overwhelmed her for the avowal which circumstances and surprise alone had drawn from her. He took the hand she extended, and raised it to his lips. Agnes still maintained the same position, and remained silent, excepting that a heavy and half-suppressed sigh bespoke the perturbed state of her mind. The Earl sat down beside her.

"Speak to me, beloved Agnes," said he. "Only say that you do not repent of making me the happiest of human beings, and

that happiness will be confirmed beyond the power of fortune."

"Alas! my lord," said Agnes, "your happiness must spring from the forgetfulness of what passed in a moment of delirium, and not from a repetition of it. Suffer me to act as if I also forgot what cannot but lessen me in your eyes and my own."

"Ask not of me what it is beyond my power to perform," said the Earl. "The words that raised me from an intolerable state of misery, are never to be forgotten; nor will I ever strive to banish them from my memory. I know all that you would say, dearest Agnes; for I have repeated the same reasoning to myself a thousand times. But when I imagined you gone from the kingdom, and lost to me for ever, my anguish was so great and so intolerable, that my determination is fixed never voluntarily to submit to such again.—Nay," he continued, "why should I not think that Heaven itself approves our union, or why hath

fate returned you to me instead of immuring you in a convent?"

"O! argue not so rashly," said Agnes, assuming a more erect posture, and looking earnestly on Gowrie, "it is permitted for our trial; but Heaven will never make me the instrument of your destruction. I know you too well, my lord, to hope you will ever change your faith, nor can any consideration induce me to alter mine; but we are neither of us bigots: we both believe that when our short sojourn on earth shall be accomplished, we may be permitted to meet again, where the faithful of all persuasions shall know sorrow no more—Do not let us forfeit this blessed hope—the struggle will be short—let us endure a separation now, in full assurance that we cannot be entirely miserable, while we walk in the path of duty."

Agnes had assumed an air of calm entreaty, foreign to her real feelings, and the Earl looked upon her, when she ceased to

speak, with a degree of distraction which terrified her.

"You shall not," said he, rising and speaking with vehemence, "take from me the hope you gave.—It is a vain attempt; and by all I hold sacred, I will never relinquish it! I once strove against my unconquerable attachment, and suffered you to depart without making it known; but you are restored to me as if by miracle, and never will I part from you more. You have need of a protector, and I will dare all the obstacles in my way to call you mine.—Nothing but the sudden stroke of death shall prevent my claiming you as such in the face of the world."

Poor Agnes was possessed, during this impassioned speech of the Earl's, by a thousand conflicting emotions. But a consciousness of weakness, which made her better resolves give way before the fervent expression of Gowrie's attachment—that bowed before the mighty temptation by which it

was assailed, mingled with an overpowering sense of happiness, unhallowed by the approbation of conscience, were those which caused her the severest suffering; and when he ceased to speak, she bent down her head and wept bitterly.

Gowrie looked upon her with regret for his own impetuosity, which seemed to himself doubly inexcusable, as it was at variance with the general habit of his mind. He approached, and took her hand, which he held between his own.

"Forgive," he said, "my vehemence; it was the hasty expression of a heart visited by a happiness it fears to lose,—the manifestation of feelings suddenly awakened, which I dared not before indulge, and which you seek to shut up again within my bosom. Say at once you will be mine, and put an end to this suspense for ever!"

The distressed Agnes withdrew her hands from the Earl's, and clasping them together in an agony of indecision, gazed timidly in his face.

"I beseech, I entreat you, my lord," she said, "not thus to urge me to betray my better reason; pity me, and give me more time to reflect. I will not seek to deny my rash words, for vain indeed would now be the attempt to impose either on you or myself, but allow me time to commune with my own thoughts."

"It cannot be," said Gowrie, feeling some encouragement from her words and manner; "I know too well what I should encounter, were I to submit to the delay you request; I should be again driven to madness. And you, most beloved, deserted and forlorn, would fail to obtain peace even from devotion. Do not deceive yourself; you possess sensibility too exquisite, and feelings too ardent, to admit of their being confined to the narrow and barren track in which you would have them to move.—"I rise not from this spot," he continued, as he knelt before her, "till you grant my prayers."

Suffice it, that, overcome at length by his importunities, and even more subdued by

gratitude, for a love so strong, that in a man of his firm character could sweep before it all impediments, and overleap all barriers, she consented to unite her destiny with his; with the promise, from which she determined not to depart, that the Earl's mother should first sanction it by her consent. It was therefore determined, that Gowrie should set off on the day following the next for Dirlton, to impart their secret to the Countess, and entreat her presence at St Johnstoun, for the purpose of introducing Agnes to her, and consulting on the necessary arrangements of the plan they would be obliged to follow in accomplishing their union, which must unavoidably be attended with considerable difficulty, since the act passed some time before against secret marriages, by which the clergyman performing such a ceremony, was liable in considerable penalties, and which of course none would run the risk of incurring.—And yet, secret it must be, circumstanced as Lady Agnes was; for an attempt to solemnize it openly, would of

course be instantly followed by the opposition of the King, who, both by his own authority, and that delegated to him by her uncle, had it in his power to prevent its taking place. The Earl, therefore, conceived that it would become necessary for him and Agnes to visit England, where he felt assured of the protection of the Queen, until the first manifestation of James's displeasure should pass over, not having any doubt that his marrying Agnes without his consent would in the first heat of his anger be considered as a high misdemeanour; although his knowledge of James's sentiments made him regard it as more than probable, that when he began to cool, he might even triumph in the circumstance of his having allied himself with a Catholic, as a cause of mortification to the Presbyterians.

On this subject, however, Gowrie loved not to dwell; for he shrunk from the idea of inflicting pain on those sincere professors of the reformed religion, who now looked up to him as their chief supporter. Yet, he internally

resolved, that his zeal for the interest of the kirk should, if possible, be redoubled. "And thus," he thought, "the most rigid will be convinced, that I have in nothing conformed to the religion of her with whom I have connected myself. And what may not be hoped from the more intimate union of our souls? She may perhaps in time feel the beauty of worshipping God in the simplicity of our church, for her mind is truly unsophisticated."

After these thoughts had flitted through his mind, he easily prevailed on Agnes to follow any plan which might be considered most advisable by his mother, of whose willingness to aid them he entertained no doubt, from her constant desire to secure the happiness of her offspring.

"And you, my dear Agnes," said Gowrie, "are quite the person to captivate her. Beatrix and I have often agreed, that you are exactly what she has laboured to make her own daughters, though nature has defeated her endeavours, by giving them so

great a flow of animal spirits, that though affectionate and generous, not one of them possesses your firmness of character, or gentle seriousness of disposition, so congenial to that of my beloved parent, who has endured the heaviest calamities with the fortitude of a Christian, and the resignation of a Saint."

"Yet how can I help fearing," returned Agnes, "that this dear and estimable woman will condemn me for having consented to involve you in difficulty, if not in danger? For of so much my own heart accuses me."

"Away," said the Earl, "with these desponding thoughts and fears. We will trust in God, who knows our hearts and intentions. And for the danger that may arise from the opposition of frail mortals like ourselves, I fear nothing. And yet, were I inclined to be superstitious," he continued, "I am now placed exactly in the situation where I should fear the most."

He accompanied this remark with a smile,

which dissipated, for a moment at least, the anxiety to which his words had given rise in the mind of Agnes.

"What mean you, my lord?" she said; "but your dreams perhaps have been troubled like my own?"

"Not so," returned Gowrie, "nor should I mention a circumstance to which I attach such small importance, did I not know how singularly free you are from superstitious fears. While in Italy, I had my nativity cast by a sage astrologer, who predicted that I should return in safety to my native country, woo, and win a bride, and yet die unmarried."

Agnes was indeed, as the Earl had said, singularly free from those false fears, which attack weak minds with supernatural dread, and which, in that age and country, were so common. Yet, as he repeated this terrific prediction, her blood seemed to recoil, and curdle round her heart, and her cheeks became pale; but unwilling to give expression to these appalling sensations by her words,

she remained silent. The Earl, however, perceived her emotion, and displeased with himself for having caused it, succeeded in some measure in removing it, by turning the circumstance into ridicule. They continued to discourse on the subject most interesting to them, namely, their approaching union, and the hopes and fears of Agnes, respecting the sentiments to be expressed by Gowrie's mother, and the reception she was probably to give her, until the lateness of the hour warned the Earl that it was time to retire, when he informed Lady Agnes, that he should not have it in his power to see her again until the evening of the next day, having promised two of the most respectable citizens of St Johnstoun, who had each a daughter to be married next morning, that he would be present at the ceremony; and he added, as he was about to depart,—" Comfort yourself, my beloved, in the trust, that He who hath allowed our being brought again thus unexpectedly together, will smooth before us

what may now seem dangerous or difficult in our path."

While Gowrie had during this conversation described their approaching happiness in glowing colours, the love that filled the fervid heart of Agnes, and which had been so long buried within its recesses, burst forth, and lighted up every line of her beautiful and expressive features with hope and felicity. But when the Earl at length quitted her for the night, she became instantly mournful and dejected. She experienced a weight of apprehension so heavy, so deadly, and unaccountable, that giving way to its irresistible influence, she rushed into the little garden, which for some distance commanded a view of the road by which the Earl returned homeward; and following with her eyes his dark figure, distinctly visible by the light of the moon, as he faded from her sight, she experienced a return of all the shudderings that had assailed her, when he first mentioned the fatal prediction of the astrologer. And so

lost did she remain for a space in reflecting on this incident, to which the universal suffrage of the age gave such fearful weight, that she started as from a trance, when the voice of Alice recalled her to recollection.

"Come into the house, dear lady," said the anxious handmaiden, laying her hand on the long tresses which had now assumed a raven hue; "the dew is falling heavily, and this hair is now almost as wet as when I began to wring from it the waters of the Tay. Pray return, for your face is still pale, and shews, as the moon shines on it, liker death than life. You must require rest; do not, therefore, lady, tarry longer here."

Agnes gave way in silence to these intreaties, and to the gentle violence with which Alice ventured to second them, by taking hold of her arm to draw her toward the house; and they entered the little bedroom at the back of the small parlour, where, as Alice assisted to undress her lady, she began to launch out on the topic which that night engaged all the gossips in St Johnstoun, namely, the marriages that were to

take place on the following morning. And this circumstance she expatiated on, partly to indulge her own propensity to talk on a subject generally interesting to the young; but more with a view to further an expedient she had formed to divert the melancholy which, from whatever cause it might arise, appeared to be the result of the late conference between her lady and the Earl of Gowrie, and which respect, and her own natural delicacy, alike forbade her to inquire into.

"The two brides," said Alice, continuing her report, "are to walk together at nine hours to-morrow morning to the Kirk of St John, where there is to be sermon before the marriage ceremony. And they say the preparations are greater than ever were made in this town on the like occasion. Methinks I should like well to see the pageant, for there are to be all manner of pastimes going forward on the South Inch."

"And why should you not witness it?" said her indulgent mistress.

"Because, dear lady," returned Alice, "well as it will be worth seeing, there is only one thing could make me take pleasure in the sight, and that I am afraid to mention."

"What mean you, foolish girl?" said Lady Agnes. "What can that be which you fear to tell me, who am ever anxious to enliven your close and faithful attendance, by granting you every indulgence within my power, which, to speak sooth, hath, from my own unfortunate circumstances, but too seldom happened."

"Nay, beloved lady," returned Alice, "say not so. I have been but too happy in the regard that hath made you treat your humble maiden ever since your childhood, with a tenderness resembling more the affection of a sister, if I dare be so bold as to make the comparison, than the condescension of a noble mistress; but, in sooth, I hardly now dare speak what would cause me so much joy for you to grant."

Here she stopped, looking anxiously at Lady Agnes, who exclaimed—

"Prithee, good girl, cut short this unnecessary preamble, by saying at once what thou wouldst be at?"

"Well, then," said Alice, "I will venture to say all that is in my heart.—Would it but please you to look to-morrow on this revelry yourself, and let me accompany you, lady, you would feel your spirits enlivened, and there could be no risk of our being discovered in our mufflers in the midst of such a crowd; and my good-mother would go with us to tell us the names of those persons you may wish to be informed of, and explain any thing you do not understand, for she knows all about the sports that are to go forward."

Lady Agnes paused in doubt of the prudence of a step she felt much inclined to take, while Alice watched the indications of her irresolution with the utmost solicitude.

"I confess," she said at length, "that I should feel inclined to humour thee in this fancy, provided I did not fear its imprudence."

"Nay," replied the waiting damsel, "I defy any person in the world, be their eyes ever so sharp, to discover us in the dress which we now wear. And I am the more confident in this belief, that the penetration of the Earl of Gowrie failed, lady, to find you out, even after he had, as it were by instinct, conveyed you to the shieling, and left your poor maiden to crawl after."

"True," replied Agnes; "but the alarm of the accident, and his supposing us at the time far from our native land, no doubt prevented his recognizing me; but you must recollect, that those who are aware that we are under hiding, may have their emissaries on the watch."

"But," said Alice, still in support of her wish, "there will be hundreds of women, as like us as one bean to another, in the crowd assembled to-morrow. And, moreover, I can borrow for you a tartan screen of my good-mother's, twice as large as the one you wear, which will conceal as much of your

person, as you think proper.—Do, dear lady, consent!"

"I must I think, then," replied Agnes, "indulge myself and you; for, to confess the truth, (and why should it be hidden from you, whose attachment hath so often been my only solace?) I feel much interested in the ceremony of to-morrow, and would fain witness it, before I am called upon to take part in the like myself; for I have this night promised—alas! I fear but too rashly—to unite myself with the noble Gowrie, should his mother approve of our union."

"Then, I was not mistaken!" said Alice. "I thought it would come to this, when I saw him in the shed, looking like a corpse till the colour began to return to your cheeks, and then it rushed to his own, and his voice changed, from the doleful tones that were enough to pierce one's heart, to the blithesome notes of joy."

In fact, Alice had long suspected that her mistress's happiness was deeply concerned in such an issue with regard to the Earl,

and sinking all her religious scruples respecting her marriage with a heretic in this consideration, she continued—

"But why, dearest lady, do you speak so mournfully? Who is there that may be compared with the good Earl of Gowrie,—so great, and so powerful, and who looks more like a King, I wot, than him who *is* King? And better still than all this, who is so merciful, that though they call him the pillar of Protestantism, he hath never given his countenance to the exercise of cruelty against the poor Catholics, like those fierce lords, who were ever for heading and hanging them. And who knows, dear lady, but you may become an instrument of good to our persecuted church, in reclaiming him from his errors, and converting him to our faith?"

"Would to God," said Agnes, "there were any chance of that! but he is as firm as fate; and at this moment the advice of my departed mother seems to ring in mine ear like a death-peal, boding future misery."

"O, talk not so!" said Alice; "hope bet-

ter things, sweetest lady! Your saint-like mother had indeed much reason for unhappiness, for the noble lord, your father, was of a fierce and stern spirit, which brooked not aught that crossed his will; and if the sooth was spoken, (pardon my freedom, lady,) had been full as much enamoured of her fair possessions, as of her fairer self. Now, none of this is to be feared from the Earl. And think but, dear lady, if the lord, your uncle, when he returns, should command you to marry that hateful Rathsay, what would become of you then?"

These, and many more arguments, did the faithful creature employ to re-assure her mistress, and assuage the remorse which had taken possession of her mind. But as it was not in her power to advance any thing that had not been suggested before by the thoughts of Lady Agnes, she was dismissed for the night but little satisfied with the apparent success of her reasoning, though duly appreciating the touching smile that

accompanied the words of Lady Agnes, when she bade her good night, which at once expressed her gratitude for the affectionate sentiments of her attendant, and the impossibility of reaping consolation from her arguments.

CHAPTER IV.

O! think what anxious moments pass between
The birth of plots, and their most fatal periods!
O! 'tis a dreadful interval of time.

ADDISON.

ON the following morning, in compliance with the entreaties of Alice, and the irresistible impulse she herself felt to witness the ceremony of a Protestant marriage, Lady Agnes was seated before the hour of nine, between Dame Norton and her attendant, in one of the darkest and most obscure corners of the Church of St John, where she had, nevertheless, a clear view of the seats allotted for the marriage party, and of the pulpit, as also of the middle aisle of the building. The church was quickly filled with people of all ranks; some of whom

came to indulge their curiosity, and others to congratulate, on this joyful occasion, the young people and their relations.

Presently after the two bridegrooms entered, accompanied each by his friend, or *best man*, as this person is called in Scotland, and whose office is to pull off the glove of the bridegroom, as it is also that of the brides-maid to unglove the bride, at that part of the ceremony where the couple are desired to join hands. The young men were shortly after followed by their brides, who, with their eyes fixed on the pavement, came together, escorted by their brides-maids, their fathers, and the Earl of Gowrie, who all entered a different seat from that occupied by the bridegrooms and their party. The succeeding service was, in every respect, the same as that which took place on the Sabbath, except that the sermon was calculated for the occasion. The clergyman dwelt entirely on the duties of the matrimonial state; and descanted, as some might have thought rather severely, on the obe-

dience of the wife, quoting many texts to prove, that a woman, having once chosen the future controller of her life, it behoved her thenceforward to submit, in all lowliness, to his will in every thing not contrary to the law of God. In illustration of his text, which was taken from the words of St Paul, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands," he proceeded to shew, that no superiority in sense or talent, whether real or imaginary, on the part of the woman, could release her from the fulfilment of this sacred obligation, yea, to the very letter of the law.

During this part of his discourse, all eyes were turned upon the two young women, who were particularly addressed. And it was visible to all, from their change of colour, and the deep attention with which they heard the preacher, that this doctrine, so humiliating to female vanity, was making no slight impression. But if he, who delivered it, was strict and peremptory in the inforcement of their obedience, and

somewhat, as it appeared, stern in laying down the law, he no sooner addressed those who were so soon to become "bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh," than the feelings of the man seemed to predominate over the late severity of the preacher, and he became enthusiastically eloquent, while he dwelt in the most touching language on the natural helplessness and dependence of the beings whom he had been so rigidly admonishing, and whose happiness was about to be committed to their keeping.

"And," said he, "shall he, who calls himself Lord of the creation, and who is bound as such to protect all, over whom God in his wisdom hath given him dominion, abuse this sacred trust, and arrogate to himself the tyrannical sway of a despot over the wife of his bosom, her, to whom perhaps his slightest wish, expressed in kindness, had been as a law? Or shall he, by neglect or inconstancy, crush to desolation the heart that trusts in him, and repel the full tide of its best affections, till they overwhelm

her soul with the waters of bitterness? Shall he do this, and escape the judgments of God? No! in that hour, when sickness or sorrow lays his pride in the dust —when the smile of the wanton shall no longer have a charm—he shall feel that he hath forfeited his claim to the undying sympathies of a virtuous love, and seek in vain for that fervour of attachment that would have followed him through life and through death, and which he hath madly cast from him for ever. The thought shall become as the anticipation of the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched. While he who hath continued the friend and faithful husband of her, whom in the sight of God he swore to cherish, shall have his darkest hours gilded by the affection which he feels he hath merited; and her tears shall be unto his soul as the dews of Heaven to the withering herb."

He next went on to demonstrate the strong obligation that bound two beings thus closely connected, to labour without

ceasing for the advancement of each others eternal welfare, in the blessed hope of meeting hereafter. And under this head of his discourse, he explained all the methods that led to this desirable end, in a style so energetic, that the most profound attention accompanied his words.

Lady Agnes had remained, during his discourse, in breathless attention; and when it was finished, and he lifted his hands in an extempore prayer, remarkable alike for its fervour and its eloquence, she joined earnestly in the devotion, which seemed to soar far above all forms, and to require none of those adventitious aids to which she had hitherto been accustomed. She beheld before her a man who convinced others, because he was himself persuaded of the truth of what he taught. The extreme simplicity of the service gave it a majesty which superseded the necessity of ornament; nor did she feel that the utmost splendour of human invention could have added one jot to the impression. She could not, how-

ever, help regretting the absence of that harmony in the Psalmody, which she so much loved, and which was at that period so totally discarded from the worship of the reformers; for even the mass-book and images had not suffered greater persecution than those notes of heavenly melody, which had formerly arisen in celestial strains from the venerable churches of the land, merely because they had formed so distinguished a part of the Catholic ritual; nay, so abhorrent were they to Presbyterian ears, that the lower class fell upon the singular contrivance of degrading these exalted sounds, by coupling them with words of ludicrous, and often impure meaning, which were chaunted through the streets in derision.

But not even the absence of music, which seems to inspire the soul with celestial feelings, and for which was substituted the harsh discord of tuneless voices, could nourish in her singleness of heart aught that savoured of contempt; for she looked upon

the faces of the multitude who were singing the sublime words of the holy songs of David; and she perceived impressed upon them the stamp of genuine devotion and artless sincerity.

At length the ordinary service of the church was closed; the bridegrooms advanced to lead their timid brides from their seats; and each couple walking up the broad aisle of the church, stood before the clergyman, with their respective friends ranged to the right and left. A short silence ensued—a noiseless interval, which the whole crowd within the walls appeared not to interrupt even by a breath. During this space, the pious minister seemed communing with Heaven; and this silence and secret communing served to make more impressive the ceremony that followed. It consisted in simply pointing out the reciprocal duties of husband and wife; and demanding of the couples severally, if they solemnly vowed, in the sight of God and man, to adhere to them; which being assented to

on the part of each, the minister again supplicated the Almighty in an earnest prayer, that his blessing might descend upon those whom he had so recently joined together; and prayed also fervently, that should they be blessed with offspring, they might sedulously guard them from the delusions of Popery, and instruct them in the pure tenets of the Reformed Kirk.

At this juncture, the sensations of Agnes were bitter and acute, and she sought to penetrate the feelings of Gowrie, who, from the first minute he entered the church, had fixed his undivided attention on the pastor. Her heart sunk within her, as she witnessed the visible emotion excited by this charge. His countenance fell, and a troubled expression took possession of it. He bent his look downward, as if suddenly afflicted by some withering remembrance, that seemed fatally developing itself to his understanding. An unutterable pang passed through the heart of Agnes, and smote her with re-

doubled remorse for the promise she had given. It was possible, she thought, that this impression, while it remained on his mind, might induce him to release her from her obligation, could she at that moment have spoken with him; but even to be seen by him in their present situation, was impossible, and she almost unconsciously followed Mable Norton and Alice, who, after the conclusion of the ceremony, mixed with the crowd that surrounded the bridal party; and was in the midst of a scene, ere she was aware, for which she was little prepared, and still less inclined; and which nothing but her reluctance to withdraw her two attendants from a sight so highly gratifying to them, kept her to witness. The South Inch, to which they had led her, was studded with groups of the town's people; this beautiful plain, which is a mile and a half in circumference, being the constant resort of the inhabitants of St Johnstoun, when disposed to relaxation. It had been their play-field; and was the place where they

still practised athletic exercises. Several tents were pitched on the side of the Tay, that bathed the greensward with its clear blue waters; while a number of boats, that conveyed the friends of the newly married pairs, danced on its unruffled surface, dipping their gay streamers in its tide, which, like a pure mirror, reflected all that was presented to it, and dazzled the eye by its brightness and incessant undulation.

The appearance of the young couples on the Inch, accompanied by the Earl of Gowrie, was the signal for cheering shouts of joy, and the sound of gladsome music, that lasted till the sports commenced, which consisted of wrestling, pitching the bar, throwing the quoit, and shooting the arrow. And so expert in the latter exercise were the sons of this ancient borough in days long past, that tradition boasts of many who could send the arrow to a distance of three thousand feet, as well as perform many other feats, that sound equally fabulous in the ears of the degenerate beings of more

modern times, and put to shame their feeble efforts.

But on this day the gallant youth of St Johnstoun were tasked to the utmost stretch of their skill and prowess, by the presence of many competitors from the rival borough of Dundee, who eagerly contested with them the palm of honour. The inhabitants of these towns were then inflamed with envy and jealousy of each other, on account of the animosity occasioned by disputes regarding their privileges on the river Tay, and the priority claimed by each borough, as the most ancient, in all parliaments, coun cils, and conventions; and some bloody falls were the consequence of the wrestling-matches between their respective townsmen. This sport was, however, speedily put a stop to by the command of the Earl, and others more harmless, in which equal strength and dexterity were required, substituted in its place, to the great relief of all the tender-hearted maidens and matrons who were spectators of the games. It was from the

hands of the youthful brides that the victors received the prizes, which were the gifts of Gowrie, and the consequence attached to these young women on that day gave double interest to the scene. All was gaiety and happiness, and the heart of every inhabitant of St Johnstoun expanded with confidence in the presence of their idolized Earl, who cherished them as friends, and was, in return, repaid by their unbounded affection. But there were present those who looked on him with far different sentiments, namely, the Munroes of Tullibrandon, who, being kinsmen to one of the bridegrooms, were invited to his marriage, which they artfully influenced him to celebrate on that day, that it might furnish a plausible pretext for their presence at St Johnstoun, where they came, attended by many of their retainers, in readiness to follow the hint of Rathsay, in taking part against the man whom it had been unanimously agreed to prefer before them in the politics of the town and shire,—a circumstance which had

not only been detrimental to their pecuniary interests, but had also inflicted a deadly wound upon their pride, not to be healed save by his humiliation. It was therefore in the full spirit of this party rancour that they beheld him reigning in the hearts of the crowd that surrounded him; and the impatience with which they awaited the coming incidents of this eventful day knew no bounds.—That it was destined by the King to terminate in somewhat detrimental to the Earl of Gowrie and his noble house, they clearly understood; but what were the events which were to bring about an issue so desirable, they did not as yet comprehend; for Rathsay, according to his first intention, had only sounded them, and ascertained their willingness to assist their Sovereign, should their aid be necessary. They were constantly, therefore, looking around them during the hours spent on the Inch,—like those who, knowing that a tempest is prognosticated, seek some token of its approach even in the most cloudless skies,—or like

mariners, who, in an unruffled sea, anxiously examine the water around for the dangerous sunken rocks, which their charts tell them are near.

Noon, however, was far advanced, without any appearance which indicated an interruption to the festive scene, and their eagerness to have the riddle solved became visible to each other, in the hasty and impatient glances they cast toward the different heights and roads in the neighbourhood, in expectation of seeing a party of troops appear; being possessed with the idea that his Majesty meditated a seizure of the Earl's person, upon some charge with which they were unacquainted.

At length a single horseman was descried, riding furiously towards the multitude, which divided to allow of his passage, after he had hastily inquired on what part of the field the Earl of Gowrie was to be found; and presently arriving where he had taken his station, the messenger threw himself from his horse, and withdrawing him out

of ear-shot of those by whom he was surrounded, he spoke with him for a few seconds. During this time, it was apparent to the keen eyes bent upon him, that the Earl appeared considerably surprised and agitated. When he had heard the tidings which had seemed to cause these emotions, the father of one of the brides, respectfully approaching him, expressed a hope that nothing had occurred to mar their present felicity, which would unquestionably be the consequence of their noble patron's having heard aught that caused him distress, and which he feared was the case.

"No, not distress, my worthy friend," returned the Earl, "but surprise assuredly, and some degree of vexation, that our Sovereign hath unfortunately fixed upon this day to honour me with a visit, and thought meet to send me no warning of this intended favour, save what I have just received from my brother, by his attendant, whom he despatched from the hunt at Falkland to inform me of it. Being totally unpro-

vided for such an occasion, and wishing this day to partake your hospitality, hath caused, as you may suppose, no very pleasant sensation. I have, however," continued the Earl, " already sent to put the cooks upon their mettle, though I fear me much there will, after all, be but sorry banquet to entertain Royalty withal."

" If," said the citizen with whom he was speaking, " I might be allowed to suggest a remedy for your lordship's want of timeous intimation, it would be, that you should honour me by accepting the dinner this day provided at my house, in addition to what your own servitors may be able to provide on such short notice."

" And most willingly should your generous offer be accepted," returned Gowrie, " provided I did not fear that inconvenience to you must inevitably arise from the want of it, in supplying your kinsmen and neighbours with your wonted hospitality."

This objection was, however, over-ruled, by an offer from the other marriage-party to

share their feast with those who had given up their own; and both families appeared to rejoice so heartily in aiding the Earl in his dilemma, that all anxiety with regard to his Majesty's entertainment was at an end. Nor had it been, in fact, the principal cause of his uneasiness; for surprise and perplexity still remained concerning so sudden a determination on the part of the King, particularly as, in a conversation with his Majesty some time before leaving Holyrood, he had requested, that when he honoured him with a visit, (which he then promised,) that his Majesty would enable him, by timely warning, to exhibit before him some experiments in chemistry, that he had previously expressed an earnest wish to witness. The Earl, in suggesting to himself the probable causes of this sudden visit, could not but fear that his Majesty, having become acquainted with the retreat of Lady Agnes, was coming in person to St Johnstoun on some errand connected with her. This train of thought was

broken in upon by the appearance of the Master of Ruthven, accompanied by young Restalrig, who informed the Earl that his Majesty was on his way, and probably not above two or three miles distant from St Johnstoun. He also related to him all that had passed during the hunt, and gave a loose to his exuberant spirits in describing the conspicuous way in which his young friend had signalized himself, and his Majesty's displeasure thereat, all of which he turned into a subject of mirth. From this raillery the young man was glad to escape, by seizing the opportunity of preferring his meditated request to the Earl, who heard it most indulgently, and promised to comply with it.

Gowrie, who joined his brother in thinking it most advisable that young Restalrig should not again present himself to the King on the day he had so unwittingly offended, committed him to the hospitable care of the same person to whom he had just been indebted for the supply of his table,

and with whom the young Laird was slightly acquainted; and bidding him adieu, mounted his horse to set forward with his brother, in order to meet his Majesty, and conduct him to his house.

During the time that the Earl of Gowrie had been conversing with Ruthven and his friend, the news of his Majesty's intended visit had spread over the plain, flying from mouth to mouth with the rapidity of lightning. But before it reached the ears of the Lady Agnes, she had received a warning of impending evil, that communicated a tremor to every limb.—For as she was standing, a few minutes before, looking one while on the pastimes which were going forward, and another while following with her eye the figure so deeply imprinted on her heart, whose noble and free demeanour drew forth the admiration and praises of all around her, she had observed a woman wrapped in a cloak, whose face seemed as sedulously concealed from observation as her own, pass

and repass her several times; the last time she did so, she came close up to her, and partially withdrawing the cloak from her eyes, to give her apparently a better opportunity of observation, Agnes was struck by their dark penetrating glance, which at once betrayed recognition, and pleasure in the discovery, to which she significantly joined an injunction to silence, by lifting the head of the rugged stick with which she walked, and, pressing it against her lips, accompanied this motion by a momentary closing of the eyes, and an admonitory shake of the head, as she passed on. Lady Agnes had hardly time to point her out to Alice before she disappeared in the crowd, leaving her filled with perplexity, which in a few minutes was considerably increased by feeling some one close at her back, whose voice sounded in her ear.—"I know you, lady," it said—"Your worst enemy is at hand—Take this warning, and retreat immediately—you will find a friend at Mable Norton's."

Agnes turned quickly round, and perceived the same woman whom she had observed before, who walked hurriedly off in another direction, and was repeating what she had said to Alice and Mable, when the buzz occasioned by the report of the King's approach met her ear. She was no longer at a loss to imagine who the enemy was that had been alluded to; and, though she felt every nerve quiver with agitation, terror lent its strength to her limbs, while she hastily retraced her steps to her wonted abode, in a fearful anticipation of the person whom she was to meet, and the intelligence she was to receive.

CHAPTER V.

——Ere the bat hath flown
His cloister'd flight,—ere to black Hecate's summons
The shard-borne beetle, with his drowsy hums,
Hath rung night's yawning peal, there shall be done
A deed of dreadful note!

SHAKSPEARE.

THAT the Earl of Gowrie's feelings, as he journeyed forth with the Master to meet his Majesty, were of a sombre kind, was clearly pourtrayed upon his countenance, which was overcast by a cloud of thought, except when the light-heartedness of his brother evaporated in some ludicrous sally, at which he could not forbear a smile; but his spirit was not in the smile, for it was busy within him in suggesting and strug-

gling with many causes of alarm; and he repeatedly questioned—Did the King indeed wish to do him honour by this unaccountable visit, or did it cover some deeper design? and could he look upon his Sovereign and Rathsay, who had so mercilessly persecuted the helpless Agnes, without wrathful emotion? Yet this latter task he was called upon to perform. But should the object be, as his fears represented, to force Agnes again into the power of James, what course was he to pursue then?—"To avoid bloodshed, if it can be avoided," said the Earl, inwardly; "but, if not, to oppose force to force, and drain the last drop from this heart, ere she shall become the prey of the villain Rathsay! Or, if I prove unsuccessful in the attempt, to lay my head down, it may be, upon the block, as did my noble and gallant father. Yet," continued he, "let Rathsay tremble to tamper with the spirit so fatal to parasites, which I inherit from my fathers!—Let him call to mind

the fates of Rizzio, of Arran, and of Lennox, and fear for his own!"

As these thoughts passed through the Earl's mind, he seated himself more firmly in his saddle, and spurred on his steed to a quicker motion; while the Master, who was about to address him, was carried also forward by the animal he rode, who, disdaining to be outdone in speed, pressed after him.

"Heaven help us!" said the Master, as he came up with the Earl, and observed the stern frown, which, in unison with his thoughts, had settled on his brow—"Heaven help us, my dear Earl! what makes you look so grim?—One would imagine you were about to encounter a host of foes, and not to welcome a royal guest!"

"It were needless to intrude on your present joy, Alexander," returned the Earl, who had not as yet mentioned to him his meeting with Agnes, "the many dark thoughts that at this moment cross my mind.—Thus much I must say, I like not this hasty visit."

"Nay," replied Ruthven, "now your suspicions carry you beyond all probability, for he can assuredly mean nought at present but to manifest his favour in the very spirit of his favourite motto, '*Beati pacifici*,' and moreover, comes attended by so few followers, that there can be nothing to alarm the most timorous imagination."

"Not perhaps in outward appearance, I grant you," said Gowrie; "but I ever fear me some touch of that craft, which you, as well as myself, have so frequently heard him shame not to avow, as the boast and privilege of kings to practise; for I cannot believe him well affected toward us, however he may varnish over his distaste by acts of seeming favour, and I shrink intuitively from his proffered courtesy."

"Faith! the only act of his courtesy I ever shrink from," said Ruthven, "is when he offers me his unwashen hands to kiss, which ever scent—pah!—of the last meats he hath eaten, and are, moreover, as you must have observed, of that unnatural and

sickly softness, as to make one shudder at their touch; and though, Heaven help me! I did all I could, while attending in his bed-chamber, to make them wholesome, by taking care that he should be offered sufficiently often the basin and ewer, yet could I never procure them a good sluicing, ever contenting himself with dipping in the tips of his fingers.—But see," said Ruthven, "there winds the royal train round the base of Mordun; and, maugre what I have now said, you shall this day behold me kiss his Majesty's hand as devotedly as ever did lover that of his mistress.—For oh, it is a pleasant thing to rise again in royal favour, just when your brother courtiers flatter themselves you are sunk twenty fathoms deep in the slough of disgrace! Had you seen the surprise of some of them in the Park of Falkland this morning, and what a bitter dose the King's favour to me was, and the wry faces they made in swallowing it, even your impenetrable gravity must have

given way.—It will be a subject of mirth to me as long as I live, and I trust it shall yet make our Royal Mistress merry withal."

"May it even be so!" returned the Earl; "but moderate it now, I pray thee, when we have so nearly approached within hearing of its objects."

The Earl of Gowrie saluted James with easy dignity, accompanied with all the respect due to his Sovereign; who, on his part, appeared to pay the brothers marked attention, by inviting them to ride at his right hand; while the Duke of Lennox, and the Earl of Mar, were placed at his left.

"We hae fulfilled our royal promise in comin to partake o' your gude cheer, my Lord o' Gowrie," said James, who seemed to be using some effort to appear in good humour. "And for whilk the day's chace has gi'en us sae braw an appetite, that ye had need be lustily provided."

"I only regret," replied the Earl, "that

your Majesty's not having given me sufficient warning of your gracious intention, may cause me to appear a very churl in housekeeping."

"We require nae apologies, man," said his Majesty. "I am this day sae hungered, that sae as ye set not afore me a poll o' ling and mustard, or a pig, and insist not on my digesting them wi' tobacco, that weed o' hell, I ken o' nae other vivers that will come amiss; but, methinks, war I to invite the deevil to denner, this should be his fare."

The people assembled to celebrate the weddings, greeted the King as he passed with hearty cheers; in which the name of their favourite Earl was occasionally mingled. These salutations seemed, however, to escape the notice of the King, while he appeared to be eagerly examining each face in the crowd that presented itself to his view. The Jesuit, who rode near to Rathsay, though at a sufficient distance in the

rear to mark their difference of rank, seemed also to be attentively making his observations; and as Rathsay ever and anon turned his head to look at particular people in the assemblage, he marked the glance of keen intelligence that passed between them.

"Allow me to bid your Majesty welcome to my poor lodgings," said the Earl, as he ushered the King into the hall of his castle.

"An' truly a noble mansion it is," said James, looking around him at its extensive dimensions, its richly carved windows, and fretted roof—"An', by our faith, a pleasanter sight I wot to your Prince and Maister, than the armed ha' o' Ruthven Castle was wont to be," continued the King, in tones which appeared modulated by a resentful and pettish remembrance of the time when he was immured within its walls, by the faction in which the late Earl had joined, and the object of which, it is well known, was to remove from the person and

council of James, the unworthy Earl of Arran, and that Duke of Lennox, of whom the Jesuit had feigned the tale respecting his gift of the falcon to his Majesty.

It was for joining this faction, that the late Earl of Gowrie had lost his head, after a solemn assurance of pardon from James. And his son, neither liking the present ill-timed allusion of his Majesty, nor the tone in which it was uttered, only replied to it by a cold and dignified bow, while he led the way to an inner apartment.

Ruthven had heard the rude speech made by James, and felt indignant at it; but thinking, from the Earl's continued gravity, that it had hurt his feelings even more than his own, he took the first opportunity of whispering to Gowrie, "I heard his courteous remark, on entering your house; but never mind him, man, it is but the dregs of the ill humour he evinced at having the *tout* taken out of his horn, and will be washed down with his first cup of canary."

The greater part of the King's train en-

tered the smaller apartment after him, with Gowrie and the Master of Ruthven, who had an immediate opportunity of kissing his Majesty's hand, which he held out in token of favour to the brothers. The Earl bent his knee, and touched it with his lips, gravely and coldly enough; while the Master, in his extreme anxiety to retain the favour so lately restored, saluted it with a shew of zeal, which was the next moment checked by a feeling of disgust, so overpowering, and so ill concealed, that had his Majesty only happened to cast his eyes that way, he must have observed the decided expression of combined aversion and risibility, as he fled hastily behind the high back of his chair, to rub his lips with his kerchief.

But the King saw it not, for his gaze was at that moment wandering in the direction of a massy golden goblet, ornamented with precious stones, which was an heirloom in the Earl's family. On this occasion, it was filled with his favourite beverage, and brought into the apartment by

old Adam, who, decorated with the insignia of his office as chief domestic of the Earl's household, was honoured by him with bearing it to his Majesty's presence; whom, as soon as he put the cup into the hands of his master, he greeted with a bend so profound, that his silver side-locks nearly touched his knees; yet in this lowly obeisance, he who was acquainted with the old man's fidelity to his late lord, would have been a sorry physiognomist, had he not discovered, when he regained his erect posture, and raised his faded eyes to the face of Majesty, that every time-worn feature spoke of injury and painful reminiscence.

The expression of the old man's countenance was, however, as little noticed by the King, as that of the Master of Ruthven had been, as he stretched out his hands to receive the draught from the Earl, who presented it to him. His Majesty dispatched a considerable quantity of the wine, taking it in his usual way, namely, by mouth-

fuls; and stopping a second between each, as if mumbling and chewing it, while sundry drops escaped to trickle off at his chin, or to mingle again with what remained in the cup. This unseemly custom was occasioned by a natural defect in the formation of his tongue, which was too large for his mouth; and gives, to the best likenesses remaining of him, the appearance of his mouth being filled by somewhat which his lips are pursed up to contain within them.

The banquet was speedily served up in an adjoining apartment, which had been hastily prepared for the King's reception, by placing a chair of state, with a canopy, at the upper end of the dinner-table.

No one sat down to this repast, save his Majesty—the two noble brothers standing with his other attendants while he dined, though invited, and even urged by him, to take their seats at the table; well knowing that nothing could gratify him more than such marks of homage. Despite, however,

of the exercise the King had that morning taken, and his frequent asseverations of hunger, he ate but little; and it was evident that he was much abstracted during his meal. This was remarked by the brothers; but it was construed by them into the effect of the unpleasant feelings called forth by his recollections on entering again a house of the Earl of Gowrie, to which he had given vent in the speech before narrated, which had both surprised and offended the Earl. He seemed, however, at length to overcome, by sudden effort, the sensations, whatever they were, that engrossed him; and lifting a cup of wine from the table, called on Gowrie to pledge him to the prosperity of old Scotland and her sons. "For although my Lord o' Gowrie hath seen mony foreign fashions, whilk he perchance preferreth," said James, "being himsel a Scot, he canna do better than prove himsel his country's friend, by drainin' a cup o' wine to her welfare."

The Earl, thus urged to give signal of

the patriotism which had ever been with him an enthusiastic feeling, nourished from his very cradle by the remembrance of all that his fathers had done and suffered in its cause, and somewhat stung by what he felt as an insinuation that he preferred other countries to his own, took from the hands of his old domestic a cup of richly cut glass, which, on hearing the King's challenge to his master, he had filled unbidden to the brim; and holding it aloft, in the uncontrollable fervour of the moment, he said, ere he drank off the wine, in a tone of voice that vibrated through the frames of all who heard him, "To the true glory of my fellow-countrymen, and of my native land!" And taking the cup from his lips, he continued, "And may that Scot, who prefers any other country to his own, and would refuse to sacrifice for her welfare, life, fortune, and happiness, perish, even as that frail vessel!" and he dashed upon the marble pavement the splendid cup, which broke into an hundred shivers at his feet.

The King looked toward Herbal and Rathsay, while he seemed to shrink within himself, at the manifestation of the spirit which his words had called forth, and to fidget upon his seat, under a sense of extreme uneasiness. From this he appeared in some measure relieved, by its being announced that the repast was spread in the hall for his attendants; whither, at the command of his Majesty, the Earl accompanied his guests to render them the rights of hospitality.

The Master of Ruthven being left alone in attendance on James, his late uneasiness settled into a timorous nervousness, that prevented his hearing or answering several attempts the Master made to entertain him, who at length ceased his exertion, and regarding him with some surprise, mingled with the instinctive contempt which the brave man must ever feel for the coward, be his rank in the scale of worldly elevation what it may, he ejaculated to himself, "What the devil ails him now?

The breaking of that glass seems to have discomfited him as much as if a pistol had been fired at him."

At length the King, as if struck with a sudden thought, arose from his chair. "Maister Alexander," he said, "we hae heard great bruit o' the mony ingenious experiments performed by my lord, your brother, whilk he hath been taught in the seats o' learnin abroad, where he hath sojourned; now, though our science canna match wi' his, we shall think nae better sport than to surprise him wi' that o' whilk he peradventure hath not yet had experience; and, therefore, crave o' you to conduct us to that cabinet that containeth his chemical implements, where, by our troth, whan we shall see fitting to admit him after a short space, he shall acknowledge that we ken somewhat o' the matter."

While the King spoke thus to Ruthven, the workings of triumphant cunning, and the misgivings of timidity, gave a singular expression to his aspect, of which he seem-

ed himself aware; insomuch, that he avoided looking at the Master, while he employed himself in buttoning his doublet of Lincoln-green, and arranging the chain, by which his hunting-horn was suspended; and having accomplished this before he had finished speaking, he took his beaver from his head, adjusted the gold-lace band and embroidered strings, and shook it in his hand with a quick motion, as if with the intention of separating the parts of the feathers, which the dew of the morning had pasted together.

Ruthven, however, took no note of these manœuvres, but as tokens of the habitual restlessness which kept him continually in motion. He therefore, with the expectation of some amusement from the promised experiments, marshalled him the way to the apartment he had mentioned; in reaching which it was necessary to pass through the great hall, where the Earl of Gowrie was entertaining his attendants with the choicest produce of his cellars. They all

rose as the King passed with Ruthven toward the stairs, which were on the opposite side from where they entered, and Gowrie made a motion as if to attend him, but James, waving his hand, commanded them to be seated. "Sit ye, merry gentlemen," he said, "and muckle gude may it do ye—I gang wi' Maister Alexander, to look upon the rare statues whilk my lord hath brought from Italy."

So saying, his Majesty and Ruthven passed up the flight of stairs, which ascended, in the language of the times, to a fair gallery; and fair indeed it might be termed, if what is pleasing to the eye, and excellent in beauty, deserves to be so styled. It was of the most finished and approved architecture of the period. Its numerous niches were filled with the choicest efforts of the Italian chisel, and its walls enriched with the most elaborate paintings by the first masters; yet his Majesty, casting a hasty glance toward its other extremity, proceeded, as quickly and unregarding of

its many attractions, as though it had been the green and damp stained passage from some dungeon vault, which was to lead him to the blessed air of Heaven.

" Strange," thought Ruthven, " that his eagerness to display what I dare swear will but turn out some paltry juggling trick, should so hurry him through a place, where even the illiterate vulgar might pause in admiration. But it is well !—I shall escape the weariness of pedantic remarks."

As they passed through the door at the other end, the King turned, and, looking at the lock, said to Ruthven, " Thraw about that key, man, for I would not that my lord should come or we prepare our surprise for him."

The Master obeyed his Majesty's command, and smiled, as he did so, at his precaution. They next entered, through this anti-room, the wished-for cabinet, of which the King himself locked the door, retaining the key in his hand. This room was

situated in the very extremity of that side of the building, and contiguous to it was a tower, through which a winding, or, as it was called, a *turnpike* stair, ascended from a door in the court below, communicating with the cabinet, where we must now leave the King and Ruthven.

CHAPTER VI.

The tyrannous and bloody act is done;
The most arch-deed of piteous massacre
That ever yet this land was guilty of.

SHAKSPEARE.

WHEN the Earl of Gowrie lost sight of the King, and his brother, as they ascended the stairs to the gallery, his first impulse was to follow them; for the conduct of James, ever since he had entered his house, appeared to him very extraordinary, as if covering insult with an outward shew of favour. And if this were really the case, his motive for the present visit still remained a mystery. The idea of treachery and danger to his brother so forcibly seized upon him, that he rose from the table, and expressed his intention of going himself to shew his Majesty

what might be worthy of notice. This was, however, overruled by his guests, who insisted, that, in thus disobeying his Majesty's command, he would rather give offence than pleasure. And he sat down again, not without exhibiting some symptoms of the feelings that possessed him, for his cheek was flushed, and his brow slightly contracted, by the agitating thoughts that were passing through his mind. He, however, shortly schooled himself into a calmer mood, by reflecting on the improbability of his brother's being exposed to any danger from accompanying, under his own roof, an unarmed man, so timorous, and so little likely to expose his own person to danger, as the King.

"This is very childishness," said the Earl to himself, "thus to give way to such foolish fears.—I have as yet no cause to distrust him, save what arises from surmise. And yet it is most strange, that I should feel thus overpowered, as if by some impending evil, that seems even now to wrestle with my spirit, against my better reason—

I will, however, strive to shake it off." And raising his wine from the table, he said, while a smile once more beamed from his countenance, " You have heard me this day drink to our country, and her sons; and now, shame it were to a leal and true Knight, not to honour her daughters with as deep a draught.—Pledge me, noble sirs, to the health of our fair countrywomen; and may he who would deceive or forsake them, be himself forsaken in his utmost need!"

This toast was drunk with enthusiasm, by those whose generous feelings sympathized with the speaker,—with indifference, by those whose selfish hearts made no response,—and with a feeling nearly amounting to resentment toward the Earl, by those whose consciences were galled. But it was drunk by all. At the moment of proposing it, as the Earl thought on Agnes, his eye glanced around the board in search of Rathsay; but he had been some time gone, as it was reported, to take from the falconer the favourite hawk, while he dined, and was ac-

companied by Herbal, who had expressed a desire to avoid deep healths. At this instant it was hurriedly announced by Laurence, that his Majesty had left the house, by the entrance before-mentioned at the bottom of the turret, and was riding through the Inch. All was directly hurry and bustle. The guests sprang on their feet, and the pavement rung to the tramp of their heavy boots, and the clang of their massy spurs, while the hall and the court resounded with the cries of—"To horse!—To horse!—The King hath ridden forth!" When, however, they began to throng through the principal gate-way of the court-yard in their way to the stables, that no time might be lost in following his Majesty, the porter persisted that he had not passed, and there being no other access from that side of the building, they were put to a stand, not knowing what to think; when it was suggested, that perhaps there had been some mistake, and that he might not yet have left the gallery; upon which the Duke of Lennox and the Earl

of Mar were proceeding to enter the hall again, in order to pass up the gallery stairs, when a cry of—"Help!—Help!—Treason! —Treason! my Lord of Mar!" struck on their ears; and on looking up to the place whence the sound proceeded, they perceived the King's face half thrust out of a small window near the turret, with the hand of a man apparently in the act of seizing him by the throat.

"What, ho!—My friends! This way to the rescue!" cried the Earl of Mar, re-entering the hall with the Duke, and several of their attendants. By this time, all was uproar and confusion in the court-yard, which, immediately on the alarm being given by some of the servants, who fled into the town, began to fill with the Munroes and their retainers.

Words cannot give an adequate idea of Gowrie's consternation at this scene, which he beheld with a prophetic shudder,—his countenance becoming pale as death, as the horrible suspicion of his brother's danger

smote upon his heart. "Follow me, my friends!" he exclaimed, with a frantic gesture of impatience, as he drew his sword from the scabbard, and snatched another from the hand of a person near him, unheeding whether friend or foe. But as he was darting toward the turret door, he was intercepted by Sir Thomas Erskine, who, seizing him by the collar, cried out,—"Thou art the traitor!—This is all along of thy contrivance, villain!"

Gowrie, thus impeded in his way, threw the sword from his right hand, and using it to disengage himself from Erskine's grasp, with the giant-strength that desperation lent him, hurled him to the distance of several paces; and catching up the sword he had thrown from him, was in an instant on the turret stairs that led to the cabinet, where we left Ruthven and the King, which he now entered. He cast a hasty glance around him,—the floor was stained with blood,—but he nowhere beheld his brother.

"What means this outrage?" said Gow-

rie.—" Why that cry of treason ?—Where is my brother ?—And whose blood is this?"

The King, whose knees were smiting against each other, and his teeth chattering in his head from the deadly fear that possessed him, was standing in a corner of the room, near the open door of a small study, with Rathsay, Herbal, and the Jesuit. No answer was returned; but Rathsay seizing the King by the shoulders, attempted to thrust him into the study. " Your Majesty, by your leave, must be put in safety," said he, " while we deal with this traitor Earl."

The King, however, struggled violently, —for fright and indignation, at the authority exercising over him, lent him a strength not his own. " Dinna kill him here—Dinna kill him here," vociferated James,—" unhand your lawful Prince and maister—I will hae nae mair bluid, I say." And as Rathsay still continued to persist in his purpose, he vociferated,—" Help !—Help ! —Ye are a' traitors !—I shall be murther-

ed!—God hae mercy!—I shall be murthered at last!"

Rathsay, however, paid no attention to his exclamations; but having lodged him in safety in the closet, secured the door, and turned to Gowrie, who had lost during that short space all consideration for himself in the sight of horror that met his eyes, while the King contended with Rathsay. For the spur of the latter had become entangled in his Majesty's cloak, which lay on the ground behind them, and dragging it forward, discovered to him the mangled body of his brother.

Gowrie gazed on it aghast, and leaned on his swords, unable to support himself; while the unutterable agony impressed on his countenance, palsied as it were the hearts of his enemies, from which mercy had fled, and they stood a moment inactive. But the Earl allowed them short space to gaze upon him; for every feature changing from the deadliness of despair to the terrible expression of exterminating vengeance, he raised

both swords and rushed toward them. Rathsay perceived the sudden change, and feeling at the same moment all his hatred revive, he cried out fiercely to the Jesuit and Herbal, who were preparing to fall upon Gowrie—"Touch not my victim at your peril;" and making a furious plunge at him with his weapon, he exclaimed—"Now shalt thou confess what thou knowest of the Lady Agnes."

Despite, however, of this boast, and his violent onset, he found it extremely difficult to ward from himself the strokes of the Earl, who was become like a tiger at bay. Nor would he have been much longer able to maintain the unequal contest; for Gowrie, filled alone with the purpose of avenging his brother's murder—more skilful in wielding his weapons than almost any man of the age—possessed of gigantic strength, and regardless of life—might perhaps have proved an overmatch, not only for Rathsay, but also for the other two; and they would, it is possible, have received from

his hand the reward of their treachery. But while the Earl was pressing Rathsay so closely and furiously, that his life appeared on the point of being sacrificed, Gowrie fell dead at his feet, pierced through the heart, by the hand of the villain Herbal, who had stepped behind him, and basely perpetrated the deed, which at once placed them all in safety. This fatal catastrophe had been so quickly achieved, that before Sir Thomas Erskine had recovered the effects of his fall, and summoned some of his Majesty's attendants to follow him up the turret stairs, which he had seen Gowrie ascend, he, whom he had thus sought, had passed into eternity; and when he arrived with his followers in the fatal chamber, the desire with which he was burning to revenge the fall received from Gowrie, was turned into horror on beholding the bloody spectacle before him.

The moment that the Earl fell, Rathsay released the King from his place of confinement, who was half dead with apprehension, while the Jesuit and Herbal ap-

plied themselves to assist the Duke of Lennox and Earl of Mar, who were demanding entrance from the gallery, to force open the door of the cabinet, the key having been lost by the King during his alarm. This they accomplished by means of the fire-irons, and numbers immediately poured in from the gallery, all of whom were in the King's interest, (the servants and retainers of Gowrie having been driven back by them down the turret stairs into the court yard.)

But the alarm had spread, and friend and foe of the Earl were gathering fast, and flocking toward the scene of his murder. Those within the house thought it most expedient, that all the entrances to it should be guarded; and they accordingly made fast the doors and under-windows, and placed sentinels upon them.

James, meanwhile, who was ever appalled at the exposure of weapons of destruction, and childishly dreaded the sight of blood, stood in the centre of the apartment, amidst naked dirks and gleaming swords,

with his shoes dyed in the sanguinary flood, which had flowed from the veins of the brothers, whose lives, in the fright of the moment, he would now have redeemed with the half of his kingdom. Yet even in this frame of mind, his natural duplicity did not forsake him, for he cautiously avoided uttering aught that might throw suspicion on himself, and called loudly to remove the bodies of the *traitors*. Which command was no sooner obeyed, and the hapless brothers borne from his sight, than he knelt down, his clasped hands trembling with agitation; and with all the gratitude that could have been called forth in the most innocent bosom, fervently thanked God for the escape which he had vouchsafed him from the murderous weapons of the brothers. Yet let no one doubt his sincerity, when they consider the extremity of fear to which he had been reduced, and which had taken such entire possession of his mind, that it sunk all recollection of the heinous part he had himself acted, in gratitude for his per-

sonal safety. It must also be remembered, that he had been led implicity to believe in the guilt of the unfortunate Master of Ruthven, and also in the ambitious designs of the Earl, which the overweening ideas he entertained of his own importance in being, as he delighted to style himself, the *Vicegerent of God*, made him imagine he was authorized to punish, inclining him also to look upon the lives of his subjects as of small account, when put in the balance with his own. When his Majesty rose from his knees, he expressed a wish to remove from the room to the gallery, which was opposed by those about him, who assured him that he was safer where he then was, all the avenues to the apartment he occupied being filled by his faithful people. The King, however, not being able to remain with any degree of composure in the room where he then was, retreated, once more accompanied by Rathsay and Herbal, to the study, where he no sooner approached the window, which, like that of the apartment he had left, opened

upon the court-yard, than he became again nearly frantic with terror.—"See," said he to Rathsay, "how the whole toun is gatherin! and only hear to them, how they are crying for their Provost! Fause loon! did ye no promise, that I shouldna be brought into trouble; that ye wad deal wi' the tane out o' my sight, and that the tother should be keepit in ward or banished, according to our guid pleasure, proving their treason upon him. And now that ye hae gliffed us amaist out o' our very senses, the house is to be rugget down neist about our lugs—I wonder what for I dinna cause seize yoursel."

Rathsay, who no way relished this last threat, endeavoured to pacify him.

"For God's sake," said he, "moderate your fears, and speak lower; your Majesty's faithful friends and subjects have this day many of them put their lives in peril to rid you of two daring men, who had become obnoxious to your peace, and dangerous to your government.—I surely need not re-

mind your Majesty, that the Earl thwarted your royal will on all occasions; and powerful as he was, who knows what might have been the consequence?"

"Ye speak sense, man, after a'," said the fluttered and agitated King, who required to be reminded of the motives which had before so powerfully swayed him; "ye speak sense; for wha kens what might hae been the upshot, wi' the wee drap royal bluid he carried in his veins?—he might hae glammed at our royal crown itsel'."

"True," said Rathsay, "and your Majesty, when this hurricane is blown over, will acknowledge that what we have done is for the best; meantime, we will all be sacrificed before one hair of your royal head shall be injured."

Catching hold of Rathsay's arm, with a convulsive motion, the King exclaimed—"Forgie your Prince and maister! I'm sure I owe ye muckle for what ye hae done this day. But, O man, it was a fearfu' sight!

and yet I dar'd na shut my een, for fear some o' your swords had been through my body or ever I wist.—And then, whan the young villain held by me to save himsel frae your hands, and gripped at my coat neck, crying out to me for to proteck and save him—The Lord preserve me, whan I think on it, and keep me from sic peril again; for this bangs a' I e'er met wi', frae the taws o' that gloomin auld thief Buchanan, to the last gliff I got wi' the villain Bothwell, whan he drave to be in at my very secret chamber."

The tumult outside the house became louder and louder, and even the boldest, who were in the apartment adjoining the study, the door of which was open, began to look at each other with dismay. It was now proposed to his Majesty as most advisable, that he should present himself at the window, and speak to the people, promising them, that he would explain what had happened, to any four of their citizens, whom they should allow to pass quietly in

at the principal entrance, and up through the gallery to his presence.

But, when James was prevailed on at length to adopt this plan, he no sooner appeared than the populace became more outrageous than ever; and when he attempted to speak, shouts and hisses arose, greeting him with abusi vevociferations; and some powerful voices were distinctly heard above the rest, calling to the King, "Come doun, thou son o' the fiddler, and we'll mak thy green coat pay for this day's wark." While others cried out, with menacing gestures, "Gie us our Provost!—Gie us our noble Yearl, or we'll set low to the lodging, and smeek ye out!" Stones and filth were thrown at the window, from which the King retreated, relapsing again into another paroxysm of terror, during which he continued impatiently lamenting himself, and wringing his hands.

There appeared no hope of the tumult abating, but, on the contrary, multitudes were flocking along every avenue that led

to the town from each place in the neighbourhood that the alarm had reached, every moment adding to the numbers that beset the house, and joining them in menace.

In this dilemma, when it became necessary that some measure should be instantly adopted to put a stop to these threatening appearances, which had even began to blanch the cheeks of the boldest of the King's friends, the Jesuit stepped forward from a corner, in which he had remained nearly unnoticed, while he had himself been accurately observing what had passed. All the bold and lofty daring of his fearless character flashed in supernatural brightness from his dark eyes, that glanced as in conscious superiority over those who stood around him, as he presented himself to his Majesty before the open door of the study.

" So please your Majesty," said he, " I will go alone into the midst of these rebellious people, and repeat to them the command which they refused to hear from your

Majesty's own lips, and I fear not to accomplish my purpose in safety."

"And," said the King, "if ye mak gude your words, and deliver your lawful Prince from the sair jeopardy that now threatens him, sae that we may this night be rendered back in safety to our ain Palace o' Falkland, we shall, on our inviolable word, bestow sic part o' this traitor Earl's gudes on you, as ye shall think meet recompence withal."

The Jesuit replied by a bend of acknowledgment, and James, who appeared somewhat reassured by his offer, commanded him to give him the hawk, which sat upon his hand; but it was no sooner presented to him, than he recoiled back some paces, with evident marks of alarm and horror, making a motion with his hand for it to be removed from his sight—For while the previous tragedy had been acting, the Jesuit had cast her loose from his hand, and her snow-white wings, her tail, and her feet, were all daggled in blood. The bird was given to an attendant of the Duke of Lennox, and

the Jesuit descended the stairs of the turret, at the foot of which as many as the small passage could contain remained to defend the door. The iron bolts were gently withdrawn by the Jesuit, and before even those of the mob who stood nearest were aware, he had sprung out in the midst of them, and the door was again secured behind him. The imminent danger to which he was instantly exposed, was sufficient to have appalled any heart but his own; for the shouts of—"Here comes ane o' the murderers!—let him not escape!—kill him! kill him!" resounded on all sides, while, whichever way he turned, he perceived weapons ready to put the threat in execution. But looking about him with the most undaunted air, and speaking loudly, he said—

"Do me no wrong, my friends; I have no wish to escape from you, but have thus ventured my life, that you may be informed of the particulars of this unfortunate affair. It is the King's desire that you choose from among your citizens four of those in

whom you place the most confidence, whom he will admit to his presence; and if they come not away satisfied with what he relates, why, the remedy still remains in your own hands, and then let justice take its course."

This speech, which appeared so moderate, and which did not positively contradict any of their preconceived opinions, was heard more favourably than could have been anticipated from their previous state of turbulence. Those standing near enough to hear it, reported it to others more distant, till, in the space of eight or ten minutes, a way was made through the crowd for him to pass, with such as had constituted themselves his guards, towards the outside of the throng, where a circle was formed, in which the same citizen was standing, mentioned before as father to one of the brides, and with whom the Earl of Gowrie had held the conversation on the expected visit of the King. He addressed the Jesuit, and inquired respecting the particulars of what had happened.

These questions the Jesuit evaded, by saying he was not competent to answer them, but that he heard it alleged the King's life had been put in peril by the Earl and his brother, who were, as the people already knew, both slain; and that he was ready to conduct the citizen to whom he was speaking, accompanied by any other three he might select, into the presence of the King.

"And what shall be our surety," said this person, "that we meet not the same fate that hath befallen our noble Provost and his gallant brother, should we not confess ourselves convinced of that which it seemeth now to us impossible to believe?"

The Jesuit studied for a few seconds, and then answered—"That you will be allowed to return in safety, whatever your opinions may be, I am willing to stake my life, by remaining a hostage for your reappearance, guarded by such as you shall appoint, on the outside of the principal entrance, until your return."

"Dinna gang wi' him! dinna gang!"

was now vociferated from the surrounding throng—" Mind as the crafty Queen-Mother guided our forebears !"

" Ay," cried others, " King Jamie hath ower muckle o' the false Guisean bluid in his body !—Dinna trust him !"

" He hath slain a better man nor himsel !" was shouted out by several—" and we will hae bluid for bluid !"

" Peace, my good neighbours !" said the citizen who had spoken before; " I will make an effort to understand on what grounds he was slain, and, for that purpose, will present myself before the King. But I have not surely so ill deserved of my townsmen, that I should be suffered to go alone.—Come, my friends !" he continued, " who among you accompanies me ?"

This appeal had the desired effect, and immediately three of the most respectable men among the crowd separated themselves from it, and followed him to the principal entrance of the building, where, upon the concerted signal being given by the Jesuit,

they were admitted, while he remained, as stipulated, guarded on the outside by some of the stoutest and roughest-looking men from among the populace who surrounded him. They gave free vent to their rage, in the most rebellious language, accusing the King loudly of the murders, and attributing the foul action to various motives, but yet seeming to agree that their zeal for the Kirk was the fundamental cause of their death. Nor did they scruple to call the King a Papist, while, in support of this belief, they enumerated with bitterness all he had done for the Popish lords, whom he had so often succoured.

The general expression of this opinion, which he heard repeated on all sides of him, was music to the ears of the Jesuit. He felt now as if on the very verge of bringing his plans to the point, for which he had, in his cruel policy, studied, toiled, and involved himself in crime. He felt his confidence in the future increased, and all became apparently level between him and the object

of his wishes. The great stroke against Protestantism in Scotland, he imagined, was struck by the death of Gowrie—For he had yet to learn how many faithful hearts still remained to oppose any innovation of their religious privileges; and taking it for granted that James really possessed the sentiments, with regard to the Catholics, so generally attributed to him, and expecting that the secret negotiations which he knew were carrying on at that moment by the powerful Earl of Essex, would shortly seat James on the throne of England, he beheld himself, in all probability, within a few steps of becoming General of the Jesuits, and wielding a sceptre of power over the princes of the earth. His anxiety at present, however, was to see the multitude dispersed, and his Majesty once more free. He also began, in the course of half an hour, to be anxious for the return of those for whom he remained a hostage; for the motions of the great concourse assembled again began to be agitated, and they called alternately

loudly for their magistrates, threatened the Jesuit with instant death if they did not appear, and menaced the destruction of the whole pile of building, swearing, that if aught ill happened to their townsmen, not one stone of it should be left upon another.

In the midst of this uproar, however, the door was opened, and their four delegates issued forth unscathed. The moment they appeared, every individual seemed so eager to hear the result of their embassy, that the Jesuit was totally unheeded, and he descended from the steps of the door, which he had so long occupied, and mixed among the people to listen to the report of the citizens, while they related the story which they had heard from the King himself. This story, however, sounded so extremely improbable, that many of the mob became more enraged than ever. The tale was that which his Majesty had, as it will be remembered, repeated to the Duke in the morning concerning the pot of gold, with this addition, that after he had dined, the Master of

Ruthven invited him to accompany him to the place where he had the man confined; and that upon arriving with the Master at a distant apartment, he found, instead of the person whom he expected to see, a man in armour, when, perceiving that their design was to murder him, he had cried out at a window, which the man in armour opened for him, refusing to act against him, and assuring him that he had been locked in there he knew not wherefore; and that upon hearing his cry, some of his attendants had arrived while he was wrestling with the Master, who swore he should die, and delivered him from his hands by putting him to death, as they had also done the Earl, when he arrived shortly after, with a sword in each hand, and with intent to assist his brother in his treason.

This relation was heard, as we have just said, with the utmost rage and indignation by the greater part of the populace, who called out for the man in armour to be produced; and when it was related by the ci-

tizens that it was alleged he had made his escape, their groanings, hisses, and shouts, were renewed, and it was with the utmost difficulty that the citizen who first offered to investigate the matter could obtain another hearing. He at length, however, succeeded in his endeavours to pacify the people so far, that he was listened to with some degree of attention, when, standing on the top of an adjoining wall, that he might be the more distinctly heard, he addressed them, reminding them that it was their interest, whatever might be their private opinion of the matter, not to proceed to any acts of violence, which might draw upon their town the vengeance of their Sovereign; and that, however justly they might deplore the fate of the good Earl and his brother, whom they had all so much loved, yet, as they could not restore life, it was folly to persist in this tumultuous conduct any farther, to the prejudice of themselves and their families. He also assured them, that some investigation of the affair must shortly take

place, even on his Majesty's own account, when they would be better able to form a judgment of what had passed.

The other three persons, who had accompanied him in his mission, also went among the people, using the same arguments, which, from the respect entertained for them and their opinions by their townspeople, prevailed on the bulk of them to withdraw to their own houses. The dregs of the rabble, however, who are always inclined to mischief, continued to watch the house, with the design of insulting the King and his attendants whenever they should leave it. The day, which had been during the greater part remarkably fine, had gradually changed, as if in sympathy with the scene of horror that had been transacted; and as it wore toward evening, a tempest of hail and rain, accompanied by a furious wind, did more toward dispersing those that still remained, than could have been effected by any other means.

No sooner were those within the house apprized by the Jesuit that they might venture forth with safety, than they hurried the King, who was still more impatient than themselves, toward the stables, and mounting him on the fleetest steed they could select, took horse themselves, and followed him to Falkland, amidst torrents of rain and a hurricane of wind, at a rate which insured their safe retreat from St Johnstoun, leaving the magistrates who had spoken with the King accountable for the safe keeping of the bodies of the brothers, together with the effects contained in the house, according to his Majesty's commands, expressed to them by himself.

CHAPTER VII.

I have words too few to take my leave of you,
When the tongue's office should be prodigal
To breathe the abundant dolour of the heart.

SHAKSPEARE.

No sooner was free egress permitted from Gowrie House, than it was deserted by all its former inhabitants save two, the servants escaping from it as from pestilence, lest they should, by appearing still to linger around their deceased master, give rise to suspicion which might implicate them in his supposed treason. Of the two that remained, after all the others had departed, one alone was actuated by affection for the unfortunate young noblemen. This person was old Adam; for Laurence, who was the other, remained on a very different errand, name-

ly, to report all that should pass in the house after the arrival of the magistrates, and to gather as much as he could from the expressions of the inhabitants of the town, after their first feelings had subsided, what were likely to be their sentiments concerning the truth of the alleged conspiracy against the King; the Jesuit remarking, when he gave him his instructions, "That the muddy waters, which had been so recently stirred, must first be allowed to settle, before aught could be clearly discerned at the bottom."

When the bodies of the Earl and his brother were removed from the apartment where they were murdered, they were conveyed to that room where the King's repast had been so lately spread, and laid at the side of each other on the long oaken table, where they remained in all respects as when they fell, no one having been near them save Laurence and Adam. The former was dispatched by Rathsay, to search their persons, and had carried off the papers and

other articles found in their pockets; and the latter had not left them for a moment. Their untimely fate was to him as his funeral knell, and happy would he have been had his spirit departed with theirs; but feeble and crushed by this stroke, withering as it was, it seemed to refuse to quit its frail tenement of clay, and still lingered near all that now remained of his noble protectors. The wretched old man hung over the bodies, alternately wringing his palsied hands, and resting them on the sides of the board, while he cast looks of wild despair on the faces which were wont to be to him as those of angels. He had closed the lids upon their darkened eyes, and washed the blood from the left cheek of Ruthven, so lately dimpled by the smiles of gaiety and hope, but where now gaped a deadly gash, inflicted by his ruthless assassins while he struggled for life. And here he stood, when he could no longer discern their forms in the darkness that enveloped them, listening to the loud peals of thunder

that rolled and crashed over his head, and waiting with eagerness for each vivid flash of lightning that restored them for an instant to his sight; while he uttered his wailings alike for the dead and the living, in the language of Scripture, mixed with that suggested by his own overcharged heart.

"O!" said he, "that my head were waters, and mine eyes fountains of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of my master's house. Ye grew up as lilies, and I thought to have seen ye cast forth your roots as Lebanon; but here ye both are, laid low on one bloody bed.—Alas! alas! for my lady, for the poor bereaved mother!" he continued, as sobs choked his utterance, and he again wrung his hands in frantic agony.

"Peace, old man," said Laurence, as he entered with a torch, which he had lighted to enable him to secure the doors of the house after the departure of the King and his retinue; for although then not more than seven o'clock, the dense clouds which

hung over St Johnstoun, rendered the darkness nearly complete even without doors, and entirely so within the house—"Peace, I say," continued Laurence. "What is the good of all this lamentation, now the deed is done? You will have more cause to grieve for your old mistress, by and by, as you are so fond of it; for I am much mistaken if the King is not even now determined to seize her other two sons. Take you my advice, and hold your tongue, lest ye be suspected of having had a hand in the treason that hath slain our masters."

"Treason! said ye, coward knave! how dared ye name the foul word!" cried Adam, whose sorrow seemed for the moment swallowed up in rage. "O, my lamented Lords! ye, who were innocent of all that was evil, are branded with the name of traitors, and this feeble arm lacks strength to smite the villain down. And must the royal fiend," he continued, "have more blood to glut his vengeance?—and must the two lambs at Dirlton come to the slaughter-house, and none

remain of my noble master's house to continue his honoured name?—But let the monster take heed! And O! that he now heard the words of my mouth, for the hand of death is upon me!" he said, as, throwing back the white hair from his face, and stretching forth his hands over the bodies, he assumed the look of an ancient prophet—"And I bless God who maketh me to feel even now while I utter them, that they are the dictates of truth. That Being who visiteth the sins of the fathers on the children, until the third and fourth generation, and who will assuredly do that which is right, shall avenge this foul and cruel murder; for the race of the tyrant, in retributive justice, shall be cut off. He hath sown the wind, and he shall reap the whirlwind. He who springeth from his loins, and is yet unborn, shall die the death of violence, and his sons' sons become aliens and outcasts, without a throne and without a kingdom, when the land of his nativity,

and his land of promise, shall alike vomit them forth to destruction."

"Nay," said Laurence, who had nevertheless felt as spell-bound while he spoke, "cease your banning, and go lay your old crazy head upon your couch; take my word for it, you had better do so before they arrive who are appointed to take charge of these bodies, lest you should have an opportunity of repeating your prophecies along with your neck-verse. But faith," continued he, as he held up the torch and looked on the Earl, "he was a good master after all—but it serveth nothing to lament, as I said before; therefore," he went on, as he moved toward a buffet in the corner of the room, "will I take such comfort as I can come at.—Hah!" he continued, as he looked upon the golden-wrought cup, out of which the King had drunk, and which remained half full of wine—"by my faith, this is a pretty bauble, and containeth, I warrant, stuff of the best."

Having drunk the greater part of the li-

quor, he offered the remainder to the old man,—"Take it, old boy," said he, "it will put sap in thy withered trunk, and, trust me, comfort thee better than all thy crazy visions of revenge."

"Away with it!" said Adam, putting back Laurence with his hand. "It may, indeed, solace and comfort such as thou art, but the time is come for this withered trunk to be cut down—the last stroke of the axe is given, that levels it with the dust, and I have tasted of wine for the last time."

"Thou art an obstinate old mule," said Laurence. "But hark—what noise is that? —Ay, ay, it is the knocking of those I warned you of; I say, you had better take my advice, old one, and begone before I let them in."

"Never more will I leave my murdered masters," said the old man.

"This is the old witch Euphan over again, methinks," said Laurence, as he went to open the door of the principal entrance, where he found the same citizen who had

taken the most active part in attending his Majesty, and in quelling the rioters, accompanied by the young Laird of Restalrig, who had been prevented from departing, according to his intention, by the events of the day.

"You know me, friend," said the magistrate; "conduct us to where the bodies are laid."

Laurence obeyed, and bore the torch before them through the deserted hall, and along the empty passages, so lately thronged with domestics, into the apartment he had just quitted. Adam remained silent while they approached the table, and contemplated with deep feeling the remains of the noble brothers. There was little in the countenance of the Master to distinguish its expression from that of sleep; for his long black eye-lashes, that rested their shadowing fringes on his cheeks, would have given to it an air of profound repose, had not the gash on his face, and the congealed gore which matted together the short curls

of his raven hair, told another tale. There was even in death some lingerings about the mouth, of that arch-recklessness that had so strongly marked his features while living, and which took much from their ghastliness in death. Not such was the impression produced by looking on the face of the Earl; for there the last and mortal struggle of his soul was stamped and fixed by the rigid hand of death; his teeth were firmly clenched; his lips compressed; and every line betokened anguish indescribable. The hair had fallen back from his ample forehead, and shewed the brow contracted by mental agony, while the distended nostril, and the swollen muscle, demonstrated the effects of over-strained strength.

The magistrate and the stripling gazed upon them intently, and the tears stood in the eyes of the former, as he called to mind the virtues of the Earl, and his urbanity and kindness to himself, now never more to be repeated. But the tears of the younger man confined not themselves within such narrow bounds, for they flowed copiously

upon the breast of the Master as he bent over him, and contemplated the ruin of him he had so lately loved and admired; and so strong were his youthful feelings, that having once burst the flood-gates of his eyes, he abandoned himself to the most extravagant expressions of grief.—His every sob seemed soothing, as the sounds of funeral music to the ear of old Adam, who stood regarding him with looks of love, in which the workings of some eager hope appeared mingling strangely with the utter despair that had possessed his features but an instant before. He approached the magistrate cautiously, unobserved by Laurence, whose late behaviour had engendered suspicion in his breast, and said in a whisper, "For the love of God send away that serving-man, while I speak somewhat of weighty import."

He to whom he spoke signified by an inclination of his head that he comprehended his meaning. "Pray, young man," said he, speaking to Laurence, "step forth to

my house, and inquire what hath detained those whom I expected to follow me immediately, that the necessary offices might be rendered to these bodies."

"Would that I were quit of you all," aid Laurence internally, as he made his way out of the house to obey this command; "for I know not what hath come over me, but giving the key of the turret to that d—d Austin, and telling the cursed lie about the King's having gone forth, hangs about me like a millstone. Yet I had nothing to do with the murders,—that's one comfort,—and the large reward I am promised for holding my tongue, is another.—And after all, I believe, the sight of the bodies, and the dreariness of the house, since it was deserted, is the cause of this cowardly feeling."

Laurence had no sooner departed, than Adam, who appeared nearly exhausted by his grief, staggered toward young Restalrig, and threw his palsied frame at his feet.

"O, young gentleman!" he cried, "save

the brothers of my murdered master; the decree hath gone forth, and they too are to be slain—save them, and the blessing of God and their widowed mother will descend upon your head!—Fly to Dirlton this night, and tell them to stint not till they have passed the Scottish Border; the Queen of England will protect them for the regard she bore my deceased lord.—And O! if ye could but deliver this to the dear bairn, Lady Beatrix, as ye pass by Holyrood," said he, producing a letter from his pocket, which the Earl had that day given him in charge to forward to his sister, and which was to inform her of his intended union with Agnes—" and," he continued, " break to her the heavy news; yet tarry not, for dear lives hang upon your haste."

" Bless thee, old man!" said the youth, in the virtuous enthusiasm of the moment, " for pointing out aught in which I can aid this proscribed family; and to the utmost of my strength will I fulfil all thy directions."

He bade the magistrate a hasty farewell,

as he turned from him to be gone, while every pulse beat high, and his cheeks, lately so pale, were flushed with the eager hope of saving the remaining sons of the unfortunate Countess. But he had much interested his elderly friend, and he caught him by the arm.

"Be cautious, young man," said he, "my greater experience bids me warn you, that you are about to tread on slippery ground. Take heed lest you involve yourself in the ruin your kind heart would avert from others."

"I shall use as much caution, at least," returned the spirited youth, "as will, I trust, secure the safety of those I go to succour; and for my own, I shall take my chance. I thank you, however, sir," he said, "for your kindly advice;" and releasing his arm from the grasp of his friend, he disappeared.

The worthy magistrate observed that Adam still remained on the ground, and offered him his assistance to rise; but in

vain, for it was seconded by no efforts of his own; and he at length lifted up his feeble frame in his arms, and placed him in the chair of state at the head of the table, in which the King had sat, as the easiest resting-place for his infirmities. He had scarcely performed this act of humanity, when the people for whom he had sent entered, and began their mournful task.

Among those assembled, were the Laird of Tullibrandon, and his brother Sir Mungo, who, after having assisted in dispersing the multitude, were attracted to the spot by their selfish views, and failed not to throw out certain remarks on the treason of the brothers; which, as they reached the ears of the feeble old Adam, appeared to recal him to recollection; for his lips trembled, and his eyes sent forth indignant flashes, such as an expiring lamp emits when it is upon the verge of sinking into darkness. But he continued silent, though he still apparently regarded what was passing, until the surgeons, who had been command-

ed to embalm the bodies, that they might thus be preserved till the next meeting of the Parliament, made the first incision on that of the Earl, when a shudder seized his frame, and he laid down his aged head on the table.

Little notice was taken of the old man after this, till the whole melancholy business was over, when they endeavoured to rouse him, and it was perceived that he had breathed forth his faithful spirit at the feet of his noble masters.

CHAPTER VIII.

O, vain distinction of exalted state!
No rank ascends above the reach of care,
No dignity can shield a Queen from woe.
Despotic nature's stronger sceptre rules,
And pain and passion in her right prevail.

Earl of Essex.

THE young Laird of Restalrig urged his favourite steed to its fleetest pace, availing himself of his knowledge of the topography of the country through which he passed, to shorten the distance between St Johnstoun and the house of the ferryman who was to put him across the Frith. Before he reached this place, the wind had fortunately abated, and the moon shone forth at intervals, so that an additional douceur, promptly applied, prevailed on the boatman, without much trouble, to land him on the opposite shore; and

continuing his speed, he arrived a short time before midnight at the principal entrance to the Palace of Holyrood, where, announcing himself as a special messenger sent to the Lady Beatrix Ruthven, who must see herself immediately, he was admitted by the guard, and directed to enter the Palace, and wait till she should be made acquainted with his arrival. Brief space, however, elapsed, before he was summoned to follow a person, who conducted him to a room where the young lady waited for him in the utmost anxiety. This apartment formed an anti-room to the sleeping-chamber of the Queen, where Lady Beatrix had been in attendance on her Majesty who was about to retire to rest. It was not till he actually stood before the sister of the two murdered young noblemen, that the youth felt the full difficulty of the task which he had undertaken to perform, and the utter impossibility of accomplishing it. The idea of a bold expedient, however, came to his aid, which nothing but the ur-

gency of the case, and his own over-wrought feelings, could have given him confidence to put in practice. He was instantly recognized by Beatrix, to whom he presented the letter he had received from old Adam, which she was proceeding to open, when the young man entreated her attention for a moment. "I have been this day at Falkland," he said; "and my principal business here is with the Queen; I am the bearer of tidings for her private ear; and it is necessary I should see her without delay. You will therefore pardon, lady, my having made that letter my pretext for procuring an interview with you, through whose means I can only hope to speak with her Majesty, it being of infinite consequence, that I should be seen by as few as possible in this place, and recognized by none."

The agitation of the young man, while he spoke, was so apparent, that Beatrix looked on him with a fearful presentiment. "This letter," she said, "I trust, brings no disastrous tidings?"

"Not that I am aware of, lady," he returned; "but I entreat you to make known my request to the Queen."

"You have relieved me from a load of fearful apprehension," said Beatrix; "and I go instantly to inform her Majesty of your desire;" and she darted into the next apartment.

The young man waited little more than a minute, till the Queen entered with Lady Beatrix. He had never before seen her Majesty; and, on any other occasion, would have felt the timidity natural to his extreme youth, on finding himself in her presence; but now all personal feelings were swallowed up in the intense interest he experienced for the unfortunate family he sought to succour; and he knelt at the Queen's feet the instant she appeared, more in the agony of his impatience to entreat her to let him speak with her alone, than to render the respect to royalty, which he knew was customary.

Her Majesty appeared startled by the extreme vehemence with which he urged

his request, and surprised at the guise in which he appeared in her presence. For the furious speed with which he had ridden, had thrown the splashes of mud as far as his shoulders, while his boots and nether garments could not be distinguished for the mass of soil that adhered to them. His hair was uncurled, and from its lank locks, as well as from his garments, the rain descended in drops to the floor, owing to his having encountered a heavy thunder-shower since crossing the Frith.

"Rise, young man," said her Majesty, "and speak at once what you have to impart; I may be considered alone, while only attended by this lady, from whom her Queen keeps no secrets;—and you may retire to that light, meanwhile, my dear Beatrix, and read your letter."

"If any one remains with your Majesty, and I cannot say that which I would, the consequences will be dreadful," said the harassed young man, with mingled impatience and solemnity, reverting in his own mind to

the necessity there was that no time should be lost in the accomplishment of his mission to Dirlton.

"This is very extraordinary, indeed," said the Queen, whose countenance began to assume that haughtiness which so strongly marked it when offended, "that a stripling, such as thou art, should disobey the command of your Queen, and keep her so long in suspense with regard to what your bearing seems to say so nearly concerns her. I command you again to make known instantly what you have to communicate."

"Oh, for the love of Heaven!" ejaculated the half-crazed boy, whose perplexity and distress had now reached their very acme—"For the love of humanity, send her away; it is her the tidings concern, and it would kill her to hear them." He said this in a whisper, going almost close up to the Queen, who, seemingly much struck by his words, turned instantly to Lady Beatrix.

"This is the most obstinate stripling,"

she said, " whom thou hast introduced to us, Beatrix, that we ever encountered; he still most ungallantly insists on your departure, therefore leave us for a brief space."

Lady Beatrix appeared so much interested in the contents of the letter which she was perusing, as scarcely to have heard what the Queen said; but she raised her eyes, and comprehended by the action of her Majesty, who waved her hand toward the door of her chamber, that her attendance was dispensed with, and instantly withdrew.

" How shall I frame my words," said young Restalrig, " to inform your Majesty of the heavy tidings I bear for that miserable young lady?—Her two elder brethren have been accused of treason, and were both slain this day in the Earl's own house at St Johnstoun, in the presence of his Majesty and sundry of his attendants."

When the young man had uttered these words, he became terrified by the paleness of the Queen's countenance, as she dragged

her limbs with difficulty to a chair, and sunk into it, exhibiting, as he thought, a strong tendency to swoon; and in the alarm of the moment, he was about to call for aid. She seemed, however, to fear this, and said faintly, "Do not alarm any one, but tell me quickly the nature of the treason of which they were accused, and by whose hands they fell."

"It is alleged," returned the youth, "that they had decoyed the King under a false pretence to St Johnstoun, with intent to murder him, and that they fell by the hands of his attendants, while making the attempt."

"It is false as the fiends who did the deed!" said the Queen, with a fervour which seemed to rouse her from the faintness that had before overpowered her.—"O, wretched woman that I am!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands together with a violent gesture; "why am I doomed to bring destruction on the noblest and the best! The princely Murray—the gay and gene-

rous Ruthven—and his noble brother.—But," she continued, with increased vehemence, " I will no longer submit tamely to be made the pretence for such monstrous crimes; I will be revenged; and James shall learn to fear a suspected and insulted consort—I shame to call myself the wife of such a craven hypocrite!"

Having thus given vent to her feelings, the Queen sunk into a state of suffering, in which sorrow and indignation strove for the mastery, and the burning tears chased each other down her cheeks.

Restalrig was struck with amazement and horror at what he heard and saw, for he was totally ignorant of the circumstances to which she alluded, as also of the customary contempt in which she held the low and cunning policy of her spouse. He, therefore, very naturally concluded, that the sudden knowledge of the untimely and bloody fate of the brothers had affected her brain, and he began to experience dreadful apprehension of what might be the consequence

of his rashness; particularly as he could not be ignorant that she must run a dangerous risk from any cause that violently agitated her; the period of which we are speaking, being about three months before the birth of her second son, the unfortunate Charles the First of England.

As these thoughts came across the young man, he became almost frantic, and again attempted to call her attendants, but she so peremptorily forbade him, that, not daring to disobey, he stood gazing upon her with pity and terror, in which, notwithstanding his contending feelings, admiration largely mingled, for she had perhaps never appeared to such advantage as she now did in these moments of natural sorrow and mental struggle. Her person was wrapt in a long and loose robe of plain white satin, which she wore as a dressing gown—her golden hair, which had been disencumbered for the night of its usual rich ornaments, falling unconfined over her shoulders, her beautiful hands and arms,

were now seen and now hidden by the wide sleeves of her dress, as she raised them in the energy of feeling, or let them fall in despair; while her features, from which the traces of vanity and the assumptions of arrogance had fled, were touched with a softness foreign to their general expression, as her half-closed blue eyes, oppressed with anguish, spoke a mind on which grief had stamped her image.

The young man knew not what to do; but, prompted by the natural kindness of his disposition, he attempted to utter some incoherent words of comfort, which were rendered nearly unintelligible by the strong sense he began to entertain of his most extraordinary situation; for that he, a mere boy, who had never before that day looked upon the face of royalty, should now, as by the power of enchantment, be standing at so late an hour alone in the presence of his Queen, the only person to witness her feelings of sorrow, and hear her words of distraction, appeared to him more like a dream

than the sober truths of waking reality. Yet in this perplexity of intellect, caused by the quick coming incidents of the most eventful day of his short life, he could never for a moment forget the time he was losing, so valuable to the remaining brothers of Gowrie; and at length, becoming nervously impatient of the delay, and perceiving her Majesty, as he thought, somewhat less agitated, he ventured, though shaking the while in every limb, lest he should increase what he had mistaken for the symptoms of mental derangement in her Majesty, to say, that he had received a hint of evil premeditated against the two remaining sons of the Countess of Gowrie, and related his intention of proceeding to Dirlton; but that having tired his own horse, he must, in order to put his plan of saving them in execution, request her Majesty's orders to replace it by one from the royal stables.

"Fly instantly to the Countess, young man," said the Queen, rising hastily from her chair; "but stay," she said, extending

her hand to him, "swear that you will never divulge what you have this night seen and heard, and accept the thanks of your Queen and her poor Beatrix for your noble exertions."

The youth, whom these words convinced of his mistake with regard to the state of the Queen's mind, knelt, and touching her Majesty's hand with his lips, vowed most solemnly never to name to mortal ear what had passed.

"Now," said the Queen, "send here the person whom you will find attending in the room beyond this, and a horse shall await you in a few minutes."

The boy, like a bird released from his cage, darted toward the door by which he had entered; and despatching to the Queen from the adjoining apartment the person mentioned by her, awaitedhis return, which was almost instant.

"Follow me, young sir," said he, taking up a lamp, and descending the stairs to a small room at the foot; when, speaking to

some one within it, he demanded a cup of wine, which he presented to young Restalrig, who having gladly accepted this refreshment, followed him to the stables, where he was quickly accommodated by him with a horse, which carried him with such speed, that, ere morning dawned, the two remaining sons of the House of Ruthven had left their mother's house for England, in which country they were protected by its Queen during her life.

Of the life and fate of the stripling who thus magnanimously secured their safety, if this tale is not doomed to utter oblivion, the reader may chance to hear more at a future period; one of the remaining manuscripts in our possession, being a relation of the circumstances of his eventful life.

CHAPTER IX.

Know ye the land, where no pain and no sorrow
  Shall darken the brow, or shall bow down the head;
Where no grief of to-day, and no thought of the morrow,
  Shall reach the glad heart, or appal it with dread?—
Know ye the land of the spirits of peace,
Where the joys never lessen, the hymns never cease?
Where the friends of our bosom, here lost in the tomb,
Shall meet us again, ever freed from its gloom?
Where the hearts now divided, united shall rest,
And be heal'd of their woes in the bowers of the blest?
Where the tear shall not quench the bright beam of the eye;
Where hopes here destroy'd meet fruition on high;
And spirit with spirit in love only vie?
Where the morn shall arise on the night of the grave;
And the arm that chastised be extended to save?—
'Tis the home of the just—'Tis the region of Truth—
Where her children shall dwell, ever blooming in youth.—
Oh, dearer than aught to the sorrow-worn soul,
Are the dreams of that land, and the hopes of that goal!

Imitation of Lord Byron's Bride of Abydos.

We now return to Lady Agnes, whom we have of necessity left while recording the disastrous events that deprived Scotland of two of her brightest ornaments.

After leaving the Inch, she hurried home, as before related, influenced by a considerable share of curiosity, not unmixed with fear; and, on her arrival at Dame Norton's, found, to her inexpressible surprise, that the person who had warned her to retire was Euphan of the Craigs, who already awaited her there, accompanied by her son; both of whom she had been told by Laurence, on her way from Craigmillar, were departed with her aunt. But if she was surprised at their unexpected appearance, she was still more so when they informed her, that the Abbess had not yet left the country. For the vessel, overtaken by a second storm after passing St Abb's Head, was driven back; and the sailors being well acquainted with the harbour of Dunbar, (where they had lain a considerable time, for the ship to undergo some repairs, after landing the Earl's baggage at St Johnstoun,) steered her for that port, being unable to run her up the Frith of Forth.

Having once more come to land in Scotland, the Abbess prevailed on the master of the sloop not to depart again until she was ready to accompany him. Being determined to make another effort to carry Lady Agnes with her, she dispatched Father Leonard to Holyrood, supposing her niece still there, to concert measures with the Jesuit, which would enable her to join her at Dundee.

When the Father arrived at Holyrood, the Jesuit informed him of his having released Agnes from Craigmillar, (where he allowed him to believe she had been detained by the contrivance of the King and Rathsay,) and made known to him her abode at St Johnstoun, from which place her joining the Abbess at Dundee would be comparatively easy. For the Jesuit, having fulfilled his purpose of inflaming, by means of her flight from Craigmillar, the hatred and suspicion of Rathsay against Gowrie, and expecting the result of the King's vi-

sit to the Earl to terminate as it did, was not unwilling to have Lady Agnes committed to the care of her aunt, now that she had become no longer necessary to his plans. He therefore informed the Father of his Majesty's intention of going immediately to Falkland, and advised the instant removal of Agnes, lest she should by any means be discovered by Rathsay or the King whilst in the neighbourhood.

On receiving this information and counsel, the old man returned to Dundee as quickly as his infirmities would permit; but, from the unusual length of the journey he had undertaken, he was unable to proceed, and the Abbess was at length obliged to send old Euphan and her son, who did not arrive, as has been seen, owing to the delay occasioned by Father Leonard, till the day of the King's visit to St Johnstoun.

Upon inquiring for Mable Norton, Euphan learned, that she had quitted her house, with the two young women who

lived with her, and with whom she was then on the South Inch. She then immediately repaired to the spot; and, singling out three women who stood together as those of whom she had come in search, her penetration soon discovered Lady Agnes, whom she was enabled to warn of the King's approach, from having accidentally heard the messenger of the Master of Ruthven tell it to one of his fellow-servants as he passed on through the crowd.

This unlooked-for intelligence threw Lady Agnes into an agony of perplexity and distress; but these sensations, which were but as a drop of water to the ocean, were quickly swallowed up in the fatal knowledge of Gowrie's murder; which, reducing the ill-fated Agnes to a state of insensibility, enabled Euphan and Alice to provide for her safety, by removing her, as soon as the fury of the elements abated, with the assistance of Walter, to a boat, which, conveying them down the Tay, lodged them on board the foreign sloop. Being then speedily join-

ed by the Abbess and Father Leonard, the vessel once more put out to sea, and soon left the shores of Scotland far behind.

Agnes continued in that state of fixed and mute despair which ever succeeds the decided and mortal strokes of destiny. It was in vain that the Abbess exerted the eloquence of her feeling heart to sooth her, or that the holy Father poured forth the consolations of her faith,—the soul of Agnes was deaf to the voice of the charmer, and she listened without understanding. Yet they observed, that, as far as bodily suffering went, she bore the long voyage better than themselves; for there was that within which bade defiance to all lesser evils, and she would sit for hours on the deck of the vessel, gazing on the vast ocean with tearless eyes, revolving deep and momentous thoughts. But she was not striving with her fate; worldly hope and mortal existence were alike leaving her. When, however, she at length entered the portals of the monastic pile, she hailed it as the last

stage of her pilgrimage, and as the porch of heaven. The fair skies of Italy, so different from those of her native land, seemed to beam upon her, in earnest of her nearer approach to that land where the clouds of sorrow shall be dispersed for ever; while the full tide of harmony that arose from the soft voices of the choral nuns, seemed as if it bore her upwards with it. A supernatural tranquillity took possession of her soul, and her features spoke peace unutterable, while the vital spark was fast extinguishing, the beauteous body returning to the dust, and the spirit ascending to him who gave it.

This was visible to all; and the Abbess, who had so long conquered all worldly desires, was resigned to the stroke; for she dared not murmur at losing her, whom she considered as redeemed by miracle from the perdition of uniting her fate with a heretic. She sought comfort in the thought, that she would die in the full exercise of all the rites of her religion, blessed by its consola-

tions, and upheld by its assurances,—and the holy Mother knew that she herself was fast treading the same path. But poor Alice, the companion of her childhood, and the humble sister of her affection, whom no dangers and no distance could deter from following her, prayed without comfort, and wept without hope. Nor was it till several years after her return to Scotland, when her unfortunate lady had long been at rest, and she herself involved in the cares of a wife and a mother, which gave a new turn to her ideas, that she could think of her without the most poignant sorrow, or mention her without tears.

The peacefulness of the cloister, where old Euphan was retained during her life by the Abbess, and the satisfaction she reaped from the performance of the masses for the souls of her lost family, together with the society of her son, who was constantly employed in the extensive gardens of the convent, seemed to bestow on her mind a greater measure of forgetfulness of the past, and

enjoyment of the present, than might have been expected.

BEING about to bid adieu to our readers, we must, we presume, give some account of the other characters who have figured in this History; but as the ancient manuscript at this point grew somewhat long and tiresome, we have thought it proper to condense its details within the compass of a few pages.

We have said, that our clerical host was appointed by his Majesty to the pastoral care of a parish; and now have only to add, that he obtained the reputation of a faithful and diligent expounder of the Gospel, and that he was frequently invited by the lairds within his spiritual jurisdiction, to partake of their good cheer;—while no cloud now intervening between our quondam hostess and her dignity, she shone forth in the full splendour of her rank. Nor

had she much cause to regret her removal from the Hostel of Loretto on the score of profit; for since the arrival of her profligate son, she had not been able to save a single coin, it being all she could accomplish to conceal from him the sum she had placed at interest, which, as she had made it by her own industry, she considered honestly her own.

On her leaving the inn, after the death of the Earl of Gowrie, Laurence changed his plan of returning to Italy, and employed part of the sum given him by the Jesuit, as the recompence of his villainy, in stocking the cellars of the old Hostel with the choicest liquors; in large potations of which he was in the constant practice of drowning the qualms of conscience, when he thought of the share he had taken in betraying his noble master. Thus living the life of a sot, he also died the death of one; for, being swollen to incredible dimensions, his breath was finally obstructed by a fit of apoplexy, at a premature age.

The honest fisherman, Nicol Partan, on the contrary, having his health preserved by temperance, survived to a good old age; continuing to live with his daughter, whose tocher did not fail to procure her a husband, till, being too old to gain his bread on the face of the waters, his chief employment was that of attending to his grandchildren, and entertaining them and his neighbours with his former adventures.

Doctor Herbal lived but a short time to enjoy the knighthood and lands conferred upon him in requital of his assistance in the bloody massacre of the 5th of August.

Not so Rathsay; whose knighthood, conferred at the same time with Herbal's, served but as a prologue to the titles of viscount and earl, which were quickly, one after another, bestowed upon him by his Majesty, after ascending the throne of England.—There, Rathsay maintained the character of an honourable nobleman with all, save such of his Majesty's subjects as obstinately persevered in their disbelief of the Gow-

rie conspiracy. These persons, however, happening to be a large majority of the lieges, especially in Scotland, subtracted somewhat from his fair fame, as it did also from the content of his Royal Master, who never ceased to murmur at this perversity of his people, till the year 1608, when the fact of the Earl's conspiracy was *incontestibly* proved by the evidence of a *single witness*; who, having wisely kept the secret till all the parties implicated were dead, and thus exempted himself from any fear of contradiction, was immediately hung up, in token of the hearty belief entertained of his veracity by his judges.

Here we may also mention, that the threats of the Queen, uttered in the hearing of young Restalrig, were not the mere breathings of a sudden and passing indignation; for this high-spirited woman, shortly after the disastrous end of the two gallant brothers, put herself at the head of a faction, whose aim it was to recal from abroad Francis Stuart, the banished Earl of Both-

well, that he might become the castigator of her lord and master. How the completion of this design was prevented, does not appear; but it is well known, that even less than their usual cordiality subsisted between James and his consort ever after this period, and that her Majesty continued her friendship to the Lady Beatrix, in direct opposition to the will of the King, after the noble name and family of Ruthven had been exterminated to the full extent of tyrannical power.

The King did not fail to reward the Jesuit with pecuniary benefits, on which his towering spirit put small value, while he continued, after the death of old Heronshaw, to hold the place of Master Falconer, as a cloak to his office of spy on the actions of James, and until his removal to England, in 1603,—an event to which he had looked forward with such sanguine hopes. But these hopes began to abate, and his spirits to flag, when, during the first year of his accession to the English throne, the pur-

poses of James were unfolded,—and he beheld, with amazement and rage, the laws framed by Elizabeth strictly executed against the Catholics. His was not the spirit to brook tamely the fall of his lofty schemes; and, in 1604, he secretly instigated, by the most artful means, the infatuated Catesby to enter into that well-known conspiracy, which, by the destruction of every individual of the three Estates of Parliament at one blow, had for its aim the realization of all their visionary hopes of a Catholic government. This was a design well worthy of the powers of darkness whom he had so long served; and had it succeeded, would, on the death of the Superior of the Jesuits, have invested him with that influence, which it had been the study of his life to obtain. But, while elated by his hitherto successful villainy, and blinded in the pursuit of ambition, it was fated to be his ruin; and, in righteous retribution, it was ordained, that he should reap the reward of his many crimes. For, on the failure of

the Gunpowder Plot, he fled with Catesby and Percy into Warwickshire, where they all three shared the same fate,—being shot in a vain attempt to withstand a party sent to apprehend them.

LETTER

LETTER

FROM

PEREGRINE ROVER, Esq.

TO

TACITUS TORPEDO, Esq.

My dear Torpedo,

You, who are accustomed to the eccentric motions of your friend, will not be surprised to perceive, that this epistle is dated from the capital of Scotland. On the contrary, it is probable, after the many months that have elapsed since you last heard from me, that you may have expected my wanderings to have been, as usual,

extended beyond the limits of our native island. And this undoubtedly would have been the case, but for some particular circumstances which have kept me stationary here, and prevented a voyage to St Petersburgh which I had projected, by taking ship at Leith, after returning from a tour through the Highlands; and where I should now have been, studying living men and manners, instead of recording the actions of people who existed more than two centuries ago, which is to be the present employment of my pen.

Know then, my dear friend, and be astonished at the information, that I, Peregrine Rover, have submitted to habits as sedentary as your own,

and become for some time past a slave to the quill, that I may give to the world an authentic copy of a MS., which fell into my hands in a most extraordinary manner; and which, from my previous peregrinations in the land of second-sight, oracular predictions, spirits, fairies, &c. I was almost induced to believe was managed by some such supernatural agency,—so strange were the incidents which led to its discovery, and to my determination of making it public.

Now, to relate all things in order, I must inform you, that, on my return from the Highlands, I took Perth in my way; where being introduced to two of its most learned

antiquaries, they very civilly volunteered to act as my guides, and explain to me the many things worthy of notice in their town, and its environs.

I soon found, however, that it would have tended more toward the peaceful enjoyment of my walks, had I been accompanied by only one of them at a time; for these obliging old gentlemen unhappily differed so much with regard to dates and localities, that the one generally flatly contradicted the other, and left me between them to form my own conjectures on the matter in dispute; except when the fierceness of their contests arose to such an alarming height as to menace their laying vio-

lent hands on each other, on which occasions, giving the point in contention to the winds, my whole attention was turned toward the restoration of tranquillity, and the protection of their several wigs. One dispute between them, however, raged so furiously, that all my endeavours to procure peace proved ineffectual, till they had fairly exhausted themselves in vociferating the thousand and one arguments brought by each, respecting the exact spot on which the decisive battle was fought between the Romans and Caledonians, in the time of the Emperor Domitian, and where Agricola remained master of the field —one affirming that it took place at Comrie, and the other asseverating

that it happened near to Blairgowrie. And here I may mention, that this latter opinion appears to me the most probable; as, about two miles west of that place, an oblong square, said to be the Roman Vallum, is in the immediate neighbourhood of numerous tumuli, giving evident symptoms of its having once been the scene of a battle; but whether of that fought between Agricola and Galgacus, will now, in all probability, never be ascertained, in spite of the firm belief of one of the old sages in its favour.

But, to enter more immediately into the train of the story which I purpose giving you,—for I have hitherto been wofully digressing from it,—I must pass over the many cu-

rious vestiges of antiquity, which abound in Perth and its neighbourhood, and say, that in none of them did I feel so much interested as in the remains of the palace of the Ruthvens, where the murder of the last Earl of Gowrie and his brother took place.

Having previously read all the different accounts given by our historians of this mysterious affair, and which, being somewhat contradictory, give so fair an occasion for controversy, I was not a little surprised to find the utmost harmony in opinion subsisting between my two guides on the subject of the Gowrie conspiracy, which they both roundly affirmed to have been the contrivance

of King James; bringing forward, in proof of this belief, many traditional stories—shewing me the charter of confirmation, granted by him, of the rights and privileges of the town of Perth—the decreet obtained from him, by the burgh of Perth, against the burgh of Dundee, respecting their contested rights, shortly after the alleged conspiracy—and, likewise, a MS. Chronicle, still preserved in the town, which states, that King James VI. came to Perth on the 15th day of April, 1601, and was made Provost of that town; on which occasion he partook of a banquet at the Market-cross, where there were eight puncheons of wine drunk dry. He at the same time subscribed the guild-

book with his own hand, *Jacobus Rex, parcere subjectis, et debellare superbos.* That he then also gave a considerable sum of money in grant to the hospital for the poor at Perth, which was kept secret for a number of years; being, as is supposed, appropriated during that time as a bribe to the people who were possessed of influence in the town, the King having given no charter for it, or in any manner instructed the ministers or elders, who had the management of the institution, in his having made such a gift.

From these circumstances the two old gentlemen drew such inferences as were seemingly to be deduced from the facts; that is, that had the King

been innocent, it was much more likely, that the town where such a diabolical conspiracy had been hatched would have become the object of his aversion, than that he should, so soon after, have chosen to honour it with such marks of his especial favour as he had never granted to any other place in his dominions; more especially as he knew full well, how much the Earl of Gowrie, and his progenitors, had been the objects of the inhabitants' devoted attachment, and how roughly they were inclined to handle him on the day of the Earl's death,—at which time the men of Dundee, over whom he had since given them so decided a victory, were under arms to march to his rescue.

All these things considered, I could not but join with my two old friends in supposing, that James's favour to Perth was meant to conciliate the town's-people, and silence the *fama clamosa*. But, as it has been truly said " none are all ill," we may even suppose, that the King might pursue this course as a salvo to his conscience for the injury he had done the people of this place, in depriving them of the protecting influence of a family, who, it appears, had been studious of their interest for many past generations; which supposition is strictly in conformity with his versatile character, (in so far, at least, as I have been able to comprehend it;) in illustration of which take an anecdote of

the relentings of his nature, as related by Arthur Wilson, in his " History of Great Britain," which has just occurred to my memory :—

This Prince, when in England, having lost some papers relative to a Spanish treaty, fell into such a passion with an old attendant in his bedchamber, named Gib, whom he had carried with him from Scotland, on the charge of his having mislaid them, that, on its being refuted by Gib, he reviled him in the most opprobrious manner, and who kneeling, the more earnestly to protest his innocence, received a kick from his Royal Master. This indignity raised the spirit of the attendant, who reminded the King, that, having served him faithfully from

his youth, he had little deserved such recompence; and, rising from his knees, expressed the determination to live no longer with him, since he could not do so without being subjected to such disgrace; on which he left his presence to return to Scotland. Soon after his departure, another attendant, with whom the King had intrusted the papers, hearing of what had happened, brought them to his Majesty, who immediately sent post after Gib, swearing neither to eat, drink, nor sleep, till he had seen his face again. On his entrance into the chamber, his Majesty kneeled down, protesting he would never rise from that posture till his old servant had forgiven the unmerited insults he had received;

and although Gib modestly declined arrogating to himself such power over his Royal Master, yet would he not move from his humble attitude until the words of remission were pronounced.

Nor is this sort of conduct at all unusual with people of inconsiderate and hasty tempers, of which our own observation may have convinced us. For my own part, I am acquainted with a gentleman of this temperament, whom the waiters at a certain hotel which he frequents are said to be in the practice of provoking to bestow injurious usage upon them, that they may be nourished by the golden showers of his penitential relentings, which never fail to descend upon them

after his fit of passion is gone by, as naturally as the rain falls after a thunder-storm.

I would therefore argue, that there is nothing out of the way, provided we allow him to have been the aggressor, in the King's taking such methods as have been related, to efface the sense of injury from the minds of the inhabitants of Perth, and to appease, in some measure, his own wounded conscience. But, if we suppose him innocent, we must for ever remain at a loss for a clue to his conduct. For, is it to be credited by common sense, that he, who was ever so feverishly alive to the dread of treachery, would have so soon trusted himself in the midst of a town, where, if Gowrie had

laid a plot against his life, some of his accomplices, it is more than probable, might still remain? Or is it consistent with the usual conduct of him, who condemned so many to death, on the absurd supposition of their wishing to injure him by the means of charms and incantations, that he should become thus suddenly forgiving and placable? Or did it savour of the tender mercies of him, who, in short, never failed to punish, with the utmost rigour, all who committed the most trivial offence against his person or authority,—as witness the instances recorded in "Arnot's Criminal Trials," which, without searching further, may be taken as very sufficient specimens to uphold the truth of what I am ad-

vancing. In short, I do not recollect one instance in which, as the aggrieved party, he shewed any mercy toward the unfortunate culprit, save sometimes in the matter of the cabals raised against him by the Popish Lords, which appears to me to have been the effect of the wholesome fear he had before his eyes of their prowess, mingled with a spice of contradiction to the clergy, in which he was fond of indulging.

All these things considered, it appears to me to surpass any ordinary comprehension why he should have taken the town of Perth so immediately under his particular protection, or why, as I said before, he did not rather let the whole weight of his

indignation fall upon a city, whose principal citizen had made so atrocious an attempt upon his life.

I shall also here mention another of what I consider the strongest evidences against the King,—the testimony given of the disbelief of his asseverations, so firmly maintained by that excellent and upright man, Mr Robert Bruce. This minister, we are informed by Calderwood, on being urged to confess his belief in the account published by King James after the murder of Gowrie, wrote a letter to the Town Council of Edinburgh, in which he declares, "That, in the chair of truth, by the grace of God, he is resolved to follow the word and spirit of truth," and therefore conti-

nued to persist in his refusal to express his conviction of that which he doubted, for which he underwent many persecutions, and was banished from his native country. We are also informed, by the same authority, that, on the King's embarkation for Denmark at the time of his marriage, "he willed Mr Robert Bruce to be acquainted with the affairs of the country, and proceedings of the Council, professing that he had more confidence in him than in all his nobles." And, in a letter written to him by the King while absent on that expedition, he confesses, "He will be obliged to him while he liveth, for the travail he hath taken in his absence to keep the subjects in order, and to

fight out the rest of his battle, seeing he was to come home shortly with a greater courage." Thus it appears that Bruce must have had ample opportunities, while so trusted and favoured by James, of forming a judgment of his character; and what the result of his observations was, is plainly spoken in his refusal to credit his word in a matter, where to doubt his veracity was virtually to accuse him of a flagrant crime.

In this view of the subject, I found that I was not only joined by my two antiquarians, but also by nearly every one with whom I became acquainted during my sojourn of a fortnight in that ancient town. I began now to perceive, that the popular belief of the

Earl of Gowrie's innocence, grounded on the traditional accounts which prevail there, and in which they had been instructed from their youth, was the original cause of the hearty concurrence of my two guides on this single subject, while, in all others, they appeared to make a point of differing from each other most materially, and, as I have related, in general most bitterly. Whether it was, therefore, from their amicable behaviour while discussing this point, which made their company more pleasant than ordinary, or from the extraordinary interest which I could not help taking in the old story of the unfortunate brothers, I know not; but so it was, that I generally found myself stand-

ing with the old gentlemen, at some hour of each day, near to Gowrie House, where I frequently pictured to myself the whole scene of their murder, while hearing from my instructors some new circumstance in corroboration of what had become my fixed opinion of the treachery of King James; and so strong a hold did this story take of my mind, on a spot where so many people appeared still as much interested in the fate of these unfortunate young men, as if the tragedy of their death had recently taken place, that it frequently led me to spend my evenings in reviving my recollections relating to them, by reading the different historical narrations of the circumstance; and I was

particularly pleased by the convincing arguments used by Pinkerton, in his Dissertation on the Gowrie Conspiracy, as inserted by Laing in his History of Scotland, and which that historian, according to my judgment, does not at all invalidate by his after recantation in regard to the letters of Logan of Restalrig,—the whole evidence of their authenticity resting on two questions—First, Whether Sprott was so successful an imitator of Restalrig's writing, as to be able to deceive those who were acquainted with his hand and style; and, secondly, Whether there existed a sufficient stimulus, on the part of the King and his parasites, to engage the wretched man in such a scheme, to support the

testimony of the King in regard to the alleged plot. Now, that forgeries of writing, as successful as those in question, have frequently been executed, requires no proof, from the variety of such instances which have occurred. Neither does it seem to me that there can exist any doubt of its having been a most desirable and acceptable piece of service to the King to have the reality of the conspiracy thus vouched, and, consequently, the truth of his assertions proved, in defiance of what we are informed had been the universal discredit in which they were held. This was, indeed, such a triumph, that we are told it drew tears of joy from the eyes of the King's councillors; but whether altogether

produced by sympathy with their Royal Master, on the removal of so foul a stain upon his fame, or by some secret feeling of private interest, it is hard to determine.

Whatever impression, my dear friend, all these circumstances which I have now related (and which it is possible you were previously acquainted with) may have made upon your mind, I can only say, that they were so convincing to me, that I left Perth for Edinburgh with scarce a doubt remaining on my mind of the injustice done to the memory of the Earl of Gowrie by all those who brand him with the crime of treason against his sovereign. On my arrival here, this subject was uppermost in my mind,

and led me into some long disputations with several of its enlightened inhabitants, whom I found by no means so ready to take for granted all my hypothesis, or even to admit what I considered incontrovertible facts; nay, I even perceived myself to be sneered at for broaching so stale a subject, and was beset by some young limbs of the law, who annoyed me sorely with their "quiddits" and their "quillets," and that sort of skirmishing warfare, in which they employed the artillery of small wit, so hard to be borne by one like myself, who, you know, am always an enthusiast in whatever happens to be my hobby for the time being. I remain, however, still firm to my text, though, I must

confess, I am now and then assailed with some slight misgivings on points where I had thought myself secure of the best of the argument.

On one of these occasions, I was by no means sorry to turn aside the weapon of my adversary, by catching at a proposal just then made by one of the company, that a party should be made to visit Wolf's Crag by water, this denomination being, it is universally understood, bestowed by the author of the "Bride of Lammermoor" upon Fastcastle, the ancient residence of Logan of Restalrig. This fell in exactly with my humour; and it was immediately settled, that, if the following day proved favourable, we should embark, at seven in the

morning, at the chain-pier at Newhaven, and proceed in a boat down the Frith, in order to examine this sea-beaten old tower.

Much amusement ensued on its being suggested, that we should provide ourselves with pick-axes and shovels, to make a search for a treasure, which, one of the gentlemen assured us, had been once secreted within the precincts of the ruin; bringing in proof of this the known fact, of a certain great character in Edinburgh having now in his possession a contract, entered into between Napier of Merchiston and Logan of Restalrig, to discover, by means of the art of the former, this hidden hoard. Knowing that such old cas-

tles are seldom without subterranean apartments, I, however, provided myself with an apparatus for procuring light, instead of the before-mentioned implements,—not with any idea, you may suppose, of following so wild a legend, in expectation of discovering the treasure, but with the desire of leaving no part of so interesting a place uninvestigated.

The next morning proving fine, I found myself at the water's edge before the rest of the party; for, with all the impatience of a schoolboy on the approach of a holiday, I had not been able to sleep for many hours. And now I hear you exclaim, "Will that restlessness, in pursuit of what is new, never leave him?"—But peace,

my dear friend; it is the trick of my nature, and cannot be conquered. I trust it hath never led me astray from the paths of rectitude, though it hath frequently beguiled me into those of difficulty and danger.

While I loitered on the pier, neither perceiving the boat, nor my *compagnons du voyage*, I began to reflect that I had not eaten anything; and, feeling more than usually appetized by my walk, I turned my steps toward a neighbouring tavern, where I ordered breakfast. Meanwhile, I began to observe a tall, portly-looking man, who was sitting at one end of the room into which I was ushered, and who, without noticing me, or apparently anything that was going on,

read for a few minutes at a time, from a book which he held in his hand, something which appeared to interest him in such a degree, as to absorb every faculty of observation. Then, again, he would lay down the book, with the open part turned to his knee, and mutter sundry unintelligible expressions, glancing over the room ever and anon with a vacant eye.

My idea of the matter was, that he laboured under a fit of mental derangement; in which opinion I felt fully confirmed, when, after my breakfast was brought in, and I had poured out my first cup of coffee, he approached the table at which I was sitting, with sundry mutterings, and many odd gesticulations, and com-

menced a most furious and unceremonious attack on my rolls and butter, seizing at the same time upon a couple of eggs, and drawing toward him a plate of ham, all of which quickly disappeared between a pair of capacious jaws, furnished with a set of grinders that might well have rivalled those of the holy friar of Copmanhurst. At length, fearing that this enormous act of repletion might produce a fit of apoplexy—for his face, which was before of a most rubicund hue, began to assume a purple tint, giving symptoms that the passages of respiration were much incommoded—I hastened to present him with a cup of coffee to assist in clearing them; which, without looking at me,

he received from my hand with a most profound inclination of the head, and an expression of simpering complaisance, which little accorded with the previous lengthened solemnity of his features. The table being by this time entirely cleared of its eatables, I ordered in a fresh supply; of which, on its arrival, I took care to convey a reasonable quantity to my own plate, while, to my no small surprise, all which I left unappropriated was speedily consumed by the voracious stranger, who devoured all that was placed within his reach, but made no attempt to procure another cup of coffee,—which I at length handed to him, when he for the first time stared in my face,

and, seeming to recollect himself all at once, burst into a most uncontrollable fit of laughter, from which he, however, almost instantly recovered, on seeing, I suppose, evident marks of surprise in my countenance. He now hastened to apologize for his rudeness, by telling me, that his absence of mind was at times so great, when employed in the consideration of any difficult case, that he entirely lost all perception of what was going on around him, adding, in a most whimsical manner, as a striking instance of this abstraction, that he had taken it for granted that he had just been receiving his coffee from the hands of some fair lady, until happening, at length, to fix his eyes upon

my face, his risible faculties were overcome by the sight of a plentiful supply of black whiskers, and a well-bronzed visage, which he never recollected to have had the pleasure of seeing before, and begged my pardon for having intruded upon me, alleging, that the sight of the viands, after an appetizing dip he had been taking in the Frith, had led him mechanically to the breakfast-table.

I professed myself perfectly satisfied with this apology, and said something civil on the good fortune of his patients for whom he was in the practice of studying so deeply; having been misled into the belief of his being a medical man, by the mention

he made of a *difficult case;* when he gave me to understand, that he was making out, not a medical, but a legal case, for a gentleman who claimed a Title said to have been long since extinct.—"So," thought I, "another man of parchment;" truly, Jack Cade, and his accomplice Dick, would have found their preliminary work of "killing all the lawyers" no easy job here; where it may be literally said of them, as they do of the moschettos in the West Indies, "that if you kill one, some hundreds of them come to the funeral."

By this time it drew near seven o'clock, when, desirous of being at the place of appointment, I settled my bill with the waiter; and as two

breakfasts were charged, from an idea, I suppose, that I had invited my new acquaintance to partake of that meal, I paid for both, as he appeared to have relapsed into one of his absent fits, and I thought the amusement which the oddity of his conduct had caused me well worth so trifling a tax.

After leaving the tavern, I was proceeding towards the pier, when I was overtaken by my quondam friend, who accosted me with a lofty demeanour, and a countenance inflamed with ire:—"Stop, sir," said he, while he took his purse from his pocket; "I confess that I am not a rich man; but neither am I poor, and least of all am I so mean as to sit on another man's coat-tail, and push myself into

his company, that I may sorn upon his purse. Be pleased to receive again what you have just paid for me."

I attempted to argue the matter with him, insisting that I would have no objection to his returning so slight an obligation the next time we met in similar circumstances.

This, however, would not content him; and, after his announcing himself as Mr Peter Papyrus, a searcher and expounder of old records, resident in Edinburgh, we settled the matter amicably, by my promising to sup with him on the following evening.

While we were adjusting this knotty point, we continued to walk on together till we reached the party who

were now waiting for me on the quay, to several of whom he appeared to be perfectly known; and, hearing that we were bound for Fast-castle, he craved permission to be allowed to accompany us, having, as he said, arrived at the knowledge of many curious facts relating to its ancient proprietors that had inspired him with an earnest desire to visit it.

This request being most willingly acceded to on our parts, we embarked in a boat furnished with six sturdy rowers, that we might be provided for all contingencies, in case the wind, which was then fair, should either change to a quarter less favourable, or be succeeded by a calm.

It continued, however, to blow a

fresh and favouring gale, which carried us in three hours down as far as Dunbar Castle, and so near to it, that we distinctly discerned its outline, and that singular-looking rocky arch, which is said to have been the entrance to its dungeon vaults. And here Black Agnes and her heroic deeds occurred to my memory with such force, that, annihilating time and space, I beheld her, with my mind's eye, standing on the battlements exhorting her soldiers, and performing all the offices of a valiant commander.

Our friend Papyrus now became talkative, and gave us the account of its having been burnt by Kenneth, King of Scotland, in 858,—of its ha-

ving given shelter to Edward the Second, after his defeat at Bannockburn, when it was commanded by the Earl of March,—and of its having been destroyed, in a fit of despair at the improbability of keeping it, by Patrick, Earl of Dunbar; when Edward the Third obliged him to erect it again at his own expense, and receive into it a garrison of English soldiers. But of all the reminiscences belonging to it, none appeared to me more worthy of notice, than that of its having several times sheltered the beautiful Mary of Scotland, and that it was from its walls she marched to encounter her fatal defeat at Carberry Hill.

After speaking of its ancient glory,

Papyrus mentioned briefly its present proprietor; and then entered into a long dissertation on the ancestors of that acute statesman, bringing in, as I thought, head and shoulders, the genealogies of half the families in Scotland, to which no one appeared to listen except myself. Nor can I say I was exceedingly sorry, when the breeze slackening, and the boat beginning to roll, the enormous cargo he had taken in became unsettled, and "suddenly a grievous sickness took him, that made him gasp, and stare, and catch the air," rendering him utterly silent, at least in speech; while, the men taking to their oars, the boat passed rapidly over the undulating billows, and, in the course

of five hours from the time of leaving Newhaven, we found ourselves under the precipitous and nearly insular rock on which stands Fast-castle.

We, however, in vain examined its northern side, in the hope of finding a landing-place. It seemed only to present masses of rock to our view, lying at the foot of headlong steeps, by which there appeared no possibility of ascending. At length, after much search, we discovered some steps, cut in the rock, immediately below the ruin, by which access had formerly been obtained to the Castle; but they were in such a decayed and ruinous state, that it was unanimously agreed by my companions, that it

would be tempting our fate to venture on them.

One of our young gentlemen, of whom, with Papyrus, I shall alone speak in particular, had provided himself with a fowling-piece, and now began to make war upon the sea-fowl that were wheeling in circles round the rock; from which unmanly and cruel sport I could not persuade him to desist, though many of the poor things he had wounded were sitting on the waves uttering piercing cries of distress, which, joined by the shrill shriekings of their mates in the air, might, one would have thought, have been sufficient to deter the lordly creature man from so base an exercise of his power. One of these birds, of

the gull species, fell into the boat; and I think I never beheld anything more lovely than its pure white plumage, varied, on the back and wings, with a beautiful violet tinge. It was very near death when I took it up; and, as it struggled and looked around for the last time, it appeared to me as if bidding an affecting farewell to its native elements of air and water, where it had so joyfully exercised the unbounded liberty bestowed upon it by its bountiful Creator; and I could scarce avoid cursing in my heart the contemptible dandy figure, which sat in the stern of the boat exulting in this pitiful proof of his dexterity.

By this time we had made the circuit of the ruin without finding a

single place that offered the slightest prospect of our ascending to the top; and we agreed to return to a small bay that we had passed, at the distance of about a mile, which afforded a good landing-place, and, by a zig-zag road, cut in the bank above, offered a tolerably decent path to the traveller,—which road, I was afterwards informed, was made in order to convey a life-boat down to this bold and dangerous part of the coast.

In rowing round the rock in order to discover a landing-place, I had observed the entrance of a pretty large cavern, into which the water was rushing with the noise of "deep-mouthed thunder;" and where, on repassing it, I was determined to en-

ter, having an idea that it was a place which had formerly been the entrance that communicated with the vaults of the Castle. In this opinion I was decidedly joined by Papyrus, who brought many reasons in support of the utility of such a passage, which, while it afforded an opportunity of egress and regress to the inhabitants of the Castle, could, from its situation, be so easily defended from the over-hanging battlements.

I therefore made the boatmen push into it, which, the tide being nearly at the full, they effected without much trouble; and, accompanied by Papyrus, I sprung upon a flat piece of rock that afforded me a firm footing, and was in the act of proceeding

to explore my way to its interior, when one of the sailors called after me, to be upon my guard lest I should disturb the slumbers of a colony of seals, who, when thus encroached upon, became extremely dangerous.—Upon hearing this, my companion, who had appeared as anxious to explore the cavern as myself, began to waver in his resolution, and at length, after endeavouring in vain to turn me from my purpose, stepped again into the boat, from which our young dandy immediately sprung, purposing to brave the danger with his gun, which he loaded with ball, and followed me a short distance up the cavern; when, just as I had ascended a large piece of rock, and received the

fowling-piece out of his hand till he mounted after me, a huge wave made an inroad on the place where he stood, and, taking a vigorous sweep round him, carried him back with it to the mouth of the cave, where his head was seen bobbing up and down like the buoy at a herring-net, and where his accounts with this sublunary world would have been quickly closed, had his cries not attracted the attention of the people in the boat, who held out an oar to him, by which means he regained his station on board, after one of the most complete duckings and dismal alarms ever sustained by a poor exquisite. Nor could I for my life refrain from a hearty fit of laughter at the forlorn figure he

cut, with his locks, which were erst so well curled and scented, hanging like rats' tails about his rueful visage, which the fright had rendered of a ghastly hue, while he sat shivering and gathering himself up into the size of a half-drowned baboon, which he very much resembled, now that his clothes were clinging to his spare figure, instead of being puffed out in sundry directions, to make his shape resemble as much as possible that of a pigeon.

I did not proceed far after this adventure, when a turn round a jutting piece of rock obscured the daylight so much that I was obliged to have recourse to my match-box; and, having trimmed a small pocket lantern, I

proceeded, keeping a cautious look-out the while—not having, I can assure you, any wish to turn the laugh against me, by waging, like Captain M'Intyre, an unsuccessful war against a phoca.

It was not, however, my fortune to encounter one; and, finding the passage become yet narrower and more difficult, from the number of loose pieces of rock that every minute threatened to put an end to my progress, by choking up the passage altogether, I laid down the gun, which had become exceedingly troublesome to me, and stretching forward my arm as far in advance as I could, I placed the lantern before me, following it frequently through crannies which

with great difficulty admitted my body. At length, when I began to be heartily weary of my serpent-like posture, and disheartened with the small prospect of success which the nature of the passage held out of its ending in the manner I had supposed, a stop seemed all at once put to my researches, by what appeared evidently the termination of the cavern, when I had arrived at a small square place, deeply bedded with gravel.

Here I sat down to rest myself, not a little chagrined by my disappointment, while, by way of amusement, or rather from a sort of restless idleness, I turned over with my hand the gravel and small fragments of rock where I was sitting, when I

discovered among them some pieces of lime rubbish of that hard and compact kind peculiar to old buildings, which somewhat surprised me, as the cavern had ascended too much for me to suppose that the sea could have washed them in, which it otherwise might have done, on their falling from the walls above. This once more set me to work to examine the place in which I was enclosed, and, on peering behind a large slab of fallen rock, I thought I discerned the top of a kind of archway, which appeared the work of art; and on forcing myself round, I found that I was right in my conjecture, for it proved to be an entrance from the interior, which was nearly filled up by loose lime-rubbish,

that had fallen from within, which I immediately set to work to remove; and indeed I soon found that my own weight contributed in no small degree to sink them so much, from the lightness with which they were piled together, that a hole was made sufficient for me to creep in at. Now I perceived that the space into which I had entered admitted of my standing upright; and, on taking my candle out of the lantern, that I might see the more clearly, I found myself at the foot of a flight of spiral stairs, which were partly cut out in the rock, and partly built, and that it was from the falling of partial pieces of the latter that the crumbled mortar had proceeded.

I began to ascend with alacrity, and choosing the firm parts which still remained of the steps, I quickly mounted to the topmost one, and arrived at a door, which, from its strong construction, appeared to have once formed a pretty secure defence against intruders, but, having lost one of its hinges, had become incapable of shutting, and therefore presented no obstruction to my entering a chamber about eighteen feet square, which, it appeared from an iron grating in the vaulted stone roof, had once been lighted in that direction, but which was now totally dark; I also observed a door-way, built up, nearly opposite to the one by which I entered; and, from the small vestiges that remain-

ed of its last inhabitants, I immediately concluded them to have been smugglers. There were three or four gin-ankers, one or two of which had fallen to pieces; these had been apparently used as seats, for they were ranged round a part of the floor where the remains of some burnt sticks shewed that a fire had been kindled, the smoke of which had escaped as it might, there being no vent for it that I could perceive, save the iron grating in the roof. But what most engaged my attention, was a huge wooden chest, that stood in a recess of the wall. It was strongly secured by broad iron bands, that traversed it in every direction, and further fortified by three locks, each being, from the ap-

pearance of the key-holes, opened by keys differing in construction from each other. Seeing the locks much decayed by rust, I imagined they might give way; but, on my endeavouring to wrench them from the wood, I found them still strong enough to bid defiance to my utmost efforts; and, on taking a more minute survey, I quickly perceived that I had been giving myself much unnecessary trouble, for I discovered that one end of the chest had been completely staved in; and, on putting my candle within it, I found that it only contained a number of papers and parchments loosely scattered on the bottom, perhaps left there by those who had abstracted from it some richer booty.

On pulling out a handful of the writings, I found them to be charters granted to the proprietors of Fastcastle, as far as three and four centuries back. Among the handful I brought out at the second or third application to the chest, was a roll, marked on the back, "Anent the Gowrie Conspiracie," bearing the date 1611.

It is impossible, my dear friend, to convey to you any adequate notion of the surprise and joy which possessed me at having, in so singular a manner, acquired what I conceived might prove the only authentic documents now existing of an affair which had puzzled all the wisest heads in Christendom for upwards of two centuries.

This happening at a time, too, when my thoughts had so accidentally and recently been employed upon the very subject, almost persuaded me that I had been guided, as I hinted before, by the agency of some supernatural being, in order to my becoming the explainer of this mysterious affair; and my former scepticism on these subjects giving way before my extraordinary situation, I almost expected to be addressed by old Caleb Balderstone; discerning, as I thought, pretty clearly, that the place where I now stood was no other than the "Secret Chammer." Do not despise the transient folly of your friend, when I tell you, that I looked up several times from the papers in my hands, expect-

ing to see some such person, with his "thin grey hairs, bald forehead, and sharp high features, illuminated by *my* lamp." In this expectation I was, however, as you may suppose, totally mistaken, nothing occurring to interrupt the death-like stillness that reigned around me.

> "For, though this vault ——————
> Was to the sounding surge so near,
> A tempest there you scarce could hear,
> So massive were the walls."

I stood, however, lost, as it were, in amazement at the circumstance which had just occurred, and pondering over the fame I was to acquire as the discoverer of these valuable papers; but, instead of obeying the first impulse suggested by their possession, which

was to pry into their contents, I resisted the temptation, and having secreted them in a deep inside pocket of my frock-coat, I proceeded to dip again into the same repository of antiquity, and pulled out several rolls of paper similar to that I have mentioned, the contents of which were, like it, also labelled on the back. One of these I supposed, from the way in which it was marked, to be connected with the one I had already secured, and I placed it accordingly in the opposite pocket, leaving, with regret, sundry other interesting documents, which I was unable to carry with me, and which I found could not belong in the remotest degree to those I had determined to bring off, but which,

nevertheless, I looked upon as treasures not to be abandoned with indifference.

As it was no part of my plan to exhibit my acquisitions to my fellow-voyagers, I buttoned my coat, and stroked down my pockets, so as to flatten the papers, and reduce their bulk to such dimensions as might not attract their notice, and, closing the door of my lantern, descended to retrace again my way to the boat, which, from my previous knowledge of its intricacies, I accomplished in one half the time it had taken me to work my passage inwards. But what was my dismay, when, on reaching the entrance of the cave, I discovered that the boat was gone, nor could I so

much as see a single sail, as far as sight could reach over a boundless ocean. It was in vain that I whooped and hallooed till I became hoarse, and at last fired off the fowling-piece; no answer was returned to these signals of distress, excepting by the sea-fowls, whom it probably reminded of their previous misfortunes.

I was extremely at a loss to surmise the cause of my having been deserted in this manner. The sea was calm and unruffled as a lake, except where it dashed its waves against the neighbouring rocks; I therefore entertained no fear of any accident having happened to the boat; yet I could not suppose I had been voluntarily abandoned. Had I discovered

the secret chamber to be stored with full casks of spirits, instead of finding a few empty ones, I might have imagined some smuggling lugger had picked up our boat's crew at the entrance of the cave, to prevent the discovery of their concealment, till they had removed their cargo; or, had it been in the time of war, I might have feared that our sailors were pressed into his Majesty's service. But, all things considered, not one feasible conjecture could I make on the subject; so I e'en set myself down on a stone in front of the cavern's mouth, which, from its perpendicular formation on each hand, and the tide's flowing into it, precluded me from attempting to climb to its

outside, and from any view, except a straight-forward one. And there I sat, for the space of an hour and half, much inclined, long before the expiration of that time, to exclaim, with the valiant Pistol's companion, "Now would I give all my fame for a pot of ale and safety!" I was not, however, driven to echo in sober seriousness so ignoble a wish, for, at the expiration of the time I have mentioned, my spirits were exhilarated by the welcome sound of oars, and the music of human voices, which, I must confess, thrilled to my heart as they might have done to that of the last mariner on a wreck, when about to be rescued from his perilous situation; for I think it is not easy to con-

ceive a more sincere joy than I experienced when the boat was once more thrust into the mouth of the cave to receive me on board.

As I gave vent, in some measure, to this feeling, I observed a sly indication of suppressed merriment on the countenances of the sailors, whom I immediately began to rate roundly for having made me wait so long for the boat, when they informed me, with great civility, and many "your honours," that on my remaining in the *cove* longer than had been expected, the other gentlemen had insisted on their landing them in the bay before mentioned, which they dared not refuse to do, particularly as the young gentleman, who had

been *houding* in the water, declared, that if he sat much longer in his wet clothes, he should infallibly die of cold; and that they hoped I would forgive them for the fright I had got in being left so long in *sic an eerie* place. Now, although I was not altogether pleased with this insinuation in regard to the alarm I had sustained, I found I could not put such a face on it as flatly to deny the charge; but, as nothing certainly is more sensibly felt by most men than the most distant suspicion of their having been subjected to the passion of fear, I was suddenly seized with a determination of manifesting my courage, by ascending the rocks in a way my companions had deemed impracticable, and thus

tacitly crow over them for the circuitous rout they had taken to the ruin; which I was further urged to by my belief that my having been abandoned in the way I have related was the contrivance of my dandy friend, in retaliation for the laugh I had indulged myself in at his expense. I therefore made the men bring the boat close to a ledge in the rock, which I had not observed when the tide was higher, on which I stepped, and choosing the firmest footing that the decayed steps afforded, I drew myself up, by clinging to the projecting pieces of rock, much to the admiration of the sailors, and the horror of such of the party as had reached the rock above, and were looking down

upon me, in momentary expectation of beholding me fall backwards into the sea; but, having escaped so melancholy a fate, I presently stood unscathed in the midst of them.

We found the remains of Fast-castle a mere ruin, indeed; but who could be otherwise than interested in its scattered fragments?—at least it was not I, when I connected it with the story that had lately engaged my attention, and with that of the noble and unfortunate Master of Ravenswood, and his old and faithful seneschal, so graven on my memory, as related by their unknown historian, whose magic pen leaves no doubt upon my mind that he is a descendant of Michael Scott the wizard, and

who, notwithstanding our modern opinions on such subjects, inherits no small portion of his powers of "gramarye." All and each of the scenes he describes as having passed upon this isolated rock were before my eyes, and I wandered from point to point, conjecturing, from the formations of the remaining foundations, what apartments they might formerly have contained; but, more especially, I set myself to find out, if possible, with what part of the building the door of the apartment I had discovered (and which I imagine the smugglers had built up) communicated; but here I got bewildered in my conjectures, and could only guess, from the distance I had ascended in-

to the bowels of the rock, that the grating which had formerly given light to it must be near the surface, and only concealed by the rubbish which had fallen down on it.

I was disturbed in these researches by being summoned to dinner by my companions, who were just then joined by our young beau, who, having remained by the way to dry his clothes at a farm-house, arrived in the van of the boatmen who bore the provision baskets, and a pitcher of cool water from a neighbouring spring, which they had been informed by the way it was necessary to provide themselves with; for "the tower well," so much lauded by honest Caleb, is now as dry as his wine butts, though a

circular hole, filled up with stones, bears testimony to its having once existed. Our provisions being spread upon the ground, we seated ourselves around them, and did ample justice to a repast, which, though neither furnished with "black-cock, veal-florentine, nor roast kid," was yet such as Caleb would have thought himself abundantly fortunate in being able to place before the Lord Keeper and his daughter, in lieu of the sumptuous bill of fare furnished them by his fertile imagination. We ate our dinner to all appearance on the exact spot where Mysie was wont to exercise her culinary art; at least so we concluded, by the appearance of a stone sink which still remains entire,

with a spout cut from it to carry off the water into the sea beneath. On this spot, the ludicrous scene described to have passed between the old woman and Caleb, when, in the full triumph of his new contrivance to save the honour of the mansion, he annihilated the " hatted kit which was for the Master's dinner," so seized upon our imaginations, that the remains of the old walls once more rung to a peal of laughter, as unextinguishable as that which took place in the hall after the thunder-storm.

As the young kittywakes flew round the rock where we sat, I could not help regretting Caleb's apparent ignorance of their savoriness, which might have wonderfully assisted his

wits on St Margaret's day; having myself lately met with them served up in several different ways, and equally good in each.

Near to the place where we dined we observed several mushrooms had sprung up, the appearance of which we could account for in no other way except by supposing, that Caleb's white broth, or some such fructifier of the soil, had here "larded the lean earth."

During the time occupied by our meal, my new friend Papyrus, who had now recovered from his sea infirmity, entertained us with many particulars respecting the last Logan of Restalrig and his family, which I shall not mention here, reserving them

to assist me in illustrating the facts contained in the before-mentioned second roll of papers, should I ever require their aid. I was so much strück with the depth of knowledge he displayed, that, considering the treasures I had just discovered, I looked upon him as a most valuable coadjutor, and in this expectation I have since found myself amply justified.

But if my recollections were amusing while I occupied Mysie's kitchen, they became sombre in an equal degree, as, on leaving the rock, I stood upon the narrow pass which connects it with the main-land, and which forcibly reminded me of the bridge by which the Musselmen, according to

Lord Byron, " skate into Paradise." There I stood ruminating on the last affecting words, dictated by the demon of despair, which were addressed to his faithful domestic by the unfortunate Master of Ravenswood, and there I might have remained for some time longer, had I not been disturbed in my graver reflections by the shouts and vociferations of my companions, who were winding fast out of sight among the hills, and which disturbed my reflections so much, that I immediately quitted a place which I, however, resolved soon to revisit, that I might secure what of the remaining papers appeared to me of any value; and which I may here mention, *en passant*, as having

since done, under the pretence of collecting minerals from the cave,—for I have hitherto most studiously kept secret the contents of the old chest, except from Papyrus, whose assistance has proved of much value to me.

You are too well acquainted with me, my dear Torpedo, to require me to dwell upon the impatience that took possession of me to reach my hotel in Edinburgh, after I became released from my Wolf's-crag recollections. In short, each hour became a day until I could examine the contents of my pockets; and I grew more impatient at every little delay that occurred in our homeward passage, than ever I remember to have

been before in my life. The pretty sayings, and harmless remarks, of the imp of fashion, who sat beside me in the boat, and whom I was tired of "fooling up to his bent," made me so splenetic, that I could scarcely refrain from uttering a most bitter philippic against his stays, which, ever since the wetting they had got, creaked and crazed in a manner not to be endured.

The time, however, at length arrived, when, springing ashore at Leith, and, scarce staying to bid my fellow-passengers good evening, I hurried home, and, instructing the waiters to deny me to any friend who might happen to call, I was quickly arrayed in my dressing-gown and slippers,

and, placing the rolls of paper on a table before me, sat down to discover whether the expectations I had formed, from the writing on their outsides, were well founded or not.

The first one I opened was that entitled "Anent the Gowrie Conspiracie;" in which I soon became so much interested, that I left the other roll unopened until I had perused, or rather skimmed the surface of it; for, so cramp was the hand in which it was written, so obscure the orthography, and so much was it defaced by the relentless hand of time, that all I could do was to make out its general meaning. But this was sufficient to keep me from resting, until, by the help of my friend Papyrus,

I completely made out and understood every line of it; when it struck me, that it would become more interesting by being put into the form of a modern novel, by which compliance with the prevailing taste of the day it was more likely to be read. I have accordingly laboured hard in my new vocation, that this relic of antiquity may be kept from the public as short a time as possible.

Yet, my dear friend, you must not imagine, while thus employed, I have suffered myself to suppose that this child of my adoption is to escape lash-free from the castigating whips of the critics; far from it, I assure you. They are a race of beings who, however some folks may affect to despise,

I am well aware are now more formidable than ever to the person who ventures to dress up a new dish of literary trifle for their eminencies' pampered appetites, which have not only been fed of late with whatever of sweet or piquant can be mingled together by human genius, to form a feast for the imagination, but have been accustomed to find in it a degree of solid nourishment formerly unknown in this sort of composition. Nor have I forgotten to bear in mind the heavy expenses of printing, publishing, &c. Now, as to the first of these dampers, my consolation is, that, though a storm of critical wrath should rage around me, I have a snug

little retreat of impenetrable obscurity, where I can hear it spend its fury without being exposed to the blast; for, having no ambition to appear in the character of an author, I have so misled all, except yourself, Papyrus, and the small party who accompanied us, who, for good reasons known to myself, will keep strict silence, that I fear no detection. And, as to the last, that is, the demands upon my purse, I must bear it as I may, and, if disappointed in this my first venture, be under the necessity of suppressing what remains of curious and interesting matter now in my possession, which, in my opinion, will be an irreparable loss to all the

novel readers in these united kingdoms, but by which means I shall avoid involving myself in any further expense. I confess, however, that I shall be extremely sorry to prevent the lovers of antiquity regaling themselves with stories of such undoubted authenticity as they seldom have an opportunity of perusing. For, how can I doubt their genuine truth, when I have found the story already transcribed, so far as it goes, correspond so nearly with what is related in sundry old books and MSS., which my learned friend Papyrus has pointed out to me, and with those I saw at Perth, as well as the traditional accounts preserved there? And I feel a

strong conviction that equal reliance may be placed on the truth of those narratives which still remain in my possession. But, should the discerning public differ from me in this opinion, and think proper to consider them as fictions, I shall make every man, and woman too, welcome to enjoy their own sentiments on the matter, without commencing a war of words upon the subject.

I have now only to add, what I find I have hitherto neglected to mention, that the other roll of papers which I brought with me on my first expedition to Fast-castle, contains (as I have hinted in the story about to be published, and which I have en-

titled "St Johnstoun,") the history of that son of Logan of Restalrig who is there introduced to the reader; and that I have discovered, on my perusal of it, that the papers containing the story now printing were given to him by one of the Earl of Gowrie's family.

Excuse my having thus long trespassed upon your patience; and pray let me have your candid opinion of "St Johnstoun" as soon as you have read it, which I will enable you to do with all possible expedition, by ordering a copy to be forwarded to you the moment it is bound up.

Farewell, my dear friend. Be kind enough to remember me most cordi-

ally to all your family circle, which I hope to join before winter sets in; and believe me now, as ever,

Yours most truly,

PEREGRINE ROVER.

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