

MAGDALEN HEPBURN.

A STORY

OF

THE SCOTTISH REFORMATION.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“ PASSAGES IN THE LIFE OF MRS. MARGARET MAITLAND.”

“ ADAM GRAEME,” &c.

“ Things now
That bear a weighty and a serious brow,
Sad, high, and working, full of state and woe,
Such noble scenes as draw the eye to flow,
We now present. Those that can pity, here
May, if they think it well, let fall a tear;
The subject will deserve it. Such, as give
Their money out of hope, they may believe,
May here find truth too——

Therefore. as you are known
The first and happiest hearers of the town,
Be sad, as we would make you: Think ye see
The very persons of our noble story,
As they were living.”

PROLOGUE TO KING HENRY VIII.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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MAGDALEN HEPBURN.

CHAPTER I.

“ A chieftain’s daughter seemed the maid.”

LADY OF THE LAKE.

* “ MISTRESS Maidlin is called to the hall.”

“ Sirrah, do your errand with reverence,” exclaimed with some vehemence a grave person of middle age, seated on a stool in Magdalen Hepburn’s withdrawing room. “ The lady is not used to such rude vassals; madam, your father’s messenger—”

“ I do my lord’s bidding, not my lady’s,” said the retainer, hastily clutching off, and

throwing on again, his cap with its badge and feather, "Mistress, so please you, you are called to the hall."

The young lady of Lammerstane, made a little bow, grave and dignified as of a queen on her throne, nor rose from her seat, upon the brief elevation of the dais, even when the step of the man at arms had ceased to ring through the echoes of the dim arched passage which separated this room from the hall.

Like a prison, or still more like the deep shaft of a well, these high, dark, undecorated walls rise up a grim oppressive enclosure for the sweet youth far down here under the lofty roof. One small square window, set in the centre of the great blank of wall opposite the dais, throws down the waning afternoon light over the heads of the tenants of this apartment, lighting on the stooping forehead of a young girl some fifteen years old, who kneels

before a desk reading aloud, and burrowing into the farthest gloomy corner, as if it knew of, and had descried, some hidden treasure there. The dais itself is strewed with rushes—you can see by the tinge of rusty brown upon them the season of the year; and it is no easy matter up here among the Lammermuirs, to find the daily supply of these, which Isobel Lauder weaves together devoutly with her own austere and loving hands, for her young lady's carpet. Drawn as close to the edge of this elevation as decorum and Isobel will permit, is the young lady's heavy oaken chair, and on it—dark-eyed, meditative, with a good deal of unconscious natural dignity, and no small share of a girl's half-conscious, half-embarrassed stateliness, which she is ready to smile at herself, resenting haughtily, however, any other's smiles—Magdalen Hepburn sits at her embroidery, listening to the reader, her sweet young lips apart, her

head thrown back a little, her hand lingering upon the frame, waiting, half-risen from her seat the while, to hear the last verse, which the young reader, unconsciously lifting her hand to delay her mistress, hurries that she may hear.

The reading desk, a heavy piece of furniture, uncouthly carved, has been drawn close to the dais. A fair, serious face, with regular placid features, and long falling curls of fair hair, a slight erect figure, clad in home-spun grey, relieved by nothing but a small close white ruff round the delicate throat, has the reader, kneeling here upon her footstool. On a higher stool, not far off, in front of the fireplace, where a damp log struggles to burn, Isobel Lauder sits with her distaff, listening with an earnest composure, much different from the slight excitement of her daughter Alice, who reads, and the animated interest

of their youthful mistress. Subdued into the deeper gravity of experience, you find in these same regular, almost faultless, features of Isobel, a faculty of restraining and concealing all expression which her young daughter has not yet reached; but the face, with its calm sobriety, its perfect outline and natural composure, is the same in both. Magdalen Hepburn, test her by all acknowledged standards, has no chance for beauty in comparison with these "her women"—yet strangely enough, turning from the statue like repose of these fair features, her face flashes on you in triumph, a world apart from theirs.

And Isobel Lauder, who frets her own child's peaceful spirit with constant comment and caution, looks with a reverential love, which is almost adoration, upon her other nursling's less obedient life. A long black gown, with hanging sleeves, close to the throat, and a

couvrechef of pure linen, shading her well-complexioned cheek, and falling in not ungraceful folds upon her shoulders, add to the natural dignity of Isobel's tall figure. There is something half-amusing in the pantomime of which these three all execute their part, for Isobel's spindle is arrested on the floor, and her half-smiling gesture summons the young lady to obedience of her father's message.

“ I go—I go,” cried Magdalen, impatiently springing from her chair, “ but my father, I wot, has nothing in the hall that will charm me like Alice, and Davie Lyndsay. Fie on you, Isobel!—I would not break upon Alice, when she reads, for Gifford and the Tyne.”

“ And I might be all the slower, if I had no other child,” said the sober Isobel. “ Lady Maidlin, your father waits.”

“ I am no Lady Maidlin—I am only a poor

knight's daughter, and Isobel Lauder's child—that is, I am lady to my father's men-at-arms, so please you," said Magdalen, sweeping a solemn curtsy before her stately waiting woman, "but not to mine own;—Alice says never a word. The good mother at St. Mary's would honour Alice—they will call her Sister Patience, when she is professed."

"If I knew not with all your daffing, the root of the matter was in you,"—said Isobel, rising.

"Whither?"

"Only to open the door for my lady," said the careful monitress, with a return curtsy of gravity and decorum.

The young lady laughed and obeyed.

Gaily through the passage, dark and narrow, with its heavy vaulted roof, and iron-barred loop-hole high in the wall, the light foot of Magdalen Hepburn, in the girlish, half-danc-

ing measure of involuntary gladness, rung pleasant echoes into the gloomy corners, across which her presence flitted like a sunbeam. But Magdalen paused in time to loop up on her arm the wide skirt of her upper garment, revealing a pretty glimpse of the brave kirtle beneath, and to subdue her pace into the necessary stateliness which became the young Lady of Lammerstane, before she entered her father's presence. Sir Roger Hepburn, it is true, cared very little for all this dignity on the part of the young and motherless mistress of his lonely household; but Magdalen, newly returned from her convent, and fortified by the constant exhortations of her "gentlewoman," took state upon her unconsciously, though with various little girlish demonstrations of the same, not necessary at all seasons, such as sometimes awed, and sometimes moved into outbursts of ridicule the something un-

cultivated knight retainer, who held Lammerstane tower a feoff from the House of Bothwell, the head of his name.

Not so lofty in appearance, because a much larger apartment than Magdalen's bower, which was divided from it in fact only by oaken panels, a temporary partition, the walls of the chief apartment of the tower sparkled with arms, arranged with some attempt at ornament. Deep-set in the strong masonry were those high square windows, through which the light came, checked and shadowed by the heavy iron bars, which lowered upon you with a fierce suggestiveness, like armed foes looking in. A long oaken table, not without trace of many a rude feast, stood at the upper end of the apartment, and cold upon the floor rang even those light steps of the Lady Maidlin, which the archer Simon, from the forest, who is a verser as much as a bowman, vows to be like

the fairy footsteps with their silver bells, or the tinkle of those sweet drops from the spring of St. Mary's, which make music like a harp in the glen.

But bare and rude as is the aspect of the hall, that dark ruddy glow of light from the blazing fir-logs on the hearth brightens its dim atmosphere into warmth and comfort. The spring begins to bud in the valleys of Lothian, but the winds are chill here, at the foot of Lammer Law, from which, over many a mile of gradual descent, we look sheer down upon the German sea. Spearhead and partisan, gorget and breast-plate, draw lines of glimmering light, ruddy and warm, and variable, along the walls, and with a flash of wavering illumination, the fire lights upon some noble deer-hounds on the hearth, and seated full in its glow, the master of the same.

Nigh seventy years old, with moustache and

beard snow-white, you scarce can reconcile the laughing blue of Sir Roger's honest eyes, and the curls of grizzled hair upon his brow with his years, or with those tokens of his years upon his chin and lip. But the frame of the old knight owns the chill of age; over the buff coat, stained with its old habitual breast-plate, it comforts him now to fold this furred gown, a fitter defence upon an old man's breast. On the leathern cushion of a stool beside him lies the sword which it still pleases him to have at his hand—but by the hearth of Lammerstane he wears no weapon, save the dagger, which serves many a peaceful purpose—and covers his head with a velvet bonnet, brave with its gold chain and medal, which throws into ruddy shadow at this moment the old man's open brow.

Carelessly thrown into a great chair near him, a young ecclesiastic, spurred and booted,

with little of the churchman in his appearance, save what this long black cassock gives him—holding up his delicate hands in the fire-light, looking at them—looking at the dog which now and then he disturbs out of its rest with his foot—looking anywhere, in short, but at the person whom he addresses—talks in an indifferent tone, but with considerable volubility the news of the time. With an eager interest Sir Roger listens, the light shifting and changing on his face as he sways slightly back and forward in earnest attention, and no one hears the entering step of Magdalen, save grey old Yarrow yonder, pricking his ear upon the hearth.

“Aha!” said Magdalen, “they told me of no stranger;” but it availed her nothing the rustle of her long garment as she let it fall from her hand, in her stately progress from the door. Neither the old man nor the

young observed her, and it was not till she had reached her father's side, and drawn up to her tallest, stood somewhat haughtily beside him, that Sir Roger's "Hush, child!" and the careless salutation of the churchman, owned her presence.

Girlish pique and mortification had almost tempted her to sweep away again, stately and indignant—but news from the court, news from the world, which lay so far away from the frowning gate of Lammerstane, and the glittering eye of the young sub-prior of Coldingham, which told of something deeper than his careless tone evinced, fascinated her reluctant attention. Patting monotonously with her little foot on the hearth, reaching up her little hand to the ledge of the great chimney-arch within which she stood, the light flashing upon her down-cast face, her cambric ruff, and close fitting gown, among the folds of whose long skirt,

her other hand half-buried itself unconsciously, holding up the heavy drapery, it was a pretty sight to look on Magdalen Hepburn, with this slight pout of girlish displeasure on her full curved lip, and the growing eagerness with which she raised her startled head to listen, though her eyes were bent upon the ground.

“The Regent hath had grace to see how far his evil inclination has quickened heresy,” said the churchman in a voice of greater interest. “You have heard my tidings, Sir knight, and I must have your help ere long, as holy church is dear to you. There is that in my saddle-bags will scare these preaching varlets from Lothian for ever and a day.”

“You maun e’en do your war yourself, boy, if words are the weapons,” said Sir Roger with a laugh, which showed him not perfectly at ease. “My day of sword and buckler is well-nigh ended, but none shall say of Roger of Lam-

merstane that he left a knight's arms for a priest's. You shall have a listed field in this very hall, if you will, and I promise you every shepherd and ewe-milker on the Lammermuirs will throng to the tournament; yourself, Master Everard—I cry your pardon, holy and worshipful—have a pretty flow of discourse, as I can witness, and as for these same Lollard knaves, the stream hath no end. So forth with your challenge, say I!—out with your stoutest lance—your longest sword—aye, good father, even with your saddle-bags—and success to the better man in a fair field. Hey, Sir sub-prior! think ye there are in this country, who will dare to lift your glove?"

“When I am mine own advocate, fear not I shall hold my ground,” said the young man haughtily; “but here I stand, her unworthy son, for holy church, and a loftier quarrel. The church condescends not to such unseemly con-

test. Judge by your carnal chivalry, Sir Knight—do you fight with every varlet that defies your authority? Good faith, poor wretch, the Massymore, and a leathern thong would be all *his* listed field—yet you put our glorious immaculate mother, spouse of Christ, on such ground as these wandering rogues; out upon them, pestilent rebels! a holy church and a wise state thrusts forth the infected member, that the innocent flock may go free. Also be it known to you,” continued the churchman, raising himself in his chair, “I have power to demand from all the faithful such aid as my office needs, to be refused at the proper peril of vassal and lord from whom I ask in vain.”

The old knight pushed back hastily his bonnet from his brow, the quick resentment of his rank and race crimsoning his furrowed forehead, but sufficient time had elapsed before he spoke to throw a cloud of caution over

his displeasure, though not to check his indignation.

“I had given your arguments weight but for your threat,” said Sir Roger, with dignity. “Much I have heard of holy church, and how, despite her silken hand, she hath an armed heel to crush her foes withal; but by my faith I never dreamt—I who brought back the stricken bands of Bothwell masterless from fatal Flodden—to make a prey on men who wear no swords—your patience, boy—perchance on bairns and women such as I have heard of in other lands, steady to their faith. Your father and I were sworn brothers, Everard Hay—nay sub-prior, priest, holy father, I reckon not how they name thee—but trust me, Roger Hepburn will never call thee Captain, if the Regent’s signet were in thy saddle-bags!”

And the old man pushed back his chair from the hearth, and again drew his bonnet

over his flushed brow. Magdalen had changed her position, but not her attitude. Gliding unobserved from the broad fireplace, she stood in the shadow behind her father's seat, and Magdalen's frame quivered with her eager listening, though she did not dare to betray her anxiety by so much as lifting her eyes.

“You were my father's companion in arms, I would not exercise my power to trouble you,” said the young man, pointedly.

The knight of Lammerstane drew up his aged figure proudly from his seat, lifted his bonnet, and with a stately bow, which, if it were of thanks or of derision, his visitor was puzzled to discriminate, threw on his cap again, and resumed his seat.

“Nor am I of those, who war on boys and women,” continued the ecclesiastic, embarrassed, but speedily recovering himself. “My quarry is worth the striking—my hawk flies

high, Sir Roger—though ye think, ye cavaliers of the world, that a churchman's wings are clipt, so that he cannot soar; what think ye of Knox, the apostate priest, he who was with the arch heretic, Wishart, till he had but barely time to escape his fate?—I trow it waits for him soon or syne. I will break up a nest of blasphemy when I seize this mouthpiece of Satan; and Paul Hepburn, of Langley—I owe him a stroke of old; there is stuff in such a man to pervert a township. I will leave the old wife by her hearth, the shepherd on the bent, if you will: so the loons pay their dues, and are mannerly, they may think as they will for me—I strike at the head—ah, ha, Sir knight, 'tis the true trick of war.”

And a fierce glow of excitement kindled on the young man's cheek, as he bent forward towards the fireplace with a laugh which made the hearts of his hearers cold—but the sub-

prior did not see the shadow, no longer with any pretence of majesty, but with a foot like a spirit, swift and silent, which passed out from the heavy door, when the knight of Lamerstone called on his servants to spread the table for the evening meal.

CHAPTER II.

“Thus was it with my lady, who would have flown if she might;—as for me I paced forth soberly, for I was old;—and so we did our errand, nor stayed for thought.”

OLD PLAY.

MAGDALEN HEPBURN was only sixteen; with a step like a startled deer she fled through the passage, through her own sitting-room, past the astonished Isobel and Alice, who sprang from her knees as her mistress entered—into a little chamber opening from the larger apartment, which was Magdalen’s sleeping-room. Here she paused a moment,

pressing her hands upon her panting breast to take breath, and then as rapidly as before hastened to shake out of its folds a great cloak of homespun woollen stuff, which she wrapped about her. It was dark by this time, and only a very dim gleam from the fire of the larger apartment was thrown into Magdalen's inner chamber. The stately Isobel put aside her distaff, and rose from her stool with a look of alarm, but neither mother nor daughter ventured on the first surprise to intrude upon the young lady's retirement, though the pale cheek, the flashing eye, and parted lips of which she had caught a glimpse as Magdalen passed, told Isobel of some rare agitation, such as had never stirred the girlish heart of her young charge before.

“Lady Maidlin has done on her French head, mother; I see her shadow glimmering on the wall—and now her mantle—what can it be?”

But while Isobel hesitated at the open door, which showed her nothing save the darkness of the little room, and its window glancing with the cold sky of night, and softly called on "Lady Maidlin, Lady Maidlin!" Magdalen herself stood in the doorway. Her pretty velvet hood pointing upon her forehead, after the fashion which did not then bear hapless Mary Stewart's name, enclosed a pale face, all moving and trembling with intense and still emotion, and the hand with which she clasped her cloak shook with eagerness and haste: without a word Isobel began to put on the wimple which had been lying on her knee on the fire-side seat. "Alice, my hood and my mantle," said Isobel. "Lady Maidlin, I grieve that you tarry for me—I kent not your pleasure."

The words startled the young lady into consciousness of their presence. "They will

mark us, if I go attended," said Magdalen. "Let me forth alone, Isobel—it is life or death—the sub-prior will slay Paul Hepburn—they say he is a heretic. Isobel, I will not be stayed—let me go, let me go."

"You must not go, the whole household will mark you," cried Isobel, throwing down the mantle which her daughter brought to her. "Lady Maidlin, your father has bidden spread the table—I heard his call—the sub-prior will not go forth to-night. Take thought—take time—cannot I your truemaid do this office. Paul Hepburn is a noble gentleman, but maidens of degree must not be lavish of their presence. It is a fitter office for me than for Lady Maidlin; so please you I will go when they sup at the great table, and all the house is astir. They will say, Isobel hath stolen forth to a preaching—by the same token the word is to be read in Miles Dunbar's cottage

to-night—it is but travelling a mile further. My lady, be content at home, and make Isobel your messenger; she has served your race in matters of life and death before.”

With the blood one moment quite forsaking her pallid cheek and brow—the next rushing back in a burning flush of maidenly pride and shame—with fear, anxiety, injured feeling, resentment, and the unwilling humility of a child, contending in her variable face, Magdalen heard this to an end—then she stood for a moment irresolute. “Paul Hepburn is my kinsman,” she said, at length, a flush of bright colour crossing her cheek, though her eye met unabashed, the glance of Isobel Lauder’s steady eye; “and I had known but little of the Holy Gospel if he had thought a child unworthy of his kindness, as well he might, I tell you, if wisdom is aught. But I will wait, as you say, till they are at table; my father

will make excuse for me. Isobel, you are not to hinder me. He is brave, he would heed nothing of your warning—it needs that I should go, who heard and saw; and Alice goes with you to the reading, Isobel,” continued Magdalen, in a softening tone, “why should not poor Maidlin, who can go neither to kirk nor market in her own mother’s hand? I would you had but heard this sub-prior with his knaves, and his varlets, and his apostates—and my good father bidding him challenge them to a tilting in the hall.”

“Now grace be with us,” said Isobel; “did the knight trow the reverend preachers were men to lift spear or sword.”

“Not so,” said Magdalen, a faint smile crossing her face, though her hands still sought the clasp of her mantle, and now and then her quick glance at the door and eager look of listening, bore witness that her anxiety was

unabated; "it was logic and argument my father meant, not spear or sword."

"And what said the proud priest?" exclaimed Isobel; "I would I did but see any one of them in hand with godly Master Knox, or such as he—but truly they are wiser in their generation. What answer did he make, dear child?"

"I hear a step without," cried Magdalen, hurriedly. "Alack, alack! if I have lost mine errand—Isobel!"

But Isobel, the instant her young lady spoke, had left the room to make investigation. With a scared face, Magdalen listened.

"Lady Maidlin, God is over all," said the grave Alice, who had not ventured to speak hitherto. "Please you, I think He will keep His own servant, though the heathen rage—therefore we should be calm—for the Scripture says—"

“I pray thee, hush, Alice,” cried Magdalen, impatiently; “pity me, I know it all—but if I be too late!”

“It is only Simon the bowman, with a sheaf of arrows,” said Isobel. “Wait in your chamber, Lady Maidlin, till he has begun to tell his news, and then we may go forth unnoticed. Alice, thou must miss the reading this night, poor bairn; keep thee here, and let no gossips in for any fleeching—bid them hush—if Maisdry or Liliias would come in to thee—lest the lady hear.”

“But when I well know the lady is abroad,” said the serious Alice; “Mother, I dare not say a lie.”

“Did I bid thee, my own bairn?” said Isobel, drawing her child close to her with tender tears. “Now heaven pardon me for leasing, or putting evil in thy sweet heart! Thou wilt do what is best, I know, and think

good thoughts, and pray for thy lady and thy mother, and God's persecuted word. I know thou mindest all the hymns and holy texts that sister Bridget taught thee. A precious Christian mother, Alice, light in a dark place—now sit down on thy stool while I go to see after Simon, and think of us, child, in thy prayers.”

A moment after this farewell, you could not have fancied the composed woman, her mantle enveloping her whole person, her wimple concealing the lower part of her face, and her “French head” of a sober wifely fashion, less graceful than her lady's, shading her placid features, capable of any such effusion of tenderness. The girl sat down upon her low stool by the dim, slow-burning fire, and bending her head into her hands, fixed the steadfast gaze of meditation upon the sullen red of the embers, and the blinks of fitful

flame. Her mother passed by her coming and going, without so much as a glance. What are the thoughts of this little maiden, Alice, fifteen years old, in this dusky chamber of dais, in the tower of Lammerstane, in the year of our Lord, 1547? Do you think they are labouring to unravel that crabbed design for her tapestry, which Alice stumbled at this morning? Do you think they are launching forth into the glorious unknown world which she has seen only from these moorland heights far off, or through the grated convent windows of St. Mary's—where, indeed, there was little but the gloomy Bass, or a passing boat upon the Firth to see? Not so. If a momentary fancy, astray and truant, wile her eye into the youthful paradise of dreams, Alice calls it carnal, and sighs over her wandering heart. These thoughts of her's

reach high as the heavens in their journeys. The things which angels desire to look into, are those that fill the meditative mind of this grave child. Simply she believes what all the world, one time or other, proclaims with voice of anguish—that all the world is vanity—and Alice muses like a sage upon the eternal verities which in that age were so tangible and real, as it is hard with our life-long familiarity to feel them at all times—ponders upon the heaven, which sooth to say, she has more true report and knowledge of, than of the earth she lives in—and gives up the world with devotion, renouncing its pomps and pleasures from the bottom of her simple heart. Sometimes a vision of the stake, the piled faggots, the terrified crowd, and the fiery passage to the skies, which many a noble heart has taken since Alice first drew breath,

inspire this young soul with a solemn enthusiasm. And such are the girl's musings, bending over the half-lighted hearth.

But Magdalen Hepburn in the dark sits on the window-seat of cold uncushioned stone, with very different thoughts. Magdalen's little inner-room is thrust into the wall, where the tower fronts to a precipice—the dark, almost perpendicular, descent of a narrow ravine, which parts the lesser hill on which stands her father's tower, from the bare peak of Lammer Law; and here where no attack can be made, the window is larger, lower, and slightly rounded, throwing in on summer days an exuberance of light, almost too much for this small room. Through these crossed and leaded panes, you can see nothing but the dark side of Lammer Law, some wan moonlight trembling on it, and itself looking all the darker for the light—and above, a glimpse

of wintry sky, paled with a few faint stars. Leaning her head upon the heavy mullion, her shoulders curved, her arms crossed on her breast, and a great fever swelling within, in this new roused and startled heart, Magdalen closes her eyes to the darkness—opens them again as if they could aid her listening, and longs and trembles for the signal to go forth. Eager with the first impatience of youth to rush away upon her errand, quivering with the excitement of a fiery temper, which cannot calculate probabilities, but leaps at apprehension of a hundred evil chances to make her mission vain—ready to chide at Isobel—to denounce the enemy to his face—and again with no wish but this overwhelming one, to warn and succour her kinsman, the young lady weeps, and dashes off her tears—trembles, and with sudden heroism scorns herself for trembling, and would fain, but for very shame, rise up

to pace ^{the} room with irrestrainable impatience, as Sir Roger, when he is roused, paces the echoing hall.

“Now, Lady Maidlin!” Like a greyhound from the leash, Magdalen sprang to her feet. They passed silently through the sitting-room, where Alice sat in the red half-light upon the hearth, musing of heaven and God, and stole out heedfully: Magdalen keeping close in the shadow of her attendant, whom, already, in spite of her desire to do this alone, she clung to as a guardian. They reached the door in safety. A little court-yard was still to be crossed, where a narrow gate, set in the massive wall, was kept by one of the retainers, a man whom the rising tide of heresy, so called, had made a willing help to Isobel in her nightly journeys. With a “Good even, mistress,” he let them pass—Magdalen was not recognized—and, looking back, they saw

the light glow red and full in the windows of the hall. "When a priest is at table, the revel is late," said the man; "let them ken there's ill brewing—but I cry your pardon, Mistress Isobel—you're better avised of it than I."

Softly bolt and bar stole into their places. Alone upon the dreary hill-side, in the darkness of this chill March night, stood Magdalen and Isobel. Black above them loomed the tower, blacker still the hill rose into the sky—and dark was the steep descending road, and mirk as midnight the deep gorge far down below, whence the hoarse murmur of a mountain-stream came clear in the silence. The wind that, driving upward from the sea, came on them with such a rush and breadth, had well-nigh torn off Magdalen's mantle, as it rushed past her to buffet the old tower familiar to such shocks—and it was some little

time before she recovered herself; for Magdalen had been tenderly bred—poor though her father was—and the punctilious care of Isobel had even exceeded her anxiety for the enlightenment of her charge. Many a midnight walk up and down the hill to some safe homestead, where the Reformation converts, who, more or less openly confessed, were scattered everywhere, could meet to read the Scriptures, had made Alice fearless; but the Lady Maidlin, more delicately cared for, was never tempted forth. She set her face to the blast with a lofty youthful enthusiasm now, and leaving far behind them those high lighted windows, the only mark of human neighbourhood, they proceeded swiftly, but warily, on the sloping road, disappearing where a rising hillock hid the very moonbeams from them, into the mirk of night.

CHAPTER III.

Born to the wars, and a man of meikle might,
With neither frown nor tear
But a smile of noble cheer,
My lord withouten fear, looked forth upon the fight.

BALLAD

EVERYTHING is silent, save the rushing of the burn, which in calm weather descends daintily by the side of the mountain-road, tripping from stone to stone, and sometimes taking a longer leap, in a rude wooden channel made to help its fall over a steeper brae than usual. To-night it moans into the silence like an unquiet spirit, and heavy with torn twigs and

tufts of heather, tears down, turbid and loud, on its way to Tyne. At long uneven intervals, on either side the way, a ray of ruddy light, a startling sound close at your hand, discloses to you that some where hereabouts—though even the moonlight cannot trace for you, against the moorland slope which buries it, the outline of its walls—a lowly farmhouse, or ewe-milker's cottage may be found. Here, in a little hollow, between a larger and a lesser slope, a brighter light shines out upon the hill. Draw closer—from the roof, which looks like nothing but a dried and withered bed of heather, the moonbeams in mid-air have caught a passing film of smoke; and now you see the strong bars of the little window chequering the light. Lift the latch lightly, bolt and bar are undone; the master of the house is still out on the hill, returning from the fold where his sheep are in safety, and the

good-wife at the other end of this single apartment which forms the dwelling, behind a slight partition formed of dry branches woven through and through with willow twigs and heather, is "suppering" her cow.

The cottage is very rude and of the most primitive construction. Great shafts of wood, undressed trunks of trees, set deep into the soil at a considerable distance from each other, at both ends and in the middle of the cottage, and tied together at the top, give the most simple elements of form. These primitive pillars, partly visible on the inner side, are built into low walls of massy stone, and the sloping roof, thatched with heather, finishes the humble habitation. The floor is earthen and uneven, a smouldering fire of peats and bits of half-dried wood is on the hearth, and the spear and rusty jack, hanging over the chimney, denote that, at some previous time,

the shepherd cottager has been a man-at-arms. Were he here himself to-night, he could show you the thrust of an English sword in the mail, which he hopes to wear never more at such a fatal fight as Flodden-field.

But this is no cottager sitting here upon the settle, reading by the light of the small dim lamp, which wavers above him, hung from the roof. With a strange composure and intentness he reads, yet it is easy to perceive how quick his ear is for every sound. He sits on the watch ready for danger, yet scorns, with the innate calm of a great and assured courage, to do his occupation carelessly on this behalf. You might say his higher mind was full, to the exclusion of aught else, with this subject which he studies; but at the same time, his senses and physical faculties, like an inferior army, alert and under com-

mand, keep a wary eye upon the occasion of peril, which may be close at hand.

Of noble height and vigour, his dark hair curling short and close upon his brow—his eye, which now and then lifts a keen glance of observation round, dark and brilliant—his cheek still ripe with the bloom of youth, though thought and gravity be on his forehead, Paul Hepburn sits by the cottager's hearth, as if it were a prince's hall. Neither priest nor apostate, but a gentleman of race and distinction, his sword rings upon the hard earthen floor as he moves upon his seat—but no demonstration of his full self-possession and readiness for defence is necessary to his clear mind and tried bravery—his right hand is free for action, but it is not on the hilt of his sword.

Hush!—steps muffled but rapid on the

road—a timid hand at the latch—“Marion Craig, the Lady would speak to you,” said a low quick voice without.

The cottage mistress stirred behind her screen—“Save us, what would the Lady have with me?—but it may be but some gangrel loon, trusting the good-man’s on the bent. If it’s the Lady, and you’re friends, enter in— if it’s the enemy—save us and keep us! there is never a bar to my door.”

Paul Hepburn laid aside his book, and rising, took his place something in the shadow, leaning upon the arch of the chimney—for rattle of arms, or voice of pursuers, was none here to rouse him. Only a quick breath, panting with haste and fear, a swift timid step, one figure cloaked and covered stealing in—another speaking to the old woman by the door. Withdrawing from his support, he came full into the light again, and lifted his

bonnet from his brow—"I know not who the Lady is," said the young Reformer gently and with courtesy, "but if she has word or errand for me, I am ready for any call."

With a hasty gesture, Magdalen Hepburn, her first startling flush of confusion at finding herself alone in his presence, suddenly vanishing in the importance of her mission—threw back the cloak from her face—"Flee, flee, you must not lose a moment!—it is I—not a lady, only Maidlin. I heard the sub-prior with my father, in the hall—he has letters to slay you and Master Knox, and I know not all the godly men beside. The preachers shall never more have place in Lothian. Kinsman, he is still at table—oh, I know not—he may have ta'en the road by this time—will you flee—will you flee!"

But Paul only took his young cousin's hand kindly in his own. What he was about to

say, it was impossible to tell, for Magdalen gave him no time; snatching her hand from his hold again, she cried aloud—

“He thinks I am distraught—he will not listen to me, Isobel, Isobel! See him, how he stands there in the light, a mark for them all if they were but here. Dame Marion, they have letters to slay him. Oh! for pity will you not crave him to flee!”

“I will go, my child, only be calm. Heaven knows I do not slight the warning,” said Paul Hepburn gently. “We have learned to play with danger, we men who have our lives in our hands. Little Maidlin, sweet cousin, let me see your face again.”

Reluctantly she suffered him to take her hand, and draw her within the brighter circle of the fire-light. Half ashamed of her own vehemence, strangely desolate in her young heart to know him going from her, yet

trembling with haste and eagerness to see him go, the warm blood flushed to Magdalen's drooping face as she stood for a moment under his scrutiny. But the moment was long. With a sudden passion she raised her eyes—"They are out for your life, kinsman. What boots poor Maidlin's face when they are on the road. Will you go—will you go?"

"I have known deadly danger many a time," said Paul in a voice of strange emotion, "but I am a solitary man; I knew not this sweet friendship till now. Maidlin, I fear not your sub-prior—he hath blessed me more than he will harm me—but know you I may never see this sweet face any more."

Maidlin had no answer to give—she held out for another moment heroically, but she was only a girl, so very young, and unused to acting for herself—so when she should have been firmest, the tears came swelling into her

eyes, and dropped one by one on his hand and on her own—but still she cried, and entreated that he should flee.

Never to see his face again—hard was the thought to Maidlin—but she could not reciprocate the farewell look which crimsoned all her drooping brow; another moment and that shy forehead reddened with a startling, violent blush, as his shadow bent upon her, and his lip for an instant touched the parting of her hair. When Magdalen looked up again, from the fit of weeping, which overpowered her like a child's—her kinsman was gone.

Into the silence, into the night—they hear his rapid step ring on the echoes; and the moon of her grace gave him gentle company, lighting over the low country like a lantern of heaven, and the wind with kindly violence held the clouds at bay upon the upper heights, shading the tower of Lammerstane, with the gloom of

a storm. "His reverence will not go forth to-night," said the priest's servant to his attending train—and the breeze freshened in the glowing face of Paul Hepburn, as free of these bewildering slopes he turned him towards the sea.

CHAPTER IV.

Day, with her open eyes affrighted us—
The holiest place we sought was the bright hearth
Of here and there a home—and thus convened
As it were guilt, we companied with God
And heard the voice of heaven.

WITH a heavy oaken shutter, hasped and barred, the small window of Miles Dunbar's cottage is closed in from the night; a stranger benighted might stumble over the shepherd's house, and think it but a grey mound among all these little hills, but Isobel's accustomed feet find the narrow thread of path that leads to its barred door. "Who calls?" said a

man's voice from within, as her summons claimed admission. "Isobel Lauder, at Lamerstane," was the answer—and Magdalen and her attendant, now the first person of the two, and humbly followed by her young mistress, entered at the jealous half-opened door.

The cottage within was of construction very similar to the one they had just left—ranged upon a bench within the chimney, a little row of aged people sat soberly in the full glow of the fire, to which a brand or two of fir had been added to make the flame brighter. A very old man, the patriarch of this little assembly, sat on the hearth close to the end of the bench, in a great elbow chair—and the rest of the apartment was filled with the younger people of the company, who, some on the creepies of the cottage, some on folding leathern stools, which themselves had

brought, pressed as close as possible to an oaken chest, which stood strangely enough by the side of the fire-place, in the most advantageous place. They were all peasants of a humble class, with the exception of one Lantermuir farmer and his wife—and a strong, dark featured man, very resolute, and very wary, leant upon the lintel of the door, holding the latch in his hand, a fit sentinel for this company, place, and time.

“Friends,” said the master of the cottage, lifting his blue bonnet from a broad, manly, weather-beaten brow, “if some of ye suld not ken, coming hither for the first this night—this Scripture was bestowit upon me by the Laird of Langley, ane of the same bluid and name as our awin knight up the hill—but a man of mair emprize—Sir Roger being agit of years, and spent with fields and fights. I reckon not that this precious Buik is mine,

but belongs to thame in this place, that the Lord has enlightened to understand the same. So having nought mair to say on mine ain behalf, I will win to the word itsel."

So saying, Miles Dunbar reverently lifted the lid of the great chest. Safely secured to this lid, a black-letter Bible of Tindal's translation lay open before him, a cord stretched over its ample breadth to keep the leaves flat as he read. This was a common precaution of the times—for the chest could be closed on any alarm, and its treasure concealed.

Strangely worn out and languid, Magdalen Hepburn had ascended the hill, her previous excitement forsaking her in a feebleness of exhaustion such as her young strength had never known before. Wrapped in her own thoughts, which took a tone of calm and languor from her present mood, it was almost with indifference—at least with the pre-occu-

pation of one possessed with matters still more vital, that she sat down in the shadow in one corner, and leant her head wrapped in a fold of her cloak against the rough undressed stone of the cottage-wall. Her mind was like the atmosphere after a storm, cold and faint, and taking time to rest.

But a glance round these earnest listening faces—upon the old woman yonder, trembling with eagerness as she draws near and supplicates of the reader, “That word ance mair—that word ance mair”—upon this silvery grey head bent forward, with the brown bony hand, that has borne arms many a day in Scotland’s quarrels, curved over the anxious ear—the steady face of the reader, illuminated by the fire-light—the little crowd of heads round him, drawing closer and closer as their interest grew—the broad pages of the open book—the little pause so breathless and

eager, which must intervene when another leaf is turned under that securing cord; the slumbering light awoke in Magdalen's eyes. Solemnly on her ear fell the weighty words in the homely speech of this grave cottager. Isobel, beside her, bending forward, listened in silent earnestness, receiving every word devoutly—the bread of life—but Magdalen's young heart quickened into stronger emotion—so vivid and real before her seemed the scene of which this humble disciple read.

“ And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow, and they awoke him, and said unto him, ‘master, carest thou not that we perish.’ And he rose and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, peace, be still, and there was a great calm.”

“ I was even so on the Firth; I was an

Eyemouth fisher born” said the old man in the arm-chair, the grandfather of this house. “In my straits I callit upon the name of Mary, but I suld reckon she sleepit, and was not to be wakened, for I was driven in on a rock, and clove my heid. Mony a storm I’ve seen, friends—but I never saw ane but God incarnate, ruling upon the sea.”

“But ye must not say evil of our Lady,” said a woman hastily. “I heard it read out of the word, ‘Hail, blessed among women.’ Have common folk better lear than the angel Gabriel that stands in the presence of God?”

“I’ll read you another Scripture,” said Miles Dunbar, “how that there is but ane Mediator between God and man—but I count it for a buitless deed mysel to cry mercy of deid men, yea, of saints in Heaven, when the Lord of them and us is near to every ane.

even in his heart; and small grace had the little bairns, the blind, and the unbelievers gotten at the Lord's hand, if even the like of holy John and Peter had held their awin way."

"Have ye proof for that?" said one of the company hastily.

Slowly turning over the leaves, the reader proceeded with his evidence. "The disciples forbade them, saying, why trouble ye the Master." "And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord wilt thou that we command fire to come down from Heaven and consume them, even as Elias did. But he turned and rebuked them and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of, for the Son of Man is come not to destroy men's lives, but to save them." "And there was a woman also in the coasts of Tyre and Sidon," said Dunbar, searching for this closing

instance, “whom the Lord would try, even her faith, letting on as though he heard her not. List ye how the holy Apostles made their intercessions. Send her away, cried they, she troubleth us. But what said the holy Lord, who tholed their troubling many a day and lang—hearken till I read.” And with the slow and difficult utterance which gave emphasis to every word, this humble Reformer read, in the deep hush to which the double influence of Sacred Scripture, and of unknown story, charmed his audience, this wonderful interview, revealing to the eager listeners round him the nameless Gentile woman fixed here for ever in noble portraiture by Heaven’s own sunshine. Before he had ended, stifled sobs went through the little company, and one woman starting from her stool, fronted the speaker with streaming eyes.

“I had a little bairn—ane—my only lamb.

I cried to Mary and the saints for her life. I went upon a pilgrimage, and offered an offering to our Lady of Lareit. All this time ye wist of this, and told me not. *Me* a dog at his table! God wot I would have been a worm in the mools for my bairn's life—how durst ye keep it secret?—but I askit not the crumbs from *his* hands. Oh, well awa! and my Ailie's ga'en for evermair!"

Miles Dunbar made no answer, but with the ready application of one mighty in the Scriptures, he turned to one of Paul's noble comfortings, to one of John's apocalyptic glimpses of the remaining heaven. Softened tears and glowing eyes of rapture were in the little company ere long. You could see how this harp of human feeling answered to every thrilling touch of the Divine Musician's hand. The words swayed them like trees in the wind. From awe to joy—from weeping to

triumph—with the voice of an angel to every heart and soul of those who listened, this Bible revealed itself as God's true message. They went home full of its new and wonderful wisdom, when all the world slept in the calm of midnight; and Magdalen Hepburn folded her cloak about her moved face, and wept a flood of irrestrainable tears out of the deep emotion of her heart—not for sorrow—but for such a thrill of new awakened feeling as seemed to her another being, added to her own.

CHAPTER V.

“In maiden meditation.”

“LADY MAIDLIN has gone forth from her chamber, mother. She is out on the hill unattended. Must I do on my mantle and follow the Lady to the hill?”

Isobel's first impulse was that of punctilious duty. “She were better alone than with so young a follower. I will go, Alice—yet stay—it is not my wont, as all the tower

wots full well—but the lady's heart is astir to-day with other thoughts than she hath ever known before—heaven's benison upon her! fair and sweet—though she be a wayward child; we will even leave her to her heart's company—I wist she has enow companions in her heart.”

“ The reading of the word so moved her, mother?” said Alice, with curiosity.

“ Ay—yet she knew the word before—I think, perchance, it was the folk gathered there, and looking upon them, how it moved them—but thy Lady hath not a peaceful soul like thine, my own child. The cares of the world are sown in the soil even now—and Maiden Maidlin begins to look on her heart. Woes me, this day cometh to all.”

“ And if she have begun to look on her heart, it is a sad sight to see it so far away from God,” said the religious Alice. “ I re-

member how I woke in terror after that preaching at the Friar's Stane—and clung to my mother, and then bethought me that even you could not save your child—but I think it is well to know the terror for sake of the joy."

The mother bent down with tears in her eyes to kiss the forehead of her child. "God knoweth I hear thee with gladness," said Isobel, "yet with trembling am I rebuked before my bairn—and heaven keep thee long from the experience of this world—the turmoil, the bitterness, the carnal strife, and care and love; and heaven succour mine other child. I wot her foot is in the tide already—and she knows as little as thou dost the bitter stream she must wade through."

Gravely and with wonder, Alice looked up into her mother's face. Nothing but the calmest life of every day had this young recluse ever known—nothing but those sub-

limest and most momentous truths of the Gospel had ever touched her heart—and these she had received with the devout humility of a child. She knew of nothing else to stir the soul, but the mourning which Christ hath blessed, the joy unspeakable and full of glory, which his mission offers unto men. All the human agonies, the passions and pains, and very perversities which thrilled through Magdalen's spirit were an unknown world to Alice. She lifted her eyes wistfully, and cast them down uncomprehending and amazed—for there was a varying flush of sympathy in her mother's face, of which Alice knew nothing—and she shrank from this undiscovered country with pain and alarm. “Are not all things evil that turn us aside from the sole good?” said Alice—and she went away sorrowfully to pray for Magdalen, who had in good truth cause to be prayed for, though the

strong emotions dwelling in her heart were neither less devout nor less pure.

Grey, into the cold blue sky of early spring, rises the tower of Lammerstane, with thin clouds floating about its battlements, like knightly pennons. The rays of the chill sun fall full on Lammer Law, lighting, but not brightening its rugged bulk and scathed, brown heathery coat; and you can see to-day the deep perpendicular descent of the ravine, and how great bushes of gloomy whins, and young bare saplings of mountain-birch and rowan, cling to its perilous side with a grasp of despair, and struggle upward to the light. Tumbling on the rocks below, revealing itself here and there in gleams of white foam, the water fights its way along its interrupted channel. The wind sighs in the long grass which fringes the edge of the precipice, and rustles through the whins upon the opposite

bank; but save this sound, and the hoarse brawling of the stream, the air is silent in this moorland wilderness. Not a bird sings here, where the broad firmament stoops over us, unbroken by a single intervening tree, and Magdalen Hepburn's eye travels far, descending one by one this flock of little hills, to rest upon a far off glitter, cold and blue, and to watch the horizon line sink clear into the sea.

If Isobel called upon Lady Maidlin now, this girl would drop her cloak from her face and hurry homewards, startled and dismayed, as if she were a culprit; but no rude voice breaks in to disturb the reverie. She is going over, in her heart, the scenes of last night, repeating them to their smallest detail, so as neither picture nor story could repeat—coming back and back to dwell again upon the strange pathos of Paul Hepburn's voice, and upon that speech of his, most strange—most

strange—that deadly danger he knew before, but such sweet friendship never—and in many a blush the blood came warm to Magdalen’s forehead as she stood entranced and still, almost feeling once again that passing breath upon her brow. Like the sun among the evening clouds, there came mingling with these natural fancies many a high thought of Scotland and the word, for which all Scotland pined; and grand historic scenes flashed into the air under Magdalen’s eye, wherein he, whom she called nothing but kinsman, stood bravely in the front for truth and Scotland’s sake. And this young heart lifted up undoubting eyes to heaven, even when she glanced again with a thrill of strong anxiety and terror upon the calm, unanswering sea.

“He is used to danger—then I wist he has escaped it oft, and knows the way,” said Magdalen, in her heart, “the sub-prior went

not forth till noon, and he might sail by break of day—would we but heard—would we but knew! Ah, pity me, of little faith! as if I did not know that He, whom they serve, hath them ever in his eye. I will go home to my chamber—often my heart breaks forth when I work at my frame—and God, if he puts prayers there, will hear me when I cry.”

Another long searching anxious look over the undulating line of land, the far off glimpse of sea, the pale clear arch of heaven—and Magdalen carried home to the calm of her chamber this roused and quickened heart—carried it home to dream and muse over her tapestry, to hear the sounds around her faint and muffled, as if by distance, and to take in many a wandering fantasy from the half-seen forms of her companions, the half-heard words they addressed to her. With the heart of a mother, Isobel Lauder sat near her nursling,

watching her with many a side-long look—yearning to offer the sympathy which shame-faced Maidlin could not ask, but restrained by the punctilious constraint of respect and duty, an iron barrier between this waiting gentlewoman and the lady of the hall. With a different curiosity, doubtful, watchful, suspicious, Alice lifted eyes of grave observation upon her youthful mistress. An elderly nun set sentinel upon some faltering novice, suspected of intent to break the convent bounds, could not have been more gravely superior, more curiously observant, and had no chance to be half so full of innocent wonder. Thus the day passed over them slow and heavily—and by and bye its dreary stillness glided into the deeper calm of night.

CHAPTER VI.

——— “ A brief farewell : the beast
With many heads butts me away.”

CORIOLANUS.

It draws near midnight, yet there is light in one end of this large apartment, where two grave men of middle age, sit by the hearth in serious and earnest discussion. The lamp which throws a faint illumination on their faces, does little towards lighting this great hall—these cold stone walls, and dark groined roof frown down the ineffectual gleam,

and the sky, through the high grated windows, looks in with chill and distant supervision, throwing down a ray of moonlight like a silver arrow into the gloom.

The last brand is dying on the hearth, the glow of the embers grows every moment of a duskier red, and strong in the further end is the moonlight, triumphant over this feeble lamp, which seems to increase the darkness in every other part of the hall, from the one bright spot it makes here. If you can trace, by means of its wavering flame, the carved heraldic tokens over the mantel-shelf, you will see that the cognizance there is the bloody heart—and with pallid and pearly colours by this midnight light, the same blazonry shines from one small central pane of the largest window. Close by the lamp, in a great oaken chair, sits a gentleman of noble appearance, with the great limbs and mighty strength of

the old Douglas race—and this Laird of Lang Niddrie, in council or in fight, does no dishonour to his name.

In marked and striking contrast, this other personage upon the settle near him, meets with his burning glance, the moderate, intelligent, kind eye of the master of the house. Shield or scutcheon is not his to carry. No martial clang, as of the stirred sword, announces his quick vehement motions. Never a better breast-plate than his cassock, a stouter helmet than the close cap which covers his dark hair has this champion worn; but states and councils start at sound of his name to whom Douglas of Lang Niddrie, his host and protector, is but a common man-at-arms. His frame is sensitive and slight—you can see how he draws round him the furred cloak, which droops down over his seat upon the cold stone pavement, and shrinks

from the chill of night. Strongly marked features, a brow that knits and evens out its folds with a constant change of expression, almost too quick for the spectator to follow—burning dark eyes, in which the enthusiasm seems to glow deep down, with a fixed perpetual fire—hair of iron-grey, and a long beard upon his breast, which gives to his middle age a venerable aspect, hardly borne out by the impetuous gestures and quick alterations of action and attitude, which throw an air of half restrained impatience over his whole bearing give a natural distinction to his appearance. That this man is naturally impatient, it takes small discrimination to discover—that this vivid glance can scarce, by any argument, school itself to wait for the slow investigation of less gifted men—and that this nervous form chafes at the restraint which bars the instant execution of its quick conceived and firm determined

purpose. This is of nature—but wisdom supplies a curb which nature could not supply—he sits at this moment in earnest conversation with his friend, suffering his own wish to be discussed and disputed—and like a man respectful of the greater intelligence he addresses, yet holding his own opinion withal, Douglas argues, insensible in his own vigorous person to the chill night air, before which his companion shrinks; and to the desolate aspect of the hall which impresses itself upon the more sensitive imagination, in all its gloom of midnight and moonlight—a picture not to be forgotten.

“There is little pleasure to the flesh in a warfare among the fremd,” said the guest of Douglas, “and this failing body lacks strength for travel—yet to say that I am other than ambitious of greater learning in mine own person, and better acquaintance with the

learned of other countries, were but leasing. God wot this unhappy Scotland hath all my heart. I could well spend my blood, drop by drop, to set the Gospel here among mine own kinsfolk—but if it is well to flee anywhither, it is well to choose a country which has not rejected Christ as He passed by, which the realm of England verily hath done, as all may witness. God knoweth my time may be nigh at hand—my feet may be withheld from flight and safety—yet I am fain to think I see, far off, a good work for me in this land, and I would put me to school, friend, to be arrayed at all points. England is no fit refuge for one who flies before the sword of Antichrist.”

“I say not England—in good sooth I think overmuch of my boys,” said Douglas. “St. Andrew’s is strong by land and sea. The Regent has no forces to overthrow so stout a hold, if they are as stout of heart who keep it

in defence. The way is not long, the journey is not hard, and by God's help Norman and his company may keep the Castle till a better time has risen on Scotland. Take the boys—come triumph or overthrow, I trust them to your keeping—and so sure as I hope in God that He will yet appear to break all bonds in this land, as sure am I that no scathe will follow if it please you take my counsel. Hark! who comes hither so late at e'en?"

Some one whose foot rings with hot haste upon the pavement—some one whose rapid entrance into the gloomy hall, so full of ardour and motion is he, startles the dying flame into a blaze, which casts a wild and sudden light upon the prophet-face of Knox, and on his companion's anxious brow. Rising hastily from his seat, Douglas thrust back his chair from the hearth with an unconscious gesture, and involuntarily tightened the belt

of his sword. Danger great and near was in the new-comer's face—and throwing from him, like an incumbrance, the mantle which, a moment before, he had drawn over his breast. John Knox stood up like an awakened spirit. The drapery fell from him as you might fancy the worn out mortal garments fall from such a one as Paul the aged, suddenly springing from his agony of martyrdom to the glorious strength of a delivered soul. Keen and intent he fixed his eyes upon the stranger's face. In as brief a time as you would take to draw a single breath this man was ready—unaware what strait or danger it was that threatened, but ready for all—for flight or struggle, scaffold or stake.

“The sub-prior of Coldinghame, armed with full power and warrant, comes against us,” said Paul Hepburn, whose brow was flushed and wet with heavy dew. “I am warned

that your name and my own are in his list. Master Knox, and that he has vowed to rid Lothian of us for ever. The danger presses. I am for St. Andrew's—a man may take breath at least, or be fronted like a man within those walls. I love not to play the fox to their hunting; but they will reckon little of my escape if they find a nobler quarry here. Will you forth with me? Douglas, it were shame to yield to such a sorry foe as this monk Everard—lend me your word and counsel—we can reach North Berwick long ere break of day. Master Knox, God's people look to you—I pray you come with me."

"I have urged it once and again," said Douglas hastily. "Sufficient have been the sacrifices—there are enough dead, with God's will to testify for the truth—Scotland calls loud and long for lives to serve her. I will

go rouse the lads—then to the saddle, for pity—you will go?”

“I will go—let us waste no words,” said Knox rapidly. “Rouse the bairns tenderly—my heart rues on them in their simple youth—but there will be little quiet in their day, if I read the signs aright, and it behoves us to breed them men. Now for our journey, Laird of Langley. This wicked body straitens me, but I pray it hold out to the end. How is our course?”

“We will take a boat to the Earl’s Ferry—an outlaw’s gate for many a day; but I think not it will serve us the worse that it has served many another flying for life. Thence, with your favour, by the landward road, so far as it is safe to travel, and any fisher from Fifeness will carry us into harbour. I do not venture a longer voyage,” said Paul, “lest some galley cross our path, and mar our

journey. Can we carry aught for your comfort?—yet the way is not long.”

“I have been hunted over moor and glen ere now,” said the reformer; “the manner of it is not strange to me. Yet I look for the time when truth shall travel undismayed, and no man flee because of this sacred evangel, which hath stirred such tumult in Scotland. Verily, the Lord’s word proclaims itself true in these times, when he sendeth not peace, but a sword. But this our sea-port is not far from here—an hour’s ride gives space for rest—’tis hard to rouse these lads so soon.”

“Early and late are words for men at ease,” said Paul Hepburn; “in such plight as ours we know them not.”

“Yet the sleep of youth is sweet,” said John Knox, pacing with a heavy step the lower end of the hall, and now and then coming full into the moonlight, which dis-

lainful of the feeble lamp, shone broad upon the cold stone carvings of the wall, and the chill pavement of the floor; "their lot has fallen upon evil days, but I would not have them lose the dew that nourisheth the tender herb. Alack for the time when tender bairns must rise and ride at midnight, or lose the teaching of God's holy word!"

A long silence followed. With his cloak wrapped about him so as least to impede his movements, Paul Hepburn stood in the centre of the hall, the light of the lamp fluttering with curious scrutiny about his person, leaning with both hands upon the hilt of his sword; while through the moonlight and the gloom, the reformer's slighter and less graceful figure came and went with long, slow, meditative strides, which struck strangely upon the silence. But already this silence tingled with horses' hoofs, stealthy, yet ringing loud upon

the midnight calm. And Douglas re-entered the hall, bringing with him three startled lads, too lately awakened to be aware of much except the thrill of strong excitement into which this sudden flight surprised them.

“I had hard ado to tear him from his mother,” said Douglas, the tear stealing to his own eye as he laid his hand upon the shoulder of the youngest, a mild boy of sixteen; “she sends her hearty farewell, with all good wishes and prayers; and now, though you upbraid me for an evil host, good friends, I implore you, go.”

CHAPTER VII.

“ Softly, brother :

‘The air is stealthy like our steps ;—a day

That well becomes our flight.”

OLD PLAY.

GREY and muffled in the morning mist, like some ancient mariner watching by the sea, North Berwick Law lowered dimly into the white haze which overspread the Firth. Still and dreaming by its foot, the fisher cottages sent up no household smoke, gave forth no household sounds upon the unawakened morn. With a faint melancholy rush, the water

which you could see but indistinctly through the mist, came up complaining and disquieted upon the rocks. Up above us is the sky—a span of faint blue, overspread and shadowed with the veil of a thin cloud, and the hill stands by us silently, with one foot on the sea, like the angel of the Apostle's vision—and thus it is, screened and surrounded by this white pale mantle, and bye-and-bye out upon the full tide, hearing nothing save the faint splash of the water against the side of the boat, and seeing nothing save these same soft, silken, melancholy waves, and this hair-breadth of shadowed sky—that we push forth upon our journey, all nature interfering, as it seems, to make the voyage safe and secret.

The three boys, crowding together in one end of the boat, look out with eager youthful curiosity for the first dim glimpse of the Fife shore, and criticize in whispers, with boyish

interest, the skill of the boatmen, who manage this rude fishing-coble. With his cloak wound round his neck and shoulders, and his unencumbered arms leaning upon the familiar sword-hilt, Paul Hepburn turns his thoughtful eyes towards that quarter where the lofty Lammermuirs recede into the sky. It is too far off, and the atmosphere is much too heavy to permit him a glimpse of the scene of his last night's interview, and you would scarcely fancy a man with life at stake, could fill his mind with ponderings of such an incident—yet there are softened lines in the Laird of Langley's face—an almost imperceptible dilation of his upper-lip and nostril, and a warm and pleasant moisture within his eye-lid, which speaks of something tender and touching at his heart. A very type of a strong man armed at all points, and ready for the threatening danger, is this stout Hepburn,

whose wary eye swept at one glance the whole apparent coast as they embarked. But having satisfied himself as far as satisfaction is possible, and being "in graith," and prepared for whatsoever comes, his heart has no room for fear. With a throb of softened and gentle feeling, that gallant heart returns to the little maiden of last night, and to her friendship; her kindly haste and zeal has saved him a free man, to serve God and his country still—and his heart expands with the confidence of manhood to do for her yet a nobler and more perilous deed.

But John Knox, for whom the excited curiosity of youth, and the romance of early manhood are over—who has neither home to look back upon, nor dream of love to refresh his heart withal, fixes his eyes upon the Testament which he carries at his girdle, and in starts of anxious musing, as the wind softly

turns its pages, ponders on the fate of Scotland, and on the word of God. Not without a sober and suitable regard to the life which God already has many times delivered, it is but when it is forced upon him, that the mind of this man has capacity for thought of his own danger. He is flying for his life, yet his life is the last thing he thinks of at this moment, though he tightens unconsciously the clasp of his furred cloak, and feels the chill creep into his heart. "This wicked karkase," as he says, cumpers and straitens him with many pangs and weakness, yet his thoughts with natural impatience reject the bondage—he does not nourish his sicknesses, like so many favourite children, but hotly denounces and resists them, as lets and hindrances on his higher course. There is no mist of dreams over his keen dark fiery eye. It is not phantasms or fairies that his soul deals withal. Profound medita-

tion, solemn and sombre sometimes, hushes him into a trance of silence—but anon his face lights up with the constant impulse of resistance, of defiance, of labour and fight. There are powers of evil rampant in the country, to which it seems as though all good must yield—but flight or dejection are not in this man's soul; you can read it in the sudden lifting of his eyelid, in the sudden start and thrill with which his thoughts arouse him ever and anon. The soul of battle is in this burning glance of his. Submission is not in him; sometime or other he will die—but when he dies, it will be with his face to the foe, his armour on his breast, his sword in his hand—he may fall, but he cannot yield.

The boat shot silently out into the Firth—silently, with its little circle of visible space above and around, and everything else of earth and heaven veiled in this misty mantle

—made its way across the calm and level tide—and the earliest household fire was scarce aglow on the hearths of these fisher villages along the coast, when the keel grated upon the beach, and Paul Hepburn leapt into the shallows to aid his companions as they came ashore. A few fisher children, already out on the rocky braes, which were the manor and estate of these small sons of the sea, gazed at them curiously, shading, for habit's sake—albeit there was no sun to dazzle them—their eyes with their little sun-burnt hands. A fisher-wife came to her door; it was but to marvel what dyvours had fled by the Earl's Ferry so early on this chill March morn, and at length to doubt, with a quickened interest, if it were not other than dyvours who bore such a presence; but no one stayed them or asked their errand. They drew together, away from the more frequented shore, to a lonely hollow

among the sea-braes, where the hoar frost lay white upon the turf, and the water laid a little curl of foam along the broken rocks at their feet, in emulation of the wintry dew. Pausing here, the boys gathered in a little cluster round their teacher and their guide, listening in silence, and with great eagerness, to their consultation.

“I know a little hostel half a mile from here,” said Hepburn, “where we may rest with safety, and break our fast; then, Master Knox, if it please you follow my counsel, you will take horse thence to Fifeness. I and these stout youths will go farther landward, and pass on, on foot, to the same tryst; but this tender boy cannot travel with us, and yourself should not risk it. The good-wife has a sober nag—I know her of old—and something they will lay hands on, friend’s or

neighbour's, to serve our boy. How say you, sirs, you will walk the road with me?"

"Aud I also," cried little Francis eagerly, as his brother and cousin assented.

"Hush! child," said their teacher, "there is enow labour for thy tender frame. Be it as you say—they will mark our company less if we are parted. But I see no cause to stand still for counsel that is swiftly said and swiftly taken. The boys are faint for needful food. Where will you that we tarry for your coming?—for we were well to keep tryst at our embarkation as you say. I know this country indifferent well—once I have fled from it, when the umquhile tyrant was in his pride of power. I never thought to seek refuge in St. Andrew's; but true it is that the place that knew that oppressor knoweth him no more. Where will you have us wait you?"

“Ralph Beatoun, at this change-house, will appoint you a safe place to leave the cattle,” said Hepburn, “and there, with your favour, we will hold our tryst—but with my will you will have short space to stay; a man’s foot has no clod on’t, who flies the pursuer and the fire.”

“Only task not the boys” said John Knox, “and I care not how soon you follow us. You must count you men, my children, for this errand. I wist not if these princely boys of Judah, who walked in the Babylonish furnace were of greater years than you—and many a Squire has pricked upon the field, with an iron headpiece on brows as youthful. Ye have hunted men for your leaders—and I pray God ye may be rather hunted on your own part ere long than fail you from the faith. Grudge not your brother, boy Francis—give thanks that we twain have the greatest

danger, since, an they come upon us, John Knox has no sword to keep his head like the Laird of Langley. Now, sirs, to the gait—the youthful blood tholes ill with long fasting—and I see the sun in the sky.”

The remainder of the journey was performed as they appointed, and, wearied with a long day's travel, the early darkness fell upon them, striking out upon the dim and swelling sea once more; but wave and tide did good service, and by light of torches, firing the retreating water, the broken rock, and rude gate of admission, they reached with safety and welcome the stronghold of St. Andrew's, when the moon began to look out wan and anxious upon the desolate house of Lang Niddrie, and the dim peaks of Lammermuir.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ Oh now, who will behold
The noble captain of this ruined band
Walking from watch to watch.”

KING HENRY V.

IT is midnight and the wind blows freshly from the German sea. High upon the battlemented wall, close by the sea-tower which bears such woeful memories, two dark figures, half in the moonlight, half in shadow, look out upon the gleaming bay, and listen to the low rush of the coming tide upon the rocks. Here and there a light still burns in one of

the narrow windows of the castle, but the dark mass frowns upon them black and sullen, throwing its heavy shadow out upon the sea. All is still in the court-yard below. The gates are closed—leader and man-at-arms lie alike at rest—and nothing but the steady tread of the warders on the wall—the apparition now and then into the moonlight, of a sentinel close at hand, whose pace of steadfast vigilance carries him anon into the gloom, breaks upon the silence and solitude of this interview. You can see the coast widening yonder, towards the narrower Firth; on the other hand the moon shines wan and white upon the Angus hills; and into the sky, not far from our hand, point the graceful turrets of the cathedral and old St. Rule's stern, black, undecorated tower. But the city, like the castle, is asleep, and still it is but the sentinel march ringing heavy and regular upon the

stones—and the roar and gurgle of the tide over the low and broken rocks which interrupts the silence. The wind breaks bold and strong upon this manful figure, on the brow bared to meet it with a gleeful defiance, and on the lifted arm. But the wind for all its will cannot detach the fluttering badge from Paul Hepburn's bonnet, much less discourage him, as he looks up with a joyous courage over the sea.

“This wind stirs like a trumpet,” said Hepburn, as he replaced his bonnet on his brow. “I have lain in chamber and hall longer than befits a man, and flight is a hard necessity for manhood. I would fain have a nobler creature on my crest than a hunted hare.”

“It is even so, I doubt not,” said his companion, with something of discontent in his tone. “Though I know not if I would ex-

change the freedom to ride and run, though I had never a man in my train, for the freedom of these castle walls, and this command that lies heavy on me. Rare freedom when the foe is on the watch, and strong about our gates—and rarer still some gay morning when they come upon us by the sea!”

“I never thought to hear complaint from you,” said Paul. “It is known in Scotland that St. Andrew’s has refuge and safety for the persecuted, and in truth I know no higher distinction than to hold this castle in God’s name, for the defence and succour of the faith.”

“I would I could but dare to hope one half of those rude knaves had faith or verity in them,” said the Knight Commander of St. Andrew’s, looking back with longing dissatisfaction upon the barred and grated windows of the castle, where his followers lay at rest, “but

I need not bid Paul Hepburn know how the leader hath a certain tenderness for his following, if they were the wildest jackmen that ever made a raid. I have both blood and havings in my band, and God wot there hath been oft talk of the holy martyr whose blood we have avenged, and of the evangel whereof we are professors; but fighting men take war's license with war's penalties, friend; I would it were otherwise for mine own part—and many a rough sermon I, the same Norman, have preached to a rougher congregation; but it boots not—so I am fain to wax peevish like a priest or a woman, and vow to hold out to the death, in the same breath as I wish withal that we were scattered to the winds tomorrow.”

“Nay,” said Hepburn, with a smile, “I would lift the beacon though it scorched me, much less, Master, for mere begriming, shame

The Master of Rothés shook his head doubtfully, though a grave smile awoke for a moment the subdued lights of his face. “For me, evil report can no further harm me,” he answered, soon relapsing into his former gloom. “Common rumour hath taken me red hand—I am accursed wherever priest or pope hath sway—but I would not have stain or blemish light on Christ’s Evangel, if I and all those knaves of mine were forfeit, life and limb, to clear the spot. Forsooth, we are a goodly congregation within this same castle. No marvel our preacher loves the townfolk without the walls, better than this graceless brood within.”

There was a pause; cold and strong the midnight wind rushed on them, fresh from its exultant journey over land and sea, and the moon with timid scrutiny stole round and round, edging their bonnets with a silver lace,

and labouring with many an ineffectual will to spy the faces which they turned away from her. The Master leaned upon the battlement and looked away into the silvery quivering light; and through the profound and solemn gloom, with a leader's cares and anxious thoughts on his brow, and in his heart. There was blood on Norman's hand, but it was a harsh and downright age, when justice had volunteer executioners, who suffered little in conscience or report, for the doom they administered to culprits universally condemned. There was no tribunal in Scotland which dared to arraign the blood-stained Beatown, slayer of saints, nor any power to curb his murderous course; and it were a poor affectation to put into the minds or words of men, who felt themselves escaped by means of his destruction from the most cruel persecution; such scrupulous horror at

his executioners as we might feel now. Let us call their deed by what name we will, neither preacher nor layman condemned them—the reformed throughout Scotland breathed freer for the deed—And the Master of Rothes lifting his eyes towards the heaven, for whose gospel he knew himself to fight, saw no cloud of this shed blood between him and the sky.

As they stood together thus, each of them relapsed into his individual musings—a quick step crossed the court-yard, and ascended to the wall. The new-comer cast a heavier shadow on the moonlight, and it was not the lithe form of youth round which this dark drapery fell, though youth could not have trodden the way with a stronger or swifter footstep. Something abruptly this personage came upon the others, who stood in silence beside the tower, and while the Master roused himself, almost reluctantly, from his reverie,

and Paul Hepburn turned round with a curious glance to see who the intruder was, he who thus intruded was the first to speak.

“I will return upon my way if I mar good counsel—yet the hour is late for labour of the mind. Right worshipful, ye spoil the night of its dues—the leader of this handful behoves to have rest, for the sake of his charge and cause.”

“It is you then, Master Knox,” said the leader; “I marvelled to see any but a stranger astir so late. This handful, alack—you have seen them by this time. What think ye of our garrison?”

“Even thus much—that I marvel how God should work deliverance by such hands,” said the Reformer hastily, “and I warn ye look well to your rule, Sir Norman, if ye would not have a signal judgment follow close upon the mercy of which no man takes heed.”

In this pale light you cannot see the flush of burning crimson which crosses the dark brow of the commander, but it is easy to note by his start and averted head, that, though himself condemning his comrades and followers, he can ill brook to hear another pronounce the same judgment—but he makes no answer, except a half muttered exclamation, “Aye, think you so?”

“Brother, if I speak amiss it is because I am jealous of your peace and welfare,” said John Knox, “and pray my God for you, day and night; but I hear even now in mine ears an echo, that will not pass away, of loud carousal in the hall. If knave and varlet be lawless in their lower place, how may ye blame it, who suffer licence in the greater sort?—and how shall God uphold you, think ye, if ye list profane gallants and midnight brawlers in the band that bears His name?”

With a half impatient gesture, the Master of Rothes threw back on his shoulder the short cloak which he wore. "I deny not it is just," he answered—"yet men say ye should laud the steed that carries you through the ford."

"But an he be a vicious beast, though he come of good blood—an he plunge and kick, and throw the rider, if his race were pure as the blood royal, what would a true man say?" said the dauntless reprovor. "What say you? — high blood hath high fancies, and troublesome mettle hard to rule?—but for this very sake, bear me witness, gentles—it becomes this steed to know the curb and rein. Your rascal jackman sins but in his own person—bears his own jeopardy—though Heaven forbid I count that light that risks an equal soul — yet greater harm is to this little

commonwealth—greater scathe to faith and cause—when the leader leads to transgression, and denies the verity for which men hold him a champion. Lawful rule and regiment, worshipful master—I call on you to uphold them for the honour of Christ’s word and name in this benighted land!”

As was his wont, heated and moved by his own strength of feeling, the speaker threw off from him his heavy cloak. Swordless, and undefended, he stood before his warlike companions, though both were mighty men of valour, the stoutest of the three.

Some few moments passed before the Master was prepared to answer. “A friar were the kindest shepherd for such a swart flock as mine,” he said after a pause. “I trow our havings are fitter for the priest than the preacher—for the holy fathers were ever

charitable to wine and wassail—but I would it might please you, Master Knox, to take this charge upon yourself. I warrant you ring music into their ears, albeit they are something used to rougher strains. I am but chief of a divided sway—but take this office on you, and you have no colleague to let or hinder. I have but carnal force and authority on my part—nor over much of that as you will see—but one who would rule and sway the spirit were likeliest to be master here. Ye were a priest, Sir John—and I who am called commander here, vow you my duty and service if ye will but be teacher to these sinful men.”

The Reformer turned away, with a sudden shrinking of awed and trembling humility. It was strange to see such an impression overpower in a moment his natural impetuous readiness; “I am no Sir John,” he

answered abruptly, "too long was I among the Pope's Knights—but I am a sinful man, unworthy of the sacred office you bid me to; nay, nay—urge me not;—I give you good night."

And with a hasty step he turned away, and hurried towards the castle. In his secret heart the Reformer longed for this, his natural calling—but no one knew as he did the imperfections of John Knox—and while he longed, he shrank and trembled; unworthy to loose the latchet of his master. Like that other bold and stout fore-runner of the Gospel, whose lion front to every carnal danger melted into the pathos of a child's humility before the Lamb of God—and the stern leader of the reformation hurried to his little chamber to humble there a human heart—a heart most conscious of individual weakness—individual

impulse—all the throbbings and quickened pulses of common humanity. No abstract creature of a great necessity, but a mortal man, struggling between the natural impatient bravery of his constitution, and his awe and terror of intruding into the mysteries of God.

CHAPTER IX.

“So shaken as we are, so wan with care,
Find we a time for frightened peace to pant,
And breathe soft winded accents of new broils,
To be commenced.”—KING HENRY IV.

THE sun rose bright on the Castle of St. Andrew's, gay with the hope of spring. This court-yard from which the guilty trembling, and false mirth, of men whose sport was murder, have so recently withdrawn themselves, is full of the unruly following of the lords who keep the hold. Leslie, in jack and jerkin—followers of the Laird of

Grange—yeomen of the adjacent counties, who serve Pitmillie or Balnaves—and here and there a gay knave, brave in the livery of the Lyon King, fill, with a picturesque and varying crowd, this square within the walls. Among them are fisher wives, from the town without, and many another humble merchant, come to seek custom or gossip among the garrison—for the castle gates are open, there is truce with the Regent—and townsmen and gownsmen come and go through the portal arch.

You would not think the stake was raised so lately within this very square—you could not believe these frowning walls, under whose shadow traffic and wooing, the jibes and retorts of common mirth go on so merrily, were reddened with the fires of martyrdom so short a while ago, that every one in this presence has the time clear in his memory,

and yonder oriel, within which it is possible to catch a passing glimpse of plumed bonnets, and breast-plates bright as silver—it was thence that Beatoun looked upon his victim's agonies—it was there his slayers showed him slaughtered unto this self-same crowd; but nothing recking of such remembrances, gay as the sparkling sun above them, are those men of war. The sea flashes under the walls with rings of joyous laughter, and throws up little showers of glittering spray in merry sport against the unresponsive battlements. Gay in the breeze flutters snowy sail and pennon from the bay. Strong life, and health and vigour are in this joyous crowd. Do you say that these are stern and sombre judges who would condemn this freedom and enjoyment, or who would rather lead these men-at-arms to kirk or chapel, to spend the sun-light there?

We know not if Paul Hepburn thought so, as he came forth among this company—but whatever he thought, his brow was not bent upon them with the grave and penetrating scrutiny with which the Reformer looked from his high window upon this lively scene, nor clouded with the care of leadership as Norman's was. His appearance made a stir in the court-yard—for all were anxious with that ready and eager curiosity wherewith country towns are endowed.

“My man has a grand boat could wise ye ower to France, afore ye kent ye were out of sight of St. Abb's,” said a fisherwoman eagerly, “Sae braw a gentleman's no to bide here. Sirs, I wouldna be bound within four wa's if they were embattled as strong as them in Canaan langsyne. Its no because I'm feared for a feckless Regent—na, nor yet the priests; but, eh man, I'm fleyed for the gloom

the Master's gotten on his brow, and him such a noble presence afore he won here! I reckon there's a bonnie lady somegatae pining in her bower for a glance of your e'e, Sir Knight. My name's Lizzie Kirkaudy—ye'll mind upon the name if ye want my man's boat."

"Ye needna fear away a defensible man, guid-wife," said a free spoken soldier near, "it's him, I trow, that came to the watergate yestreen with a peevish preacher, and three beardless callants. If he brings mouths without hands, he were best stay and take his weapon for them; we'll hae nae sorners here."

"I'm a pair minstrel to my trade, but its noble blood that helps the gentle science," said a poor creature by Paul's elbow, "as for these carles and churls, they ken not so much as what melody is; largess—largess, noble gentleman! I'll sing ye a ballad of the first Knight Leslie, if ye be of kin to Rothies."

“Gie him mair siller, my lord,” cried a brown and buxom fisher-lass — “gie him mair siller to haud his peace! Your lordship’s honour, and a’ this town, I trow, would as soon hear the east-wind rave on the sea. Hey for bonnie St. Andrew’s!—I’ll warrant him rout a haill band of gallants his single sel—for them that never turned fit on foe, would flee before *his* face, if he but sang the while. And ye’ll bide still, my lord, for a’ yon carline says? Its lords and gallants like you, with a brent brow and a free hand, that we’re needin’ here.”

“My malison on them and you;” cried an irritated yeoman, with the Leslie crest upon his sleeve; “and a curse upon ye all, false queans, that wile a man out of himsel, to leave him ashore when your ain pleasure serves. Out, ye witch! What’s a’ the gallants atween Forth and Tay to you?”

“ Maybe no so muckle as ye think,” said the bold but innocent girl. “ I wouldna gie my new kirtle for the haill castle fu’—but Jean Bowman takes quean or witch from nae man, lad. I like to see a bonnie lad mysel, gentle or simple—I’ll no deny’t; your lordship’s honour maunna take the like of him, or Lizzie yonder, for exemplars of the havings of this place. I’ll serve ye mysel, my lord, with the best fish that comes out of the sea.”

And Jean Bowman looked up with dark eyes full of wit and intelligence, and made a curtsy, half in jest, half in earnest. It was impossible not to be struck with this face, so full of fearless conscious purity. Bold and familiar as her manner was, there was not a lass in Fife could better check a presumptuous wooer than Jean—and the security of her perfect good repute, and entire mastery, as yet, over the heart which dwelt in a higher

region than this, gave daring and courage to her naturally high spirit, unfearing any evil interpretation, because confident of her own honest meaning, and of her perfect ability to defend herself. She looked up full into Paul Hepburn's face, and did not shrink from letting him perceive her willingness to serve him in other things than fish, if he had errand or commission which could be borne in honour.

With a smile, Paul Hepburn lifted his bonnet, and made obeisance in answer to hers. A storm of jests rang round her as he turned away. "And what for should he no make me his reverence?" cried Jean in defiance, though a sudden flush covered her brow. "I'm an honest lass if he's a noble gentleman, and I'll tell ye, cummers, just what he did it for. I ken as if he had telled me. There's a bonnie lady south by this—he's from the south by

his tongue—that sits in her bower and weeps tears, minding on him night and day—ye may even laugh, I'm no heeding—but I'm a woman as weel, and he lifts his bonnet in honour of every woman, because he has sae true a heart to ane. Hurra, lads!—a wooer like yon is worth a woman's while!"

The words rang in Paul Hepburn's ear as he turned away—and though with many a grave beginning, he turned his thoughts to Scotland subject and distressed—to the evil prospects of the time—to the very perils of this garrison, unruly and disordered within, and ready with little note of preparation to be beset from without—it was strange how his own defences fell, against his will. The homely chamber of dais at Lammerstane, and little maiden Maidlin weeping secret tears, and marvelling if the kinsman she braved the storm to warn, was now at length in safety.

In spite of himself his imagination dwelt upon this picture—he saw her, her cheek now glowing with quick and sudden excitement, and anon as pale as the snow of her own hills as she heard of captives for the same great cause—and to this man who had no home nor nearer kindred, there was an unspeakable secret unacknowledged delight in this thought. It seemed to link him as he never was linked before, secretly, tenderly, to all humanity about him. The loftiest and the commonest, the household loves and charities, which heart of men yearns after for ever, howsoever he tries to deny himself, came near to Hepburn in this fancy which took possession of his mind. It gave to him a certain citizenship and necessary place in life, and Jean Bowman's words came to his mind, as Jean never could have believed them to do. His heart warmed to Jean for the speech, and with a new-born

gracious courtesy, he stepped aside to let the busy matron pass him on the way, and gave place to the country lass who pressed before him to the abbey-door; and even in the abbey's solemn aisles it was hard to wile his truant thoughts into a graver tone—to turn his fancy from the Lammermuirs, in all their calm and solitude—from the pensive, variable face, and lady's bower that shaded it—to give a due attention to this preacher—to the priests who fretted as they gave him unwilling audience, and to the thoughtful congregation who pondered on his words.

CHAPTER X.

No voice of song, my masters--
No pleasant sound of one who playeth well
Upon an instrument—what!—would you blame me?
That having but a trumpet in my hand
I play no soft voiced measure, but sound forth
The shout of war.—OLD PLAY.

THE light falls down in long sunshiny lines upon the stone pavement, the eastern window glows with little brilliant panes—monograms and shields—but the candles are not lit upon the high altar, and shutters, themselves rudely painted with a legendary miracle, close over the altar-piece. In niches and smaller shrines apart, a host of little saintlings keep their

place, but there is no heavy breathing incense on the pure still air, and no priestly vestments to animate the scene. At the foot of the altar, before the reading desk, John Knox, in his black doublet and hose, stands in the teacher's place. Before him are the boys who accompanied his flight—his pupils—whose training his conscience will not let him linger to resume; and in the oaken stalls, here and there, a lingering knight or gentleman of the garrison, loth to remain, yet half afraid to go, rests upon the carved arms of his antique seat. One or two soldiers, coming and going, hang about the door, and the clang of their arms, and echoes of the obstreperous voices without, break in strangely, now and then, upon the stillness of the chapel. On a bench not far from the speaker, sits a man of vivacious countenance, in a dress something courtly, and with a bearing not misbecoming

his pretensions. It is Henry Balnaves, one of the wisest lawyers in Scotland; and a grand decayed form beside him, stricken in years, stoops upon his bent arm, as with a keen eye he criticizes the new comer, "Knox that knave," of whom already many a rumour has spread in Scotland. But the teacher is much too simply and thoroughly in earnest—much too unconscious of the presence of his elder audience, or of anything, indeed, but the present matter with which he deals, to give opportunity for that satiric sparkle in the eye of Sir David Lindsay, who straitway settles down upon his bench gravely to listen, casting an involuntary glance upward as he does so towards the vacant throne, whose late possessor could so ill have brooked this intruder here.

The Master of Rothes, with his careful brow, half musing, half listening, sits at a

little distance. It is not possible for Norman, with so many burdens on him, to give an undivided attention, even to the preaching of the Word. But this is no sermon—an animated exposition of verse by verse of this chapter of St. John, interrupted by questions to the pupils, and rich with the strong individual views of this mind, from which they come glowing warm. Listless barons raise their heads as the service goes on. There is not a feature in this, of the dull and vague sermon familiar to them of old.

“ Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”

“ My bairns, there have been many self-asserted,” said the teacher; “ many a priest and false prophet even of lesser power than Mahound and the Roman Antichrist, that

have bidden men look upon them for the grand light in the heavens—but I trow I read never of one that did not mint at pride or dominion in the very deed. There is ane man here who never stood in King's hall, but when he came to judgment—who never rode in earthly triumph, but when he wan to false Jerusalem amid her hosannas, travelling to the cross and the sepulture; and behold I look upon his face where never yet pride was, but only grace and everlasting veritie of whilk his holy life was born. But this very night, no further gone, when ilk man, lord and vassal, sought his own house—it was but the grey hill-side and the olive trees that spread a rest for him. It may be the dews of night were on his very garments, when the proud-pied Pharisees came in their bravery to try him with their questions—and I wot the new risen sun would fain have bowed its

blessed light to bear witness that this was the light of the world—yet none bare record of him—for his awn holy lips was it left to make his awin confession, even as ye will see the objection of hypocrisie—Thou bearest record of thyself—thy record is not true. Mind ye, boys, of any righteous man that testified to his truth, even that the Scriptures might be fulfilled which requireth a consent of witnesses?”

“ There was John the Baptist,” said Francis Douglas.

“ Even so,” continued the teacher; “ but mark ye how the Lord standeth immoveable, wotting of that which no man wots of forbye— ‘ Jesus answered and said unto them, though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true, for I know whence I came, and whither I go, but ye cannot tell whence I come, nor whither I go.’ Likewise again, ‘ It is also written in

your law that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bears witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.' Lo, such a plea, and such a testimony as never man had but Ane! Yea, children, I declare in your ears this day, that the Father ever beareth witness. To the Son in manifest glory, with voices of angels, with his own magnificent voice which shakes the mountains, and with testimony of a veiled Heaven and a rent Earth, when the great deed was done—and to every kingdom and nation that rejects the Lord's Majesty in dolour and woes, and lamentations, even as we see this day; martyr fires at every market cross—righteous blood, like water, spilt in every burrow's town—scarlet tyrants, primates, murderers in every lofty place, with the noise of arms and battail—the brawl of riot, the tongue of blasphemy. Woe and Alace as

I weep for Scotland—the city and the country that rejects his name!”

The speaker paused, and passed his hand hastily over his moist and heated brow; there was a stir through the small assembly—a little clash of sword points on the stones, and noise of martial accoutrements, which rang through these old walls like a stern hum of applause. John Knox looked round him with a quick, almost startled glance, as if his own thoughts and subject had carried him far out of consciousness of his auditory—then turning the page with a slight wave of his hand, he went on.

“Then said Jesus unto them, ‘I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins—whither I go, ye cannot come.’ Then saith the Jews, ‘will he kill himself? because he said, whither I go ye cannot come.’ Lo you now, bairns” said the instructor “how

the carnal mind wondereth after the things of the spirit! I wist not that there is in any place a clearer or a greater odds between him that is of the earth, earthy, and him that is the Lord from Heaven. Methinks I even do perceive the Majesty of our King, the while he says in mournful wise this sad word of prophecy,—‘ Alas, I know ye, ye dull sons of Abram, how after ye have crucified, ye will gape and marvel, and seek for me with lying legends, saying, lo here, and lo there, the Messias comes. No pleasure have I in the death of him that dieth, yet I know you that ye will perish in your sins. Alas my children, ye wist not how hard it is for this imperial Love to kythe unto the froward, a judge of wrong!—and I think not but what his glorious heart was sore to say, even unto these blasphemers, ye cannot come; but see ye how the carnal interpretation comes dull

and slow upon the thought of God. Will he kill himself? I grant ye so, poor fools, after the kingly fashion, which he dares only use—by means of your false tongues and hands, ye knaves and dastards, for sake of such, if perchance one be saved. Bairns and brethren, many a foul heart sinsyne has done its utmost to press unto this point of self-slaying the confessors of Christ's faith. Will he kill himself? By this very Lord and Prince, the only ane whose life lay in his own hand, I say to you—No! Never, if every might of earth and every priest of Satan stood in the way! They may slaughter us by kirk and market, on the moor, or at the sea—but Heaven send they hack me joint by joint rather than I fail of my own proper will—Amen. Thus ends this lesson of the Evangel of Jesus Christ."

These jackmen by the door are still as statues—these knights in the stalls turn

gleaming eyes upon the teacher, as he closes with startling abruptness the open book. There is a lingering pause of listening, for to every ear the air is tingling with these last words. The first sound in the chapel is the school-boy stir of use and wont, when the day's studies are concluded. You can see that the men present are almost inclined to resent it as a profanity—but one by one, barons and men-at-arms, the listeners steal away. Many a doffed bonnet meets his glance, when Master Knox looks out upon his way to his chamber—but he passes with a nod of abrupt recognition. He cannot feign content or satisfaction with this scene that meets his eyes.

CHAPTER XI.

“He hath songs for man or woman, of all sizes; no milliner can so fit his customers with gloves. He hath ribbons of all the colours in the rainbow.”—WINTER'S TALE.

THE spring began to brighten over the silent Lammermuirs; the equinox with all its gales was past—and the tender leaves of the young birch and rowan began to flutter softly in the breeze, striking clear with their bright spring verdure, from the dark heathery turf of the ravine, which fenced on one side the Tower of Lammerstane. At sunrise, and at darkening,

many a day did Magdalen Hepburn climb the bartizan to gaze with wistful eyes upon that far off silent sea, which alone gave her any note of the course which the fugitives had taken. She knew they had escaped the hands of sub-prior Everard, but where Paul Hepburn was, and where that still more noted professor of the faith, whose name she venerated with all her heart, albeit she had never heard his voice, or seen his face, Magdalen could not tell. With a wistful simplicity of regard, her thoughts followed her kinsman, but the growing woman in Magdalen's heart forbade her the comfort of marvelling with her daily companions, Isobel and Alice, over his fate. When she would have spoken of him, with family familiarity and honour, as she might have done a year ago, there came suddenly tingling in her ears the echo of his latest words—and with a novel start, and

blush, and tremor, Magdalen was silent, only bending the more gravely and closely over her embroidery frame.

It was while busied with such thoughts, seated alone on the rush-strewn dais of her little apartment, that Magdalen was startled by the entrance of her youngest attendant, who came in somewhat hastily to announce the arrival of the pedlar or packman, who supplied with feminine finery and gossip all the country round. "Maisdry and Liliias—yes, Lady Maidlin, I weep to say even my mother, are with him in the court," said Alice, "for the pomps of the world are strong even with God's people. Alas! I did not think it of my mother." And Alice put up her hand to wipe a tear from the corner of her eye.

"It is no harm," said Magdalen. "I would even see them myself if I might—but then I have nothing to buy withal. I love to

see brave ribbons and pearlins, Alice, as well as ever a maiden in the hills."

"I feared it so," said the young moralist, with a profound sigh; "and please you, my lady, Wat sends you word that he has some wares most fit for your own eye. Must I conduct him hither?"

"Nay, poor Wat is no unclean creature, Alice," said the young lady with a smile; "he has been in a lady's bower e'er now, and never shocked the bower-maiden—but to tell truth I have nothing to buy his gay gear with—I would I had;—so he will but lose his time coming here—though I would gladly hear what news they have of the Governor and the court—and any tidings that may be abroad—"

"Poor little Maidlin, thou shalt have thy will," said her father, as he entered suddenly by the open door; "shame it were if I kept

a pretty gaud or a new pearlin from thee, when thou must e'en give up so many things fitting thy blood and race. By my faith, they are changed times, when a maiden of our house hath all her news of the court from wandering Wat, on his travel. Poor child!—and poorer even anon, for I am an old man to be sole guardian to such as thee. Woe upon fell Flodden, its wars and the wild times it brought—they have spared me never a brother to the child of my old age.”

“Father, your eye is clear—your hand is firm. I lack no better protector,” said Magdalen, lifting her eyes with eager affection.

The old knight drew his large withered hand, slowly and softly over her hair. “I will have to wed thee, child—yes, my poor little Maidlin, whether thou wilt or no—for thine is no hand to hold this tower of thy

fathers, if I were gathered to their rest. Tush, child, be brave—I warrant we will find thee a gallant to please a lady's eye--and here is a purse for thee, meanwhile, though mine own is something lighter than it might be; choose thee a ribbon like the June roses, to bind thy hair, and look not so pale at name of a wooer. Thou wilt have other thoughts anon."

Magdalen sat still, silent and pale, with the purse in her lap, as her father turned away. His words had stricken her like a sudden blow. "Oh! Alice, Alice! think you he means so," she cried at length with a burst of tears.

"Please you, Lady Maidlin, they who give thought to the vanities of this world, must needs put up with its evils too," said the demure Alice, with a serious curtsy.

With a wavering smile upon her face,

quickly chasing her tears, Magdalen looked upon her young monitor—and thereupon she suddenly fell into a little fit of unsteady laughter, not very far removed from her former weeping. “An if I did long for another kirtle, or a ruff of Flanders pearlin,” she said, half laughing, half sobbing, “me-thinks it is a hard penance, Alice, to be menaced thus for such a small offence—but go call Wat and your mother; we will not think of evil till evil comes.”

With a slow and measured step Alice went away—and the soul of Alice was vexed within her to perceive the frivolous and worldly likings of even her mother and her lady. She could not make them, with all her prayers and tears, and admonitions, the abstracted and saintly personages which she thought it the highest end of human effort to be; and poor Alice was conscious withal of a lingering

inclination in her own blue eye, to steal toward the tempting, many-coloured riches of Wat Hedderwick's pack, and of a growing wonder and curiosity in her own virtuous mind, whether mother or mistress would bestow ribbon or kirtle upon Alice.

Magdalen had not time to return again to her momentary dismay and terror, when the travelling merchant, gravely preceded by Isobel Lauder, and followed at a dignified distance by the disapproving Alice, made his appearance, with many a bow, and humble courtesy, carrying his open pack in his arms. He was permitted to put it down, to spread out his choicest goods, and, in reality, to interest the girlish, open mind of Magdalen, before she began to question him for news. Isobel kneeling on the ground beside the pack, spread out its brilliant stores in the best light, and called on her young lady to admire its

silks and laces, and the gay embroidery of a blue velvet hood, the newest fashion from France. But Alice hastily lifting her mother's distaff, the only implement of industry ready to her hand, withdrew into a corner, and sat there spinning with silent devotion, carefully keeping herself from so much as a glance at these wiles (as she said) of the Evil one.

“This will be a kirtle to Alice—I will have this for Alice—see you, Isobel, how this pretty blue will set off her fair hair—and here is a silken lace for her boddice—you must lay aside these for me.”

With a start, Alice listened to her own name, and these most seducing temptations with which the adversary assailed her—but stoutly, bending her eyes upon her distaff, and drawing out her thread with a quick and

trembling hand, this youthful hero resisted still.

“Come hither, child,” said the gratified Isobel, “and thank the lady who minds to make you brave, ere she looks for her own attire. Alice, I say!”

Alice cast a timid glance towards them out of her tearful eyes. “Oh, sweet lady, it is vanity!” cried the little ascetic in despair—for, alas, it was not in mortal flesh and blood, being fifteen years old, and a woman born, to resist those beautiful folds of glossy blue, and the silken lace and ribbon, which lay so bright and fresh beside. With a little burst of tears, Alice owned herself vanquished, and drew near trembling and disquieted, to touch with timidity her new kirtle—and with guilty terrors to own to herself a secret pleasure with it in her own little simple heart.

“I think I will have this pearlin, Isobel,”

said Magdalen. “ I saw you could scarce mend my holiday ruff the last time it was taken down—and let me see what pretty stuff you have for a couvrechef, Wat Pedlar. Isobel wears never aught but this linen curch, and her so well-favoured, though she be a widow—but, Isobel, has he told you no news? Is there no stir in the court, that you can tell us of—or nothing abroad but what we have heard before?”

“ Here is a silken kerchief, my lady, might be a curch for a baron’s wife, let abee a vassal,” said the pedlar, “ as soft as the moss on the brae-side, and as thick as three-piled velvet; for news I ken little—if it binna the lang talk of a match with England, her Prince and our Queen—I ken ae man, and that’s just Wat the travelling-merchant, would gie as mony siller merks as he has merks worth in

his pack this day, to ken the country clear of every ane, would stand up for such a traitor's bargain—and I'm no feared to say as muckle in cot or ha'—for the best of the land's of my mind."

"But I have heard noble and trusty gentlemen, that would have died for Scotland, speak in another strain," said Magdalen hastily; "you are only an unlearned man that affirm after this fashion, and you should have better havings than to speak thus to a lady in her own bower."

"I cry you mercy, lady," said the pedlar, "but I ken your noble father thinks as I think, for he has stricken stroke on England in his day, and kens her mettle. We're ower near friends, and ower auld enemies to take hands in marriage—your ladyship would not wed a gallant yoursel that was at feud with

your father's house, since afore the days of Bruce, and next neighbour to your father's lands to boot. Na, na, mony a tuilzie we've had together—but an we were ance man and wife, I'se ensure auld Scotland a crackit crown ilka day in the year, and England mony a fair straik—for an we have, maybe, a faddom or two less land atween us and the sea, we gie the crown of the causeway to nae nation living—and I trow the auld primate, that Norman Leslie slew, had little in him to make a maen for it, if it was na this. Ye'll ken the news of Norman, my lady—he's keepit his castle stieve against the Governor—and yonder they are brave and braw at St. Andrew's, maister and man."

"I have heard of that," said Magdalen, trembling with eagerness, "and there are nobles there who had no share in the deed. Know ye of any

who have joined them in these late months? I think Isobel did hear of some."

"It was but one of the gospellers, madam," said the more wary Isobel, with a cautionary glance.

"I wot weel I've heard of him—Mr. John Knox," said the packman; "him that the blythe bishop in the west ca's Knox that knave—but I may speak here. If I was a man of weir I would hear that man sooner than a trumpet. He gars your head stound and your flesh grew; ay, he's safe in Norman's band, in the muckle black castle yonder; and when I was east the gate, I heard there was great wark to make him preacher, but he wouldna yield to that. Ye havena seen my bonnie mufflers, lady—here's ane with grand broidery, siller laid with the hand."

"Did you hear of any other that had

sought the castle with Mr. John?" asked the eager Magdalen.

"I canna say—my memory's no aye sae gleg—does your ladyship mind the name?" said Wat, with curiosity; "if you're for the muffler, I'll come bye again, and if there's speerings to be got of the gentleman, I'll bring ye word as sure as ony man in Fife."

Magdalen, rash and anxious, with a deep blush mantling on her face, and downcast eyes, was about to risk the enquiry—but Isobel hastily interrupted her.

"The lady but asked if ye kent of any—ye are over bold, Wat Pedlar. Madam, shall I spread this muffler where ye may see it best?"

The silver broidery had no great charms for Magdalen, now; but she made a few additional purchases, and gladly escaped to her little inner chamber, to ask herself for the

hundredth time, whether Paul Hepburn could not have sent some token or message of his safety to her who had ventured forth in the face of storm and darkness, to carry warning to him.

CHAPTER XII.

“My love sits heavy in her bower ;
The livelong day nae cheer has she.
Oh for true heart, and speedy hand,
Might pass atween my love and me.”

BALLAD.

WHILE the anxious Magdalen thus mused and marvelled, the desire to communicate to her intelligence of his present safety was not less near to the thoughts of her kinsman. A wandering and imperilled man for many a day, Paul Hepburn had no devoted henchman or foster-brother near him to risk everything for his master's pleasure. Safe in the fertile

slopes of East Lothian, in peasant cottage and farm-house, the vassals of Langley dwelt in quiet, remembering with love and honour the laird, whose will it was to bear his dangers and his toils alone; for, brave and prompt above most when only his own person was concerned, few of his time were so scrupulous as the laird of Langley of life and limb of others. No messenger could be spared of the garrison, for the faith of the Regent was but a frail safeguard, and the leaders of St. Andrew's knew not the day when the siege might be resumed—and Hepburn was little inclined to trust with his secret any random messenger whom he might find in the town. In this strait, his thoughts turned strangely enough towards the brisk fisher-lass who had accosted him in the court-yard. Quick witted and stout-hearted, as she evidently was, Jean's quick perception of the motive of his courtesy

ce herself dwelt in the young man's mind. He had seen more of her since their first meeting, but the most suspicious evil thinker in St. Andrew's could not lay evil to the door of the daring girl who defied it with so bold and pure a heart. With her shrewd sense and vivid apprehension, her bold undaunted manners, her fearless self-protection and self-reliance, it seemed to Paul that he could have no better messenger. The first time the thought crossed his mind he rejected it abruptly, but again and yet again it returned: till at length, one sunny morning of early May, he set out from the castle to seek the cottage where Jean and her widowed mother dwelt in homely independence. It was a bold request to make to the bread-winner of this little household—but Paul's heart yearned with a strangely uncontrollable anxiety for some possibility of intercourse with Magdalen; and

while he prayed with a sincere heart for her happiness, with strange inconsistency he longed the while, that a little sadness might mingle with this sunshine at thought of himself, banished and far away.

The rude cottage of the fisher's widow lay close upon the Links, its rough door-step almost pressing upon the sharp-bladed grass. With its low walls and dry brown thatch, the hut looked more like a mound of earth, overgrown with withered stalks of heather, than a human habitation. But full in your face, as you paused at the humble door, came the fresh exhilarating wind, wild from the German sea, and before your gladdened eyes the wide blue water flashed out a gay defiance to the sun, the Angus hills stretched downward hand-in-hand—hiding, like misers over their treasure, the brilliant Tay, that lay below their shadow—towards the sea. Here,

unnoted, the silvery Eden stole into the ocean's bosom; and there, at the other hand, the grey towers of the Castle rose broad and dark upon that sky which, rich with all these lights, and clouds, and winds, was not for two successive moments the same. As Paul Hepburn approached the cottage, a sound of loud and irritated voices prepared him for some discord. When he was almost at the threshold, the door opened abruptly, and with many demonstrations of unwillingness, and at a pace which showed her goaded from behind, out rushed upon the greensward where she had her daily pasture, the widow's cow, followed by the cowherd of the abbey, a lay-brother, and one of his meaner knaves, who, looking back to fulminate a parting threat at the inmates of the cottage, hastily drove the prize away.

Within the threshold stood Jean Bowman,

her dark eyes blazing through great tears, with the fiery rage of roused and irritated grief. Through the half-opened pannel of the wooden bed within, you could see a glimpse of a white face laid at rest, with such solemnity as belongs not to life or hope—and on a creepie stool by the chimney-side, unconsciously crouching and spreading her hands over a bit of driftwood smouldering on the hearth, an old woman with long grey locks escaping from her curch sat rocking herself to and fro with a wild and quickening motion, and moaning out a continuous flood of inarticulate sounds, of which you could only understand that they expressed the utmost might of anger and of woe.

“ I closed his e'en this blessed morn,” said Jean Bowman, with a passionate stamp of her foot upon the earthen floor. “ I closed his e'en with my ain hands—his mother swarfed

away, and lying on the earth, at my feet, the while. I wiped the foam off his puir white lips, and the death damp from his brow, and laid him to his rest, comely and seemly, as the dead should be laid, that when she saw him she might see him calm, and without a trace of the dead strife on all his bonnie brow. My heart ga'ed with the haffet locks I curled about his checks to make him brave, but I grat never a word mysel, and I loot her lie because she was blessed that didna ken I loot her lie till she sleeped for sorrow. What think you woke her out of her rest? Heaven's curse upon them, thieves and villains, and a' the curses of the poor and wretched that look up to heaven this day! They woke the widow woman out of her sleep and her faint, loosing the cow out of her byre for a corpse present to the vicar for Davie dead. Oh, woe and malison on every ane!" cried Jean, wildly

dashing her naked arms into the air—and with a sudden sinking, in one of the quick transitions of great grief, she cast herself down upon the floor, crying out, “pity me! pity me!”

The old woman’s voice became distinct, in a sort of wailing half-stupified reverie, as Jean sank down prostrate under her violent emotion. “I’ve seen him pit flowers and garlands on Crummie’s head, as grand as the saints at a festival, and hang with his bonnie lily arms about her neck. I tell ye, Jean would work for her price in siller—I maunna have my bairn’s friend away. But now I mind o’t. Jean, we’re in naebody’s reverence—neither miller nor merchant has claim on you or me—and there’s nae law to harry a widow woman’s house, or carry her gear away. We’ll gang to the grand lawyers, Jean—I’ll speak to the Laird of Halhill mysel if I ga’ed to the Castle to see

his honour—for I wouldna tell Davie when he wakes, not for a' St. Andrews, that he's to see Crummie nae mair."

With a terrified glance, Jean Bowman lifted her head, with her form bent forward, and her eyes intent, and kept watch upon her mother in an agony. As Paul stepped forward to offer his assistance, she imposed silence on him with an imperative wave of her hand, and listened, with a strong shudder stealing over her frame, to this low wailing voice, which scarcely paused as it passed from one subject to another. It was easy to perceive Jean Bowman's terror, and the spectator in great pity turned his head away. The wits of the unfortunate mother were gone.

"Poor beast! poor Crummie!" she resumed—"I wistna how it can be that the like of me, lang experienced in trouble, should make a

maen like this for a dumb creature, though she was our bread—but my heart's breaking, Jean Bowman. I'm a waesomer woman this day than when they brought hame your father to his ain dwelling, his claes dreeping with saut water, and the dulce amang his hair. Its a' because my bonnie Davie makes sic a wark with the beast—ye're sure he's sleeping, Jean? he wouldna hear the steer?"

The blood had fled from Jean Bowman's cheeks, and her eyes, full and large, and tearless, blazed out like fiery stars from her pallid face; a strange distinct "Na" burst like a sob from her lips—she could say no more.

"I'll buy him a bonnie justiecor, and a sil-ler cross for his bonnet," continued the poor mother, "and maybe afore Davie wakes we'll stir up friends, and get back the cow. Bonnie man, he's in a lang sleep, Jean—he'll

be braw and weel, and a comfort to every heart when he wakes. I've awfu' stounds in my head, and glimmers in my e'en. Was there aught befel before they came for Crummie—and what right has ony mortal man to lift my cow?"

"Nae right but just oppression and a cruel heart," said Jean, fiercely; the intolerable sense of wrong overcoming for a moment her greater anxiety. "What cares the vicar if your heart break, or your heart rejoice?—he has his christening gift, and his bridal dues, and his corpse present—dool and delight its a' ane to the proud priest that sets his foot upon us. Oh, as I could ban and curse them! they turn weeping tears into gall and blood, and sorrow to madness—and syne to ca' them holy fathers and vicars of God!"

"I wotna what ye mean, Jean, with your christening gifts and your bridal dues," said

the old woman, rising with feeble impatience and haste, “nae such feasts have spread my board this mony a day; and ye needna speak so loud to waken Davie, with wrath in your voice—and him as peaceable a lamb as e’er took heaven’s air within lips like roses. He’s like an angel when he lies and sleeps. I want to look upon my bairn.”

“Sit down, mother, and rest—he’s sleeping sound,” said Jean, interposing eagerly.

“Let me be, hempie—there’s nane can set his pillow like his mother—let me be.”

With the air of a blind person, assuring herself by touch, the old woman made her way to the bed—as she hastily thrust back the pannel, the face of the dead, a beautiful boy of fourteen, became visible to Paul, where he stood fascinated without the door—and he remembered to have seen this child, a “natural,” as the neighbours called him, but

of a gentle style of real beauty, rarely to be seen among his unfortunate class, and perfectly innocent and loveable, playing upon these very Links under this sun of spring. The mother groped over the bedclothes, arranging them about him, with muttered expressions of reproof against her daughter's carelessness. "No half happit—the cauld comin in upon his neck—my bonnie Davie, your mother should aye fend for you hersel."

While thus employed, the old woman's hand came suddenly upon the boy's face. With a great start, she joined her other hand to this, and felt over all his features, though her eyes, vacant and dim, were fixed upon the pallor of death; but though her sight convinced her not, the chill struck to her heart. She turned round with wild excitement, trembling like a flame over her face.

"Ye havena watched--ye havena waited

on him—my bairn's departed in his sleep! I felt my heart was breaking in my breast. O God, to be with Davie! O heaven, to be with him!"

As she spoke, she fell down heavily upon the floor; less moved by this than by her mother's wandering, Jean lifted her up, placed her on the bare oaken settle, and used the homely means known to her to restore the poor mother to consciousness. Succeeding ere long, she came out of the cottage with a steady step to where Paul waited by the door. He offered her money with all the sympathetic friendliness which he felt.

"I daurna take your gold," said Jean Bowman, as she put it away, "they would say it was ill won, and nae man shall have occasion to put evil breath on me. Give me nae pity, gentleman—for I daurna greet, lest the tears be tears of fire."

CHAPTER XIII.

“What! will not this castle yield?”

KING RICHARD II.

“THE Regent plays a double game with us—and I see not what hope we have, save in this faint and failing one of truthful dealing. England cannot help us; we cannot raise the faithful to try a fair chance, foot to foot, and sword to sword, for our life. Well! at the worst, it is but to hold this castle, Hepburn, till we add our blood to many a noble life-

stream that has parted here; yet a man chafes to be shut up within four walls, when he might strike a fair stroke on the free field for life and honour."

"You were better, Master, if the leaguer lay under your walls," said Paul Hepburn.

"It may be you are right," said the Master of Rothés. "Then I would think but of the needful duties of defence and ward. But we have other gear in hand to day. I envy you, Paul Hepburn—your heart that is brave to meet the immediate danger, without a burden of the dangers that are to come—and your mind which can be occupied with this present matter, unthinking what cloud lies steady upon this town and garrison. I marvel at your daily living, Hepburn—myself live yesterday and to-morrow all in this present hour."

"He will marvel less who knows me to be alone," said Hepburn, in a voice touched

with emotion, "I carry but my single life in my hand; I have neither vassal nor kinsman to put in peril—and what is his own sole blood to a man that risks no more?"

"Nay, if it needs but a command to cause you, share this cloud with me"—said the Master of Rothés, with a doubtful smile.

"I shrink from no such trial," said Paul Hepburn, "single man or captain, I care not which; but those swart knaves of yours troop to the chapel to-day. What chance has tamed their spirit?"

"We fighting men, we hold shoulder to shoulder," said Norman Leslie, "soft speaking harms the rogues; but their hearts swell to the ringing mettle of a true man's voice; one and another has come to hear the catechising, and gone home with a word in his heart; and there is some whisper among them of what is to be done to-day."

As he spoke, they entered the chapel. The soldiers clustered dark about the door in a little crowd, and farther in, advanced towards the altar, two or three leaned against the wall, in a vigilant sentry-like attitude, which contrasted strangely with the place where they were. The little temporary pulpit erected at the foot of the altar, was occupied by a quick-featured man of homely looks, sufficiently acceptable to the people, though unlearned, as his colleagues often lament. This was John Rough, formerly preacher to the garrison, a man who, without sufficient power to hold this unruly congregation in awe, had soon forsaken the chapel of the castle for the church of the town — a place from which, under cover of Norman Leslie's guns, the priests had not undertaken to debar him.

The eyes of the present auditory did not much seek the face of the preacher. A cer-

tain stillness of expectation was upon them. and the soldiers and inferior persons present, less discreet than their masters, suffered their regards to fall undisguised upon John Knox, who sat in one of the stalls, with his pupils ranged beside him. But the Reformer took no note of the many eyes that watched him. With his usual impatience of gesture, he shifted upon his seat, drawing back and forward with quick unconscious twitches, the cloak that muffled his breast—now casting a hasty glance upward at the preacher, as though to chide his tardiness—now buried in a momentary stillness and profound meditation, and anon casting his vivid glance around the chapel, or starting, with visible impatience, when the step of another entering worshipper rang upon the pavement. On either side of Knox, and opposite to him, ranged against the walls of the chapel, in the old stalls of the quire,

the leaders of the garrison sat gravely attentive, with a certain state and solemnity about them unusual to their every-day aspect. The grave and astute Balnaves, the noble age of David Lindsay, and the young chivalry of Kirkaldy of Grange, made a fair show against these cold stone walls. Here and there a faded banner swayed softly over their heads, linking these noble and well-descended gentlemen with many an ancestral feat of arms and patriotism. The altar of the old worship, with its extinguished candles and covered picture, lay under the shadow of the simple pulpit of the new faith; and the jackmen and rude followers of these country barons stood upright and manlike before them, equals in this place if in no other—or here and there, with jar of spurs and weapons, sat down upon the wooden benches brought hither from hall and guard-room. With the entrance of the

Master of Rothes and his companion the service began—their steps upon the flags, as they sought their seats, even disturbed the first words of the speaker—but in the plain and grave order of the early reformers, the worship proceeded. The bulk of the audience gave to it a settled and steady attention; among them all, the least still and reverent was Knox, whose restless spirit could ill brook the steady quiet of attitude which was easy to his fellows. The sermon was nearly over; in one of his sudden changes of position, the Reformer's quick eye caught the preacher's.

“Brother!” said John Rough, bending from the pulpit to address him. Knox looked up again with a sudden start; a slight stir and hum among the audience bore witness that now the point and climax of the day was about to be attained. Another vivid, restless, inquiring glance, John Knox, threw

round him, with something in it of defiance; but before the slow preacher could repeat his call, the Reformer met him again with the full gaze of his keen eye. Unflinching, the weaker man addressed the stronger, calmly stated his ground of right, his reason and authority for this unusual step, and ended by calling upon John Knox, with all the solemnity which such a proceeding demanded, to take upon himself the office of preacher within this castle, in the name of God.

With eyes of strange dismay and apprehension, John Knox continued to look fixedly at the preacher—but the increasing stir and audible consent of those around him to this singular call awoke him at last out of the momentary stupor, into which his great astonishment had thrown him. With a look of strange investigation, almost wild, he turned upon them; but in every face was the same

desire, the same purpose; and no where could the solemnized and trembling man find a glance of tender human pity or consolation. He sat for a moment still and motionless; then suddenly burst before them into uncontrollable tears; and leaving for the first time the pupils whom, in this great emergency, his mind forgot, he wrapped his cloak about him, abruptly rose, and left the chapel. His struggle, his agony, his fear and doubt, and noble trembling, were for the eye of one more pitiful than man.

“ Will he yield, think you—will he yield?” from one after another came the question.

“ They have tangled me in their vain talk already,” said the preacher. “ I know not their wiles and their schoolcraft; I am a simple man, and the truth is like to be belied if one comes not forth who knows their snares. Even now, Dean John defies the Reformed.

I will meet him, if a better man be at my elbow to take up the standard. Truth to speak, I will even meet him in any case; but, lords and gentlemen, the loss of this castle were a smaller loss than the losing of such an argument. By God's will, our brother must yield."

And after a struggle, such as none of all these fighting men could comprehend, and as few of our own superficial times could realize now, the Reformer did yield. Yet not with daring grasp, but with a touch of holy trembling, did this Apostle of the faith in Scotland lay hands upon the ark of God.

CHAPTER XIV.

“ And now, instead of bullets wrapped in fire
To make a choking fever in your walls,
They shoot but calm words, folded up in smoke,
To make a faithless error in your ears.”

KING JOHN.

THERE are few scenes of history more remarkable than this town and castle of St. Andrew's during the reign of Norman Leslie and his coadjutors; a few barons—none of them considerable, except indeed the Master of Rothes, who was but his father's heir—with their following, which, in a stricken field, would

have been a mere handful—holding this important stronghold, so short a time ago the seat of more than vice-regal power, in face, at once, of priestly and royal authority. The godly ballants of the Reformation ringing where George Wishart's death-groan had startled the recent echoes; and such a man as Knox, delivering his fervent appeals and bold anathemas at the foot of the very altar where Beaton celebrated the gorgeous mass, which had so many victims in his time. It was a strange and striking revolution; nor was the change more wonderful without the walls of the castle. In every other quarter of this oppressed country the Gospel was an interdicted thing; the stake, the prison, fines, humiliations, every degrading penalty, waited on the word of truth, and tracked its steps to moors, and caves, and peasant houses, and even "unto the sea, sailing in a shippe," where

one of the martyrs of the time declared himself to have preached this forbidden Gospel. The housewife, with the baby on her breast, whose only crime was that she called upon a greater than Mary, in her hour of extremity ; the " simple " man, who had no logic to confute his cavillers, but met them with the confidence of a pure heart, knowing his Bible, but no other learning ; blessed was it for such as these, if the kind waters of their own home river carried them gently to their welcome in heaven : but a harder and a fiery passage was the lot of many, innocent of everything but the acknowledged truth.

While this was the case throughout Scotland east and west, it had ceased to be the case in St. Andrew's. Even the most obnoxious of the Reformers attended the priestly convocations, and without burning a bill, or recanting an opinion, went thence unscathed,

perhaps to sow their heresy broadcast among the common people, who ever heard the gospel gladly—and uprose friars and seculars, learned brothers of the university, and emulous abbey clerks, to proclaim what was in them, or what of welcome spiritual news they had, to the attentive crowd. As much as the doctrine of toleration would have done in centuries, the doctrine of reprisals, and Norman Leslie's evangelical guns holding their cloisters within range, did for the priests of St. Andrew's in a day. Finding their old weapons no longer convenient to their hands, they unwillingly betook themselves to the unused weapons of which they were far less masters, and argument and counter-argument retailed into the lowest ranks, with many a personal comment and improvement, as they passed from hand to hand, took place of the stronger excitement of the old times. A holiday to hear the discus-

sion in the abbey, or to witness the compearance of John Knox, and his colleague, before the grave assembly in St. Leonard's yards, where Winram, who loved the Gospel in secret, for fear of the Jews, held the baton of Moderatorship, and rash Friar Arbuckle lost cause and credit in face of the Reformer, was a holiday of a different sort from those which drew the townsfolk the other year to the court of the castle to see the burning of the heretic. Here, where the royal blood of Scotland could not save young Patrick Hamilton, the humblest preachers came and went with safety; and fugitives from other quarters fled hither for succour to the stout walls, and rash noble hearts, which dared to hold against a kingdom these solitary towers.

Much we object, we peace-loving people of the present day, to the rude polemics of those earlier times. The Reformation, to tell the

truth, was a very disturbing principle, and made vast havoc in the use and wont of many a quiet spirit; but the townfolk of St. Andrew's distinctly preferred this style of disputation to the summary and conclusive argument of Cardinal Beatoun's heretic fires. True, Cardinal Beatoun's mode of controversy was a very downright and palpable one, and much more adapted for the common understanding than these fine distinctions and subtle philosophies of the schools; but the honest housewife of St. Andrew's might marvel with admiration at the brave words of the doctors of St. Leonard's, when she shuddered to her very heart, as she set her hood in her own bedchamber, at the red flame that gleamed upon the sky, and threw a sinister flush upon her own abhorrent face—and her goodman who donned his buff coat so reluctantly to join his fellows of the town-guard at

yonder woful spectacle, was even but too forward now to break a lance upon his next-door neighbour, touching the corruptions and wiles of the Papistrie, which very long ago had lost all but the compelled and formal acquiescence of his mind. The zeal for argument ran into all classes. The saddler at the market-place blushed for the failure of the champion Arbuckle; the master fashioner near him rejoiced over the victory of Knox; the wary chirurgeon, on the other side, held with Prior Winram; and a great way down in the social scale, Jean Bowman, her eyes flashing with the natural eloquence that poured fluent and loud from her lips, descanted on the priests, the enemies and oppressors of the poor; and told, in burning words that woke many a kindred indignation round her, the story of her own grief, and the exaction that followed it.

“Ye ca’ them spiritual fathers, comforters!” cried Jean, standing in her bold beauty on

the steps of the market-cross, “ye wot, cummers, how they comforted my mother and me, that have nane to work for us, and neither goods nor gear, but the cow and my twa hands? She was half our living, a kindly beast that keepit my mother aye doing, and put away sad thoughts; but whenever the bairn was gane, that was a’ our delight, ance errand, or ever it was noon in the sky, the loons came to drive the cow to the Abbey byres; and leuch in my face—me that was standing on my ain doorstane with the dead bairn at my back, and my mother in a swoond, and bade me give them thanks that they hadna broken in to take the uppermost cloth forbye!* And what do you think was the uppermost cloth?—Just Davie’s little coatie, a’

*The cow and the uppermost cloth were the vicar’s dues, the “Corpse present” on the death of every parishioner.

slashed wi' blue, that I bought him with my ain toil!"

A burst of tears interrupted Jean's oratory—but immediately drying her eyes, with fiery impatience she resumed—

“But, cummers, hear the warst. I havena tellt a'. Them of ye that has bairns kens how the heart grows grit mony a day after the first grief. My wee brother was a bairn to me; I couldna get his bonnie face out of my mind. I had nae siller to pay for a mass for him, to free him out of pain; so I gaed and begged the priest for charity no to leave the innocent in torment, if prayer or chant would win him out. Cummers, this ane leuch also—I'm speaking true—leuch, and said he was a natural, and what about *his* soul? Was I no a silly quean that didna fell him to the ground!"

So it was that the contest waxed hot in St.

Andrew's. A hundred discontents that broke forth furtively before in satirical plays and rhymes and popular verses, came out unveiled, always under shelter of Norman Leslie's powerful shadow; and within the very precincts of the Abbey, the uncompromising voice of Knox declared the fate and character of Antichrist, and identified this mysterious power, as never preacher of the Reformed had dared to identify him before. Meanwhile, this strange freedom out of doors was met by less licence within; he had need to have indeed a deaf conscience, whom the voice of this new preacher did not reach; and the soldiers owned, in a greater degree of outward decorum and sobriety, the mighty influence among them. Paul Hepburn's name was added to the list of those commanding within the walls, and already, though Paul retained and could not part

with, his light-hearted bravery, a glance upon their position, and on the certain fate which one time or other must come upon them, single-handed as they were against a whole kingdom, and against the Papal commonwealth, whom their deed had aggrieved, failed not to bring something of a cloud to Paul Hepburn's brow. Rumours of siege by sea came upon them gloomily in these long summer days, and messages from the metropolitan county told of the Regent stirring in the old courts of Holyrood. Uneasily and painfully the month of June brightened over them; and the blood rushed back upon the boldest heart within those towers, with a presentiment of inevitable ruin, though no man marvelled—at the cry from the warder upon the wall, which hailed the gay French galleys coming in under the early light to anchor in St. Andrew's bay.

CHAPTER XV.

“ All preparation for a bloody siege
And merciless proceeding by these French,
Confronts your city's eyes, your winking gates.”

KING JOHN.

THE same day as that on which the French galleys came in sight, but before they were sufficiently near to commence hostilities, Paul Hepburn again sought the cottage of Jean Bowman, determined this time not to return without having done his best to induce her to accept the office of messenger. It was still

very early, and the alarm of the approaching flotilla had newly startled the garrison. Hasty preparations were making within the castle for the emergency, and Paul climbed hastily by a rude path over the rocks and shingle of the beach towards the bare and exposed Links where the fisherwoman's cottage lay.

While he was yet at some distance from the hut, he could see Jean, with her arms folded on her breast, and her head bent down upon them, sitting on the rude stone seat by the cottage door. The light shone in her rich black hair, and gave a slight flush to the cheek which of itself seemed to have lost its usual colour. The idle listlessness of her attitude struck the spectator—it was so different from her usual activity and constant occupation. By and bye she raised her head, but as she did so, her hand dropped passively

by her side; and, with a dreamy vacant look, she lifted her eyes upon the sea.

Very brilliant, flashing under the fervid sunshine of the last day of June, the sea spread out its glorious breadth into the gray horizon line, and here and there the white sails of the galleys shone like embodied light upon the background of summer blue. They came in bravely on the rising tide, before a light wind which ruffled into waves the sunny surface of the sea; but many a tremulous gazer looked out from the beach, and crowded on the city wall, watching for the flag which did not yet distinguish these new comers, and speculating on the chances of this hazard. Another mood possessed the watcher; the light was dull in Jean Bowman's eyes: on this exposed and open eminence she sat with dead and listless composure. The cottage door was closed—there was no smoke rising from the roof, and

not a sound or voice to tell of human habitation there.

Paul had stood before her for a little time in silence ere she took any notice of him. Precious though every moment was, he was strangely unable to disturb this singular reverie : at last Jean herself turned to him suddenly, with something that looked almost like irritability and impatience.

“ Was the gentleman wanting me ? ”

“ These are the French, Jean,” said Hepburn, pointing to the approaching ships.

“ An’ they were the Turks, saving your honour’s guid presence, they’re naething to me,” said Jean, abruptly : “ I’ve nae call to meddle in ither folk’s quarrels ; and if France fights with Norman Leslie, Norman Leslie maun keep his ain head ; it’s naething to me.”

“ But you must not abide here,” said Paul ; “ this is a dangerous place. You must get

you within the city walls, good maiden, for this is no dwelling for women in face of a siege by sea."

"Is't a harder death to die by a shot than by a sword?" said the young woman. "Fire's langest and sairest of a'. I'm no concerned; ane or another comes to ilka heart; and I tell you, man, I would thole the langest torment afore thae false priests should get a silver penny to say mass for soul of mine. Let me be,—a French cannon would be a very good death. I wouldna flee before them, if they fired this airt night and day."

"But the gates will be shut," continued Paul, "good my honest maiden, stir you out of the way of harm; for what will come of your household and your traffic, if you linger here? There is neither work nor market on the Links of St. Andrew's: come, get you to the town."

“ I’ve nae mair occasion for work or mercat,” said Jean, sullenly : “ a’ that’s past and gane. I carena if I never do a hand’s turn mair. Ay, ye may look at the puir cauld nest ; there’s nane now to make the hearth warm, and the house a blessing. She’s awa’ to her ither bairn. It’s a’ for mysel, if I never lift a creel again. Do ye think I’ve ony heart for the mercat, or will to the day’s darg that’s just for me? It’s because ye dinna ken Jean Bowman. Na, I’ll work nae mair.”

“ Jean,” said Hepburn, hurriedly, “ I fled hither for my life; the danger that pursued me I knew not of till my own noble kinswoman came forth by night to bid me flee. I have sent neither word nor sign to tell her that I am safe; I do not say you shall have gold, but thanks from my heart. Will you carry my message to my lady? I know none I can trust but you.”

Jean Bowman looked up with a momentary flash of animation in her face. "Your kinswoman! you look like a noble knight yoursel that wouldna beguile a woman's heart—Is it nocht but kin? I might serve a true lover's errand if I was mysel, but I'm no gaun out of charity to kindred—I have nane in this world for my ain share."

"You will do a true lover's errand when you do mine," said Hepburn with a deep blush of manly fervour, "though I never breathed a word like this to Maidlin's delicate ear. Tell her the castle is strong, though the foe be upon us, and if she hears of me never more, yet to remember Paul Hepburn who held her dear—here is my ring which she will know—and you shall be well rewarded for your pains, good maiden; the place ——"

"Tell me nae mair," said Jean, abruptly, starting up in a sudden caprice, "what suld

I carry your errands for? there's poor Alison Hervey lost a' her bairns, and her man away in the castle serving the Laird of Pitmillie, canna stir hand nor fit to comfort her. What for should I carry your love tokens, and a good man there of my ain degree that canna hire me with siller? Fareweel—I'm no gaun from my ain doors for folk that are strange to me; I'll gang to the desolate woman up the water, and comfort her for her bairns; and never you think the sorrow of a silly maiden can be evened to the sorrow of them that close the eyes of the dead. I'm gaun upon my way."

And before Paul could remonstrate, or add a word of entreaty, she had left him with a hasty excited step, her face full of the fiery impatience of recent grief. He had lost his messenger—and there was nothing for it now but to return with all speed whence he came.

By this time the flag of France floated from the approaching vessels. The castle was full of preparation, echoing with the strokes of the armourer as he fastened rivets, and saw to the steel caps and jacks of the men at arms. It was hard to keep the excited soldiers from crowding to the wall to watch the approach of the enemy; but an hour or two's prompt exertion had given the garrison a certain readiness to receive their foe. Before that night fell, the inhabitants of St. Andrew's trembled to hear the roll of the cannonading which pealed upon their ears like thunder, and many a bold disputant stood aside with apprehension to let the priest go by, and dreamt in his affrighted sleep of recantation and judgment, scaffold and prison. Aggravating their terror, came startling messages from the villages west the coast of the Regent's march, with a sufficient army to

reduce without assistance this rebel hold. He had already crossed the ferry, and next morning shone upon the royal standard and the viceregal army, lying on the landward side of these devoted towers.

CHAPTER XVI.

“Once more unto the breach, dear friends,—once more!”

KING HENRY V.

“HEPBURN! Hepburn! I say—this is no time for child’s play—to the walls!—to the walls!”

And Norman Leslie rushed past the open door of the rude guard-room, where his friend was vainly endeavouring to persuade the younger Douglas, the delicate and gentle Francis, out of the wild excitement—half terror, half bravery — which made him

struggle to be out among the defenders of the walls.

A month of stout resistance was past, and now a steady and perpetual roar around them told of the unceasing cannonade. Now and then a splintered slate from the roof, or point of a carved turret or pinnacle came down like a great hail-drop into the court-yard. Shocks, as of the blows of a giant, quivered through these massy walls. The air was heavy with the smoke of cannon, though now and then the veil rent to the bright flash and loud report of an answering gun from the castle-walls. Indistinct and huge, like shadows, the soldiers of St. Andrew's loomed through this haze at every turret and angle, pointing their own artillery, and hosts of indistinct fierce sounds, unconscious cries of battle and contest, shrill voices from the town without, and now and then a clamour of applause from the

army of the Regent at some successful shot, filled the burdened atmosphere with such a mist and maze of sound, as matched the heavy cloud of smoke staining the summer skies. While the excited boy struggled with his detainer, a party of men entered, in haste, yet softly, bearing a blackened figure in their arms; they laid him down and retired without a word—the man was dead.

Another tremendous volley, followed by a shower of dust, mixed with detached stones and splinters from the roof and wall, awoke Paul Hepburn to a greater necessity than that of detaining this passionate child. Closing the door upon him with impatience, he rushed to his post. The peaceful bay of St. Andrew's was lost in the smoke of battle. Now and then a fiercer gleam revealed to you something more than the bare spars which struck up like wintry branches through this

heavy breath of war; and even threw a momentary illumination, wild and lurid, upon the desperate faces of the galley slaves who stood at their oars ready for any emergency, and exposed to the full fire of the castle—slaves indeed, and in bondage even now—and on those who fought and commanded, the foreign allies of the Regent.

A momentary glimpse at this was all that Hepburn could permit himself; for now, from between the graceful towers of the Abbey, profaned into a lofty battery, came the flash of war. Sheltering his men as he best could, under cover of this most perilous portion of the wall, Paul Hepburn guided them in such reprisals as were possible, and cheered them to endurance. This tall jackman beside him, who totters as he lifts the match, should even now be on a sick-bed instead of here; and at this point you can hear groans of terror and

impatience from the hospital of the castle, where many a soldier chafes himself to madness at thought of the scanty band which this fatal malady will not let him join. The army on either side is not more deadly than the single foe of pestilence within.

“To the southern wall!” cried the Master of Rothes, his voice ringing clear like a trumpet through the air, “Waste no more powder on these French loons—they fire wide—hie! to the south!”

And as Norman crossed his path again, the quick eye of Hepburn saw upon his flushed and blackened brow, no longer the heavy stamp of care, but the glowing energy of a victorious leader. Another figure came and went among the soldiers; not an inch of mail defended brow or breast of this man. Where there was service to be done, he did it without a pause or doubt, and his voice rung

through the intervals of the firing with words which every man was too deeply absorbed to remember, but which stirred every pulse and vein as they were said. Like a band of demons, black with smoke and dust, and touched with many a stain, of their own, or of a comrade's blood, brave to desperation, and mad with excitement, the common men of the garrison crowded to the point of danger. Whether it was that all the intolerable wrong against which, in forlorn and desperate bravery, a standard had been raised within these walls, rushed upon their minds with the force of inspiration to-day, or if the extreme and wild necessity had given them force to meet it, it were hard to say; but the unruly garrison of St. Andrew's defended its walls like brothers, and with a hopeless calm of courage terrible to see. The falling roof of the castle, the showers of dust and broken stones, the

wild flashes of light above, the thunder of the cannon, the confused agony of cries, and the dull battering of the wall below, did but inspire with a wilder flush of energy these men whose very life was forfeit if they failed ; and the voice of Norman Leslie on the wall—of Hepburn, fierce and foremost driving back the assailants from the breach—and of the unarmed and defenceless preacher, who shrank from no exposure of his person—rang hope and courage even to that dreary barrack-room, where the sick lay looking out upon the cloud of fiery smoke which blotted out the sky.

Behind Paul Hepburn, see!—it is Francis Douglas, striking his sword about him with the uncontrollable fury of a child ; but every man around knows, what the boy in this wild paroxysm does not know, that there is no hope.

And now it is night. Silent and weary, with jaded frame and downcast heart, a chosen band of men guard this dark and yawning fissure in the wall. On the summit of the broken rampart, a white flag flutters sadly in the night-wind. The leaders have asked a little truce for their council; and in the great hall, an exhausted band, they sit together, wounded and weary, discussing their conditions of surrender. On one point they are certainly agreed—they surrender not to the false and fickle Regent, but to the French commander and his King.

CHAPTER XVII.

“ Oh dews of night, weep soft ! oh placid heaven
Sigh over all thy hills ! yet sigh not loud,
Lest treachery take occasion by the sound
For idle triumph. What ! are you deceived ?
Or deem true faith and honour once o'erthrown,
O'erthrown for aught but the most shortest space,
The certain victor in the face of heaven ! ”

OLD PLAY.

THERE was silence in the wearied air that night. From sea and shore the echoes gave back no harsher sounds than the water dashing on the beach, the song of the sailors in the galleys, the hum of the Scottish army

on the other side. High above the scene, in the deep warm blue of the July heavens, a pale star glimmered here and there; and paler and paler, in its clear and luminous lines, the sky retreated to the water's edge. Not a ship upon the ocean, not a wandering figure on the shore, broke the calm. The lights of the galleys gleamed upon the water, and threw an inquisitive glance upward upon the castle walls, in their sad repose and silence; and slow steps, heavy and clogged with care and trouble, went to and fro in the castle yard, and by the abandoned defences of the walls. The next morning should see them embarked under the frail safeguard of the French word of honour, fondly imagining that they went protected by the honourable conditions of surrender which their enemies had accepted. The misery that really did await them entered not into the minds of the garrison of St. An-

drew's, but as vanquished men they went about sadly, and sadly looked their last upon the falling of this calm and lonely twilight, and on the towers and distant hills of their own land.

Not the least melancholy among them, Paul Hepburn leaned upon the sea wall, and looked towards the gleaming bay. Bitter thoughts were in his heart; he tried to console himself with strange hard consolations, which did but aggravate his pain. That Maidlin would forget the kinsman who never came again to claim her regard or offer his thanks; that if she did indeed think of him at all, otherwise than with the expansive generosity of youth, his remembrance had been but a passing shadow, chequering the sunshine of her glad young life; that this flush of joyful possibility which had lightened on his own sombre course, he must now be content to see disappear for ever. Were

these selfish, unpatriotic thoughts for a man on the eve of banishment from the oppressed and burdened land which had such desperate need of such as he? Nay, a Scottishman more loyal never shed salt tears at parting from his native land; but the thoughts that he had sternly put away out of his mind in the heat of battle came strong and full upon him in the sadness of overthrow; he looked on his disheartened comrades, he remembered his afflicted country, and he found an almost solace in returning to the sweet deep grief with which no stranger could intermeddle—which was his alone.

Standing thus, the night fell darker and darker on him; one after another the dispirited leaders retired with listless step to the hall, where a sort of council, unofficial and confused, was being held, or to their own separate chambers, to lose recollection of their downfall in the

heavy sleep of hopelessness. But Paul stood still, idly watching the lights gleam in the water, idly noting how the wind played faintly with the lowered flag which had sunk to-day before the golden lilies; there was little comfort in the contemplation—little in his thoughts.

At this moment a faint scrambling sound below startled him; he listened—some one was certainly ascending the wall. With almost a superstitious thrill, Paul bent over the battlement to look down. At a little distance from him was a buttress, built into a rising cliff—almost the only one which diversified the low dark rocks of the beach. Upon the rugged points of this, and on the broken line of masonry, a female figure was climbing painfully towards a little natural platform, not a foot in breadth, from which it seemed possible to communicate with those above. Who it was, the darkness made it

impossible to perceive, but Paul called to her in terror; with an imperious wave of the hand she checked him. He stood watching, growing giddy and sick as he watched, for the ascent was almost perpendicular, and the points of the rocks were sharp, and must have lacerated both hands and feet that grasped them so stoutly—but very soon after her point was attained. Somewhat impatiently she waved her hand to him, with an air of command which he obeyed instinctively, by changing his position, so as to stand immediately above her on the wall. It was only then, when her cautious voice came to his ear in a shrill whisper, that he knew this adventurer to be Jean Bowman.

“Hist,—speak low,” said the suppressed voice, which pierced his ear like an arrow; “if you are the gentleman that spoke to Jean Bowman, on the Links, the day the gal-

leys came, speak now your errand. I ken what plight you are in--and I ken by the same token ye'll be in a sairer plight afore lang. I'll gang to the lady. Gie me your errand—your ring—and my lord, direct me the place, and tell me the lady's name. I'll set forth whenever the morn dawns—give me the word."

"Cross by the ferry to North Berwick," said Hepburn, breathlessly; "strike up thence into the Lammermuirs—keep to the northmost side of Lammer Law. The place is the tower of Lammerstane, held by Sir Roger Hepburn. There you will seek for the Lady Maidlin. Say the castle is taken, the lords, the preacher, and I myself am bound for France, there to take service with the King if we will, or otherwise to be at large, and take our own course, except in Scotland. Greet her heartily from me, with humble love and thanks—pray her

to hold me in remembrance—if I live she shall hear of me again—give her this ring for a token—and kind maiden, take this purse for thine own charges, and the best thanks and gratitude of my heart.”

“I maun e’en take the siller for the journey,” said Jean, with an air of discontent. “I will do your errand—and my lord—my lord, if treachery befall, keep a stout heart.”

“How, is there talk of treachery?” said Paul, eagerly.

“’Tis but the loons of the ships,” said Jean—“Farewell; I’m no for a French shot this day.”

As she spoke she put up in her breast the purse which Paul had lowered to her, and hastily began her descent. With interest which made him faint, he watched her as she scrambled to the beach. When she had

reached it in safety she waved her hand to him, before disappearing under the shadow of the wall, and Paul Hepburn was again alone.

But strangely changed were his thoughts. With hope in his heart, and a smile dawning on his face, he looked again towards the distant Lammermuirs. This messenger seemed to link him once more with humanity, with love and friendship—and once again his heart swelled with the thought that even here, on the eve of exile, he was not alone. Something still remained to cling to with the strong appropriating grasp of affection—and with a thrill and flush the vanquished leader forgot for a moment his external position, seeing, as with a prophet's eye, the tears, the agitation, and the sympathy with which his message would be received. Paul Hepburn was still young, though he had served Scotland for many a day—and who does not know the sad

pertinacity with which young hearts cling to hope.

Harder to bear than any of the hardships of the siege, were the two or three days of plunder and domination, which the French victors exercised upon the castle—even those, however, could not last beyond the limits of time and the hour—and with sad courage the prisoners of “honour,” as they thought themselves, went on board the galleys, which for many a lingering day thereafter made their life a burden of disgraceful labour and treacherous hardship—and set sail for the alien shores of France.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“ Madam, here is a letter from my lord.”

CYMBELINE.

JEAN BOWMAN, in spite of her promise to set out on the morning following her interview with Paul, involuntarily lingered till the last galley had disappeared from the bay. There was great tumult and disturbance in the town, for already the work of demolition had begun

upon the battered castle—and many a sign of the time gave quick note of the changed *regime* in St. Andrews. The siege had lasted an entire month; it was August now, when Jean tied on the bright-coloured hood, which testified her professional love of gay tints; and with a heart full of heavy recollections, though rising in some degree to the new life, left the humble grave of her mother and little Davie, the last place she visited in St. Andrews, and set out upon her solitary way.

Her bold wit and presence of mind—her habit of self-protection and complete fearlessness, and even her want of the deep and grave piety, which might have betrayed her, made the young fisherwoman the best messenger Paul Hepburn could have chosen. She had a ready story for every questioner—a witty retort for every rude compliment—and a prompt defiance for any who might put ob-

stacles in her way. Her journey was slow and circuitous, but tended steadily towards the tower of Lammerstane; and on the fifth day after her departure from St. Andrew's, she had toiled up the last stony stretch of brae, and stood prompt as ever before the iron studded door of the little court, holding parley with Simon of Ettrick, who kept the gate that day.

“Say to my lady, Mistress Alice, that a fisher quean from the east of Fife stands at the door craving to win in,” said Simon, somewhat angry and discomfited from a sharp and witty rebuff, which had called upon him the laughter of his fellows. “But she's spent with travel,” he added, relenting, “though a mettle lass as a man could wish to see—and she'll say not a word to ony till she sees Lady Maidlin, and says she has an errand for the lady's single ear I'll take her in to

the court—and at your pleasure, Mistress Alice, you'll let the lady ken."

The grave Alice cast a glance out into the court, where Jean now entered, something weary though undaunted as ever. Alice was greatly impressed with the undeniable beauty of the new-comer, joined as it was to her freedom and boldness of carriage, and ready speech, which last, Alice perceived with no small horror. The serious little bower-maiden turned along the vaulted passage, looking more serious than ever, inquisitive, and a little afraid. For Alice, unfortunately, could not clip to her own gentle measure the spirit of her youthful lady, and she shook her head already, in sad anticipation—what if this stranger came with but another temptation to wile Magdalen to the vanities of the world?

Magdalen was alone; it suited with her

mood in these days to sit in long and frequent reverie at her embroidery—or sometimes her embroidery neglected altogether, and her hands over her eyes, to shut out from her sight every external accompaniment, you might see her breath quicken, and her cheek flush, with the fancies of her dream. To-day she was weaving her thread round her fingers in girlish abstraction, not very well aware what she was thinking of, though all her thoughts were tinged with the prevailing anxiety of her mind. This anxiety, by dint of long entertaining, and complete want of anything to keep it practically alive, had fallen by this time into a visionary and pensive emotion—wherein a very strong and clinging remembrance of her kinsman, and that fashion of resigned and patient sorrow, superior to all hope and consolation which youthful sufferers are so much inclined to

pronounce themselves fated to, mingled with the uncertainty which kept her mind constantly wondering over Paul Hepburn's fate.

"Lady Maidlin, there is one to speak with you in the court," said Alice.

Magdalen started; "One to speak with me—who, Alice?—tell me, who?"

"It is because I do not know, lady, that I cannot say her name," said the punctilious Alice. "She has a hood with scarlet ribbons, and worsted lace on her kirtle, and was weary like one on a journey. Simon has let her in—she says she has an errand for the lady's ear alone; and Simon says she is of the fisher folk in Fife."

Magdalen threw down the skein of silk she had been twining in her hands. "I will go to her," she said, hastily; "and yet the court is ever full. Make no delay, Alice—bring her hither to me."

With a little curtesy, Alice went to do her lady's bidding—and in spite of all the solemn decorum of her bearing it was impossible to conceal the curiosity with which she examined the stranger's face and person. "My lady bids you come to her chamber," said Alice—and with a great sigh of exhaustion, which made her conductor turn round with wonder and dismay, Jean followed into the tower.

Magdalen came forward, impatiently, to meet them at the door. "Do you come from Fife?" she cried, with eagerness; "what is your message?—poor heart, she is weary—Alice, go, call your mother; and tell me, I pray you, good friend, what is your errand to me?"

With admiration and astonishment, Jean looked upon her questioner; but Magdalen was too hasty and eager to be struck in a similar way with the uncommon beauty of

Jean. "Lady, I'll shut to the door," said Paul's messenger. "You're in your ain house, but there's spies every gate, at bed and board. I said it was a bonnie lady in the South, but I never thought it was a flower of spring like you. There's naebody near?—first he bade me give his ring that ye would ken, with love and thanks—and syne to bid you mind upon him that held ye dear—and if he was a living man ye suld hear of him again."

Nothing doubting that they were "true lovers," as she herself said, Jean took care, doing as she would have been done by, to select the most loving part of Paul's message to prepare the way for the rest. The dark lashes of Magdalen's eyes drooped on the cheek that flushed under them of the deepest crimson, and she put forth a trembling, uncertain hand for the ring which Jean held out to her. Such words as these had never been spoken

to Magdalen's ear before, and coming to her thus through such a channel they overpowered her with a thrill of shamefacedness. A hundred echoes seemed to repeat them in her ear, and she stood for a moment passive and unconscious, the startled blood flushing to her brow, and her downcast eyes surprised with a sudden blinding of sweet warm tears.

The light was waning in the bare and prison-like room. On the little dais was Magdalen's chair and her frame, the bright circle of silk, lying among the rushes at its feet; and here, in the centre of the room, these two figures, so strangely contrasted, stood together. Jean Bowman, with her rich black hair escaping from among the scarlet ribbons of her hood, and her mantle with its blue lining half falling from her shoulder, fixing her eyes with the strange enthusiastic admiration which one woman sometimes feels for another, upon

this form which shrinks under her eye, this girlish face full of simple and startled feeling, this heart which has betrayed itself, and given up its secret by that very look to the keeping of the stranger; and Magdalen, who could not look up, for a kingdom—whose heart has been surprised as by a sudden flood—with her head cast down, her eyelash falling as if it were pencilled upon her burning cheek, a slight tremble upon her, of something that is not common joy. In dress and rank, and character, so strangely at variance—yet so united by the look of wistful, loving, humble sympathy with which one beholds this crisis of the other's life—there was a life-long bond between them from the very hour.

But Jean Bowman was the first to break silence—and when she spoke, her voice was rich with a simple pathetic sweetness very

unusual to its bold and ready speech. "Lady, will ye ask me ony mair?"

The question startled Magdalen. With a new blush, even deeper than the first, she looked up shyly into Jean's face, but it was to meet the kindly look of lustrous eyes, softened in their shining with unshed tears. Magdalen's heart was touched to its depths already. She bade the stranger rest, with a faltering voice, and, unable to ask of Paul, questioned her as to her journey.

"I came away the day the galleys sailed; lady, there's ill news to come," said Jean, wistfully, "the castle's ta'en, and a' the knights and gentlemen away to France. When I gaed by the gate, the Regent's men were rending the sea tower stane by stane; but I was bid to tell ye, lady, that the lords, and the preacher, and him that sent me, would be free in France. Wae's me for

bonnie St. Andrew's, tower and town! A blink of freedom is ill lear for them that maun bow to the priest's foot, and pity or ruth will nane be yonder, when Norman Leslie and his men are ower the sea."

At this moment, Isobel Lauder presented herself, with her stately deference, at the door, to know the Lady's pleasure. Jean rose hastily from the stool she had been seated on. The solemnity of Isobel's decorum had a very startling effect on the fisherwoman. She was considerably more awed by it than by the Lady, with whom sympathy and kindly feeling had already made her at her ease. Magdalen was weeping a little against her will; spite of this conclusion to the message which had so stirred her heart, not for sorrow were Maidlin's tears—but she was well enough pleased to have such an excuse to the sober

Isobel for this expression of the excited feelings which she could no longer restrain.

“Come hither, Isobel—let Alice come in, if she will—here is sad news for Scotland,” said Magdalen; but Magdalen could not tell why it was, that though the tears came to her eyes abundantly, she could not be sad at her heart.

“My name is Jean Bowman. I’m from St. Andrew’s,” said Jean, with a curtsy, addressing herself half to Isobel, half to her Lady. “The castle’s ta’en, and a’ the lords banished away to France. They wouldna yield to the Governor, that’s a’ for the villain priests, but they yielded to the French. God send it binna for the waur—and them and Mr. John, and every soul that fought for the castle, has sailed in the galleys from St. Andrew’s bay.”

“Paul Hepburn is among them, Isobel,” said Magdalen.

“Men said they might not hold it against all the land,” said Isobel, slowly, “for me, I ever hoped in God’s deliverance. In his good time it will come; dear child, dear Lady, it must be the will of God.”

But Isobel’s dismay and grief, the quivering of her steady lip and the cloud upon her brow, were greater than her Lady’s. “Woe’s me for Scotland and the word!—but it is the will of God;” and Isobel put up her hand to dry a great tear.

“I’ll no say it’s the will of God to put a town and a race under them that spoil our houses, and kill our kin,” cried Jean Bowman, “I’ve nae lear mysel; I might have heard mair preachings, but my bread was to win; but gentle or simple maunna tell me that God’s will is for villany and theftdom;

they say the Kirk—but no a ane of their very sels durst say God.”

The exhaustion of her frame gave a tearful vehemence to Jean’s manner. Their Lady had received her without a doubt, but Jean was scarcely able to bear the more suspicious inquisition of Isobel Lauder’s eye, and the wondering curious glances of Alice. “You are young to come so long a gate for charity,” said Isobel, for once forgetting her mistress’s presence, in zeal lest she should be contaminated, “and I never heard that a wild country was safe travelling for the like of you. Were they not feared to let you forth so far—your mother and your kin?”

The colour wavered on Jean Bowman’s face, sinking into a deadly paleness, and flushing again with a violent blush. “I left my house behind me desolate,” she said, with a hurried indignant voice, “mother nor

friend have I nane in this world to fear for me—and I want neither hire nor reward, nor to sorn on ony, friend or fremd. I've done my errand, and ta'en up my thanks. Lady, fare ye weel."

But Jean's quick, tremulous steps could not outstrip Magdalen, whose hand upon her shoulder arrested her before she had reached the door.

"You will stay with us—I cannot let you go," said the young lady. The high spirit of Jean Bowman failed her, and she sank upon the bench by the wall in a passion of painful tears.

CHAPTER XIX.

“ I have nae hand to keip my heid
But a puir maiden's hand ;
Nor wealth, nor fame, but my guid name,
Mair worth than a' your land.”

BALLAD.

“ THE young woman from St. Andrew's would know your pleasure, madam,” said Isobel, gravely. “ I would fain hear you say you were content she should go on her way.”

“ You would have me strangely thankless, Isobel,” said Magdalen, with a flush of eager

and generous haste; "should I show me less noble than she has done because I am a gentlewoman, and she of meaner strain? Surely, no; a Hepburn must give service for service."

"It may not remain for you to do, Lady Maidlin," said Isobel, with a contraction of her brow. "I know nought of this quean's story—but there are harder things to credit than that another Hepburn hath well repaid her service. She is bold, but she is fair to see. I like not such a messenger—and surely it ill became your noble kinsman to send her hither to you."

As Isobel spoke, the face of her young lady grew white as marble. With her lips apart, and her eyes full of trembling horror, she followed the words and slight unconscious gestures of her attendant, and when the voice ceased, Magdalen sat still, without any answer or notice, like one bewitched. At

length she started from her seat with sudden abruptness, as if throwing off with impatience the unworthy suggestion.

“What dream is this?” she cried, hastily. “What! must we all be involved in one dishonour? Not this poor maiden only, who has a true heart in her face; but Paul of Langley, a most worthy gentleman, and I, poor Maidlin Hepburn, who wist not what you mean. Isobel, it ill becomes you to misken us thus—but call her hither, poor heart, that you may hear yourself what her story is.”

“I do your pleasure, madam,” said the suspicious Isobel; but turning as she spoke, she perceived her daughter at the door. “Alice, get you to your chamber—the Lady lacks not your attendance now.”

They withdrew together, and Magdalen remained alone with a swelling heart—she was very young, and the instinct of obedience,

and deference to Isobel's greater experience, was strong upon the child whom Isobel had nursed—but her whole heart repelled the ungenerous and unjust suspicion which involved Paul Hepburn in a still greater guilt than this poor messenger of his—and Magdalen sat down in her great chair, with a burning blush on her face, vainly endeavouring to seem calm, though she trembled with agitation, and feeling as something very cruel and hard upon herself the inference of Isobel, that this tale was not fit for Alice's ear.

And Magdalen had scarcely time to bend with some semblance of self-possession and unconcern over her embroidery, when Isobel re-entered, conducting Jean Bowman. The bower-woman drew her own stool further off towards the window, and with the gravity of a disapproving spectator, and fixing her own

attention upon her distaff, span with absorbed devotion, without a glance from her thread, leaving her trembling, agitated Lady, and the stranger who stood uncertain and discouraged before her, to conduct this interview by themselves.

Magdalen could not tell what to say. She dared not look up, for her eyes were full of vexed and troubled tears—her needle trembled in her hand—her cheek flushed hotter and hotter—one anxious beseeching glance she threw at Isobel, but Isobel was far too deeply engrossed with her industry to perceive it; while thus perplexed and annoyed the rich sweet voice of Jean Bowman startled Magdalen, so much that her embroidery had almost slid out of her hands. Jean's voice was very sad, but quite steady and self-possessed.

“ I kenna how it is I stand in this strange

place—I'm little used to lady's bowers and castles, and them that serve the great have maybe reason to be proud—but I canna have evil eyes on me. Lady, I would have likit ye weel, and served ye wi' a true heart—but if it be not so, I crave ye of your grace, bonnie madam, look up till I make my reverence and say my farewell."

"I cannot have you go—you must not leave us," cried Magdalen, through her tears. "You have so much to tell me yet—I know nought of the siege or the fight—and your own fortune, and how you came to know my kinsman, and wherefore it was that of your kindness you came thus far to me—sit down by me, I pray you. We among the hills are curious of tales—tell me of yourself."

After a moment's hesitation, Jean sat down on the low stool, which was the usual seat of Alice; and with a heightened colour, but

quite undisturbed in tone and manner, addressed herself to Magdalen—though Jean was perfectly conscious of the close attention to every word which Isobel disguised under her appearance of absorbed and grave pre-occupation.

“ My father was a fisher of St. Andrew’s. I was born to nae better place,” said Jean, “ when I was but sixteen he was lost in the bay, him and twa sons, that might have served ony laird in Fife, such goodly men as they were. Them that follow a man of weir have muckle peril, lady—but I think the wildest baron is a safer master than the wild sea. My mother was left with never a bread winner but me. There was ae bairn in the house forbye—but Davie was born a blessed creature, as bonnie as the day, without wit or might to mell wi’ an ill world. So I took my creel to the mercat cross and to mony a

guidwife's door. Ye'll maybe think I've a loud outspoken tongue, and a brow baulder than maiden's brow should be; them that lives in bower and ha' maun e'en be far apart from them that toils in the common gate, and maun parley with ilka ane that has siller to spend—but I'm no miskent at hame. There's mony an ill word said in St. Andrew's, but the honest wives had ne'er a scorn for me. At kirk and mercat it was 'good e'en' and 'good morrow,' though I was far below their ain degree. I was aye bauld with my tongue—maybe the waur for me, among folk that canna ken what I had to come through; it was a' the weapon I had to gar ill-doers stand about. And it even did as muckle, Lady," exclaimed Jean, starting from her tone of pathetic self-justification into a flush of triumphant defiance, "it keeped me in fence and ward as safe as if my fisher's coatie had

been an iron jack, and the bonnie siller had-dies sword and spear! Ye'll no hear ane about St. Andrew's say an ill word of me."

Considerably moved by her own speech, Jean paused. Some faltering words of encouragement came from Magdalen's lips, and Isobel stealthily moved her stool nearer to the speaker, and span with a slacker thread. Perceiving these things with her quick eye, Jean resumed, not without a slight resentment, which she had time to exhibit now, when her first self-vindication had so far succeeded;

"We didna lie soft, and busk fair like them that dwell in halls and towers, and wait upon nobles," said Jean, hurriedly, with a glance at Isobel, "and we werena fended from sair temptation like them that have friends and kin to take amends for ony scathe—but we lived on the bare Links with-

out the walls, and our board was spread as we might dow. I saw a noble gentleman ae day in the castle court, after the first siege was raised, and when I made him my reverence, he lifted his bonnet to me. The reason was, he had a lady was queen in his heart, and he couldna choose sae noble a lover, but do grace to every woman for her sake."

Breathless, and with a flushing brow, Jean paused again. The breath came quick over Magdalen Hepburn's parted lip. Through her whole frame there ran a conscious thrill; but she could not have looked up, had it been to see Paul Hepburn in bodily presence at her side. Meanwhile, the fair composed face of Isobel was melting into sympathy. At this second break in the story, she obviously made an effort to return to the immoveable gravity which had fallen, like a

silent censure, upon her youthful mistress; but Isobel was a true woman in spite of her doubts and jealousies; she could not assume successfully what she no longer felt.

“A noble heart kens truth at a glance,” continued Jean, not without another flash of her brightened eye towards her former accuser, “this lord was so grand aboon ill himsel, that he saw, withouten guile, an honest mind in me; and when they couldna spare a man for ward of the castle, and when nane ither turned to his hand, he came to bid me bear his errand to his lady in the South. Lady, it was nae lack of honour to you, for I kent it bid to be ane sweet and noble that made his heart sae fain; but I had nae will to gang love errands. First when he came I was crazed with trouble—the Abbey vassal driving the corpse-present from the door, and bonnie Davie, that was an innocent angel, lying dead

upon my mother's bed. He came to me again to bid me to his errand ance mair—and—Lady, lady, pity me!—my mother had dwined and pined after the darling of our life—and I was my lane—my lane!—as I maun be my lane for evermair.”

The tears fell warm and heavy on Magdalen's embroidery, and Isobel, turning her head aside, found her thread wet in her hand. After a little interval, Jean checked her sobs and resumed.

“I thought my heart was dead for ever when the sod was laid upon my mother's grave—and when he said to me it was a true lover's errand, I thought I was the wae-fullest messenger that ever run on such a rede. So I said him nay. I kenna wherefore—but just I was fain to fecht and battle with every ane I met from the sair trouble in my heart—but when the day of dool came

to Norman and his men—when I heard the cannon rolling on the walls, and saw the flash from the abbey steeple like lightning out of the skies, and heard tell in the town there was the pest within, my heart relented, and I would have ga'en his errand blythely then. It was sair wark, Lady, day-by-day—till tidings came there was a breach in the south quarter, and a white flag on the broken wall. Then I kent a rock where the buttress joined, and I climbed in the dark to tell the gentleman I would serve him if he listed now. I'm honest, Lady, but I'm no learned, nor ken about the new Gospel in my heart—but if ever ane had cause to curse the priests, its me; my heart rued on them that were overthrown, and I thought I would have comfort, being desolate mysel, to do a good turn for ane of the new faith. So, Lady, a' my tale's done, and I'm faint at the heart. Blythe

was the gentleman to get his errand ta'en. I trow he thought of little but his Lady weeping tears for the scathe she didna ken. But now I'll wish ye weel, and sune to meet again—and ye'll maybe whiles think of Jean Bowman, that has neither house nor hauld, neither friend nor succour, but her ain hand to win her bread and keep her name—and ye'll be kind in your ain thoughts, and let nane that sit at ease, unkenning trouble, say ill of a poor lass that has mony a pain to bear forbye, but that counts of naething sae sair and bitter as ill-fame. Bonnie Lady, fare ye weel."

At the same moment speaker and hearers rose, all of them equally eager, the one to depart, the others to detain her. Hot tears of grief and angry vehemence was dropping from Jean's eyes; she felt bitterly the doubt-

ful position in which she had been placed, and having told her story with a great effort, could restrain her passionate and excited feelings no longer. "Saving my Lady's presence," said Isobel eagerly, "I crave your pardon once and again. Tarry till you hear what the Lady would say to you; she never gave me credit, maiden—it is but I who have done you wrong. Nay, poor soul, weep not so bitterly; well I trow ye shall never lose in credit or honour by bearing the errand of a Hepburn. Lady Maidlin, I pray you bid her stay."

And Jean stayed, though not without many a tear and sob, and no inconsiderable remnant of resentful indignation against Isobel. But Jean was greatly consoled to see that there was one subject of deepest interest to Maidlin wherein she occupied a much more confidential position

than did the stately bower-woman. There was great comfort in the thought—and Jean laid down her head another night in the tower of Lammerstane, and began to think of it as home.

CHAPTER XX.

“ I wadna leave my ain free shore
For a' your gowd, or a' your store ;
But, Lady, an' your heart be true,
I'll tine my hame for love of you.”

BALLAD.

“ Is Jean content then, Isobel, to take Maisdry's place ?”

So asked the young lady of Lammerstane, Jean Bowman standing before her, half-flattered, half-reluctant. Alice, kneeling at the reading-desk, waits with solemn gravity,

scandalized by this interruption, till Jean shall have answered for herself—and Alice lays her hand upon her place in this large page, and casts a look of curious observation on the stranger, who is a wild creature of an unknown species to Alice. Isobel is in waiting too, but Isobel's countenance is considerably softened, and has an air of favour towards the "fisher quean," of whom she was so suspicious yester morn.

And Jean, who can see nothing of the sky but yonder glimpse of blue looking in through the high grated window—who feels no breeze on her cheek, but the chill draught from the vaulted passage without this apartment—but whose imagination revels withal in the glory of reflected sunshine on the sea, in the dancing boats, the wild free beach and the wind that comes exulting from the north—pauses with a sigh ere she decides to settle

herself here where the only glimpse of the broad ocean is so indistinct and far away, and where the gales shall never now dash a far travelled drop of spray against her blooming cheek. To balance these, she looks up with a wistful smile, and meets a look of encouragement on Maidlin's face—sees in Maidlin's eyes an almost entreaty; thinks upon the desolate hut, and the green grave which are all that remain to her in St. Andrew's—and with a sudden haste and eagerness makes her decision at last.

“ I'm maybe no the best at wark like this—and I'm maybe no sae mim and still as the maidens hereaway—but I'll do you true service, Lady Maidlin, either in storms or quiet weather—and never fail ye, wet day or dry!”

Such is the vow of Jean's allegiance, and she affirms it with a sigh of pining for the

freedom of her native shore. Maisdry, one of the serving women of the household, is about to be married, and Jean withdraws under Isobel's guidance, to be inducted into her place.

“ I think this scarce contents you, Alice,” said Magdalen, with a smile, as she looked on the sage disapproval of her young companion's face.

“ Nay, if it be my lady's pleasure”—said Alice with punctilious deference, “ and it may be, ere she bides long at Lammerstane, she will put off her scarlet ribbons, and think of faith and a good conscience rather than the gauds of the world.”

“ Now, pray you, Alice, have compassion,” said Magdalen, whose heart was lighter in these days. “ I am bound even now to my chamber, for my holiday gown and mantle—my Flanders ruff and my hood with the

broidery—and even you yourself must do on your blue kirtle to attend us to Gifford, to the fair—and how will it hap with us, Alice, if faith may not keep company with our best attire?”

Poor Alice fell a-weeping. “In sooth I know not, lady. My heart trembles when I think we may take the downward road even now. Please you I would stay at Lammerstane—for oh, Lady Maidlin, I am weak like any other—I dare not go into temptation.”

“Your blue kirtle is unsunned yet,” said Maidlin, merrily; “you have never worn your lady’s gift. Come, Alice, hasten—or I will even think you love me not.”

But it was no comfort to Alice, to see the readiness with which her mother’s skilful hands proceeded with Magdalen’s toilette. Slowly, and with many tears, deeply re-

penting of the little thrill with which she anticipated this unusual holiday, she took from her mother's oaken press, her own kirtle of blue, contemplating it with terror at one moment, and with sinful pleasure at another; for, alas, the remembrance would intrude upon Alice, sorely against her will, of what Magdalen had said, when she made this purchase—how well it would become her little maiden's fair face and braids of sunny hair.

And when the sacrifice is accomplished—when the rich folds of the blue kirtle fall round her, and the stiff plaits of the cambric ruff rise about the ears of Alice, she stays her weeping like a martyr. There stands Magdalen, holding up her riding skirt, to show the embroidered hem of her under dress. Poor Alice sighs, with a sad regretful consciousness that Lady Maidlin likes her bravery

well—and now to be congratulated on her own. “Alas! they are but the vanities of the world,” said Alice, with a little sob. Yet somehow, it is hard to help a certain guilty delight, when we mount these rough hill ponies to follow the palfrey of the lady, which Simon of Ettrick, in his blue jerkin with the Hepburn crest upon his arm, leads carefully down the steep hill side.

It is a gay scene this at Gifford fair, and when Magdalen has paid a ceremonious visit to the Lady Yester, it is with no small pleasure on her own part, though, as Isobel makes it out, in sole and pure condescension to the pleasure of her train, that she turns her palfrey towards the fair. These booths, so rich with ornaments of gold and silver, arrows and hearts, and many a lover-like device—these glistening stores of ribbons—kerchief, and muffler, mantle, and owerlay—

these tables heaped with rustic cates—and greatest of all, the moveable stage, where Sir David Lindsay's Four Monarchies are being performed in dumb show, the official chorus standing by to interpret the scene—dazzle the unused eyes of Alice, and awake to pleasure the ready heart of Magdalen, which has been glad it knows not why, for these days and nights since Jean Bowman came. Jean Bowman herself has deigned to accept from Archer Simon, a bright ribbon to snood her hair; and some one—in her great surprise and confusion, she cannot tell who—has put a little silver heart, with a posie, into the hand of Alice.

“ Siller's for puritie,
Blue's for truth;
I mind upon you ilka day,
Good sooth.”

Poor Alice!—she had much need indeed to fear the gauds of the world—for all her fears

could not deter her from placing this with many a blush and tremble at the throat of her kirtle, to fasten still closer the close ruff under which her heart beat like a terrified bird.

And now here is a puppet show, and an exhibition of jonglerie—here a merry Andrew throwing somersaults, and there another little theatrical company, performing with great spirit one of the coarse polemical dramas of the time, which has helped with graver things to bring down in the popular estimation to the very lowest level the reputation of the priests; custom had sanctioned these performances—but still it was not entirely safe to venture, at this moment of ecclesiastical victory, upon this broad and palpable satire.

So perhaps thought the wary manager of the band—for perceiving at a little distance the black gown and scapular of a priest, who was making his way towards

the little stage, this personage abruptly entered upon it, thrust his actors to the right and to the left, and lifting up a loud coarse but not unmusical voice, addressed the priest, who, approached with eyes of suspicious investigation, in a rude chaunt, which, consisting only of two lines, he continued to repeat, each time in a rising key, till the priest fled before the grating hoarse treble which convulsed the bystanders with laughter. "Priests, content ye now, priests, content ye now," rang out over the fair in one of those jingling popular measures which catch the ear and fancy of the multitude; and the intrusive priest was pursued with a perfect din of chorus.

"Priests, content ye now, priests, content you now,
For Norman and his company have filled the galleys fou."

Magdalen turned back, checked in the

ready smile with which she was prepared to greet this sally. Its real import startled her, strangely; as she turned she met Jean Bowman's eye regarding her with a steady and pitiful look. Magdalen waved her hand, impatiently, calling Paul's messenger to her side.

"There is little to content the priests in such an escape," said Magdalen; "think you there was treachery meant?"

"The French loons spake of prisons in France," said Jean, sadly; "but it was but the villain shipmen, lady," she continued in a bolder tone; "their word was nought—it means that the priests were blythe of St. Andrew's dinging down."

But with a sadder heart, Magdalen climbed her native hills again, and looked out that night upon the sea—distance and silence closed upon the darkening waters—there was nothing there to satisfy her heart.

CHAPTER XXI.

“ Well could he hit a fallow deer
Five hundred feet him fro ;
With hand more true, and eye more clear,
No archer bended bow.”

LAY OF THE LAST MINSTREL.

“ HARKYE, Mistress Jean ; there’s nae such haste, but ye might tarry for the sake of guid company. I have a word to say to you.”

“ I’m nae mistress,” retorted Jean, “ but a plain lass of my ain name ; and if I’m at my lady’s command, it stands to nae reason I should tarry for the like of you.”

“The like of me’s no that ill companie, if ye werena cankered,” said the good-humoured Simon. “Jean! quean!—the saucy cummer lets on as if she heard me not.”

“Muckle good it would do me hearing you,” said Jean Bowman, “I’m no used to sic like men. You’re maybe weel enough for the lassies here among the hills, that have nae better knowledge; but your braw jerkin and your auld headpiece, that never got a clour a’ its days, if it werena kicking about the court for a footba’, winna answer me. I would hire the like of you for milking maids, if I was the lasses here; but for my part, when I tarry to speak to a creature that wears a bonnet and a feather—I would like it to be a man.”

“Ye fisher jaud!” exclaimed the unfortunate Simon, in high but momentary wrath; “twa three cauld saut-water loons, and Norman Leslie’s crew of broken men—such

like as you've been used with! I wouldna even mysel so low as that."

"High or low, I would like to see half a score of ye in a blythe fisher's gate," said Jean scornfully. "Pity me for the bonnie bow and arrow a bairn might play withal! and a' the crackit crowns there would be with twa stout hands, and no anither weapon. Lad, ye may craw crouse at your ain door, but I wouldna advise you mell with men that ken the use of battle—whither it be with ither men—and baith the tae side and the tither they're demons incarnate when they're hand to hand—or with storms and winds upon the sea. It's grand playing at a mark with your arrows, or shooting a shaft down the hill at a blackcock or a doe; but it's nae sport to see the ee' set and the hand raised, for blood and life. Man, in these landward pairts, what can you ken?"

Jean's experience—and with her daring spirit and active habits, she had acquired no small share of this during the siege of St. Andrew's—had sobered her out of the *badinage* with which this conversation began; and as her tone grew serious, the flush of offence faded from Simon's frank and manly brow.

“I've seen a fight mysel,” he said, thoughtfully, “and I have sent a shaft from that very bow against the breast of one of the southern archers, that get such a name aboon the lads of the forest. That ane bragged never mair—for a' the carpet fighter ye take me to be. My father was slain on Floddenfield; I should ken the sough of battle as weel as e'er anither man. We're no such a band at Lammerstane now as when my lord was in his lusty age, and wouldna yield before the youngest gallant between Forth and Tyne. But there's enow of us yet to keep Lady

Maidlin and her right, if trouble comes to the bonnie heir of Lammerstane; and ye'll maybe see afore lang, Mistress Jean, with all your scoffs and scorns, that there's men amang the Lammermuirs."

"I've heard tell of folk being aye readiest to fight when nae occasion was at hand," said Jean, with renewed scorn.

"If ye werena as mettle as you're anger-some," said the half offended Simon, "and if I didna ken ye had dune service to this house and name afore now I would never look your gate again, for a scornfu' quean that kens not them she lightlies. There's even ower like to be occasion—for a bonnie orphan lady, though she hasna muckle tocher, as lang as she has the tower of Lammerstane, and a hill-side, will aye be a prize for some fine gallant hanging about the court. My Lord's no lang for this life—he's ower his threescore and ten,

and his cheek grows mair like ashes every day. I make nae doubt he was a proper man in the auld times, but he's far past his strength now."

"He might be the lady's gudesire—he looks little like calling so young a thing his ain bairn," said Jean.

"He lost his heir that was a stripling lad, at Flodden, like mony another noble house a' Scotland thorough," answered the archer, "and sinsyne every man of the blood has perished in field or fray. The knight was desolate on his ain hearthstane when he married a friendless maiden, as fair and as sad as ever the sun shone upon. It was said her ain love fell in fight no lang before, and she behoved to wed the knight for shelter and kindness. I trow she got baith. My Lord is honour itsel and charity. The lady kepted up her heart as long as she mot, but the word ga'ed it was

broken beyond remeid lang or ever she came into Sir Roger's hands; and I've heard she just had strength to give to his arms her little bairn when she parted like a saint. From that day to this Lady Maidlin's been the light of his e'en—and I reckon he aye thought to see her safe and wedded afore his ain day came. She'll be into the Regent's keeping—a ward of the Crown, if the auld knight lives not the langer—and then I rede her take the foremost gallant that comes. Ye look mim enow the haill clan of ye, ladies and serving damsels, but I trow there's mair feuds made about you than a' the cattle and gear on the face of the earth."

"And weel it sets us," said Jean, with defiance; "do ye think *I* would take the foremost lad I had in my offer?—no, if he was lord of Fife, let alane a knave of a servitor such like as you! Lady Maidlin's like a spring-

day—a'life and light in her face, like the leaves twinkling atween the rain and the sun—no to say she's but sixteen and has ane in foreign pairts would sooner see her than ony saint in heaven. I would never make her a leal reverence again if I thought she could betray a' true maidens, and take the first man that bowed at her knee."

"Now by St. Simon!—and that's a douce aith"—cried the bowman; "it would set ye better if nae man, foremost or hindmost, gae you the chance. As for the like of me, try your cantrips when ye will. I'se no be the man to get my naysay on sic a score."

"Na, lad," said Jean, with a merry laugh, and a glance which went as true to its mark as Simon's fairest arrow. "I've spent a' the nays in my aught, that have *that* for their ground—you'll maybe get a better reason when its your turn to spier."

And with her light bold active step, and her laugh which woke the very walls to echoes of its saucy mirth, Jean turned away. Fair to its mark had gone her parting shaft. Poor Simon turned to burnish his old head-piece with a comical look of mortification and puzzled, unwilling delight. "I've seen mony ane of them in ha' and in sheiling," said Simon, as he attacked the rusty helmet, "and had a dinnle at my heart afore now—but such a gallant quean as this—Out ye gowk!—what matters it to you?"

But this argument would not do; it was much better consolation to devise a ballad wherein the said quean should have retribution dealt upon her for all and sundry her offences against the nobler portion of the creation. Somehow it came about that even this failed—and hurried down upon the cur-

rent of his own inspiration, the verser of the forest found his displeasure evaporate in the high enjoyment of the artist, as after much muttering and shaking of his head—broken with frequent pauses in the occupation, which at the close of every pause was furiously resumed again in the excitement of a satisfactory verse—Simon lifted his voice in triumph, and to a stirring border measure sung aloud and joyously his completed song.

“ She’s no like the sun, she’s no like the moon,
The stars have naething in her,
Hence from my sicht, ye timorous loon!
Ye have na the gift to win her.
She’s nouthier like saint nor angel white,
What care I gif ye tell?
Nor mim maiden, nor ladye bright,
But like her gallant sel!

“ Ye may carry your vows to anither airt,
Falset shall ne’er deceive her;
To dee at her feet I could find in my heart,
But never to wrang nor grieve her.

Hence from my sicht, ye timorous loon!
The love gift I'll bring in
Is the sword I brak on a fause knave's crown,
And that's the gate to win!
I name nae names—even so,
Quo' Simon to his joe."

CHAPTER XXII.

“What canst thou say but will perplex thee more,
If thou stand excommunicate and cursed?”

KING JOHN.

“I LOOK that Everard Hay will send me one of his brethren. What say'st thou, Maidlin? Nay, by my faith, I trust them not more than thou doest; but I cannot leave thee in the wolf's fangs, my child, and such an offence to be avenged. Heaven knows my heart is

heavy enow to leave thee no protector; but the church shall have her dues of Roger of Lammerstane. It will do me none harm to be the priest's penitent, Maidlin—and we may e'en trust it will be some simple father that dishonours not the name."

"But not for me, not for me," cried Maidlin—"you would not do violence to your own good conscience, father, for thought of me?"

"God wot I am sinner enow to make full confession," said Sir Roger, "fear not for me, little one; I think not they will lay it to my charge in heaven that I made my shrift to a brother of St. Bernard's. I will say no leasing. Be not discouraged for my sake; and sit down by me, child, that I may tell thee what thou must do when I am gone."

The knight lay on an oaken settle before the hearth. A cushion of crimson velvet,

whereon were lingering traces of tarnished embroidery in gold, supported his head, which, with its mass of grizzled hair, its ashen cheeks and snowy beard, stood out in bold contrast from this background. A great mantle, lined with fur, wrapped his aged strength about, and showed, where it opened on his breast, the glitter of the steel breast-plate, long disused and laid aside, which, greatly to the terror of his attendants, the knight had chosen to assume to-day. The wide cloak which enveloped him swept down with its rich fur border on the pavement, and the light of the fire gave a fitful illumination to his decayed majestic person, reddening with dim reflections the stone floor under his couch, and falling in a dark glow upon the heavy folds of drapery which absorbed its ruddy light. Upon an oaken stool beside him, cushioned with velvet, and heavily

fringed with the faded splendour of crimson and gold, lay his sword within his reach, and still nearer, on another low stool, Magdalen had been kneeling by his side. As he spoke, she rose from this position with meek and reverent obedience, and, sitting down upon this humble seat, leaned her stooping head on both her hands. Her kirtle of rich brown "side and wide," fell in great folds over her feet, and on the cold stone floor they rested upon. Her close and pointed ruff rose jealously round her delicate throat, and one stray lock of hair, half-curled, fell over the cheek on which the fire-light rested with a kindly glow. But Magdalen could not lift her eyes to meet the genial light, and dared not speak, lest her choked voice should betray the sobs she restrained so painfully. Her father's eyes were fixed with dreamy musings on the fire,

and he did not see the convulsive shudder which now and then ran over her frame.

“You are the last of your race, my Maidlin,” said the old man, laying his large brown hand softly upon her bent head, though his eyes still turned, with a heavy dreamy haze upon them, towards the fire; “and I, by sore mishap, leave no son behind me to be a fence to the bairn of my old age. Fie upon strife and battle, saith Roger of Lammerstane, that has been a man of war all his days, eild and youth! but that will naught serve thee, poor maiden bairn, in this wild country. Orphans of noble blood are the king’s wards, and I must e’en yield thee, gif I will or no, to the keeping of the fickle Hamiltons. I say not who to choose—but take no churl, Maidlin Hepburn, if ye would not forfeit my blessing. Mate nobly, though it be poorly. If a gallant

Hepburn came to your hand, give him the kindest chance—and, Maidlin, let it be swiftly, gif ye may—for my heart fails me to think of masterless vassals and fenceless walls, and thou, a dove beside the corbie's nest. I leave ye well attended. Isobel will look to it that the house is ruled, and yourself kept in due honour; but, Maidlin, if your heart be shy to yield, or your maiden pride crave long wooing at a fit suitor's hand, think upon it then, that a servitor, albeit one of honour and repute like Isobel, is no fit head of Roger Hepburn's household, and give a man to be ruler of my knaves and my lands. Child, ye hear?"

Magdalen looked up with a momentary flush upon her face. "Isobel is but my bower-woman—and if my father must leave Lammerstane desolate, yet his own child is its heir. I

cannot do on your sword, or your shirt of mail—but I bear your honour, good my father, to my latest day—and I will never shame it—never!

“Child!

“I am Roger Hepburn’s child,” said Magdalen, her eyes flashing through her tears. “Father, your vassals will serve your Maidlin though she be none other than a woman. Ah, these are hard words—you speak to me of governance and of bridal when my heart thinks but of the grave!”

Softly and slowly this great hand passed over her hair, and a heavy tear came down upon the slight clasped fingers which again supported Magdalen’s brow. It was long ere her father spoke, and when he did so his voice was tremulous and uncertain. “My child is woman grown,” said the old knight.

“I have lived to see the day—let me now depart—I am content.”

He said no more, and silence deep and still fell on them both. Motionless they kept their separate places. Sir Roger, with his large and dreamy eye fixed upon the ruddy glow of the fire, and his daughter with her face hidden in her hands, at his side. A haze was on the old man's faculties—vague and dim, as all the familiar objects about him appeared through the film of his dying eyes, the far withdrawing vistas of memory appeared to his heart. With a strange drowsy helplessness he turned back upon his early and upon his later life—and the scenes blended and confused each other, vexing the mind already numbed by the touch of death with strange disquiet and bewilderment. Which were the things that befel him yes-

terday, and which those that happed far back through a crowd of years, he could not distinguish; his understanding wandered, darkling, with a strange solemnity through the mists of that valley of the shadow. And thus, once more, in his bewildered comprehension, he feels himself that bravest gallant of the Hepburn blood, who took the prize at joust and tourney, victor when even the royal James contended in the listed field; and anon, without a moment's interval, is again the old man full of years, who waits by his own hearth for this peaceful tardy death.

But strangely differing from this confused and troubled reverie is the clear and well-comprehended grief that wrings at the heart of his child. While he follows with his misty eye the changeful phantasmagoria which his failing remembrance throws before him in wavering uncertain lines, the youthful

soul of Magdalen, face to face, fronts the unveiled might of desolation. She sees him gone out of this chilled and dreary world—she feels the strange agonizing void, which has almost begun already in her life. Fatherless—she never knew a mother, this poor child; and a truer type of knightly worth and valour, a heart less soiled with living, or abounding more in every manly gift and grace, never invited love. The light is gone from Magdalen's eyes, but not all the might of her solitary and suppressed anguish can blind her heart. There is no self-deception possible—no false hope—clear as the daylight her orphanhood lies before her—and tender now of him who all her life-long has been so tender of her, she will not let a groan escape her to disturb this musing and meditative calm.

But the outer world is less chary of the knight's repose. A bustle in the court-yard, a noise of arrival, and the resounding step of some one leaping from his horse without, rouses a momentary testiness in the half-conscious face of Sir Roger. Another moment and he slowly draws his gathered faculties about him, with a painful exertion. "Maidlin, see to it if this be the priest—and bid him in to my last hours," said the old knight with a heavy sigh. "They trouble me—they trouble me—I thought to have ended my battle alone."

With haste, which was almost eager, Magdalen rose; unused to heavy affliction it was hard for her to bear it, and make no sign, and she felt as though her throbbing brow would burst and her strained heart break, if she might not give vent to their agony. With one last desperate effort she received at the door the

newly arrived priest; it was the sub-prior himself—and Magdalen could not comprehend the fiery flush of irritation which overpowered her at sight of him, knowing as she did how little welcome he would be to her father—for Magdalen was too recently acquainted with sorrow to know that this passion was but another phase of its imperative and despotic might.

The loud and light tone, not unmixed with derision, of the monk's, "benedicite," startled into something like excitement the torpor of the knight. The old man turned heavily on his couch, and lifted his eyes upon the new comer with a look of quick impatience and displeasure. The sub-prior was almost at his side ere he spoke, and then his salutation was sufficiently brief, "It is thou!"

"It is I," said the monk, his light careless

supercilious tone entirely unchanged by the solemn circumstances in which his companion stood. "Hark ye, Sir Knight, I have done honour to your message, keeping this tryst in mine own person—I, and no meaner man. Truth to tell I will have no greybeard's gossip of my years. If holy church holds me fit for office in her sacred priesthood, I call on her true sons to hail me as their ghostly father without pride or pause. Come, we were best have our work over while your strength holds."

"Was there never a simple heart in all your cloisters might hear a poor sinner's shrift," said the knight, raising himself upon his cushions, "that *thou* shouldst spur thy heel for such an errand? Get thee to thy schemes and councils, boy,—God wot, I know not, thou mayest be a proper man for a king's presence

or a prelate's board—but the couch of death hath need of others than thee. Sayest thou? Nay, but by my faith I will not!—a light eye like thine is not for the secrets of an old man's heart.”

“Rail not at God's consecrated priest,” said the sub-prior, “thou hoar heretic. Yea, it becomes thee to look aghast! I know thy name is ill affected—thy kinsman Paul, of Langley, escaped by thy connivance from my hands, and I know not when either child or servitor of thine hath come to mass, or to confession with them that love the ways of truth. Go to, thou wert best make thy peace with holy church while the means are in thy hand.”

“Boy, thou dost well to beard me,” cried Sir Roger, with a burst of half-controlled passion. “A spark of manhood in thee would

turn thy valour on thy peers—but even such as thou may trample on us when we lie in wrestle with the powers of death.”

“My son,” said the monk with mock solemnity, “make thy peace with God and with the church whiles there^s is time. Bethink thee of certain lands and gear, thou mayest not carry them with thee—and of a certain fair lady”—

“What of Maidlin,” cried the father hoarsely.

“Nay I say nought—but thou had’st best possess her of a friend in holy church,” answered the priest, “a holy man might give her succour when neither baron nor laird dared lift a hand. I hear this same lady hath opinions. My malison and God’s upon the same; therefore, Sir Knight, look to thy shrift, and defy me at thy proper peril. Come—

to-morrow may not serve our purpose if we thus dally with to-day.”

With a heavy groan Sir Roger yielded—but all the philosophy of this hard and scoffing spirit was too small to read the incomprehensible problem offered to its wisdom now—the pure transparent simplicity of a heart without offence and without disguise, such as this lofty and child-like spirit now preparing to meet its God.

CHAPTER XXIII.

“Come hither, Harry, sit thou by my bed,
And hear, I think, the very latest counsel
That ever I shall breathe.”

KING HENRY IV.

“Did some one speak of my kinsman’s son of Langley?” said the dying Knight, lifting his heavy eyes upon the little group about his couch, “I know no braver gentleman, Maidlin; said you aught of your kinsman, Paul?”

“It was I, Sir Knight,” said the priest, “fie on your heretic compliances—the church

had been rid of him but for some knave in your household. But the gallant has made little profit of his longer tether—I warrant him he will preach no false gospels now.”

“Has ought befallen the lad?” said Sir Roger, with an eager wandering wonder. He seemed to be only half-conscious of what was said to him.

And in the pause that followed, Maidlin too looked up, a momentary flush breaking through the pallor of her grief, and Isobel who stood at a little distance waiting on the sick man’s wants, turned her head aside, though she listened with profound anxiety. Among these solemnized and awed spectators, and beside this noble spirit travelling to the end of all things, the sub-prior’s careless tone, and unconcerned face marked him out like an evil being mocking at a good man’s death. Waiting to note with quick and keen observation, which

among his auditors was most moved by his words, the priest at length resumed.

“They have had their meed, these knaves and rebels; aye, Norman Leslie and such as he may ride in violence awhile, and count themselves chiefs of the kingdom, who but they—but scoffing at holy things and slaying of holy men must ever bring its penalty. God shall not sleep, or if God sleeps, holy church hath her eye awake night and day. Ha, Maiden Maidlin, this evil crew hath favour in your eyes! but sooth to tell it is better to greet a fair lady in plumed cap and velvet mantle than in the habit of a galley slave—and I doubt me if in this attire your cousin of Langley bears himself so proudly, or like as proper a man.”

“What says he, Maiden?” said the Knight, “mine ear is dull—I wist not what is his tale.

Here, child, close by my side—my heart will sure be dull, if thy voice wake it not.”

With a trembling hand and a flashing eye, her indignant tears stayed in their source, and her heart beating with well-nigh intolerable pain, Magdalen knelt down on the stool by his side. But the bondage of this man’s eye, and this man’s observation was not to be endured. She rose again hastily—“Sir, the rites of the church are administered—may we not be alone?”

“What warrant have I that you will not pervert my penitent?” said the sub-prior. “Nay, the silly sheep must be kept under the shepherd’s eye. I cannot leave him till he is past the power of all your heretic wiles and art. Mark me—I know you, lady.”

“And if you know me,” cried Magdalen, hastily, “though verily I blush that such as thou shouldst know aught of a true maiden but

her name—yet well I wist ye know nothing which all the world may not know—but I will not share with you my dearest father's last farewell. Tarry where you will, you shall not tarry here—think it not. Yea, I know what threats are on your lips—but the morrow shall care for itself, and I vow to you to-day ye shall know this is the Tower of Lammerstane, where lady and vassal are alike agreed that the last hours of their chief shall not be vexed for either prince or priest. Simon! Bertram!—Isobel, go call these knaves to me.”

But Magdalen's voice strained to this pitch of passion rang like a silver trumpet through the hall. Startled and curious, presuming on the license of a season of calamity, several of the retainers already appeared at the door. The priest caught sight of them with his cold keen eye—he knew, not only his order, but himself, especially unpopular among their class—

and there was something in Magdalen's eye which told him, steeled against all loftier arguments of natural sympathy and compassion as he was, that in her present mood this passionate and inexperienced girl would not hesitate to use summary means of compulsion. He retired with a contemptuous pity.

“She neither knows herself nor me, poor child,” said the priest, addressing no one, but leaving the words as a sort of appeal or protest with the bystanders. “If she rues this hereafter the deed is her own.”

He went out without a word or sign of reverence from any, but with sullen brows bent upon him, and muttered wishes which were anything but blessings. When he was gone, Isobel went forward to the door and with one grave word of explanation closed it upon the little crowd. Then she seated herself at the farther end of the hall. The Knight was

sinking every moment deeper into the torpor of approaching death—a vain attempt he had made before, while Magdalen spoke, to interfere, and take the matter in his own hands—but his heavy eyes were closing in a dull unwilling sleep and he seemed to be conscious only by fits and starts. Beside him knelt his child, her face once more deadly pale, and her frame trembling with agitation. Hot tears were dropping from her eyes—her heart beat loudly in the silence. The excitement of passion had but stirred up and embittered the heavy depths of grief.

“Art thou here, Maidlin—here?” said Sir Roger, groping with his large and feeble hand in the dim light of the declining day. “The night falls soon—methought I saw thy mother even now—but mine eyes are heavy, Maidlin—come near.”

“Here, father;” she laid his hand upon her

head, and with a great effort subdued her trembling that it might not grieve him.

“I have a dullness in mine ears,” said the Knight, his fingers moving heavily upon his daughter’s hair. “What were these voices, Maidlin?—some strife and quarrel, and the name of Paul of Langley. Let Bertram see to it, there be no brawlers here. What! these be other footsteps—child, who are they about us now?”

“Here are none, dear father, but Isobel and I.”

“It is but the shadows,” said the old man with an uneasy gesture. “Ay, and the priest. I do bethink me I had hoped for a man of God if such remains, and there came to me that boy Everard. Maidlin, I tell thee—there are cowls and scapulars yonder by the door—spies to hear us what we counsel!

Hush, little one, thou knowest not what venomous asps they be.”

“ It is only Isobel, dear father, dear father,” said the trembling Magdalen; “ trouble not your mind with such thoughts—we are safe in our own hall.”

There was a long silence—she thought the dying man had fallen at last into the heavy sleep which had hung about him all the day, but as she bent and listened for his breath he startled her with a violent gesture, and a loud and sudden cry; “ I would not die if I mot bide—accuse^d me not—not for all my sorrow and infirmity would I leave my child—oh God, my desolate child!”

Again, this heavy chill of sleep—again this wild awakening and startled cry; “ How wilt thou face these birds of prey, my dove?—oh heaven, that I should leave a helpless maiden without a fence or friend! Maidlin,

Maidlin, cling to me yet awhile—let me hold thee while I may.”

With a strange pang of awe and terror, Maidlin bent down her pale forehead upon her father's breast—and again there was an interval of stillness, broken only by the heavy breathing of the aged knight. At last—and the anxious heart so close to him felt that this was indeed the last—he threw up his arms wildly, and clasped her in a tight and straining grasp. “My God, thou art her watch and sentinel! My guard is done—I feel the dawn in the air—Good night, good night!”

A dead and heavy stillness fell upon the hall—through the dim twilight a ruddy ray glimmered faintly from the brands which lay in a red glow of half-decaying embers on the heart — and Isobel, looking up from her prayers, saw Magdalen lying still upon her

father's breast. The attendant dared not rise to ascertain if dying had ended in death, or to separate the father and the child. With a great tremor upon her, praying with earnest heart and quivering lips, Isobel sat motionless upon her seat, while the darkness gathered in the hall, and the glow of fire-light died away in the white ashes of the hearth. The silence grew intolerable ere long; not so much as a single breath broke its dreadful calm—and Isobel rose in almost desperation at last. With the dead man's arms clasped round her, Magdalen had fainted, and, with a great cry, her faithful servant raised the watching household, fearing, in the first burst of terror, that father and child had gone together into the better land.

CHAPTER XXIV.

“ For Amoret right fearfull was, and faint,
Lest she with blame her honour should attain ;
That everie word did tremble as she spake,
And everie look was coy and wond’rous quaint,
And everie limb that touched her did quake ;
Yet should she not but curteous countenance to her
make.”

FAERY QUEEN.

“ AND must our Lady Maidlin go to court,
mother—must it even be so?” said Alice, with
a sigh.

“ Even so, my child,” said Isobel, “ and if

she comes to no evil, it will divert her from her grief."

"It affrights me to hear you speak so," said the young ascetic, "when you know so well, mother, that nought but the consolations of God and of the Holy Word can avail the soul."

"My bairn," said Isobel, "I lost thy father ten long years ago—and I did bethink me of the Word and of God, and many a time I was comforted. But, Alice, my comforting had been sad but for thee—my comforting had been of another world alone, but for the little bairn that sat on my knee, and minded me of life with her innocent smile. This was how I woke out of my misery. God sent you for an angel to lighten my heart."

"Mother, mother, say not so," said Alice, with a look of distress; "is it not best when

all our comfort comes from thought of heaven alone?"

"Truth, I know not," said Isobel; "it must be so—it should be so—God pardon me, my mind is full of carnal thoughts—yet, Alice, we must live—and though this world is not the end, sooth to say, it is a place where we must tarry long—and if it have no sunshine, the heart grows sick. Nay, I know not what to say, heaven is over all—yet it can not be unlawful to seek such blessings as God may send us, while we tarry here."

"I think the best blessing is a heart that recks not of them," said Alice; "oh, mother, I fear me, I fear me!—if we are afflicted now, what judgments shall come upon us when we go into a wicked world?"

"I would give my new ribbon to ken what

Mistress Alice means," said Jean Bowman, in unfeigned astonishment at her side.

"She shall even tell you," said Isobel, with something like a smile on her face. "My lady calls—but I lack not your aid, Alice; I will see to Lady Maidlin, alone."

The person of all others whom Alice most regarded in the household, stood by her now—her bright eyes flashing out a gay wonder, her face full of frank and joyous smiles, whose influence it was almost impossible to resist. With a timid awe, half-horror and half-envy, Jean Bowman, abounding in the gay spirits and natural courage which Alice herself lacked, and thought it right to lack, inspired the little bower maiden—and it was no small trial for Alice to maintain her opinions, devoutly as she held them, in the face of this full undissembled glance of wonder and amaze.

“ Will it no be grand to see the court, and a’ the braw gallants and lords?” said Jean Bowman. “ I aye set my foot firmer when I stand by gentle blood mysel’. I’ve heard it said, there was an idle crew of loons and Frenchmen, about the great folk; but I would gie the best boat out of St. Andrew’s for ae look of the little queen, and the queen-mother, and a’ the gallant gentlemen about the governor’s hand—folk that have seen stricken fields, and marched on English ground—and swords glancing, and banners waving, and a tilting this day and a riding at the ring the next, and may be the third out, boot and saddle to follow a fair fray. Hurra! I could find it in my heart to ding down an auld suit of armour off the wall, and follow the lady’s train mysel’, put on like a man at arms!”

“ Oh, Jean!—Lady Maidlin herself would

learn you better," cried Alice, solemnly; "a maiden should not speak so bold."

"I'm no like your landward maids," said Jean; "I'm fisher born and fisher bred, and could keep my ain head with ony lad in this part. I wouldna gie a green rush for the spear in yon auld Bertram's hand, and wha's to defend bonnie Lady Maidlin, and even a bit gentle thing like yoursel'?—if it werena for Simon of the forest I wouldna have the heart to see you gang away."

"And I tremble too," said Alice, with a deep sigh, "for we go upon an evil course, and dare not ask the blessing of God."

"What was that you said?"

"Oh, Jean, we are going into temptation—we are seeking vanity of our own will—and how can we look that God will care for us, if we have no thought of Him?"

Jean was greatly puzzled. Strong as her

confidence was in the "bonnie Lady Maidlin," who had taken her heart at the first glance, and perfect her conviction of the innocence of this trembling girl who stood before her, Jean's downright and practical apprehension suggested nothing less than some great deed of darkness, which could call forth such terror. With fear, scarcely less than Alice's own, she turned her wistful eyes towards the door of Magdalen's apartment.

"Eh Alice, sae young and sae bonnie, what's to befall the lady?—she's no in an ill way, and her fatherless? I would fight mysel with my twa hands to rescue her, if its no with her ain will. What is it, woman, tell me—what's Lady Maidlin gaun to do?"

"I cannot tell what Lady Maidlin will do," said Alice, weeping now between vexation and fright," but she goes to the court and to the world, and I know she loves your braveries.

and your vanities in her heart, and God and the truth dwell not among galliards and gay companie—but even my mother will not warn Lady Maidlin, and I too, who love nothing save quiet and meditation, and to serve God, I too must go with my lady where no good is—but I pray God pardon me for passing among them, for it is not with mine own will.”

Another long look of bewildered surprise from her companion increased the tears of Alice. But a merry spark was lighted in Jean Bowman’s eye, and Alice, though she shrank the more, felt a satisfactory thrill of self-approbation, and something of the comfort of martyrdom, as Jean’s laugh rang gaily out into the echoes.

“It’s a’ for gaun to the court, and nae mair ill! Lass, if ye will I’ll niffer with ye, and take your punishment for my pleasure. What for should the lady no gang to the court with her

bonnie face and her gentle blood? What's a' the grand ploys and feastings made for, but just for the like of her?"

"You have never learned, Jean," said Alice, austerely, "the like of you never heard God's will, but only what the priests said—and its hard to learn the carnal heart that such poms are but vanity."

"I'll no say I'm learned," said Jean with humility; "I'm nouthar convent bred, nor given to lear. I canna read a printed book, nor lay goud with my hand like you, and I've heard little knowledge, true to say, but frae the false friars, malison and plague upon them!—but it stands to nature, a bonnie maiden should be glad of a grand kirtle and to see brave sights, and hear minstrelsie, and tread a measure with a bonnie lad—that's a' my learning—for I ken God sends mony a merrie glint out

of the skies, and I seena wherfor I suld be sad mysel."

"But, Jean, you must never think of the body that perishes, but of the soul that cannot end," said Alice, "I would rather think upon heaven and grace than all the minstrelsie in the world."

"I make nae doubt you're a holy bairn," said Jean reverently, "I could see it in your e'en."

But why this most sincere and humble commendation should awake a new burst of tears, Jean could not tell. Perplexed and troubled, she looked upon the weeping girl.

"I said I didna ken your lear. Ye needna weep, little Alice; Jean Bowman canna say but what she thinks. Plague on the lassie, can she do naething but greet!—are you no holy then?"

"Oh, Jean, there's none holy—none upon this earth—and far less the like of me."

“Weel, weel, take comfort,” said Jean, with a little impatience, “ye can thole the rest of us the better after a’; but if I was you, Alice, when I likit vanities sae ill, I would gang my ways down to the next convent gate, and take on the vows, and see the warld never mair.”

“Jean, you must not say that to me,” said Alice with dignity, “I’m done with superstition; and to be a nun would be to serve Antichrist. No, no; you are far from the faith.”

“I wouldna say,” said Jean, “maybe I am; but that’s no the best way to help the unlearned; and I would just like to ken what you’re to do, if you’ll neither mell with the world for vanity, nor gang to a nunnery for peace. It’s nae sin to be bonnie, Alice—do ye think it is?”

“If you think upon it to make ye vain”—said Alice, with a deep blush.

“Weel, a hard heart would have pity for you,” said Jean, as she turned away; “I never heard it said of a bonnie maiden that she had sae mony miseries before.”

Poor Alice returned to her work with a beating heart and a trembling hand. What trials were those which lay before her!

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