

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.

“ You hear the learned Bellarius what he writes.”

MERCHANT OF VENICE.

THE months passed on thus over this quiet household. The master of the house went and came, bringing with him, when he appeared, an alien stir of confusion and bustle which had no part in the natural order of the family. The lady went upon her sorrowful

way, dispensing daily charities, succouring the distressed, and aiding the poor, but failing still to find the inward rest and comfort for which her troubled spirit thirsted, while Marjorie and Magdalen—the one following the quiet tenor of her household way, undisturbed by anxiety or fear, the other leading her's through many a maze of musing, through pangs of terror and solicitude, triumphant glimpses of comfort and joy—pursued their youthful lives. With many a feud upon her busy hands, and breaking many a spear for the honour of Scotland, Jean Bowman's bright and animated spirit had yet gained her many a friend in the English household, where it vexed her soul in secret to dwell; and the stately Isobel, with her dignified bearing and her constant devotion to her "Lady Maidlin," commanded a degree of respect scarcely less than Mrs. Bowes herself, and unconsciously

elevated the young lady whom she served with regard so unwavering and so fond.

John Knox, already translated to Newcastle, and thence taking frequent journeys as a royal chaplain to do his stated duty before the young King, was no longer a member of this household. At long intervals he came to visit them, and as frequently as he could find messenger or opportunity, his consoling letters comforted the heart of his "mother," as he now called her, or woke to brighter satisfaction the household smile of Marjorie. True, they were little like modern love-letters, these grave epistles; their fervour was the fervour of devotion; their fear was, not that he should be forgotten, but that his Master might; and though they broke forth sometimes in irrestrainable confidences concerning the "dolours" of mind and estate, the prophetic fears which made him weep

over these countries, the weakness of his frame, and the estrangement of his friends, it was but in some brief and abrupt burst of tenderness, hastily uttered, and as hastily followed by sterner matter, that you could discover this "beloved sister" of the Reformer's correspondence to be his betrothed bride. But Marjorie's devout and simple heart was abundantly content. Those spiritual counsels were all needful — those warnings, those flashes of abrupt and startling earnestness were more suitable and seemly to her than a young man's protestations. Not for carnal pleasure, but for spiritual profit, she hid the letters of her future bridegroom in her pure breast; and there was something touching, too, in the grave and solemn love which, amid all its labours and tribulations, and with thoughts that aimed at no less than the Reformation of

kingdoms, could find time to turn aside, and with fond and careful exposition "open up" some obscure text, or compose an elaborate work for the comfort of these two unnoted women in this distant and inconsiderable place.

There was a strange difference in the correspondents; yet this brief letter from Alice, which her good husband took the pains, with much toil and labour, to bring to Berwick, stirred at least two hearts in the household even more warmly than the loftier teachings of John Knox.

"For my honoured lady, and dear mother," the little packet was addressed; and turning from one to the other with simple confidence. Alice wrote:—

"I have oft longed to let you know by hand of write, how we fare, and, dear lady, to pray you pardon me for not following of

your service through evil or good; but your own word was even with my mother, and Ritchie saith it is best you are not burdened. Dear mother, Ritchie hath gotten off the silly sheep at shearing time as much as will buy for us a great Bible like unto the printed Book, which Miles Dunbar uses at the readings; and oft we have a reading at the Halihill, and Ritchie being oft a whole day upon the bent, and left to his own thoughts, and God communing with him therein, is come to have a wonderful gift in prayer. Honoured lady, think not we ever miss to crave God send you back to your own dwelling in peace, or that there fails in this house a will to do aught it pleases you command. Ritchie will tell to my dearest mother much else concerning the place which I have not space to write; and commending thee, sweet lady, and thee,

dear mother, to God; who hath been very near to me,

“I rest, your loving child to command,

ALICE DUNBAR.”

How Ritchie was questioned, and how his frank and manly happiness, the almost tears with which he spoke of his little bride, charmed to him the hearts of both her lady and her mother, we need not stay to tell.

Jean Bowman has been about a refreshing occupation. In sight of the wild German ocean, and in sound of the heavy billows ringing along this rock-bound coast, with a tantalizing notion that could she but see far enough across this great crested breadth of sea, and through the air which flings about this wild salt spray, she might see the rocks of St. Andrew's, the ruined castle, and the beloved harbour of her native town.

Jean has been buying fish upon the shore. It is a boisterous morning, and her shining hair blows about her face as she turns to the wind; but Jean's eyes fall lovingly upon the silver trout, and the infant salmon's glittering mail; and her mind is away in her old haunts and at her old occupation "or ever trouble came."

But while she pursues her way, a serving man in a frayed buff coat, a steel cap, and riding boots, comes up to accost her. Though the surprise of her first glance of recognition almost brings a tear to her bright eye, Jean manages to conceal this, and glances up to him with assumed carelessness, exclaiming "Eh, Simon! poor knave, is it you?"

"You may say poor knave," said the discouraged Simon, "but you may even say as much to mair than me. Fie on him that trusts in woman! if he were King or paladin he's as poor a knave as me."

“ Whisht, lad! your love’s been hard to woo,” said Jean, with mock sympathy, “ take heart of grace, you’ll do better another time.”

“ I could find it in my heart,” said Simon, slowly, fixing his eyes on her with sullen anger, “ I could find it in my heart never to look upon your face again, a mocking quean, that laughs at a broken spirit; but I’ll be even with you yet, or a’s dune.”

“ Me!” said Jean, with a look of astonishment; “ if you have cast out with your joe, you landward loon, what odds is that to me?”

But Jean, brave as she was, shrank a little from the glow of Simon’s eye.

“ Ye may well forget wha was my love,” said Simon, with scornful pathos; “ a light memory sits weel with the like of you—when that loud loon, Jervis, at the house yonder—wears on the day I sat e’en upon the same! swears he has your trothplight, hand and

glove, to be his housewife ere the year be done."

Jean Bowman's eyes flashed fire, and it was now Simon's turn, having discharged the full force of his artillery, to quail and retreat.

"Me to be his housewife or ony ither Englishman's! me! out upon you all, loons and leears! gie me a canty fisher lad, that ca's nae man master, and kens the heart he can trust in. Jervis! fause knave and clown!—and you a silly Simmie as ever ga'ed on pilgrimage—what call had you to make a haverel of yoursel?"

Simon made no answer, but very doubtingly and wistfully looked into Jean's face.

"I'm no a worrie cow—what gars ye look at me?"

"Eh, woman, if a man could but lippen to ye!" said Simon, with glistening eyes.

"A man that has the heart of a man kens

wha to lippen to," said Jean, turning her head aside indignantly, "if ever man or woman kent Jean Bowman break faith, or fail trust they're welcome to let a' the world ken—and I want nae haffing wooers, with their starts and their fancies; no me!"

The rash Simon was completely overcome by this time. "How can a man trust ye, when ye cast him about like a ba' in your hand, and have as blythe a look, and as bright a smile for every gangrel about the doors as ye have for me? No to say driven about the land fighting and riding for life, scouring the country frae airt to airt, my lord no better than mysel—and when a man wins to biggit land, and thinks of a saucy quean could pay him a' with nae greater pains than a kind word, and a smile—woman Jean!"

But ere this remonstrance was fully spoken, Jean Bowman turned upon him in a sudden

caprice with a radiant face, and held out her hand, "Simon, poor knave!" said Simon's tormentor; but even Simon could distinguish this time the half-tone of tenderness which mixed with her mockery, and the tear which softened the laughter in her eye. Though Simon had delivered the letter he was charged with, he was very well content to return with Jean, and inflame the heart of the braggard Jervis with fierce and jealous hatred. And Simon went upon his way, humming to himself the half-invented verses of the new "ballant" which he dedicated to "the heart a man durst lippen to;" but still had an uneasy terror in his own, and would fain have kept a watchful eye on Jean Bowman, and all her scornful ways.

CHAPTER II.

“But for my daughter, Catherine, this I know,
She is not for your turn.”

TAMING OF THE SUREW.

“I do, indeed, acknowledge I have troubled you oft with this matter before,” said Mrs. Bowes; “yet bear with me, good my husband—it concerneth much the welfare of our sole remaining child.”

“Dame,” said Master Bowes, contemptuously, “thou may’st be twice a Puritan, and

yet have some thought of wisdom in thy heart. Beshrew me! 'tis said there be no keener buyers and sellers than even among your godly ones. What is this foolish preacher to thee?"

"Richard, he is to me but one beloved in the Lord," said the lady; "a most comfortable preacher—though woe is me for the little comfort it pleases God to send to mine afflicted soul!—a man of rare faith and singular gifts, by whom much blessed fruit has come to God in this land; but to thy daughter Marjorie, good husband, he is the sharer of her heart."

"I fear not for Marjorie," said the father, waving his hand impatiently, "lovelorn damsels come not of her kind. What, dame! I count not this man much younger than myself, who have been father of this house for thirty years. His race is naught, his

name is unknown, estate or wealth he is as bare of, as the winter trees are of shadow. What do I say? his very life he holds not on the sure tenure of a single day."

"Alack, what warrant hath the greatest among us?" said Mrs. Bowes; "life is in God's good hand."

"Yet this man dwells in perpetual peril," said her husband, sternly, "he hath more enemies in this realm of England than I could count thee. A wanderer and a fugitive, suspected, attainted, spied and followed, with naught but charity to shelter his own head. Woman! would you bind to this poverty your young child?"

There was not much of ancient tenderness remaining between this unressembling pair, yet the wife tried one appeal. "I thought not of houses or of lands, Richard Bowes, when I wedded thee."

“ You were even in little peril,” said her husband, with harsh scorn. “ Thyself indifferent well provided, and friends who took good heed for thee, dower and jointure. Nay, never twit me with our wooing, that time of folly is long gone by; but hark you hither, wife, you shall as soon shake the Cheviots, as you shall master me. This Gospeller shall never wed my daughter Marjorie. You hear me; I vow it on my faith.”

“ Richard Bowes,” said the lady, rising from her seat, and drawing up her lofty figure, “ Heaven knows I thought not ever to defy thee, nor do I now. Thy daughter Marjorie, being of full age and ripe discretion, besought of me, her mother and friend, counsel in the name of God—and I did say to her she had chosen well—I say again to thy face, she hath chosen well, for I may not speak but the truth, howsoever God hides his countenance

from me; whereupon they two took this charge upon their own heads, and were wedded with the blessings of one heart. I cannot grieve for it, though it trouble thee—the heart of my child was her own.”

With an angry exclamation, he started from his seat, and paced the apartment with resounding steps. “Wedded! said you wedded! false wife—unloving mother!—wedded to her own misery and shame, and in my despite—now Heaven send this sorrow could light on none but you!”

“Amen,” said the lady, with pathetic solemnity, “Amen. God knoweth well how vile I am in his sight, and in mine own—but I am not such as you say.”

Mortified, baffled, and enraged, Master Bowes continued to pace through the room, its oaken boards ringing under his hasty feet—and as she watched his disturbance,

the woman's heart of his wife melted into regret.

“But the last time we spoke of this together, methought you were ready to yield,” she said with a tremble in her voice. “Honoured husband, I pray you forgive the child, and have comfort of your heart; God has stood by his servant in many a mortal strait ere now—and the King—dear Richard, I humbly crave of you, bethink yourself—the King doth love him well.”

Master Bowes stayed his angry steps, and stood still fronting her with a bitter smile upon his face. “You have chosen an ill time for such a word,” he said with fierce calmness, “I had told you the news, but that yours were of first haste—nay, listen dame, they tell it in the public streets—the King is dead.”

And at that moment, peal upon peal, the bells of the city rung out their jubilee for the new monarch, and on the lady's stunned ear came the flourish of the herald's trumpet, and the loud proclamation at the cross—loud enough to wake the quiet echoes here—of Mary, by the grace of God, of England, France and Ireland—Queen!

Mrs. Bowes sank into her chair with a great gasp and sob, and covered her face with her hands. Few such bitter tears as those which blinded her eyes are shed for Kings—few such dismayed and terror-stricken faces as those of Marjorie and Magdalen, together looking out from the window above the porch, ever sorrowed at royal obsequies. Recovering himself with an instant sense of what was needful for his credit, as a loyal subject of the new reign, Master Bowes composed his angry

features, and went forth among the crowd. His wife stole faint and silent to her own apartment, overpowered with the public calamity which chased her own private sorrow from her mind. Alas, for Marjorie's husband and Marjorie's home! what but anguish and misfortune could visit this sad bride.

The night has fallen, but still these two who were bride and bridesmaid so lately, cling timidly together in the little apartment above the projecting porch, and gaze from the small window which admits, with the darkness, a ruddy reflection as of some great light. And it is possible for straining eyes to see the bare green slopes on the southern side of Tweed, gleaming out black and barren in the light of the bonfires which throw their wild flame up to the crimsoned skies. The wife of John Knox, and the betrothed of Paul Hepburn, bend

forward together with anxious curiosity to see the far-off crowd around these fires, the dark glitter of Tweed, and the black outlines of tower and battlement, which nod and bend with the fitful glare of this fierce illumination; and, with anxious fear, start and embrace each other the closer when sound or step approaches where they are. "It is my father, I know his tread." "Nay hush, dear Marjorie, it is but Isobel;" and Isobel softly closes the door, and comes behind them to gaze out with wistful eyes—and, with the instinct of affection, to assure herself by her own constant watch that no harm comes to her child.

"Oh for a wizard's glass to see what they bring, these dreadful years!" cried Magdalen, in the impatience of her grief and terror.

"Nay, Maidlin, Maidlin, wish not an evil

wish!" said Marjorie, weeping. "Come, help us, good Isobel, we are so faithless. Oh, I pray you, wherefore may we not believe that God can even turn the heart of this Lady Mary to be gracious to his truth? Good Isobel—kind Isobel—you know His ways longer than I—speak comfort to us, I pray you, for our hearts are faint."

"Dear lady," said Isobel, with a faltering voice, "I have seen in my travail much that was sore and evil to the flesh; many a gracious life have I seen spent with trial, and mine eyes have beheld such a saint as Mr. George, to whom the Lord gave a fiery chariot, to carry him hence to Heaven. I have seen hope fail, and hearts faint—but I never saw, dear children, when God closed his holy eyes, or did not watch for his own cause through all."

Silence fell on them as she spoke—these

solemn words suggested strange thoughts to hearts that longed and struggled in spite of their devotion, for life and happiness. There was something overpowering in the idea of life spent, of blood shed, of ages of misery—yet of the Cause—the one sublime unfailing purpose marching onward in the face of all.

CHAPTER III.

“ Let’s see these packets : the letters that he speaks of
May be my friend’s—
Leave, gentle wax ; and manners, blame us not ;
To know our enemies minds, we’d rip their hearts ;
Their papers, is more lawful.”

KING LEAR.

DECEMBER weather fell darkly upon the town of Berwick. Disastrous storms, and fogs still more perilous, wrapped the wild ocean in blind darkness, through which you could hear, but could not perceive, the fierce waves dashing up in wreaths of spray ; white mists lay thick and heavy in the bed of

Tweed; chill rains swept the streets of all cheerful passers-by; and though the hearth shone bright in the home apartment—though the lamp glimmered in the wainscot partition, and the old portraits—still the heart of the household was away, struggling under these dim skies and dreary storms, with oppressed and persecuted men. The routine of their own eventful days scarcely occupied their interest at all; and every mind among them was strained to its utmost stretch, following so far as imagination would go, and when that failed, pursuing into the farthest depths of vague anxiety and fear, the endangered lives so full of struggle, of peril, of great and desperate exertion, which had absorbed their own.

“ We had freedom of our faith but to the 20th of this instant,” said Mrs. Bowes, holding an open letter in her hand. The doors

are carefully closed, and the lady sits with her daughter and her guest alone; “yet hear but what he says—‘I may not answer your places of Scripture, nor yet write the exposition of the sixth Psalm; for every day of this week must I preach if this wicked karkase will permit.’”

“Yet many are in prison already, and they say the Queen hath put mercy fro of her heart,” said Marjorie. “Dear mother, I pray you plead with him to flee; or if he will not flee, to come hither and speak no more till better times. My father, surely—my father hath power to keep him safe, if he will?”

“Marjorie, thy father deals with me in secret to return unto antichrist,” said Mrs. Bowes, a flush of sudden pain crossing her face; “thy father would have thee and me profess the Queen’s religion, as he calleth this system of lies: trust nothing to thy father.”

“But Magdalen hath hopeful tidings out of Scotland,” said Marjorie, eager to seize upon some hope; “and Scotland is his own land, which he loves. If he fled thither he might be safe awhile. Maidlin, my mother hath not heard—tell her of this change.”

“So please you, it is but the Queen-mother hath the regency in the room of my lord of Arran,” said Magdalen. “But if this be good news, I know not, for she is no less of the Romish faith than he.”

“Mary of Guise, Mary of Guise—sister to the Cardinal”—said Mrs. Bowes. “Nay, I pray you, what mercy should a noted Gospeller—one that hath withstood unto the edge of death, and who will withstand till he breathes no more—I pray you, what kindness could come at her hands to such as him?”

There was a long pause; they were all deeply depressed and discouraged; and only

Marjorie, who could not refrain from attempts at comfort, still continued looking out wistfully from the sadness which enveloped the others, to seek for some possible deliverance still.

While they sat thus in heavy silence, the door was opened abruptly, and Master Bowes strode in with an angry step. His wife still held the letter in her hand, and though she put it up without delay, she could not permit herself to conceal that she had it, but held it still in her closed fingers where her husband could not fail to see it.

With an impatient exclamation he seated himself by the table.

“Look you, dame!” said Master Bowes—
“mine own temper tends not to gloom, yet I have borne with your dolours for many a day. I have borne with priests and peevish religioners about my house. Nay, I have even

been constrained to bear with my daughter, wedded to the very chief and leader of the same; but I will not be made a laughing-stock to mine own peers. Think it not—it is more than I will abide, by my soul!”

Mrs. Bowes listened to him at first with a pang of fear, and lips firmly compressed as with resolution, while her face grew even paler than its wont, if that was possible; but before he ended, astonishment took the place of deeper emotion; and she answered him softly without either self-defence or anger.

“Honoured husband, none may mourn like me, that in mind and thought we two have drifted so far apart—yet God is my witness, I never shamed you, nor by word or deed sought aught but your honour. I need not to stand a culprit, in my own behalf—I am known to many—let me be judged by whom you will.”

“A woman of good, a matron of noble estate”—said the husband impatiently, “yet this preacher must even discourse of your sins, as if you were the vilest in the common gait. Hark you, dame Elizabeth—brag of your virtues if you will—you have enow, I warrant me, for thee and me; make much of your charities—your faith—your holy deeds, but I pray you spare this country your moans of penitence. What! you falter at the last? Think you how I bore me among knights and gentlemen, when this knave Knox’s letters, which we deemed to carry secrets of state were brought forth in counsel, and found to be nought but certain advices to my wife and to my child, touching their spiritual comfort and the estate of their soul!”

“And I pray you, most worshipful and honoured husband,” said Mrs. Bowes with a momentary gleam of indignation, “how

came such worthless gear into your noble council's hands?"

"The council is awake, mistress—the council is on the watch, tracking the steps of heretics—and from the hand of this traitorous priest's own messenger were these epistles taken. Daughter Marjorie, I bethink me there were certain love tokens for thee."

Marjorie could make no answer to the scornful tone of this, but was silent and wept, taking care, so far as possible, in due estimation for her husband, to hide her tears from her father. Unconsciously Magdalen kept her eyes upon him, with an indignant spectator glance, which checked this man in spite of himself; and on the lofty countenance of his wife, offence and anxiety strove with resignation; the lady found it hard to forget even with all her real Christian humility, and all the deep self-abasement of her spiritual despair,

that she *was* a lady still, and had been subjected to insult—a woman of repute, and exposed in her most secret confidences to the light laughter of the world.

“ I pray you, wife and daughter, be prudent in your writing,” said Master Bowes, as he prepared to leave the room; “ think not a knave of my household may have a safer journey than this preacher’s messenger—my household is under watch and suspicion, and I would not have you, women, dragged forth to proclaim your faith at the market cross; look to yourselves—if ye meddle more, not all my services shall hold you excused.”

When he was gone, Mrs. Bowes, moved to unusual agitation, hurriedly went and came through the room, wringing her hands, and wavering as it seemed between determination to send off immediately another messenger, and terror lest this was impossible. Her little

silver whistle was in her hand, and many times she had raised it to her lips—but her hand fell before the call sounded, and she turned again quickly from the table, and dashed from her eyes some burning tears. Much chastened by the troubles of her spirit, this lady was still of that vehement nature which makes the sense of her own impotence in a great emergency so insupportable to a woman. She might not ride forth boldly herself, as she had indeed heart and courage to do, through the perils which she shrank from exposing another to—and she could only wring her hands again, and unwillingly yield to the hot tears of distress and impatience which gathered upon her cheek.

But Magdalen sat watching all this scene with eager interest and animation. Hastily advancing to Mistress Bowes, she took her

hand and led her back to her seat. The lady submitted with silent surprise; but there was a visible something to be done in the face of Magdalen, and she sat down, retaining her young guest's hand in her own with an almost appeal "What would you say, my child?"

"You have cherished us for many a day—now we may serve you in time of need," said Magdalen. "Weep not, dear Marjorie, I will find you a messenger—she shall go forth ere an hour has past."

"My child, you are young and brave of heart, I see your enterprise in your eye," said Mrs. Bowes, "but it may not be—it may not be—speak of it no more."

"It is not I!" said Magdalen, with a burst of envious tears, "I would rather than a crown it was I; but fear not, I mean another. I have one with me who has done many a

perilous errand ere now ; she is bold and ready, quick of wit, and true of heart. Prep re me your letters, dear lady—Jean will carry them safer than a man-at-arms.”

“ Jean? thy woman, child!” Mrs. Bowes was struck with sudden disappointment. “ Nay, this may not be.”

“ I will answer for her as for myself, and she is braver, stronger, and of a bolder soul than I. You have no choice, I will call her here.”

When Magdalen hastened from the room, the mother and daughter turned to each other with quick consultation of looks. “ She says well, we have no choice,” said Mrs. Bowes. “ Let us venture on it, faint though the hope be.”

Marjorie had scarcely time to assent, when Magdalen, quick and excited, re-entered, followed somewhat bashfully by Jean, who

scarcely lifting her bright eyes as she made her courtesy, stood, holding her hands within each other to keep them still, something too near the door for the confidential conference to which she was admitted.

Mrs. Bowes fixed her eyes steadily upon Jean. The somewhat proud elevation of the head which followed, the increasing colour, and the air of quick dissatisfaction with this scrutiny, which slightly contradicted Jean's air of profound respect, did not seem to displease the scrutinizer. "Come nearer, I pray you," she said anxiously. "Damsel, your lady has told you of this perilous errand—but think well, if you will not be afraid."

"Affrayed! Madam, my name is Jean Bowman, a fisher lass, out of Fife," said Jean, promptly, and with a curtesy of defiance.

Not quite perceiving how this bore upon

her question, but still more satisfied with the spirit of the messenger, the lady proceeded. “Maiden, this godly man is of thine own land, and of the persecuted faith—thou owest him instruction in thine own person—he is pursued of many enemies, he is parted from those he loves best, afflicted in his body, troubled in his soul. My dear child Marjorie is his wedded wife—his letters are intercepted on the way—his life in constant peril—”

“Say nae mair, lady, say nae mair,” cried Jean, ashamed of the tears that came dropping on her arms, and lifting her sparkling eyes to the speaker’s face, “Lady Maidlin has said she answered for me. I fear naething in such an errand, neither priest nor bogle—far less common men. I’m as strong as any knave in this country for thretty guid miles of gait, between morn and e’ening, and I

naething doubt I can mock Southland speech,
as well as beguile the like of them. I'll but
do on my hood and my mantle, and hie me
away."

CHAPTER IV.

“ But this exceeding posting, day and night,
Must wear your spirits low: we cannot help it:
But since you have made the days and nights as one,
To wear your gentle limbs in my affairs,
Be bold, you do so grow in my requital,
As nothing shall unroot you.”

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.

IT were easy to tell what a restless prison this house became forthwith to the three anxious women at its head, and scarcely less to Isobel, in whom Mrs. Bowes found an unlooked for comforter; how Marjorie and Magdalen wan-

dered about the garden and turning with sickening weariness from their usual occupations could not be still, except now and then in those heavy intervals of reverie from which they awoke to impatience more intolerable than ever; how Isobel waited on the elder lady in that sacred retirement of her chamber which no other attendant might enter, and for love of her own mistress, and for love of the truth, served her with punctilious regard, and ministered to her distress; how the crackling of the log upon the hearth, the falling of the ashes, the creaking of the oaken boards in these dark passages, made every heart leap, and how they were perpetually finding footsteps in the darkness—footsteps ever approaching which never reached the door.

But no later than the third day, long after night had fallen, Isobel entered hastily the

family sitting room and quickly called to her the young ladies seated there. They followed her without a moment's delay to the apartment of Mrs. Bowes—and Marjorie caught at Magdalen's arm in terror, as placed full in the light, flakes of snow melting upon her mantle and wetting her hair, her face flushed with her late struggle against the wind, and her eyes shining with some great news to tell, they suddenly came upon Jean Bowman, standing before the kindly hearth.

This room was large and low like all the rest, and had doors leading from it at all the corners, here into a little closet made for no other purpose, as it seemed, but to hold a great window, against which the snow was drifting white, and there into a dark passage leading to a nest of small apartments where the servants were lodged. The bed of state, with its heavy silken hangings and funereal plumes

stood by the wall in the middle of the room, and a round plate of burnished steel, the only mirror here, rested on the top of a carved oak cabinet between the windows. The room was hung with old and faded tapestry, and a large mat, woven of straw, lay under the lady's footstool, spread before the hearth. Mrs. Bowes herself sat in a great chair before the fire, with a warm cloak of quilted satin drawn over her shoulders above her perpetual dress of black velvet—for the night was very cold.

Jean was speaking when they entered, and Marjorie hastily left the arm she had clung to, and crossing the room with a rapid and noiseless step, seated herself silently upon her mother's footstool, and clasping her hands looked up in Jean's face. Jean made no pause to do reverence to the new comers, but with true and ready perception felt that she served

them better, by proceeding steadily with her tale.

“ I was twenty mile upon my gait, and the night was wild—so I knitted my bundle firmer to my hand, and said to mysel’, I had best take thought and rest, the better to speed my errand, for I would do little service to the lady, and ill would serve the man of God, if I lighted on a sinking moss, or fell among foes in a December night; so I settled with mysel’ if I came to a change house, or a shepherd’s sheiling, to crave a night’s lodging there. I had but even made up my mind, when I heard a tramp of horse upon the road, and through the mirk came voices—ane that I behoved to ken. I gathered me up by a whin bush, and said a’ the prayer I might, no to be deceived by the enemy—and or I was done, the light of the moon striving through a cloud came down upon the road. Lady, ye

may think I was glad—the air was clear with frost, and I heard far, for a' their speech was quiet, like men that ride in an adversary's land; but ere they came to the moonlight, I kent the word of Mr. John."

Marjorie clasped her hands still more closely together, and a low cry came from her lips. Jean had only paused to take breath, she spoke so rapidly, and in an instant her voice resumed.

"And I kent by his word," said Jean, "that he was nae prisoner among the hand of thae priests and villains, but a free man, haulding his ain with them that counselled him. As soon as I was assured of that, I steppit forth into the light. I'm no a mim maid, I humbly crave your pardon, lady," said Jean, holding down her head; "but this was nae time to be concerned what ony man should think of me. I steppit into their gait,

and put up my hand to grip the bridle of the horse that pushed upon me with his mouth in foam. ‘My lady sends me with tidings,’ said I; ‘stop for your life, if Mr. John be here!’”

“The first man ca’ed me ‘a mad quean,’ the second thrust his beast upon me to put me from the way. My blood was up, and I wasna to be daunted. But Mr. John cried, ‘Hold!’ and looked to me. He bade me tell who was my lady, and quick, for he had nae idling time; and I said your name, madam, and put the letters in his hand—though it was ill to win at them,” said Jean, with a blush, and momentary faltering “done in my boddice as they chanced to be.

“A knave behind them struck a light, and Mr. John read the papers through with as quick a glance, as if he kent already what it was they had to say. The gentlemen

gathered about him then, and there was a contest, which for the strongest, with their reason, and their words.

“ ‘I maun on—I maun on;’ this was what Mr. John said. ‘I may not leave my own flesh in doubt and terror. Nay, nay, I could not die in a better quarrel—let me go.’

“Then the gentlemen closed about him, and would not let him go. I could see he was like, with his guid horse, to break through the ring and take to the road, and leave their words to the dark whins and the mournful moon. And ane said ae thing and ane anither, and they held Mr. John and troubled his spirit, till I saw he would be blythe to cast them a’ into the ditch, for a’ sae godly a man he is, and gang upon his way. I up and spake again, I was sae bauld—I had nae warrant, but I could-na stand bye and see a brave man come back to be betrayed. I said—“ my Lady

Maidlin bade me pray your honour's reverence at no hand to come to yon place of strife again—for them you ken are in jeopardy for their awin faith, and might not succour you; and it were better to weep for hopeful banishment than to weep for the dead that ne'er come back again." I wasna wurdy to speak a word in such a presence," said Jean with downcast eyes," but Mr. John took note of me—there was but a word or twain said mair, and before I kent, I was lifted behind a serving knave, and the faces of the beasts turned to the sea. The night was mirk before and black behind—whiles a gleam out of the sky like a ghost light in a kirk yard, or the flash of a gun in a black night; and the wind rushing strong ower dreary braes, and burns that moaned at ilka turn of the gait, and blackened trees and rustling whins by the roadside—but how we ga'ed or how lang we

ga'ed, Lady, I canna tell. I ken just this, it seemed to me like the dawning, when I saw the moon light on a far away glimmering line, low upon the sky—but soon I heard a kent voice, I've lain and listened to many a night at hame—and my heart drew breath now, close upon the sea."

A momentary pause again—you can see now as the shadow of Marjorie's pretty head stooping lower and lower, removes from her mother's knee, that Mrs. Bowes holds an unopened letter in her hand, and her eyes, intent upon Jean, follow every motion with a strain of breathless interest. Taking breath—hurried as she has been by the rising force of her own feelings, Jean resumes:—

"They took me to their hostel and bade me rest—my head was dizzy, and my limbs faint. I durst not set forth to take the road again, or my errand had been lost, and Mr.

John himself was pleased to speak with me. ‘Rest, damsel,’ he said, ‘as all maun rest—lang travel is ill for young blood—and on the morrow ye sall carry my farewells hame.’ With that he gave a heavy sigh, and I saw he left his heart in this land.”

A slight sound disturbed the narrative—it was only Marjorie, whose head had drooped upon her clasped hands, and from whose breast there came a sob of mingled emotion. Turning her eyes so full of loving pity upon the young wife of the Reformer, Jean went on once more:—

“I woke not on that morrow till the day was far spent, and when I woke I was constrained to tarry till the ship put forth to sea. Lest I should spy upon them, certain of the gentleman were evil enow of heart to say—but that I might bear you certain news of his last setting forth, said Mr. John. It was nigh night when

he was gone—he sailed with a fair wind and a calm sea, and the sun setting in a red sky, boding good. I staid another night, for the place was in a manner a kent place—and I set forth upon my gate this day—and Lady, the letter is intill your hand, and I am here.”

At these last words, Marjorie started with a faint cry, “I would thou should first hear her tale, dear child,” said her mother tenderly—but the letter was already in her eager hands.

Magdalen and Isobel standing together behind the group at the hearth had listened with scarcely less interest than theirs. Worn out and lost in momentary forgetfulness, Jean Bowman remained still in her place, looking down with a singular glance of compassion and tenderness on the fair young Englishwoman. At Magdalen’s light touch on her shoulder she started with great confusion and a violent blush.

“I minded nought of where I was,” murmured Jean; and with a downcast face she followed her lady out of the apartment. They left the young wife and her mother to their own immediate gratitude and grief, and went together to the chamber of Magdalen to refresh the traveller there, and hear her perils over again.

No three could have been more completely different than these: the young lady with her noble blood, her delicate grace, her high sensitive imaginative spirit; the stately bower-woman of lineage as spotless, and name as honest, in her lower degree, and with all her noble qualities, a mother and protection wherever her presence came; and this brave, impassioned fisher-lass, with heart so stout and mind so pure. Many a strong tie of common peril, common hope, and life united them. Like members of one family they

gathered together about this hearth—but neither her own love, nor theirs—neither the services they had rendered her, nor the strong regard she showed them, could tempt either Isobel or Jean to forget that this gentle girl, who was so ready to minister to them in her turn, was the Lady Maidlin, the mistress at once, and the ideal, woman whom both served in their heart.

CHAPTER V.

“ A gentleman of credit, noble, honest,
And true as his own sword.”

OLD PLAY.

“ EVEN while we speak then, Mr. John may be on his way?”

“ Is on his way, I doubt not,” said the voice of Paul Hepburn, its tone of hopeful confidence undiminished by all the lingering

night of dreariness and toil through which he had waited for the slow unwilling dawn; “for when was he a laggard when Scotland might be served, or the word made known?”

“I know not,” said the noble and simple Glencairn, “how the Regent may bear herself—but this I know, if the preacher trusts him intil our hands and upon our warranty, she sall set my head upon her gates, ere she meddle one that trusted me. Fie, gentlemen!—Kyle and Cunninghame were even over blythe of such a quarrel; we have the old Lollard seed among us in the west.”

“I know little of your Lollard seed, my lord,” said a gentleman, whose assured and unpretending dignity did honour to the rank he held as one of those long-descended, but untitled nobles who hold so important a part in the history of Scotland; “but there has been a troubler of the people abroad among

the gentlemen of Mearns, and I doubt nothing the Gospel shall have as ready a welcome across the Tay as in your wilds of the west."

"The wilds of the west are beholden to the Laird of Dun," said the Earl; "but I trust to show the preacher, and yourself withal, if it please you, as fair an orchard in Clydesdale as all your brave Carse may yield."

"I would I rather saw in both a harvest ground," said the mild and intellectual Erskine, "to gather in full store to the heavenly garners — that were the golden fruit."

"Ay, or a field of even contest if the other might not be," said Paul Hepburn. "I would not shed kindly blood, Heaven is my witness, even for the faith and freedom; but I blush not to say, I would try a good Scottish straik

on a French crown with right hearty will, or chase the locusts to sea-board, if I rade for it night and day. Fair sirs, it is a fell chance when the governance of a distracted country falls into alien and unkindly hands.”

“ Fie, Hepburn! touch you the honour of our ancient ally?” said a young courtier with a low laugh of polished contempt. The speaker was young, but had craft and counsel already in the high pale forehead under which his doubtful eyes rose and fell with restrained brilliancy. Beside the bold and candid faces at his side, and fronting the manly mildness of Erskine, all the more notable was the subtile and almost shrewish intellect of this youth’s face, and his own evident acquaintance with the powers and faculties which obeyed, a well drilled squadron, the mastery of their commander’s will.

“ Our ancient ally gripped to my hand so

lovingly, that it bears the tokens still of her embrace," said Paul, looking upon the broad palm, in whose hard lines were unfailing mementos of the galley oars. "I owe her once a good grasp in return."

"An ye can ever spirit the loons to stand a fair onslaught, count upon the men of Kyle, and count on me, Hepburn," said Glencairn, eagerly; "do they think us malapert lads, I marvel, in the land of Scotland, that we must even thole a foreign guard about our native throne?"

"My Lord of Glencairn has wisdom in his eye," said the former speaker, the young Maitland of Lethington, "his vision reaches no farther than to the royal footstool; beyond is but a vision of authority—he asks not what its race may be."

"The Regent is a royal lady, and mother to our native mistress," said Glencairn, with

a momentary flash of anger on his brow, "if she drives the men of this realm to reckon her blood and pedigree, let her look to the issue; it will neither be sweet nor fair, nor meet for a lady's hand."

"Noble sirs, we had better hear how the country is minded to the truth, than have breaking of spears among ourselves, brother to brother," said Erskine; "and here is one will show us fairly what saith the four airts to the Gospel of our faith."

"Friends," said Paul Hepburn, "there are among you who have knowledge how my life hath been, since it pleased the Lord extinguish our poor torch in yonder castle of St. Andrew's, and send us darkling on our way. Furth of our sore bondage coming to the kingdom of England, it fell to my lot to bear one errand and another to yourselves, noble knights and gentlemen, and to others of

the best blood in Scotland. I am born a man of the sword by my race and my degree, and have neither voice to persuade my peers, nor wit nor learning to win them to my way. I have but come and gone, striving for freedom and the truth; and this I say, fair sirs, as all my tidings. The morning and the night are at strife in the sky. I cannot point to great lights like stars in a firmament. Greater professors are none in Scotland, and few that can equal in degree, yourselves who are present here; but I say to you, not stars but dawn—not the lights of the night, but the glimmer of the rising day, is abroad over this land. Secret labourers long have been astir—now, brave lords and nobles—now to lift the banner high, full in all Scotland's sight!—and I promise you the victory is sure for the truth, and swift as you could hope."

"Have my hand, Hepburn," said Glen-

cairn; "I may not be extreme of wit, more than thyself; but for what a man may do, I am for thee, ill or well."

"And I for all that may further God's everlasting truth," said Erskine, solemnly.

"And I, as far as you shall persuade me," said the half-satirical Lethington. "Marry, I have a peevish knave, called reason, ever twitcheth at my sleeve; but advise him of your enterprise, good Langley, and I am not hard to win."

"In a fair hour here comes another persuader than I," said Paul Hepburn, standing back from the opening door.

Gaunt and worn with long fatigue and journeying, the lines of his face almost black upon its pallor, John Knox abruptly entered the apartment. Pausing almost as abruptly when he perceived the persons present, he raised his hand mechanically as if to uncover

his head. "I crave the pardon of this fair company," said the Reformer, "I am but new arrived, and was advertised I should see none but mine old comrade here."

"We have waited for your coming; these be gentlemen true to the faith," said Paul Hepburn, as he exchanged with Knox the silent restrained, but fervent greeting which was all they could permit themselves—and he named to him rapidly my Lord of Glencairn, the Laird of Dun, and young Lethington. In Erskine, Knox found an old friend—but the others were strangers.

The wearied Reformer sought refuge for his fatigue in an elbow chair—the others stood round him an interested group. "I have been at rest these two years since my flight out of England," said Knox; "I even hold this the sole time in my memory where peace hath abode, albeit troubled by the

feuds of Frankfort, and jealousies of the English brethren. Yet now I crave of you, Right Honourable, how is it with you?"

"I pray you come with me to Kyle, and your own eyes shall see," exclaimed Glencairn.

"Mine old acquaintance, I have your prior promise," said Erskine; "your step will ring forth Angus and the Mearns like a kirk bell. A bold voice and a true Gospel—I ask naught more to set the north astir."

"My Lords, you reckon ill," said the prudent Lethington, "I count him a poor physician who will put warmth to foot and hand when the heart is chill; I say not whether souls are most precious in the Mearns or in Kyle, but I say in truth that this man of God shall best stir Scotland, which I reckon to be what we aim at, by prior discourse here in this town of Edinburgh, with whosoever may

be near to hear. Let the pulse be in the heart, gentlemen, ere ye tempt the extremer parts."

"There is Lothian longs for the preacher no less than the north and the west," said Paul Hepburn; "in mine own halls my ancient kinsman, the Tutor of Langley, could gather many a noble gentleman to hear the truth; but Lethington counsels well—let us first stir the heart of Scotland—the beginning of a true warfare is here."

"And this Lady Governor, the Regent, what is her frame?" said John Knox.

"She bears herself warily—courts one and another of the Reformed—promiseth to this, and lulls the other out of fear," said Erskine. "I think indeed she may be looked for to give us no disturbance."

"I admire this lady," said Lethington, with a contemptuous smile, "and still more do I admire this devout simplicity which

taketh not her craft; she would have a certain thing of this kingdom, reverend sir. Such a bauble as the crown for yonder boy-king in France—and a sweetmeat and caress are well expended that buy consent from one of the estates of the realm.”

“ I know not how far it lies within our duty to hear the husband of our royal mistress so named,” said the blunt and true Glencairn, “ we are not here to discuss the policy of state, but how the truth may be spread in the land; if need is for the other anon—but I forestal it not.”

“ I count not on remaining long among you,” said Knox, after a pause, rising and throwing his cloak from him, as if in preparation for the work, “ but being here, I am ready for aught, and assuredly count on lifting my voice in Edinburgh, wheresoever else the trumpet may sound. I bid you at ten of

the clock to-morrow to my first expounding in this place—and for this day, good my lords and noble gentlemen, the flesh is faint and craveth rest.”

CHAPTER VI.

“ We dwell alone
A household of sad women, vowed to patience,
Yet fearing treachery in the very sound
Of our own footsteps—betrayal in our breath.”

A LADY sits upon the hearth alone; the faint light of the February sunset flashes with a watery gleam of red in the wainscot partition. The clouds afar upon the chill blue sky, like travellers belated, look down wistfully upon this hearth and home, and

sway about within the range of the great bay window as if something were here that needed watching. The lawn of the little garden is drenched with rain, the first chill snowdrop hangs its head upon the dark and mournful soil, and even the holly branches hang loose, and now and then cast down a hard and thorny leaf out of their waving hands. Signs of domestic work are nowhere to be seen within. The tapestry is removed, the bright silks no longer lie catching the light upon the table. The furniture is undisturbed in its regularity, footstool and chair calm in their appointed place, and everything that tells of life or occupation has been carried away.

And idly, with passive hands clasped upon her lap—with vacant eyes watching the slow consuming flame—with her foot monotonously moving upon the hearth, this solitary site

and muses by herself. Passing steps go with a hushed sound here and there about the distant passages, and die away in dreary echoes—sometimes a foot will stir above—sometimes a bold Robin dash against the window, attracted by its light. This lady never puts aside the folds of her mourning veil, nor stirs the heavy drapery of her long black dress to show any interest, but sits like an enchanted being spell-bound and tranced under this heavy calm.

Yet the brightness of youth shines still in those sweet visionary eyes, and the pure soft rounded cheek and the beautiful outline of the clasped hands say nothing of wasting grief or sickness. But the moments pass over her unnoted, and you would think it strange could you see how little progress her thoughts make, and how they never get beyond their starting point—but are chilled and checked

with a dreary awe and languor, even like her frame.

There is a man's foot of which she takes no note in the passage without, and a man's hand it is that trembles on the door—most eager to enter, yet afraid—for one cannot come into this house without feeling that sorrow is here, and love ever trembles for its own. If harm has come to Magdalen Hepburn, this stranger will never hope again.

“Maidlin, Maidlin—safe, dear heart!” those are Paul Hepburn's wet eyes, which she wakes with a start to find covered by her own hand, and himself is kneeling before her, not in any worship or homage, but with this strong yearning manly tenderness, which could bear any evil in the world rather than the sight of Magdalen's grief. She can not refuse an answer to the earnest question in

his eyes. "Nought has befallen me; Paul, kinsman—you have been so long away."

It is best to say nothing now till the failing heart is assured a little; yet Paul says much, which Magdalen only hears like music, inarticulate and full of comfort, but pours forth her heart to him in irrestrainable complaint.

"Oh to be away!—our hearts are sick of horror. I cannot look on sky or earth but they are red—nothing but terror and blood, and the assaults of the enemy. The hills were innocent when I was there. Oh to be at home!"

"Maidlin, dear heart!"

"I have never dared be impatient till now," cried Magdalen, clasping her hands, "because I did not dare to hope. I thought nothing but this frightful cloud would swallow us all, and I should never see your face again. Nay, not when Mr. John came hither

and their hearts were glad; but now—hush! alas! why should I speak of me? Death has been here. He who put us to the torture, yet who was our shield, and kept the law and the Queen's mercy from his house—he is dead.”

“ Master Bowes?—was he a man to love, my Maidlin,” said Paul, “ that you weep for him thus?”

“ I know not why I weep, but for terror and distress, and because my heart faints,” said Magdalen. “ I have seen him day by day; I cannot choose but weep—most for the living—for they are well who die.”

“ Hear me, Maidlin,” said Paul Hepburn; “ if danger and terror were such evil things, what make you of me, who take them to mine arms, whenever I sleep? and if it were well to die, think you I should find it hard to light upon some common sworder, who would win

him a purse of gold pieces with the heretic's head? but I hold it a nobler thing to live, good faith, spite of all those grim companions that dwell at bed and board with me. What! think you the stoutest fiend of Satan's company were well to mell with him, whose shout and battle-cry is the name of the Lord."

The brightening eyes looked up in his face with the triumphant pride of love.

"You are a man, and brave," said Magdalen—and a glow of exulting courage came to her heart with the words.

"The purer the heart, the braver the soul," said Paul. "I will not seek a Hepburn and a woman, when I seek a coward; but Maidlin, it needs not longer you should tarry here; be assured Mr. John will seek another home for wife and mother, and I will abide till I may convey you hence. Maidlin, you know not what dawn of hope I have seen;

the day rises on our Scotland. We will stretch forth our arms to all fugitives anon, and even now it is safe for you."

Magdalen put up her hands to hide the burst of joyful tears which she could not restrain.

"I see it, a faithful land, a liege and loyal country—I see it free as it is fair!" said Paul, with such an effusion of feeling as he seldom permitted himself, "and I see such a home therein as shall be a haven and heaven for all my weariness—it were but a miserable soul could faint at trouble, striving for Scotland and for thee!"

Many a day had passed since the household heard a step so light as this which ascended its narrow stairs, and threaded its gloomy passages in the twilight of this night. Isobel sadly seated in her own apartment rose from her work with sudden expectation as it

approached—and when the light foot of Magdalen passed, seeking the apartment of Mrs. Bowes, her anxious attendant looked out along the passage with a yearning glance. “It might be some deliverance,” said Isobel to herself, but at that moment she heard below the subdued but familiar tones of Paul Hepburn’s voice, and returned into her room, and closed her door with a sickness at her heart. For Isobel pined for her child, and her own country—and the long dreariness and solitude of a house and time so oppressed as these were, had brought that weakness of longing upon Isobel, which suggested a faint and sickening hope in every sound; for they had now been six years in this banishment—and Mary’s reign was a night-mare over England. With a long sigh she took her work again, and steadied her trembling hand. “Dear child, woe be to me when I am not

glad that thou art glad!" said Isobel—but through her tears she saw her sweet Alice far away, and her own familiar home—and wearied and faint at heart, she prayed with moving lips, and a half-audible voice. The wife could see her husband—the lover his betrothed bride—but nothing brought to the yearning mother her only child.

There was a sound of voices in the room where Magdalen had gone—a confusion of sounds like mingled tears, and an inarticulate, almost hysterical noise of laughter. Then the door opened, and more than one step came forth; Isobel listened with such an acute and strained ear, that she fancied she could hear their very breath.

"And thou had'st thy good news too, dear Maidlin?—thank God for us all!" said the sweet and tremulous voice of Marjorie. "Oh,

who is wonderful as He, who makes evil good before our face?—that my honoured husband should bid us come to him, and thy kind kinsman offer us good guarding on the same blessed day !”

They parted there, and Magdalen approached, involuntarily breaking into a little breath of song. Isobel rose and laid her hands upon the door-post. A film of blindness came over her eyes—was this dreary probation ending at last?

Jean Bowman's arms are folded into her apron, and the February twilight pales Jean Bowman's cheek. If one could but see in this uncertain light, it might be possible to catch the glitter of the tear which this February chill has brought to Jean Bowman's eye. But she leans back against the wall of the court-yard in defiance, and will not bate

a jot of her old pride for all the weariness at her heart.

“ Poor loon !” said Jean, with mock sympathy, “ the like of you, bred to naething but papping at birds and wearied deer out ower the safe wa’ of Lammerstane Tower—its like to be little comfort of a hard riding life that ye’ve come at now.”

“ I get sma’ comfort in this airt,” said Simon, disconsolately.

“ It’s no for me to put forward mysel,” said Jean, “ but I’m sure as far as a puir lass’s word can go, ye may aye get compassion at my hand—and ye should have mair, lad, if I had my will.”

“ Mair?—the like of you should aye have your will,” exclaimed the eager Simon; “ and a’ Scotland kens its aye my vow that there’s ne’er a ane, east nor west, to marrow with my

gallant quean on the side of Tweed! Compassion's cauld—what would ye gie me mair?"

"Naething less than my mantle and my housewifeskep," cried Jean, with a laugh; "a' to change with your jack and bonnet, and a ransom for your riding horse, and ower the hills and away. Hurra! I would daur the bauldest rider to follow me, if I were ower the March again!"

Simon did not answer immediately, though his stormy eye was turned full upon Jean's face.

"I ken not wherefor a man should aye come back to you to be mocked and lightlied," said Simon, his look of disappointment and sullen anger changing into wistfulness as it dwelt upon her; "but weel I wist I'll just do the same to my dying day—and just as ready to bow to your very feet at the first

smile, as if I had ne'er stood the brunt of an ill word. Eh, woman! maybe you'll sometime ken what it is to give a' your heart and life, and get naething but a jest to make amends!"

Jean Bowman flashed upon him a startled glance. "Lad, you would make a grand waiting damsel," she began with a laugh, but suddenly stopping, broke forth into tears. "I'll mock ye nae mair, Simon — an I can refrain," said Jean, with a broken mixture of laughter and weeping; "how was I to ken you were in earnest?—the like of you that's drawn a lang bow a' your days."

The case was hopeless; but Simon, much elated, took the best view.

"Do you think *I* heed a guid mock?—no me," said the valorous archer; "say it's in love and no in mischief, and jest till the day's done."

"In love?—out, ye loon!" cried Jean, flying

with a sudden start within the nearest door. And the luckless Simon heard the gay ring of her laugh retreating through the passage, as his own hasty advance brought his hand with a rasping chill upon the bare stones of the court-yard wall.

CHAPTER VII.

“Come, come, let's see him out at gates: come!”

CORIOLANUS.

BUT the next day Simon and Jean lovingly passed the Scots Gate together, and at intervals thereafter others of the household followed. Ere night fell, the whole little fugitive party—for they deemed it safest to depart with great caution and secrecy, though

they hardly called their departure a flight—were safely housed without the walls, part in the house of a friend of the Bowes family, and part at the little wayside inn which Paul had been in the habit of using in his journeys to and fro. The short days of winter left no great space for travelling through a country so wild; but the slow morning broke upon a rare glimpse of sunshine and fair skies, and they set forth betimes on the following day.

So large a number of women, and so slender an escort, made their band rather too remarkable for perfect safety; but Mrs. Bowes mourned for poor brave Jean Bowman, who seemed to have dropped behind by some unaccountable chance, and anxiously inquired of Magdalen if the young gallant who had joined their party was a friend of their kinsman. “I love not to mark a youth so

shy of meeting an honest glance," said the lady, with trouble on her brow. "I did but look back even now to count our train, my child, and not to say he hath his bonnet slouched upon his eyes, his cloak was suddenly wrapped about his face that I might not espy it. These garments, too, are of a strange fantastic fashion. I have not seen the like since myself was young. I pray you inquire concerning him, good Isobel, whence he comes. Alas, if we are spied!"

"We are not spied, madam; my kinsman takes order for our journey," said Magdalen, with a voice which trembled slightly. Mrs. Bowes perfectly at a loss to know whence this trembling came, imputed it to anger, and was displeased.

"A frowning brow becomes not a young maiden, Mistress Maidlin," she said, with gravity. "I mean no evil—and be thou ware

how thou givest place to wrath: they who lie under the hand of God should even be free from the offence of man."

"Maidlin means but a jest, dear mother, for the gallant is known to her," interposed Marjorie; "but look you hither—what riders be these?"

They were no other than Border riders, the least desirable whom this little party could meet; and Paul, who rode in front, was already in parley with their leader.

Mrs. Bowes was naturally a woman of high spirit and courage. She drew her young charge and her daughter close to her on either side—in a firm but low voice called to their attendants to follow them closely, and again turned a suspicious eye upon the stranger gallant, who showed a very decided inclination to keep behind, and held his cloak about him after a fashion, which made it clear

he had no overpowering desire to draw his sword.

“If they engage,” said the lady, with the coolness of a woman, Border bred, “they are but four to three—we will set our horses to their mettle, children, and pass if we may. Spare not for a leap or stumble—better tear a riding skirt or bruise a finger, than fall into the hands of the reivers of the Merse. Fie, on that laggard—will he never to the front?”

One of these same reivers of the Merse echoed Mrs. Bowes loudly, calling upon the reluctant youth behind. After many feints this unwilling hero at length came forward, but after a very unwarlike fashion, and with a horse suddenly grown restive. The swords of the others had already clashed—between terror and excitement the little crowd of women thronged together with no space on the road for flight. The wrathful eye of

Mrs. Bowes blazed upon the tardy fighter, but just when her indignation was at its height he suddenly started with a wild cry, half-shout, half-scream, and plunging in a most unmannerly fashion upon his adversary with the whole weight of a strong horse already exasperated by many a device of mischief, thrust the astonished Border Centaur, horse and man, over the slippery edge of mud and grass into a ditch well defended by thorns and brambles, which crept in a strong current some good distance below. The road was cleared thus far—and the unknown gallant with a great spring forward, and a voice trembling between fright and exultation called loudly to the women, “Ladies, Ladies, quick to the road.”

Mechanically imitating Mrs. Bowes, whose spirit never failed her, the younger ladies pressed their horses forward, and flew along

the further way. Straggling and frightened the attendants followed them, knowing how to fly by instinct—but to the continued disgust of the lady, the stranger youth—though he kept last of all—showed quite as good a heart to the flight as any woman there. The booty being out of reach, and Paul's arm of stout mettle ringing perilously upon the leader of the foe—not to speak of the groans and curses of the hapless cavalier in the ditch—there ensued a parley. A little passage of arms was a prepossessing introduction—there was little to be gained by continuing the warfare—and the ladies had not gone far upon their way ere they were rejoined by their breathless escort, little injured in person, and considerably invigorated in spirit, by this wayside interlude; but Paul Hepburn did not think it advisable to risk such encounters again, and by many a rugged bridle path

where they only could ride in single file—a long procession—he conducted them at last in safety to Lammerstane, where they were to pass the night.

“Isobel, tarry for me,” cried Magdalen, as steadily resisting all the influence of associations, she conducted her guests into her own hall—a scene somewhat singular made itself visible here; closely wrapped in his velvet cloak, with his sword laid down upon the floor, and his plumed cap on the table, the nameless gallant of the journey was kneeling on the hearth, piling up wood with one hand, while he held close the folds of his mantle with the other. The noise of their entrance startled this servicable youth, and springing to his feet with a cry of confusion, and a burst of low, embarrassed, and tremulous laughter, the glowing face of Jean Bowman presented itself, drooping down, with mingled mirth and

shame upon the folds of the cloak. Mrs. Bowes' indignation against the laggard of their party died at the sight.

“ I pray you take rest,” said Magdalen, with haste and agitation, “ my kinsman is here, and Jean, lady, who knows this poor house. Isobel has a child to see, we have not looked upon these many years. Dear Marjorie, bid your mother pardon me. I will return anon.”

They had accomplished their journey rapidly in spite of all hindrances, and it was but sun-set now, when Isobel and Magdalen, hurriedly and in silence, took a narrow hillside path winding towards the west. Not a word was said between them, for there were many things in this return, and in the anticipated meeting to move Magdalen deeply; and the heart of Isobel swelled full, in the passion of love and anxiety, which grew well-nigh intolerable, as every step brought them nearer

to the house of her child. Not for a kingdom could the mother have spoken now.

The smoke rises in faint blue circles from the thatched roof of the house of Halihill. The maid has gone afield to bring home the kye, and the shepherd master of the moorland farm is still out with his sheep upon the hill. The rude garden of the homestead is behind—here is nothing but a gentle slope of hillside grass where there is never a gowan yet to attract an infant's eye, and the house looks down into a long and narrow glen, with blue hills purpled with the lingering sunshine standing out against the sky at its lower end, and through its midst a wandering discursive burn, with one low cottage, rough walled and heather thatched, placed on a little peninsula close upon the bank of the brook. A low young birch drooping its leafless slender branches like curls of brown hair, a black

bush of whins, a bed of heather, and long conglomeration of brambles thrusting out their arms upon a narrow slip of footpath, are all the vegetation here; and in the deeper hollows of the glen, the mist begins to gather white, but the sun slants his last ray still as he descends, slowly retreating over the roof of the Halihill.

The door is open, and you can see the cheerful firelight sparkling about the homely walls; upon the shelf of an oaken aumrie, secured in a corner, there glitters a silver porringer, gracing the bright supply of pewter, and the trenchers of wood, lightened with here and there a rare Delft plate, which are disposed in modest wealth within. The elbow chair on one side of the fire is the master's place; the lower seat, with its homely cushion, so near the heavy cradle on the floor, belongs to the young mother; and

the earthen floor is carefully swept, and the peats burn bright upon the hearth. But the room is vacant—we do not need yet to come within.

On a seat beside the open door, softly turning her spindle upon a smooth flat stone which lies beneath her feet, sits the young mistress of the Halihill; a fine curch of white cambric covers her golden hair, and falls in pretty folds upon her shoulders. Her kirtle of home-spun stuff sits gracefully upon her figure, and her stiff close ruff speaks more of Lady Maidlin's much beloved attendant, and Isobel's daughter, than of the moorland farmer's wife. A pretty boy of four years old, in the simplest of garments, a little loose coat descending to his knee, and bound with a rude leathern girdle, has laid a little heap of wooden toys, the work of his father on the hill, in her lap, and leans with

all his weight upon her, playing with them. A younger infant, a blue-eyed meditative girl, sits upon a small stool within the threshold, her little skirts disposed around her with precocious dignity, her small feet concealed, her hands clasped in her lap, and herself, with sweet childish gravity and wisdom, looking forth as her mother does, upon the distant hills and the silent glen. The mother herself works little, though her hand now and then wanders to the falling spindle, and sets it in motion once more; and her eyes are bent in the sweet thoughtfulness of peace upon this wild but quiet scene, though sometimes a glance to the path through the glen, or a look towards a steeper road which climbs the hill, shows that Alice, reckoning by the sunset, chides Bess in her heart for lingering so long in bringing home

the kye, and thinks it must be time for Ritchie returning from the fault.

But Alice does not see who stands here, trembling too much to come another step, and with the voice choked at her heart for joy;—"Mother," says the child at her knee, looking up with a cry, "see to that woman!—she wants you in her arms."

But stout little Ritchie was something discouraged to see his mother rush into this stranger's arms, and cling, and laugh, and sob aloud, in such a transport as the child never saw before. Ritchie withdrew promptly to his little sister, and took her under his stout protection; but the arms of the new comer tightened upon Alice, and Alice cried "mother, mother!" as if all language were swallowed up and lost in that one word; and Ritchie himself—far more Bess and the kye

faded into oblivion in the overpowering joy of this welcome and embrace.

“But Lady Maidlin, mother?” said Alice, at last.

Lady Maidlin was no farther off than yonder knotty thorn bush, which has braved all the storms of the Lammermuirs for many an angry day—she had but yielded her own affectionate eagerness to Isobel’s prior claims.

The evening meal which Richard Dunbar was only with difficulty persuaded to partake of in company of the lady of his land, whom he himself served with uncovered head, was hastily concluded in the Halihill that night; little Ritchie and Isobel much wondering, were laid to rest with weeping tenderness by the granddame whom the children had never seen before. And then Alice returned with her lady and her mother, the elder Ritchie attending as guard, to the Tower.

It was but a brief meeting for so long an absence, but though Magdalen was fain to stay longer in her own house, the thoughts of her companions were hurrying already to their journey's end. "But I will not have you go with me, Isobel," said Magdalen, as they sat together again as of old in the chamber of dais, when all the household was at rest. "Put wood on the fire, Alice; dear heart, this night is like old days come back again."

But the glance of Alice dwelt not so lovingly on the old remnants of tapestry—on the forsaken reading desk, and unstrewn dais, as did the eyes of Magdalen. "Please you, lady, you will feel this weariness on the morrow—lie down and rest," said Alice, "my mother will not leave you, Lady Maidlin—all this while I have tarried for her coming, and but one night I will see her now."

"Isobel will come to me, when she has well

rested at home," said Magdalen. "Nay, I am but Isobel's other child, I know she will stay—ah! so weeping ripe as Alice was, when last we were here, Isobel; but I think not she repents of taking counsel now."

A blush passed quickly over the fair and peaceful face of Alice. "Lady Maidlin, Ritchie fears God," she said, drooping her head—but Alice Dunbar no longer protested that all was vanity.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ My feet are shod for travel evermore ;
My hand is constant to my pilgrim staff,
And much my heart misgives if any rest
Is left for mine and me.”

OLD PLAY.

“ I MARVEL, Jean, if we will ever be at rest,” said Magdalen, as she turned from the window of the chamber assigned to her in the house of the good burgess, John Sime, of Edinburgh. “ Come, I will reckon to you whither all I have wandered. There were first the great

rooms of Falkland Lodging, and anon the little cottage of that Christian woman known to Isobel, without the gates; then we were even at Lammerstane again, and straightway to yonder English dwelling with its low chambers and darksome ways and I pray you;—look now to this new house, with the fair great parlour below, all brave with its leathern hangings, and the room of state where Dame Marion hath cut her bridal gown to cover the great bed, and this little cabinet, which hath but six paces of length from wall to wall—yet I fear me, every day as summer comes, lest we be cast forth to another wandering again. I marvel, shall we ever have rest?”

“Lady Maidlin, Alice lies low like the lark, with her breast on the sod,” said Jean, with a touch of pathos in her voice; “she’s won to her proper home—but I wouldna say I would give a fisher’s shed with the boat on the

beach, and the links a' glittering in the sun, for the warmest beild among the hills."

Magdalen looked at her sole attendant. "Will you leave me, Jean?" she said wistfully. But before Jean could answer, the door opened, and Marjorie entered in haste.

"What think you, Maidlin?" said the wife of Knox, with some heat, half-angry, half-triumphant. "The bishops have departed from their challenge. My husband did but come hither, accompanied by certain faithful gentlemen from the Mearns, and the Laird of Dun—when lo, they be so jealous of him, they swear he raises a rebellion, and give him not the meeting; heard you ever such paltering? yet it is well to see how they may tremble to meet him, though he came with never a rider in his train."

"Then Mr. John has returned?" said Magdalen, not without a faltering hope that

Paul, whom constant activity and long experience in this warfare made almost ubiquitous, might be among these same faithful gentlemen who had guarded the preacher from the north.

“There is a great company below,” said Marjorie, restless with natural excitement; “many good friends have gathered to be with him. My Lord of Glencairn, and the Lord James, Maidlin, not to say many a noble gentlemen of lesser degree, and old reverent Sir James of Calder, with his white hairs; and all unite, this terror of the priests is triumph for the faith. Nay, I even could weep, shame on me, for good pleasure. Yesterday I was sore affrayed for this appearance, and trembled to look upon the church of the Blackfriars, lest they betrayed him with guile—but now only behold the goodness of the Lord. On the morrow, when he

should have gone thither, he is even to preach in the Bishop of Dunkeld's great lodging, and my Lord of Glencairn will bring my Lord the Earl Marischal, and Sir Harry Drummond, his counsellor; and I doubt not more and greater will hear him at one speaking than did ever hear in Edinburgh before. But hasten, Magdalen—I came to call thee. Nay, come with me.”

They left the room together, and Jean Bowman went to the window, and looked out upon the Cross of Edinburgh and the thronged High Street.

“ Ilk ane follows his ain gait,” said Jean, leaning, with meditative observation, her head upon her hands. “ Simon, lad, you maun follow yours your lane, till I see the lady come to a path she can tread of her ain will. I wouldna say but it might be very lightsome, a dwelling at the braefoot, and the

sea coming in morning and night, over rock and sand, though it *was* the wrang side of the Firth; but weary on a fause world, would the loon bid me leave my lady?—no me!”

Yet Jean sighed, and shook with great haste from the finger which had been busy at her eyelash, something that looked very much like a tear; but with heat and eagerness she returned to arrange the wardrobe of her lady, muttering to herself a frequent defiance of all poor Simon’s power—though now and then a tenderer tone came in, and the finger again pursued a drop of moisture into the corner of her eye.

“They would say I grat that saw me now,” said Jean, starting with a laugh of indignant self-contempt; but a moment after, securing the door, Jean verified what “they” would say, by fairly sitting down, and having a good honest fit of tears, under the apron

which she threw over her head to conceal this most natural and primitive fashion of easing her heart.

These were notable times in the life of this household; without a pause or interval, and to great and influential congregations the Reformer preached, morning and evening of every day. Nobles and gentlemen, burgesses and city magnates, flocked to the lodging, where "this trumpet," as he said, was blown with such a stirring sound. Authority said nothing against these assemblages, for authority was very busy with its own short-sighted scheme, begging a crown matrimonial for a boyish head which never lived to bear it, save in name; and had not time to attend or hear the rising pulse of this great heart of Scotland, how it quickened into conscious life. Earls and Barons came indifferent, and went home eager to establish this same novel

truth in the special district which was home to each. These might be rude missionaries, in some cases, but in other some, they were the highest of heart and noblest of spirit in all Scotland; and the growing party dared almost count itself by shires and districts, when the heads of so many noble houses gave in their adhesion—for the readiness of the peasant classes was well and universally known.

The great parlour is lighted in the house of the worthy burgess, and the gilding shines upon the leathern hangings, and the hum of the busy street without comes in through the window, which is open to admit the cool night air of June. By the table, his dark face glowing full in the light of the lamp, John Knox sits holding a roll of paper in his restless hand; a slight smile plays about his mouth, changing in its character as he listens,

from momentary contempt to the brightness of invention and new received thought—and his hand unrolls the paper, and twists it up again with unconscious assiduity. Near him, the courtly Lethington has laid his light rapier across his knee, half-hidden in the folds of his cloak, and holds in his hand the bonnet whose ruby clasp flashes in the light; while his smile never varies from the light scorn which is habitual to his lip. Glencairn, who speaks, stands in his handsome unpretending manly strength, with honest displeasure and offence clouding his brow, and tells his tale with little pomp of words. Mrs. Bowes, at a little table apart, bends over a great Bible with strange and deep abstraction—for she has fallen on one of those dark mysterious sayings which move her soul to its depths. Marjorie with modest attention, and now and then an upward glance of interest, bends over

some needlework by the table; and Magdalen, with a face which reflects the indignant and offended face of Glencairn, more than any present, has her eye fixed on him as he speaks.

“ I gave it to her hand—I, a peer of Scotland, whose blood has been shed for this country, before she touched its soil. I commended it to her Grace, in as good words as I could master, though I be nothing learned in speech, and she took it from me—I say no lie of her—with courtesy enow. Such a matter cost you many a thought and certain pains in writing, I question not, most reverend friend. It were well you had ingine when next you write unto the great, to do the task as swift, as she did the reading of the same. That proud prelate, his Grace forsooth by pride of Papistrie—the Archbishop of the West, stood by. This lady in my face, gave

it over into his hand. "Please you, my lord, to read a pasquil." Think you, gentlemen, how I held my patience, to be flouted thus!"

"My lord, your patience is little to be murmured of," said Lethington with his usual sarcasm. "I see not that it cumbers your fair speech even now. Sooth, this is nō hour, being late at e'en, for a wanton birdie to carry the matter, but they who speak of princes should speak low."

"Speak low!" said Glencairn, angrily; "I will speak so loud Scotland shall list to me anon. What—a grave matter of counsel advised by noble peers, and indited by a soothfast man of God—and this light lady maketh no more of it than a jest at Yule!"

"Said her Grace even so?" said Knox; "though I be slow of ingine, my lord, I have yet certain additions come upon my mind even now—and what her Highness takes

no heed of, another may. I will have God's faithful people judge between her and me, and you shall leave the quarrel in my hands."

A little stir without interrupted the company. A messenger had newly arrived, bringing to the preacher, as was said, letters from Geneva. He withdrew hastily to another apartment, and waiting to hear what these urgent tidings might be, the blunt Earl and the wily courtier lingered in the burgess's parlour. Marjorie, laying aside her work with the quiet ease of her even spirit, did what she could to maintain the conversation, while Glencairn drew near to Magdalen, whose face he had seen with the ready instinct of sympathy, glowing like his own.

A considerable time elapsed, and the polished Lethington played with his sword hilt, and did not care to conceal by the light jar of its scabbard and belt, that his hand touched the

weapon with signals of impatience. The street grew silent below, the light faded from the windows, the night air grew somewhat chill—and Glencairn had made one or two hasty strides through the apartment, and Lethington was worn out, ere John Knox again appeared. His face was moved as if with surprise, with pleasure, and with sorrow, and he held letters in his hand.

“My Lords,” said the Reformer, fronting the strangers who had risen at his entrance, with the air of a man who has an important decision to communicate, “my Lords, my little flock divided from these troublers of Israel, in Frankfort, have found refuge in Geneva, and by these presents call me to their head.”

There was a pause of blank silence.

“You will scarce leave a kingdom for a handful of exiles!” said Lethington, abruptly.

“Friend, Scotland has need of you,” cried Glencairn.

“ Noble sirs, I have done in Scotland all I may well do now,” said Knox; “ upbraid me not—I love mine own land—but think not I long can escape prison or stake. Amen, I could not die in a better hour—yet I hear this voice of God call me hence now. I love this little flock; they cherished me, and how wist we how much of this wonderful grace to Scotland comes from their prayers. I shall be silenced anon if I tarry here, and the country nothing the better for the dumb knave who may not speak out of a prison. Nay, I will go, and leave the seed to spring. You are well in your beginning; warn me when the tender blade is above the soil, and I am pledged for my returning to your aid once more.”

CHAPTER IX.

“ Do not seek to take your change upon you,
To bear your griefs yourself, and leave me out;
For by this heaven now at our sorrows pale:
Say what thou canst, I'll go along with thee.”

AS YOU LIKE IT.

“ WILL you tarry at home, Isobel?” said Magdalen, with blank melancholy. “ This time we go over the seas, far away into a strange country: heed not for me. Why should I carry you hence, Isobel? I will even look to myself, as well as I may, and

you will be well at home; Isobel, you will think of your poor Maidlin at home?"

"Hush, dear child," said her attendant, quickly; "when life leaves me, I will leave thee, lady—but not before. Speak not of this again, unless you scorn me."

"There is Alice safe bestowed in her own sure home," said Magdalen; "and even Jean Bowman, with her stout heart—we will leave her on the way; yet we must get us to our wanderings, Isobel—thou and I,—never at rest."

Jean Bowman entered timidly as Magdalen spoke. Poor Jean's habitual bravery was gone; a sort of blushing self-contempt, and shy, fearful deprecation cast a strange veil over her face—for Jean, to tell the truth, was overpowered with shame for her own weakness, and could not understand how Simon, "the loon," whom she had scorned,

and vexed, and tantalized so long, should come to have a stronger hold upon her after all, than bonnie Lady Maidlin, whom she honoured from the bottom of her heart.

“ Please you, Lady Maidlin, my lord waits below,” said Jean, with downcast eyes. Paul Hepburn had never ceased to be “ my lord ” to Jean Bowman.

Magdalen did not wait to ask any questions, though her step was slow, and the colour on her face was a flush of discomfort and uneasiness, rather than a blush of pleasure. Her solitude, her helplessness, her dependance, had come to be irksome to Magdalen, and the very pride which made them so, prevented her from at once expressing her wish to remain in Scotland.

“ I honour my kinsman,” said Magdalen to herself, with melancholy dignity; “ but he must not think I linger in his way, nor be

tempted for my safety to wish me in Langley rather than Lammerstane. Nay, nay,—Maidlin Hepburn can even bear to be forgotten, rather than shamed.”

Thus pre-occupied and sad, the young lady entered the great parlour, where Paul Hepburn waited for her, alone. His dress showed all the tokens of a hasty journey; his eyes looked sleepless and anxious, and his face was unusually pale. He came forward with hurried eagerness to meet her, and held her hand, while he looked with earnest questioning looks in her face.

“What — will you go?” said Paul. “I have not rested night nor day since I heard the news. Maidlin, answer me?”

Maidlin looked up sadly: “I have no home,” she said, in the calmest voice with which she could utter words like these.

She read a burst of overpowering feeling

in the quick glow that passed across his face; she read the shadow of difficulty, of doubt, and danger, which swept this flash of joy away. He turned from her, unconsciously crushing in his own the small and delicate hand which could ill bear so desperate a grasp. "Now God deliver thee, Scotland! I dare not tell what pangs I bear for thy sake," said Paul Hepburn, through his closed teeth. A man's emotion has always a wonderful effect upon a woman. It may be impatience that moves her, or anxiety to remove the pain, but the sight is a thing intolerable, which she must conceal from her own perception at whatever cost. The bitter tide of Magdalen's own regrets were swallowed up at once in this.

"Nay, Paul, look not so sad," she said, making a vain attempt to comfort him—and failing in that, she took his great hand within her own, and

with a child's instinct caressed it silently, looking in his face with the pitiful deprecating eyes in which the tears had gathered full.

It seemed as though this manly heart swelled but the more, for these efforts of consolation. It was some time before he could speak—"Maidlin, I will let thee go," he said at last, in a voice which still trembled, "I will let thee go—I will know thee safe whatever be my lot; yet one thing I claim of my plighted bride. This time that approaches is the last wrestle; the day is ripe, we will have open strife anon—and if I fall, as fall I well may in such a contest, I would fain—dear heart, for pity pardon me—have the world know that thou wert mine. I would have it said that the widow of Langley mourned a poor soldier when he fell—nay, weep not, Maidlin—and if he fell not, that this man most blessed was

bound on a joyous errand to bring his lady home."

Magdalen made no answer—she only turned away to lean upon the great chair, and cover her face with her hands.

"Then I may no longer need to ask, when one comes or goes," said Paul, his elastic spirit rising into a tone of triumph, "saw you Mistress Magdalen? but saw you my wife?—and thou wilt no longer blush to of your kinsman, but say freely forth your heart. Maidlin—what, not a word!"

The words were slow to come; there was space for many other arguments before Maidlin's lips or Maidlin's eyes had courage to respond.

"Dear Lady, what ails thee?" said Isobel; "nay, take comfort—I think I never saw my child so sore cast down before."

But the rapid glance of preface which

Magdalen lifted to her anxious attendant's face, was followed by no words—and she fell again into her reverie, sitting in the twilight by the little window which looked out upon the city Cross.

“ I have even smiled, though smiling was not in my heart,” said Isobel, “ to look upon Jean Bowman so sore dismayed. Poor heart! she takes shame to herself to tarry behind.”

But still Magdalen did not speak. Isobel, discouraged and somewhat surprised, left her lady to her unusual silence, and went about her ordinary duties in the inner room.

These duties were suddenly interrupted by the voice of Marjorie, calling “ Isobel, Isobel.” Isobel hurriedly returned to the little cabinet.

“ Look you,” said the gentle Englishwoman, whose face was moved with a sweet mingling of smiles and tears, “ look you, Isobel, what

a fair bride." And Marjorie threw a great veil over the drooping head of Magdalen.

Under this pretty covering, Magdalen sat motionless, hiding her flushed checks, which were wet with tears, in her supporting hands.

"If the Lady of Langley will not speak, I bid you to-morrow at six of the clock at even, to the great parlour to witness a bridal," said Marjorie. "Dear Maidlin, I question not, you would be alone to-night, and I will not trouble you; it was but to comfort Isobel with the tidings—and to put mine own bridal veil upon thy head, dear friend—but now good night."

And the other sweet face stooped under the veil to bestow the sisterly salute, which Magdalen blushed to receive. "Good night;" but the bride was motionless and silent still.

"Dear Lady," said Isobel, solemnly, when they were once more alone, "if thy heart

has strayed from thy kinsman, though he is a noble gentleman that I know not a marrow to—but ye have been long betrothed, and thou wert but a child—dear lady, if your heart has gone astray, come not to this bridal; it is better to break faith than to break hearts.”

Magdalen shook the veil from her with a sudden gesture, and, rising hastily, made Isobel take her place, and seated herself on a stool at her attendant's feet.

“ I will break no hearts,” said Magdalen, in a low and earnest tone, as she leant back upon Isobel's arm, “ but mine own is moved to-night—speak to me of home.”

But thick coming memories thronged upon Isobel; the tears came fast into her eyes. Her own eve of bridal, and the night when Alice clung to her with wistful tears and fondness before hers, returned upon her with the force

of present things; she made a faltering attempt to speak. "Forgive me, dearest child;" and Isobel, who was so calm, wept upon her lady's hands.

"Nay, it is I must take the word," said Magdalen. "Isobel, I think a bride must needs be sad?"

"Nay, dear child."

"You say me nay, but yet you weep," said Magdalen. "I know you did bethink you then of others than me; I mean not sorrowful, nor as if they did repent, but sad and full of thought. Isobel, my heart is moved to-night, but think not my heart has gone astray—nay, nay, not for an hour."

Isobel said nothing, but she drew her hand fondly across the fair and open brow and the soft hair which rested on her knee, and Magdalen did not speak again, till her fond watcher could see but indistinctly the sweet

meditative face and closed eyes, on which her own gaze was fixed. At last Magdalen caught in her own those kind hands; and drawing them round her neck, folded them on her breast.

“ You were used to sing me an old song, Isobel, of the lady who died with pining, and brake her heart. Sing it to me once more.”

And Magdalen bowed her head on Isobel's folded hands, and leaned against her closely. Her loving follower could not disobey, but her voice faltered through the darkness, and the tears fell singly on her dress like drops of rain, as Isobel sang:—

Weary were the wars, and lang was the day;
There was count of mony slain,
There were tears for prisoners ta'en,
But my lady sighed her lane, and my lord abode away.

Hope came not with the spring, nor rose with the morn ;
Beside the warder's gait
Came my lady forth to wait,
All in her robes of state, and her heart sae sair forlorn.

The table aye was spread, and the hall decked fair ;
And when night fell o'er the hill
Came my lady, very still,
And silent, at her will, sat all the household there.

Without a word or smile, the meal was ta'en :
My lady broke no fast,
Waiting on the bugle blast,
That should tell the land at last, my lord was come again.

She hush'd the house by night—she watched thro' the day ;
But never, ear nor late,
Came a traveller to the gate,
And all in her robes of state, my lady dwined away.

High on the eastern tower her couch they spread—
No word she ever spake,
Nor told when her heart brake,
But looked forth on hill and lake, from her sore and
weary bed.

The night fell very still—when, lo! a bugle gay,
My lord is come again!
But death was in the strain—
With a bitter cry of pain, my lady passed away.

Oh, woe and wail was then!—oh, dool and pain!
My lady's grief was o'er,
But my lord smiled never more—
Parted swift from off the shore, and came never hame
again.

When Isobel, half-choked with tears, came to this sad and simple end, silence fell on the little room; and when Jean brought in a light, and Isobel bent over her lady, she found that Magdalen, like a child, had wept herself to sleep.

The tears were shed and past, when Dame Marion lighted the candles in her great silver candlestick, and set the lamp on the table, and proudly waited at the door of her great parlour for her noble guests. The vows of these espousals were solemn vows; and with a sweet and touching gravity, Magdalen Hepburn stood before the Reformer, by the side of her betrothed.

The words of Paul were in her ears a

mournful cadence, long after Paul himself had forgotten them—"The widow of Langley." But Magdalen remembered with a high and stedfast heart, that God's loving hand dispensed the future, and that she had now to bear her as became his bride.

CHAPTER X.

“ To-morrow is the joyful day, Audrey ; to-morrow will we be married.”

AS YOU LIKE IT.

“ If I never can be let alone—but have a muckle loon tracking me a’ the day to my lady’s very chamber, I’ll do up my bundle yet, and take heart of grace, and follow her ower the sea.”

“ Eh, woman !” said Simon, pathetically—
“ ye’ll never ken a man’s heart.”

“ I ken a better thing,” said the prompt Jean Bowman. “ I ken what trouble’s in my ain, to let the like of Lady Maidlin gang forth to foreign parts, her lane, a’ for the like of you.”

“ Her lane!” cried Simon, with scorn—
“ my lord’s wedded bride, and him at her hand—no to speak of Mistress Isobel—her lane!”

“ My lord comes back to his weary toil and battle,” said Jean; “ and Mistress Isobel is a’ for hall and chamber, and no for peril or for flight. There’s ne’er a ane about her durst daur a darksome road, or tell a simple lee, for love of Lady Maidlin. Weary on my ill tongue—what would I say? I’m no for leasing making in my heart; but if it was to Mr. John himsel, I bid to make a story, rather than betray a life.”

“ Out, ye silly quean!” said Simon—

“there’s peace where the lady gangs. The law’s no for papistrie in yon far pairts, and muckle good you would do Lady Maidlin with your leasing, and you no a word in your head, but kindly Scots. A’s done but the promise and vow; and I ken a guid Gray Freer will make little fash. Jean, come hame.”

“I said you werena to trouble Mr. John, puir man—he has plenty burdens,” said Jean, frowning on her bridegroom; “but I didna say you was to pass by a’ the godly Gospellers, and seek for a villain priest.”

“I’ll win to your will anon,” said Simon, with a great sigh. “The Gospellers have other gear in hands; will ye tell me your pleasure—aye or no?”

“No a fit till my lady’s off the shore and ga’en!” cried Jean. “No a word till I see the sails curling aboon her head, and the

ship out in the Firth. Away, ye knave—would ye wrong me of a day?”

It was, indeed, little longer than a day that the disappointed Simon was compelled to wait; for early on the second morning the little wandering party addressed itself to the way once more. The Reformer himself remained for a little time behind; but Paul Hepburn had snatched from his labours this little interval of rest to convey to her temporary refuge his new wedded bride. A singular confidence, grave and tearless, elevated into calm the heart of Magdalen, as she touched the slippery deck of the little vessel which was to carry them forth upon the dreaded sea. As it swayed upon the rising tide, and Marjorie stumbled, and looked with wistful eyes and a pang of terror into her husband's face for comfort, Magdalen only held closer by the strong arm that supported

her—and had not time to think again and reprove herself for the fanciful security which his presence seemed to give.

But Jean was weeping on her lady's hand.

“Ye've better than me by your side, Lady Maidlin! ye've them that have loved you langer than me—but nae truer heart than Jean Bowman, lady—no a ane would serve ye mair constant. It's no my will to tarry; I would gang to the end of the world, if ye but said the word. Lady, lady, pity me!”

“Nay, Jean, I must not,” said Magdalen; “I should be at feud with Simon thus.”

“The poor knave has a true heart,” said Jean, with a new burst, “he would serve ye with his best, and on his knees—and I'm making a maen, as if it was ony loss to you,” continued Jean, rising from her half-kneeling attitude and wiping her eyes; “when it's a' my ain sair grief and his blame; I'll cry

joy at your hame coming, Lady Maidlin; and blessing, and love, and God himsel, gang with you ower the sea!"

Jean made a reverent curtsey and stood still, the tears dropping silently from her eyes. Jean waited with a little expectation for Magdalen's farewell.

But not a kindly pressure of the honest hand, which had done her so much service—not a gentle word alone as Jean expected. Magdalen left her husband's side, and coming forward, laid her arms upon Jean's shoulders, and kissed the blushing tearful cheek which almost shrank from the honour.

"We will speak of you together, Isobel and I," said Magdalen, "and make poor Simon very glad, for the sake of all his truth. Dear heart, farewell."

Mrs. Bowes waited with a present, and

Marjorie with her kindest smile; Jean neither looked at daughter nor mother, but turning abruptly, sprang on shore with a bound. Coming rashly in her way as she ran on, blind with tears, with grief, with tenderness, and grateful pleasure, Simon found himself thrust back with a force that scarcely became a bride. The long-suffering Simon made no complaint, but wisely stood aside in silence, while Jean sat down upon a heap of stones out of sight of the pier, and wept her passion out. When the sobs came slow and soft, and the tears were assuaged, Simon cautiously advanced, and drew her hand through his arm. Jean rose and submitted without a word, while he turned her towards the town.

“We’re gaun to my Gray Freer,” said Simon, with secret terror and assumed boldness.

“Lad, I’ll make you a’ amends,” said Jean,

solemnly, with a little sob—and with timorous exultation, Simon drew his hold closer, and led his captive away, nor ventured to release his watch till the subdued Jean Bowman was Jean Bowman no longer, and the Gray Freer's easy office was all fulfilled.

After a different fashion John Knox parted from the little ship which carried so many hopes.

“Courage, mother,” said the Reformer; “my Marjorie, take heart: a little pain, a little peril, and lo, you will be safe in a peaceful home.”

“Pray Heaven my heart be not too heavy for this ship to carry. Pray Heaven I bring no evil on these children's way,” said Mrs. Bowes, with a slight shudder. “They who be forsaken of God should ever have their path alone.”

“His way is on the sea—see if you meet

Him not," said the Reformer. "My heart, I look to thee to comfort all."

"How? when I also am sad?" said Marjorie, whose eyes were fixed upon her husband's face; "but you will not tarry long behind?"

"Not an hour more than I may—this weary spirit longs for rest," said the Reformer. "Nay, now, farewell—farewell—but only to come anon. My hearts, be brave,—God is with you. Farewell."

The little ship went slowly from the pier of Leith. The mother and daughter stood together, fixing their eyes as long as sight was possible, on the one man standing in the midst of his little body-guard, who endeared this country to them; and the other little group looked on the fair receding shore with mingled thoughts. To Paul a beloved country for which he had battled long and hardly,

for which he must anon return to battle, and where he hoped, ere long, to establish his home in peace;—to Magdalen, a dear land of youth and sweet remembrances, which she might never see again;—and to Isobel, fixedly gazing upon it with those sorrowful grave eyes—the home and dwelling of her only child.

The little vessel spread her sails to the wind; the long day passed unmarked over the waste of waters. Far behind lay Scotland, with all its hopes and struggles; and Magdalen, upon the deck, leaned upon her husband, communing of all that was in her heart, with nothing but the faintest tremor of fear for the unknown sea which bore them so peacefully—while Isobel sat apart, closing her eyes to see in her heart the moorland home of Alice, the youthful mother at the door, and the children by her

side; and Mrs. Bowes, in darkness and solitude, had gloomy thoughts of Jonah, heaven-forsaken, found out by storms upon his voyage; and Marjorie, timid, yet hopeful, lay looking out upon the moonlight waters, thinking of Him who came at midnight to the fishers' boat, walking upon the sea.

CHAPTER XI.

“ Happy is your grace,
That can translate the stubbornness of fortune
Into so quiet and so sweet a style.”

AS YOU LIKE IT.

FAR from the moorland braes of Lammerstane, far from the misty mouth of Tweed and the stormy echoes of the German Ocean, another winter fell upon this little household: the sun that struck with dazzling reflection on the Alpine peaks before their eyes, the solemn presence of the mountain king, some-

times unseen but always present among his court of hoary hills, and the milder beauty of the lake which lay at his feet and theirs, became familiar to the eyes of the exiles. Strange and unusual was the peace of this Geneva, this throned metropolis of the faith, to those whom Scotland had cast forth and England disowned. To find their religion not secretly permitted but openly honoured, the universal rule and standard, and even in some cases the dominant and authoritative national law, was as new as it was delightful to minds wearied out with that oppression, which maketh a wise man mad. Great society was in this city of the hills. Calvin the cold and vast—another Mont Blanc among the human eminences here—and many an English family whose faith had demanded the abandonment of home and lands, made a warm circle round the preacher's household.

In her fit place, light as a lark was Marjorie, her simple beauty undiminished—her simple heart unchanged; and if she loved her native tongue, and shivered at the dazzling glory of these hills of snow, longing rather for the gentle braes of Tweed, yet she was far from solicitous to hear the call which every Scottish letter ended with, urging her husband back to his native land, and did what she could after her loving fashion to chain his heart and warm affections to this place of peace. And John Knox paused in his graver labours, and put his pen aside, and bent his ear to listen to the cradle song with which Marjorie hushed her first-born boy—and tenderness came to the strong man's heart with the tear that glittered in his eye; and he too, looked forth upon the quiet lake, and thought of the troubled sea—the evils and dangers that lay between this safe abode

and his distressed land; and his gentle wife and his new born child bound him to their foreign home.

For Mrs. Bowes, there was congenial company, sympathy, and comfort, among this band, who had been subject to like persecutions with herself. Her "dolours" lightened into hope—the baby voice awoke her human heart—and sadly still but not so sore discouraged, a heavy-hearted Christian, she went upon her way; and for her daughter's sake, and for the sake of the tender infant who here were safe, clung to the strange country where all had found a home.

But Magdalen's cheek grew pale, and Isobel's gravity deepened every day. They two dwelt alone, speaking of Scotland, thinking of Scotland, longing as if with hunger and thirst for every echo of intelligence which came from home.

The heart of Magdalen was weighed down with visionary heaviness ; no divided interest now checked the sole engrossing anxiety which followed Paul. She could not turn from this, as she had done in Berwick, to tremble with Marjorie for the Reformer in peril. John Knox was safe and in a good estate, and here there was no solitude, no desolation but her own. She wandered by the side of the lake, and away among the hills, following in her dreams her husband's imagined course, through dreary midnight journeys, through disguised and dangerous enterprises, and even into the field of open fight ; and many a time with unconscious superstition, Magdalen trembled to think she heard the wind whispering down these solitary valleys, the widow of Langley's sorrowful title, and felt the thawed icicles, falling in great drops by her feet, or the rapid sweeping

of the mountain shower to be so many tears of compassionate Nature over her melancholy fate.

“Our Alice will see this sunset on the hills,” said Magdalen, as they took their lingering walk by the lake; “and Jean will hear the sea come sweet upon the beach and the Scottish air about them, and the voice of home. Alas for one I cannot tell of, where he shall see this even fall! If I knew but where he was, Isobel, methinks I should be comforted.”

“Dear lady, we ever know who is with him,” said Isobel: “there is no comfort like to that.”

There was a pause.

“Think you we will ever win home?” said Magdalen. “Sometimes I wist as if we were there, when I stand by this water, and mind me of what Paul said ere he set forth;

but my heart faints and fears anon—yet I think I could not die here, Isobel.”

“When God calls lady, we shall die—but not for our own will, dear child,” said Isobel, “let us not speak thus—but how bright will be the halls of Langley when my lord carries thee home with joy. Lady Maidlin, you were never there?”

“No, Isobel.”

“I will tell you of your own hall,” said the self-forgetting mother, “for Langley stands not high like Lammerstane among the storms, but is so fair—so sheltered—”

“Isobel!” cried Magdalen, “I see some one come this way.”

“Nay, dear lady, cheat not your heart,” said Isobel, “it is but some townsman;—and the house is great and noble, meet for a lofty race—and has its face to the sunrising, and is guarded about with ancient trees; and——”

“Isobel, it is one from home!” cried Magdalen, “I am not deceived, it is one with tidings. Nay, come quick, come quick, good messenger!—for my heart faints so, I cannot run to meet the news.”

The worthy burgess, John Sime, of Edinburgh, commissioned with the letters of the congregation to the Reformer, did not come quicker than behoved his dignity, but already he lifted his bonnet to the Lady of Langley and saluted her with respectful kindness.

“Worshipful madam,” said the honest dignitary, “I carry letters for your hands—nay, softly—and the lords of the Congregation have charged me with a message to Mr. John. Mistress Isobel, methinks your lady heeds me not.”

“Worthy Master Sime, she would see what my lord says,” said Isobel, “so young she is yet, and so early they were parted. Dear

lady, leave her to herself a while; but what mean ye by the Congregation? is there so great hope for Scotland?"

"The Congregation of those who serve the Lord," said the burghess, "and the lords of the same, no less than my noble Lord James, and the young Lord of Lorn, and brave Glencairn, and many a baron and gentleman. They have commissioned me hither, and my comrade, to deal with Mr. John to return among us."

"Now God send you grace to move him!" cried Isobel, lifting her hands. "Is it then so well with Scotland? and her Grace the Regent—has the Gospel honour in her sight?"

"Nay, the Regent is a fair lady, and we be bearded men," said the burghess, with importance; "she holdeth her way, and we hold ours, but she troubles us not as yet."

"Isobel," cried Magdalen, advancing with

a glow of joy and satisfaction on her face, "my good lord hath spoken with Alice, and found her very well, and he tells me there is great hope that we shall go home anon. Nay, pardon me, good sir, it is so long since we heard aught—and Alice is well and at peace, Isobel—and my lord speaks bravely. Oh, Heaven pardon me, that I was so faint of heart!"

"Nay, I ever said He would send us comfort, dear child," said Isobel, with unrestrainable tears; "and listen, I pray you, Lady Maidlin, to what Master Sime would say."

The burgess struck in with his more particular and special mission, as they turned towards the house together; the evening sunshine was burning on the lake, and the solemn hills flashed in the light.

"Lady, methinks Heaven is near," said

the stranger, struck with sudden awe, as the mists parted from the dazzling peak of Mont Blanc; “and yonder, lo! the glorious ladder whereon the angels come and go; now God be here!—for it is as wondrous as a dream.”

In a great room somewhat scant of furniture, with a row of many windows closely set together making one side of the apartment almost an entire casement—John Knox sat at the table with writing materials before him, and the pen arrested in his hand. Not far from his side Marjorie looked up wistfully from a low chair, where she sat lulling her baby on her knee, and by the further window with her distaff and spindle, and in her habitual dress Mrs. Bowes sat, slowly proceeding with her labour, and musing on the spiritual trials which vexed her still. The sun gilded the entire line of these small panes of leaded glass, and dropped in lightly on the boarded

floor at one end. The hearth was filled with a little heap of mosses, and furze, and alpine flowers. The open upper shelves of a high oaken cabinet held some books, and before the Reformer on his table, lay the "Blast" of that formidable trumpet which assailed the "Regiment" of womankind.

Master James Barron, the worthy coadjutor of the Edinburgh burghess, sat by John Knox's table, and the open letter spread upon it, and the glow on the Reformer's face told that their important intelligence had already been discussed, and had roused the most powerful interest of which he was capable in the Reformer's mind.

With a wistful eye Marjorie followed his looks and gestures, and even with momentary cruelty awoke her child, that its cry might recal her husband to thoughts of peace and home—but the bolder soul had escaped

out of her hand. These tender connexions held sway over him no more.

“Never think I hold this invitation lightly,” said the Reformer, “or shrink for mine own proper peril—but I dare not hold that bond light, good friends, which binds me to this flock; abide with me till I have taken counsel—and if the path be clear and duty stand not in the way, never went man so blythely to throne or kingdom as I shall go to Scotland; yea, and to end my battle there as I well trust and hope.”

A few tears had fallen silently from Marjorie's eyes upon the hands of her child. “Nay, my husband,” she said with a faltering timid voice, “this Geneva hath loved you well—are not souls as precious here?”

“Hush, I would have a nation!” said Knox expanding his breast with an unconscious movement, “these walls be strait for me—

there are many here who may do my errand as well as I—but Scotland is mine own. What! think you I may rest and she in darkness?—think you I may light my little candle and be content she shall never see the sun? Nay, nay, the flesh hath had its time, and rested to its hearts content. Now for thee, Scotland! now for thy cities and valleys, Commons and Lords—and heaven do so to me if I waste my life in any cause but thine own!”

With a sigh Marjorie laid her baby in the cradle, and hastened to call her servants and have her table spread, while her husband took his pen again in haste, and plunged into his labour with sudden zeal and vigour, as if to prepare for the time of active warfare which approached so near at hand.

The house was stirred out of its common rest that night—Magdalen lying down with Paul’s letter under her pillow, and tears of

joy upon her cheek, could not close her eyes for the thick coming scenes of future life and hope that crowded on her mind, and scarcely could even pray for the realization of all these quick springing and happy fancies. Isobel, who has learned by heart the words that concern her Alice, lies sleepless, saying them among her prayers. Late into the midnight watches the Reformer, and with his eyes lit up once more, and bright in their old fire, holds counsel with the strangers; and Marjorie clasps her baby to her breast and weeps over his sleep, and thinks of all the grief and danger from which they have been so happily delivered. Peace and sweet silence are on the hills and waters without, under the charm of the rising moon—but there is little rest within.

CHAPTER XII.

“ What! shall I faint because I once have failed?
Poor valour this.—The sun of every day
Hath more encounters with resisting night,
Than I with fortune.”

OLD PLAY.

IN solemn consultation the Reformer's vehement desire was sanctioned by the little counsel of grave brothers, Calvin at their head, to whom he submitted the matter, and with a tender leave-taking he set out from Geneva.

A time of distressing uncertainty and anxiety followed. No record of his safe arrival at Dieppe—no evidence of his having gone farther reached his troubled family. Vague rumours were abroad of his preaching here and there in different towns of France, and the mind of his wife was thoroughly unsettled by these vague reports. Magdalen only held firm to her certainty that he must have continued his journey, and that even now in Scotland the last struggle had begun.

But Magdalen's faith deceived her; long delayed intelligence came at last, that he had found discouraging letters awaiting him at Dieppe, and had gone no farther, but remained there, waiting for such better news as might embolden him to proceed. All this expectation, however, was concluded at last, by the startling vision of Knox himself

returning home again, disheartened and displeased, in the early spring of the following year. With trembling joy his wife received him; and struck to the heart with bitter disappointment, Magdalen Hepburn withdrew into her solitude once more.

But not all the eager love and cherishing with which his return was hailed,—not the sweet face of his young wife, nor the dawning consciousness of his child could restore to John Knox his former repose and content. All day long occupied with Scotland—with urgent and passionate appeals to Lords and Commons—with private epistles, fiery and fervid—he prepared the way for his return—and could not rest, as even Marjorie came to see at last, anywhere but in this country, whose Reformation was his dearest hope, the project of his life.

The gentle mind of the Reformer's wife

had not wearied itself with those high matters which filled her husband's; she had been content to cling to him with her warm heart, without aspiring to share his thoughts; and Marjorie had never dreamed of jealousy towards the great pursuit and object of her husband's life. Was it not the glory of God, the spreading of the Gospel? and should not this be ever her own great motive too, and every Christian's?

Marjorie put her sighs out of her heart with loving submission, and struggled against the necessity no more.

But another interval—to her, of peace—of dreariness and bitter anxiety to the young Lady of Langley and her faithful attendant—and of eager watch, and vigilance, and labour to the Reformer, followed. The spring and summer passed away—the paths about the lake were all associated to Magdalen with

weariness, with longing, with grieved and troubled thoughts—and a hasty step upon the way, the sound of a strange voice, or a noise of arrival without, was enough to stir the incipient fever to a climax. The delicate frame of Magdalen waxed faint and weary. This constant strain of expectation and uncertainty, was more exhausting than daily toil.

The winter came again over these icy hills. Storms of wind, and fierce assaults of hail and sleet, came with almost a soothing effect upon minds which felt their own disquietude mocked by the sunshine, and Marjorie sat by her range of windows, and heard the great drops patter on the glass, musing over the other infant, whom God had added to her store. The elder baby, a baby still, sat on the floor by her feet, watching with infant glee the hail drops resounding on the panes; and the

little unconscious creature whose breath rose and fell so softly on her breast, filled her with yearning fears. How to carry these helpless children over many a weary league of way, over land and over sea. "Nay, but it is God who protects, it is not I," said Marjorie to herself, with a faint smile, and was content.

While Magdalen pined and wondered—where was Paul, knight and soldier? how was Scotland through these months of silence? and what hope was there of reaching home?

In the depth of winter came startling news from England; Mary's reign of blood and misery was past, and the English exiles held a jubilee over the friendly Elizabeth, and her accession, which promised a return to them. Not more than a few days after this intelligence came, Magdalen was called hastily to hear news of great importance from Scotland.

She found the Reformer in much excitement, pacing through the room with a letter in his hand. He was reading from it when she entered.

“ Being interrogated he made brave answer, nor shrank from full avow, witnessing boldly to have preached in divers places, and even upon the sea sailing in a shippe, as hath been his wont, for all he is stricken in years; being called Sir Walter, refused, saying he was no knight of Papistrie; had much encounter with the Bishop’s advocate, who flouted, and scorned, and vexed the spirit of this godly martyr to his end; and so with much bravery to the stake, where died in flames and torment this man of God, thus speaking—‘ As for me I am fourscore and two years old, and cannot live long by course of nature, but a hundred better shall rise out of my bones; I trust in

God I shall be the last that shall suffer death in Scotland for this cause. Good people, pray for me, whiles there is time.' He came of Lunnan in Angus, a faithful servant of the Great Master; and so Mr. Walter died."

John Knox paused, overpowered by the horror, indignation, and righteous rage that stayed his speech. "Shall we stand aside and see the axe of slaughter smite upon hoary hairs? No, in the name of God!—hence with all fears and doubtings—this gear is for me."

"But you will not rush into the lion's mouth—my husband, my husband, think of the little ones!" cried Marjorie, with a scream of terror.

The Reformer answered nothing, but turned to the other letters on the table. "Here is better heartening," he said, quickly; "look you, Satan is no such subtle wise man, but he

sometimes overshoots himself; I doubt not he counted on this woful slaughter as the sorest discouragement he could put upon the faith, and now he grinds his teeth, a baffled plotter. The Lords, stirred up and startled by the same, have even bound them by a solemn bond and covenant, brother to brother, and made an appellation to the Regent at the mouth of the aged knight of Calder, which receiving with fair words and promises, she hath given them faith in her good intent, and I am called once more to mine own land."

"Reverend sir, have ye naught for me?" interrupted Magdalen, who stood before him, trembling with impatience.

"Nothing for thee, lady, but the signature of thy lord to these papers, showing him astir and at his post. Now look not so sad, mother and wife—I must forth anon."

Magdalen's lip quivered, but the tears would not come. She stood still in the centre of the room needing no support, yet shuddering with strong and convulsive emotion, while her quick spirit realized with the speed of lightning, the dread excitement of Scotland over this last martyr's stake.

“Son, must we tarry long here, desolate women once more?” said the melancholy voice of Mrs. Bowes.

Marjorie gathered her children closer to her arms, and cast a startled look upon the sky; it was very visible that tender as was her regard for her husband, the mother would resist at all hazards the peril of exposing those young tender lives to all these storms and trials. The question awoke Magdalen to a quick perception of the immediate decision which her own heart had already made. She could scarcely wait for the answer of Knox.

“ Many friends are leaving thee, good my mother, but ye be a little company loving and kind. I know you will tarry in comfort and good hope—and the Lady of Langley—”

“ Reverend sir, kind friend!” cried Magdalen, stretching out her hand with a beseeching gesture, “ I go with you.”

“ Nay, Maidlin, Maidlin!”—it was Marjorie’s voice that broke so suddenly upon her.

“ My lord is in peril—my lord may be even now at the point of death; how can I tell whither he hath gone?” cried Magdalen, turning with her clasped hands from one to another. “ Oh! I pray you think upon it what a coward I have been, leaving him year by year in toils and journeys, and choosing my own safety and my own peace. Hinder me not; I dare not bear it longer—I cannot endure it longer—my heart will break unless I go;

dear friends, dear friends, let me travel home!"

Marjorie had risen, and stood gazing at her in silence, overcome by this strength of emotion. John Knox himself said something soothingly, which Magdalen did not hear, and Mrs. Bowes took her hand and said with affectionate reproach, "My child, is not this thy home?"

"Forgive me if I seem thankless," said Magdalen, "I mean it not; dear mother, dear sister—life were brief to show how dear ye are to me—but my lord is afar in fight and peril. I would be with him and Scotland—let me go."

It was Marjorie's turn to speak now, when the tears at last had found their way to Magdalen's glowing eyes; she led her to her own apartment—she hung about her with the sisterly love and tenderness which she had given to

her friend so long, and by all the motives of her own mild heart, craved Magdalen to stay. The gentle Englishwoman knew nothing of the passionate throbs that struck against Magdalen's breast, nor of the strong determination that had seized upon her now—but after a few days, they found all arguments useless.

Sadly and rapidly proceeded the arrangements for the journey; though Isobel made hers with a joy which no other in the household knew. Farewells were common in Geneva at this time;—whole families turning homewards in triumph, left the shadow of the Alps, and the calm banks of the lake for homes of rest in England. But there were few such sorrowful leave-takings, as on that bleak January day, when the stout Reformer set forth from peaceful Geneva to disturbed and warlike Scotland, with companions so

much unlike himself. But even John Knox did not look forward on the road with a keener or more eager eye than Magdalen Hepburn, and heart could not hasten faster than the longing heart of Isobel, as they turned their faces towards home.

CHAPTER XIII.

“ In whose company
I shall review Sicilia; for whose sight
I have a woman’s longing.”

WINTER’S TALE.

To be detained at Dieppe till positive intelligence came, of the refusal of the English court to permit to the Reformer a safe passage through their territory, was no encouraging preparation for the voyage and the struggle which should follow; and it was

not till late in April that this small company left the shores of France.

Wearied out with expectation, with fatigue and illness, it was the sunset of the second day of May, when, following the Reformer and the two Edinburgh burgesses, who for months had loitered about the pier of Leith at every arrival from the continent, waiting for the appearance of John Knox, Magdalen and Isobel, closely wrapped in mantle and muffler, and followed in their turn by two of the stout serving-men of these city dignitaries, made their weary way from Leith to Edinburgh. Veiled as they were, and wearied out with long exhaustion, and sickening disappointed hope, they proceeded silently, Magdalen scarcely aware of the reverent respect which their guides showed to the Lady of Langley, and grateful when at length they left her to herself; but something re-

vived by the firm soil under their feet, and the balmy air of this May night, they came at last to the house of Burgess John, where Dame Marion hastened, with tears and cries of joy, to make them welcome. Isobel withdrew to the room of state, which Magdalen, by right of her rank, was now to occupy; and the young lady herself, throwing off her wrappings, entered the great parlour with anxious haste to hear how matters stood with Scotland and the Reformation.

“ So her Grace hath cast the mask at last,” said John Knox, with a smile.

“ Alas! reverend Sir, we were all deceived,” said the Burgess. “ For mine own part, I held a lady’s silken hand incapable of deeds so evil; though, truth to tell, English Mary might have better taught us; but so it is, that all the preachers are summoned at

Stirling on the tenth day of May, and divers worthy gentlemen have entered surety for their coming.”

“With whom appear I, if God impede not,” said John Knox, solemnly, “though no man answereth for me. What, my masters! ye are not affrayed?”

“Nay, in a good cause I could even win the length of battle,” said John Sime, with boldness. “But this Lady has sore deceived us all: after the summons was forth, and these divers gentlemen had entered their caution for the Gospellers, it pleased my good Lord of Glencairn, and another trusty gentleman from the west, to make their suit unto her Grace to stay this evil. When, even in my lord’s face, she had boldness to declare, the Gospellers should be banished forth of Scotland, whatsoe’er the Estates of Scotland

had to say—and being minded of her own word, made answer that princes were not to be called to the remembrance of their promises further than themselves pleased to keep the same. Which words, my good Lord of Glencairn, mightily angered, said even here in the presence of sundry barons and gentlemen, the Laird of Langley, worshipful Lady, being present among the rest.”

“And know you where he is now?” cried Magdalen eagerly.

“Unless it be even in the place that needs him most,” said the burgess, “in truth I cannot tell—for his honour is ever on the gait, and busy for the cause.”

“Lady,” said John Knox, “sore for your tender frame and nurture, hath been this weary voyage. I will but tarry here until the morrow—thence to St. Johnstone, where

the gathering is, that I may hie me to the front of battle; will it please you tarry with these tried friends till I find my worshipful brother, your lord and husband? for such gear as this is not for a woman's hands."

"I will be no burden on you, reverend friend," cried Magdalen. "Where so like is my lord to be as among the brethren in the north? I will not cumber you—if it be your pleasure, I will travel behind—but bid me not remain—it would break my heart."

All the Reformer's kindness and respect for one, who was at once the friend of his wife, and the wife of his friend, could not restrain a slight gesture of impatience—but he paused long enough to soften his voice ere he replied, "It were better to stay—but I will not cross thee. True it is, many waters

cannot quench love, and I doubt if I had thwarted Marjorie in as fond a thought. Have thy will, lady—but now go comfort the flesh, and take rest; you shall need it ere our journeyings be done.”

With a low and reverent obeisance, Magdalen left the room. Though her first youth had bloomed and was gone, Magdalen's slight elastic figure was still eminently youthful, and her obedience to this, and resistance to the former desire of Knox—her humility at once and her wilfulness—gained her a kindly place in the hearts of those grave men, whose little assembly she left. They looked after her with softened glances—“God send her safe—a flower of grace,” said one, lifting his cap with involuntary reverence. “I know no odds since she stood even here a bride,” said John Sime, proud

and friendly, “and noble Langley deserves a loving spouse full well.”

“To our counsel, friends,” said the Reformer abruptly—his eye too had followed Magdalen with wistful kindness—the last present remembrance of his own household and dearest ones—but their time was not to be wasted so. Some of the lesser barons of the neighbourhood and citizens of Edinburgh, had been sent for already, and came in one by one, each with his separate bit of intelligence, of advice, or offered aid, and every moment was of value to the cause.

In the great chamber, Magdalen found Dame Marion, heaping a little table with delicacies for her own refreshment. This city matron was a woman blessed with the natural humility of kindness—never so happy as when ministering to the comfort or

happiness of others. The burgess's wife had not been able to learn that her servants might be as fitly employed in such duties as she—and few, who had her kind offices serving them, and her kind glances anxiously surveying the board, to invent, if possible, an additional comfort, would have easily consented to be turned over to indifferent hands. A hastily cooked chicken, a small half-dried haddock carefully dressed, with wheaten scones of the best, and a delicate little goblet for wine, were arranged upon the table, and Dame Marion, with the courtesy due to Magdalen's superior station, craved her to sit down and partake.

“If you will sit with me, and permit Isobel,” said Magdalen—“and dear Dame Marion, my head is dizzy, I understood not all they said; tell me how everything has passed, and when my lord was here.”

“ He was here, sweet lady, when the oration was made to the Regent,” said Dame Marion; “ I mind him holding up upon his arm auld Sir James, that is sair failed with years—and a great procession they made, bound to the palace. Did your ladyship ever see the auld Laird of Calder, Sir James Sandilands?”

“ No, dame.”

“ He’s like some grand auld tower for stature and nobilitie—and ye may be sure a braver gentleman never rode to court or castle,” said Dame Marion; “ but he’s far stricken in years now, an aged man. Walking down the High Street from where they held their counsel, it was meet he suld be supported, and the Laird of Langley gat the office. ‘ Eh!’ said I to mysel, ‘ if Mistress Isobel that was here with Mr. John, and her bonnie young lady, could but see this day!—for it was

even like no other thing but noble Youdith succouring noble Eild, and baith following the great cause—and thus they went by to the gates of Holyrude. I was aye a favourer of this Regent mysel,” said Dame Marion, looking down, “for my Lord of Arran was naething but a whilliwhaw, and I thought who so fit as the mother to see to the bairn’s house; but how was I to foresee all the ill that should befall?”

“And what of my lord, Dame Marion?” said Magdalen, anxiously.

“Nay, lady, there was nothing of your lord,” continued the matron; “the oration was made even as I say, and her Grace promised fair; and preaching was set up in sundry places. Eh, lady, you heard of Mr. Walter Mill, the blessed martyr, and how he suffered like a lamb at the proud Primate’s

hands? but no sooner was a' done she wanted done, than she hushed up her auld feud with this base Hamilton, the Archbishop, and naething but threatening on her tongue, and evil in her heart. Then a' was unsaid had been said before, and a' the persecutions of Arran's days, and waur, were bound to our backs, and the preachers summoned to Stirling to get their judgment there. When that was done, came my Lord of Glencairn out of the west, with mair that served the truth, and went up to speak with her Grace—but with little grace, good sooth, met she their petition, and mocked at them, and as good as said she cared not what promises she broke. Lady, I can fathom a lee—but I canna fathom them that make a vow and syne turn upon you and say they never meant to keep the same."

"Nay, Dame Marion—but when my Lord

“Glencairn came back?” said Magdalen, hurriedly.

“Certain noble gentlemen had even gathered into the great parlour, lady—so meikle are our humble chalmers honoured—and were waiting on my lord. The noble Laird of Langley was among them, as I said, and I was fain when I looked upon him, and put him in mind I stood nigh to see him wedded. ‘And what of your worshipful lady, sir?’ said I; with that the light trembled in his face, and a yearning look was in his e’e. ‘Ah! Dame Marion,’ said the laird, ‘hope deferred maketh the heart sick.’ And that was a’ he could say.”

Dame Marion’s dainty viands stood untouched, and her guest turned away to weep.

“Dear heart, would I grieve her?” said Dame Marion, with a half-appeal to Isobel:

“but well I wot the Laird of Langley will be fain when he hears of his bonnie bride in Scotland. Good Mistress Isobel, will the lady tarry here?”

“We go to the north on the morrow,” said Isobel; “my lady bids me be ready to set forth again.”

“Well away! will she to the wars?” said Dame Marion, with dismay; “so tender a lady, and so fair; but I ken well that nouthier walls nor gates, nouthier death nor peril, far less words and wishes, can keep back a loving heart.”

CHAPTER XIV.

“ Oh, thou loud war !
'Tis easy to outstrip the slow-foot, Peace,
But thou art swift of pace, and 'gain'st the court
Ere thy pursuer can——”

OLD PLAY.

ACROSS the Firth again, across the silvery Tay—and the walls of the fair city of St. Johnstone glow under the setting sun. The busy streets wear the unfailing aspect of a time of great public excitement—groups about the corners—earnest discussions upon

church steps, and by the doors of booths; and the eager inquiry, "What news?" in every man's face, show sufficiently how unanimous is the interest of the population in the pending question.

The small body of gentlemen escorting Knox and his companions attract general attention as they ride into the town; and many an enquiring face turned towards them, asks, as well as look can ask, what is the new arrival here. But strange preparations seem in progress which astonish the new comers more than they themselves startle the townsfolk. Evident attempts at defence upon the walls, and a strong muster of the city guard, enlivened by many private retainers armed and in warlike array, give the peaceful city the aspect of a place which looks for attack or siege. It is true the ordinary traffic remains

undisturbed—the gates are open with no more apparent precaution than in times of peace; but a certain air of alert and wary observation, and of readiness for every chance, show the strangers, as by a sudden revelation, that the state of matters must have changed.

The quick eye of Knox took in these preparations at a glance.

“ Evil advised—evil advised,” he said, shaking his head in grave displeasure. “ Let us even make our compearance in our Master’s name, all Scotland standing by, to see fair dealing; but I would not keep my head by shedding of blood, till I was sorer bestead than I have ever been. Fie!—this seems not well.”

They had by this time reached a house in the principal street, whose size and importance

scarcely warranted the little group of serving-men in various liveries collected about the foot of the open outer stair.

With anxious eyes had Magdalen Hepburn examined from the edge of her screen the passengers on these thronging ways, and her heart startled her with its loud and anxious throbbing, as John Sime advanced to lift her from her horse.

“Patience, lady,” said the Edinburgh bur-gess, who had been guide of the party and had advanced before them to prepare the way; “patience, lady—he will return ere long; but the good Laird of Langiey is not here.”

It was almost a relief from the overpowering tremor of expectation which had fallen upon Magdalen; and not until a few minutes had passed did she feel the blank fainting of

her disappointment. By that time she stood upon the pavement, shivering and vainly endeavouring to support herself, while she leaned heavily upon her companion.

“Nay, be of courage, gentle lady,” said the good burgess, “thy lord is very well; and look to this kind mistress, come to bid you welcome to St. Johnstone.”

“I thank you, good friend,” said Magdalen, mechanically; but her eyes sought the ground to conceal her sudden tears. Isobel came to her in haste.

“Dear lady, you fail of courtesy; these gentlemen tarry for your first entering—and look up, Lady Maidlin, see—you are waited for.”

Magdalen looked up as she was bidden, and withdrew her veil. A comely middle-aged woman, with a look of eager hospitality and

embarrassment, stood on the stair, waiting with a blush and anxious diffidence of manner, the lady's notice.

“ You are kindly welcome, madam—kindly welcome,” said the mistress of the house, eagerly; “ it's no for a lady like you, but it's our best, and the noble Laird of Langley's bonnie lady has a right to the best of every dwelling in these parts; will it please ye come in?”

Magdalen could not tell whence her sudden invigoration came. She sprang lightly up the steps, returning with a slight and blushing courtesy the salutations of the bystanders who had heard her name—and held out her hand to her hostess with a tear and a smile.

“ Good friend, has my lord been here?” said Magdalen.

The honest matron was moved almost to sympathetic weeping.

“ Well-a-day, he went hence but this very morning!—and a fain man will he be to ken his lady hame; but, madam, as soon as fleet foot and keen heart can carry him, he’ll be back anon.”

While Magdalen mastered the additional pang of having missed this meeting by so short a space, and followed Mistress Euphame Murray into her private apartments, the Reformer, under the guidance of John Sime, had reached the principal room of the house—a well sized apartment, looking out into the street. By the table sat several gentlemen, who seemed to have paused in their discussion to wait the arrival of the stranger. The powerful contrast between the stern dark face of one, and the gentlé but manly countenance of another of these councillors, shone singularly clear in the bright evening light which

surrounded the head of Erskine of Dun, as with a glory. Lord Ruthven's hand toyed with his sword, its familiar plaything, and he rose, as if to mark that he was but a visitor here; with another purpose Erskine also rose to receive the guest for whose coming all had longed and waited. The others present were principally the summoned preachers, and some burgesses of the town.

“What, has your purpose changed?” asked Knox. The Reformer fixed his eyes with a look of enquiry upon the nobleman who remained standing, and with a slight momentary knitting of his brows, seemed to interrogate “will he go, or stay!”

“I have returned but a day, foiled of my mission,” said Erskine. “Hearken, reverend friend: we feared her Grace might esteem us come in rebellious sort—the whole congre-

gation of Dundee, the gentlemen of the Mearns and many faithful in these parts being minded to keep the tryst with the preachers at Stirling—and albeit they should come unarmed, my purpose was set to go before, lest her Grace might be dismayed. Hearing of this, the Regent dealt with me to stay their journey, giving fair promise on her part to remit the summons, and leave the preachers unmolested. By hand of write I conveyed this message to the brethren, and here they dwelt at rest, thinking not to be called upon: when lo! I find her Grace purposes nothing but treachery, and hath letters ready prepared to put them to the horn, and forbid all men give them succour as rebels for their non-compearance; wherefore I came forth privily, and by break of day this morning arrived hither from Stirling. Farther measure we have taken none actual—save to

send forth letters to the Congregation of the west, by the hand of Langley, and to look we have bars to our doors, and strength on our wall, in case of scathe."

"And my noble lord?" said Knox, turning rapidly upon the silent nobleman, "is he with us, or against us?"

"Sir, I shall compel no man to other worship than his heart approves," said Lord Ruthven; "farther my thoughts do not travel—but the present company feareth no spy in me."

"Your lordship will pardon a brief speech?" said the Reformer. "Good brethren, I come hither out of my assured rest at your call—now I pray you show to me, how I can best serve the truth and you."

The little company hastily gathered round him—his weariness, his long fasting, and the weakness of his frame, were all forgotten;

and John Knox now only remembered with a triumphant thanksgiving, that he had attained to the brunt of the battle where he had so long prayed and longed to be.

And Magdalen Hepburn sat at a high upper window, and looked out upon the picturesque street—the slowly darkening sunset, the slowly dispersing groups without. Such rest and home-like quiet were in the skies, such comfort in the homely voices, the cries of children, and tongues of mothers that came to her from below. Behind her stood Isobel, vacantly looking forth, and seeing only long stretches of visionary moorland, where fair St. Johnstone lay in the gloaming, veiled with this sweet dim atmosphere of calm. At the other end of the dark room, a fine boy of twelve years old, the eldest of Patrick Murray's children—the pride of father and mother—kept watch with chivalrous

childish enthusiam, lest the lady should be disturbed.

Disappointment and pain seemed overpast with Magdalen, she herself could not tell why—and sweet was the weeping that came among her prayers, and dear the hope in her heart. “But some few days, and Paul will return,” said Magdalen, as she went to her peaceful rest. “I will see my child, anon,” said Isobel—ere God bestowed upon her weariness such sleep as He gives to his beloved—and these two wanderers and pilgrims rested in comfort and in hope.

CHAPTER XV.

“ I have heard you say
Honour and policy, like unsevered friends,
In the war do grow together.”

CORIOLANUS.

THE May sunshine lies warm and bright upon the fertile shire of Ayr. The little gardens white with blossoms, the hedgerows fragrant with hawthorn, the whole country dewy and full of odours, refresh the soul of the wayfarer. But peace, and the fair promise of

peace, which lies so softly on hill and field, has little place in the minds of those who travel by these verdant roads. "First pure, then peaceable," says their faith, and the first has to be reached, whatever the cost may be.

The paths are glistening with an early shower, and the leaves glow and twinkle between the soft wind that is abroad, and the genial May sun. Wherever you can see by every highway and lane, little bands of gentlemen are gathering to the grey and humble church which stands within this reverent enclosure of graves. Scores of serving men about, hold the horses of their masters, and themselves press as near as they may to hear what they can of the proceedings within. Noblemen, knights, and minor barons, yeoman of substance, burgesses of the adja-

cent towns, and even peasants in homespun grey, crowd within the walls. You will see by a glance that "Reformation" has been made in this Church already—that before the disrobed altar, with its bare space and vacant candlesticks, stands a reading desk bearing a great Bible, and that the Saint has forsaken his shrine in this little niche apart. The church is low and dark with heavy rounded arches and pillars of great thickness, and here and there the dim blazonry of an antique coat of arms placed above an arch, or a sepulchral effigy in the gloom of the upper corners, give a sombre historical ornamentation to these bare cold walls. On benches, on folding stools and rude chairs, and standing in groups wherever there is space, a large assembly is collected, and jealous though the times are, you can see the peasant's home-

spun coat brushing the velvet sleeve of the high descended laird, and the burgess's gold chain glittering side by side with the jewelled cap and rich embroidery of the young noble. The little church is thronged in every part—the chancel itself, into which you look from the further end as into a cavern, with its slightly elevated floor, and slightly lowered roof, is alive with earnest faces strangely lighted up by the dim faint many-coloured light which shines through the great window in the end.

A grave and dignified man, standing on the chancel steps, reads from a paper in his hand. His black doublet and hose, his close skull cap, and bonnet of black stuff, and his falling band, proclaim the unarmed man a preacher of the Reformation. Placed at either side of him, but on the lower step, two

gentlemen of bolder bearing guard the man of peace. One of a fiery and vehement countenance fixes his eyes and his attention eagerly on the reader, and bites his lip as he proceeds; the other, to whom this letter is either familiar or indifferent, turns his regard towards the assembled company, and eagerly examines their aspect and bearing. His face is bronzed and slightly marked with exposure to all weathers, and his strong athletic figure seems to have got rid of every encumbrance—everything but the massive framework, the elements of strength and vigour, and endurance, which fit him for his toil. His eyes discuss this assembly with ceaseless animation, brightening here and there as they fall upon a known face—and you see that he himself has no need of being moved by the document which is read, but that he eagerly watches and calculates its effect on others.

“ I ever thought she was false, like all her race,” burst from the lips of the impatient Laird of Gathgirth, who stood on the other side of the preacher. Paul Hepburn, who held the place at his right hand, raised his finger to call for silence. “ Lords and gentlemen, the congregation look for nothing but siege and battle in St. Johnstone. What say you? I must carry your answer back to them that sent me—will you aid or no?”

A mingled din of voices broke upon the silence. Here a compromiser cried, “ Keep the peace in God’s name as long as it may be kept.” Another advised, “ Let the men of St. Johnstone hold their own. Marry, we will even do as much when the Lady gars ride her army westaway!”

“ Meddle not in other men’s quarrels,” shouted one, “ the peace of Kyle is nearer than the strife in the North.”

“ Fie on ye, cowards !” cried another, “ He that speaks, set fair tryst, and every man in my lairdship shall follow at his heels !”

“ Gentlemen, let every man serve his conscience,” said Glencairn, suddenly rising in the midst, “ I will by God’s grace see my brethren in St. Johnstone—yea, though never man go with me, but a good pike upon my shoulder. I had rather die with that company than live after them in such a world.”

A unanimous hum drowned the conclusion of this speech—so many voices mingled together, that all Paul Hepburn’s anxiety could not distinguish what the general concord of the company was—but his brightening eyes told the intelligence conveyed by this other faculty, and soon he could distinguish through the storm of sounds, the individual shout with which every man named the number of

his adherents, and his readiness for immediate action. The bold voice of Glencairn had given the multitude what it wanted, a leader and example, and every mind followed in this strong unanimous tide.

In a shorter time than he himself could credit, Paul Hepburn found himself riding with Glencairn, the Lords Boyd and Ochiltree—the latter a Stewart, and of kin to the royal house—and a host of lesser gentlemen, at the head of a compact small army, numbering between two and three thousand; and well named, so much was the heart and conscience of every private man in these ranks, of every degree, engaged for this enterprise, the Congregation of the West.

The districts that sent forth Bruce and Wallace, gave no degenerate representatives to the present emergency; and the peasant, whose forefathers had transmitted to him the

inheritance of Lollard doctrine and righteous life, pressed on the march with courage as stout and earnest, as did the peers of Scotland who headed the array.

This eager band wasted little time in resting. When they had come as far as Glasgow, a somewhat striking incident tested their devotion. The Lion King, the fount of honour, and head of heraldry in Scotland, stayed the advancing congregation, and with the full pomp of his office, commanded in the name of King and Queen, and by her Grace's command, that every man should return to his own house, nor succour the recusants of the north, under pain of treason, and all its attendant penalties.

In grim silence, the men of Kyle and Carrick looked on, grasping the firmer to spear and pike, and pressing forward each upon his neighbour.

“ My lord, an your spring be played, we will pass upon our way,” said Glencairn, contemptuously—and with a prouder and a firmer step marched on the Congregation of the West.

CHAPTER XVI.

“ I hope all will be well—we must be patient.”

HAMLET.

WHILE the western Reformers stirred by the appeal of the north proceeded thus unani- mously to the succour of their fellow-believers, and while the preachers summoned at one time to the royal presence, and treacherously absolved from this summons to be afterwards declared contumacious and recusants, lay in the fair city of Perth, vigilant and appre-

hensive, expecting nothing but siege, the wavering policy of the Queen Regent suffered another change. No small test of the royal courage were those stout heretics, every man among them ready to be a martyr if need was, who were heard of on the fords of Forth, steadily marching towards St. Johnstone; and Mary of Guise was learned in the wiles of evasive treaty, and artful procrastination, these pitfalls, self-created, of her descendants. Unaware of the advantageous position in which the advancing reinforcements placed them, disturbed by cross rumours of the failure of their mission to the west at one time, and at another of Glencairn's advancing party interrupted and turned back, and above all, in all circumstances eager to keep peace, the "Congregation" in Perth, and the council of eminent Reformers at its head,

gave a willing ear to renewed negotiations with the court. One embassy after another, a sort of miniature foreshadowing of those long drawn out and painful parleyings by which the first Charles Stuart convinced at once his friends and foes of his untruth, occupied the attention of John Knox and his coadjutors. A stout little Commonwealth, brotherly and courageous, the citizens of Perth held by their religious leaders, but the element of doubt and hesitation was supplied by the presence of Lord Ruthven, who did not know his own mind sufficiently to give any measure his hearty concurrence, but who was still too notable and important a person, both in right of his own rank, and of his position here, to be left out. And there was the gentle Erskine on the other hand, true as good faith itself, but ever leaning to the

milder side, refusing to believe in falsehood, and ready to trust to the last extremity a plighted word, while no one of all the assembled council, however suspicious of the Regent and her advisers, was disposed to maintain resistance when she propounded terms of peace.

“No tidings, lady—they say no tidings still,” said Mistress Euphame, hastening to relieve the anxiety of Magdalen, when Patrick Murray returned from a meeting of the leaders of the Reformation in one of the city churches; “but much word of watches set on all the fords of Forth, and wild Highlandmen brought down from the hills. Na, lady, but if Glencairn be abroad with all his westland men, do you think the loons of France or the kernes from ayont Tay will hinder him? I trow not so—for I come of westland blood by the mother’s side mysel.”

“ Ah, Dame Euphame! it is hard to know naught but this—that there are no tidings,” said Magdalen; and Magdalen’s face was very pale.

“ I ken the sickening at the heart,” said the city matron, “ and I’ve heard say it was sorer to bear than certain ill; but, lady, I think not so—for it is ever sweet to hope.”

“ Nay, Isobel’s heart longs as much as mine,” said Magdalen, “ yet Isobel neither weeps nor makes a moan; yet it is weary, hoping, hoping, year on year, and never to see aught but hope!”

Isobel, who gave no demonstration of her feelings, had turned away her face on Mrs. Euphame’s entrance, perhaps to hide the pang and flush of anxiety and bitter throb of disappointment with which she too heard that there were no tidings.

“ Dear lady, little Ruthven whispers me,” said Isobel, with her tender motherly art turning the thoughts of Magdalen from their immediate pain, “ and says you were pleased to promise him a tale of our travels—how we sojourned by the lake at Geneva, and how we journeyed with Mr. John; and he has ended every task for his master, and had praise in all to-day.”

“ Nay, madam, the child is over bold,” said Dame Euphame, with a start of apprehension; for Magdalen’s rank was no less honoured in the house of Patrick Murray, than if she had been mistress and liege lady instead of guest.

But the elder boy drew near, half-timidly, half-confident; and little Ruthven looked out with a wistful face from the shadow of Isobel’s gown. “ My tale will be sad to-night,” said

Magdalen. "I would a little bird would come with the morrow to bring tidings to me."

"Lady, I would break through the queen's bands, and travel night and day, to bring you word," cried Patie Murray, with sparkling eyes.

"Dame Euphame, will you give him to me to be my page?" said Magdalen, laying her hand upon her favourite's head, "and my lord will breed him bravely, because he would be so true a little knight to me; but I think little Ruthven would love to travel forth to foreign parts, he craves to hear of yonder far country so."

"The lady said, the sun and the snow—they aye dazzled white on the hills," said the younger child, in bashful explanation, "and the hills were high up to heaven—Mistress Isobel told me so."

“ And the lake lay sweet below the moon, little Ruthven,” said Magdalen, “ and the wind ruffled on the water’s edge like an angel passing by, and we were wont to go hither and thither, Isobel and I, always thinking of home—and never looked to the great heights all glistening white as snow, but we thought upon Scotland far away, and sighed in our hearts, oh, to be there!—for a shepherd’s shieling in a glen was better to us in our thoughts than the greatest palace in the strange land—we ever longed to be back again, both Isobel and I!”

“ And, madam, we are here,” said Isobel, in a low and solemn tone; for Isobel answered not only her lady, but the anxious yearnings of her own heart.

“ For I wist always of my lord in fightings and in journeys,” continued Magdalen; “ and

when I would have slept by night, I heard the shout of battle in the wind, and the dreary sigh of wailing in the midnight rain; and Isobel had ever thought of her dearest child, dwelling afar among the Lammermuirs, and her soul was sad, and yearned for Alice, when I sent forth my heart towards my lord and home. Look you, Isobel weeps—but for me, I think I will not weep again till my lord comes here to me.”

“Madam, is that the gallant Laird of Langley that dwelt here?” asked little Patie Murray, eagerly; “when I am a man I will follow him, for they say he takes never rest—and all for sake of Scotland and the persecuted faith!”

Magdalen’s boast of weeping no more was overcome by this, and while Isobel turning her head aside, hastily wiped off her own

heavier tears, the Lady of Langley with proud affection drew her hand over her wet eyes.

“ In truth I think naught is so dear to my lord’s heart,” said Magdalen, in a subdued and gentle voice, but her heart added her own name to the name of Scotland, and Paul’s deep tenderness for his bride, so well remembered, softened into sweeter excellence his long enduring labours for the faith; “ yet I almost fear for mine own self, I am so faint-hearted,” she continued, faltering; “ for alas, Dame Euphame, what shall befall me, if my lord miscarries in these bitter wars?”

“ Nay, lady, I see not how the Congregation could miscarry,” said Dame Euphame; “ pity on us and our bonnie St. Johnstone if my Lady Regent and her Frenchmen won the day! But wherefore should they win the day?”

If she be governor of all the land, yet I count she was not born to the same like my good lord, and your own self, madam, not to count the like of my good man and me—and for strength and valour, the very moorland carles of the west I reckon as good as a fremd knight; for its hame and the truth the knaves do battle for, and that puts faith in failing hands—and right is on our side, lady, wherefore should we miscarry? no to say God fights every day for his ain cause.”

Dame Euphame's voice slightly raised in enthusiasm, sank solemnly as she concluded, and the open face of her pretty boy flushed with childish ardour as he stood proudly by his mother's side.

“Madam,” said Patie Murray, “Lord Ruthven has a page less than me, and yet wears steel at his side. I'll get a sword and

a headpiece, and away to seek the Laird of Langley, and ride at his back night and morrow, till a' the wars be done!"

Magdalen hid her face with one hand, while she laid the other caressingly on the shoulder of her little champion; but Magdalen's silent thanks touched Patie out of his flush of manful courage, and he had much ado, as he looked upon the Lady of Langley's hidden face, to keep the tears within his own eyelids. The boy was mightily ashamed of these signs of weakness, and with much annoyance turned away his face from little Ruthven's wondering wide open eyes.

"It is well for a cause when babes would fight," said Isobel. "Lady Maidlin, the boy speaks to comfort you; dear child, take heart."

"Babes will be men anon," said Dame

Euphame, proudly; “oh, wae is me, my winsome Patie, I may wail and cry well-a-day or a’ is done, for the weary wars that steal my bairn from me!—but, madam, think you the country shall miscarry where the son is so early ready for the father’s place?”

“Nay, Dame Euphame!” And Magdalen remembered with momentary shame that she thought not of the country, nor even of the faith in the first place, but of one brave man’s perils and dangers in the wars; and she turned from her own musings with compunction and a sigh.

“I marvel if Isobel has ever told you how strange it was to hear little ones like you speaking in a strange tongue!” said Magdalen, turning with an effort towards the child at her knee; “the sound of it, like learned doctors discussing somewhat which we might

not understand; and those sweet strange psalms and verses — you remember, Isobel?”

“ But great peace was in all their borders,” said Isobel: “ those good households, mistress, whom no man made afraid, and houses where the word was taught, sitting down and rising up, and never priest nor bishop to say nay; oh, for such a day in Scotland! and surely in good time it will come anon.”

“ I will but light the lamp, lady, and look to my aumrie that there is wherewith to set forth the table,” said Dame Euphame, “ and then with your good pleasure I will sit me down and hear what you say, for I was ever blythe to hear tell of foreign parts, and it well becomes my bairns and me to have a kind thought of them that succoured you. Mr. John will come hither to eat a

morsel before he takes his rest; I will but spread the table, and be back belive."

As Dame Euphame spoke, she lighted the lamp which threw its faint rays down upon the large dim chamber, and the little group who were gathered near the window. A little light still came in through the casement, but the waning day and the feeble lamp, made little more than twilight after all.

With its oaken panels, its dark roof, and heavy cumbrous furniture, and the faint glimmer of its waxed and slippery floor, Mistress Euphame Murray's dwelling room looked large, and dim, and shadowy, like a hall of romance, in this faint light. The active step of Dame Euphame bustling about her household preparations, spreading her snow-white cloth, her silver drinking cups, her cakes of bread, and stoup of wine, was the

only movement visible in the apartment, for Magdalen sat in the recess of the window, with only the drapery of her dark dress falling softly from the kindred colour of the oak; and the children very hushed and reverential beside her, waited in perfect stillness for their mother's approach; and Isobel's detached and separated figure, in its ample kirtle of black, and snowy coif, stood out from the dim background in motionless musing too. Dame Euphame's simple mind was full of natural curiosity, her task was soon executed, and she too advanced towards the silent little group who awaited her, and drew a heavy stool near to Isobel. "Now, madam, if it please you," said the matron, respectfully, "I will not disturb you more."

But Magdalen remained silent; her thoughts were gone far out of her own reach, wander-

ing after Paul in his unknown wanderings; disappointed, anxious, full of longing, yet nevertheless full of hope—for to-morrow brought always its new world of possibility and expectation, and every new to-morrow brought a greater probability with it of his own sudden arrival here.

“There are many strange ways in yonder place, mistress,” said Isobel, seeing with the quick glance of affection her lady’s pre-occupied thoughts; “but yet I do admire wherever I have wandered, how God makes a kind heart towards the forlorn and the solitary; Christian people dwelling at home have pity upon strangers, as indeed we wist of to our comfort here.”

“Nay—say not so,” said Dame Euphame eagerly, “should I count the Lady of Langley for a stranger, or you who have followed

her far and near? A burgess of St. Johnstone hath a worthy place, Mistress Isobel, and think you it becomes us to serve them grudgingly who serve us with their best blood?—Now, heaven forefend—for an we are low in degree—though my husband comes of a gentle race as is well known, albeit, he takes no state upon him—I would not for all the North Countrie, be a churl at heart. Nay, good friend—but blythe am I to entertain the lady—and a blythe woman would I be could I bring her tidings. I doubt not, you were often sick at heart, and solitary, Mistress Isobel, dwelling so far away among the fremd—but now I warrant you, we are all friends at home.”

“My lady started at every footstep without. I have seen her tremble to hear the falling leaves—always looking forth and

longing for tidings from home," said Isobel. "Dear heart, she thought of no more pining if we had but once set foot on Scottish ground—yet, here we have dwelt many days, and my lord wots not still—and it was a sore travel for a tender lady crossing the angry sea."

"Nay, were it but for that, I would have pity of all persecuted folk," said Dame Euphame. "I would not for a king's ransom go forth upon the sea. Save thee, child!—the gentle Tay, and a fisher's boat, are not like the ships and the ocean Mistress Isobel wots of—where there is never the pleasant sight of green hills or shore; but always the dreary waters, and the dim clouds, and the sky, and everything else, as you would think, gone forth out of the world."

"Not to say great storms and tempests terrible to see," said Isobel, conspiring with

the mother, to terrify the scared yet bold curiosity of little Ruthven, who listened with all his eyes and ears—"it was this that Mistress Marjorie trembled to think of for sake of her little ones."

"Now by your favour," interrupted Dame Euphame, eagerly, "is this lady a fair featured woman, and young as they say? I have heard she comes of English blood, and is well born—Nay, I trow, never man had better desert of a worthy and a noble spouse—but youthful and well favoured?—is it even as they say?"

This matter of womanly curiosity awoke even the slumbering attention of Magdalen—and she hastened to answer with a smile—

"There was not a sweeter face in all the Border, Dame Euphame—I am 'assured a fairer looks not forth upon this night—and the

sweetest heart withal!—But Isobel, Marjorie were a peaceful companion now; her faith is so calm, she knows not fear.”

“Well, lady, they say a good wife is a gift from heaven,” said Dame Euphame musingly, “but beauty truly is but a carnal grace, and favour is vain, as saith the word. I should have thought but of a grave and godly dame, if one had named the wife of Mr. John to me.”

“But it is no blessing to be evil featured,” said Magdalen, “and there never was saint on earth more godly than Marjorie. Nay providence hath only thus more endowed her, to glad her home the more—I marvel how they are, Isobel, in peaceful Geneva to-night?”

“No lack of cheer, lady, when there are little children,” said Dame Euphame, whose

heart was a mother's heart in every corner, "and knave-bairns baith?—I reckon neither Satan himself nor a' the great princes that league with him, have great comfort to see a godly race at the back of Mr. John—one of that blood is over much for them; but props of the gospel in God's pleasure, I warrant these little bairns will grow to be."

"I have seen when the sons were far other than the father," said Isobel, "thy little varlets, dame, how bold they be!—I think Patie will be no worthy burgess, but a noble man at arms."

"Hush, good friend, evil enough comes in his own pate I know," cried the anxious mother—"go to the inner chamber, Patie, and whisper thy father—say it grows late at e'en, and the table is spread."

The little company dispersed. Mrs.

Euphame to make more additions to her hospitable provision—Isobel to superintend some of the household arrangements, and the boy to bear his mother's message to the inner room, where the master of the house sat with the Reformer receiving instructions for a public mission—Magdalen alone, remained by the window, while little Ruthven straying from her footstool, peered into the familiar corners on some errand of childish investigation for a lost toy or ball. Passing groups loitered along the dim unlighted street without, passing voices and scraps of conversation fell upon the half abstracted ear which received them faintly, like far off echoes of her own thoughts. The subject was everywhere the same—if few among them had the same vivid interest as Magdalen in the safe arrival of Glencairn, everyone had

a personal stake in the security of the city; and there were voices even among those passers by, which longed by name for the bold hand and wise councils of Langley—in his own person, worth a band of meaner soldiers. With a strange tingle of delight, Magdalen bent forward to the speakers in involuntary gratitude, and her heart was moved to involuntary gladness and a little overflow of thanksgiving. Though Paul was not here to make Scotland home to her, yet how great was the difference—those foreign people of Geneva with their strange tongue and divers interests, to whom Langley was but an uncouth word—and the homely passers by of this dark street of St. Johnstone, where the name most dear to Magdalen was a name of honour, familiar to every lip—and where many a heart, besides this one

most devoted to him, rose up to call him blessed, and to commend his safety to God—a pillar of the commonweal—a shelter and strength to the timorous people and the struggling faith. Magdalen leant back in her window seat unseen, in tearful joy and thoughtfulness—the gloom of her disappointment could not stand upon the balm of this.

“No tidings, no tidings—they say the truth,” said John Knox at the supper table—“but a hundred tongues of rumour, as ye may well trow. I bid you take courage, lady—your worshipful husband is no light pleader to be set aside by a naysay—and I fear nothing, we shall see Langley at the gates anon, with a thousand men at his hand.—I would he were but here even now, and stout Glencairn; for I love not timid councils,

Master Patrick, though I be a man of peace.”

“The queen mother has knowledge of us now,” said Patrick Murray, “and cannot think longer, reverend Sir, to put us from the truth either by fraud or force—I must even believe with the good Laird of Dun, she shall keep to her treaty now.”

“Ye have my full good will to try,” said the Reformer, “I would condemn none without full proof; but mark you, *I* trust her not, and good sooth would rather hear of the men of Kyle—rather of Glencairn and Langley, though they brought never a follower—safe on the threshold of St. Johnstone, than the fairest promise of peace this lady ever made. Fie upon authority that makes its plighted word of thus small account! If ye scorn a false knave for your servitor, how reckon you

of a false prince for the ruler of your land?"

"These be perilous words," said Patrick Murray, sinking his voice, "but, I question not, most true."

Dame Euphame looked round into the half lighted corners with a glance of fear; none but members of their own household were present, and the good matron with a woman's instinctive love of daring, turned to the Reformer once again, as if to bid him go on.

"Nay, worthy mistress," said John Knox, "I would not have my rude speech put a house of good in peril; I will say my thoughts in another place—only, friend, ye shall have my free good will to trust the Regent, as I say—fear not for that; lady, I pray you keep good cheer, my worshipful friend is in no greater danger than he hath escaped a hundred times;

and if he rides with Glencairn and his following, I would fain see what band in all these parts may stop the Congregation of the west! Master Patrick, I wait your pleasure—we have done our household reverence to that God who sets us in families, and we have broken bread with gladness of heart. Now good even, and good rest.”

The master of the house rose with grave respect to attend the preacher to his chamber, where there was still a final word to say; and Magdalen went hopefully to hers, looking forward with a lightened heart to to-morrow—to-morrow in which every good was possible—in which she would permit herself to fear no evil.

“ But I would have you build little faith upon my Lord Ruthven; his heart is not detached from the guile of courts and states,”

said John Knox, turning round upon his host at his chamber door. "Forestal not evil with suspicion, but if evil come, be not dismayed. Good friend, good night."

That night was enough to ripen hope into reality, suspicion into ascertained truth; but the darkness did not close more surely upon the resting earth, than did the narrow mortal vision close upon the unconscious sleepers here; though the events they looked for came with the morrow, confirming their expectation both of good and evil—the mingled gifts of life.

CHAPTER XVII.

“ My noble friends,
I crave their pardons :
For the mutable rank-scented many,
Let them regard me, as I do not flatter.”

CORIOLANUS.

“ My Lord of Ruthven is gone !”

“ I will not say he went forth from us because he was not of us,” said Erskine ;
“ for I count him for a true believer, though yet little assured in the faith ; but I would have you encourage the people,

good brother, for this defection is grievous to their minds."

"Speak not of it—there be many in Scotland as good as he," said John Knox, with a little impatience. "I pray you mark how between these fickle nobles and this rascal and braggart multitude our cause must bear to be contemned. Nay, breaking of idols may be right commendable sport—but you shall see they set us forth as breaking down kirks and chapels out of pure despight, all for excesses of our rabble train."

"The Lord James said as much to our face," said a gentleman present.

"Noble sirs and brethren, I have come even now from holding conference with those gracious youths who were even in a more befitting place by our side than dealing for the adversary," said John Knox. "Mark

you, gentlemen, I trust not the Regent's promise—ye have experiencè of her truth of old—but ye do well to try all means for saving of bloodshed. Has any man heard aught of our brethren from the west?"

At this moment a messenger entered hurriedly, to announce that the band of Glencairn had joined with the available force of the congregation, which lay in order of battle without the gates, a short way from the town. The councillors of this present assembly gathered together in close discussion. The articles of the proposed treaty lay before them, and were once more gravely read by one of the preachers present. They were that no one in the town of Perth should be called to account for the late "emulation" in religion, or for the destruction of the convents following upon the same—that the order of

worship and public instruction begun, should be suffered to go forward—and that the Queen should leave no French soldiers or garrison behind her to coerce the town.

“ I had even boldness of heart to engage, that let us but profess Christ Jesus, and the benefit of His Gospel, there should be never within Scotland more obedient subjects than we,” said Erskine of Dun, a flush suffusing his face. “ Cursed be they who seek effusion of blood !”

“ Amen, Amen.” No one was slow to join this anathema.

“ My hand has ever been for peace,” said John Knox. “ There are in this company can testify that not the galleys and prison of France had power with me to risk such effusion for sake of freedom; and I heartily approve that ye try her Grace as far as a

mortal may: perchance for this time she meaneth well—yet I think brotherly friendship and gratefulness demand that my lords of the West have part in our council ere we set our hands to this bond.”

This was eagerly agreed to, and the council adjourned its meeting till the strangers should join them in their deliberations.

The high window in Patrick Murray's gabled house is thronged with a little crowd. Dame Euphame, courteously giving place to Isobel, is at one corner, while Magdalen, bending out eagerly, and supporting her head on both her hands, unconscious of all that is said around her, of where she stands, of everything, save what lies far off before her eyes, occupies the other. This brave and pretty boy whom Magdalen calls her page, has his high enthusiasm for the “bonnie lady”

softened into love and kindness now, and in the excitement of his curiosity bends forward by her side. A little throng of brothers and sisters, servants and neighbours, fill the room behind, for Patrick Murray's house has peculiar advantages of situation, and from this window it is possible to see the camp, and command the gate of the town.

“I see a grand lord, on a grey horse, marshalling the westland men!” cried the boy. “Will that be Glencairn? and oh for such a gallant band of gentlemen all fair mounted and arrayed with brave breast-plates and bright lances, glittering in the sun! Will all the nobles be out of the west? and look you hither, Mistress Isobel, some one has come from the town—mother, mother! do you see?—and the great lords are a' gathered in a cluster; and see, see!—I know

the bright head-piece, and the badge, and the scarf about the breast—it's the brave laird that tarried here!"

"Knave! will you be still?" cried his mother:—"you vex the lady. Madam, heed him not."

"Nay, good dame," said Magdalen, with a sick smile; her head was very dizzy—it needed the support of these nervous hands.

"And now look you—look you! they all ride for the gate!" cried the boy, who was reporter in general for the benefit of those behind, "if they be bound for the council—such a brave sight!—but bid little Ruthven hold back, mother—he pulls at me—and he could not see so far. Lo! now—yonder they come!"

The voice ran on in childish exultation

and excitement—but Magdalen marked it not; the high houses and church spires, the very sky and sunshine itself, and the streets which lay low at her feet, reeled in her eyes—she saw nothing but the dazzling flash of armour—the motion of a group of indistinct figures which she tracked and followed as they crossed the vacant space—as they entered the gate—as they drew rapidly near, their horses' hoofs ringing upon the stones, and striking to her very heart. On they came with such a dazzling, steady speed, and yet so slow withal! Dame Euphame, withdrawn from this post so unnecessarily lofty, has gone to a lower window; but Magdalen, with her absorbed and captive faculties, did not hear the invitation which her kind hostess addressed to herself, and remains there fixed and rigid among the children,

who press forward scarcely to be restrained by the anxious care of Isobel. Then there comes a sudden flash and light to these strained eyes of Magdalen, and for an instant there appears to her the face of Paul, looking up with a smile and bow—looking up, but not to her—and with immediate haste turning again upon his way.

“Dear lady, you are faint,” said Isobel, taking the passive hands of Magdalen in her own, and drawing her from the window—but Magdalen’s bloodless face and wild eye terrified her loving attendant.

Carefully shielding her from scrutiny, Isobel led her lady in silence to her own chamber; and Magdalen, with passive acquiescence, stumbled down the stair, her lips slightly open, her eyes closed, and her face as pale as marble. Isobel placed her in her

chair, and softly chafed her hands. "Dear child, dear lady!" said the distressed and bewildered attendant, "nothing evil has befallen—look up, sweet heart!"

It was some short time before Magdalen recovered from her stupor, and she did so with a burst of tears. "I am a fool, Isobel—oh, you were well to chide me! Do I not know he has no note that we are here; but it struck to my heart when Paul looked up, and saw not me!"

A hurried step was on the stair—the door flew open with a burst.

"Nay, this is unmannerly," said Isobel, rising from her lady's feet; but Paul Hepburn, who had no leisure to deprecate surprises, or think of their possible harm, sprang in upon her ere the words were said.

"Maidlin, Maidlin! my heart!"

Knight errant and soldier—leader of the Congregation—tried champion of the faith—there was yet so much of the woman in Paul Hepburn's soul, that the light of his eyes danced and trembled through a sudden dew, which ran over in his haste. Neither Magdalen nor he could tell what the words were that hurried from his lips as he rejoiced over her—rejoiced with all the triumph and exultation of a victor over a prize.

“ But, Paul, ye were bound for the council—hie you away,” said Magdalen, after a long interval: “ they would have your voice and judgment. Nay, laggard, a lady's bower is no loitering place for thee.”

“ A lady's bower !” said Hepburn, tenderly, looking round upon the great chamber, the best in Mistress Euphame's dwelling; “ there are fairer bowers in Langley, Maidlin.

Come, I will tell how I shall carry you home."

"But the council,—nay, Paul, you must not tarry with me," said Magdalen, blushing: "they will say I am to blame."

"They will say true," said Paul. "What! will ye never be content?—hard bested and weary, one year upon another—and I must not loiter an hour for joy of your home-coming. Fie upon hard hearts!"

"And, Paul, will there be peace anon?" said Magdalen, looking up with as much devout simplicity as though this simple knight had been an oracle of war.

"I doubt not Fortune will smile upon us now, since she gives thee, a hostage to my hands," said Hepburn. "Nay, sweet Maidlin, the countenance of Heaven is with our labours. God knoweth, if I speak lightly

my heart is full. Long ago, I said in my musings, dear heart, 'When I see my Maidlin safe within Scotland, it shall be my sign that God is returning in mercy to our land;' and, lo, out of my witting, out of my causing, mine own kind Lord, in his grace, hath brought this sweet sign to me! Let who will be dismayed, it is not for me to tremble more."

CHAPTER XVIII.

“ My dearest heart,
We do but part to meet, and meet to part,
But peace will come anon.”

THE joy of re-union could not last long; another parting was destined to intervene ere Magdalen could go home. The Lords of the Congregation, peaceful as was their intent, and eager their desire to accomplish a bloodless revolution, did not see that they could be

justified from mere distrust, in refusing the proposal to which the Regent, by her Commissioners, the young Earl of Argyle and Lord James, Protestants both, and most solicitous at once for peace and purity—signified her assent. With many fears and much disquiet they withdrew their forces from the defenceless city, and Magdalen Hepburn once more watched from the high window the sweeping procession of these gallant horsemen, and the one among them so long and far distinguished, who ever and anon turned back to wave his lingering and fond farewell towards the watcher whom he left behind.

“But a little time and I will come to carry my Maidlin home,” said Paul. “Fear not, sweet heart, triumph is at hand;” and Magdalen was well content, for these few days, to stay in the kindly dwelling of the Perth

burgess, and wait for her lord's return, while even the sigh of Isobel's longing was a sigh of hope. Isobel had made a vow she would never again leave her lady till she left her in Langley—her own assured and certain home.

May was ending in sweet sunshine, and all the happy promise of early summer. "Madam, will it please you descend?" said Dame Euphame. "The Queen-mother will enter anon, I hear say—and ye will see better from your own chamber, lady, or in the dwelling-room with me."

And Magdalen said her last farewell in her heart, and with a hopeful smile sought, with Mrs. Murray, the window of the family sitting-room. Groups of lookers-on, something excited, and not quite assured of what should befall them under the new reign, stood about

the streets, waiting for the Regent's entrance, and the outer stairs attached to the houses, the windows, and entries, were filled with a hushed and expectant population, looking anxiously for any sign or token from which they might form a judgment of what their future usage was to be. The outer stair of this house of Patrick Murray's had, like the rest, its little crowd, and foremost among them was Patrick Murray's eldest hope, the heir of his substance, and the pride of his heart. His mother's eye rested on the boy proudly, as he stood leaning on the rail of the stair, and looking forth, if not with the exulting delight of his former spectatorship, at least with wistful eagerness and curiosity; his cap lying lightly on the side of his head, his hair thrust back from his white open brow, and his animated healthful face tinged

with a shadow of the gravity which filled the looks of elder men.

The declining sunshine slanted along the house-tops, and sent down long rays of golden light here and there upon the high and antique street; the music came in little swells and outbreaks, heralding the royal procession, and then came the sound of horses' feet, and now and then a low, interrupted, and formal acclamation of welcome. Soldiers of the Regent's army, lackeys in black and scarlet (the royal livery), and retainers of the house of Hamilton, formed the van; and then came the Queen herself, surrounded by the Duke and the Archbishops, and the French officers of state. At a swift pace, and with tokens of evident sullenness and displeasure, the royal wayfarer passed along the street, casting keen glances around her now and then, and

anon fixing her eyes steadily on the ground, as she pushed forward, with evident contemptuous inclination to take no notice of those who made a feint of welcoming her to this unwilling town.

One broad full glance, bestowed in passing, on the somewhat notable house of Patrick Murray, which some one pointed out to her, showed to Magdalen a displeased and haughty countenance, care-worn and troubled, but not without traces of that princely beauty of which her daughter is the lasting example and type; but in another moment the distinguished group had passed, and nothing but the steady tramp of her armed followers resounded through the street, where already the lookers-on began to disperse.

Mistress Euphame left the window, and Magdalen remained with no great interest,

looking vaguely, not upon the procession, but on the general aspect of the street below. A loud report—a rush of footsteps—and a sharp cry immediately under the window startled her.

“What is that?” cried Dame Euphame, rushing to the window; it was not easy to see what it was; for, with cries and groans, a throng of people were rushing to the outer stair, while a file of hackbutteers, the last of of the procession, were deliberately slinging their guns, and falling into marching order to follow their companions. “What is that?” cried Dame Euphame again, with a shrill cry, looking down from the open window. There was a dead silence.

“God help her! he was a’ their pride,” said an old woman in a whisper; but the whisper was sharp, and pierced the mother’s ear.

With dreadful haste the poor woman rushed to the door, followed by Magdalen and Isobel. When she reached it, she fell before them, struck down upon her own threshold—for there at her feet lay her pretty boy, her hope and pride, and eldest-born, lying in the arms of a horror-struck and trembling woman, in such rigid pallor and silence as belongs to nothing but death.

“ I charge ye let her rest ! ” cried a woman in the throng. “ Oh, wake her not, wake her not !—but let her lie in her swoon, till the blood be off his bonnie brow, and we lay him in his bed. Oh Euphame ! Father and son has this ill woman torn frae me. ”

“ Neighbours, this is our handsel, ” said a man upon the steps. “ Gang to your dwellings, you of St. Johnstone—ye’ll spy blood at your ain door-steps or lang—ye need not tarry here. ”

Magdalen and Isobel tenderly raised the unfortunate mother—and with bitter tears, with groans of irrestrainable rage and malediction, and with muttered hopes for vengeance, the dead boy was carried over the threshold which he stepped across so lightly an hour before. Dame Euphame's sister pressed forward to care for her, and Magdalen, in grief and horror, sought the other sad apartment where they had laid her favourite in the pomp of death.

“ A fairer propine could nae man send to Heaven—well-away!” cried one woman by the bedside; “ but I trow her Grace would rather than ten kingdoms she hadna wised little Patie thither, when she meets his angel face before the throne.”

“ And, cummers, think what lot is ours,” said another; “ God help us, mother and

granddame--and bonnie St. Johnstone in hands of such an evil crew!"

"But how did it befall?" said Magdalen, withdrawing from the bed as she saw the wound on the child's fair brow.

"They behoved to fire a volley to mark their triumph--and it was weel seen how the Regent lookit at this dwelling," cried several in a breath; "and ane villain of the ranks took good aim--and lo, lady, your e'en see what befell."

In sickening distress and terror, Magdalen turned away. Was the era of bloodshed returning upon her life again?

Dame Euphame did not see her guest again till the following day, and then the face of this modest and loving mother was terrible to see. A light of fury glowed in her eyes, under their constant tears, and her face was

all in motion with a frenzied mingling of rage and agony. A Christian woman—but Dame Euphame's mind and feelings had given way under this dreadful assault; calamity had never come to her household before, and dreadful was this first appearing of the feared visitor. She could not subdue her heart.

“ I hear all the maen yonder woman made was that it should be the son, and not the father,” said Dame Euphame, through her clenched teeth; and, with blackness on her face and in her heart, she went away.

After a few days residence, the Regent left the town. Knox had departed with the Congregation, and Magdalen was alone in this house of affliction. By gradual degrees the city came to assume the aspect of a place besieged; with scorn and mockery

the treaty was broken, and with secured gates and insolent soldiers, keeping them in constant bondage, the inhabitants of St. Johnstone were held like conquered enemies. Some who could accomplish it managed to steal away; and the commissioners, whose honour was bound by this broken treaty, were among the first to withdraw, in lofty displeasure, from the Regent, who held their pledged honour so lightly.

But this stricken household made no attempt to fly; and Magdalen, dismayed and bewildered, remained with them, unceasingly endeavouring to win the bereaved mother to a softer grief.

A fortnight of June was past. No intelligence of how it fared with their brethren, or if any steps were being taken to deliver

themselves, by the Lords, to whom they looked for assistance, came to the distressed citizens of Perth.

Patrick Murray, at the earnest entreaty of his friends, had at last been persuaded to fly, for he was a marked man—and Dame Euphame sat silent with Magdalen and Isobel in the sitting-room, which was full of the summer evening gloom, and the faint lamp light.

In gloomy silence the bereaved woman sat by the lamp, working with spasmodic haste. Softly, and with an observant kindness, which would not willingly disturb the impatience of grief by the slightest motion, Isobel pursued her labours a little apart, and Magdalen was reading aloud from a Bible on the table.

“ Dame Euphame,” said Magdalen, “ think

you not it is a wonderful thing that God sends the hardest evils on us never in anger but in love?"

"I ken not, lady," said the voice which the harshness of this fierce affliction had bereft of its natural music. "I never stumbled yet since I came to ken the truth, at what God sent me out of heaven. Na!—it's Satan raging, and the cursed wrath of men."

"Yet God ruleth all," said Magdalen, gently.

Dame Euphame made no answer, but with one long gasping sob proceeded in feverish restlessness to her work again.

Some one tapped lightly at the door.

"A country wife would speak with my lady," said a servant of the household, glancing in with reverent respect. The door opened a little wider, and thoroughly

muffled and disguised, a woman stepped into the room light and eager, but with some visible restraint upon her. She advanced a few steps quickly, and then paused.

“ I’m sent to my lady of Langley,” said a familiar voice, breathless but constrained; then there was a momentary silence, and the new comer rushed forward, threw herself at Magdalen’s feet, and seized upon the hands which immediately were wet with her tears. “ Lady Maidlin, Lady Maidlin!—it’s just me!”

And Jean Bowman laughed, and wept, and blushed, and broke forth into repressed cries of joy, kneeling at the side of her bonnie Lady Maidlin, the queen of her generous and loving heart.

“ You were always a messenger of good,” cried Magdalen, nearly as much excited as

she was; “tell me, Jean, what comfort have you brought us now?”

Jean hurriedly examined the door, and saw that it was closed. “Lady,” she began, breathlessly, “I’ll tell ye, when I come to mysel; Mistress Isobel, I canna contain gin ye weep—and Alice is as weel as saint can be, but sair longing for her mother. The lords were in St. Andrew’s, madam, and made Reformation, and syne the Regent set forth against them, and they came in battle array to Cupar Moor, and all the congregation of Dundee, and a’ the stout loons of my ain shore, and mony a laird out of Lothian forbye. But weary on these French knaves, and the fickle Duke, and a’ the lady’s fause array!—they durstna face a band like yon—so they made a paction of peace, and drew off, ane to ae quarter, another to another; and, Lady Maidlin,” continued Jean, her voice sinking,

“ my lord sought me, and bade me, live or dee, make entrance to St. Johnstone, and give ye to ken a tryst was set to meet upon the four and twentieth day of this June, afore the walls, and deliver this place out of the hands of Satan, and the enemy—and that is wherefore I got my errand here.”

Before Magdalen could speak, a cry from Dame Euphame broke the silence; “ They can return now !” said this embittered mourner, “ when deliverance, or no deliverance, ane heeds nae mair—but they couldna turn back to save my Patie, my murdered boy !”

Jean Bowman turned to the mourning mother with respectful eagerness; “ Mistress,” she said, in the low rich tone which told when her heart was moved to its depths; “ Mistress, many a heart mourns for you that never saw ye with e’en—and its said through

a' Scotland, that little Patie Murray is the youngest martyr in heaven."

The poor mother bowed her head upon her knees, with an overpowering burst of tears. "My blessed bairn!" she cried aloud, and the weight of bitter wrong and fury was lifted from Dame Euphame's soul.

CHAPTER XIX.

“ Hang out our banners on the outward wall,
The cry is still, ‘ They come ! ’ ”

MACBETH.

LONG at once and swift were these intervening days. Jean Bowman had much to tell of her own fortune, and of the household peace of Alice dwelling among the hills. That she herself had a bright eyed baby, whom she “ had been so bauld ” as call

Maidin, Jean told with blushes and smiles of joy; and many a story of my lord, of his toils and hardships, his bravery, and the love and honour with which all the vassals of Langley named his name, which were very dear and precious to Magdalen. Mistress Euphame Murray made much of the new-comer; and Isobel took her apart whenever opportunity came, to ask ceaseless questions of Alice. Jean's coming was a boon to all.

But their hearts thrilled with a wilder animation, when through the calm of the June morning came a trumpet note, summoning the unfriendly garrison of St. Johnstone. Magdalen hastened to the upper window, where Isobel and their hostess had already preceded her—but Jean snatched up her hood and muffler: “Lady, I'll forth to the gate, and hear what the answer is.”

This window was henceforth the main object in the house: Magdalen never left its point of vision, and Mistress Euphame went and came every moment that her household occupations would allow; while eager servants and children clustered about the door in hope of catching a chance glimpse of the besieging party without the wall.

Jean had learned that the Queen's Lieutenant here, the Lord Kinfauns, refused to surrender; and they could understand from afar the negotiations which they beheld in dumb show—the hasty arrival of the Queen's messengers, the determination of the Lords of the Congregation, the parleying of the garrison within; and those strange trumpet notes of summons and defiance rung to their hearts.

It was late on the Saturday night, and the

little household had left the watch-tower. Magdalen had lingered long in this soft June moonlight, looking out upon the silvered walls, the mass of black shadow where she knew the army of friends to be, and on a distant watch-fire here and there, blazing red into the softened air of night. Not a passenger was on the street below—a singular stillness wrapt the town; and reluctantly withdrawing from the window, the young lady descended to the sitting-room, and took her seat by the spread table.

Little Ruthven now has taken the dead Patie's place, and the household has slid so far out of its usual good order, that the child is still here, though it is nearly ten of the clock. With the simple supper on the table, the fine scones, the honey, and eggs, and fruit arranged upon the snow-white cloth, only a few domes-

tic sounds breaking kindly into the silence within, and not so much as a passing foot-step disturbing the deep stillness without, Magdalen takes within her own, little Ruthven's hands; and the child stands before her with earnest simplicity, saying the little text of Scripture which it was his proud task to learn from the great Bible this morning. Dame Euphame—her eyes blinded with tears, half of proud tenderness for Ruthven, and half of mournful loving remembrance of Patie dead, conceals her face with her hand, as she turns it toward her child; and Isobel, seated a little apart, looks at the mother with affectionate sympathy; and Jean comes and goes with kindly service, waiting upon all.

Nothing but the child's sweet, unassured voice, the household stir, and softened sound;

but what is this flash of light bursting upon the window?—the sudden, long roll like a peal of thunder, and the dreadful crash and cry without?

Pale and trembling, Magdalen dropped the hands of the child. His mother started from her seat with a cry of terror, and Isobel ran to the window and drew the curtain aside.

“Is it thunder?” said Magdalen, in a whisper of awe.

“Na, lady,” cried Jean Bowman, “but the guns of those that fight for us without.”

Mrs. Euphame seized upon her child, and placed him on his little stool behind her own chair, which she set near to the further wall. Little Ruthven folded his hands, and cried with fright and wonder—but his mother could not rest.

“Jean, you are brave of heart!” she cried, with beseeching eyes, as she struggled to draw an oak cabinet between her boy and the fatal window under which she had seen his brother slain: “take heed to Ruthven till I look to the rest.”

“Fear not, mistress: think ye the cannon of the Congregation will touch the head of ane, townsman or peaceful dweller?” said Jean Bowman. “Na, na—the Lords will care for St. Johnstone better than the French.”

But Mistress Euphame, unconvinced, hastily formed a bed upon the floor, and brought her children in her careful arms, one by one, till all were laid in their disturbed and terror-stricken awakening, behind the shelter of this oaken screen, and under the close guard of her own eyes, and care of her own person.

Another ringing peal of cannon from another quarter made the walls quiver, and the watchers start. Then came cries and the sounds of distant tumult; then a profound and deadly silence—a prolonged and wailing trumpet note—and then the strained ears listened in vain — not another sound broke the deep silence of the night.

Waiting and expectant, they remained for hours looking at each other; but the cannonade was not resumed. No one had courage to go to rest. The trimly-spread table, which formed so great a contrast to the confusion of the apartment, remained untouched. Dame Euphame, with her watchful eyes, leaning upon the cabinet, vigilantly stood sentinel upon her children's rest. Magdalen, with her position unchanged, and her head resting on her hands, listened

to every tingling pulsation of this silence; and Isobel, by the window, looked out upon the street. Only Jean, the boldest of all, had been overcome by weariness. She was kneeling by a chair close by her lady, with her hand laid on the cushion, and her cheek resting on her hand; and Jean in this position had fallen softly and peacefully asleep.

But the sleeper started as Isobel opened the window to the sweet air of this Sabbath morn. The street was no longer still; thronging steps and mingling voices filled it with stir and life.

“ Friends, what has befallen ? ” asked Isobel, as her lady hurriedly came to her side, and Jean started from her slumber.

“ Tell Mistress Euphame and the lady all is well ! ” cried a glad voice. “ The garrison

got twelve hours' parley, to see if the Queen came to help; and Kinfauns and a' his men will be furth of St. Johnstone afore noon of this blessed Sabbath day!"

The report was true. Patrick Murray stayed his wife's tears, and sobbed himself over his boy's memory; and Paul of Langley was by Maidlin's side before the sun was at his strongest, or the air had rung with the chimes of noon; the fair city was free once more.

Early on the next morning, before the delivered townfolk were astir, Dame Euphame, with tears and tender farewells parted from her guest at her door.

"I will never mind my blessed Patie, lady, but I will mind of you," said the weeping mother, through her tears—and many a lingering look followed the little train, as

they left the gates of St. Johnstone, with silent joy and speed, hastening towards their certain home.

And with a glad heart Magdalen bent forward on her palfrey, and Isobel grew sick with yearning, and Jean leapt lightly up behind her own lawful chattel, Simon, my lord's trusty serving man; a little band of friendly gentlemen, and a train of stout jackmen, protected the party; and Magdalen's heart grew gay as they passed on, and gained the grey walls of St. Andrew's ere the sunset. Her eyes dwelt on the blackened ruins of the castle with strange and wistful interest; but her husband withdrew her glance from these, to turn it to the peaceful town where every citizen had an obeisance for the well known Langley, once knight and soldier, once vanquished and captive here. His own

heart ran over with devout gratitude and joy.

“Maidlin, think you I was never dismayed?” he said, with a burst of recollection. “In bondage afar, in fruitless toil at home, parted from peace and thee—but see you how our Gracious Master overpays all!”

They rested them in this place of many memories for that night. The next day, long and brilliant, the first of rich July, carried them gently over the quiet Firth, under the sunshine. There is North Berwick Law, there lies the little town at its foot—yonder rise those heathery slopes, so wild and yet so homelike, that glide back into the sky behind. Not a word can Magdalen say as they take the road again from this familiar shore—not a word has Isobel to answer Jean, whose voice sinks into a sympathetic silence. On

and on, over these dear and well-known ways—now into another track which Magdalen never followed before; and now the murmur of the sea has died in their ears, and there are only the leaves rustling in the soft summer wind, and the loud throb of their hearts.

Gently the dews of night fall on this wide and fragrant countryside, and the kind gloom of twilight veils from Magdalen their near approach unto her unknown home. She is glad of the dimness, glad of the sweet indefinite calm, that hides the tumult in her heart, but scarcely can tell what it is Paul says, as he bends forward with this whisper which comforts her, albeit she does not heed the words; but after a while Magdalen sees some one approaching through the indistinct light, and suddenly knows that Paul spoke of “home” and “my kinsman,” and that

this old man, with his white uncovered head, is the Tutor of Langley, come to bid her welcome home.

Nothing more is distinct, save Alice in her sweet youthful matron-hood waiting to greet her lady at the great door—and Alice must be given up into her mother's eager arms. The dim gloaming lies soft upon the park and on the trees, and faintly shows a noble hall, a stately withdrawing-room, and many a lofty gallery and fair chamber. But Magdalen goes dimly through them all, till leaning on Paul's arm beside a broad window, in a recess of the hall, she sees the moonlight suddenly break forth and fall upon a glistening undulating silvery line which is the sea; and suddenly it bursts upon her how this same moon fell so lately over the quiet Tay, the leaguered city, and Mistress Euphame's

bereaved dwelling—and with a great cry of joyful certainty Magdalen turns to trace her husband's face in the light, and to know herself verily at home.

CHAPTER XX.

“ I must with haste from hence.”

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA.

“ My lord’s gaun forth again! I would crave of you what the better is Lady Maidlin for her hame coming, if my lord maun hie him back to the wars?”

“ Women never ken,” said Simon; “ ye’re a’ for your ain sma’ matters, the hail tribe

of ye, and take no thought of the common-weal; what! do you think we're to leave the plough yirded in the middle of the rig, and us so muckle done? I wouldna say but ye would have us lose honour and credit, and hide like cowards at hame, baith my lord and me!"

"My lad, I'm saying naething for you," retorted the undaunted Jean Bowman. "Na, ye may ride or ye may fight if you're very sair pittin tillt; but you're little use about a house that ever I saw—I spend nae well a was on the like of you. But my lord that's been Lady Maidlin's true love from the time of Pinkie field—my lord that's aye minded upon her, and pined for sight of her bonnie face—and now she's his ain wedded lady dwelling in his ain hall, and weary on a' thae bitter wars, my lord's gaun forth again!"

But so it was—and Magdalen, if with a momentary sickening at her heart, owned the full force of the necessity, and sent forth her soldier for his country's deliverance with courage and in hope; Paul himself had no fear. His natural, most buoyant, and elastic spirit, saw certain omens of success and blessing to the cause in those great joys which had been given to himself; and turning back to see the smoke rise from the roof of Langley, to hear the cheerful sound of household life in its long neglected and silent courts, and above all this fair figure standing below the rich foliage of July, with her little group of attendant women behind, straining her loving eyes after him, returning into her new home to follow his course with many a thought, and hope and prayer, and waiting day by day in those halls of his fathers—

waiting not like the sorrowful lady of the ballad, but in good hope and comfort, for his happy coming home—Paul Hepburn went upon his way with warmth at his heart; while wiping her tears softly from her cheek, and turning to Alice and to Isobel behind, Magdalen went quietly through those stately verdant ways, under the fair elms and beeches of Langley, and looked almost for the first time upon the ancestral home where Paul Hepburn had left his bride.

With no natural strength of position, it had been needful to increase the defences of Langley with every fortification possible—and its massy walls might have withstood a siege; round the whole front, an innocent brook had been beguiled into serving as a moat, with a deepened channel, and a low but ponderous wall on its further side;

within this wall the solemn garden was fresh and green, and without it, was a beautiful stretch of woodland, full, and verdant, and unadorned. A higher wall encircled the house behind, but the garden was great enough to give the eye space to leap over this barrier and see far off, sloping away into the summer skies, the peaks of the Lammermuirs.

The great hall of Langley, hung with tapestry in the upper end, and with its range of lofty windows throwing the light down high and clear from the skies upon the oaken floor, was a noble apartment; but Magdalen left the dais to seek a recess, descending a step from the level of the hall, and lighted by a low broad window, which made this little nook as bright as day. Panelled with dark and lustrous oak, and

with rich cushions of velvet upon the bench which surrounded its sides, with one low heavy chair and footstool, with the rich background of the crimson curtain, which could, when the lady pleased, separate it from the hall, this pretty recess was dearer to Magdalen than even its pleasantness deserved—for from its broad low lattice, where many a rose looked in, she had seen the silver moonlight trembling on the sea, and awoke out of the indistinct dream and dimness of arrival, to know herself at home.

She came here in the languor of her parting, with her tears scarcely dried, and looking out now saw the sea far off under the sunny light of morning, and a fair wooded country serene and tranquil lying between her and its shore; and when she turned her eyes within, they fell upon the pretty sober figure

of Alice, in her housewife state and dignity, and on Isobel, quietly at work with her distaff, as if this house had been her home for years. A singular feeling of security and permanence came upon Magdalen; wandering and flight were over;—many a grief might come to the halls of Langley—Death himself, who heeds so little what moats and defences we put around our dwellings, might have entrance here; but the exile's solitude and uncertainty, the pining home-sickness of the banished, the eagerness which sought by every means the nearest chance of departure, were gone for ever. Come life or death come peace or warfare, here was the settled dwelling-place to meet them all.

“Lady Maidlin, Ritchie would have me do on the pearlins he brought me from Edinburgh,” said Alice, with a slight falter-

ing; “please you, madam, I thought not you would hold such apparel meet for a shepherd’s housewife—but Ritchie is fond, and loves to see me fair arrayed.”

“Before ever Ritchie came to Lammerstane, I would fain have had you brave,” said Magdalen, with a smile. “Nay, never fear for me; your blue kirtle, Alice, which you would not do on to please your lady—Ah, Isobel, they are long ago, these old times!”

“But I would not give my blue kirtle for a queen’s mantle,” said Alice, eagerly. “Dear lady, many an hour I have looked upon it, and thought how gracious it pleased you be to a foolish child, and how I upbraided my lady with vanity, and how it was I was vain in my heart—yet truly there is

little pleasure in apparel," said Alice, with a slight blush, and something of her old tremor; "and to busk the form fair, and put on costly array, is meetest for those who set all their pleasure in this life, and think not of the life to come."

"Look you, Isobel says never a word," said Magdalen, as Alice ended with a sigh full of self-censure and conscious weakness. "While thou hast been doing Ritchie pleasure in thy good home, and I have been fretting out my heart with fears and hopes—see you, Alice, this our mother, her hair is white as winter snow."

Isobel looked up with tears in her eyes. "Dear lady, it is winter with Isobel—but I think I will even forget it must be so, if I hear your young voices in my ears, and see

the kindly summer, and think of the world's renewing, and of children's children. Now I would that singular afflicted lady, and lovesome Mistress Marjorie, sweet heart, were here with the little ones—and Reformation made in this troubled land, and my good lord with his bride at home; then I would see the homely Halihill, and brave Lammerstane once more—and then I would do on my Palmer's weeds, and be right joyous and ready, when my Lord called me away."

"Nay, I will hear of no departings," said Magdalen, quickly; "and God send us all dwell long at home. Amen, Amen. But Alice has never a word of tidings to tell us of our ancient friends!"

"Madam, the Sub-prior has strangely changed," said Alice; "they say he has

gone out of convent bounds, and preaches the Word in a good nobleman's house, and is great in the faith, and stirs up the multitude. even so far that they leave not a stone in their gait that hath served the worship of Papistrie; but I hear not he has fallen into any persecution yet, but is among noble friends; and the Lady of Yester hath turned to the faith, and entertains a preacher in her hall; and of common folk, Lady Maidlin, there is word of Miles Dunbar that the Congregation will have him go forth, so godly a man as he is, for a reader among the people, and hath read the Word aloud in the kirk of Gifford, and the Common Prayer; and Bertram, at the Tower, hath entertained many sore bested by trouble, and done them service, and let them lightly forth to pass

into England, though the chase was hot behind; and Ritchie," said Alice, coming back with a slight blush to the centre of her own thoughts, "Ritchie hath many readings in the Halihill, and is honoured among men for a lover of all Christian people, and one who is great in the Holy Word."

For Alice, who thought her wooing vanity, and despaired of her wooer because he could not be content to think of holy things, and leave this profane true love to minstrel ballads, had a very different opinion of Ritchie now; and Alice, who blushed to speak of her own affection, found good cause and excuse for all its clinging tenderness in this happy persuasion which she repeated so often, that Ritchie was a man of God.

But the fortunes of the Congregation bore many a change and vicissitude as these months passed by — sometimes bravely holding Edinburgh — accepting again in forlorn hope another trial of the Regent's worthless word; anon, in strange panic, fleeing from the city, in fear of her French mercenaries; sometimes scattered, undertaking perilous journeys—wandering over the face of the country—holding dangerous communication with England—distracted by the adhesion of the wavering Arran, now honoured by a French dukedom, and a Protestant once more; in counsels, in captivities, in constant strife and danger—yet never swerving from their point, nor, save for a moment, faltering on the way.

Few and rare were the brief visits which

Paul Hepburn was able to pay to Langley; but Magdalen dwelt within these strong walls in peace, in anxiety, and in hope—sheltering many distressed, aiding many afflicted, and waiting with such patience as her faith gave her, for the coming of her own brighter life, and the deliverance of her troubled land.

CHAPTER XXI.

“ Summer showers down her lilies on the land,
For steps of peace to tread on:—now for honour.
For freedom, and for love and gentleness,
Sweet cherishing of childhood and old age,
Sweet use of joys and mercies—Oh kind heaven!
Has brought us home at last.”

OLD PLAY.

THE house of Langley lies fair under the sunshine of another June. A year of trouble, of warfare, and contention has passed over Scotland—a year of waiting solicitude has made the Lady of Langley familiar with her home, and given her guests, who share it

lovingly—and now has come a day of peace and blessing, such as has seldom fallen before in Magdalen Hepburn's life.

Without, the sun-beams lie upon these verdant slopes—upon the dewy twinkling leaves, and the distant shining of the sea, with a fond and warm caressing, as though the light loved the fair scene it gives so sweet a glory to. The summer air is musical with mingled sounds, and fragrant with many a breath of mingled odour. Not a household voice or stir but comes charmed and softened through the medium of this golden summer air, and the gray peaks of the Lammermuirs look dizzy with sunshine as they rise in their silent brotherhood to the rich blue summer sky.

Open the lattice, Marjorie; no chill and dazzling glory of Alpine peaks and glaciers,

but those verdant braes of home glistening under the morning light, say welcome to you with the silent gladness of all their gowans and their dewdrops; lean out through the broad open casement, fill your hands with those sweet small Scottish roses, all thorned and dewy, like the joys of life—and with the smile breaking into laughter on your loving lips, the gladness melting into tears in your sweet eyes, look out upon the quiet road, where it travels through its trees and sunshine; look out for those who come to carry you—a joyful journey—to your own assured and kindly home.

The sunshine catches on her golden hair, and falls in a flood upon the heavy crimson curtain behind, yet pauses midway to whiten the folds of this rich drapery of black velvet, and throw a softened lustre on the stiff snowy

ruff, the widow's wimple, and the lofty face of the lady who sits on the low chair in the midst of this recess, and turns back to look upon the grand old hall of Langley, where the table sparkles with silver cups and antique wealth of garniture, and is spread for a princely feast. A tall old man, with snowy hair and an aspect of softened stateliness, stands by to see a servant reverentially place a great cup upon the table before the vacant place which the master of the hall must fill—and though there are no other attendants here, a certain stir of preparation is perceptible in everything, and in the anxious over-seeing look of the Tutor of Langley you can see that this is no less a great day with him. This lady looks gravely on the hall, and you may see the light change and vary in those deep and troubled eyes of blue.

“ Rejoice, for the Lord hath triumphed,” says Mrs. Bowes, softly, to her own heart; and her own heart persuades her of all the thanksgivings, and human bursts of grateful joy, which this tender Lord permits to man—and the threatening cloud fades from her lofty forehead, and a smile of strange unusual sunshine makes the evening light over all her face.

Sitting on the cushioned window-seat, the Lady of Langley leans her fair rounded cheek upon her hand, and looks out with her friend. Errant rays of mirth and laughter are in Magdalen’s face. She has overpast her long vigil; she has come through the deep pathetic joy of deliverance; and now Magdalen’s gay heart has leapt from her hand, and is away singing with the birds, and dancing with the leaves under

this assured unclouded sun. Defrauded youth has come back again to have its dues for one sweet day; and all her face is in a bright commotion, and tumult of great joy.

A little serious child sits upon the step which descends from the higher level of the hall, and with a thoughtful face contemplates his younger brother, seated in the shadow of his granddame's drapery, and playing with the handful of roses his mother has thrown upon him from the window. The little heir of Knox discusses with solemnity his smaller comrade's occupation, and finds it too trifling for himself, yet casts longing looks upon the roses notwithstanding, and pulls at Isobel's dress where she stands beside him. Isobel, in kindly attendance, is no less a member of this little party than the ladies who have shared so many evils with her, and now

gladly share their joy. But neither evil nor thanksgiving can persuade Isobel to abate the ancient punctilious stately deference with which Lady Maidlin was trained of old in the halls of Lammerstane, a little moorland queen.

“How slow they travel!” cried Marjorie. “Nay, Maidlin, look you, it is noon in the sky—and they are not here.”

“I pray heaven no evil has come in the way!” said Mrs. Bowes.

Marjorie turned round with momentary dismay. “Nay, mother, think no harm—Maidlin, you say nothing. I would you told my mother that it is not time.”

“It is not noon, and the lords of the congregation must even travel like common folk,” said Magdalen; “but Marjorie’s heart hath gone before, and sped to Edinburgh,

and her own home; yet I wist not the Canon-gate of Edinburgh is so fair as Langley, all gay under the sun."

"Dear heart, it will be home," said Marjorie; "yet I will love Langley till I die; but know you all, I have it sure in my heart, I will ne'er leave Edinburgh more, but dwell at home all my days. Ah! Maidlin, such a sweet fate after our much wandering; hush! heard you not footsteps on the way?"

"It is but the hinds from the hay-field, lady," said Isobel.

Marjorie turned upon her with a bright smile.

"I think you speak music, Isobel," cried the Reformer's wife. "Sweet friends, sweet friends, we are all at home!"

And the simple heart of Marjorie ran over in glad interrupted tears.

“ My child, I hear a tramp of horsemen—they are come at last,” said Mrs. Bowes, with almost solemnity; “ now look forth and bid thy husband welcome—this is no time for tears.”

With a slight tremor and some blushing dignity, Magdalen drew Marjorie’s arm through her own.

“ I will wait,” said the mother, drawing up her lofty figure, “ till my son and my friend come to me. Dear children, go forth to gladden their hearts.”

Many a solitary day had passed over the hall of Langley, and strange was its sheen of preparation, the voices of welcome and bustle of sounds without, and the entire solitude of this noble apartment with the stately English lady, the scarcely less stately Isobel, and the children, alone waiting in the bright recess.

“ Isobel, thou and I are old, we will bless our children ere we die,” said Mrs. Bowes, in a voice of singular emotion; “ and I would I knew who dared distrust the Lord, after such grace and wondrous kindness to such a one as I.”

In another moment the hall was full. The greatest nobles of the Commonwealth, the loftiest leaders of the Reformation, were gladly gathered to celebrate their triumph, and do honour to one of the bravest of their band; and the Tutor of Langley went apart and drew the curtain when the recess was vacant, and hid himself from the general rejoicing to express with the long faltering sob of great age, his own joy before Heaven. “ The angel that redeemed me from all evil, bless the lad,” said the faithful guardian of Paul Hepburn; and he shook the tears from his eyelash, and sought the side of Magdalen,

to comfort himself and her with their mutual timidity and mutual overflow of joy.

Another morning again, and Langley was once more astir; a crowd of servants gathered about the door, where stood a large travelling carriage, with a high canopy, and open sides, and cushions of velvet embroidered with a crest and coronet.

“Ritchie must come to see his playmate anon,” said Marjorie, as she left the door of Langley, where stood Alice holding by the hand her own sun-burnt boy; “and now, good Isobel, dear Isobel, I bid thee farewell!”

“My mother bids God bless you, madam,” said Alice; “but says indeed she must not weep a tear for your glad going home.”

“Nay, I weep none,” said the Reformer’s wife, “but farewell, farewell—Ah, Jean, you would not wait to bid me God speed when I went forth upon the sea.”

“ Please ye, Lady, I had ither matter wadna tarry,” said Jean, with a blush and a low laugh, as she placed the children in the carriage. Mrs. Bowes had taken her place already, and Magdalen reined in her palfrey by her husband’s side, waiting for the setting out of this long procession. With a noble escort, John Knox was carrying his household home.

“ Yea, lady,” said the Reformer, as he uncovered his head to Magdalen, riding by his side, “ I look up to yonder Lammermuirs, and I think upon the soft and tender maiden whom it pleased God move withal to deliver my good brother and me—and I pray God bless the Lady of Langley, through whose means it is that my honoured friend is blessed in his house and home, and that I am chosen of fair Edinburgh to preach a free Gospel, and am not a handful of ashes years ago, in a captive land.”

And Magdalen felt the close and fervent pressure of her husband's hand—and hid her face, her shame, her pride, her blushes, and her tears—overcome with this heaped and abundant recompence for all her wandering and her pains.

Peace was on the land when they returned through the summer moonlight, confident and untroubled to their home. France and England had been present at the bargain. The unhappy Queen-mother was dead in her falsehood, and faith and thought were free to serve God in Scotland, with neither stake nor prison in the way. Saying little, but with full hearts, Paul Hepburn and Magdalen bent their footsteps home. Their own familiar household waited for their coming—the reverent respect of love lighted their entrance, spread their board—and not a stranger intermeddled with the joy which settled into its

deep and certain channel, not a momentary outburst, but a life-long blessing.

“ God has redeemed his sign,” said Paul Hepburn, as they stood once more together in the moonlight, looking out through the broad lattice upon the sea. “ Shame on the heart could doubt His grace, my Maidlin, who has given Scotland to us, and thee to me !”

THE END.

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