

Adventures of the Jameses.

“**H**ISTORICALLY there is no county in Scotland more interesting or more important than the ancient Kingdom of Fife.”

Such is the opinion of a thoroughly competent authority. We make bold to reiterate his words, and therefore deem it befitting to bracket them with quotation marks ; nor do we hesitate in declaring that he has only told the truth, and nothing but the truth.

It is really the case—indisputably so—that Fife, for centuries ranked as the eye and hand of Scotland. Ever since the dawn of authentic history it has been intimately associated with Scottish Royalty. Monarchs have been born, have lived and died, and been buried in it ; and the whole county is redolent with traditional and historical reminiscences of kingly peace and pleasure. Dunfermline rejoices in its being the birthplace of David II., James I., and Charles I.

Mem'ries haunt thy painted gables,
Mem'ries of the Middle Ages, when thy Sovereigns, rough and bold,
Had their dwelling in thy castle—time-defying, centuries old ;

and within its venerable abbey lie the ashes of twenty or so of Scotland's most noble sovereigns, princes, and princesses. On the wave-beat shore of the East Neuk Constantine II. awaits the blast of the judgment trumpet, and Constantine III., his nephew, spent his last years as a Culdean monk at St Andrews, where, some centuries afterwards, were born the two sons of James V. Falkland, too, was the home of the Stuarts when

chivalry bowed on bended knee to beauty, and hunting and hawking kissed adieu to the cares of monarchy. Here the young Duke of Rothesay was barbarously murdered; here also James V. turned his face to the wall and died. Lindores Abbey contains the remains of the unfortunate Duke, and in the ivy-clad ruins of Balmerino rest the bones of Ermengarde, Queen of William the Lion.

Few are the mansion-houses in the "Kingdom" whose walls have not, at some time or other, sheltered prince and peer and monarch, and resounded with the noisy revelry of courtiers. Sometimes indeed the hospitality was rewarded with worse than scanty gratitude. For instance, when the laird of Anstruther entertained Charles II. in the Castle of Dreel, the thankless young profligate paid him off with ridicule, remarking that he had "gotten a fine supper in a crow's nest."

Happily, however, it was not always thus. For the earlier Stuarts, commingled though their memories are with tales of misery and contrariness and untimely death, all Scottish hearts shall ever beat warmly. We admire our own poet-king all the more because he died a martyr in the cause of peace, and, remembering the times in which the Fourth James lived, him we cannot blame too severely. Not he, but the nobles were the cause of him lifting his hand against his father, and he made atonement for his crime by wearing an iron belt and adding a link to it for every year of his life. And when he fell on dark Flodden Field, paying the penalty of his reckless folly, Scotsmen felt, all too keenly, that a bright flower had been plucked from their midst. Peer and peasant mourned for him. To the former he was the soul of chivalry, to the latter always a true friend. So was his son, James V.

Many are the traditional stories told of James the Fifth. He would stroll about the country disguised as a tinker or gaberlunzie, and mingle with all sorts and conditions of men. In the houses of the poor would he lodge like an ordinary traveller, making himself one of them, sharing their humble hospitality

and their hardships. Thus he won the hearts of the common people, and they loved him devotedly.

Some of the stories come from his own pen, for he was an accomplished minstrel—a poet as well as a musician. The ballad of the “Gaberlunzie Man” describes one of these humorous adventures.

The pawkie auld carle cam' o'er the lea,
 Wi' mony guid e'ens an' guid days to me ;
 Saying, “ Guidwife, for your courtesie,
 Will ye lodge a silly poor man ? ”
 The nicht was cauld, the carle was wat,
 And down ayont the ingle he sat ;
 My dochter's shouthers he 'gan to clap,
 And cadgily ranted and sang.

“ Oh vow ! ” quo' he, “ were I as free
 As first when I saw this countrie,
 How blithe and merry wad I be,
 And I wad never think lang.”
 He grew canty, and she grew fain ;
 But little did her auld minny ken
 What thir slee twa thegither were sayin'
 When wooing they were sae thrang.

“ And oh ! ” quo' he, “ an' ye were as black
 As e'er the crown o' my daddie's hat,
 It's I wad set thee at my back,
 And awa' wi' me thou should gang.”
 “ And oh ! ” quo' she, “ an' were I as white
 As e'er the snaw lay on the dyke,
 I'd clead me braw and leddy-like,
 An' awa' wi' thee I wad gang.”

Between the twa was made a plot,
 They rase a wee before the cock,
 And wilily they shot the lock,
 And fast to the bent are they gane.
 Up in the morn the auld wife rase,
 And in her leisure put on her claes ;
 Syne to the servant's bed she gaes
 To spier for the silly poor man.

She gaed to the bed where the beggar lay :
 The strae was cauld, and he was away :
 She clapt her hands and cried " Waladay !
 For some o' our gear will be gaen."
 Some ran to coffer, and some to kist,
 But nought was stown that could be miss'd ;
 She danced her lane and cried " Praise be blest !
 I have lodg'd a leal poor man.

" Since naething's awa', as we can learn,
 The kirn's to kirn, and milk to earn ;
 Gae but the hoose, lass, and wauken my bairn,
 And bid her come quickly ben."
 The servant gaed where the dochter lay,
 The sheets were cauld, and she was away ;
 And fast to the guidwife she 'gan say—
 " She's aff wi' the gaberlunzie man !"

" Oh fye ! gar ride, and fye ! gar rin,
 And haste ye find these traitors again ;
 For she's be burnt, and he's be slain,
 The wearyfu' gaberlunzie man."
 Some rode upon horse, some ran a-fit ;
 The wife was wud, and out o' her wit :
 She couldna gang, nor yet could she sit,
 But aye she curs'd and she bann'd.

Meantime, far hind out o'er the lea,
 Fu' snug in a glen, where nane could see,
 The twa, wi' kindly sport and glee,
 Cut frae a new cheese a whang ;
 The prein' was guid, it pleased them baith,
 To lo'e her for aye, he ga'e her his aith ;
 Quo' she, " To leave thee I will be laith,
 My winsome gaberlunzie man.

" Oh ! kenn'd my minny I were wi' you,
 Ill-faurdly she wad crook her mou'.
 Sic a poor man she'd never trow,
 After the gaberlunzie man."
 " My dear," quo' he, " ye're yet owre young,
 And ha'ena learnt the beggar's tongue,
 To follow me frae town to town,
 And carry the gaberlunzie on."

"Wi' caulk and keel I'll win your bread,
 And spindles and whorles for them wha need,
 Whilk is a gentle trade indeed,
 To carry the gaberlunzie on.
 I'll bow my leg and crook my knee,
 And draw a black clout o'er my e'e,
 A cripple or blind will they ca' me,
 While we shall be merry and sing."

Come we now to the story of James V. and the miller of Ballomill. Who has not heard of the "Gudeman of Ballan-geich," which was the name the Merry Monarch adopted while rambling in disguise among his subjects, or read of the Knight of Snowdown, or James Fitz-James, as Scott designates him in the "Lady of the Lake?" Here we have a tale in every way characteristic of him who engaged in deadly combat with the Celtic chieftain, Roderic Dhu, who was

 "Brave,
 But wild as Bracklyn's thundering wave."

Fitz-James had been out on one of his wandering excursions, when he was overtaken by a storm. It was eventide, and to escape the wrath of the elements he hurried over the Keillour Burn, and begged shelter from the miller of Ballo. The manly carriage of the young, storm-stayed stranger enlisted the sympathy of the miller, and he was made a welcome guest. Orders were at once given for—not the fatted calf—the best hen to be killed and prepared for supper. And when supper was ready the miller, with true hospitality, insisted on the stranger occupying the head of the table, at the same time remarking—"Sit up, for I maun hae strangers honoured here."

Next morning the miller escorted his guest on his journey. They had not proceeded far when the thought flashed upon the miller's mind that his companion might be none other than the king. At once he would have returned home, but James, if nothing else, was whimsical, and threw heart and soul into escapades of this kind. To the Royal Palace at Falkland the

miller must go. There, at the dinner-table, a place of honour was assigned him, and on his declining, the King remarked, "Na, na ; sit up, for I maun hae strangers honoured here." There, too, he remained a few days, witnessing, if not partaking in, all the gaieties and festivities of the Court, but ill at ease, for his heart and thoughts were with his own mill-wheel. When at last the hour of his departure came James asked him which he preferred—the "twa" parts or the "aucht" parts of Ballomill. The modest man chose the two. Surely, if the proverb be true that "it tak's a lang spune to sup wi' a Fifer," surely the miller was not a Fifer! So he returned home rejoicing—not the tenant as formerly, but a landed proprietor—the Laird of Ballomill.

Equally fascinating is the next story of the Gaberlunzie King. While hunting one day, he became separated somehow or other from the rest of the huntsmen. Wearied and thirsty, he entered a wayside inn, where he found a tinker treating himself to a tankard of ale. The two fell a-talking, and in the course of the conversation the tinman happened to remark that he would like to see the king. "Perhaps I could help ye," said James, and he took the tinker, bag and baggage, on his horse behind him. So they set out. All at once the tinker asked, "But hoo will I ken His Majesty frae the ither courtiers?"—to which the King replied that the nobles would all doff their bonnets. By and by they arrived at the appointed meeting-place, where stood a company of huntsmen awaiting their prince. In an instant every head was uncovered. "Faith!" quoth the tinker to his companion, "they're a' unbonneted. Which is the king?" "Weel," said the Merry Monarch who never failed to grasp the right end of a joke, with a mischievous twinkle in his eye, "it maun be either you or me," and sudden as he spoke, the tinker dropped in homage at his liege's feet. Tradition draws a veil over his fate. Maybe, as the author of "Historical Antiquities" suggests, he had a

house given him in Kingskettle, and was constituted tinker by special appointment to His Majesty.

The Gudeman's frolics, however, were not always unattended by danger. Sometimes his intrepidity and prankfulness landed him on the very brink of death, as did his father's before him. We give but one instance. The whole sea-board of Fife is eaten into by numerous caves. Under the Thane's Castle at



East Wemyss may be seen one which, from its acquaintance with royalty, is called the Court Cave. In a frolicsome mood James V. stumbled into this cave at a time when it was inhabited by a gang of gypsies. As is usual with these people of dark features and darker characters, there was much merrymaking, and on the king's part no want of dalliance with the pretty gypsy maidens. He lavished his attentions on the chief's favourite beauty, and thereby stirred up the ire of the patriarch,

who was in a towering passion and smote the girl on the cheek. Thereupon the Knight of Snowdoun drew forth a well-filled purse, and held out a golden Jacobus as a peace-offering to the Egyptian. The glitter of the gold acted like magic on those ravenous eyes, and hurried, stealthy, snake-like glances were exchanged. Fingers sought the hilts of their daggers, and it would have gone hard with Scotland's sovereign had not another stranger, who had likewise strayed into the den, planted himself by his liege's side. With difficulty they succeeded in cutting their way out and reaching a place of safety.

Ballangeich's sire, too, went through an escapade quite as perilous. Amid the wild uplands of Kettle parish stood, centuries ago, the old tower of the Castle of Clatto, where lived a brigand and his six sons. Seton was their name. James of the Iron Belt happened to pass that way one day, when he was attacked by two of the brothers. A desperate struggle ensued, in which the king cut off the hand of one of his assailants. The two vagabonds fled, and James, dismounting, picked up the bleeding hand. Early next day he visited the castle with a bodyguard, and enquired for the Setons. The old robber gave him a hangdog welcome, and four sons appeared at their monarch's behest. One was not at home, he was informed; the other was ill. The king would brook no denial to his desire to see the sick man, so he was conducted unwillingly to his bedside. "Let me feel your arm, my man," he said. The uninjured hand was held out. "And now—the other;" and as the king seized hold of the handless limb he exclaimed, "So, so, you've lost a hand; maybe I can give you one," producing at the same time the rigid hand. In less than an hour old Seton and his lawless sons were hanging from the neighbouring trees.

The following story of how the minister of Markinch was snatched from the vengeance of one of the Jameses is worthy of record. In some way, which is not explained, he had offended

the king, and punishment, meet and sure, was to follow ; but, after thinking the matter over, the Royal Stuart resolved to pardon the offender if he answered correctly three questions which he would be pleased to put to him.

On a certain day the cleric was to appear at Falkland. Meanwhile, however, the miller who lived near Markinch, noticing his pastor's dowie looks, managed to get to the root of the affair, and there and then proffered to go through the ordeal in his stead. When the day of trial came round, he repaired to Falkland, attired in ministerial garb, and ready to answer whatever questions the monarch cared to ask him.

"What is the depth of the ocean?" said the king.

"Jist the distance, sir, that a stane'll fa' whan it's drappit into the sea," was the instant and rudely correct reply.

"Where is the centre of the earth?" was the next question.

"Richt under my stick," answered the pseudo-incumbent, putting the point of his staff on the ground, "for the earth is roond, an' my stick is pointin' to the centre o't."

"An' noo," said the perplexed sovereign, "can ye tell me what I'm thinkin' of at this moment?"

"Brawly, sir; ye're thinkin' that I'm the minister o' Markinch, but ye're wrang, for I'm the miller o' ——."

One story more and we are done. The Fourth James carried his humours so far as to dip his frolics experimentally among the sciences. In order to make some discovery on the primitive language of the human race, he sent two infants, under the charge of a deaf and dumb woman, to reside in Inchkeith. There they were to be kept, isolated from the rest of humankind, till they should arrive at a mature age. No doubt the self-learned speech was primitive and rudimental, though the result is not known. Quaint Robert Lindsay says there was a rumour that they spoke good Hebrew, and he carefully adds—
"But as to myself I know not but by the author's report."