WYSEBY:

A LEGEND OF THE FIRST IRVINGS.

BY

R. W. THOM.

" Through the mouldering bosom of many centuries—from the paths of other years—at our call they came. - - - They have passed away :—not so the life-picture which they have anew painted on the Eternal. Look upon it."

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

"Father, the glorious sun has disappeared behind the hill; the shadows of the evening deepen; the stars are gently stealing forth; and, as though it were their breath, the breeze of the night comes fitfully, but coolly, to our cheeks; the music of the river, low, but earnestly, as the midnight converse of spirits, ascends: let us rest here, with the blue cold curtain of the sky around us, with the clear stars above us, and the mystery of night on us; thou wilt relate me some sweet legend of the days of old."

Slowly seating himself, the old man turned his large blue eyes, beaming with paternal affection, upon his lovely child, and thus began.

The heroic Wallace had fallen,—not as the brave would fall, with the red battle raging round them, proud banners floating over them, and the loud shout of victory—of right triumphing over might, of freedom over tyranny—pealing in ears fast closing for ever: he had fallen, but not thus. Envy had thwart-

ed his counsels; jealousy had scattered his laurels; treason had broken his sword. The strong warrior tasted of captivity:—the captive of one who, in this instance, knew not the soul of a brave man. Death, painful, ignominious, is decreed. One way of escape is open. Life, freedom—nay, wealth, rank, are attainable. How? "Betray thy country." "Never!" shouted the insulted patriot. "To the scaffold, then!" cried the enraged tyrant. The brave, the beautiful, the good, sought to save the life of the hero—in vain. Edward is inexorable. The scaffold streams with blood, the best, the bravest that ever circled in Scottish veins. His kinglike body, hewn to pieces by the common executioner, is borne—a terrible spectacle!—to the principal cities of his native land. The great of Scotland's enemies behold, horror-stricken. The great of Scotland's friends grow strong in terrible resolution. Vengeance! Vengeance, as yet voiceless, gathers her giant limbs, and prepares herself for strong work. In the blood of Wallace the fates have written, "Edward shall never rule Scotland!" Tyranny smites down one patriot, and the sun of next day shines upon another. Might cannot finally triumph over right. The love of liberty is strong in the heart of man, and the heart of man is of God, and terrible in its strength. Wallace had fallen, but the falling banner of Scotland is upheld by the arm of the Bruce,—Bruce, the true king of Scotland; he for whom Wallace fought, not died:—Wallace died for his country. Bruce bears up the banner of Scotland now; Bruce is the champion of Scotland now; Bruce is the hope of Scotchmen now. Honour to the Bruce!

Around their king the might of England is con-

gregating; the terrible in war are gathering; the chivalry of a proud land are thronging. All day long hither and thither fly martial couriers. At silent midnight the peasant starts from his quiet sleep, and hears the heavy tread of armed men. The warlike preparations are complete. Forward! Onward, ever onward, pours the wild, warlike flood. Had the destiny of nations rested on the will of man and the strength of man, dread in this tide had been thy fate, oh my country! Thy brave sons and thy beautiful daughters had been the prey of the destroyer. Thy name had been blotted out from the names of the nations of the earth.

Ah, Edward, ere foot of thine pollute the soil of Scotland, thou shalt do hopeless battle with a stronger king than King Bruce. King Death has taken the field against thee, and of a surety he shall conquer. It is even so. The captain of that proud host lies vanquished. The swords of the brave are not drawn, yet their leader is smitten down. But see, northward he points his bony finger. His last command is, "Conquer Scotland." Death's vanquished monarch, impotent is thy dying command as thy living ire. A God-sent king has vanquished thee; a God-sent king defends the liberty of Scotland; and Scotland shall not be conquered.

Edward, the strong, has fallen: Edward, the weak, reigns. Yet once more the voice of War, trumpet-toned, through the fair valleys of England speaks aloud. Again the chivalry of England rein their war-steeds. A hundred banners fan the fickle winds. The glittering points of twenty thousand spears flash back the beams of the setting sun. The terrible bowmen of England are there. "To Scot-

land!" is the cry. Poor, devoted land, much must thou suffer. But thy hour of subjugation is not yet come.

Scotlandward march Edward and his host. Daily nearer and nearer his proud army approaches. Shall they pass the Border unopposed? In the halls of Lochwood grey warriors hold noisy counsel. What shall be done? Flight to Bruce, allegiance to Edward, are spoken of, fiercely debated. A grim warrior arose. Silence fell on all. 'Twas a strange sight that, at that hour, in the old hall of Lochwood. A large fire of Scotch pine blazed in a rude fireplace at the upper end of the hall; and along the walls, at intervals, pine torches glared fitfully. By a rude table sat thirty grim warriors—chiefs strong in battle—free of speech—fierce, yet generous—full of wild daring. The blue mail gleams on each broad breast; a proud plume nodded over each dark, furrowed, thoughtful brow;—each hand grasped a Border broadsword. A grim warrior arose:—gaunt and bony his frame; broad, lofty, but deeply furrowed, his forehead; large, grey, piercing, his eyes. 'Tis Douglas. All are silent. "Women are we," cried he, "thus to waste our time in idle debate. Flight to Bruce is indeed possible; but shall we leave our castles to light the midnight sky,—our cattle to feed the enemies of our country,—the feeble of our retainers to glut the cruelty of invaders? Allegiance to Edward,—to the son of the murderer of Wallace? Never! by St Bryde," cried he, drawing his sword, and dashing the scabbard on the table before the assembled chiefs. "Only one way is left for us—to fight—to conquer or die. Up, then!" shouted he, waving his sword; "he that refuses to

follow me is a foul craven,—a traitor to his God, to his king, and to his country."

Yet another week, and then, even as on this night, the stars looked forth, quiet as though they were eternal; that low river was singing melodious then as now; and then, as now, the sweet breeze, with its low mournful voice, was passing through space; but then, the gorgeous full moon sailed through that eternal, illimitable azure sky, and the earth in thousand-fold loveliness smiled. "Wave thou there, banner of the Bruce," cried a wounded warrior, striking the staff deep into the earth. "Wave thou there," cried he, sinking by its side. "And oh! God of battles, may it yet lead to victory, though victory has been denied to us this day! And it *will* lead to victory," cried he, exultingly,—for on his dying senses burst the glories of succeeding years. In high exultation the spirit of the warrior passed away. The broad moon looked down, the intense stars gazed, and the winds of heaven rustled in the folds of the proud banner; but the soldier slept soundly, for his battles were fought.

Yet four years, and there was a glad meeting at Dunfermline. The good King Robert held his court there. Rumour, many-tongued, bore to the four winds tidings of Bannockburn's famous victory. The outlaw of Carrick is, in very truth, the king of broad, free, happy Scotland. He held court in Dunfermline. The Douglas was there; Randolph was there; peerless matrons and maidens were there; valiant knights were there; the beauty, the chivalry, the strength of the nation were there. In high hall, in the middle of that proud throng, great in prosperity as in adversity, sat King Bruce.

"A boon, my liege," cried a youth, springing forward, and throwing himself at the king's feet; "a boon of the Bruce."

Who may this be? Twenty summers he has not seen, yet his dark eye meets the eye of the king, steady as the eye of a veteran; his voice is firm, as though for half a century he had known command. With kingly eyes the royal Bruce scanned him. "Rise, boy," said he; "what wouldst thou of us?"

The youth arose. "My liege," said he, proudly, "my father served the Bruce faithfully, as his son would do. In the service of his sovereign he died. The army of Edward marched northward. Of the Border barons, some fled, some owned the authority of the invader. Douglas raised the standard of the Bruce, and to my father, as to the bravest of his host, by the good earl was the ensign given, to be borne, as they fondly believed, on the field of victory. On Solway Sands they met the proud war-array of England. What brave men could do was done. But the arms of the foe prevailed. Long over the dubious conflict the banner floated aloft. 'Twas marked by the knights of England as a proud prize. Around it gathered the bravest warriors of the Border. Hundreds bide the onset of thousands. It falls, it rises. It is encompassed by a living mass of valour; a living ocean-tide of valour dashes against that; night closed in; a path is hewn through close columns of foes:—it is safe. But of all its brave defenders, its bearer alone is left. Wounded he is, grievously wounded. Through night he flies. The moon and the stars witness his solitary flight. Randolph is advancing. With him the banner will be safe. But Randolph he will never see. The hand

of death is upon him. On a green knoll he halts;—he strikes the armed staff deep into the earth, and there, 'neath the folds of the standard of his king, his brave spirit fled. On the morrow the hero and the banner were found. That banner, borne by a son of that warrior, was on the field of Bannockburn."

"In good sooth it was," cried the Bruce; "in the van of the army it floated, a star of victory. Say thy boon, brave youth, and, by our kingly word, be it in reason, it is thine."

"Three roods of land, my liege, where my father died, with leave to build a castle thereon, that my sovereign's foes, and the murderers of my father, may learn to fear his son."

"A modest request," said the king, "and ill proportioned to thy merit. Be it thine till our royal bounty find fitting opportunity to remember thy father's memory and thy bravery." Right gracefully bowed the youth, and withdrew from the court.

These, my child, are the lands, the gift of King Robert, and that grey ruin was the castle the gallant youth built thereon. Of that castle I will tell thee a tale.

CHAPTER II.

BROTHER AND SISTER.

Mighty and mysterious in its might is Time, my child. It brings forth, awhile complacently views its progeny, then ruthlessly swallows them up again. That hour the heroic standard-bearer died, Solitude reigned monarch here. Anon from the dim void a stately castle came forth. Feasts were spread there; warlike enterprises were planned there; sorrow over defeat was felt there; exultation in victory waxed loud there; marriages were solemnized there; births were anxiously waited for there; Death struck down the mighty there. Again a short time — to Eternity, how short! — that proud castle has passed away, and an old man and a fair child muse 'mid grey ruins. — But enough of this. Four years from the meeting of that courtly throng, and a stately castle, with its donjon keep, its massy walls, its deep moat, its portcullis and drawbridge, frowns in dark strength on the knoll where the warrior standard-bearer died. On the central turret waved a banner, symbolic of that other banner; and at its foot lay, in rude sculpture, a grim gigantic warrior; while around, from upland and dell, curled blue smoke, for now fourscore strong Irvings, in that lately tenantless wild, drew the breath of rude life. They were strange men these, owning no allegiance but to their chief; pos-

sessed of no virtue save rude valour, and faith to him; recking little of the earth, save as a stage for a war-affray. "Let those till who are sure to reap," they would cry in the castle hall on nights of revel. "While Northumberland has boors, we shall not want bread: while Cumberland has steers, we shall not want beef."

'Twas an autumn evening. By a half open casement stood a maiden, thoughtfully looking forth, now on the fair stream, the blue hills, the slowly setting sun. A tread is heard on the corridor. A hand is on the latch of the door. She half turned her head. The rays of the setting sun hung amid long raven ringlets, gave a heavenly softness to her sad white brow, tempered the brilliancy of her large black mournful eyes, softened the dignity, approaching to sternness, of her countenance, and placed in bold relief her full rounded majestic figure. The door opened. One, in the first stage of manhood, entered. Tall was he, past the common height, with broad shoulders; muscular, yet graceful withal; limbs formed equally for deeds of prowess or feats of dexterity; cheeks browned with healthful toil; black flowing hair; eyes black, preternaturally bright. Such was the chief of the Irvings — the hero of Bannockburn — the son of the glorious standard-bearer.

"Ever sad, my sweet sister," said the chief, throwing himself on a seat beside the maiden. "Methinks the beauty of our new dwelling might chase away all sad recollections of our early northern home. See," continued he, throwing the casement fully open, "the blue hills to the west, clothed in the golden mantle of an autumnal eve; the lone river,

lovely in its loneliness, with these precipitous, rugged, hazel-crowned cliffs, like antique giants melted by sweet melody, in their gaunt strength towering aloft, their sides wrapt in night, their summits wreathed in sunbeams. By the sceptre of the Bruce, earth has no lovelier spot than this! Cheer thee, my sister. Learn, 'mid the beauty of nature, to be glad of heart."

"Yes, brother," said the maiden, with a melancholy smile, "lovely is the face of nature here—all lovely; but the heart rests not on that; outward nature may please the eye, nay, elevate the sentiments: but the affections—ah, it reaches not them. Nature, stern or lovely, cannot banish the memories of old friendships, or restore the glad-hearted hours of bygone days."

"We should forget those," said the chief hastily, "who desert and forget us. Thou art sad, because our foster-brother, Ranolph, is gone. Forget him, sister; he is unworthy of our grief. Our brave father, at the hazard of his own life, snatched him—a babe—from the blazing pile, 'mid which his sire, his mother, brothers, and sisters, perished. Our father's hall was his home,—our sainted mother was his nurse,—we were his companions. In riper years, when our sire had fallen, and our mother departed, thou wert ever by his side in peace, I was ever by his side in war—and in war he was terrible: yet, forgetful of all this—without a wrong to plead as an excuse—he has deserted us, deserted the standard of his king, and is even now, according to the testimony of Sir Esecal, in the camp of Edward."

"Trust not that man, my brother. I like not his lowering brows—his unsteady eye—his shadowy, oft-recurring, fitful smiles—his bland courtesies.

These are the unfailing indications of guile of heart. Again I say, brother, trust not that man. Certain am I," said she, with warmth, "that he foully belies our foster-brother Ranolph. His disappearance is mysterious. But he was too noble to act ungenerously by us—too great of soul to become a traitor; and were I a warrior as I am a weak maiden," cried she, her eyes flashing fire, "the cowardly calumniator should own, that in word at least he had dealt foully by him."

"I was ever sorry," said the chief, "that my sister respected not the brave Sir Esecal: and this lack of respect grieves me doubly at this time, since a messenger, lately arrived from the knight, states that to-morrow we may expect his master, and that for brief time he will tax our hospitality."

"Blessed Virgin defend us!" exclaimed the lady, shuddering. "Assuredly some evil awaits us. Never has that knight been our guest, but Misfortune has been our guest also."

"Nay, my sweet sister, be just. Attribute not to Sir Esecal our mysterious misfortunes. There were more justice, methinks, in imputing to him the equally mysterious agency, by which the plans of our evil genius were counteracted, baffled. But thou wilt learn, sister of mine," said he, smiling, "to think more favourably, and to look more lovingly, upon this accomplished soldier. In the meantime I must leave thee; evening closes in,—duty calls. I will be with thee anon; till then, farewell."

CHAPTER III.

SIR ESECAL.

In the far North, my child, by the eternal sea, stands the Castle of Burdock,—all day, statelily looking forth, watching the white-haired billows coming up from Ocean's great deep bosom, as emotions from the heart of man; all night, listening to its awful and perpetual melody.

Proud banners fan not its donjon now, nor does wild minstrelsy at midnight burst from its halls as of yore. The glory of the Esecals has departed. The sun of their prosperity set at mid-day. The perpetual night of infamy fell upon them. Mourn we for the great of other years;—for those whose darings and sufferings and triumphs are hid therein, invisible to the eye of man!—Mourn we for them.

Nature, and her great handmaiden, Art, gave stately strength to the castle of Burdock. But they gave beauty also. Long rows of tall poplar trees;—forests of towering, spreading, gnarled oak;—long avenues, canopied overhead,—sweet resting-places for meditative age, for high, thoughtful manhood, for loving, passionate youth, for merry childhood;—ever-recurring open spaces,—the sun in summer laughing down, and herds of deer gambolling in its glorious beams; while far away the blue hills encompass all, like a girdle of angel's wings. Strong, and

in those days beautiful in its strength, was the castle of Burdock.

Descended from a long line of heroes, Brian de Esecal ardently panted for distinction — for glory. To the second son of a Norman baron, this was no easy attainment in his own country. But the world is wide; the trumpet of Fame sounds loud; and Brian heard daily in his father's halls of adventurous knights, landless and friendless, by prowess n arms placing the laurel-wreath of glory upon their brows. He girded on his good sword, and secretly left his native land, where man was oppressed to fight — to win a name—or to perish. Champion of the oppressed, short were thy journey couldst thou see; —everywhere man is oppressed. In the sultry East, in the glowing South, in the sunny West, in the tempestuous North, by others and by himself man is oppressed.

About this time — flouting the sky with their gaudy banners, troubling the air with their loud vaunts — at Largs lay the invading army of Acho of Denmark. The host of King Alexander, — the champions of freedom, the sons of the hill, — to fight for their smiling babes, their lovely wives, their beautiful cottage-homes, their birthright country, are assembled there. By Heaven! it was a glorious sight that. Rude peasant men—strong in the might of right, — their quiet occupations far away, — their limbs sheathed in mail — raising with one voice the heart-born shout, fatal to tyranny. Then closing in the grim strife — the rush — the crash — the deadly close — the incessant clang — the wild beat of life beating quicker then.

Thither came Sir Brian. To the presence of

King Alexander he bent his way. He was kindly and courteously received by the heroic monarch. His tender of services was accepted, and from that day fame spoke of Brian de Esecal. The lands of Burdock rewarded his services. He built a stately castle thereon, and bequeathed to his son wealth, power, and that which in intrinsic value surpasses all, nobility of soul. The Esecals grew in glory, in splendour, and in strength.

Of Sir Esecal de Esecal we will speak, my child. His name darkens in our history. The wild child of crime,—the powerless possessor of mighty powers. Not the thunderbolt, rushing from the cloud of secret council—irresistible—striking where aforethought had determined, but red lightning scattered on many winds;—a billow rising from a mighty ocean, fierce, terrible in its writhing magnificence, but impotent in its foaming splendours.

In youth, the inarticulate but soul-audible cry of his heart was glory: but glory other than the glory of his age. Through the pomp of the mimic fight his soul pierced, and found—nothingness. Through the terrible splendours, the horrid magnificence of the real battle, it pierced, and found—the demon of awful retribution. His spirit was vexed. The rude men of those days found happiness in action. The chase—the tourney—the battle filled their souls. The secret of happiness, that filling of the soul. Action shook his spirit, but it did not occupy it. Action was not all to him. He made companions of unutterable thoughts. The great, the good, lay before him, dimly revealed. The true, the real, prest upon him. Love—love was in his heart, making all things beautiful. He was an

aimless seeker, an unconscious philosopher, a voiceless poet, a believer in that magnificent dream—human perfection. Yet he loved no one. The courtly dame, in the pride of hereditary and cultivated graces, in the blaze of youthful beauty, in the environment of successful art;—the mountain maid,—her locks on the northern blast floating free as the blast itself,—her step timed to no music save the deep melody of inward impulses, or the louder but less divine music of the mountain cataract;—the lowland girl, with her mild look of innocence, her smile of guileless simplicity, her sweet songs of home and of love,—alike failed to possess his spirit. It felt they were beautiful; that was all. He had no sympathy with them. In the depth of his soul he cherished an ideal of beauty, of love, of truth. When alone, this would he call up, and for hours, in sweet oblivion of the world, gazing upon it, revel in the extacies of spiritual love, This was he, (the demoniac in his nature yet latent,) when at the age of twenty he became, by the death of his father, Esecal, Knight of Burdock. What he was in after years, thou shalt hear anon.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONFERENCE.

By a rude table, in a low chamber dimly lighted, sat two warriors in earnest conversation. Now clouds darken on their brows,—now smiles lighten on their cheeks,—now fire flashes from their eyes—alternately darkening, brightening, burning—outward signs of strong inward emotions. By the mass! no cautious diplomatists are these, coolly playing at "state policy," with no interest save that the game last. In that conference threat is met by threat,—old remembrance by old remembrance,—fierce word by fierce word. One of the warriors arose. "Sir Esecal," said he, calmly, "it may not be. No counsel of mine, no command of mine, shall constrain my sister's affections. To accept thee, or to reject thee, she is free as the wind."

"Chief of the Irvings," said the knight, slightly colouring, "frank is thy avowal; frank, but scarcely friendly. I am thy guest: it would ill beseem me to speak of services rendered by me to thee and thine; yet this I must say, they merit other return."

"Thy services to me and mine, Sir Knight," said the chief, firmly, "have been services of war—such as brave men are ever ready to render; and in like way shall they be repaid. But brave men seldom boast of brave deeds, and seldomer, I ween, demand the sacrifice of a woman's heart as their reward."

"True, true," said the knight, struggling to suppress his rising indignation; "the brave need not to remind the brave of gallant services, for the *truly* brave never forget them, and are ever ready to reward them. But," added he, observing the darkening brow of the chief, "landless, friendless, powerless, save in the prowess of a single arm, Sir Esecal is scarcely meet suitor for the sister of a Border chief."

In stern dignity answered Irving, "Unworthy of thee, unworthy of me, is thy base insinuation! Though at this moment thou stoodest reinstated in the favour of thy sovereign, thy reputation cleared of all charges, the possessions of thy father thine again,—though thou wert as I have seen thee, surrounded by the good, the brave, and the noble, yet should my answer be then as my answer is now—To accept thee or to reject thee, Catharine Irving is as free as the wind."

On the brow of Sir Esecal, blackness, as of midnight, settled; his breast heaved; his eyes glared malignantly; his teeth are clenched; his fingers open and shut convulsively;—a moment it is thus:—the cloud leaves his brow, the motion of his breast is regular, the agitation of his nerves is past, and, save an undefinable expression in his eye, all traces of his late emotions are fled. "By the blessed Virgin! chief of the Irvings," said he, "thy conduct is right noble; happy the sister who has such a brother. Forgive my hasty words," said he, extending his hand to the chief, who had again seated himself at the board; "forgive my hasty words, for on the honour of a knight and the faith of a soldier, dearer art thou to me, by thy noble consistency, than thou

wouldst have been hadst thou won for me by harsh means the hands of thy sister. Happy be Catharine Irving," cried he, draining a goblet, "happy in her love-choice; and be it mine in hour of need to be her friend."

Irving cordially grasped the extended hand of the knight; in the glow of generous wine, the wrath of the chief was forgotten—the wrath of Sir Esecal *seemed* forgotten.

Three days passed away. Catharine stood alone on the banks of the Kirtle. Perhaps she thought of that northern river whose waves she had watched in her glad childhood. Perhaps she thought of the low cottages which stood on its green banks, and saw, peering out of vacancy, the sweet young faces she had once seen in these humble dwellings. Perhaps she thought of those deep dells, to which the music of that stream came; and felt that the primroses that grew there were fresher than the primroses that grow here, and that the sunshine of those days was warmer and brighter than she had ever felt it since. She heaved a deep sigh. She starts. Some one is approaching. "Sir Esecal has departed," said the chief, joining his sister. "He desires to be favourably remembered by thee."

"Methought," said Catharine, "that he purposed a longer stay."

"He did so," said Irving; "but outlaws may not determine the length of their visits, nor choose their resting-places; and, certes, cunning is he who long eludes the vigilance of the Royal Bruce."

"Thou hast often promised, brother, to advise me of the cause of the Bruce's hatred of this knight,"

said Catharine; "if time serves, fulfil thy promise now."

"Thou art aware, sister," said the chief, "that to-night is the fifth anniversary of our arrival here. Our retainers are summoned. The arrangements for the banquet are not yet complete. These demand my present time; therefore, I pray thee, excuse me. But to-morrow I will chase away the evening hour by relating thee his sad history."

"Well, remember thy promise," replied Catharine.

"Fear me not," said the chief; "and, sister, to-night deck these sad brows in thy gladdest smiles. Certain am I, thou wouldest not willingly by thy sadness darken the joy of brave men, each of whom would willingly lay down his life for thee."

"I will smile, brother," said Catharine earnestly. "The sister of the chief of the Irvings will not darken with selfish sorrow the joy of brave men. We meet at the banquet. Till then, adieu!"

CHAPTER V.

THE HALL.

'Twas midnight. In the halls of Wyseby the brave and the faithful were assembled; rude men—rude in manners—rude in speech; but strong—true-hearted—dauntless. The chief entered; each warrior, rising, bowed to his leader. The wine-cup circles; anon, quaint jests—bursts of rude song—tales of wild exploits. A light foot approaches; all are silent. The door of the hall opens; serene in her majestic beauty, Catharine enters. Gracefully she bows to the circle of admiring warriors; then passes slowly forward to a seat by the side of her brother. At this moment a page entered. "A minstrel," said he, kneeling before the chief, "for the love of the joyous craft, craves the hospitality of your halls."

"Ever welcome to the halls of Wyseby," cried the chief, "are the aged and the weary; and," continued he, addressing his retainers, "but for the voice of song, vain were our deeds in war. Old man, thou art right welcome," he cried, turning to the harper, who at that moment entered the hall.

He was a strange-looking man that minstrel. In stature beyond the common height; erect as though the vigour of twenty summers circled in his veins. Long grey hair flowing on his shoulders; beard grey, descending to his bosom. His person enveloped in a coarse grey cloak, and suspended from his

shoulders by a leathern belt, the badge of his profession, a huge harp. He was a strange-looking man that minstrel! Through his grey hair brilliantly shone his large eyes as he entered the hall. Was it the divine light of inspiration blazing there? It passed away.

"Chief," said the minstrel.

Why starts Catharine? Why that flush on her cheek—on her brow? Why gazes she so earnestly on that old man? A moment she gazed—then slowly turned away; the flush left her cheek—her brow. They grew pale; her eyes dwelt on vacancy.

"Chief," said the minstrel, "thanks for thy timely hospitality. If that fair maiden's ear, and thine, can brook the rude lays of an aged minstrel, willingly would I waken at your 'hest the voice of Border song.

"Thanks," cried the chief. "Sister," continued he, turning to Catharine, "that lay which we heard last night floating from the cave, still rings in mine ear. Minstrel, heardest thou ever in thy wandering of the Lay of Lord Walter the Bold?"

The old man bowed, flung his fingers carelessly amid the strings of his harp, and, in a voice powerful for one of his years, sung the following wild chaunt:—

THE LAY OF LORD WALTER THE BOLD.

Lo! the banner that flashed in the eye of the morn,
At the close of the evening lies trampled and torn;
The warriors are scattered—quick, quick is their flight.
As the voice of the storm through the bosom of night

On his gallant black steed dashed Lord Walter the Bold,
And the fierce lightning stream'd, and the deep thunder roll'd;
But he heeded not these; on the wings of the wind
Came the shout of the foemen that followed behind:

And he saw, as he entered his own native vale,
The red lightning flung back from their steel-caps and mail:
Lo! a flash reveal'd near him his own mountain hold;—
Then loud laugh'd in derision Lord Walter the Bold.

Ha! a laugh, wild as madness, arose by his side,
Like his own, 'twas a laugh of derision and pride;
And a form he would shun met the glance of his eye,
As his steed on the wings of the tempest swept by.
In a voice render'd awful by hatred and scorn,
Wild taunts on the tract of his fleet steed were borne—
"Spare thy steed, dastard knight! for thy strong mountain hold
Cannot shelter thee now, base Lord Walter the Bold!"

But on, on dash'd the knight, and the foemen dash'd on—
His thoughts were of safety, theirs of vengeance alone;
But they mark'd not the path that turned short to the hold;—
"We are safe, my brave steed!" cried Lord Walter the Bold.

The near thunder had ceased, and the wind was less loud—
The moon burst in glory through the rent of a cloud;
What appals the Lord Walter—why shouts he so wild?
"Oh ye fiends! spare my wife! spare my innocent child!"
See, he falls!—A deep voice rung through ruin and glade,
"Lo! dread vengeance was due. It is paid! it is paid!"

The hold was in ruins; 'mid its ashes and gloom
The fair child and its mother had both found a tomb.
Kinsmen mustered, fierce throngs, vows of vengeance were said;
And they scoured every glen, and far forays they made.
'Twas in vain! 'twas in vain! for nought e'er was reveal'd
Of that secret so awful, by mystery seal'd,
Save that flames wrapt at midnight that strong mountain hold,
With the wife and the child of Lord Walter the Bold.

When the minstrel had finished, loud shouts of applause burst from the wild throng. The chief

applauded. Catharine spoke cheering words. Bending over his harp, the old man disregarded all. Suddenly raising his head, his eyes blazing again, he hurriedly struck his harp, and poured forth this wild song of warning:—

Lady! lo, thy maidens call;
Lady! leave the festive hall;
Lovely lady! quickly fly,
Hostile ranks are hovering nigh!

Chieftain of the eagle eye!
Hostile ranks are hovering nigh!
Ruin rides upon the gale!
Chieftain! heed a minstrel's tale.

Warriors! cast the goblet by,
Hostile ranks are hovering nigh!
Bold of heart, and strong of hand
Treason waves the battle brand.

Lady! chieftain! clansmen!—all,
Treason girds the festive hall!
Festive hall, fair lady, fly,
Hostile ranks are hovering nigh:
Chieftain! clansmen! gird your mail;
Ruin rides upon the gale!

"By the sceptre of the Bruce, minstrel," cried the chief, springing to his feet, "there is meaning in thy lay. What, ho! warden, see that the gates of the castle are secure; and thou, old man——"

The voice of the chief was drowned in the yell of a fierce onset. Terrified menials rush into the hall; the clansmen snatch whatever weapon is within their reach; all is uncertainty—confusion—consternation.

"Down with them!" shouted a stentorian voice.

The clash of arms—the falling of heavy bodies—

the quick tread of many feet; the door flies open; a strong warrior, cased in mail, bursts into the hall. "Ho! yield!" cried he, waving a battle-axe.

The clansmen give way. The lower part of the hall is filled with grim figures steel-clad. In mute astonishment the retainers gaze upon their chief.

"Say, who art thou," cried Irving, fearlessly advancing, "that thus uncourteously intrudest thyself into the hall of a chief, and the presence of peaceful men?"

"Perish!" muttered the intruder, aiming a furious blow at the head of the chief.

A clansman sprung forward; the axe is dashed aside; the conflict becomes general. The Irvings are borne back. Ever new assailants!—are they innumerable? The chief, undaunted, cheers on his retainers. Man grapples man in deadly strife. The floor is slip with blood. By the blazing torches it was a ghastly sight that! The chief is brave—the retainers devoted. In vain!—the foe is prevailing. A shriek! The arm of the intruder encircles the waist of Catharine; with a demoniac's laugh he whirls her round. He is flying with her. Ha! who is he that bursts, like a God of Battle, upon the foe —terrible—flaming—irresistible? They fly before him as chaff before the northern blast. He rushes upon the chief of the assailants—dashes him to the earth. Catharine is rescued, feeble, fainting; he bears her to a seat. The foe rally; they bear away their leader. The terrible warrior bursts upon them again. Yells—shouts—curses blending, the tide of conflict rolls beyond the gates of the castle. Within, save the groans of the dying, all is still. The pursuers return. The gates of the castle are secured;

Catharine is safe; slight are the wounds of the chief. Victory! Victory! dear bought, for many are the slain; yet still Victory! Ah, my child! pleasant to the souls of these fierce men was the shout of Victory, Victory! Victory!—there lay the rapture of their existence. To the patriot, too,—he who resists successfully the palpable tyrannies of his frail brother man, who, having sold eternal sympathies for transient pomps, blindly seeks to make these eternal also,—pleasant is the shout of victory, for that is necessary to tell that he is victorious. But the great good man,—he who resists successfully the world, its paltry gauds, evanescent honours, and, travelling freely and boldly on his dark journey, feels his strength,—to him no loud or low voice, proclaiming victory, is necessary; but his soul lives in its enjoyment. Victory!—in that word lies the true spiritual joyance of all.

But who was the foe? Who was the warning minstrel? Who was the terrible warrior? And the warrior and the minstrel, where are they? "They have fallen in the pursuit," cried the grateful chief; "let us search for them." A party is ordered out; Irving leads it; they search the wood—the valley—the banks of the river. In vain. Grey morning came; but minstrel or warrior came not.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FAITHFUL ONE.

Thou hast stood by lowland streams, my fair child, and seen thy sweet innocent face mirrored in their glass of waters; thou hast laughed 'mid lowland woods, till their many echoes rang with thy glad voice; and through lowland valleys, in light summer hours, thou hast bounded, chasing with boisterous mirth the merry bee: but it has never been thine to gaze upon the cloud-piercing mountains of the North, —upon those fearful and enduring monuments of the might of the God of our fathers. They tower aloft, stern and alone, awful in their fearful loneliness;— around their cloud-curtained brows, as glories, the lightnings of heaven circle; and to them the deep-voiced thunder, terrible to the sons of men, is as the voice of a friend. To that far mountain land let us turn, for I must tell thee of the dark-eyed Edith,— of the faithful one.

Ah, my child, to give complete the web of one destiny, how we must unravel the web of the destinies of others! Space serves not to keep them apart. From north to south the shuttle flies, and on the woof of Time a mixed design is wrought. Thus the destiny of a fair daughter of the hills became blended with the destinies of fierce warriors, and their names united descend, inseparable, down the path of years.

'Twas evening. Edith sat alone on Barra's bleak promontory, high—high—high, far up amid the clouds;—and before her, away—away—away, the sea leaped, and foamed, and raged, and rioted; loud shouting as a billow, shattered to spray, leaped into the air,—then lying writhing, and shrieking, and groaning in a horrid, unquiet calm; then again, as if some new torture was applied, bursting into wild agonised life. She sat there. In the morning she came. Weary, weary hours had passed away, and she sat there still, watching the unstable element undergoing its mystic torture. The sun came up from the east with his many winds. She saw him come. He stood in the centre of the heavens, shedding cold, piercing cold rays on the shivering earth. She saw him there. He went down rushing into the sea, and she saw him, as a monarch abdicating, go down. Then the stars came out one by one, the winds swept across their pale faces, and they looked sad as children of men in the hour of adversity. Ah! she has watched long. The dews of night gather 'mid her black locks, and the dimness of weariness rests upon her eyes—star-bright they usually are, with the sadness of the stars to the watching soul in their gaze. Now her eyes pierce deep into night. She springs to her feet; shouts joyfully. How strange and unearthly that shout peals, and how hoarsely the deep sea replies! She shouts again. Ha! she sees a sail; there—there, rising above the mountains of waters; but away, far, far away, touching the rim of the horizon. The stars are dancing amid its ropes. How the waves must be shrieking there!—how they must be leaping up the groaning sides of that vessel! —and how the spirit of the nether depths must be

shrieking for very joy! Hour after hour passes, still she gazes on. There, there, in that mad vortex the brave vessel struggles. Now advancing—now driven back—now invisible, deep, deep down with the foundations of the earth,—now leaping up, piercing the sky, whirling in mid-air,—now rushing down headlong. They are brave hearts who man that vessel. Courage, gallant ones! There is a Power mighty above the might of the four leagued elements—immeasurably stronger than they.

Night wears on apace. Now from the deep valley comes up the low moan of the Spirit of Night, sighing in mysterious consciousness that far beyond the stars and the deep blue the Storm-god is ascending his car, and that his panting steeds, Havoc and Ruin, wait but for the slackening of the reins. On the bleak promontory, unconscions of all this, sits Edith, —sad, not with the sadness of sorrow, but of loneliness. Now the sky is darkened as the face of a mourner. Fearfully audible is the tread of the steeds of the Spirit of the storm. From the wilderness of space, through the wide empire of night, thundering, down-rushing they come. Space echoes the sound of their tread; fire gushes from their outspread nostrils; earth trembles with fear; the maiden is viewless in the high heart of night, yet she is there, lovely as a thought of heaven in a human heart, else all darkened by sin, the while storm-tossed by the rage of uncontrolled passions.

But the grey morning comes, and the Storm-god rushes on the tract of retiring night, to his hall beyond the stars; and the winds shrink—cravens that they are!—after their night of fearful revelry, back to their distant caves. The waves roll and toss

horribly still. Ocean, like a giant maddened by torture, writhes on. But that gallant vessel—she dances there, her masts bare no longer, but crowded with broad white sails. Gallantly she bears in for the shore. Victory to the long-enduring! How noble she looks!—nobler far than if no winds had opposed, no waves sought to engulf, and no leeward rock-girt shore denied shelter. So is it with man on the sea of life: he who boldly bears on to the true port, storm defying, is the noblest. Joy, joy to the faithful one; joy, joy to the brave hearts who man that vessel. The port is gained. Edith is on the shore now. The waters of the great deep lave her feet. The low, inconstant winds, hurrying from the mountain-land to the wild freedom of the waste of waters, carry her dark locks on their broad wings. Forward she bends, her eyes, bright now, fixed on that bark riding proudly there, ten fathoms from the shore. "Why comes *he* not?" murmured Edith. "*He* would watch the shore; *he* would observe me." A form appears on the deck;—that is not he. Another and another, still he comes not. Is he not there then? She can brook no longer. "Sailors," she cried, "know ye ought of Reginald Seaton?"

Curious were the looks with which the rugged veterans regarded her,—wonder—awe; but there was an insolent freedom in his tones who spoke. "He is here, but lacking leech's skill rather than maiden's prayers, methinks."

"Ill!—ill!" murmured Edith, pressing forward, regardless of the depths before.

"Hold!" shouted the veteran.

It is too late. The arms of the billows fold over her. A few seconds, and she had slept eternally in

their bosom. The grey veteran who spoke paused not—a hero that; he dashed forward,—a plunge,—he buffets old Ocean lustily;—he conquers! A few moments, and with his lovely prize he stood on the deck of that brave vessel again.

"Where is he?" sighed Edith, slowly opening her eyes.

"Ho, to the charge! Bear them down! See how they fly!" rung wildly through the vessel.

"Father of mercies!" shrieked Edith, and rushed down the companion ladder. On reaching the cabin, what a fearful sight met her view! A warrior sat erect on a narrow couch. By almost supernatural strength he had hurled his attendants—who sought to restrain him—aside. Away at a distance they stood. The warrior's features were ghastly pale; a scarf encircled his brow; his hands were clenched, and tossed high in the air; his eyes glared fearfully. "Charge! charge!" shouted he, yet more wildly. "Ha! ye give way, cowards! Cleave *him* to the earth! Perdition——" "Reginald!" sighed Edith. "Ha!" shouted he, "she is there—there! Secure her! Bear her away! Ha! ha! Victory! Ha! ha!" and he sunk, exhausted, on his couch. Poor Edith! She knelt over the prostrated, senseless form of the strong, skilful warrior, and bathed his pale face with her tears, and fanned his burning brow with her wet hair, and rejoiced when she saw signs of returning life. But alas! he revived only to renew the imaginary conflict, and to sink exhausted as before. A fearful sight, that strong man maddened by visible wounds,—but more by wounds hidden, viewless. And that maiden—a holy sight that! Angels looking down, smiled sweetly upon her.

'Tis night again; but how changed! The sea sleeps in beauty, and the beams of the full moon are rocking in the hollow of its waves. No winds are abroad—none! And silence sits on the blue sides of the mighty hills. Ah, how sudden the change! Even such changes are there on the sea of life. Now tempests sweep over our frail bark; shores close in,—dark, frowning shores; rocks threaten. Despair not! Anon the might of the tempest is past; the shores retire; the rocks disappear; and the calm sea stretches before us, blazing with the glories of the evening sun. From the vessel noiselessly a boat descends; carefully a couch and the wounded warrior is lowered; the maiden descends next; then four grim veterans. "Farewell! Farewell!" is softly exchanged between those who tarry, and those who go. Then the light boat, obedient to the vigorous but noiseless strokes of the oars, leaps towards the land. As if by magic, the broad wings of the vessel expand. She swings round. The waves ripple before her bow. She is away again on her trackless path. Well could I wish thee success, gallant battler of the storm, did I know thy mission to be holy. Ah, how the sympathies freeze round the heart, when we doubt the holiness of the purposes of the strong! For the present, traveller of the deep, farewell!

Noiselessly the party lands from the boat. The wounded one sleeps. Now the soldiers bear the rude litter on which his couch rests. The maiden follows. How respectful the manner of these men now! Mighty is the power of beauty to awe the fierce! But, ah! mightier far the power of devotedness. Slowly onward they move. Already the narrow plain is traversed. They ascend the mountain pass. Now

the gaunt hills look down upon them. Now upon the litter of the wounded, as a pall, their shadows rest, and gloomy presentiments darken the souls of the train. Now dark presentiments vanish, for the moon, laughing down, discloses the mountains again, defying Death and Time, and in their terrible strength exulting—twin brothers of Eternity. Still onward they fare. 'Tis an hour past midnight. Weary, weary miles are past. They follow cautiously the course of a brawling rivulet. Now they strike from its banks,—they struggle 'mid tall fern and stunted brushwood. "Hush!" cried Edith. They stood before the entrance of a rude cavern. The soldiers kneel low; with difficulty they bear the litter along. "Now stop," cried Edith; "here rest your charge. Bravely have ye performed your task." All is dark. On the solid floor the litter rests. Edith moves about as if it were noon-day. Flint and steel are near. Dry timber is found. A few minutes, and a ruddy blaze eddies round, revealing the ample bounds and grotesque structure of the cavern. Partly formed by Nature, and partly by the labour of man, that cavern rose high and stretched broad as the hall of the proudest baron. In its ample bounds brave hearts had found homes, and plans had grown upon thinking souls there, which die not,—nay, in the slow fulfilment of which we live and move. Beyond that large hall several small apartments were scooped out, and there leaf-couches were spread, with their coverings of shaggy skins.

CHAPTER VII.

METHVEN.

In the halls of Wyseby, though weeks had passed, the mysterious warrior was still the theme of converse. His sudden appearance, his irresistible might, his unceremonious departure,—of such materials as these, wonder builds up those airy or sombre structures, which rise manifold in the empire of the Past. Who was he? Whence came he? Whither went he? Questions these which nor chief nor retainers can answer. This only is certain, that he came to deliver, contemning thanks or reward. "It is in vain," said the chief, rising from the board round which the principal warriors of his clan were assembled, and at which they had sat in earnest conversation, long after the mid-day meal was past. "We waste time in idle conjectures. The whole affair is involved in impenetrable mystery. This, however, is certain,—our foe is strong and subtle; be we, then, vigorous and vigilant. The unknown has saved us once, let us be grateful. But," said he, rising to leave the hall, "pleasant is the remembrance of aid to the good when feeble; but victory self-achieved, is the rapture of heroic souls."

After leaving the hall, the chief bent his way to the apartments of his sister;—but he paused at the western embrasure, arrested by the beauty of the prospect. Evening stood in the west, bowing down

her pensive face, like a pitying genius, upon the quiet Earth, resting on the bosom of its mother Chaos; and the low winds coming from their viewless chambers beyond, bore the pensive gazer's golden locks far into the darkening south. A hill bounded his view. His eye rested on that. Instantly his thoughts rush back to the period when the irresistible legions of old Rome hailed the coming of evening from its brow. The brave of those days stood before him. Their battle-cries rung in his ears, and the heroic of his nature arose. But his eye fell on the clear stream, and his ear became conscious of its song, and he knew that from afar, down through the wide-spreading wilderness of wood, (for a stately forest waved here in those days,) as the course of a solitary friendship through a troubled life, that stream came flashing along,—then he grew painfully conscious that there are holier sounds than those of battle, and braver sights than wheeling cohorts. A light hand is on his arm. "My meditative brother, methinks thou art in a fit mood for a sad tale," said Catharine. "In me thou wilt find a fitting listener."

"As thou wilt," said Irving, smiling; and they passed to her apartment together.

"Now to thy task," cried Catharine; "narrate to me as minstrel would, the fortunes of thy gallant friend, the knight of the trackless course, Esecal of Burdock."

"Sister of mine," said the chief, gravely, "methinks valour and misfortune are fitter argument for sad thinking than light jesting." Catharine blushed deeply. The chief continued—"Edward had determined upon the subjugation of our fatherland. At Methven the forces of the iron-hearted king are as-

sembled. The hearts of the brave were troubled. At midnight our council met—a council of heroes—each wise as brave. Night girt them round with a wall of impenetrable darkness. It seemed as if they were a council of disembodied voices. The King spoke. Invisible was the lofty port, the calm determined brow, the steady, piercing eye;—but his words came to the spirit of each, and they knew them to be the words of a royal soul. 'Warriors,' he said, 'much have ye endured, and yet much must ye endure. In the fair fields of your native land, by the side of your lawful sovereign, as freemen—for ye are still free—striving for the freedom of your own land: or as subjects, nay, slaves—for conquerors have no subjects—of Edward—that man of blood. Say, warriors,—sons of the free!—of those whose spirits look down upon us at this hour,—say, in which way will ye suffer?' The king paused. For some moments, silence the most profound reigned. In moments such as these, the destinies of nations balance themselves. 'What answer ye, warriors?' cried the Bruce. 'Shall we——Ha! What sound is that?' The fierce voice of battle arose,—wild on the midnight air it came. 'To your posts all!' shouted the King. 'Strike for Scotland!'——

"Boots not to tell the issue of that disastrous night. We were scattered—not as the birds of the lonely rock, by the descent of the broad-winged eagle,—No! But as the strong vessels of a gallant fleet, torn apart by the sudden down-rushing, dark, impetuous wrath of the midnight tempest.

"Night,—night,—night,—no moon, no stars;—behind defeat, ruin, havock, and before—earth and the dispensations of God,—all else unknown. On-

ward I fled. Ever bursting into the future, that terrible silence. Onward I rushed. At length, out of the thick darkness of night evolved the rosy morn, slowly ripening into the rich beauty of day. Then the stern, free hills infused a portion of their strength into my soul;—for oh! sister, pleasant is the grey, mist-crowned hills to him who fights for a country. Onward I went.

"'Twas noon. The weariness of a long flight sat upon my limbs. A clear solitary spring—a hospitable dweller of the waste—rose in my path. I knelt, and drank of its refreshing abundance. I sat by its fresh margin, and the past rose before me, and my soul grew proud. 'The usurper,' cried I, exultingly, 'may hold the castles of my land,—the barons may own his authority,—the peasantry may bow beneath his sway; but I—by this clear spring, at the foot of that heavenward-pointing mountain, under that broad cloudless sky—I am free!' I felt it was so, and a quiet gladness stole upon me. Now the mountains vanished from my sight, and the song of the spring died upon my ear. Then other sights and sounds came. I stood on the floor of my own glad home again; I *felt* the smile of our sainted mother; I heard the voice of our brave father; thou, my sister, and *he*, the absent one, rejoiced at my return.—I slept.

"The jar of arms awoke me. I started to my feet. The blue steel of Nairin the traitor, the inveterate foe of our father, gleamed above my head. An instant, and this fair world had vanished from my view. 'Hold!' shouted a bold voice. A warrior dashed from a neighbouring thicket, where, like me, he had sought rest. He caught the descending blade upon

his own. 'Ha! thou here!' shouted Nairin. 'On him, knaves! He is worth a——' The sentence died upon his lips. Ere a kern could raise a sword, the dark of soul lay lifeless by the pure spring, staining with his base blood the land he had betrayed. His followers fled. I gazed upon my preserver. His age scarcely exceeded my own. His features were wan and care-worn,—his habiliments torn and soiled; but his graceful bearing, and the skilful vigour of his arm, betrayed the warrior and chief.

"'Warrior,' I said, 'accept the grateful thanks of——'

"'No hour this,' cried he, impatiently, 'for idle words. Secure that traitor's sword, and fly with me. These kerns will spread the alarm—the pursuit will be hot, and we are far, far from aid or shelter.'

"Boots not to tell thee of the many perils of our flight. At midnight, on the tenth night, we drained the wine-cup in the halls of Burdock, and our souls grew strong in the heroic strains of Durra, the master of song. Ah! sister, is it strange that my soul loves this heroic outlaw? No! In the hour of peril we met;—in the weariness and danger of flight we parted not;—and on the night of safety we raised the wine-cup together, and gave our voices in the same song. His sword shielded me in danger;—his arm supported me in flight;—and in his castle was the glad song of safety raised. Oh! sister, look lovingly on Esecal.—But what do I ask? Pardon me, Catharine. Gratitude to a brave man has blinded me to thy rights."

"Proceed, brother," said the proud girl, her animated face covered with blushes,—"proceed."

During their conversation, the shadows of evening

had begun to descend. Wave on wave, darker and darker, down from the east they came. Objects grew shadowy, indistinct, mystical. The chief had resumed. "For months we remained——" when a low strain of music, ascending upwards from the margin of the river, arrested him. Soft and low it arose:—

Ev'ning, welcome! Ev'ning fair,
Maiden of the golden hair;
Welcome thou to hall and bower,
Sov'reign of the peaceful hour!
Welcome, Ev'ning! Ev'ning still!
Rest on river, lake, and hill.

Holy yearning! lofty dream
Meets the soul, by lake and stream;
In the vale and in the glen,
Gentle feelings wait for men:
Welcome, Ev'ning! Ev'ning still!
Welcome thou to lake and hill!

In the hut and in the hall,
Joy'us are the thoughts of all;
Peace and plenty into night
Silently thy footsteps light:
Welcome thou to hall and bower,
Sov'reign of the peaceful hour!

"Brother," said Catharine, in a soft whisper, "are the tones of that voice familiar to thee? Methinks I have heard them before.—Ah!" she exclaimed, as if suddenly recollecting where, "brother, that night." The chief spoke not, but he arose and passed to the latticed casement. His soul darkened. Shadows of coming sorrow descended upon it; for even amid the deepening shades of evening he recognised, in the singer of that hour, the minstrel of the night of

terrors. The mysterious one seemed to be conscious that he was observed. Suddenly his song changed; wildly and hurriedly it burst thus :—

Farewell, Ev'ning! Peace, farewell!
Havoc wakes the powers of hell!
Death is king;—the di'dem now
Darkens on his fleshless brow:
Lo! the gifted sees afar,
Wild the march of red-eyed War.

Farewell, Ev'ning! Peace, farewell!
Awful morn to lake and fell,
Awful morn to vale and flood—
Dark with ruin—red with blood :—
Lurid with destruction's glare,
Haunts thy footsteps through the air:
Farewell, Ev'ning! Peace, farewell!
Havoc wakes the powers of hell!

The song died. The minstrel was invisible 'mid the night. The chief felt that to pursue him would be ungenerous. "Sister," said he calmly, turning from the casement, "danger is at hand. The foe must not find us unprepared. Adieu at present; when opportunity again offers I will resume my tale."

"I will accompany thee, brother," said Catharine, rising. They left the apartment together. Another hour, and every one of the numerous huts that then studded these uplands were deserted. Old man and young, matron and maid, of the name of Irving, obedient to the hasty summons of the chief, stood in the then spacious courts of that grey ruin.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HEREDITARY FOES.

Pleasant it is, my child, at evening to contemplate the past day,—its work all done—plans conceived — plans reduced to action — their results visible, or becoming dimly visible. How the soul exults in its strength! But pleasanter, oh! pleasanter far, when the working day of life has closed, and its sunny, contemplative evening begun, thus to dwell upon the work of that long day, waiting only for the approval of the Great Master, who comes at nightfall. But not thus pleasant is it looking back, to the souls who have not conquered sorrow,—who have not detached themselves from the past,—who have not discovered that though they erewhile worked there, and though their works still exist there, working, yet that they themselves are not of the past—are separated from it, waiting to be further separated.

While the chief of the Irvings and his sister were conversing: in the distant keep of Holemains, in an antique chamber, sat a grey warrior and a gentle maiden. A proud-looking old man that warrior, with long white hair falling over his broad shoulders, clear blue eyes, high aquiline features; a commanding, decisive, yet mild-looking old man. 'Twas the heroic chief of the Carrutherses. And that fair maiden—his flower of beauty that,—the pride of his

age, his daughter Isabell—the only daughter in a numerous family. Isabell sat by the old hero's side, and her head rested upon his bosom, and she looked into his face with her large mild blue eyes,—on her smooth open brow the while lay a soul-emanating light, beaming through the rich abundance of her long auburn hair;—over her aquiline features, usually overspread by a pensive paleness, but flushed and animated now, played a smile of unspeakable tenderness. In low musical tones, those tones which reach the heart, "Thou art sad, father," she said; "tell thy Isabell wherefore thou art troubled;—she will cheer thee;—nay, never doubt her. Hast thou not often said that she possessed a gladdening witchery?" And, by the rood, cold were his heart who would not at that hour have sworn the chief spoke true!

Faintly smiled the hero: 'twas a ray of the sun through a dark cloud. He spoke not; but putting aside Isabell's flowing locks, he imprinted a fervent kiss on the brow of his child.

"But thou wilt tell me, father, the cause of thy sorrow?" insisted Isabell, gravely. "Say, have we ought to fear?"

"Nothing, my child," said the chief. "My sorrow is of the past. To-day I grieve for the dead who fell, not in the whirlwind of patriotic war—then had I not wept; for then the brave would have called him to mind on the eve of battle, when they remember the heroes who have fallen, and strengthen themselves in their fame;—he fell, but not 'mid the battles of his land." The chief was silent. He hid his face in the folds of his mantle, and wept. Brave heart! High proofs were these tears of true manhood.

Strong in the hour of need, yet full of earnest tenderness. After a long pause—

"Father," said Isabell, gently, "we will not speak further of this now. I will sing a sweet song, I will!—the one thou lovest so well. I will chase sadness from thy spirit. And mourn not, father," she said emphatically; "the dead *are* dead."

The chief raised his head and looked mournfully, yet proudly, upon his child. "Sweet is song," he said, "gushing from the heart of those we love, and in truth mighty to banish grief; but when dark days come back from their viewless sanctuary, with the sorrows wherewith their faces were sad,—when the soul resists in vain, and its strength melts away, then is not song all-mighty; then the pouring forth of the inner darkness alone gives relief. Bear with me, my Isabell, and I will tell thee of the past,—of one near to thee, yet of whom thou hast never heard. Sorrow for his fate darkened my soul, and his name is never mentioned here. But thou shalt hear, my child, how perished in the pride of young strength the brother of my heart, thy gallant uncle, Francis of Dormont."

Isabell pressed closer to the bosom of her father. Thus the warrior began:—

"Ah, my child! the soul of an old man grows sad, looking—as he sits inactive near the end of the journey of life—back upon the path he has trode. While he journeyed along, how familiar that path looked,—crowded with easily recognised objects,—everywhere meeting his view, well-known faces,—everywhere being enacted, expected events—most distinct all,—apparently real. But this looking back, how shadowy and unsubstantial every thing has grown!

How fearfully mystical! Life's path—a narrow line, stretching through an unknown, wondrous country; along its sides, now flowers, lovely to behold—now thorns, thick, wild, tangled briars; now overhead dark clouds, storm-portending—now down-rushing rays of the sun;—anon darkness and the fearful might of the tempest. Our companions,—strange, grotesque figures, coming from we know not where, and ever turning off into strange countries, or disappearing from our path to appear again, changed as in dreams. Such to the old is the saddening retrospect of the journey of life.

"There is none of the numerous friends of my youth whose memory my soul loves so often to recall," continued the chief, "as that of Henry of Kirtle, or, as he was commonly called, Henry the Brave. We fought under the same standard, and for twelve long night-hours wounded we lay on the field; but we forgot our wounds talking of deeds of war. Into the same damp prison were we thrust, to recover or die; and there we eat the bitter bread of captivity together. Thus we became friends. My Isabell, it is in hours of adversity that enduring friendships take root, and grow into strength, not in the hours of prosperity, when they seem to spring up,—otherwise friends were not so few. He was a noble soul that Henry,—wise in council, fearless in the field, and resistless as the commissioned thunderbolt. But ah! gentle mercy had no place in his soul. He was just, according to the wild justice of our times; he could weep for the brave, too, who fell before the day of fame,—but he had no compassion for the feeble who had withstood him in war, and no holy yearnings to unite again in bonds of friendship

even with a friend of his youth, if, in the hour of wrath, he had done him wrong. He knew not how to forgive. Henry contemned wealth and power; no clan bore his name; a rude tower on the banks of the Kirtle was his dwelling. That rude tower contained the wealth he loved—his wife. His Margaret —near thy age, my Isabell, and lovely then as thou art now—she was his eldest born; and years had past between the period of her birth, and that of the eldest of his six other rosy innocents,—and these six rosy innocents —that was the treasure dear to the heart of Henry the Brave! These were days of trouble to me; and, in such days, valuable indeed is the counsel of a friend. I have told thee that Henry was wise in council. Under his roof I listened to the voice of wisdom; and as Francis, previous to his removal to Dormont, was my constant companion, even in my visits to Henry, Margaret and he early saw each other. They loved, and their love grew with their years. The heart of the father was proud of their love, and my soul dwelt pleasantly on their future felicity.

"'Twas an autumn night. A group sat in the hall of Henry of Kirtle. It was a beautiful sight that group, in that old hall. The stern warrior, the man of daring resolve and indomitable purpose, with his high, open, but perceptibly furrowed brow, his protruding eyebrows, and his large eyes of deepest black, raying out smiles of winning kindness—(such smiles are the sunshine of earnest souls, warming the hearts upon which they fall, and producing holy fruit there)—now upon a gay group of laughing innocents, now upon her round whom they clustered, shouting aloud with very excess of mirth. The

hall rung with their laughter;—and, by the mass! it was holy music. So the stern warrior thought, and he laughed loud and long too. At the other side of the board—now laughing with the merry group, now lost in their own sweet converse—sat Margaret and Francis. The bell tolled. Heavy on the ears of the lovers its sound fell. The happy mother rose to depart; Margaret rose also. The eyes of the youth follow the retiring form of her he loves. At the door she turns—one smile—she is gone—vanished from his sight—alas! *for ever*. It boots not to speak of the conversation of the heroes;—enough, it was agreed that the third night from that should witness in that hall, the nuptials of Francis and Margaret. I was far distant then,—but the warriors knew my thoughts.

"Even on that autumn night of which we have spoken, in the hall of a rude fastness on the Kirtle, a mile below where the hospitable turrets of Wyseby rise now, and on the opposite side of the stream, sat a savage group. They were no clan these,—they were not named in the roll of our Border strength. Savage men they were—the outcasts of every name—victims of thwarted ambition—castaway tools of exalted villains—agents in dark, but discovered plots—foreign mercenaries, lacking purchasers for their desecrated lives—lawless in very truth they were, spurning all outward law,—the eternal law hidden in blood. The wine-cup was passing round,—the fierce jest was circling free,—when the low but prolonged blast of a bugle was heard. Instantly all were silent. A few moments, and a firm tread was heard;—then from the gloom of the lower hall a stately form emerged. He was closely muffled in

his mantle of deer-skins; but as he moved forward in the red light of the torches, the gleaming mail was fitfully visible, flashing through the rude seams. On his head he wore a cap of shaggy skin, surmounted by a plate of polished steel. He took his seat at the head of the board. He was the chief—self-elected—of that savage throng.

"'Heroes!' he said, 'on every side we are leaguered. The wardens of the marches seek our destruction; the sword of every baron is drawn against us; the leaders of every party have cast us off; the curse of every kern rests upon our heads;—which of us is not landless, friendless, in hourly danger of ignominious death,—say, which?' Deep, fearful gloom rested on every brow. The chief continued—'What, then, is left for us? The portion of cowards—submission? No, by the cross!—we have still something left—a high and fierce delight. Shall I name it? 'Tis vengeance!—ay, vengeance!' shouted he; and that savage word, bursting from a dozen savage hearts, rung through the dreary hall. Grimly smiled that dark spirit as he marked the effect of his eloquence upon these ruined souls. 'We are closely pressed by many foes,' he resumed, 'but by whom so closely as by Francis of Dormont?' A yell of execration burst from the excited throng. 'Waking,' continued the chief, 'he thirsts for our blood; and our deaths are present in his dreams. Shall we wait like cravens, till he has leisure to hunt us down? No!—rather let us burst upon him—sudden—terrible as a storm of the hill, sweeping him from our path for ever—drowning the ghastly spectre Fear in his blood, and the blood of his race.' A fierce shout of assent arose. 'Then,' cried the chief ex-

ultingly, 'our hour of vengeance is at hand. A few days, and he weds the daughter of Henry of Kirtle. —Ha! he thinks when he is leagued with that old bloodhound, we will be an easy prey. By the mass! on the marriage eve we will give the happy bridegroom a goodly light to guide his steps — ha! ha! —and his lady-love a fitting torch to trim her locks! What say ye?—shall this be?'

"'Agreed! agreed!' burst from every lip, and the revel went on.

"Before Francis, Time the mysterious stood, and its large, mournful eyes dwelt upon him until his soul grew sad with the sadness of awe. As the period approached which had promised to make him the happiest of men, he grew the saddest. The sun of the third day arose. There were loud rejoicings in the halls of Dormont. But Francis—he could not rejoice;—the future glared ghastly in upon him. He wished, yet dreaded, to grapple with the grisly phantom. The sun stood in the centre of the sky, laughing down as if earth were all holy still;—it reached the zenith;—then descended towards the dim west, its face less radiant than before, but more serene—serene it is now, as the countenance of a good man, conscious that departure is not death;—then came evening;—and then night rushed over the world, fearfully exulting in the might of darkness and tempest. 'Twas two hours from midnight. Slowly along the narrow drawbridge the bridal train defiles. The tempest increases. Still onward they fare. 'We shall have the moon anon,' muttered Francis; 'the east reddens—'tis well.—Ha!' shouted he, as a red glare shot up far into the night, dying —instantly involving all in tenfold darkness. He

reined his steed. 'Broadlance,' he cried;—an old retainer was instantly by his side 'What, in thy judgment,' said Francis, his voice slightly faultering, 'may that glare portend?'

"'Ruin,' was the laconic reply of Broadlance. Francis was silent. 'I remember,' continued the old man, 'when the keep of——'

"'It must be there,' cried Francis, who had never removed his eyes from the quarter where the glare appeared. 'Ho! on, my men!' shouted he wildly. 'Dash your spurs to the rowels! Death to the last!' Away—onward wildly they dash. Now before them a tempest-maddened stream raises its hoarse voice, threatening and defying;—now far behind it raves in impotent rage;—now a barren moor, with its jubilee of mad winds, stretches forward, interminable;—now it is traversed, and a giant hill defies their further progress;—now loud through upper night from its brow, comes the voice of the leader. Anon, its summit is past, and the train is thundering down its rugged side. Onward wildly they dash,—darkness behind them—thick impenetrable darkness before. Now a dense fir plantation past, and he will reach the ford where, three nights before, he paused, in the exultation of successful love, to gaze on the quiet home, nestled 'mid the beauties of nature, which held the idol of his heart. He reached the ford.—Father of mercies! what a spectacle burst on his sight! The dwelling which he had so lately left strong and beautiful—made visible by a hundred flaming torches—bare and blackened;—while from every loophole, tongues of fire were thrust licking the dark and crackling walls; and ever with a sudden and fearful crash, solid masses of

masonry rushing down. A numerous band of men, wild and grotesque in the red glare of the torches and the redder glare of the ruins, moving to and fro. 'Twas a fearful spectacle that! A moment of voiceless horror past,—'Forward to the charge!' yelled Francis. Onward the fierce band whirls. Roused by the thundering of approaching steeds, the party at the ruins speedily form in a solid column. They wait the attack. By the rood, it were a brave band who would attack them! But those who come rushing out of darkness are brave, and their leader—he is mad. 'Forward! spare none!' shouted Francis.

"'A Carruthers! a Carruthers!' cried a voice from the ranks of the assailed. A warrior sprung forward. 'Hold! in the name of Bruce!' he shouted. Instantly every steed was reined. That warrior was the brave, romantic Edward Bruce. 'It is in vain,' remonstrated Edward, as Francis pressed towards the pile; 'I tell thee that moment we arrived we saw the blackened bodies fall with the falling floors 'mid the hungry flames.'

"At that instant there was a movement amid the party nearest the ruins. A warrior sprung from the throng; through the crumbling portal, defying smoke and the flames, he rushed. 'Twas a moment of breathless anxiety. Now he emerges from the red darkness. A falling mass grazes his plume,—a tongue of fire, as a baffled fiend, rushes after him; but he is safe,—and, folded in his powerful embrace, he holds a sleeping child. A shout—wild, penetrating, the upheaving of many hearts—rent the air. '*Another* may be safe!' cried Francis, dashing forward; a strong arm arrested him; in fury he turned—he was detained by the hero who saved the child.

'Carruthers,' the warrior said, 'tis vain daring the flames, I saw *her—dead.*'

"'A prisoner,' cried Broadlance, dragging a wounded wretch before the Bruce. 'Perdition!' cried the retainer in horror, as he recognised the forbidding features of a traitor of his own name.

"'Confess,' cried the Bruce, 'by whom this deed was done.' His safety being promised, the wretch complied; and then Francis learned that the arch-scourge of the Border, the ruthless blaster of his life's young hope, was the son of our house's foe,—was the disgraced, degraded Gilbert de Lacy. Then the false craven told that the tower was surrounded, that a bugle was sounded, and that when Henry appeared at an embrasure, a broad arrow, launched by a sure archer, smote him to the heart; he fell—his wife and family clung around his lifeless corpse till the yielding floor buried them in the living flames. The preservation of the babe was no miracle:—the nurse, flying, was smitten down by a falling beam; that beam resting against the wall, sheltered the fair child.

"'But where,' cried Francis. 'is the destroyer now?' The double traitor described the fastness of which we have spoken.

"'To horse! my friends,' shouted Francis—'Revenge!'

"The tempest had exhausted its might; the solid columns of black clouds, broken into small detachments, fled, and the moon was sovereign of the night. 'Twas an hour past midnight,—*past the bridal hour.* Onward the avenger dashed; now the fastness of Kirtle is visible; a line of red time-worn cliffs, towering high, inaccessible; at their feet an angry and

swollen stream; and on either side, and far behind, impenetrable morasses.

"'Halt!' cried Bruce. A valley lay between them and the stream, thickly studded with wood, capable of containing a host. What is to be done?

"Broadlance stepped forward. 'Pardon,' he said; 'in youth I once reached those heights, even from where we stand now; and methinks it is not Rob of the Broadlance that will forget a pass.'

"'Lead on,' cried Francis, 'I will follow.' Forty chosen men one by one steal under cover of the wood. Unerringly Broadlance points the way: they reach the river,—alas! that the holiness of such a scene should be broken,—noiselessly they cross where a tiny rivulet empties its dashing waters. Up its channel silently they proceed. In breathless anxiety their friends wait for the sound of the onset. The forms of the foes are dimly visible on the opposite bank; but save the whizzing of a shaft cleaving the air, nothing is heard.

"'They are long,' cried Edward impatiently; but scarcely had he spoken, when a fierce yell arose. Through the pass of the morass, guided by Broadlance, the avengers had gained the solid ground in the rear of the foe, who, deeming their rear safe, had deserted the ruins to guard the cliff.

"'Revenge!' cried Francis, and his followers plunge forward irresistible. The struggle is momentary. The outlaws are swept from the edge of the fearful precipice: from below arises, as from the nether depths, yells of men in agony! Yet one is left; on the extreme edge of the precipice he stands, terrible as a lion at bay. It is De Lacy, the chief

of the outlaws. Francis rushed upon him; suddenly dashing his sword to the earth, and receiving that of his assailant in his bosom, the outlaw clasped his arms around his foe, and with a laugh of fiendish derision plunged from the cliff. There was a pause of horror!—a moment, and it was broken by the shout of Bruce, who, impatient to join in the strife, had dared the passage of the wood, and now stood below by the edge of the stream: a few words told him all; he rushed through the river, and there, 'mid the mangled and dead, shattered and lifeless, locked in each other's arms, lay the hereditary foes. Morn came, and the eye of day shuddered to behold the fearful spectacle!"

The chief was silent,—his tale was told; again he buried his head in the folds of his mantle, but he wept not. Isabell was silent: she knew how vain, in such hours, is the voice of consolation. Softly she arose, and gliding to the window, where stood an antique harp, she gently touched its strings, and raising her sweet voice, sang:—

Star of Even, mildly beaming,
Nora's song shall flow to thee;
See! my child is softly dreaming,
All are sleeping, all save me.
Star of Even, list to me!
Nora's song shall flow to thee.

Star of Even, thou wert flying
Through the broken clouds, alone,
While my sainted mother, dying,
Lay this lonely breast upon.
Star of Even, list to me!
Nora's song shall flow to thee.

Nora's song in eve of sadness,
Sunny hope, or chilling fear,
Or of slow returning gladness,
Star of Even, gently hear.
Star of Even, list to me!
Nora's song shall flow to thee.

The chief raised his head: by sadness the spell of sadness was broken!—on the pinions of mournful song the spirit of gladness entered his soul!

"Isabell," he said cheerfully, "I have not spoken to thee of the child, and of its heroic preserver."

"True, father," cried Isabell; "what of them? I long to hear."

"The gallant soldier," said the chief, "was the standard-bearer of the Bruce, and father of the chief of the Irvings. The dauntless one bore the child of his daring to his northern home; and there, amid the children of his love, the orphan grew into strength. Ranolph was in soul brave as his father: Henry lived again in him. The standard-bearer fell; and soon afterwards Ranolph mysteriously disappeared, and is now, so rumour says, with the enemies of his country. Ah! how the brave of soul may fall!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE BEACON.

Meanwhile, in the halls of Wyseby the hurry and noise of preparation was past, and on all rested the stillness of stern waiting for. The chief and his sister, who had never left his side, returned to the apartment where they sat when the minstrel's song of warning arose.

"Sister," said the chief, "it would be ungenerous to suppose that that mysterious harper wished unnecessarily to alarm us: we are threatened with danger, perchance with another midnight attack; I must watch, then, for hours; and as thou wilt not leave me, I will try to chase laggard time with the tale of the sorrows of my friend Sir Esecal." Catharine assented. The chief began:—

"I have told thee, sister, of my meeting with the brave outlaw, of our flight, and of the shelter of his halls: I will speak of his heroism now,—the greatness of souls discerned to be great—of his forgetfulness of self when the feeble require aid.

"Leaping into life 'mid those northern mountains, and nurtured into strength in their bosom, proudly flashing, onward rushes the Avenon with its might of waters, its song of power and of peace swelling trimphantly; its waves lave the walls of Burdock, and its song steals at evening through loophole and embrasure,—sweet visitant to the pensive soul! It

has terrors too, the mighty Avenon; but at Burdock, the giant rocks through which it gushes melts not with its songs of peace, and laugh at its impotent terrors, unmoved as the ocean into which in brief time it falls. On the Avenon, about a mile from Burdock, is a valley of small extent, but of exceeding beauty. On every side it is guarded by towering hills. The Weardon, a mountain stream, divided by a ponderous crag, falls in two tiny rivulets on either side into the princely Avenon, from which the valley gradually swells to the centre; and there stood a neat cottage, the home of two noble hearts: Ardin the huntsman and his daughter, his only child, lived there. 'Twas a picturesque view from that cottage! The valley—the towering hills—the majestic Avenon in its bridgeless might—the Weardon, spanned by one rude arch covered with ivy; and away, winding along and up the mountain side, a narrow pathway. Often when the summer's sun was laughing down would the pedestrian turn, as he wound along the mountain's brow, and, gazing into the fair valley, sigh for such a home.

"'Twas a sultry day. The distant thunders had muttered indistinctly through the morning hours, but ere noon they spoke audibly, fearfully in earnest; even then, save their awfully uplifted voices, all was preternaturally calm. The flocks had fled from the mountains; the birds of the air were silent; and even the stern hills seemed to veil their faces and shrink in fear. Darkness came down: then the spirits of the storm were set free, and the jubilee began. Anon, through the darkness came the voice of the mountain Weardon, exulting; and the Avenon shouted in triumph. With Esecal and I the day

had passed heavily; and now we sat by the fire listening listlessly to the raging tempest. The door flew open: wild, distracted, Ardin the huntsman burst into the room. 'Save! save!' he cried, and fell senseless on the floor.

"'Poor Ardin!' cried Sir Esecal, 'what can have befallen him?' At that moment the huntsman raised his head, and shouting wildly, 'Back, accursed waters! Spare her—spare her!—she is my only child; and so good too—spare!'—he sank insensible again.

"'Ah!' cried Esecal, 'I see all. To horse—to horse! Follow me.' A few minutes, and a dozen fearless horsemen were dashing along the mountain way, through night and tempest, on, on. The bridge of the Weardon is near. A flash of lightning revealed the angry waters.

"'Halt!' shouted Esecal. The knight discovered, in the momentary light, that the bridge was gone—swept away with its ivy tendrils, the growth of thrice a century. The storm had now reached its height: the thunder crashed through the waste of night, and the blue lightning gleamed on the waters, as if some demon, resting on its broad wings, looked with its fearfully lurid countenance and great glaring eyes into the secret bosom of the troubled deep! But no living soul, no cottage, was visible; the lightning revealed nothing but water, water; and if the valley contained a living being still, what earthly power could render aid? In a pause of the wind, an agonised shriek burst across the howling waste; and a prolonged flash of lightning revealed a female form on the centre of the rising ground, surrounded by the mad elements; wild and piercing came her screams.

"I stood appalled. A plunge,—the foam dashed around us. The lightning streamed yet more fiercely down. There, there amid the billows was Esecal and his gallant steed. Bravely they battled the mad waters; flash on flash revealed them, now triumphantly hurrying on, now swallowed up, now battling again. We stood silent as death, grimly gazing upon that wild combat. Ah! the hoofs of the brave steed strike the solid ground; the goal is reached. From our pent-up bosoms a wild shout bursts; high above the voice of the waters, rivalling that of the thunder, it arose. Esecal waved his cap triumphantly. But the return. 'Rest thy steed!' burst from every lip. Vain council! Scarcely had the maid taken her seat before her deliverer, when the Avenon, reinforced, fiercely rushed down, determined to conquer. The gallant steed, the knight, and the maiden, are whirled away, far, invisible. Is the contest over? No, no. There gallantly that matchless steed struggles still; the mid channel is gained; now one fearful struggle,—'tis past; one effort more, brave steed, and thou art victorious! Ah! its strength fails. I plunged into the flood. Loud neighed the noble animal, as if rejecting aid. One convulsive effort,—the bank is gained! and the brave steed sank exhausted—dead. A form rushed out of darkness; a lightning flash revealed his ghastly features: 'twas Ardin. He saw his child; a shout of joy burst from his lips, and he fell at the feet of Esecal. Ardin was borne to the castle of Burdock. A few days, and he laughed in a safer home, and his daughter sat by his side.

"Soon after this the Bruce raised his standard again; and once more Esecal and I lived beneath its folds. I need not tell thee of the varied fortunes

of the king, nor of our father's fall; these all are known to thee: I hasten to speak of the quarrel of Bruce and Esecal.

"The power of England was broken. The independence of Scotland was confirmed, and the heart of warrior and serf rejoiced; when a summons was issued by the Bruce, calling lord and baron to a solemn convention at Perth on a given day. The day came; and in the hall of convention the brave, the noble, the loyal of Scotland were assembled.

"What lofty enterprize fires the royal soul?—what dazzling schemes of conquest occupy the monarch's mind?—what dark lowering cloud, threatening danger, has met his vigilant eye? Such were the questions which proposed themselves in many minds.

"The Bruce arose. Dark Murray leant forward his shaggy head,—the eyes of Randolph blazed,—the scarred countenance of Douglas exhibited symptoms of intense interest,—the enthusiastic Esecal stood on tiptoe, for now would his idol dazzle all by the heroism of his soul, by the splendour of his genius, by the penetrating powers of his wisdom! 'Barons,' began the king, 'faithfully have ye served your sovereign; faithfully in the council and in the field. Heroes, accept the thanks of your king; and know in the depths of his soul he cherishes fervent gratitude to you all.' He paused, and fixed his earnest eyes upon the dark throng. 'But,' resumed he, 'ill would it beseem us, did we let even our gratitude interfere with our justice. By our blessed Mother,' he cried, his eyes blazing, 'with our sword we won our rights; and, by the sceptre which that sword gave us, we will defend the rights of our subjects, even though the best and bravest, ay, and the proudest too, of our subjects,' cried he, meeting the dark eyes of

Murray, 'should say Nay.' The king paused again. An angry glance went round the assembly; a moment, and he resumed. 'To the just of heart justice is dear. To him who holds manor or hall by true right, it recks not though his right be challenged; and he who holds it by other than true right, makes our royal selves a party in his injustice, and is a foul traitor.' The brows of the lords grew black as midnight. Undeterred, the Bruce proceeded: 'That honest and true men may be saved from reproach, and that traitors may have their treasons made manifest, have we in our good pleasure assembled you here, that ye may shew, lords of Scotland, in our royal presence, by what title ye hold your lands.' A gloomy consternation darkened on every brow; speechless, motionless, sat men whom armies of the earth could not have awed.

"Suddenly springing to his feet, 'By this I hold my lands!' cried Sir Esecal, waving his sword high in the air.

"'By this I hold my lands!' shouted Murray.

"'By this I hold my lands!' shouted Randolph.

"'By this I hold my lands!' shouted Douglas; 'ay, by Saint Bride, and *will* hold them.'

"'By this we hold our lands!' shouted the whole assembly, waving their swords simultaneously. It was a strange spectacle that! There stood the excited barons, waving their blue swords; there stood the Bruce, calm—fearfully calm—unmoved, as if witnessing some peaceful pageant!

"'Barons, we dissolve this convention,' said he sternly. His cold piercing accents fell on many hearts as the voice of doom. As Esecal passed the dais to leave the hall, a cloud darkened on the brow of the king. Esecal saw danger was near, but his

spirit quailed not; gracefully he made his parting obeisance,—gracefully as in the days of royal favour; but from that hour the glory of the Bruce was darkened in the eyes of Esecal. 'What? rob those who placed him on the throne!' he would exclaim; 'those who hold lands as the reward of services, because no musty parchment names them as court-jesters in the days of Fergus, or state-tools in his own! Out upon it! out upon him!—he seeks his own aggrandizement.' Anon, there came rumours of plots—dark, dangerous, treasonable plots;—then they were coupled with the name of Esecal;—then thundering came the bill of outlawry; and from that time the terrible soldier, the courteous knight, the polished scholar, has been a houseless wanderer, finding shelter in the caves of the mountains, or in the halls of friendly chiefs."

"But the Bruce will relent," said Catharine piteously. "Sir Esecal will be restored."

"Ah! no," replied the chief; "Bruce never forgives. Esecal's hate is eternal. The souls of the heroes are darkened by the shadows of each other!"

At that monent, loud through turret and hall rang the voice of the warder.

"The beacon!" he cried. The chief sprung to his feet; an instant and he and Catharine stood on the battlements. To the south, now expanding into a glow, now contracting into a speck, a small red star hung on the edge of the horizon. A few minutes, and it bursts into a fierce steady glare, illumining sea and sky. Catharine turned an enquiring glance upon her brother; his countenance was dark, sternly calm. "What may that mean?" she whispered. The chief answered in one word—in all times a word of wild terror that—"Invasion."

CHAPTER X.

MORNING.

From its mysterious abode, its loud inarticulate voice pealing through our whole being, the earnest soul cries continually—Conquer! Woe to him who hears and obeys not!—for as he has power to obey, and as he obeys, so is he great—so is he happy. At some time all men seek to obey this soul-mandate; but many, feeling effort to be the very painfullest task, desist, and are trodden under foot of the mighty who come behind. Others again,—fools that they are!—with the whole force that lies in them, seek to conquer the unconquerable—to appropriate that to their evanescent selves, of which the Omnipotent has written, "It is mine." From their paths, lovely human life, shrivelled up, passes away; and the history of the effort of the holy within them, is written in one word—*murder*.

Through the depths of midnight the beacon burned on; and ever the stillness of the hour was broken by the tread of some invisible steed dashing through darkness; and ever from the lips of the solitary rider burst the ominous word, "Invasion." As the night wore on, the clashing of arms was heard, and the stern word of military command, and around the castle of Wyseby the bustle and the gradually swelling hum of a congregating throng.

Meanwhile, in the great hall the chiefs of the Border were assembled. The grim Douglas, he of the scarred countenance and free speech, was not there. Alas! he had fallen. But his son, a Douglas in very truth, held his place. The fierce Johnston, the romantic Maxwell, the stern Carlyle, the gallant Graham — the leaders of the Border strength — were there; — and there, too, was the heroic Carruthers, ever faithful and ready.

"Warriors," the Douglas began, "undoubtedly the foes are in strength. This expedition has been conducted with secrecy, and, let us say even of foes, with consummate skill. But for nightfall and our guardian Solway, we had been fatally surprised. These only secure a few hours respite,—but for the brave one hour is enough. Let us not waste our time in idle words. Say, warriors, how shall we act?"

"Fight!" shouted they simultaneously.

At that moment a squire entered the hall. "Returned, Renwick?" cried the Douglas; "what of the foe?"

"They are led by Aymer de Valence," said the youth; "they are thirty thousand strong, disciplined, and well appointed; they are waiting for light to cross the channel."

"At what hour deemest thou they will cross?" said Douglas.

"Before there is light enough to show the ford," said Renwick, "the tide will have begun to flow. Methinks it will be noon before they can pass."

"Enough," said Douglas; and the squire withdrew. "By St Bryde! methinks your counsel none of the wisest," said he, turning to the chiefs. "By to-morrow at noon, four thousand men at most will

be our strength, and with that it were an idle waste of life to hazard a battle."

"Chiefs," cried the Carruthers, "methinks the wisest course were to wait till day shows the true proportions of our foes, and the strength of our friends; then, if resistance seem to be vain, let us fall back upon Lochmaben, and wait the counsel of the Bruce."

"Wisely spoken," cried Irving. "Where may the Bruce be?"

"In Linlithgow at present," said Douglas; "but he will speedily be in the field. What say ye, chiefs, to the counsel of the Carruthers? Methinks it savours of wisdom." 'Twas adopted. "Then," continued Douglas, rising, "each to his duty. Let every chief muster what men he can, and meet me two hours after sunrise at Burnswark." The council was disso ved.

Night is past,—it is glorious day now. Ah! what a holy thing is light. The strength of the Irvings muster on the lawn,—fourscore men, strong and skilful in Border warfare. On his good steed, the chief was at their head. These brave men and their gallant leader were a most royal spectacle. But there were sad sights, too, at that hour:—women, and children, and old men—a mournful throng. The high-souled Catharine was among them, speaking words of comfort. "Herbert, lead forward," cried the chief; "proceed directly to the rendezvous; I will be there anon," he said; and, wheeling round his steed, accompanied by a single retainer, dashed forward towards the neighbouring heights, from which he could obtain a view of the foe. Slowly and sadly the warriors move on. They

were brave men these Irvings;—but they were leaving their homes, perhaps never to return. What wonder, then, that the bravest wept? Catharine turned; she saw, silent and lonely, her late cheerful home, and for a moment even her strong spirit quailed. Onward they move.

Burnswark is full in view. There the standard of the Douglas waves, and the warriors of the Border, a motley group, crowd around. Beyond these hills to the east, is all calm and holy? No, no; rumour is busy there. All night long it has been busy. Ah me! what blessed visions have melted away—what long-cherished hopes have been overthrown—what blissful paradises, visible in the future, have receded into the viewless in these night-hours! Calm and holy as the soul would believe all to be beyond these blue hills, armed men are hurrying to and fro there, women are wailing, and silent agonies are revelling in hearts that fear not to die.

Meanwhile, at the full speed of his gallant war-horse, the chief dashes on. The Kirtle is passed; the steep ascent beyond is mastered; and along the still rising ground the gallant steed careers. Now the summit is gained. By the mass! there is a magnificent view—magnificent in the might and softness of Nature, and wildly animated now. The world-old Criffel, with his crown of clouds, and his unuttered memory of the olden times; and the Skiddaw, stern and grey as when the blessed light first streamed down upon its brow; the Solway, leaping and sparkling as it leapt and sparkled then; and the sun, strong and glorious as on the morn of its birth, though for six thousand years, Time, that darkens the countenance of the strong, has swept across

his brow. Ah! my child, looking into the face of Nature, how we forget the might of time! But there were evanescent things in that view, too. On the opposite bank of the Solway, the sunbeams fell on halberd, and shield, and broadsword, and spear,—on the varied arms of thirty thousand men. How strange it was to gaze upon them, moving to and fro in the sunbeams, noiselessly as the figures in the pageant of a dream, for no sound reached the ear of the chief;—yet to know that they were there on their mysterious journey, the commissioned fashioners of the future. The while, between him and the Solway, along the narrow and broken paths—for there were no roads here in these days —what crowds hurry!—old and young; the maid of sixteen, and the matron of sixty; the boy whose arm never wielded a sword or bent a bow, and the grey veteran,—the terrible in nearly-forgotten wars. When the sun of yesterday set, they rejoiced in peace and fair abundance; now they are forth to live as they may, with the earth for their couch, and the blue sky for their canopy. Ah, my child! there were stern doings in these old days.

In the long lines, in the close columns of the foe, the experienced eye of the chief read the number of those who thronged the valley. But the hollow of these hills,—what do they contain? Immediately after the breaking up of the council, scouts were dispatched by Douglas to ascertain. "It must be near the muster hour," said Irving, half aloud, casting a hasty glance at the sun. He wheeled his steed, and dashed rapidly across the country, towards the place of rendezvous.

CHAPTER XI.

NIGHT.

When Irving reached Burnswark he found many of the chiefs already there. A council was assembled. Douglas leant upon his massive sword;—grasping with both hands the shaft of his border spear, Maxwell bent forward;—on a grey crag sat Carruthers, his steel cap by his side, and his massive broadsword upon his knee;—the other chiefs stood around. At a respectful distance, yet anxious to catch a passing word, with countenances expressive of intense curiosity. stood a few old men—favoured retainers of the different chiefs. On the side of the hill sat or stood—alone or in groups—the hasty levies of the Border; and here and there stood parties of veteran soldiers, now glancing in the direction of the foe, now of the chiefs,—now earnestly conversing.

Irving joined the council. "The scouts who were dispatched last night," said Douglas, "are returned. They report the whole strength of the foe to be in view, computed at thirty thousand men—veteran soldiers—complete in all their appointments. Our strength barely exceeds four thousand men,—all brave, but many of them unused to war. The men of the dales are arming; couriers have been dispatched to the Bruce; the beacons have aroused Galloway: but days must elapse before we can receive any efficient reinforcement. To do battle

in our present strength, were to favour our enemies, —yet, by St Bryde! it ill suits with the nature of a Douglas to sit tamely watching the movements of foes."

"Let us advance," cried Maxwell, "and oppose their landing. By the rood! it were a brave deed."

"But scarcely a wise one," said Irving. "We might annoy the foe, but we could not successfully oppose their landing;—while the nature of the ground preventing a hasty or orderly retreat, our loss would be considerable. There is nothing for us but to check the foe as we may, and to avoid battle till reinforcements arrive."

"By St Bryde!" cried Douglas suddenly, arousing from a deep reverie, "I would give the worth of one of Maxwell's raids to know the purpose of this same Aymer de Valence."

"'Twere valuable knowledge," said Maxwell, sarcastically.

"If he means to move forward by the coast to-night," continued Douglas, "it boots not holding our present position; but if he means to move by the midland course, then may we for some days hold him in check. 'Twere a hardy deed to pass these morasses in the face of even our feeble force."

"He will not attempt the morass," said Carruthers.

"Why not?" said Maxwell. "Were I the leader of that host——But, pshaw! he is an Englishman."

"Ay, and a brave one too," said Douglas. "And so thou wouldst attempt the morass?"

"Ay, marry, I would," cried Maxwell. "Last Easter even I led——"

"The foes are moving," cried Irving; "already

their advance columns begin to cross." Instantly every eye was turned in the direction of the foes.

For hours column following column have flashed across that wet and glittering sand; and now on the soil of Scotland the war-array of England stands. Solid and compact it stands,—proud of its nation—conscious of its strength—exulting in its mission: but its mission is unholy;—in that lies the weakness of that war-array. In old times, One who lieth not said, "Unrighteousness shall not prosper." That is the law; and nor councils of nations, nor wills of potentates, can abrogate it. Mighty as that host looks now, its strength shall be withered; it shall not lift up its voice again amid the valleys of the land it has left.

Impatiently, from their lofty position, the leaders of the Border strength watched the motions of the foe. How the brave spirit of Douglas chafed thus to sit inactive, and a gallant enemy in view. How often he felt inclined to follow the counsel of Maxwell, but ever prudence checked the thought. The sun was far on his downward journey, when Douglas, who had for some time been watching the foe intently, exclaimed joyfully, "By the sceptre of the Bruce, they are advancing! They mean to pass the morass."

"They mean not to pass the morass," said Carruthers; "Aymer de Valence is a wise leader,—this is a feint; he would put our forces in motion, that he may discern our strength."

"Pass the word through the camp, that no man leave his place," cried Douglas; "the Southron shall be foiled." In deep silence they watched the advancing foe.

"They halt," cried Irving; "now they begin to retreat. Ah! they have found the manœuvre to be unsuccessful."

"Yonder comes a herald," said Maxwell, as a single horseman left the enemy's line and dashed forward.

"I will meet him," cried Douglas, "and prevent his approaching so near as to count our numbers; —that is his true errand." A few moments, and, mounted on his strong war-horse, the gallant leader was far across the plain.

An hour, and the Douglas returned. "What message sends the Southron?" cried the chiefs.

"He bids us," said Douglas, "descend and join battle on the level plain, or lay down our arms and accept of our lives as the gift of his master, the *most royal* Edward of England. Ha, ha! I wonder he had not said the most merciful too."

"And your answer?" they cried.

"I bade say," replied Douglas, "that we of the north country fought at liking; and that as to our arms and lives, we usually parted with them together; but that we meant, with the aid of the saints, to part with neither at the command of the *most royal* Edward."

At this moment a slight bustle at one of the outposts attracted their notice. A few minutes, and a soldier, accompanied by a youth in Southron habiliments, approached. Permission being given, they stood before the chiefs.

"Whom have we here?" cried Douglas.

The stranger stept forward: — he was scarcely four-and-twenty,—tall, handsome, with an air of reckless but immatured daring.

"Say thy say," cried Douglas, sternly.

"I am an Englishman," said the youth. "Tired of the wars of grasping ambition, and anxious to serve where purer motives nerve the soldier's arm, I embraced the opportunity afforded by the confusion of crossing yon channel, to leave the army of Valence, and I am now here to offer my feeble arm to aid your holy cause."

"Bravely spoken," cried Maxwell; "by Mary! thou hast done well."

"We have no need of traitors to aid our holy cause," muttered Irving.

"Methinks, stranger, thy eyes will soon grow familiar with our numbers and appointments," said Carruthers, sarcastically. The colour of the youth rose perceptably. Unconsciously he had allowed his eyes to wander over the ranks of the Borderers. Withdrawing them, he met the glance of Carruthers firmly, and replied carelessly, "I have been in camp, and few glances serve that purpose."

"What are the objects of the English in this inroad?" said Douglas.

"The overthrow of Bruce, and the complete subugation of Scotland," replied the stranger promptly.

"And by what course does Valence mean to proceed?" said Douglas.

"He means to cross yon morass, and carry these heights to-night, or, at furthest, by dawn to-morrow," rejoined the youth.

"Methinks," said Carruthers, "for a dissatisfied soldier, thou art somewhat too well acquainted with the council of De Valence."

The youth replied not. "Say," cried Douglas, "what may the number be of yon array?"

"Nearly fifteen thousand," said the youth, meeting the eagle glance of the chief firmly.

"Thou art young to be so foul a liar," said Douglas, indignantly. "Renwick!" he cried. The squire approached. "Tell that English *spy* the strength of yonder host."

"Thirty thousand," said the squire promptly, "within a few hundreds."

The stranger grew pale. "Thou art a sorry knave," said Douglas grimly, addressing the detected adventurer. "Thou wilt hardly win thy spurs on this occasion. Soldiers, bear him away. See that he be securely guarded. We will question him more fully anon."

'Tis night. Every fountain of hallowed light is closed, yet the peace of darkness is not upon the earth. With evening, the demon of Desolation went forth. It breathed upon the cottage, and it is ashes; —upon the castle, and lo! high above its battlement Ruin flaps its red wings, lashing the clouds. A red unholy glare is on the sky;—it is mirrored red and unholy upon the black heath;—and away, the ocean heaves a sea of living fire. It is night,—but not that night amid whose watches the ministers of gentle sleep noiselessly walk, pouring their sweet balm upon wearied eyes, and winning tired souls back to purify and strengthen themselves, in the heavenly joyance of childhood. No;—but night, red with the terrors of Pandemonium, and mad with the jubilee of the fiends.

Strange agonies peopled brave hearts 'mid the watches of that night, on that mountain side, my child! Ever a red fire-pillar clove the solid darkness; and ever as it arose, one heart could tell that

its base was a *hearth*, and its food a *home;* and ever as a fire-pillar arose, a thread that bound one being to a spot of earth was burnt up, and a heart felt that man was less emphatically his brother; and the spirit of good failed in that heart, and the demon strengthened himself there. Amid these night-hours, by the fierce light of burning homes, the spirit of evil strengthened himself in many hearts!

War! War!—theme of the poet's song!—what art thou, in truth, but the wildest realization of the Curse? To stand face to face with thee, War, in thy hour of fierce triumph,—strewed around thee the broken and defaced images of the Highest, over whom, for the time, thou seemest to prevail. Ah! it is awful! Thousands of glazed, but fearfully speaking eyes, turned upon thee. Demon! where is the divine light that, but a short hour since, streamed from them? Bold brows too, and God's sun, illumining the fearful signs that are graven there, and that terrible music of thine,—an agonised melody of mad shrieks. Oh war! and the mighty of the earth have bowed down to thee, and the simple of the earth have exalted thee, and the inspired of the earth—they in whose bosom God's own spirit burned—have in songs loud-toned as the thunders of deep midnight pealed forth thy praise. Man! man!—thinking of thy follies, all save the divine in our nature despairs.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MOUNTAIN LAND.

My child, scanning what is visible of the life-battle of a man, we exclaim, Why was he not this?—why did he not that?—and in our hearts we call our brother, Fool. The while he struggled to Be and to Do, in the south and in the north, in the east and in the west, invisible to us, invisible to him, the fashioners of his destiny stood. Stately his ice castle arose; his soul exulted in its completion;—distant, viewless, a hand was raised, which dashed it to atoms. Child of mine, judge leniently of thy kind.

We will return for brief space to the mountain-land again,—to that drear cavern of which before-time I told thee. Many weeks had passed since the night when, in deep darkness, the veterans rested the litter of the wounded man on its solid floor. But the silence which reigned there then reigned there now, and the darkness which dwelt there then dwelt there still,—thick, compact darkness;—in its hollow bosom, a feeble light, emitted by a tiny lamp, struggled; now pale, rayless,—now flaring up as if its desolation had its agonies too. Its fitful glare revealed a female form, seated in the centre of the cavern, by a rude table of stone. Her arms rested on the table, and her face was

buried in her hands. Through the dimness arose an idea of loveliness, and around her hung an atmosphere of sadness. She seemed to be waiting for some one, for she raised her head frequently as if listening for expected footsteps. She arose;—she passed to the door of the cavern;—she listened intently: all was still—still as was Eternity before the mad progeny of Time burst into life in its bosom. She took her seat by the table again, and trimmed her lamp. Now fitfully snatches of mountain melodies burst from her lips; anon, in a sweet but mournful voice, she sang:

Fair Mora was old Gaspar's child—
His only one—an orphan now;
A maiden gently sad, but mild
As lamb, on Benscar's lofty brow.

Old Gaspar won the Lady May
While yet a stripling youth was he;
And all her friends, the sooth to say,
Were wildly wroth as wroth could be.

But what can young strong love withstand,
New-born in woman's earnest breast?—
The lovely May with heart and hand
The peasant, low-born Gaspar blest.

Her father's old ancestral towers,
She left for the deep love of one;
Her airy grots, her sylvan bowers,
And all her friends—a happy band.

Though gently onward time did glide,
And she was happy in her lot;
Yet olden days,—their pomp and pride,—
By her were never all forgot.

And she — what time the setting sun
Was sinking in the yellow west,
Like infant, when the day is done,
Soft-smiling while it sinks to rest—

Would tell to Mora how in youth
Proud knights to her had bow'd the knee,
Brave, noble, handsome, young,--in sooth,
The pride of England's chivalry.

Then she would sing some olden lay
Of lady-love or knightly deeds,
Of maidens rudely borne away,
Of shiver'd spears, and meeting steeds.

Hush! was that a low whistle she heard? She started to her feet, and hurried to the door of the cavern. The awful stillness without was yet unbroken. She bent her head low to listen, but no sound came — none! The shadows of sadness were perceptibly deepened on her face when she took her seat at the rude table again. For some minutes she sat in silence; at length, in tones even more mournful than before, she resumed her song.

Then was it strange in Mora's heart
The torch of fair Romance was burning—
Of life each lone or dreary part
To softest hues of moonlight turning?

No! she would sit while yet a child,
And fashion mighty feats of war;
Then see the victor--fancy wild—
Returning 'mid the dim afar.

He swears he'd dare each field again,
But one sweet glance from her to win;

What shook her gentle bosom then ?
Lo ! unfledged passion moved therein.

As older lovely Mora grew,
Her strangest fancies unrepressed,
Imagination wider flew,
And wilder grew her heart's unrest.

But when her mother passed away,
And when in death her father slept,
At evening hour, for many a day,
She sat beside their graves and wept.

Wild sorrow lived through winter hours
Upon her heart so lone and young ;
But when the spring brought back sweet flow'rs,
She tended them, and sadly sung.

And ever as the sun arose
From ocean's breast, or cloudland dim,
And ever at the evening's close,
Burst the low music of her hymn.

" Thy song is of a sad order, Edith," said a clear manly voice behind her.

Edith—for it was she, the faithful one—turned. She beheld the tall noble figure, and earnest impassioned face, of the intruder, without any evidence of surprise. " It is a song of my childhood, Sir Reginald," she said. " I know not why," she continued, " but so it is, that all of our childhood which we love to recall, is sad."

" That is because we never look back to the period of childhood save in sad hours," said Reginald. " Then the sadness of the soul darkens every object that meets the mental eye ;—and truly, Edith, thou hast little here to make any hour of thine other than

sad. These wild haunts,—this desolate home,—utter seclusion, too, from the society of thy sex. Ah! why did I hurry thee from the peace of thine own dwelling?—why did I link thy destiny to the desperate fortunes of a wandering outlaw? Edith," he cried, "it is not too late to remedy this. Return;—seek the quietude that is the privilege of thy sex;—and find the gladness that is to be found in quietude only.

With a gaze of vacant, indefinable meaning, Edith's eyes had rested on the face of Reginald while he spoke. When he had finished, she murmured, "Ah! it is no dream, then—Well!—Ah me!" She was silent again, but her eyes remained bent upon the face of the speaker with the same gaze of vacant, indefinable meaning. His countenance darkened;—a moment, and a faint smile played amid the gloom. "Then thou wilt not leave me, Edith?" he cried. "Fool that I was, to deem that thou wouldst! There are few hearts like thine,—and ah," he continued, in a subdued tone, "how we tread upon the few that are!" A shade of painful thought crossed his brow. "Thou wouldest not exchange, then," he resumed, "these mountains—this cavern—this deep solitude, for sweet valleys—fair dwellings—and the society of thy sex?"

"No," said Edith, mechanically.

"Nor shalt thou," cried Reginald. "But cheer thee, sweet one. I would have thee sing one of those strains, whose melody in old days used to gladden our hearts."

Edith smiled as the recollections of former times arose; Ah! she was happy then—too happy!—But

now!—the joyous light faded in her eyes, the glad smile died on her lips. She answered not, but sang thus:—

"Thy steed is impatient,—yet, warrior, stay;
Three questions I'd ask," cried a palmer grey:
"Hast thou seen that host on the earth's green plain,
Could rival the pomp of night's starry train?
Are a thousand banners borne on the blast,
Like the forest leaves when the winds rush past?
Or the charge of hosts when the war-word's given,
Like the lightning's rush through the waste of heav'n?

"Stern warrior, thy course is a pageant mean,
On the hills of wind, in the forest green;
And the ocean deep, in its calmest hour,
Has a strength that laughs at thy puny power.
There's a silent might in yon hill-cloud grey,
In the silence that bounds thy noisy way;
The might that is thine is a vain day-dream,
And thyself a bubble on life's broad stream."

As the song died, a low whistle was heard at the mouth of the cavern. Neither Edith nor Reginald betrayed any signs of surprise. The latter expected it, and to the former such signals were familiar. "I have few moments to spare," said Reginald; "yet would I repeat ere I depart, if that thou entertainest a wish to return—and it is natural, Edith, that thou shouldest—to that home which overwrought gratitude excited thee to leave, say so. Much as the loss of thy sweet society would pain me, yet would I endure even that to secure thy happiness." The same vacant gaze of indefinable meaning was Edith's only answer. "Thou hast no wish to depart, then?" continued Reginald, striving to conceal his

disappointment. "Adieu for the present! we will speedily meet again." He kissed her hand respectfully, and departed. The sound of his retiring footsteps died away. All was silent. Edith sunk on the rude seat; she buried her head in the folds of her robes; silent and desolate, long, long she sat; the lamp grew dim, yet she trimmed it not; it died, and she heeded it not; in solitude and darkness, desolate of heart, she sat.

Reginald Seaton!—whose were the eyes that closed not in those long, long night-hours, when thy attendants—faithful though they were—wearied by long watching, slept? Who was it that continually moistened thy cracking and parched lips, while the mysterious fever-fire raged within thee? While thy crazed head rolled on the burning pillow, finding no rest, whose were the trembling hands that prest thy throbbing temples? When reason returned, whose low voice spoke words of comfort to thy soul? And when strength grew, by the melody of whose tones was thy heart made strong? The good within thee answerest. And how hast thou rewarded her? Thou hast placed an arrow in her bosom, and left her in solitude and darkness to madden. My child, poetic dreamers exclaim, Ah! that we could find a truly generous heart! And when they find one, they trample upon it ruthlessly.

Yet four and twenty hours, and in a dimly lighted apartment in that old castle which stands so stately still, where the mountain Strathfar joins the deep-flowing Coryshall, sat, or rather leant on a rude bench, a strong, weather-beaten man, his vigorous form carelessly wrapt in a cloak of unshorn skin. His eyes wandered listlessly along the walls of the apart-

ment, which were ornamented with studded targes, polished shields, with here and there a ponderous broadsword, or heavy battle-axe. He was listening with ill-concealed impatience to one who stood in the centre of the floor, speaking with passionate energy.

"I tell thee that she is the sun of my being. Talk not to me of glory in arms,—of the sweetness of revenge,—of the pomps of power. Though my name pealed through a wasted world—that of the mightiest desolater; though princes, girt by the valiant of their lands, if they entertained hostile thought to me, and breathed it only to their own soul, should fall—crushed, blasted, by a mystical power of mine to know and to curse; though the crowned of the earth walked in my train, and I guided the winds of night in their courses: yet without her my being were as a sunless system;—magnificent it might be,—sublime in its strength; but lightless—enveloped in nether darkness.

"Thou art eloquent, Sir Reginald," said the impatient soldier; "I acknowledge thou art so. A truce, then, I pray thee, with this idle parade of words."

Sir Reginald, who had been pacing the apartment rapidly, paused abruptly. Fixing his eyes on the face of the speaker, he said gravely,—"I speak, Sir Knight, not for the sake of idle display, but to utter solemn truth. Since that day when first I saw her, her image has remained engraven on my memory,—irremovable. She was young then; but, ah, how lovely! Hadst thou seen her then, Brian Seafton, even thou, stern and cold as thou art,—ay, even thou must have loved."

"I must have seen lovely women in my time, Sir

Reginald." said Brian, "and—but my memory is none of the faithfullest—I recollect not raving thus; perchance in my young days to do so was deemed unmanly." A slight sneer curled his lip as he spoke.

"Away with thy taunts, Sir Brian," cried Reginald. "I tell thee that I love her,—that this enterprise *will* be undertaken,—that she *will* be in my power,—and——Pshaw! to the winds with consequences!"

"Thou speakest with confidence, Sir Knight," said Brian; "may I ask upon what excellent authority thy assurance rests?"

"On the will of the fates," said Reginald solemnly, "nightly proclaimed in the great temple of primeval space, by their august ministers, the stars."

"Our monks," cried Brian, "though the meaning of their homelies be somewhat difficult to come at, are loud-toned enough, which is a comfort to plain men; but, by the rood! though their meaning may be good, the voices of your stars are none of the loudest."

"Mock not!" said Reginald. "Silence speaks to Silence. In the stillness of the soul voices are heard; and of a truth, what they utter, shall come to pass. Since *that night*, Brian, my hours have been spent in earnest conference with the eternal silences, and to me"—a glance of wild exultation shot into his eyes—"much of the future has been revealed."

"Pshaw, pshaw!" cried Brian, trying to shake off the awe that was rapidly creeping over his rude nature, "Reginald, this is idle dreaming."

"Sir Knight," cried Reginald, "I tell thee that in those deep midnight hours, when the stars look

down to the soul—intelligences, and the soul looks up to them — love; amid the universal silence, there grows into being an extatic, but all unearthly, wisdom;—then the mysteriously hidden is seen. But it is true that when we look for the things of this life, the mists of sin and sorrow arise around them, and they lie in the immense of events — dim, sometimes indefinable; but by earnestly gazing they grow apparent, and are remembered when that extatic state is past.—Nay, Sir Knight, it is so. But it is not without its fearful price, that blissful vision. Fearful is the state that follows." A shudder shook his strong frame, and an expression of unearthly wildness passed over his features.

"And it has been made known to thee that this enterprise will be successful?" said Sir Brian, with more of earnestness in his tone than he had hitherto displayed.

"Am I sure that at this hour these mountains are wrapt in the darkness of night?" cried Reginald; "as sure as I am of that, Brian Seafton, am I that in every particular our expedition will be successful."

"Thy counsels are usually wise, and thy plans have generally been successful," said Brian, thoughtfully.

"Then why gainsay them in this instance?" exclaimed Reginald.

"I met thee at this hour, Sir Knight," replied Brian, "determined to oppose this adventure; but a mysterious power has withered my opposition. It may be thy wild eloquence that prevails; it may be the fates of whom thou speakest;—I enquire not. Point the course,—I follow."

CHAPTER XIII.

MARION.

Nearly a month had passed since the night when the first alarm of invasion was given. In obedience to the command of the Bruce, the Border warriors had fallen back upon Lochmaben, and there, in and around its grey strong castle, they had entrenched themselves. Impatiently, yet with high confidence, they waited the development of the sage counsel of their sovereign.

Meanwhile, the invading army held on its way. Wild rumour arousing mad fear and high daring before, while behind, on all, as the darkness of night, the blackness of desolation rested.

'Twas grey evening, and the peculiar quietude of that holy tide rested on all visible things,—on the hills, on the vales, on the frequent broad sheets of water. There were no flashing glories, no glittering splendours, at that hour; but everywhere a grey, holy quietude. On a green knoll behind the castle, and far beyond the din of the camp, a party sat. A fair girl leant on the bosom of a stately woman. 'Twas strange to look on these two—the mild, sunny eyes, the soft, expressive face of the one; the flashing, piercing dark eyes, the proud, high countenance of the other—both lovely, yet how dissimilar in their loveliness. Beside them a grey warrior sat, and a noble-looking youth lay at their feet. By the mass!

it was scarcely wise to stray so far beyond the camp, with an enemy before, and bands of lawless men—the progeny of anarchy—hovering around. Nevertheless, every evening since the arrival of the army at Lochmaben, that party had assembled there.

"The proud, honest soul is of the Most High, not of his vicegerent," said Carruthers, solemnly; "and for it the mightiest of those mighty in things of the earth only, can do nothing higher than to let it choose its province, there uninterrupted to toil. It is not," he continued, "in the observance of rules as wise, or of precepts as sacred, that nobleness manifests itself.—No! but in *feeling* that holy things *are* holy, and, feeling them to be so, in maintaining them inviolable. This nobleness may manifest itself in the vassal as in the chief, in the daughter of the one as in the daughter of the other."

"Ah, chief!" said Catharine, "you flatter our poor sex by supposing that under any circumstances this nobleness can form a portion of our character."

"No lady!" said Carruthers; "I know one instance where the daughter of a low-born man endured many woes and murmured not. But——Ah, Marion! thine was an all too melancholy fate.'

"The quiet of evening accords well with a sad tale," said Catharine. "I pray thee, chief, narrate her story."

"Thou wilt relate it, father," said Isabell, raising her head from the bosom of Catharine.

"The chief cannot refuse our joint request," said Irving.

"Backed by mine," said Douglas, who had approached unobserved, seating himself by the side of Catharine. "Your story, chief of the Carrutherses,—this fair audience waits."

Thus admonished, the old warrior began :—

"I was a child when the events which I am about to narrate occurred, and my faithful Carrutherses then owned my brave father's authority; but from his lips have I heard Marion's tale, when the noble old man wept over her many sorrows,—mourning that he had been made the instrument of inflicting one, and grieving, that though he afforded her protection in her desolate days, yet had he not yielded her that consolation which was due to her tender but valiant spirit. 'For the chief,' he would say, 'is not the lord to rule only, but, holier far, the father to comfort also.'

"Our house never had a braver retainer than Walter of the Longsword. He stood high in the favour of his chief. They had shared the perils of many fields, and exulted in many victories. It is trials and triumphs, faithfully shared, that bind noble souls to noble souls—bind them, without regard to condition. The soul of the chief and his grey retainer were bound thus. The dwelling of Walter stood on the shores of the Solway, whose waves, when the tempest maddened them, lashed its walls. It was a rough neighbour, but the old soldier loved it well. Its sparkling waters sparkled in his day-dreams of sunny childhood; and ever on quiet evenings, when he stood by its side, he felt—how deceptive such presentiments are!—that its song would be the last sound from outward nature that would fall upon his ear. Woe! woe! to a land when its sons cease to love its deep seas, and to worship, though dwelling in far lands, its everlasting hills. Walter had three children once; but two of them slept—they went to rest 'mid the thunders of fierce conflict, and the tu-

mult of mad life rolling over them disturbed them not. His youngest—his Marion—was left, and the affections that could not die,—the affections of the truly good cannot die,—grew around her. She was, at the time of which I speak, about eighteen; and although she was no beauty, there was in her calm, mild face something that the gazer loved to dwell upon; and although he thought calmly, he thought often of the mild girl, for ever quiet, holy things suggested memories of her.

"'Twas a winter evening. Under a sky of solid darkness, the vexed ocean moaned and heaved; and the winds fitfully howled, as if they were prisoned in its deep caves. Anon, red lightning cleft the solid darkness, and the winds were set free, and the waves leapt into the air, shaking their white heads, and night was a wild anarchy. Walter and his daughter sat by the hearth of their humble home, pitying those whose life-battle must be fought on the waste of waters,—when, hark! pealing above the wrathful voices of the storm, one of those wild, agonised shrieks, which, once heard, are never forgotten, smote their ears. A moment, and Walter stood upon the beach. All was dark—dark!—but ever and ever came that wild yell,—now dying away 'mid the blended voices of the tempest; now rising, fearfully audible, over all. From the bosom of the dead darkness the red lightning rushed down. For an instant the face of the troubled waters were illuminated. There—there, not two cable-lengths from the shore, a doomed vessel sails by;—her masts bare, and her deck crowded with faces, ghastly in hat awful light. In the omnipotent darkness the vessel—the sea—is invisible again. A moment—a

crash, one fearful, simultaneous yell,—the vessel is in pieces! Under that supernatural blackness a fearful warfare is waging!—thirty human beings are struggling there, and the commissioned destroyers are exulting. Walter knelt on the beach and gazed beneath the darkness into the bosom of the deep. There—there—receding from the shore, a livid face floats above the water. Not a moment for idle thought;—the soldier is amid the waves, struggling, buffeting, and—conquering! He is on the shore again, bearing an apparently lifeless youth. Would he save his life, there is no time to be lost;—but shall he abandon the hope of saving others? He raised the inanimate form in his arms, flew to the cottage, and, committing his prize to the care of Marion, whom he had with difficulty prevented from accompanying him at first, he hurried to the beach again. He watched all night; but the ocean kept its treasures well.

"For many days, with unwearied care, Walter and his child watched over their ocean charge.—Slowly his strength returned; again he was able to gaze upon the sun and the sea, and to rejoice in the prospect of life. He offered no information concerning his name and history, and no questions were asked. His age might be about five and twenty; he was slightly and gracefully formed; his hair was jet black; and his face, to the casual observer, was beautiful indeed;—but there was a latent expression there, which in moments of excitement looked out. As to the mariner the faint ripple which shows the sunken rock, so was that expression to those who could see.

"In three weeks he was perfectly recovered. After

many expressions of fervent gratitude to the father and child, he departed, but in a few days he returned again. Then he frankly confessed himself to be Henry de Harris, brother of the chief of a sept bitterly hostile to the Carrutherses; but he told a sad tale of wrong and suffering, and besought Walter, as the preserver of his life upon a former occasion, to afford him shelter then. What could the brave warrior do? To have denied that under such circumstances, even to a foe, would have been churlish indeed. The youth remained a guest in the hospitable dwelling of Walter, and his image became a guest in the tender heart of Marion. That heart was simple, but it was holy and pure; it had listened to few homilies, and knew no sage sayings, but the voices within, night and day, talked of the invisible heaven, and the spirit of evil found no audience. Knowledge!—bah! That unloosing of the furies, that after fearful conflicts we may bind them up again. In the fervent, ever-eloquent language of real passion, the youth breathed his fond wish. Marion frankly confessed her love, but referred him to her father.

"'Guest of mine,' said Walter sternly, when the youth had ended his passionate solicitation for permission to make Marion his bride, 'against the weary, the wounded, or the oppressed of the family of mankind, my door is never shut. My duty as a man requires that; but my duty as a vassal forbids that I should enter into any alliance with the foes of my chief; and my feelings as a soldier,' cried he, indignantly, 'lead me to spurn the wretch who could avail himself of the opportunities afforded by the hospitality of the father, to steal the affections of

the child. My daughter is free to choose between her duty and her inclination;—but I am not free to shelter a villain under that roof where my honoured father broke his daily bread. Prepare to depart; in an hour you shall hear from my child.'

"In an hour the lovers had an interview—*their last.* 'I love,' cried the gentle girl, 'but my father opposes our union; to disobey him is impossible. Go, win fair fame; perhaps then he will relent.—Nay, speak not; the will of my father is mine.' That evening the youth departed.

"Ah, what agonies arose in Marion's heart in those days! The dream of the Possible which she had so long indulged had vanished, and a cold, perfect appreciation of the Unattainable was all that was left her now. The tones of a low, melodious voice rung in her ears; at times snatches of nearly-forgotten melodies seemed to sing themselves in her heart; and ever lofty sentiments hung upon her lips:—then came the chilling knowledge that these things were of the past; yet no murmur escaped from her. Her voice was cheerful as of old; *his* name was never breathed; and the warrior dreamt, in the simplicity of his heart, that the wanderer was forgotten.

"A month passed away. Walter, in obedience to a summons from the chief, had gone to Holmains, and Marion anxiously waited for his return. It was already two hours beyond the period he had fixed; and when before had he disappointed her? Another hour passed, yet he came not; and a dim presentiment of coming evil grew around her heart. Time passed on. The shadows of evening descended, and he was absent still. She went out to the small knoll

behind the cottage, to try if, amid the ever-deepening gloom, she could discern his approaching form. A moment she gazed; an exclamation of joy burst from her lips;—there he comes; she rushed forward to meet him. Ah me! it was only Wanop, another retainer. Who can conceive the horror of the noble girl when she heard that her father was a prisoner in the dungeon of Holmains, on the charge—of all charges the blackest—of treason to his chief? Wanop told that a suspicious-looking stranger had that morning been arrested near Holmains, who, on his safety being promised, had confessed that a raid was meditated by the De Lacys, and that Walter of the Longsword had agreed, for a certain sum of gold, to place the keep of Holmains in their power. Wanop told, too, that the person stated he was on his way, at the time he was arrested, to treat with Walter as to the time, and other circumstances, of the intended inroad.

"Wildly hurrying forward, all regardless of impediments, Marion paused not until she reached Holmains. She sought and obtained an audience of the chief. With all the indignation of a noble soul, she denied the foul charge against her father; with all the eloquence of affection, she besought his release: but the chief was inflexible. The doom of the prisoner, so far as man had power to will, was sealed. The treason of his best beloved retainer had, for the time, overthrown the old man's faith in the nobleness of human nature; and in such hours pity finds no place in the soul. Then she sought permission to share her father's dungeon;—looking on the agonised supplicant, the chief could not deny that.

"Passionately affectionate was the embrace of the

father and the child in that hour, and their converse was of higher things than the deeds of men. The cause that had brought them there was never mentioned. It would have humbled the father's proud soul had he deemed his daughter believed him guilty; and Marion—no thought of dishonour in her father could enter her heart.

" Hours passed on. It is still midnight now, and deep silence, broken only by the low voices of the prisoner and his child, reigns,—when, hark! that fierce shout!—'By the mass!' cried the prisoner, 'that was the war-shout of the De Lacys.' An instant, and it was answered from within, by a single voice first—the voice of the chief, then by another, and another, as the domestics, aroused from their quiet slumbers, gave forth instinctively the battle-word of their clan. 'Holy Mary!' groaned Walter, 'feeble will be the defence of the assailed.' Now in the outer court swell the shouts of the foe; they batter the iron doors of the keep; the tower shakes to its foundation; shout on shout, full of the pride of victory, bursts from the assailants, and ever a shower of missiles from the walls is their only answer. 'Oh that I stood by my chief at this hour!' groaned Walter in agony, tossing his fettered hands aloft. The door of the dungeon was thrown open. The retainer to whose charge Walter had been consigned stood before them. 'Thou art no traitor, Longsword,' he said. 'They may bring what charge they choose against thee, I will not believe them. Thou art at liberty,' he said, unloosing his prisoner's fetters; 'there is a sword;—the foe is at the gate.'

" With a shout of wild exultation Walter dashed from the dungeon; he reached the hall as the iron

bars yielded to the force of the foe. 'Defend the stair!' shouted the chief.

"'Follow me!' cried Walter; and dashed through the now open door; the retainers followed. Surprised by this fierce sally, the De Lacys give way; the court is cleared; the foes rally—when, clear and high, a shout rose from the valley below;—a hind had observed the secret movements of the enemy; he had spread the alarm; the clan mustered in force; and now, on they come. The De Lacys were scattered; the rescue of the Carrutherses was complete. And Walter,—his brave liberator had been smitten down at his side,—had no tie now to bind him to a dungeon and disgrace; he foresaw, too, that the attack of the De Lacys would strengthen the opinion of his guilt. In the deep darkness who of his clan was to recognise him as their champion? He sought his child,—crossed the court rapidly,—and passed through the still open gate; then he paused;—gazed wistfully upon the dark tower;—threw his sword into the court-yard;—and fled.

"At this time the imbecile Henry of England, unable to wield a sceptre, but unwilling to relinquish a throne, sought, by mercenary aid, to deluge the land he could not rule in the blood of its children. He had purchased the swords of several of the Welsh barons; and of the Scottish chiefs, the Comyn, with the Lords of Galloway and Annandale, owned the power of gold. The war banner of the Bruce—the grandsire of our glorious sovereign—waved on the turret of his ancestral castle; in whose broad halls veterans of every clan found fair welcome. At sunrise Walter and his child stood before its gate, and at noon he marched in that gallant array of

Border strength, which went forth then, with loud merry shouts, and proud martial songs, on its journey to a *foreign grave;* and Marion—the gentle Marion—mixed with the followers of a camp. All the glad April month, through the fair fields of England, that doomed host moved on. Now, the rich beauties of summer around them—the red spirit of war within them—and the dark banner of death waving over them, onward they move. The fatal field is reached; under the castle of Lewes, they join the forces of Henry. The powers of the nobles are full in view. Peace—peace—for one night; on the morrow red battle, and the jubilee of death!

"'Twas evening again. Red and angry the sun stood on the edge of the horizon; dark clouds, like massive drapery, hung around the sky; and on the plain dead men lay, with their ghastly faces turned up to heaven. By a heap of the slain a maiden sat, and a warrior, from whose side the tide of life gushed, rested on her bosom. 'I saw *him*, Marion,' murmured the wounded soldier.

"'Who?' said the gentle girl, a blush suffusing her cheek.

"'HIM,' said the soldier.

"'Where?' exclaimed Marion involuntarily.

"'With brave men, in the front of battle he fell.' Marion's cheek grew deadly pale, but she spoke not. 'Ah! he was a brave youth,' continued the wounded soldier; 'and but that thou hast forgotten him so long, I would say he was worthy of thy love.—But he was of the foes of my chief,' murmured the wounded soldier, his brow darkening.—'My chief—ah! I shall never see him again. Marion, tell him in death his old retainer loved him;—tell him that

the old soldier blessed him with his latest breath. Marion, my child—Marion——" His head gently sinking on the bosom of his daughter, Walter of the Longsword slept in death.

"After many weeks, Marion dwelt in the cottage on the shores of the Solway again. Warm was her welcome from all who bore her name; intense was the sorrow of the chief when he heard of the devotion and death of her father,—for on the night of the unsuccessful attack of the De Lacys upon the castle of Holmains, the wretch whose tale had led to the arrest of Walter, in attempting to escape, was cut down; after lingering for many days in the agony of death, he confessed himself employed by some person whose name he knew not, but whose means to pay were ample as his will, to effect the ruin of the brave retainer. After this, every effort had been made to discover the retreat of Walter; but, alas! ere his innocence was discovered, he was away, on that death-march, far 'mid the valleys of England. Marion, at the earnest request of the chief, removed to the castle of Holmains, and there, through these autumn and winter months, she remained.

"In the spring, Percy of Northumberland, with an array that rendered all resistance vain, suddenly appeared before the castle of Holmains. One hour, the castle stood fair to behold,—the next, it was razed to the ground; one hour, the chief and his retainers were free, laughing round a hospitable board,—the next, they were captives, following in the train of conquerors. So cautious, yet decisive, were the movements of the enemy; with such certainty they threaded the secret paths of the morass; so

accurately they knew the numbers of every clan, and the strength of every castle; that the chief of the Carruthers and his fellow-captives—and as castle after castle fell into the hands of the enemy, these were numerous—could not doubt but that some foul traitor enlightened their councils and directed their movements At length the forces of Douglas took the field, and the invaders retired, laden with booty, and carrying with them an army of prisoners.

"Now in fair Alnwick's princely halls the Percy sat. Around him stood those warriors whose prowess, guided by his sage counsel and romantic daring, had made his name terrible. On the fine, bronze countenance of the Northern conqueror, there sat an expression of stern pride—the light of inward exultation faintly bursting through. A grey-haired veteran was addressing him. 'True, Rodman,' cried Percy, his countenance darkening. 'Let the renegade have his pay.' The veteran addressed an attendant. A few moments, and a door at the end of the hall opened, and, accompanied by two attendants, Marion entered. Percy regarded her mournfully for a few minutes; his countenance gradually reddened with anger. 'By the rood, warriors!' he exclaimed, 'it were a foul deed to bestow aught so holy upon a traitor.—But, alas!' he continued, checking himself, 'the knave holds our promise. Too well for the country which, in an evil hour, gave him birth, has he fulfilled his stipulated part, and we must, however much it irks us, perform ours. Maiden,' he said, addressing Marion, 'it grieves me to say that thy hand must be the reward of treason. 'Fore George! but that the word of a Percy is pledged, I—I—' he struggled to suppress his rising

indignation. 'Let the traitor appear,' he thundered. There was a slight bustle amid the warriors at the end of the hall. Marion, who had listened in bewilderment to the indignant words of Percy, involuntarily turned—when, O heaven! what a sight met her eyes! There, there—pale, haggard, as if he had risen from the grave to which she believed him consigned —stood the object of her first and only love—the idol of her secret worship through weeks and months of sorrow,—Henry de Harris.

"There are fearful moments, my child, in which, to the terrified soul, the hidden, in all its horrible nakedness, becomes suddenly visible,—glaring in upon it. To Marion, the mysterious ruin of her father, and the equally mysterious march of the foes, was no mystery now.—No, no. She had loved, and felt her love hopeless; she had known her father disgraced — imprisoned — a fugitive — wounded — dead; she had suffered disappointment—wanderings —loneliness—captivity; and murmured not;—but to feel the holiest of the holy to her, desecrated,—ah, it was too much! She could not endure that. With one convulsive shriek, her proud heart broke; she sunk on the floor — lifeless. A dozen warriors spring forward. 'She is dead!' gasped Rodman, gently raising her. 'By 'Fore George I am glad of it.' cried Percy, springing to his feet. 'Traitor!' he shouted, turning to Henry, his large eyes blazing, 'there, there,' pointing to the lifeless body, 'thou hast thy reward. Our pledge is redeemed. Now, by the cross! and by the word of a Percy! thou shalt have justice. Ho! to the block with him! Let his execution be instant.' The guards drag De Harris from the hall. The folding-doors close-

'So he thought,' said Percy, sighing as one relieved of a heavy burthen, 'to make our father's hall a sanctuary for traitors.' An hour, and Henry de Harris, who had escaped honourable death in battle, fell by the axe of the common executioner."

At this moment a squire approached the Douglas. "Mysterious strangers have been observed in the passes of the hills," he said, in tones intended only for the ear of the chief.

"Bid the Maxwell advance and question them Doubtlessly deserters from the camp of the invaders," said Douglas. "Marry!" he cried, addressing Carruthers, "thy tale has detained us into night. These fair maidens, methinks, will scarcely favour the growing gloom.—Hist! was not that the tramp of steeds? Ho, here they come! By St Bryde! we are foully surprised." Scarcely had he spoken, when, crashing through the darkness as the thunder through the night-sky, and nearly as invisible too, the foe came down. "Irving,—Carruthers,—fly!" shouted Douglas; "bear away your sacred charges—bear them away, warriors! A Douglas! a Douglas!" and the gallant soldier raised that terrible war-cry proud and clear, as if a host were at his back. But there is no time for flight. The foes encompass them round; quick, fierce blows are exchanged.—Ha! the enemy gives way;—they fly. Quick as was the attack, is the retreat now. Hark! wild and high a shriek burst on the night-gale,—another,—and another. "Catharine! Catharine!" cried Isabel, rushing forward; the fair girl fell at the feet of Irving. Through night came a loud exulting shout of triumph; then a wild shriek; then the tramp of many steeds rushing impetuously along;

then all was silent, as if the stillness of night had never been broken.

"By the sceptre of the Bruce! that was a strange attack," said Douglas, drawing his hand across his brow.

"My sister! my sister!" shouted Irving. "Catharine! Catharine!" All was silent. "Isabel," he cried, rushing to the trembling girl, who now leant on the arm of her father, "Isabel, where is my sister?" Vain question! Through the gloom and growing tempest, the reward of a daring adventure, Catharine was being hurried along. Ah! where in that tide was the mysterious minstrel? Why was his harp silent then?

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CAPTIVE.

There is a charm in sad things, my child; for ever, even in our merriest hours, we recall them. We look in memory back upon the joyous of the past, and lo! a divine sadness rests upon it. Sadness is the essence of all-enduring thought; the element of the lofty and the holy is serene sadness.

To the mountain land must we turn again;—to the hollow bosom of the rock. In secret and mean places, mighty events in the history of men and nations have had birth. There, by the rude stone table as beforetime, Edith sat,—the dim light of the lamp falling on her pale face—paler now than heretofore; and, as before, with sad song she was essaying to chase away the laggard hours. My child, life is a span; but there are epochs in it which stretch, as it were, into eternities. To those who wait, or watch, or suffer, who shall mete out an hour? To spirit, a moment—itself a mysterious spirit—may expand into centuries;—each holding in its bosom the fiery tortures of illimitable time.

Since the night on which Reginald Seaton departed to meet Brian de Sefton in that grey castle by the deep-flowing Coryshall, long, long days—long, long nights had passed. Anxiously had she awaited his return, and oftentimes had her anxiety grown into agony, and she had endured that, until agony in the intensity of its own existence, had died—anon

to spring into wilder life; yet he came not. But he will come,—her anxiety, and watching, and suffering to reward. Ah! what time has the true, deep, earnest-hearted met with that? Hush! steeds are approaching. She started to her feet, but she moved not; she stood as if spell-bound. "Ho there! a light," shouted one from the entrance of the cave, whose voice she easily recognised as that of Brian de Sefton; still she moved not. Footsteps approach. "Unhand me, ruffians," said a soft, feminine, but firm and commanding voice. Edith uttered a half-stifled scream, glided past the approaching figures, hurried from the cavern, and was soon deep in the bosom of night.

Yet twelve hours, and in one of the largest of those apartments scooped out of the rock, beyond the broad bounds of the cavern, a maiden sat. There was an easy dignity in her whole manner; a calm decision on her noble brow; but there was that in her large dark eyes which betrayed inquietude—a spirit, despite powerful control, ill at ease. And how could she be other than ill at ease—a captive, unknowing who were her captors? She had remained in that apartment, in utter darkness, some hours after her arrival at the cave; then an old crone came, and, save her, she had seen no one. In vain Catharine—for it was she—questioned the old woman; she moved about, silent as the dead, deigning neither question nor reply. Catharine heard voices outside; a few minutes, and her strange attendant entered. She spoke for the first time. "Lady," she said, in hoarse, croaking, but submissive tones, "Sir Reginald Seaton craves an audience."

"Who may he be?" demanded Catharine.

"He craves an audience, lady," said the attendant,

"Admit him," said Catharine. A few minutes, and a visored warrior entered. He bowed low and respectfully. "Lady," he said, "it grieves me that one so fair should be a constrained guest in my humble dwelling."

"Sir Knight," cried Catharine,—"for so thy minion terms thee, though in sooth thy deed brings shame upon knighthood,—tell me, I pray thee, in thy courtesy, whose prisoner I am?"

"Mine, lady," said the knight, raising his visor. Catharine uttered a wild shriek. She stood in the presence, not of Reginald Seaton, but of Esecal de Esecal, Knight of Burdock. "Mine," reiterated he sternly. "Lady," he continued, "I was rejected, contemned, by thee; but there are powers against whom the will of a mortal may not prevail. The destinies, lady, may not be thwarted. From of old it was written on the brow of one fair star that thou shouldest be mine; and there, lady, in the deep midnight hour, I read the unfailing words. For long, long years ere I read the will of the fates there, I had loved thee,—oh, how wildly! Amid ever baffled efforts, at times I doubted of attaining thee. But in a blessed hour, when wounds and agony of spirit had preyed long upon me, and the ties of mortality were loosened from the soul, I read, and doubted not again." The knight paused. Catharine was silent. Sir Esecal resumed. "Lady, let the memory of the past die; let the uncontrollable ardour of immeasurable, undying love—love which few may excite, and which fewer still are capable of feeling—pass for meet excuse where I have overstepped the limits of worldly rule. For oh lady——"

"Sir Knight," said Catharine, with ca'm dignity,

"not here, nor as a captive, may a Scottish maiden, the sister of a powerful chief, hear or answer love suits."

"Lady," replied Sir Esecal, "in these rude apartments, for many months, one young and lovely as thou art, dwelt;—a passionate and enthusiastic maiden, lady, with a most lofty and holy nature, but all unrestrained by those cultivated feelings which keep daughters of the earth on that beaten track fashioned by cold hearts, and consecrated by custom. And thou art no captive; thou, destined in old times to be my soul's mate, art——"

"Miserable dreamer!" cried Catharine. "The success of a well-devised, but unknightly enterprize has unsettled thy reason. Hast thou no dread of the vengeance of the Douglas—of the prowess of the Irving—of the might, the daring, the terrible energy of—of—" Her voice slightly faltered.

"Ranolph," cried Esecal derisively. "Ha, ha! lady, rest not the rejection of my proffered love upon the might of earthly powers: against the higher power of which I have spoken it would dash impotent as the night-wind against the rock in whose heart we stand. But did I list to measure the might of mortal power against those of whom thou speakest, fearlessly might I do so. And by the cross! now that I bethink me, thou shalt be thine own judge of that power. To-night, in a castle distant some miles, my followers meet. Thou shalt grace our banquet. Thou shalt go well attended. Thou art surrounded by rude men, lady; but one who loves thee all too well will watch over thee. For the present, adieu!" and bowing courteously, the knight retired from the apartment.

CHAPTER XV.

THE CAVE.

Scooped from the solid rock, by some hand centuries ago mouldered into dry rotten dust, and scattered to the winds of heaven, in a cliff rising sheer from the bed of the Kirtle, is a spacious cave. Grey and strong is that cave; but no record telleth of him who carved out its hollow bounds, nor of the purpose for which he scooped it out. Ah, my child! Oblivion, voiceless offspring of death and time, of the least evanescent of the works of man, fashioneth a strange empire of its own.

He who would speak in any measure comprehensively of the life-struggle of a man, must not be bound by place or time. While in the south this event is being enacted by him of whom he speaks, lo! in the far north, the parent of the next has sprung into life. From every quarter, as to a centre, mysterious influences are raying in upon him, and to write truthfully of him, is to discern and describe these. Therefore, child of mine, follow me to that cave, in that rock which rises sheer from the bed of the Kirtle.

'Tis night, — cloudless, star-lit, moon-illumined night;—holy! most holy! Gazing up into that blue, immeasurable waste of ether, and into the placid countenances of these most holy and calmly silent stars, and upon the brow of that serene moon, who

could believe that in the universe of which they are a part, unhallowed Ambition could vaunt itself, and its twin, giant Crime, find space wherein to exist. Alas, my child! for the vaunted greatness of human nature. That which from the beginning had no will, being directed by laws which it could not disobey, is an order, a harmony, a most royal spectacle still; while that, the peerless, the priceless, free from the first, disobeyed one law involving all, and is a wreck, a chaos, a fearful battle-ground of conflicting passions.

The cave was not untenanted at that hour;—ah! far better that it had! Within its bounds, in the frailest prison of flesh, a soul was enduring terrible torture. Mysterious it is how the immaterial acts upon the immaterial! Three days since, at early morn, a woman bowed down by age and misery, came there. How that feeble being, bowed down by age and grief, reached the entrance of that cave in that sheer rock, must ever remain a mystery. But strange feats have been performed by madness, and sleep, and misery. By Mary! it was fearful to look upon her,—her shrivelled countenance distorted by strong inward emotion; her grey hair falling loose and disordered; and her large, blood-shot eyes, with that hideous expression; her hand now convulsively clasped, now tossed high in th air;—ah! she was a fearful spectacle. Exhausted she has sunk from her rude seat. The cold stone i her bed now; but even that burns as a bed of living fire. No rest—none! To this side, to that, she tosses. Rest, rest, rest,—none, none, none; guilt, guilt, guilt,—misery, misery, misery. Oh, child of mine! such is the everlasting law.

Hush! a step is approaching; the deep, awful silence is broken; the tortured is still now. Has the accusing angel fled on the approach of a mortal? But who is it that is abroad at this hour? High should their hest be, and holy their thoughts, who are abroad with the silences in eternal night. For lo! the holy spirits which day, with its glare and unhallowed bustle, drive from earth, are returning again; and the future and the destinies are conversing. By the rood! it is the mysterious minstrel, enveloped as of old in his grey cloak, and bearing with a light step for one so old, his heavy harp. He pauses. Are his steps arrested by the hallowed grandeur of that scene:—that interminable forest of moonlit trees; that quiet river, fitfully sparkling; these grey rocks, dimly visible; and, resting upon all, an overpowering idea of the immense?—No! Cautiously he gazes around; from beneath that grey cloak he produces a coil of strong rope; he doubles it carefully round the trunk of a giant pine; now he casts both ends over the edge of the rock; another careful gaze around,—then grasping the folds of the rope, he descends down—down; his feet touch the threshhold of the cave; he is on its solid floor, amid its grim darkness now. Unconscious of the presence of his fearful companion, he seated himself upon one of the rude blocks of stone that served for seats, leant his back against the wall, drew his cloak closely round his body, and after a low prayer for protection through the watches of the night, resigned himself to sleep. Gently the soft spirit of rest descended;—the present faded; the broken shadows of the past, ever the last to disappear, were passing away,—when, hark! clear and high, and uttered in

tones instinct with preternatural energy, his own name came upon his ear. He sprung to his feet; —all was silent. Avas involuntarily rose to his lips; his fingers mechanically signed the cross. A few seconds and again, but low and feeble, that name sounded. Springing forward, he snatched the fragment of an extinguished pine-torch from the wall, applying flint and steel, sudden and high a red glare arose, illumining the cave. The light fell full on the pallid face of the dying woman—for dying she evidently was. An exclamation of half-joyful surprise burst from the lips of the minstrel. "Elspeth!" he cried.

"Silence!" shouted she with fearful energy, half raising herself as she spoke. "See, the glass is nearly run! and there is much to reveal,—much; dark, black, horrible. But it must be told—it must. Kneel, kneel!—let not the spirits of night hear. Kneel—it is too terrible." The minstrel knelt by her side. In a low, deep whisper the old woman spoke;—long and earnestly she spoke. Suddenly springing to his feet, a shout of uncontrollable exultation burst from the bosom of the minstrel. Elspeth groaned heavily. Recalled to himself, the minstrel knelt again. A few moments, and once more he sprung to his feet. Mary! how his eyes blazed! Rage, hate, revenge,—each had its fearful sign graven on his noble countenance. "Fiend!" he shouted; "say where?" No answer was given. "Where, where?" cried he yet more fiercely. But, save by his own voice, the silence was unbroken. "Speak!" he cried, "accursed wretch! or——" The threat died upon his lips. One fierce glance told him too well why his question was not answered.

The Peace of Death had descended upon the tortured one. With what quickly-varying feelings the minstrel continued to gaze upon the dead. A few moments, and he cast himself upon the rude seat, and there, in that grim cave, illumed with that red light, the unbroken silence of night around him, and the fearful silence of death before him, he sternly communed with his own soul.

Darkness and solitude, ye are terrible to the guilty soul! The hour is yours. Lo! in undreamt-of hideousness the deeds of other years come forth. Save by a fearful instinct, the soul recognises not in their altered lineaments the laughing fiends, who, under the shadows of pleasure or profit, or in the whirlwind of impetuous passion, seemed hurrying down to oblivion and forgetfulness. But in the hour, oh darkness and solitude! when ye rule the world in your immeasurable vastness, in your terrible desolateness, all the treasured vanities of earth vanish, and the everlasting stands before the everlasting, in the fierce hideousness of their own unchangeable attributes; and the evil from of old glares in upon the once good, and still partly so, and behold, the undivided is the strong, and triumphs. And the damned on their burning shores laugh, beholding on the sea of time another fragment of the primeval wreck. But, oh darkness and solitude! no terrors have ye to the brave, holy soul!—to that minstrel ye had no terrors.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE GUIDE.

There is a strength in all material things, by whomsoever fashioned. In the palace, the work of poor, proud man; in the everlasting hills, the work of the Mightiest—the Highest. At times, gazing upon that, the soul rises exultingly,—laughing in the might of its diviner strength: but there are times, too, when even the greatest soul quails before material things—shrinks upon itself, and, in the presence of the vaunting palace, or when looked down upon by the piled-up hills, feels these only to be great, and all spiritual greatness a dream.

Even thus felt he of the grey cloak and heavy harp, as, 'neath the shadows of the stern Northland mountains, seven days from the period of which we last spoke, he hurried on. The sun glared down; the mountain rivulets shrunk from his fiery gaze; and pale weariness sat by the wayside, wiping his dusty brow:—still onward the minstrel went. Hills rose up;—their grandeur arrested not his steps; valleys stretched far—broad, sunlit, beautiful;—he heeded them not: rivers leapt across his course, laughing in the glad light, they rushed by the way-side, wooing his gaze;—in vain. Onward, still onward! 'Twas evening. Serenely, yet with a glory as of a triumph, the sun retired from the busy world. Stately and slow, over the edge of the lofty hills it

went; and from the distant east, the timid shadows stole forth; and in the glory of departing day they grew dimly bright, as the sad of soul, when the mirth of childhood for a brief moment recalls gladness to their heart. Onward, still onward, the minstrel went. His high purpose, silent and strong, dwelling distinct in the inner recesses of his soul; the means of attaining it, with the yet rude materials of the future, on which earnestly gazing, trying to discern them, the while all unconscious of outward things, onward, still onward, he went. Suddenly he was aware of a strain of sad music. Starting from his long reverie, he discerned the form of a young maiden: far up the hill, on the projecting point of a rock, she sat, and the glories of day and the gloom of night gathered around her; and her long hair, and her white robes, floated on the light breeze. The minstrel approached. She observed him not, but continued in a low, plaintive voice to sing:

Long years in the greenwood a minstrel sung,
And still by his side was a maiden young;
In his loftiest hour full proud was he
That a maid so lovely his bride would be.

But the question rose in his heart of pride—
Could a lowly maid be a minstrel's bride?
Then his songs were given in measure free,
To the charms of maidens of high degree;
In time he went from his woodland bower,
And he dwelt in hall and in feudal tower.

But the forest maid in the greenwood still
Sang of the beauty of tree and of rill;
But her strains lack their olden power to move
The spirit that breathes of a living love;

Then the greenwood deeps they were silent all,
And song arose not at evening's fall;
For the maid had gone where song sounds higher
Than the highest note of earth's mightiest lyre.

And the forest minstrel, at lady's call,
Sang in feudal tower and in lordly hall;
And unmeaning smiles from a heartless throng
Was the tinsel meed of eternal song;
And the minstrel thought in his proudest hour
Of the forest maid and the greenwood bower.

Then his soul grew sad, and he hied away
From the hall of state and the castle gay,
And sought, as the evening's shadows fell,
The haunts of his youth, in the forest dell.
But the merry echoes were silent all,
For no song arose at the evening's fall;
And he sought in vain in the wonted shade
For the spirit of song,—the greenwood maid.
Then he broke the strings of his harp in twain,
And their magic numbers ne'er rose again;
But in half a moon, oh! full well slept he,
With the forest maid 'neath the greenwood tree.

"Fair maiden," said the minstrel, "methinks the spirits of song might envy thy power over sweet sounds. Deign to inform a member of the joyous craft who framed that touching strain."

"*He* framed it," said the fair songstress, turning quick upon the speaker, but betraying no signs of surprise or fear, "long. long ago. It is a sad song, minstrel; but it was framed in glad hours, and our hearts grew happy while our voices joined in it. *He* thought not of *her* then—no, no. Ah! there were merry days then. Hast seen *her*, minstrel? Ye of the joyous craft, wandering from castle to

castle, see many a high-born beauty.—Hast seen *her?*" The maiden fixed her dark, swimming eyes upon the minstrel, and paused as if waiting for an answer.

"Maiden," said the minstrel, in tones of touching tenderness,—for he saw that her reason was shaken, and his noble heart bled beholding one so young and lovely a wreck,—"his skill must have been great in the mystery of song. 'Tis passing strange that in my wanderings I have not heard of the Bard. I pray thee, how do they name this son of the harp?" The maiden cast a quick, suspicious glance upon her interrogator, and without reply sung:

Oh! the loveliest flower of the lowland dale
Blooms sweet on a Nor'land hill;
But there's woe and wail in the lowland vale,
And grief by a lowland rill.

"*She* must be passing lovely," said the minstrel, with deep interest in his tones.

"I never saw her, stranger. *He* brought her to our home; I had waited for *him* long—long; but I could not look upon *her*,—no, no; so I stole away; he missed me not. Ah! it was not so once;" the large tears swam in her eyes; "it was not so; but no matter,—

"For the grave it is lonely, and silent, and deep,
And no phantasies trouble the night of its sleep:
There the silence that circled the soul ere its birth,
Is unmarred by the pains and the passions of earth.

Is it not so, minstrel?" she cried, pausing abruptly.

"'Tis even so," said the minstrel. "But she of whom thou hast spoken,—say, was her hair of the

deepest black,—her eyes large and piercing,—her form full and noble,—and——" The maiden turned a glance of wild intelligence upon the minstrel, as with fiery animation he proceeded with his description.

"So thy lady-love has fled, sage harper?" she cried, interrupting him. "Ha, ha!" and the maiden of the rock laughed loud and scornfully. "She loved stern hills and sterner deeds better than gay halls and soft songs. Ha, ha!" and she laughed till the echoes rung again.

"By the rood, maiden!" cried the minstrel, "there was nothing in my questions to justify thy suspicions;—and now that I bethink me, they were right foolish—thou hast never seen her."

"He is sad and care-worn," murmured the fair girl, as if communing with herself; "he has been wronged; ah me!" She gazed wistfully into the face of the minstrel, all the while murmuring, "Wronged—ah me! Couldst thou look upon her now, stranger?" she cried, abruptly. "Would thy heart not break? I could not look upon *him!* I have thought I would like to do so; but I fear that my poor senses"—and she pressed her hand on her brow, and looked up wistfully—"would not endure it. It is a sad thing madness, minstrel." A feeble, ghastly smile played upon her lips as she sang:—

"Poor Pheby has wandered many a day,
By rock and river lone;
She has many a song both sad and gay,
But word she speaks to none."

"Gentle maiden," cried the minstrel, "if it is she

of whom I wot, right glad would I be to look upon her again."

"Thou shalt, then," cried she with wild energy; "follow me!" and descending from the rock, in the strength of her new purpose she moved rapidly along. The minstrel followed. Through deep dells, over steep hills, along a wild tract of desolate heath, down the banks of a noble river, then hills and heaths again, onward, still onward they went. Night gathered around them with its many shadows, still the maiden showed no signs of weariness. Ever and anon she murmured, "Wronged too—ah me!" and ever she seemed to gather new strength from the thought. They follow the course of a brawling rivulet; they leave its banks; they struggle 'mid tall fern and stunted brushwood;—now they stood before the entrance of that rude cavern, the drear mountain-home of Sir Esecal of Burdock.

"Thou shalt see *her*," said the fair guide pausing, and laying her small hand on the arm of the minstrel; "but tell her not who guided thee hither. And I charge thee, injure not—pshaw! thou canst not injure *him;* he is brave, and strong, and wary, stranger. She is there, there, minstrel; that cavern is her home now,—no stately castle that. Adieu! and in thy prayers remember her

> Who dwelleth all the night
> By the river lone and bright,
> Singing, 'Love, love is woe;'
> Till gentle spirits come,
> When all earthly things are dumb,
> Whispering, 'No, no, no!'"

CHAPTER XV.

THE CASTLE.

The minstrel entered the cavern. At the rude stone table sat—not as of old the gentle Edith—a rugged soldier. "Ho, minstrel!" he cried, "thou art tardy when fair largess and a jovial feast awaits. I have been expecting thee a good hour and more; and, by the mass! absence on the eve of a feast improves no man's humours."

The minstrel perceived that he was mistaken for another, but he concealed the fact,—determined, as Catharine was not in the cavern, to accompany the soldier, as the best means of finding her. "As thou hast said, friend," he replied, "I am late; we had better be on our way."

"Hadst thou been always in such a hurry, minstrel, our journey might have been shorter now," said the soldier gruffly. "Wilt drink?" and he offered the minstrel a flagon, with the contents of which he had evidently made free.

"No," said the minstrel, somewhat sternly; "let us go." The soldier obeyed. An hour from midnight, and the soldier and the minstrel stood on the banks of the Coryshall; before them the grey castle rose —made visible, like the monsters of ancient story, by the fire of its own eyes;—for from every loophole red light streamed, and sounds of tumultuous mirth

came rolling down with the rapid waters. Yet the minstrel paused not;—onward he strode. For the last hour no word had escaped from him. Once he paused; a half derisive laugh burst from his lips; then without observing the astonishment, mixed with awe, of his companion, he hurried on again. They pass the outer gate; they cross the inner court. "The minstrel! the minstrel!" cried many voices. Now the hurrying to and fro of many torches; the confused murmur of many voices; the creaking of many and heavy doors;—then a red, steady glare of light, and the minstrel stood in the halls of Coryshall, 'mid the stern followers of the wild fortunes of Esecal of Burdock. At the upper end of the hall were two vacant seats, elevated above the rest, and covered with unshorn skins; around and behind these sat Brian de Sefton, and half-a-dozen other grey, scarred veterans—men in society equal to Sir Esecal, but in their lawless confederacy owning his superiority; these men had in their hearts the elements of social anarchy;—high aspirations after a lofty—but in a world under the dominion of sin and sorrow, all unattainable—liberty; striving to realise it,—by themselves—by others baffled,—they accuse this individual, then that, of being the enemy of their ideal; until the world they sought to save, unable to endure them any longer, casts them forth—its declared, irreconcilable enemies. Stern men they were now, prepared on emergencies for merciless deeds. But they were evil from very excess of good;—worse than the mass, because they once sought to be better. And the mass of their followers were such men as ever in troubled times gather round wild spirits,—enthusiastic men—daring—enduring—strong to aid—terrible

to revenge. Down the centre of the hall stood tables of split timber, their ends resting on blocks of grotesquely carved stone; and along the table, curious vessels of wood, filled with varieties of liquor, were ranged. The naked walls were studded with pine-torches, and the hall was crowded with faces, now sedately grave, now convulsed with laughter, as a free jest provoked hasty mirth. As the mistrel entered the hall, Brian Sefton arose. "By my faith," he cried, "thou art a tardy minstrel. Nevertheless, since thou art come, we bid thee fair welcome. Gladden thy heart with the wine-cup; and so soon as the weariness of thy journey has left thy limbs, raise, we pray thee, the voice of song."

"Sir Knight," replied the minstrel, "we of the joyous craft are used to wanderings, and weariness takes no sudden hold on our limbs; with this cup of generous wine to warm my heart, the melody of the harp shall arise." Taking his seat in the centre of the hall, and passing his fingers o'er the strings of his harp, he sang:—

Oh! fairy form, might grace the skies,
Raven ringlets wildly streaming,—
And rosy cheeks and dewy eyes,
With the light of genius beaming—
Full oft are fatal gifts possest
To rob the throbbing heart of rest.

Such has Highland Lora found them,
Alo's pride, Dhu Ronald's daughter;
It irks the generous muse to name
Woes her fatal charms have wrought her.
Yet gentles, at your 'hest I twine
Wrong'd Lora's woes in measured line.

Oh! why yon beacon's boding light?
Why are Ronald's banners streaming?
Or why, amid the gloom of night,
In Alo's vale are broadswords gleaming?
See in Lora's anxious eye
The tear drop wildly--question, why?

Or why that host with early morn
Down Alo's rocky pass descending;
Their war-notes on the gales are borne—
Along the hills their lines extending,
Threat the pale god of peace to scar
With the rude sight of Highland war.

'Tis Alpin's clansmen fierce and rude:
Their chief by Ronald's Lora slighted,
Has sworn to quench in Alo's blood
The flame her fatal charms has lighted.
Oh! holy Mary, wild and fell,
The tale the conqueror's bard will tell.

But hark the sound of revel high,
Even's gale in Alpin swelling;
And hark! that shout which rends the sky—
Alpin's gifted bard is telling
Of battle won, and conflict o'er—
Of stern feud quenched in foemen's gore.

"Oh! when was ever Alpin's lord
On haughty foemen slow in wreaking
The deadly veangeance of the sword,
See him, thro' the deep ranks breaking,
He bursts on Alo's chief amain—
Dhu Ronald's numbered with the slain."

Oh! who is she on war steed borne,
From Alo's turrets wildly blazing?
Oh! who is she who laughs in scorn
At bards the song of victory raising?

Lora—Ronald's dark-eyed daughter,
Saved alone from kindred slaughter.

And who is she with eye of pride
Alpin's victor chief defying?
"Oh! ne'er shall Lora be thy bride,
And Alo's ghost for veangeance crying.
Red murderer, reck thy meed of ill,
Lo! Alo's Lora scorns thee still."

See, starts in ire, Vich Alpin now
From his red hand the goblet dashing,
The thunder's cloud is on his brow,
Its lightnings from his eyes are flashing:
"And Alo's ghost fit veangeance claims,
For clansman slain, and towers in flames.

"So let them: but fair maiden list,
Warriors ill brook a woman's taunting;
And tears are fitter arms, I wist,
For captive maids, than haughty vaunting;
Despite the ghosts of all thy line,
Dark Ronald's Lora, thou art mine."

Ha, see! a poniard cleaves the air,
From Alpin's breast the red tide's starting;
He reels—the pangs of death are there:
"Feel, dark spirit, ere departing,
Far Alo's debt of vengeance paid
By Highland Ronald's orphan'd maid."

As the song of the minstrel died, the door at the end of the hall was thrown open, and Catharine, pale, very pale, but calm and collected, entered. Sir Esecal followed; his eyes were unnaturally bright; his countenance was wild and haggard. Stately Catharine advanced up the hall; the warriors rise and bow respectfully. She is opposite the harper now; a half joyful exclamation burst from her lips; Sir Ese-

cal sprung forward; his eyes encounter the eyes of the minstrel;—"Eternal furies!" cried Sir Esecal, "it is he," and with a savage shout he sprang towards the minstrel. Dashing his harp to the earth, and tearing his grey cloak from his shoulders, the stranger stood,—a minstrel no longer; but, calm and terrible, a warrior cased from head to heel in heavy mail—the mysterious in the hall of Wyseby—the irresistible in that night of terrors.

"Ho, treason!" shouted Brian Sefton, springing to his feet and drawing his sword. "Treason! treason!" rung through the hall; and a hundred bare blades gleamed in the red light.

"Back! as you value your worthless lives," cried the minstrel.

"Cleave him to the earth," shouted Esecal. Rude and fierce the tumult rose. Soldier after soldier fell 'neath the vengeful strokes of the minstrel warrior. But he were more than mortal who could long cope with such fearful odds. By Mary! the stranger's strength fails; less effective his blows fall; Sir Esecal is near him now; Brian Sefton is near,—when, hark!—"A Douglas! a Douglas!" High through turret and hall that terrible name rung. Preternatural strength nerves the minstrel's arm. Yet once more, savage and high, the war-word of the Border rose, as Douglas, Irving, Maxwell, Carruthers, and a chosen band of rugged veterans burst into the hall. Wild and terrible was the scene now. No mercy was asked, and none given. Savage shout was answered by savage shout; furious blow by furious blow; when, ha!—that stifling smoke! God of battle! the castle is in flames. Now, in one tumultuous rush, friends and foes crowd the narrow en-

trance. The minstrel, his visor closed, supports Catharine. Douglas, Irving, Maxwell, and Carruthers are by his side. A few moments of terrible exertion, and under the stars of night on the green plain they stood; and the ghastly faces of each grew bright, as in red flames the might of the castle of Coryshall sailed away on the night-winds.

Meanwhile, as if inspired with the wrath of mortals, the elements burst into wild war. The terrible melody of midnight thunder burst upon the silence of the hills; and ever the red fire-bolt rent the fearful darkness 'neath which earth was shrouded. The wild warfare of the opposing wind was renewed in the illimitable field of space. How the spirits of the silent caves yell!—now as if in wildest exultation—now as if in more than mortal agony. The empire of Old Night was shaken to its centre.

But the warder of the monastery of St Ninians saw other sights than the descending cloud-fires, and heard other sounds than the melody of reverberating skies in the watches of that fearful night. As the abbey bell tolled twelve, he heard a rushing sound; and anon a princely pageant swept past. There came first, a warrior cased in mail. He saw by the lightning's glare that his visor was closed. By his side rode a lady, closely muffled; behind these rode four armed knights; and a long train of grim figures followed. Sudden the midnight hymn of the convent arose; and the infernal pageant melted into air. But scarcely had the hymn died, when a savage shout smote his ear. Then the thunder pealed deeper, and the darkness grew more intense; but a fire-bolt clove through it, and he discerned a fearful spectacle. A warrior, his helmet cleft in twain, his

hair loose and floating on the wind, his sword broken by the hilt, but firmly clenched in his hand—and ever he struck as if at some deadly foe; and behind him a blessed spirit, in white flowing robes, followed. But ever the warrior fled—waging with fierce blow and savage shout that fearful conflict. The warder saw no more;—stricken by mortal terror, he fell senseless; and many hours passed ere he was able to relate his wild and wondrous tale.

Oh, Death! thou art lovely when thou comest to the young—the quiet friend whom the spirit knew of, but whom it deemed not to meet with yet. Thou art lovely too, Death, when thou comest to the old, bearing in thy hand the olive branch; the while mirrored in thy earnest, but not mournfully sad eyes, the land of rest. But, oh Death! thou art awful when thou descendest upon the fierce a fiercer, upon the mighty a mightier.

When the sun of the next morn sailed up from the invisible into the still storm-tossed east, under a dark promontory from which the waters of the Coryshall had fled, lay the form of a warrior, rigid and cold; and by his side, not weeping, but silently watching, a maiden sat.

CHAATER XVI.

THE INTERVIEW.

Yet seven days, and around the castle of Lochmaben there were sights aud sounds of rejoicing. Overnight the chief and Catharine had arrived, unaccompanied, however, by the warrior of the harp, who had again mysteriously disappeared; and with morning came an order from the Bruce that the Borderers should hold themselves in readiness to march and join the forces of Randolph, designed to attack the now retreating and famine-wasted army of Edward, on the eastern marches. There was, in truth, high rejoicing in the camp of Scotland. The insolent freebooters who had stolen upon their security were chastised, and they believed the mighty army of invading England to be wholly in their power.

Though the might of man, my child, is to the silent might of nature as a sunbeam to the blaze of a burning world, yet still great is the might of united man; puny it is, though still great, when called into action by gold, but fearfully mighty—all but all-powerful—when prompted by common cause, and cheered on by a wild, deep, soul-emanating enthusiasm. With the first intimation of the retreat of the enemy, and their course, the woods rung with an hundred axes. Cottage after cottage arose in vale and on upland, and again, from many a sacred altar —a cottage hearth. that divine incense—blue, quiet

smoke arose to the evening sky. A few days, and, save the blackness of the fire-path, and the still continued effort round some fast-ascending castle, all looked even as heretofore.

The castle of Wyseby, from its situation and its proximity to the camp of the Borderers, had escaped uninjured. Its halls are again thronged with domestics, and the aged of the clan; and in its eastern turret as of old, looking out upon the lone and lovely river leaping onward in its never-ending journey, Catharine sat. It is the evening of the second day after her arrival at Lochmaben. Her eyes rested on the river, but her thoughts were busy elsewhere. The drear mountain cavern,—the low scream she had heard on her entrance,—the invisible form that glided past her,—and the saying of Esecal, that one young and pure as she, had been for months the tenant of that cavern;—on these things her thoughts dwelt. A slight rustling aroused her from her reverie. She raised her eyes. "Maria," she said, addressing a girl who stood by her side, "what wouldest thou?"

"A stranger lady craves brief audience," said the maiden.

"A stranger lady!" said Catharine thoughtfully. She paused, as if uncertain how to act. At length she said firmly, "Admit her."

With a firm, proud step the stranger maiden entered; but she paused ere she had well crossed the threshhold. Whatever doubts Catharine entertained as to the character of her visitor, they vanished as her eye fell on the pale, pale brow, and wan cheek, and bright, troubled eye, of the being who now stood before her. "Maiden, be seated," said

Catharine, gently. The stranger moved not, but the cheeks that were so pale grew flushed and red; and the bright, troubled eye had even a brighter and more troubled expression. Anon paleness—a deadly paleness—overspread her countenance, and she leant against the wall for support. "Maria," cried Catharine in alarm. Gently bending her head as if she went to sleep, the stranger sank towards the floor, but the arms of Catharine and her maiden received her.

Another hour, on a couch in a small sleeping apartment in the higher division of the same turret, the stranger lay. The rays of the setting sun stole through the latticed casement, illumining her pale speaking features; and the evening breeze came in too, often gently raising her dark locks, and ever sighing mournfully as it passed away. In low, sweet, earnest tones she was addressing Catharine, who sat by her side.

"Our cottage stood on the banks of the Aveuon, lady,"—Catharine started,—"on an island formed by the divided waters of the Weardon. In a sweet cottage on that island was I born. Arden, my father, was huntsman to the house of Burdock. My mother I never saw. Ah me! I never knew her hallowing care; she died while the world was yet new to me. O blessed spirit! from thy everlasting home look down upon thy child." The wonderful being was silent. Catharine gazed upon her with new interest, for she recollected her brother's tale. "Ay, lady! a sweet cottage on that island was my home through the glad day of childhood; and when sedate girlhood came, there my more thoughtful, but not less happy, hours were spent. That, in

truth, was a happy period. My father was nearly always absent; and save when some traveller wound up the mountain way, the solitude was never broken. When night relieved my father from his duties, he returned, ever to talk to me—an all too anxious listener—of the deeds of his young master. I listened attentively, and was ever sorry when he left the subject, and glad when he returned to it again. I know not why—I tell thee true, lady, I had not seen him then—but it seemed as if love had dwelt from of old in my soul, and leapt into life at first mention of his name. I could have seen him, lady,—any day I could have seen him; but I wished not to do so, for his image was engraven on my heart, though I had never seen him. Every lineament was there. I shunned him, I know not why, but a mysterious fear fell upon my heart, ever when a chance of seeing him occurred. Lady," she cried, turning abruptly to Catharine, "are souls linked together—do they sympathise with each other? I have sometimes thought it was so; for in our mountain-home——"

"What mountain-home?" cried Catharine. "Art thou——" She paused; for her eyes fell upon the mild, innocent face of the dying girl, and the spirit of earth that rose in her bosom felt rebuked. She was silent.

For a few moments Arden's daughter gazed doubtingly upon Catharine. She resumed with mild dignity,—"I am Edith, lady, the huntsman's child; and the mountain home of which I spoke, was that cavern to which thou wert brought." Her bright eye was fixed on the countenance of Catharine, and she seemed to watch the effect of this announcement;

but as the traces of no feelings save those of womanly compassion were there, she resumed:—"I said, lady, that I sometimes thought that souls were bound together—that they sympathise with each other; for ever in our mountain-home, when his spirit grew glad, mine grew glad also; and the clouds that darkened his, darkened mine." She paused an instant, and then resumed:—"We met at last,—he was chief then,—and ah! such a meeting!" Edith related, my child, with all the wild fervour of love, and the deep pathos of genuine gratitude, the touching tale of heroism which the chief of the Irvings had already told. "Then came his evil fortunes," Edith continued; "and the base deserted his councils, and the cowardly shrunk from his side. Forced to abandon his own castle, he sought shelter in the mountains. In such a tide would it have been well to have left him to loneliness and terrible solitude, lady?" Meeting no answer in the cold but mild look of Catharine, she continued emphatically:—"No, no! *I* could not. Lady," she said, raising herself up, "the world may be very wise; but it is cold and selfish too;—it will condemn my conduct; but amid the silences of midnight, heaven, of which our conscience is the voice, has not condemned it." She sunk back on her couch, exhausted. A few minutes, and she resumed:—"I knew that he loved me not as it was in his nature to love, but I deemed that he loved no other, and I was happy in our mountain-cavern. The idols which the chief had erected were hurled to the earth; the faithlessness of his friends had disgusted him with the world. But amid the hills which change not, and listening to the songs of the many tempests who

flatter not, his soul grew strong. He talked of heroes and of their deeds,—of the great of old; he indited wonderful, spirit-stirring songs; and he taught my voice their melody, and I sung till his own soul was wrapt in the spell itself had created. But this did not last. He met with Brian Sefton, lord of the castle of Coryshall; he stirred up ambitious thoughts in the bosom of Esecal. Brian and the chief often met; they drew around them discontented, turbulent men; Esecal was now often and long absent, and ever moody and thoughtful when he returned; savage-looking men often came on secret missions to our home; in the night, too, mysterious sounds were heard; and happiness fled, for it never dwells with unquiet things. Ever he grew moodier," continued Edith, "and often talked of my returning again to Burdock. But I could not do that, lady; and as I deemed that care for my comfort prompted the counsel, I ever refused. At length there were musterings and trainings of men at Coryshall, and nightly meetings of the chiefs. Then I knew that some enterprize was about to be undertaken. A few days and Esecal departed; but he named the period when he would return. Then Brian Sefton disappeared: the savage-looking men were not seen;—and a fearful wish to pierce into the future, sprung up in my heart. At length the day named for Esecal's return came—a day of tempest, lady. He came not; but in the early watches of the night the masts of his vessel were visible, swaying backward and forward past the stars. But anon the stars were blotted out, and the vessel was invisible. In the might of darkness and tempest, the night rolled on, and in the morning the

vessel reached the shore. He was not on its deck. No, no! In its cabin he lay, wounded—grievously wounded. I reached him. He knew me not. His reason was dethroned, and, lady, his talk was of battles, and defeat, and vengeance. He was borne to the cavern, and there the fearful warfare of death and life was waged."

"Thou art wearying thyself," said Catharine; "sleep; on the morrow thou wilt resume thy story."

"Lady," said Edith solemnly, "no earthly morrow will dawn to me. Yon glorious sun is vanishing from my view for ever. I know it it so, yet am I not sorrowful. Ah, lady! thou knowest not the might of loneliness,—the terrible desolateness of utter isolation from thy kind. Thou wilt never know it," she continued energetically; "thou art the delight of a brave clan; the day-star of one whose image dwells in thine own heart."

The blood rushed into the cheek of Catharine. Averting her face—"Maiden," she said, "thou wert speaking of the illness of Sir Esecal."

"Thou hast known sorrow, lady," said Edith, mournfully, unheeding what Catharine had said. "I know the cause; and I have come far, far, to reveal it to thee. Fear not;—thou wilt yet be happy." Then without waiting for reply, she continued,—"In that cavern the war of life and death was waged; and madness was there with its raving moods of hardened obduracy, and mild repentance, and grotesque imaginings, and baseless fancies. Now Sir Esecal deemed me a fiend commissioned to torture; now a spirit empowered to forgive; oftenest thee, lady; then ever a mailed warrior, prepared for mortal strife. It was in these hours that I first

knew how deeply he loved another; and —— but enough of that,—'tis past now.

"'Twas the fifth day after his arrival at the cavern. I stood by his couch. He had remained silent for some time, and I deemed he slept. Suddenly starting up, 'Ho, priest!' he exclaimed, fixing his eyes upon me; 'I expected thee ere this. Dost see the sand is nearly run. Do thy office quickly.' Then he uttered, as if at confessional, what it imports thee, lady, much to know.

"'Priest,' he began, 'they loved each other well. I saw it in his every act; I read it in her every look; and I hated him because she loved him. He was brave and strong, but I cared not for that;—but that I knew that to injure him was to lose her, I would have smitten him down even in their own hall.' 'Twas of thee and of thy foster-brother Randolph he spoke. I know it was so, lady. 'So' he continued, 'a cunning device entered my heart. They had a nurse——'"

"Ah! what of the good Elspeth?" cried Catharine. "Knowest thou aught of her?"

"Call her not good," resumed Edith; "but interrupt me not—I repeat his words:—'An aged crone, priest; gold sapped the faith of years——'"

"Maiden," said Catharine, hastily, "if thou hast evil word to say of Elspeth, I will not hear thee."

"The dying repeat the words of the dead," said Edith, solemnly, "and they are the words of truth." Then without waiting for an answer she resumed—"'I taught her, priest, to say to Randolph,—that child snatched from the burning ruin,—whom, under the mother of Catharine she had nursed, that he was the offspring of the light love of him whom he called

preserver. 'Twas a foul lie, priest—but love gave it birth. Holy man, can noble passions prompt to ill? She did so. All that I wished for was realised. The youth fled—whither I know not;—I said to the camp of Edward. That, too, was a lie, priest; I knew it was so, yet I told it. Ah, how crimes multiply upon us; they sow each other as poison-plants scatter their own foul seeds.

"'When time enough had passed for his image in her heart to have faded, I sought her home. I was rejected by her; I was rejected by her brother. I had dreamed of the probability of this, and I went not alone. In the depths of the adjoining wood-studded vales, my followers lay concealed. At midnight—'twas a festal night—I attacked their castle. I seized her in the middle of their hall.'" Catharine shrieked, and gazed wildly around. "'When there, —*there*,—*he*—a minstrel, ha, ha! Curse,—curse him, priest! What, art silent? Curse him, I say, or by the cross!——' With a fierce effort he sought to rise,—in vain. He sank back on his couch senseless. For hours he lay thus, and when consciousness returned, his wandering thoughts had found a new course, and the confession of that hour was forgotten."

"And where is Sir Esecal now?" cried Catharine gazing wildly round, as if fearful that the terrible maniac was near.

"In the grave," said Edith, in a calm voice. "I saw him rush upon death; I saw him low in the dust; and I have travelled far, far, to do what he would have done had time for repentance been given,—to make reparation to those who have suffered through him.

'Twas midnight. On the same couch lay Edith, and Catharine was by her side as heretofore. But a priest stood by the couch now, holding over her the symbol of mercy, and in fervent prayer invoking it in favour of the dying one. Now the strife has closed. The immortal spirit has left its frail tenement. Whither? Child of mine, ask not even of thine own soul. And the daughter of Arden was a clod of the valley.

Esecal—Edith, my child, have vanished from our history. Through the mouldering bosom of many centuries—from the paths of other years—at our call they came. Awhile they dwelt before the vision of our souls. We recognised humanity in their lineaments, and we loved and feared them. They have passed away;—not so the life-picture which they have anew painted on the Eternal. Look upon it. Ah! ye simple of heart, who, from some lone mountain in your own spiritual dream-land, look down into the world, ye discern that their nature was lofty and lovely, discern also that their life-journey ended *there,* and ask of your own hearts, why?

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BELL.

The blow was struck; the might of invading Enggland on the Borders was shivered; Scotland was free; and the dove of peace gathered in her wings, and seemed about to descend for a time on the troubled land. Again in the halls of the castle of Lochmaben the warriors of the Borders are congregated. There was no noisy mirth in that vast assemblage. Victory had been the reward of the late fierce struggle; but the bones of the well-known brave were left to moulder in a hostile land. In that hall stood Douglas, Irving, Johnston; but where was Carruthers, Carlisle, Maxwell? Alas! the strength of the mighty has passed away; their voices will not be heard any more in the battles of the land. They sleep where the Tyne gives its might of waters to the heaving main; and the winds of England laugh over their lowly graves.

Pride in the living was ever blended with sorrow for the dead, in the bosoms of the rude men of those days, my child. 'Twas well. Generation follows generation, as star host follows star host in the immense of space. The mourned has gone down to the narrow house; to-morrow, and lo! the mourner has followed him. The ship of life sails on through the infinite, with an ever-changing crew, all too busy with the imagined object of their voyage to

cast a look after those who yesterday sunk into the invisible. On the mournfully stern countenances of the bereaved clansmen gleams high exultation as they gaze upon the swelling forms of their youthful chiefs, excited as they are by the great occasion, and by the first consciousness of power. There are proud dames in that assembly too, and maidens, lovely as any the sun in his wide course looks down upon. But where is Catharine Irving—why is she not there? Ah! she sits lonely in the halls of Wyseby; and her soul lightens and darkens in a joyous sadness, even as the face of a mountain lake, when sun-lit clouds are sailing on high. In the late battle one arm turned the fortunes of the day, and her heart told her whose that arm was. And though she wished—oh, how she wished!—to gaze upon his noble brow again as in old days, and to hear the music of his deep rich voice, and to listen to his mighty thoughts, as in high moods he poured them forth; yet she could not meet him there in that assembly. No! so she sat, a lone watcher, in the halls of Wyseby.

And why, in Lochmaben's grey castle, are the strength and beauty of the Border assembled? They are gathered there around one at whose name every heart in broad Scotland leaps with joy, or sinks with guilty fear—around the idomitable soldier, the irresistible king, the heroic man—the Bruce. High in the centre of that throng he sits. Early struggles—the cares of rule—and time—have left their traces on the high brow of the victorious sovereign. His eye is stern and cold as when Irving first saw him; but his hair, which then waved in rich luxuriance, is now thin and sprinkled with grey, and his muscular

limbs have lost something of their early vigour; yet as of old, proud and commanding was the look which he cast around the throng as he began:—"Warriors! next to the God of Battles, who ever gives victory to the right, are we indebted to your valour that this Scottish land is free from the polluting tread of invading hosts. Thanks, warriors all; your Sovereign from his heart thanks you. Bravely each and all of ye bore your parts in the fierce strife; but there was one whose prowess rivalled that of the heroes whose deeds live in our songs. Let him appear." There was a slight bustle at the lower end of the hall; the crowd opened; and with a stately step, the warrior-minstrel of Wyseby and of Coryshall approached the Bruce. His helmet was removed, his long hair floated over his broad shoulders, and his large dark eyes glowed with lofty pride; his port was noble, and his bearing erect and firm, as though he stood only in the presence of his peers. The kingly eyes of Bruce scanned the hero. "Warriors," he cried, turning to the throng, "I said that in the strife each of ye well enacted your part; but, by the cross! *he*"—pointing to the minstrel warrior—"*bore the bell.*" Then turning again to the hero, he continued,—"Thy father was Walter of Kirtle, a brave man, and a soldier good at need. Be the land on which he dwelt thine, within such bounds as we shall appoint;—that have and hold, thou and thine, for services rendered to us and ours." The king paused. The warrior bowed and retired. A few minutes, and he left the assembly.

Turn we again, child of mine, to the castle of Wyseby. For a long hour Catharine has sat at the

latticed window of that western turret, gazing upon that point where the road sweeps round the sloping end of lofty Burnswark. There spears and halberds gleam, and banners fling their broad folds to the sun, as parties of returning Border warriors sweep on their way. But the Irvings are not visible yet; even at this distance she could know them. Ha! there they come! Why so eagerly gazes Catharine? She endeavours to discern one form loftier than the rest. The door of her apartment opens gently; she hears it not. A stranger of proud port and noble mien enters. By Mary! 'tis the minstrel warrior. The Irvings have swept past, and he whom her eye seeks to behold is not there. With a heavy sigh Catharine turned away from the casement.—Ha! that stranger!—a slight scream burst from her lips; the blood forsook her cheeks, then rushed back as if it would burst its natural bounds. A moment's pause;—she rushed forward and threw herself into the arms that opened to receive her.—"Ranolph! Ranolph! my—my—deliverer!"

"Catharine!" said the warrior, in a voice of tremulous tenderness.

Yet another hour, and in the same apartment, stately and calm, Catharine sat; and, as in old days, Ranolph was by her side. "I ever loved thee, Catharine," he said, "as woman is rarely loved; but how could one fed by charity aspire to the hand of the child of his benefactor—his preserver? Or how could one landless, almost unknown to fame, dream of an alliance with the sister of a rich and powerful chief? I could not dwell in thy presence, and I had not strength to fly from thee. My spirit was vexed. 'Twas then that Elspeth, in a weak moment tempt-

ed by the gold of the Knight of Burdock, whispered in mine ear a foul, a most accursed lie."

"Speak not of that, Ranolph, I know it all."

"Thou know it," cried Ranolph in surprise; "how came my Catharine by the knowledge?"

"Of that anon," said the maiden. The warrior continued—"I was stung to madness; I fled far, far west; but I could not live beyond the light of thy countenance;—so, disguised as a harper, I returned to the cave. I watched over thee, and *that night*, in the hour of danger, was by thy side. Again, 'mid yon hills I noted the march of the army of Valance; and not knowing what rout they meant to take, I hastened to warn thy brother. I returned, if possible to ascertain the numbers and the object of the foe. Worn with long travel, illness overtook me. I was sick, near unto death, and for weeks the hut of a peasant gave me shelter. 'Twas then that the daring scheme of De Esecal was executed, and thou, Catharine, borne away into captivity. Soon as strength returned, I hastened to gaze upon thee once more. Overtaken by night and weariness, I tarried to rest in the cave, and there found Elspeth, who alone, on the night of Esecal's attack upon Wyseby, penetrated my disguise, and discovered my retreat. She had sought me at the cave, pierced by terrible remorse; for two days, foodless, lightless, she had waited my arrival there. In the agonies of death she confessed her compact with Esecal, and the falsehood of what she had told. Oh, Catharine! the madness of joy took possession of my heart! And then she told of thy captivity; but the silence of death settled upon her lips before she could tell whither thou wert borne. Thou wert borne to the North I knew.

With the return of light I began the vague pursuit. For days I journeyed on. Now from a peasant I heard of a host who in the dead of the night hurried past; and from another, of a band which he saw in the grey light of morning rushing down the mountain side. Guided thus, I journeyed on, till chance threw in my way a crazed, but passing beautiful, mountain maid. Ah, that I knew her history, or where she wanders now!—and by her was I guided to the cavern."

"Ranolph," cried Catharine, with a voice of deep interest, "how did she seem, that mountain maid?" The warrior described the maiden of the rock. "It must be she," cried Catharine. Then she told to Ranolph of the death of Edith, and she heard from him of what her strange guest had not chosen to speak,—of the time when desolated love had overthrown her reason. But she could not tell of its sudden restoration when Edith found him she so loved waging wild combat with horrid phantoms, 'mid the blackened ruins of Coryshall—a terrible maiac."

At this moment loud rose the cry of "The chief! the chief?" and Irving and the warriors of the clan swept into the court of the castle. As the meeting of brothers was the meeting of the two warriors; and when it was known to the retainers that Ranolph was in truth in the castle again, loud, deep, and earnest were the sounds of joy that arose.

Winter had passed away, and prolific spring. 'Twas rich summer now. Where late a barren crag rose over the waves of the Kirtle, a strong castle, with donjon keep, and bastion towers, and fosse, and drawbridge, frowned; and bold warriors trode its broad battlements, and high word rung through its

vaulted halls. Blackethouse was added to the list of Border strengths, and fame was busy with the name of Ranolph de Bell.

'Twas autumn. In the serene majesty of peace the sun journeyed up into a sky of cloudless blue; and woods, and hills, and streams laughed in the joy of their king. There were sounds of high rejoicing in the halls of Wyseby too; the keep of distant Holmains rung with the sounds of tumultuous joy; and to the halls of Blackethouse the pride of the Borders thronged;—that day saw solemnised the nuptials of Isabell Carruthers and Irving, of Catharine and Bell; and in the union of these families, the consolidation of the strength of the Western Borders. Child of mine, my tale is told.

THE END.

APPENDIX.

It is perhaps necessary, for the benefit of those of our readers who are not acquainted with the western marches, to state the precise localities of the principal places mentioned in our story.

Wyseby.—The lands of Wyseby, the gift of the royal Bruce to the son of the glorious standard-bearer, lie on the banks of the Kirtle, (Dumfries-shire,) one of the loveliest streams in the "land of mountain and of flood." Of the castle of Wyseby, traces are still visible.

Holmains, for many centuries the stronghold of the ancient sept of the Carrutherses, is situated upon the Annan, a short distance from the once celebrated burgh of Lochmaben. Of the keep of Holmains, no traces are left.

Blackethouse, the stronghold of the long formidable sept of the Bells, is situated, like Wyseby, upon the banks of the Kirtle. Tradition has been busy with its name, and many are the tales of terror—albeit there are gentle ones too—which it supplies. The donjon keep, or central tower, still remains in a pretty perfect state; but alas!

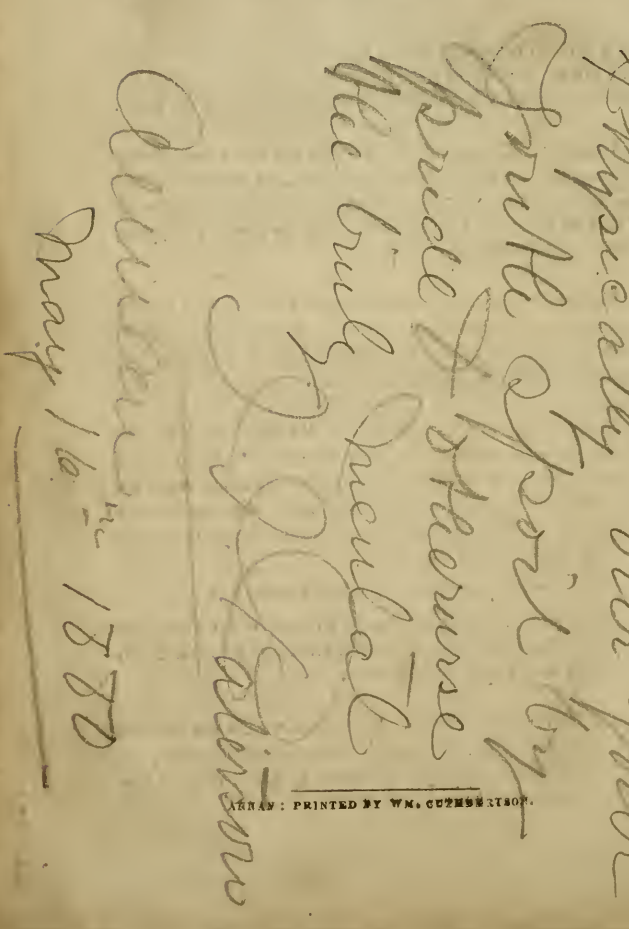
"Its guard's the brier, its guest the peaceful dove."

It bears no evidence of the former strength of the place, and tells no tales of the fierce, yet withal brave and generous hearts that once beat within its grey walls.

The Cave on the Kirtle. This singular cave has been cut out of the solid rock; by whom it was cut, or for what purpose, nothing is known. It is on the estate of Cove, about a mile below the ruins of the castle of Wyseby.

BURNSWARK, a hill in Dumfries-shire, remarkable for its form, for the extensive view which it commands, and for the vestiges of Roman works which may be distinctly traced on its sides and top.

Of the historical events introduced in the course of our story we say nothing at present, as we intend to enter minutely into them, in our forthcoming "HISTORY OF THE BORDERS."



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(Teach!!)
Cotters Saturday Night

Whoever comes into possession of this Book, must ignore, in reading it, the Drawing-Room Literary Trash of the present day, & in so doing, see, realise that days gone past were happier & better than now, and also that intelligence could grow without the aid of Rhymes & Reels — 99.