LEGENDARY TALES OF THE HIGHLANDS

VOLUME I

THOMAS DICK LAUDER

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LEGENDARY

TALES OF THE HIGHLANDS.

VOL. I.

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LEGENDARY

TALES OF THE HIGHLANDS.

A SEQUEL TO

HIGHLAND RAMBLES.

BY

SIR THOMAS DICK LAUDER, BART.

AUTHOR OF "LOCHANDHU," "THE WOLFE OF BADENOCH," "THE MORAY FLOODS," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOLUME I.

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OF THE
FIRST VOLUME.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

TO

HIS GRACE

JOHN DUKE OF ARGYLL.

MY DEAR DUKE,

The permission which you have so kindly given me to dedicate these Volumes to you, affords me a double source of gratification.

In the first place, it recalls and strengthens the recollection of the first formation of that, which may now be called an old friendship between us; from the continuance of which I have, from time to time, derived so much valuable scientific and general information, as well as so much rational recreation of mind, and which has, moreover, produced some of the happiest hours of my life.

Secondly, I am thus allowed to attach to my Highland Legends the name of Mac Chailein Mhòir, which is certainly, of all others, that most fitted to be associated with Highland story.

With my best thanks, therefore, and with every wish for your Grace's health and happiness, as well as for those of all you hold dear, I beg that you will always believe me to be, with the highest respect and regard,

MY DEAR DUKE,

Most sincerely and affectionately yours,

THO$^{S.}$ DICK LAUDER.

THE GRANGE HOUSE,
19th March 1840.

NOTE EXPLANATORY OF THE ARGYLL PATRONIMIC OF MAC CHAILEAN MHOIR.

This patronimic of the noble family of Argyll has been strangely changed by Sir Walter Scott, and others, into MacCallum More. The true orthography and reading of it is Mac Chailein, that is, the son or descendant of Colin. Mòr signifies great; and when used in the genitive case as above, it is written Mhoir —pronounced Vòr, or rather Vore—having much the same sound as More in English.

Mac Chailein Mhoir, the son of the Great Colin, or Mac Chailean, is synonymous in Gaelic with Argyll; and Mòr, *great*, makes it, in fact, the Great Argyll.

Calain Mòr—so called from his stature or his actions—was the eighth knight of Lochow of the name of Campbell. He commanded the right wing of the Scottish army at the battle of Largs, in the year 1263. His father Archibald was in life at the time, though Colin led on the men of Argyll. Colin Mor was knighted by Alexander III. in the year 1280. He was killed in a fight with John Bachach (that is, Lame John) MacDougald of Lorn about the year 1293, in forcing a pass called the Ath-dearg, or the Bloody Ford, in Lorn. His remains were carried to Kilchrennan, on Lochow side, and interred in the parish churchyard, where his tombstone is still a conspicuous object. From him the family of Argyll have the patronimic of Mac Chailean Mhoir, or, as generally pronounced, Mac Calain Mòr.

The Author has to thank the Rev. Dr. Norman MacLeod of Glasgow for having afforded him the information which has enabled him to give this explanation, and he is the more grateful for it from the interest he personally takes in the memory of the heroic Sir Colin, from whose great grand-daughter, Alicia, he has

himself the honour of being descended.

TO THE READER.

These three volumes of Highland Legends are published in continuation of those which appeared in 1837, and in pursuance of a plan—long cherished by the Author—of collecting, and preserving in print, all the more interesting of the traditional and local histories of the Highlanders that yet remain, but which, to the regret of all antiquaries, are fast melting away. Not a year passes over us, that does not see some ancient Seanachaidh, whom perhaps we may have known as the venerable historian of the district where he lived,—to whose tales of love, strife, or peril, we may have often listened with eager attention,—borne to his silent grave in the simple churchyard of some lonely Highland parish, where his snow-white head is consigned to its parent earth, and there left to moulder into dust and oblivion, together with all the legendary lore which it contained. The Author has always had great pleasure in availing himself of every opportunity that occurred to him, of conversing with those living records of the glens, and he has never failed to write down whatsoever curious matter it may have been his good fortune to gather from them. By such means, as well as by the assistance of many kind friends, he has been enabled to make a very considerable collection of these traditions, from all parts of the Highlands of Scotland; and, like all other collectors, he has become only just so much the more insatiably avaricious to increase his store, the larger that he sees the heap becoming.

Such legends are not only curious and interesting in themselves, but they will often prove to be helps to history, from the little incidents which they furnish, that may throw light upon it. But, however they are to be estimated in this respect, they must always be considered as having some value, from the pictures which they afford of the manners of the times to which they belong.

It is quite possible that many of these Traditions, in the course of their long descent through successive ages, during which they have been distilled and

redistilled through the poetical imaginations of so many narrators, may have undergone considerable alteration, and even, perhaps, in some instances, exaggeration. To many fervid minds such an effect produced by their antiquity, may not render them one whit less palatable; whilst people of a less romantic and more common-sense cast, will always be able to winnow out for themselves the more solid grains from the glittering but empty chaff. But any one, who, from the apparent improbability of some of their attendant circumstances, should assert that such legends have no foundation in fact, would fall, it is apprehended, into a very grievous error. The Author thinks that no legend, however improbable, can have been created, without having had some foundation in reality,—some germ, in short, from which it had its origin,—and perhaps he cannot better illustrate this observation, or prove its truth, than by narrating a circumstance with the particulars of which he was favoured by his friend the Venerable Archdeacon Williams, which shows this connexion in the strongest light. What he has to tell, it is true, belongs more particularly to the Principality of Wales, but it only furnishes a more than ordinarily curious and striking example of a class, of which many similar samples might be easily produced from the Highlands of Scotland, as well as from many other parts of the world.

Some of the Welsh legendary historians tell us, that in the year 500, there flourished a renowned chief called Benlli Gawr. His usual residence was where the present town of Mold now stands, and his hill-fort, or place of strength was erected on the highest of the Clwydian range, nearly due west from Mold, and about half way between that place and Ruthin. The hill on which the remains of this fortalice still exist, is called Moel Benlli, or the conical hill of Benlli, and it presents a conspicuous object from Mold, Ruthin, and Denbigh. An immense *carnedd* or cairn of stones, which was still to be seen some years ago in an entire state in a field about half a mile from the town of Mold, was supposed to have been the place of this hero’s interment; and if we may believe what we read in the Welsh verses on the graves of the warriors of the Isle of Britain, his son’s place of sepulture was in a spot about eight miles distant, and is thus noticed in the following rhymes:—

“Pian y bed^{h}d yn y Maes Mawr,
Balen a law ar ei larn awr:
Bed^{h}d Beli ab Benlli Gawr.”

That is,—

> “He who owns the grave in the large field,
> Proud his hand on his blade:
> The grave of Beli, son of Benlli Gawr.”

But to return to the great Carnedd of Benlli himself in the field near Mold. It was always called Tomen y r Ellyllon, or the Tumulus of the Goblins, and for this reason, that from time immemorial it was believed that the grim ghost of Benlli, in the form of a knight clad in splendid gear, and especially wearing a Celain Aur, or golden corselet, appeared after sunset, standing on the cairn, or walking round it, and that there he continued to maintain his cold post, till the scent of the morning air, or the crowing of the cock, drove him to the necessity of retiring from it to some more comfortable quarters. This legend had for generations so terrified the people, that no bribe could have tempted any one to have passed by that way after nightfall. Yet, though nobody went thither, and that every possibility of having anything like direct evidence as to what the spectre knight’s personal appearance and dress really were, had been thus precluded by the circumstance that every one shunned his dreaded presence, the most wonderful and incredible accounts of his stern countenance and terrific bearing, together with the most fearful stories of their effects upon people who had beheld them, continued to be propagated, although no one could specify the individuals who had seen them, or been so affected by them.

Towards the end of the year 1833, it happened that the occupier of the field where the carnedd stood, took it into his head, that the stones of which it was composed might be of use for the construction of a road, or for filling drains, or for some such rural purpose. It was with some difficulty that he could procure workmen bold enough to make such an assault on the very castle of the goblin, even although it was to be carried on during the hours that the blessed sun was abroad. But having at last succeeded in obtaining these, he proceeded to work, and soon drove away some four or five hundred cart-loads of stones from the cairn, when, at last, the workmen came upon something of a strange shape, which was manifestly constructed of some sort of metal. It was with no little dread that they ventured to touch it, but their observation having led them to believe that it was some old brass pot-lid or frying-pan, it ceased to be an object either of dread or of interest in their unlearned eyes, and they threw it carelessly into a hedge, where it lay all night neglected.

Some person of education having come to the spot next morning, who had heard of such a thing having been found, was led by curiosity to examine it, when, to the astonishment of all who heard of it, the brazen frying-pan was discovered to be a lorica, or corselet of gold.

The metal was found to be of about the same degree of purity as our present coin. It was so thin, that it weighed altogether no more than sixty sovereigns, and therefore it appears evident that it could not have been used as armour of defence in combat. It is more than probable that it must have been worn merely as an ornamental piece of armour on occasions of state or parade, in which case it was, very likely, originally lined with leather. It was embossed all over it, of a simple pattern, but it was not perforated.

The obliging correspondent through whose kindness, and that of his friends, I have become possessed of these very remarkable facts, amuses himself by calculating the immense value which such a piece of dress must have had in the time of Benlli-Gawr, its wearer, that is, in the year 500. “This,” says he, “may be done by referring to the ancient laws of Wales, now publishing under the Government Commission. In these laws, the average price of a cow was five shillings, and allowing for the difference in the value of money, a cow would now cost about ten pounds. Then one pound at that time would buy four cows, and the ten pounds would buy forty cows, and the sixty sovereigns would be the value of two hundred and forty cows, or two thousand four hundred pounds sterling.”

This curious and highly valuable *morceau* of antiquity was immediately claimed by the Honourable Edward Mostyn Lloyd Mostyn as lord of the manor, and by Colonel Salusbury of Gallbfarnan as the possessor of the field where it was found, and the law having determined that it should belong to the former gentleman, it is now in his possession. It is gratifying to the Author to think, that it should have fallen into the hands of Mr. Mostyn, with whom he has since had the honour of becoming acquainted, during the Welsh Eisteddvod, held at Liverpool, where, as President of that body, his high attainments—his courteous manners—and his ardent devotion to the cause of the preservation of Welsh literature and antiquities, gave universal satisfaction to all present, and afforded a sufficient assurance for the safety of the interesting relic, of which an account has been given.

This is certainly a very powerful instance of the soundness of the proposition, that legendary tales, however incredible many of their circumstances may be, have always some foundation in truth. It appears to be by no means difficult to speculate reasonably enough on the probabilities of the matter in this case; and it would seem that they have in all likelihood been these:—In the year 500 or thereabouts, the renowned hero, Benlli, died, and in obedience to his own last instructions, or of those of his son, Beli, or of some other relative or friend, he was buried in the tumulus with his golden corselet on, and then the carnedd was heaped up over his remains. To prevent the risk of any avaricious follower or serf, or any other promiscuous pilferer, uncovering his body during the night, in order to possess himself of the glittering prize, his surviving friends circulate the story that his ghost, frowning fearfully, as such ghosts are wont, is seen nightly to guard the tumulus, girt in the golden armour. Terror fills the superstitious minds of the inhabitants of the district, and no man for his life will venture to approach the Carnedd after sunset. This lie protective is thus very naturally and innocently handed down from one generation of the superstitious people of the neighbourhood to that which succeeds it, and implicitly believed; and so the story is traditionally preserved for about fourteen hundred years, until it is now at last unravelled, in our own time, by the removal of the Carnedd of stones, and the discovery of the golden corselet itself.

Let not any one refuse then to give credence to the main circumstances of these our Highland Legends, because they may perhaps be somewhat overlaid with circumstances of a romantic or doubtful nature, but let the judgment rather be exercised to discover, and to discriminate, between the thread of the true and original history, and those adventitious filaments of later manufacture which have from time to time been introduced and interwoven with it. This will generally be found to be no very difficult task, and there are many by whom it will be considered rather as an agreeable amusement, than as an irksome occupation.

HIGHLAND RAMBLES.

STRATHDAWN.

We left the Highland village of Tomantoul after an early breakfast, and proceeded to wend our way slowly up the pastoral valley of Aven. The scenery as yet had nothing peculiarly striking about it, but our faces were turned towards the Cairngorm group of mountains, and the closing in of the hills forming the termination of our present view, already excited interesting expectation regarding those higher regions which arose beyond them. This was especially the case with my fellow-travellers, who had not previously visited this elevated district. A certain air of tranquil repose that hung over every thing around us, and gave an indescribable charm to the simple features of nature, rather disposed our minds to quiet and passive enjoyment, so that we walked leisurely along for some time, less inclined to talk than to ruminate each within himself. Our young friend Clifford was the first to break silence.

CLIFFORD.—What a beautiful little plain!—How animating the clear river that waters it, with its stream sparkling under the bright morning sun!—And see how appropriate the few figures that give life to it. Those cattle there, so agreeably disposed, cropping the fresh herbage, with that boy so intent upon plaiting a cap of rushes for the innocent little girl who sits beside him. It would make a subject for a Cuyp or a Paul Potter. What a scene of simple happiness, contentment, and peace!

DOMINIE MACPHERSON.—It is indeed a quiet enough scene at this moment, sir. But peaceful as it is at this present time, it hath not been always so, for it hath more than once had its green turf trodden into black and dusty earth by the thundering hoof of the neighing battle-steed. The day has been, Mr. Clifford, when, as Maro has it:—

> ——————————"Agmine facto
> Quadrupedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum."

Here it was, sir, that Montrose encampit with his army in 1645, alter having defeated the godly sons of the covenant in the bloody field of Auldern, and before marching to glut his cruel spirit by massacring more of them at Alford on the Don. And, as if the soil of this fair spot had not been thus sufficiently polluted, it so chanced that, in June 1689, the bloody Clavers also cumbered it with himself and his followers on his way to the Pass of Killiecrankie, where, on the 16th of July thereafter, praise be to the Lord, his wicked existence was at last put an end to.

GRANT.—Ha! These historical recollections do indeed give a new interest to the scene.

CLIFFORD.—Only fancy the motley troops, in the varied military costume of the time, drawn up here in their lines, the tents and huts stretching along yonder in regular order,—the mingled sounds arising from the busy camp followers,—the trumpets clanging,—and the bold Dundee scampering across the plain on his gallant black charger! What a contrast to the figures which are now before us!

DOMINIE.—Aye; and if all tales be true, he was but an uncanny beast that black hone of his. But, my certy! the beast and the man were well matched.

CLIFFORD.—You seem to have a great distaste at the Viscount Dundee, Mr. Macpherson, and yet he was followed by the great mass of your Highland clans.

DOMINIE.—That may be, Mr. Clifford; but that makes no odds to me, sir. I am in no ways answerable for the deeds of my forebears. If they turned out to support popery and yepiscopacy, that is not what I would have done. I reverence the manes of those sainted heroes who drew their good broadswords for God and the Covenant, and who suffered all manner of tortures and all kinds of cruel deaths rather than abandon so glorious a cause,—a cause, let me tell you, with all due respeck to you, Mr. Clifford,—a cause in which I should be proud to die at this moment.

CLIFFORD.—Your enthusiasm is not only excusable, but honourable to you, Mr. Macpherson. But will you tell me the name of this spot, that I may endeavour to remember it?

DOMINIE.—It is called Dell-a-Vorar, or the Lord’s-haugh, a name which it got

from one, or may be from both of these two lords I have named, though it is more probable that it was from Clavers, seeing that the place in Braemar to which he marched from here has ever since borne the same name.

GRANT.—I know there is a place in Braemar so called.

AUTHOR.—By the bye, Mr. Macpherson, does not the dwelling of Willox the wizard lie somewhere in this neighbourhood?

DOMINIE.—Yes, sir, it does. Gaulrig, as the place is called, lies up beyond yon hollow in the hill on the right side of the glen which you see before us yonder, dipping into the valley of the Aven from the north.

CLIFFORD.—Let us visit the old fellow by all means, Mr. Macpherson.

DOMINIE.—We may easily do that, sir, for the house is not much out of your way, and we are pretty sure of finding him, for he is too old now to be often or far from home.

A walk of some couple of miles brought us to the place where we found the residence of this extraordinary man, standing on the sloping side of the northern hill, immediately below a small tributary ravine, which ancient popular superstition has very appropriately consigned to the dominion of the fairies, and other beings belonging to the world of spirits, and in which there is one of those green artificial-looking knolls called *shians*, from their being supposed to be places of especial fairy resort. His cottage hangs on the edge of the bank facing the Aven, is of the most primitive architecture, composed of drystones and sods, and forms, with its humble out-houses, two sides of a small square. Near one angle of the house there is a rude stone, on which the old warlock is in the habit of sitting to enjoy the sun.

Understanding that Willox was at all times rather flattered by a visit from strangers, we made no scruple in requesting an interview with him; and, accordingly, he soon appeared from the door of his dwelling. Notwithstanding all that Mr. Macpherson had said to the contrary, I had found it a difficult matter to persuade myself that I was not to see a vulgar countenance, strongly marked with that species of sordid cunning, which one might suppose sufficient to enable a knave, of the lowest description, to impose on the most ignorant class of

rustics. The figure of the man, indeed, who now showed himself, had nothing about it to do away with this preconceived notion of mine. He was rather under the middle size, and was dressed in the ordinary *hodden grey* clothes, which have now so generally usurped the place of the gayer tartans, and more picturesque highland dress. But I at once perceived that his low stature was to be attributed to the decrepitude of old age, for he was probably above ninety. The moment he put forth his head from the threshold, and perceived those who sought for an interview with him, an inconceivable expression flashed from his eyes, which, I might almost say, threw over him a certain light of dignity. We were all of us at once convinced that this was no common man, and our regard was riveted upon him. It seemed as if the native lightnings of an uneducated, but naturally very powerful mind, were bursting through the obscurity of those grey orbs, which had been dimmed by the gathering mists of many a long year. The half dormant spirit appeared to have been suddenly summoned to the portal of the eye, by this anticipated interview with people whom he had never seen before, just as, in the olden time, the jealous captain of a fortress might have been brought to its barbican by the bugle call of some knight of doubtful mien who wished to hold parley.

As he advanced to meet us, I was struck with the corselike paleness of his face, to which the glaze of his eyeballs, and the grizzly and tangled locks that strayed from beneath his bonnet, gave an inexpressibly ghastly effect. A transient gleam of electric fire shot from within his eyeballs into each of our countenances individually, as he was introduced to us in succession. We felt as if it had penetrated into the inmost recesses of our very souls. It appeared to us as if he had thereby been enabled, from long practice in the study of mankind, at once to read our several characters and thoughts, like so many lines of the great book of nature hastily skimmed over. To each of us in turn he bowed with a polished air, and a manner like that of a faded courtier of the age of Louis Quatorze, than the inhabitant of so humble a dwelling, in the simple and pastoral valley of Strathdawn; and strangely indeed did it contrast with the coarseness and poverty of his dress, and the squalid *impropreté* of his whole personal appearance.

After the usual preliminary salutations were over, I expressed a wish to see the far-famed magical kelpie’s bridle and mermaid’s stone, for the possession of which he is so celebrated in all the neighbouring districts.

“You shall see them both, sir,” said he, after eyeing me for a moment with a

searching look. “To such gentlemen as you, I cannot refuse a sight of them, though they are hardly to be seen by vulgar eyes, and never to be handled by vulgar hands;” and, with a marked politeness of manner, he returned into the cottage to bring them out.

“Now,” said I to my companions, “you must keep him in talk, whilst I endeavour to steal a sketch of him.”

“Here are the wonderful implements of my art,” said he, as he returned, holding them up to our observation.

“They are very curious,” said I; “perhaps you will have the goodness to allow me to make a hasty drawing of them. I hope it will have no effect in taking away their virtues.

“Their virtues cannot be taken away by human hands,” replied Willox, gravely. “You are welcome to draw them if you please, sir, and I shall hold them for you so that you may best see them.”

I thanked him, and proceeded instantly to my work. My friends followed my injunctions so well as fully to occupy his attention in replying to their cross fire of queries, whilst I was myself obliged to interject a question now and then, in order to get him to turn his countenance towards me. The wonderful expression I have already alluded to appeared even yet more striking, on these occasions, by his ghost-like features being brought so closely and directly opposite to my eyes. I then looked in as it were upon his spirit,—and it was manifestly a spirit which, in ancient days, when superstition brooded as much over the proud castle of the bold baron, as it did over the humble cot of the timid peasant, might well enough have domineered over the minds of nobles and princes, nay subjected even crowned heads to its powerful control.

I did make sketches of the *mermaid’s stone* and the *water-kelpie’s bridle*, the two grand instruments of his art. As already described to us by Mr. Macpherson, we found the stone to be a circular and flattish lens, three inches diameter, of semi-opaque crystal, somewhat resembling, in shape and appearance, what is called a bull’s eye, used for transmitting light through the deck of a vessel into its smaller apartments below. The water-kelpie’s bridle consists of a flat piece of brass, annular in the middle, and having two lobe-like branches springing from it in

two curves outwards, the wider part of each lobe being slightly recurved inwards, so that they present the appearance of two leaves when they are held flat. Attached to the ring part, but loose upon it, are two long doubled pieces of flat brass, and, between these, a short leathern thong is attached by a fastening so intricate that it might have rivalled the Gordian knot. It has not the most distant resemblance to any part of a bridle, and none of us could guess to what purpose, either useful or ornamental, it could have ever been applied. Willox's own account of the acquirement of these two wonderful engines of his supernatural power, elicited by our repeated questions, was nearly as follows:—

THE WATER-KELPIE'S BRIDLE AND THE MERMAID'S STONE.

My grand-uncle Macgregor, was so much devoted to the study of that mysterious and unpronounceable art which gives man control over the world of spirits, that he ultimately became a powerful adept in it. He lived on the banks of the river Dulnan, in Strathspey, and his fame went so much abroad, that his name was never mentioned without reverential awe. Whilst involved in the pursuit of these studies, he was much used to take solitary walks, during which it was believed that he held high converse with beings rarely brought within the reach of human communing.

He was walking one evening on the lonely shore of Loch-an-dorbe. The sky was calm, but the air was hot and sulphurous, and the sun went down in a blood-red haze, that the gifted eye of Macgregor knew to be portentous. Wrapped in his plaid, he leaned against a huge stone, and stood earnestly gazing at the sinking orb till it had altogether disappeared. He read therein that some mighty deed was to be achieved, and he wound himself up to encounter whatever adventure might befall him.

Suddenly the black waters of the lake began to heave from their centre without any seeming cause. Not a breath of wind stirred them, yet they came boiling outwards, so as at once to dash their waves on every part of the surrounding shores. A dark object was seen to bound forth upon the beach at no great distance from the spot where Macgregor stood. A less strongly fortified heart would have quailed with fear, but his was armed with potent spells. He stretched his eyeballs towards the object, when, less to his astonishment than delight, he beheld a black horse, of immense size, and of beautiful proportions, approaching him through the lurid twilight. On he came, prancing proudly along the strand, pawing the ground from time to time, and neighing aloud with a voice of

thunder, while blue lightnings were ever and anon darting from his expanded nostrils, and his eyes were shining like stars. It required not Macgregor's skill to know that this was no ordinary horse, but his superhuman knowledge made him at once aware that it was the water-kelpie himself, and he watched his coming with a heart beating high with hope. Well instructed as to the measures which it now became necessary for him to adopt, he stood aside behind the large stone, and employed certain charms which he knew would aid in his concealment; and as this terrific incarnation of the spirit of the waters was curvetting grandly past him, he sprang suddenly out upon him, and, seizing his bridle with his left hand, he raised aloft his gleaming claymore with his right, and cut it out of the water-kelpie's head at one blow. In an instant the terrible spirit was metamorphosed into the shape of a man of huge and very formidable appearance.

"Give me back my bridle, thou son of earth!" cried he, in a voice like the roaring of a cataract.

"No!" said Macgregor, boldly; "I have won it, and I shall keep it."

"Then," roared the enraged spirit, "you and it shall never enter your house together!"

Macgregor staid not to hear more, but ran off in the direction of his home, from which he was then distant a good many miles. The enraged spirit came roaring and howling after him. Ten thousand floods pouring down over the rocky ridge of Ben Nevis could not have created so appalling a combination of terrific sounds. The hot breath of the fiend came about Macgregor as he flew, as if it would have threatened suffocation. Lucky was it for my granduncle that the kelpie, in losing his bridle, had also lost with it, for the time at least, the power of becoming a horse, else had his chance of escape been small indeed. As it was, however, it seemed as if Macgregor had suddenly acquired a large proportion of those racing qualities which were derived from that magical virtue so strongly inherent in the bridle which he bore; for he appeared, even to himself, rather to skim than to run over the vast extent of moors, hills, and bogs that lay between him and his own home, scarcely bending the heather tops in his way, so lightly and rapidly did his feet fly over the ground. But great as was the supernatural speed he had acquired, that of the water-kelpie was so little short of it, that the wicked spirit was close at his heels when he reached his own house. With a presence of mind, and an adroitness, which no one but an experienced and expert

adept in the management of a contest with powers naturally so superior to man, could have commanded or exercised, he avoided entering by the door, although it stood yawning temptingly wide to receive him. Luckily a window was open. “Hulloo!” cried he hastily to his wife, whom he happily observed within, “catch this in your apron!” And, throwing the bridle to her through the window, he cunningly avoided the denunciation which the kelpie had uttered against him.

No sooner did the kelpie perceive that he was thus outwitted, than he shrieked so loud that all the hills of Strathspey re-echoed again.—Yes, you need not stare, gentlemen; I tell you that the mountains echoed again, as if the lofty Craig Ellachie had rent itself from its foundations, and rolled itself into the river Spey. The water-kelpie disappeared, and, what is strange, he has never since been seen by mortal man. But my grand-uncle Macgregor had his bridle, which, as you see, afterwards descended from him to me.

The story of the acquirement of the Mermaid’s Stone is no whit less extraordinary than that of the bridle. The stone came to me from my maternal grandfather, who gained it by the superhuman powers which he possessed; for in my veins two most potent streams of necromantic blood have united themselves, though it would ill become me to say that I have ever equalled my ancestors. After having made frequent visits to the sea coast, my grandfather at last found out the spot where a beautiful mermaid was wont to sport amid the shallows, and sit on a rock, to comb her long hair, and to sing the most exquisite melodies. Long and anxiously did he watch her motions, till he perceived her one day combing her lovely tresses over her face and bosom, altogether unconscious that she was observed. Arming himself with certain spells which he possessed, which gave him superhuman powers, he crept into the sea from the rocky point where he lay concealed, and wading silently towards the stone where she sat, he came behind her, and clasping her eagerly in his arms, he held her fast, and, in spite of all her wailings, her lamentations, and her struggles, he succeeded in carrying her on shore. When fairly on land, she became exceedingly helpless, so that he had no farther trouble with her, and, delighted with his fair prize, he brought her home in triumph. There he made a soft bed for her upon the rafters of the house; and although he was unwillingly compelled by prudence to make sure of her by subjecting her to the restraint of tying her to the couples of the roof, he in all other respects lavished the utmost kindness upon her.

So very much, indeed, was my grandfather taken up with his new acquisition,

that my grandmother began to grow jealous of his attentions to the fair sea nymph; and, more out of spite, perhaps, than from any real wickedness, she began to encourage the visits of a young man who had been formerly attached to her. Now, strange as it may seem, it is no less true, that, great as were my grandfather's powers in the art magic, he was yet unable thereby to discover the fact, that his wife received the visits of this lover, on certain occasions, when his trifling affairs required his absence from home. Now, it happened one day that my grandfather returned so suddenly, and so unexpectedly, that his wife was compelled to conceal the youth hastily behind a bed. The lady was in a terrible taking, you may believe; but she so far subdued her agitation as to receive her husband with every possible appearance of kindness and affection.

"I dreamed a strange dream last night," said she, after fully recovering her presence of mind, and smiling gaily. "I dreamed that I put both my hands over your eyes, and yet you saw as well as if they had not been there."

"Come try, then!" replied her husband sportively, taking what she said as the mere prelude to some little innocent matrimonial frolic; "come try then, my dear. I believe I can see as far into a millstone as most people."

"No doubt you can," said his spouse, laughing outright, and approaching him with a merry air, she clapped her hands so firmly over his eyes that he was completely blindfolded, "now can you see?" exclaimed she.

"No!" replied the husband, "not one whit."

"Stay a little," cried his wife, laughing heartily again, "depend upon it this miraculous light will come to you at last!"

"Aye, aye!" cried he, struggling till he escaped from her hands, and then kissing her heartily, "I see now well enough." But, alas! my grandfather's vision had come too late, for the lover had availed himself of this brief opportunity, so cunningly afforded him, to make his escape.

The mermaid, who was seated on the rafters above, laughed aloud with an unearthly laughter, as she witnessed the trick that had been played to my grandfather. To divert her husband's attention from a mirth that at first appalled her, the lady, with great presence of mind, threw down the girdle-stone, a flat

stone, which in those primitive times was used for firing the oaten cakes, instead of the iron plate of that name, which now forms so important an article of furniture in the kitchen of every Scottish cottage. The stone was broken to pieces, and the lady's loud lamentation for this apparently accidental misfortune, quickly diverted her husband's attention from the mysterious merriment of the mermaid, and having thus effected her purpose, she threw the fragments of the stone out on the dunghill.

The poor mermaid pined and sighed for her native element, until she wrung the heart of her captor to pity.

"Take me but down to the sea," said she with her sweet voice, "take me but down to the sea, and put me but into the waves—but three yards from the shore—and it shall be better for thee than all the good thou can'st gain by keeping me here."

Softened to compliance at last, my grandfather did take her down from the rafters, and carrying her to the coast, he waded into the sea with her, the three yards she had specified, and put her gently down amid the waves, near the very stone where he had originally caught her. The joy of this beautiful marine spirit in finding herself thus again bathing in the invigorating waters of her own native ocean, after having been so long hung up, as it were, on the rafters of a Highland cottage, to be smoked like an Aberdeen haddock, or a kipper salmon, may be easily imagined. But, although wicked people might perhaps impute her parting speech more to that natural love of scandal which is said to belong to her sex, than to any strong feeling for my grandfather, yet we must say, that her words and her counsel shewed that her gratitude was no less abundant than her joy. Turning to him who had treated her so compassionately, she passed her taper fingers gracefully through her long silken tresses, and thus addressed him with her siren tongue:—

"Travel not so oft nor so far from home again! Ill luck attends that home whence the master often wanders. Dost thou remember my loud laugh on that day when thy wife broke the girdle stone? It was because she made a fool of thee by blinding thine eyes that her lover might escape unseen. Be wiser in future, and never leave home; and when you go back now, look among the straw where the broken bits of the girdle stone were thrown, and you will find that which will be a treasure to you and to your children for ever."

With these words she dived among the breakers and was seen by him no more. My grandfather returned home rather chopfallen; but on searching where the mermaid had indicated to him, he found that very stone, which has now, for three generations, been the agent in performing so many wonders.

THE DOMINIE DEPARTS.

Soon after quitting the dwelling of the Warlock, we were doomed to lose the company of one, with whom we were all much more unwilling to part.

DOMINIE MACPHERSON.—I can hardly bring myself to tell you, gentlemen, that I must now—sore against my will—take my humble leave of you. My road to my brother's house lies north over the hill there. But ere I go, I am truly glad to have it in my power to put you under the guidance of my good friend, Serjeant Archy Stewart. I sent him a message last night to come and meet us here; and there is the very man coming over the knoll, with his Sabbath-day's jacket and bonnet on.—How is all with you, Serjeant? My certy, I need not ask, for you look stout and hearty.

SERJEANT ARCHY STEWART.—Thank ye, Mr. Macpherson, I cannot complain. I am a little the worse for the wear—but my old legs, such as they be, are fit enough for the hill yet. I am glad to see you well back in the country again.

DOMINIE.—Thank ye, Serjeant. Now, my good man, these are the three gentlemen you are to guide. Three better gentlemen you never fell in with in all your travels. You must do all you can for them; and, above all things, be sure to give them plenty of your cracks. They like to hear all manner of auld-warld stories; so, as you must put on a budget of their provisions on your back—which, by the bye, will be like Æsop's burden, always growing less,—you may e'en lighten yourself as you go of as many of the auncient legends which you carry in your head as may help to ease your travel.

SERJEANT.—Uh! I'll not be slack at that, Mr. Macpherson, I promise ye, if it be the pleasure of the gentlemen.

I shall not attempt to describe the scene of our parting with the worthy

schoolmaster. It threw a gloom over us all. As for the good man himself, his voice trembled—his lip quivered—and his eyes filled with moisture, when he pronounced that most unpleasant of all words—farewell—and gave us the last cordial shake of the hand, pouring out his best wishes and blessings upon us. He then put his stick firmly to the ground, as if to help his failing resolution, and, as he took his way over the hill, he turned and waved—and turned and waved, twenty times at least, e'er he disappeared from our sight.

Our attention was now directed towards Serjeant Archy Stewart, who was cheerfully occupying himself in shouldering a portion of our necessaries. He was a veteran of about sixty years of age, of middle size, and of a hardy, wiry, though not very robust frame. His fresh coloured countenance was lighted up by a pair of small, grey, and very intelligent eyes; and its bold forehead, aquiline nose, high cheek-bones, and prominent chin and lips, exhibited traits of a very undaunted and indomitable resolution, which his whole appearance showed had been well tried by hardships. All this, however, was tempered and sweetened with so perfect an expression of courtesy and good humour, pervading every line of his weather-beaten features, that he instantly gained the golden opinions of our party. After adjusting the wallet to his back, he pointed his hazel stick to the grass, and led the way before us with an activity much beyond his years.

CLIFFORD.—Capital fishing hereabouts, no doubt, Mr. Stewart?

SERJEANT.—Just grand, sir—no better in this, or any other country side.

CLIFFORD.—You know the river well, I suppose?

SERJEANT.—Few should know it better, sir—for I've known it ever since I could look out over the nest.

CLIFFORD.—You are a native of these mountains, then?—Come! we have been told that you are full of their legendary lore, and we look to have much of it out of you ere we part.

SERJEANT.—I am sure your honor is welcome to as much as you can take and I can give you.

CLIFFORD.—Come away then—you shall begin, if you please, by giving us your

own history.

SERJEANT.—Oh troth, sir, my history is little worth; but, such as it is, you shall have it. I was born in this very glen here—for I am come of the Clan-Allan Stewarts, who were the offspring of Sir Allan Stewart, who was said to have been a natural son of the Yearl of Moray.

AUTHOR.—What Earl of Moray was that, Archy?

SERJEANT.—Really and truly I cannot tell you, sir. But this I know well enough, that them Clan-Allan Stewarts were a proud, powerful, domineering race, and always reported to have been very troublesome customers to those who happened to have any feud with them. I've heard say, indeed, that while they boore sway here away, fint a man of any other name dared to blow his nose throughout the whole of Strathdawn without their leave being first asked and granted. Wild chields they were, I'll warrant ye.

AUTHOR.—That may be, Serjeant; but I shrewdly suspect that you are not altogether right in your genealogy. My belief is, that it does in reality go somewhat farther back than you suppose.

SERJEANT.—Do you think so, sir? Well it may be so.

AUTHOR.—I am inclined to think that you must be come of the old Stewarts, Earls of Atholl.

SERJEANT.—Aye, aye!—Yearls of Athol!—that would be strange. But what makes you think that, sir?

AUTHOR.—Why, we know that it was through the marriage of Alexander, third Earl of Huntly, with the Lady Johanna Stewart, daughter of one of these Earls, in 1474, that Strathdawn first came into the family of the Gordons, with whom it still remains. It is therefore clear that Sir Allan, your ancestor, must have come here considerably before that period; and if your forefathers, the Clan-Allan Stewarts, were such hard-headed, knock-me-down, domineering fellows as you would seem to say they were, it is by no means improbable that they may have managed, by the use of their swords, to bear sway here for many a long day, after the lands were chartered to the Gordons.

SERJEANT.—I have little doubt that your honor is perfectly right; and now I think on't, I remember an auncient legend of the Stewarts of Clan-Allan, in which a speech of the old Lord of Cargarf strongly supports the very view of the matter which you have so well explained. I never could very well understand it before —but now, when I put that and that together, I see the truth as clear as day light.

CLIFFORD (*taking out his tablets and writing*.)—I shall put you down for that same legend, Mister Serjeant; but in the meanwhile proceed with your own history, if you please.

HISTORY OF SERJEANT ARCHY STEWART.

Well, Gentlemen—as I was telling you, I was born in Strathdawn here—as pretty a glen as there is in all Scotland. Oh, what a bonny glen it was in my young days! You see plain enough, without my telling you, that there are no trees now in it to speak of—none, indeed, but a parcel of straggling patches and bushes of aller and birch and hazel about the bit water-runs and burnies, or hanging here and there on the brae sides. But when I was a boy, the hills were all one thick wood of tall trees, that gave shelter to great herds of deer in the winter. Now, alas! the trees have fallen, and the deer, annoyed and persecuted by sheep, shepherds, and sheep-dogs, have longsyne retreated to the upper mountains and vallies of the Cairngorms, save may be, at an *anterin*[1] time, when severe weather on the heights, may drive an odd few of them down upon us for a short season.

Well, gentlemen—not to detain you with my school-boy days—(for I *was* at school, gentlemen—and not so bad a scholar neither)—when I grew up to be a stout lad, I left the glen, with six others of my own age, to go and seek for work in the south country. I shall never forget that day that we left it. We went off full of life and joy—for we thought but little of leaving our friends or the scenes of our youth, since we trusted that the same firm legs that were carrying us away could at any time bring us back to them the moment we had the will to return. We panted to see the world, and it was now opening before us. All the fanciful dreams of our boyhood were, as we thought, now about to be realized. Light, I trow, were our hearts, and full were we of hopes, as we made our way across the Grampians, and in a few days these hopes were realized, by our finding ourselves busily employed, and working hard, though at good wages, in a quarry near Cupar in Fife.

There we continued for some time perfectly contented with our labour, as well as with the price of it, till John Grant of Lurg, grandson of the famous Robert of

Lurg, well known by the nick-name of *Old Stachcan*, or the stubborn——

CLIFFORD (*breaking in on the Serjeant's narrative*.)—What! the fierce looking fellow whose picture we saw at Castle Grant with a pistol in his hand?

SERJEANT.—Just exactly—the very same, sir—he has a pistol in his hand in the picture, and well, I promise you, did he know how to use it when he was in the body. Well, it was his grandson, John of Lurg, who, some how or other, smelt us out in the place where we then were in Fife; and as he was at that time raising men for a company, you may well believe that his joy was not small when he thus came, like a setting dog, to a dead point on such a covey of stout young Hillantmen in a quarry. He soon contrived to get about us altogether, and with a hantel of fair words, and mony a bonny speech about our Hillant hills—Hillant glens—Hillant waters—Hillant lasses—and, what was more to his purpose at the time, about Hillant deeds of arms—all of which, observe ye, gentlemen, were made over a reeking bowl of punch that you might have swum in, he very soon succeeded in stirring up the fire of military ambition within our souls, until he ultimately so inflamed us, that, with all the ease in life, he quickly converted us, who were nothing unwilling, from hard-working quarriers, into gentlemen sodgers, by enlisting us, all in a bunch, into the ninety-seventh regiment, or Inverness Highlanders.

I need not tell you all the outs-and-ins of adventures that befel me while I was in the ninety-seventh, in which corps I remained about two years and a half. But I may mention to you, that I was serving with it when I got my first wound—I mean this bit crack here, gentlemen—(and he pulled up his trews, and shewed his right leg immediately below the knee, which was shrunken up to half the thickness of the other, from having had the greater part of the muscles utterly destroyed.)—Some way or another, they took it into their heads to put us on board of the Orion, one of the ships of Lord Bridport's squadron, to act as marines—an odd sort of duty truly for Hillantmen, and one, I'll assure you, that we by no means liked over much, seeing that, on board of a ship, we were obliged to stand to be peppered at like brancher crows on a tree, without the power of having our will out against the villains, by charging them with the baggonet, as we should have done had we been opposed to them on dry land; and, indeed, we soon felt the frost of this, when we came to be engaged in the action fought with the French fleet on the 23d of June 1795.

On that day, the French had twelve line-of-battle ships, besides a number of frigates and other smaller vessels. From all their manœuvres it was very clear that they did not wish to face us—for they stole off in a very dignified manner, never looking over their shoulders all the time, as they were fain to have made us believe that they never saw us at all, or that we were quite beneath their notice. But it was no time for us to stand upon ceremony.—We after them full sail, and we soon made them condescend to attend to us. In spite of all they could do we brought them to action in L'Orient Bay. There we lethered them handsomely, and we very speedily took from them three great ships, the Alexander, the Formidable, and the *Tigger*; and, if it had not been for the batteries on shore, there was no doubt that we should have had every keel of them. Well, you see, gentlemen, a large splinter of oak—rent away from the ship's side by a cannon shot—took me just below the knee, and demolished the shape of my leg in the ugly fashion I showed you this moment. But I was young then, and hearty, and no very easily daunted or cast down, so that I was soon out of the doctor's list, and on duty again.

But what was far worse than all the wounds that my body could have suffered, though it had been shot and drilled through and through like a riddle, was that which befel me at Hilsea barracks after we returned to Britain. You know very well, gentlemen, that the Bible says, "a wounded speerit who can bear?" Now, you may guess what were the wounds of my speerit, and, consequently, what were my sufferings, when I and some of my Hillant comrades were told, that we were to be immediately drafted into the ninth, or East Norfolk—an English regiment!

It was with sore hearts, and no little indignation, that we heard of the odious order for this cruel separation from our beloved native regiment—a corps in which we had all been like bairns of the same family in the bosom of our common mother—where our officers had been more like elder brothers to us than superiors—cracking with us, at times, in Gaelic, over all our old Hillant stories—and enjoying, as much as we did, our Hillant songs and Hillant dances—and many of them, having known sundry individuals among us when at home in boyhood, were as familiar and easy with us, at any ordinary bye-hour, as you, gentlemen, are pleased to be with me at this precious moment—and yet the di'el ae bit was our discipline any the waur o' that, whatever his Grace the gallant Duke of Wellington may say against such a system—and, for aught I know, he

may be right enough as to the English, who have not been brought up as we were in the allowance of such liberties,—but, as for us, when the parade hour came, or the time for duty, all such familiarities ceased, and every one filled his own place, like the wheel of a watch, to be turned at the will of him who was above him.—You may easily conceive, then, that banishment, or even death itself, would have been better to us than the being thus torn from such a regiment for the express purpose of being joined to a corps composed of Englishmen, with whom we could neither crack of our homes, nor of our Hillant hills, nor sing Gaelic songs, nor tell auncient stories, nor speak about Ossian, nor hear the pipes play, nor dance the Hillant-fling.—And then, instead of the kind and brotherly correction of our Hillant officers, the very slightest sound of whose word of reproof brought the blush of shame into our cheeks, and was as effectual a punishment to us as if we had been brought to the halberts—think what it was to us to be snubbed by some cross tempered upsetting Sassenach, who could know nothing of our nation's temper or disposition, and who might perhaps, of a morning, order our backs to be scored, with as little remorse as he would order a beef-steak to be brandered for his breakfast.—Oh it was a terrible change!—Our very speerits were just altogether broken at the very thought of it, and we actually ceased to be the same men.

But, gentlemen, if this was the effect produced on our minds by the mere anticipation of this most bitter change in our fate, what think ye was the misery of body which we sustained, and, especially, what think ye was my misery, when I, who never wore aught else but a kilt from the day I was born till that accursed moment, was crammed, in spite of all I could say or do to the contrary, hip and thigh, into a pair of tight regimental small-clothes!—Aye, you may laugh indeed gentlemen—but if anybody was to tie your legs together with birken woodies, as they have tied the fore-legs of yon pouny that you see feeding yonder in the bit meadow at the foot of the brae, and if you were then to be bidden to climb up the steepest face of Ben-Machduie, you could not be more helpless, or more ill at ease than I was. As for drilling, you might as well have set up a man in a sack to march.

"Step out!" cried they eternally—"why the devil don't you step out?"

But it was just altogether ridiculous to cry out any such thing to me, for fint a step could I take at all, unless they had letten me step out of my breeks.—I was in perfect torture with them.—The very circulation of my blood was stopped—

my nether man was rendered entirely numb and powerless. Nay, had I been built up mid man into a brick-wall I might have stepped out just as well.

Now, I would have you to understand, gentlemen, that especially and above all things, the confounded articles grippit and pinched me most desperately over the henches. The joints of my henches were so bound together in their very sockets by their pressure as to be rendered altogether useless; and the torture I endured in these quarters became so great, that I felt I could bear it no longer. I sat down, therefore, to hold a consultation with myself what was best to be done; and, after as cool and calm a consideration of my lamentable case as my extreme state of misery would allow, I came, in my own private council of war, to the determination, that I had only three things to choose from, and these were,—to desert—to cut my throat—or to cut my breeches; and, after having much and duly weighed these different evil alternatives, I finally resolved to adopt the last of them.

Having come to this resolution, I then began, like a skilful engineer, narrowly to examine the horrid instruments of my sufferings, in order to ascertain how and where I could most easily make a breach in them, and one that was most likely to give the greatest ease to myself. A little farther thought and observation soon convinced me, that, as the parts most grievously afflicted, were those which your masters of fortification would have called the *sailliant* angles of my henches to right and left, and especially as on these hinged much of the motion of the whole man, it was clear that the proposed attempt to work myself relief should be first tried in those two points. I lost not a moment, therefore, in carrying my plan into execution. I immediately borrowed a pair of shears from a sodger's wife; and, sitting down regularly before my breeches, like an experienced general about to besiege a fortress, I fairly attacked the two *sailliant* angles of the bastion, and carried them by storm; and having, with the greatest nicety, cut out a round piece of the cloth of three or four inches in width, directly over each hip-joint, I ventured to thrust my limbs within the very garrison of my breeches; and really, gentlemen, the ease I obtained in consequence of this bold operation is not to be described.

So innocent was I, and so utterly unconscious of even a suspicion that I had done any thing wrong, that when the drum beat, I went off to the private parade of the company I had been attached to, with my heart almost as much eased as my henches; nay, it was absolutely bounding with benevolence, and brimful with the

earnest desire and intention of spreading the blessed discovery I had made, and making it widely known among my Hillant comrades, so that all of them who might be in the same state of misery as I had been, might forthwith proceed to benefit themselves, as I had done, by the bright discovery I had made. Rejoicing in my ease, therefore, I strode across the barrack-square, with a step so much wider and grander than any I had lately been able to use, that I felt a pride in the excellence of my invention which I cannot possibly describe. I halted for a moment—stretched out, first my right leg, and then my left, just as I have seen a fowl do upon its perch—and then, clapping my hand upon the new made hole on either side of me, I chuckled for joy.

“Hah!” cried I; “breeches do they call you? By my faith, then, but I have made you more like your name by these well-imagined breaches of my own contrivance, which I have so ingeniously opened through your accursed sides.”

I then bent myself down, and made a spring into the air; after which, being quite satisfied that a paring or two more off the edges of the round holes would make all nearly right, I walked on with an air of dignified self-satisfaction that was not to be mistaken. But I had not come within ten yards of the spot where the company was falling in, when I heard the serjeant exclaim,—

“My heyes! look at that ere Ighland savage! I’m damned if he arn’t been cutting big oles in his Majesty’s rigimental breeches!”

A loud horse-laugh burst out from among the men, and the serjeant joined heartily in it. But it was no laughing matter to me; I was cut to the soul. All our horrible anticipations of English officers, halberds, and cat-o’-nine-tails, came smack upon me at once. I was overwhelmed—I grew dizzy—and, before I had well recovered myself, I was marched off to the guard-house under the charge of a corporal and a file of men, and a written crime was given in against me in these terms.

“Privut Archbauld Stewart of Captin Ketley’s compnay, confined by order of Sargunt Nevett, for aving cut two big oles in the ipps of a pair of riggimental britches belonghing too is Magesty King George the Third.”

Well, gentlemen, there was I left in the guard-house for some hours a prisoner. But if I was confined in one way, I took good care to put myself very much at

my ease in another; for I pulled off my tormentors altogether, and sat quite coolly and comfortably without them. But I was sore enough at heart, for all that; for, independent of the fearful prospect of the unrelenting punishment that awaited me, the disgrace of confinement to which I had thus, for the first time in my life, been subjected, and that so unjustly, stung me to the very heart. For a good hour or more I could do nothing but grind my teeth with absolute vexation and rage; but at length I began to gather some command of myself, and to think of the necessity of making up my mind as to what was to be done. I recalled the three evil alternatives, from which I had already made that which had now proved to be so unfortunate a selection, and as that had so miserably failed me, I continued for sometime swinging backwards and forwards, like a bairn in a shuggy-shue,[2] between the two that yet remained to be tried, and I had not yet made up my mind on the subject, when the serjeant appeared, and ordered me to put on my breeches and follow him. I obeyed like a man who gets up from his straw to go out and be hanged. But there was one great difference between such a poor wretch and me, very much in his favour, for as his fetters in such a case are taken off, I was on the contrary condemned to buckle on mine.

I did follow the serjeant as he bade me, but notwithstanding the outlets I had made in the breeches for the joints of my hench bones, and the comparative ease I had thereby formerly enjoyed, yet the few hours I had had in the guardhouse of a freedom of limb resembling that which I was wont to enjoy in my old kilt, made me feel so strange upon thus recommitting my joints to the thraldom of the accursed garments, that I went shaughling along after him, as if they had undergone no improvement at all. He took me directly to Captain Ketley’s quarters, and whilst I was on my way thither, I was compelled to bring my doubts to a hasty conclusion, and so I resolved that of the two plans now only remaining for me to choose from, desertion should be first tried, seeing that if it should fail me, I might cut my throat afterwards, for that if I should cut my throat first, I should not afterwards find it an easy matter to desert. I had no more time than just enough to settle this point with myself, when the serjeant rapped at our captain’s door.

“Come in!” cried Captain Ketley, in what sounded in my ear like a tremendous voice.

“Privut Archbauld Stewart and his cut breeches, your honour!” cried the

serjeant, ushering me without ceremony into the middle of the room.

There I stood with my head up, and in the military attitude of attention, the which, as you will naturally observe, gentlemen, was, of all others, out of all sight the most convenient and best chosen attitude for me at the time; for, as you will understand, the palms of my two hands were thus exactly applied to the two holes I had made, though the size of the holes themselves was so great that I could by no means entirely cover them. But if I could have done so, this well conceived manœuvre of mine would have been of no avail.

“Stand at ease!” cried the serjeant, giving me at the same time a smart tap on the back with his rattan cane.

“Serjeant,” said I impatiently, “you know very well that it’s not possible for me to stand at ease in thir fashious breeks of mine.”

I saw that Captain Ketley had a hard task of it to keep his gravity.

“What is this which has been reported to me of you, sir?” demanded he with as stern a look as he could possibly assume; “how comes it that you have taken upon you to destroy a pair of new regimental breeches in that manner?”

“Captain,” said I, now quite brought to bay, and making up my mind to go through with it, whatever the consequences might be; “Captain, if your honor will but hear me, I will speak.”

“Speak on then,” said Captain Ketley, “provided you say nothing that as an officer I may not listen to. Serjeant Nevett, you may retire.”

“You need not fear that I shall offend you, Captain Ketley,” said I, “I have been over long accustomed to speak to officers to forget the respect and duty I owe to them as a sodger, and since your honour is so kind, I will be as short as I can. I enlisted, you see, to serve in the Inverness Highlanders, and in so doing I covenanted to fight in company with my own countrymen, and in the freedom of a kilt. Now, against all bargain—against all manner of justice—against my will—and against the very nature of a Hillantman, I have been thrust, first into this English regiment, and then into this pair of English small clothes—well may they be so called, I’m sure. Captain Ketley, all this is most unreasonable. You

might as well put a deer of the mountains into a breachame, and expect to plough the land with him, as to put a Hillantman into such cruel harness as thir things, with the hope that he can do his work in them; and, although I am as wishful as any man that serves King George can be, to spend the last drop of my blood, as some of it has flowed already in the cause of his Majesty, God bless him! and for our common country, yet I will just tell your honour plainly and honestly—though with all manner of respect—that I will not stay in this Ninth Regiment to be kept in the eternal torture of thir breeks, though I should see the men drawn out to shoot me for trying to desert—for death itself is desirable rather than that I should longer endure such misery as this. So I say again, that although I am quite willing to serve King George in any regiment he may be pleased to put me into that wears the kilt, yet I will take the first moment I can catch, to run away from such disgraceful and heartbreaking bondage as this to which I am now subjected."

"No, no, my good fellow," said Captain Ketley, who had all this time had his own share of trouble in keeping himself from laughing, and who now gave way and laughed outright; "you must not run away from us, Archy. We cannot afford to lose so good a man. We must do all we can to put you at your ease with us. Your complaints are certainly not altogether unreasonable. But you should not have cut holes in your breeches—you should have come and stated your grievances to me. Remember in future, that you will always find me ready to listen to any well-founded complaint you may have to make. Meanwhile,—see here," said he, taking a pair of old loose trowsers out of his chest, and tossing them to me,—"wear these for a few days, till your limbs get somewhat accustomed to the thraldom of small clothes, and until we can get you fitted with a better and easier pair of your own. I shall see about your immediate release from confinement, and that you and your Highland comrades be excused from duty until you are more at home in your new clothing. If you behave yourself well, you shall always find a friend in me."

"God bless your honour!" cried I, with a joyful and grateful heart, and, if you will believe me, gentlemen, almost with the tears in my eyes; "your honour has spoken to me just like one of our own kind Hillant officers of the Ninety-seventh. I'll go all the world over with you, though my breeks were of iron!"

Well, gentlemen, Captain Ketley was as good as his word—he was a kind and steady friend to me as long as he lived. He inquired of me whether I could read

and write; and, finding that I could do both—aye, and spell too—and that somewhat better, as I reckon, than Serjeant Nevett,—and, moreover, that I was not a bad hand at counting,—he got me made a corporal in less than a fortnight, and, very soon after that, a serjeant. But, woe's me! a few months had hardly passed away when Captain Ketley died. Many were the salt tears I shed over his grave, after we had given him our parting vollies, and no wonder, for he was one of the best friends I ever had in my life. I cannot think of him, even yet, without regret. Willingly would I have given my life for his at any time. But what is this miserable world, gentlemen, but a valley of sorrow?

Well, I got fond enough, after all, of the Holy Boys, as the old Ninth lads were called.

CLIFFORD (*interrupting*.)—How did they get that name, Archy?

SERJEANT.—Oh, I'll tell you that, sir.—You see, when they came from the West Indies, as a skeleton regiment, they were made up again with growing boys. Colonel Campbell of Blythswood tried to do them some good by getting them schoolmasters and Bibles. But the young rogues had been ill nurtured in the parent nest, and they used to barter their Bibles for gin and gingerbread. The Duke of York used to say of them, that they were every thing that was bad but bad sodgers—ha! ha! ha!

And now, gentlemen, I believe I have little more to tell you about myself, except that I got my jaw broken in two places by a musket ball in Holland, on the 19th of September 1799. See what a queer kind of a mouth it has made me in the inside here. You see I had been out superintending the working party in the redoubts, and I had returned, tired as a dog, to the barn where the light company were quartered, and had just laid my head on my wife's knee to take a nap—for I was married by this time—when a terrible thumping came to the door, and Corporal Parrot ran to see who was there. Now, it happened that one of our serjeants was sick, and the other had been killed.—It was Adjutant Orchard who knocked so loud.

"Where is Serjeant Stewart?" demanded he, in a terrible hurry, the moment he entered the place.

"Can't I do instead of him?" replied Corporal Parrot; "for he is just new out of

the trenches."

"No!" replied the Adjutant; "if he was new out of hell, I must have him directly."

"What's ado, sir?" demanded I, jumping up.

"You know as much as I do," replied the Adjutant; "but, depend upon it, we are not wanted to build churches. Get you out the light bobs as fast as you can."

Well, I hurried about and got out the light company with as little delay as possible; and no very easy matter it was to get hold of the poor fellows, knocked up as they were. Some of them I actually pulled out of hay stacks by the legs, as you would pull out periwinkles from their shells. The troops marched fifteen miles without a halt. We found the French and Russians hard at it, blazing away so that we could see the very straws at our feet as we marched over the sand. The balls came whistling about us like hail as we advanced. First came one, and knocked away the hilt of my sword; then came another, and cracked off the iron head of my halberd.

"If you go on at this rate, you villains," said I, "you'll disarm us altogether."

Then smack came another, whack through my canteen, and spilt all my brandy.

"Ye rascals!" said I, trying at the same time to save as much of it as I could in my mouth, "that is most uncivil. Ye are no gentlemen, ye scoundrels, to spill a poor fellow's drop of comfort in this way."

By and bye, half-a-dozen of balls or so went through the blanket I carried on my shoulders.

"By my faith," said I, "it's time now that I should return you my compliments for all your civilities, you vagabonds."

I stooped to take a musket from a dead Russian for my own defence. The piece was a rifle, and it was yet warm in his hand from the last discharge.

"By your leave, my poor fellow," said I, "I'll borrow your firelock for a shot or two, seeing that you have no farther use for it at this present time."

But dead as he was, the last gripe of departing life had made him hold it so fast, that I was obliged to twist it round ere I could make him part with it. I took off his cartridge-box by pulling the belt over his head. He had fired but two cartridges, and eighteen still remained. I loaded and fired twice; and I was just in the act of biting off the end of my third cartridge to fire again, when a musket ball took me in the left cheek, and knocked me over as flat as a sixpence on the ground. The captain of the company looked behind him, and seeing that I was still able to move my hands, he very humanely ordered a file of men to carry me to the rear. They lifted me up from the ground, and the whole world seemed to be going round with me. They supported me under the arms, and I staggered along like a drunk man. They took me to a barn, where I lay insensible for some time, until coming to myself somewhat, as I lay there, I saw two surgeons employed with the wounded. “You will have little trouble with me, gentlemen,” thought I within myself; “I shall be dead before you can get at me.” Just at this moment I heard one of the surgeons say to the other,—

“I believe I shall die of hunger.”

“I am like to faint from absolute want,” said the other.

I could not speak, but I beckoned.

“By and bye,” said one of the surgeons, shaking his head.

“Your turn is not come yet,” said the other.

I beckoned again, and pointed to the wallet at my side.

“Oh ho!” said the first surgeon crossing the place, and rapidly followed by the other,—“Oh ho! I comprehend you now. Let’s see what you have got in your larder.”

He put his hand into the wallet, and found some balls of oatmeal, which my wife, honest woman, had made by rolling them up with water, and then giving them a roast among the ashes. The two gentlemen devoured them with great glee. They then looked at my chafts, put some lint into the wound, and bound it up.

“Well,” thought I to myself, “a leaden ball made the wound, and a ball of

oatmeal has doctored it. Many thanks to my worthy wife, God bless her!”

After the doctors left us, the place, which was pitch dark, became hot and pestiferous, and the groans that came from some of the poor wretches put me in mind of pandemonium. I was for some time feverish and restless. I tried to stretch myself out at length, but I felt some one at my feet who would not stir all I could do. Though I could not speak, I was not sparing of my kicks, but still the person regarded me not. Next to me was Serjeant Wilson with a broken leg, and he was pressed upon by some one at his side. But the Serjeant had the full use of his tongue.

“Sir,” said he to his neighbour, for he was noted for being a very polite man, “will you do me the favour to lie a little farther over, and take your elbow out of my stomach.”

His civil request was disregarded, and there was no reply.

“Oh!” said the serjeant, “perhaps the gentleman is a furreiner; but all them furreiners understands French, so I’ll try my hand at that with him:—Moushee wooly wous have the goodness to takee your elbow out of my guts. Confound the fellow, what an edification he has had that he does not understand French. I’ve heard Ensign Flitterkin say that it is the language of Europe. Pray, sir, may I ax if you be a European? No answer,—by my soul then I may make bold to say that you are any thing but a civilian. Sir,” continued the serjeant, beginning now to lose patience altogether, and to wax very wroth, “I insist on your removing your elbow. I say, rascal! take your elbow out of my stomach this moment!”

And so the serjeant went on from bad to worse, till he swore, and went on to swear, at the poor man more and more bloodily the whole night. But neither his swearing, nor my kicking, could rid either of us of our troublesome companions. And it was no great wonder indeed—for when the day-light came, we discovered that they were two dead Russians!

“This is a horrible place!” exclaimed the principal surgeon when he came back in the morning. “As near as I can guess, one hundred and fifty-two men have died in this wretched barn since last night!—we must have the wounded out of this.”

Thanks to my wife’s oatmeal balls, which the grateful surgeons had not forgotten, my wounds were dressed the very first man. We were soon afterwards carried on hand-barrows by a Russian party down to the flat-bottomed boats, and so we were conveyed to the Texel. I bore the bullet home in my chafts, and it was cut out by an English doctor in Deal hospital. I was discharged on the 23d of June 1800. But my pension was granted before pensions were so big as they are now-a-days, so that I am but ill off compared to some who have come home from the late wars. But, thank God, I am contented, since I cannot make a better of it.

1

Accidental, and rarely occurring. ↑

2

A swing. ↑

GALLANTRY OF THE SEVENTY-FIRST HIGHLAND LIGHT INFANTRY.

Clifford.—How little known are the miseries to which the brave defenders of Britain's glory are subjected!—and how meagre is their reward, and how poor is their harvest of individual fame!—Our Nelsons and our Wellingtons, to be sure, are as certainly, as they are deservedly, destined to immortality of name. But is it not most painful to think that so many of our bravest hearts have gallantly fallen, to sleep in undistinguished oblivion? Your scene in the old barn, Serjeant, reminds me of an anecdote which I had from an officer of the Ninety-first Regiment.—It has never yet appeared in print, though it well deserves to be so recorded, as being worthy of that distinguished corps, the Seventy-first Highland Light Infantry, to which it belongs.

The circumstances took place in 1813, during the Peninsular War. The Seventy-first were at that time stationed with the Fiftieth and the Ninety-second, at St. Pierre, on the main road between Bayonne and St. Jean-pied-de-Port.—This was the key of Lord Hill's position on the river Adour, and the fire of musquetry brought against its defenders on the 13th December, was such as the oldest veterans had never before witnessed. The corps under Lord Hill, indeed, were on that day attacked by Soult's whole force. But so nobly did those fine regiments perform their duty, that the late Lieutenant-General the Honourable William Stewart, next day gave out an order, which I remember treasuring up in my memory as a masterpiece of soldier-like diction. I think the very words were these:—"The second Division has greatly distinguished itself, and its gallantry in yesterday's action is fully felt by the Commander of the Forces, and the Allied Army."

And well indeed had they merited this highly creditable testimonial of their good behaviour. But the carnage was great, and there were many who, alas! did not

survive to participate in the honour conferred by it. Several of the wounded, belonging to the respective corps, were huddled together in the lower storey of an old house, that stood upon the very ground on which the thickest part of the contest had taken place. Now it happened, that certain officers from different regiments had taken shelter in a room in the floor above, where they were refreshing themselves, after their fatigue, with such food and other restoratives as they could command, and among them was that officer of the Ninety-first who told me the facts to which he was an ear-witness.

The conversation of these gentlemen, though mingled now and then with many regrets for lost companions, had a certain temperate joy in it—a joy arising from a conviction that they had behaved like men—and which was tempered by strong feelings of gratitude to a kind Providence, who had preserved them amidst all the perils of the fight. Suddenly their talk was put an end to by the most heart-rending groans and shrieks of agony, that came up from the room below, through the old decayed floor. What mirth or joy there was among them, was altogether banished by the frequency and intensity of the screams, that betokened the mortal sufferings of a dying man. They sat for a time mutely, though deeply sympathizing, with the poor unfortunate from whom they came. At length they distinctly heard another faint, and apparently expiring voice, say, in a tone of rebuke,—"Haud your tongue, James, and bear your fate like a man. We'll soon be baith at ease.—But, in the mean time, haud your tongue, for there are folk aboon us that may be hearin' you; and if you have no respect for yoursell, recollect what you owe to the gallant Seventy-first Hillant Light Infantry, to which we baith belong."

This appeal had the desired effect. All that could now be heard, in the stillness of the night, was a low murmur. A surgeon, who was of the party, immediately went to administer what relief he might to the wretched sufferers. But in one short hour these heroic men had ceased to exist, and no one can now tell even the name of either of them.

AUTHOR.—A most touching anecdote!—What magnanimous fellows!

GRANT.—Their names should have been written by the hand of Fame herself, in letters of the purest and most imperishable gold!—Yet they have been allowed to sink into the sea of forgetfulness, and,

“Like the snow-falls in the river,
A moment white, then gone for ever.”

they have melted into oblivion—so far, at least, as this world is concerned.

CLIFFORD.—Yes; they sleep unremembered, whilst every lily-livered cobler, or tailor, who has handled his awl, or his bodkin, with no more peril to his person than may have lain on the point of one or other of these formidable weapons, has his tombstone—his death’s head and cross-bones—and his attendant cherubims—as well as his text and his epitaph.

SERJEANT.—Very true, sir—very true. What have such chields as these to do with fame? But for all that, we see fame arise to the silliest men, and from the most trifling causes.

GRANT.—Right, Archy. For instance, I remember a certain Highlander, who gained his fame in a way that may perhaps make you envious—for it is the tale of your unwhisperables that has brought him to my mind.

SERJEANT.—Aye, sir!—What was his story?

GRANT.—Why, the hero was a certain Rory Maccraw, who, despising the kilt which he had worn all his life, resolved, at all risks, to figure in a pair of those elegant emblems of civilization called breeches. At the present day, one may travel from the Tweed to the Pentland Firth without seeing such a thing as a kilt; but at the time of which I am now speaking, anything in the shape of breeches was just as rarely to be seen as the kilt is now. Rory had a pair made for him in some distant town, where, as they would say in Ireland, he had not been by when his measure was taken, and having put them on, he left his glen to go to a market. It was observed by his neighbours, that he never before took so long a time to walk the same distance, and, from his strange and stately manner of strutting, they attributed this circumstance to the pride he felt in his new garments. Arrived at the market, the expectation he had indulged in, that he was to excite the wonder and envy of all the people there, did not deceive him. He was followed, and stared at, and admired, and questioned wherever he went. If a dancing bear had waddled through the fair, he could not have had half the number of people after him. But like most of those who envy the lot of their neighbours, these good folks only saw the outside of things, and knew not the

misery which was covered by this fair external show. In the midst of their admiration, poor Rory was in torture. He would have given all he was worth, unmentionables and all, to have got rid of the admiring crowds that followed him; and at last, long before he had done half his business in the market—for as to pleasure, he could taste none of it—he, the envied, the observed of all observers, watched his opportunity to steal hobbling away down a back lane, whence he went limping in agony into the country. There, seating himself by the public way-side, regardless of what eyes might behold him, he pulled off the instruments of his suffering, and hanging them on the end of his staff, he placed it over his shoulder, and so trudged his way homeward, in defiance of the taunts, gibes, and laughter of the crowds which he fell in with by the way. But his fame was established; and ever afterwards he went by the name of Peter Breeks.

CLIFFORD.—Capital!

AUTHOR.—Well, Archy, to return to your own story, and the disappointment you have met with in the arrestment of your career of glory, I would fain comfort you with the old proverb, that a contented mind is better than riches.

SERJEANT.—That is very true, sir; and I am very thankful that I am blessed with that same. And although I got but little in the army but hard knocks, yet I would take them all over again, rather than that I should not have seen the many things I did see, as well as the heaps of queer human beings I met with during the few years I served. What is man, gentlemen, unless he gets the rust of home, and the reek of his own fire-side rubbed off him by travel? He can never be expected to speculate on any thing but the ducks in the dubbs, or the hens on the midden-head. Though I had a tolerable education for the like of me, what would I have been had I never been out of this valley? Not much better, I trow, than one of the stirks that are bred in it. Bless you, sirs, I saw a vast of human nature in my travels.

GRANT.—And thought much and well on it too, Archy, if I mistake not.

SERJEANT.—May be I did, sir,—and a very curious nature it is, I'll assure you. But, gentlemen, we must cross the water at this wooden bridge here.

AUTHOR.—If you had not seen so much by going into the world as you have done, Archy, I have great doubts whether that curiosity, which has since made

you pick up that great store of your native legends which you are said to possess, might not have lain entirely dormant.

SERJEANT.—Oh, bless your honour, I should never have thought of such things. It was the seeing so much that roused up the spirit of enquiry within me. And so it happened, that after I came back from the sodgering trade, this spirit could not rest till I had gathered up all the curious stories I could get. And then I fell tooth and nail upon books, so that, when I was not working, I was always reading histories, *novelles*, magazines, newspapers, and such like, so that I am not just altogether that ill informed. But stop a moment, gentlemen; do you see yon bright green spot in the hollow of the hill-side yonder above us?

GRANT.—Yes; but what is there wonderful about that, Archy?

SERJEANT.—There is nothing very wonderful about itself, indeed, but it is worth your remarking for all that. It is what we call in this country a *wallee*, that is, the quaking bog out of which a spring wells forth.

CLIFFORD.—Tut, Archy! There are few grouse shooters who have not experienced the treachery of these smooth-faced, flattering, but most deceitful water-traps.

SERJEANT.—Smooth-faced, flattering, and deceitful, indeed, sir. I've heard them compared by some to the fair sex, beauteous and smiling outside, and cruelly cold-hearted within. But I think any such comparison is most unjust, for my old woman never deceived me; and, as I have told you, if it had not been for her oatmeal balls I verily believe I should not have been here at this moment.

CLIFFORD.—It would ill become you, indeed, to slander the fair sex, Mister Serjeant, and depend upon it, you will not catch me doing so.

SERJEANT.—But about the wallee yonder; I was saying——

CLIFFORD.—Aye, the wallee; I shall never forget the first cold-bath I had up to the neck in one of them. It was all owing to the spite of a cunning old moorcock, which I had severely wounded. Out of revenge, I suppose, for the mortal injury I had done him, he chose to come fluttering down into the very middle of what I conceived to be a beautiful surface of hard green-sward. Being but a young

sportsman at the time, and very eager to secure my bird, who sat most provokingly *tock-tock-tocking* at me, as if he had bid me defiance, I ran down the bank, and made a bound towards him. In I went souse. I shiver yet to think of it—my very senses were congealed—and for a moment I verily believed that I had been suddenly transformed into the North Pole, and that the cock-grouse that fluttered around me was Captain Parry come to explore me. And, i' faith, if it had not been for the light foot and strong arm of the gilly who was with me, I believe I might have been sticking upright there, preserved in ice till this moment. There was a *moorish* bath for you!

SERJEANT.—They are most unchancy bits for strangers; that is certain, sir.

CLIFFORD.—Unchancy indeed! But if that is all you have to tell us about yonder place in the hill-side, Mr. Archy, you may save yourself the trouble of attempting to astonish me with your information; for, Sassenach though I be, I promise you that I have been long ago initiated into the full depth of the mystery.—Nymphs and Naiads of the crystal Aven, what a beautiful stream there is for fishing!

SERJEANT.—'Tis very good, indeed, sir. But yon wallee that I was speaking about would swallow a horse, with you on the top of it. Many a time have I thrust a long pole down into it without reaching any thing the least like firm ground. It would swallow that fishing-wand of yours, sir.

CLIFFORD.—(*Already employed in putting his rod together.*)—Plague choke it, I should be sorry indeed to see my rod go in any such way. It is one of the best Bond ever made; and though adapted, by means of these different pieces, to any size of stream, it was never intended for such deep sea fishing as you would put it to. I shall apply it to another purpose, my good serjeant. With this sky, the trouts there will take a grey mallard's wing with a yellow silk body, in great style.

SERJEANT.—But the wallee up yonder is worth your notice, because of an ould auncient monumental stone, that once stood on the dry bank beside it.

GRANT.—Ha! a monumental stone!—let us hear about that.

SERJEANT.—It was about seven feet high, sir, and the tradition regarding it is, that it was set up there in memory of a sad story that is connected with it.

AUTHOR.—A story, said you?

CLIFFORD.—Then, my good fellow, Serjeant Stewart, just have the kindness to sit down there, and tell us the particulars of your sad story, while I give a few casts here over this most tempting stream.

SERJEANT.—With all manner of pleasure, sir; I shall be happy to tell your honours all I have gathered about it. It is the very legend for which Mr. Clifford marked me down in his book.

Clifford immediately began to fish. Grant and I seated ourselves on the daisied bank of the river, one on each side of the serjeant. The gilly stretched himself at length on the grass, and was soon asleep—the pony with the panniers grazed as far around him as the length of his halter would let him, and my Newfoundland dog Bronte sat watching the trouts leaping, whilst Archy proceeded with his narrative, as nearly as I can recollect, in the following words; but if not always precisely in the serjeant's own language, at least I shall give it with a strict adherence to his facts.

LEGEND OF THE CLAN-ALLAN STEWARTS.

From the important correction which your honour has made upon my genealogy, I think I may now venture to say, with some confidence, that the time of my legend must be somewhere about the fifteenth century—how early in it I cannot say; but it is pretty clear that my ancestor, Sir Allan Stewart, must have lived about that period. As I have already told you, the whole of this country, hill and glen, was then covered with forests, except in such spots as were kept open by the art of man for pasture or for tillage, but of the latter, even of the rudest kind, I suspect there was but little hereaway in those days. I take it for granted that the chief of the Clan-Allan must have had his stronghold at the old tower of Drummin, though I do not mean to say that it was identically the same building that now exists there. It stands, as some of you perhaps know, gentlemen, a good way down the country from where we now are, on a point of table land considerably elevated above the valley, which is there rendered wider by the junction of the river Livat with the river Aven, and just in the angle between these two streams. When the noble old forests waved over the surrounding hills, leaving the quiet meadows below open in rich pasture, it must have been even yet a more beautiful place for man to dwell in than it is now,—and, let me tell you, that is saying a great deal.

My history begins towards the end of the life of Sir Allan Stewart, whose term of existence had been long, and no doubt boisterous enough, as you may very well guess. He was by this time so old as to be confined to his big oak chair, which was generally placed for him under the projection of the huge chimney of the ancient fire-place, or *lumm*, as we call it in Scotland; and there he sat, propped up with pillows, crooning over old ballads, and muttering old saws from morn till night, as if he now cared for nothing in this life, but to drone away the last dull measure of his time, like the end of some drowsy ill-composed pibroch, if such a thing there can be. But the lively interest which he took when any stirring

event occurred, which in any degree affected the honour or welfare of himself, his family or clan, sufficiently showed that all his martial fire was not extinguished; for then would it flash out from beneath his heavy eyelids—his bulky form would move impatiently on his seat, and he would turn his eyes restlessly towards his broadsword and targe, that hung conspicuously among the deers' heads, wolfs' skins, and the numerous warlike weapons that covered the walls, with an expression so animated, as very plainly to speak the ardour of his decaying spirit, which still, like that of the old war-horse, seemed thus to snuff up the battle from afar.

Sir Allan had two tall strapping sons by his first marriage—Walter and Patrick, both of them pretty men. To Walter, as the elder of the two, he looked as his successor, and, accordingly, he already acted in all things, and on all occasions, as his father's representative. After the death of their mother, Sir Allan had married a woman of lower degree, by whom he had a third son, called Murdoch, whose naturally bad dispositions had been fostered by the doting fondness of his old father. Murdoch's mother, at the time we are speaking of, was what we would call in our country phrase a handsome boardly-looking dame, of some forty years of age or so, whose smooth tongue and deceitful smile covered the blackest and most depraved heart.

"See, father!" said Walter Stewart to old Sir Allan, as he and his brother Patrick entered the hall one evening, followed by some of their people, with whom they had been all day engaged in the pursuit of a wolf, whose grinning countenance, attached to his shaggy skin, was borne triumphantly on the point of a hunting spear. "See here, father! we have got him at last. We have at last taken vengeance on the villain for his cruel slaughter of poor Isabel's child. Look at the spoils of the murdering caitiff who devoured the little innocent."

"Hath he not been a fell beast, father?" said Patrick, holding up the hunting spear before Sir Allan, and shaking the trophy.

"Ah!" said Sir Allan, rousing himself up, "a fell beast indeed!—aye, aye—poor child, poor child!—bring his head nearer to me, boy! Would I could have been with you! Aye, aye—dear me—age will come upon us. But I have seen the day, boys—aye, aye—och, hey!"

"Ho, there!" cried Walter Stewart, "what means it that there are no signs of

supper? By St. Hubert, but we have toiled long enough and hard enough to-day with legs, arms, spears, spades, and mattocks, to have well earned our meal! Where is brother Murdoch?—where is the Lady Stradawn?"

"Aye, aye," said the querulous old Sir Allan, "it is ever thus now-a-days. I am always left to myself—weary, weary is my life I am sure—and I am hungry—very hungry. Aye, aye."

"Thou shalt have thy supper very soon, father," said Patrick, kindly taking his hand; "and Walter and I will leave you but for a brief space, to rid us of these wet and soiled garments."

The two brothers then hastened from the hall to go to their respective chambers.

"Whose draggle-tailed beast was that I saw tied up under the tree beyond the outer gateway as we came in?" demanded Walter of his attendant, Dugald Roy.

"I have seen the beast before," replied Dugald. "If I am not far mista'en, it is the garron the proud Priest of Dalestie rides,—and a clever beast it would need to be, I am sure, for many a long, and late, and queer gate does it carry him, I trow."

"How came the animal there, Dugald?" demanded Walter quickly.

"If by your question, *how* the animal came there, you would ask what road he took, Sir Knight," replied Dugald, "I must tell you that the man that could answer you would need to deal with the devil, for no one but the foul fiend himself could follow the Priest of Dalestie; for, unless he be most wickedly belied, his ways follow those of the Evil One, as much as our good father, Peter of Dounan, is known to travel in the path of his blessed Master."

"Nay, but I would know from thee, in plain terms, where thou judgest that the rider of the horse may be?" said Sir Walter, impatiently.

"With your lady mother, the Lady Stradawn, I reckon," said Dugald, sinking his voice to a half whisper.

"Call her not my lady mother!" said Sir Walter, angrily, "my lady step-mother, if thou wilt, or my step-mother without the lady, for that, in truth, would better

befit her, disgrace as she hath been and still is to us all.—Here, undo this buckle! —But what, I pr'ythee, hath she to do with the proud Priest of Dalestie, as thou hast so well named him?"

"Nay, nothing that I know of, Sir Walter, unless it be to confess her," replied Dugald.

"Why, the good old father, Peter of Dounan, was here but yesterday, was he not?" exclaimed Sir Walter, "might he not have shriven her?"

"Father Peter was here sure enough," replied Dugald, "but it would seem that he is not to the lady's fancy."

"Beshrew her fancy!" cried Sir Walter, bitterly,—"Where could she, or any one, find a worthier confessor than Father Peter of Dounan? He is, indeed, a good and godly man, and, frail as he is in body, we know that he is always ready to run, as fast as his feeble limbs can carry him, wherever his pious duties or his charities may call him.—Moreover, he is at all times within reach, what need, then, hath she to send so far a-field for one whose character is, by every one's report, so very questionable—give me my hose and sandals, Donald.—Now thou may'st go.—By the Rood, I like not that pestilent and ill-famed fellow coming about our house! He hath more character for arrogance, and self-indulgence as a glutton and a toss-pot, than for sanctity.—It was an ill day for this country side when it was disgraced by his coming into it."

After muttering this last sentence to himself, Walter quickly descended the narrow stair, and approached the door of the lady's bower in another part of the building.—It was partially open.—He tapped gently, and, no answer being returned, he pushed it up, and great were his surprise and disgust at the scene which he beheld. The Lady Stradawn was sitting, or rather reclining in her arm-chair, with a pretty large round table before her, covered with good things.—A huge venison pasty occupied the centre of it, and around it stood several dishes, in no very regular order, containing different dainties. Two well-used trenchers, showed that some one else had assisted her, in producing the havoc that appeared to have been wrought in the pie, and among the other viands—and a black-jack half full of ale—and a tall silver stoup, which, though now empty, still gave forth a potent odour of the spiced wine which it had contained—together with two mazers of the same metal, which bore the marks of having been used in the

drinking of it, proved that the guest, who had just left the lady, must have been a noble auxiliary in this revel, which, judging from the fact of an over-turned drinking horn that lay on the floor, and one or two other circumstances that appeared, must have been a merry one. The deep sleep in which the lady lay, and her flushed countenance, left no doubt in Sir Walter's mind that she had enjoyed a full share of this private banquet. By the time he had leisure to make himself fully aware of all these particulars, the lady's bower-woman appeared at the chamber door. She started, and would have retreated—but Sir Walter seized her by the wrist, and adroitly put a question to her before she had time to recover from her confusion.

"When did the priest of Dalestie go forth from hence, Jessy?" demanded he.

"I have just come from seeing him to horse, Sir Knight," said the woman, trembling.

"Well, Jessy, thou mayest go; I would speak with thy mistress in private," said Sir Walter, seeing her out, and shutting the chamber door; and then, turning to the Lady Stradawn, and shaking her arm till he had awakened her. "Madam," said he, "what unseemly sight is this?"

"Sis—sis—sis—sight, Sir Priest?" replied the lady, with her eyes goggling; "sis—sight! What mean ye, Sir Priest? he! he! he!"

"Holy Saint Andrew grant me temper!" said Sir Walter. "Madam, Sir Allan waits for thee to give him his evening meal: he is impatient. Sir Allan, I say!"

"Tut! hang Sir Allan," cried the lady, still unconscious as to whom she was addressing, and taking him by the arm; "hang Sir Allan, as thou thyself saidst but now, thou most merry conditioned mettlesome, Sir Priest. He! he! he! Hang the old stobber-chops, and let's be jolly while we can. Come; sit down—sit down, I say. You need not go yet. Did I not tell thee that Jessy keeps the door?"

"I am not the priest, vile woman!" cried Sir Walter, with indignation, whilst, at the same time, he shook her off with a force and rudeness that seemed almost to bring her back to her senses. "Did'st thou not now, alas! alas! to our shame, most unworthily fill that place once occupied by my sainted mother, and that thine exposure would prove but the greater dishonour to our house, by the holy Rood,

I would call up every thing that hath life within these walls, down to the very cat, that all eyes might behold thy disgrace, and then should'st thou be trundled forth, and rolled into the river, that the fishes might gorge themselves on thine obscene carcase!"

Bursting from the apartment, Walter hastily sought the hall; and the evening meal having been by this time spread, he called to the retainers to be seated, and hastened to busy himself in attending to his father, in supplying him with the food prepared for him, and with such little matters as he knew the old man most liked—feeding him from time to time like a child.

"Aye, aye, that's good," said old Sir Walter. "Thanks, thanks, my boy; you are a good boy. But where is Bella? where is the Lady Stradawn? Och hey, that's good,—but she is often away now; seldom it is, I am sure, that I see her. Aye, aye, Walter, boy, that is good—that is very good."

When his father was satisfied, Walter seated himself at the board, and ate and drank largely, from very vexation and ire, and in order to keep down the storm of rage which was secretly working within him. This, as well as the cause of it, he privately determined to conceal, even from his brother Patrick, with whom he had been, upon all other occasions, accustomed to share his inmost thoughts. For the rest of the night he sat gloomy and abstracted, and at an earlier hour than usual he hurried off to his chamber. There, having summoned his attendant, Dugald Roy, he questioned him more particularly as to all he knew regarding the visits of the Priest of Dalestie to Drummin, and having then dismissed him, with strict injunctions to maintain a prudent silence, he threw himself into bed, to pass a restless and perturbed night.

The next morning saw the Lady Stradawn glide into the hall, to preside over the morning meal, gaily dressed, and covered as usual with chains, brooches, and rings of massive worth, which she procured no one knew how. Her countenance beamed with her wonted smiles, as if nothing wrong had happened, or could have happened on her part. Walter and Patrick saluted her with that cold yet civil deference, which they had always been in the habit of using towards her, as the wife of their father, and in which Walter took care that neither his brother, nor any one else, should perceive any shadow of change upon the present occasion. The manner of her salutation was as blythe, kind, free, and unconcerned as it ever was before.

“Wicked rogue, Walter, that thou art!” said she in a tone of merry railery, “fie for shame on thee! to steal into thy lady mother’s bower to catch her asleep in her arm-chair! In sooth I was not altogether well last night, else had I joined thee at the festive board, to rejoice with thee over the spoils of that grim gaffer wolf, whom they tell me thou hast so nobly slain.”

“Thou did’st indeed seem somewhat indisposed, madam,” said Sir Walter with a peculiarly significant emphasis, and with a penetrating look which she alone could understand.

“I was very much indisposed as you say, Walter,” replied she, as if quite unconscious that he had intended to convey to her any covered meaning; “that foolish old woman, Nancy, the miller’s wife, took it into her wise head to come a plaguing me, to reckon with her about the kain fowls she had paid into the castle since last quarter-day; and she talks—Holy Virgin, how the woman does talk!”

“Truly the woman does talk marvellously,” replied Walter, biting his nether lip to keep down his vexation.

“As thou say’st, son Walter, she does e’en talk most marvellously. Her tongue seems to have learned the art of wagging from the clapper of old John’s mill. I protest I would as lieve sit listening to the one as to the other. My head aches still with the noise of her clatter.”

“I wonder not indeed that thy head should ache,” replied Sir Walter.

“And then, forsooth, I behoved to call up meat for the greedy cummer,” continued the lady,—“Holy Mother, how the woman did swallow the eatables and drinkables!”

“She must have swallowed enough of both sorts,” said Sir Walter, with a meaning in his mode of speaking, that he began to suspect he might have made almost too plainly marked; and, hastening to change the subject, “Madam,” continued he, “I fear you have forgotten Sir Allan this morning.”

“Holy Saints, but so I have!” cried she, starting up from her seat,—“what have I been thinking of? My poor Sir Allan!” continued she, as she hastened to him with a covered silver dish, that contained the minced food the old man was wont

to take; and, after making of him, with all the fuss and phrase she would have used to an infant, she put a napkin around his neck, and proceeded to feed him.

“Where is Murdoch this morning?” demanded Patrick of his brother.

“I know not,” replied Walter, as he sat musing with a clouded brow.

“He was not at supper last night,” observed Patrick again; “nay, I know not that I have seen him for these three days bypast.”

“He was not at supper,” said Sir Walter, still absorbed by his own thoughts.

“Murdoch is an idle good-for-nothing,” said the Lady Stradawn, joining in the conversation, from the place where she stood by the side of Sir Allan’s chair. “Though he be mine own son, I will say that for him, that it would be well for him to take a pattern by his elder brothers, and be killing wolves, or doing some such useful work, and not be staying out whole days and nights this way, at weddings and merry-makings, without ever showing us his face. I wish you would give him a good word of your brotherly advice, my dear son Walter.”

“Chut!—tut!” cried old Sir Allan,—“let the boy alone!—aye, aye—let the boy alone. The lad is young.—I was a wild slip myself once in a day—that I was. But old age will creep on—hech sirs!—aye, aye—what days I have seen!—Och, hey!”

“Here, take this, my dear Sir Allan,” said the lady,—“take this, dearest—’tis the last spoonful.”

“Where art thou going, brother?” said Patrick, rising to follow his brother Sir Walter, who had left the table, and was moving towards the door.

“Up the glen to look for a deer,” replied Walter.

“Then have with thee brother,” said Patrick.

Sir Walter would have fain shaken himself free from his brother, for that morning at least; but he felt that he could not do so without a certain appearance of unkindness, which the warm affection that subsisted between them could not allow him to use, or that otherwise, he must have given him an explanation,

which he was conscious that he could not have given him, consistently with those designs which he then privately cherished in his bosom. He was therefore compelled silently to assent to his accompanying him. They both accordingly assumed that humble garb, which they usually wore when bent upon the pursuit of the deer,—in which, but for their carriage and bearing, they might easily have been mistaken for the humblest of their party, and, after such preparation, they sallied forth.

They were hardly gone, when the Lady Stradawn, leaving the old Sir Allan to entertain himself with his own dreamy musings and vacant thoughts, climbed to the bartizan of the tower to look out for her son, Murdoch. It was yet early in the morning—but as her two step-sons had a walk of a good many miles before them, ere they could reach the place where they proposed hunting, they and their people were seen toiling up the valley, at a pace which corresponded with the violence of those feelings which then possessed Sir Walter, who was stretching away at the head of the party.

“Curses on ye both!” cried the lady, with intense bitterness, after having followed them with her malignant eyes, till they had wound out of sight behind a projecting spur of a wooded mountain that flanked the valley.—“Curses!—black and withering curses on ye both, vile spawn that ye are, that stand between my boy and his prospects!—I fear that Walter—my especial curse upon him!—for, with all his fair words, he is stern and ferocious as a wild cat when he is roused. —But, wild cat though he be, the wily viper may yet wind its folds silently around him, and sting him to the death ere he may have time to unglove his claws.—What can make my darling boy tarry so long.—He has now been absent for more than three days.—Much as he hath enriched me with money and jewels, I like not the risk he runs.—But he will not be forbidden.—Nature works in him, and perhaps it is as well that he should thus render himself hardy, seeing that he must one day—aye, and that soon too, if I have any cunning left in me—command the proud Clan-Allan. Stay, did I not see tartans yonder, and arms glittering in yon farther lawnde, in the vale below, beyond those nearer woods? That must surely be Murdoch and his men. The foolish boy will not surely bring them within nearer ken of the Castle? Ha!—I see one figure separate from the rest, whilst the main body seems to take to the woods on the hill-side. In sooth, there is no prudence lacking in the youth, nay, nor any cunning neither, as I well know, from the trouble it hath cost me to lull his suspicions regarding the Priest

of Dalestie. But if Murdoch hath cunning, he hath it from me, his mother; and it will be hard indeed if mine cannot match it. Ah!—there he already bursts from the wood—I must hasten to meet him in my bower, that I may learn what luck he hath had."

The lady hurried down to her bower—quickly found some errand on which to despatch her woman—and then she sat waiting impatiently, turning over the bunch of antique keys which hung at her girdle, until she heard her son's step in the passage, and his gentle tap at her door.

"Come in!" said the Lady Stradawn in a subdued voice—"come in, my son!"

"Ha!—I am glad that thou art here and alone, mother," said Murdoch, a slim, handsome, dark-eyed youth, who, after cautiously entering, shut the door behind him, and carefully turned the huge key that locked it. "I am glad that you are here alone, for I have such treasure for you."

"Hush, hush, my darling," said the lady, almost in a whisper—"speak lower, I entreat you, lest any eaves-dropper should hear you.—Quick!—how sped ye?—and what have you got?"

"We have been all the way to Banff again this time," replied Murdoch. "Seeing that we sped so well the last time we made thither, as thou well knowest we did, we thought we should try our luck there once more. We heard that there was a market in the Brugh, and we sent a clever-witted spy among the packmen, to gather who among them might be best worth holding talk with. Two of them we learned were to travel together for company's sake,—fellows who dealt in goldsmiths' work. But, marry! they travelled not far from the town-end till we met them, when, like good-natured civil fellows, we eased them of their heavy loads, under which they seemed to sweat so grievously; and that they might not trouble us here, and at the same time being loth to part two such friends, we set them both a travelling together on a journey to the next world."

"Speak not of the next world, Murdoch!" said the lady, shuddering. "But they were sickerly sent thither, said'st thou?"

"As surely as we shall one day go there ourselves, good mother," replied Murdoch.

“Speak not of our going there, boy,” said the lady. “’Tis time enough yet. But there is little crime I wot, after all, in ridding this world of such cheating gangerels as those you tell me of.”

“Crime!” replied Murdoch, “Why, mother, there is an absolute virtue in such a deed. Have we not put an end to their rapacity and knavery? And have we not thereby saved many a foolish maiden from being cheated by them? By Saint Nicholas, but the doer of so good a deed deserves to be canonized!”

“But come, boy, thy treasure,” said the greedy and impatient dame. “Quick,—what hast thou got to show me? Haste thee to feast mine eyes with the spoil of these miscreants.”

“In the first place, then,” said Murdoch, “as at a feast we should always begin with the solids,—here is a small bag of broad pieces, which might well satisfy many a hungry man. Secondly, here are your curious cates and delicacies, enow to bedizen out a dozen of lordlings’ daughters!—See what a chain!—how exquisite the workmanship!—Behold these rings,—see what sparkling gems! Every one of them set, too, most rarely in a different fashion! Here is one, for example, which would seem to have a curious posey in it; some ready-made love verse, I suppose. Let me see,—‘*Feare God and doe no evyle*,’—eh! ha!—that—that is a good advice, which the last owner, as I take it, was too great a knave to profit by; but you and I, mother dear——”

“Have done with thy foolery, Murdoch,” said the lady, impatiently; “have done with thy foolery, and give me thy booty, without farther nonsense. Now, leave me for a while, and go talk with the old man, whilst I bestow the treasure in a place of safety. Thou knowest it will all go to deck thy bride, when thou canst find one.”

“Leave me alone for that, mother,” said Murdoch, significantly. “I promise thee, I have mine eye on a good man’s daughter, whom I shall have by foul or by fair means ere I die. But that is a secret I shall keep to myself till the time comes; so good day, good mother.”

“What can he mean?” said the Lady Stradawn, after he was gone. “But ’tis nothing, after all, but his wild talk. No, no; I must have my say with him when it comes to that!”

Now that the lady found herself alone, she doubly locked and bolted the door. She then spread the gold and the jewels on the table before her, and glutted her eyes for a time with the glittering sight. Applying her keys to a cabinet which stood against the wall, she opened the leaves of it, and so exposed the front of a set of secret drawers, shallower above and deeper below. Selecting other keys from the bunch, she began to open and to examine the drawers, one by one, from above downwards—her eyes successively surveying the riches they contained, whilst, with scrupulous attention, she from time to time selected articles from among the spoils on the table, and deposited them among the rest, as fancy led her to sort and arrange them, carefully locking each drawer ere she proceeded to open the next; and thus she went on until she found that she had disposed of the whole of the trinkets.

"'Twas no great things, after all," said she, musing; "I wonder when they will go forth again? But let me count the money.—Aye, that is pretty well; and yet it might have been more for the death of two men. But there are other two men I know of, whose lives would be worth more!—Hush!—did I not hear a noise?—Quick—let me huddle the gold into this drawer in the cabinet, where I bestowed the broad pieces in the hurry I was taken with when the Priest came in last night.—What!—nothing there!—Ha!—can the man who—can the villain have robbed me?—Yes; it could have been no one else.—I see clearly how it was. He asked me for money—I gave him two pieces from that very drawer. His greedy eyes saw what it contained, and, whilst my back was turned, he must have cleverly helped himself to the whole. It could have been nobody else, because I well remember that I carefully closed the leaves of the cabinet, locked them, and put the keys into my iron strong-box, before I called Jessy to bring the refreshments.—What a consummate knave!—But what could I expect better of such a reprobate—a priest who glories as he does in his wickedness? It would have been well perhaps for me that I had never seen him.—And yet—But his share of his crime is his own.—Wretch that he is, he might have had it all for the asking.—Weak woman that I am, I could have refused him nothing.—Well, I must e'en let it pass, and be more careful again.—But I shall look better after this bag of broad pieces. It shall be added to the heap I have here," continued she, unlocking a drawer of deeper and larger dimensions. "Aye!" said she, eyeing the treasure it contained with avaricious delight,—"that is all safe; go thou, then, to increase the store, and may my darling boy soon fetch me other bags to bear these company in this their prison-house!"

I must now return to the two brothers. Walter, who usually directed every thing in all their expeditions, never halted until he found himself far up on these very mountains now before us. He sought for deer, it is true; but, whilst he did so, or rather, whilst he allowed his brother and his people to do so, his mind seemed to be occupied with something else than hunting. It was towards evening, when he and the rest of the party were still tracking their way through the forest without success, when, they at last found themselves in that part of it, which then covered the hill that hangs over the haugh of Dalestie, some miles above this. Partial breaks among the trees there gave Sir Walter, now and then, a view downwards into the valley below; and, as he walked and ruminated within himself, as if oppressed with some weighty matter, his secret musings were suddenly broken by the distant toll of the bell of a small chapel, which, if I am rightly informed, then stood near the bottom of the hill. The sound came mellowed over the intervening woods, and Sir Walter started as it reached his ear. He became deeply moved; but his emotion was not like that movement of piety which the note of the church-going bell should awaken. It more resembled that, which, when the hoarse trumpet has sounded, or the shrill pipes have struck up, I have myself seen convert the godlike countenance of man into that of a demon. Sir Walter Stewart stamped upon the ground.

“Dugald!” cried he aloud; “What ho, Dugald Roy, I say. Does that bell call to evening mass?”

“It does, Sir Knight,” replied Dugald.

“Then get thee down through the wood,” said Sir Walter; “get thee down through the wood ere it hath ceased to sound, and tell the proud priest of Dalestie that I, Walter Stewart of Clan-Allan, am upon the hill, and that, if he dares to mumble a word, yea, or a syllable, before I come, his life shall pay for it.”

“Stay, stay,” cried Patrick Stewart, eagerly; “stay him, dear brother! What sudden fit is this that hath seized thee? A priest!—how canst thou think of sending such a message as this to a priest?”

“Dugald Roy, begone, and obey thy master’s bidding!” cried Sir Walter, sternly. “Brother, I forgive thee this thine interference, though I cannot allow myself to be swayed by it. Trust me, I have mine own good reasons for so acting, though this be no fitting time for making thee aware of them.”

Patrick, whom affection, as well as habit had long disposed to show implicit deference and obedience to his brother Walter's will, said no more, but followed his solemn footsteps down the mountain path that led to the chapel. They had not gone half the way till the bell had ceased to toll. And they had not gone two-thirds of the way till Dugald Roy met them.

"Thou hast not sped on thine errand, then?" said Sir Walter, with an expression in which more of satisfaction than of disappointment might have been read. "Speak, Dugald; how did the arrogant caitiff receive my message?"

"Since I must say it, Sir Knight," replied Dugald, with some hesitation,—"he received it very scurvily.—'Tell the proud Stewart,' said he, 'that though he may be lord of the land, I am the king as well as the priest in mine own chapel.'—And so he straightway began the holy service, but rather, methought, as if he had been dighting himself for single combat, than for prayer, and in a manner altogether so irreverent, that the few people who were there, with faces full of dismay, quietly arose and left the chapel, as if some wicked thing had ta'en up the priest's surplice in mockery."

"By the Rood, but they were right if they so thought!" cried Sir Walter, quickening his pace—"He is a vile obscene wolf that hath crept like a thief into the fold.—But I'll speak to him anon."

The rate at which Sir Walter now strode down the hill, kept his astonished brother Patrick, and the whole party at their full bent. The trees grew thinner as they came nearer the level valley, and by and bye they ceased altogether, so that a full view was obtained of the haugh at the bottom. There the Priest of Dalestie was seen leaving the chapel to go homewards.

"There he goes!" cried Sir Walter—"there he goes stalking along with an air and a gait, that might better befit a proud prince of the earth, than Heaven's humble messenger of peace, as his profession ought to have made him.—What, ho, Sir Priest!—I would speak with thee."

The Priest started—looked suddenly back—halted, and drew himself up—then turned again, and moved a few paces slowly onwards, as if irresolute what he should do.—Again he halted, and again he moved on, whilst Sir Walter's footsteps were hurrying fast up to him.—At length, he seemed to have made up

his mind to abide that parley which he now saw he could not escape, and, turning sharp round to face the Stewart, he planted himself firmly in the way before him.

“What would’st thou with me, Sir Knight?” demanded he, in a haughty and determined tone.—“After the rude and unwonted message which thou hast just dared to send to me, a holy minister of the Church, methinks that thou canst dare to approach me now, for no other purpose, than to sue penitently for pardon and absolution at my hands.”

“A holy minister of the Church!” exclaimed Sir Walter.—“A minister of the holy Church, if thou wilt—but thyself most unholy.—My sins, God pardon me!—are many.—But albeit that I am at all times ready to kneel in confession, and in humble penitence, before that true and godly servant of Christ, the good and pious father, Peter of Dounan, or any other such as he, I will never bend the knee before one, whose wickedness has been the dishonour and reproach of the district, ever since it hath been cursed with his presence, and who yet profanely dares most impiously to approach the holy altar.”

“Brother! brother Walter!” cried Patrick Stewart, endeavouring to moderate Sir Walter’s growing ire; “what madness is this! Think of the sacred character he wears, however little common fame may give him credit for supporting it. Think how——”

“Silence, I say, Patrick!” cried Sir Walter, in an authoritative tone, which he had never before assumed to his brother. “Again I say, thou knowest not the secret reasons which move me at this moment. That foul swine, whose sensual snout hath been in every man’s dish, and who hath uprooted that very vineyard which hath been confided to his care, must be forthwith cast out. He must be no longer permitted to live. Seize him and bind him!”

“Lay not a hand on me, good sirs, if you would avoid the thunders and excommunications of the Church,” cried the priest, now no longer proud, but trembling, and in an humble tone.

“Seize him and bind him, I say,” cried Sir Walter. “If there be any one man among the Clan-Allan here—if there be one Clan-Allan Stewart, I say, who in his conscience believes that he doth not deserve to die by fire, that man hath my

leave to sit apart, and bear no faggot to the pile that is to consume him. Who among you is there that doth not know his misdeeds? Not a man answers. Then is he condemned by all. Let each man, then, get him to the wood, and bring a faggot of the driest fuel, and let him forthwith be brent, and his ashes scattered to the winds, so that the earth may be no longer polluted with his carcase, and that even the very memory of him may perish!"

"Brother, brother!" cried Patrick Stewart, in a tone of entreaty; "do not bring upon yourself the terrors of the Church. His fame, indeed, is none of the best; but, whatever be his sins, bethink thee that 'twere better to let him be tried by that sacred tribunal to which he is naturally amenable."

"By the holy Rood, which this traitor to his crucified Master has so wickedly profaned, he shall not live an hour," cried Sir Walter, rising in his rage. "I am but the executioner of God's justice on him; and he shall die, be the consequences what they may. See!—see how busily the fellows toil! Their hearts are in the work. The labour is a pleasure to them. Not a man hath stood aloof from it, far less hath any one dared to speak in his cause. Why, then shouldst thou speak brother Patrick? Though thou knowest not all, thou knowest quite enough to know that he hath well earned the fate I have awarded him. But though thou art ignorant of all that now impelleth me, I tell thee that I have enough to satisfy bishop or pope, if need were, that I am now doing the Church good service. But, be that as it may, I trust the time will never come when the chieftain of Clan-Allan shall not dare to deal with all within the bounds of Stradawn, whether churchman or layman, as his pleasure may dictate. Ha! see, the pile is already heaped high, and now they are preparing to set fire to it; that shows no want of good will; and see, of their own accord, they prepare to drag him to it!"

"Then, brother, though I am the younger, I must needs interfere," cried Patrick Stewart, rushing forward to throw himself between the men of the clan, and their terrified victim; "such a deed as this must never be done by thee, my brother."

"Patrick, dispute not mine authority," cried Sir Walter, his rage now beginning to get the better of him; "my father's weakness hath made me thy chieftain. Stand back I tell thee! Stand back! place thyself not between me and my just vengeance, or even the name of brother shall not hinder me from dashing thee to the ground."

“Nay, stand you back!” cried Patrick, covering the priest with his body, whilst the clansmen retreated from the prisoner at his word. “Walter, I would save this wretched man for another and a calmer tribunal; and, in thus saving him, I would save thee, my brother, from——”

“Stand from before his polluted carcase!” cried Sir Walter, collaring Patrick, and casting him from him with a force that threw him several yards away from the spot where they were contending, and prostrated him headlong on the ground. “Now, Clan-Allan! now do your duty to your chieftain! I’ll see that my sentence —aye, and your sentence, is duly carried through!”

“Mercy, most noble knight!” cried the wretched man.

“Mercy, most noble knight!” cried the wretched man.

“Mercy, most noble knight!” cried the wretched man, as they dragged him along to the pile, deadly pale, and quailing with fear—his pride all gone, and the terrors of a horrible death upon him. “Mercy! O spare me! spare me, most noble Sir Walter Stewart! I confess that I have deeply sinned against you and yours; I confess that——”

“Silence, caitiff!” cried the stern Sir Walter, loudly and hastily interrupting him; “I am no priest—I want none of thy confessions. Confess thyself inwardly to thine outraged Maker. Thou shalt have time for that. Down on thy knees! confess thy sins in secret to Him, and pray to Him for mercy in the next world, for here all laws, human and divine, tell me that thou shouldst have none; and thou shalt have none from me.”

The miserable wretch, trembling, haggard, and conscience-stricken, knelt down at a short distance from the great heap of dry and decayed timber which they had prepared. By this time it was lighted, and it soon began to blaze up so high as widely to illuminate the broad faces of the wooded hills on both sides of the valley, arousing them from that gloom which had been already gradually deepening over them into shadow, since the sinking of the sun. Neither his countenance nor his eyes were directed heavenwards; yet his lips moved, more like those of some one uttering an incantation, than of a penitent seeking of Heaven to be shriven of his sins. Full time was allowed him. But the stern Sir Walter Stewart stood over him, as if jealous lest his fears or his agony of mind, might goad him on to utter some secret aloud before the clansmen, which he

wished to see consumed, and for ever annihilated with all that was mortal of him who held it. And when he thought that he had given the wretched man enough of licence, he waved his hand—turned himself aside for a moment—heard one piercing shriek—and when he looked again the myriads of brilliant sparks that were rising into the air from the fall of a heavy body among the fuel, sufficiently proved to him, that the miserable object of his wrath had been thrown into the very midst of the burning heap. Another, and a fainter cry, made Sir Walter again turn involuntarily towards the pile. There the head appeared, with the face contorted with torment, and fearfully illuminated. The body reared itself up for a moment, as if by one last struggling effort of life, and these half-stifled words were dolefully heard,—

"WALTER STEWART!—THY GRAVE IS NEAR!"

The Clan-Allan men stood appalled. Again the figure sank. More broken and decayed wood was thrown on the pile, and they continued to heap it up until all signs of a human form were obliterated. Then it was that Sir Walter, calling his followers into a ring around him, swore them solemnly, on their chieftain's sword, to eternal secrecy; and then, sick at the thought of the work they had done, chieftain and clansmen slowly, and silently, left the place and began to wend their way down the glen. Sir Walter thought of his brother Patrick as he went—he halted, and blew that bugle sound, which was well known as a private signal between them. But there was no note of reply. Taking it for granted, therefore, that the stern act of justice, which circumstances had compelled him to see done on the Priest, had been too much for the sensitive mind of Patrick even to contemplate, and that, therefore, he had hurried away to avoid witnessing the horrible spectacle, Sir Walter pensively and moodily moved homewards.

But the cause of the muteness of Patrick Stewart's bugle, was very different from that which his brother believed it to be. At the time that he had been dragged from before the Priest, and thrown so violently to a distance, Sir Walter had been too much excited by rage to notice how he fell, or indeed whether he fell at all. Nor in the fearful work in which they were all so intently, and with so much good will engaged, did any of the Stewarts of Clan-Allan once think of him more. Had Sir Walter known that his beloved brother had been stretched bleeding, and senseless, on the ground, by his rash hand, and that he was now leaving him to perish without help, his mind, during his homeward journey, would have been even less tranquil than his reflections on the past event

permitted it to be. The truth was, that Patrick Stewart's bonnet, having been driven off by the furious force with which Sir Walter had hurled him from him, his unprotected head came into contact with a large stone, that projected out of the surface of the meadow-sward, with a sharp point, from which he received so severe a cut, and so rude a shock, that he never moved after it, but lay there as if he had been dead, in the midst of a pool of blood that flowed from the wound. How long he had remained in this situation, he had no means of guessing, but when his senses returned to him, he found himself seated, with his back leaning against the trunk of a great tree, near a fountain that welled out from the side of the hill. By the blaze of a bit of moss fir that a man held in his hand, he perceived that there were several people around him, who seemed to be busied in administering to him. One especially was anxiously supporting his head, staunching the blood that was still discharging itself from the cut in his temple, and holding a cup to his lips.

"How fares it with thee now?" enquired this person eagerly; "how fares it with thee, my dear friend?"

"Arthur Forbes of Curgarf!" said Patrick faintly.

"Holy St. Macher be praised that thine eyes are opened, and that I once more hear thy voice!" cried Arthur Forbes, "I had mine own fears that thou wert done for. What, in the name of all that is marvellous, hath befallen thee? Hast thou chanced to come into the hands of the Catteranes, who are said to harbour sometimes among these mountains?"

"Where am I?" said Patrick, turning his eyes around him, his brain still swimming in confusion. "Ah! that fire yonder!"

"Aye, that fire!" said Arthur Forbes eagerly, "what knowest thou of that fire?"

"Nay nothing," replied Patrick shuddering.

"By the Rood, but it brent boldly when we first saw it from the far hill-side yonder," said Arthur, "though it hath now fallen somewhat lower. Knowest thou at all who kindled it? We heard a bugle blast come faintly up from the bottom of the valley, as we came first within sight of it."

“It was not burning when I fell,” replied Patrick guardedly.

“How did you fall, I pray you?” demanded Arthur Forbes.

“As I was hurrying through the haugh,” replied Patrick, “my foot tripped in the twilight against something in the grass, and I was thrown forward, with so much force, that it is no wonder I was stunned.”

“Your head must have struck upon some sharp stone,” said Arthur Forbes, “that gash in your temple is a very ugly one, and it still bleeds considerably. Let me bathe it for you.”

“The ice-cold water is most reviving to me,” said Patrick, sitting up; “I am much better now. I think I am almost strong enough to walk.”

“Shall we help thee down to the Priest’s house?” demanded Arthur; “that, as thou knowest, is the nearest dwelling.”

“The Priest’s house!” said Patrick, with an expression of horror which he could not restrain.

“Nay ’tis no wonder that thou should’st shudder at the very mention of that reprobate,” said Arthur Forbes; “he is a scandal to the very name of Priest.”

“I would rather go anywhere than to the Priest’s house,” said Patrick Stewart.

“Nay,” said Arthur Forbes, “it is a thousand to one that we should find him abroad on some of his unseemly nocturnal pranks; but you might at least repose thee for a time in his dwelling.”

“I should find no repose under the Priest’s roof,” said Patrick Stewart quickly. “I would rather try to make the best of my way to Drummin.”

“Thou shalt never essay to go to Drummin to-night,” said Arthur Forbes. “And, now I think on’t, why should you not go over the hill with me to Curgarf? My sturdy fellows there shall carry you. And then, when you are there you know,” continued he, sinking his voice to a whisper into Patrick’s ear, “my sister Kate shall nurse thee.”

“Your proposal is life to me,” replied Patrick, in the same tone. “I gladly accept your kind offer. But as to loading your poor men with the weight of my carcase, there will be no occasion for that. Now that my head is bound up, I feel quite strong, and I know I shall get better every step of the hill I travel.”

“I thought that Kate’s very name would be a potent balsam for thy wound,” whispered Arthur Forbes again. “Thou wilt be better in the hands of Kate, my friend, than in those of the Catteranes. Lucky was it for thee, truly, that those knaves did not find thee in thy swoon. They were the people, no doubt, who kindled yon rousing fire, from which they were probably driven away by our first appearance on the hill. Thou wert lying scarcely half a cross-bow shot from the very spot where they must have been making merry, and if they had but stumbled on thee by accident, their cure for thy wound would have been a dirk-point. Holy Saint Michael, what an escape thou hast made!”

The way to Curgarf was long and tiresome enough, for they had to cross over the very summit of the mountain-ridge—that, I mean, which now divides us from the water of Don. But Patrick Stewart bore the fatigue of the walk better than any one could have expected, and there was no doubt that the prospect of seeing Catherine Forbes very much improved his animal powers. He was already known to his friend’s father, who received him hospitably, though rather haughtily. The old Lord of Curgarf’s coldness of carriage towards him was to be attributed to the suspicion he entertained of that which was in reality true, that a secret attachment existed between Patrick Stewart and his only daughter Catherine. This he did not wish to encourage for many reasons. The Clan-Allan Stewarts—to say nothing of what he considered their questionable origin—were a new race in the neighbouring strath; and although he had never been actually at war with them, there had yet been many petty grievances and heart-burnings between them and his people. These had not in the least shaken the friendship that had accidentally arisen, during their boyhood, between Patrick Stewart and Arthur Forbes; and you all know, gentlemen, that the affections of a woman’s heart are but little swayed by any such circumstances. The bonny blue eyes of Catherine Forbes sparkled, and her bosom heaved with delight, when she saw Patrick Stewart enter the hall of Curgarf, though she was compelled to keep down her emotions, and to receive him as a mere acquaintance. Certain stolen glances did, however, pass between them; and when Arthur mentioned the accident which had led to his bringing his friend to the castle, and made him

exhibit his wound, Catherine had an opportunity of giving way, in some degree, to her feelings, without the risk of being chargeable with any thing more than that compassion naturally to be expected from a lady, even towards a perfect stranger, who came under such circumstances. Patrick was by this time satisfied that the wound was of no great moment. But his love for Catherine, and the opportunity which it thus happily afforded him of being under the same roof with her, made him very cautious in contending that it was not severe, and he had no objection to admit, when he was much pressed, that the pain he suffered from the contusion which his head had received, was very considerable.

Patrick retired to his chamber that night, his mind filled with the lovely image of Catherine Forbes, his eyes having done little else, during the evening meal, than carefully to collect and treasure every minute beauty of her fair countenance, and graceful person, so as to deepen the lines of that portrait of her which had been for some time engraven on his heart. But fond as he was of dwelling upon so much loved an object, he felt it difficult to keep possession of her image, or to prevent it from being driven from his memory, by the frequent recurrence of that horrible scene, of which he had witnessed so much, previous to his being rendered unconscious, as well as to overcome the distressing recollection of his brother Walter’s violence towards himself, and he found it a very difficult matter, to control his mind so far, as to prevent his imagination from sketching out the revolting circumstances of the catastrophe that followed, with a degree of detail, and in colours, scarcely less appalling than those of the dreadful reality.

Patrick was next morning blessed with a short private interview with Catherine Forbes. It was short indeed, but it was long enough to give time for the ingenuity of lovers to arrange a plan for a more satisfactory meeting. It was agreed between them, that they should separately steal out in the evening, to a grove of ancient pine trees near the Castle, where, if I mistake not, they had met with one another before, with the sanction of Arthur Forbes. There they hoped for leisure and privacy enough to enable them more fully to open their hearts to each other, and to talk of their future hopes and fears. Contented with this arrangement, Patrick submitted to the confinement which was imposed upon him in his character of an invalid, and spent the day in basking silently in the sunshine of his lady’s eyes, in conversing with his friend Arthur as the confidant of their loves, and in doing all that in him lay to thaw the icy politeness of the old Lord of Curgarf. An earnest desire to make one’s self agreeable to another, will

generally succeed, in some degree, in the long run; but Patrick's success with the old Lord was much beyond what he could have believed or expected.

"Truly thou art a pretty fellow, Patrick!" said Arthur Forbes jocularly to him, at the first private moment which he chanced to catch. "Judging by the proximity of the place where you were found lying last night, to the fire which had been kindled by the Catteranes, there can be no doubt that you must have fallen among thieves. This being the case, I, like the good Samaritan, pick thee up by the wayside, bring thee here in thy wretchedness, pour wine and oil into thy wounds, and see thee well fed and lodged; and how dost thou repay me, I prythee? Why, not contented with carrying off my poor love-sick sister's heart, thou art likely to run away with the old man's too."

"I rejoice to hear that I have any such chance," replied Patrick; "I had feared that thy father's coldness towards me was invincible."

"Nay, promise me not to interfere with my birthright, by taking away half my father's lands with Kate, and I will tell thee what he said of thee but half an hour ago."

"I should be too happy to have thy treasure of a sister, with nothing but the sandals her fair feet tread on," said Patrick, with enthusiasm.

"Tush, man!" replied Arthur Forbes, "be assured thou shalt have her some day or other; aye, and a bit of land, and some good purses of broad pieces with her to boot. But hear what the Lord of Curgarf said,—'Arthur, do you know that friend of thine hath a mighty pleasant manner with him; yea, and his discourse is more worth listening to than a young man's talk usually is: moreover, he hath a certain noble air withal. I remember that, when I was a child, I was once taken to visit the old Earl of Athol. His appearance made so strong an impression on me, that I think I see him yet, and that Patrick Stewart is the very image of his progenitor.' There is for you, my gallant friend! As to finding thee agreeable, I marvel not much at that; for other people, both men and women too, have been before him in making that wonderful discovery; and then, seeing that thou didst listen so well to his talk, and agree with him in every thing he propounded, his finding that your conversation was good was all natural enough. But to discover that you bore so strong a resemblance to the old Earl of Athol—the person whom he is ever ready to cite as the pattern of every thing that was graceful and pleasing in

days long gone by, and now never to be matched again—ha! that was something indeed to give thee a great stride into the citadel of his affection."

"Be the breach through which I may be allowed to march in thither, produced how it may," said Patrick Stewart, "I am not sorry at thine intelligence. But, much as I love the good Lord of Curgarf's converse, I must freely tell thee that I would fain slip away from it, for some half hour or so, before supper to-night, unperceived by him, to exchange it for that of thy sweet sister. We have not had above five words of private conference together since I entered the Castle. So pray have the charity to keep thy worthy father in talk, while the Lady Catherine and I are out, for a brief space, on an evening walk."

"A pretty use thou wouldst put me to, truly!" said Arthur Forbes, laughing. "But to pleasure thee, thou shalt be obeyed."

The lovers waited with no little impatience for the hour which was to yield them the desired meeting. When it at length arrived, they stole out at different moments, and went by different ways to the trysting spot. No one but a lover can fully estimate the delight of such a stolen interview as this was. They felt it deeply; and the only difficulty they had was in estimating the lapse of time. The surly toned bell, that pealed from the tower of the Castle at some distance, warned them to separate, ere, by their calculation, they had been more than a few short minutes together.

"Must we then part so soon?" said Patrick, fondly. "How swiftly the moments have flown!"

"I dare not tarry one instant longer," said the Lady Catherine; "my father, you well know,——"

"Alas! I do know," interrupted Patrick; "yet have I now some hopes of working my way into his good favour. But I shall tell you more of this anon. We shall meet again to-morrow night, shall we not?"

"Yes, yes!" replied Catherine, hurriedly.

"At the same hour and place?" said Patrick. "Alas! till then I must be contented with such converse with thee as our eyes may yield us: and blessings on thine for

the intelligence they convey to me."

"I hope my father may not be able to read them so readily," replied Catherine. "But I must go now."

"Stay for one moment, my sweetest heart," said Patrick. "Ere you go, let me fix thine arryssade more firmly over thy bosom." And, as he said so, he took from his sporran a golden brooch, formed of two entwined hearts, set with garnets. "Wear this trifle for my sake over thy heart. And now may I say, what I dare not utter in thy father's hall—Farewell, my love—my dearest Catherine!"

"Farewell! farewell! my dearest Patrick!" replied she, with a throbbing heart. "I shall never part with this thy gift whilst life or sense endures; and I shall wear it ever thus, as thou sayest, over this heart, which beats but for thee alone."

Thus they at last parted, with lingering reluctance; and each took a different and circuitous way to return to the Castle.

As Patrick entered the hall, a significant nod passed between him and Arthur Forbes. Soon afterwards, the retainers came crowding in, and the evening meal was placed on the board by the serving men. The piper had played his accustomed number of turns upon his walk, in the open gallery over the court-yard. All were ready to sit down. But there was one most important personage wanting; I mean, the fair Lady Catherine Forbes. The fashion of the house, as well as of all well fashioned houses of the time, forbade their sitting down till the lady appeared. The Lord of Curgarf grew impatient.

"Go!" said he at length to one of the attendants; "go, and send some of the women to knock at the Lady Catherine's chamber door, to tell her that supper is served, and that we wait for her presence."

Again the company remained standing for some time. The old Lord of Curgarf arose from his arm chair, and took two or three turns on the large hearth before the fire place. Meanwhile, Arthur Forbes stole an enquiring glance at Patrick Stewart, but could gather nothing in reply. At length the Lady Catherine's bower woman entered the hall, pale and trembling.

"What wouldst thou say, girl?" cried the Lord of Curgarf. "What of my

daughter? Thy looks are ominous! She is not ill?”

“No, my Lord,” replied the girl, “my Lady is not ill; that is, she was quite well little more than an hour ago—but—but——”

“But what?” cried Arthur Forbes, anxiously; “cannot the girl speak out?”

“Tempted by the balmy evening,” replied the girl, “my Lady threw her arryssade about her, and walked forth beyond the castle walls, as her custom sometimes is, to breathe the air a little while.”

“Run!—fly all of you!—take lights, and search for her every where!” cried the Lord of Curgarf. “How provoking this is! How often have I tried in vain to cure her of this most foolish and pernicious custom! And then to go without an attendant too! and beyond the walls!—how very imprudent!”

The two friends were among the first to hurry out, in obedience to these orders from the old man. Both were extremely agitated; and, so far as this example went, it would have been difficult to have, from it, determined the question whether the affection of a loving brother or a tender lover, should be accounted the greater. Arthur Forbes was eager for some explanation from Patrick Stewart as to what he knew of the Lady Catherine. But, alas! Patrick could give him no information beyond that which I have already detailed to you. Leaving the crowd of the retainers to examine every hole and corner, bush and brake, immediately around the castle walls, Arthur and Patrick, from their knowledge of circumstances, pushed their search farther; and as they secretly knew the way that Catherine had taken from the pine grove homewards, they looked diligently for her all along the path. Of her, or any thing belonging to her, they discovered nothing. But at last, in one place, where the path ran through a thicket, where the ground was soft, they were struck with the appearance of numerous newly impressed prints of footsteps. On examining these more closely by means of a torch, they observed, among those of many a rude brogue and sandal, mixed and mingled together, and pointing in all directions, as if those who wore them had been engaged in hurried action—among all these, I say, they observed one tiny and delicate footprint, which was here and there perceptible, and which Patrick Stewart at once declared, could have belonged to no one but to the Lady Catherine Forbes.—Wild with dread and alarm, they returned to the castle. On questioning the warder, he admitted that he did remember having heard

something like a woman’s shriek, that came faintly from some distance in the direction of the thicket, but as it was immediately drowned by the first drone of the piper’s warning, and had been heard by him no more, it had passed away altogether from his thoughts. Not a doubt now remained in their minds, that the Lady Catherine had been carried off by some villains, who had been lurking about the castle. The old Lord of Curgarf was inconsolable.—He was quite unmanned, and unable to give an order as to what should be done. His son Arthur, the Master of Forbes, lost no time in acting for him.—The retainers were hastily armed, and commanded to prepare for instant pursuit; and, being divided, at Patrick Stewart’s request, into two bands, the friends determined each to take the command of one of them,—and accordingly, with such hasty refreshments as the men could snatch, and carry with them, they took leave of one another, and started off, each upon such a line of country as he, in his quickly summoned forethought, judged to be the most likely to bring his expedition to a successful termination.

As we have already learned from the conversation of the Master of Forbes, when he first met Patrick Stewart after the accident which befell him near Dalestie, it was pretty generally known in the country, at this time, that a gang of Catteranes, or free-booters, from the west, were occasionally harboured somewhere among the neighbouring mountains, but no one could precisely tell whereabouts they most commonly secreted themselves. On this point, however, Patrick Stewart had some general suspicions, though he knew nothing that could lead him to guess—even within miles—as to the exact spot where their lurking place might be.—He took his way directly over the mountain that separates the upper part of the river Don from the Aven, and he descended towards the valley of the latter stream, through that precipitous ravine, that affords a course for the little tributary burn of Cuachan-Seirceag, down the face of the white cliffs that almost overhang the small house of Inchvory, which, if we be all spared gentlemen, we shall see this night before we sleep. There is not a tree there now; but, at that period, the ravine was thickly shaded by such timber as could find footing, or nourishment among the rocks, and it therefore formed a good and well-known place of shelter. Having fixed on it as the point of rendezvous, Patrick took his way up the valley of the Aven for some little distance, and then, dividing his people into two parties, he sent one of them off by the pass leading in the direction of Loch Builg, whilst he continued to lead the other up that which is more properly called Glen Aven, by the Lynn of Aven, where the river throws

itself over the rocks in a fine wild fall. Having then ascended the mountains, he began, by break of day, to march, and countermarch, over and across them, visiting, and carefully examining every retired nook or corner that he thought might be the least likely to be chosen, by such villains, as a hiding-place, until mid-day came without bringing him the least clue to the object of his search. Then it was that he unwillingly halted his party in a hollow by the side of a spring, that the poor fellows might refresh themselves with food, and rest for a time.

THE SERJEANT HALTED FOR REFRESHMENT.

CLIFFORD.—(*Interrupting the Serjeant.*)—Gentlemen, I beg to remark, that I think it would be quite proper that we should refresh ourselves with food, whilst Mr. Patrick Stewart and his party are engaged in doing so. We shall thus save time, as must be self-evident to all, seeing that the action of the story is thus brought, for a little while, to a state of repose. Of bodily rest we have had enough, in all conscience—thanks to the length of Mister Archy's yarn.

GRANT.—I beg to second the motion of our worthy secretary, which, in my mind, is most sensible.

CLIFFORD.—Methinks, then, that a slice or two from that cold round of beef, which I saw so carefully bestowed in the right hand pannier on the pony's back, would come well in as an episode to Serjeant Stewart's story. Here Davy, untruss, if you please.

GRANT.—Spread the cloth before us here on the grass, and then lay out the eatables.

CLIFFORD.—Now, methinks, we can more readily sympathise with Patrick Stewart and his people at their luncheon. But come, Davy; we must have something potable too.

AUTHOR.—Bring us one of those bottles from the pannier on the other side of the pony.

CLIFFORD.—Aye, that's right; something to wash the dust out of the serjeant's throat would considerably improve his voice. What say you to my prescription, Archy?

SERJEANT.—Troth, sir, you're an excellent doctor. Well, here's wishing all your good healths, gentlemen!

AUTHOR.—By the way, Clifford, how many trouts have you caught?

CLIFFORD.—None of your jokes, my good friend. Why, you know very well that I have never made a single cast. Before I had time to give one throw over the stream, Archy hooked me here with the thread of his discourse, and here he has been reeling me out such a line, that I can plainly see it will be some time ere he can wind it up again so as to land me. Fish!—no, no, I may as well put up my rod at once, that we may all hear his Legend quietly to an end.

AUTHOR.—I think so, indeed.

GRANT.—Well Archy, when you think that your Patrick Stewart and his party have had their luncheon, and that you have satisfied your own hunger and thirst, we shall all be ready to listen to you.

SERJEANT.—I am well served now, sir, and quite ready to proceed.

CLIFFORD.—Spin away then, my gay fellow.

LEGEND OF THE CLAN-ALLAN STEWARTS CONTINUED.

With a view of multiplying the chances which might still remain of effecting the anxious object of his expedition, Patrick Stewart had no sooner started again from the heather where they had been seated, than he subdivided his party into several sections, under certain intelligent leaders, and having given to each of them such instructions as he deemed necessary for their guidance, he sent them off in different directions, with orders to meet together again, by nightfall, at the ravine of Cuachan-Seirceag. There they were all to wait till he should join them, unless in the event of the Lady Catherine being recovered by any of them, in which case they were to proceed in a body, without tarrying, to carry her straight to Curgarf, leaving one of their number behind them to certify him of the agreeable intelligence. For his own part, he took with him a single attendant only, one of the Curgarf retainers, called Michael Forbes, with whose superior sagacity and activity, some former circumstances had led him to be more particularly acquainted.

After all the others had left them, Patrick and his companion began a most particular and persevering search through the forest, and among the mountains, of that part of the country which he had especially marked out and reserved for himself, leaving no spot unexplored that had any thing the least suspicious connected with it. But the wilderness through which they wandered was so wide, and, in many places, so very thickly wooded, that they might have been employed for days in the same way, without his being one whit nearer his object. It is not wonderful, then, that the evening began to manifest its approach, whilst he was yet actively engaged in laborious travel, yet still he bore on with unremitting exertion, altogether unconscious of the wane of day.

The wild scenery by which he was surrounded was beginning to grow dim in the increasing obscurity, when he arrived at the edge of a deep corry or ravine, in the steeply inclined side of a mountain. It was a place, of the existence of which, neither he nor his companion had ever been aware, well as they were both acquainted with the mountains. The precise position of it has been long ago forgotten; and indeed, if it could be guessed at, it is probably now so altered, and blocked up, by the fall of the mountain masses from time to time, as to be no

longer in such a state as might admit of its being identified. But it was one of those rugged places of which there are plenty of examples among these mountains. The elevation on the mountain side was not greater than to have allowed Nature, at that time, to have carried the forest partially up around it, and the wood, that in a great measure concealed it, was chiefly composed of the mountain pine. The trees, which were seen struggling against the wintry tempests that prevailed around the summits of the cliffs above, appeared twisted and stunted, yet they grew thickly and sturdily together, as if resolved, like bold Highlanders in possession of a dangerous post, to put shoulder to shoulder for the determined purpose of maintaining their position, in defiance of the raging elements. Their foliage was shorn, not thinned by the blast. On the contrary, it was thickened by it, from that very clipping to which the storms so continually subjected it, so that the shade which was formed by their tops overhead, was thereby rendered just so much the more dense and impenetrable. The narrow and inclined bottom of the immense gully below, was composed of enormous fragments, which had been wedged out by time and frosts from the faces of the overhanging crags, and piled one over the other to an unknown depth, whilst the ground, that sloped rapidly down into it, from the lower part of the abrupt faces of the precipices on either side, was covered with smaller and lighter materials of the same sort, mingled with a certain proportion of soil. There some scattered trees had been enabled to grow to a huge size, from the uninterrupted shelter which the place afforded; but whilst few of these had altogether escaped injury and mutilation from the frequent descent of the stony masses, many of them had been entirely uprooted and overturned, by the immense magnitude of some of those falling rocks which had swept down upon them, and there lay their enormous trunks, resting upon their larger limbs, or upon one another, the whole being tossed and tumbled together in most intricate confusion, so as to cover the rocky fragments beneath them, with one continued and almost impervious natural *chevaux-de-frize*.

Patrick Stewart halted behind the bole of a tree, and, resting against it, so as to enable him to lean forward over the precipice, he surveyed the gulf below, as accurately as the evening twilight, and the intervening obstacles permitted him to do. He and Michael Forbes then stole slowly and silently along the very verge of it, in that direction that lay down the mountain side, using their eyes sharply and earnestly as they went, and peering anxiously everywhere, with the hope of discovering some track which might tend downwards into the ravine. While so

occupied, Patrick became suddenly sensible of the fresh smell of wood smoke. From the manner in which it was necessarily diffused, by the multiplied network of boughs through which it had to ascend, he looked for it in vain for some time, till he accidentally observed one or two bright fiery sparks mount upwards from below, such as may be often seen to arise from a cottage chimney top, when new fuel has been thrown upon the fire by the people within. Marking, with great attention, the spot whence these had proceeded, he commenced a more narrow examination of the edge of the ravine, until he at length discovered a perforation in the brushwood, so small, that it might have been easily mistaken for the avenue leading to the den of some wild beast, but which, a closer inspection persuaded him, might have been used by human creatures, there being quite enough of room for one man at a time to creep through it in a stooping posture. At all events he was resolved to explore it, and accordingly, having first stationed his attendant, Michael Forbes, in a concealed place, near to its entrance, that he might watch and give him warning if any one approached from without, he bent himself down, and began his strange and hazardous enterprise.

Creeping along, with his bonnet off, and almost on his hands and knees, he found that the track, which inclined gently at first over the rounded edge of the ravine, became, as he proceeded, nearly as steep as an upright ladder, but it was less encumbered with branches than the first part of the way had been, though there was still enough of growth to aid him in his descent, and to take away all appearance of danger. It went diagonally down the face of the cliff, dropping from one narrow ledge of footing in the rock, to that beneath it, with considerable intervals between each. But to one accustomed, as Patrick Stewart was, to scramble like a goat, the difficulties it presented were as nothing. All his anxiety and care was exerted to guard, if possible, against surprise, as well as against making any noise that might betray his approach, to any one who might be harboured in the ravine below.

Having at last got to the foot of the precipice, he found it somewhat easier to descend the rugged slope that inclined downwards from its base, and, upon reaching the bottom, he discovered that the track continued to lead onwards under the arched limbs of an overthrown pine, the smaller branches and spray of which, appeared, on a minute examination, to have been evidently broken away by frequent passage through underneath it. This circumstance he had some difficulty in discovering, as the increasing darkness was rendered deeper here, by

the overhanging shade of the rocks and trees high above him. Bending beneath the boughs of the fir, he advanced with yet greater caution, and with some difficulty, over the rugged and angular fragments, until he suddenly observed something, that made it prudent for him to halt for a moment, that he might well consider his position. This abrupt stop was occasioned by his observing a faint gleam of light, that partially illumined the broad side, and moss-grown edge, of a large mass of stone, a little way in advance of the place where he then was. He hardly breathed, and he tried to listen—and, for a moment, he fancied he heard a murmur like that of human voices. Again he stretched his ear, and again he felt persuaded that he heard the sound of the voices coming hollow on his ear, as if from some cavity, somewhere below the surface, at a little distance beyond him. Resolving at last to proceed, he moved on gently, and upon a nearer approach to the great stone, on the broad edge of which the light fell, he found that it formed one side of a natural entrance to a passage, that led upwards under the enormous superincumbent masses, that had been piled up over it, in their fall from the shattered crags above. Pausing again for a moment, he drew himself up behind a projecting part of another huge stone, that formed the dark side of the entrance, that he might again listen. He was now certain that he distinctly heard voices proceeding from within, though he was not yet near enough to the speakers to be able to make out their words. The smell of the wood smoke was exceedingly powerful, and his heart began to beat high, for he was now convinced that his adventure was drawing to a crisis.

He plucked forth his dirk, and stooped to enter the place. He found the passage to be low, narrow, gently ascending, and running somewhat in an oblique direction, from the illuminated stone at the mouth, for a few paces inwards, till it met with another block of great size. The edges of this block glowed with a brighter light, that seemed to come directly upon it, at a right angle, from some fire, not then visible, but which was evidently blazing within, and which was again reflected from the side of this stone towards that of the stone at the entrance.

Having crept onwards to this second fragment of rock, where the passage took its new direction, he discovered that it led into a large, and very irregularly-shaped chamber, which was within a few feet only of the spot which he had now reached, but he had no accurate means of judging of the full extent of the cavern. He could now see the rousing fire that was burning in a recess, in the side of the

rocky wall of the place, the smoke from which seemed to find its way upwards, through some natural crevice immediately over it, for the interior of this subterranean den was by no means obscured by any great accumulation of it. By the light of the fire, one or two dark holes were seen, apparently forming low passages of connection with other chambers. How many living beings the place might then contain, he had no means of knowing or guessing. All that came within the field of his vision were two persons, which he supposed were those whose voices he had heard. One of these was a slim youth, who was employed in feeding the fire from time to time with pieces of rotten wood and branches, and in attending to a large pot, that hung over it by an iron chain, depending from a strong hook fastened in the rock above. But the youth and his occupations were altogether disregarded by Patrick Stewart, in the intense interest and delight which he experienced in beholding the Lady Catherine Forbes, the fair object of his toilsome search, who sat pensively and in tears, on a bundle of heather on the farther side of the fire.

You will easily believe, gentlemen, that it was difficult for him to subdue his impatient feelings, so far as to restrain himself from at once rushing forward to snatch her to his arms. But prudence whispered him that her safety might depend on the caution he should use. Ignorant as he was of the extent of the subterranean den, or how it might be tenanted, he felt the necessity of exerting his self-command, and to remain quietly where he was for a little time, until he might be enabled to form some judgment, from what he should see and hear, as to the probable force he should have to contend with, as well as to determine what might be his best plan of action.

“If thou wouldst but listen to my entreaty,” said Catherine Forbes, addressing the youth in an earnest tone of supplication, whilst the tears that ran down her cheeks roused Patrick’s feelings to an agonizing pitch of intensity—“If thou wouldst but fly with me, and take me to Curgarf, my father would give thee gold enough to enrich thee and thine for all thy life.”

“I tell thee again that it is useless to talk of it, lady,” replied the youth. “I have already told thee that I pity thee, but it were more than my life were worth to do as thou wouldst have me. And what is gold, I pray thee, compared to such a risk?”

“Methinks that, once out amidst these wide hills and forests, the risk would be

but small indeed," said Catherine.

"That is all true," replied the youth. "The hills and forests are wide; but the men of the band well know every nook and turn of them. Nay, they are every where, and come pop upon one at the very time when they are least looked for. Holy Virgin, an' we were to meet any of them as we fled!—My head sits uneasily on my neck at the very thought!—By the Rood, but there would be a speedy divorce between them! and where would your gold be then, lady?"

"Then let me go try to explore mine own way without thee," said the Lady Catherine.

"Talk not of it, lady," replied the youth, impatiently. "My head would go for it, I tell thee.—It would go the moment they should return and find that thou hadst escaped. They may be already near at hand, too, if I mistake not the time of evening. Therefore, teaze me no more, I pray thee."

"Spirits of mine ancestors, give me strength and boldness!" cried the Lady Catherine, starting up energetically, after a moment's pause, during which she seemed to have taken her resolution, and assuming a commanding attitude and air as she spoke.—"Let me pass, young man!—give me way, I say!—or I will struggle with thee to the death, but I will force a passage!"

"I have a sharp argument against that," said the youth, drawing his dirk, and planting himself in the gap before her.—"Stand back!—or thou shalt have every inch of its blade."

"Out of the way, vermin!" cried Patrick Stewart, no longer able to contain his rage, and dashing down the youth before him as he entered.

"Patrick!—my dear Patrick!" cried the Lady Catherine, flying into his arms with a scream of joy.

"My dearest, dearest Catherine!" said Patrick, fondly—"this is indeed to be rewarded!—Wretch!" cried he, grappling the youth by the throat, and putting the point of his dirk to his breast, as he was in the act of rising from the ground, apparently with the intention of making his escape—"Wretch! our safety requires thy death."

“Oh, do not kill me, good Sir Knight!” cried the terrified youth piteously, and with a countenance as pale as a corpse.

“Spare him!—spare him!” cried Catherine,—“his worthless life is unworthy of thy blade.”

“Oh, mercy, mercy!” cried the youth again.—“Spare me!—spare me!—oh, do not kill me!”

“If I did kill thee, it would be no more than what thou hast well merited,” said Patrick.—“But, as thou sayest, Catherine, my love, such worthless blood should never wantonly soil the steel of a brave man; and if I could but make him secure by any other means, I should be better contented.”

“Bind me, if thou wilt, Sir Knight; but, oh, do not!—do not kill me!” cried the youth.

“Well then, I will spare thy life, though I half question the wisdom of so doing,” said Patrick.

Casting his eyes around the cave, he espied some ropes lying in a dark corner. Catherine flew and brought them to him. He seized them, and quickly bound the youth neck and heel, in such a manner as to make it quite impossible for him to move body or limb, and then, lifting him in his arms, he groped his way with him into the farther end of one of those dark recesses that branched off from the main cavern, and there he deposited him.

“Now, let us fly, my love!” cried he, hastily returning to the Lady Catherine. “Every moment we tarry here is fraught with danger.—Follow me quickly!—I grieve to think of the fatigue you must undergo. But cheer up, and trust for your defence, from all danger, to this good arm of mine. Above all things, be silent.”

“With thee as my protector I am strong and bold,” said Catherine. “Thanks be to the Virgin for this deliverance!”

Patrick now led the Lady Catherine forth into the open air. But before he ventured to proceed, he listened for a moment to ascertain that there was no one near. To his great horror, and to the lady’s death-like alarm, they distinctly heard a footstep slowly and cautiously approaching. Pushing Catherine gently behind

the dark mass of stone at the entrance, he placed himself before her in the shadow, that, whilst concealed by it himself, he might have a perfect view of whosoever came, the moment the person should advance into the light, that was reflected on the wall-like side of the rocky mass opposite to him, and fell on the ground for a little space beyond it. He listened, with attention so breathless, that he seemed to hear every beat of his own heart, as well as of that of his trembling companion. The footstep was that of one person only, and he felt as if his resolution was quite equal to an encounter with a dozen; but he knew not how many might be following, and he was fully conscious of the importance, as regarded the lady, of avoiding a conflict, unless rendered indispensable by circumstances. The step came on, falling gently, at intervals of several moments, as if the individual who approached was unwilling to make the least unnecessary noise. The dim figure of a man at length appeared, under the arched boughs of the fallen pine tree. He advanced, step by step, with increased caution. A dirk blade, which he held forward in his outstretched hand, first caught the stream of reflected light that came from the mouth of the cavern. The next step that the figure took brought his face under its influence; and, to the great relief of Patrick Stewart, displayed the features of Michael Forbes. Patrick gave a low whistle. Michael had at that moment stopped to listen, with a strange expression of dread and horror, to the complaints of the youth who was bound in the innermost recesses of the cavern, whence they came, reduced by its sinuosities, into a low wild moaning sound, that had something supernatural in it, so as to be quite enough to appal any superstitious mind. The whistle startled him.

“Michael!” said Patrick in a low tone of voice, “why did’st thou desert thy post?”

“Holy virgin, is that you, Sir Knight?” said Michael, in a voice which seemed to convey a doubt whether he was not holding converse with a spirit.

“What could make you desert your post?” demanded Patrick, angrily, and at the same time showing himself.

“Holy saints, I am glad that it is really you, Sir Knight,” replied Michael. “I crave your pardon, but your long delay led me to fear that something had befallen you, and that you might lack mine aid.”

“Had an accident befallen me, Michael,” said Patrick, “thine aid, I fear, would

have been of little avail. But we have lost much time by this thy neglect of mine orders. Quick! let us lose no more, and give me thy best help to aid thy mistress, the Lady Catherine."

"The Virgin be praised!" exclaimed Michael, as Catherine appeared; "then the lady is safe!"

"But so for only," replied Patrick Stewart. "We have yet much peril to encounter; but our perils are increased every precious moment that we loiter here. Get thee on quickly before us to the top of the path where it quits the ravine,—the spot, I mean, where I left thee, and see that you be sure to give me good warning, shouldst thou see or hear any thing to cause alarm."

Michael obeyed; and Patrick, having led Catherine out from under the boughs of the fallen pine, began to assist her in ascending the path. He had some difficulty in dragging her up the wild-cat's ladder that scaled the side of the cliff; but, by the assistance of his strongly nerved arm, she reached the summit without danger. She then forced her way through the narrow passage in the brushwood that grew over the top of the crags, until she had at length the satisfaction of being able to stand erect, to receive the cooling mountain breeze on her flushed cheek and throbbing temples. But this was no place for them to rest. Patrick whistled softly, and Michael appeared.

"Catherine, my love," said he, "this is no time for ceremony. Give one arm to Michael, and put the other firmly into mine—so. Now take the best care you can of your footing, and lean well upon me as we go down the mountain side. Oh, how I long to talk to thee! But, dearest, we must be silent as death, for we know not whom we may meet."

After a long, rough, and slippery descent, they came at length into a narrow glen, where the trees grew taller and farther apart from each other. This was so far fortunate for them; for as the shadows of night became deeper here than they had been on the mountain side, they were compelled to move slower; and it required all the care of the Lady Catherine's supporters, to save her from the injuries she might have sustained from the numerous fallen branches, and other obstacles lying in their way.

They had nearly reached the lower extremity of this lesser tributary glen, where

it discharged a small rill into the wider glen and stream of the Aven, when Patrick Stewart suddenly halted.

“Stop!” cried he; “I hear voices on the breeze, and they come this way too. We must up the bank, Michael. Courage, my dearest Catherine! let me help thee to climb. Trust me love, thou hast nothing to fear.”

“I fear nothing whilst thou art by my side,” replied Catherine, exerting herself to the utmost.

“Now,” said Patrick, after they had half carried her some thirty or forty paces up the steep slope; “we have time to go no farther. Hark! they come! Stretch thyself at length among this long heather, Catherine, and let me throw my plaid over thee. Nay, now I think on’t, Michael’s green one is better, the red of mine might be more visible. There; that will do. Now, Michael, draw thy good claymore, as I do mine. Here are two thick trunks which stand well placed in front of us. Do thou take thy stand behind that one, whilst I post myself behind this, so that both of us may be between the lady and danger. They cannot come at her but by passing between us. And if they do! But see that thou dost not strike till I give thee the word. Hush! they come!”

They had hardly thus disposed of themselves, when the voices drew nearer, and the dusky figures were obscurely seen moving up the bottom of the little glen. They came loitering on, one after another, in what we of the army used to call Indian files,—man following man along the track, where they knew that the footing was likely to be the best. This plan of march necessarily made them longer of passing by, but it relieved those who were lurking in the bank above from any great fear of being discovered by any stray straggler. Two individuals of the party, who had probably some sort of command over the rest, were considerably in advance. These lingered on their way, and halted more than once to give time for those that followed to come up, so that Patrick Stewart caught a sentence or two of the conversation that fell from them.

“He must be as cunning as the devil,” said one of them to the other, in Gaelic.

“Thou knowest that she has not yet seen his face,” replied the other; “so that, when he comes to act the part of her deliverer, she will never suspect that it was to him she was indebted for her unwilling travel last night, and her present

confinement. And then, you see, he thinks, in this way, to make his own, both of her and her old father, by his pretended gallantry in rescuing her from——”

Patrick Stewart in vain stretched his ears to catch more, for on came the rest in closer lines, gabbling together so loudly about trifles, and with voices so commingled, that it was not possible to gather the least sense out of their talk. These all passed onwards; and, a little way behind them, came four other men, who walked very slowly, and stopped occasionally to converse in Gaelic, like people, who were so travel-worn, that they were not sorry to halt now and then, and to rest against a tree for a few moments.

“What made Grigor Beg stop behind Allister?” demanded one.

“Hoo! you may well guess it was nothing but his old trick,” replied the other. “The boddoch would have fain had me to tarry for him, that I might help him, by carrying a part of what load he might get. But I was no such fool. My shoulders ache enough already with carrying the rough rungs of that accursed litter last night, to let me wish for any new burden.”

“If thou hadst not been carrying the bonny lassie for another’s pleasure, methinks you would maybe have thought less of it,” said a third man.

Whilst attentively listening to this dialogue, Patrick Stewart observed some ill-defined object, coming stealing up the slope of the bank, in a diagonal line, from the place a little way down the glen, where the four men had halted. It came on noiselessly, but steadily pointing towards the spot where Catherine lay. It stopped, and uttered a short bark, and Patrick now saw that it was a large, rough, Highland wolf-dog. Again, with its long snout directed towards the plaid that covered Catherine, it barked and snarled.

“Dermot, boy!—Dermot!”—cried one of the men from the hollow below. —“What hast thou got there?”

As if encouraged by its master’s voice, the animal barked and snarled again yet more eagerly, and seemed to be on the very eve of springing upon the plaid. The blade of Patrick Stewart’s claymore made one swift circuit in the air, and, descending like a flash of lightning on the neck of the creature, his head and his body rolled asunder into different parts of the heather, and again Patrick took his

silent but determined stand behind the tree.

“Dermot!—Dermot, boy!”—cried the man again from below.—“What think ye is the beast at, lads?”

“Some foulmart or badger it may be,” replied another.

“Can’st thou not go up and see, man?” said a third.

“Go thyself, my good man,” said the dog’s master.—“I am fond enough of the dog—aye, and, for that part, I am fond enough of travel too, but I am content with my share of fagg for this day without going up the brae there to seek for more. A man may e’en have his serving of the best haggis that ever came out of a pot. Trust me, I am for going no foot to-night beyond what I can help.—Dermot—Dermot, boy!—See ye any thing of him at all, lads?”

“The last sight that I had of him at all, was near yon dark looking hillock, a good way up the bank yonder,” said another man.

“I’m thinking that the brute has winded a passing roebuck,” said the fourth man, “I thought I saw something like a glimmer just against the light cloud yonder above, as if it had been the dog darting over the height, the very moment after the last bark he gave.”

“Dermot! whif-hoo-if!” cried the dog’s master, and, at the same time, whistling shrilly upon his fingers. “Tut! the fiend catch him for me! let him go! I’ll be bound that he’ll be home before us.”

“Come, then, let’s on!” said another, “I wonder much that Grigor Beg hath not come up with us ere this.”

“Hulloah, Grigor!” shouted one of them. “No, no, we’ll not see him so soon, I’ll warrant ye.”

“Come! come away, lads!” said another, moving on with the rest following him. “I’ll be bound that the boddoch hath got a swingeing load upon his back.”

“Awell!” said one of the first speakers, “rather him than me. But we shan’t be the worse of it when it’s well broiled, for all that. I’m sure I wish I had a bit of it at

this moment, for I'm famishing. I'm dead tired to-night; I hope that we may have some rest to-morrow. Know ye aught that is to do?"

"I heard the Captain say that"——but the rest of the dialogue was cut off by the distance which the men had by this time reached.

"Thanks be to St. Peter, they are gone at last!" said Patrick Stewart. "How my fingers itched to have a cut at the villains.—Catherine," continued he, lifting the plaid, and assisting her to rise, "art thou not half dead with terror? But courage, my love. There lies the murderous four-footed savage, whose fell fangs had so nearly been busied with the plaid that covered thee. If we may trust to what we have just heard, there is but one man to come; and, judging by the name of Beg[1] which they gave him, he ought to be no very formidable person. Michael, get thee on a few steps in front, and keep a good look out for him. Were we but out of this narrow place, and fairly into the wider glen of the Aven, we should have less to fear, and then we shall find means to carry thee."

"Thanks to the Virgin, I am yet strong," said Catherine. "Let us fly, then, with all speed."

A farther walk, of a few minutes only, brought them into Glen Aven, and they pursued its downward course, for a considerable length of way, until Patrick Stewart began to perceive something like fatigue in the Lady Catherine's step. He therefore halted, and made her sit down to rest a while. In the mean time, he and Michael Forbes contrived to hew down two small sapling fir trees, by the aid of their good claymores, and having tied their plaids between them, they, in this manner, very speedily constructed a tolerably easy litter for the lady to recline at length in. This they carried between them, by resting the ends of the poles upon their shoulders, Patrick making Michael Forbes go foremost, and reserving the place behind for himself. I need hardly tell you that the Stewart especially selected that position, for the obvious reason that he might be thereby enabled to cheer the Lady Catherine's spirits, and to lighten her fatigues, by now and then addressing a word or two of comfort to her as they went. In this manner they pursued their way down the glen, until the loud roar of many waters informed them that they were approaching the grand waterfall, called the Lynn of Aven. You will have ample opportunity of becoming intimately acquainted with all the details of this fine scene, gentlemen, as you go up the glen to-morrow. But in the meanwhile, I may tell you generally, that the whole of this large river, there

precipitates itself headlong, through a comparatively narrow chasm in the rocks, into a long, wide, and extremely deep pool below.

The sound increased as the bearers of the litter drew nearer to the waterfall, and the rocky and confined passage, over which they had to make their way, compelled them to walk at greater leisure, and to select their footing with more caution. Fortunately they had now the advantage of the moon, which had been for some time shining favourably upon them, and they were already within a very few steps of coming immediately over the waterfall, when they were suddenly alarmed by a fearful and most unearthly shriek. It came apparently from the very midst of the descending column of water below them.

“Holy Virgin Mother!” cried Michael Forbes, halting, and backing like a restive horse, so unexpectedly, that the ends of the poles were nearly jerked from Patrick Stewart’s shoulders, by the shock which was thus communicated to them. “Holy Mother, didst thou not hear that, Sir Knight?”

“I did hear something,” said Stewart, not quite willing to increase that dread which he perceived was already quite sufficiently excited in his companion, and of which he could not altogether divest himself. “I did fancy that I heard something. But for the love of the Virgin take care what thou dost. Thou hadst almost shaken the poles from my shoulders by thy sudden start.—Come! proceed man!”

Again, a louder, and more appalling shriek arose from the midst of the cataract, piercing their ears above all the roaring of its thunder.

“For the love of all the saints, let us turn back, Sir Knight!” cried Michael. “It is the water-kelpie himself!”

“Nay,” said Patrick Stewart; “back we may not go, without the risk of falling again into the very jaws of the Catteranes. They are no doubt hard on foot after us by this time.—Forward then, and fear not!”

Again came the wild shriek, if possible louder and more terrible than before.

“For the love of God, Sir Knight, back!” cried Michael, now losing all command of himself, and forcing the litter so backwards upon Patrick Stewart, as to

compel him, from the narrowness of the rocky shelf where they then stood, to retreat in a corresponding degree, to avoid the certain alternative of being precipitated over the giddy ledge into the boiling stream of the Aven. “For the love of God, back, I say! were it but for a few paces, till we have leisure to lay down our burden, and cross ourselves.”

“Merciful saints! what will become of us?” cried the Lady Catherine, in great alarm.

“Now,” said Patrick Stewart, after yielding a few steps, “now, we may surely halt here till thy courage return to thee, Michael. What a fiend hath so unmanned thee to-night? I thought thou hadst been brave as a lion.”

“A fiend indeed, Sir Knight,” replied Michael, as they were laying down the litter; “I trust that I lack not courage, at any time, to face any mortal foe that ever came before me. But,” added he, eagerly crossing himself, “to meet with the devil thus in one’s very path!—Good angels be about us, heard ye not that scream again? Have mercy upon us all!”

“There is something very strange in this,” said Patrick Stewart. “But this will never do. We cannot tarry here long without the certainty of being overtaken by the whole body of the Catteranes. By this time they must be well on their way in pursuit of us.”

“Holy Virgin! what will become of us if we should fall into their hands?” cried the Lady Catherine, in an agony of distress.

“Fear not, my love!” said Patrick Stewart; “I will forthwith fathom this mystery. I will see whence these horrible screams proceed.”

“Nay, Sir Patrick, tempt not thy fate,” cried Michael. “If thou dost, thou goest to thy certain destruction.”

“Oh stir not, dear Patrick!” cried the Lady Catherine, starting up from the litter, and endeavouring to detain him. “Do not attempt so great, so dreadful a danger.”

“Catherine, my dearest!” said Patrick, fondly taking her hands in his; “listen to reason, I entreat thee. The danger that presses on us from behind is imminent, and more than what two swords, good as they may be, could by any means save

thee from. And since God hath given us strength to flee from it, he will not forsake me in a conflict with the powers of hell, should they stand in my way. I go forward in his holy name, then; have no fear for me therefore. Rest thine arm upon Michael, dearest—tell thy beads, and may the blessed Virgin hover over thee to protect thee! As for you, Michael, draw your claymore, and stir not a step from the lady till I call thee."

Patrick Stewart now crossed himself, and then strode, slowly and resolutely, along the narrow ledge of rock towards the roaring lynn, repeating a paternoster as he went. The moon was by this time high in the heavens, and its beams produced a faint tinge of the rainbow's hues, as they played among the mists that arose from the waterfall. The shrieks that came from below were now loud and incessant, and might have quailed the stoutest heart. But still Patrick advanced firmly, till he stood upon a shelving rock, forming the very verge of the roaring cataract, whence he could throw his eyes directly downwards, through the shooting foam, into the abyss below. Far down, in the midst of the rising vapour, and apparently suspended in it, close by the edge of the descending column of water, he could distinguish a dark object. New and more piercing screams arose from it. He bent forward, and looked yet more intently. To his no inconsiderable dismay, he beheld a fearful head rear itself, as it were from out of it; the long hair by which it was covered, and the immense beard that flowed from the chin, hanging down, drenched by the surrounding moisture, and the eyes glaring fearfully in the moonlight, whilst the terrific screams were inconceivably augmented. Appalled as he was by this most unaccountable apparition, Patrick was shifting his position, in order to lean yet more forward, that he might the better contemplate it, when the toe of his sandal grazed against something that had nearly destroyed his equilibrium, and sent him headlong over the rock. Having, with some difficulty, recovered himself, he stooped down to ascertain what had tripped him, when he found, to his surprise, that it was a rope. He now remembered, that the feudal tenant of the neighbouring ground, who owed service to his father, Sir Allan, was accustomed to hang a conical creel, or large rude basket, by the edge of the fall, for the purpose of catching the salmon that fell into it, after failing in their vain attempts to leap up.

"Ho, there!" cried Patrick Stewart, in that voice of thunder, which he required to exert in order to overcome the continuous roar of the cataract.

"Oh, help! help! help!" cried the fearful head from below.

“Man or demon, I will see what thou art!” cried Patrick, stooping down to lay hold of the rope, with the intention of making an attempt to pull up the creel.

“For the love of Saint Andrew, lay not a hand on the rope, Sir Knight, as thou may’st value thy life!” said Michael Forbes, who, having heard Patrick’s loud shout, had been hurried off to his aid by the fears and the commands of the Lady Catherine.

“Why hast thou left the lady, caitiff?” demanded Patrick Stewart, angrily. “Did I not tell thee to stay with her till I should call thee?”

“We heard thee call loudly, Sir Knight,” replied Michael, trembling more from his proximity to the place whence the screams had issued, than from any thing that Patrick had said.

“True, I had forgotten,” replied Patrick; “I did call, though not on thee. But since thou art here, come lend me thy hand to pull up the basket.”

“Nay, Sir Knight; surely thou art demented by devilish influence. For the love of all the saints!” cried Michael, quaking from head to foot; “for the love of ——”

“Dastard, obey my command, or I will hurl thee over the rock!” cried Patrick furiously, and with a manner that showed Michael that it was time to obey. “Now, pull—pull steadily and firmly; pull away, I say!”

“Have mercy on us! have mercy on our souls!” cried Michael, pulling most unwillingly.

“What a fiend are you afraid of? Why don’t you pull, I say?” cried the Knight again.

“Jesu Maria protect me! that I should have a hand in any such work!” muttered Michael. “Oh holy Virgin! to have thus to deal with the Devil himself!”

“Come! pull!—pull away, I tell ye—pull! aye, there!” cried Patrick Stewart, as the basket at last came to the top of the rock.

“Preserve us all!” cried Michael; “the water-kelpie, sure enough! Mercy on us,

what a fearful red beard! what terrible fiery eyes! For the love of heaven, Sir Knight, let him down again!”

“Coward!” cried Patrick, “if you let go the rope, I’ll massacre thee! Now, do you hear? pull the creel well out this way.—Ha, that will do!—Now I think it is safe.”

“Oh, may the blessed saints reward thee!” said a little shred of a man, who now arose, shaking in a palsy of cold and wet, from the midst of at least a dozen large salmon, with which the creel was heaped up; “Thou hast saved me from the most dreadful of deaths.”

“How camest thou there?” demanded Patrick Stewart; “answer quickly, for we are in haste.”

“Oh, I know not well how I got there,” said the little man, shivering so that he could hardly speak. “I stept aside from the path, just to take a look down to see if there were any salmon in the creel, when something took my foot, and over I went. Oh, what a providence it was that ye came by! Another hour, and I must have been dead from cold and wet, and buried in salmon, for they were flying in upon me like so many swallows. I thought they would have choked me.”

“Here,” said Patrick Stewart, taking out a flask, “take a sup of this cordial; it will speedily restore thee.”

“Oh, blessings on thee, Sir Knight!” said the little man; “I will drink thy health with good will. But tell me thy name, I pray thee, that I may know, and never forget, who it was that saved my life.”

“I am Patrick Stewart of Clan-Allan,” replied the knight carelessly. “Come now, Michael, we must tarry here no longer.”

“Sure I am that I shall never forget the name of Sir Patrick Stewart,” said the little man, whilst he was following them along the narrow path, as they retraced it towards the place where they had left the Lady Catherine; “and if ever I can do thee a good turn I shall do it, though it were by the sacrifice of my life.”

Catherine’s fears were soon allayed by the explanation that was given her. She was again put into the litter, which was quickly shouldered by her protectors, the

little man lending them a willing helping hand; and Patrick and Michael proceeded on their way, whilst the half-drowned wretch went up the glen, pouring out blessings upon them. Without fear or interruption they now passed by the spot which had occasioned them so much dread and delay, and they soon left the roar of the lynn behind them, and at length reached the ravine of Cuachan Searceag, where, much to their relief, they found the whole of the party anxiously waiting for them. When the Forbeses beheld Patrick Stewart, and, above all, when they beheld their young mistress, the daughter of their Chief, safe and well among them, they rent the air with shouts of joy that made the whole glen ring again.

"Aye," said Patrick Stewart, as they sat down to rest a little while, and to take some hasty refreshment, "We may now make what noise we list, for, if the whole gang of these accursed Catteranes should come upon us, we have brave hearts and keen claymores enow to meet them. But, for all that, we have too precious a charge with us to tarry for the mere pleasure of a conflict; so be stirring my men, and let us breast the hill as fast as may be."

You may all well enough guess, gentlemen, how Patrick Stewart was received by the old Lord of Curgarf when he entered his hall, leading in his fair daughter safe and sound. The joy of the father was not the less, that his son, Arthur the Master of Forbes, had returned but a brief space of time before, jaded, dispirited, and sorrowful, from his long, tiresome, and fruitless expedition. Worn with anxiety, the old man had counted watch after watch of the night, and the day and the night again, until his son's arrival, and then he had sunk into the most overwhelming despair. After pouring forth thanks to Heaven, and to all the saints, he now gave way to his joy. The midnight feast was spread, and all was revelry and gladness in the castle. Patrick Stewart was now viewed by him as his guardian angel. Seeing this, Arthur Forbes took an opportunity of advising his friend to profit by the happy circumstance which had now placed him so high in his father's good opinion. He did so—and the result was, that he obtained the willing consent of the old Lord of Curgarf to his union with his daughter, the Lady Catherine, with the promise of a tocher which should be worthy of her.

The happiness of the lovers was now complete, and the next day was spent in open and unrestrained converse between them. The time was fixed for the wedding, and then it was, after all these arrangements had been made, that Patrick Stewart first had leisure fully to recall to mind, all those afflicting

circumstances which had taken place when he last saw his brother Walter. He thought of his father—he felt the necessity of going immediately home, to relieve any anxiety which his father, Sir Allan, might have, in consequence of his unexplained absence, as well as to make him acquainted with his approaching marriage. He accordingly took a tender leave of his fair bride that evening, and, starting next morning, he made his way over the hills to Drummin.

Patrick Stewart was already within sight of home, when his attention was arrested by the blast of a bugle, which rang shrilly from the hill above him. It conveyed to him that private signal which was always used between his brother Walter and himself. For the first time in his life it grated harshly in his ear, for it immediately brought back to his recollection those oppressively painful circumstances which had occurred at Dalestie, which he had so studiously endeavoured to banish from his memory. But the strong tide of brotherly affection within him was too resistless not to sweep away every feeling connected with the past. He applied his bugle to his lips, and returned the call; and, looking up the side of the hill, he beheld Walter, and a party of the Clan-Allan, hastening down through the scattered greenwood to meet him.

“Thanks be to Heaven and good Saint Hubert that I see thee safe, my dearest Patrick,” said Sir Walter, hurrying towards him, and warmly embracing him. “Hast thou forgiven a brother’s anger and unkindness?”

“Could’st thou believe that I could for a moment remember it, my dear Walter?” replied Patrick, returning his embrace.

“Where in the name of wonder hast thou been wandering?” demanded Sir Walter. “Where hast thou been since that night—that night of justice, yet of horror—when you disappeared so mysteriously? Since that moment, when I returned home and found thee not, I have done little else, night or day, but travel about hither and thither, anxiously seeking for tidings of thee.”

“Let us walk apart,” said Patrick in his ear, “and I will tell thee all that has befallen me.”

“Willingly,” said Sir Walter in the same tone; “for, in exculpation of myself, I would now fain pour into thy private ear all those circumstances which secretly urged me to execute that stern act of justice and necessity, which then thou

could’st not comprehend, and against which thy recoiling humanity did naturally enough compel thee so urgently to protest.”

Arm in arm the two brothers then walked on alone, at such a distance before their clansmen as might insure the perfect privacy of their talk, and long ere they reached Drummin, they had fully communicated to each other all that they had mutually to impart. Old Sir Allan had been querulous and impatient about Patrick’s absence, and he had been every now and then peevishly inquiring about him. But now that his son appeared, he seemed to have forgotten that he had not been always with him. He was pleased and proud when the contemplated marriage was communicated to him, and he enjoined Sir Walter to see to it, that every thing handsome should be done on the occasion. In this respect, Sir Walter’s generosity required no stimulus; and if Patrick was dissatisfied at all, it was with the over liberality which his brother manifested, which, in some particulars, he felt inclined to resist.

“Patrick,” said Sir Walter aside to his brother, with a more than ordinarily serious air, “I give thee but thine own in advance. One day or other it will be all thine own. There is something within me that tells me that I am not long for this world. The last words of that wretch, delivered to me, as I told thee, from the midst of those flames that consumed him, were prophetic. But, be that as it may, I have never had thoughts of marrying, and now I am firmly resolved that I never shall marry, so that thou art the sole prop of our house.”

The entrance of the retainers, and the spreading of the evening meal, put a stop to all farther conversation between the brothers. Patrick had not yet seen either the Lady Stradawn, or her son Murdoch. On inquiry, he was told that Murdoch had gone on some unknown expedition on the previous day, and that he had not yet returned. A circumstance, so common with him, excited no surprise. As for the Lady Stradawn, she now came swimming into the hall, with her countenance clothed in all its usual smiles. Her salutation to her stepsons was full of well-dissembled warmth and affection. She hastened, with her wonted affectation of fondness, to bustle about Sir Allan, with the well-feigned pretence of anxiety to attend to his wants, after which she took her place at the head of the board. It was then that Patrick’s eyes became suddenly fixed upon her with a degree of astonishment, which, fortunately for him, the busy occupation of every one else at the table left them no leisure to observe. To his utter amazement, he beheld in her bosom that very garnet brooch which he had given to Catherine Forbes! His

first impulse was to demand from her an explanation of the circumstances by which she had become possessed of it; but a little reflection soon enabled him to control his feelings, though he continued to sit gazing at the well-known jewel, altogether forgetful of the feast, until the lady arose to retire to her chamber.

“My dearest Sir Allan,” said she, going up to the old knight’s chair to bestow her caresses on him ere she went; “My dearest Sir Allan, thou hast eaten nothing for these two days. What can I get for thee that may tickle thy palate into thy wonted appetite? Said’st thou not something of a deer’s heart, for which thou hadst a longing? ’Tis a strange fancy, I’m sure.”

“Oh, aye! very true,—a deer’s heart!” said the doting old man. “Very true, indeed, my love. I did dream—oh, aye—I dreamed, I say, Bella, that I was eating the rosten heart of a stag—of a great *hart of sixteen*,[2] killed by my boys on the hill of Dalestie—aye, aye—and with arrows feathered from an eagle’s wing. As I ate, and better ate, I always grew stronger and stronger, till at length I was able to rise from my chair as stoutly as ever I did in my life—ouch, aye! that day is gone! Yet much would I like to eat the rosten heart of a deer; but it would need to be that of a great hart of sixteen.”

“My dear father, thou shalt not want that,” said Sir Walter; “thou shalt have it ere I am a day older, if a hart of sixteen be to be found between this and Loch Aven.”

“Aye, aye, Walter boy, as thou sayest,” said the old man; “a great hart of sixteen —else hath the heart of the beast no potency in’t—aye, and killed with an arrow feathered from an eagle’s wing—och, aye—hoch-hey!”

Though the two brothers were satisfied that this was nothing but the drivelling of age, they were not the less anxiously desirous to gratify their father’s wish to the very letter. Accordingly, the necessary orders were given, and the trusty Dugald Roy[3] was forthwith summoned to prepare six arrows, which would have been easily supplied, with the small portions of feather which were necessary for them, from the eagle wing in Sir Walter’s bonnet. But Sir Allan stopped him as he was about to tear it off.

“What, Sir!” exclaimed the old man testily, and in a state of agitation that shook every fibre of his frame like a palsy;—“What! wouldst thou shear the eagle

plume of my boy Walter, thou ill-omened bird that thou art? Yonder hangs mine; it can never more appear bearing proudly forward in the foremost shock of the battle-field. Och, hey, that is true! Take that, thou raven! Thou may'st rend it as ye list. But, my boy's!—the proud plume of mine eldest born boy!—thou shalt never take that!"

"I crave your pardon, Sir Knight," replied Dugald Roy; "and now I think on't, I need not take either, for I have some spare wing feathers in my store that will do all the turn."

The next morning saw Sir Walter and his brother Patrick early on foot, dressed in their plainest hunting attire, stretching up the valley at the head of their attendants. Each of the brothers had three of the eagle-winged arrows stuck into his belt; for, as both were dexterous marksmen, and as they had resolved to use their shafts against nothing else but a great hart of sixteen, they felt themselves to be thus most amply provided to insure success. Fortune was somewhat adverse to them, however; for although they saw deer in abundance, they found themselves in this very part of the valley, when the day was already far spent, without having once had a chance of effecting their object.

"Look ye there, brother Walter!" at length cried Patrick Stewart suddenly, as he pointed to a hart with a magnificent head, which was crossing to this side of the river, at the ford you see above yonder. "Look ye there brother! there he goes at last!"

"By the rood, but that is the very fellow we want," replied Sir Walter. "Watch him! See!—he takes the hill aslant. He will not go far, if we may judge from his present pace."

"I saw him walk over that open knoll in the wood high up yonder," said Patrick, after some minutes of pause. "He has no mind to go farther than the dip of the hill above. I think that we are sure of finding him there. What say you brother?"

"Thou art right, Patrick," said Walter. "Then do thou run on, and take the long hollow in the hill-side, beyond the big pine tree yonder. I will follow up the slack behind us here. Let your sweep be wide, that we may be sure of stalking well in beyond him, so that, if we fail of getting proper vantage of him, we may be sure that we drive him not farther a-field. Let us take no sleuth-hound, nor bratchet

neither, lest, perchance, we cause him alarm. You, my merry men, will tarry here for us with the dogs."

Off went the two brothers, each in his own direction, and each with his bow in his hand, and his three arrows in his belt. In obedience to Sir Walter's directions, Patrick hurried away to the great pine tree, and then began his ascent through the long hollow in the woody mountain's side with all manner of expedition. After a long and fatiguing climb, he began to use less speed and more caution, as he approached nearer to the somewhat less steep ground, where his hopes lay. Then it was that he commenced making a long sweep around, stealing silently from tree to tree, and concealing himself, as much as he could, by keeping their thick trunks before him, and creeping along among the heather, where such a precaution was necessary. Having completed his sweep to such an extent as led him to believe that he had certainly got beyond the hart, he was about to creep down the hill, in the hope of soon coming upon him, when he chanced to observe a great uprooted pine, which lay prostrated a little way farther on, and somewhat above the spot where he then was, its head rising above the heather like a great green hillock. Thinking that he might as well have one peep beyond it before he turned downwards, and wishing to avail himself of its shade to mask his motions, he took a direct course towards it. But it so happened, that the hart had found it equally convenient for the same purpose, as well as for a place of outlook, for it had taken post close to it, on the farther side. Descrying Patrick Stewart through an accidental opening in the foliage, and having no fancy to hold nearer converse with him, the creature moved slowly away. His quick and practised eye caught a view of it through the opening, as it was going away up the hill, as it happened, in a direct line. Well experienced in woodcraft, he, in a loud voice, called out "*hah!*" As is common with red deer when in the woods, the hart made a sudden halt, and wheeled half round to listen, and in this way he placed his broadside to the hunter's eye. This was but for an instant, to be sure; but in that instant Patrick Stewart's arrow, passing through the break in the foliage of the pine, fixed itself deep into the shoulder of the hart.

"Clumsily done!" exclaimed Patrick Stewart from very vexation as he saw the hart bound off. "I'll warrant me the arrow-head is deep into his shoulder blade. One single finger's breadth more behind it would have made him mine own, and with all the cleverness of perfect woodcraft."

Patrick, baulked and disappointed, now extended his sweep, and crossed and re-

crossed the ground, with the hope of meeting his brother Sir Walter; but as he did not succeed in falling in with him, he followed the track of the hart for some distance up the hill, until he lost every trace of his slot upon the dry summit, after which he returned with all manner of haste to make his way downwards to the party in the valley below. This he did, partly with the expectation of meeting his brother Sir Walter there, and partly with the intention of getting the dogs, that he might make an attempt to recover his wounded hart. There he found—not his brother Sir Walter—but his brother Murdoch—who stood exulting over a dead stag. He was a great hart of sixteen, just such an one as he himself had been after.

“Thou see’st that I have the luck,” said Murdoch Stewart triumphantly.

“Whence camest thou, Murdoch? and how comes this?” demanded Patrick.

“All naturally enough, brother,” replied Murdoch Stewart carelessly. “As I was wandering idly on the hill-side above there, I espied the people here below, so I came sauntering down to see what they were about, and to hear news of ye all. But, as my luck would have it, I had hardly been with them the pattering of a paternoster, when the very hart that thou wentest after came bang down upon me—my shaft fled—and there he lies. Mark now, brother, is he not well and cleanly killed? Observe—right through the neck you see. But, ha!—it would seem that thou hast spent an arrow too—for these fellows tell me that thou tookest three with thee, and methinks thou hast but twain left in thy belt.”

“I used one against the hart I went after,” said Patrick coldly.

“And missed him, brother—is’t not so?” said Murdoch laughing. “Well, I never hoped that I should live to wipe thine eye in any such fashion; for these varlets all say that this is the very hart that thou went’st after.”

“Nay, then,” replied Patrick with an air of indifference; “if this be the hart I went after, I must have found another great hart of sixteen the very marrow of him; and him I have so marked, that I’ll be sworn he will be known again; for I promise you that at this moment he beareth wood on his shoulder as well as on his head.”

“The hart thou sayest that thou sawest may be like Saint Hubert’s stag for aught I

know," said Murdoch; "but it is clear, from all that these fellows say, that there lies the very hart that thou went'st forth to kill, and that is no arrow of thine that hath fixed itself in his gullet."

"I did see a hart—draw my bow at a hart—and sorely wound a hart," said Patrick, rather testily; "and were it not that the scent is cold, and the hour so late, I think that the sleuth-hounds there, would soon help me to prove to thee that he is as fine a hart of sixteen as this which thou hast slain."

"Cry your mercy, brother," said Murdoch; "I knew not that such great harts of sixteen had been so rife hereabouts, as that one should start up as a butt for thine arrow the moment that the other had been lost to thee. Yet it is clear that thou hast spent an arrow upon something.—Ha!—by the way—where is our brother Walter? They tell me that he went up the hill-side with thee."

"After seeking for him on the hill-side in vain, I reckoned on finding him here," replied Patrick. "But if he be within a mile of us I'll make him answer."

He put his bugle to his lips, and awakened the echoes, with such sounds as were understood between Sir Walter and himself; but the echoes alone replied to him.

"He may have met with a deer which may have led him off in pursuit over the hill," said Patrick.

"Aye," said Murdoch; "he may have fallen in with your hart of sixteen—yea, or another, for aught I know, seeing that harts of sixteen are now so rife on these hills."

"Fall in with what he might, he is not the man to give up his game easily," said Patrick, somewhat keenly.

"Whatever may have befallen him," said Murdoch, "we can hardly hope to see him hereabouts to-night."

"I hope we may see him at Drummin," said Patrick; "for as the night is now drooping down so fast, he will most readily seek the straightest way thither. So, as thou hast now made sure of a great hart of sixteen for Sir Allan, we may as well turn our steps thitherward without more delay."

On reaching Drummin, Patrick Stewart's first inquiry was for his brother Sir Walter. He had not returned home; but it was yet early in the night, and he might have been led away to such a distance as to require the greater part of the night to bring him home. The hart was borne up to the hall in triumph, and exhibited before Sir Allan, with the arrow still sticking in his neck. The old man's countenance was filled with joy and exultation when he beheld it. The Lady Stradawn could not contain her triumph.

"So, Murdoch," said she, "thou art the lucky man who hath killed the much longed for venison! Thou art the lucky man who hath brought thy father the food for which his soul so yearneth! There is something of good omen for thee in this, my boy!"

"A noble head!—a great hart of sixteen, indeed," said Sir Allan. "Aye, aye, that is a head, that is a head indeed! Yet have I slain many as fine in my time. Aye, aye,—but those days are gone; och, hey! gone indeed. See what a cuach his horn hath. Yet that which I slew up at Loch Aven had a bigger cuach than this one by a great deal. As I live, you might have slaked your thirst from the hollow of it the drowthiest day you ever saw. Yet this is a good hart—a noble hart of sixteen, —aye, aye! hoch-hey! But, hey! what's this? A goose-winged shaft? Did I not tell ye that my dream spake of an eagle's wing? His heart will be naught after all —naught, naught—och, hey! och, hey!"

"Nay, we shall soon convince thee to the contrary, father," said Murdoch, motioning to the attendants to lay the deer down upon the hearth. "I will forthwith break him under thine own eye, and thou shalt see, and judge for thyself."

Murdoch then drawing forth his knife, began to open up the animal according to the strictest rules laid down for breaking a deer, as this operation was called, and on proceeding to slit up the slough, to the great wonder of every one, it was discovered that the old man was right. The heart was indeed so very small that it might very well have been said to have been naught. Murdoch was dismayed for a moment at an omen so very inauspicious, which, in his own mind, he felt was more than enough to overthrow all the fair prognostics which his mother had so evidently drawn from his success. The Lady herself was equally disconcerted.

"Naught, naught!" whimpered Sir Allan. "'Tis an ill omen for thee, boy. Thou

shalt ne’er fly with an eagle’s wing—nay, nay! Aye, aye! Thou art ever doomed to gobble i’ the muddy stagnant waters like a midden-gander.—Uch, aye! och, hey!”

“The fiend take the old carl for his saying!” whispered Murdoch angrily aside to his mother.

“Amen!” replied the Lady Stradawn bitterly, in the same under tone. “But fear ye not, boy, thou shalt wear his eagle wing, aye, and sit in his chair to boot, ere long.”

This dialogue apart was unobserved by any one, and both son and mother speedily recovered their self-possession. The lady very cunningly set herself, straightway, to turn the weak and dribbling stream of Sir Allan’s thoughts from the subject which then occupied them, to some other, which was to her less disagreeable at the moment, and she easily succeeded.

Patrick Stewart’s attention was attracted from all this superstitious trifling, as well as from what followed it, by again observing the garnet brooch, which appeared in the bosom of the Lady Stradawn. His thoughts were entirely occupied with it, and his eyes were from time to time rivetted on it. At length it seemed as if Murdoch had somehow remarked his fixed gaze, for a private sign appeared to pass from him to his mother, after which she pleaded a sudden faintness, and left the hall, to return no more that night, and her son soon afterwards followed her. Patrick Stewart’s mind remained filled with strange speculations regarding the jewel, until the night wore late, and he began to think anxiously about his brother Sir Walter. Having done the last offices of attention to his father for the evening, he secretly desired Dugald Roy to follow him.

“Dugald,” said he, “I am, most unaccountably, unhappy about thy master. Surely, if all had been well with him he should have been here ere this? I cannot rid my mind of the idea that there is something amiss with him. He rested not, as thou knowest, when I was missing, and it would ill become me to sleep when he is absent. Let us go seek for him, then, without delay.”

Dugald Roy readily assented; and both of them having dighted themselves well up for turmoil, as well as for toil, they secretly left the tower of Drummin. All that night they travelled, and by daylight they had got into the range of

mountains, and of forests, where they had reason to hope for tidings of Sir Walter. They searched through every part of the wooded side of that hill where he had last disappeared, and they visited every human dwelling within a great range around it, but all without obtaining the slightest intelligence regarding him. Disappointed, and disheartened, they had returned nearly as far as where the village of Tomantoul now stands, on their way home in the evening, when they met with Dugald Roy's brother Neil.

"What brought thee here, man?" demanded Dugald; "and what a fiend gives thee that anxious face?"

"Holy Saint Michael, but it is well that I have foregathered with you both!" replied Neil. "You must take some other road than that which leads to Drummin, Sir Patrick. Believe me, it is no place for you at this present time."

"What, in the name of all the saints, hath happened to make it otherwise?" demanded Patrick Stewart.

"Cannot ye speak out at once, ye Amadan ye, and not hammer like a fool that gate?" cried Dugald impatiently.

"Patience! patience!" said Neil; "patience! and ye shall know all presently. In the first place, then, Master Murdoch says that Sir Walter is murdered."

"Murdered!" cried Patrick, in an agony of anxiety; "My brother Walter murdered!—Where?—when?—how?—by whom?—Oh, speak, that I may hasten to avenge him! But, no!—'tis impossible!—speak!—I have mistaken thee —surely it cannot be!"

"Master Murdoch says that it is true," replied Neil. "But the worst of all is, that he hath accused thee, Sir Patrick, of having done the deed, with an arrow, somewhere in the wood on the hill of Dalestie."

"Merciful Saints!" exclaimed Patrick; "can he indeed be such a villain? But who will believe so foul and unnatural a calumny? Oh, Walter, my brother, my brother! Heaven above knows that thy life was ten thousand times dearer to me than mine own!"

"Nay," replied Neil, "he hath called all the clansmen who were there to witness

and to support the strong suspicions which he hath industriously raised against thee."

"What argument hath he against me?" cried Patrick Stewart impatiently.

"He says that the men who were present can testify that you and your brother, Sir Walter, went into the wood together," replied Neil; "and that Sir Walter hath not been seen since; and then, he contends, that the sudden flight which you made from Drummin, under the cloud of night, is enough to show that you have taken guilt home to your conscience."

“And is this all?” demanded Patrick Stewart.

“Nay,” replied Neil, “there was more stuff of the same kind, by the use of which he hath contrived so to persuade them with his wily tongue, that they are all clamorous against thee. Nay, he hath even warped the feeble judgment of Sir Allan himself to the same belief.”

“Serpent that he is!” cried Patrick Stewart. “But let me hasten home to confront this vile traducer. My brother!—my brother Walter!” continued he, bursting into tears. “My brother Walter gone!—and I accused of his murder!—Oh, my brother!—my dear brother! Heaven above knows how willingly I would have laid down my life to have saved thine! Nay, how willingly would I now lay it down at this moment, were it only to secure to me the certainty that thou art yet alive! The very thought that it may be otherwise is agony and desolation to me. But let us hasten to confront this villainy. Let us hasten to revenge! For the love of Heaven, let us hasten home, Dugald!”

“Nay, my good master,” said Dugald weeping, “for if this sad tale be true as to Sir Walter’s death, other master than thee, I fear me, that I now have none. Neil says well that Drummin is no place for thee to-night, with so sudden and tumultuous a clamour excited against thee. Thine innocence will avail thee nothing. Even the innocence of an angel would naught avail against the diseased judgments of men, with minds so poisoned and so possessed. Be persuaded to go elsewhere, until the false and weak foundations of this most traitorous accusation fail beneath it, and the mists drop from men’s eyes. Who can say for certain that my beloved master, Sir Walter, is dead? I cannot believe in so great a calamity. What proof is there that he is dead? There is no news that his body hath been found.”

“Nay,” replied Neil, “he is only amissing as I said.”

“Thou dost well advise me, Dugald,” said Patrick Stewart after a moment’s thought. “There is, as thou say’st, no proof that my brother, Sir Walter, is dead. It

is most reasonable to believe that this may, after all, be nothing but a foolish or malicious surmise. My best hope, nay, my belief is, that it is founded on naught else; and may Heaven in its mercy grant that it may prove so. I will take thine advice. I will not go to Drummin at present, but I shall straightway bend my steps towards the Castle of Curgarf."

"Then shall I and Neil attend thee thither, Sir Knight," said Dugald; "for next to Sir Walter Stewart do I assuredly owe thee fealty and service."

Sir Patrick and his two attendants now turned off in the direction of Curgarf, and the day was so far spent that the sun was setting, as they were passing over the ridge of the country lying between the Aven and the Don. The trees of the forest there grew thinly scattered in little stunted patches. Sir Patrick was walking a few paces in front of the two brothers, musing as he went, when he was suddenly surprised by a shower of arrows falling thickly on and around him. One stuck in his bonnet, another buried itself harmlessly in the folds of his plaid, a third pierced his sandal and slightly wounded his foot; and, whilst a fourth struck fire out of a large stone close to him, two more fell short of him among the heather near him. In an instant his bow and those of his attendants were bent, and their eyes being turned towards the place whence the shafts had flown, they descried some men lurking beneath one of the straggling patches of dwarf pine trees. To have stood aloof with the hope of shooting at them successfully would have been fatal, for the archery of Sir Patrick and his attendants could have done nothing against men so ambushed, whilst the Knight and his people would have been a sure mark for their traitorous foes.

"On them, my brave Dugald!" cried Sir Patrick Stewart, drawing his sword, and rushing towards the enemy.

Dugald Roy, and his brother, Neil, were at his back in a moment. Before they could reach the point against which their assault was directed, several arrows were discharged at them. But so resolute, and so spirited an attack had been so little looked for by those who shot them, that they were too much appalled to take any very steady aim, so that all of them fell innocuous. Seeing Sir Patrick and his two attendants so rapidly nearing their place of concealment, the villains thought it better to turn out, that they might receive their onset on ground where they could all act at once. Six men accordingly appeared claymore in hand, and as Sir Patrick continued to hurry forward, he now took the opportunity of

speaking hastily to Dugald and Neil, who were advancing to right and left of him.

“Draw an arrow each,” said he, “and when I give you the word, stop suddenly, and each of you pick off the man opposite to you, and leave me to take my choice of the rest.—Now!”

The unlooked for halt was made just as the assassins were preparing to receive the on-comers on the points of their swords. The aim was sure and fatal. Three men fell—and on rushed Sir Patrick and his two people with a loud shout. The three, who yet stood against them, were panic-struck, and, ere they could well offer defence, they were also extended writhing among the heather, in the agonies of death; and the whole matter was over in less time than it has taken for me to tell of it. But, uncertain whether the partial covert of the pine-patch might not still shelter some more enemies, they rushed in among the trees, brandishing their reeking blades. Up started a youth from among some low brushwood, and ran off like a hare. Neil was after him in a moment, and up to him ere he had fled twenty paces. Already he had him by the hair of the head, and his claymore was raised to smite him, when Patrick Stewart called to his follower to stay his hand. Neil obeyed, and granted the youth his life; but when he brought him in as a prisoner, what was the Stewart’s surprise when he discovered that he was the same individual whose life he had spared in the Catterane’s den.

“Ha!” exclaimed Sir Patrick; “said I not well that I questioned the wisdom of sparing thy life when we last met, thou vermin? What hast thou to urge, that I should show mercy to thee now, Sir Caitiff?”

“Oh, mercy, mercy, Sir Knight!” exclaimed the youth, piteously. “Trust me, I came not hither willingly. I had no hand in this treacherous ambush against thy life.”

“Appearances are woefully against thee,” said Patrick Stewart; “yet would I not willingly do thee hurt, if thou be’st innocent. But this is no convenient time nor place to tarry for thy trial. So bring him along with thee, Dugald. We shall take our own leisure to examine him afterwards; meanwhile, take especial care that he escape not.”

Sir Patrick Stewart’s reception at Curgarf may be easily guessed at. He told of

the providential escape he had made from assassination by the way; but he thought it better, as yet, to say nothing of the mysterious disappearance of his brother, Sir Walter, or of the traitorous accusations against himself, to which it had given rise. His resolve to be silent as to this matter was formed, because he had by this time reasoned himself into the firm persuasion that his brother's reappearance would speedily make his own innocence as clear as noonday.

He was next morning happily seated in the hall, now talking with the old Lord of Curgarf on one subject, and again taking his opportunity of whispering to the Lady Catherine on another, when he suddenly recollected the brooch he had given her. It was not in her bosom.

"Where are the two twined hearts?" said he to her, smiling. "Fear not, dearest—I am not jealous."

"Thou hast no cause for jealousy, dear Patrick," replied the lady; "and yet, I grieve to say, that I have not the jewel. When the Catteranes hurried me off from here, and just as they stopped for a little time to make up a litter, that they might the more easily carry me, one who appeared to have a certain command over them, but whose face or person I could not see in the obscurity which then prevailed, snatched it from my bosom, whilst affecting to fasten my arryssade more firmly around me. Nay, look not so serious, dearest Patrick! surely thou dost not doubt me in this matter?"

"Doubt thee, my Catherine!" said Sir Patrick, kissing her hand with fervour; "sooner would I doubt mine own existence;—thou art pure virgin truth itself! Think no more of it. Thou shalt have another and a richer one anon. But say, dearest! why should we longer delay to set our own very two hearts in that indissoluble golden knot, with which the sacrament of our holy church may bind them together, so as to form a jewel, of which neither robber nor Catterane can rifle us, and which cannot be rent asunder save by the iron hand of death. I have thy father's permission to move thee to shorten that cruel interval which thou hast placed between me and happiness."

In such a strain as this, did he continue to urge his suit, until it was at last successful; and, to his great joy, it was ultimately arranged, with the consent of all parties, that the marriage should take place on the second day from the time I am now speaking of. The bustle of preparation began in the Castle the moment

the circumstance was announced; and it immediately spread far and wide everywhere around it, and went on incessantly day and night. Joy was everywhere as universal among the clansmen as their devotion to the Lady Catherine, the bride, and their admiration of the merits of the bridegroom, could make it. The day at length arrived. The Castle was crowded with all the friends and retainers of the family, who came pouring in to witness a ceremonial so interesting to them all. The Priest had arrived; the Castle chapel had been set in order; the bridal-chamber had been dight up; and the feast prepared; and every soul was astir to contribute, so far as in them lay, to the general felicity, as well as to share in it. The old Lord of Curgarf seemed to have grown young again. Arthur, the Master of Forbes, was all life and raillery. Already had the whole company been assembled within the hall. All the men-at-arms within the Castle had crowded in thither. Even the old warden at the gate had lowered his portcullis, and made every thing secure with bolt, bar, and chain, so that he might safely leave his post to the charge of their stubborn defences. The blushing bride, arrayed in the richest attire, had been led in, attended by her blooming maidens; and the movement towards the chapel was about to be made, so that the ceremony might go on, when suddenly a shrill bugle blast from without the gate made the very Castle walls resound again.

“Go some of ye, and see who that may be who summons us so rudely,” said the Lord of Curgarf.

“Murdoch Stewart, and a party of the Clan-Allan, are at the gate, craving admittance,” said the messenger, on his return.

“Son Arthur,” said the Lord of Curgarf, “get thee down quickly, and give Murdoch Stewart of Clan-Allan, the brother of this our son-in-law to be, instant entry. Let the gate be opened to him, aye, and to all his people, dost thou hear? It was kind in him thus to come, on the spur of the occasion,” continued the old Lord, addressing Patrick, after his son had gone with his attendants to obey his will—“It was kind in thy brother to come thus unasked on the spur of the moment. Would that Sir Allan, thy father himself, could have been here.”

The court-yard and the stair now rang with the clink of armed men, and Arthur, the Master of Forbes, entered, ushering in Murdoch Stewart, proudly attired, and followed by a formidable band of the Clan-Allan, whose flaring red tartans were strongly contrasted against the more modest green of those of the Clan-Forbes.

To the no small surprise of his brother Patrick, he no longer wore that appearance of youthful carelessness and indifference, under the mask of which he had hitherto disguised his true character. His bearing was now manly and lofty, suited to the command of the Clan-Allan, which he now seemed to have assumed. His salutation to the Lord of Curgarf was grave, dignified, and courteous; and, as way was made for him, he advanced, with the utmost self-possession, into the middle of the hall.

“I rejoice that I have arrived thus, as it seems, in the nick of time,” said he, looking around him, and bowing as he did so, but without once allowing his eyes to rest on his brother, who stood fixed in silent astonishment at what he beheld.

“So do we all rejoice,” replied the Lord of Curgarf. “Had we but known that our bridal might have been thus honoured by the house of Clan-Allan, on so short a warning, trust me thou shouldst not have lacked our warmest bidding, as thou hast now our warmest welcome.”

“Welcome or not, my Lord,” replied Murdoch Stewart, with a respectful reverence, “thou wilt surely thank me for this most unceremonious visit, when thou shalt know the object of it. I come to save the honour of thy house from foul disgrace: would, that in so doing, I could likewise save the honour of that which gave me birth! But although, in saving thee and thy house from dishonour, the good name of that of Clan-Allan must assuredly be tarnished, it shall never be said of me, that I preserved it by falsehood or infamous concealment.”

“Of what wouldst thou speak?” demanded the Lord of Curgarf. “I do beseech thee, keep me, and keep this good company, no longer in suspense.”

“Then, my good Lord,” replied Murdoch, solemnly, “much as it pains me to utter it, and much as it must pain thee, and all present, to hear it, I must tell thee, that strong suspicions are abroad, that mine eldest brother, Sir Walter Stewart, hath been most foully murdered, and that he, on whom thou wert now on the very eve of bestowing thine only daughter, is the foul murderer, who took an elder brother’s life, to make way for the gratification of his own ambitious and avaricious desires. The circumstances are so strong against my unfortunate brother Patrick, that all agree that no one else could have been the murderer.”

“All!—all!—all!—all! was echoed from the stern Clan-Allans, at the lower end

of the hall.

“Holy saints defend us!” exclaimed the Lord of Curgarf, sinking into a chair.

“’Tis false! oh ’tis all false, father!” cried the trembling Catherine Forbes, rushing forward to assist her father.

“Infamous traitor!” cried Patrick Stewart; “lying and infamous traitor! Where are the proofs on which you found so foul and false an accusation?”

“Would, for the credit of our poor house, that it were false!” said Murdoch, mildly. “But it is impossible to conceal, that thou wert the last person seen in our poor brother Walter’s company. Thou wentest up the wood with him, with three arrows in thy belt. Thou camest back shortly afterwards without him. One of thine arrows was gone. Thou gavest reasons for the want of it which proved to be false; and our dear brother Walter hath never been since seen.”

“He is guilty! He, and no one else, is the murderer!” cried the men of Clan-Allan hoarsely.

“Woe is me!” said the distracted Lord of Curgarf, springing from his chair with nervous agitation; “the circumstances are indeed too suspicious!”

“Father!—father!—father, he is innocent!” cried the frantic Lady Catherine Forbes, holding the old lord’s arm.

“Sister,” cried the Master of Forbes, taking the Lady Catherine affectionately by the hand, and speaking to her with great feeling—“Dearest sister, this is indeed an afflicting trial for thee; yet, be of good courage—I have no fears of the result. Patrick Stewart cannot be guilty of the foul and cruel deed of which he has been accused. We must have the matter sifted to the bottom; the truth must be brought out; and, as his innocence must be thereby established, all the evil that can happen will be but the short delay of your nuptials, till he be fairly and fully cleansed from these wicked charges.”

“I am sent by my father,” said Murdoch Stewart—“I am sent by my father, and that most unwillingly, to demand his son Patrick as a prisoner. Forgive me, my good Lord of Curgarf, for thus daring to execute his paternal order under your roof.—Men of Clan-Allan, seize and bind Patrick Stewart!”

“Hold!” cried Dugald Roy, in a voice like thunder.

“Hold!” cried Dugald Roy, in a voice like thunder.

“Hold!” cried Dugald Roy, in a voice like thunder—“Hold, men of Clan-Allan! Lay not a hand upon him, to whom, if my dear master Sir Walter be indeed gone, ye must all soon, in the course of nature, swear fealty as your chieftain. He is guiltless of my beloved master’s murder, though murdered, I fear, he hath most foully been. But here is one who can tell more of this cruel and wicked deed. Come hither boy, and tell us what thou may’st know of this mysterious matter.”

Dugald Roy then led forward the youth whom he had brought prisoner to Curgarf, of whose very existence Sir Patrick Stewart had lost all recollection, amidst the tumult of joy in which he had been so continually kept by his approaching nuptials. The Lady Catherine Forbes started with surprise when she beheld him; but the countenance of Murdoch Stewart turned as pale as a linen sheet at the sight of him.

“What hast thou to say, young man, to the clearing up of this dark and cruel mystery?” demanded the Lord of Curgarf.

“My Lord, I saw Sir Walter Stewart of Clan-Allan murdered,” said the youth in a tremulous voice. “I saw him shot to the death by the arrow of Ewan Cameron, one of the band of Catteranes.”

“How camest thou to have been in any such evil company?” demanded the Lord of Curgarf.

“Trusting to have mercy at your hands, my Lord, I will tell my whole story as shortly as I can, if thou wilt but listen to me,” replied the youth. “I was prentice to a craftsman in the town of Banff, a man who wrought in gold and silver. Being one day severely chidden by my master for some unlucky fault, the devil entered into me, and I resolved to be revenged of him. Having become known to the captain of a certain band of Catteranes, I stole my master’s keys, and gave them to him, so that he and his gang were enabled to rifle the goldsmith’s stores of all his valuables. In dread of punishment I fled with them to their den in the hills, where they afterwards kept me in thrall to do their service. The lady, thy daughter, can tell thee that I was there when she was brought in by them, and had

not Sir Patrick Stewart left me bound when he spared my life, they would have certainly taken it on their return, in their rage and fury at her escape; but, fortunately, I was lying quite out of their way at the moment, and was not discovered till they had somewhat cooled. Finding that their retreat had been found out, they hastily abandoned it, and dispersed themselves through the hills. On the day that followed after that, we were all collected together to meet our captain; and after two days more, a breathless messenger came early in the morning to tell him something which was kept secret from all else. There were but few of the band with him at the time; but these were ordered to arm on the sudden; and even I, who had never been called out on any expedition until that day, was commanded to arm like the rest.

“Our small party marched off in all haste, and about mid-day we were planted in ambush on the side of a hill above the Aven. Our captain seemed to be restless and anxious. He moved about from place to place, stretching on tiptoe from the top of every knoll, and sometimes climbing the tallest pine trees, in order to scan the valley below more narrowly. At length, as it grew late in the afternoon, he took a long look from one point, and then, as if he had at last made some discovery of importance, he suddenly moved us off into a thicket, which grew on the edge of a considerable opening in the wood on the hill-side; and I would know that opening again, for it had the green quaking bog of a well-head in the very midst of it.

“We had not stood long there, till a man in very plain attire, with a bow in his hand, came up from the thick wood below, and began to pass aslant the open space. ‘There goes a good mark for an arrow,’ said the captain of the band. ‘Shoot at him, my men.’—‘He is not worth a shaft,’ replied some of his people. ‘He is a poor fellow who hath nothing in his sporran to pay for the killing of him.’—‘No matter,’ said Ewan Cameron, ‘he hath a good pair of sandals on him; and my brogues are worn to shreds—so, here goes at him.’ And just as the man was passing along the bank close above the well-eye, the arrow fled, and pierced him to the heart. ‘Well shot, Ewan!’ cried the captain, in a strange ecstasy of joy; ‘thou shalt have gold for that shot of thine.’ So instant was his death, that he sprang high into the air, and his body fell headlong and without life into the very middle of the bog, with a force that buried it in its yielding mass, so high, that nothing was seen of him but his legs. Ewan hastened to the place, quietly took off the sandals from the dead man, threw off his own brogues, and put on the

sandals in place of them, and then the captain himself ran eagerly to help him to force the corpse downwards into the bog; and this they did till the green moss closed over the soles of its feet. I then knew not who the murdered man might be,—and the deed was no sooner done, than our captain ordered us to make our way back, as fast as we could travel, over the hills, whilst he left us to go directly down into the glen.

“Early next morning, a messenger again came to us; and five picked archers were sent out under the orders of Ewan Cameron. I was directed to accompany them; and I marvelled much why I, who was so inexperienced, should be required to go on an expedition where they seemed to be so very particular in choosing their men. But Ewan Cameron soon let me into the secret. ‘Thou knowest the person of Patrick Stewart of Clan-Allan, dost thou not?’ said he to me.—‘If that was he who took the lady from the cave, and left me bound, replied I, ‘then have I reason to remember him right well.’—‘Then must I tell thee, that we are now sent forth expressly to hunt for him, and to take his life,’ replied Ewan; ‘and if thou would’st fain preserve thine own, thou wilt need to look sharply about thee, that thou mayest tell me when thou seest him.’—‘Who covets to have his life?’ demanded I.’—‘He who made me take the life of his brother Walter, for those sandals which I now wear,’ said Ewan.—‘What! our captain?’ exclaimed I; ‘that must be in revenge, because Sir Patrick Stewart took the lady from him.’—‘Partly so, perhaps,’ replied Ewan; ‘but I am rather jealous that our captain’s greatest fault to Sir Patrick Stewart is, that he, like his brother, Sir Walter Stewart, was born before him. Knowest thou not, that our captain is no other than Murdoch Stewart, the third son of old Sir Allan of Stradawn?’ I was no sooner made aware of this, than—”

The youth would have proceeded, but the loud murmur of astonishment and horror that arose every where throughout the hall, so drowned his voice, that he was compelled to stop.

“Holy Saint Michael, what a perfect villain thou art!” exclaimed the old Lord of Curgarf, darting a look of indignant detestation at Murdoch Stewart.

“Thou wouldst not condemn a stranger unheard,” said Murdoch, calmly.

“Nay,” replied the Lord of Curgarf, “thou shalt have full justice. We shall hear thee anon. But let this youth finish his narrative, which would seem to be

pregnant with strange and horrible things."

"I have but little more to say," continued the youth. "Gratitude to Sir Patrick Stewart, for having spared my life, when his own security might have required the taking of it, at once resolved me against betraying him to slaughter. Ewan Cameron marched us straight away to the hill, which rises above the track that leads from the little place of Tomantoul to the river Don, and there he kept us sitting, for some time, watching, till we espied three men coming along the way. Whilst they were yet afar off I knew one of them to be the very person whom the murderers were in search of. 'Is that Sir Patrick Stewart that comes first yonder?' demanded Ewan.—'I cannot tell at this distance,' said I; 'but I think the man I saw in the cave was much taller than that man.'—'That is a tall man,' said Ewan; 'take care what thou sayest, or thou mayest chance to have thy stature curtailed by the whole head.'—'I say what is true,' said I; 'no man could know his own father at that distance.'—'Then will I assert that thou sayest that which is a lie,' said one of the party; 'for great as the distance may be, I know that to be Sir Patrick Stewart. I mean that man who comes first of the three.'—'Let us down upon him without loss of time then,' cried Ewan; 'and do you come along, Sirrah! Thou shalt along with us; and, when our work is done, we shall see whether we cannot find the means of refreshing thy memory.' Having uttered these words, Ewan hurried us all down to the covert of a small patch of stunted pines, that grew on the flat ground below. There we lay in ambush till Sir Patrick Stewart, and his two attendants, came within bowshot, and there, as is already known to most here, the six assassins were speedily punished for their wicked attempt, and I became Sir Patrick Stewart's prisoner."

"Now," said the Lord of Curgarf, addressing himself to Murdoch, "what hast thou to say in answer to all this?—What hast thou to answer for thyself?"

"I say that the young caitiff is a foul liar!" cried Murdoch violently. "He is a foul liar, who hath been taught a false tale, to bear me down."

"He may be a liar," said the Lord of Curgarf; "but his story hangs marvellously well together."

"Who would dare to condemn me on his unsupported testimony?" demanded Murdoch, boldly.

“Here is one who is ready to support his tale,” said Michael Forbes, pressing forward, and pushing before him a strange looking little man, with a long red beard, and a head of hair so untamed, that it hung over his sharp sallow features in such a manner, as, for some moments, to render it difficult for Sir Patrick Stewart to recognise in him, the man whom he had saved from his perilous position in the salmon creel, at the Lynn of Aven.

“Ha!—Grigor Beg!” cried Murdoch Stewart, betrayed by his surprise, at beholding him; “What a fiend hath brought thee hither?—But thou—thou can’st say nothing against me.”

“I fear I can say nothing for thee, Murdoch Stewart,” said the little man, darting a pair of piercing eyes towards him, from amidst the tangled thickets of his hair. “Nor is it needful for me now to say all I might against thee. But here, as I understand, thou hast basely and falsely accused thy brother Sir Patrick Stewart of murdering his elder brother Sir Walter. Now, I saw Ewan Cameron shoot down Sir Walter Stewart with an arrow; and it was done at thy bidding too, for I was by, on the hill-side, when thou didst give to Ewan Cameron his secret order to slay thy brother, and when thou didst teach him to do the deed, as if it were an idle act, done against a stranger.”

“Lies!—lies!—a very net-work of lies, in which to ensnare me!” cried Murdoch. “But who can condemn me for another’s death, who, for aught that we know truly, may yet appear alive and well?”

“Thou hadst no such scruple in condemning thine innocent brother, Sir Patrick,” said the Lord of Curgarf; “yet shall no guilt be fixed upon thee, till thy brother’s death be established beyond question. Meanwhile thou must be a bounden prisoner, till the truth be clearly brought to light.”

“Men of Clan-Allan! will ye allow him who must be your chieftain to be laid hands on in the house of a stranger?” cried Murdoch Stewart aloud. “You are armed; use your weapons then, and leave not a man alive!”

A thrill of horror ran through every bosom. There were brave men enough of the Clan-Forbes there, to have made head against three times the number of Clan-Allans that now stood, armed to the teeth, and in a firm body, at the lower end of the hall; but there was not a man of the Forbeses, who, if not altogether unarmed,

had any weapon at all to defend himself with but his dirk. Those who had such instruments were drawing them, whilst others were rushing to the walls, to arm themselves with whatsoever weapons they could most easily reach, and pluck down thence. The noise and bustle of the moment was great, when, all at once, there fell a hush over the turbulence of the scene.

“Stir not a man of Clan-Allan!” cried Sir Patrick to the Stewarts, who stood in their array, like a heavy and portentous thundercloud. “Stir not, men of Clan-Allan!—Stir not a finger, I command you!”

“Sir Patrick Stewart is our young chieftain!” broke like a roll of Heaven’s artillery from the Clan-Allans. “Sir Patrick Stewart is our young chieftain! Murdoch is a foul traitor and murderer! Bind him, bind him! Let him be the prisoner, and let us have him forthwith justified!”

“Nay, nay,” cried Sir Patrick; “bind him if you will, but lay not your hands upon his life. This day, my Catherine,” said he, turning to the lady, and addressing her tenderly and sorrowfully; “This day, that was to have been to me so full of joy, must now, alas! be the first of that doleful time, which, in the bereavement of my heart, I must devote to mourning for my beloved brother Walter. My first duty is to go and seek for his remains; and in following out this most sad and anxious search, I must crave thy presence, my Lord of Curgarf, and thine, too, Arthur, with that of such of our friends as may be disposed to go forth with us, to aid us in so painful a quest.”

The wishes of Sir Patrick Stewart were readily agreed to. The nuptials were for the present postponed; and instead of the marriage-feast, some hasty refreshment was taken, preparatory to their immediate departure on their melancholy search. The treacherous Murdoch Stewart was now given in charge, as a manacled prisoner, to those very Clan-Allans, at the head of whom he had come, so triumphantly, to fix a false accusation on his brother Sir Patrick. With them too went the youth, and the little man, Grigor Beg, who had given their evidence against Murdoch. The old Lord of Curgarf’s quiet palfrey was led forth; and he set forward, attended by Arthur the Master of Forbes, Sir Patrick Stewart, and a considerable following of those who were led to accompany him by duty, or from curiosity.

They first visited the scene of the attempted assassination of Sir Patrick Stewart.

The spot where the six Catteranes were slain, was easily discovered, by the flock of birds of prey that sat perched upon the tops of the dwarf pines, or that wheeled over them in whistling circles; whilst every now and then, some individual, bolder than the rest, would swoop down on the heath, to partake of the banquet which had been spread upon it for them. That some considerable share of courage was required to enable these creatures to do this, was proved to the party, who, on their nearer approach, scared away a brace of hungry, gaunt-looking wolves, who had been employed in ravenously tearing at the bodies, and dragging them hither and thither with bloody jaws; as well as an eagle, who had dared to sit a little way apart, to feed upon one of the carcases, in defiance of his ferocious four-footed fellow-guests. The spectacle was shocking to all who beheld it. But one object of their search was gained; for, on examination, Patrick recognised his brother Walter's sandals, which were removed from the feet of the corpse of Ewan Cameron, and taken care of—thus so far corroborating the testimony of the youth. Having completed their investigations in this place, they piled heaps of stones over the bodies on the spot where they lay, and the party then pursued their way, over the mountain, towards the alleged scene of Sir Walter Stewart's murder.

Providence seemed to guide their steps;—for, as they passed over the brow of the wooded hill that dropped down towards the Aven, they scared away two ravens from a hollow place in the heath; and, on approaching the spot, they discovered the well-picked bones of a deer. His head showed him to have been an unusually fine great hart of sixteen. An arrow was sticking so deeply fixed through the shoulder-blade, as to satisfy all present, that its point must have produced death, very soon after the animal had received it.

"As I hope for mercy, there is the very arrow that was lacking of Sir Patrick's three!" cried Dugald Roy, triumphantly. "See—there is the very eagle's feather which I put on it, with mine own hand! And, look—there is the cross, which I always cut on the shaft, to give them good luck. No shaft of mine, so armed, ever misses, when righteously discharged. But for foul or treacherous murther, I'll warrant me, that the most practised eye could never bring it to a true aim. But" added he, as he very adroitly dislocated out the shoulder-bone, as Highlanders are wont, and then possessed himself of the shoulder-blade, arrow and all—"I'll e'en take this arrow with me, with the bone just as it is, as a dumb but true witness in a righteous cause."

Led by the directions which they received from Grigor Beg, they now descended through the forest, till they came to that very well-eye you see yonder—for that was the very individual place, that both the old man and the youth had described as the scene of Sir Walter's murder. They had used the precaution to bring with them implements for digging; and, by means of these, a few sturdy fellows were soon enabled to make an opening into the lower end of the quaking bog, so as very quickly to discharge the pent-up water within it. The green surface then gradually subsided, and the legs of a human being, with hose on, but without sandals, began to appear, sticking out, with the feet upwards; and, by digging a little around it, they soon succeeded in bringing the body of Sir Walter Stewart fully to light. It was in all respects unchanged. The fatal arrow was deeply buried in his left breast; his bow was firmly grasped in his hand; and his three eagle-winged shafts were in his belt. The small unplumed bonnet which he usually wore, when dressed for following the deer, was fast squeezed down on his head, by the pressure which had been exerted to sink him. How differently were the two brothers, Patrick and Murdoch Stewart, affected by the harrowing spectacle which was now brought before their eyes! Murdoch shed no tear—yet his features were strongly agitated. He looked at the corpse with averted eyes, and shuddered as he looked; whilst his face became black, and again deadly pale, twenty times alternately. Sir Patrick Stewart, on the other hand, threw himself, in an agony of tears, on the cold and dripping body of his murdered brother, as it lay exposed on the bank; and, unable to give utterance to his grief, he clasped it to his bosom, and lavished fond, though unavailing caresses on it. In vain he essayed, with as much tenderness as if his brother could have still felt the pain he might thereby have given him, to pluck forth the arrow, deeply buried in the fatal wound. All present were overcome by this sad scene;—but poor Dugald Roy hung over them, and sobbed aloud, till the violence of his grief recalled Sir Patrick Stewart to himself again.

"Aye!" said Dugald Roy; "that is a murderous shaft indeed! A good cloth-yard in length, I'll warrant me; and feathered, too, from the wing of some ill-omened grey goose, that was hatched in some western sea-loch. This is no arrow of the make of Aven-side, else am I no judge of the tool. No cross upon this, I'll be sworn. No, no.—By St. Peter, but it hath murther in the very look of it! Aye, and there are the true arrows of the cross in his belt!—These are of my winging, every one of them. Little did I think, when I stuck them into my poor master's girdle, that this was to be the way in which I was to find them! Would that he

had but gotten fair play! Would that he had but got his eye on the villains ere they slew him! If he had but gotten one glimpse of them, by the Rood, but every cross of these shafts would have been eager to have dyed itself red in the blood of their cowardly hearts!”

The body of Sir Walter Stewart was now wrapped up in a plaid, and fastened lengthwise upon two parallel boughs, and it was borne towards Drummin. Their movements were so slow, and so often interrupted, that it was dark night long ere they came to the place of their destination. Sir Patrick Stewart felt the necessity of preparing his father, Sir Allan, for the coming scene, as well as for the reception of the Lord of Curgarf, and his son, the Master of Forbes. He therefore resolved to hurry on before the party, that he might have a private meeting with the old Knight, before their arrival. But being fully aware that Sir Allan’s mind had been already filled with those iniquitous falsehoods, which his wicked brother, Murdoch Stewart, had engendered against him, he thought it prudent to take with him Dugald Roy, and two other men of the Clan-Allans, that they might be prepared, if necessary, to support his justification of himself.

As Sir Patrick Stewart, and his small escort, approached the outer gate of the Castle of Drummin, they perceived that it was shut. Dugald had no sooner observed this circumstance, than he made a signal to the Knight to remain silent, and then he advanced quietly to the little wicket in the middle of the gate, and knocked gently.

“Who is there?” demanded the Warder, from within.

“Open the wicket, man, without a moment’s tarrying,” replied Dugald.

“Is that thee, Dugald Roy?” demanded the Warder.

“Who else could it be?” replied Dugald.

“It may be that any other might have done as well,” replied the Warder gruffly. “Thou wentst not forth with Murdoch Stewart;—Art thou of his company at the present time?”

“What matter though I went not forth with him, if I come home in his company?” replied Dugald readily.

“Is he with thee, then?” demanded the Warder.

“To be sure he is,” cried Dugald impatiently. “Come, man! he is close at hand, I tell thee. Come! art thou to keep us standing here all night? By all that’s good, he is coming upon us;—and, if he be detained but the veriest fraction of a prod-flight, thou shalt surely have a cudgelling for thy supper. Come man!—open I tell thee.”

The huge iron bolts were now withdrawn from their fastenings, the key grated among the rough wards of the lock, and the wicket was thrown back, whilst the Warder, peering through the opening, seemed as if he were inclined to know something more of those without, before he removed his own bulky person, that still blocked the passage. But Dugald, stooping his head, sprang through the low aperture, and throwing his skull right into the poor fellow’s stomach, with the force of a battering-ram, he laid him sprawling on his back.

“Hech!” cried the Warder, as he fell. “Hech me!”

“Old fool that thou art!” cried Dugald, taking up the first word of quarrel with him; “who was to think that thou wert to be standing in the very midst of the way?—Yet I hope I have not hurt thee, for all that. Thou knowest, Rory, that I had rather hurt myself than thee.”

“Nay, nay,” said the old man, with a surly sort of acquiescence, as he was slowly raising himself from the ground by means of Dugald’s assistance; during which operation Patrick Stewart, wrapped up in his plaid, and followed by the other two men, had made good his entrance into the court-yard. “Nay, nay, I am not hurt. I’m no such eggshells, i’faith. Yet what a fiend made thee so impatient? I behooved to be careful who I let in, seeing that I was strictly charged to open to none but Murdoch Stewart himself there,” pointing to Sir Patrick, who was standing a few paces aloof. “More by token, I required to be all the warier, seeing that there was none living within the walls, besides myself, save the old Knight Sir Allan, and the Lady Stradawn.”

“How comes that?” demanded Dugald; “Though so many went to Curgarf, there were still some left behind, surely.”

“True enough, true enough,” replied the Warder. “But I know not what hath

possessed the lady. They have all been sent hither and thither, on some errand or another;—even the very women folk have all gone forth."

Sir Patrick Stewart stood to hear no more, but making a signal to Dugald and the others to follow him, he crossed the court-yard towards the door of the keep tower, where they stood aside, whilst he knocked gently, yet loud enough to be heard in the hall above. Soon afterwards, a timid and unsteady footstep was heard descending the stair.

"Open, good mother," said Sir Patrick.

"Oh, how thankful I am that thou art come!" said the Lady Stradawn, mistaking him for her son Murdoch, their voices being a good deal like to each other, and opening the door, pale and trembling, with a lamp in her hand, which the gust immediately extinguished. "A plague on the wind, my lamp is out! But oh, I am thankful that thou art come! 'Tis fearful to be left alone in the house with a dead man, and one, too——Oh 'twas fearful!"

"Dead!" cried Sir Patrick, with an accent of horror, which might have betrayed him, but for the agitation which then possessed her whom he addressed. "A dead man, saidst thou?"

"Aye!" replied the lady, in a hollow tone, "aye! I saw that thou hadst yearnings. Yet, after all, it was but giving him ease, by ridding him of a lingering life of pain. It was kindness, in truth, to help him away from such misery. Yet, 'tis no marvel that thou, who art his very blood, should have some compunction. But thou mayest be at rest now, for he is gone beyond thy help, or that of any one else."

"Gone!" exclaimed Sir Patrick again—"Gone! how did he die?"

"Horribly! most horribly!" replied the lady, shuddering. "It was fearful to behold him in his agonies! Knowing, as I did, the potency of the poison, I could hardly have believed that the old man would have taken so long to die."

"Horrible!" exclaimed Sir Patrick, involuntarily.

"Aye, it was horrible!" replied the lady; "horrible indeed, as thou wouldst have said if thou hadst seen it. For a moment, the poison seemed to have given him

new strength, and he rose from his chair as if he would have done vengeance on me. ’Twas fearful to behold him!”

“Art sure he is quite dead?” said Sir Patrick again.

“Aye,” replied the lady, “as dead as his son Walter; so dead, as to make thee surely the Laird of Stradawn, the moment that thou shalt have made as sicker of Patrick, as we may now soon hope thou wilt be able to do. I did but help him, as I was saying, out of the pains and wretchedness of old age and dotage. Yet it was an awful work for me. And oh, his last look was fearful! I wish I may ever be able to get rid of it! Would that thou couldst have steeled thyself up to have done it thyself Murdoch! But come in—come in quickly! Hast thou secured the prisoner?”

“I have,” replied Sir Patrick, now exerting a certain degree of command over his feelings; “he will be here anon.”

“That is well,” replied the Lady Stradawn; “then all is thine own. His trial must be short, and his execution speedy. But come, we have much to do to make things seemly ere they arrive. He must appear to have died of a broken heart, caused by the wickedness of his son. Every thing suspicious must be removed from about him. I could not dare to touch him. Why stand ye so long hesitating? But ’tis no wonder, for I could not look upon him myself without fancying that the devil was grinning over my shoulder. ’Tis horrible to think on’t! But come,” continued she, as she at last seemed to summon up resolution to climb the stair; “lock the door, Murdoch, and follow me up quickly, for we have no time to lose.”

Sir Patrick Stewart made a signal to Dugald and the others, and then ascended to the hall after the Lady Stradawn. A deathlike silence prevailed within it. A single lamp was glimmering feebly on a sconce at the upper end of it: and there stood the lady, pale and trembling, at that side of the chimney which was farthest from Sir Allan’s chair. Sir Patrick, in his agitation, moved hurriedly forward; and the moment the light of the lamp fell upon his features, the lady uttered a loud scream, and swooned away upon the floor.

The spectacle that now met his eyes harrowed up his very soul. His father lay dead in his chair, with his features and his limbs fixed in the last frightful

convulsion, by which the racking poison had terminated his existence. His mouth was twisted, his tongue thrust out, and his eyeballs so fearfully staring, that even his tenderly affectionate son felt it a dreadful effort to look upon that, which used to be to him an object of the deepest veneration and love. Beside his chair was the small table, on which he was usually served with his food. There stood a silver porringer containing the minced meat, which his extreme age required; and notwithstanding all that the Lady Stradawn had said to the contrary, the operation of the poison seemed to have been so quick, as to have mortally affected him, ere he had taken the fourth part of the mess that had been provided for him. Sir Patrick was overpowered by his feelings. He sank into a chair, and covering his face with his hands, he gave way to his grief, in which he remained so entirely absorbed, that neither the entrance of Dugald, nor the thundering which some time afterwards took place at the outer gate, nor the noise of the many voices of those who came pouring in, were sufficient to arouse him.

Dugald Roy had the presence of mind to hurry down to the court-yard, to prepare the Lord of Curgarf, and those who came with him, for the dreadful spectacle they were to witness. Thunderstruck and shocked by his intelligence, they crowded up to the hall, where the general horror was for some time so great, as to render every one incapable of acting; but at length they gathered sufficient recollection to bestir themselves. The poisoned porringer was first carefully preserved; the Lady Stradawn was carried off in strong fits to her apartment; the body of Sir Walter Stewart was borne up into the hall; and there, after undergoing the necessary preparations used on such occasions, the father and son were laid out in state together, and the couches on which the bodies rested were surrounded by so great a multitude of wax tapers, as to exchange the melancholy gloom of the place into a blaze of light, which, reflected as it was from the various pieces of armour that glittered in vain pomp upon the walls, shone but to produce a greater intensity of sadness. The good priest of Dounan was sent for; and the appalling news having spread quickly around, the retainers began to swarm into the Castle, from all quarters, in sorrowing groups, full of lamentation. Meanwhile the Lord of Curgarf and his son, the Master of Forbes, occupied themselves in soothing the afflicted Sir Patrick Stewart, and in aiding and encouraging him to go through with those trying and painful duties which this most afflicting occasion demanded of him.

Food and wine had been carried to the Lady Stradawn, where she sat alone in her bower, so deeply sunk in remorse, and dejection, and dread, as to be quite unconscious of the entrance or departure of those who brought her these comforts. Those who were compelled to be the bearers of them, gazed on her with fear, and hastened from her with expedition, and no one else could be persuaded to go near her, even her woman refused to remain with her, as something accursed, so that she was left abandoned by all, as a prey to her evil thoughts. Had any one ventured to look in upon her, as she sat motionless in her great chair, with a lamp flickering on a table beside her, and throwing an uncertain light by fits and snatches on her face, now pale and fixed as marble,—and on her glazed and tearless eyes, and her dry and withered lips, he might have fancied that she was already a corpse; yet deep, deep was the mental agony that she felt.

The midnight watch had been set, and all had been for some time silent within the walls of Drummin, save the distant hum of the subdued voices of those who, according to custom, sat waking the corpses in the hall, when the door of the Lady Stradawn's bower opened, and her son Murdoch appeared. If the spirit of her murdered husband had arisen before her eyes, she could not have started with more astonishment, or recoiled with greater apparent horror.

"Murdoch!" cried she, in a loud and agitated voice, "Is it thee, Murdoch?"—And then, sinking back into the same fixed and motionless attitude, whence she had been thus momentarily aroused, she added, in a faint, low, and feeble tone, "Murdoch!—would that thou hadst never been born!"

"Mother," said Murdoch, calmly shutting the door behind him, and taking a seat beside her chair, "I have heard all from Nicol, the playfellow of my boyhood, who chanced to be set to guard me, in the apartment below. I wished to see thee ere we die; and I purchased from the sordid wretch this midnight hour—this last hour of privacy with thee."

"Ha!" cried the Lady Stradawn, with a strange and sudden transition from the apathy and torpor of despair, to the most energetic anxiety of hope; "If Nicol did that for thee, why may we not bribe him to open a way for us through those who guard the gate?—Quick!—quick!—quick!—Oh, let us quickly escape!—Oh, let us not tarry one moment longer! There are my keys; we have treasure in that cabinet, which may well bribe him, and yet leave us rich!"

“Be composed, my most worthy mother,” said Murdoch Stewart; “There is not the shadow of a chance for us in that way. The door of the keep is doubly barred, and doubly guarded, and no one leaves it unexamined beneath the light of a blazing torch. The whole men-at-arms and clansmen within the walls, infuriated against us, are of their own free will engaged in vigilant watching. The portcullis is down, the gate barricaded, the barbican manned, and the walls surrounded by patroles. Mother, cast aside all such hopes as useless, for as the guilt of both of us must soon appear as clear as to-morrow’s noonday, so that sun, which shall certainly arise to-morrow morning, shall as surely look upon our graves ere he sets.”

The Lady Stradawn sank again into the chair, from which the sudden impulse of hope had so energetically raised her, and, groaning deeply, she relapsed into her former state of deathlike stillness, broken only by the long drawn sob that at certain intervals convulsed her whole frame.

“Mother!” said Murdoch Stewart, after a pause; “Where are all the fruits of that career of crime for which thou nursed me as an infant, tutored me as a boy, and prompted me as a man? Have I not followed thy bidding through deceit, robbery, and murder, and where is now my reward?—Thine is locked up there in that secret cabinet of glittering toys, which to-morrow thou must leave, to go out to be hanged by the neck on the gallows-tree, with the son, whom thou wouldst have had Lord of the Aven, grinning at thee like a caitiff cur from the farther end of its beam—”

“Oh!—Oh—ho!” cried the agonized woman, shaken through every limb by the palsy of her fears; “Is there no—no deliverance for us?”

“Yes,” said Murdoch Stewart, calmly; “yes, there is a deliverance, and a speedy one too.”

“Oh, name it!” cried the frantic woman; “Oh, name it! and quickly let us avail ourselves of it!”

“Here it is,” said Murdoch Stewart, quietly taking a small paper packet from his bosom; “Here it is, mother. A few small pinches of this powder, mingled in a cup of that wine, will snatch us both from the torture of being made a disgraceful public spectacle to-morrow—of being gazed at by the vulgar eyes, and pointed

at by the vile fingers of those wretched serfs, and their grovelling mates and spawn, whom, a little better luck and better fortune for us, had by that time made the abject slaves of our will. See! here it is mingled, already it is dissolved, and now the draught is potent. Good mother, I pledge thee," said he, drinking down half of what the goblet contained; "and now here is thy share."

"No,—no,—no!—I cannot!—no, I cannot!" cried the Lady Stradawn, with frantic horror in her averted eyes.

"Then do I tell thee, mother mine," said Murdoch Stewart sternly; "thou hast not trained me up to deal in deeds of blood and death for naught. I shall never suffer thy womanish fears to bring the disgrace of the gallows upon thee. I love thee too much for that. See here, good mother! 'tis but a choice of deaths. Here is a concealed dagger, look you. Say! wouldst thou bring one more murder—the murder of a mother on my already overburdened soul, to sink it deeper in that sea of torment, to which these priests would fain have us believe that those, who, like us, have used the wit and the strength with which they have been gifted, for bettering their own condition in this world, must hasten from hence. Drink! or by every fiend that suffers there, thou diest in the instant!"

The Lady Stradawn glared at her son with a vacant stare, as if all reason had fled from her. She took the cup mechanically from his hand, and drained it to the bottom.

"What hast thou done?" cried the man-at-arms, who had been brought to the door by the violent tone of some of Murdoch Stewart's last words, and who rushed in just as the Lady Stradawn had swallowed the poison.

"Do what thou wilt now, Nicol," said Murdoch Stewart, with perfect composure; "We are both beyond thy power, or that of any one else within the castle of Drummin."

Nicol at once guessed at what had happened, and ran instantly for the Priest. The good Father of Dounan was deeply skilled in medicine, as well as in divinity. He called for assistance, and antidotes were forcibly given to Murdoch Stewart, and passively received by his mother the Lady Stradawn. Their wretched existence was thus prolonged, though death could not be altogether averted. They lingered on, in great pain, for many days, during which all judicial proceedings were

suspended. The pious priest lost not one moment of this precious time. By exerting all his religious learning, and all his eloquence, he at length succeeded in bringing both of them to a full sense of the enormity of their guilt, as well as to an ample confession of all their crimes. It is not for us to interpret the decrees of the Almighty in such a case as theirs; but if the apparent deep contrition that followed was real, and heartfelt, we may trust that the mercy, as well as the benefit of the merits of that blessed Saviour, who died for us all upon the cross, even for the thief that was crucified with him, was extended to them, dreadful as their crimes had been.

My legend now draws to a hasty conclusion. The days of mourning were fully numbered by Sir Patrick Stewart, for his murdered father and brother. The kindness of the old Lord of Curgarf, and his son Arthur Master of Forbes, towards him, was unwearied and most consolatory. Nor were the delicate affections of the Lady Catherine Forbes less tenderly or unremittingly displayed, so that, in due time, by becoming her husband, he bound himself to both his friends by the closest and dearest ties. In pious remembrance of his brother Sir Walter’s murder, he erected the pillar of stone I spoke of, as that which stood so long by the side of the well-eye where he was slain; but he refrained from inscribing any thing upon it, lest his doing so might have revived the recollection of Murdoch Stewart’s atrocity. He likewise ordered a stone to be set up, where the proud Priest of Dalestie was burned, rather as a sort of expiation of the stern act of justice, which his brother Sir Walter had inflicted upon him, than to perpetuate the detested memory of the depraved wretch who suffered there.

1

Mòr, *great*, and Beg or Beag, *little*, are well known Highland cognomina, employed like Dubh, *black*, Ruadh, *red*, and Bàn, *white*, to distinguish different individuals of the same name. ↑

2

That is, having sixteen or more tynes upon his antlers. ↑

3

Or Ruadh, red. ↑

FATE OF THE OULD AUNCIENT MONUMENTS.

CLIFFORD.—(*as we arose to pursue our journey*.)—And what became of these two monuments, Serjeant Stewart?

SERJEANT.—A certain gentleman, who was building a house somewhere in this neighbourhood, (for I had rather not designate him too particularly,) cast his eyes on the fine stone that stood by the well-eye, and perceiving that it would make an excellent lintel, he took immediate measures to get it carried off to his rising edifice. Having accomplished his intention, with no little difficulty, it was speedily employed in the building, where it promised to conduct itself with the same quiet and decorum which were observed by all the other stones of the edifice, after being put to rest, each in his separate bed of mortar. But no sooner did the house come to be inhabited, than it began to be haunted by strange and mysterious noises. Some of these were quite unintelligible, for they resembled no earthly sound that had ever been heard before. Then long conversations began, and were continued, in small sharp clear voices; but although the words fell distinctly enough on the ears of those who heard them, the language was as a sealed book to them. And ever and anon the seeming dialogue would be interrupted by strange uncouth fits of laughter, as if of several persons together, or in different parts of the premises, that were so far from creating a corresponding disposition to mirth or merriment in the listeners, that they froze up the very blood in their veins. But this was not all. The most dismal croaking of frogs arose in every part of the house. You would have sworn that the creatures were in the cup-boards—the presses—the chimnies—in the beds—on the floors—nay, on the very tables, and among the dishes which the good folks of the family had set before them. It was as if the frogs, that formed the great plague in Egypt, had filled the house with their hoarse voices. One would begin as if he were the leader of the band, and then others would start off, one after another, till the doleful chorus, resounding from all quarters, made the concert

loud and sonorous. It was no uncommon thing, during the dark and dreary watches of the night, for the voice of the leader, which had something peculiarly striking in it, to arise of a sudden, as if he that uttered it was sitting astraddle on the nose of the goodman of the house. In vain was the hand applied to the organ, to drive off what, in reality, appeared to be the organist. There was nothing there; yet the sound continued as if it had come from the deepest pipe in the organ loft of some cathedral, yea, of that of the great organ of Haerlem itself. The more he rubbed the more it grew, and the louder and more universal became the chorus. His very nose itself increased in size, from the frequent and severe rubbings to which it was thus subjected, whilst he began to grow thin and emaciated in proportion, till his whole person at length appeared rather as if it had been an appendage to his nose, than his nose an appendage to his person. At last, being worn out in spirit, as he was very nearly in body also, he was fain to take out the stone from the building, and to carry it back to the hill-side again, and then, to be sure, he enjoyed perfect quiet.

CLIFFORD.—A sensible man, truly. But what had evil spirits or fairies to do with a monumental stone?

SERJEANT.—Nothing that I can see, sir, except that being guilty of so impious a deed as the removal of such a stone, he was for a time left unprotected by all good angels, and consequently he was altogether at the mercy of those evil ones.

GRANT.—Very well made out, Mister Serjeant. But where is the stone now?

SERJEANT.—Why, sir, I am sure you will hardly believe me when I tell you, that a few years ago it was wantonly destroyed by another gentleman, who shall be also nameless.

GRANT.—What a Goth he must have been! Why should you conceal his name, Serjeant?—It deserves to be held up to public reprobation

SERJEANT.—I know my own interest too well to be the officious person who shall publish it though. Yet I must own that it would have served him right that it should have been so marked. What do you think he did, gentlemen? Happening to be in this part of Strathdawn, he, without rhyme or reason, and out of sheer wickedness, ordered his people to break both that and the *Clach-na-Tagart*, or the Priest’s stone, which shocking pieces of barbarism he took care to see

executed in his own presence, whilst he stood by, like a mischievous baboon, chuckling over their destruction.

CLIFFORD.—The fellow deserved to have been plunged over head and ears into the Wallee in the first place, and after being thus well soaked, he ought to have been leisurely consumed at the Priest's stone, like a well watered sack of Newcastle coals.

SERJEANT.—Why, sir, I must allow that he has been punished severely enough. The whole people of the country cried out upon him, and every one declared that it was quite impossible that the fellow could thrive, after having demolished two such ould auncient antiquities. And so in truth it turned out, for not long afterwards he lost the whole *fushon*[1] of his side. As for the Clach-na-Tagart, the Roman Catholics, who form the chief population hereabouts, intended to have clasped it together with iron bands, but, (*addressing author,*) as you know very well, sir, from having recorded the fact in your book, the great flood of August 1829 saved them the trouble of doing so, for the Aven then carried the broken stone clean away, aye, and it swept off the best part of the haugh it stood upon into the bargain.

GRANT.—But stay, my good friend, Archy. What do you mean by quitting the level path to climb this confounded steep hill, as the direction of your nose, at this moment, would seem to indicate your present intention to be?

SERJEANT.—I would fain show you an extensive prospect, gentlemen. It is only a bit start of a pull up here. A mere breathing for you after the long rest you had by the water side yonder.—(*Then addressing the gilly.*)—My man, hold you on the road to Inchrory with the horse, and tell the gudewife there that we are coming.

CLIFFORD.—'Tis a very stiff pull, Archy. But we shall be all the better for something of this sort to put us in wind. I calculate that we shall have some worse climbing than this before we are done with these mountains.

SERJEANT.—Troth, you may well say that, sir; and as for this hill, we may be very thankful that we have not to climb it with a strong demonstration of the enemies' riflemen lining the ridge of it.

CLIFFORD.—You are out there, serjeant. Depend upon it, if we saw an enemy

lining the height, we should both of us climb it like roebucks, to be at them.

SERJEANT.—I'm not saying but we might, sir; that is, if we saw that we were sufficiently well backed. But for all that, we might find our graves before we were half way up the hill; and then what the better should we be, of our comrades saying, as they passed by us, "Poor fellows, you are settled!" Would that be any consolation to us, as we lay writhing in the last agonies?

GRANT.—Very small consolation indeed, Archy.

SERJEANT.—I wot it would be little indeed, sir. Yet ought a man to do his duty for all that, simply because it is his duty. Many is the time I have heard my good friend Captain Ketley say that; and there were few words fell from his mouth that had not some good sense, or some good moral in them. And certain it is, that if we did not always keep this rule of our conduct in view, we should neither be good sodgers nor good Christians.

CLIFFORD.—Right again, old boy.

SERJEANT.—And yet, Mr. Clifford, as I reckon, there is some pleasure in coming out of the skrimmage in a whole skin, and with ears that can hear all the honest commendations that are bestowed upon your own brave and gallant conduct.

GRANT—(*after reaching the summit of the hill*.)—That was indeed a breather; but now, Serjeant, for the prospect you promised us, I see nothing as yet but the bare flat moist moory hill-top.

SERJEANT—(*leading us to the eastern verge of the top of the hill*.)—Come this way, then, gentlemen. See here what an extensive prospect you have down the course of the river Don. It looks but a small stream there, especially from this height.

AUTHOR.—What old castle is that which we see below us there, near yonder clump of trees?

SERJEANT.—That is Curgarf Castle. That is the very spot to which so much of my legend referred, though I shall not pretend to say that the building you see there is precisely the same. But now, gentlemen, turn your eyes westward again. Is not that a fine mountain view? See how proudly the Cairngorms rise yonder! But,

observe me—you don’t see the very highest summits as yet, because those big black lumps opposite to us there, hide the highest tops from our eyes.

AUTHOR.—It is a magnificent scene notwithstanding, especially as viewed at present, under that splendid display of evening light, that is now shooting over those loftier ridges from the descending sun.

GRANT.—A very grand scene indeed!

CLIFFORD.—Aye, Grant, we shall have some climbing there, I promise you.

GRANT.—There can be little doubt of that. But tell me, Serjeant, what solitary house is that we see in the valley below?

AUTHOR.—I can answer you that question. That is Inchrory, the small place, half farm-house, half hostel, where we are to sojourn to-night. It is used as a place of rest and refreshment, by the few travellers who pass on foot, or on horseback, by the rugged path which we left in the valley, and which goes hence southwards, up through the valley of the Builg—past the lake of that name,—so across what is there the rivulet of the Don,—and then onwards over the hills to Castleton of Braemar. That deep hollow in the mountains, that turns sharp westwards beyond Inchrory yonder, is what is more properly called Glenaven. The river Aven comes pouring down hitherwards through it, and our way lies up its course.

CLIFFORD.—I should be sorry if it did so this evening. I am quite prepared to hail yonder house of Inchrory below, as a welcome place of refuge for this night.

AUTHOR.—Few places must be more welcome to a wayworn traveller than Inchrory, especially when first descried by the weary wayfarer from Castleton, in a winter’s evening, as the sun is hasting downwards.

SERJEANT.—You are not far wrong there, sir. A dreadful hill journey that is, indeed, from Castleton to Inchrory, amid the storms of winter. Not a vestige of a house by the way. Many a poor wretch has perished in the snow, amidst these trackless wastes. Not to go very far back, there was a terrible snow storm about the Martinmas time in the 1829. It roared, and blew, and drifted so fast, that it was mid-day or ever Mrs. Shaw of Inchrory ventured to put her head out beyond the threshold of her own door, to look at the thick and dreary shroud of white in

which dead nature was wrapped, and which covered the whole lonely scene of hill and valley around her, and was in many places blown into wreathes of a great depth. There was not a speck of colour, nor any moving thing to vary the glazed unbroken surface, except on one distant hillock, where a single human figure was seen, wandering to and fro, as if in a maze, like some one bereft of reason. The male inhabitants of the house were all out looking after the stock belonging to the grazing farm; and, as Mrs. Shaw was in doubt whether the person she beheld might not in reality be some one who was deranged, as his movements rather seemed to indicate, she was afraid to venture to approach him. But curiosity as well as pity made her cast many a look towards him during that afternoon, as he still continued to move slowly round the hillock, and backwards and forwards, without any apparent sense or meaning, and stopping now and then, as if utterly bewildered. At length, as it was drawing towards night, Mrs. Shaw observed that the figure had either fallen, or lain down among the snow, and her charitable feelings then overcoming all her apprehensions, she proceeded to wade through the snow towards the hillock where he lay. Having, with very considerable difficulty, made her way to the spot, she found him lying on his back, as composedly as if he had lain down in his bed. The intense cold had so benumbed his intellects, indeed, that he did not seem to be in the least aware of his own melancholy situation.—“Wha are ye? and what are ye wantin?” said he, to Mrs. Shaw, with a faint smile on his emaciated face, as he beheld her stooping over him with an anxious gaze of inquiry. “I came to help you,” replied Mrs. Shaw; “Will you let me try to lift you up?”—“Thank you, I can rise mysel’,” replied he, making a vain effort to get up.—“You had better let me help you,” said Mrs. Shaw.—“Ou, na, thank ye,” replied he again; “I can rise weel eneugh mysel.”—“Do so, then,” said Mrs. Shaw, whilst at the same time she prepared herself for giving him her best assistance during his attempt. In this way, a strong effort on her part enabled her at last to succeed in getting the poor man on his legs; and then, after the expenditure of as much time as might have easily enabled her to have gone five or six miles, and with immense labour and fatigue, this heroic woman was finally successful in supporting him, or rather, I should say, in half carrying him to Inchrory. When she had got him fairly out of the snow, and into the house, she had the horror to discover, that not only were his shoes and stockings gone, but that even the very flesh was worn off his feet. When help arrived, they got him into bed, and did all for him that charitable Christians could do. Food was brought to him, but it was some time before he could be made to swallow any portion of it, and that only by feeding him like a

child. The poor fellow turned out to be a young man of the name of Thomas Macintosh, servant to the Rev. Mr. MacEachan, the Roman Catholic priest at Castleton, which place he had left on the Wednesday morning, and he had wandered among the snow, without food or shelter, and becoming every moment more and more bewildered, until the Friday evening, when Mrs. Shaw's praiseworthy exertions brought him to her house. On the Saturday, the good people carried him down the valley to the next farm, on his way to the doctor. But, alas! no doctor was ever destined to do him any good, for he died that same evening. Two one pound notes, and a few shillings, were found in his pocket, which sum went to pay the expense of his interment in the newly made church-yard at Tomantoul, of which, as it so happened, he was the second tenant.

GRANT.—What a melancholy fate!

SERJEANT.—Sad, indeed, sir. But there are many stories of the same kind connected with this wild path through these desolate mountains.

AUTHOR.—Do you remember any more of them, Archy?

SERJEANT.—Ou, yes, sir. It was upon that terrible night of drift, the 25th of November, 1826, no farther gone, when so many poor people perished, that a man, three women, and two horses, were buried in the snow upon yon hill, which is called Cairn Elsach, as they were on their way back from the Tomantoul market. So deep was the snow in many places, that one of the horses was found frozen stiff dead, and the beast was so supported in it, as to be sticking upright upon his legs, and a woman was discovered standing dead beside him. Some little time afterwards, a shepherd, who happened to have occasion to cross the hill, had his attention attracted by some long hair which was seen above the icy surface, waving in the wintry blast. On scraping away the snow, he found that it was attached to a woman's head, who had unfortunately perished. He procured the assistance of some of his friends, who were afraid to dig out the body for fear it might have become offensive. I, who chanced to be there, had no such scruples, first, because I knew very well that the snow must have preserved it, and, secondly, because, if it had been otherwise, I knew that I had lost my sense of smelling in consequence of the desperate wound in my jaw, of which I told you. When the snow was removed, the poor young woman's body was found quite fresh and entire, but it was perfectly blue in colour.

AUTHOR.—These are melancholy details; yet, it must be confessed, they are quite in harmony with the wild and lonely scenery now before our eyes.

GRANT.—They remind one of the horrors of the Alps.

CLIFFORD.—The gaunt wolves are wanting, though, to make up the picture completely.

SERJEANT.—We had the wolves also ourselves once upon a time, sir; and now the corby, and the hill-fox, and the eagle, do their best to make up for the want of them. But such a wilderness as this, covered deep with snow, and the howling wind carrying the drift across it, has quite terrors enough in it for my taste.

AUTHOR.—I am quite of your opinion, Archy.

SERJEANT.—Yet it is wonderful how Providence will interfere to preserve people alive, amidst such complicated horrors. I remember a story of a man of the name of Macintosh, who left Braemar, with his wife, to come over this way. A dreadful snow storm came upon them, and, being blinded by the snow-drift, and encumbered in the deep and heavy wreathes, the poor people were separated from each other. The man made his way, with great difficulty, to a whisky bothy, where he arrived much exhausted, and quite inconsolable for the loss of his wife. Being thus saved himself, he procured the assistance of people to help him to look for the corpse of his lost partner. For two whole days they sought in vain; when, just as they were about to abandon their search, till the surface of the ground should become less burdened with snow, they observed a figure coming slowly and wearily down the hill of Gart. This, as it drew nearer, appeared to be a woman; and, on her approaching nearer still, the overjoyed husband discovered that she was his living wife, for whom he had been weeping as dead. She had been wandering for nearly three days, without either food or shelter, amid the mountain snows, but, although she was dreadfully exhausted, she eventually recovered.

GRANT.—That was indeed the support of Providence, Archy!

AUTHOR.—Most wonderful indeed! Her preservation was little short of a miracle.

SERJEANT.—Aye, truly, you may well say that, sir. Nothing but a miracle could

have preserved the poor woman from so many perils as she must have encountered in her wanderings,—not to mention those of cold, hunger, and fatigue. It was the hand of Providence, assuredly, that supported her. By what means he worked, we have no opportunity of knowing. But surely it was strange that he could have enabled any human being, and especially a woman, to have come through so much fatigue and suffering alive.

CLIFFORD.—Truly, most miraculous!

SERJEANT.—And then, gentlemen, how very strangely—so far as we blind mortals can perceive—are others permitted to perish at the very door, as it were, of help. I think it is now about sixteen years ago—and, if I remember rightly, it was about the Christmas time—that James Stewart, son of the miller of Delnabo, perished, on the very haugh there, just below the House of Inchrory. The poor fellow passed by this place, on his way over to Braemar, one morning that I happened to be here. He stopped a few minutes with me, and had some talk. —"I'm likely to get a fine day for crossing the hill, Archy," said he.—"Well," said I, "I hope you will, and I wish you may. Yet I don't altogether like yon *mountaneous* heap of white tumbling-looking clouds, that are casting up afar off over the hill-top yonder."—"They dinna look awthegither weel, to be sure," said Jemmy; "but I houp I may be in weel kent land lang or they break."—We parted. The snow came on in a dreadful storm, about mid-day; and I had two or three anxious thoughts about Jemmy Stewart, as the recollection of him was ever and anon brought back to me, during the night, by the fearful whistling of the wind, and the rattling of the hail. Next morning, I, and some of the other men about the place, found a human track, running in a bewildered, irregular, and uncertain line, between the house of Inchrory and the burn yonder, which must be a width of not much more than forty yards. We had not followed this far, when we came to the poor man, whose worn-out feet had made these prints. His walking-stick was standing erect among the snow beside him,—and there lay poor Jemmy Stewart, on his face; his hands were closed, and his head rested on them, just as if he had lain quietly down to sleep. The lads who were with me, stupid gomerills that they were, had a superstitious dread of touching him; but, deeply as I grieved for the poor fellow, I had seen too many dead men in my time to have any such scruples. I accordingly turned him, and found, alas! that he was quite gone. It appeared that he had been suddenly surprised and bewildered by the snow-drift among the hills, and that, having lost all knowledge of his way, he

had unconsciously wandered in the very opposite direction to that in which he had intended to go. Becoming more and more confused, as he wandered and wandered, he became at last so entirely stupified by the multiplied terrors of that awful night, that he ultimately yielded to the last drowsiness of death, and so laid himself down to court its fatal repose. Alas! he was unhappily ignorant that he was within a few yards of the friendly house which he had passed on his way upwards on the previous morning, to the reviving shelter of which, the least possible additional exertion might have easily brought him, had he but known in what direction to have made it.

CLIFFORD.—What a sad and fearful story!

SERJEANT.—Aye, sir, sad and fearful indeed! Is it not dreadful to think how often the recollection of him crossed my mind during that fatal night, and how little trouble, on my part, would have saved him, had I only known that he was wandering in the snow so near me? Aye, and to think that I should have lain ignorantly all the while in my warm bed, allowing him so cruelly to perish! Willing would I have been to have travelled all night through the drift to have saved poor Jemmy Stewart!

AUTHOR.—No one can doubt that, Archy.

SERJEANT.—Well, but sir, you see these matters are in the hand of God, and at his wise disposal; and although we, blind moles of the yearth as we are, cannot easily descry why a worthy well-doing young man like Jemmy Stewart should be permitted thus wretchedly to die, without aid, either human or divine, we cannot doubt the justice and wisdom of God’s ways, which are inscrutable, and past man’s finding out. Well, I did all I could for the poor fellow, for I had his corpse carried down to his afflicted father at Delnabo, and I saw him buried at Dounan, near the Bridge of Livat.

CLIFFORD.—That, indeed, was all you could do for the poor man, Archy; and the manner in which you did that little, together with all the sentiments that you have uttered regarding him, are enough to convince any one that you would not have scrupled to peril your life, if you could have thereby saved that of a fellow-creature, still more that of a friend.

SERJEANT.—Thank you, sir, for your good opinion of me; but, as I said before,

these matters are in the hand of God: and, whilst he allows the strong to perish, he can, if he so wills it, preserve the weakest. I remember an extraordinary circumstance that happened about eighteen or twenty years ago, which I may mention to you as an example of the truth of this observe of mine. Four women, who had been in the south country at the harvest, were on their return home over these mountains, when they were caught in a storm. The snow came on so thickly upon them, and the wind raised so great a land-drift, that they became bewildered, lost their way, and, after much wandering, they at last got into the ruins of an old bothy, near the side of the river Gairden, which runs, as I may tell ye, beyond those farther hills there to the south. By this time their shoes were worn off. They were without food—without all means of making a fire—and the cold came on so intense during the night, that the poor things were all frozen to death. There they were found in the morning by a party of smugglers, who had been early a-stir after their trade. The whole of the four women were cold and stiff. But the most wonderful, as well as the most touching circumstance of all was, that a female child, of about sixteen months old, was found alive, vainly attempting to draw nourishment from its mother's breast. The poor woman's maternal anxiety had enabled her to use precautions to keep her babe warm and in life, which she had failed to exercise for her own preservation. The child was taken charge of by Donald Shaw of Lagganall, and brought up by him under the name of Kirstock; and she afterwards went to service in Glen Livat, where—— But mark me now, gentlemen! Here we are at Caochan-Seirceag, of which you heard so much from me in my Legend of the Clan-Allan Stewarts.

CLIFFORD.—I see there are no trees here now, as you say there were in the days of Sir Patrick Stewart of Clan-Allan.

GRANT.—The cliffs are fine though, and the ravine itself romantic. How comes it that some of these rocks are so brilliantly white? They absolutely shine like alabaster amid the dazzling radiance of that setting sun.

AUTHOR.—If I answer your question, it will draw me into a disquisition which may bring an attack upon us from Clifford, for prosing about geology to one another.

GRANT.—Never mind him; he may shut his ears, if he likes.

AUTHOR.—Those brilliant streaks of alabastrine white, are nothing more than

incrustations of calcareous stalactites, formed on those rocks of gneiss, by the evaporation of these trickling rills, the water of which holds lime in solution, probably derived from the little aquatic marl snail in the moss above, from which they drain themselves.

CLIFFORD.—I'd advise you to think less of your alabastrine incrustations of calcareous stalactites on gneiss, and more of your necks and limbs, during this steep and somewhat hazardous descent, else you may evaporate like some of those trickling rills you are speaking of. These fellows you told us of, Mr. Serjeant, must have had some little difficulty in carrying the Lady Catherine down and up here. But tell me, I pray you, what is the meaning of the name of Caochan-Seirceag? for I know that all your Gaelic names of places are highly poetical and descriptive.

SERJEANT.—The meaning of Caochan-Seirceag, sir, so far as I can make it out, is *the rivulet of the beloved maiden*.

CLIFFORD.—Poetical in the highest degree!—Why, what scope does it not afford to the poet's mind to fancy the ardour of the passion of the lovers who must have made the romantic bed of this rivulet their trysting place, as well as the beauty of the maiden by whose beloved image the youth thus happily chose to distinguish it—to imagine all the obstacles which the pure stream of their love may have encountered in its course, and of which this vexed and tortured little brook may have formed but too lively a type, until at length it glided into a peaceful channel, as this does in its passage across the green meadow yonder below! What a glorious poetical romance might be suggested by these rocks and rills!—Confound them!—I had nearly tumbled headlong over this slippery stone!—What a fall I should have had!

GRANT.—You made a narrow escape there, indeed, Clifford. I would have you to remember, that it would have been quite as bad to have died the victim of romantic enthusiasm, as of dry geological speculation.

CLIFFORD.—I beg your pardon, my good fellow, you are quite wrong there. I at least would have infinitely preferred to have died from thinking of the beloved maiden, than from a confusion of brain occasioned by a mixture of alabastrine incrustations of calcareous stalactites and gneiss and marl snails! But to return to my speculations as to the rivulet of the beloved maiden,—why may it not have

had its name from the Lady Catherine Forbes herself?

SERJEANT.—As I shall answer, you have hit the very thing, sir. There cannot be a doubt that it was from her that the rill was so called.

CLIFFORD.—See now how lucky it was for you, Mister Archy, that I was not killed by a fall, as I had so nearly been, else had you been deprived of my ingenious elucidation of this most difficult point. But now, thank heaven, we are all safe in the meadow, and I shall have one touch at the trouts yet ere the light goes away entirely.

AUTHOR.—I wish you great success, Clifford. Pray do your best, my good fellow, for I know not what commons we may have in this our hostel of Inchrory here.

CLIFFORD.—Aha! you see that my rod and my piscatorial skill are not without their use. Depend upon it, you shan't go without a supper, if I can help it.

As I suspected, we found that our accommodations at Inchrory were rather of the simplest description. But the good people of the house showed every disposition to do the best, for our comfort, that lay in their power. A dozen and a half of large trouts, which Clifford soon brought in, added to some of those provisions which we carried with us, made up the best part of our repast, and we very speedily prepared ourselves for the intellectual enjoyment of the evening.

CLIFFORD.—One would think that the worthy people here, had been forewarned of our story-telling propensities, and that they had made especial provision accordingly for the serjeant's long yarns. Did you ever see a more magnificent pair of wax candles on any table? Why, these would see out all the narratives that ever were told by Sindbad the Sailor.

GRANT.—Who could have expected to have met with wax candles, such as these, in an humble place like this, in the midst of these lonely mountains, and so far from the haunts of men? Nay, who could have expected to have met with any candles at all here?

AUTHOR.—How happens it, Archy, that they can give us candles so superb as these, in a place like this, where they have so little else to produce, and nothing at all that can in the least degree correspond with them? They are of enormous

size—nearly three inches in diameter, I should say. I have seen no such candles as these, except in a Roman Catholic church, or procession.

SERJEANT.—Troth, sir, I imagine you have solved the mystery. The truth is, as I told you before, that the great mass of the population of this Highland country consists of Roman Catholics; and it is probable that these candles, which have been originally used for some religious rite, have, from necessity, been this night lighted for your use.

CLIFFORD.—Come, then, serjeant, do you proceed to use the candles as fast as may be. Open your budget, my good man, and give us one of your many legends.

GRANT.—You had better allow the serjeant to mix a tumbler of warm stuff in the first place, and whilst he is doing so, he can be considering as to what he had best give us.

SERJEANT.—Thank you, sir. I'll just be doing that same. Would you have any objections to another legend of the Clan-Allan Stewarts, gentlemen?

AUTHOR.—Certainly not, Archy, if it be only as good as the last you gave us.

SERJEANT.—It is not for me to speak in its praise, sir, though I must e'en say that I think it no worse than the last. But it is a hantel longer.

GRANT.—The longer the better, if it be good. We have a long night, and great candles before us, so that you may give your tongue its fullest licence.

SERJEANT.—Well, gentlemen, it's a good thing to be neither gagged in the mouth, nor stinted in the bicker.

AUTHOR.—Depend upon it, Archy, you shall be neither the one nor the other.

CLIFFORD.—Come away, then, serjeant, begin as soon as you please.

Archy then took a long snuff out of the box which I handed to him, during which he seemed to be collecting his ideas, and then he began his narrative. Although I regret that I cannot always give the precise words used by him, I shall endeavour to preserve as faithful an outline of its particulars as I can, and that in language

which I hope may be at least as intelligible.

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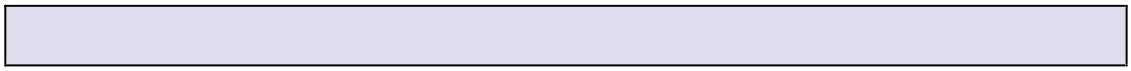

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vii	recals	recalls	1
9	liker	like	1
11	chrystal	crystal	1
26	provi-visions	provisions	3
34	Sergeant’s	Serjeant’s	1
41	undertand	understand	1
49, 92, 231, 231	[*Not in source*]	“	1
58, 140	”	[*Deleted*]	1
63	rivers	river	1
106	caitif	caitiff	1
112	between between	between	8
132	Arther	Arthur	1
184	recal	recall	1
186	“	[*Deleted*]	1
208	villany	villainy	1
209	[*Not in source*]	”	1
236	assasination	assassination	1
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