

THE

# WILD WITCH OF THE HEATH;

OR, THE DEMON OF THE GLEN.

A Tale, of the most Powerful Interest.

BY WIZARD.

K

— “ Strange screams of Death,  
And prophesying with accents terrible  
Of dire combustion and confused events,  
New-hatch'd to the woful time. The obscure bird  
Clamour'd the live-long night. Some say the earth  
Was feverish—and did shake.” *Macbeth*, Act ii. sc. 1.

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THE INCANTATION.—(See page 5.)



### NOTICE.

THE Publisher, in returning thanks to his Subscribers for past favours, begs to introduce to their notice a new work which he can confidently recommend to them as one unparalleled in the annals of fiction for startling development of plot and the concentrated incident it displays. The first Number has just appeared, and will be continued (in Weekly Numbers at One Penny, and in Parts at Fourpence) until completed, under the title of

**THE REWARD OF CRIME ;**

OR,

**THE BLACK PHANTOM OF THE CASTLE.**

**A TALE OF THE OLDEN TIME.**

THE  
WILD WITCH OF THE HEATH ;  
OR, THE DEMON OF THE GLEN.



Methven brought before the Viscount Dunbardon.

CHAPTER I.

The Tyrant—The Captive—The Hall of Torture and Death.

IN the beginning of the sixteenth century there dwelt in an ancient and fortified castle, situated on the borders of Scotland, a powerful nobleman, known as the Viscount Dunbardon. He was of a cruel, malevolent, and implacable disposition; pride, avarice, ambition, and revenge were his predominant passions. He had recourse to fraud, hypocrisy, and stratagem, whenever they served his purpose; and had long entertained a secret hate, and sworn a deadly revenge, against the Baron Glendovan, a neighbouring noble, whose eminent virtues, which were in such direct opposition to the principles of his haughty foe, rendered him an object of love to all, save

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the Viscount, whose hatred had arisen to such a fearful height that he would have shrank from no means, however base, whereby he might have effected his purpose; for beside another powerful motive for wishing the death of the Baron, which will be shown in due course, he had long since given imperative orders to his vassals, that all members of the Baron's establishment found near the castle should be made prisoners; by which means he hoped, by bribery, to obtain an easy access to the castle of his enemy. In this, however, although he made frequent captures, he was foiled—all his captives choosing rather to suffer death than to betray their lord into the hands of his ferocious foe—in which case they were invariably consigned to a dreadful and lingering death by the rack. Finding, at length, that all his machinations failed in the desired effect, he came to the resolution of challenging the Baron to single combat, for a supposed insult offered him in the person of Angus, the governor of his castle, nothing doubting that his boasted skill in arms would ensure an easy victory, and at once rid him of his detested rival.

He had accordingly dispatched a messenger with the challenge, and was pacing his chamber with hurried steps, impatiently awaiting his return, when the door was suddenly opened, and Angus, accompanied by two domestics, appeared.

The Viscount, in an angry tone, demanded to know why he was thus interrupted; upon which they dragged a man in chains before him, as Angus replied:—

“My lord, one of the sentinels surprised this fellow near his post, and I have commanded him to be brought before your lordship.”

“’Tis well!” replied the Viscount; “tell me,” he continued, addressing the prisoner, “why were you found near the castle? Are you not aware that death will be the reward of your temerity?”

“Death I fear not,” replied the other; “his approach has no terrors for the innocent. Well may they who stain their hands in innocent blood, and embitter the lives of others by the oppressor's iron hand, dread its barbed terrors. I—”

“Death and fends!” vociferated the Viscount, fiercely; “what mean you by this? Say instantly the purport of your speech, or, by heavens, it is your last! Speak, and quickly!”

“I meant nothing,” answered the stranger, calmly; “it is, I believe, one of the inestimable liberties of a free-born man to give utterance to his sentiments. I know not whether I have said aught that refers to your deeds; you are the best judge of your own acts; I, for my part, never pry into other men's actions. I—”

“Enough!” cried the Viscount, impatiently interrupting him; “say,” he continued, as if struck by a sudden thought; “thy name?”

“Methven!” was the reply.

On hearing this, the Viscount waved his hand, and the attendants withdrew.

“Methven,” he continued, approaching him, and laying his hand on the captive's shoulder, “promise to lead me by the subterraneous passages into the castle of my enemy, and life, with ample reward, shall be yours. Pause well ere you decide; remember, you are in my power; if you refuse, a pain-

ful and lingering death will be your fate; if you consent, you have but to name your reward. How do you decide? Ha! you tremble and change colour. How do you determine?"

"Death, honourable death, is preferable to treachery."

"Remember," returned the Viscount, calmly, though well nigh choking with rage; "mine is no common offer; reject it, and——"

"Will your gold purchase peace of mind," cried Methven, with energy.

"The inestimable jewel I throw away by consenting to your designs is far more valuable to its possessor than the vast riches of Peru. No, Viscount, I am not the villain you would have me. If, indeed, my noble master has incurred your displeasure, why not seek and demand the satisfaction of a man of honour?"

"I *have* done so," replied the Viscount, "and, by the long delay of the messenger, I half suspect the boasted honour of your coward master; and, as you are so insensible to the greatness that awaited you, instant preparations shall be made for the torture. Therefore, prepare to meet a dreadful death."

"If it be so decreed, I am content to submit, even though the blow be struck by a villain's hand."

"Villain!" reiterated the Viscount, furiously; "Death and fiends! do I live to hear myself branded by the infamous name of villain? Die!"

And unsheathing his dagger, he was about to plunge it into the breast of Methven, when his arm was suddenly arrested by Angus, who, upon hearing him utter the exclamation, had rushed into the chamber.

"Unhand me!" cried the Viscount, furiously; "or, by ——! you meet his fate. He has defied my power, and shall feel its sting; think not to screen him from my fury."

"My lord!" exclaimed Angus, "should you not rather consign him to the death he merits? In submitting to this impotent rage, you but demean yourself, and afford your base-born foe the satisfaction of knowing that he has defied you."

"You reason well," replied the Viscount, sheathing his dagger. "Let him be conveyed to the Torture Chamber, and should he, after the torture, consent to my plans, bring him instantly before me again; if he still persist in his obstinacy——. You know the rest."

Angus bowed an affirmative, and the captive was dragged from his presence; and a few moments afterwards the heart-rending screams of the poor sufferer told that the Viscount's commands were being obeyed to the utmost extent of his wishes. Thus he soliloquised:—

"This poor slave thinks to brave my power, and defy me. Ah well! he is in the hands of those who will test his constancy to the utmost, and should he swerve—delicious thought—my foe will then be in my power. Oh! where is the philosopher, however wise, that can paint in sufficiently glowing terms the sweet, the thrilling, sensation that awaits the gratified revenge. Oh ——"

The sudden opening of the door made him start. On looking round to ascertain the cause, he discovered Angus.

"Well," he exclaimed, as a satanic smile momentarily illumined his features; "has the poor wretch already forgotten his protestations of constancy, and confessed himself subservient to my will?"

"Not so, my lord," replied Angus; "the torture has proceeded to its utmost length: and though the prisoner is faint and exhausted, he still continues firm; and I fear, if he is not released, the result will prove fatal."

"I will myself proceed to the Torture Chamber, and there interrogate him," replied the Viscount.

Saying which, he descended to the place of torture. On arriving there, a scene presented itself that moved even his iron nature. There lay his victim, extended on the fatal wheel, apparently lifeless, his limbs torn and mangled, and the blood slowly flowing from at least a dozen fearful wounds, each of which looked like

"A breach in Nature, for Ruin's wasteful entrance."

His eyes were closed, even as though he had fallen into that long and happy slumber from which no slumberer awakes, but at that last and fearful summons, which levels all crime and distinction, and which will

"Appal the villain, and make the tyrant tremble."

The Viscount stood for some few moments gazing on the wretched object before him, apparently absorbed in reflection. Arousing himself from his reverie, he commanded wine to be administered to the sufferer. The effect was soon apparent. Yielding to its all-powerful influence, the prostrate form before him showed signs of returning animation. The Viscount, all impatience, commanded to know whether he consented to yield to his desires. It was in vain. The head was slowly raised, as if about to utter a reply; but immediately sank back upon the instrument of torture. The Viscount snatched a torch from one of the attendants; and, stooping down, hastily placed his hand upon the breast. His victim was *dead!* Upon ascertaining this, his rage knew no bounds. He dashed the torch with violence to the ground; and, stamping upon the inanimate form, he exclaimed, in a dreadful tone—"Dead! defeated! Perdition seize thee! Oh, that he had lived! then would I have torn his accursed heart, reeking from his body."

And he stayed not to say more; but rushed from the place, followed by Angus and the attendants.

## CHAPTER II.

### The Departure—Meeting on the Heath, and Incantation.

THE Viscount impatiently awaited the return of the messenger the whole of the following day. Still he came not; and though he dispatched several of his favourite and confidential vassals in the direction of his enemy's castle, they all returned, after a fruitless search, on the third night from his departure. The Viscount wrapped himself in his plaid, and arming himself with a sword and a brace of pistols, he sallied forth from the castle no one knew whither. When he had proceeded some distance from the castle, the sky, which was before clear and cloudless, suddenly, turned to a pitchy hue. Loud and terrible peals of thunder shook the

earth from its foundation; the forked and vivid lightning angrily darted in long and repeated flashes from the blackened clouds; and, as he reached the heath, he was startled at beholding several wild and uncouth female figures dancing around a huge blazing fire. He was at first inclined to suppose this strange phenomenon proceeded from the vapours to which that part of the country was subjected; but a nearer approach convinced him that he was mistaken in his conjectures, for when he had approached to within a few yards of the spot where they were standing, he distinctly heard one of the hags in a dreadful tone howl forth the following:—

“Behold! the Viscount this way stalks.  
 With fearful step the murderer walks:  
 The blood of one he late hath shed,  
 With deep revenge shall crush his head.  
 Prepare at once our art to show—  
 Strike to his peace the mortal blow;  
 Appear at once, and cross his path—  
 His wish to grant, and brave his wrath!”

The Viscount stood for some few moments, apparently bewildered at the appearance of this wild group. At length, after some hesitation, he placed his hand upon his sword, and exclaimed in a fierce tone,

“What wild and withered hell-cats have we here? Minions! what is your purpose here, and at this wild hour? Speak! Why have you thus crossed my path? Say!”

“Our purpose here is to warn thee from that bloody track which thou art now pursuing!” exclaimed one of the sisters; “be warned in time, or, if thou wilt still persist, be prepared to meet the dreadful fate which awaits thee.”

“Peace!” cried the Viscount, drawing his sword; “cease thy accursed trifling, or by ——, I will strike thee dead where thou now standest!”

“Think you, my lord Viscount,” continued the hag, without appearing to notice the threat, “that the murderer can attain his object, and overcome the virtuous, without the aid of supernatural agency? We know thy desires, and would forward them. It is for that purpose that we have crossed thee here. What wouldst thou sacrifice to obtain an easy and complete revenge upon thy enemy?”

“Any, oh, any!” replied the Viscount, impatiently; “but the means, the means?”

“Are here!” cried the hag. “Say. Canst thou nerve well thy heart, and steel thy eyes against the terrors to which they will be exposed? If thou canst do this—”

“I can, and much more!” exclaimed the Viscount; “but delay not longer.”

The hags now joined hands, and after dancing and making other hideous gestures around the magic circle, they motioned to him to enter the same; which he did; after which they continued to dance until a low, hollow groan was heard, as if proceeding from the most impenetrable depths of the forest. Next followed a loud hissing noise through the air. At the sound of this they ceased their antics, and immediately the sounds were changed into the most delicious music.

“He comes!” cried one of the sisters; “Peace! our labour’s done.”

Next his ears were assailed by a dreadful peal of thunder. The next moment a huge ball of fire was seen to hover for an instant in the air; the next, and it fell with a loud crash at the feet of the Viscount who had witnessed these strange appearances in silent amazement; but who can describe the terror which seized him, when the fiery ball which rolled at his feet, suddenly, and with a loud crash, opened, and a hideous form presented itself before him, and, turning to the hags, it commanded in a dreadful tone, to know why it had been summoned.

"We summoned thee at the request of yonder lord, who requires thy aid," answered one of the hags.

Turning to the Viscount, the demoniac form before him exclaimed, "Bold mortal, we admire thy bravery, and promise to grant all thou shalt ask. What wouldst thou with us?"

The Viscount appeared to hesitate, probably awed by the dreadful aspect of the demon.

"What!" he cried, with a satanic smile, "art thou affrighted at the mere sight of what thou must one day endure? Well! to satisfy thy humour, behold!" With which words his demoniacal form vanished; and, to the astonishment of the bewildered man, a neat, dapper form, clothed in black velvet, stood before him. "Now, poor mortal, thy request?"

"If, then, thy power can grant so much," replied the Viscount, his confidence somewhat re-assured by the transformation; "I would have my inveterate foe, the Baron Glendovan, in my power."

"'Tis granted! What more?"

"I would know the conditions upon which this is granted."

"The exchange of thy immortal soul!"

"Begone! I will not accede to thy hellish proposals."

"Cease thy tauntings, and see that thy wishes are complied with; and for thy soul—know that thou hast already endangered that by this conference with us."

"'Tis false, false as hell and thy fiendish self!" exclaimed the Viscount, in a furious tone. "Thy, thus do I defy thee!"

Saying which, he drew forth both his pistols, and fired them at the object before him. A loud fiendish laugh followed this act, and on looking towards the spot from whence it seemed to proceed, he was horror-stricken to behold the messenger whose arrival he had so long and so impatiently awaited, lying dead at his feet. He looked in vain for the mysterious forms by which he had been so lately surrounded. No traces of them remained. When he had in some measure recovered from his surprise, he lifted the lifeless body, which was yet warm, from the ground, and to his horror and consternation, discovered that his favourite domestic had been shot through the head. No doubt remained on his mind as to who was the murderer; still how could he have stood before him, and invisible?

"'Tis evident," he exclaimed, after a pause, "their fiendish and demoniac laugh was not without cause. Ah, well! their triumph is complete in this; but now to dispose of my faithful slave."

Saying which, he hastily quitted the spot, and, on reaching the castle, selected four of his confidential vassals, and again departed in the direction of the heath.

On arriving there, his astonishment was increased by the disappearance of the body which, but half an hour since, he had left lifeless upon the ground.

"By Heaven!" he exclaimed, in the extremity of his surprise, "I—I could have sworn that it was—near this spot. Ah! Merciful heavens!" he continued, "what dreadful sight is this I see? Down, fiends; down! Why do you glare at me? Did—d-i-d I not refuse your aid? See! they advance. Save, oh, save me! Saying which, he fell, exhausted, into the arms of an attendant.

"Are they gone?" he inquired, on his recovery.

"What? who, my lord?"

"The fiends! the fiends!"

"You are fatigued, my lord," exclaimed the terrified domestic; "we have seen no living being but ourselves."

"'Tis well! then am I content;" cried the Viscount; it was but the force of heated imagination. But lead me from this hateful, this damnable spot."

On reaching the castle, and being conducted to his chamber, he commanded to be left alone; and pacing the floor with hurried steps, he continued long to ponder on the strange incidents of the night.

"Fool that I was to be baffled and affrighted by their devilry!" he at length exclaimed; "had I but threatened the lives of those accursed hags, all might have been well. And yet—those fearful words are still ringing in mine ears, and crowd themselves upon my memory; and——Can it be possible that there is a world beyond that dark and uncertain period which terminates the mortal career? No! it cannot be; 'tis impossible. Yet ---but I grow fearful, and start at imaginary horrors. I will have recourse to that soul-stirring and effectual bane to melancholy---wine, and in its potent fumes beguile the past, and defy the impenetrable future. Come death; come torment, and aught else that will---I defy them all, all. Ha! ha! ha!"

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### CHAPTER III.

#### The Midnight Warning—The Accomplice.

EXHAUSTED by his ravings, the Viscount sank into the nearest chair, where he remained for some time, wrapt in gloomy thought. Arousing himself at length from his reverie, he was about to rise to summon his attendants, when he fancied he heard the sound of footsteps on the staircase. He paused, irresolute. Again the sounds struck upon his ear, and became more audible. It seemed as though one heavily armed and clothed in mail; for he distinctly heard the clang of armour as the feet descended was approaching his chamber. He paused again; drew his sword, and was about to advance, when the doors suddenly flew open with a tremendous crash, and a figure, armed *cap-a-pie*, appeared before him. The sight of this chained him to the spot. His hair stood erect; his eyeballs glared, and seemed ready to start their sockets; and his whole frame shook con-



vulsively, and seemed paralyzed with fear and agitation. A dreadful silence prevailed for some few moments, which was at length broken by the Viscount, who, having in some degree recovered his self-possession, exclaimed, in a tremulous tone—

“Wh - - y dost thou still haunt my repose? Have I not already endured tortures that would strike terror—ah, even to the damned? Speak! Say, then, why am I thus tormented? What! still silent? Then, by ——,” he continued, brandishing his sword, “this shall compel thee! Dost brave me now? or”—he was here interrupted by the phantom, who, waving the spear which it held in its right hand, exclaimed, in a hollow, sepulchral tone—

“Hold! be warned—repent—remember. Continue not longer in thy guilty career, rash and bloody man! Will nothing intimidate thee from the commission of new crimes? Will not all the awful warnings thou hast received strike terror into thy marble heart? Not content with thy former crimes, thou hast added another murder to the dreadful catalogue which will one day be produced against thee. Thou saidst but now that my appearance struck terror to thy inmost soul! What, then, thinkest thou must await the murderer hereafter?”

“I care not,” replied the Viscount, furiously. “Even though hell itself should gape, still would I continue in my course, until I have encompassed the death of one whose very existence mingles gall with my daily life, and makes even thy hellish torments light.”

Heaving a deep sigh, the spectre again waved the spear, and disappeared with a low groan.

“Am I once more alone?” soliloquised the Viscount. “By Heaven, these ghostlike gentry seem to have a marvellous care for the welfare of my immortal soul; for I am annoyed by their ‘supernatural solicitings’ both at home and abroad. Repent! did the spirit say? Will repentance wipe from busy memory the glorious reflection of my present exalted state, or the damnable means by which I rose? No; repentence is vain, since it cannot calm my ——. Ah! as I live, here comes another of my spiritual advisers. No; there I am mistaken—’tis Angus: what can be his business at this late hour!”

Scarcely had he given utterance to the latter sentence, ere the Governor stood before him.

“Well!” he exclaimed: “thy business?”

“My lord,” replied Angus, “as one of the sentinels on the eastern post was pursuing his rounds, he was startled at the sound of footsteps, and had scarce time to demand the pass-word, ere a man, equipped in a robber’s garb, stood before him, and demanded an audience of your lordship.”

“Who is he that dare demand of me?” asked the Viscount; said he aught of the nature of his business?”

“He did not, my lord,” replied Angus; “on his refusal to depart, the sentinel presented his partizan; at which the fellow, with a contemptuous smile, bid him either fire or hasten to inform his lordly master that Pietro D’Arste awaited his pleasure.”

“Pietro D’Arste!” exclaimed the Viscount, in an under tone; “the villain by whose hand my nephew fell! What can be his purpose here?”



Pietro and the Viscount in the Torture Chamber.

“Tell me,” he continued, to Angus “how did the guard then!”

“Immediately informed me of the circumstance, my lord.”

“And you!—”

“Ordered him to be seized. And he now is without, my lord.”

“Let him be brought hither instantly.”

Angus bowed—departed, and in a few moments returned with his captive.

“Methinks you select rather an unusual hour for your visit,” exclaimed the Viscount, as they entered.

“Marry! but I knew your lordship seldom ventures to seek the pleasure of repose at these hours; therefore I selected the present time for my visit. For blood will have bl—”

“Peace, slave!” vociferated the Viscount, in accents of mingled rage and fear.

“Slave!” echoed the other, contemptuously; “if it is your lordly pleasure that I speak not, you will perchance control your own speech, for I cannot boast much forbearance and am irritated with ease; therefore—you may readily guess the rest, my lord Viscount.”

“Death and hell! what damnable purport is hidden beneath your mysterious words?” exclaimed the Viscount.

“Rave on, madman,” continued the robber, “I heed thee not; if ——”

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"Eternal villain," cried the Viscount, fiercely, and drawing a dagger. "Silence, or by ——"

"You dare not strike," interrupted the other, drawing his sword. "Come on! I defy thee."

"Disarm the caitiff!" cried the Viscount, turning to Angus.

His order was promptly complied with.

"What is to follow next?" inquired the other, in a taunting tone.

"The rack," answered the Viscount, fiercely.

"The rack!" echoed D'Arste; "*that* has no terrors for me. Be warned, my lord, how you tempt me farther; you affect not to know me—'tis vain. Allow me a few moments' private conference with you, that I may explain the cause of this unexpected visit, and spare you the shame and disgrace which, if you proceed in this, will await you. Thou knowest my nature; and may therefore judge accordingly. If——"

"Eh! does the slave threaten?" exclaimed the Viscount. "Away with him instantly."

"Villain, know that I defy thee and thy power," exclaimed the other.

"Slaves," cried the Viscount in a paroxysm of rage, "why am I not obeyed? Tear him hence, or by ——, you all stand upon your graves."

Angus and the rest now advanced to seize him, when he exclaimed in a fierce tone—"Back! ye hireling pack, nor dare pollute me with your coward touch, lest I take the infection, and, like thee, cringe and bow to the earth at the nod of yonder villain."

"Damnation!" cried the Viscount, furiously stamping his foot; "why this delay? away with him! or——"

"I shall probably probe the hero still farther," replied D'Arste, tauntingly.

He was then seized by the attendants, and borne off in the direction of the Chamber of Torture.

On being again left alone, the Viscount wiped the sweat from his brow, and paced the chamber with hurried steps. "What!" he at length exclaimed, in a tremulous tone, "what earthly motive could tempt this wretch to appear again before me, after all his solemn oaths and protestations never again to revisit his native land? There is some dark, powerful, and hidden motive in this, which is at present unknown to all save himself. What else, after an absence of ten years, should induce him to again appear and thus brave me to my teeth? Oh, man, man! when once thou dost league thyself with the sordid, base-minded wretch, whose station was before inferior to thine own, then farewell to all distinction and subservience of power. Crime, black and damnable crime, levels all distinction, and makes the rude, low-born peasant equal with his lord. What if he should betray me! Pshaw! the thought is vain. Is he not in my power? and yet—what could he mean by the mysterious threats to which he gave utterance. His robber's garb, too—all is manifest. This torture must not proceed." So saying, he darted from the chamber, hastily crossed the corridor, paced the galleries, threaded the subterraneous passages, and when within a few yards of the hall, exclaimed, in a loud tone: "Hold instantly! release the prisoner!" who, when he arrived, he found was already bound for the torture.

"'Tis well, my lord," replied the now-released captive; "by so doing you have rendered yourself an essential service, and spared me a labour; for these limbs, now bared for the hellish torture of thy favourite wheel, should have been mangled, and my frame exhausted until Death itself should have glared me in the face. Then, and then only, with my dying breath, would I have revealed the damnable crimes whi——"

"No more!" cried the Viscount, hurriedly; "you are free. Leave us," he continued, turning to the attendants.

His order was instantly obeyed; and, as the door closed upon the retiring domestics, the Viscount slowly advanced, and laying his hand on the other's shoulder, he exclaimed, in a low tone—

"Pietro d'Arate! I ask thee not to explain thy motive for again appearing here. No! the great service thou didst once render me, forbids me to question thee thus."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the other; "what new work has my Lord Viscount in contemplation? Surely there is not another nephew to be dispatched?"

"Peace! and check thy heedless speech!" cried the Viscount, "lest ——"

"I prove thy courage still farther!" interrupted Pietro. "What if thy nephew should live? Wouldst not be surprised to have thy castle besieged by his forces; the power which now is thine wrenched from thy grasp, and thy former friends and adherents, driven hence by thy tyranny and oppression, appear as evidences against thee?"

"Silence!" screamed the Viscount, "or, by ——, I'll tear thy accursed tongue, yet reeking, from thy body. What black and damnable fiend art thou that dost torment me thus? Avaunt! or dread my direst wrath."

"I shall not hence," replied the other, "nor do I dread thy anger. Nay, knit not thy brow, nor lay thy hand upon thy dagger thus. Thou need'st not tell me I am in thy power; but know, that if I do not return within a specified time, my companions have such instructions as will insure thy destruction; and though thou shouldst dismember me, even like the loathsome mass now lying at thy feet, still should I die happy in the conviction that thou must ere long share my fate."

"Listen!" exclaimed the Viscount, as though struck by a sudden thought, "nor longer dwell upon such hateful subjects; thy presence here first struck terror into my soul. I now look upon the same as a special intervention of the higher powers. Thou knowest the castle which stands in yonder glen?"

"I do."

"Then know, also, that it is inhabited by one on whom I have sworn a deadly revenge; and no price is there, however great, that I would not freely give to have him in my power. Thou art the only man in whom I could place that confidence necessary for the achievement of my purpose. Say but that thou wilt render me thy assistance, and name thy reward; but shouldst thou refuse ——"

"You will not—dare not, molest me farther; therefore no more need be said upon that subject. Thou shouldst have remembered this ere thou hadst ordered me to the rack. However, I will consent to this, but only on one condition."

"Name it, name it," cried the Viscount, eagerly, "and rest assured 'tis thine."

"Hear me, then," replied D'Arste. "I have long since grown weary of my present mode of life, and would fain change it for some other did my means permit me so to do; it now appears that you would fain employ me in a business, the execution of which thou canst entrust to no one save myself. Well, then, to serve thee, I am willing to comply with thy request, providing thou wilt settle on me, for the term of my natural life, one third of the vast fortunes which, through my agency alone, thou dost now possess. Pause well, ere you decide; and remember, by so doing, you secure my services for ever."

"Will nothing less than a third of my estates satisfy the cravings of thy ambitious soul?" inquired the Viscount.

"No," answered the other, "it will not. And dar'st thou talk to me of ambition—thou who, for an empty worldly title, and the worthless dross, lucre, that was attached to it, didst plunge thyself into guilt, and commit crimes from which even my guilty heart would have shrunk with horror; yet, with the remembrance of this before thee, wilt thou reprove the appearance of avarice and ambition in others. I tell thee again, that if thou wilt not consent to my proposals, I will not accede to thy fiendish purpose; therefore, thou canst use thine own discretion in framing an answer. I, for my part, care not which way thou dost decide, so thou but use dispatch."

"I consent," replied the Viscount. "Now for the means."

"Softly, my lord, softly. Before I proceed farther in this, I must know the cause of thy enmity, for well I know thy revengeful spirit is soon excited, which, being done, thou wilt not shrink from any means, however base, whereby thou mayst bring destruction on thy foe."

"Know, then," returned the Viscount, "that Glendovan has a daughter, young, fair, and lovely as the blushing dawn. In one of my walks, I accidentally encountered this matchless beauty, who no sooner caught sight of me than she darted off with lightning-speed in the direction of the castle, and rapidly disappeared from my enamoured gaze."

"It is ever thus!" exclaimed D'Arste. "Innocence is appalled, and flies at the appearance of crime."

"On my return," proceeded Dunbardon, without appearing to notice the interruption, "I sent out several of my attendants, with orders to ascertain, if possible, the abode of this coy beauty; and they, in a short time, returned, and informed me that she was the daughter of my inveterate foe. Upon learning this, I immediately formed the resolution of carrying her off; and after watching, with two of my confidential vassals, for some days, without success, I at length succeeded in capturing my precious prize, and, regardless of her shrieks and cries for assistance, was about to bear her off, when the Baron appeared, attended by several of his dependants, all armed. A fierce struggle ensued, in which, after some time, my two attendants were slain in my defence, and I myself was compelled to seek safety in disgraceful flight, and was pursued by my exulting conquerors to the very castle gates."

"What, then, is now thy thoughts?" inquired D'Arste.

"Dost not think I have ample cause to devise the death of him who was the exulting witness to my shame and defeat?"

"Thou hast indeed," answered the other; "but would it not be better, thinkest thou, to first demand the lady in marriage, which, should he refuse, thou wilt then have ample cause to proceed to the worst extremity?"

"Right!" answered the Viscount: "I thank thee for the suggestion; and should I profit by the same, thou mayst—"

"Expect thee to fulfil the conditions of our compact," interrupted the other. "But come, my lord," he continued, "let us fly this place; for though its charnel-house and pestilential air may be in accordance with thy taste, I myself, with all due reverence to thy will, had rather draw my breath from some purer atmosphere than that which we are at present inhaling."

"Thou shalt do so," replied the Viscount; "and from henceforth cast off the air and garb of poverty, and assume those of a man of fortune. Be thou but true to me, and thou shalt never be without ample means to sustain both."

To this D'Arnte coolly bowed, and motioned the Viscount to advance, which he did; and both slowly quitted the Hall of Torture.

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### CHAPTER III.

Hospitality of the Earl—The Outlaw's Return—The Reconnoitre, and the Reception of the Viscount's Messenger.

AT a late hour on the following evening, as the Baron Glendovan was about to retire to his couch, the warder was aroused by a loud and continued knocking at the outer gates of the castle. On hearing this, the Baron descended to ascertain the cause, when he discovered that three strangers were then in the Hall, one of whom was impatiently awaiting his presence. He then proceeded in the direction pointed out, and in a few moments stood before them, when he immediately recognised in the elder of the group the Earl of Strathallan, a nobleman who had been outlawed and banished from his country upon suspicion of being concerned in a conspiracy planned by the Earl of Athol, and which terminated in the death of the Scottish king; but through the powerful intercession of his friends, he had at length returned, after an exile of three years.

"My dear Strathallan," exclaimed the Baron, shaking him warmly by the hand, "how happy am I to see thee! But who have we here?"

"My companions from Barra," replied the Earl. "We must solicit leave to sojourn here for the night; to-morrow I hope to regain possession of my estates, and—"

"No more, my dear Earl," interrupted the Baron; "I am but too happy in the society of thee and thy friends; therefore, I pray thee, make them welcome. But I myself am unmindful of the duties of a host, else should I ere this have commanded some refreshments to be brought; for the fatigues of the journey thou hast undergone have doubtless—"

"No, indeed, my dear Baron, we shall not tax thy kindness farther than requesting shelter until the morrow."



After some farther useless solicitings on the part of the Baron, the party separated for the night. On the following morning, when they were assembled at breakfast, Glendovan had more leisure to observe the companions of his friend, the youngest of whom seemed to be about twenty-two years of age: in person he was tall and commanding, rather above the middle stature, and possessed an expression of countenance "rarely to be met with except in persons of high birth;" and for the other, he was a man far advanced in years, and his furrowed brow and sunken eye seemed to infer that the possessor had endured his share of worldly troubles. Wondering within himself how and under what circumstances his friend had become acquainted with his present companions, and the object of their unexpected visit, the meal was soon dispatched, and the Baron having prevailed upon his guests to spend a few days with him at the castle, they proceeded to enjoy the extreme fineness of the day by a walk through the glen; and they accordingly departed at an early hour from the castle, and were proceeding through a narrow defile of the mountain, when four masked ruffians suddenly appeared from behind a buttress in the rocks. In one of them who headed the rest, and who was also masked, Glendovan immediately, by the sound of his voice, recognised the Viscount Dunbardon.

Directly on discovering his ferocious foe, the Baron exclaimed to his companions: "Hold! for the love of heaven, hold! This ruffian has often injured me, and deeply; and I have solemnly sworn that, should he ever cross my path as he now has, I would never again sheath my sword until it had drank his life's blood. The time has now arrived!"

"It has," interrupted the Viscount, tearing off his mask, and brandishing his sword; "the time has arrived, and, if thou hast but courage to test thy skill, a few moments' time will decide who is to be the conqueror. If thy cowardice should cause thee to hesitate, or refuse, why then I will gage my single arm against thee and thy companions."

"Fool!" cried Glendovan, "dost think the lord cannot partake of the same courage and constancy of purpose which characterised even his slave and taught him to brave and despise even thy hellish tortures?"

"Ah," replied the Viscount, "'tis well thou didst remind me of that. I will first lay thee bleeding at my feet, and then shalt thou deliver up thy life's-breath upon the very wheel, and with his fast-rotting carcase for thy pillow."

The combat then commenced with great heat and fury on the part of the Viscount, and with admirable skill and coolness on that of the Baron. It was long doubtful upon whose side the victory would ultimately sit. Both were equal masters of the swords they wielded; both had hitherto fought with equal chances of success, until the Viscount, by a dexterous back stroke, snapped the blade of his adversary's sword close to the hilt, and by the same stroke brought the Baron upon his knees; and while in that position, he shortened his sword, and prepared to plunge the blade in his breast, when the younger companion of Strathallan interposed, and proffered his sword to the prostrate Baron, who immediately, upon receiving the same, started to his feet, and commenced the contest with redoubled fury. They retreat—then advance—aiming terrific blows at each other, which they receive upon their shields. Fire flashes from the well-tempered blades

at every fresh stroke: at length, the Baron is proclaimed victor, by disarming his opponent. Uttering the most dreadful oaths and imprecations, the Viscount, followed by his attendants, then darted off in the direction of the castle.

"How soon has his boasted courage fled to the winds!" exclaimed Glendovan. "This vain boaster will now learn how to appreciate his own prowess. To my brave friend and preserver here," he continued, returning the sword, "I owe my life; and the future shall determine whether I can sufficiently reward my generous preserver."

The stranger accepted the proffered sword; and, in answer to the expressions of gratitude, proposed that they should return to the castle without delay, lest the Viscount should overtake them, and they should be overpowered by numbers, and made prisoners.

Acting upon this advice, Glendovan, and his friend and companions, proceeded towards the castle, where they had not long arrived, when an attendant entered, and informed the Baron that a messenger from the Viscount Dunbardon was without, who, in the name of his lord, demanded an immediate interview.

"Let him be conducted hither," replied the Baron. The attendant bowed, and retired, and in a few moments returned, introducing a man-at-arms, in the uniform of the castle. On entering the presence of Glendovan, he bowed to all; and the latter exclaimed—

"What is the nature of this visit? What new atrocity has your villainous master in contemplation?"

"I am not aware, my lord, that the Viscount has any villainous plans in contemplation; on the contrary, he would confer an honour upon your family, by accepting the hand of your daughter, the Lady Isabella, in marriage. 'Tis for that alone I am here! It is also the will and pleasure of my lord that I should see the Lady Isabella, and from her own lips receive an immediate answer."

"Slave!" replied the Baron, indignantly, "go tell thy tyrant master that the Lady Isabella is reserved for another more worthy her hand. Dares he to demand the hand of one whose soul is not stained with the life's-blood of their fellow-beings? Begone! And bear this message to thy lordly master. Tell him, that should he chance again to cross my path, his life shall pay the forfeit."

"And shall I not see the Lady Isabella?" inquired the messenger, who, as the reader has doubtless ere this conjectured, was no other than Pietro D'Arste.

"No," answered the Baron. "And if thou dost value the safety of thine own carcase, thou wilt not tarry longer here."

"But, my lord,——"

"No more. Begone!"

"I will," replied the other; "but if thou dost not wish to have thy heart-strings severed, and thy daughter dishonoured, thou wouldst do well to comply with the commands of my lord. With this counsel, my lord, which is that of a friend, I take my leave. Lead the way, slave!" he continued, turning to one of the attendants. And with this he strode from the hall and from the castle.

"By my soul, a mighty benevolent personage!" exclaimed Strathallan, as Pietro disappeared; "and, had the Lady Isabella been present, she could not but have duly appreciated the motives which induced the tender-hearted messenger to warn you of your danger."

"I am of your opinion, my lord," replied Glendovan: "but come, the banquet waits our presence. Should this ruffian ever chance to fall into my power, I will revenge myself for the insults he so oft has heaped upon my head."

#### CHAPTER IV.

Return of Pietro D'Arste—Visit of the Viscount to the Black Witch of the Glen—Bloody Encounter.

ON the return of the messenger the Viscount met him at the castle-gates, and eagerly demanded the result of his mission. On learning the same, he in a paroxysm of rage seized Pietro by the throat, and, holding a dagger to his breast, exclaimed, in a fierce tone,

"Repeat this infernal lie, and, by —, I swear to strike thee to the heart!"

"Strike," returned the other; "strike, if thou wilt; Pietro D'Arste is not the man to fear the prospect of death."

"This is vain," returned the Viscount. "If—"

"Nay," replied the other, "I must first request that your lordship will not again test the brightness of your steel so near to my breast, or it is more than probable that I shall on some occasion be dispatched to my final home *sans ceremonie*; and, until I have accomplished my revenge upon a villain who for the present is beyond my power, that would be somewhat inconvenient."

"I beseech your pardon," returned the Viscount. "In this I was to blame; but say, did you not threaten the Earl with my revenge upon his refusing to hear of my suit? Did you not see the lady? what said she?"

"Such a multiplicity of questions in a breath I must confess my inability to answer, my lord," returned Pietro, with most provoking coolness; "but this I can tell you, the Earl sets your vengeance at defiance, despises your threats, and politely informed me of his kind intentions with regard to yourself, should you ever be so fortunate as to fall into his power."

"Vain, boasting fool!" muttered the Viscount; "could I not crush him like the poor worm, did I so will it?"

"Then would I commence instant preparations for his capture, my lord," cried the other; "for certain am I that his death would render you more joy than aught else on earth."

"Thou art right," exclaimed the Viscount; "but come, I have another work in contemplation, of which thou shalt hear more anon. Stay!" he continued; "for the present I would be alone; return to me at midnight."

At the time of our narrative, when the people of Scotland yielded to the belief of every idle and superstitious tale of the times, the mountains were inhabited by a wild and mysterious being, whose supernatural power



Mystic Appearance of the Wild Witch to the Viscount Dunbar.

(real or imaginary) was universally believed and feared by all. It seldom ventured forth from its mysterious abode; and the highlanders ever considered its appearance amongst them as a sure prognosticator of some severe calamity. The opinions with regard to this strange being were numerous; some gave it credit for being a man; others a woman; but the more superstitious proclaimed it to be nothing more or less than an evil spirit, and, as a farther evidence of the opinion expressed, named it the **WILD WITCH OF THE HEATH**—the mention of whose name would, in those days, serve to check even the most reckless and bloodthirsty villain in his career of crime. Nay, such was its all-powerful influence, that the very bare echo of the words had often been known to silence even the clamorous tongue of the scolding housewife.

As to when, or how, this strange being had first appeared amongst them, was unknown even to the oldest inhabitant.

It was towards the abode of this all-important personage that Dunbar resolved to direct his steps, and, by leaguering himself for a time with a power so universally known, he hoped to attain the objects nearest his heart—the possession of the Lady Isabella, and the captivity of the Baron Glendaran, her father. Accordingly, wrapping himself in his plaid, he quitted his castle, and hastened towards the Heath said to be inhabited by the witch. The road lay through a long ridge of mountains; at the

bottom of which stood the fast mouldering ruins of an ancient castle, and through these ruins he was compelled to pass. He involuntarily came to a pause ere he entered the venerable pile. Its towering head seemed to threaten destruction to the bold traveller whose temerity might persuade him to entrust his life for one moment within its ruinous remains. The calmness of the hour too, and solemnity that reigned around, threw a gleam of sadness even over his gloomy soul; the sky, full of stars, appeared without a cloud; the moon, bright in the heavens, shed a mellow lustre upon the waters of the river which sparkled in her beams; her pale rays fell upon the tops of the woods and distant mountains, tinging their dark features here and there with a silver hue; while their remoter recesses were clothed in deep shade. All was still; not a sound broke upon the tranquillity of the scene save the distant sighings of the breeze, as it swelled at intervals over the adjacent steeps.

The beauty of the landscape seemed to have transfixed him to the heart, when he was suddenly aroused from his reverie by the hooting of the numerous owls that now inhabited this once magnificent and noble structure, and who had been disturbed by the sound of his footsteps. Scarce had he recovered from the momentary surprise occasioned by this unearthly salute, ere he distinctly heard the following words—which seemed to proceed from the very depths of the earth:—

“The Viscount to thy haunt doth steal;  
 But naught to him must thou reveal.  
 His heart to anguish shall be prey,  
 And from his mind peace shall away;  
 Foul murder is his base resolve;  
 Let direst fate on him revolve.  
 Conceal in yonder mountain's gloom  
 The hand by which he meets his doom.  
 Warily, warily, must thou play!  
 He this way comes! away! away!”

The solemn death-like tone in which this was spoken, to say nothing of the words themselves, struck like the cold, icy hand of death to the heart of the Viscount, who, as may be supposed, partook largely of the superstitions of the age in which he lived. He advanced a step, then receded, and had half resolved to return to his castle without a moment's delay; a slight pause, and he had determined on proceeding onwards.

“What!” he exclaimed, stamping his foot, though with something of irresolution in his tone, “what childish fear is this, that would deter me from the execution of my purpose? Tush! 'twas but an idle fancy of the brain. I will proceed, even though danger, ah! or death, should surround me on every side.”

He then slowly proceeded onwards, and had not gone far, when a bright blue, sulphurous flame flashed before his eyes. He involuntarily shuddered on beholding this strange phenomenon, which was immediately followed by a wild, unearthly laugh, and a tall, thin figure, clothed in black, whose long, loose hair hung in matted tresses, reaching nearly to the ground, and which, to the confused imagination of the Viscount, appeared to be so

many long, slimy, venomous snakes. In its right hand the figure held a flaming fire-brand; its left was extended towards the Viscount, who beheld its cadaverous, unsightly face, and long, bony fingers in silent horror. He stood for some time in the vain expectance that the phantom would address him, until, losing all patience, he drew his sword, and was about to advance, when, with a repetition of the same fiend-like laugh he had before heard, the figure disappeared from his astonished gaze.

"This is strange, wondrous strange!" exclaimed the Viscount; "by Heaven! I almost begin to imagine that mine is to be a life of incident and adventures; and, should my ghostly monitors be as favourable to my interests in the next world as in this, I need not fear to embrace an opportunity which may chance to present itself whereby I may attain the summit of my hopes. But while I stand thus, the air grows chill, and new terrors may arise. I now regret that I did not —. Nay, perish the thought! I will myself, and unaccompanied, explore the abode of this mistress of the broomstick, and by her aid endeavour to —"

He was here interrupted by the sound of heavy footsteps, and had scarce time to conceal himself behind a projecting part of the ruins, ere a solitary traveller appeared, and passed so close to the place where he was standing that he was compelled to recede a few paces in order that the other might pass without observing him. He was betrayed by the very movement he had made in order to conceal himself more effectually; for, coming in contact with a loose pile of stones, one of them fell to the earth with a loud noise.

The stranger started, and, on discovering the Viscount, drew his sword exclaiming,

"Thou thieving varlet, darest thou profane this sacred spot by making it a haunt for robbers, and lie in wait here under the dark cover of the night to rob the poor traveller who may chance to pass within thy toils? Draw, villain, draw; or I'll lop off an ear by way of testing thy courage. Have at thee, coward!"

Saying which, he made a pass at the Viscount's breast, which, had it taken effect, must have proved fatal. The Viscount, however, avoided the thrust by jumping nimbly on one side; and, drawing his sword, replied—

"Peace! fool, thou art mistaken in thy conjectures; I am neither varlet nor robber. In me you behold the Viscount Dunbardon."

"Dunbardon!" echoed the other; "then, by heaven, thou hast sounded thine own death-knell; with that little word sealed thy fate! Of all things else on earth have I wished—prayed for this joyous moment. Tyrant, dost thou not know me? Nay, pause not; no subterfuge shall avail thee now. If there be a hell, to that place shall Antonio's arm now speed thee. I have journeyed long and far—endured much—to effect this meeting; judge, then, whether thou needest sue for mercy. Wilt thou not speak? has terror chained thy tongue, and denied thee utterance? hear me, then. Two years since thou didst hold in thy service a young Spaniard, by name Hugo Marlo: him thou didst, for some trifling offence, put to the rack; in vain he implored thy mercy. Thou wouldst grant him none; he expired beneath thy hellish torture. From the moment I learned this, I swore he should be revenged; the time has arrived!"



"Cease thy ill-timed taunts," interrupted Dunbardon, "and nerve well thy arm, for I can promise thee full employment for the next hour at least ; after which time I may, perhaps, in pity despatch thee out of thy misery ; but, if thou dost longer delay, I cannot promise thee even that slight forbearance."

To this insolent exclamation the other deigned no farther reply than a smile of defiance, and immediately commenced a furious attack upon the Viscount, who defended himself with great skill and bravery, and succeeded in wounding his antagonist twice in the left shoulder. The pain of the wounds enraged him nearly to madness, and the Viscount indulged in the hope of ultimately obtaining an easy victory ; but in one moment after exulting in this thought, he had received a wound in his breast, and lay weltering in his blood.

## CHAPTER V.

The Stranger—His Narrative—Murderous Attack of D'Arste—His Capture and Liberation.

ALL impatient to learn more of the companions of his friend, the Earl of Strathallan was overjoyed when, on the following evening, the Baron Glendovan proposed a walk on the turrets of the castle.

The evening was calm and serene. The beauty of the prospect, and the silence that reigned around, inspired their minds with rapture and devotion to that supreme Power who formed the glorious scene. A few streaks of purple appeared to glow in the west ; and at length the sun burst from behind a dark azure cloud in all his retiring splendour—his bright golden beams slanting in glorious majesty upon the mountain tops, enlightening in the perspective the summits of awful crags and impending precipices that, to the eye of man, appeared to top the clouds ; then opening on all sides, they extended in every direction, until they were lost in the haze of distance.

"Pardon me, my dear Baron," exclaimed the Earl, after a pause of some few moments ; "'tis friendship alone prompts me to put the question ; but who are those two gentlemen that accompanied you hither, the younger of whom so nobly preserved my life in the encounter with Dunbardon ? he, I am convinced, is descended from no mean family. I am the more anxious to know him farther, from the fact of having encountered him alone with my daughter Isabel in the saloon this evening. They were evidently confused by my interrupting them ; and, on my questioning her as to the nature of their conversation, she blushed deeply, and retired from my presence without replying to my interrogations. And I fear ——"

"Fear not, my lord," interrupted the Baron ; "I will first inform you how and under what circumstances I first became acquainted with this youth, who is known to all as Walter Raven, the natural son of Eustace, the well-known pirate. That he is *not* the son of this desperate and ferocious ruffian, I have the most substantial proof : but to my promise. While confined at Barra, my principal recreation was to spend a few hours each

day by the sea-coast, to watch the numerous vessels that daily arrived in that port from England. One evening, when I had stayed rather beyond my usual hour, and the shades of night were fast enveloping the surrounding objects in impenetrable darkness, as I was about to take my departure from the enchanting scene, a band of pirates rushed upon and seized me, and swore with the most tremendous oaths and imprecations, that, if I did not surrender my purse, they would despatch me on the spot. In vain I protested to them that I had no valuables about my person. One of them levelled his carbine; desperation nerved my arm; and before he could draw the trigger, I had wrested the weapon from his grasp, and laid him dead at my feet. The ruffians then commenced a furious attack upon me, and I should doubtless have been overpowered and slain, had not this Walter suddenly appeared amongst them. At his command, they slowly and suddenly disappeared. On being left alone with my preserver, I would have poured out my thanks; but he prevented me, by saying, 'Sir, I need no thanks; I have but followed and acted upon the common impulse of humanity. Follow me, I pray you. These ruffians have committed a gross outrage, and transgressed the general orders, for which alone they merit death. Follow me, Sir!' I did so. In a short time we arrived at the entrance of a subterraneous cavern. Upon a peculiar signal being given, a huge stone was slowly raised, and a villanous face appeared in the aperture. Upon perceiving who it was that had given the signal, the face, together with the body attached, disappeared with great precipitation; and my guide entering the opening, beckoned me to imitate the example. I complied, and, after groping our way through innumerable long and dark passages, we emerged into a large gloomy cavern, which was illuminated by three large lamps, suspended from the roof. Never did human eyes look upon a set of more accomplished-looking ruffians than I then beheld. On entering, one of the most ferocious advanced, and, in a savage tone, demanded of my preservers who that trembling cur yonder was—meaning myself; and also his motive for introducing me amongst them. 'I have brought him here,' replied Walter, 'for the purpose of inquiring whether you authorise any of our band to stop the peaceful wayfater, and threaten his life, should he refuse to comply with their demands?' 'Walter,' replied the other, 'for what purpose dost thou question me thus? Is it not known to all that my orders forbid any such outrage?' 'This I knew,' answered Walter; 'and therefore would ask what is the reward of those who disobey that order?' 'Death!' shouted one and all in a breath. 'Canst thou, my son,' inquired the other, 'amid this brave crew point out one who would dare to transgress the commands of his Captain?' 'I can,' was the reply. 'Name him!' 'Marco Cattizone.' 'Is he here?' inquired the Captain. There was a death-like silence. 'Does no one reply?' he repeated. 'Is Marco here, I say?' 'He is,' answered a gruff voice. 'Come forward!' He did so. 'Of what is Marco accused?' inquired the other, turning to Walter. 'Of presenting his piece to the breast of this man, who, had he not have wrested it from him, would now be lying dead upon the sands.' 'Is this true?' 'It is, it is,' replied the other, gruffly. 'Then die!' exclaimed the Captain; and with that he drew a pistol from his belt, and levelled it at the head of the offender, who fell dead at his feet! 'Now to spend the night in revelry!' exclaimed the Captain, coolly putting up the pistol.

“I was disgusted with the scene I had just witnessed, and requested permission to depart, when the Captain informed me that I was to spend the night with them. To this arrangement I was by no means agreeable; but I was in their power, and opposition would have been useless. I therefore acknowledged his kindness by a bow, and, a short time afterwards, requested them to show me to my apartments. This caused a hearty laugh amongst them, and one of them setting fire to a torch told me, with an imprecation, that he would lead me to my sleeping hole, if that was my meaning. I thanked him, and gladly accepted his service. About midnight I was aroused by a slight tap on my shoulder. Starting to my feet, I was greatly surprised to behold Walter standing over me; and was about to inquire the motive for this strange intrusion, when he motioned me to silence, and in a low whisper informed me that his father had, after a long consultation, determined upon murdering me in my sleep, lest I should betray their haunt. I shuddered at the thought. He furthermore informed me that he had come to save me from such a dreadful fate. I would have thanked him, but he made a gesture of impatience, and motioned me to follow him; which I very gladly did. Suddenly he came to a pause, and listened. All was still and silent as the grave, and we again moved slowly onward. All was dark, and gloomy. ‘Hark!’ exclaimed Walter, ‘methought I heard the sound of footsteps approaching this way. Caution! sir, as you value life.’ A few moments proved that his conjectures were not without ample cause; for the rays of a lantern suddenly gleamed in the surrounding darkness. The sight of this so terrified me that, had not Walter suddenly, and with great presence of mind, placed his hand upon my mouth, I should most certainly have given utterance to an exclamation of surprise, which would most undoubtedly have betrayed us. To our great joy and satisfaction the light suddenly disappeared, and the sound of footsteps gradually died away, until nothing was heard but the faint echo of our own voices. A short time afterwards sufficed to see us safely on the outside of this terrific place, and we reached the place of my abode. The day succeeding this adventure was the happy one on which my pardon arrived. On my communicating the joyous intelligence to Walter, who had continued with me, he besought me to accept him for my travelling companion to Scotland. Could I deny him that trifling favour—him who saved my life? No, my lord! gratitude forbade that I should. I consented. The rest is already known.”

“Allow me, my dear Strathallan, to congratulate you upon having met with so great a friend in the hour of need,” exclaimed Glendovan; “and, should you so will it, I myself will befriend this brave son of mystery. And—”

The sharp report of fire arms prevented any farther conversation on the subject. A bullet passed them so close that, had not the Baron started on one side, it would doubtless have entered his brain.

“Merciful powers!” ejaculated the Baron, when he had in some degree recovered from the surprise which this extraordinary occurrence had caused, “what treacherous villain has dared commit this daring outrage? Surely it cannot be—”

Before he could conclude the sentence, another sharp report succeeded

the first, and the ball was aimed so near to the Baron Glendovan that it passed through his doublet, but without doing him any farther injury than slightly grazing his left arm.

"Marry! but I think we had better call a retreat," exclaimed the Earl, "for should we longer stay here there is every chance of our being compelled to bite the dust, without the satisfaction of knowing to whom we are indebted for the dispatch." Saying which, they hastily descended.

Summoning the principal of his vassals, Glendovan commanded them to reconnoitre the surrounding mountains; and, should they in so doing encounter any person or persons with any description of fire-arms in their possession, they were to seize them, and bring them before him without delay.

"What can be the cause of this new phenomenon?" soliloquised the Baron, as they departed. "I have ever prided myself upon possessing the friendship and love of the surrounding peasantry; the welfare and happiness of whom it has ever been my greatest wish to promote. What, then, could induce them thus to seek my life? I cannot believe there is one amongst them who would reward my kindness thus. No! 'tis, doubtless, some outlawed robber, whose schemes I may perhaps, at some time, have thwarted."

He was here interrupted in his soliloquy by the return of the dependants, who entered the hall, dragging in a ruffianly-looking individual; upon beholding whom, Glendovan exclaimed in a taunting tone,—

"How long has your lordship turned murderer?"

"Are not these mountains, whose pure and unsullied air and broad expanse are the pride and admiration of all, free alike to the rich and poor? You would be thought noble, generous, humane, and charitable; how comes it then, that I am to be seized and brought here like a common felon?"

"When you have answered me one question," replied Glendovan, "I shall then know how to judge of your actions. How long is it since you first entered the path that leads to this castle, and in which you were surprised by my attendants?"

"What if I refuse to answer?"

"I shall then detain you a prisoner here until you do so."

The other smiled.

"Nay," returned the Baron, "you need but use your own discretion; if you prefer captivity to freedom, I shall not quarrel with your choice."

"I would know your motive for questioning me thus?" replied the other.

"And I," responded the Earl, "would know your name?"

"Pietro d'Arste," was the reply.

"Then I have but one more interrogation to put. Was it you who fired a pistol (for such weapons I perceive you have) a short time since?"

"It was," answered Pietro; "I did discharge these weapons but half an hour since."

"For what purpose?" inquired Glendovan.

"In order, if possible, to send the contents through your brain," was the reply.

"Audacious wretch," exclaimed the Baron, "when did I ever offer insult and wrong to either thee or thine?"

"Never!" answered D'Arste; "'twas no personal insult or wrong that

tempted me to seek thy life. No, my lord; but I would ask of thee where and how my lord the Viscount of Dunbardeen is disposed?"

"Villain!" returned Glendovan, "dost thou take me for an assassin? I know nothing of thy master; nor have I seen aught of him since the day of our victory and his defeat. Should we again meet, his blood shall wash out the stain of his oft-repeated insolence."

"That treats not of the present argument: the Viscount some days since left his castle, unaccompanied by any one, and has not since been seen or heard of. Though the strictest search has been made, and the most minute inquiry instituted far and near, we have been unable to discover any traces of his place of concealment."

"And for this thou thus treacherously sought my life? Why should you seek to wreak your vengeance upon me, when I, who have so often confronted you in your career of crime, before you became the creature of the Viscount, and consented to become his instrument in villainy, never yet sought to injure you? How many and great have been the opportunities that have ——"

"No more, my lord," interrupted D'Arste; "I remember your kindness, and, be assured, I will let slip no opportunity whereby I may acknowledge the same; although I cannot but suspect you know more of the strange disappearance of the Viscount Dunbardeen than you are at present inclined to acknowledge. But, am I at liberty to depart, my lord?"

"You are," replied the Baron; "but I do hope that you will not again attempt to repeat this outrage."

"Rest assured I will not," replied Pietro; "with which assurance I will, with your permission, take my leave." So saying, he bowed to all, and hastened from the hall.

"A strange fellow that," exclaimed the Baron, as D'Arste disappeared from their view.

"By my troth! I should not have dealt thus leniently with him," observed Strathallan. "What, if he should renew this attempt?"

"I fear him not," replied Glendovan; "he is a strange mixture of honour and villainy. For a long time since he has headed a large band of Highland caterans; but, for some secret motive, the Viscount has taken him into his confidence. It has always been suspected that it was through his instrumentality the Viscount disposed of his nephew, upon his first succeeding to the title and estates."

"By the by," returned Strathallan, "I have always felt a desire to learn the particulars of the death of the young lord. Is I mistake not, he was suspected by all of despatching the youthful heir by poison?"

"I know not that exactly," answered Glendovan; "but it was firmly believed that this D'Arste was the man who perpetrated the foul deed. For my part, I pretend not to judge the actions of any man; still, I have no hesitation in saying that the Viscount gained his fortune by the most foul and unnatural means. And should the rightful heir chance still to live, and at any future period appear to claim his lawful rights, I myself should be amongst the first to assist him in their recovery. Of this, however, I fear there is but little hope; he is too old and inured to crime to trust to imperfect means."



D'Arto and Angus discover the Viscount in the Abbey Ruins.

"Has he ever before this confessed his passion for your daughter?" inquired the Earl.

"Often," replied the Baron; "and I fear that she will, by some means, eventually fall into his power; when, should she refuse to become his wife, which I am convinced she would, he would shrink from no villanous artifice by which he might effect his purpose."

"But what think you of his present absence from his castle? Can he have been allured thence by some secret enemy, by whose hand he may, perhaps, ere this, have met an untimely death? or ——"

"Never," interrupted the Baron; "I should rather imagine that he has quitted home for the furtherance of some villanous plan he has in contemplation; nay, even now, while we are conjecturing here, it is more than probable that he is planning some scheme for the capture of my Isabella; but he shall never gain possession of her, while I have life. No! rather would I see her lying mouldering at my feet, than that she should ever become the wife of that villain! But, yonder comes the brave Walter, doubtless in search of us; for by our long absence he may imagine we have deserted his company."

"One word!" hastily remarked the Earl of Strathallan. "For the love of heaven! speak not of the subject of our discourse; for the least mention of his birth is to him a source of pain and horror."



It will be remembered that when we last spoke of the Viscount Dunbardon, we left him senseless, and bleeding, in the ruinous pile where he had first encountered his unexpected and inveterate foe. We shall forthwith proceed to state how and under what circumstances he was ultimately discovered and rescued from his truly unpleasant situation.

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## CHAPTER VI.

D'Arste and Angus discover the Body of the Viscount in the Abbey Ruins—  
Meeting with the Witch—Resuscitation of Dunbardon by the Deacon of the Glen.

ON quitting Glendovan Castle, D'Arste slowly retraced his steps through the mountains, still pondering on the sudden and mysterious disappearance of the Viscount, and revolving within himself on the most probable means by which he might become acquainted with the cause of his absence; when his attention was attracted by the sudden appearance of the WILD WITCH OF THE HEATH, who stood on the brow of the mountain. Her appearance, which was at all times wild and terrific, was now such as would strike terror into the boldest heart. In her right hand she clutched a huge black snake, which emitted volumes of fire from its mouth; and in her left, which was extended towards D'Arste, she held a long, black wand of ebony, around which was coiled another snake of much smaller dimensions than that which she grasped in her other hand. She was attended by her inseparable companion in mischief, an ugly mis-shapen creature, known as the Red Dwarf.

Though naturally a brave man, Pietro indulged in all the superstitions of the times. And on perceiving these uncouth figures, his first impulse was to fly. A moment's meditation, however, convinced him of the folly of this resolution, and he abandoned it accordingly.

"What seeks the brave Pietro here?" at length exclaimed the Dwarf, in a croaking voice.

"Ah! what seekest thou?" responded the Witch.

"Spirit of the mountains," answered D'Arste, "I would ask of thee where Dunbardon's lord, the brave Viscount of yonder castle, is now concealed?"

"Art thou, whose courage prompts thee to question us thus, prepared to behold all that our art can show thee?" croaked forth the Witch.

"I am, I am!" replied Pietro.

Scarcely had he given utterance to the latter sentence, when the moon, moon which was before bright in the heavens, suddenly changed to a blood-like hue, and all was buried in impenetrable darkness, save when the lightning momentarily illumined the scene. An awful silence prevailed for some moments, which was at length broken by the Dwarf, who cried in a loud tone, "Behold!"

On looking towards the spot where they had before stood, and from whence the sounds seemed to proceed, he beheld the Witch and the

Dwarf still in their former positions, and apparently enveloped in a blue sulphureous flame, the intense heat of which compelled him to recede several paces backwards, which action was hailed by the Dwarf with a loud, derisive laugh.

"Behold!" repeated the Witch, waving her wand.

This command was seconded by a loud and long peal of thunder; and, on again looking in the same direction, what was his astonishment to behold the inanimate form of the Viscount lying weltering in his blood! He involuntarily advanced a few paces.

"Hold!" cried the Dwarf: "rash mortal, whither wouldst thou come?"

"The Viscount!" stammered D'Arste. "Should he remain longer in that condition, his death will be the result. Release him, then, I pray you!"

"You sue in vain," replied the Dwarf. "We have, by our power, shown you his present condition; if you would release him, repair, at midnight, to the old Abbey ruins: the charm is now broken, and you can remove him to the Castle."

"But," continued Pietro, "you have not revealed to me how he ——"

"Seek to know no more," interrupted the Dwarf, "or dread the consequences. At midnight, we meet again!"

A loud hissing noise followed this speech; and both the Witch and her companion had disappeared from his astonished gaze. He advanced to the spot, where, a moment before, the mystic pair had stood, and which, as we have before stated, was enveloped in flames; but, on examining the foliage by which the spot was surrounded, he could not discover even the smallest traces of the effects of the devouring element. He remained for some time upon the spot buried in the gloomy depths of meditation. Arousing himself at length from his reverie, he hastened towards Dunbardon Castle, where he remained until an hour before midnight, at which time he, in company with Angus, the late Governor of the castle, departed, in the direction mentioned by the Dwarf, for the discovery of the Viscount. On arriving at the ruins, D'Arste involuntarily came to a halt.

"Why tarry here?" inquired Angus; "this is not the spot you mentioned as being the place where the Viscount was to be found. Perhaps the time we are wasting here may be precious, and necessary for his recovery. Are you not assured of the place?"

"I am," answered Pietro. "Come on!"

Saying which, they entered the venerable pile, where they discovered the Viscount, stretched upon the ground, apparently lifeless. His sword was still in his right hand, and seemed to be held in the convulsive gripe of death. On his breast was seated the Dwarf, whose horrible and fiendish grin contrasted fearfully with the scene of death and devastation by which all were surrounded.

"Merciful Powers!" exclaimed Angus, "his lordship is dead."

"He is," replied the Dwarf: "approach, and convince thyself."

Angus did so; and clasping the hand of the Viscount, instantly let it fall to the ground, with a cry of horror. He was cold and insensible as the marble tomb. The fearful evidences of decomposition were already visible upon his rigid features. The Dwarf shrugged in his shoulders on behold-

ing this; and he instantly, and in a terrific tone, yelled forth the following words:—

“ ’Tis time, ’tis time the slaves were here,  
Spirit of Wrong! appear, appear!”

Scarcely had he spoken these words, when the Witch appeared before them. Her aspect was, if possible, more terrible than before. The same blue, sulphureous flame surrounded her; the same disgusting reptiles entwined her arms. On beholding this unsightly object, Angus started with affright, and would have darted from the spot, had not D’Arste seized him by the arm.

“ Whither would ye fly?” he exclaimed. “ Shrink not from this single terror. What would ye have done, had ye beheld what I have this day encountered—horrors, the bare mention of which would freeze the current of thy life’s blood, harrow up thy soul, and chill life’s energy? To thy coward heart, ’twould have been death, worse than death!”

“ What would ye with me?” yelled forth the Witch.

“ They would witness the reanimation of yonder mass of filth and corruption,” replied the Dwarf. “ ’Twas by my commands they came hither. And ——”

“ Shall be gratified,” interrupted the Witch. “ What, ho! Cabello! Appear, appear!”

A tremendous crash of thunder followed this command. Next, was heard loud deafening sounds, which appeared to proceed from a whole forest of wild animals. A moment, and this cry was changed to the most exquisite music. A loud noise succeeded this, and suddenly the earth opened near to where the Viscount lay; and a fiendish monster issued from the aperture. The aspect of this fiend, who was enveloped in flames, was so horrible, that it struck terror even to the marble heart of D’Arste. In its right hand was an enormous trident, which, like itself, appeared to be composed of one dense mass of fire; its body, which was covered with scales, was of a blood-red hue; and its whole aspect was that of the Arch Fiend himself.

“ What would ye?” he exclaimed, addressing the Dwarf.

“ Bring to life this mortal here!”

“ His course must and shall continue longer!”

A low hollow groan was now heard.

“ It shall be done!” cried the Fiend.

“ Never!” exclaimed an unknown voice.

“ Ha!” roared the Demon, “ who dares refuse when I say ‘ Aye!’?”

“ Behold!” answered the same voice.

All turned at the sound—all beheld a figure armed with a spear, and clothed in complete armour.

On perceiving this phenomenon, the Demon gave utterance to a wild derisive laugh, which was echoed by the Dwarf.

“ So!” he exclaimed, “ thou wouldst interrupt us. What, ho! Rhadamanthus, Mephistophiles, Hellwine, appear!”

Scarcely had he concluded this, when the earth again opened, and the three monsters above-named appeared, and with them a whole legion of hellish tormentors, each of whom carried his own peculiar instrument of

torture, and instinctively commenced testing the quality of their merciless engines upon the persons of the already trembling Angus and D'Arste, who speedily acknowledged the favour by roaring most lustily for help and mercy. Not heeding either of these, however, they still continued to enjoy the pastime which evidently, by their demoniac grins, afforded them much satisfaction, until their victims fell to the earth, writhing beneath their tortures; and then only did their fiend-master command them to desist.

"'Tis yonder slave," he exclaimed, pointing to the phantom, "who dares to rise in disobedience, and would thwart my plans. To your tender care I confide him. Hence with him!"

The spirits brandished their weapons, and advanced towards the figure. Instantly the armour vanished, and a skeleton form appeared, clothed in white. In its right hand it held a small ebony crucifix, which it extended towards the demons; at the sight of which they all shrank back with terror. Slowly retracing its steps towards the entrance of the ruins, it disappeared from the view of all.

"He has repented of his interference, and quitted our presence, in the abject fear of what may follow," exclaimed the first of the demoniac group. "Shall we delay our project? No!"

Saying which, he approached the spot where lay the prostrate and lifeless form of the Viscount; seized his right hand; muttered a few cabalistic words, and the Viscount, obedient to his power, slowly raised his head.

"Away!" shouted the Witch.

All immediately disappeared; and Angus, D'Arste, the Witch, and Dwarf alone remained.

"What horrible phantoms are these?" gasped the Viscount, on his first beholding the Dwarf and the Witch.

"I know not," stammered D'Arste; "but, I believe, they are ——"

"Thy friends!" screamed the Witch.

"'Tis false!" faintly ejaculated the Viscount; "I know ye now—cheating, cozening fiends!"

"Thy words savour of insult," cried the Witch; "and did we reward thee rightly, we should strike thee dead to the earth; but we will punish thee thus:"

And waving her wand thrice over his head, the Viscount started to his feet, perfectly recovered from the effects of his wound.

"Our work is done!" exclaimed the Witch, turning to the Dwarf; "we'll now away!"

"Hold!" cried the Viscount; "tell me—for by thy power thou should'st know—how can I obtain the means of gratifying any wish I may have, without endangering my immortal soul?"

"Meet us on the Heath at the midnight hour of the morrow!" yelled the Dwarf; "and thou shalt know more!"

"I would know all now, here upon this spot!" cried the Viscount, fiercely.

"Thou cannot—shalt not know!" screamed forth the Witch; "our power denies thee that."

"Then die!" shouted he, aiming a blow with his sword.

A loud supernatural laugh followed this action, and, on looking round to discover who had given utterance to the same, he was petrified at the spectacle which presented itself to his astonished gaze. He beheld the Witch and her companion descending into the bowels of the earth, encircled by a large body of fire. Wiping the sweat from his brow, the Viscount commanded D'Arate and Angus to follow him. They quitted the ruins, and soon arrived at Dunbardon Castle.

## CHAPTER VII.

Sudden and unexpected Meeting of Walter Raven with one of the Pirate Crew—  
Midnight Appointment—The Demon—Bond, Signature, and Oath of Blood—  
The Talieman.

EVER ruminating upon his strange fate, and wondering how he could possibly have fallen into the hands of the desperate man, by whose fostering hand he had been reared to manhood's dawn, and whom he now felt more than ever convinced was not, in reality, his father, Walter Raven would often, in the gloom of evening, wander through the mountains, contemplating on the future prospects of his life. On the day succeeding that of the Viscount's return to Dunbardon castle, he quitted the hospitable roof of his friend, the Baron Glendovan, and started forth upon his accustomed ramble. It was evening: a stream, rolling in its rocky channel with a thundering noise, and crossing the road he was pursuing, murmured under a rude bridge of wood and turf, was the only sound that broke the solitary silence reigning around, or gave animation to the prospect. Dark, gloomy, and stupendous mountains encountered the eye on every side—retiring in long perspectives till their summits were lost in the clouds. Now and then, at intervals, the bleating of the flocks that hung upon the cliffs, scarcely distinguishable from the gray round stones that appeared here and there starting from the heathy steep, were borne faintly on the breeze. Dark glens, deep, frightful chasms, met the eye on every side; while hills, more remote, were misty with the streaming shower, and others appeared glittering in partial rays of the fast retiring sun, or were slightly coloured with the pale azure of distance. The foliage of the forest which he now entered, was assuming the brown tint of Autumn, and was, beautifully contrasted with the distant steep, that peeped between the foliage, rough and healthy. Enchanted by the solemnity and grandeur of the scene by which he was surrounded, Walter suddenly came to a pause.

"Oh! thou omniscient and unknown power, obedient to whose command the earth yields forth her fruits in due season, and to whom man owes the manifold blessings and comforts of—nay, even life itself! here, on my knees I implore thee, reveal to me, by such means as thy all-powerful thought may suggest, the mystery of my birth!"

"I will!" shouted a rough voice. A man immediately emerged from behind a recess in the rock: he was enveloped in a huge horseman's cloak, and over his face he wore a black mask, which completely concealed his features from view.

"What rude outlaw art thou," exclaimed Walter, starting to his feet, "that dares thus to interrupt me in my moments of solitude?"

"One," replied the other, "whom thou knowest well. Behold!"

The speaker threw off his cloak, and slipped the mask from his face; and Walter, to his astonishment, recognised in the individual before him one of the most desperate pirates of his reputed father's gang.

"Alvardo here!" he exclaimed, when he had in some degree recovered from his surprise.

"Aye! the same," replied the other.

"In the name of heaven! what motive has induced you to quit the island, and venture here?"

"Oh!" replied Alvarde; "simply because I had no desire to be strung up for mutiny. Our Captain, your father, is now anchored in the narrow creek about half a mile distant."

"But what reasons could he have for this undertaking?" inquired Walter.

"Many; but the principal cause of his visit was to fulfil an oath he took upon first discovering that you had made that man whom you had brought to the cavern, and whom he had secretly condemned to die, your companion in flight."

"But you have not yet informed me of the nature of his oath."

"Well then," replied the pirate, "he swore to effect the death of that man, and, depend upon it, he will accomplish his purpose. But I must be gone; 'tis already past the hour appointed for my return."

"Stay!" cried Walter; "say not that you have encountered me."

"Meet me here at the same hour to-morrow evening. Till then, farewell!"

On being again alone, Walter continued long to ponder on the strange incident above recorded; and, so completely was he absorbed in his reverie, that he was equally insensible to the lateness of the hour, as to the sudden change in the weather, for the bell of a neighbouring church had long since tolled the solemn hour of midnight, and he was thoroughly drenched with rain, ere he became aware of his unpleasant situation. Once, however, aroused from his reverie, he was not long before he reached Glendovan Castle, when, the Baron having retired for the night, he soon sought the comforts of his chamber; in the enjoyment of which we must, for the present, leave him, and return once more to the Viscount Dunbarndon, who impatiently awaited the arrival of the hour appointed by the dwarf for their meeting upon the heath.

At length the hour of twelve struck upon his anxious and impatient ear. The Viscount started at the sound, wrapt himself in his plaid, and, quitting the Castle, started off in the direction of the heath. On arriving there, his mortification and astonishment was great at not discovering any traces of either the Witch or her companion. After pacing the ground with impatient steps for some time, he saw, or fancied he saw, a dark vapoury cloud arise at a short distance from the spot where he stood: he watched the progress of this for some few moments; at length, the mist gradually dispelled, and the Witch appeared in all her former terrors: by her side stood her inseparable companion, the Red Dwarf. When they

first appeared, they were partly concealed by the dark vapour that preceded their appearance; but, on the Witch waving her wand of ebony, it was soon dispelled, and the same sulphureous flame surrounded them as before.

"Behold! our resuscitated mortal is here before us," she exclaimed, turning to the Dwarf.

"'Tis well!" replied the other. "What would'st thou now with us?" he continued, turning to the Viscount.

"I would possess the power of commanding the fulfilment of my every wish."

"Thou shalt be gratified," returned the Witch. She waved her wand, drew a circle around the spot where they then stood, and muttered some incoherent words; the import of which the Viscount vainly endeavoured to discover. Immediately on the conclusion of this, a loud hissing noise, which was succeeded by the appearance of a huge body of fire, around which were dancing the same three uncouth figures he had before beheld on this very spot, when he had discovered his messenger, who, as has been before stated he had by some inexplicable means shot through the head.

"Behold this mortal!" cried the Witch, entering the magic circle. "He needs thy aid," she continued, addressing the foremost of the three.

"And must have it," chimed in the Dwarf.

"He shall," yelled forth the second Witch. "Cabello, come forth!"

Obedient to her command, the same unsightly monster arose from the interior of the earth. In lieu of the flaming trident he had before carried in his right hand, a large sheet of parchment, which was scrawled on all sides with strange and illegible characters, was substituted; and in the other, he held an immense pen of iron.

"Why am I again summoned?" demanded the Demon, in a dreadful tone.

"The Viscount Dunbardon would again crave thy all-powerful aid!"

"Is he prepared to sign the conditions?"

"I would first hear them: afterwards decide," replied the Viscount.

"Listen, then!" exclaimed the Fiend.

He then proceeded to unfold the roll; and in a voice like roaring thunder thus commenced:—

*Protestation.*—"I, Cabello, first Minister of his most puissant Satanic Majesty, do here openly and to all solemnly vow, swear, and protest, to be unto the Lord Viscount Dunbardon a true and loyal servant; to faithfully and cheerfully obey all his wishes; to grant all he may desire——"

"And also," interrupted the Viscount, "that thou shalt consent, at a given signal, to appear at whatever hour, time, or place, and in any form, I may command thee."

"Agreed!"

"Hast thou any farther propositions to make?"

"None!"

"Then I would have thee bare thy left arm."

"For what purpose?"

"That with thy life's blood thou mayst affix thy signature to this bond."

"And by so doing, I shall consign thy soul and body to us for ever!" interrupted the Demon. "Beware how thou dost refuse; for shouldst thou not consent to do this, thou art already in our power by this second conference."



Conflict between Walter Raven, Strathallan, and the Captain of the Pirate Crew.

"Enough!" exclaimed the Viscount, desperately; "I consent!"

A tremendous peal of thunder followed this declaration, and the forked lightning darted forth from the heavens as if in anger at this impious deed, and hovered o'er their heads as if in contemplation of the vast power and influence the common enemy of mankind possesses over the hearts of his victims.

The Viscount then bared his arm, and the Demon thrust a peculiar sharp instrument into a small vein. Immediately the blood spirted forth he dipped the pen therein, and, stamping on the ground, a huge dragon presented itself. The Fiend King stretched the bond upon his fiery back, and, motioning the Viscount to advance, placed the pen in his hand. He seized it with avidity; and, amid the most tremendous howlings, affixed his signature.

"Now," exclaimed the Demon, "I am for ever thy good genius!"

"And I," cried the Dwarf, "will be thy evil one. Yes; from this hour will we be thy bane, and thwart thee in thy evil designs."

The Demon then presented the Viscount with a small golden and curiously wrought casket, exclaiming—"Take this; and when thou dost require my aid, hold this high in the air, and pronounce these words—'*Glish, ma ris, tu fel!*' at which I shall immediately appear; but, remember, also, that when thou hast summoned me for the twelfth time, I quit not the earth again until accompanied by thee!"

No. 5.



Ere the Viscount could reply to this, all appearance of his former companions had vanished, and he stood quite alone and solitary. He started with horror at the recollection of the awful compact to which he had bound himself; he vainly endeavoured to convince himself that the deed lived but in his own imagination; but the casket which he still held in his grasp soon convinced him of the fatal truth. After a long pause his desperate nature burst forth, and he exclaimed, "Pshaw! what necessity is there for me to fulfil the conditions of the compact? No! I will first effect my purposes, and then defy thy power." Consoling himself with this idea, he slowly retraced his steps towards his castle.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

**Walter Raven — The Breakfast Table — The Hunt — The Mountain — Dangerous Situation of the Lady Isabella — Bravery of Walter Raven.**

ON descending from his chamber the following morning, Walter Raven continued to meditate upon the strange circumstances of the preceding evening; and, as he did so, had, upon entering the breakfast-room, come to the determination of informing the Earl of Strathallan of the whole of the information he had received upon his accidental meeting with the pirate, mentioned in the preceding chapter; and who, as we have there stated, was one of the principal members of the daring band then under the command of the man whom fate had ordained he should call by the tender name of father—although he felt inwardly assured that by nature no such ties existed between them.

He continued long to ruminate on the strange oath of his father; it was a great struggle between nature and duty; for, on the one hand, he knew that, should the Earl by any chance fall into the other's hands, his death would be the result, and, also, should they meet, and Strathallan prove victorious, the man whom he was for the present, at least, compelled to call his parent, would be brought to an ignominious death. Nature was at length triumphant; and he ultimately came to the determination of laying all before the Earl. Accordingly, when they rose from the breakfast-table, he led him aside, and informed him of the whole affair.

"By Heaven!" exclaimed Strathallan, as he concluded, "this is a strange business. By what chance did he discover to where we had fled?"

"I know not," replied Walter.

"Is there any chance of again meeting with this man?"

"There is; he has appointed to meet me at the same time and place."

"I will accompany you," returned the Earl.

"Agreed, my lord!" replied Walter.

"And I should advise that we should both go well armed, in order that we may, in some measure be prepared, in the event of a surprise."

"Nay, my lord," returned Walter, "if you fear aught, I would rather proceed alone and unaccompanied; yea, perish, rather than endanger the

safety of my friend and protector. Let me beseech you, therefore, my lord, to remain here and await my return!"

"No!" replied the Earl, firmly; "if there is danger to be encountered, you shall not go alone; I will accompany you."

"What if we should solicit the Baron Glendovan to allow us an escort?" suggested Walter.

"No! I would not that he should know aught of our departure. But, doubtless, we overrate our danger; what could induce them to use force? As the son of their Captain you are secure from harm; they will not dare to molest you; and they cannot possibly know that I am to be your companion. But see! yonder comes Glendovan and his lovely daughter."

"May I make bold to inquire what subject my friends were discussing that requires such a solemn countenance? I fear if you oft indulge in such earnest discussions, we shall for ever lose the cheerful smile that now enlivens our board."—Thus spoke the Baron.

"Not so, my lord," returned the Earl; "I and my young friend here are too anxious for the establishment of good humour."

"Ah, well!" replied Glendovan, gaily; "I am most happy to find my suspicions were groundless; but, harkee, I and the Lady Isabella here have half agreed to devote the remaining part of the day to the pleasures of the chase. The forest abounds in game. What say you, my lord; will you accompany us?"

"Right willingly," answered Strathallan.

"And you, Sir," continued the Baron, turning to Walter, "will,"—

"With your permission, my lord, attend your pleasure."

"Huzza!" shouted the Baron: "now to prepare for the start. Come, my friends," he added, turning to Walter and the Earl, "let us away at once. Oh, a delightful sport is this same hunting!"

The Baron's impatience did not admit of much time for preparations; and in a short time they departed from the castle, and entered the forest; and, as they soon succeeded in starting a fine stag, the sport commenced in right earnest. The animal was young and spirited, and, whenever they gained upon it, the agile creature bounded from rock to rock and precipice to precipice with the greatest ease. Its pursuers were, however, capitally mounted, and extremely warm in the chase, and followed it through all its fearful leaps. At length it came to a sudden halt on the verge of a stupendous mountain, between which and the opposite one a frightful chasm appeared. On perceiving the creature pause in its flight, Glendovan and his companions gave a loud shout. The animal started at the sound; and the next instant was on the opposite crag. The Lady Isabella was the first that arrived at the summit. She fearlessly urged her steed onwards, and the animal immediately followed the example of the flying deer. He missed his footing; and, instead of alighting in safety on the opposite side, fell together with his venturesome rider into the yawning gulph beneath. Upon beholding this fearful accident, Walter stuck spurs into his steed, passed his companions, and vaunting from the saddle, fearlessly plunged into the depths beneath, where, to his great joy and astonishment, he found the Lady Isabella still alive, and struggling to

free herself from the back of her exhausted steed, who lay panting upon the rocky couch which also pillowed the head of his lovely mistress. A moment served to release her from her unpleasant situation. In answer to his inquiries as to whether she had sustained any severe injury by the fall, she replied, with an enchanting smile, that she had suffered more from excess of fear than injury.

Her father and the Earl now re-appeared at the summit. On first discovering them, Walter besought them not to descend; and, in answer to their anxious inquiries, the lady laughingly replied that she had suffered less from the effects of her fall than they had by their anxiety for her safety. She then, by the assistance of Walter, soon rejoined her father and the Baron. The steed, too, was after much difficulty raised, and, being once more in their saddles, the whole party turned their horses' heads in the direction of the Castle, fully satisfied with the result of their day's amusement.

As the pace they returned at was somewhat at variance with that by which they had set out, they were considerably longer in regaining the Castle, when they were suddenly startled by the sound of a shrill whistle, which was immediately answered from another part of the forest; and, ere they could conjecture the cause, they were surrounded by twenty or thirty ruffians, all of whom were disguised in huge cloaks, and wore masks.

"Quick! seize the lady, and bear her off!" exclaimed their Captain or leader.

"The first man that advances stands upon his grave!" exclaimed the Earl, who together with the Baron and Walter stood with drawn swords ready to receive them.

"Forward!" shouted the same voice. "Seize the lady, and see that you harm her not. Forward! and cut down all those who oppose you."

They then rushed upon the opposite party, and Walter with the first blow laid the foremost ruffian dead at his feet quick as lightning. Another supplied his place—a second blow, and he laid aside his companion. The conflict now raged fearfully. As their danger increased, the Earl seemed to grow more furious. At length, the ruffians, after a long and severe struggle, succeeded in overpowering him and his companions, and bearing off the lady Isabella. No sooner had they effected this than they darted off at full speed.

"Gracious heavens!" exclaimed the Baron; "to what will these ruffians consign my child? Oh, that I could by any chance discover the haunt of the villains!"

"I am half inclined to suspect these are no common assassins," observed the Earl; "but see! my lord," they are yet in sight, and, should we follow, we may succeed in gaining some clue as to who they may be."

Without waiting to reply, Glendovan set spurs to his horse, and darted off in pursuit of the fugitives, followed by Walter and Strathallan. They continued to ride at full speed for some time without appearing to gain upon the pursued, until at length the whole party halted in front of a huge edifice, where they lost all traces of them.

"'Tis useless proceeding further, my lord!" shouted the Earl.

"Why so?" inquired the Baron, reining in his steed.

"She is in the power of the Viscount——"

"Dunbardon?" interrupted the Baron.

"Even so," replied the Earl.

"Then is she lost!"

"Not so!" exclaimed Walter; "for I swear, either to effect her escape, or to perish in the attempt!"

"We will now return to the Castle," said the Baron; "the honour of my child I feel will be held sacred, even though she be in the power of a villain, for there never yet lived the guilty wretch who was not appalled by the appearance of virtue. To-morrow we must devise some means for her rescue, and, if another chance presents itself, I will summon my vassals and attack the tyrant in his own strong-hold."

As the time appointed by the Pirate for his second meeting with Walter was fast approaching, both himself and Strathallan were impatiently awaiting an opportunity to retire from Glendovan, and prepare for their journey. At length, under pretence of proceeding to reconnoitre the castle of their foe, they contrived to effect their purpose.

After having disguised themselves, and buckled their swords by their sides and thrust a brace of pistols into each of their girdles, they sallied forth in the direction of the forest. On arriving at the appointed rendezvous Walter was astonished to find Alvardo already there and accompanied by another individual, whose features were effectually concealed beneath the folds of an ample cloak.

"Tis past the hour you appointed to be here," exclaimed the Pirate, addressing Walter; "who is your companion?"

"A friend!" returned Walter.

"His name!" inquired Alvardo.

"Aye, his name!" echoed the other, in a peremptory tone.

"Speak on!" exclaimed Strathallan, seeing that Walter hesitated; "let not this ruffian imagine that we fear his power."

"Hush! my lord," whispered Walter, laying his hand on the other's arm; "for the love of heaven, be silent!"

"My name," continued the Earl, without appearing to notice the admonition, "is the Earl——"

"Strathallan," vociferated the muffled figure; and throwing off his disguise, Walter to his consternation discovered his adopted father.

"Do I not judge aright? he continued, drawing a brace of huge pistols from his girdle.

"You do villain," answered the Baron, imitating his example.

"Then be this your companion to hell!" he resumed, levelling his pistols.

The Baron did the same. And they stood each with a brace of pistols levelled at his head. On beholding this, Walter drew his sword, threw off his cloak, and, rushing forward, exclaimed, in a loud voice,

"Hold! for the love of heaven, hold! Father," he continued, "I conjure thee, as thou dost value life, harm not this man; or, if thou dost, I shall forget thou art my parent, as thou hast oft declared thyself; and on this spot revenge with thy life's blood the death of my generous benefactor.

"Peace, heedless boy!" cried the other; "or, by the infernal powers,

I will first punish thee for thy presumption, and afterwards execute my pleasure upon yonder traitor!"

"As I hope for mercy hereafter, you wrong him: he is no traitor."

"Then why did he steal from our cavern so secretly?"

"'Twas at my instigation. I learned from one of the band that you had resolved to murder him as he slept; and I immediately determined, if possible, to effect his rescue. At midnight I entered his sleeping-place, awoke him, and we fled. How then can he be termed a traitor?"

"No matter!" replied the other, savagely; "he dies."

"And with him his murderer!" exclaimed Strathallan, advancing a few paces nearer to the Pirate-captain.

"What, ho!" Alvarado!" shouted that personage; "give the signal. You, my renegade son, and your companion here, shall once more return to the Isle of Barra; and that too as quickly as you departed from it."

In obedience to his command, a shrill whistle struck upon the ears of all.

"Fire! my lord," shouted Walter, discharging both his pistols by way of example. Strathallan did the same. And he who but a moment before had uttered such vain-boasting threats, now lay weltering in his blood.

"Fly!" cried Strathallan; "see, they come!"

"Fear not for me, my lord," replied Walter, "look to yourself."

They then darted off in the direction of Glendovan Castle. Several shots were fired after them by the pirates, who, upon arriving at the place where their bleeding Captain lay, had started off in the pursuit of the fugitives, who were yet in sight. Finding their pursuers were gaining rapidly upon them, the pursued suddenly darted behind a thick grove of trees, which entirely concealed them from the view of the opposite party, who, upon arriving at the place where they had so suddenly, and to them so mysteriously, disappeared, they came to an immediate halt. The Earl gave an involuntary shudder as he remembered that the slightest movement, nay, even a breath, might betray them to their ferocious foes. Drawing his sword, Walter silently motioned him to advance; they proceeded onwards a few paces, when suddenly a bough broke beneath Strathallan's tread. The slight noise occasioned by this trifling incident betrayed them to their enemies.

"Hark;" cried one of the gang; "they are here—this way!"

"They come," said Strathallan; "be cautious!"

The next instant a sword glistened through a small aperture, accompanied by a rough voice exclaiming, "Ha! they're here." The next moment a dozen blades gleamed in the air, and in another a vacancy appeared sufficiently large for the entrance of a man.

"They can but come singly," whispered Walter; "and we must dispatch them as they enter; for, should we be captured, a horrible death will now be our certain fate." Scarcely had he concluded these words, when a head was thrust through the aperture. Before the body could follow, a blow from the sword of Walter had nearly severed it from the shoulders. Another followed, and shared the same fate; next came a bullet, which passed Walter, slightly grazing his left shoulder in its progress. After this, another pirate succeeded in gaining an entrance; and, while Walter struggled with him, his companion guarded the entrance.

After a fierce conflict of some moments, Walter, by a desperate effort, succeeded in passing his sword through his adversary's body, which done, he again took his post at the opening, in time to save the life of the Earl, who was then but the shortest possible distance from the sharp point of a Pirate's sword. The fellow fell beneath his all-conquering blade, and while yet the most tremendous oaths and imprecations issued from his mouth, he yielded his life's last breath into the hands of that Omniscient Power from whom he had first received the precious gift.

After the death of this fellow, no one else appearing for some few moments afterwards, Walter now began to imagine that they had either slain them all, or compelled the survivors to seek safety in flight, and was about to venture forth, in order if possible, if such really was the case, when suddenly a well-known face appeared through the opening. He paused; it was but for a moment—the next, and his sword's point was in a parallel line with the other's head.

"Attempt not to advance farther," he exclaimed, in a tremulous tone, "or I will not answer for the consequences of your temerity."

"Back, fool!" raved the other; "I disown thee. Let me pass, or by hell, thou diest! Give way, I say!"

"Nay, my father," replied Walter, "I would not stain my hands in thy blood. And I have sworn that none shall pass here. Therefore I conjure thee, by the lessons which thou thyself hast taught me, fall back!"

"Never!" vociferated his father.

"Then," replied Walter, "if thou art still determined to press forward, behold this trusty and well-tempered sword, already stained with the life's blood of thy brave fellows. Compel me not, I implore thee, to dye it still deeper in a parent's blood; which, if thou wilt still insist upon following up thy foolish determination ——"

"Farther parley is useless," replied the other: "if thou wilt not suffer me to pass, then compel yonder villain to come forward. I have sworn to effect his death; and no power on earth shall deter me from the fulfilment of my oath."

"Father!" cried Walter, in an agonizing tone, "thou hast asked of me the only favour I cannot grant thee. I, also, have sworn to protect the Earl from all injury, and while I have life I will not shrink from the fulfilment of my vow."

"Hold!" exclaimed the Earl, coming forward, "I will at once conclude this war of words. Wilt thou give way, and suffer us to pass unmolested?" he continued, turning to the Pirate.

"Never!" replied the other.

"Then be that word thy last!" exclaimed Strathallan; and with that, he made a thrust at the breast of his opponent. The blade passed through his left arm, and he instantly fell backwards upon the earth.

"Now!" exclaimed the Earl, "we may pass on in safety; he will interrupt us no more."

"Gracious God!" exclaimed Walter, "you have slain him. Now I am indeed alone"

"No," replied the Baron, placing his hand upon his left breast; "he lives!"

"'Tis well!" exclaimed Walter; "I would not have him meet his death at our hands."

They then passed through the aperture; and, with the exception of their prostrate foes, not an object met their view. They then darted off, and in a short time reached the Castle in safety.

## CHAPTER IX.

The Dungeon—The Captive Lady—The Escape—Mystic Appearance of the Dwarf  
Triumph of the Demon—Rage of the Viscount Dunbardon.

ON reaching the Castle with his lovely prize, the Viscount gave strict orders that no person should be admitted without the pass-word; and also, that should any messenger arrive from Glendovan Castle, they were to be seized and brought before him. He led the Lady Isabella into one of the grandest chambers of the Castle; and on their arrival there, he exclaimed:

"Come, come, lady, this air of disdain ill becomes the affianced bride of the rich and powerful Viscount Dunbardon."

"Monster!" replied the Lady Isabella in a tone of disgust, "sooner than become the wife of thee, I would link myself to the vilest wretch in existence."

"Rail on, lady," exclaimed the Viscount, in a taunting tone; "it may perhaps serve to moderate thy spleen, but listen to my words. This night either makes thee my bride or mistress; therefore, now that thou knowest my determination, 'twere better for thee to consent to my desires. Compel me not to use force."

"Oh, my lord!" exclaimed Isabella, softening her tone, and falling on her knees before him, "you surely will not commit this outrage. For pity's sake, spare me!"

"Pity did ye say?" inquired the Viscount; "that sentiment has no place in my bosom. No. And listen, lady; didst thou but know the damning depths into which I have plunged my soul for thy sake, thou wouldst cease to importune me thus; as well mayst thou sue to the cold and insensible earth, or to the hungry and insatiate wolf. Rise, then, and prepare thyself for the ceremony; for so sure as the hour of midnight shall arrive, shalt thou become my wedded wife."

"Depraved wretch!" exclaimed the Lady Isabella rising, "dost thou not remember that I have a brother, and thinkest thou he will suffer his only sister to be sacrificed to a murderer?"

"Lady!" vociferated the Viscount, in a furious tone, "cease these tauntings. You sting me to madness, and shouldst thou tempt me farther, I may commit a deed, the after recollection of which may strike horror even to my marble heart."

"I care not," replied the Lady Isabella, firmly, "even though instant death should be my fate, still with my last, fleeting breath, would I proclaim thee tyrant to thy teeth."

"Nay, then," cried the Viscount, fiercely, "thy fate is decreed." And



Forced Marriage of the Lady Isabella prevented by the Miraculous Intervention of the Wild Witch of the Heath and the Red Dwarf.

with this he seized her roughly by the arm, and, despite her shrieks and cries for assistance, forcibly dragged her to one of the dungeons beneath the Castle, where he left her, with the parting assurance that he should return at midnight with the priest. He spoke but to the vacant air; his victim had fainted through excess of fear.

On regaining his chamber, the Viscount summoned D'Arste into his presence.

"I have sent for you hither," he commenced, as that personage made his appearance, "for the purpose of——"

"Instructing me how to play the villain in some scheme you have in contemplation," interrupted the other.

"Thou hast judged rightly," replied the Viscount. "Thou rememberest the lady we captured scarcely an hour since?"

"I have ample reasons to show cause why I should not forget the same," replied Pietro; "for I received this wound in your defence. Behold!" he continued, holding up his left arm, which was saturated in blood; "had the blow which caused this alighted on your arm instead of mine, methinks you would have been half inclined to beat a retreat, and surrender the lady upon the shortest possible notice."

"I thank thee for thy timely intervention," replied the Viscount, "and will reward thee; but listen! That lady is the daughter of my direst foe; I have sworn to wed her; she has refused to grant me her consent."



"Then you will undoubtedly return her to the arms of her anxious father!" interrupted D'Arste, jeeringly.

"Never!" replied the Viscount; "I have sworn to make her my wife. This night shall see her mine. But, listen to me! the marriage ceremony must be performed at midnight; the priest must be yourself."

"But, my lord!" exclaimed Pietro, in astonishment, "I am not learned in the necessary dialogues."

"No matter," returned Dunbardon; "you must study your part, and when you imagine you are sufficiently learned, come to me, and I will rehearse the part to you, as those who play the actor are wont to do."

"But, my lord," continued Pietro, "my memory is so bad that I fear a week would be the earliest possible time I could perfect myself in."

"Then imitate the example of priests in general; preach from the book itself."

"And for the robe, my lord?"

"Oh, that can be obtained with the greatest ease."

"How?"

"Send out a couple of the guards, with orders to waylay and murder one of the neighbouring monks."

"Your orders shall be observed," returned Pietro; "till midnight, farewell!" so saying he bowed to the Viscount and retired.

"All goes well!" exclaimed the Viscount. "At length my long cherished hopes will now be realized; she will be mine; I shall now be happy. Happy, did I say? wretch that I am! how dare I to talk of happiness—I that am haunted, day and night, by the damning pangs of coward conscience? oh! rather would I court the direst vengeance of that heavenly power I have now offended and defied, than permit this Canker to corrode my heart and prey upon my soul! ah! what means this shaking arm? I for a single moment about to become the slave of fear and cowardice? No! away thought! I will not suffer thee to spread the dark clouds o'er the blithful hours I have yet to pass. Let the recollection of that drown all thought of the damning future!"

Upon the conclusion of this soliloquy, the Viscount descended to the dungeon in which his fair captive was confined. On unbarring the massive door, he was panic-struck to find the dungeon empty; his victim had escaped; still the door was barred precisely as he had left it. On looking again into the dungeon he uncountered the horrible grin of the Dwarf, who he for the first time discovered sitting in his usual posture with his hands upon his knees.

"Eternal fiend!" exclaimed the Viscount; "am I for ever to be baffled by thy infernal machinations? Die!"

He drew his sword, and rushed towards the spot. A loud, fiendish laugh followed this action, and his sword snapped against the vacant wall. The Dwarf had vanished.

"Death and damnation!" raved the Viscount; "am I to be foiled in my hopes thus? Never! What, ho! Angus, D'Arste, help! help!" he cried, rushing from the spot: "quick! raise the drawbridge, kindle the torches!"

"In the name of all that's sacred, what is the meaning of this uproar?" exclaimed Pietro, who was the first to appear before the Viscount.

"Mean!" echoed the Viscount, furiously; "why, that the lady has escaped me. Quick! send out men, and give them strict orders that they return not without her; or, by ——, their lives shall pay the forfeit!"

D'Arste then quitted him, and, obedient to his commands, dispatched a numerous detachment of the vassals in search of the Lady Isabella. Scarcely was this accomplished, when a loud knocking at the outer gate intimated to those of the interior that those who sought admission were somewhat impatient in their demands.

"What unruly ruffians are those who dare thus command admission?"

"My lord!" exclaimed one of the attendants who had opened the gate; "there are two dark, suspicious-looking men now in the court-yard; one of them says he wishes to see you instantly upon business of importance."

"Let him be conducted hither instantly," returned the Viscount.

The messenger departed, and immediately returned, conducting two mysterious individuals before him. They entered with a firm, undaunted air, and both surveyed the Viscount with ill-disguised contempt, not unmingled with disgust.

"Well, valiant sirs!" said the Viscount, in a taunting tone, "thy pleasure?"

"Could we but effect our pleasure, as you are pleased to term it, we should speedily lop off thy ears for a coward," replied the foremost of the new-comers.

"Ruffian!" exclaimed Dunbardon, in amazement. "What punishment thinkest thou is in store for this audacious insolence?" he inquired.

"Whatever my insolence may deserve; I am too well convinced of thy cowardice to suppose that thou wilt dare inflict any," replied the other.

"Seize the slaves!" commanded the viscount, turning to D' Aste and the attendants by whom he was surrounded.

The two strangers then threw off their horsemen's cloaks in which their persons were enveloped, and each drew a brace of huge pistols from a broad black belt which encircled their waists, and levelled at the heads of those who were about to advance. The Viscount started at the ghastly appearance of the foremost stranger; his right arm, and also his left shoulder was bound in a blood-stained cloth, and he appeared to hold his weapon with great difficulty. His countenance also appeared ghastly and death-like.

"You appear but ill qualified for fighting," observed the Viscount, with a sneer; "I should, therefore advise thee to lay down thine arms and submit to our superior power.

"Ah! ah! ah!" replied the other; "what answer dost thou expect to thy insolent proposals?"

"Answer!" reiterated the Viscount; "why, that thou wilt accept our conditions, and acknowledge our clemency upon thy knees.

"We will do so," answered the other, discharging both pistols at the head of the Viscount, who, fortunately, or unfortunately, as the reader may please, escaped unhurt.

"I will shew thee no mercy," he exclaimed, drawing a dagger, as he was about to rush upon his insulting foe, when Angus arrested his arm.

"Hold! my lord Viscount," he exclaimed, "what would you do?"

"Didst thou not say Viscount?" exclaimed one of the strangers.

"I did," answered Angus.

"Then am I not in Glendovan Castle?"

"You are not," replied the Viscount; "you now stand before the Viscount Dunbardon."

"I crave your pardon, my lord!" exclaimed the Pirate-captain, for he it was; "I have until this moment believed myself to be standing in the presence of the Earl of Strathallan."

"His friend and protector, the Baron Glendovan, is my inveterate foe," replied the Viscount; "his daughter has but now escaped from me. Had she not have done so, I should this night have compelled her to become my wife."

"Ha! say you so?" returned the other; "I myself captured a lady whom I met flying at the top of her speed in the direction of the place which until now I thought to be your castle."

"'Tis she! 'tis she!" suddenly exclaimed the Viscount; "where is she now concealed?"

"My comrades have her without. I will conduct her to ye."

He then strode from the apartment; and in a few moments returned, dragging with him the Lady Isabella.

"So, lady!" cried the Viscount, "you have returned to us once more. The time affixed for our marriage is now fast approaching. Conduct this lady to her chamber," he continued, turning to D'Arste.

"Will you be pleased to follow me, Madam," said Pietro, addressing the Lady Isabella.

"Any where!" she replied, "any where to escape the demoniac glances of that villain."

"By my soul!" exclaimed the Pirate; "but she seems to have no very great desire for your company."

"No!" replied the Viscount; "but that I heed not; she shall this night be mine. Ha! here comes my priest!"

Scarcely had he said this, when D'Arste entered, equipped in the garb of a monk.

"Now, my lord!" he exclaimed, "the hour has arrived. The bride, she is dressed; and the priest, he is ready."

"We will proceed at once. Will you accompany us?" he added, turning to the pirates.

They both nodded their assent, and were about to depart, when D'Arste suddenly exclaimed—

"But, my lord, you have not said where the ceremony is to take place."

"In the Torture Chamber," replied the Viscount.

Pietro then disappeared. On arriving at the Chamber, they found the priest, lady, and attendants had arrived before them.

"Now," commenced the Viscount, looking towards D'Arste, "prepare; begin the sacred rites."

"Come forward, Lady!" cried Pietro, addressing the Lady Isabella.

"Never!" she replied, in a firm voice.

"Drag her here!" vociferated the Viscount.

"Beware how you approach me! I am armed!" she continued, producing a pistol; at the sight of which those who had advanced to seize her involuntarily came to a halt. "Why do you hesitate?" she continued; "what! has all thy bravery evaporated before the valour of one poor, defenceless woman?"

"Damnation!" raved the Viscount; "seize her, I say, or ——"

"Peace! ruffian," interrupted Isabella; "or I fire."

The Viscount advanced, as if about to seize her. She immediately discharged the pistol, the ball of which passed the Viscount without doing him the slightest injury. He then dragged her to the place where D'Arste was standing with the book open ready to commence the ceremony. All was now silent, and Pietro had proceeded nearly half through the ceremony, when suddenly the rack was seen to move, and the distorted and fast rotting form of him whom the Viscount had, for his constancy and truth, condemned to die upon the hated wheel, suddenly, and to the horror and consternation of all, but more especially to the Viscount, whose limbs shook with violence and whose hair stood erect, was seen to move, as if wreathing beneath the torture; and, at length, in a faint voice, it was heard to exclaim, in broken and disjointed sentences,

"Oh! s-p-are me! spare me-! Me-r-c-y! me-r-c-y! I d-i-e!"

"Proceed!" cried the Viscount, impatiently; "think ye I am to be baffled by such shallow artifice?"

Scarcely had he concluded these words, when a tremendous crash was heard, and an immense pile of rubbish fell clattering at their feet. A large aperture appeared in the wall, and the Witch, accompanied by the hideous red Dwarf, stood before them.

No sooner did the Lady Isabella behold them, than she implored them to set her at liberty.

The Witch waved her wand, the Dwarf indulged in his satanic grin, and the Viscount, determined not to be defeated, drawing the Casket from his bosom, muttered the incantation. Obedient to his command, Cabello appeared, in all his terrors, which, however, were visible to none but to the Viscount himself.

"Stay them from effecting their escape!" he raved.

"Who?" demanded the Demon, in a dreadful tone.

"The lady!"

"By what means has she done this?"

"The Witch, the red Dwarf!" screamed the Viscount.

"Is it they who have aided her?"

"It is! it is!"

"Thou art too late!" cried the fiend; "once past the forest, my power is void. Thou shouldst have summoned me sooner, or not at all. Remember our compact, and the consequence of our twelfth meeting!" Saying which he disappeared.

"They have escaped me!" exclaimed the Viscount, turning to D'Arste—"and the others—no matter! a day of reckoning will come."

"But why not pursue them?" asked Pietro, in astonishment.

"No!" replied the Viscount; "let them go."

"I have a proposal to make, my lord Viscount," said the Pirate-captain.

"What is thy desire?" inquired the Viscount.

"If I am not mistaken," replied the other, "a nobleman, known as the Earl of Strathallan, is now sojourning at Glendovan Castle?"

"There is," returned the Viscount.

"That man is my direst foe,"

"And the Baron himself is mine," rejoined the Viscount. "But, to thy proposal!"

"It is soon told," replied the other: "I have solemnly sworn to encompass the death of this Strathallan; and you, it seems, have the same kind intention towards the lord of the castle. My plan is this: I am a Pirate, and have the command of as brave a set of men as ever paced the quarter-deck of a vessel; I will willingly tender you their assistance, if you will summon your vassals, and with them march against them, take the Castle by storm, and put all that can be found, with the exception of your lady-love and a youth who is the companion of my foe, to the point of the sword."

"I consent," replied the Viscount, eagerly. "When shall this be done?"

"That wholly rests with yourself; if you can manage to have your men in readiness by the next hour, I will return with my band."

"It shall be done!" returned the Viscount.

"Alvardo! follow me!" exclaimed the Pirate to his companion, and hastened, from the Castle.

"Let the domestics be summoned before me instantly!" commanded the Viscount.

His orders were immediately obeyed, and when he entered the Hall, he thus addressed them:—

"It is a fact, I believe, well known amongst my dependants, that the Baron Glendovan has, by repeated insults and injuries, long since incurred my just hatred and revenge. He has this day, by a fresh insult, so far worked upon my nature, that I have sworn this night to take ample vengeance, and have summoned you in order to know whether you will follow your lord in his attempt to storm his Castle this night?"

"We are resolved to die in defence of our lord!" they shouted in a breath.

"Right!" cried the Viscount; "I knew you would reply thus."

"Are ye prepared for the attack?"

"We are!" they replied, crossing their swords; "lead us on to victory or to death!"

"Then follow me!" rejoined the Viscount.

He then conducted them into the court-yard, where they were a short time afterwards joined by the Pirate-crew. The Viscount then retired into the Castle, and equipped himself for the enterprise; which having done, he rejoined his band, and inquired of the Pirate-captain what was the number of the men.

"Oh," replied the other, "but a mere hand-full; still, as they are all men of tried courage, we have every possible chance of success."

The word to advance was then given, and the whole party moved slowly onwards in the direction of Glendovan Castle, where the lady Isabella had

arrived but a short time before them. On arriving at the eastern wing they paused, irresolute. The numerous sentinels were vigilantly pacing their allotted rounds; and they were compelled to conceal themselves beneath the buttresses of the wall, in order to escape their observation. The many pieces of ordnance, too, which bristled from the battlements, seemed to promise the besiegers anything but a favourable reception. At length, after some further consultation, it was resolved that the first attack should be made upon the eastern gate. Accordingly, the whole party cautiously advanced in the direction of the same, but when they had nearly effected this, a bullet from the piece of one of the sentinels on the ramparts prostrated one of the Pirate-crew.

The report of this alarmed the whole Castle; the alarm-bell sounded, and the guards rushed in from all points, and ere the Viscount or his party could draw a single trigger, the loud report of the cannon showed them at once the danger of their position, and the utter impossibility of effecting their purpose.

After a hurried consultation, they had determined upon a retreat, and were about to act upon their determination, when a small detachment of the guards of the Castle were seen to come forth. On perceiving that they were headed by Glendovan, the Viscount hailed him with a smile of savage satisfaction, and, without allowing a moment for consideration, he ordered his men to advance. They did. A furious engagement took place between the contending clans; many fell on both sides; and the victory was for a long time undecided. At length, by a skilful movement practised by Glendovan, the Viscount and his party were compelled once more to yield to his superior force, and call a retreat.

As before they were pursued to the Castle-gates by their exulting conquerors. On being left alone, the Viscount gave way to the most ungovernable rage, pacing his room with hurried and impatient strides.

"Horrible!" he exclaimed, "to be thus baffled in my designs—my every wish defeated—all my golden objects frustrated—my hopes blasted, and my love crushed ere it had time to blossom—all my well laid plans overthrown by the caution and artifices of a villain! By the infernal powers! 'tis not to be borne! To think on my defeat maddens me! His death must and shall be accomplished! Glorious thought! To have him in my power would be a reviving cordial to my sick, desponding soul! What, if I summon my familiar to my aid?" he continued, taking the talismanic Casket from his bosom, and holding it above his head: "my success and triumph would be then secure! How know I that he did not suffer the detested black Witch and her infernal Dwarf to triumph over me this very night? No!" he added, after a pause; "they are leagued together and plot my ruin—they shall be foiled! Thus, thus, do I cast them from me!"

Saying which, he dashed the casket with such violence to the ground that it was shattered and broken into innumerable fragments; which, on beholding, he gave utterance to a loud and exulting laugh. His triumph was but short-lived: the next moment, he, to his horror and consternation, held in his grasp the Casket whole and unbroken as before.

"So!" he exclaimed; "the fiends, the flaming ministers of the infernal

regions, are not to be thus defied! The dreadful compact into which I have entered—bound in chains of adamant my immortal soul—seems of too powerful a nature even for me to withstand! Must I then console myself with the idea that, after a few fleeting years of power and enjoyment, the Demon of darkness will, in exchange, claim for a long eternity my soul? Paha! it shall not be! Let fools alone obey the power they dare not withstand! but, for me, I defy them all—all—the arch-fiend himself! What care I, if but my long expected vengeance is accomplished, and I obtain final possession of the lady of my heart, the lovely Isabella, the daughter of my foe? And this shall be done at any hazard, though H—himself should rise in revolt, and—”

“*Impious mortal, beware!*” exclaimed an unknown voice, in a tone, hollow and sepulchral.

“By heaven!” cried the Viscount, “my ghost-like visitants watch me with all the solicitude of a fond mother o’er her darling. If they continue thus, I shall not have very great cause to fear when the great day shall arrive. Whom have we here? ’Tis D’Arste. Well,” he continued, as his confidante in crime approached, “what would you with me? what news bring you now? Some new villany afloat? is it not so? Say!”

“Why,” replied D’Arste, “I scarce know how to answer your inquiry, for, in my own humble opinion, this place, and the air by which it is on all sides surrounded, breathes nought else but villany; therefore ’twould be useless to reply but in affirmative. But to the cause which brought me here. I know where the Baron Glendovan may with ease be captured; and should you —”

“Say on, and quickly!” exclaimed the Viscount, impatiently interrupting him.

“Within one hour from this time,” replied D’Arste, “he, in company with the Earl of Strathallan, crosses the glen; but I also hear that he will be accompanied by a strong guard, therefore ’twill be necessary that we use caution. Will your lordship endeavour to profit by my information; if so, the soldiers shall be got in instant readiness! What says my lord?”

“I will avail myself of the opportunity; but, say, how obtained you the information? What business is it which calls the Baron across so drear a place at this hour?? However, that to me matters not. Let the men be in readiness, and yourself must head them: and see that you return not without the Baron. Now leave me!”

Obedient to the commands of his lord, D’Arste quitted the chamber, and proceeded to make the necessary preparations for the attack.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### The Warning Voice—The Bandit’s Hold—The Capture and Carousal.

WE now, imitating the example set by authors of the present age, quit for a time the Viscount, his familiars, and accomplices, in order to acquaint the reader with some further adventures encountered by the Captain of the



The Captain of the Pirate-Band drinks to the Health of his new Mistress.

Pirate-band and his crew. After their encounter with the Earl and Walter, those who remained in ambush hearing that all was silent, now advanced towards the place where lay their Captain in a state of insensibility. He was borne by them to their cavern; where he was extended upon a couch and his wounds were dressed. Several of the band then departed from their rendezvous in search of plunder. Scarce had they entered the forest, when a loud shriek resounded through the air. At the sound of this the ruffians started, and hastened forward in the direction from which the sound seemed to proceed. They had scarce moved twenty yards when they encountered two females, richly attired.

"How now!" exclaimed the foremost ruffian; "what business can have caused this? Come," he continued, addressing one of the females, "you must along with us! Our Captain is in want of a wife, and, as you are both young and handsome, why one will do for the Captain, and the other for myself. So, now, my pretty damsel, give me a kiss by way of ratifying the agreement."

Upon this he rudely seized the lady to whom the foregoing sentences had been addressed, and attempted to imprint upon her lips a salute. She struggled, and finding that he could not effect his purpose without the aid of violence, he summoned one of his fellows to his aid, and they then conducted their fair captives to the cavern—for since their arrival they had



selected one of the numerous depths for their head quarters. On arriving there, they were somewhat surprised to behold the whole Band, together with their Captain whom they had believed to be dangerously wounded, seated at a table, carousing. All rose upon their entrance, and upon their fair captives being introduced to the leader, he immediately prevailed upon the fairest to take her seat by his side; while the other stood by partially concealed in the folds of the tapestry—for the place, which was commodious in the extreme, resembled more the hall of a nobleman than a Bandit's hold. They then, with the exception of the two who had returned with the females, resumed their seats; and, holding high in the air a huge goblet, the Captain gave a toast to the health of his newly elected mistress. The toast, which was drank with the most vociferous acclamations, had scarce subsided, when a shrill whistle resounded through the neighbouring rocks.

"How now!" cried the Pirate Captain; "what means that signal? I thought that we were all now assembled here. Hark, again!"

After a pause of some few moments, the sounds that had attracted the alarm were again, and again repeated. The whole Band now started to their feet, and, headed by their leader, hastened forth without the cavern. They had not proceeded far, when, upon ascending a low ridge of the rock, they beheld in one of the Baudits the author of these signals that had been the cause of so much consternation and confusion.

Upon perceiving their leader halt, as if in contemplation, the whole of his followers now, for the first time, began to suspect that some treachery was abroad. The sound of fast approaching footsteps next struck upon their expectant ears, and, in a few moments, a man, richly dressed, was seen approaching. The men now, one and all, instantly divined why they had been summoned. Two of them rushed upon the traveller, and commanded him to "stand!"

Instead of replying to this, the other dealt a furious blow on the head of the nearest of his assailants. This, however, sealed his doom: in one instant more twenty bullets had passed through his skull, and disincumbering the body of what valuables it contained, they hurled it into the abyss below.

The Pirates once more returned to their cavern, and, to their utter astonishment, they discovered that the female captives had effected their escape.

"Death and fury!" vociferated the Captain; "out upon the rocks—guard well each pass—and see that you return not without bringing with you some intelligence of these women!"

Obedient to the commands of their Captain, the men took their departure in search of the captives. Until they return again to the scene of action, we will endeavour to entertain the reader with the relation of some further adventures encountered by the Viscount Dunbardon and others connected with this narrative.

## CHAPTER X.

The Stranger—The Monument—The Encounter—The appearance of the Dwarf.

SCARCE had an hour elapsed since the time of his departure, when D'Arste again entered the presence of his lord. As he did so, the Viscount exclaimed :—

“How now! have you succeeded in your endeavours to aid my plans; or is the whole but a subterfuge?”

“My lord,” returned Pietro, “I spoke but truly. Summon the vassals; place yourself at their head; and within the next half hour I will answer that you shall hold them in safe bondage—all you would desire. Therefore, my lord, if you will be pleased not to stand staring thus aghast, and thereby suffer the time to elapse, I will answer for your complete success, if you will at once cause the necessary arrangements to be made for the attack and capture.”

“Agreed!” said the Viscount. “Come,” he continued, “let us to the Hall, there to assemble the domestics, then—a few minutes will suffice to get them in readiness.”

To that place they then proceeded, where the vassals were soon assembled together, and, after an address from their lord, which lasted for some few minutes, the whole of them, with D'Arste, hastened from the Castle. No sooner had they taken their departure, than the Viscount returned to his chamber. As he entered, he beheld, lying upon the table, his talismanic Casket. How easy would it be, thought he, at once to discover the success of the present expedition—the demon must, by virtue of his bond, inform him of all he might wish to know. The Casket was in his hand, and half up-raised it the air—the sentence half exclaimed—when the carpeted floor was seen to rise, and through a small aperture appeared the Dwarf; his grin could not be misinterpreted—his project would fail! The effect of this was soon apparent. The Viscount sank upon the nearest chair, partially insensible.

“Why,” he exclaimed, “why am I thus ever to be foiled? For what did I ensnare my soul, but for the fulfilment of my every wish? May all the fiends of H— seize upon those for whose sake alone I thus involved my soul! Hark! footsteps approach. 'Tis D'Arste!”

Scarce had he given utterance to the above sentence, when the door slowly opened, and a man habited in the garb of a Monk entered. He rushed towards him, and seizing him by the arm, exclaimed,

“Say! how have you done? have you effected your purpose? Why this silence? Say! I would rather that all else on earth should yield to that one act of—”

“Pious virgin!” exclaimed the friar, crossing his hands devoutly, and upraising his eyes to heaven; “I know not what you mean; but Heaven directs all things, and that Power alone can now withstand all temptations. What means my lord?”

“I—I—scarce know how to reply, good father,” continued the Vis-

count; "I am bewildered: if you are s—o—me——leave me, good father—I would be alone—'tis——"

Before he could complete the sentence, the holy father had, according to his desire, disappeared. No sooner, however, had this been accomplished, than he felt desirous to know for what reason he had been interrupted—upon what errand the friar had appeared. He, accordingly, summoned him again before him.

"Now," he demanded, "for what purpose, good father, did you visit me? Have you aught to communicate that may concern me? If so, I shall be most happy and obliged, if——"

"My lord," said the Monk, interrupting him, "scarce half an hour since I learnt from D'Arste that a man, who had long been confined in one of the subterraneous dungeons beneath the eastern wing of the Castle, was lying at the point of death. Upon hastening thither, I found the statement most true."

"And what did you then?" inquired the Viscount.

"My lord, I commanded that you should be immediately informed of the circumstance, and by that means I hoped, for a short period at least, to be enabled, through your own gracious benevolence, to have detained a guilty wretch from the presence of that most holy Power——"

"Peace! caunting hypocrite," cried the Viscount; nor dare to come thus before me with your false professions of mercy and holiness. I am disgusted with such protestations, in which I am convinced there is no truth or sincerity."

The holy man judged, and rightly, that even if he stood in the presence of his lordship for whole hours, as the advocate for mercy or justice, that the result would be the same as though he should contend with the wild tenant of the forest, he accordingly, for the second time, quitted his presence, and proceeding to the dungeon, where was confined the man for whom he had interceded in vain, and to his consternation found to be dead. An hour after this the body was consigned to a subterraneous passage thence, since the present lord had been the possessor of the Castle, had been the receptacle for those whom his tyranny had consigned to an ignominious death.

The Viscount continued to pace his chamber with hurried and impatient steps, anxiously awaiting the arrival of D'Arste and the others who had started upon the expedition of blood. At length his impatience became so irresistible, that he summoned into his presence the warder, and inquired of him if D'Arste had yet returned; and, upon his answering in the negative, the Viscount came to the determination of setting forward himself in search of them. Accordingly, he wrapped himself in his plaid, and arming himself with a brace of pistols, quitted his Castle, and set forward in search of those he hoped to encounter with his captive foe.

He had not proceeded many paces, when the distant tread of footsteps convinced him that those he sought were not far distant. A moment more, and before him stood D'Arste, who was wounded and faint through excessive loss of blood; his doublet completely saturated with the crimson gore.

"How now! what means this? Have you been defeated in your plans?" exclaimed the Viscount. "You are wounded, and seem faint," he continued, turning to D'Arste, who appeared so feeble that no power of utterance remained. Finding that he could not reply to his interrogations, the Viscount commanded that he should be conducted with all possible speed to the Castle, that his wounds should be carefully dressed, and that every possible attention should be bestowed upon him. He then turned an angle of the road, and was presently lost to sight.

He took his way across a range of dreary mountains, and continued to wander until the shades of night had buried the surrounding objects in impenetrable darkness, he once more returned to the Castle.

As the moon soon after appeared, emerging from the eastern horizon, tinging the features of night with a mellow hue, a stranger was seen to cross the rustic bridge: his appearance was that of deep thought.

The romantic scenery of the mountains in the yellow mist of moonlight displaying here and there dark frowning crags and deep rocky glens, which appeared visible to the eye on all sides; higher up fantastic summits reared their lofty heads, shadowed by huge clumps of fir whose bare and naked aspect gave the scene a still more dreary appearance, which seemed to have inspired his mind with awe and delight.

Suddenly hearing the distant sound of a water-fall, he was seen to quicken his pace; then, as he neared the stupendous steep, he for some few moments halted to contemplate the appearance of the moon's pale and silvery beams. The surrounding grandeur of the crags added greatly to the wild appearance of the scene. The white foam of the gulf had a beautiful effect upon the blue waters sparkling like streams of silver in the moon's beams—the uninterrupted silence that reigned around the towering summits on every side, which seemed to repose in the sylvan scene—and the tranquillity of the hour, so enraptured him, that he continued to gaze apparently lost in pleasing reflections. When, the next instant, he was about to cross the perilous fabric thrown across a frightful chasm, he saw, or fancied he saw, a figure standing upon the opposite side. Though he was not superstitious, as was clearly proved by his firm and undaunted air, yet a feeling of dread appeared to involuntarily steal over his mind at the sight of this object. His eyes were fixed immovable upon it, and upon proceeding over the bridge to the opposite side, he beheld again the same figure leaning in a sorrowful attitude upon a slender edifice at a little distance. Upon approaching nearer, he found it to be a small monument thickly surrounded on all sides by the many wild plants which grew around. An aged yew tree waved its dark foliage over the spot. The impenetrable ground, and the hollow sighings of the blast threw fearful images over his mind. As he continued to approach nearer, a ray of moonlight fell through the leaves of the yews upon the rustic structure, and discovered to view a youth of noble mien leaning on its base, apparently involved in gloomy thought. Often, and at irregular intervals, a sigh, deep drawn, would rend his bosom.

"Great God!" he at length exclaimed, "cruel indeed must he have been that could upraise the foul hand of murder, and strike thee! May Heaven's avenging thunder-bolt crush him! May his immortal soul be for ever

doomed to anguish—such as I now feel for the loss of one so dear, so beloved! Oh, kind Heaven, whose minister alone he was, do thou grant that mine may be the avenging arm! that it may be my task alone to punish the murderer! Alas! cold, cold as the pure and unsullied marble, is now that heart which once beat with love, and glowed with sympathy! Peace to thy departed soul! And, if justice is to be found in other worlds, then is thy portion with those saints thou didst resemble while thou wert on earth! Oh, great, noble Glenaire!”

“Hark!” cried the stranger, starting forward; “surely I was not deceived. My ears heard aright. Sir stranger, did you not say Glenaire?”

Upon hearing this hurried exclamation, the stranger instantly drew his sword, then, upon looking around in order to ascertain from whom the words proceeded, beheld, standing opposite to him, the enquirer.

“What!” he exclaimed, “is not even this consecrated spot held sacred; must man, while pouring forth the dictates of his conscience, be thus interrupted? Depart instantly; do not dare pollute this sacred place longer with your unhallowed presence. Begone, I say! Provoke me not farther; or, by heaven’s eternal throne, I swear this blade shall search acquaintance with the circlets of your heart. Beware how you advance, or I shall become your destroyer, and that in such quick time that you live not an instant to boast of your temerity. Begone!”

The other appeared not to heed the admonition, but exclaimed—

“Sir! pardon, I pray you, the interruption of a stranger, whom curiosity alone has impelled forward. The name of Glenaire, which you pronounced, was to me a source of joy. If, then, I have not obeyed your commands, trust me it was long engendered friendship for him you say was murdered, that alone prompted me to stay, where, if ——”

“I charge you leave this spot, if you value life?”

“Be not offended at my presumption if ——”

“Peace! I do not think it necessary to indulge the curiosity of strangers upon matters that cannot possibly concern them. Nay,” he continued, seeing that the other was about to give utterance to some farther enquiry, “begone! and quit this place of crime and foul murder.”

“Murder!” reiterated the other, in a tone of agony, his eyes and hands devoutly upraised to heaven. “Speak, in the name of mercy! I conjure you, say who did this deed?”

“Alas! I know not,” responded the other, somewhat moderate in his tone, apparently softened by the latter question; “the perpetrator of this foul deed has never yet been discovered. But tell me, I pray you, what means this unusual agitation, and for a stranger, too? why are you so interested in the fate of the murdered lord? surely it cannot be any common interest that could tempt you to defy the calm determination of one armed with desperate fury as I myself was.”

“The deceased lord was united to me by ties of blood,” returned the stranger; “and having been many years travelling, and but now returned, I was anxious to learn the fate of my kinsman, who, upon my arrival, I sought for; but, as you may readily suppose, my labours were unattended with success. Now that I have learned his melancholy end, my labour it shall be to discover the perpetrator of this foul deed. If, Sir, that you

can render me any assistance in the same, I should esteem it as no light favour. But tell me, are you acquainted with the manner in which the Earl was assassinated?"

"I am," replied the other, "that is, imperfectly; and as far as my memory will permit, I will inform you of the whole circumstance; thus then it is. About two months from the present time, as I was proceeding slowly through the mountains, over which, owing to the unusual fineness of the evening, I had wandered further—much further—than was my general custom, when suddenly I was alarmed by the sound of footsteps. At first I imagined that I was about to be attacked by one of the numerous bands of highland caterans that infest our neighbourhood; a moment, however, served to convince me that I had been mistaken in my previous conjectures, for scarce had I sufficient time to escape observation by stepping behind a jutting ridge of rock that was situated close to where I was standing, when some five or six soldiers, habited in the uniform of—"

"Whom? whom? As you hope for salvation hereafter, tarry not in your reply!"

These words were spoken with great earnestness by the stranger.

"Pardon me if I reply not to that question," replied the other; "I have long suspected who was the original instigator of the foul deed; but, until I can fully prove that my suspicions are just, no sound that may cast reflection of guilt upon any man shall voluntarily escape my lips; therefore you will render me an especial service, if you mention not the subject again."

"God!" exclaimed the other, impassionately; "can a consideration so trifling, for a moment deter you from making a disclosure that to me is of so much importance? So, on, for the love of heaven!"

"The soldiers then wore the uniform of Dunbardon! But I would also have you know that I have no proof that the Viscount was the assassin, though suspicion's light shone somewhat prominent upon him. However, I have long since had my own ideas upon the subject, and, should occasion require, I should most certainly—"

"But the soldiers!" exclaimed the stranger; "you have not yet concluded what you had to say concerning them. Returned they again while you remained?"

"They did not," replied the other; "but, as they passed, I heard the following words:—'A lucky thing for us,' exclaimed the first officer, 'that he was unaccompanied; if we had been a few moments earlier, his attendants would have rendered our task somewhat difficult; however, one consolation for us, the dead men tell no tales.' They conversed in this manner until they had passed the place where I was concealed. This was no sooner accomplished than I emerged from my hiding place, and followed their track; and after I had so for a few moments I observed them enter—"

"Where? where?" inquired the other. "Why this delay?"

"Into Dunbardon Castle," was the reply.

The stranger started involuntarily, as he exclaimed:—"So! for years have I had my suspicions of this titled villain. So help me Heaven! if I can but obtain an entrance into his gloomy edifice, I will either sink the

same into one great heap of ruins, or perish ignobly in the attempt! And you, sir stranger, shall, if you will it, be my companion in danger; and by the high heaven, there will I reward your love for the family of my deceased friend!"

"Sir," replied the other, "it shall be as you desire; yet, methinks, you overrate my poor services greatly. But, see! the sky has become clouded—a storm is fast approaching—and, if we delay longer, 'twill overtake us. Come!"

With these words both proceeded.

"I shall ever be most sensible of your unexpected condescension, and—"

"Condescension!" reiterated the stranger; "wherein does it consist—even though I should now be conversing with the most abject beggar? Can a rose lose its perfume that is reared by a shepherd? You shall, as I before said, become my friend and companion; accompany me to the Castle, which from this time shall be thy residence."

"Your exalted generosity," replied the other, "has caused the tear of gratitude for a moment to dim my eye. These are no selfish tears which flow, my lord—for such, by your noble bearing, I feel convinced you must be; and, in return for your benevolence, I will relate farther particulars of the assassination."

"Listen and revenge!" cried a hollow voice.

At the sound of this, both started and gazed around in expectation of beholding the speaker. No one save themselves was to be seen. All was silent as the grave. The stranger inquired if the other had not heard the words; he replied in the affirmative. Again they listened attentively, in anxious expectation of again hearing a repetition of the sounds. In this they were disappointed; nothing save the hollow murmuring of the blast could be detected.

They had not proceeded far, when, upon a high range of rocks, was perceived a noble edifice, from the battlements of which innumerable domestics were discovered, some waving their bonnets in token of joy at once more in safety beholding him who now appeared to be their lord. Others there were who, upon the lawn before the Castle, tuned forth in gay tones the jocund life.

"This," exclaimed the Baron Glenis—for he it was—"this is your future place of abode. See you that lady upon the battlements? she is my sister, the Lady Elizabeth."

Conversing in this way, they soon entered the Castle, where the Baron conducted the stranger to his wardrobe, not wishing to introduce him to his sister, until he had thrown aside his humble garb. Taking a suit of rich tartan from a closet, he presented it to the stranger, and bidding him make haste, and dress, he quitted the chamber. As he did so, the other viewed with amazement the costly robe. The coat and philibeg were each of a bright blue, edged with the most costly description of lace; the buttons of the same consisted of pure gold. A magnificent black velvet bonnet, turned with plum-coloured satin in front, with a diamond button, from which arose a plume of tri-coloured feathers. No sooner was he equipped in this, than the Baron again returned, and presented him with a costly sword, the



Attempted Escape of the Maniac.

handle of which was inlaid with gold, and set in diamonds. Thus attired Glenis took him warmly by the hand exclaiming—

“Sir, I will now conduct you to my sister, who anxiously awaits the arrival of my friend.”

They then quitted the apartment, and, proceeding up a broad, oaken staircase, entered a magnificent hall, where was seated the Lady Elizabeth, who, on their entrance, immediately rose from her seat, and acknowledged their arrival by a graceful bow.

The Baron introduced the stranger to the Lady Elizabeth as a friend who commanded from her all the kindness she could bestow.

“My brother may command my utmost attention,” she replied, with a smile of bewitching sweetness, “as may also any who are his friends. But come, my dear brother, you have been long absent, and must need require some refreshment; the banquet-hall has long since been prepared for your arrival.”

They accordingly proceeded to the hall, where they continued until a late hour, when they separated for the night. The stranger was conducted to a lofty chamber; the pannels were of highly polished oak, embellished with views of the neighbouring scenery. The rich tints of the pieces drew forth his admiration; he stood for some time lost in silent rapture, until, at length, the extreme beauty of the Lady Glenis intruded upon his fancy. He retired to his couch. In his dreams the same beloved object haunted his imagination.



## CHAPTER XI.

## The Tournament.

On the following morning, as the stranger arose, Glenis entered his chamber. After having greeted him, and inquired as to the state of his health, he commenced—

“This day is one of happiness; 'tis that of the anniversary of my beloved sister's birth; and, to celebrate the same, I have made the preparations for a grand tournament, which is to take place on the lawn before the Castle. The principal nobles are invited, and you, of course, will accompany us on this joyous occasion.”

They then joined the Lady Elizabeth at the breakfast table; and, as the day advanced, the nobles assembled, and the spectators now began to take their respective stations. Under a magnificent canopy, consisting of crimson velvet, fringed with gold, was seated the Lady Glenis. On one side stood the Baron, his arm resting in thoughtful attitude upon his sword; on the other, was the stranger, his eye intensely fixed upon the beautiful Lady Elizabeth, who often surveyed him with a timid glance, and whenever their eyes encountered each other, they were thrown to the ground in ardent confusion.

The trumpets now sounded, which was the recognized signal for the commencement of the contest. Immediately, in obedience to the summons, two knights approached, preceded by two trumpeters, and attended by their respective squires. One of the knights was equipped in black armour; his helmet of steel was surmounted by a sable plume; on his shield was the device, *Caution is speed*. His opponent was clad in a suit of highly-polished steel armour, with Mars on his shield, accompanied by the device, *I am invulnerable*.

The signal being given, the barriers were thrown wide; they entered, and they were closed upon them. The trumpeter then sounded the charge; the knights viewed each other disdainfully, and, couching their lances, suddenly rushed upon each other with dreadful fury. In a moment their weapons were shattered into a thousand pieces; they then endeavoured to throw each other from his horse; the contest was long doubtful, but, at length, victory was declared for the Black Knight, who, making a feint towards his opponent, succeeded in unhorsing him. Several other knights entered the lists with this powerful champion, but all, after a brief contest, shared the same fate. Loud and universal applause rent the air; none now appeared to prevent the victorious champion from receiving the reward of his prowess. He alighted; was about to proceed towards the Lady Elizabeth, when a strange knight was suddenly seen to be galloping up the lawn. He was clad in a complete suit of blue armour, and mounted on a steed of snowy whiteness; and a majestic plume of feathers nodded over his brow. Upon arriving at the barrier, he threw down his gauntlet; and the victorious knight's squire immediately took it up. The champion looked upon his new adversary with mingled feelings of scorn and contempt, being, in his own opinion, confident of success. He remounted his steed, and prepared for the contest.

The Stranger Knight rode around the barrier until his adversary was in readiness to commence the contest; all present were charmed with his noble air, and the grace which he displayed in keeping his seat on horseback. None were charmed more with the tall and graceful appearance of the unknown warrior, than the Lady Elizabeth, who remained alike insensible to all around her, keeping her eyes continually fixed on the object of her admiration. The rival knight now entered the barrier, and the trumpets being sounded, they prepared for the charge.

No sooner was the signal for the attack given, than they rushed against each other with the fury of lions; the shock of the encounter was so great that the hitherto victorious champion was suddenly, and with great force, thrown from his saddle, but was instantly replaced by the attendants. Burning with shame and fierce resentment, he determined to be revenged upon his successful opponent; couching his lance, he, for the second time, rushed fiercely upon his rival, who avoided the blow by wheeling about his horse. Transported with rage at finding his every plan frustrated by his youthful antagonist, the Black Knight adopted every method that a skilful champion could devise, to unhorse him; but in this attempt, like the former, he was unsuccessful. The Stranger now made a sudden movement, as though about to take the other by the leg, and, observing the good success of his stratagem, he suddenly wheeled round, and, before his more experienced rival could regain his guard, clasped him in his arms, raised him from his saddle, and dashed him with violence to the earth. The vanquished knight sprang upon his feet, drew his sword, and, in the excess of his wrath, threw his glove high in the air; the other, leaping from his horse, took up the gauntlet, and drew his sword also. The combat now re-commenced with dreadful fury, both showing themselves to be complete masters of the well-tempered blades they wielded. They retreat—then advance, aiming terrific blows at each other, which they receive upon their shields—now they close—retreat—rush forward with redoubled fury—fire flashing from their swords at each new stroke.

The contest continued long uncertain. At length the youthful knight was proclaimed victor, by disarming his opponent; upon which, the other vaulted into his saddle, struck spurs into his noble courser, and, in a few moments, was out of sight. The victorious champion was now conducted in triumph, and amid the vociferous acclamations of the spectators, to the throne, where sat the Lady Elizabeth. Kneeling at her feet, he removed from his head the helmet. What was the astonishment of all to behold in the illustrious champion of the lists, the—*Stranger!*

Blushing deeply, the Lady Elizabeth placed a rich embroidered scarf about his shoulders, and, as she arranged in graceful folds the same, her eyes were cast in deep confusion upon the ground.

“Can it, indeed, be possible,” at length exclaimed the Baron, who had, in some degree, recovered from the surprise into which the discovery had thrown him, “that in the victorious hero I behold my youthful friend? Tell me, I pray you, how could you possibly have attained to so much skill in arms, as to induce you to encounter so powerful a knight; and one, too, who has ever been most successful in all the contests in which he has been engaged.”

"It was that alone which induced me to test my own prowess against him, my lord," replied the stranger, (whom we shall hereafter name Kenneth); "I was anxious to prove that him you had adopted possessed skill sufficient to protect from insult and wrong my generous benefactor. Observing no one appear to prevent this proud knight from carrying off the reward of superior valour, I came to the hasty determination of trying my skill in arms with this haughty champion. Acting upon this resolve, I proceeded to the castle armoury, where I selected this suit, mounted your charger, and hastened here. The rest, my lord, is already known to you. I trust I have not offended by my presumption in thus encountering the chosen knight of Scotland's isle."

"Offended!" reiterated the Baron, "and why? No! my brave friend; he whom you alone could vanquish, is no other than my inveterate foe, the Viscount Dunbardon."

"Who now, through me, demands the Lady Elizabeth in marriage!" exclaimed a rough voice at his side; and, upon turning to ascertain who had given utterance to these words, the Baron discovered a man at arms with a party of highlanders at his head.

"And what villain art thou," inquired the Baron, "who dares thus intrude upon the festive scene? Speak, sirrah, and quickly. Thy name?"

"Pietro d'Arste!" was the laconic reply.

"A more complete villain than whom never yet breathed," exclaimed an attendant noble, stepping forward; "if, indeed, we except thy tyrant master. What answer do you purpose returning to this insolent mission?" he continued, turning to Glenis, who appeared absorbed in reflection. "Were I to advise ——"

"Trust me, my lord, you would not resent the insult more effectually than I myself shall," exclaimed the Baron, interrupting his friend. "Now hearken well to my words, sirrah," he continued, turning to D'Arste; "but that I know full well that you are commissioned to perform this act of insult by one who, if possible, is more inured to crime and villainy than yourself, I would have punished you, and severely, for the same; as it is, you are at full liberty to depart, bearing this message to your tyrant master. Tell him, the Baron Glenis has not words sufficient to express his hatred and contempt of him; but that should he, or any of his minions, dare to pass near this castle, their temerity shall be repaid with instant death. Begone!"

"My lord," replied D'Arste, nothing daunted by the fierce deportment now assumed by the exasperated noble, "I am forbid to quit your presence until I have received an answer, verbal or written, from the Lady Glenis."

"Presumptuous villain!" exclaimed the Baron, doubly enraged at this new evidence of the other's effrontery, "must we submissively yield to your insolence? Begone instantly!"

"My lord," replied D'Arste, "if that my words have offended, you must impute the same to the Viscount, not to me; but since you are so indignant at what I have already spoken, I will say no more. This," he continued, proffering to the Baron a letter, "this will more fully explain the nature of my errand."

The Baron hastily seized the proffered epistle, and, having broken the armorial seal, read aloud the contents, which ran as follows:—

“MY LORD BARON,

“I, Viscount Dunbardon, do hereby demand the hand of your sister, the Lady Elizabeth of Glenis, in marriage; and, as you value life and happiness, I charge you return, by my confidential messenger, an answer suitable in every way to my wishes.

“For the Baron Glenis.

ALEXANDER, VISCOUNT DUNBARDON.”

Immediately upon reading this, the Baron tore the letter into innumerable fragments, and cast it to the winds.

“Now,” he exclaimed, once more turning to D’Arste, “if you would escape with life, let me advise that you depart instantly; or, by heaven, you shall find a resting-place in one of the most dreary dungeons of this Castle!”

“But, my lord,” exclaimed D’Arste, “shall I not speak with the Lady Elizabeth?”

“No!” replied the Baron, in a haughty tone. “My sister cannot be seen; besides, I have objections to the match, which it will be needless to mention to you.”

“But, my lord, if ——”

“No more, sir, no more; begone! I have answered to your lord’s insolent proposals, and no power on earth shall cause me to alter my determination.”

“Then,” replied D’Arste, “beware! the vengeance of my lord will fall heavily upon you.”

“His vengeance I defy! Leave the Castle immediately, and carry thou this last message to thy master. Tell him I despise his threats; and that to-morrow, on the swift wings of vengeance, I come to storm his Castle; and if this proud, vain man should fall into my power, death shall be the arrogant boaster’s doom. Reply not! away! away!”

Upon the departure of D’Arste, the Baron and the Lady Elizabeth, together with the stranger and attendant nobles, returned to the Castle, where they adjourned to the hall, in which a sumptuous banquet was served up. Three huge lamps of massive silver, suspended from the roof by chains of the same costly metal, gaily illumined the glittering scene. Seven large mirrors, richly ornamented and gilded, placed on the wall, reflected every object, however minute, with the greatest brilliancy. The whole of those knights who had been seen at the tournament, were also present at the banquet; which, being concluded, the Baron thus addressed them:—

“My Lords and Gentlemen—You have, of course, been witnesses to the insult offered to me by the Viscount Dunbardon, through the agency of his principal confidant in villany, D’Arste. Now if, indeed, it were possible that I could follow the dictates of my own soul, I would immediately punish this insolent noble as his conduct best deserves. What say you, my friends, will you join me in the attempt? May I rely upon your services in this business?”

“You may! you may!” simultaneously replied all, rising, and crossing their swords. “When shall the attack commence?”

"To-morrow, at sunset," was the reply.

No sooner had the Baron said this, than Kenneth exclaimed—

"My lord, may I request of you the honour to be appointed leader of your friends. From my recent encounter with this powerful tyrant, I am inclined to suppose that, should I but ——"

"No more, my friend," replied the Baron, "in this I have no voice; your late bravery has so wrought in your behalf, that to deny you aught would to me be an impossibility; therefore, if you will it, the office is your own."

The following day was spent by the Baron in making preparations for the attack, and, as the hour of sunset drew nigh, the vassals were all under arms, and in readiness for the march. They then set forward, and in a short time arrived at Dunbardon Castle, where to the astonishment of all, the draw-bridge was discovered to be down, and the portals thrown wide. Elated at what appeared to be a signal of the most complete success, Glenis hastened forward, and urged his followers to farther exertions, by the most encouraging words and jestures. In vain did Kenneth, who now began to suspect that the unguarded appearance of the entrance was a mere stratagem to lure them onwards to captivity, attempt to convince his friend of the same; but, finding him resolved, he came to the determination of fighting by his side while life remained. They crossed the bridge, and had scarce entered the portal, when a bugle was sounded, the draw-bridge raised, the gates closed, and they were surrounded by the Viscount, and several of his followers. Upon perceiving that they were thus surrounded, and made prisoners by his savage foe, the Baron started involuntarily; recollecting he still possessed a sword, he resolved to attack the Viscount. In the attempt he was disarmed.

"Allow me, my lord Baron," exclaimed the Viscount, "to return you my sincere thanks for the honour you had intended to confer upon me, had I been fortunate as to have fallen into your power. I have now the honour of entertaining you here, and rest assured that nothing shall be wanting that may promote your comfort, and ——"

"Villain!" vociferated the Baron, "hold your peace, and if we are to die, let the doom at once be proceeded with; or, if to a dungeon's depths we are to be consigned, delay not."

"Right," returned the Viscount, "I am too lenient. What ho! D'Arste, Angus; chains here!"

Both the above named functionaries made their appearance, and, obedient to the commands of their lord, seized the Baron and Kenneth, while the soldiers struggled with their followers, who were finally overpowered and borne off. After he had been conducted by a couple of guards along a range of damp, dreary passages, they halted before a massive door of iron, the bolts and bars of which being undrawn, the Baron was unceremoniously thrust into a large square dungeon, whose damp, slimy walls of freestone, filled the place with a death-like odour, and the effect was such upon the captive, that had he not sunk upon a small couch of iron which lay in an obscure corner of the dungeon, and upon which lay a small pallet of straw, he would have fallen upon the pavement. For several hours after he had been left alone, he continued to pace the narrow precincts of his gloomy abode in silence; at length he exclaimed, in a tone of agony—

"Great and merciful heaven! for what am I ordained? Deprived of liberty; the prisoner, too, of a savage and inveterate foe, who will exult in my death. Oh, Virtue! if thou dost serve as a mask to Vice, how, how shall we know or discern thee beneath thy black and impenetrable disguise? Shall man ever thus triumph over man? No, it cannot be; the guilty and conscience-stricken wretch must one day meet the reward of his iniquity. Tremble, wretch! thy reign of tyranny and oppression must one day close. Oh! my beloved sister, what pangs will rend thy gentle heart, when thou dost learn the dread condition of thy dotting brother. By encompassing my death, the tyrant imagines his triumph will be secure; that thou wilt then be his without farther difficulty or delay; but oh! my sister, better thou wert confined, and thy young beauty rotting into death's mouldering emblem; better thou wert wedded to calamity in her most fearful shape, than become the bride of foul dishonour. Oh! how dreadful is my fate; perhaps even while I am murmuring here, the tyrant may be contemplating some accursed plan by which he may obtain possession of my sister. But yet let me not murmur. No; I will again place my faith in that divine and all-seeing Providence, whose care it is ever to guard the innocent."

As he said this, he once more gazed upon the dark, narrow confines of his dungeon; large drops of damp trickled slowly down its black and slimy walls; its high, grated window, couch of iron, and solitary chair, which constituted the only furniture of the apartment, struck terror to his heart. Suddenly, his ears were assailed by a loud shriek; the sound increased; a heavy fall succeeded this. Footsteps were next heard approaching, and, in a moment more, the door was unbarred, and D'Arste entered the dungeon, his dress disordered, and hands stained with blood.

"How now!" exclaimed the Baron; "what means this? What new atrocity has been committed within this accursed pile?"

"You shall hear," replied D'Arste, as he in some measure succeeded in transferring the blood from his hand to a portion of that straw which constituted the bedding upon which those confined were constrained to rest their weary limbs; "you shall hear. In one of the subterraneous dungeons below there has for a long time been confined a strange sort of fellow—in fact, a confirmed maniac. As I passed, just now, I was greatly surprised, and perhaps I may say *terrified*, to behold his door thrown wide, his matted locks flowing wildly in the night air, and his arms stretched out as if in readiness to seize me by the throat. My dagger in his breast, however, soon decided the case, and, after a short struggling, he fell dead!"

"And what is your purpose here?"

"To seek thy life!"

"Eternal villain!"

"Dost remember that thou art in our power?"

"I do—monster!"

"Thy speech, methinks, should savour less of insult than it does, or thy doom may perhaps be accelerated even by thine own means. But, listen! I have come to offer you freedom!"

"Freedom!" reiterated the Baron; "kind heaven, I thank thee! my prayers have at length been heard.

"Stay! exclaimed D'Arste, seizing the arm of the captive noble; "before you trouble heaven with your thanksgivings, hear the *conditions* upon which that freedom you seem to prize so greatly has been offered to you."

"Conditions!" reiterated the captive, "name them, and I will gladly accede to them, whatever they may chance to be."

"Indeed!" exclaimed D'Arste, aside, "this unexpected willingness will greatly please his lord——"

"Now, sir," cried the prisoner, impatiently interrupting him; "the conditions. I wait your pleasure."

"Say you so," returned D'Arste, "then know that, upon receiving the hand of your lovely sister in marriage, the Viscount Dunbardon will instantly set you at liberty."

"Villain!"

"What, for offering you freedom at so small a price; there, at least, you and I agree, for even when the Viscount expressed to me his intentions, I assured him that you would esteem the favour too light, and had his lordship but ——"

"Silence!" vociferated the Baron. "Nay," he continued, proceed as you will; I am impatient to discover to what atrocious length the tyranny of thy ruffian lord will extend. Are the conditions you have named the only means whereby my escape may be effected?"

"They are," replied D'Arste.

"Then hear me," continued the Baron, raising his voice; "rather than consent to the demoniac proposals of thy fiend master, would I be for ever consigned to the most hellish tortures his villany could suggest; yes, even though he should consign me to the most horrible and lingering death, still, with my life's latest breath, would I proclaim him villain to his teeth."

"So then," returned D'Arste, "thou dost affect to despise my offer? Ah well! time will time prove thy constancy, and should'st thou chance to repent of thy obstinacy, there will come one presently will happily receive tidings of the same; for myself I say farewell."

"Heartless ruffian!" exclaimed the Baron, "probe me not farther, or by heaven's eternal throne you die. Manacled as I am, you shall feel my vengeance, and ——"

"Rave on madman!" returned D'Arste, in a taunting tone, "perchance 'twill serve to call thy remaining courage. Adieu my lord."

And with these words, he quitted the dungeon, secured the door without, and in a few moments more, the last remaining echo of his fast retiring footsteps had died away. An uninterrupted silence again prevailed over the scene.



Mystic Appearance of the Wild Witch disguised as a Minstrel.

## CHAPTER XII.

The Dungeon—Apparent Death of Kenneth—Appearance of the Witch disguised as a Minstrel—Resuscitation of Kenneth by the Demon of the Glen.

UPON being separated from his friend, Kenneth was first heavily laden with fetters, and then led, or rather dragged, through innumerable dark gloomy passages, at the end of which was a massive door of iron. After undrawing the trusty and time-worn bolts, an operation which produced a harsh, grating sound, one of the foremost ruffians exclaimed, in a taunting tone:—

"This, sir, is your apartment. I have no doubt but that you will find it cool and comfortable; valiant heroes like you should at all times be well eared for, and should you ——"

"Leave me," interrupted Kenneth, impatiently.

"Aye; that I will," returned the fellow with a contemptuous smile; "I will leave you, but it will not be very long before you will wish even for my company. Adieu!"

And with these words he quitted the dungeon, and having secured the door of the same, hastened from the spot to join his fellows.

For some few moments after he had been left alone, Kenneth continued

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to pace the narrow limits of his cell with hurried and unequal strides, but worn out with this, he threw himself with violence upon the couch of iron that stood in an obscure corner. His disquietude, however, would not permit him to remain long in one position; and he accordingly rose with a determination to examine his prison-house, in order to discover whether any available means of escape presented themselves; but after a fruitless search he was about to resume his seat, when his attention was suddenly attracted towards an immense ring of iron which appeared to be fixed in the floor. Immediately upon perceiving this, he proceeded to examine it more closely; when, from the ponderous and mildewed hinges to which it was attached, it seemed to have been but seldom opened. Kenneth now grasped the before-mentioned ring of iron which was affixed to its centre, and exerted all his strength to raise the trap, which he hoped would lead to some of the subterraneous passages with which Dunbardon, like all other castles of the age, abounded.

His exertions were vain, and after he had continued them for some considerable time he at length sank exhausted to the ground. After a short relapse, however, he renewed his efforts with redoubled energy, despite which they were again unattended by that success he so ardently wished to attain. Nevertheless, after some farther exertions, he had the satisfaction to behold it suddenly yield to his efforts, and continuing to exert his whole strength, slowly and with a loud creaking sound the trap was raised, until at length it stood erect. This accomplished, he wiped from his brow the clammy evidence of perspiration caused by his previous exertions; then hastened to the opposite side in order to ascertain whither the opening would lead him; when to his horror and consternation he discovered that the trap which he had been at such trouble to raise, covered a dark, impenetrable, and frightful abyss—the horrible and overpowering stench that issued from which well nigh suffocated the lonely tenant of the scene of horror. Upon a closer examination he discovered the imperfect, mangled and mutilated remains of several bodies, some of which, as far as the impenetrable gloom in which the chasm was enshrouded, would permit his observation to extend, he fancied had been once richly attired. Chancing to cough slightly while bending over this awful gulph, he shuddered involuntarily as the sound echoed faintly until it reached the inky stream which apparently rolled at its base. He next succeeded in gaining possession of a fragment of rock from off an immense ridge near to the opening. He dashed it with violence into the yawning depth, and, as it bounded from rock to rock in its hasty descent, bore frightful evidence of the awful sufferings that awaited those who had shared a similar fate. Scarce had he completed this fearful discovery, when the sound of heavy and fast approaching footsteps alarmed him. He hastily grasped the huge ring, and prepared to re-close the aperture, exerting all his strength in order, if possible, to lower it without a sound; but, despite his utmost endeavours, he was compelled to let go his hold, and accordingly it closed with a tremendous crash. At the same instant the bar fell from the door, and the bolts were hastily withdrawn, and DUNBARDON, accompanied by Angus, entered the dungeon, each armed with a drawn sword. Upon their first entrance each gazed at the other, seemingly wrapt in silent wonder and amazement.

"How now!" at length began the Viscount, in a gruff tone of voice, and turning to the place where stood Kenneth, whose whole frame seemed as though paralyzed with horror at the dreadful spectacle he had been just gazing upon. "Say!" continued the Viscount, "what noise was that I heard on my entrance?"

"What mean you?" replied Kenneth.

"That noise, I repeat, which resounded through my ears as the door was unbarred."

Kenneth maintained a profound silence.

"What! no reply?" exclaimed the infuriated Viscount. "Perchance," he added, "you would affect to misunderstand my meaning; the thought is vain; I will tell you from whence the noise came.—You have thought fit to explore the hidden mysteries of yonder abyss; your curiosity has tempted you to make a premature examination of the place destined to be your final resting-place on earth."

"Villain!" cried Kenneth; "what mean you? I——"

"Mean!" reiterated the Viscount, interrupting him "why, that you now stand upon your grave! Yes," he continued, "you have incurred my direst hate. So prepare; for you have not long to live; but before you die I would have you know that your brave friend and companion, the Baron Glenis, will ere long share your fate: having informed you thus much, I will next acquaint you with the fate of him——"

"Eternal villain!" vociferated Kenneth, grasping his fetters in the excess of passion, "tempt me not further, or——"

"You have forgotten your chains, good Sir," sarcastically exclaimed the Viscount; "'twere a folly to indulge in this violence, for then will passion obtain a mastery over your reason, and——"

Before he could utter another word, Kenneth with lightning-speed had rushed upon him, and, despite the interference of Angus who was taken completely aback by the suddenness of the attack, obtained possession of his sword.

"Now," he exclaimed, "let him who dare, approach, and you my lord Viscount," he continued, turning to the place where the exasperated noble was standing; "you, my lord, bade me a short time since think on my fetters. I have done so; I have dwelt upon your tyranny and injustice. That has nerved my arm, and enabled me to place you at my mercy. What mercy, think you, will be shown? what would you have granted me? None; and now, in order to test your honour, and probe your soul to the utmost, behold!"

And with the latter word yet lingering upon his lips, Kenneth let fall the sword at his feet, but stood, also, in a position that would enable him to recover it on the instant, did occasion so need it. No sooner did the Viscount perceive this, than, with a loud laugh of exultation, he exclaimed—

"Upon him, I say, strike him to the earth, and ——"

At this instant the sharp report of a pistol was heard without.

"Ha!" cried the Viscount, "what means this?"

"Villain!" replied Kenneth, who had now regained the weapon, "'tis some of thy hellish plans now brought to light; thy end is near, and ——"

A flash—a report—and Kenneth lay bathed in blood. A bullet from Angus had done its work.

"Now!" he exclaimed, putting up the weapon, while a demoniac gleam of satisfaction illumined his countenance, "we have silenced his chattering, at least for the present, and ——"

"Let us waste no more time here," exclaimed the Viscount, interrupting him; "follow me!"

Angus did as he was commanded, and Kenneth was once more left alone.

The blood continued to flow from the wound, which was in the left side, for some considerable time afterwards, until all signs of life had departed, and Kenneth lay stretched upon the stone pavement a lifeless corse. Some few hours after this, Angus again entered the dungeon, now the scene of death, and stooping down he placed his hand upon that part of the body against which, in life, the pulsation is ever wont to vibrate. All was still and calm. Angus, ruffian as he was, appeared for an instant to be subdued by the solemnity that reigned around; for some moments he moved nor spoke not, but in silence knelt beside the cold and fast stiffening corse, apparently absorbed in reflection. This was one of nature's triumphs. He remained in this position for some few moments, until, at length, the sound of footsteps caused him to start hastily to his feet. A moment more, and the Viscount appeared.

"Why stand you gazing here?" he exclaimed; "know you not how and where the body may be disposed of? The chasm, man, the chasm!—Come—use despatch—quick now. Assist me to convey the same to that home which has so long and effectually shielded from the observation of all, those who have dared to risk my displeasure. Now!"

And, with these words, they bore the body to the spot; where, after much labour and difficulty in raising the trap, before they could succeed in throwing the body into the depths below, a loud yet hollow voice was heard to exclaim—

"Hold! desist from your impious proceedings. Beware!"

"Hark!" exclaimed the Viscount; heard you that? Surely I—I—"

"It was only the force of imagination, my lord," said Angus, though his every limb trembled with the firm conviction that the words had been spoken, though as yet the speaker was unseen.

"Proceed!" exclaimed the Viscount, after a momentary hesitation.

Again did they raise the lifeless form; again was it in part suspended over the chasm. Again were the above words pronounced. The Viscount and his attendant simultaneously receded several paces backward, and replaced the body upon the pavement. The same instant the cause of this new consternation was visible to all. The aperture was filled by the sacred outline of an ancient Bard, in whose hand which was slightly elevated in the air was held the emblem of his calling, and whose long white locks hung upon his shoulders in wild disorder, and whose robe was also one of snowy whiteness.

Upon beholding this unexpected and extraordinary vision, the Viscount assumed an attitude of terror, as did also the ruffian, Angus. For some few moments an awful silence prevailed. At length it was broken by Dunbardon, whose desperate and fearless nature having once again gained the ascendant, he in a fierce tone exclaimed—

"What hellish interruption is this? Tell me," he continued, turning

to the phantom, "whence thou comest—thy errand here—the cause of this interference? Speak! say! or, by my soul, this, (drawing his sword) this shall compel you! Still silent? Thy fate, even though from the depths of perdition thou dost come, is sealed!"

He then made a furious pass at the Ariel form. A loud fiendish laugh followed; the outline of the minstrel suddenly vanished, and before them stood, clad in all her former terrors, and the hideous Dwarf beside her, **THE WILD WITCH OF THE HEATH!**

"Viscount," exclaimed the hag, "ever at thy devotions! Ha!" she continued, apparently for the first time noticing the dead form of Kenneth; "this should not have been. More labours, Dwarf!"

"Begone!" vociferated the Viscount; "thy presence here was uncalled for, and by my Talisman I swear that, if you disappear not on the instant, I will summon those who shall soon crush thee into very nothingness! Beware!"

To this vain threat the Witch vouchsafed no other reply than a laugh loud and wild. Enraged at her cool indifference, the Viscount made another furious pass with his sword. The wand was upraised on the instant, and the weapon fell from his grasp writhing on the stone pavement, and finally rolled at the feet of its late possessor formed into a complete curve. At this both the Viscount and Angus recoiled with the greatest terror.

"How now!" screamed the Witch; "dost thou not now acknowledge our superior power; or dost wait for more convincing proofs?"

"I do acknowledge all," replied the Viscount; "but quit my presence, and—"

"Leave thee to work thy will upon yon inanimate form," interrupted the Witch. "Never! Hear me! The life you have apparently driven from that corse must be returned—nay, start not—I know full well he is thy foe, and that to such a bitter degree that each moment of his being thrusts like a venomous poison to thy soul. Much danger from his hand yet awaits thee—yes, that arm, now so cold and seemingly stiffened by the grasp of death, must strike many a blow for victory and justice—that arm it was that wounded your proud soul by a defeat in the lists; and more yet remains to be done—much more shame shalt thou endure at his hand. And this also must thou—"

"I'll hear no more," vociferated the Viscount; "enough has been said already to set my soul in arms, and cause me to curse the damning hour in which I first became subject to your demoniac influence; but further speech would be now a useless sport of time. You have defied my power—that you have free liberty so to do, I grant ye—but await my return, and he who is to conquer all shall soon be seen."

With these words the Viscount, accompanied by Angus, darted from the dungeon. Immediately upon their disappearance the Witch proceeded towards the spot where lay the corse, and with her wand formed a mystic circle around the same; then muttered a few incoherent sentences, at the conclusion of which both she and the Dwarf entered its precincts.

"What wouldst thou with me?" demanded a gruff voice.

"Thy services are needed," responded the Witch.

"For what purpose?" again demanded the voice.

"Appear, and thou shalt know more of our purpose," again answered the Witch.

Obedient to the request of his familiar, Cabello now made his appearance, attended by several demons of hideous appearance.

"How now!" he exclaimed in a voice like unto the roaring thunder; "for what purpose have I been summoned hither?"

"Behold!" yelled forth the Witch, pointing with her hand to the place where lay the body of the prostrate Kenneth; "yonder mortal must live; much of our future actions depend on him; therefore thy power is required to resuscitate his dying and exhausted nature. Have I not oft served your purposes? Speak! tell me."

"You have! you have!" roared the Demon; "and in return may command my service in aught but this."

"And why not this?" demanded the Witch.

"Because——"

"Thou wouldst have me—us—believe that you scruple at your word once passed," interrupted the hag.

"Thou knowest our victim has for a few fleeting years of power and enjoyment pledged to me for time eternal his immortal and never dying soul. Why then wouldst thou have me break our compact? With fiends 'tis ever a plan of conscience to preserve whole and inviolate a word once passed with earthly creatures."

"I admire the appearance of honest truth thou dost put forth," answered the Witch, "and will not attempt to persuade thee farther. But this also know—that to this mortal alone is thy earthly victories confined; hope not, therefore, to delude others. No! my especial care shall it be to prevent this. Now, Cabello, we part to meet no more. With the assistance of my inseparable friend and companion, Fripolo, here will I work my purpose; and, though I should tarry somewhat longer [for the result, yet will my ultimate success be certain. Now, my most conscientious friend, farewell!"

"Hold!" cried Cabello; "we part not, sister, thus. In amity have we ever lived, and no rupture shall mar our future projects. For once, then, will I quit my intentions to serve thy desires."

Saying which the Fiend strode into the centre of the dungeon. A bright flame of blue illumined the same, and upon some unintelligible jargon being given utterance to, the pavement suddenly opened, and, to the horror of all mortal eyes—though there were none there to witness the same—a chasm some three or four hundred feet in depth was disclosed to view, at the bottom of which appeared an immense body of flame. Into this the Fiend plunged, carrying along with him the inanimate form of Kenneth. The Viscount at this instant entered the dungeon, and to his utter horror and consternation beheld naught but the Witch and her companion.

"Where is the body?" he demanded; "whence have you borne it? Say, speak! Death and h---! still silent! Eternal curses light upon your souls!—if indeed you possess any—why am I ever to be trifled with thus? Fool that I was to league my soul's welfare with such treacherous fiends! Oh, that man could see the everlasting pains that await

the vain and thoughtless here, how different would then be their pursuits? Pshaw! am I to turn driveller now, and fear the issue of what shall await me hereafter? No! not all the insatiate ministers of hell shall check my purpose now. I have too far proceeded in crime to act thus, and I will brave all—all, to the last. Ha! what sound was that?" he continued, as a loud fiendish laugh was heard. "Tell me," he cried, turning to the dwarf, "whither have you borne the form that laid upon the pavement here? why am I to be ever thus foiled in my desires? if you cannot ——"

"Peace!" cried the Witch, "nor dare to tempt our wrath; or ——"

"Thy wrath!" reiterated the Viscount, "I defy thee; and if thou dost provoke me farther, this, (exhibiting the casket) this shall do its work upon you. Once more, I demand to know whence have you borne the body? what, still silent? Cabello, come forth!"

No sooner had the words been uttered, than the Demon appeared.

"What would you with me!" he inquired, in a dreadful tone; "why am I now summoned here?"

"In order to inform me by whom this place has been visited? by whom the form of one that met his death-blow in this place has been removed?"

"And is this the *only* cause assigned for my appearance here?" demanded the Demon, angrily.

"It is," replied the Viscount.

"Hast forgotten the conditions of our compact?"

"Why ask you this? why question my motives?"

"Twice have I at thy command appeared on earth; and on the *tenth*—from this—thou knowest what must attend the tenth?"

"I *do* remember," answered the Viscount, "that I am ever foiled and cheated by those whose duty it is to forward my desires; never yet hast thou benefited me by thy supernatural agency. When I commanded thy appearance in the Hall of Torture, then didst thou suffer yonder hag to obtain a triumph over me, and permit my captive to escape me? Call ye this acting to the tenor of our agreement? But when the day of final reckoning shall arrive, I shall also be found wanting; your purpose shall be defeated."

"What mean you?" thundered the Demon; "yonder lies the body of him slain by your confidant."

An incredulous smile curled upon the lip of Dunbardon as these words were given utterance to; but this was immediately dispelled, for on turning to the place pointed out, he to his utter astonishment discovered that there indeed lay the form for the repossession of which he had paid so dear.

"I had wronged you," the Viscount exclaimed, turning to the place where his eyes had last rested on Cabello—he had disappeared; the Witch and Dwarf alone remained. Exhausted by his previous exertions the Viscount hastened from the scene of horrors in search of D'Arste.

To reanimate the form of Kenneth was but the work of an instant. That youthful warrior started to his feet.

"By that place," cried the Witch, pointing to a small aperture hitherto unseen by all, "you may succeed in effecting your escape. To reward

virtue and punish vice. On the heath, at midnight; prepare to meet your deliverer!"

With these words the hag vanished, together with the Dwarf, leaving the resuscitated Kenneth to imagine as he best could by what means so wonderful an action had been encompassed.

### CHAPTER XIII.

The Attack, Surprise, and Capture of the Baron Glendovan and the Earl of Strathallan by D'Arste.

WE imagine, (and doubtless the reader will coincide with us on that particular point) that it is now high time that we return to our original plot, and inform them how the Viscount Dunbardon, whose consummate villany causes him to be constantly upon the stage of action—thereby rendering him a character conspicuous for the number and magnitude of his crimes—succeeded in his attempt, through the agency of his companion and partner in crime, D'Arste, to capture the Baron Glendovan and his friend Strathallan, as they crossed the moor.

Upon quitting the presence of the Viscount, D'Arste summoned attendants to the number of twenty, all of them well armed, and placing himself at the head of these he quitted Dunbardon Castle, and hastened forth upon his expedition. Upon their arrival at the Glen he commanded a halt, and the men were ordered to conceal themselves amid the impenetrable brushwood that grew around. They had not been long in this position when the sound of fast-approaching footsteps was heard.

"They come," exclaimed D'Arste, in a half suppressed whisper, "prepare to meet them."

A few moments more, and their foes were within bow-shot. A volley of arrows fired from the ambuscade found their burial-places in a corresponding number of hearts—fifteen of those who had accompanied the Baron Glendovan and his friend having fallen bleeding to the earth; and in a few moments more life had departed from them.

"What's this!" exclaimed Glendovan, "there must be some treachery abroad. Ha! that report. Surely we are beset by a band of caterans; and if, indeed, such should be the case, we shall suffer, and that considerably, for our imprudence in courting the veil of night for this foolish exploit. What do you advise?" he continued, turning to the Earl of Strathallan; "shall we stand, or proceed?"

"In this case I must confess my utter inability to advise," responded the Earl; "all sides seem to be fraught with danger; perhaps the best plan, however, in the present uncertain dilemma is to form our little band into battle-array, and proceed with caution onwards, and in the event of a surprise fight while we have strength. This is the only plan, my dear friend, that I have to suggest."

"And an excellent one it is," said Glendovan; "one, too, that shall be immediately acted upon. Are your fire-arms ready for instant discharge?" he continued, turning to his followers.



Intended horrible Death of the Baron and the Earl frustrated by Pietro.

"They are, my lord," replied one of the foremost, "and yonder," he continued, "is one, at whom, methinks, we should not do wrong did we discharge thier contents."

Looking in the direction pointed out, the Baron beheld the dark outline of a man.

"Fire!" he exclaimed, in a loud tone.

Obedient to the command issued by Glendovan, a discharge of arrows and fire-arms, followed.

A moment—another; and the dusky outline before spoken of had expanded; the earth had received another addition. A man rolled lifeless upon its surface; he lay entranced in death, the messengers of life's bane had done their work.

Upon advancing to the spot where lay the body, the Baron, together with Strathallan, recognized in the garb of the fallen man one of the followers of Dunbardon's ford.

Astonishment rivetted them for a moment to the spot, the Baron was first to interrupt the momentary silence that prevailed, he looked earnestly upon the inanimate form before him, then exclaimed—

By my faith! I am of opinion that some treachery was intended here; however, we have defeated their foul purpose and——"

Before he could conclude the sentence, a bullet passed so close that it tore the bonnet from off the head of one of the soldiery.



"The bullets fly freely," cried Strathallan, "an' we remain longer here, the consequence will be more warm than agreeable. What say you my lord?" he continued, turning to the Baron, "do you coincide with me."

"I do," replied Glendovan, and, moreover, I feel convinced that it is under the direction of no other than that consummate villain, Dunbardon, that this murderous attack has been planned, and I also suspect that should we —"

The sharp report of a volley of fire-arms interrupted the Baron in his speech. Two of the shots took effect, and the same number of *Kernes* fell prostrate.

"We must devise some plan, and speedily," exclaimed Strathallan to the Baron in a suppressed whisper, "or we shall shortly not have a man by our side. Let us onward at once."

"Agreed," responded Glendovan, "forward!" he exclaimed turning to the few remaining men, the ill practice of their hitherto invisible foe had left them.

They then hastened forward in the direction of the place from whence the messengers of death had come forth, and in a few moments they were surprised by the sudden, though not entirely unexpected appearance of a band of highlanders, who rushed suddenly from the interior of an impenetrable cluster of bushes. They instantly commenced a furious attack upon the few remaining followers of the Baron, who, together with Strathallan, fought with great skill and bravery, and indeed had it not have been for the timely intervention of D'Arste a well aimed blow must have laid the Viscount Dunbardon prostrate, who headed the band enveloped in a mask which entirely concealed from view his features. As it was, the weapon glanced aside, it being parried by a dexterous back stroke by the above mentioned personage, and immediately the two noblemen were surrounded on all sides; and desperate indeed did they struggle with their rufianly opponents, until at length they were completely overpowered by superior numbers, and the contest terminated in the capture of the Baron Glendovan, Strathallan, and total defeat of their followers, who were repulsed in their repeated attempts to release their lord and his companion from captivity, with great slaughter.

A short period served to bring them to Dunbardon Castle, where they were upon their arrival dragged to the Hall of Torture, followed by the Viscount. Upon their arrival, the Baron shuddered involuntarily as he beheld the dreary horrors by which they were on all sides surrounded; its dark, slimy walls, and—; but we have already in an early number entered into a lengthy account of the same, therefore any farther comment now would be superfluous and unnecessary.

"What think you, my lord," exclaimed the Viscount, in a taunting tone, "is not this a fitting receptacle for noblemen of your distinguished bravery? I am thoroughly convinced as to your entire approbation of the chamber into which you have been conducted. What is the worthy Baron Glendovan scrutinising so minutely?" he continued, seeing that nobleman look with an inquisitive glance upon the rack, to whose terrible frame so many tortured wretches had owed the sufferance of those pangs which not unfrequently had brought death in their track, and thereby added one crime

more to that catalogue against which the tyrant owner of its terrors must one day contend. "See you that wheel?" inquired Dunbardon; "'tis not unlike to the one said to be the chosen companion of the fickle dame Fortune, though I am half inclined to doubt the potency of its powers when compared with mine; you may also observe by the side of that wheel a confused heap of mouldering bones. You reply not. Ah well! I see, by the expression of disgust which now pervades your countenance, that I am not labouring under a mistake upon that particular point. Well, my lord Baron, what I was about to observe is, that those dismembered bones once formed the carcase of your favoured slave; him, I mean, that suffered by this instrument—the rack. Remember you the circumstance, my lord?"

"I do, villain!" exclaimed the Baron, impatiently; "and what then, though your hand prevailed against the menial, you have not yet vanquished his lord. Nay, start an' you please, I heed not your frowns, though I am at present in your power. A day of reckoning must—will arrive, and at that you must tremble."

"Well, my lord," replied the Viscount, "be that as it may, I am in no humour to listen to your sermons now. If you are in a vein to indulge in sentimentality, the gloom of this place is in every way calculated to promote your plans. But listen, my lord Baron, I have counsel for thy ear, and should you follow the same, you will render me, together with yourself, an especial service; on the contrary, if you ——"

"Proceed, Sir," exclaimed Glendovan, impatiently interrupting him; "I am anxious to ascertain to what extent your villainy will enable you to proceed."

"What I would say, my lord, is this," returned Dunbardon. "You know that I have long loved your daughter; what I would now propose is ——"

"What?" eagerly demanded the Baron.

"Be not too hasty," exclaimed the Viscount, "remember that your immediate freedom or perpetual bondage depends upon your answer; think well upon this, and ——"

"Be assured I will do so," replied Glendovan; "but have you forgotten, Sir, that I am impatiently awaiting your counsel; I demand without further delay to be informed as to your intentions or desires. Now, Sir."

"All I require," replied the Viscount, with the utmost *sang froid*, "is, that you grant me the hand of the Lady Isabella in marriage, and the immediate consent shall be accompanied by your unconditional freedom. What say you to this, my lord Baron? do you agree to my proposals?"

"Agree!" reiterated the Baron. "Monster!"

"And for what?" inquired Dunbardon. "For offering you freedom on such excellent terms. If you do well, my good lord, you now avail yourself of the advice I shall offer, and act in accordance with the same without further delay. I am rich and powerful; more so than any Scottish noble you can mention; what, then, can induce you to refuse me the hand of her I love? A mere idle fancy; and take heed, my lord, see that you indulge not in the same too far, or it may cost you dear. I should be loth to turn inquisitor, and use force where gentle means alone should prevail. Do you agree to my proposals?"

"Have I not already expressed my determination, Sir," inquired Glendovan, in a sarcastic tone.

"You have," replied the Viscount, "and as you appear determined to act in accordance with the same, I need no more delay, D'Arste," he continued, turning to the place where that worthy individual was standing; "yonder chains must once more be called into requisition. Those fetters, my lord," he continued, "are never placed upon any but those condemned to die; among which unhappy number I grieve to rank you. Yes; in one short hour from this, you will lie cold in death by the side of yonder bones, unless indeed within the hour you should repent of your obstinacy, and yield in acquiescence to my wishes."

Euraged at the silence of the Baron, for he replied not to the latter remark, Dunbardon made a sign to Pietro, who immediately approached with the fetters. No sooner had he come within reach of the Baron, than he rushed furiously upon him, and held him by the throat with such convulsive grasp that the fetters fell from his hand, and he appeared to be nearly strangled. The Viscount saw this, and seizing the Baron by the middle; drew him off as though he had been a mere child, then threw him to the ground, and with his own hand, despite the furious struggles of the prostrate man, attached fetters to his person, while D'Arste also contended with Strathallan.

"Now," exclaimed the Viscount, when both were manacled, "bind them to yonder stakes. Quick! obey!"

"What would you do, my lord?" inquired D'Arste.

"Teach them submission," vociferated Dunbardon. "Am I to be obeyed in this, or also to perform that duty with my own hands? Why this unnecessary delay? if ——"

"You have any very great desire for the business," exclaimed Pietro, interrupting him, "I shall of course resign it into your hands, and ——"

"Proceed!" cried the Viscount, impatiently; "proceed with the sentence."

"Which is ——"

"That they be manacled to yonder pillar, and perish by the flames that shall burn from beneath them," returned the Viscount, savagely.

D'Arste and Angus then performed the first part of the ceremony.

"Now set fire to the faggots beneath," commanded Dunbardon. "This," he continued, aside, "will test the courage and constancy of new captured friends."

The two confidantes were already in a kneeling attitude; the torches were applied, when, as if struck by a sudden thought, D'Arste exclaimed—

"Hold! Angus! Stay your hand for a few moments."

"And why?" thundered forth the Viscount. "Proceed!"

Again had Angus resumed his former attitude; again the torch was applied to the combustible pile.

"Eternal fiends!" exclaimed D'Arste, striking the flaming brand from the hand of his fellow, "am I not to be obeyed in any one instance? Stand aside! My lord," he continued, turning to the Viscount, who appeared petrified by extreme astonishment, "I would speak a word with you apart, if you will it so; if otherwise, I will speak openly my wishes."

"Wishes!" reiterated the Viscount.

"Yes, my lord," returned D'Arste; "wishes; nay, if the word likes you not, if you imagine I have addressed you improperly, I will say *commands*."

"However you word it the meaning will doubtless be the same," said the Viscount, greatly annoyed at the latter remark, though powerful as he was he feared to suffer his displeasure to be visible, "therefore I shall take it kindly if you will be pleased to explain more fully the import of your words."

"Then," replied D'Arste, "I would have you instantly quit this dungeon."

"What! know you to whom you speak?"

"I do," replied D'Arste, "the Viscount Dunbardon."

"And you would request—nay, command him to quit your presence—and think you I shall obey?"

"I think not about it," replied the other, "but am convinced you will not, dare not, refuse; as lord of this Castle, you can, to a certain extent exert your own will and pleasure, but the result of that you may very readily guess. How do you determine?"

"First," returned the Viscount, "I would know your reasons for desiring me to quit your presence. Answer me this, and truly, or fear—"

"Fear!" reiterated D'Arste, a contemptuous smile momentarily illumining his countenance; "talk you to Pietro D'Arste of fear? Has your lordship so soon forgotten the circumstance of my first appearance here? Talked you of fear then? ha! ha! ha! When you talk of *fear*, remember, that I it was who, when upon the—"

"No more!" exclaimed the Viscount, interrupting him, "I will retire awhile, and, remember, I shall in a short time return, when I hope to behold yonder lord extended lifeless and disfigured upon the pavement. Remember!"

"Merciless villain!" cried the Baron, who together with Strathallan had listened to the foregoing dialogue in silent amazement.

The Viscount then, accompanied by Angus, quitted the place.

"You appear wonder-stricken," observed D'Arste, turning to the Baron.

"And you," returned Glendovan, "appear to have an uninterrupted control over the will of your tyrant-lord."

"Appearance then does not belie itself in the present instance," replied Pietro coolly; "but listen, my lord—"

"These bonds are galling," interrupted the Baron; "first release myself and friend, and, my honour upon it, you shall not be further interfered with in your speech—not even though it should continue until midnight."

"Before I accede to your request," returned D'Arste, "I must know something about the reward I am likely to receive for the same."

"Mercenary wretch!" exclaimed the Baron.

"Why, my lord, why," returned D'Arste, "do you call me thus? In what do I differ from mankind in general? do not all first consult their own personal interests, even before they embark into any plan or consideration? all, all are alike—selfish, unjust, and avaricious—therefore, I ask again, in what do I differ from mankind in general?—in nothing—no one man is there but would sacrifice all other claims upon his honour and good name for the furtherance of his pecuniary interests! Where is the sordid miser who would not sacrifice all—aye, even his immortal soul, if it would

add to the useless treasure with which his coffers are already lined? What is money—I grant 'tis dross—but still 'tis the god, the idol of mankind! Man, though his talent and acquirements should eclipse all with their superiority and brilliancy, is, unless possessed of money to lavish on the world's creatures, useless—for even those who, when he has so done, affect to be lost in wonder and admiration of those accomplishments, which if seen under less profitable circumstances they would have condemned—aye, and even expressed their extreme surprise and disapprobation at the insolence and assurance of the man. Then with this example of the world's partiality before you, how can you accuse me with the crime of being mercenary, when you see by my argument that it forms so prominent a feature upon the world's great stage?"

"I have wrongly judged you," returned Glendovan; "surely you must have long been a philosopher to become thus deeply studied in the character of man; 'tis a task only to be accomplished by dint of long and intense application of study. I knew not until now of the knowledge concealed under your furrowed brow. But say what sum do you require for our instant liberation? Name it, and the reward shall soon be forthcoming."

"I require nothing, my lord," returned D'Arste. "I do remember me of a promise made to you when brought before you, and, in obedience to that promise, I now set you free!"

With these words, he loosened the bands that bound them, and the Baron, together with his friend, were once more free—from their fetters at least.

"Now," continued Pietro, "that you are liberated from your chains, the next care must be to make a successful attempt at escape. Follow me—quick, or the Viscount may yet detect us in the execution of our plan. Why do you hesitate?" he inquired, seeing that Glendovan made no effort to follow him.

"I am surprised to think you could so soon forget an insult."

"And why? my lord Baron."

"Are you not of Italian parents?"

"I am. Why do you ask that question?"

"Remember you what occurred a short time since?—have you forgotten my attack upon you?"

"I have not," replied D'Arste.

"And yet," continued the Baron, "you affect to render me a service! Dare I trust you?"

"Why this unnecessary delay, and these repeated interrogations! Surely you cannot be fully aware of the extreme danger, or you would be more anxious to be gone. What is it you fear?"

"I was meditating upon my present position," replied the Baron, "and considering whether it would be more advisable to remain here and confront our foe, than place ourselves under the guidance of an insulted Italian. Now you are informed of my real motives. Have I not acted justly towards you?"

"You have indeed, my lord," replied Pietro; "but fear not me, for though I am from the warm clime you speak of—aye, and a confirmed

villain—yet I am only the victim of circumstance. Many deeds, dark and mysterious, are attached to my name. For one act of damnable injustice have I sworn to be revenged on the whole human race. I have, in part, kept my oath, and while life remains within me will I continue to war on all mankind; and, did I but possess the power, the rising of to-morrow's sun should be the death-knell of millions—should proclaim the commencement of a dire and bloody massacre, from which but one should escape the general carnage."

"And that one," exclaimed the Baron.

"Is to you an entire stranger," responded D'Arste. "But come, my lord, neglect not to avail yourself of the present opportunity for effecting your escape from the power of tyranny. I am of a revengeful disposition, yet keenly alive to any act of kindness that may be at any time performed towards me. I was a short time since in your power; you might for the crime I attempted have consigned me to the depths of a dungeon, and have been highly justified in so doing. Instead of which, you yielded to my honour, and suffered me to go free. For that service, important in itself, I am yet your debtor, yet I would not have you, after this, confide farther in me. I may remember the insult you spoke of but now, and take an ample revenge for the same. Follow me!"

They did so; and, quitting the dungeon, they hastened along several dark, gloomy passages, and when about to cross a subterraneous gallery, the bright gleam of a torch for a moment served to illumine the scene of impenetrable darkness by which they were on all sides surrounded.

"Lie close," exclaimed Pietro, in an under-tone, "we need a guide to conduct us in safety through this seeming labyrinth of galleries. See, 'tis but a single man, and he shall be that guide, or die."

The man, who as they suspected proved to be one of the guards of the castle, now advanced with hasty strides, where in concealment lay his superior, and as he was about to pass the place, they suddenly rushed forward, and seized him from behind. The man being thus unexpectedly surprised, was about to utter a cry for assistance, when D'Arste, by a sudden turn, shewed the other who was his captor. This unpleasant discovery had the opposite effect of immediately banishing any idea he might have previously entertained of raising an alarm.

"Now, Sir," exclaimed Pietro, "we are anxious to be free from this place. You, I believe, are fully acquainted with all the various windings of these passages. Show us the way from this place. Hear you me?"

"I do," replied the man; "but I—I—have received no orders to that effect, and should my lord but ——"

"Nay," replied D'Arste, "I will hear of no subterfuge. Will you do as I desire. Remember, I am Pietro D'Arste; 'tis he that asks this of you, and beware how you deny me. Why this hesitation? Answer me!"

"Well," replied the man, after some farther hesitation, "I must e'en make a virtue of necessity, and perform the task, though I like it not."

"Into the care of this fellow I now leave you, my lord," said Pietro to the Baron. "I must return, in order to prevent a search, which at present would prove fatal to your interests. Watch him closely, and if you suspect him to be misleading you, let him not live to boast of his cunning."

Farewell! Look you, Sirrah," he continued, addressing the newly-elected guide, "I am about to return into the presence of your lord, and if you attempt to play them false, your own life shall pay the penalty. Beware!"

After again bidding the Baron and his companion farewell, and giving utterance to a parting admonition to the soldier, Pietro d'Arste retraced his steps towards the Torture Chamber, where we shall for the present leave him, and for a brief course at least follow in the track pursued by the fugitives, and their guide. They had continued for some time to thread innumerable passages, all of which were dark as the "silent recesses of the tomb of death," and still appeared not a jot nearer to their destination; when, growing somewhat mistrustful of their guide, the Baron drew his sword, which had been returned to him by D'Arste, and seizing the fellow with a suddenness that completely took him by surprise, placed the glittering blade to his breast, exclaiming as he did so—

"Harkee, Sirrah! I know not whether you intend playing me false; but entertaining, as I do, a great regard for your personal safety, I should advise you not to do so; or, if you neglect my caution, I —"

"A few moments will decide," returned the fellow; "this passage terminates in an opening which leads to the river's bank—at that opening we part. If you follow in the path that lies on your left hand, it will lead you direct to the western gate of Glendovan Castle."

"Thanks for your kindness!" exclaimed the Baron; "without your generous assistance we should never have effected our escape. Name the reward, and—"

"Nay, my lord," replied the soldier, "I acted not through hope of reward—no! 'twas fear that caused me to obey the commands of D'Arste. Here is the opening I spoke of; there lies your road, and here mine. I should advise you to use your best endeavours to reach a place of safety with all possible dispatch; for, should I encounter the Viscount, and he chance to question me, I must not fail to inform him of all I know concerning your flight. Adieu!"

With these words he disappeared. As may be supposed, Glendovan and his friend were not long in acting upon his parting admonition; but, on the contrary, they set off at a good round pace, and in an incredible short space of time afterwards arrived in perfect safety once more at Glendovan Castle.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

Quarrel between Dunbardon and Pietro d'Arste—his Defiance of the Viscount, who threatens to discard him.

UPON quitting the Baron Glendovan and Earl of Strathallan, as mentioned in the previous chapter, Pietro D'Arste returned to the Torture Chamber, in expectation of beholding the Viscount. In this he was disappointed; before he had been many moments there, however, he heard the footsteps of Dunbardon fast approaching. A moment more, and he had



The Viscount disguised as a Monk quitting Dan-ar-don Castle.

entered. Scarce had he done so, when he exclaimed in a furious tone, and foaming with rage—

“Where are the prisoners?”

“*Where?*” reiterated Pietro, “they have escaped.”

“Through the agency of ——”

“Myself,” returned D’Arste.

“Art mad, man?” exclaimed the Viscount, in agitation. “Know you who were our prisoners?”

“I do,” was the reply.

“Yet you suffered them to escape me.”

“I did.”

“Then may all the withering blasts of h—ll be yours!”

“Nay, spare your lungs, my lord, for I need not your curses; what I have done is without remedy.”

“Not wholly so,” exclaimed the Viscount; “I will despatch a party in search of them; they must overtake them. Then will my vengeance be secure.”

“Not so,” returned D’Arste; “they must not be pursued.”

“*Must not,*” vociferated the Viscount.

“Did I not speak sufficiently plain? if your lordship should labour under any mistake, I will repeat the words—*they must not be pursued!*”

No. 11.



"And why not, Sir? who is master here?"

"Yourself."

"Then, by your own reply, will I proceed."

And with these words the Viscount moved towards the door, as if about to quit the place. Pietro intercepted his course, and as he did so, exclaimed,

"My lord Viscount, I would have you beware. I have passed my word that these people shall pass unmolested, and not all the men within the edifice should prevail upon me to alter my determination. I need not inform you that I am highly calculated to stand up in my own defence; few men are there who would willingly encounter Pietro d'Arste, known as the *Italian Brigand*!"

"Your reasons for espousing the cause of this man, whom you know to be my most inveterate foe?" demanded the Viscount.

"He once performed a kind and disinterested action towards me," was the reply.

"How?"

"Remember you the night in the Abbey ruins?"

"I do. What then?"

"Suspecting the Baron was privy to your place of concealment, I reconnoitred the exterior of the Castle, and observing him and several other nobles upon the turret, I immediately drew a pistol from my belt, and levelled the same in the direction of the place where the Baron was standing, but this not having the desired effect, I also discharged a second, and not choosing to await the issue of this, I proceeded onwards, and in a few moments I was overtaken by a party of highlanders, who seized and dragged me before the Baron."

"And when there what reason did you assign for your murderous attack upon his life?" inquired the Viscount.

"Accused him of having your lordship in his power."

"And what did he then?"

"Suffered me to depart."

"And for this paltry service you suffered him to escape me now."

"I did so, and, what is more, pledged with him my word that you should not intercept his flight."

"Methinks you have grown marvellously scrupulous of late. The time has been when——"

"I would not have acted thus," interrupted D'Arste; "perhaps you may be right—I will not attempt to contradict your words—but with this man I have been slightly acquainted before. Astonished at his wholly unexpected generous behaviour towards one who so late had sought his life, I was easily betrayed into passing my word not to repeat the attempt, and, also, that should the opportunity present itself, and I be enabled so to do, I would repay the debt with interest. The time has now arrived, and with my life will I defend my generous foe!"

"D'Arste," returned the Viscount, "you act not up to the tenour of your agreement with me. What, if in return for your unjustifiable lenity, I should cast you from my confidence?"

"What say you, Viscount?" cried the other, with a sudden earnestness which momentarily alarmed even his companion; "dare you threaten me? Have you so soon forgotten the ties that bind us to each other, and——"

"No, more!" replied the Viscount; "I remember all—all—if——"

"No more, indeed," returned D'Arste; "you have dared to threaten, and I will quit your thick and sultry atmosphere. On the hills is gathered a powerful clan—men free of soul—men whose enfranchised spirits spurn even the titled ruffian seated on his gorgeous throne of power. Bold, courageous, and heedless of danger, they have lately sought in vain for their leader who in a moment of folly consented to become the hired myrmidon of a villain—one devoid of all honour and principle—one that would not shrink from the performance of damning deeds of the blackest hue. The brave men of the hills shall no longer seek in vain for him they know as leader. No! once again will he place himself at their head! Do you comprehend the purport of my words, my Lord Viscount?"

"I do," replied Dunbardon; "but there was no necessity for you to dwell thus harshly upon what I said. Full well I know you fear me not; our power is equal. We must not quarrel now. If I have offended you, you must think upon the rage disappointment often causes. I was excited to madness, and——"

"Had you dared, would have sacrificed me to your vengeance," interrupted D'Arste; "but, thanks to my fortune, I am equal to yourself, and fear not the outbursts of your furious nature. But, come, are we to take up our abode here? If you are pleased to remain, I make no opposition to your choice; but be it remembered, my lord, that upon a repetition of such words as you spoke but just now, I quit you for ever."

With these words D'Arste quitted the Chamber of Torture, leaving the Viscount to follow the dictates of his own inclination.

"Tis a strange unaccountable man that same D'Arste," soliloquised Dunbardon, on being left alone; "would that I could crush him! yet he may be of some future service to me. My own purpose answered, he shall live no longer! no, I will not hold myself in dread of any power, human or divine; but the Baron—he shall not escape me! no, if D'Arste will not second my designs, alone shall they be concocted, aye, and executed alone! Yes, to encompass my reason men must possess no small portion themselves! Now to dispath some of my confidential followers in search of the fugitives, who through the susceptibility of D'Arste have been suffered to escape me!"

He then quitted the hall, and in a short time afterwards four parties of soldiers had been dispatched in search of the Baron and his friend.

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## CHAPTER XV.

The Banquet—the Poisoned Cups—Preparations for the Marriage of Walter with Isabella—Deception of Dunbardon—his Defiance—the Demon.

UPON entering Glendovan Castle, the Baron was met by Walter Raven and the lady Isabella, who, upon beholding her parent, uttered a faint cry of joy, and fainted in his arms.

The Baron then commanded that she should be conveyed to her cham

ber. This done, he next gave orders that a grand banquet should be prepared, in order to celebrate the escape of himself and his friend from the bonds of tyranny.

They had not been long in the Castle, when a messenger entered the presence of the Baron, and informed him that a stranger awaited to see him without.

"What would he with me?" inquired Glendovan.

"I know not, my lord," was the reply.

"Then first institute the necessary inquiry: after which, say I will attend him."

The domestic bowed—departed, but in a few moments returned, with the information that the stranger was an applicant, and desired upon any terms to be admitted into the service of the Baron; but," continued the man, "methinks your lordship will do well not to accede to his desires."

"And why not, sirrah?" demanded Glendovan.

"His appearance, my lord, is anything but satisfactory."

"Peace, fool!" exclaimed the Baron; "see that his request be complied with, and instantly. Leave me!"

"Your commands, my lord, shall be obeyed," replied the other, retiring as he spoke.

"Stay!" exclaimed the Baron; "a banquet is this evening to be served up in the Hall, and, in order that we may judge more fully of this stranger's merits, let him attend our pleasure there!"

Chancing to wander through the eastern gallery, Walter Raven suddenly, and ere he became aware of the same, entered the Hall, which was now prepared for the entertainment. His attention was attracted towards the wine table, by observing a strange and somewhat suspicious looking personage busily engaged in transferring from a small blackened phial some liquid which was contained in the same into one of the golden goblets that were ranged around. This being done, he set a mark of recognition on the same.

Walter waited for no more; he had seen sufficient, and, accordingly, joined the party who were assembling in the saloon.

A short time after this, a domestic entered, and informed them that the banquet awaited their presence. They then proceeded, Walter leading the lady Isabella, with whom he was now become a constant companion, and preceded by her father and his friend. Upon their arrival in the hall, Wall Walter looked around for the stranger, whom he at length beheld stationed at the wine table. Upon perceiving this, he determined to observe him more closely. He did so; and the result of this was that, in the person of the new domestic, he discerned HIS SUPPOSED FATHER, the Captain of the Pirate-crew!

Instantly, upon making this discovery, Walter judged, and rightly too, the motives which had prompted him to assume his present disguise.

Having recovered from the effects of the wound he had received in his encounter with Walter and Stráthallan, he remembered the oath that he had taken—that he had sworn to be revenged on the latter for being the means of Walter's flight from him; and had now, under the guise of a hired domestic, obtained ingress into the Castle, in order the more effectually to accomplish his deadly purpose.

With dreadful anxiety did Walter await the issue of some desperate effort on the part of him, who, though known as his parent, he felt convinced no ties of consanguinity existed between them. One moment he had half determined to call Strathallan aside, and inform him of his fears and suspicions. No sooner, however, had this resolution been formed, than it was as quickly abandoned, and he had again resolved to abide the result calmly, and to watch the actions of the desperado before him.

The feast proceeded, and when the noble host commanded the cup-bearer to bring forward some wine, and two goblets had been proffered—one to Glendovan and the other to Strathallan—with a loud exclamation Walter rushed forward, and struck each vessel to the ground, at the same moment as the two friends were about to pledge each other in the potation.

Terror and surprise momentarily rivetted the attention of all who beheld this unexpected and uncourteous action. Walter was the first to break the reigning silence; drawing his sword, he glanced towards the place where the Pirate-captain was standing, and exclaimed—

“Doubtless, my lords, you were greatly surprised at my unexpected rudeness, as you may at present term it; but when I inform you that the wine you were about to drink was *poisoned*, you will perhaps forgive me for having taken the means that time and the emergency presented, in order to rescue you from the hands of death.”

“Said you not that the wine was poisoned?” inquired the Baron, without appearing to notice the latter remark.

“I did, my lord,” replied Walter; “and as a farther conviction of the truth of my statement, behold!” Turning at the words, the Baron discovered a favourite poodle, the property of his daughter, lying upon the ground, writhing in the agonies of death. He had swallowed a small portion of the poisoned draught, which had already testified its power. In a moment more the animal expired in dreadful agony.

“Who has committed this atrocious act?” inquired the Baron. “Is it yet known who has thus dared to commit——”

“No more, my lord,” interrupted Walter; “I regret to say it is known.”

“*Regret!*” reiterated Strathallan, “surely it is not Walter Raven that speaks thus; him who ever has appeared most ——”

“My lord,” exclaimed Walter, again interrupting, “it is indeed me, and *yonder*,” he continued, “stands him who, had it not have been for my timely interference, would ere this have been an assassin. That man is—*my father!*”

“Impossible!” exclaimed the Earl.

“’Tis no more impossible than true,” exclaimed the Pirate Captain, advancing to where they stood. “I am, indeed he who would have hurled destruction upon your head, and ——”

“No more!” vociferated the Baron. “Away with him!” he continued, addressing the already terrified domestics.

They simultaneously advanced, as though about to obey the commands of their lord. The Pirate-captain suddenly drew from his vest a brace of pistols; at the mere sight of these formidable weapons of destruction, they one all fled through absolute fear, leaving the Baron and others to secure the ruffian as they best could. Upon beholding this, he gave utterance to a loud laugh of exultation.

"Villain!" exclaimed the Baron, "surrender! think not to escape us. No; even if ——"

Before he could finish the sentence, several guards of the Castle entered, and, presenting their partizans at the head of the Pirate-captain, commanded him to surrender. He replied not, but still keeping the pistols pointed towards them, attempted to gain the door; in this he was frustrated; two of the soldiers seized him from behind, and before he could rally, he was overpowered by numbers. In the struggle that ensued, both the pistols were discharged, though without doing the slightest injury to any person; he was then borne off a prisoner, and secured within a dungeon's walls, there to meditate upon the ill consequences of his rash imprudence.

No sooner were they again alone, than the Baron seized Walter warmly by the hand, and as he did so, exclaimed—

"My generous preserver, my more than brother, what do I not owe you? how can I hope to repay the gratitude? If ——"

"Dare I but disclose it," exclaimed Strathallan, "I am half inclined to say I know how you could reward his zeal, and that to his own entire satisfaction."

"Then name it freely," replied Glendovan.

"If you would but bestow the hand of your lovely daughter there upon him, I feel convinced that he would esteem himself the happiest of men upon earth."

Upon hearing these words, Walter evinced great confusion, and the Lady Isabella, blushing deeply, cast her eyes upon the ground.

"If, indeed, this be the wish of my Isabella, I shall most cheerfully act in accordance with the same, and feel a degree of satisfaction seldom experienced, to know that I possess the power to perform a service for one to whom I owe so much. I am now resolved. You sir," he continued, turning to Walter, "love my daughter, and her confused silence convinces me that the passion is reciprocal; to-morrow evening shall see the chapel prepared for the marriage ceremony, if it be in accordance with your own wishes; if it be not, you, Walter, know where I may be found; but, come let not what has transpired mar the social hour, the banquet shall proceed, after which I shall expect your coming in the library."

\* \* \* \* \*

Having previously obtained the consent of his beloved Isabella, Walter proceeded as it had previously been arranged to the castle library, where he found the Baron awaiting his arrival. Upon entering, Glendovan motioned him to be seated; he did as desired, and the Baron thus addressed him—

"If I am not greatly mistaken, Walter Raven, you love my daughter Isabella?"

"I do, my lord," replied Walter.

"And mean her well?"

"As heaven is my judge."

"Read this," continued the Baron, proffering him a parchment; before doing so, however, Walter exclaimed—

"My lord, I fear there is one insurmountable bar to our union. I fear

I must decline the honour your benevolence would confer upon me, and resign your daughter to your own fostering care."

"How? what mean you? resign—I—I—sir, I would know what are your motives?"

"You shall, my lord," returned Walter? "they are pure and disinterested. Have you forgotten that the man upon whom you would bestow the hand of your daughter is an outcast—a beggar—and ——"

"That, sir, has been cared for," exclaimed the Baron, in a tone of assumed severity. "Will you be pleased to read that parchment."

Walter bowed an affirmative, and upon unfolding the same, discovered that he held a grant of four thousand pounds yearly for the natural life of himself and heirs. The extremity of surprise for a moment denied him the power of utterance; he would have poured forth his thanks, but the Baron, all generosity, precluded the possibility of this by quitting the chamber, and immediately dispatched a messenger to the Abbot of Inchaffy, requesting him to send one of the brotherhood on the following day in order to perform the ceremony. The messenger shortly returned, and informed him that a priest would attend accordingly. The Baron proceeded to inform Walter of the same, and observing him to appear somewhat gloomy, he in a tone of gaiety exclaimed—

"I never knew any one who was so dreadfully impatient, yet seem so to fear the arrival of that moment which is calculated to establish his happiness."

"Oh, my lord," replied Walter, "you know not what contending thoughts now rack my brain. I have a heart that trembles even with hope, for sad forebodings rush unbidden to the seat of reason, and as the time draws nigh, I have serious apprehensions upon my mind of coming danger."

"What do you mean?" demanded the Baron, with looks of unfeigned surprise.

"Why," replied Walter, with a deep sigh, "nothing can efface from my mind the fear that, on the day of my marriage with your lovely and all-accomplished daughter, she will be forced from my arms by Dunbardon."

"Dunbardon!" reiterated the Baron, starting with surprise; "how—what mean you?"

"I know not," returned Walter, "though ——"

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Glendovan, "away with these idle fears. How can that possibly be effected? Shall not the Castle be guarded by my faithful vassals? how shall he then obtain an entrance? If he *does* so, he must have recourse to supernatural, not mortal, means, in order to effect his purpose."

"I sincerely wish it may be so," returned Walter, "but am much afraid this presentiment of fear will prove to have been entertained with ample cause, and my expected bliss changed for dark despair."

"Come, come," exclaimed the Baron, "do not, I pray you, torment yourself thus by the dread anticipation of dangers that cannot—will not arrive."

Walter shook his head in silence.

"Will nothing serve to dispel the gloom which now pervades your spirits? Be not dismayed, I entreat you, by vain, foolish fears; banish that grave, melancholy face, and assume one of joy. Is not the moment fast approach-

ing when the hand of her you adore will be yours? My dear Walter, even though Dunbardon should make the attempt, which is not at all probable, he will find, and to his cost, that he must first conquer my brave vassals before he could obtain admission to the Castle."

"I fear the truth of this, my lord, but hope you will not be in error.

"Do not, I pray you," continued the Baron, "indulge in such thoughts, for while I am able to wield a sword, my life shall ever be devoted to the service of my brave deliverer. Banish then such thoughts, they are heedless; mar not, I beseech you, our jovial hours by such sad foreboding, that will not be attended with conviction."

After conversing upon various topics, they separated.

The happy, yet dreaded day at length arrived. The large Gothic hall was on all sides hung with the various trophies the family of Glendovan had taken in battle from their enemies; and its walls were covered with tapestry illustrative of the scenery around. The Standard of the family, which had so long lain neglected in dust, was now unfurled, and waved in proud grandeur upon the ramparts of the Castle.

The chapel where the ceremony was to take place, was richly adorned with festoons of flowers whose lively bright hues formed a striking contrast to the low, heavy pillars that supported the roof, and the deep, awful gloom of the surrounding walls.

The altar was covered with white and blue satin, with a rich gold-lace border in the midst. A large crucifix of black ebony rose to the vaulted roof behind, which was a magnificent painting of the Resurrection.

The delicious, fragrant perfume of the incense that burned upon the altar; the rich bloom of the flowers around the Cross, and the blaze of lights that illumined the place, inspired the mind with reverential awe.

The Earl of Strathallan, accompanied by Glendovan, first entered the chapel, followed by Walter Raven and the lady Isabella. A numerous train of ladies, domestics, and soldiers brought up the rear.

The lady Isabella was attired in a purple velvet robe, deeply fringed with gold: in the centre of the dress was embroidered a thistle-leaf, fastened at the bosom with clasps of pearl; her hair was without any ornament, with the single exception of a small sprig of diamonds in front.

Walter was attired in the Highland garb, with a richly embroidered sash thrown gracefully over his shoulders, from which also was suspended a magnificent sword, the handle of which was inlaid with gold. Upon his head he wore a crimson velvet bonnet with a brilliant diamond-buckle overshadowed by a large plume of feathers. Upon his breast he wore a star.

The Baron Glendovan was attired in a dress of red and green tartan fancifully wrought with silver. A sumptuous sword, studded with diamonds, hung from a belt of pearl.

As the lady Isabella surveyed the nuptial preparations, a deep blush tinged her fair cheeks; her confusion was increased by the raillery from the Earl of Strathallan.

In a short time afterwards the warden entered, introducing the friar, who bowing crossed his hands in silence upon his breast, while his eyes were fixed immovably upon the ground. As Walter surveyed him, he remarked



First and unexpected Meeting of the Ladies Isabella and Elizabeth.

a sternness and cunning depicted in the monk's brow. His figure, though effectually shrouded in long black drapery, appeared to the Argus-eye of Walter to be strong and masculine, of about the middle stature. Under his cowl was seen a scowling eye, that seemed to watch every motion of Raven.

Walter was greatly surprised to behold such deep traits of villany marked in a visage—so different from what he expected to find; naturally thinking that in the countenance of a monk there should be nothing but meek devotion and holy love. He did not communicate his fears to the Baron, but continued to observe him with looks of dread and suspicion; while his mind was filled with gloomy forebodings of approaching danger.

The Monk proceeded up the steps of the altar with a slow, solemn pace. Walter slowly followed, leading with him his blushing bride. After having taken their stations at the altar, upon a preconcerted signal being given, the attendant bards chaunted forth a hymn to Justice.

When the Monk was about to commence the service, he suddenly dashed the book which he had held in his hand with great violence to the ground, and started back, with a pale quivering lip, upon beholding another Monk suddenly enter the chapel.

“Ah! death and fiends!” he exclaimed, in a furious tone, “I am undone—ruined for ever, if this foul miscreant be not instantly dispatched! There, fend, take the reward due to thy treachery!”



And throwing off his friar's habit, with these words, all discovered in the person of the supposed Monk, the Viscount Dunbardon armed with a dagger in each hand. With a savage, demoniacal laugh of triumph he rushed up to the spot where Walter was standing.

Before he had time to strike, he was disarmed by the domestics of the Castle.

The horror of this unexpected discovery had such an effect upon the feelings of the Lady Isabella, that she uttered a faint scream and fell insensible into the arms of her father, who, upon discovering the cheat that had been practised upon them, rushed forward, sword in hand, in anticipation of what would follow.

For some time all were struck dumb with astonishment, and overspread with terror, at the boldness of the impostor.

After a long struggle the Viscount succeeded in escaping from the attendants, and rushing up to the spot where the lady Isabella was held still insensible by her father, he stamped upon the pavement. A private door in the wall immediately opened; a formidable body of armed ruffians, headed also by a friar, issued from the door into the chapel. They were drawn up by their monkish leader, fronting the vassals of Glendovan, in battle array.

The clan of the Baron Glendovan were highly enraged at this indignity, and the profanation offered to their religion by Dunbardon's stealing into the castle under the disguise of a priest; and with such fury were their minds inflamed, that it was with difficulty they could restrain themselves until their lord should give the signal for an attack.

"Now, lady, you are mine!" exclaimed the Viscount in a furious tone, seizing the Lady Isabella by the hand; "and shall be so, by every attribute of heaven or h—! Nay, tremble not, fair lady, to receive a hand so deeply imbrued in human blood: you have oft eluded my vigilance, and frequently caused me much trouble and inconvenience; but you shall not escape me now. Come, prepare! begin the sacred rites."

The friar was about to obey, when a low hollow groan vibrated along the roof of the chapel.

At the sound of this the guilty Viscount started suddenly; trembled; and turned pale. The extreme terror depicted in his countenance assisted to dispel the stupefaction that had seized their senses by the sudden and unexpected appearance of the tyrant. Walter was the first to interfere. Observing the Viscount's agitation, he advanced with his drawn sword, and, seizing upon the hand of his affianced bride, in a tone of command insisted that the usurping villain should instantly quit the castle. Baron Glendovan, and Strathallan also, approached. Observing this, the followers of Dunbardon advanced towards their master. Immediately upon beholding this, the retainers of Glendovan castle rushed upon them, and a terrific conflict now ensued.

Many fell on all sides; and at length, the Monk, who fought with great skill and bravery, fell, bathed in blood. The death of their leader caused great confusion and disorder among the band. The forces of Glendovan each moment obtained some new advantage; and, at length, compelled the followers of Dunbardon to make a precipitate retreat; leaving their lord behind, unprotected, and in the power of his enemies.

Dunbardon, mad with rage at finding himself thus forsaken by his followers, turned furiously round, and drawing his sword, exclaimed—

“Eternal fiends! do mine eyes deceive me, or is it —— No matter! come on! I defy thee!”

“Stay!” cried the Earl of Strathallan, seeing that the contest was about to commence; “let the strife be mine alone. I have long sworn to be revenged on yonder villain, and now ——”

“Nay!” returned Walter, with emphasis, “mine shall be the task; yonder villain has more than once crossed me, and now I am determined to be revenged.”

“Your spirit and sentiments I admire,” exclaimed Dunbardon, in a sarcastic tone, “though I abhor your person.”

“If life is dear to thee,” responded Glendovan, “instantly yield yourself an acknowledged prisoner to our arms.”

“Never!” replied the Viscount, with energy; “and thou,” he continued, turning to the place where Walter was standing, “hast once called me a base usurper; this foul reproach can only be washed out with blood; beware, then, of my vengeance!”

“Your vengeance,” returned Walter, “I defy; and for the rest, what are you *but* an usurper? It is rumoured abroad that you foully murdered the late possessors of Dunbardon Castle and estates, in order to obtain an early possession of the same yourself. The infant heir ——”

“Died!” exclaimed Dunbardon, impatiently interrupting him; “died, too, from natural consequences. What more would you say?”

“You dare not again deny the awful truth!” returned Walter, gazing with horror upon the altered countenance of the Viscount, whose face had now turned ghastly pale, his eyes rolled, and his whole frame appeared to be convulsed with extreme terror. “The honest tinge of nature has now blanched thy cheek, and conscience, ever true to her task, stamps indelibly on your gloomy brow the unquestionable evidence of guilty terror.”

“If,” replied Dunbardon, “you possess the courage to defend what you now have spoken, why stand thus inactive? Surely *fear* must be a sentiment unknown in your chivalrous bosom. Why not, then, endeavour to take a life you seem to hate? I am nothing more than mortal; my sword no more than steel; though some I have heard, do give me credit for being the impersonator of an unearthly being of questionable reputation. What think you; Sir Knight?”

“I know nor care not if what you say be true, or otherwise——” returned Walter. “But this I can plainly perceive, that how great soever may be your share of personal valour, you tremble at the fate which now awaits you; therefore I would again advise thee to yield submission to a superior force, and thus escape with that life which, should you resist our combined power, must inevitably pay the forfeit of your temerity.”

“Never!” exclaimed Dunbardon, rushing forward; “my voice is in my sword. Ah! do I then behold in my present opposer him who has always defeated me? Madman, to put yourself within reach of my sword! Though your better fortune has hitherto protected and favoured you from my just rage and vengeance, you will now find it hard to make me yield; though you have always escaped my vigilance, I shall not, now that you have thus

rashly placed yourself in my power, spare my hated foe. Tremble, rash boy! no power above or below shall shield thee from my vengeance now."

Walter then delivered the Lady Isabella to the care of several waiting-women, and rushed upon the Viscount with great heat and fury.

The combat long appeared doubtful, until at length Walter, by a dexterous back-stroke, succeeded in disarming his antagonist, who immediately sank upon his knees and implored for mercy.

The brave and generous youth, on beholding the ferocious man at his feet, instantly forgot his wrongs, and returned to him his sword.

No sooner had the prostrate ruffian received this mark of Walter's generous forbearance, than he started suddenly to his feet, and exerting his whole strength with one great effort he broke the sword of his antagonist, and seizing him fiercely by the throat forced him to the ground.

Walter, confounded at finding himself thus at the entire mercy of his ferocious opponent, stared aghast. The Viscount, exulting in the complete success of his well executed desire, contemplated with apathy his prostrate and defenceless foe; and while a smile of savage joy for a moment appeared to illumine his harsh features, suddenly, and with diabolical emphasis, he exclaimed, as his sword was upraised in the air,

"Die! vile reptile of the earth; thou thorn to my bosom; and may all my enemies perish thus!" And with these words he was on the point of plunging the blade of his sword into Walter's body.

Seeing this, the Baron Glendovan was about to rush forward; but his interference was unnecessary; ere the Viscount could strike the intended blow, before him stood the ARMED FIGURE mentioned in the foregoing pages.

On beholding this spectre, the Viscount let go his hold of his prostrate foe, and receded several paces, with horror. The apparition, frowning upon the tyrant, then disappeared.

Meanwhile Glendovan had presented a sword to Walter, who now advancing towards the Viscount, in an indignant tone exclaimed,

"Base, treacherous villain! is it thus that you repay humanity by acts of black, damnable villany and cowardice? At such a deed of atrocity even the most abject villain would have recoiled with horror. None but you would even have thought——"

"Cease, vain boaster!" cried the furious Viscount, "with thy ill-timed taunts, and let our swords decide this war of words."

"Agreed!" returned Walter; "and may the soul of him who falls take its flight into a better world; and with a conscience purified from all the foul crimes that are attached to it!"

"Say on, nor recommence till your prayers be completed," retorted Dunbardon, with a ghastly smile of horror; "that can never be my fate; no matter; come! a few short moments will decide——"

"Whether you or I must live," interrupted Walter; "for, by heaven, I swear not to cease the struggle until the blood of one or both shall be mingled with the dust!"

"Bravely spoken!" exclaimed the Viscount, with a sneer; "by all that's sacred, I gave you not credit for the possession of so much genuine courage before now, Sir Knight."

The combat was then renewed with great fury. Dunbardon, despite his boasted skill as a swordsman, received a wound in the left arm, and, at length, becoming desperate, he suddenly closed upon his antagonist, and seizing upon the hilt of his sword with one hand, aimed a terrific blow at his breast with the other. This Walter avoided by starting suddenly aside. Still grasping firmly his sword, the Viscount was about to repeat the attempt, when he received a tremendous blow on the left shoulder from behind.

Shrieking with agony, he turned to see who had done this, and observed a highlander with a mace upraised as if about to repeat the blow. The Viscount rushed suddenly upon him, and, seizing him by the throat, would have strangled him, but being overcome by previous exertion fainted into the arms of a domestic, and for a moment appeared to be fast sinking into death; but, a short time after this, breaking from the hold of the vassal, he again advanced towards the place where Walter was standing, his countenance pale and haggard, and again renewed the contest.

After a brief struggle Walter succeeded in passing his blade through the body of the Viscount, who with a loud cry fell bleeding to the ground. For some few moments he spoke not; at length, by a desperate effort, he exclaimed,

"May all the fierce lightnings of Heaven blister you and yours for ever! may the avenging powers crush you for this! Perdition catch thee! Fiends seize and tear thy limbs! may they nor you ever know the nature of—oh, curse—curse—you!"

"Guilty wretch!" exclaimed Walter, "you are now upon the last sad scene of life; the moments you have to live are few and numbered; therefore, in prayer should you spend them, and of offended heaven entreat forgiveness for the manifold crimes that have marked your guilty career. Do this, and you may yet hope for mercy."

"Peace, fool!" cried the Viscount, furiously; "nor delude yourself longer with the false hope that I am now about to yield up my life thus, and leave you here to enjoy the triumph. No! I have yet much to accomplish; much that concerns you, and your lady also. She shall be mine! All my great and incomprehensible plans shall be accomplished: aye, and to the letter."

"Heedless man!" continued Walter; "you grow delirious; a farther proof that your frame is now smitten by the hand of death."

"Death!" reiterated the Viscount; "I fear it not: for me it has no terrors. No! I possess a charm that can counteract even that power before which you, and all of earthly mould, must in humble submission bend the knee; and could crush you all into dust; aye, and in a moment too!"

"Were it indeed as you say," returned Walter, "you would not have suffered yourself to have been reduced to your present helpless condition; but have worked our ruin from the moment of your first entry here."

"No!" returned Dunbardon; "I reserved the display of my power until this moment: Behold!"

And with these words he held the talismanic casket above his head, and as he did so, *muttered the Incantation.*

The effect of this was soon visible to all; a loud crash was heard! a

portion of the stone pavement started aside! and THE DEMON OF THE GLEN stood before the prostrate Viscount!

"How is this?" he exclaimed, in a dreadful tone. "Why am I summoned here? Speak!"

"Dare you ask this?" enquired Dunbardon; "when you behold the present state of exhaustion in which I lie."

"What would you with me?" demanded the demon; "Arise, unharmed! Now," he continued, as obedient to his power Dunbardon arose from the ground as though he had never been wounded, "what further service would you have performed?"

"Yonder villain, confined in Dunbardon castle!" vociferated the Viscount.

"Have thou thy wish!" responded the demon.

Scarce had he uttered the words, when a figure, clothed in a suit of mail, and holding in its right hand a crucifix, appeared before them. At the sight of this, the demon instantly disappeared; leaving the Viscount to accomplish his will as he best could.

Upon beholding this, Dunbardon stamped his foot with rage; again elevated the casket, and muttered the first portion of the Incantation; a second thought, however, appeared to alter his determination; for, suddenly remembering the fiendish laugh that accompanied the disappearance of his familiar, he replaced the talisman in his vest, and folding his arms in calm desperation, awaited the arrival of coming events.

As may be supposed, Walter, the Baron, and others assembled, were all greatly astonished at what had transpired; for though none save Dunbardon had beheld the Demon, yet the words were distinctly heard by all present.

"Now, villain!" exclaimed Walter, "your fiendish accomplice has deserted you, and you are once more in our power. Guards! forward! and sieze him!"

Obedient to the command of Walter, and before Dunbardon could throw himself into a defensive attitude, he was overpowered by several men at arms.

"Now!" continued Glendovan, when this had been accomplished, "bear him to one of the dungeons beneath the Castle."

"Your triumph will be short-lived! I shall yet be revenged! and then—"

"Away with him!" shouted the Baron.

Dunbardon was accordingly forced from their presence. The whole party, whose spirits were greatly depressed by the scene they had witnessed, then retired within the Castle.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

Walter Raven—His Visit to the Dungeon of the captured Pirate, his reputed Father—Projected plan for his Escape.

THE turret clock of the Castle had tolled forth the sombre hour of midnight, and all the inhabitants had long been buried in the balmy depths

of slumber; when, shrouding his person in a plaid, taking a lamp in one hand, and grasping his sword in the other, Walter Raven quitted his chamber for the purpose of discovering, by some means, where the dungeon might be situated in which his reputed father was confined, and of visiting that desperate outlaw in his captivity. He crossed several galleries and long dreary passages in uninterrupted silence; until at length he came up with one of the numerous sentinels stationed beneath the Castle. The man immediately presented his partizan, and demanded to know who it was that traversed the Castle at so late an hour.

"A friend," replied Walter, attempting to pass on.

"Whether friend or foe," returned the man, "you pass not here; my duty it is to prevent all persons from traversing this place, if they know not the pass-word—of which you appear in ignorance."

"I confess, my friend, I am so," said Walter; "but you will not commit a breach of duty in suffering me to pass unmolested."

"You may speak truly, Sir," rejoined the soldier, in a reverential tone; "but I dare not suffer you so to do, until I know who you may be; that done, perhaps I might alter my determination, and allow you to pass."

"Know then that my name is *Walter Raven*."

"Surely then," returned the man, "you are the individual who is son to that ras—; I beg pardon, Sir;—that gentleman who was detected in his base attempts to poison the wine yesterday?"

"I am. What then?"

"Nothing; only that the prisoner is continually raging about you."

"Indeed! and what is the substance of his discourse?"

"Vowing the most deadly oaths of vengeance against yourself," replied the soldier.

"I would now visit that man," exclaimed Walter, "and you," he continued, turning to the man, "must conduct me thither."

"Are you mad," inquired the other, "that you talk thus? his threats are against your life, and —"

"I care not for that," returned Walter; "if you will conduct me to him, mine shall be the risk."

"Well," replied the soldier, "if that is your mind, I have not the least objection to oblige you. This way, Sir!"

After proceeding through several passages, they halted before the door of a dungeon. The sentinel then quitted Walter, and in a few moments returned, accompanied by a gruff-looking personage, who, from the huge bunch of keys that hung from his girdle, Walter took—and rightly—to be the jailor.

Without uttering a sound, the new-comer thrust a large key into the lock, lowered the massive bar that crossed its centre, and then threw wide the door, when the trio entered the dungeon, and Walter beheld his reputed father seated upon a huge block of stone, heavily manac'ed.

Upon their entrance, he started, cast a furtive glance upon his visitors, and then relapsed into his former thoughtful attitude.

"Father!" exclaimed Walter, "do you not know me?"

"Father!" reiterated the captive-robber; "who's he that calls me by the name of father; 't's a name that reflects no honour upon the possessor."

"I—I had a son—but he died—oh, yes! he would not have thrown me into this gloomy place; he would not have frustrated my means of vengeance upon my enemies. No! none of this would Walter Raven have done; he was a dutiful son—no power could have tempted him to betray his father, the man who had reared him from infancy. False—"

"Friends," said Walter, "may I entreat that for a few moments you will leave me with this man! I have some questions of importance to propose."

The men bowed and retired.

Walter closed the door upon them, then proceeding to where his father was bound, and laying his hand lightly upon the Pirate's shoulder, exclaimed—

"Father! do you not know me? I am Walter."

"Of that I am already aware," replied the other; "what then?"

"I thought by your previous discourse your reason had fled, and that you—"

"Was a confirmed madman?" interrupted the Pirate captain; "did you know my reasons for so doing?"

Walter replied in the negative.

"Then I will tell you," rejoined the other. "I have heard much of the benevolent principles of this Baron Glendovan, and I thought by affecting the madman, he might take some pity upon my condition, and so set me at liberty. Now that I have informed you thus far; what think you of my plan—will it succeed?"

"Decidedly not," replied Walter; "the Baron is so greatly incensed at your atrocious attempt yesterday that, friend as I am, I should not even wish him to know that I had visited you."

"That is some little consolation, truly," replied the captain; "then I must reconcile myself to this gloomy hell-palace until death shall remove me from it?"

"Not so," returned Walter; "I am here now for the purpose of aiding your escape."

"How?"

"I have a free passage over the entire edifice, and will now endeavour to place my knowledge to a good account."

"Are those fellows that accompanied you hither, to be made privy to the plan?"

"No!" returned Walter, "they are not."

"Then the utmost secrecy, is absolutely necessary to its success," exclaimed the captive pirate, "and now," he continued, "how do you intend to commence operations?"

"You shall hear," returned Walter, "I must first contrive to dispatch these men from the spot upon some trifling pretext, and in the meantime our escape must be effected."

"That you have told me before," returned the other; "but I am anxious to learn how this is to be effected."

"That I must, for the present at least, express my utter inability to answer to that inquiry—yet hold. I will first try the effect of a bribe upon the guard, yet should he refuse to comply with our wishes —"



Rescue of the Lady Elizabeth by Walter Raven and the Baron.

“He must then be silenced and effectually.”

“How, what mean you?”

“Who is it that ask’s me this question?” returned the captive Pirate, “can it be you Walter Raven? you whom for twice ten years knew no other home than the robber’s gloomy abode of crime; you who have so oft been the partner of our expeditions, and ever shewn a firm heart and willing hand for murder’s fell purpose, and plunder’s glorious cause? yet I had forgotten; the scented atmosphere of power, the gilded hall of lordly wealth has dispelled—for ever, banished—from the mind of the low-born robber’s fou—I should say *offspring*, all manly thoughts, and naught but romantic ideas of chivalry, love, and knight-errantry, pervade the use and call of reason. Useless thoughts—damnable treason—fools—passions—coward’s notions of honour, now usurp the place where in men’s breasts is nurtured gratitude, valour, and manly hopes of future greatness; and this pitiable object of general care and compassion—this renegade—is he, whom, with such care, I have, from the days of puling and helpless infancy upwards nurtured with the greatest care and attention possible, regardless alike of every manifold trouble and expence, with which the vast undertaking has been fraught; now that he has arrived at years of maturity, a time when all warmer feelings of human passion should prompt him to repay with deep interest the debt he owes, he casts me into a gloomy dungeon, defeats the plan of that vengeance so long hugg’d next my heart, contrives



to obtain an interview to enable him to give utterance to vile taunts, and slur, in contemptuous terms, my overthrown power. I propose the most safe—the only means—by which my liberty can be regained, and from the execution of this he affects to recoil with deep, heart-felt horror and disgust. Hear this, ye parents! howl it forth, ye winds! from henceforth, fathers, suffer not your brats to live. No! I would not; strangle them while even yet your hand can grasp their tiny throats—at the moment when worldly life is first instilled into their infant frames. This do, then will you not be torn, your hearts writhed by their black, damnable ingratitude hereafter, as mine has been. Oh, Walter!" he continued, lowering his voice, "little thought I to have been brought to this degraded condition, and by you."

"Sir," exclaimed Walter, with somewhat of indignant scorn in his tone, "I have always been led to believe that you are my parent, and as such I have, I flatter myself, ever obeyed your injunctions with all due, cheerful obedience and alacrity; though within my own heart is enwrought the conviction, firm and lasting, that no such ties ever existed between us. Therefore you now may take back the taunts and reproaches you so late cast upon me, and hear me, as a future proof of that respect which, until the sad mystery of my birth shall be revealed—as I am thoroughly convinced it must be, though the joyous day may be yet far distant—I do show you, that had any other than you have dared to utter such vile asperities, I would have seen him bleeding at my feet. If," he continued, approaching nearer the spot where the Pirate-chief was standing, "if you know aught of my birth, for the love of Heaven and mercy, keep it not from me; long has my breast been tortured with doubt, and contending with hope and fear, for the result. Oblige me by informing me of this, and by my sword, that precious badge of honest valour, I swear for ever to become your most abject slave. If this induce you not, then name your own proposals, and however preposterous they may be, again I swear to accede to the same, and cheerfully."

"And now that you have made to me this proposal, what would you have me say?" inquired the Pirate; "who shall I say were your parents?—you would wish them to be of high birth of course—then the manner in which I first received you? and that, I suppose, must be from some four or five armed ruffians seated in an old and dilapidated cottage by the river side, or not choosing this, it must be from some old hermit whose place of abode was situated ——"

"Where? where?" cried Walter, with sudden energy.

"In the mouldering and ivy-grown remains of some antiquated and ruined abbey. If this suit not your fancy, romantic though it be, I can say no more."

"Oh, sir," exclaimed Walter, "this is cruel, very cruel! Why sport thus with my feelings? I have a heart that can forgive a past injury, even though that injury should ultimately place my very life in danger; therefore, if at any distant and former period you should, in the pursuits of your dark exploits, have encountered them, and their very lives have become a sacrifice to the murderer's knife, I can forgive even that, so you do but acknowledge the same. Speak, I implore you. Say if, indeed, such has been the case, and thus in part ease my troubled mind of the burden which time, instead of lessening has rendered almost insupportable."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed the other, with ill-disguised impatience, "why do you trifle time with this fooling; am I to remain for ever a prisoner here, or will you aid my escape? I care not which it may be, so you do but use dispatch. Now, how am I answered? does your noble blood recoil with horror and disgust from this act also?"

"No," replied Walter, "in silence follow me, and the result will soon be shewn, then if I give you ample cause to say you have wronged me, may Heaven for ever blast the hope now kindled nearest my heart, and cause ill success to attend all my actions. This way, father; hush; silence."

They then quitted the dungeon, and with slow and noiseless steps proceeded through several of the subterraneous passages, without knowing where they would lead them, until, at length, their onward progress was suddenly arrested by the sound of approaching footsteps, which each succeeding moment grew more distinct and loud.

"What is now to be done?" inquired Walter of his companion; "shall we still advance, or recede?"

"Recede!" reiterated the pirate; "never. While I have a spark of life within my body, I will defy them all; even death itself were preferable far to hated bondage. Come Walter, forward!"

"Hush!" returned Walter; "would it not be far more advisable to conceal ourselves, though it be but for a moment, behind this friendly buttress; 'twill give us time, afford an admirable opportunity to reconnoitre, and besides this, if our foes are not numerous, which I do not believe them to be, we can seize —"

"And, if occasion need, *silence* them," from behind suggested the outlaw.

"Even so," returned Walter, with a deep-drawn sigh.

A moment more sufficed to bring the objects of their fears and expectations to the spot where the two were concealed, when Walter recognized in them the persons of the gaoler and the guard who had been placed as sentinels on the exterior of the dungeon.

By common consent they were permitted to pass unmolested, and proceeded onwards to the dungeon, followed closely and cautiously by the pirate chief. The two former entered the place where so lately they had left the objects of their present search, and were about to give utterance to the surprise their non-appearance had caused in words, when they were suddenly seized from behind, thrown to the ground, the before-mentioned huge bunch of keys taken from the leathern belt that encircled the waist of the gaoler, and threatened with instant death if they attempted to raise an alarm: then taking the sword of the former, and the partizan of the latter, the door was once more reclosed, the key applied, the lock turned upon them, and the discomfited pair left within the gloomy and narrow precincts of a subterraneous dungeon, to indulge in their own meditations, which, judging from the discontentment of mankind in general, even when surrounded by all calculated to make life's passage sweet, we should be inclined to say were not fraught with much real pleasure to the newly-elected captives.

## CHAPTER XVII.

The Ruffians—Courage of Walter Raven—Rescue of the Lady Elizabeth by him—her visit to Glendovan Castle.

ON the day succeeding the night upon which the before-mentioned occurrence took place, as the Baron Glendovan, the Earl of Strathallan, and Walter Raven, were indulging in a ramble through the neighbouring forest, their ears were suddenly assailed by a loud shriek. At the sound of this they started with surprise, and listened with the greatest possible attention for a repetition of the sound; this they had not to wait for long, for the next instant another heart-rending cry rent the vacant air.

At this they simultaneously drew their swords.

“By heaven!” exclaimed Walter, advancing a few paces, “that was the cry of a female. Perhaps,” he continued, after a momentary pause, “some lady may be struggling in the arms of a ferocious ruffian, who, destitute alike of all sentiment or feeling of honour or humanity, is, despite her piteous shrieks and cries for mercy, now, without opposition, bearing off this weak and defenceless victim to the stronghold of his villany; while we, being in ignorance as to the right path that may guide us to the spot, are rendered utterly incapable of offering that assistance to persecuted virtue I so ardently desire. Heard ye that terrific appeal to our hearts? As men and friends to humanity, by heaven! my lords, I shall go well nigh mad with impatient ardour if thus inactive we tarry longer. Would that I had the villain or villains here, and within my grasp; I would not harm a worm, yet were they now before me, this good sword should speedily provide a crimson sacrifice to the shrine of persecuted innocence.”

“Hark!” exclaimed Glendovan, “the sound grows more distant; follow me, and my life on’t we shall soon track the villains in their lair. Now, forward! quick!”

“Not too hastily, my friends,” interposed Strathallan, “or we shall betray ourselves before the fitting moment; for rest assured that there are such things as scouts to be encountered. Caution will be the only means of success.”

With these words they simultaneously proceeded onwards, and having arrived at the extremity of the before-mentioned path, an impenetrable cluster of fir trees interrupted their farther progress. At this instant, another loud shriek told that the Baron had not been mistaken in his conjectures.

Walter Raven, all impatient however, in a moment more contrived with his sword to hew a passage through the foliage, and the next instant disappeared from the astonished gaze of his companions, who were completely taken aback by the sudden and unexpected success of Walter’s labours.

Scarce had he disappeared, when the clashing of swords told them he had met an adversary, and a faint cry of joy also told that one person at least had profited by his timely interference. Upon hearing this, the Baron, proceeded with Strathallan, to pass the aperture also, and there beheld Walter contending with two ruffians, in one of which the Baron in-

stantly recognised D'Arste, whose countenance was completely concealed beneath a mask; the other he could not succeed in recognising. The object of their fierce contention was a young and lovely female, who stood a few yards only from the combatants, who still fought with the greatest skill and desperation. With the aid of Glendovan they were soon enabled to put the ruffians to flight, and upon addressing the rescued lady, Walter learned from her that she was the sister of the Baron Glenis, and that her name was the Lady Elizabeth. Upon discovering this, he inquired of her how she had thus become exposed to the ruffian's power; when, from her statement it appeared that, tempted by the fineness of the evening, she had quitted the Castle on horseback in order to indulge in a ramble through the forest, when, by some unaccountable accident she had become separated from the two attendants that accompanied her, and upon turning an angle of the forest, she had been suddenly attacked by the ruffians from whose power they had rescued her.

Upon hearing this, the Baron proposed that they should immediately repair to Glendovan Castle, and the Lady Elizabeth gladly consenting to this, they then without further delay set forward, and in a short time afterwards arrived at their destination. Upon their gaining the interior of the Castle, Lady Elizabeth, by the request of Glendovan sought the presence of the Lady Isabella, whom she discovered seated in a pensive attitude upon a couch in one of the antechambers at the eastern wing of the Castle.

Upon beholding the Lady Elizabeth, Isabella rose, and taking her by the hand kindly inquired as to the state of her health. To this the Lady Elizabeth received a satisfactory answer, and then proceeded to detail the cause of her appearance at the Castle; for, though such near neighbours, the two nobles seldom visited each other.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

Escape of the Pirate captain—Glendovan's visit to Dunbardon—Walter Raven quits Glendovan castle, disgraced.

WHEN they were once more alone, the Baron proposed to Strathallan that they should visit the captured Viscount, and interrogate him as to the chief cause which prompted him to commit so daring an outrage upon the combined ties of manhood, honour, and religion, as that mentioned in the foregoing pages; and also to remonstrate with him upon the fearful consequences that might have been attendant upon the same. Strathallan, however, would by no means consent to become his companion; accordingly the Baron came to the determination of visiting his ferocious foe unaccompanied except by a couple of sentinels under arms, who were immediately summoned before him for that purpose. When they had arrived at the exterior of the dungeon the key was applied, and they entered. At the sight of them Dunbardon started suddenly from the thoughtful position in which they had discovered him.

"Why starts my lord Viscount thus?" exclaimed Glendovan; "there are none here but his friends—men who wish him well. I did not anticipate the pleasure of seeing you here, or I should, doubtless, have——"

"Did your lordship suppose that I possessed the power to escape through the key-hole, or roof?" returned the Viscount, in a derisive tone.

"I had thought—nay, expected—that through the aid of that power you boasted of so late you would have endeavoured to effect an escape from the galling bonds of captivity."

"Be that my care alone," returned Dunbardon; "yet, did I so will it, I could free myself from your power and overthrow you all, and should——"

"If that you possess power so complete," returned Glendovan, interrupting him, "why not exercise the same, and at once? Were I a captive, and in the hands of a foe so inveterate as I am to you, by heaven! I am not at present skilled in the motive that could succeed in detaining me from my purpose."

"Is this the Baron Glendovan?" inquired Dunbardon, in a sarcastic tone; "he who has ever been celebrated far and wide for the humanity and benevolence of his principles? This looks unlike benevolence, to taunt and deride a fallen foe thus."

"Has the Viscount Dunbardon so soon forgotten the time when he had so treacherously lured me and my followers into his Castle, and the taunts he used when assured that we were in his power, so effectually, that an escape would be impossible? How did he then proceed? With the fell hand of slaughter he drove my brave followers precipitately from the court, and the swords of his ruffians pierced to the core many of the brave hearts that accompanied me."

"I remember all," replied the Viscount, while a smile of savage exultation momentarily illumined his harsh features; and hear me when I proclaim aloud that, should chance ever again present the opportunity, I would act with even more severity than was displayed on the occasion you mention; but why are you here now? why torment me with your presence? Surely you can experience no pleasure at the misfortunes of another?"

"I come," replied Glendovan, "to prove your courage and magnanimity to its utmost extent. You are to die, my lord Viscount Dunbardon!"

"By the hand of——"

"The executioner, my lord."

"Executioner!" reiterated Dunbardon. "Ha! ha! ha! Forgive my presumption," he continued, turning to the Baron, "if I tell you that you wrong your noble nature much. You will never attain that triumph. I know you fear me when at large; and believe me when I say that in bondage I am not less terrible. You have given me ample cause for vengeance, and ere long you shall be taught [how to dread that power you so bravely defy."

"Hast forgotten that thy life must pay the forfeit of thy insolence, even on the instant, and I——"

"Furies!" vociferated the Viscount; "and am I ever to be taunted! Now for the death of one or both!"

With these words he rushed with terrific fury upon the Baron, who, taken aback by the suddenness of the assault, could scarcely defend himself

from his ferocious assailant. Recovering in some degree from the surprise that had momentarily suspended their mental faculties, the two sentinels simultaneously rushed forward, and though heavily manacled they had the greatest difficulty to tear the Viscount from his tiger-grasp upon the Baron. At length, after much labour, they did succeed in this, and forcing the wretch on his knees presented their fire-arms to his breast, and threatened to despatch him upon the spot, if he attempted to rise.

Glendovan commanded additional fetters should be placed upon the captive, then quitted the dudgeon, and the fierce Viscount was once more alone.

As the Baron was crossing one of the galleries, and about to enter the saloon, he encountered Strathallan. The conversation immediately turned upon the rescued Elizabeth, and the ruffians who had attacked her.

"Was either of the villains known to you, my lord," inquired the Baron Glendovan.

"I can scarce reply with safety," returned the Earl, "yet I am inclined to think in one of them I could recognise the dark, forbidden countenance of that fellow who attacked myself and Walter upon a late occasion, as we strolled through the Forest."

"I know not whom you mean," returned Glendovan.

"It is the same ruffian who so basely attempted to poison the wine upon the banquet day, and which he would most certainly have succeeded in accomplishing."

"That is indeed impossible," rejoined the Baron. "That ruffian is now confined in one of the subterraneous dungeons beneath the castle, where escape would be impossible; therefore, my lord, I rejoice to say you are on that particular point, in error."

"I rejoice with you," returned the Earl, "to find that it is impossible; yet, for farther satisfaction, would it not be as well that we visit the dungeon, in order to convince ourselves more fully that such is indeed the case, for, notwithstanding your assurance, I am half inclined to suspect the entire truth, of what you say."

"If that is indeed your opinion," replied the Baron, "I will at once remove all doubt by ordering the prisoner to be brought before us."

Saying which, he proceeded to give the necessary directions for the fulfilment of his wishes; in accordance with which, two men-at-arms were dispatched to the dungeon where the Pirate-king had been confined. Upon throwing wide the door, they, as may readily be supposed, were greatly surprised, when, instead of the expected prisoner, they encountered the sentinel and gaoler before mentioned.

The extremity of surprise for a moment denied them the power of utterance; when, however, they had in some measure recovered from the effects of their unexpected astonishment, they eagerly demanded the cause of their being there, and also to where the prisoner had been removed.

"To either of your questions," replied the turnkey, gruffly, "we are utterly unable to give a reply. Do you for a moment imagine that we are here by our own free will and consent? if so, you could not possibly have by any chance laboured under a more complete mistake. No; we came in here to search for the prisoner, and while in, the door was barred upon us,

and had not you arrived thus opportunely, I have no doubt that we must have enjoyed the felicity of perishing by starvation."

"But the prisoner, where is he?" inquired the foremost, without appearing to notice the latter remark.

"Have I not already told you I am incapable of answering that question?" demanded the gaoler. "All I can say is, that he has escaped, but where I know not, nor can it be supposed by any that I could possibly follow them, seeing that we were all the time securely lodged within these infernal stone walls, where a fellow may bawl himself hoarse, and even then not be heard. But why are you here? upon what errand was *you* dispatched!"

"We came here," replied the foremost, "with orders from our lord to conduct the prisoner, before him."

"Instead of which," returned the sentinel, "you may conduct *us* into the presence of his lordship, when I scarce dare suppose any will profit by the exchange."

"I, for my part," continued the gaoler, "shall divulge all I know of the subject, whether Master Wal——"

"Silence," whispered the sentinel; "mention not his name, or we may have cause to repent our temerity."

"Nay," returned the other, in the same under-tone, "I care not; he might have placed some little reliance in our honour, and relied upon our promise not to betray him."

"Which promise you would not have been *very* scrupulous in violating. But come," he continued, in a somewhat louder tone; "the worthy Baron stays upon our leisure; let us onward."

They proceeded onward accordingly, and in a few moments more were ushered into the presence of the Baron, who started with unfeigned astonishment upon beholding them.

"Where is your prisoner?" inquired Strathallan.

"Escaped!" was the reply.

The Earl cast a meaning glance towards Glendovan.

"How is this?" demanded the Baron.

The sentinel then related to his lord all that we have already detailed concerning the escape.

When the name of Walter Raven was mentioned as an accomplice, the Earl of Strathallan became visibly agitated.

"Surely," exclaimed the Baron, "you are mistaken; it could not possibly have been Walter Raven whom ——"

"It was indeed, my lord," returned the sentinel.

"How know you this?" demanded Strathallan.

"Himself it was who divulged his name," replied the soldier; "and farther, informed me that the prisoner was his father, which statement alone prompted me to suffer him to enter the dungeon."

"No more will I place reliance in mortal man," exclaimed Glendovan. "Walter Raven was a man upon whom I had begun to build my future hopes—now, how has he requited my trust? What has he proved himself? A villain—a traitor. In aiding in the escape of that miscreant, he has forfeited my friendship, and for ever. I could sooner have brooked the



The Pirate-captain.

rescue of the villain Dunbardon. "Do you," he continued, turning to one of the attendants, "seek Walter Raven, and inform him that we await his presence here."

The man departed accordingly, and in a few moments returned with the intelligence that Walter was not within the castle.

"He has doubtless made himself the partner in flight of the blood thirsty ruffian whose escape he has aided. Well, let it be so; he has escaped the tortures with which his villainy has been crowned, and for Walter Raven, my only now existing feelings towards him is mingled pity and contempt. "Come, my lord," he continued, turning to Strathallan, "let us on in search of my daughter, and acquaint her with the ignoble flight of her perfidious lover."

As they were about to quit the saloon, a domestic appeared, and informed the Baron that Walter had just entered the eastern gate.

"Let him be conducted hither," exclaimed Glendovan.

The attendant bowed, retired, and in a few moments afterwards re-appeared, introducing Walter.

"May I beg leave to inquire where Walter Raven has been detained thus long," exclaimed the Baron, in a slightly sarcastic tone.

"I have been indulging in a ramble through the neighbouring wood," returned Walter; "nothing more."



"Escorting some stranger through its intricate windings, perhaps," suggested Glendovan.

Walter became evidently confused at his railery, and replied not.

"Walter Raven," again exclaimed the Baron, "since the moment of your first arrival here, I have looked upon you as a friend and companion, one, too, who had endured fortune's toughest tugs, yet noble, generous, withal. I placed the strongest confidence and reliance in your honour, and had not a strange and unexpected occurrence taken place, your hand had ere this been joined in the indissoluble bonds of matrimony. She had been yours, and for ever. Doubtless you are already acquainted with the real and undisguised motives which prompt me to speak thus, the man whom you are at present compelled to acknowledge as your parent committed, or at least attempted to commit, a deep, damnable act of treachery, the result of which had it taken effect, would have been fearful; the sacrifice of life to dreadful even for contemplation, yet with this before you I hear the man has escaped, and that too —"

"By my hand, you would say, my lord," returned Walter, "I know it. The arguments you have already introduced are correct, nay just, but ere you condemn the act, I pray you to remember that that man is my father, and when due recollection has rested on that point, condemn me an' you please."

"What," exclaimed Glendovan, "dare you aspire to so much? you, the son of a rude, low born —"

"No more, my lord, no more," cried Walter, with sudden energy; "as you wish for grace hereafter, talk not in this strain. I should be the first to scorn aught that may not be consistent with honour, and my duty, yet I cannot stand tamely by and listen to such taunts as those to which you now give utterance. Though an unfortunate mystery at present obscures the circumstance of my birth, yet my only pride is the knowledge of my own untarnished honour and integrity, which ever has, and will continue, to shield me from all danger and temptation, however great."

"By heaven, Sir," cried the Baron, with energy, "it would be better far did you quit Glendovan Castle, and seek some fitting opportunity for the display of such brilliant virtues, which, in my own personal opinion, exist but in your own imagination, which ever fertile has ere this doubtless intimated to you that palms of honour and renown are even now awaiting your pleasure, and which, when you grasp, shall at once, and without delay, raise you to the highest pinnacle of worldly greatness. Indeed, after your base presumption, it would not be consistent either with *honour* or *propriety* that I should suffer you to remain longer here."

"My lord," exclaimed Walter, hurt to the soul by the unkind behaviour of Glendovan towards him, "you will not need to repeat your commands. It was my previous intention to have acted as you now have desired me; yet permit me to return you my most grateful and sincere acknowledgments for the many past favours your goodness has showered upon the head of one whose sole portion of life is mischance and misery. I have yet but one boon to solicit before I depart, and I trust your lordship will not deny me that, the last request I shall ever make to you; that granted, I shall for ever quit your noble presence."

"Acquaint me with the same, and I will then answer your demands. What would you of me?"

"It is, that you will be pleased to restore the humble garb I wore upon my first arrival here."

Immediately upon hearing this, the countenance of Glendovan became less clouded.

"This splendid tartan," continued Walter, looking upon the magnificent garb in which he was then attired, "would but ill accord with the humble son of adventure and misfortune. Those trappings of grandeur are not suited to my humble sphere, and to have them in my possession would be only to keep keen remembrance alive to those scenes of past happiness and enjoyment I should now wish to be buried, and for ever, in obscurity. My lord," he continued, "you will be pleased to receive back at my hands the sword which you first presented to me upon my arrival here; although it has oft been drawn in the cause and defence of the unfortunate, and has delivered the sufferer from the iron hand of oppression, yet it has never been stained in an unjust cause."

The Baron at first refused to accept the proffered weapon, but finding Walter was peremptory, he at length received it in silence; then desired him to follow. Walter did as commanded; the Baron proceeding first, Walter following, and Strathallan, whose spirits were greatly depressed by what within the last few moments had transpired, brought up the rear.

Having once more resumed his humble garb, Walter bade farewell to all save the Lady Isabella, whom he was not permitted to see; then, with slow and measured steps, quitted Glendovan Castle, where he had passed so many happy hours, never again to be recalled, and pledged such tender, true, and constant faith, entertained such bright hopes of future happiness, alas, never to be fulfilled or realized.

When about to enter the wood, he encountered the other companion of their travels, the middle-aged personage, whose furrowed brow and care-worn appearance distinguished him from among his fellows upon their first arrival at Glendovan Castle, where, through the repeated solicitations of its lord, they had remained until now.

Upon hearing the cause of his altered appearance, the hitherto unnoticed traveller exclaimed, and bitterly, against the Baron, for treating in so harsh a manner, and behaving so ungenerous, to one who had so often, and at the imminent risk of his own, saved his life

"I never," he exclaimed, warmly, "could have credited that the Baron would have acted thus basely towards *you*, to whom he is indebted for so much."

"It does not signify," replied Walter; "I can endure this, and much more, from *him*. The thought that I have ever fulfilled my duty towards him, cancels all the ill that he has done me. I grant that I acted rashly towards him, but the man he held in bondage *was* my parent, if only by adoption, and I felt 'twas my duty to effect his liberation, if, indeed, I possessed the means so to do. The present state of my fortunes are but a fearful emblem of the uncertainty of all wordly dependence, the frailty of human nature, and the general ingratitude of man. Ha! what noise was that? it sounded like a dying groan."

They continued to proceed a few paces farther, when they discovered a man lying weltering in his blood. Upon stooping to observe whether he still lived, or if life had taken its final flight from the heart of the prostrate man, Walter, to his unutterable astonishment, perceived it to be the Pirate-captain, his reputed father. Immediately upon making this discovery, he stooped to ascertain what had reduced him to his present helpless and wounded condition, they discovered a sword lying broken by his side, where also lay a brace of pistols, discharged of their contents.

"By the appearance of these weapons he has been engaged in some desperate conflict, and with unequal numbers, too," exclaimed Walter. "What is to be done?" he continued, turning to his companion.

"I know not," replied the other; "yet stay; I have here a small flask of cordial, this may perhaps revive him." (The wounded man had now fainted.)

And with these words he drew from his vest a small flask, and raising the head of the prostrate man, poured a small portion of the same down his throat. The good effect of this soon became apparent; in a few moments he slowly raised his head, opened his eyes, and attempted to speak, but without success. Another short period, and he had considerably revived; his tongue no longer refused its office, and in faint and scarce audible terms he exclaimed—

"W-h-e-r-e i-s W-a-l-t-e-r, m-y s-o-n?"

"Here, father, here," replied Walter, eagerly.

"Your hand," exclaimed the once terrible, but now dying man, with a painful effort.

Walter complied with his request.

"I have much to say," continued the prostrate Pirate, somewhat more revived from another draught of cordial, "much that concerns you, and that very near — But I fear I am not long for this world; the wounds I have received are deep and many, the purple stream of life flows fast, and soon will life's bright current be extinct from this heart. If you can bear me to—to—th—"

"Where, Sir, where?" impatiently demanded Walter, seeing that the other could scarce give completion to his sentence. "But name your wishes, and my care shall it be to see them complied with, and speedily."

"On the brow of yonder mountain, which lies through the westerly opening of this wood, there is a small and, indeed, may be to you invisible, opening, near to an ivy-grown bank, beyond which is to be seen the ancient and time-worn hovel of a hermit. With that hermit is linked the story of your birth, which, if you succeed in bearing me thither while life remains, shall be revealed, and if you retain even the most distant desire that such should indeed be the case, you must bear me hence at once, for should I be unable to give the preconcerted signal, and issue the desired command, you must ever remain in utter ignorance of the same. Oh, eternal powers! that pang—with what deadly force did it vibrate through my exhausted frame; it has stamped upon my brow the pallid hue of death, and just—just—"

Nature was exhausted; he could say no more, but again relapsed into insensibility.

"Kind heaven, spare his life until this great mystery of my birth shall be revealed," exclaimed Walter, who, in conjunction with his companion, were raising the exhausted man from the earth. This done, they bore him onwards, and in a short time arrived at the before-mentioned rock, where they halted; the flask was once more applied; again did the dying Pirate raise for a moment his drooping head.

"Forward! quick!" he exclaimed, in a faint tone.

They raised him again from the ground, and proceeded accordingly, and in a moment more entered the gloomy precincts of a damp and narrow cave, at the extremity of which was a small antique looking cell, hung around with a few rudely formed earthen vessels, while on the other side was ranged a brace of huge pistols, an old rust eaten breast-plate, together with a ponderous broadsword. These weapons served at once to convince Walter that the present occupant of the cell had not passed the whole of his life in a hermit's solitude; and for his companion, he entered the place with the air of one who was no stranger to the scene of strange mystery by which they were surrounded. They placed their wounded charge with all possible gentleness upon the ground, then looked around as if in search of the solitary occupant of the scene of retirement and seclusion.

"Abdellah, holy father. Recluse of the Mountain, come forth," exclaimed the Pirate-chief; "'Tis I, Rialdo, calls upon thee."

A small door, hitherto unperceived by all, and which opened from the centre of the ground, was now disclosed to view, the head of an aged man appeared, the body followed, and clad in tattered garments, the Recluse of the Mountain in a feeble tone demanded of the Pirate for what purpose he had been summoned.

"Cast off that disguise which is now no longer needed; the oath of blood has been fulfilled. By the tyrant's minions have I fallen; his fast tottering power must fall, be crushed, crumble into dust, while the child of hardship and misfortune must at once be installed into that which, by birth-right and God's precious will, is his. I would have you disclose to this youth all you know of that business. I shall, have shortly passed into the presence of my maker, and as I hope for mercy at the great throne of lasting and eternal power, I would see justice done to all. You have now my free will and license to cast aside that disguise you have worn so long, and faithfully; now appear once more in your proper character."

Obedient to the request of the expiring outlaw, the false beard dropped to the ground, his hermit's garb was thrown aside, and disclosed to view the stout stalwart person of a middle aged cateran. Immediately upon changing his garb, his voice altered accordingly, and instead of the silvery and disjointed tone of age, the firm speech of resolution and fearless bravely was now substituted.

He advanced to where his wounded chief lay, and hastily seized his hand—the hand that was at Death's fearful call, now yielding up life's genial warmth. The wounded man made one last effort to speak; it was but "th' attempt, without the deed"—one fearful struggle—and his soul had burst its thralldom; his last moment on earth was past—his fixed eyes had gazed their last, and he was dead—and gone for ever.

"Now," exclaimed the late Hermit, "now has a soul, brave as ever yet man possessed, or boasted, quitted yonder form; but I must haste to obey the last injunctions of my friend—you, Sir," he continued, turning to Walter, "would fain know the mystery of your birth."

"I would indeed," replied Walter.

"Be seated then," returned the Hermit.

Walter did as desired.

"I should wish to confide what I know to yourself alone," muttered the supposed hermit, casting a meaning glance towards the companion of Walter.

"He is my only friend and solace," replied Walter—"alas, the unfortunate can boast of few friends!"

"Despair not, my son," returned the other; "for, believe me, the duties you have yet to perform are both numerous and important; be not therefore dismayed; let not your spirits sink with disappointment, nor grieve to find your present hopes frustrated, but cast yourself upon the kind care of that Providence which in your more youthful days preserved your life from the murderer's poignard, soon, I hope to see better days; though the view may at present appear dark and gloomy, yet rays of joy, like the sun's bright beams through a hazy atmosphere, will soon burst forth and illumine all your future days."

"Gracious heaven!" exclaimed Walter; "you speak somewhat strangely, Sir—what do you mean? May I presume to ask to whom you allude when you speak of the murderer's dagger? Surely you must be labouring under the effects of some personal mistake, as I cannot remember any such circumstance."

"It is scarce possible that you should do so, seeing that at the time of which I speak you were only six days old; but I will reveal to your entire satisfaction all the mystery of your birth."

"My birth!" reiterated Walter; "I know the only mystery that can possibly attend that."

"Indeed!" rejoined the other; "do not flatter yourself with such false confidence. I am certain you cannot inform me as to the name of your father—whose eminent virtues deserved a better fate."

"God of mercy!" exclaimed Walter, "what is it you say? Is my dear father no more?—but I trust my dear mother is still numbered with the living?"

"Alas, no! both have been long since numbered with the silent dead," replied the man, sighing deeply.

"Heavenly powers!" cried Walter; "are they then both gone? Oh, heaven! what will now become of me—forlorn and forsaken, whither shall I fly for protection? Oh, I am indeed lost; without a home, friends, or shelter to cover my distracted head from the fury of the elements. Oh, that my father here had lived."

"Be not surprised," returned the other, "if I tell you that he was *not* your father."

"Not my *father*!" reiterated Walter, "then are my suspicions confirmed. Oh, thou unknown being, who appeareth to know this sad mystery, reveal what you can. For the love of heaven ease this troubled mind of the burden with which it has long since been afflicted."

"I will do so," returned the hermit, "and must crave all attention. Listen to what I shall now disclose."

Walter then seated himself upon a rudely-formed chair, while the stranger began as follows:—

"You are the only son of the late noble Robert, Viscount Dunbardon. Your father married Lady Matilda, the only daughter of the Laird of Kenrose, who was young, beautiful, and accomplished. The noble Viscount's sole happiness consisted in distributing the smile of joy and contentment among his tenantry; in all the surrounding hamlets the hollow groan of oppression, or the indistinct murmur of discontent was nowhere to be heard. All was joy, gaiety, and pleasure. None were permitted to feel the bitter pangs of misfortune, the chill blast of adversity, or the cold hand of penury; felicity ever smiled in the abodes of all.

"I was one of the servants of your late father. About a year after their marriage, the Viscountess blessed her lord with a son and heir to the vast estates; this event was followed by great festivity and rejoicing, in which all seemed to join but Alexander, brother to the rightful lord."

Walter started, and turned suddenly pale, while his heart beat quick with alarm.

The stranger, without noticing his agitation, continued his narrative.

"He alone appeared dissatisfied. Alexander is the natural son of your grandfather. Alas! I little at that moment thought what his black, diabolical heart had in contemplation. Some days after, I chanced to meet him in the hall; there being no person nigh, he led me aside, and informed me that he had something of importance to communicate, and with these words, he conducted me to a retired apartment in the Castle, and there revealed to me the damnable plot he had in meditation; the remembrance of which even at this distant period freezes the current of my blood. He informed me that he was determined to usurp the title, seize upon the title by despatching his brother, and produced a forged will, which he had already prepared for the purpose. Upon hearing this dreadful determination, I groaned deeply.

"When I had in some measure recovered from my surprise, I endeavoured, with the aid of all the eloquence of which I was master, to dissuade him from the commission of an act so horrible, but finding that he still retained his blood-thirsty disposition, I threatened to disclose his murderous intentions to my lord.

"Suddenly he seized me fiercely by the throat, and drawing a dagger, which he held at my breast, swore, with the most dreadful oaths and imprecations, that if I did not instantly swear never to divulge his intentions, he would stab me to the heart. I was frightened into compliance by seeing the uplifted steel ready to be plunged into my bosom if I refused. After the villain had succeeded in obtaining my promise, he, with a horrid smile, left me. What were my sensations at that moment; to think that I alone knew of the danger impending over the head of my lord, and yet, by the oath I had taken, I dared not to reveal, or put him upon his guard to avert the approaching evil.

"Some hours afterwards I saw the present Viscount, together with my lord and lady, in the saloon, conversing with them in the most gay and friendly tone imaginable. I was astonished to behold the wary hypocrite

thus completely assume the look and appearance of virtue, while in secret the devil was lurking within his heart. I now regarded him as an assassin, awaiting a favourable opportunity to plunge a dagger into the hearts of his unsuspecting protectors, on my quitting the apartment, he followed me, and artfully endeavoured to impress me with the belief that he felt a strong compunction at the thoughts of shedding the blood of so good and kind a brother; but his pretended remorse of conscience did not serve to remove my former suspicions.

"I was that evening despatched to Dunkeld, by orders of the Viscount. Never before did I leave the castle with so much reluctance; something whispered to me that I should never behold my lord and lady again, at least with life. Alas, my fears were too true, I never saw them more."

Here Walter started to his feet, and paced the narrow limits of the cell with hurried and impatient steps, deep sighs often escaped his bosom: the narrator seeing this, paused. Walter, in a voice scarcely audible, desired him to proceed; he bowed his head in silence, and resumed once more his narrative.

"On my return to Dunbardon Castle, I found a sad and melancholy change; the servants in tears, the hall hung around with black cloth, confirmed my worst suspicions concerning my lord and lady. Their sudden death, and the manner in which it happened, left no doubt upon my mind but that the cruel tyrant had despatched them by poison; and the better to conceal the crime, had made the domestics believe that they had died of so dangerous a malady that, unless they were buried immediately, and without the least delay, it would spread over the whole country. The simple servants too soon gave credence to this plausible tale. Accordingly, the remains of the unfortunate viscount and viscountess were, with as little delay as possible, privately interred in one of the vaults of the Castle; this atrocious murder having been my committed in my absence, made him believe that all was secure. Nothing now stood in the way of the attainment of his wishes but the infant son of his murdered brother. He determined to have him despatched, and, I thank heaven! fixed upon me for the commission of the deed. At the mention of his intention, I sighed deeply; perceiving my agitation, he in a harsh tone said—

"If you find your conscience too tender to rid me of this brat, say so, and I will employ another, who will neither shrink from the commission of the deed, or hesitate to obey my commands."

"After a moment's reflection I was convinced that if I refused to obey him, he would employ some ruffian, who, for the receipt of a few pieces of gold, would undertake the deed I wished to prevent; I therefore undertook to see it done. Having now become fully determined to deceive the bloody tyrant, and frustrate the design he had formed upon the life of his infant nephew, which resolution I firmly adhered to. Being at that time intimate with the captain of the pirate crew I afterwards joined, I had the child placed in a basket, and conveyed it to their haunt, where a nurse was provided, and the child reared in the robber's cavern, and having obtained a promise of eternal secrecy from the Captain, which promise he has strictly adhered to, I set out on my return to Dunbardon Castle. *You, Sir, are that child!*"



D'Arste informs Dunbardon that the castle has surrendered to Walter Raven.

"Gracious heavens! is it indeed possible!" cried Walter, while a slight shudder passed through his frame, as he thought upon the past.

"It is most true," returned the narrator; "you are the infant I received from him now lying dead at our feet. On my way back to the castle I discovered a young kid lying asleep in a thicket; pleased beyond measure at the sight, I approached softly to where the animal lay; I drew my dagger, and having stabbed it to the heart, dipped my kerchief in its blood. With this false trophy, I hastened to Dunbardon Castle, and shewed the same to my lord, when he, with a savage joy, embraced me, calling me his dear preserver. My whole soul shuddered upon finding myself in the arms of so atrocious a ruffian. He continued long to glut his sight upon the seeming evidence of death, and the attainments of his object. He immediately assumed the title of the Viscount Dunbardon, and by his cruelty, tyranny, and oppression, soon became detested, abhorred, and despised, by vassals and neighbours. Various reports were then circulated through the country respecting the disappearance of the young Viscount. It was the general belief that his cruel and unnatural uncle had put him out of the way in order to secure the title and estates for himself.

"Soon afterwards the Viscount married the only daughter of the Earl of Glenrough, a lady of great fortune and personal endowments. I happened one day to be closeted with the Viscount talking of past events,



when your supposed murder came to be discussed. He spoke upon this subject with rapture, praising my readiness to obey him, and said that I should not be forgotten in my old age for the eminent services I had rendered him. At this moment his lady burst into the chamber with a look of horror, and upbraided him with his manifold crimes. Almost frantic with rage, he, with quivering lips, demanded to know how she had become possessed of such vile falsehoods.

"Falsehoods!" she exclaimed; "wretch! would you have me believe that what I have now heard is not true?"

"This speech so wrought upon his passions that with the most dreadful imprecations he commanded her to leave the chamber, and upon her refusing to comply he forcibly dragged her thence.

"I heard nothing more of my Lady until the evening of the third day, when a surgeon arrived express to visit the Viscountess, who had been suddenly seized with strong convulsions; upon seeing her he shook his head in silence, and then declared that her disorder was beyond the power of medicine. He was right; in about three hours afterwards the unfortunate lady expired in great torture. Immediately after death a blackness overspread the body and visage of the deceased. The surgeon by his looks expressed his suspicions. Her remains were interred that night in one of the vaults of the Castle."

Walter continued long to ponder upon what he had heard, and contemplated in silence the wondrous change that had now taken place in his condition, instead of being the son of an outlaw and a ruffian he was the true and lawful heir to a title, together with a fortune of ample means to sustain the same; he was at length roused from his reverie by his companion clapping his hands and leaping about overjoyed that his friend had arrived at so much good fortune, and whose joy found vent in the following words:—

"It affords me infinite pleasure to find that after all your troubles and misfortunes, you will attain a reward suitable to the high order of your merits; it is a pleasing reflection to be enabled to look back upon the past when all is calm within—no remembrance of actions disgraceful to manhood or humanity weighing heavily upon the heart—and whatever reward is given to valour, whether pains or poverty be attached to it it is of little consequence so one's own breast approves the deed."

"Is it possible," cried Walter with unfeigned surprise, "that you can play the sentimental orator, and with such pathos too?"

"Your pardon, my lord Viscount; do not blush at the title which by birth is yours," continued the Pirate, seeing Walter's evident confusion; "it has always been a maxim of mine to give free vent to my thoughts, and to pay whenever I meet with virtue the compliment I think its worth deserves. Be not hurt at the treatment you have received from the Baron, for, believe me when I say it, he still respects the man who has rendered him so many and eminent services."

"I am astonished," exclaimed Walter, "how can you possibly be acquainted with the Baron's sentiments?"

"So tells my heart," returned the Pirate; "and so time will show you, that the good services you have rendered his family will one day extinguish the few sparks of offended pride that have burned in his bosom."

Do you indeed think so?" inquired Walter.

"I do indeed," answered the Pirate, "and I doubt not but that you will soon again appear as the deliverer of the family—not in your real character, but in the one in which you have ever been known—when you will find that though he at present appears to be highly enraged at your former conduct, he will then seek the alliance of that brave and virtuous youth whom he formerly despised; then it will be judgment to declare your real birth, but not sooner."

"I comprehend your meaning," returned Walter; "you wish me to conceal my birth from the Baron until he shall once more offer me the hand of his lovely daughter for my services under the impression that I am nothing more than the son of yonder deceased Pirate."

"You have guessed my design, and I am convinced that when the discovery shall have been made, it will be a most complete and agreeable surprize to all parties."

"I shall observe your injunctions," returned Walter.

"Tis well," answered the Pirate. "Now I will so disguise your features that even the tyrant himself shall not distinguish you from one of his own dependants. Remain only concealed in the Castle until we can raise a sufficient force to tear from the usurper's grasp your lawful rights; and as soon as the kindred spirits that lived in the days of your parents shall know that the son still lives, and is among them, a thousand arms will be raised, all eager to force the tyrant from his throne of power. Then without delay we will storm the Castle; in the confusion that will then ensue you can disclose yourself, and the brave souls who served under the banners of your father will, I am certain, be willing to sacrifice all, even to life itself, for your sake. This, (showing a soldier's garb) this will shield you from every prying eye."

Walter immediately equipped himself in his disguise.

The Pirate then took from out a drawer a small box of dark coloured ointment, and, taking a small portion upon his finger, rubbed it over the face of Walter, which instantly assumed a dark brown hue; he then delivered him the box, with directions how to use it. All showed symptoms of astonishment upon beholding so great a change in the appearance of the young lord.

"No one who saw you a few moments since would have believed you to be the same person," exclaimed the Pirate; "you need be under no apprehensions of being discovered, as your face is now so changed that I am sure if either of us had met you just now we should not have known you."

"That is most true," rejoined the new found hermit; "I should have supposed you to have been a man who had been exposed all your days to the burning rays of an Indian sun."

Walter now thought upon the lady Isabella; and the knowledge that he was not now unworthy of her love, filled him with transport.

"Nay!" exclaimed the Pirate, seeing that Walter appeared somewhat dejected; "you are thinking of the lady Isabella. Well! she is a sweet amiable lady, and well deserves your love"—his eyes sparkling with admiration as he spoke and gazed upon the youthful ardour of the young

Viscount—"she is discreet without being distrustful; mild in temper as the dove; gentle without weakness; and beneficent with discernment."

"What!" cried Walter; "do you also admire beauty?"

"I do," replied the other; "I never yet beheld a lovely woman without admiration. The rising sun may surely cheer my sight, though his radiant beams cannot inflame my heart; but enough of this; we must now turn our thoughts to the enterprise. Here, my lord, take this spear, and proceed directly to the castle, while we rouse your friends to action. Oh! if these eyes saw you in the possession of your lawful rights, I should resign my breath with pleasure."

"Do not speak so mournfully," returned Walter, with a smile, "I shall hope ere long to see you my steward."

"Farewell!" exclaimed the Pirate; "you had better at once proceed to the castle, where you will be admitted as one of the soldiers come to offer your services. When you encounter the present lord, tell him——"

"Surely," returned Walter, interrupting him, "you have forgotten that he is now a prisoner in Glendovan Castle, where he has been confined for some time."

"I have not forgot aught concerning that same; but I also remember that last night it was discovered that he had succeeded in effecting his escape."

"How?"

"Nay, I cannot pretend to answer that question; for the prison gate was still secured, and all appeared fast and safe. Which way he passed, heaven only knows, for at night the sentinels stationed along the various avenues are usually doubled, and—No matter!" he continued, turning to Walter, and raising his hand, "may the God of mercy and justice protect you in your just cause. Oh! how my heart burns with joy at this happy discovery, and I hope I may be the first to hail the foster son of my deceased friend, Lord Viscount of Dunbardon! Farewell!"

Walter then, after having received still farther injunctions, set forward upon his journey.

## ! CHAPTER XIX.

Walter Raven storms Dunbardon Castle—is elected its lawful lord—The Lady Isabella rescued from the Usurper's violence.

UPON his arrival at Dunbardon Castle, Walter Raven, by which name he must still be known, was admitted as one of the vassals who had come to offer his services.

Under the pretence of taking a walk, he strolled about the Castle in order to examine its strength; and finding it to be weaker on the eastern side than any other, he determined that the attack should commence in that quarter. As he proceeded along the walls, he gazed upon the massive ramparts, and with rapture exclaimed,——

"Welcome! thrice welcome, ye beloved scenes of my infant days;

while every step I take confirms my resolution to assert my birthright. In these walls tyranny and oppression have too long exercised their superiority; and the shades of my murdered parents call loudly upon their offspring to revenge their foul and unnatural murder!"

In the evening he wandered among the mountains, ruminating upon approaching events. Suddenly his eyes were rivetted by the extreme beauty of the landscape before him. Hills of fantastic forms on every side met his view; the surrounding mountains opened upon the left into a wide and spacious glen, which, seen beyond the frowning steeps, formed a picture of unparelleled grandeur and magnificence. The bright green of the lowlands; the dark verdure of the woods, waving along the side of the mountains; the rough barren aspect of their summits, and the impending crags, exhibited a diversity of wildness which faded from the eye in the haze of distance. The sun was sinking slowly beneath the western Grampians, enlightening their distant summits with a ruddy glow; not a sound was heard to disturb the tranquillity of the evening hour, but the gentle sighings of the breeze, and the distant lowing of cattle that came at intervals upon the wind, and then died in faint murmurs upon the air, to return no more.

He continued to gaze at the mellow features of the landscape, lost in rapture, till at length the sound of footsteps startled him. On turning round, he saw his pirate friend approaching. Walter slowly followed after him; admiring, as he proceeded, the warmth of the veteran.

At the time appointed Walter met his companion, who informed him that he had explained to his clan the cause of his being at the Castle under the disguise of a soldier, and of his intention to visit them. This intelligence had been received by them with long and loud acclamations of joy.

His companion then led Walter down the hill into a narrow glen on the left. The moon rising in the east discovered to his view a small cottage. Its thatched roof appeared to be just tinted with a silver hue; while as far as the eye wandered in many windings over the dreary scene, nothing but dismal crags and black heathy mountains met the view. At a little distance on the right, Walter caught a sight of the Allan, wandering in many windings among the glens; the sparkling of the water in the moonlight, and the deep gloom of the surrounding scenery, threw a pleasing sadness over his spirits.

Upon their arrival at the cottage, Walter, at the desire of his companion, knocked at the door. It was some time before any sound was audible; at last a voice was heard from within, demanding—

"Who's there?"

Walter, in a low tone replied, that he wanted admittance.

The door immediately opened; a tall figure of a man, holding a lamp, appeared. His silvery hairs and furrowed cheeks inspired the mind of Walter with respect for the reverend peasant. He shook hands with Walter, and led the way into a neat chamber. After shutting the door, he advanced towards Walter and gazed upon him for some few moments in silence. At length the tear of sorrow appeared to fall gently from his age-dimmed eyes, and grasping Walter by the hand, he suddenly exclaimed,

"Oh heaven! has my old age been spared to this happy moment! Forgive my presumption; but the excess of my joy, I hope, will plead my excuse. Oh! how many are the days I have fought beside your departed father, whose eminent virtues deserved a far better fate. Alas! little did I then think that I should ever behold his only offspring deprived of his birthright by the cruelty of his uncle."

Some time after this, the worthy old man conducted Walter and his companion to the back of the cottage which opened upon an extensive moor. A large body of armed men appeared drawn up; as soon as they beheld their young lord, they gave utterance to loud shouts of joy.

Walter advanced to an eminence; then, in a solemn, expressive tone, exclaimed—

"My brave friends and defenders of my rights, you behold in me the much injured Walter, son of your late lamented lord, Viscount Dunbardon. It will not, I presume, be necessary for me to enter into a detail of my future intentions. My name, I trust, will speak comfort to the afflicted, appal the villain, and make the tyrant tremble."

"We all," exclaimed the foremost warrior, "pant with impatient ardour for the glorious struggle; all is prepared; we only await the signal to attack the castle. When shall it commence?"

"To-morrow, at noon," replied Walter; "let the signal to attack those guilty towers be the sound of trumpets and drums. I will be within the edifice, impatiently awaiting a favourable opportunity to throw wide the gates to my brave defenders. Farewell! Remember, I shall expect you all to be ready at the appointed hour."

"On us, my chief, you may depend," replied the first speaker; "we shall either restore you to your inheritance, or sink the Castle into one heap of ruins."

Walter waved his hand to the troops, quitted the moor, and then proceeded to the castle.

On the following day his mind was agitated with contending hopes and fears as the hour approached, fraught as it was with his future destiny. At the time appointed, he ascended to the battlements, followed by the faithful Allan, to observe his vassals, among which were all the members of the pirate crew, marching towards the castle, with drums beating, fifes playing, and banners floating in the air.

A little after they appeared ascending the rocky heights in different places; suddenly the cry of *To arms, to arms*, resounded through the air, and he beheld the soldiery of Dunbardon running about in great confusion. Immediately all the towers and ramparts were filled with troops awaiting the assault.

Walter, seeing that not a moment was to be lost, hastily desired Allan to conduct him to the armoury of the castle. Upon arriving there, he inquired for the arms of his late father, and as he arrayed his manly form in the black coat of mail, exclaimed—

"Kind fortune, I thank thee; the buckler of the sire will protect the son fighting for the restoration of his lawful rights from the power of usurpation."

Suddenly his ears were assailed by the welcome sound. Starting at the

long-expected signal, he drew his sword, and rushed from the armoury into a private passage that led to the courts of the castle, followed by the faithful Allan. Here Walter found twenty brave followers ready to spring into the court upon his signal; he remained there, awaiting with impatience an opportunity of rushing into the contest.

The assault commenced. All was uproar and confusion; nothing was heard but the shrill blast of the trumpet, the clash of arms, the shouts of assailants, and the cries of the wounded.

Walter led on the attack in two divisions; the first commanded by himself, and the second headed by his friend, who immediately (according to the plan agreed, which was, to attack the castle in two different places) filed off his men, and marched off his followers to the opposite part of the castle. Walter advanced to the gates, and, striking his sword upon his shield, commanded the castle to surrender. The summons was answered by a shower of arrows and stones from the besieged. Instantly the assault was renewed with greater fury,

"Now shield with shield, with helmet helmet closed,  
To armour armour, lance to lance opposed,  
Host against host with shadowy squadrons drew;  
The sounding darts in iron tempests flew;  
Victors and vanquished join promiscuous cries,  
And shrilling shouts and dying groans arise.

Observing the ardour of the besieged beginning to slacken, Walter ordered the scaling ladders to be placed against the walls.

The first who mounted was Murray. Just as he was about to step upon the ramparts, one of the soldiers of the castle struck him with his battle-axe, and he fell from the battlements into the moat below. Melrose was more successful; he reached the spot where Murray had fallen, and leaping suddenly upon the soldier who had done the deed, stabbed him through the heart, and with a low groan he expired. He then pursued his way in the direction of the flag-staff, which he was about to pull down, when he found himself suddenly seized from behind by the ferocious D'Arste, who, with a tremendous oath, threw him down the walls, and his body was dashed into a thousand pieces against the rocks.

D'Arste then ran about the battlements and dismounted the scaling ladders which were covered with soldiers attempting to reach the battlements, but as often as they endeavoured to scale the walls they were repulsed with great slaughter.

Walter finding his repeated efforts were unattended with the desired success, had recourse to stratagem, which was now his only hope; if that failed he would then be compelled to make a precipitate retreat, in order to preserve the few brave men that remained. He suddenly made a movement as if he intended to withdraw his troops and go to the assistance of the opposite division. The besieged instantly hastened to the aid of their comrades on the eastern part of the castle, expecting that the general assault would be made in that quarter. In their hurry and confusion they left only a few behind them to guard the entrance of the castle.

Walter in the mean time had taken a favourable position on a small

rising ground covered with trees, whose thick foliage protected his troops from the showers of stones and other missiles hurled against them by the besieged, and where they harassed the enemy by a steady, well directed discharge of arrows and spears.

This petty warfare between the contending parties did not suit Walter's enterprising spirit. Observing the ranks of the enemy thinned by his archers, he determined to obtain possession of the Castle by storm.

Immediately he gave the signal, by striking his sword against his shield. No sooner did the troops hear the sound, than, with a dreadful shout, they climbed the rocks, headed by their Pirate leader, regardless of the spears and arrows that flew around them—and forming a ladder with their shields, they sprung upon the ramparts, and, leaping down into the Castle, attacked their foes with dreadful fury.

The besiegers at first were panic-struck at this daring attempt, but the appearance of their comrades inspired them with new courage. A furious engagement took place between the commanding clans. Nothing met the ear on all sides but the clashing of swords, clattering of shields, the twanging of bows, the cries of the wounded, and dismal groans of the dying, mixed with the mingled shouts of the soldiers. After a short contest, the besieged succeeded in repulsing their assailants, after much blood shed on both sides. Early in the conflict the Pirate leader was wounded with a spear; his troops were disheartened at this, and commenced a hasty retreat, carrying their wounded commander upon their shields.

Meanwhile, Walter was impatiently awaiting an opportunity to open the gates to his friend, being as yet unconscious of his wounded state. The long wished for moment at length arrived; the precipitate retreat of the soldiery from the ramparts favoured his design, and without delay he hastened from the passage through a door, followed by his attendants, and rushed into the courts. After disarming the guards, the portal was thrown wide to his brave vassals, who, upon beholding him, rent the air with shouts of joy. The uproar alarmed the soldiers on the eastern side of the castle, who came running to the courts in every direction. A short contest ensued, in which they were overpowered and made prisoners by the brave dependents of Walter Raven.

All being now accomplished, and Walter reinstated in his lawful possessions, his first impulse was to see that every care was bestowed upon those who had been wounded in the glorious struggle, as also to provide for the widows and orphans of the dead. This being in some measure performed, his next anxiety was to visit his wounded friend, the Pirate, to whose valiant arm and those of his comrades he owed so much.

Summoning one of the attendants, he was informed that the object of his search was extended on a couch in an adjoining apartment, attended by several of his companions and a medical adviser. Walter desired the informant to conduct him thither without delay; upon his arrival at the couch upon which the wounded man was extended, he started back, while a look of horror was depicted in his countenance.

“Great heaven!” he exclaimed, with sudden energy; “can it be possible that so great a change can have been wrought in a man's appearance



Walter Raven defending his claim to the estates of Dunbar.n.

in so short a time. Why Marco, my dear friend, I scarce knew you; is your wound deep?"

"Deep enough to take me hence in a few short hours;" returned the wounded Pirate; "but I can now yield up life without a pang. What is there to live for, now the Captain is no more, and I have continued here long enough to behold his adopted son happy in the enjoyment of those comforts and that exalted position for which alone his noble soul was formed? One thing alone I could have desired."

"Name it!" returned Walter, solemnly; "and as I hope for mercy at the great court of heaven's judge, I swear your request shall be complied with! yes, that shall be my own immediate care. Say on, my friend, and freely. Walter Raven, the companion of your early days, now craves it of you."

"It would avail you nothing," returned the wounded man, "and is utterly out of your power to comply with the same; though it concerns you deeply."

"At least let me be informed of the same," returned Walter; "and you may perhaps find that it is in my power."

"It is this, then," continued the other; "I would have lived to wreak my vengeance on your foul usurping uncle, whose tyranny it was that first—"



"No matter; fatigue not yourself by further speech: left to the pangs of his own guilty conscience, the wretch will endure more than our poor malice could inflict; but as he has not yet heard of the loss he has sustained, we shall doubtless have the honour of receiving a visit from him, and should such indeed be the case a dungeon shall be his future home. But listen, my friend; I have ordered a grand banquet to be prepared, and we await with impatience your recovery; for no rejoicing can proceed while he to whom I owe so much is kept from participating in the general rejoicing that will then prevail. The friends of those who have fallen in the dreadful conflict I will provide for. It is a duty incumbent upon me to protect those whose supporters have been slain in my defence. Alas! how many a wife will bewail over the dead body of her husband; and how many a fond mother will weep over the remains of her beloved son. Oh, War! thou scourge of the human race! what dire misfortunes attend thy bloody footsteps! It is a dreadful reflection to think how many left their homes this morning in health, are now borne back a lifeless mass of clay! I will now retire for a short time; you, my friend, need repose: farewell, for a brief space."

With these words he quitted the chamber, and having committed the charge of the Castle to Allan, he withdrew.

To amuse his mind, and escape from more serious reflection, Walter wandered through the lofty chambers of the Castle: their Gothic structure and magnificent furniture filled his mind with awe and admiration. As he explored the apartments of grandeur, a solemn sadness overspread his spirits, and while contemplating the rich, sumptuous tapestry hanging in many of the chambers in tatters upon the walls, disfigured by dust and cobwebs, sighing deeply, he exclaimed,

"Alas! such is the end of all human greatness; man, when assailed by misfortune, is like these—left in solitude by the world, and is allowed to linger out a wretched existence, forgotten and unknown, perhaps, by those who in the days of his wealth and prosperity lived on his bounty, now their generous benefactor, oppressed by poverty, is shunned—despised by those whose very existence seemed to be centred in his smiles—adversity tests the sincerity of our boasted friends—alas! how few are there who can withstand the trial."

On the following day the Viscount, together with Allan, quitted the Castle.

Dark and gloomy mountains everywhere met the eye, retiring in long perspective until their summits were obscured in the clouds. Now and then the bleating of the flocks that hung upon the cliffs—scarcely distinguishable from the grey round stones that appeared thickly starting from the heathy steeps—were borne faintly upon the wind. Dark glens, deep and frightful chasms on every side met their view; while hills more remote were often misty with the streaming shower, and others appeared glittering in the rays of the sun or were just coloured with the pale azure of distance. The howling blast descended on the valleys its mournful sighings along the rocks; the distant roar of turrents concealed from the eye, and the humming of bees, threw a strain of melancholy over their spirits.

Walter's mind was filled with imaginations highly romantic; he looked

around as if in expectation of beholding the sacred outline of some ancient bard, seated upon a high rock, musing upon the scene, ever and anon striking the strings of his harp, or directing the storm.

Suddenly their attention was withdrawn from the grandeur of the prospect by the alarming cries of a woman. Instantly drawing their swords, they rushed forward in the direction from whence the sounds seemed to issue.

They had not proceeded far when they suddenly confronted a man, who also bore a sword, and who was hastening on with all possible speed. Nothing doubting but that he was the perpetrator of some outrage which had caused the outcry they had heard. Walter in a loud tone commanded him to halt. Not heeding his words, however, the stranger still continued to pursue his onward course, until the young Viscount darted after him, followed by Allan. The stranger suddenly halted, and confronting his pursuers, in a hurried manner exclaimed,

"Why would you interrupt me? Heard you not the voice of distress! If ye are men you will aid rather than obstruct my cause!"

"Lead on!" returned Walter; "I have been labouring under a mistake; I imagined you to be the ruffian; lead on—quick!"

"I will, Sir," returned the stranger, proudly; "Kenneth is not the one to remain in apathy when the cries of distress assail his ears. Now then, friends, let us onward!"

With these words Walter and his new found companion, followed by Allan, hastened on, and in a few moments afterwards found themselves at the entrance of a gloomy cavern; Walter was about to enter, when an armed ruffian suddenly sprang from behind a recess. At this instant a loud scream rent the air. Walter made an impatient gesture for his companions to seize their opposer while he explored the interior.

The ruffian instantly sounded a horn, and then darted off among the rocks, pursued by Allan who soon caught him, and seizing the fellow in his arms, precipitated him into the glen below, where he was dashed to pieces.

Walter was amazed upon beholding another man, armed, at the entrance of the cavern, who in a menacing tone bade him approach at his peril. Walter replied not, but attempted to advance. The ruffian presented his battle-axe, telling him if he dared to advance a step nearer he should most assuredly die.

"Begone, base assassin!" exclaimed Walter; "it was the voice of distress that summoned me hither, and I am resolved to enter here and explore this mystery; do not then attempt to retard my progress, or, by heaven! you live not another moment. Give place!" he continued, brandishing his sword.

"Return, vain boaster, from whence thou camest!" cried the ruffian, aiming a blow at the head of Raven, which he avoided. At that moment, a voice, which the young man recognised to be that of a female, exclaimed,

"Mercy! help! spare, oh, spare me!"

Infuriated by these evidences of suffering weakness, Walter aimed a terrific blow at the fellow that opposed him; the ruffian started aside, threw his battle-axe away, and, drawing his sword a desperate conflict

ensued. At length the Viscount succeeded in wounding his ferocious antagonist, who sank to the ground. Upon beholding him fall, Walter rushed into the cavern, and was closely followed by Kenneth.

They found themselves in a long winding passage hewn out of solid rock; they pursued their way for some time in darkness; at length a faint light glimmered at a distance. Upon arriving at the place the passage suddenly opened into a spacious gloomy vault; a lamp stood upon the stone in the centre, which was the light that had directed them to the spot. The first object that presented itself was a lady struggling in the arms of a ruffian.

"Villain! defend thy hated life!" exclaimed Walter, fiercely, and striking the other with the back of his sword.

The man instantly quitted the female, and appeared to be confounded upon seeing two armed strangers; then, without making a reply, he instantly fled.

In the interval the lady had fainted. Upon a more minute examination of her features, what was the joy of Walter to behold in her whom he had delivered from such imminent danger, the object of his adoration!

Upon recovering from the swoon into which she had fallen, the transport of the Lady Isabella was great to find in the person of her brave deliverer the being upon whom she doated so fondly. Blushing deeply upon the recollection of his unjust dismissal from the Castle by her father, she with downcast eyes exclaimed,

"Words, Sir, are inadequate to express my gratitude for the many obligations we owe to your friendship; indeed our family is now so much indebted to you that I really begin to think that we shall be unable to present to you a reward suitable to the high order of your merits."

"Ah! dearest Isabella," returned Walter, with a sigh; "if you would but bestow this hand upon me, I should seek no other recompence."

Lady Isabella blushed deeply, and proposed that they should immediately return to the Castle, a proposal which the young nobleman immediately acceded to.

Upon entering the Hall, they were encountered by the Baron Glendovan and the Earl of Strathallan, who, as may be supposed, were greatly astonished to behold Walter leading in the lost Isabella. The Baron fondly embraced his daughter; while the tear of pleasure sparkled in his eye upon beholding her once more safe.

"My dear father," she exclaimed, "we are indeed much indebted to this brave young man, who like a guardian angel came to my rescue at the critical juncture when the villain had nearly overpowered me."

Glendovan shook Walter warmly by the hand, calling him the preserver of his child. After his joy had in some measure subsided, he inquired of Isabella in what way she had been carried off.

"When I entered my apartment," she answered, "I took up my guitar, and after playing several favourite airs, I suddenly heard a strange grating sound, resembling that of undrawing rusty bolts. In a few moments afterwards a part of the flooring gave way, and a man's head appeared through the aperture. Upon beholding this strange phenomenon I screamed aloud with terror. Four armed men instantly sprang into the chamber; and while

two of them seized me, the others guarded the entrance ; they then, regardless of my cries, which one of them at length prevented by placing his rough hand across my mouth, bore me through the opening and down a narrow dark flight of steps and a long winding passage. After having passed several staircases, they led me into a lofty vault, where I discovered a stranger pacing to and fro with hurried and irregular paces. Upon hearing the sound of footsteps, he turned hastily round and waved his hand in an authoritative manner. I was surprised to observe that he wore a mask. This discovery added to my fears ; the same circumstance of concealing his features to escape observation, strengthened my suspicions that some treachery was intended.

“ Upon the departure of the villains who had brought me to the place, he threw himself upon his knees, and in the most impassioned terms declared his love. Enraged at his presumption in thus mentioning his odious attachment, I returned no answer, but endeavoured to effect my escape ; but he anticipated my intention, and, clasping me by the waist, swore with the most dreadful oaths and imprecations that force should compel me to yield. Upon finding myself in his grasp, I screamed loudly for assistance. At that moment the shrill blast of a horn resounded among the neighbouring rocks ; he started at the sound, and for a few moments appeared irresolute.

“ ‘ No ! ’ he at length exclaimed, in a tone of deadly desperation ; ‘ I will not be foiled ; no earthly power shall deter me from the completion of my hopes ! though even the proud spirit of thy power should rebel, thus would I treat the admonition with scorn—nay, struggle not, haughty fair one—no power can avail thee now.’ ”

“ I entreated—implored for mercy—but the monster, deaf to my cries, was about to perpetrate his nefarious purposes, when my brave companion came so unexpectedly to my relief. But how did you, my dear father, know that I had been carried off ? ”

“ One of the domestics,” replied Glendovan, “ happening to pass the door of your chamber, which was open, was surprised to behold the aperture you spoke of, just now, in the floor, and which in their hurry to escape I suppose they had forgotten to secure. He raised the alarm ; you were nowhere to be found ; therefore I came to the conclusion that you had been carried off, though how or by whom I was at a loss to conjecture. I immediately commanded a strict search to be instituted, but without success, and now I behold you once more restored to my arms, pure and unspotted ; and all this was effected by the brave youth I so ungenerously expelled from my presence, thereby depriving Glendovan Castle of its corner-stone. Can my brave friend forgive me,” continued the Baron, turning to Walter, “ for behaving in so disgraceful a manner to one who has rendered me so many eminent services ? Oh ! my friend, I blush at the remembrance of my conduct.”

“ You hurt my feelings, my Lord,” returned Walter, “ by repeating what is past ; I did no more than what every man of common feeling and humanity would have done under similar circumstances, when he beholds virtue in distress.”

“ Generous, noble youth,” returned the Baron ; “ what return shall we

make you for the kind acts you have performed towards us? Your actions, Walter, show so much courage and loftiness of mind that I have long suspected that your birth is illustrious and that you are really not the son of that misguided man whose escape you effected, and through which we disagreed. The hand of my daughter shall now be yours, together with a handsome dowry, without further delay."

"If you do me that honour, my lord," returned Walter, "I shall indeed think myself amply repaid for all the dangers I have encountered. My happiness will now be complete. Your suspicions concerning my birth were not without foundation; therefore be not amazed when I tell you that I am the only son of the late Robert, Viscount Dunbardon, and by right of my father, together with the permission of my sovereign, I have succeeded in obtaining lawful possession of the estates and honours of my family,

"That is impossible, my friend, while Alexander lives;" returned Glendovan, in astonishment.

"It is most true, my lord," replied Walter. "In me you behold the only true and lawful heir; and in Alexander a foul usurper."

"Then you are the child that disappeared so strangely upon the death of the late Viscount and his lady?"

The Viscount answered in the affirmative.

"I am lost in astonishment!" cried the Baron. "It is now verified," he continued; "and all has transpired as I foretold."

The Lady Isabella was overjoyed at this unexpected discovery. Often would her eyes wander with admiration upon the manly form of the Viscount; while her heart glowed with rapture to think she would at last be blessed in alliance with the object of her love.

The Viscount then related every occurrence that had befallen him since the time of his quitting the Castle to the moment when he rescued the Lady Isabella from the ruffian in the cavern.

The Baron and Strathallan were filled with horror upon learning that Alexander was the murderer of his own brother; but what was their agony when they were also informed that he was the assassin of the late Earl Strathallan, who had suddenly disappeared about six years previous to the date of this narrative.

Horror mixed with despair kept them for some time silent: at length it was broken by the Earl, who having drawn his sword, knelt down, and in a solemn voice exclaimed—

"I swear to pursue the steps of this bloody fiend, though he be at the utmost verge of the earth, and revenge my father's foul murder!"

"*Beware of Treachery, my son! The Assassin ever lurks near this Castle!*" said a hollow voice. "*Be on your guard from the attempts of villany!*"

A tall figure, clothed in azure robes, appeared before him. All heard the words, but none saw the spectre save the Earl. Upon beholding the shade of his murdered parent terror struck him dumb; he continued in his kneeling posture gazing wildly upon the figure.

Smiling upon the prostrate Earl, the shade invoked a blessing upon him; then clasping its long, bony fingers, until they emitted a horrible creaking noise, vanished, murmuring—

*"My son, revenge my murder!"*

The words that were heard threw a tremor over all except the Earl, who felt his blood glow with redoubled animation and vigour for vengeance upon the tyrant.

He communicated to his friend what he had seen; at the intelligence they started. A silence for some time reigned over his astonished hearers.

The Earl of Strathallan, still vowing vengeance upon the murderer of his parent, quitted the castle in search of the miscreant Alexander. He had not proceeded far, when he was suddenly attacked by three ruffians in masks; one of them, who directed the others, appeared by his mean to be no common assassin.

The infuriated Earl soon discovered their leader, by his voice, to be no other than the ferocious ruffian of whom he was in search. Overjoyed at thus meeting with his foe, while resentment burned in his heart to take vengeance upon the tyrant whom he upbraided with the crimes he had committed, the Earl continued to aim all his blows at the breast of his opponent; but he parried them with a coolness and precision that astonished Strathallan.

Alexander in return taunted the other with false aspersions of cowardice in the field; all of which he bore with calm and heroic fortitude; being fully aware of the intention of his antagonist to take any advantage of the irritation of his feelings.

The Earl continued to defend himself against their united attacks, till at length his strength began to be exhausted; and just as his adversary was about to plunge his sword into his breast, Walter suddenly made his appearance.

"Base Villain!" he exclaimed, drawing his sword, "usurper of my rights, and murderer of my parents! behold now before you the only son of your brother! whom you, to gain his place, like a fiend, murdered! I am here to revenge my wrongs! Villain! though you see me thus disguised, I know you well to be the destroyer of my family! therefore instantly yield or defend your wretched life! Turn, coward!"

"Yield! never! Base slave thy tale is false—fabricated to deprive me of my lawful rights. The infant whom my brother left to my charge, died years, many years ago. Tremble, boy! fear me—shun my sight; thy presence is mortal. This to thy heart!" he continued, aiming a blow at the head of Walter, which he avoided.

After a long and skilful combat the young Viscount succeeded in disarming his fierce adversary, who, uttering many imprecations, fled.

As soon as the villain and his vile accomplices had disappeared, the Earl of Strathallan embraced his friend with rapture, he having a second time preserved his life from the power of treachery.

Soon after they returned to the Castle, the Baron Glendovan gave orders for the immediate preparations for the marriage ceremony, and a messenger was a second time dispatched to the Abbot of Inchaffey.

## CHAPTER XX.

Appearance of the Wild Witch of the Heath.—Summoning of the Demon.—The Magic Couch.

Six weeks had imperceptibly passed away, and Walter Raven, or, as he should now be styled, the Viscount Dunbardon, had been united in the holy and indissoluble bonds of wedlock; all was rejoicing at the Castle; no mournful voice was now heard; in the surrounding hamlets all was joy, peace, and content; while in another wild and unfrequented spot, shut out alike from society and the light of day, was one self-immured captive who not long previous had been the terror of all, thus solitary was pacing the limits of his gloomy abode, when the sound of approaching footsteps started him. He seized a sword from off the small dilapidated table, and in a loud tone demanded,

"Who's there?"

A man entered and bowed low, As he did so,

"How now!" cried the other; "upon what errand are you here? and why that look of terror? Speak! tell me!"

At this juncture a third person appeared upon the scene, muffled in the folds of a huge cloak, and in one of his hands, which were crossed upon his breast, he grasped the hilt of a dagger.

"Now," continued the occupant of the cavern, "tell me, I command, the cause which brought you here."

"My lord," replied the last comer, "I grieve to be the bearer of such unwelcome tidings, but my duty it is to inform you that ——"

Well, say on, sir," returned the other impatiently.

"Dunbardon Castle has surrendered to one, Walter Raven, who has been elected its right and lawful lord."

"Liar, and slave!" vociferated he to whom these words were directed; and rushing forward, he seized the informant fiercely by the throat. "Repeat that vile falsehood, and this sword shall pierce thy heart."

"Strike, my lord!" returned D'Arste; for he it was; "if what I say is false, I yield up my breast to the blow. Why hesitate? it is but one murder more."

"Cease thy taunts, D'Arste; spare me all unnecessary pain; and if possible produce some further evidence of the truth of your assertion."

D'Arste muffled himself in the cloak as before, then delivered to his companion a folded document, with directions to read aloud its contents. Unfolding the roll, he thus commenced:—

"This is to certify, that by our royal authority, the bearer of this, one Walter Raven, long since known as the son of a notorious Pirate chief now deceased; is the heir to the Dunbardon title and estates. We also command the present usurping possessor, Alexander, do quit the same upon first hearing of this our declaration.

(Signed.)

JAMES OF SCOTLAND.

"From whence did you obtain this?" enquired the usurper, almost choking with rage.

"I found it near to the castle gates;" was the reply: and the speaker



Walter Raveu receiving the Magic Helmet from the Wild Witch of the Heath.

as he uttered these words, pointed with the forefinger of his right hand in the direction of the same.

"Leave me," thundered forth Alexander, as from his vest he drew forth the fatal talisman.

He was instantly obeyed.

"Now!" he exclaimed, holding the casket on high, "Spirit, appear! appear!"

In answer to his command, the well-known voice of the **WILD WITCH OF THE HEATH** was heard to yell forth the following:—

"Deeds of justice now are done,  
Thy guilty course is well nigh run,  
Cabello comes, 'tis now too late,  
Submissive yield, and meet thy fate;  
My friendly Dwarf, do thou appear,  
Our future victim now is here."

A laugh, loud and wild, followed the above words. A portion of the rocky partition was seen to dissolve, and there stood the Witch, accompanied by her attendant, the Red Dwarf, whose countenance was as usual illumined with a horrible satanic grin.

"Filthy hell cat, what do you here with your croaking prophecies? be—  
No 17.



gone, 'tis Cabello I would see. How is this? dares he to refuse my call?"

Again he held high the casket, and muttered an additional incantation.

The Witch and her companion instantly vanished, and in their place appeared CABELLO.

"How is this?" inquired Alexander; "why thus tardy?"

"You have broken your part of the compact."

The late Viscount started back with horror,

"How?" he inquired. "And why did you desert me in the chapel, just too when I could have borne off my prey? was that acting in accordance with the conditions of our compact? I would retake Dunbardon Castle from the power of my foe, and in this enterprise you must aid me."

"Impossible," returned the Demon.

"And why so?" inquired Alexander.

"In our compact," answered the Demon, "it was, among other conditions, specified that you should not enter a sanctuary, or ever make mention of the supreme powers. *Both* of these you *have* done. Upon the violation of a clause, the terms are ——"

"Too dreadful for contemplation," groaned the misguided man. "Yes, Demon, I am thine, soul and body, for ever. Seize and bear me to thy infernal dominions without delay."

"Not yet," roared the Demon, "not yet. I am at present at war with his imperial majesty, and until the cabinet shall be re-established, and peace restored, all my victims fall to him, therefore I give thee one last chance to provide for thy life and future prospects. If thou canst once more regain the interior of the Castle, and the chamber where the new lord passes the night, thou wilt behold the costly couch whereon he and his youthful bride beguile the midnight hours. In the centre of that bed hangs a golden tassel, and, when the lady shall have been by any chance left alone upon that couch, thou must first seize this tassel, and pull it violently; the couch will descend through the oaken floor, and halt not until thou and it shall arrive at the magic cavern, where thou wilt find a dungeon; take this key, unlock the gate of the same, and, having placed her within, secure the gate by a huge padlock of steel; then ascend again with the key securely lodged in your bosom. This do, and there is yet hope for thee. If thou shouldst fail, or she by any chance effect her escape, terrible is the fate that will then await thee. Beware!"

The usurper then slowly extended his hand, and accepted the magic talisman; and as he did so, a loud fiendish laugh struck upon his ear, and the Demon in a fearful tone exclaimed——

"Now be firm! tremble not! remember that this is the last and only means thou hast, whereby thou may'st escape the conditions of our compact! this is an indulgence which thy previous conduct does not merit; but, away! and see how thou dost deserve the same!"

A loud crash followed; and the trembling Alexander was once more left alone to his meditations.

For some few moments he remained fixed immovable with excess of terror. At length, striking his brow, in a tone of bitter anguish, he cried,

"Oh, eternal powers! for what am I ordained? The power I once hoped to defeat, has now prevailed: that power to whom in a moment of

rash intemperance I bartered my immortal soul, has defeated all my well-concocted plans. Oh! that I had listened to the voice of friendly warning that assailed my ear, ere I had sealed my own doom—ere I had leagued myself with those false and juggling fiends, whose only province it is to mislead and then betray. But reflection now comes too late, and remorse is useless. Now to test the efficiency of my talisman: but the castle; how is an entrance to be gained? I am known to the guards, and should be captured on the instant of my appearance amongst them. How has the last few hours changed my fate! I now fear to approach that edifice, whose lord, a short time since, I was. Ha! footsteps approach! who can this be? 'tis D'Arste. How is this? what brings you here? have you tidings of more misfortunes?"

"No, my lord," replied D'Arste, "methought you commanded my presence here; did you not so?"

"No!" returned Alexander; "yet stay!" he continued, as D'Arste was about to quit his presence; "I wish to gain the interior of Dunbardon Castle; think you it can be accomplished with safety?"

"Impossible! my Lord," returned D'Arste; "your person is so well known to the domestics, and to appear among them would be certain detection; in which case I need not relate to you the course that will be instantly pursued—an instant and terrible death will be your fate."

"Of that I am fully aware," replied the other; "yet, notwithstanding this, I would make the venture."

"My Lord!" cried D'Arste, in surprise.

"What I have said is most true," retorted Alexander; "I must obtain an instant entry into the Castle, and you, D'Arste, must and shall assist me!"

"My Lord," replied his companion, "why suffer your foes to obtain so complete a triumph over you? Is it not enough that they have deprived you of your possessions?"

"It is those possessions I would retake; 'tis for that alone I wish to effect an entrance into the Castle."

"This is some idle scheme, trust me, my Lord—invented only to betray you, if possible, into deeper consequences."

"Not so," returned Alexander; "not so, D'Arste; once within the Castle, success is certain; then falls my rival beneath my superior power, and I shall once more be reinstated in the seat of lordly wealth, and all will again be well."

"I should rejoice to see it as you say," replied the other; "but I can not see how or in what manner this great change can be effected. Trust me, my Lord, that it were better far to think no more of this enterprise, which will be fraught with destruction to all engaged therein. I have another, and more practicable scheme for your consideration; the men of the hills—the brave band of the hills, once commanded by me, as I have told you before, now wait the arrival their leader—place yourself at their head, and the proud young upstart Lord of Dunbardon Castle may yet be brought to tremble. Do this, and you may prosper."

"What!" cried the late Lord of the Castle, starting aside, "would you have me league myself with a band of lawless robbers? No, D'Arste;

there is a link in *my* destiny that must not be broken, or terrible may be the result, I am for the Castle! follow, or remain, as thou wilt."

Upon arriving near to the castle, Alexander, for the first time, became aware that he was followed by D'Arste. Upon perceiving this, he halted suddenly; and when his confidante had joined him, he turned and exclaimed——

"So you are disposed to aid my plans. 'Tis well; success is certain! Yet hold! How can we effect an entrance? I have it. Do you, D'Arste, steal by yonder column, and dispatch the sentinel."

"A thing easier said than done;" retorted D'Arste, who for some secret cause, contrary to his general nature, continued to cast insurmountable obstacles upon every fresh plan that was proposed.

"Coward!" returned Alexander, fiercely, being wearied by his repeated subterfuges; "if you had no desire to serve, why did you follow me? Can it be possible that you are the D'Arste who so oft has braved danger to the teeth; him, too, who has defied the proudest and most powerful chieftains that have lived in the age, and ——"

"Nay, no more, my lord," cried D'Arste, "this is the man who has done that and much more. Daring deeds grace the list to which my name is attached, yet I am not so much in love with honour that I can consent to link myself with you in an enterprise that is so full of danger, and in which there is so little chance of success; but still, if you can explain to me how you are to be obeyed, and in what manner even then obtain entrance, I shall be more happy to obey your commands. Now, my lord," he continued, "have you aught more to say; more practicable commands to issue?"

He then, with these words, quitted the cavern, followed by D'Arste.

"None, coward. Leave me; I see it all. The hour of wealth and supreme power has passed; I am equal with yourself, therefore you are not now in the mood to render me those services you otherwise would do; but no matter. Alone and unaccompanied will I go, and either effect my purpose, or perish in the attempt."

"Has your lordship concluded?" inquired D'Arste, "because if so, I will say a few words upon the subject also."

"I have said all," returned Alexander, gloomily.

"'Tis well," replied D'Arste. "Now then for my defence. My lord; when I first re-entered your castle, I swore to aid and assist all your plans: Have I ever yet violated that oath, my lord? Nay, answer me that trifle."

"I do not remember any instance," replied the other, with a gesture of impatience.

"Then why speak in the strain you have?" demanded D'Arste, imperiously.

"Did not your refusal, or, at least, hesitation to obey my commands augur such to be the case? When I was the reigning lord of Dunbardon Castle, no hesitation then marked your conduct; and when I see your unwillingness here what else am I to suppose, but that you are now regardless of my will, and would fain desert me."

"Pshaw! my lord, don't talk thus, 'tis childish in the extreme, a little more delay and you will be detained against your will too; but come, my

lord, let us on; since I am to be your companion in this hazardous expedition. Now, see the sentinel's face is turned from us—now, he dies!”

With these words he darted forward, and in a moment more, the man with a low groan fell writhing to the earth bathed in blood. In falling, his partizans, by some strange accident, discharged its contents—the report produced thereby alarmed the guard stationed on the opposite side. The two adventurers darted off towards a buttress of the tower; as they were in the act of doing this the man observed them; a loud report—then a bullet passed them, so near that a feather flew from the cap of D'Arste.

“A warm reception, rather;” he exclaimed, as they succeeded in concealing themselves; “another such close appeal, and I would not give much for our lives; but hark! the whole castle is alarmed! what's to be done, my lord? flight is the only resource left us, and that——”

“I still scorn;” responded Alexander; “no,” he continued, after a brief pause, “that shall only be adopted when all else shall fail. Now that some small chance of success is presented, I would not for worlds forego the same by cowardice. Ha! what was that light? see! a party of them now cross the court.—Eternal curses! they will discover us, and then all will be lost; keep close, man; close, close.”

The next instant showed the complete necessity of this caution, for a large party of men at arms passed them, bearing numerous lighted torches, the glare of which partly displayed the dingy outlines of the concealed fugitives. Contrary, however, to their expectations, they passed without observing the objects of their search; though so near were they, that at one moment scarce a hair's breadth intervened between them. For some considerable time after they had disappeared, the two individuals who had so narrowly escaped detection, did not exchange a word or attempt to move from their hiding place, but at length D'Arste, whose patience was completely exhausted, broke silence.

“Now,” he exclaimed, in a half-suppressed whisper, “I think we may in safety venture forth, for to speak candid, my lord, I am in no humour to be jammed up in this nook any longer. Why, my lord, you bear all as patiently as though you were seated in the principal chamber of Dunbar-don Castle, and we quietly sipping your wine, instead of standing under one of the buttresses of the same, fearful of being made prisoners by the very domestics whom a short time since we were wont to kick and execute at our pleasure.”

“Talk not of that hated subject,” groaned Alexander, “it is to me worse than death. Let us on; my heart sickens, and at this moment I would——”

“Send a bullet through the heart of any that dare offend you,” suggested D'Arste. “But come,” he continued, “this is not to the purpose, and we have no time to waste in idle conversation. But, by heaven! we are likely to have a warm reception, for see, another man has now taken the place of him we slew; but come, we have ventured too far to recede; move with caution along this bank, if we can but gain the moat, all will then be well.”

“Indeed!” replied Alexander; “how so? explain the purport of your words.”

“That I will do, and in a few words, too. On the left side of the cas-

tle-wall is a small fragment of an iron ring ; by a movement known only to myself, that portion of the same can be made to recede, and——”

“The water admitted into the Castle at pleasure,” rejoined Alexander ; “but as that cannot possibly be productive of any benefit to ourselves, or any harm to our foes, whp that plan may be abandoned upon the instant.”

“That is the opinion you entertain,” my Lord,” replied D’Arste ; “but you must know that mine is somewhat at variance with my own, for it so happens that as one butt will admit the water, there is another on the opposite side that by lowering the same that is prevented. So now, my lord, for the leap which is to decide all ; rise or fall, live or die.”

And with these words both simultaneously leaped into the inky stream at the same instant as the sentinel stationed above them fired his musket, being alarmed by the noise necessarily created by the plunge ; the bullet, however, missed its aim, both were buried deep in the watery bed. Upon rising above the surface of the water, D’Arste succeeded in lowering the chain ; at the same instant another chain was disturbed, and D’Arste, together with his companion, had entered a subterraneous dungeon of the castle. The place upon which they entered was buried in profound darkness, and Alexander shuddered as with horror he meditated upon the miserable fate with which they were now threatened ; for the first time his guilty soul shrank appalled. No so D’Arste ; he still determined to effect their purpose, and while his companion stood wrapt in silent grief and fear, he was busied in making search for some outlet by which they might secure their escape. Onward, however, still they went, winding through long avenues and passages made in the thickness of the wall, which, however familiar their uses had been to them when previous possessors of the castle, served now to perplex both Dunbardon and D’Arste. A light, however, was at last seen to glimmer obscurely in the distance, and guided by its faint rays the two adventurers soon penetrated through the arched vault they were traversing to a more open cell beyond. On arriving here, they found that they were in the vaults beneath the chapel of the castle, as a subdued strain from the organ above them testified. The light now disappeared, and left Dunbardon and D’Arste again in pitchy darkness, the monk who carried the lamp, for thus was the temporary light caused, having departed from these cells to rejoin his holy companions above.

“The pious fools !” muttered Dunbardon from between his clenched teeth ; “these mummeries are sickening. Such things, thank Heaven ! were untouched by me, and left to those who most should value them—the oily monks.”

“True !” rejoined D’Arste, “but now their shaven-crowned reverences have participators in their ceremonies they knew not formerly. The new lord of the castle ——”

“Dog !” interrupted the other, “darest thou to use that phrase when I, its rightful owner, am with thee ? Am I, from whom by artifice and stratagem this fortress has been wrested, to listen patiently to thy mention of its present owner’s name ? Rather call the boy Raven a pirate’s churl, whom chance, not destiny, has placed in power here.”

“Well, then, this usurper of your just rights and privileges,” responded D’Arste, whilst a smile he could not—or perhaps cared not to—repress

played upon his features, "this Walter Raven has been for some time past as I have understood by his domestics, engaged most deeply in religious lore, and I have heard that every night his confessor, accompanied by the priests he has appointed to his household, await his presence to conduct him at vespers to the Chapel of our Ladye, which, as thou knowest, lies in the eastern portion of the building, and beneath which, as I conjecture from the proximity of the sounds we are now standing."

"Which said chapel was the stable for my horses when I was reigning here," cried Dunbardon, sarcastically.

"True! but to the furtherance of our object. There is, or was here a spring, which by pressure, communicated with a stone in the wall, that turning upon a pivot revealed to view a passage leading to the very shrine itself. They are now celebrating mass; by gaining the shrine, we may seize the opportunity to mix with the rest, and so secure admission into the very spot whither you would go."

"Thou art in the right, D'Arste," answered Dunbardon, "though I would that we had no occasion to mix with the canting crew; I have already paid dearly—aye *too* dearly for the connexion already—but come! no matter, to the chapel—to the chapel!"

"And with this D'Arste commenced a vigorous search for the spring, but in vain, the darkness of the place obscuring the different crevices of the stone from the sight.

As he was groping on his hands and knees along the surface of the dungeon, he came in contact with with a stone, which guessing to be a flint, he availed himself of, for the purpose of aiding him in his search. Drawing a dagger of curious workmanship which the wily Captain of the mountain Band always kept secured in his vest in case of an emergency, he struck the blade with the flint, and the sparks that were emitted by the contact revealed to him, much to his satisfaction, some fragments of a half burnt torch, probably thrown down there by one of the Viscount's own attendants, and which now seemed placed there by the hand of fate to assist them in their nefarious designs.

"See!" cried D'Arste, "here is that will transform chance to certainty. Look upon this, and hail it as an omen of success."

But Alexander seemed too much engrossed in the contemplation of his own intended schemes to pay much attention to the remarks of his companion.

D'Arste therefore recommenced his operations alone. Again striking the flint and dagger, the spark produced by the collision he caught upon the torch, and fanning it with his breath, he at last had the gratification of beholding the inflammable materials of which it was composed resolve themselves into a bright yellow flame, which enabled him to discern the most distant objects in the dungeon minutely, and threw the forms of himself and Alexander into strong shadow.

"See!" cried he, waving the torch on high, "the fickle dame that has of late played such fantastic tricks with you and I, now seems to smile on us. Another moment, and the castle will be; if water failed, this," raising the torch, "would supply the building with fire instead."

"Peace, fool," vociferated the other. "Hast thou forgotten that I have

mighty things to execute ere destruction wraps this cursed pile in ruins! come, let us find this passage thou spokest of just now, though I fear me it is but a vision existing only in thy heated brain."

D'Arste, without replying to this last speech of the tyrant, save that a scowl that knitted his brows together might be thus interpreted, examined the sides of the wall more narrowly than before, and soon discovered by the light he carried a piece of rusty iron projecting from the wall, which, on being turned inwards, allowed a stone near it to revolve upon its iron hinges with a loud creaking noise.

They both pursued their way through the opening thus afforded, in silence, moving onwards in a circuitous direction until they came to a spot whence egress seemed to be doubtful, save that two doors, barred and protected by metallic safeguards, faced them as they approached.

The first door they tried resisted all attempts to gain an entrance, but with the second they were more fortunate, for yielding to the pressure D'Arste bestowed, it gave way, and revealed to them another spacious vault, the extremity of which was shrouded in the gloom that prevailed.

Here they entered, Pietro leading the way, followed by the late lord of the very castle where he was now but a pitiful interloper. They had proceeded some distance, when their course was interrupted by some obstacle on the floor, which rattled when Dunbardon's foot touched it as though it had been an iron vessel containing articles of value.

On stooping down to examine the cause of the obstruction, and holding the light closer to the ground for that purpose, D'Arste discovered that it was the bony skeleton of a human being, which, blanched by time, and denuded of its fleshy covering, rattled at every touch like the dice that jingled in a gamester's dice-box.

"Here," cried D'Arste, pointing with his finger downwards, "lieth another victim of thy accursed vengeance. A death of long and lingering starvation is thy reward for years of toil and bravery in a murderer's cause."

"How! dare you taunt me thus?" cried the other. "Is a cur to reason with his master on the tendency of his commands? Peace, I say!"—and a half-sheathed stiletto supplied the interruption of his words of a more fearful meaning.

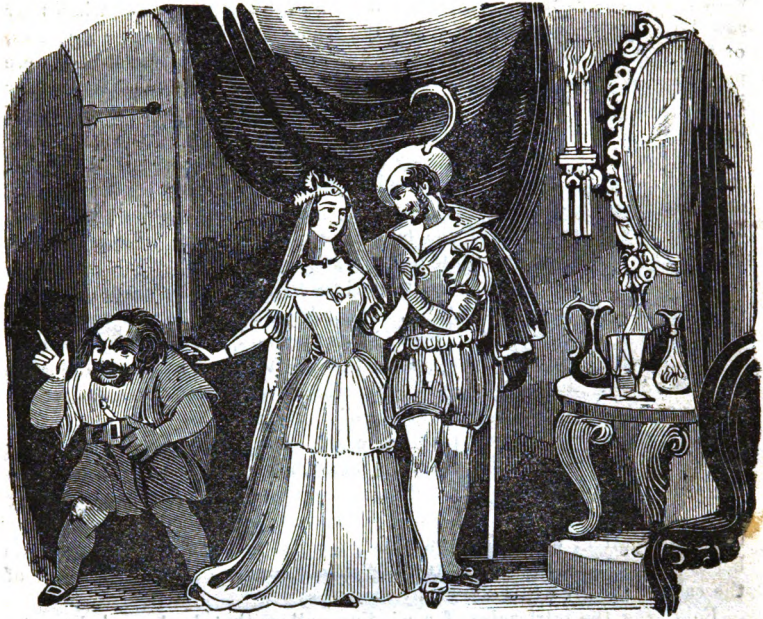
"Nay," retorted the other, "I fear ye not; thy black looks and savage threats might have frightened thy vassals into passive obedience; but Pietro D'Arste is not to be scowled down into silence. Thy career of crime has nearly terminated, and—"

A loud swell from the organ which was now evidently at hand broke off the sentence, and the "Ave Maria" of the Monks mingled with the solemn outpourings of the seraphic instrument, in solemn contrast to the half-breathed vengeance of Pietro; the one redolent only of devotion and peace, the other of blasphemy and bloodshed.

Alexander paused; not that veneration urged him so to do; but he saw that by quarrelling now with his companion he was placing an insurmountable bar between himself and the accomplishment of his wishes.

"Pshaw!" he cried, "'tis time, Pietro, this foolery should cease; I am hasty in my wrath, 'tis true, but I meant it but in jest."

And the two ruffians united their hands together with the same outward



The Meeting of Walter Raven and Isabella.

fergency as if they had been linked together for the accomplishment of a good cause, instead of one fraught with sin and dishonour.

Leading the way to an opening beyond, the massive door of which was open, they ascended a flight of rugged stone steps, and in another instant they emerged from behind some moth-eaten tapestry into the aisle of the chapel.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### The Mystery of the Magic Couch—The Disappearance—The Pursuit.

THE monks were too deeply engaged in their devotions when the two adventurers we left in our last chapter appeared in the chapel. Intent upon the books before them, they heeded not the entry of Dunbardon and his companion, who, thus enabled to secrete themselves unobserved, were screened from observation behind one of the pillars of the sacred edifice.

The ceremonies of the evening were at last concluded, and one by one, the lights were extinguished; the aromatic pastille and the fragrant myrrh and frankincense, burning in the censors, alone wafting their welcome odours on the viewless air. The intruders now began to feel anxious to  
No. 18.



make good their escape, and for that purpose were on the eve of mixing with the monks as they departed, even undisguised as they were, when they saw fortunately, or unfortunately as the reader may please, some surplices, or friars' gowns, left upon the benches of the aisle down which they were passing. To secure these was but the work of a moment, and in another instant they had become in outward appearance, as plausible a couple of monks as ever told beads before a catholic shrine.

Mingling with the throng, they advanced into the body of the castle, where dispersing different ways, some to the buttery to obtain refreshments, others to their abodes in the neighbouring hamlet to seek repose, they soon left the ample corridors of the building as tenantless as if some mighty plague had swept away the late inhabitants.

On looking round for the first time since he quitted the chapel, and removing the cowl from his features, Alexander saw that he was *alone*. Relying upon D'Arste following closely in his footsteps, the discovery produced a corresponding feeling of surprise in the late Viscount's breast, and thus he gave vent to his rage, in a soliloquy which was poured forth amidst the utterance of curses, "not loud but deep."

"Pietro surely would not play me false? Did I think so, I would tear his warm heart yet bleeding from his breast, and pluck out vengeance from his gore-stained corpse. The dastard churl; yet stay, perhaps I wrong him. He may have fancied I had gone elsewhere, and thus have missed me. No matter; I will despatch this project of to-night alone, perhaps 'tis better it should be so. This turning should convey me to the interior of the castle; thither will I direct my footsteps."

Following the intricacies of a winding gallery that he knew led to the more habitable portion of the building, he had not proceeded far when the sound of approaching footsteps smote his ear. Afraid of premature discovery, and marvelling who the intruder could be, Dunbardon stealthily drew back into a darker recess in the wall to elude observation.

The footsteps approached nearer, and now, for the first time, a lamp became visible in the hand of the new-comer, which had been previously obscured from sight, but Dunbardon's surprise did not here terminate, for, watching the direction in which the rays of light fell, he saw they rested on the countenance of the bearer of the lamp, revealing in certain surety the features of Walter Raven himself.

Alexander's first impulse was to await his approach, and then, seizing the opportunity of no one being at hand, to plunge his dagger into his rival's heart; his second thoughts, however, impelled him to abandon so dangerous a project, as upon the accomplishment of his mission, and the capture of the Lady Isabella, all his future hopes depended. The latter course—that of endeavouring to pass unnoticed—was therefore adopted, but this, as will now be speedily seen, was frustrated in the manner we are about to relate.

Walter approached; the lamp gleaming upon the walls within three feet of the spot where Dunbardon then stood. Another instant, and it fell upon his very form, but Raven, so far from expressing the least surprise at seeing any one there, seemed, on the contrary, to rejoice in the encounter.

† "Hail! holy father," cried Raven, "it glads me much to be so fortunate in our meeting; I came to seek one of thy holy order."

Dunbardon, seeing that there was no loop-hole of escape, thought that the "discretion" was the "better part of valour," he might make on this occasion of necessity a virtue, and accordingly, seeing the mistake into which Walter had fallen, stepped boldly out from his concealment, and confronted the present lord of the castle in his assumed character of the monk.

"*Benedicite, son,*" muttered the disguised Alexander, in a feigned voice corresponding with the garb—the phrases belonging to which he had contrived to borrow from the society he had just left—"what wouldst thou with me?"

"But the granting of a poor request," responded Walter. "I would but crave thy presence with the Lady Isabella for a few short moments. She had a dream last night of strange and perilous import, to explain the which she has desired me to recall you here."

The mock monk, overjoyed at the good fortune that had thrown this opportunity in his way, acknowledged his assent to the same by a low deferential bow.

"She awaits you in the ante-chamber," cried Raven, "whither I will soon attend you; I go but to observe my sentinels discharge their duty, and will within the hour there return."

"I will attend her ladyship," continued Alexander. "*Pax vobiscum.*"

And the salutations of the night were returned, Walter proceeding on his way to the ramparts, and Dunbardon seeking with exultation the road to the Lady Isabella's chamber.

To reach that spot, he had to traverse numerous passages, and pass many of the domestics, but as it was a thing of ordinary occurrence to require the aid of a priest when any dream or mystery had to be unravelled, the disguised monk reached the door of the apartment unsuspected, unquestioned.

A few knocks sufficed to announce his presence, and the purport of his visit. The door was opened, and an attendant ushered him from the lobby in silence to the chamber. His arrival seemed to have been anticipated; for making a deferential inclination of the body as Dunbardon entered, the female servitors, who had before crowded round their mistress, now took their leave.

The room into which the masqued designer was introduced, consisted of a wide and spacious apartment, beautifully ornamented with vases of flowers, and costly full-length portraits, that, representing likenesses to the earlier portion of the Dunbardon family, frowned in solemn sociality from the walls. On a couch, in the centre of the apartment, reclined the lady Isabella; her fair cheek, once the cradle of smiles, now moistened by tears; the hue of rosy health was now replaced by ashy paleness; her form was supinely stretched upon the yielding surface of the couch; and, as the supposed monk entered, the lady Isabella half rose, and received him with a graceful inclination of her head:

"Your ladyship demanded my presence, I believe," cried Alexander, carefully surveying the room where he stood, to see that no one was present to disturb the interview.

"True, holy father, I did," responded Isabella, "I would receive thy counsel for a dream that I have had, one fraught with strange forebodings of some dire and new calamity."

"Say on, my daughter," continued the hypocrite in his feigned voice.

"I know 'twere wrong to place, good father, too much resolve in dreams, to stamp them with a confidence as true as warnings of a better nature, granted us in day; but still, I'd fain not disregard the vision of yester-even, seeing that 'tis predictive of much pain and misery.

"And this dream was ——"

"You shall hear. Methought I was on the brink of a precipice where the hated usurper of Dunbardon Castle was also standing. Fixing on me a look that thrilled my very soul with horror, and froze the current of my veins, he grasped my hand in his and hurried to the edge; we sprang together from the rock into the foaming mass of waters beneath. I endeavoured to resist, but in vain; supplications were fruitless, and I was dragged down—down into the gulf that yawned before me. Shrieking with horror I awoke, but the impression that this dream made upon me will never be forgotten."

"Such a vision should scarcely need an interpreter," pursued Alexander, still preserving his feigned voice.

"Indeed!"

"No!" for thus it will be unravelled; Dunbardon is before you—away with the whining cant of the monk and this fraudulent garment—here am I, Dunbardon, the despot! the destroyer!—call me what you will—here, ready to secure you as my lawful prize and capture! Nay, no attempt at raising an alarm, it will avail you nothing, this dagger shall find its way to your heart ere you are able to utter one cry for assistance."

Isabella started by the sudden discovery, grew of a deadly paleness, and shrieking with despair, fell back senseless on the couch.

The late Viscount, obeying the instructions of Cabello, now sprang upon the couch whereon she lay, and grasping the golden tassel that had been pointed out, an opening in the floor appeared, and the couch gradually sank down through a trap, leaving the room undisturbed in which it had so lately been, save that neither the Lady Isabella nor the bed on which she reposed were any longer visible.

The piercing shriek that ran through the household when Isabella disappeared, now aroused the whole of the domestics. Bursting into the room, no language can express their surprise when it was found that neither their mistress nor the supposed monk were in the apartment. Walter rushing in, soon participated in the excitement that prevailed, and all was bustle and confusion.

Walter did not hesitate long before he resolved in his mind the course he should adopt. Feeling confident that supernatural powers were at work to counteract his designs, he sought aid from the same source; the rest of the servants with trembling looks and pallid faces, awaited their master's bidding, but as Walter moved not, nor uttered a syllable that might be construed into an order for their departure in search of the abducted bride, they remained perfectly stationary.

It was a fine clear night; the moon flung forth its silvery light over tower and tree, buttress and battlement, making the sky as clear and light as though the fair Cynthia had stolen more than her usual share of her brother Phœbus's rays, when Walter Raven, girding his cloak more closely

around him, for the air was chilly, pursued his path from Dunbardon Castle to the abode of the Wild Witch.

The road, as we have already mentioned, lay through a rugged defile, flanked on either side by long lines of rock, looming out against the horizon in fearful grandeur. He had proceeded thus far, when the usual chant of the Wild Witch was heard welcoming Raven to her abode.

“Welcome! welcome! noble youth,  
 Rich alike in worth and truth;  
 I—the Witch—will grant thee all  
 Thou dost wish performed, and call  
 On all my imps to aid thy cause,  
 As guided by fair Virtue’s laws.  
 I will now ensure thy life  
 Against thy hated rival’s strife,  
 And soon in crushing him essay  
 To gain myself triumphant away.  
 Come! then, to my wild abode,  
 And heed not what may check thy road,  
 Well knowing this, I am your friend,  
 And that your troubles soon will end;  
 Come, then, and triumph will be mine,  
 Whilst Isabelle again is thine.”

As these words died away on the breeze, Raven paused, and saw that he had now approached within a few yards of the Witch’s abode. A bright blue light, that danced on before him, showed plainly that his visit was not repugnant to the mysterious woman who presided over the place, and soon after the Witch herself appeared, and inquired the reason of his arrival.

Her demeanour was subdued and gentle, and her manner that of one who could at different times, and under different impulses, enact the part of terminant or Griselda as the occasion warranted. She held in her hand the snake-entwined rod by which her enchantments were performed, and at the distance of about three feet from her appeared the Dwarf, whose social qualifications have been already introduced to the reader. He was perched upon a small rise or hillock, on which not a blade of grass was seen to grow, all vegetation being withered by the scorching propensities of those who dwelt in the vicinity.

“I know thine errand Walter,” said the Witch, as she perceived him about to answer her first inquiry.

“Indeed!” responded Walter, “then thou can’st find the means doubtless of relieving me from my difficulties.”

“That depends upon the concurrence of another being.”

“And he is ——”

“A tyrant, more powerful than I, though executing that power with the worst designs. His name is Cabello, and he is the protective genius of Dunbardon, whom he has secured as his victim, and who has bartered to him his soul itself, for the cravings of ambition.”

“I would but know,” said Walter, “where my bride, the Lady Isabella, is imprisoned, so that I might release her from the captivity in which, as I conjecture, she has been placed by the supernatural means, at the command of the hated Alexander.”

"The knowledge thereof would be but of little value," responded the Witch, "did I not give thee the means to overcome the difficulties what you will have to encounter."

"And wilt thou do so?"

"I will!" pursued the other, "what Ho! my faithful Dwarf, I require thy services."

As these words reached the resting place of her dwarfish familiar, his ears pricked up, and his whole countenance underwent an animated change. He rose, and seeming conscious for what purpose he had been summoned, rolled over to the foot of his mistress, prepared to obey her behests.

Striking her rod against the earth, a magic cauldron now rose, boiling with a sulphureous flame that almost stifled Walter, as he watched with amazement its sudden appearance from the earth. Into this the Dwarf poured from a crucible which rose before him various metals in a state of fusion, and stirring up the metallic mixture with her rod, a helmet was soon seen moulded to her hand.

"Take," cried the Witch, "this Magic Casque; it will confer on you the power of invulnerability, sword and dagger will fall as lightly upon thy frame as though the aggressor stabbed the viewless air, or yielding water. By its means you can obtain instant power over those who would thwart your plans of vengeance."

"And where is Isabella imprisoned?"

"In the dungeon beneath Dunbardon Castle."

"And how to obtain admission?" inquired Walter.

"Listen. The entrance is guarded by an invisible spirit, whose power is bounded, but to whom is confided the care of the cell. This talisman," continued the Witch, presenting Raven with a glowing ruby set in pure gold, "will procure you instant ingress to the vault; at its touch the barred doors will immediately fly open, and revolving on its hinges will disclose the form of her whom thou hast called thy bride. Be vigilant, and conquer."

"I will," answered Walter, "and thank thee, too; how can I return this kindness?"

"By being ready when I bid thee to execute my wishes."

"So that they are not at variance with the dictates of my conscience, I will," responded Raven.

"I ask for no more," exclaimed the Witch. "When I have need of thy services, I will take such means as will ensure them; till then, farewell. Morning is breaking, and its ruddy streak warns me that my presence is required elsewhere. Once more, farewell!"

And before Walter had time to return the compliment, the Witch had struck her rod upon the earth; a chasm had opened at her feet, and she, together with the Dwarf, and the strange implements they had used in their incantation, had disappeared, and left no visible trace upon the surface of their former existence.

Walter, pleased, yet horrified with the scenes they had witnessed, and their result, began to turn his footsteps back to the castle, holding the Casque or Helmet firmly grasped in his hand, as a proof that all he had just heard was no delusion. Whilst Walter is thus spell-bound with amaze-

ment and expectation, turn we our attention to Dunbardon, whom we left a few pages back sinking with the Lady Isabella, through the chasm that had so suddenly appeared.

Dunbardon, still retaining a firm grasp of the magic tassel, heeded not the swoon of his fair companion of his flight. Downwards they sank through a succession of chambers, until the couch, resting on the surface of the stone floor of a dungeon, ceased to continue its descent. Dunbardon, perceiving now that his journey was concluded, sprang forth, and bearing the senseless girl in his arms, strode towards a barred door that obstructed his view before him.

He now touched a spring on the wall, the existence of which the Demon had rendered familiar to him, and the bed and its appurtenances vibrated a moment, and then, by a mechanical contrivance, the trap rose, and gradually ascended, till the bed appeared in the same position that it formerly occupied in the chamber, with but this difference, that the Lady Isabella, the former beauteous occupant, no longer pressed the pillow.

We have said that Dunbardon's progress was obstructed by a door, which, thickly studded by huge bars of iron, seemed to oppose all his attempts at obtaining admission, but we have to add that Cabello had, by imparting sundry cabalistic words to Dunbardon, prevented any unpleasantness of the sort occurring.

It was now the time when these words were to be called into requisition, and Alexander, resting his burden on his left arm, prepared to give them utterance.

"*Clash ma giel tu releddy!*," cried the soul-lost Dunbardon; and as these words were uttered, the ponderous portals yielded to the awful words, and revolving on their cumbrous hinges, disclosed a narrow but lofty dungeon, dimly lighted by a small taper lamp that was suspended from the roof, that rose in solemn darkness above the surface of the cell.

The abductor bore the helpless maiden in his arms into the vault which we have described, and placing her with some violence on the ground, she gradually recovered by the shock from her swoon.

"Where am I?" she faintly articulated, as unclosing her pale blue eyes they rested on the person of the late Viscount.

"Here where you will be well provided for," responded that person, in tones as soft as the natural gruffness of his voice would permit; "I love you, Lady Isabella; and, trust me, there are few more constant or devoted in their attachments than Dunbardon."

"*Love,*" almost shrieked the affrighted girl, "and from you, the murderer—the crime-ridden Dunbardon!"

"Aye!" thundered forth the other, "Dunbardon, the proud—the haughty, if you will, but still the powerful Dunbardon—the master of thy person—the controller of thy destiny—the avenger of my own wrongs—and the punisher of thy husband's treachery!"

"Are there no lightnings yet in heaven to strike the traducer to the earth?" exclaimed the fair Isabella; "or has that great Power whose might protects the innocent permitted the existence of a wretch like this to wander unscathed through this beautiful world Heaven has created, and to crush the helpless whilst he spares the guilty."

"Peace, raving fool!" roared the late Viscount.

"I will not cease to upbraid you with the wrongs you have committed till this form, weak though it be, falls stricken to the earth. Aye, 'tis well," continued she, seeing Dunbardon involuntarily grasp the hilt of his sword, "strike a woman, 'twill be in unision with the rest of thy noble deeds; nay, I care not for thy threats and menaces; the time will soon arrive when heaven will punish thy misdeeds—when providence will turn against yourself the dagger raised to smite another—when thy last moment will be fruitlessly occupied in gasping for breath; that thy repentance may be atoned and received, and then thou wilt ponder with sorrow on my words, and reflect on the injuries thou hast done mankind."

"Silence, again, I say, thou taunting slave," pursued Dunbardon, "or I will level thee with the earth, woman though thou art, from which you sprung."

"Nay, frown on, proud and haughty chieftain, but my latest breath shall be spent in proclaiming thy crimes aloud to the whole world, and calling for vengeance on thy devoted head."

"Death and furies!" screamed the infuriated Alexander, "must I crouch before a menial like thyself? must I bow to the mandates of a woman, and seek for no other confessional than that she would afford me. Pshaw! out on't; I will have no more of this fanaticism here, or this shall—" and the withdrawal of a short *kidah*, or stiletto, from his breast, filled up the pause with an action of fearful import.

The Lady Isabella seemed to disregard, however, all attempts to conciliate her, either by threats or remonstrances. She continued to pour out her vituperations with unabated force, and ceased not until languor compelled her to obtain repose. Dunbardon, seeing this, left her to recover on the stone floor of the dungeon, and slamming to the door, which closed with a spring, returned to the lobby to see if he could discover his partner in crime, D'Arste.

He wandered stealthily on amid the labyrinthine passages of the castle walls, and saw no light, and heard no footstep which might serve to guide him in the direction which his former companion had taken. At this juncture, whilst he was bewildered with the different thoughts that crowded round his confused brain, he heard the sound of voices break upon his ear, and listening anxiously, heard the following dialogue:—

"Pooh! Gerald, I care not for thy surmise," cried one, "thou art in the wrong, most assuredly."

"Indeed!"

"Aye, indeed! he has gone, vanished, evaporated, if you will, and these eyes saw him disappear."

"Nonsense, man! you were dreaming, or had been drinking too deeply when you saw this."

"Drunk I might have been, but it was with horror; and dreaming I might be, but it must have been with fright. I tell thee the mysterious monk has gone, shaven crown, gaberdine, and all."

"And with thy wits, too, good Oswald, or my place as steward of the battery goes for nought. Gone, forsooth. Stone floors are not marvelously renowned for pitfalls."



Kenneth attacked by the Highland caterans.

The late Viscount stopped to hear no more, but proceeded onwards with a firmer step and sterner aspect, assured, as the overhearing of the above dialogue enabled him to feel, that the mysterious monk, whose brief process of evaporation had occupied so fully the attention of the speakers, was no other than D'Arste himself.

Confident of this, and likewise believing that Pietro had only left the hall to meet with him, his mind became easy upon that score, and hearing the clock of the old turret toll the hour by three sonorous strokes, he found that he had already wasted fruitlessly four hours in the pursuit of D'Arste, and with that discovery he determined to return without delay to the cell where the Lady Isabella had been imprisoned during the night.

Here for awhile we leave him, and returning to Walter, take up the thread of the narrative from that point when, leaving the Witch with the Magic Helmet in his possession, he was about retracing his steps to the castle. The night, which had been hitherto one vast cloudless expanse of azure, thickly studded with myriads of stars that resembled so many golden specks cast into the abyss of space, now became murky and overcast. Dense clouds weighed down the atmosphere in every direction, and a heavy mist or fog seemed gradually rising from the lochs to meet it. Flakes of fire gleamed at intervals from the marshes by which he was on every side surrounded, and ever and anon huge balls of flame, each more vivid than the



last, darted athwart his path, flashing light upon every object, and leaving a glistening train of sparks behind to mark their track. Still he pursued his way, unheeding the wrathful omens that thus crossed him, and confident in the uprightness of his cause, and the honesty of purpose by which he was guided, he slackened not his pace until the crumbling battlements of Dunbardon Castle frowned in all their awful and gigantic majesty before him.

On reaching the eastern postern he was challenged by the sentinel, but as he gave the pass-word, and touched by accident the soldier's halbert with the magic Helmet which he carried in his hand, he was astounded to perceive that by the touch the lance and halbert in the sentinel's hand was shivered into a hundred fragments.

Without pausing to dwell upon the strange nature of a circumstance like this, he hurried onwards, and reaching the corridor that led to the dungeons below, he earnestly bent his steps to the spot where the Wild Witch had informed him the Lady Isabella had been incarcerated.

After traversing the numerous intricate passages that led to the vaults, he at last arrived at one which he conjectured was the place of which he was in search. The doors were secured by massive bars of iron in triplets, that seemed to present insurmountable obstacles to his attempts at entrance, but remembering that this cell had been originally contrived by a magician, who, learned in the law of the Egyptians, had applied the knowledge of the magi to the security of this place in a manner that would have reflected the highest credit ever on the wonder-executing Zoroaster himself, he ceased to marvel at the apparent impenetrability of the portal, and prepared himself fully to meet with other obstacles, much more calculated to affright him in the progress, and deter him from the execution, of the task which had been imposed upon him.

Nor in this particular was he at all deceived, as succeeding events quickly proved. A shriek from Isabella gathered his wandering senses to their seat, and restored him once again to himself. He called aloud upon her name; she responded; and now, feeling confident that he was correct in his suppositions, and that this was the place whither she had been conveyed, he drew his sword, placed the Helmet on his head, and, prepared to encounter every difficulty, in the anxious wish to regain his soul's idol, he commenced wrenching the sturdy bars that creaked in their rusty sockets before his eyes.

No sooner had he commenced his operations in this manner, than a small, diminutive figure, from two to three feet high, suddenly rose from the earth to oppose his passage. He was appalled in complete armour, and accoutred in all the majesty of an armed warrior. His shield shone like burnished gold, and his sword gleamed like lightning as he released it from the silver scabbard by which it had been confined. His features were concealed by a huge visor, that terminated in an embossed point above, and a scrolled crescent beneath. His demeanour, notwithstanding his disadvantageous size, was of a fiery and haughty nature, and from the gentle movement of the head it seemed that the Demon Dwarf was taking a complete, but contemptuous survey of the party before him.

Such was he whom Walter had to encounter, and his quick eye had

scarcely been able to note the particulars we have above given, ere the figure commenced a furious onslaught.

The blows showered upon the crest of the Dwarf fell like rain, but possessed, in addition to the attribute of rapid succession, that of harming not. Thrusts were parried upon both sides with vigilance and skill; but the combat remained not long undecided. A blow from the Dwarf fell upon the head of Raven; he yielded to the force, and sank upon one knee, but the invulnerable Helmet had done its work, and the sword of the dwarfed Demon splintered into a thousand fragments, its owner falling, at the same time, through the earth, and vanishing from sight.

Walter for an instant stood aghast at the wonderful result of the Witch's present, but soon recovering his equanimity he laboured hard to force the passage which had been so furiously disputed.

Whilst thus engaged, huge toads, with bloated bodies, and eyes like two blazing coals protruding from their heads, stared at him from beneath, jerking their envenomed sweat over his flesh, and raising on the fall of each drop a burning blister. Still Walter worked unceasing to complete his task.

Apeas of a strange and uncouth shape, with forms of unnatural dimensions, now sat gibing and gibbering at him from every dark recess. Large black cats, of a size equal to a mastiff, purred against him with their bristled backs, causing the same acute pain as if each hair had been a packing-needle. Faces detached from bodies, and headless forms, endeavoured to divert him from his purpose, but, with the skilful exercise of his sword, he soon put them all to flight.

Additional phantoms, each more hideous than the other, appeared now like visions of faces that he had seen before, in the stone walls that confronted him. Faces whom he had seen, loved, and adored, faces which he had gazed up to with veneration, and valued as dearly as his own life, now faces which—but their glances were but the glances of the moment, another moment, and they changed to features expressing strong, implacable hatred.

These, however, speedily disappeared in their turn, and now his only difficulty was to break open the door.

As he was pondering upon the means by which this could be accomplished, he heard a low plaintive voice proceeding from some dark aperture around him, which, though at first indistinct, gradually grew louder, and merging into that well-known voice of the Wild Witch of the Heath, resolved itself into the following words;

"Walter Raven! look around,  
 Know you tread on magic ground,  
 That door your progress will oppose  
 Until you've conquered all your foes.  
 That you may do this without fail,  
 And render fruitless bar and nail,  
 This talisman—a magic ring—  
 Will instant aid and succour bring.  
 But turn it to the stony walls,  
 And in that instant each one falls,  
 Owing in their gloomiest hour,  
 That even here THE WITCH has power."

No sooner had these airy syllables died away into the air whence they

had sprung, than Raven feeling a slight pressure to which he had previously been a stranger on the middle finger of his right hand, looked down and discovered that that finger was clasped by a ring. The golden circlet was most exquisitely fashioned, being as brilliant and elaborate in the beautiful tracery by which the rim was distinguished, as if that moment it had left the hands of some fairy jeweller; a circumstance that Walter considered within himself by no means an improbable one.

In an enamelled border of the most perfect chrysolites, was set a ruby of such a fiery lustre, that its reflection was visible in a bright red hue for some yards round the place where he stood. No sooner had he turned the ruby towards the barred portals, than at that instant they vanished with a loud crash, leaving, however, one behind, still more durable and apparently still more obdurate. This notwithstanding, speedily followed in the wake of the other, and left Raven a clear and unobstructed passage into the cell. Isabella, roused by the tumult, had sprung forth to meet him; tears of gratitude for her deliverance trickled down her pallid cheek in pearly drops. She thanked him with the tribute of a moistened eye and a bloodless lip; fear had subdued all her faculties, and now the reflux of joy—the flowing in once more of the tide of happiness—was too much for her to withstand. She sank to the earth, oppressed now as much with joy as she had been during her imprisonment bowed down with the weight of sorrow. Walter, whose presence of mind nought could destroy, and nothing lessen, was now reminded, by the approach of footsteps still distant though ringing loudly upon the stone pavement of the dungeon, that some one was approaching, whose power might be exerted anew for their captivity. Not knowing the passage that would secure them a safe retreat to another portion of the castle, Walter began to feel vexed that after so much had been accomplished there still remained so much to be done. In this perplexity he had recourse to the ring. Turning the stone towards the south, and using a little gentle friction, he was surprised to see appear before him the Witch, accompanied by her familiar, the subtle Dwarf.

“What wouldst thou?” exclaimed the Witch, in as bland a tone as the natural roughness of her voice permitted; “are not thine enemies yet overcome? are not thy wishes accomplished?”

“Thanks to thee, my kind protectress, they are,” responded Raven; “but the Lady Isabella—she who now reclines senseless in my arms—is inadequate to the perils and anxiety of a return to the other portion of the castle by the subterraneous corridors that lead thither, to say nothing of the dangers that seem likely to beset us on the path; may I request again thine aid to free us from this dilemma?”

“Enough! ’tis granted,” said the other; “throw thy Magic Helmet on the ground.”

This was done.

The Witch continued;—

“Spirits of night! obey my power;  
Aid me in this lonely hour.  
Take this Magic Helmet here,  
And let a car instead appear.”

Waving her wand over the Cabalistic Casque, she took a small paper packet from her bosom, and sprinkling upon it a fine red powder, which immediately, upon contact with the ground, burst into a bright red flame, a dense vapour arose, and soon afterwards the Helmet began to increase in size, and change its shape, until it had assumed the outward appearance of a car, or small chariot, at each corner of which a bright blue lambent flame was burning.

"Now," said the Witch, "step within this flying vehicle; in another instant you will reach your own chamber."

Raven did as he was directed, and still bearing the senseless Isabella in his arms, he nerved himself for what might follow. The Witch struck the ground with her stick, and the car at that instant ascended.

The floor seemed to sink beneath them; the ceiling parted to admit their entry, and soon after closed when they had passed it; and encircled as they were by the vapour arising from the flames, it seemed as if they were cleaving on eagles' wings through the fields of space.

They rose still upwards, till, on gazing round, Raven saw that he was once more secure in his own chamber. Here they stopped, and Walter, placing the beautiful form, yet clasped in his arms, on the couch before him, he turned round to look upon the car, and found it had disappeared. In its place, however, appeared the Dwarf.

"Hast thou anything further to require of myself or my mistress?" inquired the mannikin.

"Nothing," answered Raven, "save that thou wilt inform me of Dunbardon's designs against me and this castle."

"Listen!" cried the Dwarf; and at that moment a wild, unearthly strain broke upon his ear, which took the following form of words:—

"Dunbardon, bent on war and strife,  
 Would take your own and consort's life,  
 But Providence protects you both,  
 And disregards the tyrant's oath.  
 Within that dungeon whence you came  
 Will he be 'prisoned just the same;  
 A punishment awaits him there  
 More dire, more dread, than man can bear.  
 His sad existence then will cease,  
 And yours will straight begin in peace.  
 So now farewell! When aid is wanted,  
 But turn the ring—that aid is granted."

Walter turned round to acknowledge his gratitude for the protection thus afforded him, but the sound had ceased, and the Dwarf had disappeared.

## CHAPTER XXII.

Death of the Mountain Chief—Treachery and its Reward—Virtue and its Requital.

IN the midst of a beauteous and inviting country, a solitary stranger is travelling. He neither gazes to the right nor to the left ; he has no taste for the beauties that have opened around him ; his mind is evidently engrossed by some absorbing thought, but the scenery is attractive, nevertheless, and deserves a description.

A dell, luxuriously fringed with broom, and intermixed with the purple heath, and both basking in the golden rays of the sun, lies stretched before him. The brightness of the blossom on the furze is beyond description ; the blue-bell occasionally mingles with it ; and the tall mountain heath, with its wiry, hard stem, intervenes its delicate spiral bloom amid the richer blossoms. There is no sound save a low hum of deep enjoyment, one might almost fancy it the gladsome voice of the sunbeams, it is so soft, so soothing, so like the music that should spring from warmth and light. And yet from this radiant path walk but a few steps, and you are immured in a gloomy and profound solitude. Take a glance through that gap, the damp ground is covered with dead leaves, which have lain there for ages ; large weeds of unnatural growth have sprung up dank and covered with unhealthy dews, as if they grew o'er graves. Step in, you are in another world ; the air cold, comfortless, and damp, creeps over your face ; above is a confused mass of black, through the fissures of which you catch a glimpse of the bright blue sky, but so far distant that it seems truly to belong to another world, one more bright and beautiful than even this. Everything, however, is grey, grave, and hoary aged ; profound and mute, like the wrecks of a by-gone globe. The branches crackle under your feet, the midwived sides of the cavern catch the echo, and repeat it with a shrillness as if sound was unknown in these regions, and that silence was terrified at its intrusion. But the dell through which the stranger is wandering, where is that ? Yonder we may trace it through the hills, and watch it winding its way through the solemn gloom around ; now it is lost ; now it re-appears, and again you see it far up in the distance, penetrating into that dusky wood, like to the subduing smiles of a young girl of sixteen making their irresistible way into the hoary and shaggy heart of a great sulky grandpapa, not over well pleased at the favour requested. Yonder, where the shrill cry of the bittern awakes the echoes of the forest, you may see a ravine, and there behold the brook, tumbling down from rock to rock, plunging and leaping on its solitary course, with nothing near it but the dark woods and the grey rocks through which it foams.

The eye of man seldom rests on it, though congregated multitudes might well assemble to yield it their applause. The trees, too, are likewise conscious apparently of the solitude in which they stand. They raise up their tall, dark solemn forms in the air, but disdain to utter their griefs, save when the blast comes rushing with its thousand wings through yon cleft ; and then they roar out their indignant fury, wringing their arms and lashing the air in every direction ; whilst the river, breaking into a savage

participation in their rage, raises his voice and grumbles out his anathemas in tones of thunder, as he bounds along his course flinging up the foam of passion that gleams with a white crest through the darkness beneath.

It was through a country like this that he whom we have thus introduced to the reader was travelling. His meditations might be surmised from the following lines which he muttered as he proceeded onwards;—

“Now Dunbardon!” cried he, “the hour of thy fate and my vengeance has at last come; D’Arste shall no longer crouch submissive to thy feet; he shall be his own master again, he shall renew his acquaintance with the brave remnants of his mountain band, whilst *he*, the taunter, the tyrant, shall expiate his crimes by a fate as fearful as he deserves. By my cunning have I escaped him at the castle; the disguise of the monk gave free access to every portion of the cursed building, and by my art I have so contrived it that within four-and-twenty hours—nay, before the coming night is over—Dunbardon’s corpse will lie drenched within the water of the moat, owing to the keystone of the castle reservoir having been abstracted.”

D’Arste—for he it indeed was, paused not to linger on the view which opened to him in the distance—looking back to the road he had already traversed—save than bestowing a mere passing glance upon the turrets of the old castle that loomed gloomily out against the blue horizon. He was now ascending a steep and rather hazardous ascent; the path became more tangled with the brushwood, and the trees began to cluster more closely above him, almost shutting out at different intervals the light of day itself.

Whilst pondering on the adventures of the previous day, his attention was aroused by hearing the clashing and clanging of sword and buckler at no very great distance from him. Rousing himself for a contest, he sprang forward, and clearing a few scathed trees that had been struck by lightning, and now lay before him in his path, he discerned at a short distance enough evidence to show that his ears had not deceived him.

It was a desperate and a fearful contest. D’Arste beheld a young man, clad in the tartan plaid of the Highlands, oppressed by the united power of three ruffians, whom he at once recognised to be the remnants of his late band of mountain caterans. As with him to think was to put that thought in action, Pietro drew his sword from his side, and as the bright blade gleamed in the air, he rushed forward to render what assistance he might give; not, however, without a hope that he might meet a reward in so doing. The place on which they were fighting was a narrow plank, that creaked with their weight, over a ford below, the depth of which was considered great by those who knew the spot.

Leaping on this temporary bridge, he called aloud for them to relinquish their prey, and bidding the stranger be under no apprehension, he placed himself in a posture of defence, ready to attack in his turn the assailants.

“Stand aside, ye mountain devils, and give a man fair play,” cried D’Arste; “are ye to use your weapons three to one against a single warrior. Bah! out upon’t.”

“This is pretty language from him who was once our captain,” said the first mountaineer in reply, as they with one consent suspended the affray;

"Is Pietro d'Arste grown soft-hearted, that he must even cry for mercy upon his deadly foe Kenneth?"

The form of D'Arste, as the two syllables forming the above-named word escaped from the lips of the utterer, underwent a sudden and peculiar change. He rolled his eyes from the assailants to the assailed, and at last fixed them upon Kenneth, with a cold, unearthly stare.

"Nay, then," cried he, "if thou art Kenneth, away to the winds with every other feeling in my breast but dire revenge; let my sword find no longer a scabbard at my side, 'tis in your heart that I would sheathe it."

"And wherefore is this violence used towards me," continued Kenneth, still keeping himself on his guard; "why am I singled out as an object of thy vengeance? it was but now that, as I was calmly pursuing my way along this river in thoughtful meditation, that I was attacked by these three men, who have but now acknowledged you for their leader. Tell me then, I beseech you, why am I to pour out my life's blood at the altar of thy vengeance?"

"Listen," replied Pietro; "my breath is but short, and my impatience will not allow me to waste more words in parley than necessary, but this I will tell you, that to you I owe a long and burning curse. It was through your father, the Earl of Dunroben, that mine was strung upon a tree for robbery."

"Meaciful Heavens! the Earl of Dunroben!"

"Aye! the secret of thy birth is out now, but of that thou wilt not live to profit. When my father died, I swore to him that his death I would avenge on the body of his murderer's son. We have met before, but this is the first time we have met each other knowing and known. The time has come, therefore, when either the one or other of us must breathe his last."

"You cannot mean this!" cried Kenneth. "Four upon one are odds too great for any fair encounter."

"Nay, think not," continued D'Arste, "that I would take advantage of thee, far from it, but I here, with a stout arm and a resolute heart, challenge you to a *single combat on the surface of this narrow plank*. He who first gives way, or retreats from the thrust of his adversary, will meet with a death perhaps more immediate, but not the less inevitable. So prepare."

"I am ready," answered Kenneth, "and Heaven defend the right, for if thou art that D'Arste whose hand is imbrued in the blood of many an innocent being, thy death will be a boon to the world which I shall yield with pleasure."

"Come, then," exclaimed Pietro with energy, "and let this decide at once the truth and justice of our cause."

The combat now commenced with fury upon both sides, the narrow plank upon which they fought giving way from side to side with the weight of each combatant, and threatening each by turns with immersion in the foaming current below.

The combat was for a long time doubtful, but fortune at last seemed to decide in favour of Kenneth. The foot of D'Arste had slipped, and his



The Wild Witch disguised as a Minstrel congratulating Isabella on her escape.

adversary pursuing the advantage he had thus gained, closed in, and thrust his sword in at the point of the robber's throat.

The eyes of D'Arste seemed starting from their sockets; he made one attempt to rise, gurgled a few inarticulate words, and fell a soddened mass of blood-stained human flesh into the water beneath, leaving only a few eddies to mark the place of his descent.

The rest, seeing the defeat of their chieftain, rushed upon the wooden-bridge, and this giving way with their weight, they were all four precipitated into the current. The robbers sank, but Kenneth, whose powers of swimming were of sufficient strength to keep himself afloat, swam to the side, and returning to the castle of Glenis congratulated himself not only upon his fortunate escape, but from the secret of his birth having thus strangely become imparted to him.

Baron Glenis received him with open arms, and by his exertions Kenneth—now the Lord Dunroben—recovered the whole of his domains, and having long loved in secret the Baron's sister, the fair Elizabeth, they were soon after united with the consent of Glenis, and in the enjoyment of each other's loved society passed the remainder of their lives, undisturbed by the quarrels of their more irascible neighbours.



## CHAPTER THE LAST.

The Despair—the Dream—the Demon—the Denouement.

WE left Dunbardon in a previous chapter on his way to the cell where the Lady Isabella had been imprisoned. Pondering on the reason that could have induced D'Arste to have left him in this emergency, he found himself getting bewildered in his progress, having to pass on his return long subterraneous passages that were now for the first time traversed by him. The time that had now elapsed since he had seen his captive being approaching five hours, would not, he thought, be productive of any danger to himself, relying on the powers of the Demon Cabello, and the security which the charmed doors afforded to those confined within. Confident, therefore as he was in his own craftiness, he recked not the hours he had spent in pursuit of D'Arste, little imagining that the very time to which he was paying such scanty attention had been, as our readers are well aware, the means of enabling Walter to rescue his bride from the dangers which had before environed her.

He had now arrived at the door of the dungeon, which, to his infinite surprise and astonishment, he found open. Disregarding this, however, and thinking it might have arisen in all probability from his carelessness in not closing it when he last issued from these portals, he passed on, several signs of a desperate combat having taken place there creating sundry feelings of misgiving in his mind notwithstanding.

He now arrived at the inner door, which closed on the inside with a spring, and which could only be opened from without. Detaching the bolt, he entered, the door closing with a violent rebound after him.

He looked around, *the chamber was empty.*

Dunbardon, enraged at the escape of his victim, how he knew not nor supposed, gave way to the most violent paroxysms of passion. He tore his hair, raved and cursing the unpropitious star that had wrought him so much misery on earth, he sank enervated by rage to the ground.

To think that she for whom he had undergone all these perils was no longer in his power—that the hope nearest and dearest to his heart was gone—that his ardent wish of revenge could not be gratified—these, these were maddening thoughts that drove him on to temporary madness.

But there was at least one resource left; he would summon his brave vassals to his aid, he would call upon the Highland caterans, the brave band of the hills, for their assistance, would pursue her and her hated husband to the Death, and thus triumph—nobly triumph at last.

He had resolved this mentally; he would execute the project without delay; the thought poured balm upon his wounded pride, and he innately again became Dunbardon the Despot—Dunbardon the DESTROYER.

Full of the high hopes engendered by this self-communion, he sprang forward, eager to emancipate himself from the thralldom of thought that now held him captive, and darting towards the door, he hoped within a few minutes to be beyond the portals of the castle. But here he found, to his mingled horror and dismay, that he was held captive by a stronger power

than that of the mind ; the door which, as we have said, fastened with a spring that could not be opened on the inside, had flown to with a recoil that had caused the spring to fly back, and he was now without the power of either opening the door, or obtaining the assistance of any one to aid him on the opposite side.

Barred within a narrow cell of six feet wide, and as many long, without the hope of ever being enabled to obtain egress therefrom—with no prospect but that of dying a painful and lingering death by starvation, his condition became too painful almost to contemplate.

“ Fool! madman that I was to venture here,” cried Dunbardon ; “ here, where I should have known the perils that awaited me ; here, where the very walls seem to breathe back the breath of some victim whose blood has stained the clotted floor. But no matter ! the destiny—the damning, overwhelming destiny that has pursued me through life, and which now attends me to my grave, has brought it on ; and I am here, a living corpse—a dead living being, ready to starve—starve, oh ! ten thousand devils—and end my life within these walls that I fondly hoped would have been my bridal chamber.”

And with this Alexander again exercised his strength fruitlessly against the iron barriers that opposed his egress ; he strove in vain to release the heavy masses of ironwork from their sockets ; but they moved not an inch ; perspiration was streaming down his face like so much water, but still he strove on, though well knowing that his endeavours were as useless as if he had striven to propel a vessel with his breath, or attempted to turn aside the ocean with his foot.

“ Damnation !” shrieked the infuriated Viscount, “ is there no hope ? no escape ? Am I to die here ? die like a dog, without one struggle being made to eke out my existence ? Is this to be the end of all my struggles, of all my ambition ? it tears my heart to think of it. Is it for this that I have passed sleepless nights, and days of care ? Is it for this that I have imbrued my hands in blood ? Is it for this—but cursed, cursed fool, why do I rehearse my grievances to myself, when by shouting for aid I may yet be safe, be happy.”

With this he commenced a succession of shouts in the hope that the noise might attract others to that part of the castle. His lungs were sore, his voice was hoarse with shouting, but still he shouted on ; the sound reverberated from wall to wall, until it was lost in the distance, but still as it died away, he hoped some one would be there who would yet hear him, yet assist him. But still none came ; each moment dragged itself lasily after the other, seeming to embrace within itself the time of years, but still there was no sign of any one approaching. Once, indeed, footsteps were heard along the corridor, and he shouted more loudly, more earnestly than before, straining all his nerves to the accomplishment of this one end, but whilst his ears were rendered so acute that the mere dropping of a pin would have carried with it an audible sound, and whilst his heart beat quickly in his bosom, sending the warm blood gushing and bounding like fire to his brain, he had the redoubled mortification and disappointment of seeing the last chance of his delivery disappear with the sound of the footsteps that had first suggested its probability.

And now all the damning anguish of despair came upon him; he clenched his hand, and ground his teeth, till the nails of the first penetrated into his flesh, and dug blood therefrom, and his lips, bitten in twain by the second, poured forth their vital currents in deep coagulated streams of red. To him each posture was in its turn painful. He got up, walked, and again reseated himself, but each change brought him no relief; each limb, before rigid as iron, was now cramped and tortured in every joint. The air, too, seemed stifling; a sense of suffocation pressed upon his heart, and he would have given worlds at that moment for even a draught of water, but that, even that was denied him.

Anon he would cover his face with his hands, and whilst he seemed rapt in apparent meditation, on a sudden the thought would strike him that the **INFERNAL POWER** for whose aid he had bartered his soul would soon be there to claim him as his prize, and with that thought the paroxysms would return, and he again would make fruitless attempts to escape. In such an undertaking must we now leave him engaged, whilst for a few moments we direct our attention to the other portions of the castle.

The Lady Isabella and Walter being now once more together, and having nothing to link their affections to the spot where they then were, consulted together between themselves as to the propriety of journeying further southward, where Walter Raven had recently purchased a *chateau* replete with every comfort and convenience. They were deeply engaged in this topic, when a servant rushing in with scanted breath and eyes starting from their sockets thus addressed him:—

“My Lord!” exclaimed the menial, “the moat which has so long defied the power of our enemies, has yielded to the more cunning and secret craft of one who knows the spot well, for the key-stone has been abstracted, and in another moment the vaults and lower parts of the castle will be deluged with water.”

“Indeed!” responded Raven, “well, it grieves me but little, as we can ensure the safety of our lives, at least. Order the travelling carriage to be got ready immediately, and let the castle be abandoned to its fate.”

“It shall be, my lord, as you request,” replied the servant; and within an hour the only inhabitant—if, indeed, the name could thus be applied—of the castle of Dunbardon was its late Viscount, the miserable Dunbardon himself.

To him there was not one minute that brought more satisfaction than its fellow. He was without hope, with death at his side, yet unprepared to meet the dreaded fate.

Gradually, whilst the water was pouring in with a rushing sound like unto the gurgling of a distant ocean within the walls of the castle, Dunbardon yielded to the powers of exhaustion, and sank into a slumber which, though fitful and startling, might still be considered a relief to his emaciated frame.

His sleep—we had nearly written *repose*, but that he knew not—had continued for some time, when it gradually formed itself into a dream of singular wildness and intensity, which, as the vision of his last slumber on earth, was worthy of notice.

He dreamed that he stood upon the very summit of a high mountain,

above downward height no eye could have measured, or plummet tell. The fearful waves of a fiery ocean lashed and blazed at the bottom, sending its burning spray up—up—up so high, as to illumine for the moment the dark black sky that arched gloomily above him, and thus drenched the dreamer with its fiery rain. The scene was lighted by a yellow sulphureous glare, which shone upon every object, and rendered each singularly vivid.

The whole glowing ocean below was *alive*; every billow bore an agonising soul, that rose like a wreck, or a putrid corpse on the face of the crested furnace, and then sank, uttering a shriek so painful as to rend the heart of the dreamer with its semblance to vivid reality.

Every billow of fire was thus instinct with immortality; every drop bore on it some part of a fellow-creature's agonising existence. Each wave that dashed its fiery plume against the bituminous rocks of the precipice was freighted with the soul of a human being, that, adding its piercing shriek to the noise of the convulsion of the tumultuous waters, rose on the surface with one look of tortured despair, and then sank down—down—down—but to rise again, and repeat the same monotonous existence for ever.

At this crisis, whilst the dreamer was half wondering, half shuddering at the mystic scene that had opened to him, he felt himself *slung* down the precipice half-way. He stood, in his dream tottering on a crag that sprung out from the solid rock, exactly at a mid-distance down. He looked towards where heaven should have been, but *there was none*; the upper air showed only blackness, unshadowed and impenetrable; he gazed down below, and saw the coruscations of fire gleaming from every side as brightly as before, and *flying ten thousand times more swiftly*.

We have said that all above was dark—dark like one vast sheet of ebony above him—but blacker than even this loomed out a shapeless mass, which he soon after distinguished to be a gigantic outstretched arm, that held him as it were in mockery on the ridge of that infernal precipice.

Spell-bound by the sight of the arm, he altered his position, with a view to escape its grasp, but in that effort he fell, and falling, grasped at anything that he might catch at in his descent. His fall seemed perpendicular; the sides of the rock were like ice, they slipped from between his fingers, the ocean of fire cast up its billows at his foot. Suddenly a groupe of figures appeared ascending in the air as he descended. They were the ghosts of the victims he had murdered. He grasped at them successively, first one, then the other, but all passed him. To each he wished to attach himself, if only to break his fall, but all forsook him in his downward flight, and disengaged themselves as they ascended. His last despairing, reverted glance was fixed on the figure that was behind him. The black arm upraised seemed to push him forward into the blazing waters—he fell—he sank—he shrieked—and splashing in a sea of molten lead, or what seemed such to his disordered fancy, he felt burning blisters raised by every drop that fell upon his parched and withered brow. The scorching foam boomed over his sinking head, and the clock of eternity rang out its awful chime. A hot knife at that instant seemed to be severing the scalp from his brain. A voice like the sound of distant thunder cried "Room for the soul of Dunbardon!" and whilst the waves lashed the shores with their gleesome responses, an invisible hand dragged Dunbardon by the hair of his head down into the abyss below, and at that instant—*he awoke!*

It was dark. The mighty noise of rushing waters smote his ear, and made the dream appear to his disordered mind still more terrible. A clap of thunder roared above his head, and CABELLO stood before him. The glazed eye of his victim fell upon the form of the Fiend; he retreated; the other pursued; a fearful chase of about a minute's duration followed. One grasp—one shriek—and Dunbardon was borne away on the wings of the whirlwind by the Fiend for whose aid he had bartered his soul.

Years flew past, and the sands of time had mingled in the hour-glass of eternity with those that had gone before. Many springs had refreshed the earth; many summers had warmed its fruit into ripeness; many autumns had yielded that fruit to the hand that planted the stem, and many winters had snowed their covering over the face of the ground, but Dunbardon Castle stood proud in their decay amongst the warring of the elements, and at midnight the disembodied soul of the murderer Dunbardon was seen to appear on the moss-screened turrets supplicating for mercy, and receiving none.

The Lady Isabella, with Walter Raven, after a tour around the southern parts of Europe, returned to Scotland with her health much improved from the change, and Glendovan and Strathallan inviting them to make the Hall their temporary residence, they passed the remainder of their days in the enjoyment of love and tranquillity.

There is but one more whom it behoves us to mention, and though no longer influencing mortals, to this day it is said her appearance is common in the Highlands. On the shafts of lightning, on the wings of the wind, on the forked glare of the thunderbolt, may be still seen, as the harbinger and pilot of the coming storm,

## THE WILD WITCH OF THE HEATH.



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