

JAMES HOGG

THE THREE PERILS OF
MAN; OR, WAR, WOMEN,
AND WITCHCRAFT, VOL.
1 (OF 3)

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CHAPTER I

*There was a king, and a courteous king,
And he had a daughter sae bonnie;
And he lo'ed that maiden aboon a' thing
I' the bonnie, bonnie halls o' Binnorie.*

* * * * *

*But wae be to thee, thou warlock wight,
My malison come o'er thee,
For thou hast undone the bravest knight,
That ever brak bread i' Binnorie!*

Old Song.

The days of the Stuarts, kings of Scotland, were the days of chivalry and romance. The long and bloody contest that the nation maintained against the whole power of England, for the recovery of its independence,—of those rights which had been

most unwarrantably wrested from our fathers by the greatest and most treacherous sovereign of that age, with the successful and glorious issue of the war, laid the foundation for this spirit of heroism, which appears to have been at its zenith about the time that the Stuarts first acquired the sovereignty of the realm. The deeds of the Douglasses, the Randolphs, and other border barons of that day, are not to be equalled by any recorded in our annals; while the reprisals that they made upon the English, in retaliation for former injuries, enriched both them and their followers, and rendered their appearance splendid and imposing to a degree that would scarcely now gain credit. It was no uncommon thing for a Scottish earl then to visit the Court at the head of a thousand horsemen, all splendidly mounted in their military accoutrements; and many of these gentlemen of rank and family. In court and camp, feats of arms were the topic of conversation, and the only die that stamped the character of a man of renown, either with the fair, the monarch, or the chiefs of the land. No gentleman of noble blood would pay his addresses to his mistress, until he had broken a spear with the knights of the rival nation, surprised a strong-hold, or driven a prey from the kinsmen of the Piercies, the Musgraves, or the Howards. As in all other things that run to a fashionable extremity, the fair sex took the lead in encouraging these deeds of chivalry, till it came to have the appearance of a national mania. There were tournaments at the castle of every feudal baron and knight. The ploughmen and drivers were often discovered, on returning

from the fields, hotly engaged in a tilting bout with their goads and plough-staves; and even the little boys and maidens on the village green, each well mounted on a crooked stick, were daily engaged in the combat, and riding rank and file against each other, breaking their tiny weapons in the furious onset, while the mimic fire flashed from their eyes. Then was the play of *Scots and English* begun, a favourite one on the school green to this day. Such was the spirit of the age, not only in Scotland, but over all the countries of southern Europe, when the romantic incidents occurred on which the following tale is founded. It was taken down from the manuscript of an old Curate, who had spent the latter part of his life in the village of Mireton, and was given to the present Editor by one of those tenants who now till the valley where stood the richest city of this realm.

There were once a noble king and queen of Scotland, as many in that land have been.—In this notable tell-tale manner, does old Isaac, the curate, begin his narrative. It will be seen in the sequel, that this king and queen were Robert the Second and his consort.—They were beloved by all their subjects, (continues he,) and loved and favoured them in return; and the country enjoyed happiness and peace, all save a part adjoining to the borders of England. The strong castle of Roxburgh, which was the key of that country, had been five times taken by the English, and three times by the Scots, in less than seventeen months, and was then held by the gallant Lord Musgrave for Richard king of England.

Our worthy king had one daughter, of exquisite beauty and accomplishments; the flower of all Scotland, and her name was Margaret. This princess was courted by many of the principal nobility of the land, who all eagerly sought an alliance with the royal family, not only for the additional honour and power which it conferred on them and their posterity, but for the personal charms of the lady, which were of that high eminence, that no man could look on her without admiration. This emulation of the lords kept the court of King Robert full of bustle, homage, and splendour. All were anxious to frustrate the designs of their opponents, and to forward their own; so that high jealousies were often apparent in the sharp retorts, stern looks, and nodding plumes of the rival wooers; and as the princess had never disclosed her partiality for one above another, it was judged that Robert scarcely dared openly to give the preference to any of them. A circumstance, however, soon occurred, which brought the matter fairly to the test.

It happened on a lovely summer day, at the end of July, that three and twenty noble rivals for the hand of the beautiful princess were all assembled at the palace of Linlithgow; but the usual gaiety, mirth, and repartee did not prevail; for the king had received bad tidings that day, and he sat gloomy and sad.

Musgrave had issued from the castle of Roxburgh, had surprised the castle of Jedburgh, and taken prisoner William, brother to the lord of Galloway; slain many loyal Scottish subjects, and wasted Teviotdale with fire and sword. The

conversation turned wholly on the state of affairs on the border, and the misery to which that country was exposed by the castle of Roxburgh remaining in the hands of the English; and at length the king enquired impatiently, how it came that Sir Philip Musgrave had surprised the castle this last time, when his subjects were so well aware of their danger.

The earl of Hume made answer, that it was wholly an affair of chivalry, and one of the bravest and noblest acts that ever was performed. Musgrave's mistress, the lady Jane Howard, of the blood royal, and the greatest heiress of the north of England, had refused to see him, unless he gained back his honour by the retaking of that perilous castle, and keeping it against all force, intercession, or guile, till the end of the Christmas holidays. That he had accomplished the former in the most gallant stile; and, from the measures that he had adopted, and the additional fortifications that he had raised, there was every possibility that he would achieve the latter.

"What," said the king, "must the spirit of chivalry then be confined to the country of our enemies? Have our noble dames of Scotland less heroism in their constitutions than those of the south? Have they fewer of the charms of beauty, or have their lovers less spirit to fulfil their commands? By this sceptre in my right hand, I will give my daughter, the princess Margaret, to the knight who shall take that castle of Roxburgh out of the hands of the English before the expiry of the Christmas holidays."

Every lord and knight was instantly on his feet to accept

the proposal, and every one had his hand stretched towards the royal chair for audience, when Margaret arose herself, from the king's left hand, where she was seated, and flinging her left arm backward, on which swung a scarf of gold, and stretching her right, that gleamed with bracelets of rubies and diamonds, along the festive board, "Hold, my noble lords," said she; "I am too deeply interested here not to have a word to say. The grandchild of the great Bruce must not be given away to every adventurer without her own approval. Who among you will venture his honour and his life for me?" Every knight waved his right hand aloft and dashed it on the hilt of his sword, eyeing the graceful attitude and dignified form of the princess with raptures of delight. "It is well," continued she, "the spirit of chivalry *has not* deserted the Scottish nation—hear me then: My father's vow shall stand; I will give my hand in marriage to the knight who shall take that castle for the king, my father, before the expiry of the Christmas holidays, and rid our border of that nest of reavers; but with this proviso only, that, in case of his attempting and failing in the undertaking, he shall forfeit all his lands, castles, towns, and towers to me, which shall form a part of my marriage-portion to his rival. Is it fit that the daughter of a king should be given up or won as circumstances may suit, or that the risk should all be on one side? Who would be so unreasonable as expect it? This, then, with the concurrence of my lord and father, is my determination, and by it will I stand."

The conditions were grievously hard, and had a damping

and dismal effect on the courtly circle. The light of every eye deadened into a dim and sullen scowl. It was a deed that promised glory and renown to adventure their blood for such a dame,—to win such a lady as the Princess of Scotland: But, to give up their broad lands and castles to enrich a hated rival, was an obnoxious consideration, and what in all likelihood was to be the issue. When all the forces of the land had been unable to take the castle by storm, where was the probability that any of them was now to succeed? None accepted the conditions. Some remained silent; some shook their heads, and muttered incoherent mumblings; others strode about the room, as if in private consultation.

"My honoured liege," said Lady Margaret, "none of the lords or knights of your court have the spirit to accept of my conditions. Be pleased then to grant me a sufficient force. I shall choose the officers for them myself, and I engage to take the castle of Roxburgh before Christmas. I will disappoint the bloody Musgrave of his bride; and the world shall see whether the charms of Lady Jane Howard or those of Margaret Stuart shall rouse their admirers to deeds of the most desperate valour. Before the Christmas bells have tolled, that shall be tried on the rocks, in the rivers, in the air, and the bowels of the earth. In the event of my enterprise proving succesful, all the guerdon that I ask is, the full and free liberty of giving my hand to whom I will. It shall be to no one that is here." And so saying she struck it upon the table, and again took her seat at the king's left hand.

Every foot rung on the floor with a furious tramp, in unison

with that stroke of the princess's hand. The taunt was not to be brooked. Nor was it. The haughty blood of the Douglasses could bear it no longer. James, the gallant earl of Douglas and Mar, stepped forward from the circle. "My honoured liege, and master," said he, "I have not declined the princess's offer,—beshrew my heart if ever it embraced such a purpose. But the stake is deep, and a moment's consideration excusable. I have considered, and likewise decided. I accept the lady's proposals. With my own vassals alone, and at my own sole charge, will I rescue the castle from the hands of our enemies, or perish in the attempt. The odds are high against me. But it is now a Douglas or a Musgrave: God prosper the bravest!"

"Spoken like yourself, noble Douglas," said the king, "The higher the stake the greater the honour. The task be yours, and may the issue add another laurel to the heroic name."

"James of Douglas," said Lady Margaret, "dost thou indeed accept of these hard conditions for my sake? Then the hand of thy royal mistress shall buckle on the armour in which thou goest to the field, but never shall unloose it, unless from a victor or a corse!" And with that she stretched forth her hand, which Douglas, as he kneeled with one knee on the ground, took and pressed to his lips.

Every one of the nobles shook Douglas by the hand, and wished him success. Does any man believe that there was one among them that indeed wished it? No, there was not a chief present that would not have rejoiced to have seen him led to

the gallows. His power was too high already, and they dreaded that now it might be higher than ever; and, moreover, they saw themselves outdone by him in heroism, and felt degraded by the contract thus concluded.

The standard of the Douglas was reared, and the bloody heart flew far over many a lowland dale. The subordinate gentlemen rose with their vassals, and followed the banner of their chief; but the more powerful kept aloof, or sent ambiguous answers. They deemed the service undertaken little better than the frenzy of a madman.

There was at that time a powerful border baron, nicknamed Sir Ringan Redhough, by which name alone he was distinguished all the rest of his life. He was warden of the middle marches, and head of the most warlike and adventurous sept in all that country. The answer which this hero gave to his own cousin, Thomas Middlemas, who came to expostulate with him from Douglas, is still preserved verbatim: "What, man, are a' my brave lads to lie in bloody claes that the Douglas may lie i' snaw-white sheets wi' a bonny bedfellow? Will that keep the braid border for the king, my master? Tell him to keep their hands fu', an' their haunches toom, an' they'll soon be blythe to leave the lass an' loup at the ladle; an' the fient ae clout shall cross the border to gar their pots play brown atween Dirdan-head and Cocket-fell. Tell him this, an' tell him that Redhough said it. If he dinna work by wiles he'll never pouch the profit. But if he canna do it, an' owns that he canna do it, let him send word to me, an' I'll tak' it for him."

With these words he turned his back, and abruptly left his cousin, who returned to Douglas, ill satisfied with the success of his message, but, nevertheless, delivered it faithfully. "That curst carle," said the Douglas, "is a thorn in my thigh, as well as a buckler on my arm. He's as cunning as a fox, as stubborn as an oak, and as fierce as a lion. I must temporize for the present, as I cannot do without his support, but the time may come that he may be humbled, and made to know his betters; since one endeavour has failed, we must try another, and, if that do not succeed, another still."

The day after that, as Sir Ringan was walking out at his own gate, an old man, with a cowl, and a long grey beard, accosted him. "May the great spirit of the elements shield thee, and be thy protector, knight," said he.

"An' wha may he be, carle, an it be your will?" said Ringan; "An' wha may ye be that gie me sic a sachless benediction? As to my shield and protection, look ye here!" and with that he touched his two-handed sword, and a sheaf of arrows that was swung at his shoulder; "an' what are all your saints and lang nebbit spirits to me?"

"It was a random salutation, knight," said the old man, seeing his mood and temper; "I am not a priest but a prophet. I come not to load you with blessings, curses, nor homilies, all equally unavailing, but to tell you what shall be in the times that are to come. I have had visions of futurity that have torn up the tendrils of my spirit by the roots. Would you like to know what is to befall

you and your house in the times that are to come?"

"I never believe a word that you warlocks say," replied the knight; "but I like aye to hear what you *will* say about matters; though it is merely to laugh at ye, for I dinna gie credit to ane o' your predictions. Sin' the Rhymer's days, the spirit o' true warlockry is gane. He foretauld muckle that has turned out true; an' something that I hope *will* turn out true: But ye're a' bairns to him."

"Knight," said the stranger, "I can tell you more than ever the Rhymer conceived, or thought upon; and, moreover, I can explain the words of True Thomas, which neither you nor those to whom they relate in the smallest degree comprehend. Knowest thou the prophecy of the Hart and the Deer, as it is called?"

'Quhere the hearte heavit in het blude over hill and howe,
There shall the dinke deire droule for the dowe:
Two fleite footyde maydenis shall tredde the greine,
And the mone and the starre shall flashe betweine.
Quhere the proude hiche halde and heveye hande beire
Ane frenauch shall feide on ane faderis frene feire,
In dinging at the starris the D shall doupe down,
But the S shall be S quhane the heide S is gone.'"

"I hae heard the reide often and often," said the knight, "but the man's unborn that can understand that. Though the prophecies and the legends of the Rhymer take the lead i' my lear, I hae always been obliged to make that a passover."

"There is not one of all his sayings that relates as much to you and your house, knight. It foretels that the arms of your family shall supersede those of Douglas, which you know are the bloody heart; and that in endeavouring to exalt himself to the stars, the D, that is the Douglas, shall fall, but that your house and name shall remain when the Stuarts are no more."

"By the horned beasts of Old England, my father's portion, and my son's undiminished hope," exclaimed the knight,—"Thou art a cunning man! I now see the bearing o' the prophecy as plainly as I see the hill of Mountcomyn before my e'e; and, as I know Thomas never is wrong, I believe it. Now is the time, auld warlock,—now is the time; he's ettling at a king's daughter, but his neck lies in wad, and the forfeit will be his undoing."

"The time is not yet come, valiant knight; nevertheless the prophecy is true. Has thy horse's hoof ever trode, or thine eye journeyed, over the Nine Glens of Niddisdale?"

"I hae whiles gotten a glisk o' them."

"They are extensive, rich, and beautiful."

"They're nae less, auld carle; they're nae less. They can send nine thousand leel men an' stout to the field in a pinch."

"It is recorded in the book of fate,—it is written there—"

"The devil it is, auld carle; that's mair than I thought o'."

"Hold thy peace: lay thine hand upon thy mouth, and be silent till I explain: I say I have seen it in the visions of the night,—I have seen it in the stars of heaven"—

"What? the Nine Glens o' Niddisdale amang the starns o' heaven! by hoof and horn, it was rarely seen, warlock."

"I say that I have seen it,—they are all to belong to thy house."

"Niddisdale a' to pertain to my house!"

"All."

"Carle, I gie nae credit to sic forbodings; but I have heard something like this afore. Will ye stay till I bring my son Robin, the young Master of Mountcomyn, and let him hear it? For aince a man takes a mark on his way, I wadna hae him to tine sight o't. Mony a time has the tail o' the king's elwand pointed me the way to Cumberland; an' as often has the ee o' the Charlie-wain blinkit me hame again. A man's nae the waur o' a bit beacon o' some kind,—a bit hope set afore him, auld carle; an' the Nine Glens o' Niddisdale are nae Willie-an-the-Wisp in a lad's ee."

"From Roxburgh castle to the tower of Sark,"—

"What's the auld-warld birkie saying?"

"From the Deadwater-fell to the Linns of Cannoby,—from the Linns of Cannoby to the heights of Manor and the Deuchar-swire,—shall thy son, and the representatives of thy house, ride on their own lands."

"May ane look at your foot, carle? Take off that huge wooden sandal, an it be your will."

"Wherefore should I, knight?"

"Because I dread ye are either the devil or Master Michael Scott."

"Whoever I am, I am a friend to you and to yours, and have

told you the words of truth. I have but one word more to say:—Act always in concert with the Douglasses, while they act in concert with the king your master,—not a day, nor an hour, nor a moment longer. It is thus, and thus alone, that you must rise and the Douglas fall. Remember the words of True Thomas,—

'Quhane the wingit hors at his maistere sal wince,
'Let wyse men cheat the chevysance.'"

"There is something mair about you than other folk, auld man. If ye be my kinsman, Michael Scott the warlock, I crave your pardon, Master; but if you are that dreadfu' carle—I mean that learned and wonderfu' man, why you are welcome to my castle. But you are not to turn my auld wife into a hare, Master, an' hunt her up an' down the hills wi' my ain grews; nor my callants into naigs to scamper about on i' the night-time when they hae ither occupations to mind. There is naething i' my tower that isna at your command; for, troth, I wad rather brow a' the Ha's and the Howard's afore I beardit you."

"I set no foot in your halls, knight. This night is a night among many to me; and wo would be to me if any thing canopied my head save the cope of heaven. There are horoscopes to be read this night for a thousand years to come. One cake of your bread and one cup of your wine is all that the old wizard requests of you, and that he must have."

The knight turned back and led the seer into the inner-court,

and fed him with bread and wine, and every good thing; but well he noted that he asked no holy benediction on them like the palmers and priors that wandered about the country; and, therefore, he had some lurking dread of the old man. He did not thank the knight for his courtesy, but, wiping his snowy beard, he turned abruptly away, and strode out at the gate of the castle. Sir Ringan kept an eye on him privately till he saw him reach the top of Blake Law, a small dark hill immediately above the castle. There he stopped and looked around him, and taking two green sods, he placed the one above the other, and laid himself down on his back, resting his head upon the two sods,—his body half raised, and his eyes fixed on heaven. The knight was almost frightened to look at him; but sliding into the cleuch, he ran secretly down to the tower to bring his lady to see this wonderful old warlock. When they came back he was gone, and no trace of him to be seen, nor saw they him any more at that time.

CHAPTER II

*This man's the devil's fellow commoner,
A verie cloake-bag of iniquitie.
His butteries and his craboun he deschargeth
Flasche, not by airt or reule. Is it meet
A Ploydenist should be a cedant arma togae,
Mounted on a trapt palfrey; with a dishe
Of velvatte on his heide, to keepe the brothe
Of his wit warm? The devil, my maisteris,
There is no dame in Venice shall indure itt.*

Old Play.

Whilst the knight and his lady were looking about in amazement for their mysterious guest, the tower-warder sounded the great bugle, a tremendous horn that lay on a shelf in the balcony where he kept watch. "One—two—three," said the knight, counting the three distinct notes,—a signal of which he well knew the language,—"What can that mean? I am wanted, it would appear: another messenger from the Douglas, I warrant."

"Sir Ringan, keep by that is your own," said the lady—"I say, mind your own concerns, and let the Douglas mind his."

"Dame," said the chief, "I hae gotten some mair insight into that affair than you; an' we maun talk about it by an' by. In the meantime let us haste home, and see who is arrived."

As they descended from the hill hand in hand, (for none

walked arm in arm in those days,) they saw Richard Dodds, a landward laird, coming to meet them. "Oh," said Sir Ringan, "this is my officious cousin, Dickie o' Dryhope; what business can he be come upon? It will be something that he deems of great importance."

"I hate that old fawning, flattering sycophant," said the lady; "and cannot divine what is the cause of your partiality for him."

"It is his attachment to our house that I admire, and his perfect devotion to my service and interests," said the knight.

"Mere sound," exclaimed the lady bitterly: "Mere waste of superfluous breath! I tell you, Sir Ringan, that, for all your bravery, candour, and kindness, you are a mere novice in the affairs of life, and know less of men and of things than ever knight did."

"It is a great fault in women," said the knight, making his observation general, "that they will aye be meddling wi' things they ken nought about. They think they ken every thing, an' wad gar ane trow that they can see an inch into a fir deal.—Gude help them! It is just as unfeasible to hear a lady discussing the merits of warriors an' yeomen, as it wad be to see me sitting nursing a wench-bairn."

"Foh, what an uncourtly term!" said the lady; "What would King Robert think if he heard you speaking in that uncouth stile?"

"I speak muckle better than him, wi' his short clippit Highland tongue," said the chief: "But hush, here comes the redoubted

Dickie o' Dryhope."

No sooner were the knight and his lady's eyes turned so as to meet Dickie's, than he whipped off his bonnet with a graceful swing, and made a low bow, his thin gray locks waving as he bowed. Dickie was a tall, lean, toothless, old bachelor, whose whole soul and body were devoted to the fair sex and the house of his chief. These two mighty concerns divided his attention, and often mingled with one another; his enthusiasm for the one, by any sudden change of subjects or concatenation of ideas, being frequently transferred to the other. Dickie approached with his bonnet in his hand, bowing every time the knight and lady lifted their eyes. When they met, Sir Ringan shook him heartily by the hand, and welcomed him to the castle of Mountcomyn.

"Oh, you are so good and so kind, Sir Ringan, bless you, bless you, bless you, noble sir; how do you thrive, Sir Ringan? bless you, bless you. And my excellent and noble lady Mountcomyn, how is my noble dame?"

"Thank you," said the lady coldly.

Dickie looked as if he would have shaken hands with her, or embraced her, as the custom then was, but she made no proffer of either the one or the other, and he was obliged to keep his distance; but this had no effect in checking his adulations. "I am so glad that my excellent lady is well, and the young squires and maidens all brisk and whole I hope?"

"All well, cousin," said the chief.

"Eh! all well?" reiterated Dickie, "Oh the dear, delightful,

darling souls, O bless them! If they be but as well as I wish them, and as good as I wish—If the squires be but half so brave as their father, and the noble young sweet dames half so beautiful as their lady mother—oh bless them, bless them." "And half so independent and honest as their cousin," said the lady, with a rebuking sneer.

"Very pleasant! very pleasant, indeed!" simpered Dickie, without daring to take his lips far asunder, lest his toothless gums should be seen.

"Such babyish flummery!" rejoined the lady with great emphasis. Dickie was somewhat abashed. His eyes, that were kindled with a glow of filial rapture, appeared as with flattened pupils; nevertheless the benignant smile did not altogether desert his features. The knight gave a short look off at one side to his lady. "It is a great fault in ladies, cousin," said he, "that they will always be breaking their jokes on those that they like best, and always pretending to keep at a distance from them. My lady thinks to blind my een, as many a dame has done to her husband afore this time; but I ken, an' some mae ken too, that if there's ane o' a' my kin that I durstna trust my lady wi' when my back's turned, that ane's Dickie o' Dryhope."

"H'm, h'm, h'm," neighed Dickie, laughing with his lips shut; "My lady's so pleasant, and so kind, but—Oh—no, no—you wrong her, knight; h'm, h'm, h'm! But, all joking and gibing aside—my lady's very pleasant. I came express to inform you, Sir Ringan, that the Douglasses are up."

"I knew it."

"And the Maxwells—and the Gordons—and the hurkle-backed Hendersons."

"Well."

"And Sir Christopher Seton is up—and the Elliots and the Laird of Tibbers is up."

"Well, well."

"I came expressly to inform you—"

"Came with piper's news," said the lady, "which the fiddler has told before you."

"That *is* very good," said Dickie; "My lady is so delightfully pleasant—I thought Sir Ringan would be going to rise with the rest, and came for directions as to raising my men."

"How many men can the powerful Laird of Dryhope muster in support of the warden?" said Lady Mountcomyn.

"Mine are all at his command; my worthy lady knows that," said Dickie, bowing: "Every one at his command."

"I think," said she, "that at the battle of Blakehope you furnished only two, who were so famished with hunger that they could not bear arms, far less fight."

"Very pleasant, in sooth; h'm, h'm! I declare I am delighted with my lady's good humour."

"You may, however, keep your couple of scare-crows at home for the present, and give them something to eat," continued she; "the warden has other matters to mind than wasting his vassals that the Douglas may wive."

"Very true, and excellent good sense," said Dickie.

"We'll talk of that anon," said Sir Ringan. And with that they went into the castle, and sat down to dinner. There were twelve gentlemen and nine maidens present, exclusive of the knight's own family, and they took their places on each side as the lady named them. When Sir Ringan lifted up his eyes and saw the station that Dickie occupied, he was dissatisfied, but instantly found a remedy. "Davie's Pate," said he to the lad that waited behind him, "mak that bowiefu' o' cauld plovers change places wi' yon saut-faut instantly, before meat be put to mouth." The order was no sooner given than obeyed, and the new arrangement placed Dickie fairly above the salt.

The dining apparatus at the castle of Mountcomyn was homely, but the fare was abundant. A dozen yeomen stood behind with long knives, and slashed down the beef and venison into small pieces, which they placed before the guests in wooden plates, so that there was no knife used at the dining board. All ate heartily, but none with more industry than Dickie, who took not even time all the while to make the complaisant observation, that "my lady was so pleasant."

Dinner being over, the younger branches of the family retired, and all the kinsmen not of the first rank, pretending some business that called them away, likewise disappeared; so that none were left with the knight and his lady save six. The lady tried the effect of several broad hints on Dickie, but he took them all in good part, and declared that he never saw his lady so

pleasant in his life. And now a serious consultation ensued, on the propriety of lending assistance to the Douglas. Sir Ringan first put the question to his friends, without any observation. The lady took up the argument, and reasoned strongly against the measure. Dickie was in raptures with his lady's good sense, and declared her arguments unanswerable. Most of the gentlemen seemed to acquiesce in the same measure, on the ground that, as matters stood, they could not rise at the Douglas' call on that occasion, without being considered as a subordinate family, which neither the king nor the Douglas had any right to suppose them; and so strongly and warmly ran the argument on that side, that it was likely to be decided on, without the chief having said a word on the subject. Simon of Gemelscleuch alone ventured to dissent; "I have only to remark, my gallant kinsmen," said he, "that our decision in this matter is likely to prove highly eventful. Without our aid the force of the Douglas is incompetent to the task, and the castle will then remain in the hands of the English, than which nothing can be more grievously against our interest. If he be defeated, and forfeit his lands, the power of the Border will then remain with us; but should he succeed without our assistance, and become the king's son-in-law, it will be a hard game with us to keep the footing that we have. I conceive, therefore, that in withdrawing our support we risk every thing,—in lending it, we risk nothing but blows." All the kinsmen were silent. Dickie looked at my Lady Mountcomyn.

"It is well known that there is an old prophecy existing," said

she, "that a Scot shall sit in the Douglas' chair, and be lord of all his domains. Well would it be for the country if that were so. But to support the overgrown power of that house is not the way to accomplish so desirable an object."

"That is true," said Dickie; "I'll defy any man to go beyond what my lady says, or indeed whatever she says."

"Have we not had instances of their jealousy already?" continued she.

"We have had instances of their jealousy already," said Dickie, interrupting her.

"And should we raise him to be the king's son-in-law, he would kick us for our pains," rejoined she.

"Ay, he would kick us for our pains," said Dickie; "think of that."

"Either please to drop your responses, Sir," said she, sternly, "or leave the hall. I would rather hear a raven croak on my turret in the day of battle, than the tongue of a flatterer or sycophant."

"That is very good indeed," said Dickie; "My lady is so pleasant; h'm, h'm, h'm! Excellent! h'm, h'm, h'm!"

Sir Ringan saw his lady drawing herself up in high indignation; and dreading that his poor kinsman would bring on himself such a rebuke as would banish him the hall for ever, he interposed. "Cousin," said he, "it's a great fault in women that they canna bide interruption, an' the mair they stand in need o't they take it the waur. But I have not told you all yet: a very singular circumstance has happened to me this day. Who do you think I

found waylaying me at my gate, but our kinsman, the powerful old warlock, Master Michael Scott."

"Master Michael Scott!" exclaimed the whole circle, every one holding up his hands, "has he ventured to be seen by man once more? Then there is something uncommon to befall, or, perhaps, the world is coming to an end."

"God forbid!" said Redhough: "It is true that, for seven years, he has been pent up in his enchanted tower at Aikwood, without speaking to any one save his spirits; but though I do not know him, this must have been he, for he has told me such things as will astonish you; and, moreover, when he left me, he laid himself down on the top of the Little Law on his back, and the devils carried him away bodily through the air, or down through the earth, and I saw no more of him."

All agreed that it had been the great magician Master Michael Scott. Sir Ringan then rehearsed the conversation that had passed between the wizard and himself. All the circle heard this with astonishment; some with suspense, and others with conviction, but Dickie with raptures of delight. "He assured me," said Redhough, "that my son should ride on his own land from Roxburgh to the Deadwater-fell."

"From Roxburgh to the Deadwater-fell!" cried Dickie, "think of that! all the links of the bonny Teviot and Slitterick, ha, ha, lads, think of that!" and he clapped his hands aloud without daring to turn his eyes to the head of the table.

"And from the Deadwater-fell to the tower o' Sark," rejoined

the knight.

"To the tower of Sark!" exclaimed Dickie. "H— have a care of us! think of that! All the dales of Liddel, and Ewes, and the fertile fields of Cannobie! Who will be king of the Border, then, my lads? who will be king of the Border then? ha, ha, ha!"

"And from the fords of Sark to the Deuchar-swire," added Sir Ringan.

Dickie sprang to his feet, and seizing a huge timber trencher, he waved it round his head. The chief beckoned for silence; but Dickie's eyes were glistening with raptures, and it was with great difficulty he repressed his vociferations.

"And over the Nine Glens of Niddisdale beside," said Sir Ringan.

Dickie could be restrained no longer. He brayed out, "Hurrah, hurrah!" and waved his trencher round his head.

"All the Esk, and the braid Forest, and the Nine Glens o' Niddisdale! Hurrah! Hurrah! Mountcomyn for ever! The warden for ever! hu, hu! hu!"

The knight and his friends were obliged to smile at Dickie's outrageous joy; but the lady rose and went out in high dudgeon. Dickie then gave full vent to his rapture without any mitigation of voice, adding, "My lady for ever!" to the former two; and so shouting, he danced around, waving his immense wooden plate.

The frolic did not take, and Sir Ringan was obliged to call him to order. "You do not consider, cousin," said the warden, "that what a woman accounts excellent sport at one time is at another

high offence. See, now, you have driven my lady away from our consultation, on whose advice I have a strong reliance; and I am afraid we will scarcely prevail on her to come back."

"Oh! there's no fear of my lady and me," said Dickie; "we understand one another. My lady is a kind, generous, noble soul, and so pleasant!

"For as pleasant and kind as she is, I am deceived if she is easily reconciled to you. Ye dinna ken Kate Dunbar, cousin.— Boy, tell your lady that we lack her counsel, and expect that she will lend us it for a short space."

The boy did as he was ordered, but returned with an answer, that unless Dickie was dismissed she did not choose to be of the party.

"I am sorry for it," said Sir Ringan; "but you may tell her that she may then remain where she is, for I can't spare my cousin Dickie now, nor any day these five months." And with that he began and discussed the merits of the case *pro* and *con* with his kinsmen, as if nothing had happened; and in the end it was resolved, that, with a thousand horsemen, they would scour the east border to intercept all the supplies that should be sent out of England, and thus enrich themselves, while, at the same time, they would appear to countenance the mad undertaking of Douglas.

CHAPTER III

"Come, come, my hearts of flint; modestly; decently; soberly; and handsomely.—No man afore his leader.—Ding down the enemy to-morrow,—ye shall not come into the field like beggars.—Lord have mercy upon me, what a world this is!—Well, I'll give an hundred pence for as many good feathers, and a hundred more for as many scarts:—wounds, dogs, to set you out withal! Frost and snow, a man cannot fight till he be brave! I say down with the enemy to morrow!"

Sir John Oldcastle.

The castle of Roxburgh was beleaguered by seven thousand men in armour, but never before had it been so well manned, or rendered so formidable in its buttresses; and to endeavour to scale it, appeared as vain an attempt as that of scaling the moon.

There was a great deal of parading, and noise went on, as that of beating drums, and sounding of trumpets and bugles, every day; and scarcely did there one pass on which there were not tilting bouts between the parties, and in these the English generally had the advantage. Never was there, perhaps, a more chivalrous host than that which Musgrave had under his command within the walls of Roxburgh; the enthusiasm, the gallantry, and the fire of the captain, were communicated to all the train.

Their horses were much superior to those of the Scots; and,

in place of the latter being able to make any impression on the besieged, they could not, with all the vigilance they were able to use, prevent their posts from being surprised by the English, on which the most desperate encounters sometimes took place. At first the English generally prevailed, but the Scots at length became inured to it, and stood the shocks of the cavalry more firmly. They took care always at the first onset to cut the bridle reins with their broad-swords, and by that means they disordered the ranks of their enemies, and often drove them in confusion back to their strong-hold.

Thus months flew on in this dashing sort of warfare, and no impression was made on the fortress, nor did any appear practicable; and every one at court began to calculate on the failure and utter ruin of the Douglas. Piercy of Northumberland proffered to raise the country, and lead an army to the relief of the castle; but this interference Musgrave would in nowise admit, it being an infringement of the task imposed on him by his mistress.

Moreover, he said, he cared not if all the men of Scotland lay around the castle, for he would defy them to win it. He farther bade the messenger charge Piercy and Howard to have an army ready at the expiry of the Christmas holidays, wherewith to relieve him, and clear the Border, but to take no care nor concern about him till then.

About this time an incident, right common in that day, brought a number of noble young adventurers to the camp of Douglas. It

chanced, in an encounter between two small rival parties at the back of the convent of Maisondieu, which stood on the south side of the Teviot, that Sir Thomas de Somerville of Carnwath engaged hand to hand with an English knight, named Sir Comes de Moubray, who, after a desperate encounter, unhorsed and wounded him. The affair was seen from the walls of Roxburgh, as well as by a part of the Scottish army which was encamped on a rising ground to the south, that overlooked the plain; and, of course, like all other chivalrous feats, became the subject of general conversation. Somerville was greatly mortified; and, not finding any other way to recover his honour, he sent a challenge to Moubray to fight him again before the gate of Roxburgh, in sight of both armies. Moubray was too gallant to refuse. There was not a knight in the castle who would have declined such a chance of earning fame, and recommending himself to his mistress and the fair in general. The challenge was joyfully accepted, and the two knights met in the midst of a circle of gentlemen appointed by both armies, on the castle green, that lay betwixt the moat and the river, immediately under the walls of the castle. Never was there a more gallant combat seen. They rode nine times against each other with full force, twice with lances and seven times with swords, yet always managed with such dexterity that neither were unhorsed, nor yet materially wounded. But at the tenth charge, by a most strenuous exertion, Sir Thomas disarmed and threw his opponent out of his saddle, with his sword-arm dislocated. Somerville gained

great renown, and his fame was sounded in court and in camp. Other challenges were soon sent from both sides, and as readily accepted; and some of the best blood both of Scotland and England was shed in these mad chivalrous exploits. The ambition of the young Scottish nobles was roused, and many of them flocked as volunteers to the standard of Douglas. Among these were some of the retainers of Redhough, who could not resist such an opportunity of trying their swords with some rivals with whom they had erst exchanged sharp blows on the marches. Simon of Gemelscleuch, his cousin John of Howpasley, and the Laird of Yard-bire, all arrived in the camp of Douglas in one night, in order to distinguish themselves in these tilting bouts. Earl Douglas himself challenged Musgrave, hoping thereby to gain his end, and the prize for which he fought; but the knight, true to his engagement, sent him for answer, that he would first see the beginning of a new year, and then he should fight either him or any of his name, but that till then he had undertaken a charge to which all others must be subordinate.

The Laird of Yardbire, the strongest man of the Border, fought three combats with English squires of the same degree, two on horseback and one on foot, and in all proved victorious. For one whole month the siege presented nothing new save these tiltings, which began at certain hours every day, and always became more obstinate, often proving fatal; and the eagerness of the young gentry of both parties to engage in them grew into a kind of mania: But an event happened which put an end to them

at once.

There was a combat one day between two knights of the first degree, who were surrounded as usual by twenty lancers from each army, all the rest of both parties being kept at a distance, the English on the tops of their walls, and the Scots on the heights behind, both to the east and west; for there was one division of the army stationed on the hill of Barns and at the head of the Sick-man's Path, and another on the rising ground between the city and castle. The two gentlemen were equally matched, and the issue was doubtful, when the attendant Scottish guards perceived, or thought they perceived, in the bearing of the English knight, some breach of the rules of chivalry; on which with one voice they called out "foul play." The English answered, "No, no, none." The two judges called to order, on which the spearmen stood still and listened, and hearing that the judges too were of different opinions, they took up the matter themselves, the Scots insisting that the knight should be disarmed and turned from the lists in disgrace, and the English refusing to acquiesce. The judges, dreading some fatal conclusion, gave their joint orders that both parties should retire in peace, and let the matter be judged of afterwards; on which the English prepared to quit the ground with a kind of exultation, for it appeared that they were not certain with regard to the propriety of their hero's conduct. Unluckily, it so happened that the redoubted Charlie Scott of Yard-bire headed the Scottish pikemen on the lists that day, a very devil for blood and battery, and of strength much beyond

that generally allotted to man. When he saw that the insidious knight was going to be conducted off in a sort of triumph, and in a manner so different from what he deemed to suit his demerits, he clenched the handle of his sword with his right hand, and screwed down his eyebrows till they almost touched the top of his nose. "What now, muckle Charlie?" said one that stood by him. "What now!" repeated Charlie, growling like a wolf-dog, and confining the words almost within his own breast, "The deil sal bake me into a ker-cake to gust his gab wi', afore I see that saucy tike ta'en off in sic a way." And with that he dropt his pike, drew his sword, and rushing through the group he seized the knight's horse by the bridle with his left hand, thinking to lead both him and his master away prisoners. The knight struck at him with all his might, but for this Charlie was prepared; he warded the blow most dexterously, and in wrath, by the help of a huge curb-bridle, he threw the horse backward, first on his hams, and then on his back, with his rider under him. "Tak ye that, master, for whistling o' Sundays," said the intrepid borderer, and began to lay about him at the English, who now attacked him on both sides.

Charlie's first break at the English knight was the watch-word for a general attack. The Scots flew to the combat, in perfect silence, and determined hatred, and they were received by the other party in the same manner. Not so the onlookers of both hosts,—they rent the air with loud and reiterated shouts. The English poured forth in a small narrow column from the east gate along the draw-bridge, but the Scottish horsemen, who

were all ready mounted, the better to see the encounter from their stations, scoured down from the heights like lightning, so that they prevailed at first, before the English could issue forth in numbers sufficient to oppose them. The brave Sir Richard Musgrave, the captain's younger brother, led the English, he having rushed out at their head on the first breaking out of the affray; but, notwithstanding all his bravery, he with his party were driven with their backs to the moat, and hard pressed, Douglas, with a strong body of horse, having got betwixt them and the castle-gate. The English were so anxious to relieve their young hero that they rushed to the gate in crowds. Douglas suffered a part to issue, and then attacking them furiously with the cavalry, he drove them back in such confusion, that he got possession of the draw-bridge for several minutes, and would in all likelihood have entered with the crowd, had it not been for the portcullis, the machinery of which the Scots did not understand, nor had they the means of counteracting it; so that just when they were in the hottest and most sanguine part of their enterprize, down it came with a clattering noise louder than thunder, separating a few of the most forward from their brethren, who were soon every one cut down, as they refused to yield.

In the meantime it fared hard with Richard, who was overpowered by numbers; and though the English archers galled the Scottish cavalry grievously from the walls, he and all that were with him being forced backward, they plunged into the

moat, and were every one of them either slain or taken prisoners. The younger Musgrave was among the latter, which grieved his brother Sir Philip exceedingly, as it gave Douglas an undue advantage over him, and he knew that, in the desperate state of his undertaking, he would go any lengths to over-reach him. From that day forth, all challenges or accepting of challenges was prohibited by Musgrave, under pain of death; and a proclamation was issued, stating, that all who entered the castle should be stripped naked, searched, and examined, on what pretence soever they came, and if any suspicious circumstances appeared against them, they were to be hanged upon a post erected for the purpose, on the top of the wall, in sight of both armies. He was determined to spare no vigilance, and constantly said he would hold Douglas at defiance.

There was only one thing that the besieged had to dread, and it was haply, too, the only thing in which the Scots placed any degree of hope, and that was the total failure of provisions within the castle. Musgrave's plan, of getting small supplies at a time from England by night, was discovered by Sir Ringan Redhough, and completely cut off: and as Douglas hanged every messenger that fell into his hands, no new plan could be established; and so closely were the English beleaguered, that any attempt at sending additional supplies to those they had proved of no avail. The rival armies always grew more and more inveterate against each other, and the most sharp and deadly measures were exercised by both. Matters went on in this manner till near the end of October, when

the nights grew cold, long, and dark. There was nothing but the perils of that castle on the Border talked of over all Scotland and England. Every one, man, maid, and child, became interested in it. It may well be conceived that the two sovereign beauties, the Lady Jane Howard and Princess Margaret of Scotland, were not the least so; and both of them prepared, at the same time, in the true spirit of the age, to take some active part in the matter before it came to a final issue. One of them seemed destined to lose her hero, but both had put on the resolution of performing something worthy of the knights that were enduring so much for their sakes.

CHAPTER IV

*And O that pegis weste is slymme,
And his ee wald garr the daye luke dymme;
His broue is brente, his brestis fayre,
And the deemonde lurkis in hys revan hayre.
Alake for thilke bonnye boye sae leile
That lyes withe oure Kyng in the hie-lande shiele!*

Old Rhyme.

*I winna gang in, I darena gang in,
Nor sleep i' your arms ava;
Fu' laithly wad a fair may sleep
Atween you an' the wa'.
War I to lie wi' a belted knight,
In a land that's no my ain,
Fu' dear wad be my courtesye,
An' dreich wad be my pain.*

Old Ballad.

One cold biting evening, at the beginning of November, Patrick Chisholm of Castleweary, an old yeoman in the upper part of Teviotdale, sat conversing with his family all in a merry and cheerful mood. They were placed in a circle round a blazing hearth fire, on which hung a huge caldron, boiling and bubbling like the pool at the foot of a cataract. The lid was suspended by

a rope to the iron crook on which this lordly machine was hung, to intercept somewhat the showers of soot that now and then descended from the rafters. These appeared as if they had been covered with pitch or black japanning; and so violently was the kettle boiling, that it made the roof of Pate Chisholm's bigging all to shiver. Notwithstanding these showers of soot, Pate and his four goodly sons eyed the boiling caldron with looks of great satisfaction,—for ever and anon the hough of an immense leg of beef was to be seen cutting its capers in the boil, or coming with a graceful semicircular sweep from one lip of the pot to the other.

"Is it true, callants," said Pate, "that Howard is gaun to make a diversion, as they ca't, in the west border, to draw off the warden frae the Cheviots?"

"As muckle is said, an' as muckle expectit," said Dan, his first born, a goodly youth, who, with his three brethren, sat in armour. They had come home to their father's house that night with their share of a rich prey that the warden had kidnapped while just collecting to send to Roxburgh under a guard of five thousand men. But Sir Ringan, getting intelligence of it, took possession of the drove before it was placed under the charge of those intended to guard it.

"As muckle is said, an' as muckle is expectit," said Dan; "but the west border will never turn out sae weel to us as the east has done. It's o'er near the Johnstones, and the Jardines, and the hurkle-backit Hendersons."

Pate looked from under his bonnet at the hough of beef.

—"The Cheviot hills hae turned weel out for the warden," continued Dan; "Redhough an' his lads hae been as weel scribing o'er law and dale as lying getting hard pelts round the stane wa's o' Roxburgh, an' muckle mair gude has he done; for gin they dinna hunger them out o' their hauddin, they'll keep it. Ye'll draw an Englishman by the gab easier than drive him wi' an airn gaud. I wad ride fifty miles to see ony ane o' the bonny dames that a' this pelting an' peching is about."

"Twa wanton glaikit gillies, I'll uphaud," said Pate, looking at the restless hough; "o'er muckle marth i' the back, an' meldar i' the brusket. Gin I had the heffing o' them, I sude tak a staup out o' their bickers.—Whisht, I thought I heard the clanking o' horse heels.—Callant, clap the lid down on the pat; what hae they't hinging geaving up there for?"

The clattering of the horses approached, but apparently with caution; and at length a voice called at the door in an English accent, "Hollo, who holds here?" "Leel men, an' for the Scots," answered Dan, starting to his feet, and laying his hand on his sword. "For the knight of Mountcomyn, the Scottish warden?"—inquired the horseman without. "For the same," was the answer. "It is toward his castle that we are bound. Can any of you direct us the way?"

"Troth, that I can," said old Pate, groping to satisfy himself that the lid was close down on the pot, and then running to the door; "I can tell you every fit o' the road, masters: You maun gang by the Fanesh, you see; it lies yon way, you see; an' then

up the Brown rig, as straight as a line through Philhope-head, an' into Borthwick; then up Aitas-burn,—round the Crib-law,—an' wheel to the right; then the burn that ye come to there, ye maun cross that, and three miles farther on you come to the castle of Mountcomyn.—Braw cheer there lads!"

"I am afraid, friend," said the English trooper, "we will make nothing of this direction. Is it far to this same castle of the Scottish warden?"

"O no, naething but a step, some three Scots miles."

"And how is the road?"

"A prime road, man; no a step in't a' wad tak your horse to the brusket; only there's nae track; ye maun just take an ettle. Keep an ee on the tail o' Charlie's wain, an' ye'll no gang far wrang."

"Our young lord and master is much fatigued," said the trooper; "I am afraid we shall scarcely make it out. Pray, sir, could you spare us a guide?"

Dan, who was listening behind, now stepped forward, and addressed them: "My masters, as the night is o' darkness, I could hardly ride to Mountcomyn mysel, an', far or near, I couldna win there afore day. Gin ye dought accept o' my father's humble cheer the night—"

"The callant's bewiddied, an' waur than bewiddied," said Pate: "We haena cheer for oursels, let abe for a byking o' English lords an' squires!"

"I would gladly accept of any accommodation," said a sweet delicate voice, like that of a boy; "for the path has been so

dreadful that I am almost dead, and unable to proceed further. I have a safe-conduct to the Scottish court, signed by all the wardens of the marches, and every knight, yeoman, and vassal is obliged to give me furtherance."

"I dinna ken muckle about conducks an' signatures," said Pate, "but I trow there winna be mony syllables in some o' the names if a' the wardens hae signed your libelt; for I ken weel there's ane o' them whase edication brak aff at the letter G, an' never gat farrer. But I'm no ca'ing ye a leear, southron lord, ye may be a vera honest man; an' as your errand may be something unco express, ye had better post on."

"It sal never be casten up to me neither in camp nor ha," said Dan, "that a stranger was cawed frae my auld father's door at this time o' the night. Light down, light down, southron lord, ye are a privileged man; an', as I like to see the meaning o' things, I'll ride wi' ye mysel the morn, fit for fit, to the castle o' Mountcomyn."

The strangers were soon all on their feet, and ushered into the family circle, for there was no fire-place in the house but that one. They consisted of five stout troopers, well armed, a page, and a young nobleman, having the appearance of a youth about seventeen or eighteen years of age. Every eye was instantly turned on him, there was something so extraordinary in his appearance. Instead of a steel helmet, he wore a velvet cap, shaped like a crown, striped with belts, bars, and crosses of gold wire, and manifestly more for ornament than use. His fair ringlets were peeping in curls out from below his cap, and his face and

bright blue eyes were lovely as the dawn of a summer's morning.

They were not well seated till a noise of the tread of horses was again heard.

"The warld be a-wastle us!" cried old Pate, "wha's that now? I think fouk will be eaten up wi' fouk, an' naething for folk's pains but dry thanks;—thanks winna feed the cat—"

He was stopped in his regretful soliloquy by a rough voice at the door: "Ho, wha bauds the house?" The same answer was given as to the former party, and in a minute the strangers entered without law or leave.

"Ye travel unco late, maisters," said old Pate: "How far may ye be for the night?"

"We meant to have reached the tower of Gorranberry to-night," said one of the strangers, "but we have been benighted, and were drawn hither by the light in your hole. I fear we must draw on your hospitality till day."

"Callant Peter, gang an' stap a wisp i' that bole," said Pate; "it seems to be the beacon light to a' the clanjaumphry i' the hale country. I tauld ye aye to big it up; but no ane o' ye heeds what I say. I hae seen houses that *some* fouk whiles gaed by. But, my maisters, its nae gate ava to Gorranberry,—a mere haut-stride-and-loup. I'll send a guide to Bilhope-head wi' ye; for troth we hae neither meat nor drink, house-room nor stabling, mair about the toun. We're but poor yeomen, an' haud our mailin for hard service. We hae tholed a foray the night already, an' a double ane wad herrie us out o' house an' hauld. The warld be a' wastle us! I

think a' the mosstroopers be abraid the night! Bairns, swee that bouking o' claes aff the fire; ye'll burn it i' the boiling."

The new comers paid little attention to this address of the old man; they saw that he was superannuated, and had all the narrow selfishness that too generally clings to that last miserable stage of human exisence; but drawing nigh they began to eye the southron party with looks of dark suspicion, if not of fierceness.

"I see what maks ye sae frightet at our entrance here," said the first Scots trooper, ye hae some southron spies amang ye—Gudeman, ye sal answer to the king for this, an' to the Douglas too, whilk ye'll find a waur job."

"Ken where ye are, an' wha ye're speaking to," said Dan, stepping forward and browing the last speaker face to face: "If either the ae party or the ither be spies, or aught else but leel men, ye shall find, ere ye gang far, whase land ye are on, an' whase kipples ye are under. That auld man's my father, an,' doitet as he is, the man amang ye that says a saucy word to him I'll gar sleep in his shoon a fit shorter than he rase i' the morning. Wha are ye, sir, or where do you travel by night on my master the warden's bounds?"

"Sir," answered another trooper, who seemed to be rather a more polished man, "I applaud your spirit, and will answer your demand. We go with our lord and master, Prince Alexander Stuart of Scotland, on a mission to a noble English family. Here is the king's seal as well as a pass signed by the English warden. We are leel men and true."

"Where is the prince?" said Dan: "A prince of Scotland i' my father's house? Which is he?"

A slender elegant stripling stepped forward. "Here he is, brave yeoman," said the youth: "No ceremony—Regard me as your fellow and companion for this night."

Dan whipped off his bonnet and clapped his foot upon it, and bowing low and awkwardly to his prince he expressed his humble respect as well as he could, and then presented the prince to his father. The title sounded high in the old man's ears, he pulled off his bonnet and looked with an unsteady gaze, as if uncertain on whom to fix it—"A prince! Eh?—Is he a prince o' Scotland? Ay, ay!" said he, "Then he'll maybe hae some say wi' our head men—Dan—I say, Dan"—and with that he pulled Dan's sleeve, and said in a whisper loud enough to be heard over all the house,—"I say, Dan, man, gin he wad but speak to the warden to let us hae a' the land west the length o' the Frosty lair. O it wad lie weel into ours." "It wad, father, and I daresay we may get it; but hush just now." "Eh? do you think we may get it?" enquired the old man eagerly in the same whispering tremulous voice, "O man, it wad lie weel in; an' sae wad Couter's-cleuch. It's no perfect wanting that too. An' we wad be a great deal the better o' twa or three rigs aff Skelfhill for a bit downfa' to the south—See if ye can speak to the lad."

Dan shook his father's hand, and nodded to him by way of acquiescence. The old man brightened up: "Whar is your titty Bessy, Dan? Whar are a' the idle hizzies? Gar them get

something set down to the princely lad: I'se warrant he's e'en hungry. Ye'll no be used til siccan roads as thir, Sir? Na, na. They're unco roads for a prince.—Dan, I say, come this way; I want to speak to you—I say," (whispering very low aside) "I wadna let them ken o' the beef, or they'll just gang wi't. Gie them milk an' bread, an' cheese, an' a drap o' the broo; it will do weel aneuch. Hunger's good sauce. But, Dan,—I say, could ye no contrive to get quat o' thae English? I doubt there will be little made of them:—They're but a when gillie-gaupies at the best, an nae freends to us.—Fouk sude ay bow to the bush they get bield frae."

"It's a' true that ye say, father; but we surely needna grudge an Englishman a piece o' an English cow's hip.—The beef didna cost you dear, an' there's mair where it cam frae."

The old man would not give up his point, but persisted in saying it was a dangerous experiment, and an unprofitable waste. However, in spite of his remonstrances, the board was loaded with six wooden bickers filled with beef broth, plenty of bear-meal bannocks, and a full quarter of English ox beef, to which the travellers did all manner of justice. The prince, as he called himself, was placed at the head of the table, and the young English nobleman by his side. Their eyes were scarcely ever turned from one another's faces, unless in a casual hasty glance to see how others were regarding the same face. The prince had dark raven hair that parted on a brow of snow, a black liquid eye, and round lips, purer than the cherry about to fall from the tree

with ripeness. He was also a degree taller than the English lord; but both of them, as well as their two pages, were lovelier than it became men to be. The troopers who attended them seemed disposed to contradict every thing that came from the adverse party, and, if possible, to broach a quarrel, had it not been for the two knights, who were all suavity, good breeding, and kindness to each other, and seemed to have formed an attachment at first sight. At length Prince Alexander inquired of his new associate his name, and business at the Scottish court, provided, he said, that it did not require strict secrecy. The other said, he would tell him every thing truly, on condition that he would do the same: which being agreed to, the young English nobleman proceeded as follows:

"My name is Lord Jasper Tudor, second son to the Earl of Pembroke. I am nearly related to the throne of England, and in high favour with the king. The wars on the Borders have greatly harassed the English dalesmen for these many years, and matters being still getting worse between the nations, the king, my cousin, has proposed to me to marry the Princess Margaret of Scotland, and obtain as her dowry a confirmation of these border lands and castles, so that a permanent peace may be established between the nations, and this bloody and desperate work cease. I am on my way to the Scottish court to see the princess, your sister; and if I find her to be as lovely and accomplished as fame speaks her, I intend to comply with the king's request, and marry her forthwith."

This speech affected the prince so much that all the guests wondered. He started to his feet, and smiling in astonishment said, "What, you? you marry m—m—my sister Margaret? She is very much beholden to you, and on my word she will see a becoming youth. But are you sure that she will accept of you for a husband?" "I have little to fear on that head," said the Lord Jasper Tudor jeeringly; "Maids are in general not much averse to marriage; and, if I am well informed, your lovely sister is as little averse to it as any of her contemporaries."

The prince blushed deep at this character of his sister, but had not a word to say.

"Pray," continued Tudor, "is she like you? If she is, I think I shall love her,—I would not have her just like you neither."

"I believe," said the prince, "there is a strong family likeness; but tell me in what features you would wish her to differ from me, and I will describe her minutely to you."

"In the first place," said the amorous and blue-ey'd Tudor, "I should like her to be a little stouter, and more manly of frame than you, and, at least, to have some appearance of a beard."

All the circle stared. "The devil you would, my lord," said Dan; "Wad ye like your wife to hae a beard, in earnest? Gude faith, an your ain war like mine, ye wad think ye had eneuch o't foreby your wife's." The prince held up his hands in astonishment, and the young English lord blushed deeper than it behoved a knight to do; but at length he tried to laugh it by, pretending that he had unwittingly said one thing when he meant the very contrary, for

he wished her to be more feminine, and have less beard."—"I think that will hardly be possible," said Dan; "but perhaps there may be a hair here an' there on my lord the prince's chin, when ane comes near it. I wadna disparage ony man, far less my king's son."

"Well, my noble lord," said the prince, "your tale has not a little surprised me, as well it may. Our meeting here in like circumstances is the most curious rencounter I ever knew; for, to tell you the plain truth, I am likewise on an errand of the same import, being thus far on my way to see and court the lady Jane Howard, in order that all her wide domains may be attached to my father's kingdom, and peace and amity thereby established on the border."

"Gracious heaven!" said young Lord Tudor, "can this that I hear be true? You? Are you on your way to my cousin, the lady Jane Howard? Why, do you not know that she is already affianced to Lord Musgrave?"

"Yes, it is certain I do; but that is one of my principal inducements to gain her from him; that is quite in the true spirit of gallantry; but, save her great riches, I am told she has little else to recommend her," said the prince.

"And, pray, how does fame report of my cousin Jane?" said Tudor.

"As of a shrew and a coquette," answered the prince; "a wicked minx, that is intemperate in all her passions."

"It is a manifest falsehood," said Tudor, his face glowing

with resentment, "I never knew a young lady so moderate and chastened in every passion of the female heart. Her most private thoughts are pure as purity itself, and her—."

"But, begging your pardon, my lord, how can you possibly know all this?" said the prince.

"I do know it," said the other, "it is no matter how: I cannot hear my fair cousin wronged; and I know that she will remain true to Musgrave, and have nothing to do with you."

"I will bet an earldom on that head, said the prince, "if I chuse to lay siege to her."

"Done!" said the other, and they joined hands on the bargain; but they had no sooner laid their hands into one another's than they hastily withdrew them, with a sort of trepidation, that none of the lookers on, save the two pages, who kept close by their masters, appeared to comprehend. They, too, were both mistaken in the real cause; but of that it does not behove to speak at present.

"I will let you see," said the prince, recovering himself, "that this celebrated cousin of yours shall not be so ill to win as the castle of Roxburgh; and I'll let Musgrave see for how much truth and virgin fidelity he has put his life in his hand; and when I have her I'll cage her, for I don't like her. I would give that same earldom to have her in my power to-night."

The young Lord Tudor looked about as if he meditated an escape to another part of the table; but, after a touch that his page gave him on the sleeve, he sat still, and mustered up courage for a reply.

"And pray, sir prince, what would you do with her if you had her in your power to-night?"

"Something very different from what I would do with you, my lord. But please describe her to me, for my very heart is yearning to behold her,—describe every point of her form, and lineament of her features."

"She is esteemed as very beautiful; for my part I think her but so so," said Tudor: "She has fair hair, light full blue eyes, and ruddy cheeks; and her brow, I believe, is as fine and as white as any brow can be."

"O frightful! what a description! what an ugly minx it must be! Fair hair! red, I suppose, or dirty dull yellow! Light blue eyes! mostly white I fancy? Ah, what a frightful immodest ape it must be! I could spit upon the huzzy!"

"Mary shield us!" exclaimed young Tudor, moving farther away from the prince, and striking lightly with his hand on his doublet as if something unclean had been squirted on it. "Mary shield us! What does the saucy Scot mean?"

Every one of the troopers put his hand to his sword, and watched the eye of his master. The prince beckoned to the Scots to be quiet; but Lord Tudor did no such thing, for he was flustered and wroth.

"Pardon me, my lord," said the prince, "I may perhaps suffer enough from the beauty and perfections of your fair cousin after I see her; you may surely allow me to deride them now. I am trying to depreciate the charms I dread. But I do not like the description

of her. Tell me seriously do you not think her very intolerable?"

"I tell you, prince, I think quite otherwise. I believe Jane to be fifty times more lovely than any dame in Scotland; and a hundred times more beautiful than your tawny virago of a sister, whom I shall rejoice to tame like a spaniel. The haughty, vain, conceited, swart venom, that she should lay her commands on the Douglas to conquer or die for her! A fine presumption, forsooth! But the world shall see whether the charms of my cousin, Lady Jane Howard, or those of your grim and tawdry princess, have most power."

"Yes, they shall, my lord," said the prince: "In the mean time let us drop the subject. I see I have given you offence, not knowing that you were in love with Lady Jane, which now I clearly see to be the case. Nevertheless, go on with the description, for I am anxious to hear all about her, and I promise to approve if there be a bare possibility of it."

"Her manner is engaging, and her deportment graceful and easy; her waist is slim, and her limbs slender and elegant beyond any thing you ever saw," said Lord Tudor.

"O shocking!" exclaimed the prince, quite forgetting himself: "Worst of all! I declare I have no patience with the creature. After such a description, who can doubt the truth of the reports about the extreme levity of her conduct? Confess now, my lord, that she is very free of her favours, and that the reason why so many young gentlemen visit her is now pretty obvious."

High offence was now manifest in Lord Jasper Tudor's look.

He rose from his seat, and said in great indignation, "I did not ween I should be insulted in this guise by the meanest peasant in Scotland, far less by one of its courtiers, and least of all by a prince of the blood royal. Yeomen, I will not, I cannot suffer this degradation. These ruffian Scots are intruders on us,—here I desire that you will expel them the house."

The Prince of Scotland was at the head of the table, Tudor was at his right hand; the rest of the English were all on that side, the Scots on the other,—their numbers were equal. Dan and his three brethren sat at the bottom of the board around the old man, who had been plying at the beef with no ordinary degree of perseverance, nor did he cease when the fray began. Every one of the two adverse parties was instantly on his feet, with his sword gleaming in his hand; but finding that the benches from which they had arisen hampered them, they with one accord sprung on the tops of these, and crossed their swords. The pages screamed like women. The two noble adventurers seemed scarcely to know the use of their weapons, but looked on with astonishment. At length the prince, somewhat collecting himself, drew out his shabby whanger, and brandished it in a most unwarlike guise, on which the blue-eyed Tudor retreated behind his attendants, holding up his hands, but still apparently intent on revenge for the vile obloquy thrown on the character of *his cousin*, Lady Jane Howard. "Tis just pe te shance she vantit," said the Scot next to the prince.

"My certy, man, we'll get a paick at the louns now," said the

second.

"Fat te teel's ta'en 'e bits o' vee laddies to flee a' eet abeet 'er but's o' wheers? I wudnae hae my feet i' their sheen for three plucks an a beedle," said the third.

"Thou's a' i' the wrang buox now, chaps," said the fourth. These were all said with one breath; and before the Englishmen had time to reply, clash went the swords across the table, and the third Scot, the true Aberdonian, was wounded, as were also two of the Englishmen, at the very first pass.

These matters are much sooner done than described. All this was the work of a few seconds, and done before advice could either be given or attended to. Dan now interfered with all the spirit and authority that he was master of. He came dashing along the middle of the board in his great war boots, striking up their swords as he came, and interposing his boardly frame between the combatants. "D—n ye a' for a when madcaps!" cried Dan as loud as he could bawl: "What the muckle deil's fa'en a bobbing at your midriffs now? Ye're a' my father's guests an' mine; an', by the shin-banes o' Sant Peter, the first side that lifts a sword, or says a misbeadden word, my three brethren and I will tak' the tother side, an' smoor the transgressors like as mony moor-poots."

"Keep your feet aff the meat, fool," said old Pate.

"Gude sauff us!" continued Dan, "What has been said to gie ony offence? What though the young gentlewoman dis tak a stown jink o' a' chap that's her ain sweet-heart whiles? Where's

the harm in that? There's little doubt o' the thing. An' for my part, gin she didna"—

Here Dan was interrupted in his elegant harangue by a wrathful hysteric scream from young Tudor, who pulled out his whinyard, and ran at Dan, boring at him in awkward but most angry sort, crying all the while, "I will not bear this insult! Will my followers hear me traduced to my face?"

"Deil's i' e' wee but steepid laddie," said Buchan the Aberdonian; "it thinks 'at 'er preeving it to be a wheer 'e sel o't!"

Dan lifted up his heavy sword in high choler to cleave the stripling, and he would have cloven him to the belt, but curbing his wrath, he only struck his sword, which he made fly into pieces and jingle against the rafters of the house; then seizing the young adventurer by the shoulder, he snatched him up to him on the board, where he still stood, and, taking his head below his arm, he held him fast with the one hand, making signs with the other to his brethren to join the Scots, and disarm the English, who were the aggressors both times. In the meantime, he was saying to Tudor, "Hout, hout, young master, ye hae never been o'er the Border afore; ye sude hae stayed at hame, an' wantit a wife till ye gathered mair rummelgumption."

The five English squires, now seeing themselves set upon by nine, yielded, and suffered themselves to be disarmed.

When Tudor came to himself, he appeared to be exceedingly grieved at his imprudence, and ready to make any acknowledgment, while the prince treated him with still more

and more attention; yet these attentions were ever and anon mixed with a teasing curiosity, and a great many inquiries, that the young nobleman could not bear, and did not chuse to answer.

It now became necessary to make some arrangement for the parties passing the night. Patrick Chisholm's house had but one fire-place in an apartment which served for kitchen and hall; but it had a kind of *ben end*, as it was then, and is always to this day, denominated in that part of the country. There was scarcely room to move a foot in it; for, besides two oaken beds with rowan-tree bars, it contained five huge chests belonging to the father and his sons, that held their clothes and warlike accoutrements. The daughters of yeomen in these days did not sit at table with the men. They were the household servants. Two of Pate's daughters, who had been bustling about all the evening, conducted the two noble youths into this apartment, together with their two pages. The one bed was neatly made down with clean clothes, and the other in a more common way. "Now," said one of the landward lasses, "You twa masters are to sleep thegither in here,—in o' this gude bed, ye see, an' the twa lads in o' this ane." The two young noblemen were standing close together, as behoved in such a room. On the girl addressing them thus, their eyes met each other's, but were as instantly withdrawn and fixed on the floor, while a blush of the deepest tint suffused the cheeks of both, spreading over the chin and neck of each. The pages contemplated each other in the same way, but not with the same degree of timidity. The English stripling seemed rather

to approve of the arrangement, or at least pretended to do so; for he frankly took the other by the hand, and said in a sweet voice, but broad dialect, "Weall, yuong Scuot, daghest thou lig woth mey?" The young Caledonian withdrew his hand, and held down his head: "I always lie at my master's feet," said he.

"And so shall you do to-night, Colin," said the prince, "for I will share this bed with you, and let my lord take the good one." "I cannot go to bed to-night," said Tudor, "I will rest me on this chest; I am resolved I sha'n't go to bed, nor throw off my clothes to-night."

"Ye winna?" said May Chisholm, who visibly wanted a romp with the young blooming chief,— "Ye winna gang til nae bed, will ye nae, and me has been at sic pains making it up til ye? Bess, come here an' help me, we sal soon see whether he's gang til his bed or no, an' that no wi' his braw claes on neither." So saying, the two frolicsome queans seized the rosy stripling, and in a moment had him stretched on the bed, and, making his doublet fly open all at one rude pull, they were proceeding to undress him, giggling and laughing all the while. Prince Alexander, from a momentary congenial feeling of delicacy, put his hand hastily across to keep the lapels of Tudor's vesture together, without the motion having been perceived by any one in the hurry, and that moment the page flung himself across his master's breast, and reproved the lasses so sharply that they desisted, and left them to settle the matter as they chose.

The prince had, however, made a discovery that astonished

him exceedingly; for a few minutes his head was almost turned,—but the truth soon began to dawn on his mind, and every reflection, every coincidence, every word that had been said, and offence that had been taken, tended to confirm it: so he determined, not for farther trial, but for the joke's sake, to press matters a little further.

When quietness was again restored, and when the blush and the frown had several times taken alternate sway of the young lord's face, the prince said to him, "After all, my lord, I believe we must take share of the same bed together for this one night. It is more proper and becoming than to sleep with our pages. Besides, I see the bed is good and clean, and I have many things to talk to you about our two countries, and about our two intended brides, or sweet-hearts let us call them in the meantime."

"Oh no, no, prince," said Tudor, "indeed I cannot, I may not, I would not sleep in the same bed with another gentleman—No—I never did—never."

"Do not say so, my dear lord, for, on my word, I am going to insist on it," said the prince, coming close up to him, his eyes beaming with joy at the discovery he had made. "You shall sleep by my side to-night: nay, I will even take you in my bosom and caress you as if you were my own sweet dear Lady Jane Howard." Tudor was now totally confounded, and knew neither what to say for himself, nor what he did say when he spoke. He held out both his hands, and cried, "Do not, prince, do not—I beg—I implore do not; for I cannot, cannot consent. I never slept even in the

same apartment with a man in all my life."

"What, have you always slept in a room by yourself?" asked the teasing prince.

"No, never, but always with ladies—yes, always!" was the passionate and sincere reply.

Here the prince held up his hands, and turned up his eyes. "What a young profligate!" exclaimed he, "Mary shield us! Have you no conscience with regard to the fair sex that you have begun so wicked a course, and that so early? Little did I know why you took a joke on your cousin so heinously amiss! I see it now, truth will out! Ah, you are such a youth! I will not go a foot further to see Lady Jane. What a wicked degraded imp she must be! Do not kindle into a passion again, my dear lord. I can well excuse your feigned wrath, it is highly honourable. I hate the knight that blabs the favours he enjoys from the fair. He is bound to defend the honour that has stooped to him; even though (as in the present instance I suppose) it have stooped to half a dozen more besides."

A great deal of taunting and ill humour prevailed between these capricious and inexperienced striplings, and sorely was Tudor pressed to take share of a bed with the prince, but in vain—his feelings recoiled from it; and the other, being in possession of a secret of which the English lord was not aware, took that advantage of teasing and tormenting him almost beyond sufferance. After all, it was decided that each should sleep with his own page; a decision that did not seem to go well down at all with the Yorkshire boy, who once ventured to expostulate with

his lord, but was silenced with a look of angry disdain.

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