MAGDALEN HEPBURN.

A STORY

OF

THE SCOTTISH REFORMATION.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"PASSAGES IN THE LIFE OF MRS. MARGARET MAITLAND,"

"ADAM GRAEME," &c.

"Things now
That bear a weighty and a serious brow,
Sad, high, and working, full of state and woe,
Such noble scenes as draw the eye to flow,
We now present. Those that can pity, here
May, if they think it well, let fall a tear;
The subject will deserve it. Such, as give
Their money out of hope, they may believe,
May here find truth too——

Therefore.....as you are known
The first and happiest hearers of the town,
Be sad, as we would make you: Think ye see
The very persons of our noble story,
As they were living."

PROLOGUE TO KING HENRY VIII.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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MAGDALEN HEPBURN.

CHAPTER I.

"She is young, and of a noble modest nature."
KING HENRY VIII.

BUT the winter passed, and another spring brightened the bleak sides of Lammer Law ere Magdalen Hepburn was disturbed in her solitary tower. The time passed slowly over the little household; their young mistress seldom cared to leave the room where she sat listlessly over her embroidery, hearing at long

intervals, by means of travelling packman or unfrequent Palmer, some news of the world, whose distant echo never rang upon those hills. Feud and deadly fray in the low country, rapine on the border, English arms and English banners shining in the free air of Scotland, and now a battle and now a skirmish, slaughter of heretic and intrigue of priest, and the dreary certainty that the brave defenders of St. Andrew's were bound in French cells, or labouring in the galleys of their foe, came ever and anon—unwelcome tidings—to the ears of these dwellers among the hills. All the day through, her long black robes sweeping upon the ruffled rushes, Magdalen's drooping head bent over the embroidery, which many a time her dreaming eyes did not see, as she sat absorbed in melancholy musings, recalling once again that last sad parting with

her father, or imagining the dreary plight of her noble kinsman chained to the ignoble labour of the oar. Plan and prospect for herself seldom broke the blank of Magdalen's brooding. She had no friends, and with a passive but strong attachment she clung to these old walls—all that constituted home to her bereaved and orphan life.

At a respectful distance, apart from the lady, Isobel span her flaxen thread; and Alice, kneeling by the reading desk, submitted now and then with some romaunt or ballad to diversify the graver hours—when, with devout and humble reverence, with a closed door and cautious voice, she read from the Bible which Magdalen possessed—the richest treasure in the Tower, and the most dangerous.

Sometimes, to a secret preaching or social reading of the Scripture, the mother and

daughter would steal forth under the gloom of night; and now and then some whilom monk, who had exchanged his convent ease for the flights and perils of a preacher of the Reformation, took shelter in the secret chamber, and gave fervid exhortations and words of counsel to the lady and her immediate attendants; but save for this, their loneliness was undisturbed.

Even the revengeful sub-prior had forgotten her offence, as Magdalen thought, and no one came near the tower to startle it from its usual stillness.

The spring days grew and brightened into summer; but on the brightest day of June you could hear the crackle of the whins as the seed burst its enclosure, so still was the air round the peaceful Keep of Lammerstane.

And Simon of the Forest, with this rich voice of mockery in his ear, plaguing him

with gibe and jest, and merry taunt, finds little comfort in polishing his head-piece, and rushes out, the only refuge that remains to him, to show by his vigour in the chase how stout a man-at-arms he would prove himself, if but the opportunity were here; and Bertram orders the household, at the great hall table, with observance as solemn and stately as though the company were knights and ladies, and himself a Seneschal of old—and Jean Bowman chafes in her heart at the quiet which is never broken, and "under instruction" though she is, longs for the free shore and dazzling sea, and would rather set her foot on the rough planks of a fishing boat, than sit on Lady Maidlin's seat, for all its velvet cushions and tarnished fringe of gold.

"I saw a feather dance in the sun, and heard a horse's tramp down the brae," cried Jean, on a bright August morning, returning

from the grassy slopes where she had driven the cows to the pasture. "Now a' the saints and our lady send it be a braw knight come to woo Lady Maidlin, and waken life in this airt! No that I would have her wed him for a' the ploys that ever was, and her ain true love in foreign pairts in trouble—but we ne'er hear a spur jingle, nor see a spear shine; and how's the lady to get up her heart if she ne'er sees a face but Mistress Isobel and Alice, and them aye learning lear?"

"Away, ye silly quean," cried archer Simon; "you a knight to woo my lady! It's weel to be seen how you ken the golden spur. It's naething better than Gilbert Hay of Staneypath, ane of the Laird of Yester's men."

But this was a personage of sufficient importance, to rouse every inhabitant of the tower to curiosity and eager interest, which

rose to all the greater pitch, when Gilbert solemnly presented a letter for the lady, and leaping down in the court-yard, eagerly took Simon's proffered cup of wine, and wiping his own forehead, proceeded to refresh his horse, intimating with solemnity that he waited to ken the lady's pleasure.

"What would ye have with the lady? Lady Maidlin ne'er puts foot in stirrup now," said the solemn Bertram; "a' her pleasure and her light heart are gane with the auld knight. Ye'll have grand cheer in the castle, Gibbie? as for us, we might as weel be buried—ne'er a blink comes to Lammerstane of either feast or fray."

"Patience, man," said Gilbert, oracularly; "Them that serve a woman have a sair time—but for a' I hear the lady has just as good a chance of a man as ony gilpie gaun."

"As good a chance! there's no her marrow atween England and the sea!" cried Jean Bowman. "Ye're brave knaves, the race of ye, to hear a paughty serving man say such a word of Lady Maidlin and never lift a hand!"

"A bauld cummer," said Gilbert, turning a side glance of cool observation upon Jean as he raised a second draught to his lip—for Gilbert was a grizzled jackman of middle age, upon whom the smiles and frowns of Jean Bowman were very ineffectual artillery, "but that doesna concern the matter. Them that kens tellt me. I wouldna say she was far, at this presents, from her bridale day."

The staid figure of Isobel, advancing to the door of the tower with singular haste, broke off the conversation at this interesting point, but only to increase the excitement of the assembled spectators, when Simon

returned to intimate that he had orders to saddle Lady Maidlin's palfrey, and that himself and Mistress Isobel, her gentlewoman, were to accompany the lady forthwith to Yester.

While Jean in great excitement and interest lent an eager hand to hasten the equipment of the lady's palfrey, Magdalen herself with considerable agitation permitted Isobel's quick and careful services to the improvement of her own toilette. The young lady seemed too much startled and annoyed herself, to be quite aware of these, but she suffered them to proceed, earnestly discussing the while the open letter which she held in her hand. This was a letter from the Lady Yester intimating that the Regent, abroad with a hunting party, had lain at her humble house the previous night, and now before he set forth again, would see the fair

ward of the crown whose fate he held in his princely hands.

"Alas, what would he have with me?" said Maidlin with a sigh, "I cannot do him service either in field or hall, and we were so well in our quiet. What know you of the Lord Governor, Isobel?—tell me."

"Indeed I know little of good complexion, lady," said Isobel, "he was once a favourer of the Gospel, and gave good promise—but them that turn back, God wot, are worse than they that never put hand to the plough. I know no harm of him in his daily life,—and if to be weak in fight and overborne in council, promises a gentle tone and a soft, verily, Lady Maidlin, this lord should please you well."

"Hush, Isobel—he is the ruler of our people," said Maidlin, 'my dear father was wont to speak of the fickle Hamiltons; I

would he were a stouter man—but, Isobel, a knight and a gentleman will not afflict a poor maiden—is it not so?"

"Men of the world think it small affliction to mate a moorland heiress with a gallant of the court," said Isobel. "If you have no harder fate, Lady Maidlin, both lord and lady will smile at your calamity."

"But I will not have it smiled at," cried Maidlin, starting from her seat, her face, which had been as white as marble, flushing of the deepest crimson. "I will not have my misery mocked and my heart belied. Nay, Isobel, nay, nay; the walls are high and the tower is strong—I will resist to the death!"

"Bethink you, lady, what is your following," said the calmer voice of Isobel. "Simon and Bertram, Simple Will, and yonder knave, Black Jack, that lives among

the steeds in your stable; and of the tenants on the hill—you would not make Michael Cranston, my old lord's henchman, nor Ralph Forrester of Meadowhead, nor Patie Hepburn of the Shaw, nor the good Dunbars —true vassals that love you well—you would not make them rebels, and lay them under the doom of treason, for keeping up you in this tower, contrair to his grace's will? Lady Maidlin, dear child—I wist you will never risk their lives and houses that would spend both for you."

Magdalen had buried her face in her hands and was weeping silently.

"Isobel, we will fly; thou shalt be the mother, and Alice and I thy true children, to labour for daily bread. I care not what cothouse or hut by the way we come to; but I will not wed for this lord's will—oh! never, Isobel, never!"

The bowerwoman bent over her youthful mistress to sooth her distress.

"Poor child! poor child!" said Isobel. "Thou hadst not known such trouble, I warrant thee, if thy heart were free. But, lady, we know not yet a word of evil omen; thou hast but to present thee to his grace—and forget not, dearest child, how God has us all in his care, and is the father of the fatherless. Lady Maidlin, they wait your pleasure without. Shall I bid them mount and be ready? Now are you your ownself once more!"

CHAPTER II.

"The year was young, so was the morrow,
And my heart rose, despite of sorrow;
For youth and hope are near of kin."

The August sun shone gaily, the winds which were seldom still among these hills, blew fresh and light in the faces of the travellers, as they set out down the rough slopes of the Lammermuirs. Long confined in her voluntary bondage, the young

heart of Magdalen Hepburn leaped to meet the sweet air and the sunshine. Her heavy thoughts lightened, her troubled mind escaped out of its forebodings. Unwillingly she gave herself up to the new and happier influence which awoke all the slumbering lights in her face, and all the native elasticity of her heart.

The long tufts of grass waved gaily from edge of rock and brow of hill. The young birch trees, clambering on the deep side of the ravine, shook their dewy branches in the sun; and here and there nestling among the slopes, a cottage with its open door, and its small spot of kailyard and green, added the kindlier charm of human neighbourhood to the enlivening influences around. It was true that Magdalen held her breath, and reined in her palfrey as they passed one humble door, where an old housewife stood upon

the threshold shading her eyes with her hand, to see the little train go by. It was the house where Paul Hepburn had been sheltered—but spite of this recollection, her pace quickened as her heart grew light, and it was at last with a little flush of girlish exhilaration that she cantered down the softening descent, and drew bridle on the level ground of East Lothian, within a stone's cast of the towers of Gifford.

And here a cloud of awe and embarrassment recalled in some degree the heaviness of her heart. Many a sickening terror this name of the Regent had forced on Magdalen. It was he whose fickle weakness had first encouraged and forwarded the Reformation, and then overpowered its professors with persecution and penalty—it was he whose known weakness, and subordination to the priests, had driven

Paul Hepburn, and all his brothers in arms, upon the false honour of France—and not least, it was he who had the power to force herself into marriage; who might, if he would, dispose of the royal ward, to the first needy gallant, whose fortunes demanded such a cure. But even had none of these reasons inspired her with repugnance and shrinking, there was enough in this hurried and unlooked-for presentation to the highest personage in the realm, to overpower with embarrassment the girlish and inexperienced Magdalen, who had never seen a greater gentleman than her father, nor a lady of higher station than the Lady Yester. And this feeling of timidity overpowered all others, as she and her slender train approached the castle. Divided between the impulse of haste to get this formidable interview over, and the impulse of fear, which bade her delay,

it was at a very uncertain pace that she reached the gate of Gifford at last.

Closely following Gilbert who now led the way, and too shy to do more than cast a hasty and troubled glance on the busy courtyard, now filled with retainers of the court, an animated crowd—falconers and huntsmen, lackeys, and men-at-arms—with noble stag-hounds in leash, and hooded hawks flapping their wings, as they perched upon the wrists of their attendants, Magdalen hasted to dismount, and had scarcely touched the threshold, when she was met by an attendant of the Lady Yester, sent to conduct her to the hall. The young lady turned a glance of dismay on Isobel, and involuntarily raised her hands to her riding hood, from which her hair escaped in a somewhat wilder fashion than she would choose it to do on entering this princely presence.

"My Lady charged me to carry you to the hall without delay," said the ancient gentlewoman, looking with no favor upon this unconscious movement. Magdalen with a trembling hand thrust the rebellious curls away, and with no comfort, save a single glance of approval from Isobel, turned hurriedly to follow her conductor to the hall.

This hall seemed of wonderful dimensions to the eyes of Magdalen. Lady Yester's little withdrawing room, and the small oratory adjoining her bed chamber, were the only rooms she had seen in the castle, and this great apartment, with its range of sculptured and stately windows, rich with the blazoned arms of the important family—the great coat of arms graven in stone above the spacious arch of the chimney—the polished and glimmering oaken floor, and the dais with its high chair and canopy—bewildered her

with their magnitude and splendour. Remnants of the morning meal were still upon the great oaken table—such wealth of silver flagons and drinking cups, strangely blended with pewter platters, and trenchers of wood, as Magdalen had never deemed to exist within sight of Lammermuir, dazzled her eyes; and it needed not the throng of people crowding the hall, and the hum of their conversation, mixed as it was with the sounds from without, and the ringing of cup and platter as the table was cleared, to complete the confused embarrassment which overpowered the young stranger. Not perfectly able to distinguish the gay pages and esquires at the lower end of the apartment, from the knights and barons who formed a group round some unseen person at the head of the table, with downcast eye and faltering step, Magdalen

passed among these gallants with timidity, starting back hastily when any crossed her path.

Her girlish shyness and her suppressed excitement made the colour come and go in rapid vicissitude upon her cheek, and she could have chosen no dress better suited to her slight elastic figure, than the close riding dress of black velvet which gave her both trouble and relief in the necessity of bearing up its long skirt, as she advanced. Straight on and perfectly unmoved by the obstacles which embarrassed Magdalen so painfully, Lady Yester's waiting gentlewoman hastened forward towards the dais. Hitherto the stranger had only been surveyed by passing glances of light and evanescent curiosity—but to see this group open, and one after another of these dark-browed men bend their scrutinizing eyes

upon her, was almost more than Magdalen could bear.

Her colour varied from a deep blush to the pallor of a sickening heart. So desolate, so forsaken, and alone, she felt as she raised one hurried half-beseeching glance towards a dignified man of middle age, seated in a great chair in the midst of this little crowd, and then half-shrinking, half-emboldened by the necessity, cast down her eyes again, and stood timidly before them, one hand drooping by her side, the other lost in the rich folds of the drapery she bore up, trembling with eagerness to be recognized by some one, yet shrinking with a sudden start when she was indeed addressed.

"The young gentlewoman, my lord, Maidlin Hepburn of Lammerstane," said the chill voice of Lady Yester; but Lady Yester

did not come to the side of the timid girl, to strengthen her for this first trial.

Magdalen had not time to draw a quick breath, when a shadow fell upon her, a step advanced, and a kind hand lifted hers. All her self-possession could not repress a little gush of tears; but they came no further than the long downcast eyelashes, where they hung unshed.

"The young lady is confused with so many strangers," said a kind voice. "Step aside hither with me, Mistress Magdalen; I must do you a guardian's part, for lack of a better. Here, my child."

And the Regent himself conducted the trembling Magdalen to the deep recess of the great window, which threw in the sunshine upon them in many a brilliant tint through the stained glass—and placing her courteously upon the cushioned window-

seat, drew forward a heavy oaken stool, and seated himself before her.

With a sudden revulsion of grateful feeling, Magdalen lifted her eyes upon the lofty personage, who treated her with so much kindness. The dignity which high rank, and the long use and wont of honour confers upon those accustomed to them from their earliest years, sate quietly here upon one whose high and narrow face promised at least no overpowering force to strengthen his dignity; a country gentleman of good repute and blameless character, father of a household, an innocent member of the commonwealth, with scarcely a greater fault than a sensitive jealousy of his name and station, this gentleman would have proved himself in any other place or name. But command had fallen unhappily on the Earl of Arran, and the very natural

harmlessness of the man made him a deadly instrument of harm to the country, vexed with his fluctuations of wavering purpose, and tortured by the advisers, who overbore his counsels by dint of noise, or violence, or numbers—for any power, of whatever description it was, even although no higher in character than mere pertinacity, was enough to sway and turn aside this infirm ruler and irresolute man.

But nothing of this occurred to the thoughts of Magdalen Hepburn, as she turned with sudden relief and gratitude to the courteous face, looking upon her with an expression of friendliness and kind attention.

The sun glittered red upon the golden medal, with its rich and heavy chain, which looped the velvet bonnet of the Regent—his dress was a buff coat, rich with embroidery; and she could see that

he was fully arrayed, and ready to set out again on his journey.

"I hear that you have but a solitary bower among your hills to hold so fair a bird," said the Regent, graciously; "and the household were needs be prudent where the ruler is so young. How many spears ride in your train, fair Mistress Maidlin? for you must even need safe keeping in this disordered country."

"Please you, my Lord, I never go abroad." said Magdalen, timidly.

"Never! nay, this is worse than I feared—are there then so many suitors for your gentle hand already?"

Faltering in her first attempt to answer, as she bent her head to conceal the deep and painful blush that overspread her face, it was with a great effort, and a slight

effusion of girlish indignation and resentment, that Magdalen answered at last;

"My Lord, I go not abroad, because I am solitary and alone. I have no mother or friend to care for me like other maidens of good, and I will not come to gaze at feast or company where I have no fitting part. Further so please you, I know nought of what your Grace would say."

"It does please me, maiden," said Arran, with a smile, "I would have thee choose no moorland mate, but wait to see what our gallants think of so sweet a lark, rising from the bent and heather. I see nought for it, but you must home to your hills now, for I must take thought where to bestow thee. Stay, here is a friend of thine may guide me in the choice. Reverend father, a word with you."

And Magdalen looking up, saw the glit-

tering eye of the sub-prior fall with contemptuous indifference, as she thought, upon herself. She was timid and afraid among all these strangers. "He is not angry at least," she said to herself with a glimmer of hope, and it comforted her heart.

"This youthful lady must not dwell among your cold hills alone," said the Regent," you knew her father. Advise me what noble dame I may place her with in the city to please the maiden best."

The priest turned upon Magdalen with a careless smile. She saw the contempt with which he regarded her before, fading into the gleam of mocking malice, with which such a man might devise a trick for the punishment of a child. "She is petulant and froward, so please your Grace," said Sub-prior Everard, "place her with my good

Lady of Falkland,—she could not be under the eye of a nobler dame."

"My Lady Falkland?—'tis a strange choice," said the Regent in some perplexity, turning again and again with native vacillation from the half sneer of the priest, to the pale and proud indignation of Magdalen's face. "What say you, Mistress Maidlin, do you approve the election?"

"I leave me in your Grace's hands," said Magdalen, firmly, "I know not this nor any other lady; and I pray God pardon any who wish evil towards a solitary maiden, for whom no man will draw sword. I leave me in your Grace's hands."

But Magdalen could have done nothing which would more bewilder his Grace, or throw her cause more hopelessly into the hands of him who had the last word. The Regent rose with the cloud of hesitation

still upon his face. His horses stood at the gate—his attendants waited his pleasure.

"Farewell, fair lady. Ere long, we will bid you welcome to Holyrood," said the Governor of Scotland; and it seemed to Magdalen that in another moment the hall was vacant of all but the servants, who ran about in confusion, clearing the table and restoring the usual order of the apartment.

Lady Yester had gone to the door with her illustrious guests, and Magdalen sat alone in the recess of the great window, weary and exhausted, as with some piece of strenuous labour, and fain to hide the tears that would burst from her eyes, within the slender fingers which scarce could keep the torrent in.

Not a milking maid of all these hills but had some father or mother, cousin or kins-

folk, to serve her at need. Only she, poor maiden, on her sad elevation of dreary rank and small nobility, was uncared for and alone.

CHAPTER III.

"A noble Duke in nature as in name."

TWELFTH NIGHT.

IT was with many troubled thoughts that Magdalen turned homewards. Isobel had waited anxiously in the lady's apartments, while Magdalen proved her fate in the hall; and though she did not question her young mistress, her solicitude was sufficiently evident; but they were clear of the castle and the village, and again ascending their own

hills before the young lady of Lammerstane ventured to break the silence.

"I am to be placed with some noble lady in Edinburgh, Isobel," said Magdalen, with a deep sigh; "so says his Grace."

"Dear lady, was he gentle with thee?" said Isobel eagerly.

"As though he had been my own nearest kinsman," answered Magdalen with gratitude. "Surely they do him wrong who say evil of him, Isobel. He has a lofty presence, worthy of his blood; for he is nearest to the throne, after our Lady Mary, ye know. Lady Yester knows me of old, and has had service from our house, but her tone was cold, and her bearing proud, beside the Regent's courtesy. I warrant me he has daughters, Isobel, and loves them well."

"I thank Heaven you found him kind, Lady Maidlin," said Isobel; "but they say

he is weak of purpose. Where will he place thee, dear child?"

Magdalen's face grew darker—"Out of his grace, because he would be good to me, he called on the sub-prior, Isobel, who was in presence. The sub-prior wishes me no good—I know it by his glance; and when my Lord Governor asked his counsel, he named a lady's name. Certain it was of no kind purpose—he called her the Lady Falkland."

"The Lady Falkland! I have heard of that name," said Isobel—"one who is altogether devoted to the priests and to Antichrist."

"I did even fear so," said Magdalen; "but I committed me, Isobel, to his Grace's hands."

"Poor child! poor child!" said Isobel, sadly; "it will go hard with thee, if thou forsake not the faith."

"You think me light and fickle—a lover of vanities," cried Magdalen, with a sudden burst of weeping indignation—"you think me an unlearned child, who prizes not the truth; but hear you, Isobel—I will never forsake the faith—never—if I should light the faggots with mine own hand! God wot, it may please Him try me even to the death; but I would rather this moment the earth devoured me, and the hills closed upon my grave, than fail from the blessed Evangele which I do hold in humble faith! Nay, nay; you may see poor Maidlin perish, Isobel, but you shall never see her live unfaithful and perjured—I vow to you—never!"

"Dearest child, I doubt you not," said Isobel, soothingly; "but see how the household waits for thee, sweet lady. Nay, let them see no evil omen. Smile for thy followers' sake."

It was hard to subdue at once her forebodings for the future and the strong excitement of the present hour, but Magdalen's heart lightened involuntarily at sight of the anxious and interested faces which waited her return. The heavy door in the wall of the court-yard was open, and on the threshold stood old Bertram, in his suit of state. The humbler servitors of the household, Black Jack and another horse boy, in such bravery of apparel as they could muster, and armed with rusty weapons from the hall, stood behind the steward —further on, in her best kirtle, her rich black hair carefully snooded and shining in the sun, stood Jean Bowman, with Lilias, her less ambitious coadjutor, a brown but comely maiden of the moors—and little Alice stood in the high doorway of the Tower, looking down upon them all. The tears

came to Magdalen's eyes, and a strange pang of mingled pain and pleasure struck to her heart. Desolate and solitary as this poor dwelling was, bereaved of its head, and with none but retainers within, it was still home.

And with mingled terror, hope, and expectation, Magdalen climbed to the bartizan in the early morning, and in the falling twilight, to look abroad over the fair country lying at her feet—the heathery slopes of the hills, and the distant glimmer of the sea. It was true, that in reality she feared this threatened peril; yet with the impatient temerity of youth, she almost longed to prove its unknown dangers, and essay her inexperienced strength against the trials and temptations, which, vague and distant, had a certain fascination in them. Many a long hour now this dreaming girl gave up to visions of the brilliant companies of Edin-

burgh, of assaults made upon her own faith and convictions, and of the sufferings and the constancy with which, her heart beat high to think, she would defend the same; and many a day did Magdalen chafe within herself to think of the crowd of humble "professors," who sealed their devotion with pain and death, while she dwelt slothfully in her solitary fortress, without a word of testimony to the everlasting verity which she held in her heart.

Were these strange musings for the maiden of seventeen simple years? The time was a strange and unparalleled time.

Meanwhile Alice trembled on another score. The soul of the young recluse shrank with horror from the pomps and vanities which it would be impossible, in the metropolis and court, to close her eyes upon, and shrank, alas, with greater guiltiness and trouble still, from

the secret consciousness which told her, that these same blue eyes would brighten and sparkle in spite of themselves, and in spite of ever so many showers of penitential tears, to look upon the renounced and hated glories of a wicked world.

And Isobel's heart was heavy with a graver foresight, knowing the real troubles which awaited these two girlish dreamers, her lady and her child. The forced unwilling marriage which Magdalen no longer thought of, or thought of only with a flush of angry determination never to yield to such, was present to Isobel, a real and certain trial, sure to come, let the young lady protest as she would; and for her own enthusiast—stakes had been raised, and faggots piled already for lives as innocent. Guarded and firm as she was herself, she feared that even she might be constrained in what she gravely thought of

as an idolatrous household, to risk the uttermost penalties of the law, by profession of her faith; and what then might hap to Alice, so scrupulous of conscience, so strict in doctrine? The mother, almost equally attached to the two, could only commit them with many a strong appeal and cry of agony to the care of God.

Jean Bowman's catechisings went on briskly, and throve but indifferent well. True, her acute mind seized upon the unencumbered truth when it came clearly to her eyes; true, her sensitive heart melted into tears and admiration when she was permitted to hear the reading of the Gospel, to which she listened with the intense and vivid interest with which this wonderful story must always be received by those who hear it for the first time. But though Jean wept over the weeping sisters of Lazarus,

and listened with awe and trembling to the solemn miracle which turned their sorrow into joy, it was hard to restrain her vehement seconding of the revengeful petition of John and James, or her indignant "Fie upon them," when she heard of the disciples flight. That the Peter of the denial, whom she repudiated with fierce indignation, was the "Holy Sanct Peter," upon whom the Church was to be built, Jean would not believe—and the cry of joy and triumph with which she burst forth amid her tears, when Alice read of the angel at the empty tomb, of the grave-cloths laid aside, and the Lord risen, startled the reader into alarm and horror. But it was not to be amended—and Jean followed all this solemn and divine story with the natural emotions of an untutored heart, flashing into exultation, melting into tenderness, crying aloud these irrestrainable

and weeping benisons upon Him whose every act was mercy, and scarcely refraining the shout of human delight with which she would fain have hailed the glorious deeds that confounded his adversaries. But Jean's demeanour did not at all satisfy the requirements of Alice—for Jean, after all was done, was slow to relinquish her scarlet ribbons, and very slow to condemn and renounce the delight of brave sights, and minstrelsie—the conversion thus far was very incomplete.

And so another winter passed upon the Tower of Lammerstane; the world forgot the little household, and left it in peace.

CHAPTER IV.

"Oh world unknown!—oh heart untaught!—I warrant me thou art eager-sick, for all thy fear. Swift goes the steed to the battle that comes from thence full faint—if he comes at all."

OLD PLAY.

IT is again a day of spring, fresh and sweet; and the gates of Lammerstane are opened wide, and a little party slowly mount the waiting horses, and, with many farewells and some tears, take their way down the hill. Jean Bowman, divided between grief for their

departure, and unselfish rejoicing in all the gaiety and pleasure to which, as she expects, Lady Maidlin is going, stands waving a kerchief and clapping her hands, while the tears drop heavily upon her bare arms; and many a parting look and farewell signal the travellers cast behind them, from Lady Maidlin herself, foremost on her palfrey, to Simon of Ettrick, who goes sturdily and sadly behind. Poor Simon knows not what chance may befal before his eye lights again upon that tantalizing smile, or his ear is disturbed with that merry voice, so full of provocation, which have together done but too certain execution upon the verser and bowman of the forest; nor does he dare to appropriate to himself so much as one of those tears which, broken by the gleam of many an uncertain smile, and denied by the tongue which rings out so many encouragements and messages of good cheer,

fall from Jean's eyes. Balked in the tender leave-taking he purposed, by a sudden shaft of wit broken upon him when he least expected it, archer Simon rides on half-sulky, half-defiant, but with a wonderful relenting at his heart, in spite of all the hard usage which drives him almost to despair; and he bans her for "a pure torture, fit to see a man die before her e'en, and laugh the while," in the same moment and with the same breath as he vows, "there's no a bonnier or a braver in Scotland, be the ither wha she may."

And Alice draws her silken muffler over her face, and weeps such a flood of innocent tears as no self-command can restrain; but all the while has a simple flutter of expectation at her heart; and her mother rides gravely behind her lady with heavy thoughts and a troubled brow; and Lady Maidlin, dashing the tear from her cheek with some

impatience, and with a flash of brave but agitated resolve in her eye, touches her palfrey with her riding whip, and quickens her pace, as though to keep better measure to her impetuous heart. They are bound for Edinburgh, at the command of the Regent; setting out from their undisturbed and quiet home, to enter the wild precincts of the world, and it would be strange, if youthful agitation, fear and hope, wonder and curiosity, did not quicken heart and pulse of these young hermits, to whom the world is an unknown thing.

They were to travel from Gifford under the escort of Lady Yester, who was also bound for the Court. Her ladyship would get to horse immediately, and did but wait for Mistress Magdalen's arrival, they were told; and Magdalen, feeling somewhat chilled and repulsed by this message, waited with her

little train at the castle gate, till Lady Yester rode forth, surrounded by her women, and with page and gentleman usher in attendance. A small body of men-at-arms waited already without to be their escort. Magdalen, saluted formally by the Lady, innocently pressed her palfrey to her side, but Lady Yester addressed herself exclusively to her attendant gentlewoman, and Magdalen, much embarrassed and cast down, gradually fell back upon her own little company, which had not amalgamated with the band.

Riding thus, at a very sober and moderate pace, and pausing to dine midway with another noble dame equal in rank and stateliness to the Lady Yester herself, to whom Magdalen was presented with the most cursory mention, and at whose table she sat with a painful consciousness of intruding, amid conversation of things and persons she was

quite ignorant of, and without being noticed by any one, it was a great relief at last to hear that they were approaching Edinburgh just as the twilight began to fall. Fatigued with the long unusual journey, and disconcerted by the crowd which thronged the High Gait of Edinburgh, Magdalen was glad to draw her muffler closer, despite the interest which this most novel and animated scene awoke in her mind, and to content herself with a stolen glance from the edge of her screen as they descended the narrow Canongate. The haze of the spring sun-set hung richly about the dark houses, the softened air rounded the sounds and voices of the crowd, and Magdalen Hepburn slowly moved downward, lulled by the monotonous pacing of her wearied palfrey, by the passing glimpse of scenes so strange and unusual, and by the hum of sound around her, till the keenness of

reality almost merged in the softened outlines of a dream.

But just then the leader of the party halted. They were opposite one of the dark black narrow passages, which piercing into a block of building as if forced by a wedge thrust through, had many a story of strong masonry resting on its vaulted roof, and was jostled on either side by the line of jealous building which frowned on this attempt to penetrate their depths. Here, however, Lady Yester's Master of the Household alighting from his horse, prepared to enter, and Magdalen perceived by the somewhat impatient signal which Lady Yester made to herself that here she must follow. Thus suddenly aroused, she advanced to her stately fellow traveller, not without reluctance, to receive her formal farewell, and then dismounting waited only long enough to see Isobel and Alice by her

side, before she followed the retainer of Gifford. Passing through the dark entrance they came to a little quadrangle behind, buried in the great depths of those black and many-windowed walls; sculptured heraldic emblems, and a coat of arms which Magdalen was not acquainted with, decorated that side of the square to which they turned. The great door was open, showing a couple of men servants in a sombre and faded livery, playing at some antiquated game. To one of these, Magdalen's conductor called in a tone of authority, and bade him let the Lady Falkland know, that Mistress Maidlin Hepburn, recommended to her care by his Highness the Regent, waited at the door.

The man left his game with grumbling reluctance, but before he reached the door of this outer hall, was crossed by a friar coming out. With a thrill of conflicting feelings,

half-terror—half-defiance, the little group of women at the door saw the deep and startled obeisance with which the lackey saluted the monk. Rapid and careless, the priest's benedicite was not accompanied by so much as a glance at the individual whom he blessed. A far more keen and searching look he cast at themselves as they stood without in the twilight, but they were all muffled in the silken veils common to the time, and he passed on without a question.

In a few minutes more Magdalen was ushered into the presence of the Lady Falkland. She was seated at one end of a large and magnificent room, near the fireplace, where a great log, thoroughly consumed, but retaining its perfect shape, lay a mass of glowing red upon the hearth. A small silver lamp upon a little table beside her threw a strange light upon the dress and person,

sparkling with jewels, of Magdalen's unknown guardian. As the young lady advanced timidly through the large dim room, she saw a figure of middle size rise slowly from the low chair, and wait her approach. The Lady Falkland was more than three score. Her thin features had once been delicate—they were now pinched and decayed—and the snowy hair upon her forehead, and the perfectly pallid and colourless complexion of her face, contrasted strangely with the splendid dress, looped and festooned with jewels, which inclosed her meagre person. Her eyes were cold and grayish blue, her lips were thin, and her features contracted, as if old age had come like a positive bodily chill upon her. Her close coif of black velvet, and a ghost-like wimple, closely wrapping her throat and chin, made her appearance still more remarkable, and Magdalen could not repress a

trembling sensation akin to fear as she thought of this weird enchantress head, placed upon a form, which, for the elaborate splendour of its apparel, might have graced the gayest court in Christendom.

"You are welcome, maiden," said Lady Falkland; "I know not, indeed, why my lord Governor should send you hither to me, but I have been mother of the maidens in a gay court 'ere now. These things are vanities. In this house I warn you, young mistress, you will hear but prayers and psalms—which are poor music, as I know, to the ears of such as love the world."

"But not to me, madam," said Magdalen, eagerly. "I pray you believe, not to me."

"Be it so—but ye undertake full soon," said the lady. "I hear ye travelled with the Lady Yester—are you known to her?"

"Please you she hath known me from a child," said Magdalen, humbly.

"A vain and idle dame," said the Lady Falkland, "and she comes to shine at court, I warrant, with never a feature will brook a second glance, or a woman in all her train can busk a tire aright; I tell you, child, these are weary vanities. Undo your riding hood that I may perceive what favour you are of."

With a blushing cheek and faltering hand, Magdalen loosed her hood—a curl or two of rich brown hair escaped as she uncovered her head; her new acquaintance lifted the lamp from the table, to bring it full upon her, and surveyed her with a scrutinizing eye.

"I will speak with your woman, myself," she said, abruptly; "child, it is the hour of vespers. I desire you attend me to my chapel. Here, you shall carry my breviary, and I will

see if you brag lightly of your devotion. The lights are here."

As the old lady spoke, two serving men of the household appeared at the door carrying candles in heavy silver candlesticks. Bewildered and timid, afraid to comply, and too shy to resist, Magdalen slowly followed Lady Falkland, carrying the missal in its velvet cover and gold clasp. Compliances which a Protestant would think no harm of now, were sinful then, involving as they did the falsehood and dissimulation of outward consent to what the mind and judgment rejected.

Trembling and reluctant, Magdalen entered the dim chapel of this great mansion. It was lighted only by the candles on the altar, and the rich window behind glimmered in pearly and delicate tints more beautiful than in the full noonday, with Scripture stories limned in its ancient glass. From the other

windows of the chapel the soft gloom of the twilight stole into the deep cold area. Magdalen could see a number of servants already assembled, and only glad to find that her own were not there, she took the place the lady pointed to her beside herself, and with a trembling heart, and many a secret prayer for pardon, gave an outward acquiescence to the forms of the evening worship. The guilt which she felt depressed her bitterly—was this then the first proof of her earnest adherence to the purer faith?—and her fatigue added to her despondency. But the sadness of her face, and her devout attitude were enough for the Lady Falkland, and Magdalen was grateful to be dismissed to her own apartment without further question, when the vesper service was completed. The rooms allotted to her were but two—a larger and a smaller bed-chamber—one for her

women, the other for herself; and in the larger apartment she found Isobel and Alice preparing for her comfort. Magdalen appeared before them with a contrite and humbled face.

"Dear lady, look not so sad; it is lawful to conform somewhat," said the elder and more tolerant attendant. "Lady Maidlin, be not angry that I speak to Alice as to thyself. Dearest children, we are here among enemies—and what we may without guilt of conscience, I pray you for you young life's sake, endeavour with a humble heart to do."

At this appeal, Magdalen, who felt herself guilty, knelt down by Isobel's side, and, leaning upon her lap, burst into tears; but Alice, who was innocent, raised her young upright head only the firmer, and looked full, with a half-warning, half-condemning look in her mother's face.

"At vesper and matins, they do but praise God," said Isobel through her tears, appealing to her child, while with tender hands she caressed her lady's drooping head. "Nay, I say not, but even there, is idolatry; but, dearest ones, it may be permitted you to drown the sound of the 'Ave Mary' with your own heart prayers. Nay, heaven pardon me if I counsel amiss; but God knoweth it is hard to think you in peril of your lives, so lovesome and so young!"

But the words on Alice's lips were checked by the sudden entrance of a servant with provision for their evening meal. They were all exhausted by the journey, and even Alice was fain, without further discussion, to betake her to her rest.

CHAPTER V.

"Now afore God this reverend holy friar—
All our whole city is much bound to him."

ROMEO AND JULIET.

"This, father? this is a young maiden commended to my care by his Grace. Something mean in her apparel, you will perceive, but of good blood—and seemeth to me devout for her years, though her women are evil disposed by reason of the journey, and may not descend to the chapel—but the child, I doubt not, will do well. Thou shalt read to me anon out of the

holy life of St. Winifred, Mistress Maidlin. In the meanwhile get thee to the window, and look out upon the town—and now, father, what news have you to bestow upon us?"

"Of the church, or of the world, Lady?" said the priest.

"Our Lady help us! thou wouldest not have me tempted to ask of profane tumults and vain shows, before holy counsels and deeds of mercy?" said Lady Falkland; "yet these loud knaves brawl without, so that we may not lose the sound of their racket night nor day; my father, what make they in the world?"

A smile of half-amused perception passed over the priest's face; it was clear that he at least understood the character of his penitent.

"The old rugging and riving between France and England, all for favour of our bonnie queen," said Father Jerome. "His

Grace, the Governor, like an apple in a new year's tankard—now above the tide, now below, bobbing hither and thither as he may, and in no small wise affrayed for talk of the Queen Mother having the Regency. I marvel the good man will have the trouble of such an office; it fits him not, and but for his right of heirship, I warrant me he had rather see the fair demesnes of the Hamiltons than the Canongate of Edinburgh from his palace windows; but his royal blood is the good Earl's nightmare—he ceases not to quake lest some one dispute his next succession to the crown."

"They are a race of renown," said Lady Falkland, "but I heard not they were ever famous for manhood. I remember this lord's mother—I would not reach an old age like to her, in her plain wrapping gown and toy with fur—nay, not for all the fair acres of Lothian and Fife."

A slight and evanescent smile passed again over the priest's face. "The heretic, Patrick of this name, whom our lord, the Cardinal of blessed memory—holy be his rest! did to death for holy Church's sake, is reckoned of the Governor's blood." Father Jerome continued, "but this recks little, seeing the most pious and faithful primate is of the same, and nearer in degree; but I count not greatly on the truth of the Hamiltons. Another notable piece of news is abroad. That crew of parricides, the slayers of the Cardinal, have some escaped out of the coasts of France. 'Tis said, the French King, being sure of his son's betrothment, cares no more to do pleasure to the godly in this land, and that by slack ward and careless keeping, more of these murderers escape every day."

"Is it so?" cried Lady Falkland, eagerly, "that grim dame, the Lady of Rothes will have her son again. Who are they, father?"

"Even the same Master, and more of his heretic name," said Father Jerome. "The Laird of Pitmillie, as I hear—the younger of these knaves of Grange—and a gentleman of the Hepburn blood—besides others that are escaping day by day."

"I warrant them bide no longer than they may, and sooth I reproach them not," said Lady Falkland, "though there be fair fashions and a gay court in France, for them that reck of such vanities. Said you a Hepburn, father? my young maiden is of that blood. Mistress Maidlin, I trust you have no kindred among those who slew the Cardinal."

"No, madam." Magdalen's cheek was flushed and heated, her heart beating high with subdued agitation; but she turned from the window, with almost abrupt firmness to answer.

"I do not say this gallant was at the

deed," said the priest; "many there were who took its guilt upon them by flight to these accursed walls; but Hepburn or no Hepburn, these have escaped, and more are like to follow if I hear aright, to plague again this troubled land. So, lady, but for a few feuds over hotly followed, and brawls on the common gait—are all the tidings I bring you of the world."

"The saints and our Lady be praised," said Lady Falkland, with great profession of content, but no great satisfaction in her countenance. "Now, good father, for news of holy Church and all her righteous ways."

Another class of gossip, wherein abbots, priors, bishops, and even no less a person than the Primate of Scotland, came in for their share of scandal, began now between the Lady Falkland and her father confessor. Magdalen, whose heart had been startled into

wild and sudden anxiety by the previous conversation, followed this for a little time with disgust and secret shame, till she was glad to turn again towards the half-opened window, and divert her attention from the ludicrous stories of the witty father Jerome, and the comments of his companion, by paying close and sedulous attention to the matters going on at present in the street below.

Close in the neighbourhood of these noble houses, there still intervened here and there a tradesman's booth, thrusting out its gay collection of wares to tempt the passing eye; and not all the stores of travelling Wat, his pearlins, his embroideries, his mufflers, and couvrechefs, could equal the dazzling display of one well laden oaken counter, upon which Magdalen looked down. This gay booth had attracted her eye, when she first came to the

window, but now its charms failed to divert the anxious gaze, which sought about among the passengers on the way, as it never had done before. Gallants with bonnets slouched upon their brow, and cloaks wrapped round and concealing the lower part of the face, were not unusual even in the daylight streets; and when one approached of a loftier carriage than usual, Magdalen's anxious eyes pursued him with a close and nervous scrutiny, not much to her own credit, if the interpretation of yonder sober city dame, with her blue coat serving-man behind her, had any value.

Sometimes she almost thought she could detect the stately step of Paul Hepburn, among the shuffle of passing footsteps, and see his lofty figure gliding far away among the thickest of the crowd; and some strange echo in Magdalen's mind seemed to change and to repeat these words of startling infor-

mation — "Escaped! come back into this troubled land."

The young lady would have been fain to escape to her own apartment, till her first agitation was calmed, but she dared not indulge her wish; and the scene without floated before Magdalen's eyes, even as the conversation within fell like mere sound unmeaning and inarticulate upon her dizzy brain.

Her attention was roused at last by a little stir in the street. A procession was about to pass with its usual accompaniments—cross-bearers, friars, black and grey, and in the midst, carried high, a little figure of St. Giles, the patron saint of the royal city. Trained as she had been in earnest but secret opposition to all these "idolatrous rites," as they were boldly called by the Reformers, but prevented in a great degree by her entire

isolation among her hills, during the last few years of her young life from seeing any exhibition of the kind, Magdalen was roused to immediate interest. The careless groups in the street, the slight and equivocal tokens of respect, rendered still more conspicuous by the rapt devotion here and there of some enthusiastic Catholic among the crowd, sufficiently proclaimed the relaxed and feeble hold which these superstitions had upon the public mind. A little knot of bystanders under Magdalen's window gave her still further assurance of the fact.

"I'll doff no bonnet for such a plea," said one man. "The Sanct maun e'en have a long arm to crack the crown of every native townsman that uncovers not, when it pleases him to pass."

"It is but little St. Geilie," said another, contemptuously. "By my faith, I'll tarry

for his father 'ere I do my reverence. Give them size enow, if ye give them nought mair. They're scrimpit with their sancthood, the holy gray freers. I'll bow to great St. Geil, and nane but he."

Father Jerome had seen the passing train from where he stood, and Lady Falkland rushed to the window. By this time the priest and his penitent were deep in one of the discussions of the time—a very extraordinary one to modern ears.

"The chapter of St. Andrew's decides not the question," said Father Jerome. "Marry, the sub-prior's Thome hath decided it after a manner that gives the multitude great content. 'To whom shall we say the Paternoster?' was one so rash as ask the fellow. 'To God only,' saith Thome. 'What, would the saints have all? Give them Aves and Credos enow, and let them be content.'"

"And what say you, father?" said Lady Falkland, with some anxiety.

"Nay, lady, I set not my poor judgment in contest with the Church," said the priest; "yet truly I hold the Paternoster to be primarily addressed to God, even as the knave said; but that we may be permitted likewise to address the holy saints thus, as I will show you. Primus, a reverent person we call Father being in this world; secundus, we do know the holy saints to be in heaven; wherefore our Father who art in heaven is but lawful; then I trow it is God's will their names be hallowed and their will be done, seeing their will is his will; and thus forward I see nought in these petitions may not be said to any holy person in the calendar, though first and principal to God."

"Mistress Maidlin, I pray you note the good father's words," said Lady Falkland,

" these heretics wot not of the blessings of authority; hear you, child—your wits wander. To whom must you say your paternoster?"

" Madam, to God alone," said Magdalen.

" Nay, the poor child! her mind hath been astray after these gay stuffs in yonder booth, while your reverence spoke—but thou art in good hands, maiden, fear not. Father Jerome will give a heedful eye to thy instruction. And now—must you needs go, father?—take the book, Mistress Maidlin, and let me hear thee read."

But Magdalen's patience was not long tried with the wonders of St. Winifred and her miraculous well—for Lady Falkland loved better to hear her own voice than any other, and a long and somewhat hazardous cross-examination followed, which Magdalen succeeded in evading by the briefest answers. Then more fatigued than with a day's labour, she

escaped to her own apartment and her sympathetic attendants, to wonder again with many a wistful fancy where was Paul Hepburn, a fugitive once more.

CHAPTER VI.

"Come, sing to me—
I am faint, and sick at heart."

OLD PLAY.

DESPOTIC as her intrusive and curious disposition made her, Lady Falkland had no choice but to be very tolerant of the royal ward, the special *protégé* of the Regent; and Magdalen's private apartments, were so far left to herself and her women, that they could at least calculate with some accuracy when a

domiciliary visitation might be apprehended, and could prepare for it accordingly. But Magdalen's windows looked forth upon no better prospect than the little square court-yard of Falkland lodging, and these close pressing walls seemed to crush the very day-light from eyes accustomed to look out upon the wide solitudes of the Lammermuirs, the boundless sky and expanse of free air where no restriction was; solitary at home, there yet was all the household, familiar and long acquainted, making a small community, separate and self-sufficing; but here there was no solemn Bertram to smile at, no frank Simon to commend or blame, no Jean Bowman —but only strange retainers of another great house, to whom the praise or reproof of Lady Maidlin was not worth so much as a glance of their own ancient and sovereign lady; and without a single friend to brighten their

solitude, their life was sombre enough. Like a beleaguered city, they kept their narrow bounds with constant watch and ward, drawing closer to each other in their semi-captivity; and Isobel was kept alert in perpetual trembling and insecurity, and Magdalen, half amused, and half respectful, had no small share of occupation too, in soothing the scrupulous Alice, whose righteous soul was vexed within her by the occasional conformity which they all gave to the religious rites of the household, and the silence they were compelled to keep concerning their own. This, and the longing wonder of Magdalen over her kinsman's fate, the scraps of intelligence concerning the exiles which she could glean from Lady Falkland and her confessor, or the larger amount of gossip which Isobel heard among the servants on the same subject, filled all their thoughts and all their discussions;

though Magdalen scarcely ventured to mention her individual anxiety, but wondered with an innocent artifice which concealed nothing, how they *all* fared—where Mr. John was, and how it had happed with the brave Laird of Grange—but kept all her longing unanswered questions of Paul Hepburn in her own heart.

"My Lord Governor passed even now with a great train," said Isobel. "I marvel, Lady Maidlin, when you were called hither for his pleasure, that he seeks you not to the presence—for in king's courts there must ever be show of mirth and gay companie—whatever great care is on hand."

"I thank his grace," said Magdalen, with slight displeasure and some dignity; "the marvel is he counted it worthy a prince's pains to bring us out of poor Lammerstane, Isobel, where we were well and free, and

recked of no man's pleasure,—I would indeed we were but home once more."

Magdalen looked up wistfully at the little square of sky set in the heavy window frame, and sighed. Such a thing might chance as that a wandering exile should climb the solitary moorland path—but the heretic with a price upon his head might not venture here.

"Alack for a frail heart!" said Isobel, "I hear the Governor would fain succour my lords that are delivered out of France, and bring them gladly home—but will not dare for fear of the primate and the priests; but, madam, in all these rumours hear you nothing of your noble kinsman?"

Magdalen looked up hastily, with a quiver on the lip, which said a hurried "No." Then casting down her eyes again, waited in silence, with quickened breath, ashamed to ask, but most eager to hear.

"The steward would talk with me of the Reformed if I might trust him," said Isobel, "truth to tell, the good word has gone far and wide, and many love it in secret—but I heard from him, there was so great freedom of the faith in England, that many a godly professor hath succour there—and chief the gentlemen of St. Andrews. But, Lady Maidlin, there was word of one who had no heart to be secure; they say to me, none hath higher favour with the English nobles—but to tarry in great houses has less pleasure for him than sore travail and weariness for his own land and the truth; and they say he has been seen hither and thither throughout all the Border, and it thought he knows of many a secret of state, and has many a great mission in his hands—and that cottage or palace are even all as one to the Laird of Langley, wherever he hath an errand to speed."

"Now I pray heaven he have not ventured here!" cried Magdalen, pale with fright and eagerness, as she started from her chair.

"Nay, lady," said Isobel, with a look of surprise which called the blood into Magdalen's cheek in a tingling rush of pain, "I know not, indeed, what mission there could be to peril life for here."

"I but thought he was too bold," said Magdalen, in her lowest tones, instantly abashed and subdued; and her attendant, looking up, saw the young lady drop into her great chair so wearily, and with such a long sigh of disappointment, that Isobel's heart smote her for the vain expectation her words had caused.

"Dear lady, methought these were good tidings," said Isobel anxiously.

"Nay, you must not think I hold them aught but good!"—the tears rushed to Magda-

len's eyes, but by a great effort she kept them down; "I had rather be of kin to such a one, than to the greatest prince in Christendom,—but, see you, I have done naught all this morning, and Lady Falkland will be here anon; and Alice sits as silent-sad as if we did conspire to make her sin. Pray you, Isobel, sing one of your ballads to Alice and me."

And Magdalen put back her hair hastily from her forehead, and bent her flushed face over her embroidery. "Nay, mother, for Lady Maidlin, if you will—but think not of me,"—said the protesting Alice. Magdalen neither heard her, nor heeded—but glad of the silence, and glad of the occupation which she nervously resumed, once more threw back with a slight gesture of impatience the hair which had escaped from its braid, and laboured with vehement speed at her embroidery. Her heart throbbed loudly, and her fingers

trembled. She thought by this process to still them both.

And Isobel, whom long use had accustomed to all these swift and changeful impulses which her own nature never knew—and whose heart of deep love, and conscience of punctilious respect, rendered such service to her Lady Maidlin, as many a princess might have envied—with Alice sitting by in disapproving silence the while—Isobel looked with tender sympathy on her young charge and mistress, and, scarcely pausing in her own grave labours, began to sing—

Her kin were poor, and my lord was fain,
How mot the maiden strive,
In the frays of the March her love was slain,
She had no help alive.—
The light died in her e'en, and gloom
Came mirk on her sweet brows,
And wae was her heart for the gowden broom,
That blooms on the Cowdenknowes.

Oh had my lord but set his heart
Upon a noble bride,
Nor ever ta'en this Southland airt,
Nor come to Leader side!
Alack the day when brides weep sore
To speak the holy vows—
Alack her heart for evermore
Sighs sad for Cowdenknowes.

"Oh I was young and I was fain,"
She sings intill her bower,
"But my love came never hame again—
And I came to this hour.
Oh for the broom, the bonnie broom,
The broom of the Cowdenknowes;
I wish I was at hame again
Milking my daddie's yowes!"

"I had nae thought of high degree,
Nor great estate, nor fame,
Oh had my lord ne'er looked on me!
Then had I died at hame.
Oh waes my heart for the sweet broom
That blooms on Cowdenknowes,
I wish I was at hame again
Milking my daddie's yowes!"

"Oh sighing sore for home and rest,
Makes summer days full lang,
Her heart died in her weary breast,
And aye she made her sang.

"Ever alace for the broom, the broom
The broom of the Cowdenknowes!
I wot I will never win hame again,
To milk my daddie's yowes!"

"Poor heart!" Magdalen was glad that she might venture now to wipe some tears from her cheek. "I think if it were even so with me, not all the walls of Edinburgh would hold me, Isobel; I would fly, or I would die."

"Walls are strong, Lady Maidlin," said Isobel, sadly, "yet many a captive escapes therefrom; but stronger is God's law, and right, and the duties of woman and man—ye may never break through these, if your heart break day by day."

And with a glance of fear Magdalen looked up. "Isobel, Isobel, think you indeed we shall never win home?"

CHAPTER VII.

"This night I hold an old accustomed feast."

ROMEO AND JULIET.

"DEAR child, you will bear you as your own judgment tells," said the anxious Isobel, "albeit you know not the fashion of a court, it is not in your choice, Lady Maidlin, to be other than a noble gentlewoman, youthful though you be; I would I even were as sure that nought befel to pain your heart."

Alice stood looking on with sorrowful disapprobation. For several days now poor Alice had unwillingly followed her mother to matins and even-song, but though she found it possible with much self-condemnation to follow her private devotions in the face of many an ave, it was not in her power to look on with any semblance of satisfaction, while her young mistress was arrayed for her first introduction to the world. The careful Isobel smoothed down the folds of Magdalen's rich brocaded dress, and touched into perfection the clear points of her ruff, with a most loving and solicitous hand, as anxious that her lady should appear well among the courtly assemblage to which she was bound, as that she should suffer no pain from anything she met with there; but Alice, shocked by this anxiety, and greatly distressed with the very evident expectation of Magdalen, stood a little apart,

ready to weep at the slightest provocation, and greatly troubled in mind and conscience for her lady's sake.

"Do not wait for me, Isobel—go to your rest, I pray you," said Magdalen.

"Nay, I cannot sleep till I see you safe returned," said Isobel, "go forth, dear child, and think in yonder lonesome grandeur that there are who pray for you perpetually. No one will offer you aught but kindness—think it not—and it contents me to see a bearing and a countenance that do honour to your race."

Lady Falkland's call for Magdalen stayed the words of remonstrance with which Alice was about to enter her caveat against her mother's compliments, and Magdalen went hastily away to join her ancient guardian and chaperone. It was almost impossible for Lady Falkland's dress to be richer than it was on

the first and several other occasions when Magdalen had seen her in her own apartments after her elaborate toilet was completed, but she had made an effort to-night—her whole person was in a restless glitter of light, quivering rays of gems glancing out from the heavy velvet drapery of her dress, looping up the folds at one place, buttoning the robe at another, and adorning every point where such decorations were possible. Magdalen, who had not a jewel in her possession, save a ring of her mother's which she wore on her finger, and a necklace of pearls which was on her neck, looked with wonder and admiration at the singular wealth of her companion's ornaments. Lady Falkland was pleased; she called her young ward's attention to this ruby and that diamond, with many an anecdote and scrap of history belonging to one and the other, from which Magdalen learned that this

was Lady Falkland's peculiar avarice, and that she even cast wistful and covetous looks upon the simple string of pearls, the sole ornament of her charge.

But Lady Falkland was in a high flutter of spirits and as full of excitement as a country belle; she had been for some time tacitly excluded from the stately revels of the court, and this return was a delight which she could not too much exult over. Magdalen's interest and expectation, and awe of the coming greatness were so intense as to make her cheek pale, and her brow more grave; her whole mind was absorbed in the scene that lay before her—but Lady Falkland's joy and self-gratulation were more visible. They changed places in appearance—and the old lady for her flush of high spirits and pleasure, might have been the country girl bound for her first glimpse of this unknown splendour, while the

quiet bearing of Magdalen could be easily mistaken for the passionless calm of experience knowing this pageant well, and how little of reality was there.

But the brilliant halls of Holyrood burst upon Magdalen like a vision of enchantment; those deep windows, where the soft moonlight of July stole in with timid gleam, to light upon fair ladies and noble gallants, the highest in Scotland—those elevated seats at the upper end of the hall wherein the noble presence of Arran and of his high-born countess filled the royal place—the blaze of light, the glimmer of jewels fluttering hither and thither in restless brilliancy like liquid flame, the conscious and indisputable nobility of all who surrounded her, dazzled the eyes of the moorland maiden, and filled her inexperienced mind with wonder. With no cynic eyes, but with the pure gaze of innocence and simplicity,

Magdalen shyly looked upon the brilliant crowd, believing with her whole heart that every stately baron among them was a heroic paladin, and every lady worthy of the loftiest titles of romance.

In her own chamber Magdalen had not failed to be a little anxious about her appearance, and careful to ascertain that her dress was properly arranged, her fine hair in becoming order, her lace ruff, and necklace of pearls disposed so as to set off each other. But arrived at the scene for which this was the preparation, her own appearance did not cost her a thought; she felt in an instant with most genuine humility, that no one in this throng would notice her, or rather she forgot in her admiration and interest that there was anything to be noticed, and devoured with eagerness and complete self-oblivion the splendid spectacle, which was

such as she had never seen before, and might never see again.

Shyly shrinking out of every one's way, standing back in timid respect when any one crossed her path, it was somewhat hard for Magdalen to keep her original position of close follower to Lady Falkland, who went gleaming with all her jewels, and with her weird and ashy face, which bore so strong a contrast to these ornaments, through the crowd where she had a hundred friends to salute. It was true that the old lady now and then looked back through some intervening group to beckon impatiently to the blushing and confused girl who had not courage to make her way through these high-bred personages, to her simple eyes so brilliant and so dignified, who intercepted her, and sometimes Lady Falkland was detained so long by some friendly dowager as to suffer her young companion to make her way to her

side again; but Magdalen thought her progress through the crowded hall of Gifford Castle was nothing to this passage among the royal guests at Holyrood. With a feeling almost like sudden joy, she caught a glimpse of Lady Yester as she advanced—but Lady Yester's chilling recognition was a great deal worse than the careless glance of strangers; and now that the first impression was over, Magdalen began to feel very forlorn and solitary. They were all so lofty, so far above her—she could have clung with almost affection to Lady Falkland, but Lady Falkland seemed to have forgotten her existence. In the midst of this scene which transported her with joyful wonder five minutes since, Magdalen by this time could have wept for vexation and bitter loneliness—so unfriended she felt herself, so destitute of kin and kindness. The old home room at Lammerstane, the bare chamber at

Lady Falkland's, where Isobel and Alice sat together talking of their lady, were a hundred times less dreary than this court and palace, where there was no one who cared to hear poor Magdalen Hepburn's name.

But now they are so close to the head of this long gallery that Magdalen cannot quite distinguish the Regent and his Consort, and it is with a sudden start that she hears herself addressed.

"What, our pretty heiress of the Lammermoors! I commend this daughter of a brave knight, and lady of a stout fortalice to your Grace's acquaintance. Nay, this way, Mistress Magdalen—I promised me to have the pleasant office of bidding you welcome to Holyrood."

And once again Magdalen Hepburn's moist and gratified eyes turned upon the Regent's face. He had risen from his chair of state with a graceful and fatherly kindness to

present her to the Countess, who sat looking on with a smile, half of amusement, half of pleasure. The Governor of Scotland wore a suit of black velvet, sufficiently plain in itself, but the splendid workmanship of the light rapier he carried, and the magnificence of the jewelled clasp which held the plume in his bonnet, vindicated his princely rank. The bonnet itself was slanted over his high and narrow forehead, resting only upon his hair at one side, while on the other it nearly touched his cheek; his features, all of a somewhat high and narrow cast, were lighted up to-night, in addition to their usual good humour, with something like a flush of triumph. The good man had managed in some matters connected with the fête—although even then of secondary importance—to accomplish his own purpose without being met by any one's remonstrances—and his jealousy of Mary of

Guise, the plotting Queen Mother, who would fain have his authority in her own hands, his troubles with priest and heretic, prelate and presbyter, his long halting between France and England in the momentous question of the Queen's marriage, had passed from his Grace's mind to night. Elated with his single victory, he forgot the unnumbered hosts of his defeats, and the young stranger could not have approached the vice-regal seat in a happier hour.

With a sweet and gentle voice the Countess of Arran repeated this welcome, and made some passing observation which Magdalen was too much confused to hear, much more respond to. Then there was a pause; it was painfully embarrassing to the poor shy Magdalen, but she stood still not knowing what it meant. At last some courteous but half-laughing words from the Countess startled

her; casting her timid eyes around, she saw a smile on all faces, and it suddenly burst upon her that she, who should have passed on happy and grateful for the kind word of passing notice, was standing alone in the midst of this brilliant circle occupying with her shy and awkward silence the attention of the illustrious host and hostess of the courtly assembly. In Magdalen's timid glance round her, she found not a face of compassion, and by this time the smile was rising to a titter, which the courteous Countess could not refrain from joining in, though she made an effort to check it. Lady Falkland was not to be seen—a sea of strange and unknown faces bewildered the solitary girl. Her face flushed, her breast heaved, and with so rapid a motion that the laughers had not time to recover their countenance, she fell back upon the crowd. In another moment, entirely self-conscious, and in

possession of all her faculties now, she saw the space where she had stood remain vacant for an instant, and the circle of faces change from mirth into surprise—and then the stream flowed on, the crowd returned to its individual flirtations, discussions, feuds, and friendships, and Magdalen saw that her momentary distinction was past.

But the sting of wounded pride and mortification was not past—she stood erect, her breath coming quick, her head elevated, and every vein tingling, behind a group of attendant ladies. She had lost her temporary guardian, and she knew no one who could or would conduct her from this corner; but Magdalen stood firm, a sensitive and nervous pride animating her slight girlish figure, and giving an unusual brilliancy to her pale face and glistening eye; and with resolution worthy a higher occasion, vowed that no lip

in this presence should curl again into ridicule of her.

"This heiress, then, does your ladyship know who she is?" said a thin and eager dame, in the group which sheltered Magdalen.

"I know her only as of Lammerstane, a poor tower among the hills, and of some acres of moss and moor," said the measured tones of Lady Yester, "but I marvel why his Grace takes note of this child. She has neither grace of nurture nor wealth of demesne."

"But it is said she takes the next heirship of her kinsman's lands of Langley," said the first speaker, "and they are a fair dower for a maiden of degree. The laird of Langley is outlaw and heretic, and his lands go to this damsel for default of better kin."

"I know naught of this," said Lady

Yester, coldly, "but it needs such a reason, well I wist, to do his Grace's excuses for such honour to an unbred child."

Proud and firm, Magdalen stood behind, her eyes dilated, her brow reddening in spite of all her self-command, and she could not restrain the prompt and impatient answer which burst from her trembling lips.

"My kinsman of Langley is a noble gentleman, lady—no outlaw, but one whom all men are proud to honour—and I am Maidlin Hepburn of Lammerstane, this and no other. If his Grace is deceived, it is not at my hand; my kinsman needs no heir—and I would die a hundred times ere I would brook such a traitor's part; the Lady Yester knows my degree—it is as she says."

The surprise and startling effect which this declaration produced, attracted once more the wandering eyes of Arran; he made a step

aside, spoke to a young gentleman of his train, and turning towards Magdalen directed her with a slight gesture, and a kind bow and smile, towards this messenger who approached her immediately. "His Grace commissions me to the honour of conducting you to Lady Falkland who waits," said the young man with a careless courtesy, and a half-concealed smile. Magdalen silently accepted his guidance, and turning with a quivering lip, and an air which by and bye she felt to be almost defiant, made her way, with perfect self-possession and jealous pride this time, to where the Lady Falkland, plunged in a delightful gossip, had forgotten all about her charge; with another bow of amusement and indifference, the Regent's gentleman left the young lady there. She had scarcely glanced at him, yet she knew him perfectly; his smile, his carelessness, his amusement with

herself, impressed Magdalen as no devotion could have done.

"Now, child, how long must I wait for you? alas, that I should touch these evil vanities again for sake of a stranger!" said Lady Falkland querulously, and with a long sigh —the sigh was for the pleasure past. And thus ended Magdalen Hepburn's introduction to the world.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Lady, I warned you, even so.
Vain pleasures bring but care and woe.
Hymns, psalms, and godly meditation—
'Tis thus *I* take my recreation."

"Oh, I would we could go home!—I would we were at Lammerstane!" cried Magdalen, as she hastily traversed the large and bare sleeping room, where Isobel and Alice had listened to her tale; "or I would I was but your child, Isobel, and heir of neither tower nor land. Oh, pity on me! I would I were aught but what I am!"

"Dearest lady, it is not what you would, but what God would," said Isobel, anxiously; "trust to His supreme majesty—He knoweth why He placed you thus—and truth to speak, the word of a court lady does not make you your kinsman's heir."

"I will never be his heir—never, if I should die," cried Magdalen, a wild blush breaking through her paleness. "*I* have advantage by *his* harm and loss! I, Isobel, I!—but, alack, I doubt it not, the Regent holds me so; for what were the poor lady of Lammerstane to the Governor of Scotland? Our poor tower, our scant lands, our little following—they would tempt no man, Isobel—none; but all the fair lands of Langley—Oh God, have pity on a miserable maiden; they will rob my kinsman of his heritage in name of me."

And Magdalen's quick step echoed through the room, as she traversed it from end to end,

clasping and unclasping her hands in strong agitation. The serious motherly eyes of Isobel followed her every movement, but Isobel judged it best to let this emotion subside before she spoke. Alice had bent her head between her hands, and hitherto had ventured no remark, but as Magdalen passed her she lifted her eyes wistfully, and with a faint detaining hold, touched her lady's dress —Magdalen stood still in an instant; her figure was drawn up to its fullest height—a thrill of almost imperceptible trembling was upon her—her hair was thrust back from her forehead, her eyes were shining with some impetuous impulse, her lip quivering with the passionate emotion which spoke in every line of her variable face. Steadily looking up at her from between her shading hands, the wistful blue eyes of Alice, the sad, pale, faultless countenance, timid yet inspired like

a young saint, held the lady like a spell—and the mother, anxious and fearful, was silent and looked on.

"Please you, lady," said the low voice of Alice, "are not these judgments of God for sinful compliances? Alas, He will not have us give His honour to another, nor forsake Him for the world."

Magdalen stood still for a moment, and did not answer; a momentary flush of resentment, a sudden gravity, came over her like a cloud, and under this shadow her agitation calmed—but Isobel hastened to speak.

"Lady Maidlin will not chide you, Alice, for the love you bear her—but, dear lady, upbraid not yourself, you have done naught amiss; we who are christians are not in heaven, nor in a convent, but cast abroad upon the world. Peace, child—it is here God gives us charge to live—and the bravest noble

of our faith complies thus far, where there be neither preaching nor place for better worship. Be patient, dear ones. God wot I am no wise woman, I know not what is to come—but I am assured and confident, as if an angel spoke with me, that God will deliver us anon. Take thine own seat, dear lady, till I tell thee a tale I heard to-day."

Magdalen sat down hurriedly in the great chair, which her attendant drew towards her, and bent forward, with her interest awakened and her thoughts turned from herself, to listen. Alice drew her stool closer, and Isobel, well pleased with her contrivance, began her story.

"In the High-street, where I went forth a little while to-night, I met, Lady Maidlin, with an ancient gossip of my own; Alice has heard me often speak of Christian Wardlaw, at Cockburnspath. She is a woman of sin-

gular grace, sore tried by the Lord with loss of bairns, and loss of gear, but sustained by His own exceeding might. When I had made my speerings for her house, and she for mine, the converse turned, as you will well suppose, upon the ways of truth; and Christian told me a tale well certified, of that blessed servant of the Lord, Mr. John, when serving at the oar in these galleys of the French. They had come in sight of Scottish land, Mr. John being sick, well nigh unto death, and one who was with him in that hour, pointed where the ruined castle of St. Andrew's lay visible, with the abbey towers beyond, and asked him if he knew the place. 'Yea,' said God's servant, 'there I first opened my mouth to preach the Lord's grace, and there I am verily assured it is His will I shall preach again, howsoever it appeareth now.' In sore sickness and captivity, it pleased God to comfort His own

soldier with this certitude, and, dearest lady, the word is, that Mr. John is safe in English land even now. Comfort your hearts, and be patient—deliverance comes apace."

Her young auditors listened to Isobel with such interest as her tale deserved. The Reformed of these days were not, as we are disposed to expect, centuries in advance of their time; and with devout and eager interest, these girls received the comfort of this assurance into their hearts. It was not difficult after this to persuade them to lie down to the sleep which both believed impossible, but which overpowered their youthful faculties almost before their prayers were done. The mother alone, who could not bring back the ready slumber of youth to her wearied eyes, lay awake through the dark watches of the night, and with the bitter anxiety which

knew what it feared, addressed her appeal with silent tears to the throne of God.

It was Lady Falkland's custom to preside over the labours of her women in the large apartment where Magdalen had first seen her and to speak truth, Lady Falkland's women, under the restless and querulous oversight of their mistress, who sat with an open volume of the lives of the saints before her, and who was not to be propitiated with less than some dainty bit of gossip, had no very desirable life; for on the alert, as the lady herself was perpetually, it was a rare chance when she did not know beforehand the morsel of scandal, with which some waiting woman hoped to excuse her neglected labour. Isobel and Alice, though now for a considerable time residents in the house, had not hitherto joined this industrious company; but Lady Falkland, im-

patient at last that these strangers should escape her rule, gave Magdalen very distinct intimation that their presence was required. So Alice carried her embroidery, and Isobel her distaff into the hall; the mother was permitted to remain among the other women at the lower end of the apartment, but Alice, in consideration of her more elegant employment, in which Lady Falkland believed herself a critic, was promoted to the very unenviable dignity of a seat by the lady's side.

It was nearly noon when Magdalen entered hastily and called Isobel to her. Alice saw with trembling agitation her lady and her mother hasten from the room; now indeed she was left to herself, and she felt her face flush with fear and courage as a hundred imagined emergencies rushed into her mind, and she felt that now whatever befell her in this dreaded

company she must act for herself, uncounselled and alone.

"Whither goes your lady, child?" said Lady Falkland, "but eyes so intent scarce wot she has gone, I trow; I hold this damsel a pattern to you all, slothful queans. Come hither, Lilian, bring thy work to me."

A light young figure rose from among the workers, and the quick glance of Alice caught a saucy confident face which seemed to have little fear of the coming rebuke.

"Your ladyship has heard of the Lady Calder, and that gallant of the house of Crawford," said the offender in a soft voice, as she gave her work into the hands of her mistress.

"The Lady Calder—nay, child, what of her?" exclaimed Lady Falkland eagerly.

"Your ladyship knows she is widowed and

has a rich dower. Well, madam, so please you, this gallant—— "

But before another word could be said, the heavy bell of a neighbouring church rang out upon the air, lady and maid servant stopped abruptly, the work fell from the willing hand of the women, and Lilian interrupted in her tale, and the eager lady in her listening, suddenly sank upon their knees; the astonished Alice, dizzy and confounded, rose by a natural impulse, when all rose around her; but instead of kneeling as they did, the poor girl wavered, hesitated, and finally turning again, sat down in an agony of bewilderment, and burst into tears.

But Alice through her weeping could see that Lady Falkland, absorbed as she was with her prayers, did not fail to fix a pair of keen cold eyes upon the little heretic, while she pattered the Aves and paternosters of the

Angelus—and even had she escaped Lady Falkland, the observation of Lilian, jealous and curious, was certain. The boldness of a martyr and the terror of a child overpowered Alice—she sat still as if fascinated, and could do nothing but weep.

It was a brilliant July noon, rich with the balmy warmth and sunshine of summer. E'er the bell ceased, one after another of the women, more speedy with their devotions, rose and resumed their work; but the last swing of the bell was vibrating in the air when Lady Falkland rose from the orthodox prayers, which occupied exactly the time they should occupy, neither a moment more nor less. She rose with deliberate and inquisitorial dignity, composed herself in her seat, imposed silence on Lilian with a gesture, and turned to the weeping Alice.

"From what land of heathens do you come,

damsel, that you know not the Angelus?" asked Lady Falkland sternly.

Alice made no answer, but she dried her tears, and raised her flushed and agitated face.

"Have you then been bred among such reprobates and sinners? answer me, I command you. Fool! did you never hear the bell of Angelus, or behold the prayers of the faithful before?"

"Yes, madam, so please you, I have both heard and seen," said Alice bravely.

Lady Falkland fixed her cold eyes full on the face of the young recusant, but though Alice was abashed, she was not dismayed.

"You have seen and heard—hear you this bold quean!—and how is it that you dare to rebel against God?" cried Lady Falkland, "and keep your knee unbent when Holy Church requires your prayers?

"Madam! I dare not pray, save to God!"

said Alice, with difficulty restraining a fresh burst of tears. "I dare not bend my knee at a call of superstition—oh lady, I dare not!"

"The little fool is a heretic!" cried Lady Falkland with a half scream.

But this scream was much more of triumph than of horror. A heretic! The honour and glory awaited Lady Falkland of conveying this little heathen to the vigilance of priestly instruction—perhaps of converting or condemning in her own person. Lady Calder and the unheard story were forgotten in this new and delightful excitement. With a dignity and importance quite novel to her, Lady Falkland rose.

"Conduct this foolish child to the little cabinet which opens from my chamber," said the lady, with much state. "Lilian, I commit her to you—see that she is kept securely

and alone, till I speak with her again—I must even see to this speedily. Thou little heretic! I warrant me thou didst not gather this at thine own hands—thy mother and thy lady!—but begone till I have better leisure. Alack the day!—what place shall be free of its pollution, when this black heresy comes within *my* dwelling, where Father Jerome says there is a very odour of unblemished faith. Have her hence, Lilian—I must hear what his reverence says."

But Alice, excited and trembling with the tumult of her own feelings—her childish terror, and her enthusiastic bravery which was equally childlike—did not observe the laughing face of Lilian, nor the little nod and gesture of encouragement which promised her no great severity from her warden. The lightfoooted waiting woman hurried her away, holding her hand—and with tremulous

dignity restraining her tears, and solemnly, but shyly meeting the glances of Lady Falkland's curious attendants, Alice left the room like a hero. Not to the stake, though her ready imagination leaped to its horrors already, nor to gloomy prison, or chamber of priestly inquisition – but only through these bare familiar passages, and through the sombre and faded splendour of Lady Falkland's own apartment, to the little cabinet, with all its store of curious toys and antique vanities— no very terrible place of imprisonment.

"Now look you hither," said Lilian, with a little peal of restrained laughter, "I'll be no jailer if my lady were the greatest lady in all the land. Little maiden, little fool, what had the like of you ado with faiths and doctrines? and I warrant me your pretty lady herself called to make answer for it; but see you here, child—when my lady Falkland

lodges prisoners, she maun e'en look to her keys, and this is in the lock for a kind chance; do you not mark me? nay, there is no such cause for fright after all. I will lock one door upon you, little Alice, but I know nought of this, look you, save where it leads."

And Lilian opened a door opposite to the one by which they had entered, showed to her captive how through another small room adjoining she might escape into the gallery which led to Magdalen's apartments.

"I am not frighted," said Alice, though a shudder and tremble contradicted her words, "and indeed I think I should abide and bear my testimony—and Lady Falkland will chide you—and, indeed, you betray her trust—and oh, Lilian, I know not what to do!"

"I betray her! good lack, the child is distraught," cried Lady Falkland's waiting woman; "flee, or tarry, I care not, you can

have your will; but one barred door is enow to scare a froward bairn. I give you good day, mistress heretic—but I would not bide for good night, if I were in your place."

The door closed, and Alice was alone; but flight was not by any means the first impulse of the young Protestant. Sitting down upon the waxed and glimmering floor, Alice first wept out the tears of excitement which almost choked her breath—then she started, scared and trembling at distant noises which seemed to draw nearer—footsteps hastening to her prison. Then she paused to endeavour some compromise between her terrors and her resolutions; she thought of the martyrdoms of recent time, and her young breast swelled high with sudden heroism; but anon she thought of her mother and her lady—of the peaceful braes of Lammerstane, and how the little household there would weep her sacrifice;

and Alice could not refrain weeping for pity as she paused in momentary contemplation of the desolation caused by her own death. At that moment something stirred, not unlike the rustling of Lady Falkland's dress in Lady Falkland's apartment, and then an imagined footstep struck cold upon the heart of Alice. She started up—there was no longer time for parley with herself—and fled along the gallery like a frightened bird.

CHAPTER IX.

Oh startled dove! and whither shall she flee?
Whither but home: although, poor heart, she knows not,
But that the fowler hath been here before,
And spread his net across her very threshhold.

UNFEARING any such catastrophe, and in little more than time to escape betrayal of her own opinions by the same ordeal, Magdalen hurried Isobel to a window of the gallery which looked out into the little court. A young woman in a decent peasant dress—a grey cloak and hood of black say—stood below, in laughing conversation with one of the lackeys. The man's

heart was so far opened that he bore a very animated part in the dialogue, and the smile of a bystander, and a burst of laughter from his unseen fellow-servants within, showed that the stranger had the better of it, whatever their discussion was.

"I know her not, lady; she might even be any common housewife within reach of Edinburgh, for her attire," said Isobel, with perplexity. "He points her thither. Save us! Can it be?—it is certain a kent face."

"It is Jean," said Magdalen, breathlessly, "I knew her at the first glance—and she brings us tidings from Lammerstane; but wherefore so sad in her apparel? Nay, hasten, Isobel, bring her here."

And Magdalen hurried to her own apartment, to await, in a great tremor of anxiety and alarm, this unlooked for messenger; for troubled with many a fanciful foreboding, the

loss of Jean's scarlet ribbons became a fatal omen to her trembling lady. Some minutes elapsed and no one came—the visitor was no longer in the court-yard—then another little interval, and Magdalen's heart beat high to hear a flying footstep approach her door. "Jean, Jean! what has befallen us?" cried Magdalen, rushing forward; but instead of Jean, appeared the slight figure of Alice, her cheeks wet with tears, and her face full of shame, distress, and apprehension. Magdalen paused before the window with sudden bewilderment and fear.

"Oh, Lady Maidlin, I am no better than a traitor," cried the weeping Alice; "mother, mother, what shall I do?"

As if in answer to the appeal, Isobel hurriedly entered, followed by Jean. "Madam, it is Jean Bowman, even as you said," said the punctilious Isobel, though her eyes sought

her child with a look of eager inquiry and fear, "but I pray you, dear lady, pardon me till I have looked to Alice. Alice, Alice, what is this?"

"Nay, what is it then—have we two griefs to bear?" said Magdalen, "let Jean keep hers awhile, it must be saddest; yet it will be but for Lady Falkland's chiding—and you have travelled long and sore; nay, Jean, I cannot tarry—tell me what your tidings are."

Jean cast a quick glance upon Alice and her mother, and turned at once to Magdalen. "*My* errand is first, Lady Maidlin—and syne, if Mistress Isobel lacks service, I'm aye at hand. Madam, I came to tell you of ane had been at Lammerstane."

Magdalen could only answer by a slight gesture, bidding her go on; for what with her anxiety concerning this, and the half repressed sobs of Alice, and whispered inquiries of her

mother behind, Magdalen could scarcely preserve the small degree of tremulous composure she possessed.

"I kent him at half a mile of gate," said Jean, rapidly plunging into her story as was her wont, "for all it was falling gloaming, and the watch set, and the cows in the byre—but I durst not say even to Simon, 'my lord is coming,' for fear he might be in peril. So what could I do but slip without the wall mysel—to my ain scathe, for they threw in my teeth I held a tryst upon the hill—but that's nought to the purpose," said Jean, with a quick blush; "I hasted to come up to my lord in a hollow, where naebody could see, but he noted me not, setting his face to the tower, and looking no other airt. I had to speak mysel. I said soft, 'my lord, my lord!' and he turned a quick glance upon me, but I saw he remembered me not, but just waved his

hand and on to the tower. Then I spake again, 'my lord, Lady Maidlin's away to the Lord Governor's court in Edinburgh; there's nane but certain serving men and maids left in the tower.' He stoppit at that word, and such a lang weary sigh, and such a sickening at his heart! I kent it by the look he gave. 'Lady Maidlin gone!' and he drew his cleak closer and pulled his bonnet down on his brow, and cast a wistful look at the tower. Maybe I may seem a bauld quean to speak in such companie, but my heart grieved for a true lover stoppit at his lady's door; so I took heart and said, 'I'm Jean Bowman, my lord, that bore your errand from St. Andrew's; I'm leal and true, as the lady kens, and if its your honour's will to send message or token, plague be on my slothful feet, if I canna reach the Canongate of Edinburgh the morn.' He gave a lang sigh again, and then he said in

his noble way, 'I looked to see her own sweet face to-night—but if *she* be well, what matters it for me?' And then he charged me to make his humble duty to Lady Maidlin, and to give you to wit he had escaped, and all the gentlemen of St. Andrew's, every ane but a man or two of the meaner sort, out of the hands of France; and Mr. John, the preacher, and his ain noble self, dwelling over the border in England, living in freedom of the Evangel, and ready to do you service whensoever it pleased you give him a call; and, lady, if there was ae word wasna true in a' he said, it was when he wished, with a gleam of his e'e, you might be safe and happy, and need nae aid, but to mind he was your servant and vassal when you did: and he named to me Luckie Craig's cothouse as a place whither to gang, if ony strait came, to send her good-man to him with the news. And that was a' his noble

honour said—for I canna let you see, Lady Maidlin, how his face lighted, and his grand e'en shone, whenever he mentioned your name."

"And did he not go back, nor tarry for so much as the shelter of a night?" said Magdalen, with blushing eagerness, "and it was late and he benighted on the hill? I would he had been in Lammerstane. Nay, Jean, but he has suffered much, and we are near of kindred: you may not think amiss of me."

"Na, lady, no if an angel bade me," said Jean promptly, "but I think not my lord ever thought mair of Lammerstane, but that it was black and desolate with Lady Maidlin away—but madam, maun I no ask of little Alice and Mistress Isobel, what ails them now?"

Magdalen started with confusion from her own absorbing thoughts—and started all the

more when she saw Isobel hastily equipping Alice as for a journey.

"Dear lady, let Jean tarry with thee," said Isobel, very steadily, but with emotion. "This poor child has been betrayed—nay, Alice, I blame thee not—but Lady Falkland counts her for a heretic, because she did not kneel at the bell of the Angelus; and she is even now escaped from the lady's private chamber. Madam, Isobel has not been wont to fail thee—but I must save my child."

"I will not hear you speak so to me," said Magdalen, with tears. "Nay, Isobel, you do me wrong—but this lady dare not harm her—Alice, will you not tell me?—what has befallen you?"

"Oh, Lady Maidlin! I thought to be very brave and defend the truth—but I am nothing better than a traitor, for now I am to flee," said Alice, with much weeping—and Alice

through her tears and her self-condemnation, started at a step without, and kept eyes of timid watchfulness upon the closed door.

"She dare not harm her, Isobel," said Magdalen, "I will appeal to the Regent—I will hasten to the court. Alice, dear heart! they shall do you no wrong."

"Lady Falkland will have her to the priests, and the priests to their instruction," said Isobel, with steady gravity—"I dare not run this dreadful risk, even for love of my lady. Peace, child! if God called thee to be a martyr, would I strive against the Lord? peace, He calls us not. Lady Maidlin, I cry you pardon—she must hence without delay."

"And I would so might I," said Magdalen, with a sigh, "but Isobel says well. Comfort, Alice—you will be safe at home; and, Isobel, never falter nor look on me. Nay, haste—I

will aid Alice. Do not linger—if you flee, you must flee now."

And Magdalen hastened to render to Alice services which Alice had often dutifully offered to her—but these unwonted attentions confused the poor little heroine more and more, as she shrank from them with punctilious respect. Meanwhile, Isobel with sure but faltering hands, secured her own hood and mantle, and very pale, with a tear in her eye, and her look hesitating between her lady and her child, prepared for instant flight.

"You will not leave the lady, Mistress Isobel?" cried Jean Bowman, suddenly, "or it will be but that they may wise you back, heretics baith—for the like of you can neither wear a false guise nor tell a lee. Na, I ken better—you'll trust little Alice to me."

Isobel paused, and looked up earnestly at the speaker—and Jean presented to the

trembling mother's scrutiny, her own bright and candid face, glowing with conscious ability to do good service—"I'm not to ca' wise in lear, nor holy at the heart like you," said Jean, with humility, "but I'm used of old to hauld my ain, and be a' the defence I could lippen to—I'll carry her hame as safe as a babie in its mother's breast—and nae man will lay heresy to my hand, for a' I say my malison night and day upon every thing that's ca'ed a priest. Na, Mistress Isobel—you'll let me take Alice hame."

"I have none other—she is all that God has left to me, save my lady," said Isobel, overcome at last. Jean Bowman's eyes filled with sympathetic tears—no stronger appeal could have been made to her.

"For I have nane!" said Jean, emphatically—"I would gang through fire and water afore another heart should be desolate like

me. Fareweel to bonny Lady Maidlin—fareweel and comfort to you—and little Alice and me, we'll slip away hame."

So swift and sudden it was, they had indeed stolen away—and Magdalen and Isobel standing together alone in the room looked blankly into each other's faces. Magdalen could not resist the solicitous imploring look which her attendant turned upon her.

"You have tarried for me, Isobel—and your very heart in peril!" cried Magdalen. "But Alice is mine as she is thine, and I am assured she is in true hands. Isobel, courage! they will be home so soon."

"I do believe it, lady," said Isobel, and she turned slowly to the window. There, with such trembling anxiety that they scarcely dared draw breath, Magdalen and she watched together, while these two figures emerged—heard with a pang of terror the light and

happy voice of Jean Bowman, throwing back a contemptuous gibe upon a serving man in her way, and watched them at last safely and silently disappear under the gloomy portal of the "close," which conducted the wayfarers out of the gloom of Lady Falkland's sombre lodging into the busy outer world.

CHAPTER X.

Mariana.—"You have strange thoughts for a patrician dame."
Angiolina.—"And yet they were my *father's*."
MARINO FALIERO.

"MISTRESS MAIDLIN, I would speak with you," said Lady Falkland, sharply, as she entered in haste the apartments of Magdalen. "It is well—your woman is here—but where is that malapert child?"

Magdalen, seated in the great chair, had been for some little time summoning all her fortitude in expectation of this visit, and it was with a beating heart that she looked up to answer, "Is it Alice, madam?"

"Nay, Alice or Joan, what know I of the quean's name," said the old lady, her cold blue eyes glittering restlessly from her ashen face, "but this I know, the little fool hath been trained in error, and will not give obedience, either to holy Church, which is above all, or to me. Young mistress, it is meet you should look to yourself; where is this heretic?"

"Madam, Alice is of my service," said Magdalen, with a flush of tremulous pride, "and has not been wont to give obedience to any other; if it please you to tell me what she has done amiss, I will chide her."

"Thy chiding will not serve," said Lady Falkland, hastily, "nay, child, nor yet mine

own; the good father, Jerome, will speak with her himself—too great a grace—and if that reaches not her case, the Church, as his reverence says, has means enow. What, woman! is it you have perverted your child?"

"Nay, lady, heaven forefend!" Isobel scarcely could lift her head, composed as her appearance was, to meet the scrutiny of those chill inquisitive eyes; and in her heart Isobel was pursuing the fugitives, fretting at their fancied tardiness and urging them to greater speed.

"Youth is wilful," said Lady Falkland, "no need to look afield, I trow, to learn that for truth," and her eyes turned angrily to Magdalen; "but no one shall tell me that years so tender could light of their own accord upon heresy so foul; out upon cowards! if there was counsel ta'en among you to put scoff on all good Christians, truth, I would

not have left it to a child! Mistress Maidlin, you who are so bold, it had been better to hazard your own person than your bower maiden's."

"But, madam, will it please you tell my lady what the poor child hath done amiss?" said Isobel interposing anxiously.

"She has not told her own story, I warrant," said Lady Falkland, with an inquisitive glance round the room. "What think you the minion did at sound of the Angelus, but mock at mine own devotions and refuse the holy call? Nay, woman, I cannot be deceived; will you dare affirm to me that she did this profanity without your command?"

"I never said, thou shalt not pray—never, lady, but rather pray at all seasons wheresoever thou mayest, dearest child," cried Isobel with agitation. "I deny not what is true in my heart—I say not I can worship

day by day, with honesty, as this lady and her household worship; but bear me witness, Lady Maidlin, I never won thee from thy prayers: I never forbade my child to seek God—yea, at any or at every time!"

"I perceive the craft," said Lady Falkland, "so, I doubt not, the prayers of holy Church—of a humble lady like myself, and such an holy man as Father Jerome, are not worthy to be prayers for this spoiled vassal, a moorland mistress's bower-woman! Fie upon you! profane and proud! that would hold your heads with the holy saints, and yet love a fool's ballad better than an Ave Mary—fie upon you all!"

"My lady was a lady of birth and renown. Hush! I entreat thee, dearest child," cried Isobel. "Madam, it is ill flyting between your high degree and mine—but this is true, I never wiled a heart from seeking God, nor

put scorn on any for his service; and if my fortune has been to offend a noble lady dwelling in her household, I crave my pardon humbly, kenning my place."

"Fair words—fair words," said Lady Falkland, "if your heart be as humble as your phrases, mistress, what ails you to bring this little fool to me?"

A blank glance of dismay was exchanged between Magdalen and her attendant—"Alas, madam, she is my only child!" said Isobel, with a start and suppressed sob; but Lady Falkland was not to be moved by any such argument.

"A wise mother would think the greater reason she should be trained aright," said the childless inquisitor. "Mistress Maidlin, I wot not well what privilege pertains to your service, but in mine own dwelling I will not be scorned. She must even be delivered to me."

"Madam, another of my women came but now from Lammerstane," said Magdalen, faltering, "and they were friends of old; I did not hinder it—Alice went forth with her awhile. What say you, Isobel? nay indeed, I may not for the truth's sake, Lady Falkland, say she will return again."

"So fares it with those who put their faith in the word of heresy!" exclaimed the old lady bitterly; "you reckon this fair dealing, I warrant me? Now plague on such! and this saucy quean is gone?"

There was no answer. Magdalen did not dare express her indignation, lest she should exasperate her hostess, and perhaps procure an immediate pursuit of Alice, while Isobel, bending her head over her distaff, with flushed cheeks and downcast eyes, listened and made no sign. Never before had her young mistress seen the stately Isobel so greatly discomposed.

"I bid you look to yourselves!" exclaimed Lady Falkland, "it is but fair to hold the puppet-master bound for his creature's freaks. Oh ye are of goodly seeming—honourable women in your degree—but I would even gladly see this mim Mistress Maidlin, or her bower-woman, that might be a queen's, so high she holds her head, make answer before saintly Father Jerome, or a session of holy brethren, concerning the faith! Nay, young mistress, never think to move me with your proud looks—I promise you we know no Lady Maidlin in Falkland Lodging, for all your flattering vassals have made you trow; and I know not wherefore ye should abide at large in a noble dwelling to spread your heresies, while bolts and bars are at hand."

A flush of impetuous resentment overcame Magdalen's caution. She felt the blood rush

to her cheeks, and with a thrill of pride rose from her chair.

"My Lady Falkland forgets that I came not hither at my own pleasure," said Magdalen, "nor would cumber her or her house, were it my choice—and I know not how it may serve his Grace's honour to have bolts and bars threatened upon a ward in his keeping; but with your pleasure, madam, I will refer to my lord Governor's judgment—having neither friend nor kin to take part for me."

The low and intense composure of Magdalen's voice startled Lady Falkland, as emotion always does startle the frivolous; but the slight faltering of the concluding words reassured her. It was a very indifferent argument for gentle usage, that the speaker was friendless.

"You say sooth in that," said the angry

and disappointed judge of Alice; "many a noble maiden has done me reverence that had the chief of her name at her back; but the poorest is ever the proudest, as it is well to see. I trow his Grace has small ado to prank out the poor heir of a moorland tower for ward of the crown—deceiving gentlemen of good repute that else would never dream of so tocherless a bride."

Magdalen resumed her seat with bitter tears of injured pride in her eyes—so far provoked now, that she could make no response.

"And how his grace thinks to preserve his own credit with holy Church, and her righteous councils, and to give shield and shelter to heretics, sooth I cannot tell," said Lady Falkland. "Child, ye do ill to battle with one like me. Was it not enough that I did force myself, and returned unto the vanities

of the world for you, that you put slight upon an aged woman thus?"

The change was so sudden, that Magdalen was taken by surprise. She rose again with natural humility, but still found no words to express the quick compunction with which this claim upon her gratitude, equivocal as it was, touched the generosity of her youth.

"A bootless toil I have brought on Father Jerome—holy man," said Lady Falkland querulously, "giving him to wit he had a strayed lamb to bring back to the only fold. Hear you, child, what is said in your parts of the Lady Yester; does she lean to heresy like you?"

"I never heard so, madam," said Magdalen, briefly.

"I think indeed you heard never aught among your hills," answered Lady Falkland, with a little contempt, "or else you are

marvellous prudent for your years, and fear to make foes if you speak the truth; but tiring-maids and bower-women are seldom so mim. Mistress, what say you?"

"Please you, lady, I think neither Church nor heretic moves the Lady Yester," said Isobel; "but she is not reputed in our land to love the Reformed, and hath to her confessor the sub-prior of Coldingham, who is of the Hays, and a zealous man against all Gospellers near and far."

"I marvel that dame will not seek somewhat to mark her by," said Lady Falkland, relapsing into peevish gossip; "fair favour nor wit never went with her race, yet she keeps at court for love of vanity, despite her years. Now I warrant they will say in your parts how old this lady may be?"

"My lord was not wedded to my sweet mistress till the Lady Yester was a widow,

madam," said Isobel, lending herself with unusual willingness to Lady Falkland's pleasure. "The word went abroad that the knight of Lammerstane had found gracious welcome in Gifford had he ta'en his wooing thither, for my old lord was a man of a grand presence, noble to see. She was nearer his years by far than my lady; I would not count the Lady Yester far under threescore."

"Nay, I well believe it," cried Lady Falkland, triumphantly, "and hath not the art to carry her years lightly either, for all she loves the world so well—with habits and tires I would not bestow on my waiting damsel—I, who am retired and recluse from the pomps of this world. And so she would have wared her weeds on the knight of Lammerstane? I remember that gentleman well; and forsooth he was thy father, Mistress Maidlin? Well, child, I will not chide thee again to-day. So

he would none of this light widow? I marvel it not; and thy lady, good woman—who was she?"

Magdalen withdrew softly to the window. This unknown mother, so long enshrined in visionary reverence and tenderness, was too sacred a person to be subject to Lady Falkland's curious questions and gossipping observation, while her daughter sat still to listen; but Magdalen was glad that Isobel could thus divert and exhaust the wrath that had threatened them so much annoyance. And when Lady Falkland wiped her eyes hastily as Isobel's pathetic story proceeded, Sir Roger Hepburn's daughter drew near her again with lessening displeasure. The old devotee and worldling had been charmed for the moment into human and womanly interest, and Alice and her heresy escaped into quiet once more.

CHAPTER XI.

"Thus, then, in brief:—
The valiant Paris seeks you for his love.
Nurse.—A man, young lady!—lady, such a man
As all the world—why, he's a man of wax."

ROMEO AND JULIET.

BUT the escape of Alice added heaviness to the thraldom of those who remained behind. Father Jerome's active superintendence, and the inquisitive observation of Lady Falkland, chafed the high spirit of Magdalen almost beyond endurance. The greater composure and steadier temper of Isobel gave less advan-

tage to the enemy; but Magdalen, impulsive, hasty and generous, whom no necessity could school out of her natural self-forgetting, perpetually fell into their snares. Happily for her it was an enterprize too daring for either priest or lady to denounce to the punishments of the law, a ward of the crown and the heiress of a noble house; the Regent continued to distinguish her by kindly notice, and albeit the honours she received as heiress of Langley were very little to Magdalen, she still was honoured on this behalf; so that annoyance, and not active or dangerous persecution, was all that she had to apprehend.

Lady Falkland's sole guests hitherto had been confined to a few ancient ladies of her own class, and to the monks and religious itinerants, who found the consolations of the spirit and the gossip of the world equally acceptable to her devout but liberal ladyship.

These visitors Magdalen avoided as much as it was possible; for the covert assaults upon herself, the pious horror and compassion for her heresy to which a new arrival gave rise, were something trying at once to temper and spirit. The case being so, she was startled to receive Lady Falkland's peremptory injunction, not long after Alice's departure, to prepare herself to be present at a stately assembly within these sombre walls.

"You will look to your apparel, Mistress Maidlin," said the lady, "and your woman shall have the aid of Lilian, if you will. Poor child! you are in no great case for noble companie—and I know not what those will deem who hold you for a wealthy heiress, and see a maiden no better arrayed than a yeoman's housewife, with never an adornment but yonder poor chain of pearls. It shames me to see thee so—but his Grace's pleasure must

be done; and look well to your tiring, child. There will be in this company whom it much concerns you to do pleasure to. Nay, I have no leisure for thy questioning; go, see if thou canst do nothing to make thy poor apparel brave."

Amazed, and somewhat disconcerted, Magdalen obeyed. The shadow of another and formerly much dreaded peril, came in her way again; but saying nothing to Isobel, making no response to the solicitous looks which met her troubled face, and with a little secret pique and displeasure, arranging her dress with the utmost plainness, she prepared for Lady Falkland's assembly. Priest and pilgrim were out of sight for this time. Like a draft from the splendid company of the court, Lady Falkland's unwonted guests dazzled Magdalen's inexperience once more; but she could not explain why it was that her heart failed her

as her eye fell on the careless escort whom the Regent had provided for her on the evening of her visit to Holyrood. She saw even now his face expand a little in a smile of amusement as she entered. He had not forgotten her girlish awkwardness, nor the laugh it caused; and Magdalen's heart beat high with defiance and answering disdain. But the gallant was not in the mind to trouble her, and but for this momentary smile seemed exceedingly indifferent to her presence.

Another face which she recognised came more prominently before her now—it was that of the eager dowager, whose inquiries concerning her heiress-ship Magdalen had overheard; and the young lady soon found herself in the entire possession of this inquisitive personage, whose curiosity seemed to be of a more practical kind than even Lady Falkland's own. Lady Semple had no pretensions to wit,

or—even faded—beauty—no ambition apparently to keep up an artificial glitter like Lady Falkland in the magnificence of her jewelled dress; sufficient to her station but no more, her alert and meagre person was only clothed, not adorned; and the keen eyes and shrewd sharp face proclaimed her not a lady of the court so much as a woman of the world.

"In my youth I was much in your parts, Mistress Magdalen," said Lady Semple, "and to speak truth, a loftier dwelling or a fairer than the house of Langley, I never saw; the umquhile lady was known to me in my own young days. Poor heart!—she lived not long to use her good estate; but it is truly a noble inheritance as heart of man could desire."

"A noble master books it, madam," said Magdalen, raising her head proudly with a blush and unconscious frown. "My kinsman

is in the flower of his age. I know not why men should speak of heirs to Langley, when it lies in such sure hands."

"Nay, hush, dear child," said Lady Semple, caressingly; "or men will say, forsooth, that the pretty lady, the heir of these lands, would rather share them with the forfaulted laird than hold them in her own right."

A blush covered Magdalen's face; her heart swelled and throbbed so loudly, she could make no answer. Confusion, anger, and a still deeper emotion, overwhelmed her; and when she turned away from the sharp scrutiny of Lady Semple's eye, it was but to meet once more the smiling glance of the Regent's gentleman, whose youthful and well-favoured face was gradually inspiring her with vehement dislike, she knew not why.

"My son must be known to you, Mistress Magdalen," said Lady Semple. "His Grace

himself was pleased to commit his ward, I do remember, to the guidance of Sir Hugh—and did not fail to remark to myself, being in the presence, how fair a couple you were. I would I might wile you to Castle Semple, our poor house in the west; and I fear so young a lady must be sad enow in Falkland Lodging to give her good word for a lightsome change."

"I would very fain be home, madam, in my own poor Tower at Lammerstane," said Magdalen, with proud simplicity; "otherwise I care not for any change, but at his Grace's will."

"His Grace does well to commend you, pretty lady," said Lady Semple, with a smile, "for there be few less dutiful subjects than the wealthy maidens who have the crown to their tutor; but I even trust, as I well know his Grace doth, that you shall think very

speedily of a change—at your own sweet will, forsooth, though it be his Grace's too."

"Nay, madam, I know not what you would say," said Magdalen; and Magdalen could not conceal the mingled embarrassment and displeasure with which she spoke.

"A maiden's wiles, Mistress Magdalen," said the gracious Lady Semple, "I doubt not you will learn anon; but my heart grieves to see thee in so cold a house, poor child. Nay, whisper: does not Lady Falkland chill thy youth with her penances and her prayers?"

"You speak in Lady Falkland's dwelling, madam," said Magdalen.

"Nay, our Lady save us! has it come thus far?" said Lady Semple, lifting her hands with effusive compassion. "The poor maiden trembles for spies in this very company! Dear child, say but thy pleasure, and I will

myself speak to his Grace. I marvelled why he chose Lady Falkland; but to have thee in terror of thy very words! Thou shalt come to me, Mistress Magdalen—I will not see thee oppressed."

"Lady, I said not I was oppressed," said Magdalen, yielding, in spite of herself, to a little petulant impatience. "I am very well—I desire no change unless to go home. I would his Grace might permit me that—and I thank the Lady Semple very heartily—but I seek no change."

"A jealous guardian might pray Heaven keep you of that mind," said Lady Semple, "so do not I, pretty one. I remember mine own youth though I be old—and would fain have pleasure and lightsome fashions among fair maidens and gallants of degree. You may think no such mighty things of Castle Semple, minding you of the noble house of

Langley, but it is a pleasant dwelling for all—and I thought it very fair and stately when I went home thither a bride. The Lady of Castle Semple has honour in her own country, I warrant you, Mistress Maidlin; and much joy there will be and merrymaking, when Sir Hugh carries a pretty lady home."

Lady Semple paused for a response, but received none, for Magdalen, thoroughly confused and angered, could find no words to reply.

"I may not be frighted by naysays," continued Lady Semple, "think you now, pretty Mistress Magdalen, if a maiden's will-nots were always heeded, what would come of it anon? Nay, dear child, but a dutiful ward like thee, will think what his Grace wills, I trow, and what all thy friends that wish thee well, will for thee—and thy welfare is sure, I know. Many a fair damsel in Scotland may

sigh long, ere Providence send her so fair a lot."

And turning round, Lady Semple permitted her eye to fall undisguisedly upon her son. This then was Magdalen's fate. Sir Hugh Semple was a worthy example of the gallants of the court — a fair large person, a well-looking face, and a very competent estate, had been assigned to the young heiress in this arrangement, which seemed so very simple and matter of course in Lady Semple's eyes— and Magdalen felt that the careless smile of her temporary attendant at Holyrood fell upon her now, with a certain quiet observation and proprietorship which made her blood boil. Sir Hugh, on his part, had good-humouredly accepted the bargain, leaving to his mother the trouble of securing it—and no one seemed to fear any resistance on the part of the unconsulted bride.

The experiment was never tried on one less likely to submit; the proud blood of her race boiled in the veins of Magdalen Hepburn, nor could any philosophy calm the impetuous throbbing of her breast. Her solitary life, her devoted attendants, the punctilious reverence and constant love to which she had been accustomed, contrasted strangely with the unceremonious distinctness of her disposal now, and bitter tears, which she was too proud to shed, blinded the eyes of Magdalen. Those dreams of chivalrous devotion—of the old ideal love of romance and ballad, which are never quite dissevered from the fancies of youth, had come often to the much cared for Lady Maidlin in her maiden's bower; and the stately image of Paul Hepburn had given a sort of imaginative reality of late to the vague fair visions of her girlish days; these were dreams—but this sordid arrangement,

this miserable bargain—this was true and real—a fact of every day, only waiting for accomplishment—nothing extraordinary, alas! —nothing which any common bystander would think worthy a passing wonder; but a matter of common use and wont, in the everyday routine of the time.

"But his Grace means it not—so kind he has ever been to me," said Magdalen in her heart—and she turned away from the persecuting attentions of Lady Semple, to stand behind Lady Falkland's chair—and seek a temporary refuge in her shadow. She stood for some time unobserved, hearing, but not listening to, the animated conversation which Lady Falkland maintained with one of her friends—and Magdalen's hand trembled, leaning upon the chair, and her throng of angry and excited thoughts took away her breath. All this was from her fancied

heirdom of Langley—the cause gave additional bitterness to her distress.

"Child, is it you?" said Lady Falkland, looking up querulously. "I see not you cherish my company so, when I bestow it all upon you—nay, I warrant me, it is some peevish quarrel with the fair choice his Grace has honoured you withal—a plague of your fancies, silly maiden! it were better to see you meek and gentle, showing a fair demeanour now — or the world will little marvel when they name you a froward dame. Nay, child, leave me—your arm trembles on the chair."

Magdalen withdrew silently; but it was now only to seek her own apartment, from which even Isobel was gone. She sought the window, sad and lonely, and looked out upon the dreary little quadrangle, the darkening sky and rising stars, that looked down from

on high upon the chill stone pavement. As cold, as far away, as unconnected by any kindly circumstance, were all who had authority upon herself or her fate—and the Lady Maidlin, upon whom they all looked with reverent affection, thought almost enviously of little timid Alice, who had a natural ruler and guardian—of Jean Bowman, independent and fearless, who dared to rule herself, and yielded to none—and returning to her own higher fortunes, bowed down her head upon her clasped hands, and wept an orphan's solitary tears.

CHAPTER XII.

"The constant service of the antique world
When service sweat for duty, not for meed."

AS YOU LIKE IT.

THE ordeal of this first night came to be a repeated and daily trial to Magdalen. She had no one to whom she could complain; nor indeed had she actual matter of complaint—for Sir Hugh Semple made no haste to woo, and it was possible that the ceaseless allusions of his mother were but runnings over of her

meddling and intrusive spirit, and had no real authority after all. Yet her son came constantly in Lady Semple's train, and seemed almost as solicitous as Lady Semple herself to prevent Magdalen from falling into other hands than hers; and Magdalen felt it impossible to doubt that the Regent had committed her to this persecution. Lady Semple's protection, Lady Semple's advice and patronage, were almost forced upon the friendless heiress; and she herself caressed, applauded, and undertaken for, found herself in the position of favourite most sorely against her will, and heard her own name joined with Sir Hugh's till her endurance was exhausted. All the admirable qualities of Sir Hugh—all the honours of Castle Semple, and of its future mistress, dinned into her ears by day, pursued to her very dreams the reluctant heart of Magdalen. She seemed to move in

some bewildering, enchanted circle, where resistance was impossible; and vowing often by some bold and distinct avowal of her own feelings to put an end to her thraldom, constantly found her efforts foiled. It was in vain to permit herself to show unfeigned weariness of Lady Semple's manifold addresses—vain to protest her want of interest in Sir Hugh's estates and prospects, and still more vain to repudiate indignantly the heiress-ship on which all their pretensions were built. Sir Hugh wisely kept beyond reach of her repulses, and nothing discouraged the perseverance of Sir Hugh's mother. Magdalen was in despair.

And in the meantime the yoke of Lady Falkland's keen inspection — the perpetual suspicion to which both herself and Isobel were subjected—the undisguised jealousy of the frequent priestly visitors of Falkland

Lodging, and the constant taunts and doubts of the lady, increased the daily discomfort in which Magdalen was held; she blushed to tell even to Isobel the whole of her annoyances—blushed even to herself as if there was vanity in the thought, that this was meant for wooing, but could not by any means divest herself of the constant uneasiness, the impatience and the dread against which her high spirit struggled. And strong as was Isobel's attachment to her lady, it was impossible that she could do other than long and yearn for her imperilled child. After many lingering and weary days, they had still no intelligence of Alice; their hearts were sick with expectation and fear, and the evils with which they were menaced on their own part, grew sometimes in their solitary broodings into certain doom for her. Her mother saw her in the gloom of a convent prison, her lady imagined her

subjected to the subtle questionings of an inquisitor priest; it was not improbable that such should be the termination of their own trial, and the state of semi-restraint and anticipation in which they lived quickened all their fears.

Since the discovery of Alice's heresy, Lady Falkland had ceased to invite to her chapel her unwilling guests. Instead of this, both were subjected now and then to a conversation with Father Jerome, whose instructions, if not very much to edification, were not ungentle—for Father Jerome was a man, though a priest, and had compassion for the orphan lady, and the "woman of good," who might be a heretic, but visibly was not irreligious or profane. Lady Falkland herself did not in any degree share this feeling of pity. To her, Magdalen was but a perverse child, and Isobel a rebellious servant; and welcome to the ears of the lady

of the house, was any piece of observation travestied and misrepresented, which her own attendants brought her touching the secret occupations of her guests—the great black book which they were reported to read together in private—and their long half-whispered communings in the weird and mystic gloaming.

"Nay, how know we what sorceries they breed?" said Lady Falkland, with pious horror. No marvel that Magdalen, young, impetuous, and unused to control, provoked by the unpalatable attentions of Lady Semple, and the suspicious scrutiny of her hostess, was almost in despair.

"Oh, Isobel, my heart faints," said Magdalen, as she came wearied and impatient from the with-drawing room of Lady Falkland, where she had met with her usual persecutors. "There is no one to protect us; the Regent, if he has the will, is too weak

to help. Oh, I would we could be bold and make one true confession, and die where they will, like the blessed martyrs whom these tyrants have slain!—for my soul is sick of all—Isobel, Isobel, they encircle me like the hunters—I cannot breathe, I cannot think—oh, would we were away!"

"Lady Maidlin, the women say the heiress of Langley and Lammerstane is promised to the Laird of Semple," said Isobel; "the Regent hath both will and power to make this match, and whatever be its evils, Lady, there is at least escape for thee, and a dwelling of thine own."

Magdalen raised herself in her seat with dignity. "If it is your plan to mock me, Isobel, then have I lost my last friend—and alas, if you speak in sincerity, you do me cruel wrong. The Regent may betroth the heiress of Langley to whomsoever he will,

but Magdalen Hepburn of Lammerstane will stoop to no man's whistle, nor at any man's command. I will not be doubted; nay, never look so gravely in my face—I know it boots nothing to say, I had rather die—I cannot die for a word—but I will resist to my last strength; Isobel, believe me, I will never yield!"

"But if it might be well for thee to yield?" said Isobel—"Lady Maidlin, this gentleman is of good repute, and they say he leans towards the Evangel; think upon it again I pray you, dear child, ere you make this avow."

Magdalen did not answer—her face was hidden in her hands, and Isobel was at a loss to know whether her silence arose from displeasure, or if her young mistress pondered her counsel. But when Magdalen rose at last with a heightened colour, and eyes that shone through her hastily dried tears, Isobel per-

ceived that her prudent advice had deeply wounded her lady. She made an effort now to resume the conversation and vindicate herself, but Magdalen put it aside hurriedly —"we will speak of this no more."

On the following morning, no less a visitor than the Regent himself appeared at Lady Falkland's door. But, full of excited and nervous attention as his hostess was, it was not to her but to Magdalen that the visit was paid. With his usual courtesy, he led the young heiress to the window, and then with a gentle reproof to her for having made no more than a solitary appearance at Holyrood, he opened the main subject of his visit with a little hesitation.

"You are aware, Mistress Maidlin, of the right which our place of Regent lays in our hands, in respect of the wards of the crown? What! a blush so soon? nay then my errand

will be well sped. The Laird of Semple has spoken with me, Mistress Maidlin; he is of good blood and competent estate, and I doubt not, has already recommended himself to the lady of his heart."

"My Lord, I know not what you say," said the dismayed and trembling Magdalen.

"What! he leaves his suit to my hands?" said the smiling Regent; "what shall I say then, Mistress Maidlin, but that he is a proper youth, well spoken of in hall and fray; brave and courteous, with estate and castle meet for a noble bride. Nay, droop not, because another than the groom does the wooing. You shall but be dutiful, and say that your fate is in the hands of the Governor of Scotland, and he has bestowed you well."

"My Lord, I beseech your Grace's pardon," cried Magdalen hurriedly, "my fate is in your honourable hands; but I know a true

Knight with the blood of princes in his veins will never do a lady wrong—far less bestow an orphan friendless maiden on one whom her heart denies. My Lord, I know not this Laird of Semple; but this I know, that but for a delusion, he would never have sought so poor a hand as mine."

"So poor a hand?—nay, this is over humility," said Arran, "but pray you, Mistress Maidlin, make us aware what this delusion is?"

"I am told that I inherit my kinsman's lands of Langley," said Magdalen earnestly. "My Lord, believe me it is not so—your Highness smiles; oh, my Lord, you are a prince and knight, the noblest gentleman in Scotland! If none other comprehends me, I am bold to turn to you—I know my kinsman to be true and noble, trustful and fearless of soul—himself is in his prime of youth—he has

served my father at risk of all things—and my lord, I vow—I am but a woman, but I come of the blood of soldiers—I will not take Paul Hepburn's heritage—I will not be called heiress of Langley—I will be traitor to my native ruler, ere I will be traitor to my blood and kin!"

The blood rushed to Magdalen's face, her voice shook, her form trembled—and the Regent looked on with the half-envious admiration with which a nerveless man beholds the resolution of one who has learnt to keep the same. A short time passed in silence, Magdalen endeavouring vainly to compose herself, to subdue the tumultuous beating of her heart, and tremor of her frame. But a cloud was on the Governor's brow of another kind—he looked at Magdalen, he threw a vacillating glance around the apartment as if to seek for better counsel; and discomfited

and embarrassed he felt himself thrown back upon his own.

" This means she likes him not," said the Regent, muttering, " but, fair lady, if it be for the advantage of the state?"

" My Lord, I will leave you all my rights," said Magdalen, " I will go to any humble refuge it please you appoint for me; but this, so please your Grace, I cannot do."

" It is well to say, so please your Grace," said Arran, almost querulously, " but in truth I think I am ever thwarted most, when men say, so please you. Shall I send you this gallant in his own person, Mistress Maidlin? Is this more like to move you?"

" No, my Lord."

" By my faith, I will no more of it!" said Arran, " I have troubles enow, without striving with wilful maidens and lovelorn swains. Nay, pretty maiden, I frown not on you—you

even follow the fashion of your kind—but I leave you to your own pleasure; though how I shall deal with this foolish boy—well, be it so—every work to its proper time."

With a flush of joy Magdalen sought her chamber; she had scarcely spoken to Isobel since the discussion of last night, but in the fulness of her heart this offence was forgotten and forgiven. She told her all, with such a flush of satisfaction, that Isobel's slow and grave congratulations, doubtful and hesitating as they were, were almost a new cause of quarrel; but Magdalen suppressed her rising anger, and returned to Lady Falkland, ready to be gracious even to Sir Hugh Semple, out of the unbounded satisfaction of her heart.

But before the sun set, a royal lackey delivered into the hands of Magdalen, a billet from the Regent. She opened it with expectation, but without fear. It ran thus:—

"Mistress Maidlin,

"It appears very clear to us after farther consideration, that it does not become a prince and your native ruler, in the name of our Sovereign Lady the Queen, to yield to the rash wish of so young a maiden, who may long repent hereafter the indulgence which it pleased her crave to-day—wherefore we advertise you that Sir Hugh Semple of that ilk, a dutiful and faithful knight, hath our full concurrence and consent to his suit for your hand; and desire you, as a loyal subject, to prove your allegiance by a ready and willing acceptance of the same. The Lady Falkland shall have our instructions touching your bridal—and monies to provide for the same shall be supplied to her out of the rents of your own land; wherefore, greeting you heartily, we rest

"Your friend and servant to command,

"ARRAN."

Magdalen could scarcely support herself, but summoning all her strength she fled to her own chamber. Fastening the door, she ran to Isobel who sat calmly at her work by the window, and falling on her knees, hid her face in her kind attendant's lap. "Isobel, Isobel, haste and make ready—we must be gone to-night."

CHAPTER XIII.

"The loyal of the antique world,
When service sweat for duty, not for meed."
AS YOU LIKE IT.

THE mellow moon of harvest was high in the soft blue heavens; not with the chill and pallor of ordinary moonlight, but warm and full, like softened day, the light fell on the Tower of Lammerstane, and cast a sharp, bold outline of its shadow on the black side of Lammer Law. You could almost see the

autumn tints upon the leaves, and the rowans reddening in their clusters on the side of the ravine, and through the air, which carries nothing else save a whisper of voices close at hand, comes the voice of the mountain torrent ringing full and clear under the foliage, in its deep channel, at the foot of this highest peak of the Lammermuirs.

The little court-yard lies black as night under the shadow of its own walls, all except one angle close by the tower, where the light comes down warm and trembling upon the figure of Alice, who stands in her blue kirtle with a silken veil drawn over her fair hair, speaking to some one in the shadow. If you look closer into this darkness, you will see a tall man wrapt in a cloak, bending to hear what she says—and another female figure, bolder and of fuller size than Alice, stands aside with respect, looking up to where the well developed

form of Archer Simon on the wall stands out against the moonlight and the warm unclouded sky.

"Then your lady knows not that you are safe," said the gentleman. He changes his position a little, and now the moonlight has caught upon the edge of the plume in his bonnet, and you can perceive by other tokens that his rank is undisputable, for he carries himself loftily, even though his cloak is muffled about him with the purpose of disguise.

"Please you, we feared to send," said the low voice of Alice.

"She will be grieved and anxious for your sake—she shall have the assurance," said the stranger; "but hearken, little maiden—was she well in state, and dealt with in honour? I would you told me fully—for I am her nearest kinsman—it is meet I should know."

"Lady Maidlin was well if she were not tempted with great temptations," said Alice, with a sigh, "but in truth she came from Holyrood with aught but pleasure, so I even trust, noble sir, that all will be very well."

A sudden signal from Simon stayed the farther question which was on the stranger's lips. They listened; through the deep stillness, the sound of footsteps, hasty but uncertain, rang upon the stony path. Simon of Ettrick put his hands to his mouth like a trumpet, and spoke through them in a hissing whisper, "But two women—naething mair."

But Jean Bowman sprang upon the high narrow steps which led to the door of the tower, and Alice lifted up her wistful face on which the light shone full, towards the watcher, in anxious expectation. The slight jarring of the sword upon the stone pavement

told that the visitor had stepped back into the deeper shadow; but the steps proceeded, stumbling, fatigued, and precipitate, while the little company in the court-yard held their breath to hear.

Then came a low, but hurried knocking at the strong door; "we've nae refuge for weird women in Lammerstane," said Simon, looking down from the wall, "what makes you abroad so late at e'en? Hence, light queans! ye get no housing here."

But Simon started violently, as he caught a glimpse of the pale stern face looking up at him.

"Silence, knave," said the voice of Isobel Lauder. "Undo the door—the lady is here."

Her voice was drowned in the sudden clangour of bolt and bar. Pale, and faltering, and weary, bearing her cloak upon her arm, and wiping the dews of fatigue and fear from

her brow, Magdalen Hepburn crossed the threshold of her father's house once more.

"It is well with Alice—thank heaven then for us all," said Magdalen, eagerly, as the heavy cloak fell from her arm upon the pavement. "Now, good friends, good friends, be faithful—admit no stranger within these walls to-night. Ah! am I then too late?"

For the stranger advanced as Magdalen spoke, and she shrank from him in terror. In a moment he stood before her in the full moonlight, his cloak dropped from his face, and his head uncovered. She faltered forward with a cry of joy. Paul Hepburn, like herself, a fugitive, was by her side in the hour of need.

But Magdalen, who had been brave and prompt in all the terrors of the journey, and whose courage and endurance had never failed before, entered her home with a trembling

step, and a shy and downcast eye. Jean Bowman, waiting for no greeting, well though she deserved it, had already lighted a pile of wood and peats upon the hearth; the air was warm without, but the dark and solitary hall needed some internal brightening. These two Hepburns entered together this old stronghold of their race; a flood of conflicting emotion overpowered Magdalen—the ruddy blaze of fire-light glimmering on the armour on the walls and across the echoing floor, recalled to her memory, as sudden and clear as though she saw it now, her father's dying, with all its magnanimous endurances; again she knelt beside him, receiving his last counsel—again she heard the last violent throb of that brave knightly heart. Overcome by weariness, by remembrances so sad, and by the present so full of expectation, of fear and of sudden joy akin to fear, she threw herself into a chair, and

hid her face in a long burst of weeping. Her kinsman stood before her in the full illumination of the fire-light, bending towards her with pitiful and loving eyes—but he was wise as he was kind, and had the heart to let her full soul relieve itself. She had soon calmed down this first weakness, and with a blush and a downcast face held out her hand to him, and bade him welcome to Lammerstane.

"Is it safe for you?" She looked round with a sudden tremor into all the corners of the hall.

"Scottish ground is not over safe for me," said Paul Hepburn, with a slight smile; "yet my foot is on it many a day. But how is it with you, sweet Maidlin?—alone and unattended, on foot, in haste—say I have come in time to serve you; that were worth a life's danger indeed."

"I have fled from the Regent's hand—he

would have wed me against my will," said Magdalen faintly, her head drooping on her breast.

And what more there remained to say was said while Paul Hepburn knelt on one knee beside her chair, holding safely in his own this small imperilled hand.

Meanwhile, Isobel rested in Lady Maidlin's chamber, closely surrounded by her joyful and weeping daughter, and the eager Jean. Composed as Isobel was by temper and habit, she could not deny the tearful glance of deep love and tenderness with which her eye fell upon Alice, nor the breathless attention with which she sought an account of the journey, most safely and warily performed under the guidance of Jean. Having heard this, and once more drawn close to her breast her delivered child, Isobel gave thanks to Jean with tears and a full heart; but before Jean

could recover herself from the half-indignant disclaimer with which she repudiated any merit in the matter, Isobel Lauder was again the composed and grave waiting gentlewoman, ready to counsel or obey without sign of emotion, and whose very bearing gave countenance and protection to the youthful lady and her train.

"It was but yesternight," said Isobel, in answer to their eager questions, "my dearest child suspected no evil, but trusted in the Regent's princely word. Ill have they sped for many a day that trusted the word of Arran; and there came a billet to her, ere the even, which showed Lady Maidlin her delusion. Ye shall know that Lady Falkland had advertisement of the same, and came even to our very apartment to give my Lady joy. We had already spoken touching this matter, and my sweet child took her noble grace upon her, as she well wots how, and gave the Lady

Falkland to wit, that she would send myself, her woman, to Lammerstane for certain needs. The lady consented with great heart, promising a maiden of her own in place of me, as though Lady Maidlin was to be served in dressing of tires. So it being known I should set forth, my lady wrapt about her the cloak which Jean cast from thee, Alice, when thou madest thy escape, and in the gloaming, ere there was light in the hall, we stole forth of Lady Falkland's lodging. It was not meet so tender a maiden should travel by night, so we went but two or three miles of gate without the walls, to Christian Wardlaw, my gossip of whom I told thee, where, not without fear, we lay that night. My cummer's son went forth by day-break with his master's cart to gather peats, and though I mourned to see Lady Maidlin thus, it was well to be on our way. A matter of five miles we were carried

so—then we were sore afraid by sight of a passing train, six stout serving men and a gentleman in advance; but they took a turn in the road, and went from our sight—and thus we travelled foot by foot through Lothian, and fearing to enter Gifford, took to the hills. And now I thank God, and thee, Jean Bowman, and all good friends, that we are even safe at home."

"Fie upon him, for a false knight!" cried Jean Bowman, "would he wed Lady Maidlin to another, and her ain true love in peril? Now, let who will miscall this Governor. I'll speak good word for him never mair."

"Nay, Jean, we say naught of true love; —be silent, girl," said Isobel, a slight flush of displeasure crossing her brow, "have respect to the child."

"And sooth I will," said Jean, with a

laugh of happy triumph, "if she never hear of true love but from the like of me."

A troubled glance from Alice—her head cast down so quickly—her wandering unconscious fingers—even the blue kirtle condemned so rigorously by herself as vanity, and the little silver heart with its posy, fastening her ruff, startled her unsuspicious mother. Isobel looked with amazement, at her shrinking child—"Alice, what does this mean?"

"Mistress Isobel, you will not chide her," said Jean half gravely, half laughing, "it means nae mair than that, sair against the bairn's will, a moorland lad has been ill to drive from Lammerstane outer gate. He's come with the dew, e'ening and morn—and a bonnie lad, and a bein house and a guid steading of his ain; for when I kent it was Alice he wanted and no me, I looked to the lad—he's leal to the lady and of your ain faith, and he

canna see a thing in her, unwurdy of a saint out of heaven."

The tidings struck Isobel to the heart; her child was so young, and her child was all she had in the world.

"Alice, is it so?"

"I have told him it was sin—I have told him to think of holy things—but he will not hear me. Oh mother, mother, I am not to blame!" cried Alice, throwing herself into her mother's arms.

Her mother held her close and long, with such a colourless and rigid face, as Jean Bowman in spite of all her bravery almost trembled to see. Then Isobel rose, and asked "What is his name?"

"His name is Richard Dunbar—he is feuar of Breckenrigs, and farmer of the Hali-Hill. I gave him my word to speak for him mysel."

Isobel placed her daughter in her own chair tenderly, and hurried to her little sleeping room. Twice in one night she could not show herself overpowered by natural weakness; and Isobel was not prone to effusions of feeling, but with her strong conscience and sense of duty, trembled for everything in herself, which could seem like opposition to what appeared to her the will of God. She sat down upon her little wooden chair, and buried her face in her hands; what tears she wept—what struggle she experienced, no one knew, but the God to whom she fled for refuge in every calamity; and what was visible to lookers on, was only the same composed and dignified gravity, the same devotion to her lady—her duty—her common observances, as had been characteristic of Isobel Lauder for many a year and day. She came down with her face unmoved, her snowy

curch arranged, and gravely proceeded to wait upon her lady in the hall—as if not only no troublous realities had intervened, but they had not left the home precincts for more than the visit of a day.

CHAPTER XIV.

"What say you by that? Still harping on my daughter."
HAMLET.

THAT night Magdalen Hepburn laid down her head in the deep and dreamy slumber, through which her kinsman's words came sweet in whispers of hope and tenderness. She was no longer a solitary orphan, friendless and unguarded in an adverse world. Under the humble roof of Marion Craig's cottage,

was one from whom neither force nor fraud—neither banishment nor death, could ever effectually disjoin her now. Both were in the utmost danger, troubles surrounding them on every side, but the sky of each was flushed and glorious with such light as only is in dreams. The perils close at hand shrank into ignoble trifles, for the years and the days far off lay in the beautiful sunshine, and assurance and triumph were the best names for the exceeding hope of their hearts.

And Isobel lay awake through that solemn moonlight, holding close in her arms her sleeping child. The young man who sought Alice was known to her mother; and Isobel's devout mind had already recognized the hand of Providence in this suitor's urgency. Slowly her mind acquiesced, and not only acquiesced, but planned on this foundation. She thought of Alice safely left in the protection of a

humble home. She thought of herself free to follow the fortune of that other and scarcely less beloved child, who had been trusted, a motherless infant, to her hands; and though the tears blinded her eyes, she possessed her own will and conquered it.

"I thought to have seen Lady Maidlin wedded, and held thee a little while for mine own, mine own," said Isobel in her heart, as the deep and passionate love which she kept so much in restraint broke forth in this moment, yearning over the unconscious sleeper in her arms; "and now I must go away from thee, and leave thee with God and thy new fate—even so, even so; and the God who is her portion will be with my child."

By earliest dawn Isobel was astir, and out upon the wall of the Tower. To Magdalen, opening her eyes upon the charmed light, it

seemed only that Isobel's watchful love took greater precaution than any other, and that she looked for the approach of foes; but Jean Bowman had a clearer insight into the cause of Isobel's long and anxious gaze in the immediate vicinity of the Tower. At last the young yeoman appeared on the hill—but Isobel's womanly pride would not permit her to be the first to speak as she had intended. She lingered in the court-yard while Lilias drove forth the cows to the pasture, and nervously busied herself with little matters altogether unusual to her hand. The prompt spirit of Jean Bowman was of unspeakable service in this time; she hurried forth from the court-yard gate and made a signal to the suitor of Alice—a quick whisper and an imperative touch on his shoulder sufficed; and with a glowing face, and bonnet in hand, the young man made his obeisance to Isobel.

"My dear child is very young," said Isobel, faltering.

"She is not too young to have all the holy graces that are out of heaven," said the suitor, hastily. "Mistress Isobel, I am unlearned, but my heart is to the word and the truth. I will set up my house in the fear of God, and I will guard her with heart and arm, now and for ever, till my last breath. Will you trust her to me?"

Isobel did not think to be overtaken with such a sudden overflow of tears. "Young man, I know you but by name and report," she said. "Providence and the hand of God seemeth to me in this, I make my avow; but God do so to you and more also, if you deal not truly by my child. She is of tender years and tender heart—say to me before God you will be as gentle with her as her mother—

and He is witness between us, if I give my sweet Alice to you."

"Amen," cried young Dunbar, "I wish not a better wish than misery and destruction on my own head, if I deal not with her like an angel in my house. Mother, I kiss your hand."

And thus was concluded the fate of Alice.

When Isobel, pre-occupied and graver even than her wont, appeared before her lady, Magdalen longing to communicate her own secret to this dearest and oldest of friends, could find no words to convey it. Her quick and sensitive mind divined in an instant that something had happened to disturb the usual composure of Isobel, and both sank into a troubled silence, feeling those untold events a blank gulf between them, which neither was bold enough to plunge across. With punctilious care Isobel completed the toilet of her

lady, arranged her bright hair, smoothed back the plaits of her ruff, and adjusted the riding dress which it was Magdalen's pleasure to assume at once. As she did this, the journey which must be immediately undertaken occurred to the minds of both, and they began to discuss it eagerly with a feeling of relief.

"I had scarce time to tell you, Isobel," said the shy Magdalen, "My kinsman trusts to provide us shelter, with a godly gentlewoman in Berwick, one of good blood and singular grace, as he says. Mr. John, who is there established by commission from that good King, hath found him a home in this godly house, and, I do hear, a bride."

"Did you say a bride, Lady?" asked Isobel, in some surprise.

"It is no evil—he is a preacher of the Evangel," said Magdalen, blushing, "and if this Mistress Marjorie has it in her heart to

love him, is it not well? Her mother is a Christian lady, and herself a very sweet and godly maiden, my kinsman says—and he would have us, Isobel, set forth without delay."

"Dearest child," said Isobel, "it becomes not your faithful servant to forsake you in the hour of need, but I must even tarry a little while behind."

Magdalen looked up in alarm.

"One has been with me this very morn who seeks Alice in marriage," said Isobel steadily; "where our dear lady must flee, she must carry a lightened train—and I would leave my bairn in a home of goods, Lady Maidlin, before I follow thy course, my other child. Will it please you, take leave of Alice, and fortify her heart—for the child weeps, she knows not why. She is startled with this haste, and so tender and so young withal."

Not less startled, and moved all the more,

for what had just happened to herself, Magdalen faltered and wept as she spoke, "Will he hold her very dear, oh, Isobel, Isobel! will he cherish her as thou hast done, and I? Bid them go forth with us, and we will find means for all our following. Alice, my sister, my dear heart!—Isobel, you cannot leave her behind."

"I will leave her in her home, lady," said Isobel, "I have another dear one to go forth withal, but Alice must abide here, and look to her own house, and take up the lines that have fallen to her lot. When God sends thee home in peace, dear child, then shall Alice be near to thee and me; but the child is tender and young—we will leave her in her safe bield ere we wander on our way."

Magdalen turned round and threw herself into Isobel's arms. Then, indeed, the full heart wept a few tears unseen; but Isobel's

quick ear was roused to a whisper. "And I also—thou hast another child to bestow, and another blessing for me!"

When Magdalen raised herself from her kind attendant's shoulder, Isobel met her shy glance with a trembling smile of love and encouragement. "Shall I even serve the Lady of Langley one day, when all is done?" said Isobel, putting back with her tender hands the falling hair. "God's blessing upon him and thee, my Lady and my child."

These events were soon told, and there was now but the journey to provide for, and Alice to say farewell to; it was still very early—the bright August sunshine fresh and new, was full upon all the hills, and the dew glittered on the heather blossoms, on the golden whin bloom, and on the long and wiry tufts of grass. The door of the Tower was carefully closed, and a vigilant outlook kept

watch upon the walls, where indeed you could hear Jean Bowman parleying in a suppressed voice with the perplexity of Simon of Ettrick, whose eye was greatly tempted to leave its scrutiny of the hills for the more pleasant perusal of her gay and sparkling face.

"And you'll vow it was but the lady's love, and nae joe of your ain?" said Simon, in a somewhat doubtful voice.

"As true as the sun's in the sky," asseverated Jean, "and by the same token, he's higher than he should be, and us such a road to gang. Me! do you think I would give mysel the fash to set a tryst on the cauld hill for ony such lads as ane can see here?"

Simon could scarcely repress a muttered "Deil be in ye!—this quean would make ane swear out a' the saints in heaven—have ye nae comfort for a man but that?"

"Whisht, lad, we'll no say," said Jean,

with a saucy glance, "just you bide till Lady Maidlin's safe landed on English land, and you a' the credit of the ride."

"And what am I to look for syne?" said the mollified Simon.

"I would put on my strongest jack if I were you, and a good bright sword—nane of thae pleughpettles of rousted iron—and there's an eagle's feather in the east loft I'll give you for your steel cap. What, man! Scottish folk maun be brave when they cross the marching line."

"But that's no to say what I'm to win, when we're there," said Simon, bending very lover-like from his elevated post.

"Thae moorland wits, they're slow to learn," said Jean, leaping lightly from the step she stood upon. "What but bonnie Lady Maidlin's favour, were well worth a knave's bluid? —but there's a lang day, and mony a mile between us and there."

So saying, Jean ran gaily off to some other matter of preparation, leaving Simon, mortified, tantalized and fascinated, as entirely her dutiful slave as heart of woman could desire.

CHAPTER XV.

"I, mother!
I leave these calm, retired, and holy ways,
For the profane broad highroad of the world;
Its common use and custom. I wed! I plight
A silly troth, or own a worldly love!
Alas for me!"

"Oh, Lady Maidlin! oh mother, mother! it is sin to think of such vanities—I am assured it is sin."

But Magdalen only sits close by her, smoothing down her fair hair over her flushed and tear-wet cheek, and whispering "nay,

Alice, nay," while Isobel gravely standing before her, speaks as her mother only can.

"If it were attire for thy bridal, my bairn—if it were gauds for thine apparel, or gear for thy house, thou mightest have reason; but it is the common life—the lot of thy whole days. God pardon us all if this be vanity."

"Mother," said Alice looking up, worn out as it seemed, with a distressed and overpowering struggle, which was amusing and yet pathetic; "is not God enough for all? what want I more in my life? Oh, sweet lady!—dear mother! what want I more when I have God's truth?"

An appeal of this description, always threw the pious Isobel into perplexity.

"Alas, it may be I have a carnal mind," said Isobel, "I shame to speak in thy presence, Alice—yet God has ordained this so to be, and it will be comfort to thy mother's

heart, and to thy Lady's heart, to see thee safe bestowed in thine own home."

"And I know this Richard to be bold and true," said Magdalen, choosing another line of attack; "he has been named to me—and well to look on, Alice, and holds thee very dear."

"Oh, Lady, it is but vanity," sobbed Alice once more, but with a softened tone. And the very consciousness of this softening overpowered the young recluse. Alas! how many traitors were in the fortress! With a fresh burst of sorrow it came to her mind, that never temptation had beset her yet, but her own heart responded to it from within—that her treacherous fancy loved the blue kirtle, and gave a guilty bound of secret delight to the splendour of brave sights and rural festivities. Even now, Alice, weeping, has a consciousness that after all life would be

something changed, if Richard Dunbar should suddenly disappear over the southmost point of Lammer Law.

Paul Hepburn waits in the hall; it is agreed between them that their flight must not be together; and still with so many important projects on their hands, the order of the journey is scarcely arranged, save that Jean and Simon shall be Magdalen's attendants, and her new betrothed and anxious kinsman shall take his course, so as to cross them at several points on the way. But while Alice still is inconsolable there enters Jean Bowman, carrying with much mystery and reverence a bundle in her arms. Even Alice dashes away her tears hastily, and looks up with tolerable composure to see what this may be. A shade of frank and smiling embarrassment, a half bold, half bashful hesitation, call the general attention to Jean her-

self, and it is not diminished when she lays down carefully upon a table, a gay embroidered doublet, hose, and a cloak of velvet; a light sword and a pair of silver spurs lie on the mantle, and this Jean puts down with a little outburst of laughter, a blush and a side-long glance, which seems half to ask and half to defy the satisfaction of those around.

"Lady Maidlin, if it be your pleasure"—Jean stopped and faltered—"I ken it will not be your pleasure, and Mistress Isobel will gloom and Alice greet; but, madam, its for less scathe and mair disguise. If it please you, let me do on this suit, and ride before you on your horse?"

Magdalen was in high spirits—her natural girlish light-heartedness, restrained and broken down by many a weight, had burst its bondage for the time, and Paul Hepburn's face brightened where he stood in the hall,

to hear the laugh that hailed the proposition of Jean. The only "gloom" was on the face of Alice, for even Isobel smiled.

"The cloak's aye a mercy," said Jean, holding down her head, with a low laugh, "and I'll take heed to keep it well about me, and I wouldna say but I could use my hand as weel as anither if ony enemy come the gate—only I have nae broo of drawing bluid; but my lord himsel and Simon both give this counsel—if it please you, madam, give me leave."

"But Jean, you will make so comely a gallant," said Magdalen, gaily, "we will have over much gazing."

"Na, lady," said Jean, with a deep blush, "nane will look at me that sees wha I have behind."

"Have them on, Jean," said Magdalen, shaking off this compliment by a slight but

smiling gesture, "let us see how he bears himself, this cavalier."

"They are my young master's apparel," said Isobel, "I have heard men say he was a proper youth—but the fashion is old, they will betray you."

"Folk look not for fashion on the Lammermuirs," said Jean, "and if it pleases Lady Maidlin, I wouldna be seen in them till the horse is at the door."

She had not to wait long—and the handsome young gallant wrapped in his velvet cloak, and wearing his bonnet low on his brow, who sprang to the saddle before Magdalen's pillion, puzzled the keenest eyes in the household. Old Bertram surveyed him with a startled and superstitious glance. "Even so Master Adam was arrayed when he went forth to the hunting last; a merlin on the wrist and a medal on the bonnet, and I

would even say my brave young master had come to life once more. Pray heaven this travel be canny. I like not a guisard that mocks the dead."

Isobel and Alice stood at the gate gazing long and earnestly after the little train. By a different course Paul Hepburn set forth on foot. The mother and daughter were to find shelter at once with Dunbar's friends; and Magdalen turned back to wave her hand sadly to those who departed last from the tower of Lammerstane, and looked at it lifting up its black battlements against the sky, with a sorrowful farewell.

The whins upon the hill-side were bright with a mass of golden blossom, and the dark purple of the heather intervened its rich purple undertone between. The pang of parting and farewell passed quickly from Magdalen's lightened mind; the very danger of

this enterprize added to her high spirits, and the blythe sunshine, the early freshness of the morning, the feeling that she was accompanied by hearts devoted to her, and that one heart still more devoted kept watch upon her way, gave her a lightness and elation such as she had scarcely ever felt before. Low whispers of speech and ringing echoes of sweet laughter came back on the astonished Simon's ears, as he rode behind. "Its a' that clever quean," said Simon, admiringly; "how brave the gipsey looks in her man's apparel!—I wouldna be a lass on the gait for a mark of siller—for I think she glints the very heart away with thae twa glancing e'en;" and Simon, jogging on without jest or smile to solace *him*, sighed a most heavy sigh.

Their road was a rude bridle path, narrow and rugged, closely following the edge of the ravine—for it was not their interest to take

the easier highway. Almost sure of meeting no passengers here, Magdalen had opened her muffler a little to take breath. She had not time to secure it again, when a sudden and hurried step struck upon the stones, and abruptly appearing from behind a crag, the careless glance of the sub-prior quickened into keen scrutiny as it fell upon her face.

"Ha, Mistress Maidlin! I heard of you as a star at court—are you late returned, fair lady? This rude road is an ill exchange for the bowers of Holyrood."

"I am returned to breathe the air of the hills awhile," said Magdalen. "A free bird takes long training, father, ere it sing in a cage."

"I have seen when they clipt the wings of such," said the priest. "Look you now, how the world fades from the doors of our cloisters. I thought I knew the gentles of this land, as

well as a brother of St. Bernard's might—but this gallant, who has been at Flodden, I warrant him, for the fashion of his doublet, is strange to me, as if he were a guisard. Hey, good youth!"

Jean Bowman was a mimic by nature, and had a quick ear. Almost before Magdalen had begun to tremble for her—before the astonished Simon could draw near enough to put himself on the defensive, as gay a voice as ever sang a serenade struck in.

"Beshrew me, father, monks have keen eyes! I said, fair kinswoman, folk looked not for fashion on the Lammermuirs, when my hunting suit was frayed so sore in the chase yestreen. But you shall see naught but this same fashion of Flodden, holy father, when it pleases you come again to Holyrood. A rare fancy hath this doublet—not a page in the royal train but shall copy it anon."

Whether he was really imposed upon by this bold speech, Magdalen could not discover, but the sub-prior was of a temper to be easily cowed by assumption so careless and unhesitating. "Ay, sir youth, you speak fair," said the priest, half-sneering, half-respectful; "and where, may I ask, is your worshipful honour bound?"

"Your reverent worship has acquaintance with my kinswoman," said the pseudo youth, touching his horse lightly with the whip. "For my own person, we of the court count it dishonour to answer every chance query. Ho, knave, keep thy nag at safe distance. Your lady loves not a prancing steed."

"Sooth to say, Mistress Maidlin, you choose a strange guide," said the priest, with puzzled displeasure. "I wot not who this doughty page may be, but maidens should be wary-wise. Get thee home to thy tower if thou would'st rest in peace."

"What! my fair kinswoman must trust the cowl before the plumed cap?—that were ill prudence," said the youth. "Hark thee, father, meddle not with fair ladies; nay, never wait for good-morrow, need is better than courtesy—farewell."

A touch of the pony's shoulder drove the monk back on the sharp covert of a whin bush, and light as an arrow the sure-footed animal cantered away with his double burden. "I might have held out nae langer, lady," said Jean Bowman, "but I've aye minded grand words; now, for our lives—sit firm, for we must ride."

And ride they did by such a network of intricate and rugged paths as made Magdalen dizzy. Simon, sometimes in advance, sometimes behind, pointed the turns and guided their course; and, with only the excitement of a little fright, they reached in safety the

glen and fountain, beyond the border of the hills where Paul had appointed their first meeting. There was little time to rest, but while Simon watched at one "airt," and Jean at another, it seemed to Magdalen there never had been draught so delicious as the cup of cold water her kinsman offered to her thirst. He had reached the spot before them, although but on foot, and the moment in which she caught sight of this eager watching face, not a stranger's, but her own, looking out for her approach, and flushing into radiant thankfulness at her first glance, was worth a hundred such journeys to the orphan maiden, who all her life had been alone.

CHAPTER XVI.

"An' you will live with us,
A grave and modest order hath our household—
Good sober cheer, but neither feast nor fray.
To-morrow marvellous like to yesterday—
Brother and brother."

SOMETHING of a different fashion from the few baronial halls she has seen, and even from the peaceful apartments of the Lady Falkland is this low-roofed room, into which Magdalen timidly enters, following her kinsman. Passing under the projecting gable which, with its open lower

story, forms the porch, and through the small dark court, full of serving people busy with household occupations, they have traversed various dark passages, and taken sundry single steps upward and downward through the gloom ere they reach this family apartment. Nearly as small as Magdalen's own chamber of dais, it looks much larger from the low level of the panelled roof. One large bay window, strongly barred and bolted above its oaken shutter, fills one side; on the other are the shining panels of an oak partition, hung with one or two small grim portraits, dark and lustrous as the wood itself. The high mantel-shelf has a rude oak carving of the Last Supper, and a sort of rug of home manufacture lies before the table, where a little group seated round the lamp attract the stranger's anxious interest more than the room.

The principal of them is a lady, whose black velvet dress and high stiff snowy ruff have an air of habitual costume—part of herself, like the dress of some sisterhood. From her girdle, hung by a silver chain, the household keys conceal themselves in her drapery, and close to her fine but emaciated hand, a silver whistle lies upon the table. Her features are high and regular, her eyes of a deep and variable blue, her complexion marble pale, and her hair as white as silver. The instinct of command and authority which you can see she has in no small degree, gives a certain stateliness and calm to her face, but under this, these quivering and almost querulous lines about the mouth, and the depths of yearning anxiety in the eyes, betray to you a twofold character in this matron of good, dignified and composed as her present demeanour is.

Opposite to the lady sits a man whom

Magdalen's eyes seek out with an instinctive reverence and curiosity. He is interrupted, as it seems, in some discourse of comfort, for his hand rests on the open Bible before him, as he lifts his head towards the new comers. Those strong and rugged features, those dark eyes burning with an inward radiance, and this perpetual light of expression which speaks in intelligible language, not to be mistaken, as plain as utterance of the lip could speak, fascinate the attention of the young and timid stranger. He is no longer the preacher of a forlorn hope, no longer the inspiring voice of a hopeless battle, nor needs the strong assurance, vivid and defiant of every power but the delivering might of heaven, which strung the galley slave to his life of misery. His face has opened out under the home light that gleams upon its furrows. The beloved apostle could have given no gentler exposition of the

loving Gospel than was in those words, which but now have awakened his lips to the half-tender, pathetic, exultant smile, which throws light upon his face—and strangely these strong features, this quick working brow, and earnest countenance appear all full of light and shadow, like some grand mountainous country under the glory of a sunset which has been touched with tears.

Magdalen Hepburn! young maiden newly wooed! shrink not, nor droop your head at sight of this sweet Saxon face, beside the preacher, mild of brow and calm of eye. Not your own sensitive and tremulous soul, your eyes that can flash enthusiasm well nigh as glorious, and can comprehend and see into, if you may not fathom, the depths whither this man plunges, were fitly mated with this man. These sweet eyes so mild and dewy, this fair calm face where every sunbeam has an answer,

but which has nothing akin to tempest or to storm—this dear and gentle lowliness, this blessed patient humility of nature, all that makes an atmosphere of sweet and tempered fragrance about this English Marjorie, is formed for the repose and solace of a stronger spirit—and well for her that this is her fate.

The light of the lamp shone upon them all as they sat in home quiet around their table; but Mistress Marjorie was the first to rise, with light and willing courtesy; and her smile, though she did but smile, was comfort to see. Then came stately Mistress Bowes, saying some words of welcome, and leading the tremulous stranger to a great cushioned chair by her own side. Like one at home in this apartment, Paul Hepburn drew to him another seat and took his place, and when Magdalen was calm enough to see and hear clearly, she was looking down into the face of Marjorie

Bowes, who knelt before her busily loosing her cloak, and all the warmer wrappings, "which," a sweet voice says "Mistress Magdalen needs no longer, now she hath arrived at home."

Magdalen would fain have put out her hand, with a childish impulse, to smooth down the beautiful golden hair—fain have touched the smooth rounded cheek, with its soft downy bloom, admiring and grateful, and indeed she did quite shrink and condemn herself in contrast with this ready, simple, loving spirit, which went about these little offices with such natural grace and promptitude. Mistress Marjorie wore her bright hair uncovered as Magdalen herself did, and her kirtle rose high upon her pretty neck, and, widening out at the shoulder, descended thence in a tight sleeve to the wrist, as Magdalen's own dress was fashioned; but Marjorie's kirtle was of maidenly white, with laces and ribbons of blue, and a broad

golden clasp secured the girdle round her waist, and a golden chain supported the pretty ornament which hung, with drops of pearl and chasing of gold, from the fastening of the stiff ruff of lace and cambric which stood out like a fan round her shoulders. An English maiden of noble race, accustomed perhaps to less particular and reverent attendance, but to more freedom and greater abundance than the young heir of the poor knight of Lammerstane—yet Magdalen perceived with surprise how this young lady went about such homely domestic offices, as it would have grieved the soul of Isobel Lauder to see herself put finger to.

When all that kindness could do had been done for Magdalen, Mistress Marjorie seated herself on a low chair opposite the stranger, and lifted her blue eyes to her face with admiration and respect. Marjorie Bowes was

already past her one and twentieth year, but "mim" as maid should be, she sat silent till some one else had resumed the suspended conversation.

"I have my thanks to make to you, Mistress Maidlin," said Knox himself, after a pause. "I had not been free to my Master's work this day but for your warning. Alas! in our poor Scotland, fair ladies, children must even buckle harness to them. This young gentlewoman must have been but a child, good friend, when she succoured thee and me."

"I doubt not, a child of grace," said Mistress Bowes; "maiden, favour is deceitful, and beauty vain. Thou didst not this for merit of a good work?—alas, naught is good save God's grace; thou didst it not for the praise of men?"

Magdalen looked up in astonishment. Praise of men had certainly not attended the action,

which, but for the other circumstances connected with it, would never have rested in her own memory. Her "No, madam," was uttered in a tone of surprise, and even suppressed resentment—for Magdalen had still to learn patience, and was little accustomed to the rebuffs and questions of common intercourse; and, as she lifted her rebellious eyes upon the lofty troubled face beside her, she could not help a momentary gleam of displeasure, which Mistress Bowes, wrapt in her own thoughts, saw nothing of.

"My sister," said the preacher, "if nothing is good, as thou sayest well, yet behold what a glorious alchymy is in the power of man; think you the cup in which that royal witch of old melted her pearl is half so precious as the cup of cold water given at thy gate in the name of God? Nay, verily!—and I trow, this life and warfare becomes a glory, when we

bethink ourselves—What! shall any man say to me, that out of my misery and weakness can come no praise to God? Lo, I defy him with the magnificent name of my Lord, and prove me every act I do in honour of the same, well-pleasing, and of no evil savour before His Father in Heaven. Hence with these carping Satans! Of tender pity, of neighbour love, and of regard unto His holy name, the Lord maketh no evil, howsoever the adversary will."

To this unhesitating reproof the mistress of the house made no response. Her mouth worked nervously, her heavy eyelid drooped upon her troubled eye; but she seemed accustomed to such remonstrances, and took no notice of this.

"And for yourself," said Paul Hepburn. "What news of your travail, Mr. John?"

There was a slight pause—the mind of the

Reformer was otherwise occupied. "Look you," he said, with a smile, "how our good Mistress Marjorie doth contemplate this her tender sister, longing to hear how and wherefore she took the hill on yonder chill March night, for thy deliverance and mine. I know she loves to hear of dangers, being herself of so assured and mild a mood that wandering and danger flee from where her presence is; and lo, I pray you, note how the other little one marvels in her eyes, how it befalls that she never knew this for a worthy deed before. Hark you, friend Paul, I will tell you of my warfare anon; but if there come a lighter moment, I count it right to give it full space to shine upon us."

At this moment an old servant entered the room; his appearance was the signal for a general rising, and Marjorie, taking Magdalen's hand, passed her mother and the Re-

former with a slight reverence, and led the stranger to a larger apartment, where a long table was spread for the evening meal. Fatigued with her journey, Magdalen was glad to bid a blushing good-night to her kinsman, and to her new friends, whenever the solemn thanksgiving permitted her to rise from the table. Marjorie, rising with her, took her hand again, and led her through these same dark perplexing passages, and up a narrow gloomy staircase to her apartment. It was a large low room, with silken hangings and an ample bay-window, and seemed, indeed, to be over the sitting-room into which she had first been introduced. Marjorie led her to a little door at one end of this apartment, and bade her look at a pretty small chamber, full of moonlight, streaming in by the open window.

"This is mine," said the young English-

woman; "when we are good friends, we will even strive who is to call the other first in these sunny mornings; yet I would you had come in spring, sweet Mistress Maidlin. I love that name of yours, it is woman-like and sweet; but now let me aid you. Look you, I know you have been used with gentle tendance. Your kinsman told us. Nay, I love to be of service—let me loose your riding skirt—and you shall go to rest, and I will read to you one precious word when you are laid down to sleep. Ah, I do love to hear it so!—and thus the last thought is of God, and it stays the soul till morning light."

"I thank you, lady; you are even too good to me," said Magdalen, unable to prevent the ready care and attention with which her new friend began to assist her disrobing, whether she would or no.

"Nay, you must not call me lady," said

Marjorie Bowes, "but Madge, or Marjorie, or what friendly name you will. Now you shall throw on my wrapping-gown, and I will go apart into my little chamber. When I hear your step again, I will return and say good-night."

Full of so great a confusion of emotions, joy at her escape, gratitude at her kind reception, embarrassment, wonder, thankfulness, it was no great marvel that Magdalen's prayers were somewhat wandering and bewildered to-night, but when she lifted her head from her pillow, to meet, with a blush and a tremble, the kiss of her good-night—for all so pure and gentle as were these lips of Marjorie Bowes—her heart was surprised into a sudden calm and suffusion of sweet tears, by the gentle whisper with which this was accompanied.

"I looked into the holy book for you, sweet Maidlin, and lo, now, this is the word."

"'At that day ye shall ask in my name, and I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you, because you have loved me, and believed that I came out from God.'

"If it please God wake you in the dark, you will not be faint with such a word," said Marjorie, "and now, dear heart, good-night."

CHAPTER XVII.

He was arch and litherlie,
But well Lord Cranstown served he."

LAY OF THE LAST MINSTREL.

But these watches of the night passed over Magdalen in the deep and undisturbed slumbers of youth. When she woke, the sun was shining full into her chamber, and as she glanced about her on the unfamiliar furniture, and low-roofed spacious apartment, so unlike the lofty rooms of Lammerstane, her first

feeling was bewilderment and wonder. She started up with a low cry. Startled in her turn, Jean Bowman raised her head from a book, over which she had been poring with painful assiduity. Jean had resumed her own proper appearance, and in her holiday kirtle, did not seem by any means an unworthy representative of Magdalen's attendants. She hastened towards the lady with a half-blush of embarrassment.

"Maybe, you'll think me but an ill tire-woman, lady—I'm no to be evened to Mistress Isobel; but please you to tell me what I maun do? I'll try my best."

"No fear, Jean," said Magdalen, gaily; "but tell me now how you have fared since we parted last night?"

"Your ladyship kens I put off the guisard at the hostel where we abode, till my lord came back," said Jean, holding down her

head for the moment, "and then I came step for step behind up to this great house, me and that puir knave Simon. He says you'll have little need of his service now, lady," continued Jean, holding down her head once more, and putting up her hand stealthily to her cheek as though it might be possible a tear was on its way, "and the silly loon does nought but fret himself, and make a moan, at taking service, a common jackman, on the border side."

"Nay, Jean, I will speak to my kinsman," said Magdalen, hurriedly.

"It's the very words I said," cried Jean, in great haste and shame dashing off the tear which was visible after all for a moment; "and, lady, I think I maun take my journey, now you're here in safety, hame to bonnie Sanct Andrew's, to my creel and my poor bit lonely housie—if they havena dinged down

the bits of wa's and trodden in the roof—it was naething but clay and divots when a' was done." And Jean could no longer command the honest outburst of tears, the shower that had been gathering in her face.

"Am I no a silly quean?" said Jean, with a sob. "Me, that suld be glad to see you safe, Lady Maidlin, and fore-gathered with your true love again—and I'm thinking of mysel like a fause cummer that has nae kindness in her heart."

"Jean," said Magdalen, drawing near to her with a pale face and considerable alarm, "do you think then that I am now so very poor?"

"You are dwelling with the fremd, Lady Maidlin," answered Jean.

Magdalen fastened her kirtle with trembling fingers, and drew through her hand her necklace of pearls with a wistful glance at Jean. "I must speak with my kinsman," she said

with a deep blush and a sigh. "It is true I am a fugitive from my own house—it is true we come to dwell with strangers—yet tarry with me if you may; here is what will buy you apparel, Jean, and give somewhat to Simon to mind the house of Lammerstane by—and if better days come, as I pray they may, we shall even travel as gladly home again as with heaviness we travelled here."

"Lady, I spoke not for siller's sake," said Jean, with deep shame and mortification, "there's sea-water plunging on this shore, and plenty work for the like of me. I wouldna take ae bonnie pearl, like yoursel as white and innocent, no if I should die; it was but that nane might think Jean Bowman sorned upon an English dwelling—I had nae thought but that."

"They are kind and good, and love the truth; upbraid them not with the name of

enemy," said Magdalen. "Alas! our own land casts us forth; we do ill to be aught but thankful to England."

But Jean who was much more of a Scottish-woman than a Protestant, answered nothing: unwilling to dissent from her lady, and unable to give her concurrence to Magdalen's gratitude.

"It's a great house, lady, though the chalmers are low and brown, and no like the grand roofs of Lammerstane; and the very kirk in this town cowers beneath the walls, for they say, though a high tower would be a land mark at sea, it would be naething but a mark for Scottish shot, or English shot, in such a weary battling town; and this lady has a tribe of serving women past my counting, and maun have gear and estate to keep it a'—but they say she gies her bonnie lady-bairn to the great Gospeller that's dwelling here. I would honour

him, Lady Maidlin," said Jean, looking up with a sparkle of returning animation, "but I wouldna wed sae black-a-vised a man if it was me."

If Magdalen's smile owned a kindred feeling, it was checked by her quick "hush," and the motion of her warning hand—and scarcely a minute after Marjorie Bowes entered the room.

"Good morrow and a daylight welcome," said Marjorie, "you are soon astir, pretty lady—and I pray you tell me if this your maiden is well learned in the faith?"

Jean made her obeisance, half-defiant; but Magdalen saw that the beauty of the young Englishwoman insensibly softened Jean, who was extremely susceptible and easily influenced by beauty.

"Please you, madam, no," said Jean, firmly, expecting what penalties and pains should follow.

"Wherefore, I ask, is this?"—said Marjorie. "It pleases Mr. John, sweet friend, to question and deal with the unlearned in the household at seven of the clock ere the day's work is well begun. First we do break our fast, but after, if this damsel will—"

Jean's bent brows were already smooth and bright; another courtesy of prompt acquiescence interrupted Marjorie; for with all Jean's love of the gayer and lighter pleasures, in some measure condemned by so religious a household, her mind was active and thirsted for knowledge, and Jean had a twofold curiosity respecting this Mr. John, who was not only the great Gospeller and renowned of St. Andrews, not only a suffering and heroic man, persecuted for his faith, but the betrothed of this fair and sweet lady, whom Jean already admired with enthusiasm, despite her English blood.

The bay window of Mrs. Bowes' sitting-room looked out upon a small trim garden, jealously enclosed, and permitting no other prospect than its own strip of lawn, its evergreens and flowers, and straight lines of division.

Marjorie led Magdalen into the wide and bright recess formed by this sunny casement, with the air of one who has something to tell.

"I would speak to you of my mother," she said, simply. "I wist not of one who serves God more faithfully in all this land; but it pleases the Lord permit Satan to exercise her with many and great temptations, and her spirit is oft so sore cast down, that she sees no longer the ground of her acceptance, and believes her lost for evermore; but Mr. John spares not to deal with her morn and night; so I pray you think it

not strange if you see her sad—it is the tribulation of her life."

It was well that Magdalen was thus warned, for otherwise she would have found it strange to account for the deep, uneasy, and troubled dejection which seemed to overpower the mistress of the house.

Though John Knox and Paul Hepburn sat with her at the table, Magdalen could not keep her eyes from this face, so stately in its natural bearing, so worn with inward conflict. Sometimes the weird aspect of Lady Falkland—her withered ashen cheeks and contracted countenance lighted up with frivolous and unseemly curiosity, or distracted between the formal rites of religion, and the unabandoned and beloved world of vanity and intrigue which she professed to abjure, glided in before Magdalen's memory in contrast with this other face. They were

alike in their common pallor, and in the silver-white hair revealed on either brow; but how unlike this deep absorbing passionate emotion, to the light flutter of Lady Falkland's agitations and excitements, Magdalen could not sufficiently observe. When the meal was over, and prayer and thanksgiving had been said, Magdalen forgot all the novelty about her, in the sudden discovery that Paul Hepburn was again booted and spurred as for a journey. With dismay she looked up to meet the earnest fervid glance which had been dwelling on her, as she sat absorbed with the stranger, and Magdalen rose, blushing and confused, at his invitation, and went with him timidly to the little garden, feeling that she was here to receive his farewell.

"Must you leave me here alone?" Paul Hepburn was something comforted by the look of discouragement with which these words were said.

"I have much to say to you, Maidlin," was his answer; "you know me, as coming and going, a man who has no certain home; but I have never told you, sweet one, that I go among our Scottish lords and knights with such persuasions as I may, to move them to defend the truth. Many are much disposed towards a better faith; and many more are wroth and sick with the devices of Papistrie. I have borne many a mission from this gentle prince and flower of promise, who sits upon the English throne, and many a journey have I undertaken at mine own hand. Nay, sweet Maidlin, look not so pale—I am skilful at disguise, and never a baron in Scotland but would be shamed and false, if he betrayed me. This is my warfare, mine own Maidlin—and thus is my life."

Dizzy and trembling, Magdalen clung to his arm—but even in her first tremor her

young erect head rose higher, and her eyes shone. He saw that her pride in his high occupation was already stronger than her fear.

"My Maidlin is content I should go?" said Paul; "now let me tell thee further, dear heart, of myself. I have not been in mine own hall for many a day; but my mother's kinsman, whom thou hast heard of, and whom it pleased the king to appoint Tutor of Langley, when I was but a stripling, dwells there to this hour. He is a mild old man, who molests no one, and whom none molest, and from his good stewardship I have enough to provide for all needs. Maidlin, I would not have thee forget, for a moment's space, what dearer tie is between us; yet bethink you, Paul Hepburn is your nearest kinsman; and tell me whom I must care for of thy attendants, or what for thine own self."

"There is Simon, the poor knave," said Magdalen, with a deep blush; "I warrant him true and loyal: and how shall I requite this lady who succours me? Were we not better have a little dwelling, Isobel and I, when she comes? Isobel has rare skill with her needle, and I also can do somewhat, and Jean will wait upon us both."

Paul Hepburn bent over her with a smile. "I warn thee thou shalt hear words that fright thee, if thou speakest so to me. What if I should call Mr. John hither, and get me witnesses, and hold fast this hand, though it tremble, and have thee bound, whether thou wilt or no."

Magdalen drew her hand from his arm, and retreated in terror.

"Nay, nay, no need to fly," said Paul; "sooth, thou shalt do but what thou wilt, and even a woman can crave no more; but

tell me of thy knave and maids. Mistress Bowes is joyful to have thee for guest, sweet Maidlin. I will confer with her as thy guardian should, and she shall dispense for thee. Simon—he shall be my knave awhile instead of thine; but mark you, I look to carry my lady to Langley anon—to home, and to peace."

No very long time after, Paul Hepburn made his farewell, and Magdalen stood in a little solitary room over the porch, looking after him till she had long been looking at the vacant street and the strange houses alone. He was gone upon his dangerous course once more.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"My mother sits among her maids,
And spins the livelong day;
My heart beats in my ears so fast,
I hear not aught they say.
But while the thread runs on my wheel,
The road is clear and free,
And my heart carries like a bird
My love's errands to me."

WHEN Paul was indeed gone, and when the excitement of novelty was over, Magdalen found herself established in a very quiet and orderly household, and to a most undisturbed life. The sweet fresh heart of Marjorie Bowes lighted up the atmosphere, which might otherwise have been somewhat heavy;

and it was impossible to behold, uninterested, the comings and goings of such an inmate as John Knox, or to look on, without concern, upon the daily life of the troubled and anxious spirit which ruled the house. But Magdalen loved to escape, when such an indulgence was safe or possible, to the dark shores of Tweed, sodden and dull with autumn rains, and here so bare of the beauty which distinguishes the "fair river, broad and deep," of many a border song—or to look out with never failing interest on the wild sea, plunging upon the iron coast of Berwick—upon the fishing coves and villages, the fishing boats and hardy men.

A routine which rarely varied was the life of the household. By break of day, both mistress and servants were astir—then came the solemn household prayers, the breakfast; and then Mr. John went forth about his

daily labour, or sought the chamber in the wall where he pondered his sermons, or departed into the adjacent country on journeys which kept him away for days; and the female portion of the household took their domestic tasks, diversified only for the youngest among them, and for Marjorie and Maidlin with the rest, by hours of reading and instruction, and by intervals of devotion for all. And evening came with its gathering about the hearth, when perhaps Mr. John, unfolding his expressive brows, would tell the listening maidens in the fire-light, some story of his imprisonment, or of his flight, or absorbed in graver matters, would discuss and expound the Gospel for the comfort of the suffering lady, who sat unmoved in her gloom, through such a flood of blessings and words of cheer, as made the very atmosphere radiant, and sent echoes of benediction through the

darksome walls—or suddenly startled with the effect of one which struck to its mark like an arrow, would awake for a little while to a troubled joy, trembling and insecure, and almost as sad to see as her grief.

This group around the hearth was such as a painter might have studied. Few were these nights of intercourse; most usually Magdalen and Marjorie drew their stools within the chimney arch alone, while the Reformer busy at his warfare, was travelling, discussing, preaching in season and out of season—and the mother, as usually, kept her own chamber, where her time was spent in prayer. At these seasons the young Scottishwoman, an exile and a fugitive, and the young Englishwoman, the beloved of the grave Reformer, forgot for the time all but their youth, and the natural license of young hearts, and with the fire-light shining in the golden hair of one,

and flashing back from the kindled eye of the other, lost themselves in such wandering fancies, or dialogues, full of much disgression, as were natural to their state. But at other times, when the lamp upon the table threw its light full on the sorrowful and lofty countenance of Mrs. Bowes, and on the slow and dreamy industry of her distaff as she twisted the spindle, and drew out the slender thread after a monotonous fashion, which came to be strangely impressive if you watched it long, like a pure, unvindictive, but sorrowful Fate, weaving the thread of life—when John Knox threw his cloak over the high back of his chair, and turned the powerful features which shone all the stronger and more characteristic, for this dusky glow of fire-light towards the hearth—when Magdalen's graceful head stooped over her tapestry at one side of the fire, and Marjorie Bowes looked up from her

fine needlework at the other—this group was worth an artist's eye; nor perhaps less a poet's tongue, when the silence of their assembling was broken, and one and another spoke.

"I must preach in Newcastle anon," said John Knox, "these coasts have heard well of my doctrine—honoured lady, methinks I tarry here over long."

"Now, heaven forbid," said Mistress Bowes hastily; "alas, it seemeth me, as if Satan were leagued with man against my comfort—or verily, I will rather say," she added in a tone of deep dejection, "as if the Lord himself would have me know that grace remaineth not for me, the chief of sinners."

"Nay, it is even of such stuff that it pleaseth God, make the chief of saints," said the preacher, "and I confess me, the flesh is fain to rest, and loves the light of home and

hearth. Mistress Marjorie, if it please you, I would enquire wherefore you smile?"

"It was but to think of what you called rest," said Marjorie, in the low and reverent tone, with which she always addressed him.

"I warrant me, my child, it were harder at the oar," said the Reformer, lifting his hand as though he would have laid it on her beautiful hair, "and there was never such as thou in yonder parts, with thy housewife crafts and gracious ways, to make home and hold out of four bare walls."

"But if carnal comfort was not there, the Lord supported your spirit," said Marjorie.

"Mightily," said the preacher with a kindling eye, "yea, with such great assurance, and joy of victory, as this worldly pleasance often lacketh now. Say thy will, young sister —I spy question in thy glance."

"It was but to ask," said Magdalen, "if

the tale were true they told of one who pointed to the towers of St. Andrew's—if you knew what place it was?"

A flood of great and inspiriting remembrances flashed back upon the Reformer's face—for sudden light, or sudden darkness revealed itself, as in a mirror, through every line in his countenance. "I see the time," he said, warmly, "it fell upon this wise. I was sick at my post, sick, and sorely straitened with pains and weakness; but, of a sudden, there gleamed upon my soul such triumph that I scarce contained, and my heart rose up and declared before God that I should preach therein before I died. Yea, and I shall!" continued the Reformer. "Ye bear me witness; I am a poor preacher of the Gospel labouring on English land, and may not cross the border but at the certain peril of my life—yet I vow to you, God so en-

lighteneth my soul that I wot well I shall preach in Scotland, and serve my Lord in Scotland ere I die—yea even there, where it pleased Him call me to bear His cross before the world!"

A high flush of certainty and triumph lighted up his face, and no one of these women durst for a while intrude upon the silence which still vibrated with his words; they went on with their suspended occupations in hushed and quiet reverence. At length Mrs. Bowes spoke.

"Methinks, pains or martyrdom were little for such a token of heaven's gracious favour. Blessed are they who wiss that God is with them; all tortures were small for such a grace as this."

"Mean you to purchase the like?" said the preacher, darting upon her his quick and vivid eye. "Nay, then, in sooth I know no

tortures sufficient for any mercy; for mine own part, honoured sister, I have but those my glorious Lord has bought for me—and even for thee as well."

There followed another pause; Mrs. Bowes made no answer, but went on silently, and with moving lips, as though she spoke a charm, twining her slender thread.

"I love this Scotland," said Marjorie, in a very low tone. "Yet I marvel why it might not be as good to preach God's gracious word to Englishmen?"

The Reformer smiled; he caught the startled face of Magdalen—the lifted head, the flashing eye—with a sympathetic glance. "Dear is the mother of our blood," said Knox, with a certain pathos in his voice. "I do honour every mother for the sake of her I call mine own, yet none but mine own is mine; and heaven send my best blood, drop by drop,

could bring her light—could bring her peace, great heart, fair land! Yea, I do cry with Paul, I would I were accursed from Christ for Israel's sake, my brethren according to the flesh; and if I but spend my life in God's great quarrel, and for sake of Scotland, there will be joy in my end."

CHAPTER XIX.

"Oh grave and good Paulina!
The great comfort that I have had of thee."
WINTER'S TALE.

BUT months passed on after this quiet fashion ere Magdalen heard anything of the constant companions of her former life—her devoted attendants, Isobel and Alice. Jean Bowman, promoted to the dignity of Mistress Magdalen's bower-woman—for the fond title of her home, the Lady Maidlin, was now forgotten—

had grown expert in the offices of the toilette; but though Jean's mind, ever fresh and full of life, was a constant refreshment to her wearying mistress, she longed for the motherly presence of Isobel, without which her own sense of loneliness and self-responsibility, accustomed as she had been all her life to the kind and constant service which was indeed protection, grew almost too much for her. The companionship of Marjorie Bowes had become dear to the solitary Magdalen, and she had learned to look up with veneration, not unmixed with affection, to the noble and sorrowful mother of this household. But despite these consolations, her heart yearned after the old familiar friend, who was her own and not another's; and Isobel's name in her nursling's prayers was said every morning and every night with weeping, and with earnest petitions to see her once again.

And light was the waking of Magdalen who had gone home in her dreams, when, suddenly opening her eyes on the new year's morning, she found Isobel Lauder seated by her bed. The young lady was not astonished for the first moment, for in her sleep all was well at Lammerstane, as it had been ere any of these disturbances began—but the next instant she threw herself upon Isobel with glad tears and rejoicing, and with a multitude of questions which the new comer did not attempt to answer, as with a trembling lip and full eye she held her lady closely in her tender arms.

"Has it been well with thee, dear child?" said Isobel.

"It has been very well with me—but I have longed for you, and wearied my heart. And Alice, Isobel—Alice!—how is it with Alice? tell me of her."

"I have left her in her own home," said Isobel, steadily, though her features changed. "Dearest lady, it is well with Alice; she will have her cares, God's gracious blessing on them! lest her heart be too much carried towards the joy of Heaven; and she has one by her who loves her well, and she will remember her lady and her mother in her prayers. Dear heart, Alice is very well."

"And yourself, Isobel?"

"I have thee, my other child," said Isobel, "nay, lady, bear with thine ancient servant. Thou wert given to me in thy infant years, and I love thee as mine own."

"You say this to me," said Magdalen, reproachfully, "who have been like my very mother; but there need not such compliments between us, Isobel. Come, tell me how all has fared since we came from Lammerstane."

"Lady Maidlin, you must first do on your

kirtle," said Isobel, with a smile, "we may not have these shoulders bare, for all so white as they gleam. There is much to tell, dear child. Nay, but these wilful locks—be still, lady, till I braid them aright."

"I will have no braiding till I hear your tale," said Magdalen; and with her long brown hair streaming over her shoulders, she drew a stool to Isobel's side, and sitting down leaned upon her lap, and looked up into her face. There was a tremble in Isobel's smile.

"You were not long gone, lady, when there came a band of men-at-arms with a reverend person like the master of a royal household, and that same gay gallant, the Laird of Semple, from whose alliance you fled. They had even lost their way by Providence, good guiding, and strayed wildered among the hills, or they had stayed your flight before. I did on my suit of pearlins and my bravest hood, and

spoke with them myself at the door; and less would not serve them, but they should be in to search hall and chamber, where they found naught, as you will trow. When this same band was in the hall, who should come thither but the sub-prior, who even vowed in my face a light gallant of the court had stolen you away, and upbraided your fair innocence with names that it stung my soul to hear. Sir Hugh of Semple and he were forthwith hand in hand, and straightway set out together to follow their chase. I procured me one to convey Alice safely to a place we had appointed, and having thus secured the child, I tarried to see what should befall my lady. But at even the same band returned empty, save of wrath, and I warrant me Bertram served them with no pleasure. They threatened me the torture," said Isobel, raising her head with a heightened colour, "if I betrayed

not where my sweet child was gone; and Heaven pardon me, dear lady, I turned upon them—shame on my carnal heart—with scorn and disdainful words; as if *I* were like to be false to thee, dear child, for peril of a pain! but they touched me not at the last."

With a low cry and a tightened hold upon Isobel's arm, Magdalen listened. Her kind attendant smoothed her hair with her disengaged hand, and went on with a smile.

"I went forth when they had gone, to where Alice was, and failed not to note who went and came from the tower; there were frequent messengers, lady, scouts, and spies enow—but none could carry any tidings—though tidings came to me in my humble dwelling by the grace of thy good kinsman; and then my child was wedded, Lady Maidlin, and I went home with her and her bridegroom to the Halihill. There is plenty in her house,

and a place for the stranger and the wayfarer by her hearth, and they serve God in fear and reverence, and uphold His worship, and succour His saints, and in good truth I fear not for them—they are very well; the low-lying beild escapes the storm. Now, dear lady, my tale is told. I have travelled hither with little peril; and tell me once more, art thou here at rest?"

"My kinsman has never come again," said Magdalen blushing," and Simon went with him, Isobel, in his service. Jean has been with me, my sole attendant, and all in this house have been gentle and kind as loving friends; in good time here cometh one. This is my Isobel, Marjorie, after much longing, come to me at last."

"She is very welcome," said Marjorie Bowes, who had just entered, "but I may not stay to do more than to commend her to the

good care of my mother's women, and to bid thee without delay to the great parlour—Magdalen, my father has come home."

This did not seem to be altogether so joyful an announcement as the words represented. Pleasure there was in Marjorie's face, but pleasure mixed with a large amount of care and anxiety, things so alien to her mind that Magdalen followed her reluctantly and with wonder. Already before they reached the room Marjorie's brow was cleared, and she whispered half playfully "I may not amend it—wherefore should I fret, think you, Maidlin? —yet I do, without my will. My father is fresh from the world and its wiles—all of us cannot live devout and in quiet, thou knowest —and wherefore should we repine?"

So saying, with all the wrinkles in her pretty brow smoothed out, Marjorie led the way with a smile—and Magdalen, with a sigh,

admired her philosophy, but could not quite follow her example, though the trouble was not her own.

At the table sat a gentleman of unusual stature and strength, wearing a buff coat and great riding boots, on which the travel stains were sufficiently evident. His heavy sword, and his high crowned hat, circled with the usual gold chain and clasp of jewels, lay near him on a chair; and he was speaking loudly with a certain swagger of authority, quite unknown in this well-ordered house, telling to his wife and Mr. John, who were both present. the news of the court.

As Magdalen entered, Master Bowes rose, and the young stranger almost shrank from the greeting, which, without a particle of of kindness, was so redundant in courtesy. She took a seat timidly behind the lady of the house, whose manner bore some semblance

of animation—but it was one of her darkest days with Mrs. Bowes; and her attention perpetually wandered off, distracted and broken, as it was evident, from her husband's discourse.

"Such being his Majesty's temper, and my Lord of Canterbury as great at the court as ever was the Cardinal, ye may well believe in the sudden godliness which has come like a flood, upon all who would hold office in the state," said Bowes with a light laugh, "Church and Convocation for feast and tourney—hearing of a sermon for treading of a measure—and grey Gospellers with velvet cap and falling band, where the gay ladies of the court were wont to blaze in their jewels—it is a changed time,"

"The change of the time that hangs on a king's favour, is a broken reed to lean upon," said Knox, "yet I pray God this godliness be not feigned but true."

"Oh! true, I warrant you," cried Master Bowes, "true as a longing for silver wands and truncheons of state, for the very keys themselves, the greatest prize of office—true as courtier hope, and statesmen heart can be; and, marry, it is but politic for such even as have no hope of place to conform to the same."

"Good brother, you speak it in righteous scorn, I know," said the Reformer, "yet patience for the sake of these little ones."

"What, Marjorie? Ha, my child, you take your father's meaning! and this strange damsel—I believed her in sooth to be of your reverent worship's own godly breeding, and by that same token invulnerable to all the scoffs of the world. As for our good dame, I warrant me her brain is full even now of pious psalms and verses. Wife, you were well to go to court in these days—my fortune were made

anon—and 'tis said of yourself, Mr. John, you are to be named a royal preacher, to do your oratory before the King."

"He is a gracious Prince, and I will gladly speak the truth before him," said John Knox, calmly, "but it is well known I am no orator, good Master Bowes."

"Nay, you are over humble," said the man of the world. "What now, dame, whither are ye all astir?"

"So please you, honoured husband, to prayers," said Mrs. Bowes.

The new comer rose from the table with a mock reverence, and strode after his lady with jingling spur and heavy foot. "It is the fashion of the time," he said, with a half-perceptible sneer, "let us even do at Rome as Cæsar wills."

His daughter and their guest followed humbly, with a sense of something like guilt;

his scornful submission made this, which was a daily habit and delight, appear to the worshippers like a feigned and treacherous compliance to the caprice of those in authority. With his usual fervour, Knox conducted the services, but it was strange to note what an aspect of sneering and hypocrisy was thrown upon them, by the one scoffer here.

CHAPTER XX.

"My noble father,
I do perceive here a divided duty;
To you I am bound in life and education—
My life and education both do learn me
How to respect you; you are the lord of duty,
I am hitherto your daughter; but here's my husband."

OTHELLO.

"AND would not your father, then, have you wedded to Mr. John?" asked Magdalen.

"Nay, he knows naught of it," said Marjorie, blushing less to answer than her more sensitive companion did to ask. "Dear Maidlin, it is hard to speak of my father; he loves the world and all its great preferments

and ambitions; and it pleases him to make use of what he calls the temper of the time. Mr. John hath had his home here, because our good King loves the Gospel, and honours him who has suffered for its sake; but my father—alas, Maidlin! I weep to say it—my father would not stay to cast him forth, if there came another change. Hush!" said Marjorie, whispering low, and looking cautiously round the garden where they walked: "'Tis said our gracious Prince is weak of frame, and may not live; and the Lady Mary is austere and bitter of heart—seeing the King divorced her mother on this pretext—and loves nothing so well as her Papistrie and all its evil ways; so I know not what is to befall us, if there come days of persecution again."

A momentary cloud came over the sweet unfearing face, whose aspect varied so little.

—"Yet God will always deliver," said Marjorie, with a quick returning smile. "I do ill to doubt and take thought for to-morrow, when our gracious Lord assumes its care upon himself."

"Alas!" said Magdalen, whose heavy sighs fell through the silence like a tear—"what comfort is there for home or household with such evil in the land! Oh, I would there were no women to weigh down hands that should be busy, and hearts that must be bold; for where even the strongest have so sore a fighting life, what make we weaklings here?"

"I had rather be here than no-whither," said Marjorie, with a low and timid laugh. "I had rather be troubled in my life, and affrayed, and subject to flight and many evils, than choose no life at all; for I know, dear Maidlin, we were sure never to have Heaven, if we had not earth before."

But Magdalen's heart was heavy in her breast; it was now April, and she had heard nothing of Paul Hepburn since he left them in the autumn of the previous year.

"I marvel how they have borne with his reasoning," said Marjorie, innocently following the tenor of her own thoughts. "I marvel if he can reach home to-night—if, indeed, they do not tangle him through their vain talk—yet he knows the schools—or lay him in prison through some false witness. But God guards his servants. Come, Maidlin, the evening falls."

Magdalen followed without a word. The yearning of her heart would not be said; she could long for him and pray for him—but she could not speak of Paul.

This was a time of special moment to the household. Though John Knox, by royal commission, carried the Gospel, for which he

had borne many an emphatic testimony elsewhere, to this town and neighbourhood, the common clergy were still only those poor monks and priests, suffered to remain in their small benefices at the pseudo Reformation of the previous reign; and Bishop Tonstall was far from reluctant to hear the tales they thronged to tell him of the great heresiarch who "spared no arrows" on mass or confessional. Master Bowes had carefully absented himself, waiting at a distance the decision of the Bishop and the Bishop's court. His wife spent these momentous hours in her chamber, praying for victory to the faith; and Marjorie Bowes and Magdalen Hepburn took their places by themselves on the twilight hearth, before its ruddy fire. The thoughts of the one were with the Reformer in the stately chapter-house of Durham; the thoughts of the other were painfully wan-

dering over dale and moorland, to border holds and northern castles—to the cottages of shepherds, and houses of yeomen; and with the painful restlessness of uncertainty, she was gazing through these creations of her fancy for the one form which was the centre of all.

Thus they sat in silence while the night gathered darkly round them. Marjorie, indeed, had made one or two attempts to resume the conversation, but these died off in a few words; and, save when she rose to place another log upon the hearth, neither sound nor movement disturbed their solitude. Girlish indiscretion was still possible to Marjorie Bowes, and she had forgotten to cause the great shutters of this window to be closed; so there came in a ray of very faint wan moonlight, which chilled the floor it fell upon, and drew a ghostly pale glimmer from

the wainscot partition and the dark indiscernible portrait which hung on one of its panels. The new log blazed and crackled upon the hearth, and you saw the rounded outline of Marjorie's pretty figure, and the gleam of her golden hair, as, half-abstractedly, half-carefully, she settled the unconsumed end of this piece of wood upon the brass and irons—and could perceive in Magdalen's stooping attitude, as clearly as if she spoke it, how completely absorbed in her own fancies, and unconscious of all around her was she.

"I marvel if he can be home to-night," said Marjorie, again in a gentle undertone; and she glanced at the unlit lamp with a momentary thought of preparing for him; but this vague expectation occupied her sufficiently; Magdalen's deep reverie was contagious, and Marjorie sat still and gazed at the crackling wood. Just then a sound

of horses' hoofs rung upon the stones without. Nearer came these loud, quick footsteps; then a confused sound of voices—of steps upon the passage. Marjorie started up in haste to light the lamp, but before she could accomplish it the door opened, and there entered, not Knox alone, but with the Reformer Paul Hepburn.

The person most interested in this arrival marked it not; one quick startled glance had shown her that the preacher himself was here, but his companion was behind him, and Magdalen, though her interest was great in the Reformer, cast down her eyes again with that sickening of visionary disappointment which is natural to those who expect always, and never know when their expectations may be realized.

The room was still dark, for Marjorie's fingers could not resist the little tremble of

agitation which disturbed her calm. That footstep is not the footstep of John Knox; another earnest dreamy glance into this gloom—that is not John Knox's stature towering over the half-lit lamp, and the fair figure by the table; and Magdalen rises with a start and cry. Her heart has not deceived her this time—it is her kinsman who stands by her side.

Ere the first surprise of this arrival is over, Mistress Bowes has heard of it, and comes with unwonted satisfaction in her face to hail her friend returned.

"God has stood by his own," said the lady, eagerly; "so I trusted—so I knew—and thou art delivered from the adversary's hand."

"With triumph," said Paul Hepburn. "Never a shaveling among them might open lip; and your Bishop, madam, was properly silenced, if ever I saw a man. This Tonstall

dare do great things if he might, but King and council are too many for Cuthbert of Dunelm, not to speak of those knaves, Truth and Reason, which his mistress of Rome could never brook. I was present at this disputation, fair ladies, and Reverend Mr. John will not himself tell you what I am free to say—one fair stroke sans fear or parley—and his foe bit the ground."

"Nay, I think it no harm to say the victory is with us," said Knox, with something in his face like the reflection of a broad light half-laugh, half-smile. "Good sooth, I had the better of the battle; my good lord and they who were with him said not an evil word to me, and I think not Bishop Tonstall will thank those shaven crowns of his for ringing such a blast of the pure doctrine through Durham quire; and they but opened my mouth

to speak my testimony, they did no other evil, thanks to the Ruler who ordered it so."

"And is the Bishop then as courtly as men say?" said Marjorie.

"Of his courtliness, truth to tell, I made no essay," said the Reformer; "he bade me not to his table, gentle mistress, though he suffered me go forth in freedom from his convocation; but a politic and perilous man, friend Paul. If Antichrist have sway again in England, I mourn for these hapless coasts which lie within his rule. But, madam, we are right weary, many a mile of gait has vanished under our horses' feet to-day; this wicked body compels me rest."

At a sign from Mistress Bowes, Marjorie hastily left the room to give orders for their comfort, and while the lady conversed with her more distinguished guest, Paul Hepburn

drew his chair close to the hearth where Magdalen still sat glad and silent, watching the blazing wood.

"My Maidlin has been well and not weary!" he said, bending over her; "nor longing for her own hills, nor repenting of her flight!"

"Nay," said Magdalen, with a blush, "but thou?"

"I—when I know thee safe, nothing but good can come to me," said Paul. "I trust well the time of our deliverance will come anon, but it is long or the sun rises, sweet Maidlin, when men watch for the dawning throughout all the night."

"Ah, ye grow weary," said Magdalen, "nothing but perils, naught but fears, and weariness, and faintings. Noble kinsman—nay, I would name thee otherwise, but heed not names—might ye not flee into a foreign

country and be safe, and hold the Word in peace?"

"And with thee?" said Paul. Magdalen dared not look up in the silence that followed these words. "But leave the battle when hope is highest—leave the watch-tower when the sky already flushes in the east—leave mine own land, thine own land, my Maidlin! while strength and hope is strong to strike a fair stroke for her sake?"

"No, no, no, I meant it not," cried Magdalen; and the tears of her ready penitence fell upon the hand which held her own.

"I must prove me worthy of this prize I hold," said Paul, "mortal man had never great temptation, if my lady were to keep these words she said. Bid me once more, Maidlin Hepburn—say fly, and with me!"

"I will not bid you once more," said Magdalen, with a momentary petulance. "Get you to your own ways, knight errant—I will never bid you again. Nay, hush, I pray you, the lady speaks."

END OF VOL. II.

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