

MARTYN OF FENROSE;  
OR,  
THE WIZARD AND THE SWORD.

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VOL. I.

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MARTYN OF FENROSE;

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*Margaret Royal 1827*

THE WIZARD AND THE SWORD.

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ROMANCE.

— 000000 —  
BY HENRY SUMMERSETT,

AUTHOR OF LEOPOLD WARNDORF, JAQUELINE OF  
OLZEBURG, &c. &c.

— 000000 —  
VOL. I.

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—  
1801.



# P R E F A C E

WHO is he that starts when a cloud passes over the sun—that walks in dread of earthquakes—that trembles at the serenity of nature, and almost yields himself to annihilation, while viewing the storm which breaks not the sport of children?—FEAR.—His birth is of old; and he has the curse of immortality upon him.

One evening he fled through the gloomy mazes of a forest, and made towards a rude and pitiful dwelling, at the door of which he struck a hand that neither vein warmed, or sinew strengthened.—“Who disturbs my quiet?” was an enquiry made within. “Open your wicket, and admit me instantly; the foul  
a spirits,

spirits, with lash and brand, pursue me. My body will be lacerated by the cord—my flesh blistered by the flames—and the ever burning pit will gape and swallow me!—Open, open, and shield me from their rage!”

The latch was raised—he rushed forward with wildness, and ploughed the muddy floor with his head. IGNORANCE was the mistress of the hall, and the first object on which the fugitive fixed his eyes. The stupidity of her countenance partly banished his terrors, and at length gave him as much energy as his frail frame had capability to admit.

They lay on one couch till the morning. He sojourned with her during five moons, and on the appearance of the sixth crescent, from her premature womb came a languid bantling, who afterwards took the name of SUPERSTITION. Her mother

mother rocked her cradle on rushes, and her father told her stories of hell. Her body and mind were equally imbecile, still she had an obstinacy of spirit, which the softest persuasion could not divert.

Her parents gave her early to the world; and she traversed every part of it. Wherever the sea washes, and wherever the winds blow, she has been found. All men listened to her wild doctrines, and were amazed; she must however have fallen in her extravagancies, had not priests patronized her follies, and abetted her inconsistencies. But she no longer lifts the scourge, which, throughout many ages, she raised with the hand of a despot; and her antics, though they may amuse, and even for a moment impress, can actually terrify no more.—Nothing can re-establish her power; and all her false lights, compared with the dawning star of **REASON**, are like the harmless



harmless fires of the glow-worm beneath  
the unclouded moon.

I will not insult the reader's understanding by telling him my motive for prefixing this allegory to my book. The judicious will not need any such confession; and the idler, viewing it as an excrescence, would not compliment my task even with a glance of his eye.

THE AUTHOR.

LONDON,

1800.

MARTYN



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# MARTYN of FENROSE,

OR, THE

WIZARD AND THE SWORD.

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“**W**AVE the flag on high,” said  
the bard of Alwynd; “and sing the  
song of triumph.”

Come, play the merry timbrels,  
Our Lord returns, with glory crown'd;  
Clash, clash the lively cymbals,  
And let the song of joy go round;  
For victory, for victory  
Upon our banners smiles to-day;  
And pale defeat and agued fear  
Attend the cowards of the fray.

Bright rose the sun at morning  
Forth flew our swords, our trumpets bray'd,  
Our heroes, caution scorning,  
And not of danger's threats afraid,  
Rush'd to the fight, rush'd to the fight,  
And battled there most valiantly!  
All seem'd to snatch at fame's high crown,  
All wish'd to triumph, or to die!

O, blue-eyed chief! whose glory  
No living warriors can exceed,  
Thy name shall live in story,  
In many a brave recorded deed;  
And while thy bones, and while thy bones  
With thy forefathers idly rest,  
Thou wilt by every heart be mourn'd,  
By every tongue thou wilt be blest!

This song came from a company of men and women, who were stationed on the battlements of the castle of Alwynd; a maimed soldier was in the front of them, and, tho' his wounds were bleeding, he joined in the chorus. Several instruments

ments assisted the voices; and on the finishing of the last stanza, a loud shout was sent into the air.

One of the men ran to the highest turret, on which he hung a flag; and the party below requested that he would inform them of the first appearance of their expected Lord. The music again founded, the shoutings were renewed; and the bloody arm of the foldier was bound up with some of the linen which the females tore from their bosoms.

“Thanks to ye, maidens,” cried the hero, “you have touched my hurts with gentle hands; but the joy caused by the success of the day removes all pain, and I can laugh, girls, while I throw my cap in the air, and cry, huzza! glory and long life to the Lord of the castle!”

“Comes he yet?—Comes he yet?” cried the impatient group, turning up their eyes to the man on the turret.

“No, I see nothing of him.—But he will be here anon.—Ha! they are climbing the hill!—I see their banners—their glittering arms—and now, the warrior on the white horse.—He comes!—He comes!—They have gained the brow.”

The man immediately joined his friends below; and within a few minutes, Lord Alwynd and his foldiers were seen by all of them. Their joy encreased; and when the noble leader and his brave followers were under the walls, it became tumultuous. As soon as they saw him enter the gate-way, they hurried down, and were ready to receive him as he came into the hall, when the song was once more repeated, and a crown of leaves  
put



put upon his head. But he smilingly removed it from thence, and twined it around the brows of one his poorest vassals; whose enterprizes he had marked, and whose sword had cleft the scull of an enemy that had taken an unfair advantage of his Lord, while he was engaged with another man in the field.

This action of gratitude was highly applauded; and the fame and generosity of Lord Alwynd formed many a deserved panegyric. He was not accompanied by any nobleman. He took off his helmet, and all those who were around him, were desirous of having the honour of disencumbering him. At length his armour was entirely removed; he requested every one to attend to the festivity of the hour, and then retired to the interior of the castle, in quest of objects which he longed to gaze on.

He went quickly through several rooms, and then came to one in which he caught the sounds of childish sport. His heart beat with delight:—Gently opening the door, and without advancing, he cried, “William! Agatha!”—There was a momentary silence—he called again,—“Hark!” said the voices of children within;—he heard them running across the room, and in the next minute they were hanging upon his neck, and kissing his cheeks.

The hero burst into tears; and he who had so lately frowned on death, was dissolved by the tenderness of two children.

“O, my dear Lord!” cried the boy, “how glad, how happy I am to see you!”

“And so is Agatha!” said the little girl, removing her mouth from the cheek

to the lips of the warrior, whose emotions still kept him in silence.

“Why do you not speak to us?” said William.

“Dear boy!——”

“And now to me!” cried the girl.

“Sweet Agatha!—Did I not tell you, little ones, that I should soon return to you?—Give me your hand, William; and kiss me again, Agatha. Come with me to my chamber. There will be a feast in the hall this evening, and both of you shall be present, and hear the music.”

He then placed Agatha on one of his arms, and led William out of the room. Delighted with their innocent talk, he could not part with them; and when



he was summoned to the hall, he took them with him, making the mirthful William his sword-bearer. The warriors smiled when their gallant Lord approached, and he gave his hand to many of them, as he advanced to the table; at the top of which he seated himself on an elevated chair, and the children were placed on each side of him, tho', before the repast was finished, he more than once drew them on his knees.

The feast was sumptuous; and it was eaten with merriment—no cold formalities of state checked the gaiety of the banquet. The Lord looked not above his guests, but seemed to consider them all as friends and brethren. Mirth was not lost for want of his smile; neither did the song sink for want of his voice. As he was about to retire, he drank a general health to his associates, thanked them for their support and fidelity in  
the



the late skirmish; and to the man who had rescued him in the field, he gave his sword, desiring him to hang it under the wreath that had been transferred to him for his valor.

He then rose, and led the smiling children out of the hall; but previously desired that his absence might neither conclude, nor interrupt, the festivity of any of his people.

As he was returning to his apartment he heard a loud altercation; and, looking forward, found that it arose between one of his servants and a stranger. Surprised, he went near, and turned towards them. He demanded of his domestic the cause of the contention; and the fellow was going to reply, when his opponent prevented him, by asking Lord Alwynd, whether the day was not considered as a general festival?

“It is, sir,” replied the Baron; “all who enter the castle, are most cordially welcome to whatever fare may be found in it.”

“Victory to your arms, and happiness to your heart!” cried the stranger.— Yet why, my Lord, am I to be treated with scorn, when your hospitality takes in every one?—Why driven from your gate by a barking cur, whom your Lordship’s bounty fattens?”

“Use no more angry words, I beseech you stranger; enter and feast.”

“My Lord!” cried the servant, “my Lord, is it really your pleasure that this hideous wretch should be entertained at the public table?—He is too frightful an object to be endured!—His eyes are too dreadful to look upon!—Pray, my Lord, desire him to retire, or give orders  
that

that he may be driven out of the gates. The sight of him makes me sick — it fills me with fear and astonishment!”

“Are you mad?” cried Lord Alwynd; “or is it the force of wine that makes you talk thus strangely?—This person is not such as you describe. His garments are good and clean — his countenance mild, humane, and respectable—and he bears the best appearances of a gentleman.”

“My Lord!—His countenance, did you say?—Hell cannot produce any thing more ugly!”

“Peace, unmannered fellow, or I will chastise you for your insolence. Good fir! drink has destroyed my servant’s reason:—Go into the hall, to which yonder passage leads, and be merry with those whom you may find there.”

“Aye,



“Aye, do, good stranger!” cried young William; “go in and be merry with the rest.”

The man kissed the robe of the Baron, and laid his hands on the heads of the children; then bowing to Lord Alwynd, whom he respectfully thanked for his hospitality, he retired from the castle, instead of going to the feast.

The servant was very severely reprimanded by his Lord, who, supposing him intoxicated, commanded him to go to bed, in order that he might not give offence to any other of the guests. But the man affirmed that he was not, in the least degree, affected by drinking; and again asserted that the filthiness of the stranger's garments, and the hideousness of his face, had caused him to act as he had done.

“Lunatic!”



“Lunatic!” cried Lord Alwynd, “I now perceive that you are not drunk; but it is evident that your mind is diseased. The person you speak of has a very good countenance, and he was habited like a gentleman.”

“O, mercy on me!—I protest, my Lord, that the fiercest devil could not——”

“Be silent!—Your extravagant talk is not to be borne. Did you ever see the stranger before?”

“Never, my Lord; and I pray Heaven I may never see him again.”

“You cannot, then, possibly suspect who he is?”

“My Lord, I do believe that he is one of the wizards that live in the forest. It is said that there are several of them,  
and

and that they have resided there an hundred years and upwards; but no person has ever ventured to go near them. Ha! he is here again, and more ugly than before!—Look, my Lord!—Look! look!”

“On what?—Compose your mind, or you will certainly grow distracted.—Why do you shake so violently?—What do you fix your eyes upon?”

“On that abominable creature!—Ah! he has torn my flesh with his brutal nails!—He throws his filthy foam at me; and now his eyes grow more large and red.—Save me, my Lord!—Save me! save me!”

He was flying towards the Baron, but he fell into a swoon; and his Lord having called some of his attendants to the assistance of the distracted wretch, retired with

with the terrified children. The heart of Alwynd truly commiserated the state of his domestic, and the sudden insanity that had affected him; still he was sorry that any person should have gone from his castle without partaking his hospitality, and he sent some of his servants in quest of the stranger, with an entreaty that he would return. But, after an hour had elapsed, they all came back, and informed him that the object of their search could not be found.

About two hours after, and as the sun was declining, he parted from the children for the night, and took himself to a wood at some little distance from the castle. Tho' he was skilled in the science of war, still he was a lover of nature; and he had often wandered amid her scenes with the purest delight. He was no promoter of broils and contentions; and he never sought the field of battle,



battle, when false honour held out a lure for him. But in a true and justifiable cause, he would prowl among the ranks like a determined lion; the whisperings of peace, however, were always pleasing to his ear, and the smiles of humanity he regarded as precious.

The mortal that knew and did not love him, with only one exception, was not to be found; still among those who esteemed him most, there were some who called him a strange, good man. His fortune was noble, and his adherents were numerous and loyal; the thirtieth summer was coming over his head, and his manly beauties were then in their richest blossom.

He lived but in the castle and in the field. The court of his prince, tho' he wanted neither favours, nor respect, he absented himself from; but his services  
were

were granted as soon as they were commanded, and no noble of the realm was more firm in his loyalty, or more ardent in his exploits. Peace and retirement, however, were his favourites; and in the summer evenings, the villagers generally saw him either wandering thro' the meadows, with the playful children, or roving alone, with an air of melancholy, among the shades of the forest.

Tho' his was not a confirmed sadness, yet many were surprised by the temporary gloom that often hung on his brows; and tho' he smiled on those who unexpectedly accosted him in his reveries, still they wondered at the dejection of his faded countenance.

It was known that he had never been married; and there was no probability that he would enter into the state of wedlock. The two children that have  
been

been mentioned, were reported to be the offspring of a deceased friend; they were twins, and Alwynd had brought them, about three years before, and when they were only two years old, to the castle, where he desired that they might be treated with all possible tenderness and respect.

This love for the orphans was of a paternal nature; and every person who resided in the castle, not only praised the benevolence of his heart, but also, in different degrees, and according to his station, strove to imitate the Baron's example.

He had, within a few hours, come smiling and victorious to his home, and afterwards joined in the revelry of his friends and followers, and also in the fancy sports of the children. But in his evening walk, all mirth seemed to be forgotten—



forgotten — every splendid and lovely image to fade. He moved slowly among the trees—he paused—he sighed, and his eyes were raised to the summit of a hill, from behind which the moon was coming, with a devout and strong expression, as if he were expecting the appearance of a spirit of Heaven.—Man! thou shalt exult thy hour; but look for nought of joy beyond it.

The mutterings of two hoarse voices, and the approach of feet, disturbed the ruminations of Alwynd, who, looking towards the spot from whence the noise proceeded, saw two objects which caused him to start, and filled him with surprise. One of them was designed for a man, but nature had strangely sported with his form, and compounded him of ugliness. His body was misshapen, and his face brutal; one of his eyes was fierce as fire,

fire, the other seemed a lump of senseless matter, and was dull and rayless.

Alwynd, not without a fearful emotion, turned towards the woman, whose deformities nearly corresponded with those of the man. But she was naked almost to the waist, and some of her greasy hair was pulled partly over her breasts, which seemed to contain nutriment for, and also to have been swayed by the eager jaws of a tribe of imps.

Alwynd grasped his sword, fearing that the monsters would attack him; but each of them made a respectful motion, and wished the blessings of the new moon upon him. Ashamed of his fears and rashness, he sheathed his half-drawn sword, and enquired who they were, and from whence they came.

“ We

“ We are beggars, my Lord,” replied the man; “ we are compelled to rove about the world, and to subsist by charity. You have seen the lightnings fly, while lying on a bed of down; we then have been unhoused and unsheltered. You have heard the fierce spirits of the rigorous season — you have heard the wind howling in the nights of December, and the hail rattling against the window of your well-warmed chamber; aye, then we have been shivering in a ditch, covered only by a blanket that was supported by a leafless hawthorn.”

“ With twenty thousand agues on us,” said the wild looking woman; “ our bones ready to crack with the frost, and our very marrow to freeze.”

“ Pinched by want, I have said to many whose purses have been overstocked, give me something to buy food with,



with, lest I perish; some of them cursed me, others baited me with their cries, and there were among them those who passed me with unopened eyes."

"Aye, and the time has been, when I have begged the herdsman's wife to give me a few grains, which she was carrying to her swine.—But I have had them not.—Get thee to hell, beldame, she has said, get thee to hell, and gape for the steams of sulphur."

"You have been victorious in battle," said the male beggar, "and, in consequence of it, have given a feast to-day. I asked one of your servants for some food to appease my hungry bowels; but he cursed and drove me away."

"For which may fire from the clouds turn him into a cinder!" exclaimed his dreadful companion.

"Had

“Had I been there,” said Alwynd,  
“you should have had it; go back again,  
and I will order provision to be placed  
before you.”

“No, no, we have since made our  
meal:—A dead lamb came down the  
river; we pulled it to the bank, and  
feasted daintily. But we were not alone  
refused admittance to the castle; for I  
met a knight, who said that the Lord  
might be honourable, but his servants  
were villainous.”

“I am sorry for the misconduct of  
my people. Here is money for you  
both. But tell me how you came to be  
so mishapen?”

“Ask that of Him who furnished the  
Heavens:—I refer you to the highest  
authority. There is a design in every  
thing—in monsters, as well as in angels.

Whatever

Whatever you see, dare not to call it abominable, for it comes from the hands of One, whose ever active eye loaths it not, and whose works none should venture to blame. Good night, noble Lord! —We shall travel till the stars are lost in the clouds of morning.

They went forward, and Alwynd noticed their strange limpings till they disappeared. At first he had thought them supernatural, but in the parting speech of the man, he found some forcible truths, which made him blush at his own weakness.

The ravings of the servant were now accounted for; it was evident that he was labouring under the impressions of terror, when the knight demanded admission into the hall; and, indeed, the wildness and deformities of the beggars, were



were sufficient to affect even a strong and unprejudiced mind.

Alwynd's fears decreasing, he rambled still further; and about a quarter of an hour after the wanderers had left him, and while it was yet light, he saw the gentleman that had been repulsed by the servant, riding along the forest on a beautiful steed. He was accompanied by a lady, who also rode a handsome horse. She was uncommonly lovely and graceful in her person; and tho' they travelled very fast, her eyes were fixed, with an expression of affection, on the face of her companion, who checked his steed on being accosted by the surprised Alwynd.

"Return to the castle, gentleman," cried the Baron, "and sojourn with me till to-morrow. I blush for the manners of my servant, whose distraction

can alone excuse him. Several of my fellows have since been in quest of you; but now I have the pleasure of seeing you again, I entreat you to go back with me, and to partake the hospitality of a willing host."

It was with difficulty that the travellers restrained their steeds, which were as beautiful, and apparently as capable as those of the charioteer of the Heavens. They appeared as light as æther; and while they disdained the curb, their hoofs scarcely imprinted the forest turf.

The stranger placed his hand on the back of his horse, and gracefully turned towards Alwynd, to whom he said,—  
"I must decline your invitation, but I most cordially thank you for it.—I judge not of a chief by the manners of his vassal. Prosperity attend your Lordship, till we meet again, for ere long,

long, perhaps, I shall be within the walls of your castle. We are bound to the north:—We have an hundred miles to ride to-night, and the moon will not live till the morning. Our courfers will not be held any longer.—Away, ye fiery spirits!—Farewel, Lord Alwynd!—Farewel, gallant and hospitable chief!”

“Good night, sir.—Adieu, fair lady!”

“Health to the Lord of Alwynd; success to his sword, and repose to his pillow!” said the lovely traveller, smiling like a cherubim. The reins were given, unlimited, to the horses; they began not their course by degrees, for no archer could send an arrow with so much swiftness as they commenced their journey.

The riders sat firmly—they even turned and saluted Alwynd with their hands. There were graces in the horseman which



could not be excelled; and the long and glossy locks of his companion, were raised from her fair neck, and sported with by the winds. They soon lessened—in a few minutes they were on the verge of the wide forest, and the wondering eye that had followed saw them no more.

“Is this a reality?” cried Alwynd, rubbing his brows with his hand. —  
“Have mortals these powers?—Have I seen and conversed with corporeal things, or been cheated by visions?—I have beheld strange objects to-night, which will excuse my doubts; yet the beggars, tho’ monstrous to the sight, wanted neither faculties nor reason; and these mysterious travellers—these meteors of human form—Pshaw! the strangeness is in my eye, or in my imagination. My blood has been heated in battle, and my spirits have been roused into confusion—I feel a giddiness in my head, and to that I attribute

attribute these seeming wonders. I have foolishly made phantoms of substance, and grossly perverted the plain truths of nature."

Convinced of the temporary defects of his own faculties, he returned to the castle. The remainder of the inferior guests were then departing, the others having gone before; he wished them a general good night, and retiring himself soon after to his chamber, the comforts of a soft repose came upon him.

On his rising in the morning he was saluted by the sun, and afterwards by his merry little fairies; they all went forth to breathe the air of the forest, from whence they returned, enlivened and refreshed by the breezes that had blown on them. It gave great pain to Alwynd, to find that the servant still laboured under his fears, and that his wits were

still disordered. On the third day, however, he became more calm; and his Lord advised him to think no more of the beggars, and also not to alarm his superstitious fellows, by talking of the strange object that had presented itself to him, and caused his short derangement.

Peace! thou wert ever, and ever wilt be, loved by the good, the gentle and humane. He is no hero who scorns thee—he is not noble who would turn his eyes from thy fair face, to gaze upon the glaring and bloated countenance of war. The lord and the peasant must love thee; and the venerable matron, the tender wife, and all her little progeny, ever bless thy name. How cheerful and bounteous art thou in cities, where a thousand smiles in every moment are created by thee!—How mild in the temples of religion, where it is held to be no longer necessary to implore Heaven  
to



to rout our opposers, and deluge their blood! — How beautiful and serene in meadows and in groves, where thou givest rich rewards to industry, and crown'st the heads of youthful innocence and virtue, with garlands of long living flowers!

Three years passed away, during which the hand of Alwynd was never incumbered with an instrument of war; neither national broils, nor private contentions, interrupted his tranquillity, and the piled arms were not resorted to, for the chastisement of either a public or domestic foe.

The servants of the castle still loved and revered its Lord; and they were pleased to observe, that he was less subject to those fits of melancholy, and to those seemingly bitter ruminations, which had previously robbed his face of half

its beauties. They now saw him generally cheerful, he smiled upon them in the hall, and frequently went blithesome to the chase. A quick recollection, however, would sometimes strike his mind; and once or twice he retired abruptly from the feast, and also turned, dejectedly, from the steed that was to convey him to the forest sports. But the infrequency of these actions made them less noticed, and they were attributed to the indisposition of the body, rather than to the more serious and inveterate malady of the mind.

The children still continued the principal objects of his happiness and delight. His care over them was exemplary; whenever they smiled he was never sad—he encouraged them in their sports, they attended him every where, and frequently partook his bed. If they ever complained of illness, his face shewed nothing but

but anxiety, till they again gambolled around him, and by their sportiveness assured him that they were no longer afflicted by pain.

Many idle stories, respecting these children, had long been abroad; but none of them reached the ears of Alwynd. No person, except Lord Celwold, ever importuned him in regard to their birth and origin, which he had never thought proper to explain; and it was not in every season that even Celwold, who was the cousin of Alwynd, ventured to touch upon the subject.

Living at a small distance only from his relation, he was almost every day at the castle; and he frequently came accompanied by a boy, to whom he was an appointed guardian, and who was two or three years older than the adopted children of Alwynd. Edward was con-



sidered, by the young ones of the castle, as a dear companion; and at their solicitation, he frequently abided with them for the course of a week, at the expiration of which time, he always left his associates with regret.

This youth was of high birth and fortune; his father had been dead nearly two years, but his mother was still living, Owing to some peculiar matrimonial disagreements, to the extreme caution of the one parent, and to the implacable temper and violent passions of the other, the boy was, by the mutual consent of the authors of his being, made the ward of Lord Celwold. As his mother had withdrawn herself to France, without thinking it proper to account for her motives, Edward was taught to look to his guardian as his dearest and only friend.

Lord

Lord Celwold had intimately known his father, and not unready became his guardian. Perhaps it was neither true friendship, nor true affection, that caused him to assume the character; but having taken it on him, he was indulgent to the youth, and his conduct, tho' injudicious, was not untender.

At the time his guardianship commenced, he had an infant daughter, and he entertained a hope, that, in a later season, a connection might be formed between her and his ward, whose alliance would greatly honour his family, and whose wealth would munificently enrich it. Within a twelvemonth, however, his expectations were for ever blasted, for the little object of his ambition was destroyed by a consumption; and in the course of the ensuing year, the parent from whom she had come, also went down into the grave.

These

These events had a very serious effect on Celwold, he felt to the full force of his nature; but, perhaps, he suffered as much from disappointment and foiled ambition, as from the afflictions of a father and a husband. Baffled and chagrined, he shut himself awhile from society; Edward was sent from him for a few months, and his visits to the castle became less frequent. At length, however, he recalled the boy, his mind recurred not so often to the departed, and he renewed, with an unclouding brow, his attendance on Alwynd; who, long as he had known and conversed with his specious kinsman, was still very ignorant of his well-disguised character.

With suspicion no one was less acquainted than Alwynd; he never put on any disguises himself, and was not fortunate in discovering them on those who made them their frequent habits. He  
generally



generally judged of man by his exterior; and respected and applauded his good traits, without searching for, or prying into his bad ones. The smiles of Celwold's face, therefore, and the mildness of his tongue, were favourably regarded; and he who could so smile and speak, was not to be suspected of either artifice or depravity. How far Celwold merited the good opinion of Alwynd will soon be shewn; and his character must be judged by his actions, not by a superfluous description of the tenor of his mind and past pursuits.

While Alwynd was in tranquillity, Celwold seemed, by an almost daily intercourse, by a countenance which was always pleasing, and by the never deviating words of affection, to make the life of his kinsman still more happy. The children of Alwynd's love and bounty, and the young ward of Celwold, sported

sported together in the forest, and often gambolled before their guardians, while they, pleased by their actions, followed them with smiles.

“How delightful are the hours of youth!” said Alwynd, one evening as he was sitting on the turf, by the side of Celwold. — “How delightful are the hours of youth! — Mark the faces, the bodies of these children; how joyful, how elastic and animated! — They seem to be mounting on the wind that wafts the glossy ringlets of their hair. I hope they will ever be happy; but no moments can be more precious to them than the present. O, I hope they will ever be happy!”

“Heaven grant it, my dear cousin!” cried Celwold, with apparent feeling and tenderness.

“Yet,

“ Yet, whatever portion of felicity may, after a few more years shall have gone by, be awarded to them, it must be comparatively poor. Surely, that must be the happiest state, when the human mind has still to make its first calculations of joys and sorrows. The man who has attained his full strength of reason, the sage, the poet, nay even the impetuous warrior, will often for a while neglect their studies, and forego their soberer pleasures and serious occupations, to turn a wistful eye upon the gaities and sportiveness of youth. It is the knowledge of the utter impossibility of recal, that makes us say we wish not our days to come back again; otherwise we should willingly hazard the chances of life, willingly start again from the goal of childhood, to hunt the gossamer and butterfly, and to run, with outstretched hands, after the distant rainbow.”

Celwold



Celwold assented to this opinion with a significant motion.

“What a charming little group!” continued Alwynd, with his eyes still fixed on the children.—“The figure and actions of William are truly graceful; and those of Edward are equally so. They may be heroes while I shall yet live. I would not check the spirit of valor, but were I to see my boy mown by the scythe of war, I should perish ere I could draw my eyes from his bleeding body. Observe the lightness of the fairy Agatha! the flowers scarcely bend under the pressure of her feet. Perhaps Providence will ordain that, I shall not only see her grow up to a beautiful maturity, but also that, in the days of age, my ears shall be delighted by the prattlings of her innocent offspring!”

“My

“ My dear Lord! you speak with all the tenderhefs of a father.”

“ Suppose I do,” answered Alwynd, after a pause evidently occafioned by his emotions.

“ And yet, fuch you are not.”

“ You are deceived:—Such, I confefs, I am.”

“ My Lord — you — this confeffion agrees not——”

“ It agrees, coufin, with every thing that I have ever fspoken on the fubject. The world has many tenants, of various qualities; and all among men who are virtuous, and free from crime, I can ef-teem as much as if they bore my name, and were of the loins of my father. I  
rejoice

rejoice in their prosperities—I can mourn for their adversities; and when they die, after the final departure of their wives, I can say to their progeny,—‘Come hither, poor orphans! and I will be a father to you, you shall dwell with me, and share my superfluous riches; and in return, I shall expect that you will love me, and also perform the duties of children, as willingly as I shall those of a parent.’”

William and Agatha came up to him, as he was concluding his speech. They ran into his arms, and his head fell upon the shoulder of the boy; in the next minute, however, they flew again to their sports, when the uncovered face of Alwynd, shewed to Celwold the tears which had risen from a quick emotion. He was conscious of his weakness being observed, but he pretended to smile at it himself,



himself, and immediately addressed Celwold in a lively manner.

“Your Edward and my Agatha,” he cried, “appear to be dear companions. It is not improbable, but that their youthful attachment may grow with their years, that the love of youth may ripen into perfection; and that, in the course of time, my adopted daughter may——”

“What, my Lord?”

“Become the wife of Edward, of your ward, my good cousin.”

“Is your Lordship serious?—Do you not know that the family of that boy is illustrious—that his fortune, when maturity shall allow him to possess it, will be immense; and that it will consequently be my duty either to select for him,

him, or to guide his choice towards, a woman who shall have some nobility to speak of, and also a dowry suitable to his wealth?"

"Well—Suppose I admit it."

"Then, my Lord, the connection can no longer be thought of. You have veiled the little Agatha in obscurity, from which it may be inferred, that there is no great degree of dignity in her ancestry; and as she and her brother confessedly are claimants on your bounty, every person must acknowledge, that her alliance could neither be solicited for, nor, with any degree of propriety, accepted by one of the descendants of the Earls of Mercia."

"Indeed!" cried Alwynd, with a blushing face.—"I confess that you are a most cautious guardian; yet one whom

I believe to be somewhat too hasty in his conclusions.\* If ever the heir of Mercia shall lead Agatha to the altar, his bride may, if she chooses, boast of a descent *nobler* than his own, and also of a fortune which the most venal would not look on indifferently.”

“You astonish me, my Lord. But you look displeased; if I have incautiously offended you, I entreat your pardon. Were your Lordship to entrust the secret with me——”

“I cannot, cousin, therefore, do not ask me. I spoke more than I intended, and that perhaps too warmly. But it is time to return:—I shall keep you at the castle to-night; and as the dew is falling thick, we will go back with the children.”

They all took the path leading towards the castle, where the remainder of the evening



evening was spent by them with apparent cheerfulness; and the hour was rather late when the kinsmen separated for the night.

Lord Celwold, on entering his chamber, did not immediately go to his bed, for there was business in his mind which strongly claimed inspection. He was the nearest relation of Alwynd; and in their ages there was a difference of only two or three years. Alwynd had never been married; he had assured his cousin, very frequently, that he should ever continue in his present state, and also that he believed it not to be in the power of any woman to lead him from his determination.

This had been welcome intelligence to Celwold, tho' he always concealed the satisfaction arising from it. The title and riches of Alwynd, he thought might, in an after season, devolve on him; and

as his wife had left him no children, it was his wish to marry again, in order that he might raise an heir for the envied possessions, in case he should not live to take them to himself. He had always looked with an eye of displeasure on the children that Alwynd had brought to the castle; and he secretly hated the good deeds which he openly extolled.

At first he had supposed them to be the natural offspring of Alwynd; nothing, however, warranted the suspicion, and many things went against it. The idea of a secret marriage afterwards gave him considerable disturbance; but the declaration of Alwynd, that Agatha was of birth superior to Edward, convinced him that he was not her father, for the name of Alwynd, tho' nearly allied to honour, and greatly distant from obscurity, still required a very considerable  
encrease

encrease of fame to rank with that of Mercia.

Pleased as he was, with the self-assurance of the children not having any of the closer claims of nature, yet he was not perfectly satisfied; and tho' he presumed to think that there were no ties of consanguinity, still he was discontented, as well as alarmed, by the unbounded affection of Alwynd for William and Agatha, who, in the end, might greatly impair the fortune for which he was greedy and craving. Avarice was not one of the least vices of his nature; but he had craft enough to put a specious disguise on it, which was perceived only by those who were nearest to, and had daily intercourse with him, and which also concealed his niggardliness, even from many of those who were inmates of his dwelling.

He



He was feldom the creature he appeared to be; the gems of honour sometimes seemed to throw their beauteous rays around his head, ever while all the different corruptions of human nature were mingling together in his breast.

He indulged his mind, during the greater part of the night, with many suggestions and selfish calculations;—in the morning he hailed Alwynd, with a seemingly generous smile, and a few hours afterwards returned with Edward to his home.

In retirement and happiness, Alwynd lived till the children had arrived at the age of fifteen years. They promised to repay their guardian and instructor for his care and tenderness. The roses of health and beauty bloomed every day anew upon their cheeks; and the comeliness and form of the boy, were equal

to the sweetness and gracefulness of the girl. They both delighted in exercise and activity. The sun had seldom long dawned on the forest trees, before they were wandering among them; and at early morning they often mounted their horses, and spurred them on, in order to meet their friend Edward, who was as dear to them as they were to him.

The charge of Celwold was now a noble looking youth; he was also enterprising, generous, and humane—dignified without vanity, great without pride, and sensitive without affectation. On many occasions, he bore himself in a manner which seemed to import a more advanced age; but there were times when mirth had not a lighter-footed follower, nor wit a more sportive or merrier child.

Lord Alwynd, agreeably to his vow, still continued unmarried; and Celwold remained

remained a widower, without the desired heir. He had, indeed, been almost on the eve of marriage with a woman of distinguished rank and fortune, but his superciliousness towards one of her nearest relations, had caused a misunderstanding, of which an hasty dismissal was the consequence. This circumstance affected him strongly; the little amiability there was in his disposition, was considerably lessened by it, and his dependants had to witness no inconsiderable degree of gloom upon his brow, or of spleen and petulance in his temper.

His reason had ever been subordinate to his passions, which, from his childhood, had had an uncontrouled sway; and as even trifles had the power of irritating him, the effect produced by matters more weighty, was generally to be seriously dreaded by those who stood in fear of him.



The second failure of his project, which has been alluded to, made him inconsistent and extravagant; and his ill-humour arising from it had nearly once fallen even on Edward, whom he had ever previously treated with respect. But the nature of the youth would brook no insult, and he spurned at that which, in this season, was offered to him. His resistance and unrestrained retorts, brought to the mind of Celwold a sense of his impropriety; but the apology he made on the occasion, was accepted somewhat coldly by Edward, who had for some time past commented with privacy on the character of his guardian, which often appeared to him spotted and discoloured.

Another year went over, and preparations were made for the annual celebration of the birth day of William and Agatha, which had never passed unnoticed.

ticed. It was generally distinguished by a rural *fête*, in which the Lord of the Castle, his domestics, and tenants, always joined. On this anniversary, however, the entertainments were more numerous, the hospitality more diffusive, and a general joy was on the faces of those, who saluted the young people, whose calling into life was thus commemorated.

Celywold, hypocritically, wished health and happiness to be showered on those, whose deaths would have excited neither sorrow nor regret. Edward embraced his young friend with great warmth and sincerity; and the kiss that his lips imprinted on the cheek of Agatha, tho' preceded by those of her protector and her brother, raised on her face a fine suffusion, which afterwards spread over his own.

Alwynd caused his favourite girl to be drest in the most splendid manner. Her robe was rich and elegant; and her dark locks were confined by a wreath of the most beautiful gems that had ever been seen in the castle. The eyes of almost every person, particularly those of Mercia, were fascinated by her charms; but envy checked the admiration of Celwold, who secretly cursed the folly and profuseness of the infatuated Alwynd, for such he was pleased to think his happy kinsman.

The splendor of Agatha dazzled not her reason, which shone brighter than the jewels that studded her crisped locks. She moved with her accustomed ease—wore her native smiles—was affable to all the dependants—loving to her brother and his admiring friend—and most tenderly affectionate to Lord Alwynd, around whose neck she many times



times threw her delicate arms, in order that she might, more freely, give those kisses which flew from her lips towards his smiling face.

The song and the instruments of music inspired mirth and harmony. The funny forest was made the spot of their pleasures during the day; but, at length, they retired to the hall, to eat the evening feast, and to renew the enlivening dance.

Alwynd was seated at the head of the table, and William and Agatha were placed on each side of him. The viands had been taken, and the goblet passed around the board, from which the whole party was rising, when a stranger presented himself before the Lord of the Castle, craving leave to speak to him either in public, or in private.

“I am furrounded by my best friends,” replied Alwynd, “therefore be pleased to use your words freely and without ceremony.”

“The Lord of Bartonmere once received succour from your arms. Your Lordship fought bravely—even bled for him; and he, in return, afterwards fought and bled for you. I am commissioned by him again to entreat your aid.”

“He shall have it, sir.”

“My dear Lord!” cried Agatha, in a low voice, and moving nearer to him.

“What! pale in the cause of friendship and of honour, my girl?” cried Alwynd. “Pray explain further, sir, and tell what services may be required of me.”

“The

“The haughty Baron of de Stacey, the old and inveterate enemy of my noble Lord, has again demanded tribute, which has been openly refused. In consequence of this he has, we learn, been making preparations for an excursion to our castle; and from a man, who broke his allegiance with the Baron, and came over to us, we are informed, that within two days an attack will be made by our imperious foe.”

“I’ll meet him there myself,” cried Alwynd; “so inform your Lord. The distance from hence is trifling. This is a night of festivity; but to-morrow we will put on our arms, and go forward to subdue avarice and pride. This tell the Baron of Bartonmere, whom I would have you greet in my name. Partake of our cheer, sir, before you depart.—The night promises to be fair, and your Lord is doubtless anxious for your re-

D 5

turn,



turn, I will not therefore ask you to sojourn till the morning."

The messenger bowed and smiled; and in the course of an hour he went from the castle.

Lord Alwynd attended him to the gate, and stood by him while he mounted his horse. Retiring afterwards to a private room, he conversed some considerable time with Celwold, and then went towards the hall, at the entrance of which he met Agatha in tears. The festivity of the evening was clouded by her sorrow. Alwynd took her hand from William, and led her to her chamber, where he endeavoured, by tenderness and by precept, to sooth and fortify her mind. But she declined returning to the hall, in which it was necessary he should be present, he therefore embraced and left her. He then went back to his friends; he

he conversed with them for a length of time, on the subject of the expedition which he had been summoned to make; and every man that was present, without a single exception, offered his arm and his sword to the cause.

Among the rest was heard the voice of Celwold, who would have been silent had not his honour been at stake. William also wished to go forth with the warriors; and Edward spoke firmly of his design of joining them. But the former was immediately denied by Alwynd; and the peremptory commands of Celwold were placed on the latter youth, who received them in a manner which evinced his mortification and disappointment.

It was with pleasure that Celwold heard Lord Alwynd declare he must not accompany him, but stay at the castle  
till

till his return. To this arrangement he acquiesced without a scruple; for, ready as he had seemed to go to the succour of Bartonmere, he was better pleased to remain within unmolested walls, than to undergo the fatigues of the march, and risk the dangers of the skirmish.

Agatha enjoyed but little repose during the night; at early morning she went to the chamber of Alwynd, and gently opened the door.—She saw that he was writing. Tho' the light of day was growing strong, his lamp was unextinguished—his habit remained as it had been in the preceding night, his bed was unpressed, and it was evident that he had taken no rest since they parted.

There was a great degree of expression in his countenance; he wrote—paused—sighed—and wrote again. The name of Agatha was more than once repeated  
in



in the tenderest strain. He saw her not.—She felt inclined to rush upon his neck, and to return affection for affection; but thinking that he might not wish to be disturbed, she walked softly away, and went to her chamber.

She met his Lordship again about seven o'clock — her eyes were thrown eagerly upon his face; she feared that she should see him distressed and agitated, but serenity sat on his brows. She could scarcely believe, by his countenance, that he had been waking all the night; and never had his smiles appeared to her more precious, or more beautiful.

The three next hours were spent by Alwynd and his men, in preparing themselves for their route: within that time all his vassalage had attended, they immediately equipt themselves in an armoury, and the chief and his followers were soon  
ready

ready for their march to the Castle of Bartonmere, in which they meant to pass the coming night, in order that they might be refreshed, and fit to meet the expected assailants on the following day.

Alwynd had another private interview with Celwold, with whom he was closeted upwards of half an hour; he then came forth, and summoned William and Agatha to take his farewell. This was a tender and truly affecting period! The hero himself melted. Had he been inclined to speak he would have been unable. He silently pressed the hand of the youth; kissed the cheek of his sister; strained them both affectionately to his breast; and, having put them into the arms of Celwold, he vaulted on his horse, and proceeded at the head of the warriors.

He

He knew that this was not a proper season for the indulgence of the weaknesses of human nature; he therefore endeavoured to recal his energies, and, within a few minutes after the separation, turned his face, on which appeared a noble fortitude, towards his vigorous and determined followers, whose love and loyalty closely attended their gallant leader.

They had gone about a mile across the forest, which was of great extent, when Alwynd perceived a horseman approaching him. Soon afterwards he was saluted by the person whom he had, several years before that period, seen, with a lady on that very spot, and who had been refused by the distracted servant, to partake of the feast which he had given on his former victorious return to the castle.

Alwynd immediately recognised him, for he was mounted on the same beautiful



tiful steed; and time had not in any degree impaired his personal graces. The warrior instantly checked his horse, and held forth his hand, to meet that which the stranger smilingly tendered him,

“Health to your Lordship!” cried the latter; “and your countenance assures me that you enjoy it. Believe me, my Lord, I am glad to see you well!”

“I thank you, noble sir,” replied Alwynd. “Your present kindness is not necessary to bring you back to my memory, for since I last saw you, I have many times thought of you, and I am concerned that it is not in my power to go back with you to the castle, and offer you the hospitality which, at our former meeting, I could not prevail on you to accept.”

“I cannot wish you to return; yet I am loath to part from you. Let me not  
impede

impede your march, I will ride to the border of the forest with you."

• The troop that had halted with the leader, now went forward again; and Alwynd's horse walked by the side of that of the stranger, who continued—"I know your designs, Lord Alwynd, and applaud them too. This morning, for my journey since sun-rise has not been short, I saw the hostile preparations which were making by de Stacey, who, I doubt not, will be at the Castle of Bartonmere early in the morning of to-morrow. I afterwards passed the place of his destination, where, I am assured, a gallant defence will be made by the insulted chief; a defence which you, and this excellent troop, will serve greatly to strengthen. Bartonmere merits your assistance, de Stacey deserves to be scourged. The one is a good man, with a fair name; the other

other an earthly devil, who shall hereafter be known in hell."

"I hope we shall succeed in chastising him," cried Alwynd.

"The dangers of the contest," replied his companion, "will be many; and your life is precious."

"As that of any other individual, sir; I know how it should be estimated."

"You speak with too much modesty. I would not have you fall for the world's united riches; by yonder sun, and by the power that governs it, I swear I would not!"

"My thanks are greatly due to you: but, from a stranger, I could not have expected so much feeling and concern. Your countenance beams with sincerity;  
and



and I can readily believe what you profess."

"And yet," said the traveller, abstractedly,—“And yet, perchance, Alwynd may be the mark of fate. Ha! See you not that black cloud, to the west, my Lord?—It is an omen which I like not.”

“I believe not in omens, I draw no fears from them; madmen and children only consult and tremble at them.”

“He who is too secure, is not less faulty than he who is too apprehensive. It is true that you breathe, my Lord, and so true it is that yonder cloud portends much evil. It enlarges—it grows more black—Shall Alwynd conquer, or be conquered?—Indeed!—Juggling fiend!”

“Sir!”

“Sir!” exclaimed the amazed Alwynd; “to whom did you speak; On whom do you look so angrily?”

“Pardon me, my Lord,” he replied, with a smile which beauty could not excel — “Pardon me, my fancy was sporting with my reason: I was, indeed, strangely bewildered. But I would entreat you not to go forward to the battle.”

“You must entreat in vain, then. Besides, did you not, a few minutes ago, spur me on; commend and applaud the expedition?”

“True, but in every moment man may have cause to shift his opinions. Wisdom never whispers, but we may learn something, however often she has spoken to us, or however long we may have listened to her. I have some sudden apprehensions for your safety. I conjure  
you

you to appoint a leader to the troop, and to let your soldiers go on without you."

"You, indeed, speak earnestly," said Alwynd, smiling; but I cannot make your prejudices my own. I perceive that you are governed by some strong and peculiar opinions, by which I never was directed, and which I must ever reject. Still your kindness—it appears to me almost that of a brother."

"I love you like a brother, Lord Alwynd; and would guard you from peril with my every mean."

"I am grateful, noble sir; but every human voice, directed towards me; one time, should not make me turn from the succour of so excellent a friend as Bartonmere,—from the menaces of his wolfish and sanguinary oppressor."

Then



“Then go, my Lord,” said the stranger, after a pause, during which his eyes had been fixed, with a strange expression, on the earth,—“then go, my Lord—meet the proud barbarian, and crush him, if you can. But first accept this gift; and be not incredulous to what I say.—Here is a sword, which I offer to you for your preservation, for it has a magic power that nothing can resist. The ore of which it was formed, was once millions of fathoms below the surface of the earth:—The feet of the miner that walked towards it, trod a horrid and dangerous path:—The fire that melted it was elemental:—The hand that tempered and fashioned it, the property of no mortal:—The man that could avert its point has never yet been created; and the blood it has shed, would crimson all the waters that are around the globe. Nay, it can even fascinate

fascinate with its rays:—I'll prove the truth of this. See here, my Lord."

He unsheathed the weapon, and held its point towards one of the foldiers, whose eyes instantly assumed a wild and terrific expression. The fellow, apparently propelled by an instinct which was irresistible, left his companions—he rushed forward to his destruction, and his breast seemed to court the instrument that was to slay him.

"Forbear!" cried Alwynd, stricken with horror and amazement, "forbear! forbear!"

The stranger immediately dropt his sword. The willing victim stood for a moment in wonder before him, and then returned to his unobserving companions, looking like one that had been cheated  
by

by a vision, and was ashamed of his folly and idle superstition.

“Take it—use it,” said the stranger, again presenting the instrument to Alwynd: “You can no longer doubt what I have said. Let it be your companion till the fray is over, when I shall claim it again.”

“Replace it in your scabbard, and wear it yourself,” the warrior replied. “I had no belief in these matters before; and will not now become an agent in forcery. I am going forth in the cause of justice, not of murder. I will not turn from my opponent, whoever he may be, while I can lift my arm; but I will not attempt to cut him off by means so devilish as those which you advise.”

“Meet



“Meet the true warrior, with the spirit of a warrior; but be not falsely merciful to him who pants for the blood that is in your veins. Under the banners of de Stacey there will be many who delight in butchery. I have examined the body, and discovered its corruption. De Stacey knows that Bartonmere has claimed your succour, and believes that it will be given, in consequence of which he bears you a most deadly enmity; and he who shall bring to him your head, or trunk, is promised a reward which all the felons wish to grasp. They will pounce upon you like a flock of kites. This I swear to be true, as I swear my friendship to be sincere. I shall make you only one more tender. Think not ill of me for being the possessor of this strange instrument; employ it in your defence—be sure you part not with it, even for a moment, and return it to me when I shall claim

it of you. Decide, my friend, decide instantly, for I can go with you no further."

The intelligence of de Stacey's stratagem and villainy had a considerable effect on Alwynd. He took the sword, and placing it by his side, vowed to give it back again to the stranger, if he should ever return.

"Of that there can be no doubt," said his companion, "if you retain it as I have directed; but should you part with it even for the smallest measure of time, I would not stake the most trifling thing on earth against your life. Adieu! — You shall see me again ere long; I will then explain to you my name and circumstances, which the pressure of the present moment will not allow."

"Go

“Go to the castle, and continue there during your pleasure:—My kinsman takes the government of it while I am absent, and he will receive and entertain you hospitably.”

“He is unworthy of the trust, tho’ he so kindly, so modestly accepted it.—Celwold would be the master, not the deputy. I know him—his heart is before me. You have not been sufficiently observing of his nature. When you have tamed the savage de Stacey, let your first action be to take all power from Celwold—your next to dismiss the hypocrite.”

“You speak too freely, sir.—Celwold’s ancestors have ever been virtuous, and he is nearly allied to me.”

“And what of that?—Virtue is not hereditary; and where there is much



honour, there may be an ugly speck, which, tho' not absolutely contaminating, should, for the sake of fair appearances, be removed. Farewel! farewel! I reverence the known merits of Lord Alwynd, but detest the corrupted heart of Celwold."

The stranger placed his spur to the side of his horse, which, with an almost incredible swiftness, bore him from the astonished chief. Alwynd continued his march with his men, who had moved at too great a distance to hear any of the foregoing conversation.

The forest friend appear'd to him a singular being — more than once he thought strangely of him; and he was tempted to throw from his side the mysterious weapon, that was to atchieve the wonders which had been spoken of. His own mind, however, soon accused him

him of ingratitude and injustice; he was not long in bringing back his belief that the stranger was honest—and he girded the loosened sword again round his loins; while he entered into converse with those who were at the head of his troop.

The shadows of night were resting on the towers of Bartonmere Castle, when the assisting warriors arrived at its gates. They were received with acclamations of joy by those who were in the walls; the men grasped the hands of each other like brothers—and the chiefs, as soon as they met, placed together those breasts in which honour and heroic friendship were, in an equal degree, to be found.

The enemy was expected on the following morning; and before the Barons separated for the night, it was determined that they should not remain coolly de-

fending themselves within the walls, but quit them on the approach of de Stacey, and give him immediate battle, in case the inequality of their numbers was not great.

It was near the hour of midnight, when Alwynd retired to a chamber appropriated to his use, and even at that late season he was little inclined to repose. His mind was too busy to be speedily lulled; the images set upon it were many and various, and each of them had its peculiar interest. The events and concerns of the day were neither uninteresting nor without interest. He had risen in the morning, and perhaps would be incapable of rising ere the sun should shine and again disappear.—He had embraced those dear, those beloved children, whom his arms might never more infold,—his Agatha!—His William!—And he had, in case of his death,



death, explained a long concealed mystery to, and repoted the most precious of all trusts, in a man, whom he had ever thought most honest; but who had been denounced, by one to whom all things seemed to be known and familiar, an enemy to his house, and an artful foe to himself.

“The falsehoods of hell,” cried Alwynd, “were in the accusation!—Celwold is tender, honest, and virtuous.”

“The falsehoods of hell,” returned a voice, sounding like that of the stranger of the forest, “are in the heart of Celwold; and he is cruel, deceitful, and full of vice.”

“Come forth!” exclaimed the astonished chief; “I know thee—we have met before since the morning, therefore

come forth. I have some things to demand of thee."

"When the battle is over, my Lord, ask of me what you will. I am not what I seemed—but trust me not the less for it. My sword will lead you through a thousand dangers; remember, however, not to part with it till I shall hail you in your quiet castle. I have now no time for converse, as I am a busy agent in concerns which are innumerable. Forget not the perfidious intentions of de Stacey; forget not your lovely children—the children of Matilda."

"The children of Matilda! — Mysterious being!—Surely nothing can be concealed from you. Matilda! — Oh, there is agony in my heart!"

"There shall, if my advice be followed, hereafter be in it an immense  
store

store of joy. Remember the offspring of the dead—and that Celwold is unworthy. But see, I place before you a silent monitor. Adieu!—Matilda must go with me a space untraversable by mortals in a thousand years, before the lark soars, or the clouds grow grey.”

A lovely spirit rose at some little distance from the warrior. She bore the smiles of heaven on her cheeks; affection shone from her dove-like eyes; her bright hair dispersed itself on her snowy bosom; her white and naked feet were visible beneath her spotless robe; and her whiter arm, and extended finger, pointed towards those regions, in which virtue is crowned with unfading bliss. In the centre of her cestus beamed a small, but matchless star; and on her head was placed another of nearly equal radiance, serving as unextinguishable lamps in the paths of immortality.



A secret dread was mixed with the rapture of Alwynd, who slowly strove to approach the beauteous shade of Matilda. But, smiling still more strongly, and waving to him her hand, she retired as he advanced; and, when he had reached the window, he found that the essence had burst through the walls, and saw the spirit mounting in the air, and hailing him from the moon-light plains of heaven. At some small distance from her appeared the being of the forest, mounted on his curbed courser, from whose nostrils a pale blue fire seemed to issue, and whose hoofs had nothing more solid than the air to press. The looks of the rider were turned towards the female shade; and he summoned her by his motions and gestures. The rapidity of the spirits then encreased; the appearance of the steed became more fiery; and within a few minutes, the mysterious group  
pierced

pierced through a cloud, which previously began to over-shadow the moon.

The eyes of Alwynd closed. Astonishment affected his breathing; and his head fell on the stone casement, from which, for a considerable length of time, he had not power to remove it. The window fronted the ramparts, and when he awoke from his trance, at no great distance he perceived a foldier pacing on his guard, and called on him to advance, which he did as near as was possible.

There was no small portion of dread mingled with his wonder; and at an hour like that, it was comfortable to speak to a human being.

“Have you had no disturbance, friend?” enquired the chief: “and are our foes yet distant?”

“All

“All is quiet, my Lord,” replied the soldier; “not a single enemy has dared to approach the walls.”

“And have you heard no noise near your post? Have you observed the clouds, and seen nothing strange in their appearance?”

“No, my Lord. The moon has been smiling ever since I took my station, and the sky calm and cloudless,”

“Did you not see a meteor in the air, and hear the wild neighing of a horse, or some most strange sound?”

“No, in truth, my Lord.”

“You have not slumbered, friend?”—

“If my eyes have closed since the morning, may they instantly shut, and never open again.”

“Good



“ Good night, foldier. Make your-  
felf known to me in the morning, and I  
will give you fomething for your wife,  
if you are married; and for your chil-  
dren, if you are a father, in cafe  
you fhould not return to them from  
the expected battle.”

“ Good night, my noble lord. My  
infants and their mother fhall blefs  
your Lordship, and pray for the hap-  
piness of thofe who are moft dear to  
you.”

The foldier retired, but Alwynd re-  
mained at the window, looking towards  
that part of the heavens in which Matilda  
had faded. It was not long, however,  
before the firft rays of morning began to  
appear; expectation was no more to be  
indulged, and he turned towards the ftill  
burning lamp, by the fide of which lay  
the fword that had been lent to him  
in

in the forest. He viewed it with fear and suspicion, for he was now assured that the giver was no mortal; nor did it seem unlikely to him, but that the vision and the weapon were effected and presented by the arch fiend, to whom man's misery is pleasure; for the purpose of bringing him into that horrid snare, from which there can be no extrication.

Much, indeed, had been protested and sworn: But he might have merely listened to the wily speeches, and feigned assurances of the devil, or of one of his principal agents. Yet had he not, for many years, believed Matilda to be a spirit of heaven, over which hell could have no domination? That idea still added to his perplexities: But ruminating farther, his better opinions returned, and he resolved to bear himself as he had been instructed.

• • •  
Shortly

Shortly after he laid himself down, and, though his agitation had been so great, for three hours enjoyed a tranquil sleep; he then arose, and sought Lord Bartonmere, whom he found in the court yard, inspecting a body of his adherents. But the expected enemy had not appeared. All, however, were in preparation, and every man in the castle was eager to grapple with the clan of de Stacey.

Impressed as Alwynd was, by the mysteries of the past night, he strove to conceal the effect of them from Bartonmere, and succeeded in doing it. He did not forget the promise he had made to the man on the ramparts, who privately presented himself before the chief, from whom he received a gift, which was to be transferred to the partner of his breast, for the succour of herself and her innocent progeny.



The Castle of Bartonmere was a scene of busy preparation; that of Alwynd of sorrow and apprehension; excepting one man that it contained, who wanted every virtue which he imposed on his observers. Agatha's fears were almost insupportable; and when her following eye could no longer distinguish Lord Alwynd on his departure, she hastened to her chamber, from which she debarred all intrusion; and after the tumult of her grief had partly subsided, on her knees she implored the aid and protection of the God she adored, in behalf of him who was next in her love.

“Spare him, Eternal Providence!” she cried; “let the sword be lifted against him in vain, arrows fly around him, and wound not. Guard him, power of my adoration—oh! return him to me in safety, that my sorrows may fade while I hang on his neck, and my

my fears vanish, while I press my kisses on his lips!"

She wished not for society, not even for that of those beloved friends who were still near to her, her William, and young Mercia; they, however, succeeded in drawing her from her retirement, and induced her to attend the evening repast, though the appetite of sorrow alone was craving. Celwold, with great tenderness, endeavoured to soothe her, nor was she insensible of the kindness of his efforts; her brother's voice also assisted the intentions of his Lordship, and the eyes of Mercia strove to cheer her spirits, and lessen her despondency.

Still her heart could not recal its fortitude; there was langour in her countenance, and tremor in her speech, and it was difficult to check the tide that was so strong and impetuous in its course. She  
• looked

looked at the chair in which Celwold was seated, and thought of him who was accustomed to fill it ; of him who had been to her tender and loving as a thousand fathers ; of him who, perhaps, was on the eve of destruction, and fated to the butchery of the merciless and savage.

The repast being over, she was glad to hear Celwold speak of the necessity of his retiring for the evening ; and when he was gone, she agreed to walk awhile with her brother and Mercia. After an hour's ramble in the moon-light forest, she returned with them, somewhat benefited and enlivened by the exercise and the air.

During their walk, the expedition of Alwynd was the chief subject on which they talked. William lamented that he had been forbidden to go with his Lordship ; and Mercia more vehemently exclaimed



exclaimed against the prohibition of his guardian. His dissatisfaction encreased every moment, he seemed to consider the conduct of Celwold as too scrupulous and arbitrary, and his own submission as tame and dishonourable. William strove to change the tenor of his friend's thoughts, though his own in some measure accorded; and Agatha entreated him to appear tranquil and satisfied, and also to believe that the caution of Celwold arose from tender, good, and generous motives.

Mercia listened with greater pleasure and respect to her voice, than to that of her brother; and when she was about to retire to her chamber, he arose also, and having wished William good night, he walked across the hall, and ascended the stair-case with Agatha. There was in his countenance a strange expression, which she could not fail to notice; and his mind

was, evidently labouring with something which he feared to disclose.

When he came to the end of the gallery he stopt, and took hold of her hand. His lips were in motion, but his voice was not heard. He paused—gazed on her still more earnestly, and with greater affection—a smile was on his cheek, and a tear in each of his eyes, which fell from him in sadness, and over which he placed his agitated hand.

“ Dear Mercia!” she cried, “ whence arises this sudden distress?—What is the cause of it, my Lord?”

“ I dare not tell you, sweet Agatha!” he replied; “ but you shall know it when we meet again — probably you will hear of it in the morning, before you see me. Angels protect you, Agatha! — Good night, dear girl! — My foolish

foolish emotions must not keep you from your pillow; nor can I now with propriety speak to you as my wishes prompt me. Good night."

He then walked hastily out of the gallery, and Agatha went into her chamber, greatly surprised by the agitation of Mercia, and wondering at the unexplained cause of it. She was acquainted with the nobleness of his mind, and also well assured that his fortitude was not to be shaken by trifles; for she had seen him, on many great occasions, bear himself with heroic firmness, and rise above those things which threatened him with vexation and disquiet.

His extreme perturbation gave her a considerable degree of concern, as it seemed to arise from something difficult to conceal, and distressing to speak of. She had reason to believe that the cause  
of



of it had been kept from her brother; and she hoped in the morning to gain the confidence of Mercia, and to see his anxieties greatly diminished. The fears which she entertained for Alwynd, and the serious interest that Mercia's behaviour had created, kept her mind long and actively employed; and the pillow which she prest scarcely afforded her any repose or refreshment.

While she was turning on the bed of disquiet, Celwold was still walking and ruminating in his chamber. Since the departure of Alwynd, there had been a restlessness in his spirit, which he could scarcely conceal; and had he not risen immediately after supper, he feared it would have discovered itself to the eyes of some of those who were around him.

When his kinsman, previous to his leaving the castle, took him to his closet,

an

an interesting conversation had ensued; but it was of a mixed nature, and the most important part of it related to the youth William, and his sister Agatha.—It has been said that, Lord Alwynd employed himself in writing the whole night that came after the summons of Bartonmere. On the following day he signed and placed his seal upon the papers, and afterwards put them into the hands of Celwold, whom he took apart for that purpose.

“I am going,” he cried, “where there will be some danger:—My fall may be ordained, and I may perhaps be fated never more to enter these walls, tho’ I have spoken so confidently of my return to my adopted children. Celwold, I commit these papers to your hands. Should I come back in safety, you will return them to me in the state you now receive them; but should the  
sword

sword of de Stacey, or any of his men, cut me off in battle, I charge you to break the seals, to peruse the papers attentively, and, as you shall respect my memory, implicitly to obey the directions they contain. My will is among them, and also a written particular concerning the birth of William and Agatha.—Love those children, Celwold, as well as I have done, and be to them a tender guardian, if, owing to my loss, they shall stand in need of one.”

“ I will, dear my Lord ! ”

“ Heaven bleis you, Celwold, for the promise !—If I live, I will make my friendship better known to you ; and if I die, you will find that I have not been neglectful of you, tho’ there were prior claims on me.”



The last words cooled the blood of the new appointed guardian. He contrived, however, to keep his countenance smooth, while Alwynd continued before him; on his departure the effects of hypocrisy were still more strengthened, and tho' he looked softly throughout the day on the favourites of the warrior, yet he almost wished some mischance would remove them from his sight before the morrow; and it was with a considerable degree of satisfaction that he could escape from them so early in the evening.

Celwold felt the power with which he had been invested, and strongly wished that it might be long and permanently continued in him; though it could only be so, by means of the death of the amiable Alwynd, whose merits made him more precious to the world, and to society, than a thousand such men as his fawning and disguised enemy.

Celwold was full of his own greatness; and as he passed by the menials of the castle, he was inclined to think himself their arbitrary lord. Pride raised his brows, and vanity swelled his heart; yet he knew that it would not be politic, in that uncertain season, to let them be visible, difficult as it was to him to wear his false appearance undetected.

As he walked through the apartments he looked on their costliness and worth; he regarded them as things that would be more dear to him thereafter, and went to his chamber, musing on the probability and means of his succession. He afterwards opened a cabinet, and took from thence the papers which Alwynd had deposited with him. They were sealed with great care and exactness; and it was impossible to unfold the packet, and again to secure it, without discovering the action. The silken cord that  
fastened

fastened it was, in several parts, covered with wax, and stamped with a private seal, which Alwynd had not left behind.

Celwold's curiosity was so powerful, that it almost made him dangerously incautious; for he was strongly tempted to lay all open before him, and the impossibility of disguise could scarcely restrain the impulse. But as he was about to raise the cord, the impressive words of Alwynd returned to his memory—"Should I come back in safety, you will return them to me in the state you now receive them."—Disappointment and vexation unnerved his arm, and the packet dropt from his hand to the floor.

Having, of late, considered himself as the destined heir of Alwynd, his desire to peruse the will may be conceived to be strong; especially as Alwynd's parting words had turned towards a *prior claim*,



which seemed to frustrate the designs of ambition, and to shift from its eye the brightest of those prospects, on which it had long and anxiously dwelt. The history of the favourites, too, he longed to possess himself of; for they had, during several years, been objects of great pain and concern to him. Should any disaster befall their benefactor, which the prayers of his false friend and relation would not strive to avert, obscurity would no longer hang over them; the narrative would be resorted to, and explain to whom they belonged, and in what proportion they would decrease the envied fortune of Celwold.

He could not conceive that the prior claim rested with them, nor trace it in any other person; and he endeavoured to persuade himself, that he had either misunderstood, or strangely misconstrued the words of Alwynd. His principal motive  
for

for leaving the young people so early in the evening, was, in order that he might again inspect the packet, which he hoped he should be able to look into. The expectation however faded, an anxious and seemingly lengthened night succeeded, and in the morning he met William and Agatha with such smiles on his face as villains teach themselves to wear.

His hypocrisy was not discovered either by the youth or his sister, they both conceived that he was intitled to their respect and gratitude, and the one was as willing as the other to offer them to him.

They all met at one time, and it was not long before the eyes of Agatha began to look for Mercia, whose recent agitation had greatly interested her. But, after waiting a considerable time, he did not appear, and Celywold, wondering at his absence, sent a servant in search of him.

The messenger, however, soon returned, and informed them, that Lord Mercia left the castle just at the break of day, having previously commanded the man who let him pass the gates, to cause a letter, which he had given to him, to be delivered to Lord Celwold, but not before the hour of nine.

Celwold started at the intelligence, and took the paper hastily. The eye of William became suspicious; and Agatha's face grew still more pale and painfully expressive. Celwold's countenance shewed immediate anger, and his hand trembled as he unfolded the letter, the contents of which he made known to his companions, by reading it aloud to them. It was brief, but resolute—

“The struggle to obey your Lordship's commands,” it said, “I find myself unequal to; nor do I think, in this instance,



stance, the duty that might be owing even to a parent, could fix me here at a time like the present. Before this will reach Lord Celwold, I shall be near, and perhaps giving assistance to his noble, his gallant kinsman; for whose preservation I would brave the most imminent dangers of the field, and encounter the most daring of his enemies. My inclination is not to be baffled. I am not emulous of staining my virgin sword with blood, merely to gaze on it when my eyes shall be stretched by ambition, or by false glory.—No!—I would aid the persecuted, and side with the meritorious and valiant. Adieu, my Lord. I will not be recalled. What you would impose on the boy, the growing spirit of manhood cannot brook. I take the chance of the warrior. Conquest may send me back to you, smiling, and bearing her ensigns; and death may drain the vessels of my body, and shut

me from all further pursuits in the tomb. Health to your Lordship. To William and Agatha, friendship and love.

Mercia."

"Perverse and obdurate!" cried Celwold. "I little expected this ingratitude from Mercia. Should danger befall him, he alone will be accountable for it; for in this letter he scorns my advice, contemns my power, and frees himself from my guardianship. Should his blood therefore be spilt"—

"Gracious God, preserve him!" cried Agatha, with much energy; "his agitation when I saw him last was great indeed, and the cause of it is now explained. Our father and our friend may both fall; if so, peace will never thereafter be known to me."

"Did

“ Did he confide in neither of you,” said Celwold; “ and did neither of you know of his intentions?”

“ I had no fufpicion of them,” replied Agatha; “ my mind was as free in that refpect as your Lordfhip’s.”

“ But why are you, fir, filent?” faid Celwold, turning to William. “ You were doubtlefs in his confidence, and probably aided him in his defigns. Young man, I fhould have viewed you more kindly, if you had not judged of Mercia by yourfelf; and alfo if you had balanced my difappointments againft your own romantic friendship.”

“ My Lord, your attack commences fharpely. What if my ignorance of the affair amounted to that of my fifter?”

“ O, I am not eafily to be perfuaded to believe that. Edward and you corre-



sponded in every thing; indiscretion was your tutor, and vain-glory your mistress. It is not likely that Mercia should leave you a stranger to his important project, in the execution of which, I could almost wish his vanity to receive a check, that might for a long period mortify and gall him."

"He is too noble to deserve mortification, too spirited to receive it from those who would ungenerously impose it; and too wise to take it to himself on slight occasions."

"You are a champion with your tongue, sir, tho' not with your sword."

"My tongue, my Lord, may at present assert its freedom; so should my sword, by the side of my heroic friend, were it not restrained by him to whom

I owe an equal love, joined with a true and honest duty."

"But why do you evade my question?"

"Because it is unfair. Your very suspicion contains a most disgraceful accusation. The beauties of truth are heavenly; but, to preserve her dignity, she may sometimes retain her veil, especially when she is too imperiously commanded to remove it."

William, who had been standing in an easy attitude, slightly bent himself to Celwold, and then, with an air in which there was some dignity, walked out of the room. Agatha had listened with emotion to this conversation; she rose from her seat at the conclusion of it, and followed her brother, whose conduct was such as her free and liberal spirit approved.

But

But she did not then recollect that the deputed Lord of the castle was entitled to her respect, and she hastily retired without offering any to him.

Celwold was mortified and confounded. Mature in years as he was, he wanted that equanimity of temper which had then been shewn to him; and he was conscious that the boy was in the possession of qualities, which the man had never been able to obtain. Wanting admiration for talents, he slighted what most men would have applauded; and he wished to curb, and wholly subdue, the noble spirit that animated the breast, and gave vigour to the tongue of his young opponent.

It was not a fit time for him to vent his spleen, and exercise his resentment. The departure of Alwynd was too recent for his purpose; but his fixed dislike accumulated,



cumulated, and he longed for the arrival of the hour, in which he might set up his power and dignities, and teach the boy to bend to them. Agatha's conduct, bearing a resemblance to that of her brother, also excited his displeasure. Their youthful arrogance, as he termed it, seemed to be alike in their natures; and when he should see them again, he expected to have words more free, and looks more expressive, directed towards him, by the stripling and his assuming sister.

At the hour of dinner he went into the eating-room, but neither of the young people were present; in a few minutes, however, Agatha entered, without a single mark of resentment on her face, and with eyes shewing so much beauty, that even Celwold was fascinated by, and returned her smiles. But his principal enemy was still to appear. Almost immediately after the entrance of Agatha,

Agatha, William came in, and, with a face scarcely less interesting than his sister's, he advanced towards, and respectfully bowed to Celwold, who had not previously expected any such condescension, or mark of respect.

"I come a suppliant to you, my Lord," he cried; "and it is for your Lordship's forgiveness. You were angry with me when I last parted from you; and it was my impetuosity, perhaps, alone, that made you so. I have since reflected on the cause of your vexation, and more seriously thought of your disappointment. My own warmth, and too spirited retorts, I have also considered; and reason has told me of their impropriety. Take my apology, my Lord, and give me your pardon."

Celwold was astonished; even his insensible heart was touched by this unexpected

pected conduct, and he readily took the hand that was offered to him.

“Now,” continued William—“now my heart is lighter, and my mind more free. But, in some degree, to extenuate my fault, let me declare to your Lordship, by all that good men reverence, and bad men dread, that Mercia never told me of, or even hinted his design. Tho’ he spoke against your restrictions, I suspected not that he meant to break thro’ them, and my surprise, when I heard of his departure, could not fail to be as great as your Lordship’s; for, on our parting last night, he planned an excursion, in which myself and Agatha were to have joined this morning.”

There was a sincerity in the words and countenance of the speaker, which the most suspicious would not have doubted. Celwold regarded him with eyes more favourable



avourable than he had ever done before. Something told him that he deserved not what was then offered to him; and after dinner he drank to a forgetfulness of past anger, and to a reconciliation of friendship.

Agatha was a well-pleased spectator of the scene, and her looks fully expressed her satisfaction. Joy could not, however, establish itself in the soft bosom it had entered; apprehension demolished the throne on which it wished to be erected, and the delight that was produced by the amity of Celwold and William, the fears which waited on Alwynd and Mercia were not long in destroying.

The Castle of Bartonmere remained unmolested during the whole of the day on which the enemy had been confidently looked for, and the united nobles began to suspect that the force of de Stacey had  
been

been found either incomplete, or unprepared, or that he did not mean to execute what he had so loudly and basely threatened.

Alwynd strongly hoped that he should not withdraw himself, without having performed some serviceable action; for, loving humanity, as a son would love his mother, and averse to the trade of war as he was, he saw in the infamous de Stacey a general enemy to his species, a combination of the darkest villanies, a wretch deserving of the scourge of a powerful hand, and almost unmeriting of mercy, should he even be brought, by any disaster or mischance, to call for it.

Another night came on, and Alwynd, whose thoughts since the morning, had many times wandered widely from the object in which every person around  
him

him was so deeply interested, again went towards his chamberr. He felt a sensation of awe, when the man who had preceded him placed the lamp on the table, and left the apartment; for the recollection of things recently gone by was powerful, and though he was inclined to wish for a renewal of them, there was a dread combined with the desire, from which he found it not easy to be separated.

He placed his charmed sword by his side, and, partly undressing, laid himself on the bed; for he not only wished to be ready to join Lord Bartonmere, the very moment in which he might be summoned, but also to watch for the re-appearance of the forest wonder, as well as for the pure and angelic form that he had seen, travelling amid the clouds of heaven. He was, however, soon attacked by a drowsiness,



drowsiness, from which he could not free himself. His propensity to sleep was not to be resisted; he rubbed his brows, and even sat up on the bed, but he almost immediately sunk on his pillow, and became insensible to all things that were around him.

His slumbers were soft as those of infancy; no dreams disturbed him, and after the morning had been beaming at least two hours, he was still composed and tranquil. But at that time Lord Bartonmere rushed into his chamber, and summoned him to rise, as the enemy was within half an hour's march of the castle. The powers of Alwynd were sufficiently roused by the information. He instantly accoutred himself, and hastened with his gallant friend to the warriors in the castle yard, who were animated by the smiles and liberal praises of the chieftains.

They

They were all properly arrayed by the time de Stacey was at the gates; when Bartonmere was desired to shew himself on the ramparts, and also to listen to the leader of those who were come against him. He immediately complied, when, below the walls he saw his collected foes, in the front of whom stood the tyrant that had led them thither, smiling with contumely and peculiar arrogance.

“The time is come, Baron,” he cried, “and you must listen to me. I am inclined to believe, that you have repented of your obstinacy, and that you will hearken to the terms on which alone peace and amity can be grounded.”

“Terms from thee!” exclaimed Lord Bartonmere.—“But speak them—I may reject afterwards.”

“You

“ You know I am allied to royalty.— Acknowledge me your superior, and give me the annual tribute that I have before demanded; or you shall soon see us proceed in our power, and demolish the castle in which you think to hide yourself.”

“ Now take my answer,” replied Bartonmere.—“ Royalty is stained by the alliance of which you so proudly vaunt. Flatter not yourself that you are my superior, for you are much below me. Would the tribute of a single coin appease you, it should be withheld; and your threats, great Lord, alarm me no more than would the same menaces coming from an instructed pye.”

“ We’ll raze your castle!” exclaimed de Stacey, made almost frantic by the galling answer.—“ Ere night you shall be buried in its ruins.”

“ Nay



“Nay, we wish not to hide ourselves in it,” said Bartonmere; “and if you are not daftardly you will withdraw to the heath, and wait for us there. We will attend you soon; and this may convince you, that the incaged lion is not always to be tamed.”

“It shall be so.—Follow to the fate that awaits you, Bartonmere.”

“To the heath! —to the heath!” cried the clan of de Stacey; and soon afterwards they marched from the castle, towards the place to which they had been directed. Bartonmere then went down to Alwynd and the soldiers, whom he apprised of what he had proposed, and found that it corresponded with their wishes.

The leaders retired for a few minutes to the hall, when Alwynd threw his arms  
around

around the neck of Bartonmere, to whom he said,—“ There is an uncertainty in our ever meeting hereafter; and tho’ we may strongly hope to return hither, when the battle shall have ceased, yet we cannot expect any assurance of it. We may come back ere night, and renew our friendship on this very spot,—and we may travel thro’ worlds unknown, before we are allowed again to hail each other. Bartonmere, God bless you! If providence lead you thro’ the battle, believe me I shall rejoice in your preservation; and if it be ordained that I shall see you fall, while I am assisting in laying you in the tomb of your ancestors, the remembrance of what you have been, and at this present moment are to me, will not pass away like common thoughts.”

Bartonmere was a hero; but he had a heart of great tenderness and susceptibility. He repaid the affection of Alwynd,

wynd, whom he had long known and truly esteemed, even with a tear; the adieu on his part was equally kind and impressive — and they immediately returned to the soldiers, for whose passage the gates of the castle were widely opened. They began their march; but Alwynd desired them to halt for a moment, and requested one of the servants to bring him from his chamber his sword, which he had forgotten.

“Your sword, my Lord!” cried Bartonmere; — “you have it by your side.”

“True, I have one there; but that is to be used only in the greatest emergency — and indeed I shall be loath to draw it from the scabbard. It has been lent to me; my own, however, must be employed before I resort to this.”



The servant came back with the sword, which Alwynd carried in his hand; the warriors then passed over the bridge, and went onward to the heath, which was scarcely more than a mile distant from the castle. The men were well prepared for the combat—and the nearer they approached to the danger, the less they seemed to think of it.—Their spirits had reached their possible altitude; resolution strongly shone in every eye, and their swelling chests seemed to brave the arrows, which the compulsive cords were to put upon the wing.

Alwynd felt the general ardor; but just as they came in view of the power which they were to oppose, a momentary tenderness pervaded his breast—an exquisitely painful thought, hanging upon William and Agatha, took a temporary

porary possession of his mind, and he breathed forth an unheard prayer for those dear objects of his love.

Both Bartonmere and his friend, observed that they had a superior force to contend with, and this they spoke of to their men; but the inequality of numbers robbed not the troops of their valour—and as they had so far advanced, they were determined not to retreat, till they had tried the temper of their swords, as well as the elasticity of their bows.—Indeed the disadvantage served only to inflame them, as it made the baseness and depravity of de Stacey more flagrant; for he had brought only a third part of his men before the castle, tho' it had been considered as his whole force, and kept the remainder in ambush, for those purposes which treachery and cowardice are most apt to involve.

As the terms of the enemy had been before so peremptorily and scoffingly rejected, they were not repeated in the field: The trumpet of each party soon called them to the attack, and the battle commenced with spirit and bravery. The heroism of Bartonmere shone at the head of his troop, and Alwynd led his men with the greatest gallantry.

At the onset, and for some time afterwards, there was some method, as well as regularity, to be observed in their proceedings; neither of the bands were able to break thro' the other—and tho' determination moved the nerves of every arm, yet, for a while, slaughter had the veins only of a few to fix her lips upon. At length, however, confusion began to prevail—the soldiers were indiscriminately mixed, and Bartonmere and Alwynd widely separated. But the latter, where-  
ever he went, and whatever was the dan-



ger that he risked, perceived a soldier, whose face he either saw not, or did not recollect, keeping close to his side. His sword was not merely for himself, it seemed to be designed as a guard to Alwynd; and once it had assuredly saved his life.

“You are a noble fellow!” cried the latter, while he was in his pursuit, “but let me warn you to be less unguarded. Your enterprising spirit merits the wreath of glory; if, however, you are not more cautious, you will never live to wear it.”

The man replied not.—Nearly half an hour longer he ran and fought by the side of the Baron; they were then separated by a party belonging to de Stacey, who seemed to design Alwynd as their joint victim, and whom they afterwards surrounded.

“Alwynd,

“ Alwynd, we have you now!” cried one of them.—“ We ask you not to yield, for it is your death, not your captivity, that will appease the fury of our chief.”

“ His life,” said another, “ will bring us nothing; but his head, or his heart, will pass current for a hundred pounds.”

“ Dispatch him, comrades!—dispatch him!”

“ Villains! blood-hounds!” exclaimed Alwynd; “ I have heard of you, and also of your tyrant’s promised reward. Five opposed to one!—Infamous dastards!—Take my life, if you can, and claim the gift; but you shall find that your prey will not be quietly netted.”

He felt within himself the strength of a tyger; and the first man that struck at

him soon lay gasping on the earth. The other four, however, closed him in behind, when, as his last resource, he drew forth the sword that had not been before unsheathed; well knowing that if it wanted the promised power, his death must be inevitable. It was instantly proved that the giver of it had not lied, when he described its virtues, for two of the fellows, in the course of a minute, became its victims. The weapon of a third broke upon it as if it had been made of glass; and the fourth ran speedily away, yelling like a fiend that had just slipped from the manacles of hell.

Heated in blood, and made almost mad by their treachery, he pursued the flying foldier, and commanded him to turn. The fellow, tho' he feared his success, made a struggle for his life; when Alwynd, disdaining all unfair advantage, threw on the ground the sword that  
that



that was so fatal, and drew forth that with which he might fight only on equal terms. His foe was not without skill, which made the contest long and obstinate, but, at length, the soldier fell; and at that moment a body of nearly fifty men was within a few yards of Alwynd, when he fled towards a party of his own followers, whom he had joined before he recollected that he had left the magic instrument behind him.

It was now too late to attempt to recover it. The loss, however, struck him with pain and apprehension; for, setting aside his personal safety, he knew not what answer he should give to him who was hereafter to demand it. His mind was much harraffed, while he scoured the heath in search of Bartonmere.

The soldier that had displayed so much attachment to Alwynd, was un-

successful in his attempts of joining him again. He sought him in many places, and asked several soldiers of his party, to direct him to their chief. Disappointment, however, waited on him wherever he turned; and he could neither find the Baron, nor hear any thing of him. He was re-commencing his search, when a man, without any weapon, or means of defence, appeared by his side, and took hold of his arm.

“ Lord Mercia,” he cried, “ is looking for the noble Alwynd, who is in yon corner of the field, and exposed to the greatest danger. He has lost this sword, which I found at some little distance. Hasten to him; replace it in his hand, if you should find him alive,—if dead, let your arm drive it thro’ the trunk of de Stacey.”

“ You

“ You know me then,” said Mercia; “ Lord Alwynd in such danger! I will fly to him instantly. But I leave you stranger, defenceless in the extreme.”

“ Regard not that. Neither swords nor arrows can give me any injury. Were it my mind I could turn every blade of grass crimson with human blood, and tear the wolfish de Stacey piece-meal. But vengeance is reserved for you. Away, Mercia, away!”

Edward's feet seemed no heavier than the air; he ran with his sword in his hand, and to his astonishment, he saw soldiers fall before they were attacked. As he went forward nothing resisted him; the power of a divinity was apparently lodged within him, and he trembled at what the stranger had said, and also at what his own arm unconsciously performed.



At the place to which he had been directed, and ere he could wholly reach it, he saw Alwynd and de Stacey engaged in fierce combat. His speed encreased; he raised his voice, in order to attract their notice, and cause them to desist; but before he could come up to them, the heart of Alwynd was pierced by his enemy, and as he sunk into immediate death, the conqueror hastened away exultingly, to boast of the deed to those who were as sanguinary as himself.

Mercia now arrived at the body of Alwynd, threw himself upon it, and mourned the hero's fall with tears, which would not be restrained; and tho' the weapon of de Stacey had made a passage for the bowels, yet Mercia gazed on Alwynd's face, in the earnest hope of seeing some signs of life, and distractedly called on him who was never thereafter to reply. "And art thou gone,"

gone," he said, "worthiest and best of men, art thou gone!"

"Aye, for ever, for ever!" exclaimed the unarmed stranger, who was now standing by his side.

"You here so soon?" cried Mercia: "See, the flower of the field is blasted! He stirs not—he breathes not—the star of human nature shall rise no more. The friend of the good, the protector of the innocent is gone; and, oh! who shall relate this deed, who bear this body to thee, dear William, and to thee, sweet Agatha?"

"You, Mercia. This must be done by you. But the hero shall not be borne to his castle, without the head of him who slew him. You, friend to the dead, shall hew it from his accursed body; or if you refuse, it shall be performed by me.

Ask

Ask me not now who or what I am. I belong to the globe it is true; but I can go beyond it. The sword you brought hither I lent to Alwynd, and charged him not to part with it; had he been cautious the fury of millions could not have reached him. Now, Mercia, it is your turn to use it."

"I stand in fear of you, stranger!"

"May the flames of hell environ me this instant, if I deceive you. But see, de Stacey returns! Shall he triumph? Shall the wolf again shew his fangs in savage joy? Give me the sword, boy. So many men as there are in the field, into so many pieces will I cut him."

"No!" cried Mercia; "I will be confident; the deed shall be performed by me, or my blood shall stream for it."



it. I rise above my nature, my arm is of steel; I feel the growth of my heart within me, and can doubt no longer. He comes, he presses towards me; guard you the body, till I bring to you some trophy that may be borne away with it."

"Begone, youth! Away, away!"

He grasped the sword, rushed forward with a degree of swiftness which he himself wondered at, and within a few minutes stood before the slayer of Alwynd. "You must engage with me," he cried; "villain, it is you whom I seek. The blood of Alwynd cries aloud for vengeance; by you he is sent to heaven; by me you shall be dispatched to hell."

De Stacey replied only with a laugh of contempt; and he raised his weapon against his young opposer. He aimed, however,

however, without success; and it was not long before the sword of Mercia had cut through the very centre of his skull, from which his loosened brains found an immediate passage. The soldiers, seeing the fate of their leader, were struck with dismay; many of them yielded to those who were against them, others scoured over the heath in the greatest confusion, and Mercia dragged the trunk of de Stacey to the spot where he had left the body of Alwynd, over which the bleeding Bartonmere was standing with looks of anguish.

The stranger also was there; he snatched the sword from Mercia, and hurried away with uncommon speed; but by the singular expression of his countenance, it was evident that he wished his interposition, and wonderful assistance, might be kept secret from the surviving hero. The eyes of the astonished Mercia followed him

him till he disappeared; the young warrior then cast them, moistened by pity, on the breathless body of Alwynd, and with his arms raised it from the earth, and placed it against his breast. In this action he was aided by Bartonmere, whose wounds, though many, were not mortal, and to whom Mercia, unre-  
fervedly unfolded himself.

Some soldiers soon joined them, and they proceeded, with the poor remains of valour, towards the castle; leaving the disfigured and horid corse of de Stacey, to the chance of being either taken away by those who might seek for it, or to be corrupted by the summer heats.

Victory was on the side of Bartonmere, but he thought it dearly gained, while he contemplated the ghastly face and gaping wounds of his fallen friend. The farewell that had preceded the battle afflicted  
him



him greatly; and he now grieved that they must, indeed, "travel thro' worlds unknown," before they should meet again. His concern for the fate of his noble ally, made him indifferent to his own wounds, on which it was a considerable time, before he would consent to have any bandages placed; for he felt himself unable to turn his eye from the pale object which it still dwelt on with gloomy sorrow.

Mercia bore not the loss with so much quietness; though, perhaps, he felt not more exquisitely. His was the impetuous grief of a young and unfortified heart, which could not call in philosophy to heal its bruises, or teach him how to alleviate the anguish of them. From the indulgence of his passions he was, however, at length roused by prudence; and fearing that some unguarded tongue might pour the intelligence into  
the

the ears of his friends, he silently pressed the hand of Bartonmere, mounted his horse, and rode towards the late residence of Alwynd, to be the narrator of the fate that had attended him.

The feet of his horse were swift, but it was evening when he entered the forest, which, tho' decked with all the blushing sweets of summer, seemed not to him more interesting than a blasted desert. Sorrow was in his heart, and tears frequently in his eyes. His heroism was faded, and his fortitude still more shaken by the sight of Agatha and William, who were sitting beneath the branches of a tree, the former half hiding her melancholy face in the bosom of the latter, whose conciliatory smiles she did not seem to heed.

Mercia wished to pass them undiscovered, and attempted to turn his horse  
into

into a path, which was screened by a thick row of trees. But this he was not able to effect, for the eye of William had fallen on him, and instantly his friends came running up to him nearly breathless. He hastily dismounted, and took them both into his arms. The face of Agatha shewed a strange expression of happiness and dread; and her brother was scarcely less agitated by this unexpected meeting.

“Praises to Heaven for your safety and return!” he cried, with the accents of the most animated friendship. — “Dear Mercia! the sight of you gladdens my soul. But you come from Bartonmere. — How goes it, friend? — Has the battle been fought?”

“Yes, William. But has no messenger arrived? — Have you heard nothing



thing relating to the event of which you enquire?"

"Nothing.—You are the first from the field. Be quick, dear Mercia, in telling me on which side victory is to be found. Lord Alwynd—how fares he?—Not speak, Edward?—God! what mean your silence and your tears?"

"He has cause for them," cried Agatha, almost with a shriek, "and I had cause for all my fears. Ask him no more concerning Lord Alwynd, for there is a horrid meaning in his eyes, which I well understand."

"Dear Agatha!" cried Mercia, "I conjure you to be calm."

"Calm! when I hear that Lord Alwynd, my friend, my protector, oh, I may say my father!—When I hear that  
he

he is dead—cut off by the murdering sword—torn from me for ever, for ever!”

“ But this you have not yet heard.”

“ You cannot say that it is not as I interpret. I read a dreadful history in your countenance. If I judged wrongly, you would look in my face and smile; but this you cannot do. Your eyes turn from me—your cheeks are of a deadly colour—and all your limbs are quivering. Brother, behold this messenger!—Brother, weep not for me if I sink into instant death. Mourn with me for Alwynd—for——” Her eyes closed, her breath was suspended, and she fell at the feet of William and the young warrior.”

“ Let us bear her immediately to the castle,” cried Mercia; “ delay not a moment, for I am distracted with a thousand

sands

and fears, lest death should be still more busy with us."

"Still more busy!" exclaimed William; "there you confess it—there you acknowledge to be true, what I strongly hoped to be false. Mercia, my strength is leaving me, and I think I am sinking into the condition of my sister."

"Rouse, William!—shake off this lethargy. Alwynd has perished!"

"Oh, world, thou art worthless to me now!"

"He perished, but he died the death of a hero. He fought nobly. His foe was de Stacey, whose sword, after a sharp contest, pierced the noblest of hearts. William, the conqueror did not escape—I followed him, and hewed his scull in pieces.



pieces. His brains even splashed against my shield."

"Did they?" cried William, roused by a speech which was made merely to release his mind from torpidity.—"Did you, Mercia, revenge the death of Alwynd? May the sinews of your arm be strong for ages. May the action, in centuries to come, be praised by those who shall point towards your grave. The work of fate is accomplished, but de Stacey has suffered as he deserved; and though my grief may be strong, it shall not be foolish. My sister is yet motionless; help me to raise her, Mercia, and let us carry her home. Poor Agatha! thou wilt shake off this insensibility with pain and bitterness.

The young friends took the unconscious girl from the ground, and carried her in their arms to the castle; when Mer-

cia

cia desired William to attend his sister to her chamber, while he should go to relate his painful narrative to the kinsman of Alwynd, who was yet unapprised of his arrival.

Having been informed, by one of the servants, in which apartment he might find his guardian, Mercia, drooping under the sorrows which oppressed him, went towards, and after a moment's hesitation, entered it. Celwold started on seeing him; and before he spoke, his eyes had darted a thousand reproaches. At any other time, Mercia would have either warmly resented, or calmly smiled upon this severity; but he had then no spirit to strengthen him, no resolution to resist the attack.

“The hero is come from the battle!” cried Celwold, in a tone of irony.

“Where

“Where are your laurels, warrior? Why do you not relate your achievements?”

“Peace, my Lord!” exclaimed Mercia, stung by this ungenerous speech; “this is no time for scoffing. If I disobeyed your orders, it was for my own gratification; and though I would not wilfully break through the barriers of respect, yet I will never submit to thralldom. I have, indeed, been to the battle.”

“And to what purpose, sir?” enquired Celwold, with a sneer. “Where is the blood of your enemies?”

“It is moistening the heath of Bartonmere; it still floats on the surface. But why do you not enquire after the noble Alwynd?—See you these stains upon my arm? Look at the crimson marks.—Oh, spirit of the brave!



brave! let my tears, my present agonies, bear witness how much I loved thee!"

"Mercia—What do you say? Has my dear kinsman——"

"He has perished!—He has perished!"

"Do not tell me so, dear youth! forgive my unkindness, and say, I beseech you, that Alwynd still lives; that he is returning to these walls with victory."

"Ere long he will, indeed, be within these walls; but he will be borne hither, only to be consigned to the tomb of his forefathers. His body, gashed and mangled, now lies in the hall of Bartonmere; but his spirit has soared through the regions leading to the high dwelling of his God."

“ Oh, Mercia, you have heaped afflictions on my heart ! ”

“ And I, my Lord, have no power to console you; I feel the loss we have sustained, too deeply to sooth the sorrows of another person, with any of those cold speeches, which are called philosophy. I must retire; for weariness, as well as grief, oppresses me. William, is at this time, weighed down by sorrow; and Agatha—poor Agatha ! ” — He rushed out of the room, and as he passed through the gallery, he was heard to sob aloud,

His absence was a great relief to Celwold, who now uncovered his face, which he had concealed with the skirt of his habit, but on which there was not a line of sorrow to be traced; nor had the tale of Mercia drawn from his eye a single tear. A strange expression was

was stamp'd upon his countenance, thro' which ran a wild gleam of unnatural satisfaction; but he seemed half-frightened by his own sensations, and the baseness of his pleasure was not altogether unnoticed, while his smiles momentarily faded and returned.

He sat a considerable time confused in his intellects; and his brain almost wanted capacity for his thoughts. At length, however, he was obliged to resume the garb and mask of hypocrisy, for William came to him, and without speaking threw himself into his arms. Few hearts could have resisted the grief of the youth; and few men could have beheld it without sympathy. Celwold, however, was but in a small degree affected, though he professed himself to be feelingly sensible of the calamity which must occasion a general mourning.



From William he learned that Agatha could not possibly be soothed, and that, though her women had succeeded in getting her to bed, no means could be found to prevent her faintings, which had been so numerous, that life was sometimes scarcely to be found in her. Celwold heard this account with apparent concern, and he shewed himself desirous of alleviating the distress of her brother; but after some fruitless efforts on his part, he declared that his own anguish was insupportable, and that it was become necessary for him to retire to his chamber.

Mercia now joined them, but Celwold was anxious to depart; he therefore called one of his attendants to light him to his bed-room, and having tenderly wished the young men good night, he placed his hand over his brows, as if he had legible characters  
of

of grief written upon them. He then slowly followed the servant out of the apartment, leaving his ward and the adopted son of Alwynd, to talk over the tale which had before deeply searched their hearts.

As soon as he reached his chamber he dismissed the servant, and prevented all intrusion by locking himself in. His heart was beating with the quickest and most painful motion; he could scarcely believe that his breathings came from his own body, and his knees knocked against each other as he went towards the cabinet in which the explanatory papers of Alwynd had been deposited. Base as he was, he was not totally insensible, but felt the stings of conscious villany. The remembrance of the many virtues, of the numberless kindnesses, and of the ever-lively affection of the departed, came to his

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mind;

mind; and he almost fancied, when he touched the ivory box, that he grasped the death-cold hand of Alwynd.

The first paper he took up was directed, by the fallen hero, to his "dear cousin Celwold." He laid it down hastily; and collected as he had been, when ruminating on the probable issue of the warrior's interference in the cause of Bartonmere, yet he now found it impossible to steel his heart against the puncture of remorse. He continued a considerable time absorbed in reflection. The evening had been sultry, and a storm succeeded; the thunder rolled heavily over his head, and his eyes seemed fearful of being scorched by the lightnings.

Superstition began to work on him, and feeling himself insecure, at such a distance from the inhabitants, he replaced the papers, took up his lamp, and again  
went



went to Mercia and William, whom he informed that there was no possibility of obtaining either sleep or repose, while the events of the day so forcibly impressed his mind. The young men were softened by these apparent traits of humanity and affection, and though they stood in need of consolation themselves, there was an equal wish in either of them, to give it to him who actually wanted it not; and also a reciprocal desire to heal the imaginary wounds, that neither pained nor bled.

The generous are ever the tools of hypocrisy; Celsword mourned without affliction, and was sincerely compassionate. He felt himself secure in his deceit, while they remained with him, though Mercia's known discrimination was more to be feared than William's unbounded tendernefs.

The chamber of Agatha was often visited by her brother, who returned from it with reports very unfavorable, to Celwold and Mercia; the latter of whom was not less pained by her situation, than if he had stood in an equal degree of kindred to that of his young friend. Sorrow, or the appearances of it, hung upon every countenance; and the servants of the castle were heard to sigh heavily, as they passed from room to room. The tempest at length spent itself, and the morning followed with loveliness, which, however, was regarded neither by the anxious Celwold, nor by any of those with whom affliction claimed acquaintance. The heavens were tinted with beauty; but their imaginations, dark and disturbed, took in none of the rays which glowed in the canopy of creation.

The

The appearance of day seemed to recal some thoughts into the mind of Celwold; and once more he separated from his companions, and went to his chamber. The coldness of apprehension had passed away; a glow of hope entered his heart, and he again opened the cabinet and broke the seals of Alwynd's packet. He immediately saw, that, among other papers, it contained letters addressed to William and Agatha; that, however, which was directed to himself, he instantly unfolded, when he read, with impatience, the underwritten lines.

“I am summoned to the dangers of the field; and when next I see you, it is my intention to say, that, if I return from it alive, these papers may be delivered to me unperused; but if I fall, that you may read, and at your discretion, act according to

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the directions contained in them. If they hereafter should meet your eye, mine will be closed for ever, but I can readily believe that you will not look on them without concern; and that my being peremptorily called from hence, never more to come back to those who shall anxiously look for me, will raise a regret within your bosom, which shall not be easily appeased."

At that moment the reader forcibly felt his own unworthiness; his eyes fell from the paper, and he paused for several minutes.

"Your blood is allied to mine, dear Celwold! and our friendship has been of a long date. Our affection has reigned without interruption. I have seen your face grow bright at my happiness; and when sorrow came upon me, I have beheld your concern and dejection.

I am assured that you have ever acted with true sincerity, and that assurance, at this moment, greatly distresses me; because I am conscious of having, during many years, borne myself with duplicity.

“But let the motives I shall mention, soften the offence of which I have been guilty. When you shall know them, Celwold, when you shall read the confession that I am now going to make, I dare believe that the unaffected voice of nature will tell you to pity the friend that is dead; and also that you will be even compelled to obey her. From you—my nearest acquaintance—from every person have I concealed the origin of William and Agatha. I have reported them to be the children of a deceased friend—have framed many excuses for withholding the circumstances of their birth,  
and

and even declared that they owed not their existence to me. Celwold, forgive me for quitting so long the paths of truth, which it was painful for me to forsake—forgive me, when I confess, that this dear boy, and this lovely girl, are my own beloved and legitimate offspring!”

“Liar! Liar! Execrable liar!” exclaimed Celwold, dashing the paper on the floor.—“Forgive you!—I swear I never will forgive you.”

The fairest object that he had ever contemplated, seemed to be changed into a black deformity; and the rich designs of the palace of hope, were strewn disorderedly on the unsolid earth. An envenomed serpent had pleased his eye more than the letter of Alwynd. He spurned it with his foot, and heaped many an impious curse on the soul of him, who



who was then associating with the spirits of the blessed. After a long and half frenzied rumination he snatched up the the hated paper; and followed, with a gloomy eye, the remainder of its contents.

“It would be unfair, and I must appear unworthy indeed, dear Celwold, if I were to withhold my motives after this free confession of facts. No, I will conceal nothing, but put an unbounded confidence in you; and well I know there is not a man on earth more worthy of the precious trust I am about to repose in you.

“But before I proceed to that tender consignment, you shall know who the mother of my children was—for, ah, she is dead!—Why I have spent so many years in retirement; and why I have hitherto wrapped my children

dren in mystery and obscurity. You will pity me, Celwold, not merely in the capacity of a father; for you will also dwell compassionately on the sorrows of an afflicted husband, and grieve that such I have been.

“I could dwell long on the story of my unhappy love. The night, however, will soon be gone, and as I have my principal affairs still to settle, I must abridge a tale, that I should find a melancholy pleasure in lengthening; lest my brave fellows, in the morning, have cause to chide the tardiness of their leader.

“You and I, Celwold, have known each other from the days of childhood. When a youth, you will remember, I was accustomed to be often in the court of our sovereign, with whom I was a favourite, and, after his death, I was  
equally

equally esteemed, and perhaps regarded more affectionately by his successor. Indeed he was seldom seen from my society. The prince and the subject appeared as brothers; and there were men who beheld me with dislike, merely because they could not catch those smiles, which were so liberally bestowed upon me.

“I held out no lure; I angled not for royal favours; but they came unsolicited from one, in whose heart friendship had firmly established me. In the train of state it was his command that I should be nearest to his person; when he wished to join the chase, he would not mount his steed till he saw me on the back of mine; and in the field of battle, I kept myself almost as close to his side as the armour that incased him. His virtues were many, and his failings by no means



means conspicuous. He was capable of loving with enthusiasm; but in his resentments, he was more strong than any man of whose nature I ever had any knowledge. That unconquerable passion has for ever alienated me from him. He still lives; and may the crown of England long sit upon his brows, though I have become an object of his displeasure, and fallen from that eminence, on which he was once pleased to place me.

“The smiles of royalty has been compared to a sun-beam; a monarch’s praise to the restlessness of the winds and waves. The countenance of my king, however, shone not on me merely for a summer’s day, but throughout a long and happy season; and the kindness of his words was not withheld till it was, I am convinced, as painful to him who suppressed, as to him who

no longer enjoyed it. You remember his sister, Matilda—You have seen her, Celwold; and he who ever saw, surely never can forget her! She was in point of personal charms so superior to the court, and to women in general, that she impressed even the unwilling heart of envy. Her complexion might have vied with that flower, which we liken to things most fair and delicate; and if she wanted the measured gait, which is denominated dignity, she had the graces of ease, and the sprightliness of joy. Her airy tread was superior to all the formalities which her sex, in their self-important moments, take upon themselves; and the unrestrained smiles, that gave fresh beauties to her face.

“ Ah, Celwold! the pencil of affection, while it sketches the charms which were so dear to me, is drawn gratingly over the heart that still mourns for Matilda.

“ She

“ She was greatly loved by her brother, and I was one of her earliest friends; in our younger days we were often together, and still more often as we advanced in years. I was daily receiving from her marks of esteem, and from the gratitude which rose in my breast, and which I too indulgently nursed; my soul at length took in wishes, which, being considered as fruitless and unattainable, caused anxiety to possess that spot, where ease and happiness had thitherto uninterruptedly reigned. I became more than a simple friend—I was the silent, desponding, and uncomplaining lover of Matilda.

“ Honour forbade me to speak to her of a passion which I thought almost criminal; I therefore strove to stifle it, but it even grew under the unequal opposition. I foresaw a thousand evils arising from my misplaced love; still I was unable to change the tenor of my thoughts. I  
sighed



sighed that birth and national custom, should destroy the most charming plan that happiness had ever formed; and never turned my eyes upon a cottager's daughter, without wishing that her and Matilda's pretensions were on a level, and that love might fly as unfettered to the bosom of the one as the other.

“ Had Matilda borne herself with the usual dignity of a princess, or with half the importance of many of her attendants, I had broken the chain by which I was enthralled. But neither pride nor consequence could be found in her actions; she was even less restrained in conduct towards me than she was to her brother, who, tho' not devoid of affection, sometimes commanded her to be less indifferent to her elevated birth and rank, and to assimilate her manners to those of the daughter, as well as the sister of a British monarch. She would listen  
attentively

attentively to him, and for a while appear with the desired restraint before her brother; but nature, irresistible nature, broke through the imposition, and shewed her darling child in all her loveliness and unstudied graces..

“I suffered at the heart while my eyes fondly contemplated. I really became indisposed, and retired into the country. But the king soon followed me, and after endeavouring to draw from me the secret of my malady, for such an one he assured himself there was, he took me again to his court, even to the cause of my inquietude and affliction — to Matilda, whose compassionate looks, and soft accents, kept open the wounds which indifference and neglect would probably have sooner closed. Oh, how beautiful were her pitying eyes! — How forcible the accents of her concern!

“She

“ She once visited me without attendants as I lay on my couch. I was starting up to meet her, when she stepped forward with a quicker motion, put her hands gently upon me, in order to prevent me from rising; and, seating herself by my side, softly asked me how I did. I scarcely answered her with reason, a torrent of joy rushed into my bosom, and caused a temporary suppression of the pain that I had previously endured.

“ She saw the varying colours of my cheek, and her own also changed. Her beauty had never before appeared so exquisite, and I gazed on her unconscious of the action. When she again enquired concerning my health, I assured her that I felt a quick amendment; and when she asked me what I supposed to be the occasion of my illness, caution and prudence deserted me on the instant. I threw myself on my knees, and pressing her



her hand to my glowing lips, exclaimed, "You, dear Princess! — You, Matilda, are the cause of it. I love you — as dear as my life I love you! — But I know that the treasure which my affections covet can never be attained; and that, in consequence of it, the acquaintance already formed between me and misery, must be lasting while I continue to exist."

"She arose hastily — one of those looks which her brother wished her to wear, took possession of her face, but it could not establish itself. Her features were almost immediately governed by the generous instinct of her heart; and tho' she quitted the room abruptly, in her countenance I traced the marks of pity and concern, but not a single line of resentment. Left to myself, I cursed the folly of my tongue, and also the vanity and presumption of my heart.

Though

Though no anger had apparently been raised in the bosom of Matilda, I could not assure myself that she would not thereafter shun and contemn me; nay, knowing how loving she was to her brother, I believed it probable, that honour might urge her to repeat to him what I had so inconsiderately uttered; the result of which would have been eternal banishment from the court of my generous and friendly monarch.

“ I saw not Matilda again for several days, tho’ I left the apartment in which I had confined myself. It was evident that she avoided me. The king spoke of her being very strange and capricious; and about a fortnight afterwards I met her as she was going on a visit to the Countess of Surrey. It was in the court-yard where we encountered each other. Our agitation was equal.—She turned for a moment, as if she was going again

again into the palace; but recollecting herself she advanced, and when I bowed to her, I saw in her face the smile that never failed to charm. It gave me confidence, and I ventured to speak to her. She was embarrassed, but not displeased. Accompanying her to her horse, I assisted her in mounting it; and on wishing her good day, and a pleasant excursion, "Adieu, my Lord," she cried; "adieu, I am very happy in your recovery."

"I curbed the horse a minute, in order that I might peruse her lovely countenance, after she had uttered these words. I traced in it characters which flattered and delighted me; and then it was I first assured myself, that she felt an affection of the same nature as that which I had declared to her. From that hour my acquaintance with anxiety ceased, and my health



health amended surprisingly. My friends noticed the sudden alteration, and congratulated me; but when the king expressed his pleasure on the occasion, I felt, for a while, as if I were unworthy of his regard, hypocritical, designing, and cunningly presumptuous. Honour pointed towards a path which my passions would not allow me to tread.

“Matilda continued at Lady Surrey’s nearly a month, during which time, I visited her, and also gained a full assurance of what I had before merely suspected. She loved me—she confessed it—and I was more than happy. Love made us both indiscreet, and though danger stood so glaringly before us, we did not seriously regard it. In the course of the six months which followed our return to the court, and after we had placed a very considerable sum in the hands of a priest,

we were privately married. Matilda became the wife of Alwynd, and he the most joyful being that trod the earth, or smiled upon the heavens.

“ It was not the falling off, but rather the increase of affection, that called us from joy to apprehension; for our intercourse was dangerous, and our very pleasures were stolen. Matilda started at the sight of her brother; and I found it impossible either to look on, or converse with him, as I had been accustomed, with ease and confidence. My alarmed wife reposed her secret with none of those women who were around her. It rested only with the priest that united us, and with a female attendant of the name of Neville; the former of whom could not reveal it without bringing himself into immediate danger; and the latter loved the princess so truly, that

that we believed tortures could scarcely have wrested it from her.

“ Still Matilda was agitated, sorrowful, and not easily to be consoled. She wept on my breast, and in our nightly intercourse, which was hazardous and full of peril, fear chilled the bosom of either, almost as soon as love had warmed it. These surreptitious meetings were continued for a few months, when Matilda found herself pregnant; and that circumstance, which to most married women is joy, was to her frightful and distracting.

“ Now our ruin is complete!” she would exclaim; “ now the danger comes upon us indeed. I know my brother well; his virtues will not resist his ambition. Where shall I bring forth my infant? The king will hurl his vengeance on me; and Alwynd will



suffer imprisonment and death. He will bleed! My husband will bleed!"

"I shuddered at her expressions! I assumed a fortitude, but did not possess it. My fears grew as strong as those of Matilda; and I was nearly distracted, lest the agitation of her mind, should do a serious injury to her precious health. I knew that confidence would carry us thro' the difficulties by which we were surrounded, rather than timidity; and I vauntingly resolved to act in a manner which my passions would not sanction. To add to my many tortures, my sovereign one day informed me of a most distressful project. He began by speaking of the changed manners of his romantic sister; and concluded with saying that, he hoped the love of the king of Scotland, who had made private overtures which had been  
accepted

accepted, would bring her back to her former habits, and also cause her to resume that character, of which she had so strangely divested herself.

“We were walking in the palace garden when the king thus addressed me; and astonishment nearly bereft me of reason. I could not raise my feet from the ground; I became instantly cold, stiff, and almost as insensible as the walls of the fabric that stood before me. The king regarded me with amazement; he shook me by the arm, as if he would rouse me from the spell of sorcery; and quickly asked what was the occasion of such a frightful attitude and expression of features?

“Have you your senses, Alwynd?” he enquired, “or is your brain seared by witchcraft?”

“ My liege ! ” — My head seemed the sport of an eddy — I could utter no more.

“ This is most strange and incomprehensible ! ” exclaimed my royal companion. — “ Tell me, I conjure you, Alwynd, under what influence do you labour ? — What are your sensations ? — What makes you thus wild in your looks ? ”

“ You have surpris'd me greatly. — The princess — ”

“ Well ! — What of her ? ”

“ Is young, beautiful, and virtuous. — The King of Scotland — ”

“ Go on — go on, my Lord. ”

“ Has no youth in his favour — is disagreeable in his person — and known to be most gross and indelicate in his amours. ”

“ You



“ You are too free with your pencil, Alwynd,” he replied; “ yet I will forgive you. The picture you have drawn of Matilda is just; but in respect to her intended husband, you are truly illiberal.”

“ Do not mention the name of husband—for heaven’s sake do not. Never, my liege, never place so sweet a flower in a soil which would not nurture its beauties.”

“ Silence!” cried the king, in a tone of displeasure,—“ you are as romantic and extravagant as Matilda; nay, I believe more so; for I cannot think that she will hesitate in ascending the throne to which she is invited. You know the dissensions which have long been between our country and the Scots:—Matilda once their queen, and I trust our bickerings will cease. This marriage is highly political; and the King of Scotland has

already received our best assurances.—Matilda will be apprised of the honours which are awaiting her to-morrow; and it is expected that she will take them to herself with the satisfaction and pleasure which they ought to create.”

“The king left me in the garden; and filled with terror, I hastened to the apartments of my wife. None of her women happened at that time to be with her. Almost bereft of reason I rushed up to her—I clasped her to my breast, and could not check a womanish flood of tears that fell into her bosom. My actions were sufficient to alarm her.—Trembling, she demanded an explanation, which I gave to her in a disjointed and almost distracted manner; and she sunk, with her hands bound together by the force of agony, upon a couch that stood beside her—her eyes  
shut

shut up in langour and she fainted in my arms.

“Terrified, lest we should be surprised in this situation, I called on Matilda, but she was wholly senseless. A footstep was heard in the passage that led to the room, when I left my insensible wife alone on the couch, and was hastening out of the apartment by a door opposite that near which the noise was made.—To abandon her, however, in a state so distressing I found myself incapable—I again flew to her, and raising her on my breast, looked anxiously, yet fearfully, for the person who was approaching.—Fortunately for us it was our only confidant; and she ran to the assistance of the princess, whom we immediately conveyed to her bed-chamber, into which I entreated my female friend to let no person intrude.



“I will obey your Lordship,” she replied; “but I entreat you to retire immediately, for ruin would fasten on us all were you discovered here. Away, my Lord. The princess shall have my best services. Begone, I conjure you. I will contrive to see you again in the course of a few hours.”

“I hid myself from all observance, till I learnt from her that my wife was more composed and tranquil; but when I stole to the chamber of Matilda—oh, what an interview ensued!—The night went over, and neither of us closed an eye;—the morning at length dawned, but we were enveloped in the thick clouds of sorrow and despair.

“Rise, and retire, my Alwynd!” cried Matilda.

“I

“I will, my love,” I replied; “but let me conjure you to fortify yourself for the trial to which you will be brought to-day. Be collected and resolute in your refusal, and leave the consequences to me. We will abandon all rank and titles—I will search for some secluded spot, where, in summer and in winter, I will love, cherish, and solace you.—For yourself, for Matilda, not for the sister of a king, will I forget my ancestors, fly from my native land, and put on the garb of rusticity.”

“All the morning I remained in a state of sickness and trepidation; and towards the evening I saw the king, who was red with anger, and agitated by passion. I could not speak to him till he had disclosed himself to me.

“Matilda is base and worthless,” he cried; “she is only fit for a herdsman’s wife,

wife, and unworthy of being my sister. She will not consent to the alliance—she has asserted a will most strong and obstinate—and on her knees, and in the name of God, sworn never to become the wife of the King of Scotland. But she shall suffer for this.”

“Oh, be not severe with so much gentleness!”

“Gentleness, Alwynd! — Obstinacy and cunning are in her nature. Tomorrow she shall depart from the palace. She shall retire into the country — she shall live as humble as if she had never heard of royalty; and instead of having a suit to attend her, like a plain housewife, she shall be compelled to administer to her own necessities.”

“This design filled me with a secret pleasure; but, knowing his disposition, I  
ventured



ventured to oppose his intention with some warmth, and, by that means strengthened his determination. I did not go to Matilda's chamber, but I saw our friend, and desired her to tell my wife, that I admired and loved her more truly for her conduct; and that I hoped we should, ere long, be intimately acquainted with the wanderer peace.

“ Early on the following day the king, with a smile of satisfaction, told me that he had begun to retaliate, by sending Matilda away, as soon as it was light, and without giving her an hour's notice of the journey. I could scarcely bear this stroke, without betraying my weakness; for, tho' I had wished him to remove her from the court, still I hoped to have seen her depart, and also previously to have offered her the consolation of a true and loving heart. I made an effort, however, to recal the fortitude

fortitude that was shrinking from me; and the king, without reserve or suspicion, informed me that he had sent her to a castle in Kent, and that the old Lady Westmorland, whose splenetic temper was generally known and despised, accompanied her."

"And did the princess take no other attendants?" I enquired, with an affected indifference.

"I allowed Rosamond Neville to go with her," he replied, proudly; "neither the beauty, nor the wisdom of that girl will be missed at court, tho' Lord March says her eyes are all heaven, and her voice all harmony. But enough of this—If Matilda is wise, she will yet consent in time—If obstinate, by what is most sacred I swear, I will both hate and punish her."

"With

“ With all the pangs I suffered, it was still a small consolation, to find that our faithful Rosamond was with her mistress.—The pressure of the time accords with the melancholy remainder of my story. I must briefly say, that, pretending a journey into France, I contrived to see my beloved wife at several different periods. I put a deception on Lady Westmoreland, eluded the eyes of the servants of the castle, and, aided by a large sum of money, procured and also bound to secrecy, a midwife of skill, with whom I found my way, at night, to the chamber of Matilda. Rosamond was every thing to us, without her we should soon have been inclosed by ruin.

“ It happened that Lady Westmoreland was confined to her chamber when the princess began to feel the pangs of labour. Rosamond looked pale,



pale, and I remained shivering with apprehension in an adjoining chamber, shutting my ears against the stifled cries of my dear Matilda. Neither of the agents came to me for a considerable time; at length, however, the midwife entered, bearing in her hand a basket, which had been previously prepared for the purpose, and in which were laid two innocent babes—my William and Agatha.

“I burst into a flood of agonising tears. The feelings of a father for the first time rose within me. I stood shivering, and with my hands almost growing to my breast, my eyes were on the infants, gazing to the full, fixed, rivetted. The midwife returned to Matilda’s chamber, and Rosamond came from it, and took hold of my arm. “My wife!” I exclaimed, “my wife!”

“She

“She lives, my Lord.”

“Lives!—Can you say no more than that?”

“I trust in heaven to her recovery,” replied my gentle friend, whose voice was changed by her emotions. “But retire instantly, my Lord; for the morning will break ere long, and you cannot too soon place the infants with the woman who is to receive them. The love of your wife attends you. Adieu, my Lord, heaven be your guide and protector!”

“The night was somewhat cold. Rosamond placed a comfortable covering on the pledges of Matilda’s love, and I retired unmolested. I scarcely retained my senses, and when I ought to have been calm and collected, my passions made me almost wild.

wild. I had left a horse in a wood at some little distance, tied to a tree, but on looking for him, the moon being full and clear, I found that he had broken the bridle and strayed away; consequently I had to walk to the residence of the nurse, which was ten miles distant. Thro' motives of security I had wished to place my offspring at a place rather wide of the castle; but the loss of my horse made me fearful of their safety. Perhaps I should have had no cause for apprehension, had my reason been unruffled; at the faintest noise, however, I trembled, and the wing of a linnet would have agitated me. Still, at intervals, I felt as if my ribs were of iron, and resolution bound within them.

“Fancy that you see a tyger, bearing away its young, when the hunters  
are



are thought to be in pursuit; it flies with the cub in its jaws; but what single power would dare to stop it in its course? I would have been hewn in pieces, ere I would have parted from my children. My mind was in its greatest elevation. I seemed not to touch the earth as I went forward; and just as the cottage-woman, who was a childless widow, had risen from her bed and opened her door to the air of morning, speechless and almost breathless I put my infants into her arms. She instantly saw their wants; she had, providentially, a breast for either of them, they clung to it; I sat myself down by her side, I saw my babes imbibe the milk with eagerness. On earth I never can experience a sensation so precious; and heaven itself can never offer a joy more exquisite.

“ I had previously told the nurse, whose youth, health, and cleanliness recommended her to my favour, that the child I should bring to her, was the fruit of a true but unmarried love; that its mother had ever been respected in the middle class of society; and that I wished her to perform her duty, without indulging any useless curiosity. As an earnest of my intended liberality, I threw into her lap a purse of some value; and was impressed with pleasure, on seeing that my gift was less noticed than the children whom she lulled on her bosom. I explained to her neither my name nor quality; I wished her to believe me an untitled gentleman; and had appeared before her previously, as I did at this time, in a habit that accorded with the character I adopted.

“ I staid till the approach of evening with her; and partook of her humble fare. I had much anxiety in my breast on Matilda’s account; but ~~knew~~ that I could not see her, till darkness should favour my clandestine entrance into the castle. When the sun was shining in the western region of the heavens, I kissed my sleeping infants, bade adieu to their nurse, returned to the place from whence I had taken them, and gained the chamber of my wife without detection.

“ What a meeting was this!—Our converse was soft as the accents of angels—our joys delicious as heaven. The considerate Rosamond, however, would not allow many words to pass from her mistress; nor would she suffer me to remain more than an hour in the chamber.

“ During



“ During the following week I was alternately with my wife and children; and I was as blessed in learning from the cottager that my infants thrived, as I was in believing that the strength of Matilda was gradually returning. Our plans had been favoured greatly beyond our expectations. Lady Westmorland was still confined to her bed, by an almost excruciating rheumatic disorder; and Rosamond informed her that the princess, owing to an intense pain in her head and eyes, was obliged to shut herself up in a darkened room. The dowager murmured her complaints without much regarding those of Matilda; and the servants of the castle, who were few in number, and of the inferior order, were only informed that the princess was indisposed, and did not require their attendance.

“ Matilda’s

“ Matilda’s spirits were still greatly depressed; she pined for her children, and urged me to take her out of the kingdom as soon as possible. A fortnight had elapsed since her delivery, when Lady Westmorland was carried in a chair to her chamber; and she was so much surprised by the alteration of the princess’s health, that she proposed to send an immediate account of it to the king. This the terrified Matilda opposed; endeavouring at the same time, to assure Lady Westmorland that her illness was slight, and that she should probably be without cause of complaint before her brother could send her any assistance. She even attempted to be lively while the old lady continued in her apartment; but she afterwards found that her exertions had weakened her nature, and sunk almost breathless on the bosom of Rosamond.

“ When

“When I saw her at night I was terrified by her appearance; her eyes seemed to me almost beamless, her cheeks were ashy, and she regarded me with the looks of the departing.

“Death will enforce his claim, my Alwynd,” she murmured, while she lay on my breast; “we must part, dear husband! the grave will soon hide me from you for ever. My powers are nearly exhausted, and my brother will ere long be fully satisfied. But never, never divulge the secret of our union—never let the king know the unhappy issue of it. My children would not be safe.—Oh, my little ones, I shall never see you more!—Hide them, Alwynd, from my brother. All will soon be quiet with Matilda.”

“I was nearly distracted, and could scarcely persuade myself to retire from  
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the castle at day-break; and when I returned to it again, I was assured that my wife was departing from the world. I threw myself by her side, I groaned with the pangs I endured, and alternately supplicated the aid, and arraigned the decrees of the power that alone could save her. She made an effort to raise herself, when kissing me with her cold lips, and uttering something indistinctly, which related to her children, she pointed to the door.

“Lady Westmoreland and her attendants were then coming to the chamber; the trembling Rosamond hurried me out of it, and I was sent to make my lamentations in the open air, and amid the gloomy shades of the night.

“I never saw my wife again. When I next entered the secret avenue it was with a throbbing head, a sick heart, and

enfeebled limbs. Affection hurried me forward, but the hand of despair seemed to draw me back again. I had passed the chapel, and was ascending the stairs with uncovered feet, when several men started from behind, and seized me rudely by the neck. Having no weapon to defend myself, I was obliged to submit to the superior force, and my detainers bore me to a room, in which I beheld Rosamond Neville. She shrieked when she saw me enter.

“Our ruin is now inevitable!” she cried; “now they have you in their power, there can be no hope for us.”

“But your mistress — my wife! — I charge you, in the name of heaven, to tell me how it is with her.”

“Ah, my God! what can I say, unfortunate Alwynd!”

“At

“ At that moment a greater light broke into the room, and to my astonishment I saw the king.

“Alwynd!” he cried, in amazement.  
“Impostor, villain, traitor!”

“ His face crimsoned, his eyes became fiery, and I expected that he would punish me with instant death. He commanded his attendants to withdraw, and haughtily desired Rosamond to accompany them.

“ You see, Alwynd,” he said, “ you see that I am not afraid to trust myself with you, tho’ I believe you capable of any baseness. And is it thus you repay my regard, my friendship, and my confidence?—To thwart the wishes of your king—to impose the most artful lies on him—to screen yourself in mean disguises—and to alienate the duty and affections



affections of my unfortunate sister!—You have been as an adder to me, Alwynd; the sting did not merely touch, it even reached the centre of my heart.”

“Oh, I do not deserve your hatred!” I cried.—“I was guided by love; and God alone knows how much, how fervently I loved your sister!”

“Arrogant and presumptuous!—How could you dare to step over the barriers that were placed between her and you?—Oh, misguided, but ill-fated Matilda!—Heaven will vouch that I bore for you a most tender affection; but you are become insensible to it, and the current of your heart is stilled for ever.”

“Almighty God!” I exclaimed, “is she dead?”

“She

“She is torn from me, and can never be restored!” cried her brother, in a strain of agony.—“Her bosom is icy, her lips are closed, and her sweet eyes sealed for ever!”

“I groaned in agony, while my sinews were relaxing.

“Leave me, Alwynd,” continued the king; begone; and from this hour never let me see your face. Your friendship and loyalty once formed a source of pleasure; but now I throw you from my heart, and swear by my Saviour never to take you to it again. What I have conferred on you, retain; but retire from my court, and dare not hereafter to place yourself before me.”

“I believe this was not the conclusion of his speech; but the sickness of my soul overpowered me, my senses fled for

a while, and on their return I found myself in another apartment, and Rosamond Neville and a servant of the castle standing by my side. My head had scarcely been raised, or my eyes opened, when the man addressed himself to me.

“I have been commanded, my Lord,” he said, “to continue with you till the return of your reason; but now I tell you to begone.—Rise, Lord Alwynd, and instantly depart from the castle; you must not stay in it another minute, for the wrath of the king is not to be appeased.—Rise, rise, and go out at the gates immediately.”

“I will not depart,” I replied; “I tremble not at the anger of the king, and I will not be forced away till I have once more beheld my——”

“Silence!”



“ Silence!” cried my tender companion, “ as you value your life and mine I charge you to be silent. I feel more on your account than on my own; tho’ I am an outcast, and have been treated with severity. Nothing further can be done here, let us away, my Lord, for, in my present state, I find it necessary to call on you for protection.”

“ I knew by her words and actions, that my marriage, and the innocent issue of it, were yet unknown; and tho’ I wished once more to look on my departed love—once more to strain her cold bosom to my heart, yet I suffered Rosamond to lead me away, and we both left the castle in public disgrace. Grief, however, lessened the mortification. In the anguish of my heart I regarded not the glances of subordinate scorn; and my poor and faithful associate went forward with me, leaning on my arm,

and with her eyes sorrowfully fixed on the earth, as if she were courting a grave to receive her.

“I now learned, that my detection and seizure, had been effected by the wary Lady Westmoreland, whose emissaries had been dispatched to the king, in order to apprise him that the princess had contrived surreptitious meetings with a stranger, (for my disguise had not been seen through,) and enquiring in what manner she should cause the night visitor to be treated. Her sovereign returned with the messengers. That Rosamond was instrumental to our interviews was perfectly clear; and, as she had never stood in the favour of the king, his anger and resentment fell heavy on her.

“Matilda’s faculties were nearly gone on the arrival of her brother; and

and tho' she had spoken distinctly a few minutes before his entrance, yet when he was announced, and afterwards approached her bed, terror destroyed the few remaining powers. Her eyes grew more dim; her tongue became speechless; and in less than two hours she fell a corse into the arms of her anguished and astonished brother. Oh, my wife! Why was I not there to consign thee to thy sister angels!—Fraternal grief soon yielded to the more violent passions; and the rage of the king, and the contempt of Lady Westmoreland, were heaped upon the innocent Rose Neville, who was strictly watched till I had been detected and secured. After the interview between me and Matilda's brother, my agitated and abused friend was commanded to leave the castle, at the time that I should depart from thence.



“This I became acquainted with, as I and my companion went forward; but the voice that told it me, was often indistinct, and my heart was bleeding during the recital. I had turned round to look, once more, at the fabric that contained the breathless form of Matilda, and Rose had done the same, our eyes then met, and made reciprocal confessions; and we trod the path in silence and agony undescrivable. It was early morning, and heaven and earth were smiling. Scarcely a wave sported on the sea, the flowers of the field raised their heads amid drooping gems, and the tillers of the earth, russet clad and healthful, went down into the vallies, and ascended the hills; while the instinctive harmony of thrush and lark, sounded from the thickets and the regions of the air.

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“ I was wretched, and, I thought, accursed even in a world of seeming happiness. All objects now were to be envied; and I could almost have wished the spirit of animation to fix, to become insensible, and to stand motionless as long as the heavens should hang over the earth. I had so loved my wife that, in losing her, I found myself of neither worth nor importance. But I knew better how to estimate myself, when Rosamond suddenly spoke of my children. Matilda had, indeed, nearly made me a bankrupt in happiness; still her progeny were as rubies of the east to me.

“ At a farm house, about four miles from the castle, I procured a horse of a countryman, and placed Rosamond on the back of it; the owner of the beast followed her at some little distance, and I walked by her side till

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we came to the village where I meant to stop, and from whence the rustic returned after I had satisfied him for his trouble. We were now within sight of the dwelling of my children, when I pointed to it, and with great emotion told Rosamond of what it contained.

“Then let me speak to you, my Lord,” she cried, “before we go any further. When last you saw the dear and lamented Matilda, you must recollect how many fears she expressed for her helpless little ones. After your departure she continued to talk of them, her apprehensions hastened her death, and the last words she said to me were, “Tell my husband, Rosamond, never to forget what I have said concerning my children; and, in my name, charge him to let them never be known to, or reside near, my offended brother.”



“Dear and precious Matilda!” I cried, “you shall be most willingly obeyed.”

“We are yet insecure, and fearfully situated,” said my companion; “and tho’ the king has driven us from him, his vigilance will not sleep. I know his temper, his resentments.—Ah, God! If he should, by any means, discover the precious babes, and wrest them from us.”

“He shall not!” I exclaimed; “by the Eternal God I swear, he shall not! See, the cottage is close by; let us hasten to it. Be quick, quick as the emotions of a father’s heart. I will tear my children from the arms of their nurse, and plant a poinard in the breast at which they have sucked, should I think she will betray me. For them I would renounce every thing; would live in a desert, amid  
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the damp of a cave, bury myself all the day, and prow! all the night with a heart fierce as the wolf's ere——”

“ Hold, hold!” cried Rosamond; “ your impetuosity alarms and terrifies me. Let us go to the cottage, but not in the manner you have proposed. Inform the woman that I am the mother of your children; and I will aid the deception, as far as I can. You say, tho’ she is poor, she is seemingly honest, and I have no doubt but that she will readily accompany us to some other spot. Make the proposal to her as soon as you can; and, if she consents, remove us to some distant retirement. If you will shelter me from the world, my Lord, I will be to your children——”

“ She paused, sobbed, and fell upon my shoulder. Words could not so tenderly

tenderly have expressed her feelings; and after I had embraced and blessed her, I went with her to the cottage, and was admitted by the simple mistress of it. I shall not describe what I felt when I again fondled the soft pledges of Matilda's love. I followed the advice of my friend, made liberal offers to the nurse, and gained her acquiescence. Rosamond had been worn by watchfulness and distress; her countenance, naturally delicate, became sickly; and the maternal imposition was not suspected.

“ Soon after our arrival, we finished the plan that we had previously sketched; and some of our designs we communicated to the cottager. I proposed to take my friend, my children, and their nurse, to a distant part of the kingdom; and on the following day we all left the hamlet, without exciting any particular notice,



notice, and removed to the next small town, where I procured a covered carriage and a pair of horses; and during the ensuing twenty-four hours, we travelled nearly fifty miles.

“ I knew that great exertion on my part was necessary; but my heart was all grief, and to counterfeit serenity was, indeed, an arduous task. Soon after we halted, I found accommodation for my offspring and companions. It was my wish that they should remain there, till I had been to my castle, and also till I could, on their account, make some further arrangements. To this they assented, and I accordingly departed. It was absolutely necessary, that I should shew myself to my dependents, before the story of my disgrace should be rumoured. I staid, however, only a day or two with them, and having determined on placing the poor fugitives in  
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an ancient manor-house, which stood on one of my estates in another county, I hastened back to them, and by easy stages afterwards conveyed them thither in health and safety.

“It was to this place I so often retired, when I was absent from the castle; and I acquainted no one with the nature or extent of my excursions in order that curiosity might not interrupt, or lessen, the felicity I found with my thriving progeny. The priest that married me to Matilda, I patronised till his death; and I supported the midwife for her fidelity, till she and her secret expired together. I loved them for their honesty and attachment, and sighed over them when they were breathless. But it was no common grief that took possession of my heart, when I grasped the unnerved hand, and closed the rayless eyes of the good, the tender,  
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the sensitive Neville! Peace, dear woman, to thy spirit; and in the invisible world may'st thou and my Matilda dwell everlastingly, in renewed friendship, and with joys unfading! The nurse still lives; but she married respectably, and retired into Scotland, the native country of her husband, to whom she carried a dowry which I proportioned to her merit and virtue.

“ You know the rest, Celwold; and I think I have sufficiently explained my motives for the obscurity in which I have hitherto wrapped my children. My love and reverence for Matilda made me observant of her dying request; and oftentimes has the quick eye of imagination, caught her delicate form in the act of approving my caution. If, in adhering to my promise, I have been led beyond the boundaries of truth, I hope, situated



as I was, the fault will be considered as venial.

“ Many times have I wished to open my breast, and give to you unreservedly its mysteries; for I have ever believed you worthy of my friendship and confidence. Some invisible power, however, has hitherto seemed to divert the impulse; but as I am now about to rush into danger—to take the chance of either conquering, or of being conquered—of mounting the banner of victory, or of being trampled upon by the hoof of the war-horse, to whose care should I, acting on probabilities, consign my beloved children?—To you, to you, dear Celwold!—I believe there is no worthier man within my knowledge. You must be their friend, and, in case I should stretch in death on the plains of Bartonmere, also their father. They have  
no

no mother—I no wife.—Thou art gone, Matilda, for ever art thou gone!

“ Since my separation from her whom in this world I can behold no more, I have only once seen the king. I met him in the field of battle, to which I went without my services being required. He was in extreme danger, and my heart glowed when my falchion rescued him from it.

“ Remove your helmet, foldier,” he cried, “ and let me see the face of my gallant deliverer!”

“ I put it aside, and bent myself before him.

“ Alwynd!” he exclaimed, “ Alwynd the preserver of my life!—I thank you; and tho’ our friendship can never be cemented, still from my soul I thank you!”

“ He

“He grasped both my hands—he looked earnestly in my face, and as he gazed his eye moistened. He then ran from me, and I never saw him afterwards.

“Part of this narrative has been written many months; and it was designed for your reading, in case any casualty had befallen me. The other part, present circumstances draw from me; and I give the whole of it to you, with a confidence nearly as strong as that with which angels wait for the good works of providence. Oh, children, children! you are in the heart of your father!—Shield them, Celwold, from the brother of Matilda, for even now I am not wholly divested of fear. Tho’ I wish them not always to remain ignorant of their descent, yet suffer the reason of William to correct his enthusiasm, before you tell him that the blood  
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of princes runs in his veins, and that his uncle is the beloved monarch of this happy country."

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Here concluded the narrative of the fallen warrior. It affected the reader variously and strangely; his heart alternately glowed and sickened—the burning blush of shame was often on his cheeks, and his brows warped in disappointment. Tho' he knew himself to be unworthy of the praises which honesty and virtue had bestowed on him, yet his merit grew not; for avarice and pride had taken possession of his breast, and recent circumstances demolished the fabric which had cost him numberless and busy days in erecting.

That which stands between man and his desired attainments, whatever may be

be its qualities, is generally despised; and those objects which were barriers to Alwynd's wealth, tho' worth, innocence, and beauty attached to them, were contemned and execrated. He threw from him the papers that he had been reading, and snatched at the will which he had not yet perused. The first devise was to the acknowledged son of Alwynd, and it comprised demesnes and accumulations of gold, which princes would have deemed acquisitions. The bequest to Agatha was noble, and would afford a dowry equal to most of the heiresses in the kingdom. Then followed the gift to Celwold.—It included the manor-house, to which Rose Neville had been conveyed with Matilda's children, a large tract of land contiguous to it, and many articles of value once esteemed by the ancestors of Alwynd; besides a pecuniary legacy, which none but a most liberal hearted donor would have bestowed on

a person who stood only in a distant degree of affinity.

But the latter part of the will was read by Celwold with disgust. He thought of his shorn honours with a gloomy malignity; and comparing his treasure to that of the youth, whom he so envied and uncharitably hated, it seemed no more than a remote star faintly twinkling, while all the gems of the firmament were shewing themselves in extreme lustre and beauty.

He arose from his seat, and after pacing the chamber some little time, went to the window and looked around him. But the prospect added to his mortifications, and encreased his spleetic humour. The view was wide and lovely. The flowery forest, the ample and luxuriant meadows, the groups of cattle and fleecy sheep, and the



the gigantic and lofty oak trees in all their summer beauty, attracted his eye. The hills that bounded the eastern prospect were distant, and the sun, having long journeyed over their summits, spread his rich beams on the extensive lawns; and on the rippling waters that coursed between the pendant willows.

But all that he saw were as treasures which had been drawn from his confident grasp.—All that he saw belonged to the newly discovered son of Alwynd, whom he had once beheld as a creature of charity; and who was designed to be the homaged Lord of the castle and domain.

“Even I,” exclaimed Celwold, “must bow before the boy, and smile and say, sweet Lord! your servant greets you.—Even I must—No, ruin  
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and perdition overtake me if I do! Alwynd, you might have spared your praises, for I neither profess, nor will strive to deserve them. Had I earlier known what I was reasonably to expect, I might have been different to what I am. But now, I will not love your name—I will not reverence your memory; and should your pale spirit, too troubled for repose, haunt me throughout each night, I would not bend to your will, or be diverted from my own purposes. Your fortune and your children are at my disposal; placed absolutely within my power. You confided in me too late; and what I so long and ardently wished for, I will still attain and enjoy. I am your nearest relative; and those papers destroyed, I may boldly step forth, and say aloud to the world, I am the heir of Alwynd! O, I will be no coward in my ventures;

my

my grasp shall be resolute and strong. Not only your riches, cousin, but also your children must be at my command. Tho' the king has many good qualities, he is tenacious of his dignity and jealous of his rights. Tell him only that the lawful issue of his sister stands secretly behind the throne he now sits upon, and to which his darling grandson is to succeed—tell him but this, and where shall the young pretenders fly for shelter? Procrastination will be my surest foe; my operations, therefore, will I begin, by destroying this paper,—this accursed instrument!—which, once divulged, would place me in a state of insignificance that I should despise,—and bring to me an host of undermining plagues, more to be dreaded than the sudden and inevitable attack of death."



He walked quickly towards the table, in order to destroy the will and narrative; but as he was laying his hand on them, a body of air rushed impetuously into the room, and carried them out at the window. His endeavour to catch at them was unavailing; for he saw them sometimes floating on the air, and sometimes blown rapidly over the ground. Greatly alarmed he immediately left the room, and, hastening out of the castle, found the papers still the play-things of the element; and tho' he ran with all his speed, he could not get possession of them.

Half mad with fear and vexation, he continued his pursuit. Several times he thought he had put his hand on them, but when he lifted it from the earth, he found himself deceived; while, as if he were the fool of sport, they

they curled above his head and frolicked before his eye. What he had at first regarded as a common event, he now looked upon with amazement; they still were hurried over the more open parts of the forest, and still he followed them. At length, however, they were blown beyond the verge of a dark and almost unfathomable quarry; and he watched them from the brink, as they slowly descended.

“They are lost to me,” he cried; “and I shall assuredly never regain the possession of them.”

“Who complains there?” said a voice near to him; when he turned his head, and found that the enquiry came from a poor traveller, who had apparently been reposing on the sunny turf. His garb was coarse and mean, and his countenance shewed not much

of health. His cheeks were pale, his beard neglected, and his eyes beamed with anxieties. A wallet lay by his side, and an ill-fed, but watchful mastiff stood near his head, baying the disturber of his master's slumbers.

The man arose, and, drawing his hand over his brows, walked towards Celwold; who still was looking over the edge of the quarry, and repeating his fears of never recovering the papers from such a dark and dangerous abyss.

“What have you lost, my noble sir?” enquired the stranger.

“Some writings of great concern,” replied Celwold, “which, considering the depth, the darkness, and the dangers of this place, I fear will never be restored to me.”

“Send



“Send some person in search of them,” said the traveller.

“But whom should I employ? Who would venture? Who trust himself in a place so unfrequented and dangerous?”

“O, there are many men who will go far for rewards.”

“Would I could find one willing on this occasion.”

“Behold him here, in me,” cried the traveller; “fashion the advantages according to the hazard, and I will not long remain above the surface.”

“See this purse,” said Celwold, “it is filled with gold. Go down into the cave, bring me the papers, and the money shall be your’s; aye, this, and fifty

more of equal value, shall be your reward, if you redeem what I have lost."

The man looked into the quarry, drew back, and shuddered.

"What, you will not venture?" asked the fearful Celwold.

"Yes, if it lead to hell I will descend.—And yet how horrid—how dreadfully silent!—Nothing to be heard, nothing seen, except that little ridge of earth which my hand's breadth would mock. God, how dreadful!—Give me the purse, and if I return, observe well your promise. I go—but first let me tell you why I go. At a distance, in the western country, stands a hovel of clay, in which I lately dwelt. Beneath the thatch of it lies my dying wife, and around her bed of straw stand my four children, with faces of the colour of the walls,

walls, and with their juices dried up by poverty.—Are you a father?”

“No, I am not.”

“I am, I am!—I prove it here—I feel it deep in my heart. Must my wife die, and shall my children perish in want?—You know not the pain arising from the emptiness of stomach and long fasting. Nature is kinder to brutes, to birds, and to reptiles, than to many of the children of man. See what an ample pasturage for the sleek-coated deer. Yon herd of stupid swine revel amid showers of acorns; and the beasts of prey find, beneath the turf of this forest, caves comfortable and suited to their dainties—as are marbled halls and rooms of tapestry to the luxuries of ennobled gluttons. I grow wild and giddy with my thoughts!—The ghost of my wife is before me, and I hear the shrieks



of my famished babes!—Nature, I owe thee nothing, nothing but curses, and them will I give to thee unstinted. In my craving mood I should have killed and eaten my dog, had it not been for the well known love he bears for me. I have called him Fidelity. No, Fidelity, thou shalt not die!—Should I hereafter be rich, I will build a temple, and set up thy image in gold. It will be religion in me to worship thee; and I will speak in praise of thy loving instinct, and execrate the savageness of reason. Come to my arms, thou worthier being than man!”

The animal leapt upon the traveller's breast, and seemed to view him with ecstasy. Celwold was astonished and alarmed; he began to suspect that he had been conversing with some lunatic straying from his chains, and was going

going hastily away from his strange companion.

“Hold!” cried the latter, perceiving his intention; “the cave—I will descend instantly.”

“But the peril; the extreme danger——”

“I laugh at it; I see it not. I am assured I shall come up again.”

“Should you find the bottom of the cave, how can you, amid so much darkness, discover what I have lost?”

“O, I will cast up my eyes, and gather in such a body of light, that I will describe to you every species of insect that may crawl in the regions beneath. Adieu!—Fidelity! Fidelity!”

He

He stepped forward, no longer dull and slothful, but with vigour in his limbs, and with a strangely altered countenance. The dog followed, growling at Celwold, who laid his head over the cave, in order to mark the descent of the adventurer.

The man passed the first ridge, and leaped lightly on a second, turned up his face, laughed at the observer, and still pursued his course. He was seen for a considerable time, then he lessened to the sight, seemed to grow smaller still; and after space had reduced him, in the eyes of him who looked from the surface, to the size of a pigmy, he was lost in impenetrable darkness.

Celwold did not believe it possible that he could ever return, and, indeed, it was a matter of indifference to him; for he was now convinced that the papers could never be brought again to light,  
and



and that he should not have been more secure had he consigned them to the flames, or torn them to atoms. He frequently spoke to the stranger, but was not heard by him; the voice of the latter, however, and the howlings of the dog frequently ascended, in different degrees of strength, sometimes like audible whisperings only, and sometimes like the rumbling of thunder.

He had left the mouth of the cave nearly half an hour, when Celwold, who was still in the act of listening, very distinctly heard himself spoken to.

“I prosper in my undertakings,” said the man; “I am now treading a path upon which I could spur forward a courser of the quickest mettle. A little light from above—darkness and no visible bottom beneath. Now the scene changes again, but it is to my discomfiture.—

Leave

Leave not the cave till I return. The damned can never go into ways more dreadful!"

The first part of this speech was soft as echo, when she replies to the cheerful forester; but the concluding words were hoarse and strange, as if they had been bellowed in pain and agony, by a monster huge as the leviathan, and strong as Atlas. Celwold trembled at the sound; and it was a long time before he heard the voice again. At length a shriek of horror came to his ear.—The stranger had slipped from one of the projections—his screams were dreadful—the noise made by the brute follower loud and terrifying. The one of them, by turns, prayed and execrated; and the other, unvarying in the tones of his distress, yelled like the keeper of the gates of hell.

The

The uproar continued nearly half an hour, and the wretch, without being deprived of life, was dashed from shelf to shelf. A pause ensued, and afterwards a noise was made by the body dashing into a bed of water, at the bottom of this unfathomable abyss. It was as horrid as if all the seas and rivers had met in silence, and a star had dropped in the midst of them. Tho' the heart of Celwold was roughly fashioned, and had but few qualities of feeling, yet this strange circumstance impressed him most sensibly. His body weakened, and his mind grew feeble. He arose with difficulty, and having walked a few paces, he fell on the roots of an oak tree, and became insensible.

When Celwold awoke to a sense of his situation, it was a satisfaction to find no person near him. From his loneliness he concluded that he had not been observed;



served; and after sitting a while on the turf, in order that his intellects might resume their former capacities, he arose from the spot on which he had fallen. Having looked with dread towards the abyss, in which the adventurous traveller had perished, he returned to the castle.

In the hall he met with Mercia, who cast his eyes upon the face of his guardian, and read with secret comment, the wild characters that were yet stamp'd upon it, and which no present artifice could disguise. He was assured that the mind of Celwold contained some most strange matter; and the affirmed cause of the visible disorder, tho' he spoke not on the subject, he peremptorily rejected.

Celwold had always found the penetration of his ward unsuited to most of his purposes. He had, for a considerable time,

time, been convinced, that his hypocrisy passed not to Mercia as to other men; and nothing but the pecuniary advantages which his avarice craved, could so long have induced him to retain his charge. He now perceived the glances that came to him indirectly, but, in his apprehensions, he did not venture to chide what he deemed impertinent and found distressing.

He wondered alike at his own present fears, and at the recent consequences of the traveller's disaster. No occurrence had ever so strangely wrought on him, nor had any preceding event ever reduced him to a state of insensibility; and that which he had considered as a womanish and conquerable impulse, he now acknowledged as an irresistible attack on human nature. Having made enquiries concerning William and Agatha, and been told that the youth was  
in

in the chamber of his sister, who was still weak and inconsolable, Celwold was retiring, when Mercia stepped before him, and begged that he might be heard for a few minutes.

“I shall not long detain your Lordship,” he cried, “for I have only a single request to make. I beg you will allow me to return to Bartonmere, in order that I may bring from thence the body of Lord Alwynd.”

“Would it not be more proper if I were to go thither, either alone or in your company?” enquired Celwold. “Why do you, Mercia, wish to engage in the melancholy office?”

“Oh, my Lord, you know not how dearly I loved him! Neither William nor Agatha, could have a warmer affection for him; and having lost him,



him, they cannot feel more acutely than I do, tho' my external appearances of sorrow are so few. I fought by his side—I was near him when he fell. I never knew my father or my mother—had the former; however, died in my arms, grief could not have laid a stronger hold on me; and had the latter——But there no comparison will rest. Her long and shameful neglect of me has made her an object of little concern. Let me go to Bartonmere, let me bring back that beloved, once beautiful, and manly form, in which the spirit of animation shall never more be found."

"Go, Mercia," replied Celwold!  
 "go on the mournful errand whenever you shall think it proper. I own, I feel myself unequal to the office. In the death of Lord Alwynd you have only to lament a friend. I  
 must

must mourn for him as a relation; as one closely linked to me by the chain of nature, and made most precious by the ties of kindred. When will you depart?"

"With the permission of your Lordship, I will be gone within the present hour. Some of the servants should go with me."

"Command such of them as you best approve to wait on you."

"And William, my dear, unhappy friend! He too will accompany me."

"Oh, it will be too much for the gentleness of his nature! Spare him, spare him, Mercia, from a fight so distressing."

"No."

"No, my Lord, I have prepared him for the occasion. His grief is such that it should be disturbed. It gathers, it accumulates, and threatens to canker his heart; but when I bring him to the body of Alwynd, and point out his many gashes, the tempest of the soul will vent itself freely, and probably be soon succeeded by a calm of long continuance."

Celwold agreed to what Mercia proposed; and the latter went to make the necessary preparations. He found all the servants desirous of going for the remains of their loved Lord, and allowed many of them so to do. He then sought his friend William, and after a short conversation they both entered the apartment of Agatha, to whom Mercia, who had some knowledge of the human heart, unreservedly spoke of the errand on which he was going.

"Restrain



"Restrain your tears, dear girl," he cried, "and shew not so much sorrow for an event, which was not brought about by mere mortal agency. Every hour, nay every moment is pregnant with death. With our general belief in things hereafter, and estimating future rewards and neglects, we have more cause to sigh for the departure of those, who dwelt among us in the habits of vice, than of those whose time was spent in virtue; and whom we, reserving all the best qualities of our nature, joyfully acknowledge as brothers and fellow-men. Does Alwynd, in his present state, demand the tribute of human tears?—He does not Agatha! sorrow never was where he resides, and earthly pity is not wanted where there is heavenly gratulation."

"Adieu, dear girl! Adieu, dear sister!" cried William, while he pressed her to his breast.

breast. The friends then left the room, and soon afterwards the castle, at the gate of which appeared Lord Celwold; who waved his hand in silence, and affected to feel infinitely more than his nature had ever been sensible of.

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