

ANN RADCLIFFE

The Castles of
Athlin and Dunbayne

A Highland Romance

READER'S EDITION

Edited by Sandra K. Williams

IDLE SPIDER BOOKS
Sacramento, California

The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne:
A Highland Romance (Reader's Edition)
by Ann Radcliffe

Edited by Sandra K. Williams

Notes and editorial changes
copyright © 2017 Sandra K. Williams

All rights reserved. Copyrighted material may not be duplicated, reproduced, or transmitted in any form whatsoever—except in the form of brief excerpts or quotations incorporated in critical articles and reviews—without written permission from the publisher.

The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne was first published in 1789

This edition published in 2017 by
Idle Spider Books
www.idlespiderbooks.com

Design and typesetting by
Williams Writing, Editing & Design
Text set in Berthold Baskerville

Idle Spider Books™ and the spider colophon are
trademarks of Williams Writing, Editing, & Design
www.williamswriting.com

ISBN 978-0-9797290-8-9

Editor's Note

This edition has been copyedited to current American practice in respect to punctuation. Spelling has been standardized throughout using the author's preferred spelling when it could be determined. In some places words and phrases have been reordered—and in a very few cases altered or removed—to improve ease of comprehension. However, no scenes, no events, and no descriptions have been removed: the work stands as Ann Radcliffe wrote it, polished for today's readers.

If you need an exact reproduction of the original text or extensive footnotes, you may prefer one of the many other editions that are available. This is the *reader's* edition, intended for whiling away a rainy afternoon with a story set in a Scotland that never existed . . .

. . . for justice bares the arm of God,
And the grasp'd vengeance only waits his nod.

—James Cawthorn, “Abelard to Eloise”

Chapter I

On the northeast coast of Scotland, in the most romantic part of the Highlands, stood the castle of Athlin, an edifice built on the summit of a rock whose base was in the sea. This pile¹ was venerable for its antiquity and from its Gothic structure, but more venerable from the virtues which it enclosed. It was the residence of the still-beautiful widow Matilda and the children of the noble Earl of Athlin, who was slain by the hand of Malcolm, a neighbouring chief, proud, oppressive, revengeful, and still residing in all the pomp of feudal greatness within a few miles of the castle of Athlin.

Encroachment on the domain of Athlin was the occasion of the animosity which subsisted between the chiefs. Frequent broils² had happened between their clans, in which that of Athlin had generally been victorious. Malcolm, whose pride was touched by the defeat of his people, whose ambition was curbed by the authority of and whose greatness was rivalled by the power of the earl, conceived for Athlin that deadly hatred which opposition to its favourite passions naturally excites in

1. Large, impressive building.
2. Brawls.

a mind like his, haughty and unaccustomed to control; and he meditated his enemy's destruction. He planned his purpose with all that address which so eminently marked his character, and in a battle which was attended by the chiefs of each party in person, he contrived by a curious finesse to entrap the earl, accompanied by a small detachment,³ in his wiles, and there slew him.

A general rout of Athlin's clan ensued, which was followed by a dreadful slaughter. A few only escaped to tell the horrid catastrophe to Matilda. Overwhelmed by the news and deprived of those numbers which would make revenge successful, Matilda forbore to sacrifice the lives of her few remaining people to a feeble attempt at retaliation, and she was constrained to endure in silence her sorrows and her injuries.

Inconsolable for his death, Matilda had withdrawn from the public eye into this ancient seat of feudal government, and there, in the bosom of her people and her family, had devoted herself to the education of her children. One son and one daughter were all that survived to her care, and their growing virtues promised to repay all her tenderness. Osbert was in his nineteenth year; nature had given him a mind ardent and susceptible, to which education had added refinement and expansion. The visions of genius were bright in his imagination, and his heart, unchilled by the touch of disappointment, glowed with all the warmth of benevolence.

When first we enter on the theatre of the world and begin to notice its features, young imagination heightens

3. Body of troops.

every scene, and the warm heart expands to all around it. The happy benevolence of our feelings prompts us to believe that everybody is good, and excites our wonder why everybody is not happy. We are fired with indignation at the recital of an act of injustice and at the unfeeling vices of which we are told. At a tale of distress our tears flow a full tribute to pity; at a deed of virtue our heart unfolds, our soul aspires, we bless the action, and feel ourselves the doer. As we advance in life, imagination is compelled to relinquish a part of her sweet delirium; we are led reluctantly to truth through the paths of experience, and the objects of our fond attention are viewed with a severer eye. Here an altered scene appears: frowns where late were smiles, deep shades where late was sunshine; mean passions or disgusting apathy stain the features of the principal figures. We turn indignant from a prospect so miserable, and court again the sweet illusions of our early days, but ah! they are fled forever! Constrained, therefore, to behold objects in their more genuine hues, their deformity is by degrees less painful to us. The fine touch of moral susceptibility by frequent irritation becomes callous; and too frequently we mingle with the world till we are added to the number of its votaries.⁴

Mary, who was just seventeen, had the accomplishments of riper years with the touching simplicity of youth. The graces of her person were inferior only to those of her mind, which illumined her countenance with inimitable expression.

4. Devoted admirers.

Twelve years had now elapsed since the death of the earl, and time had blunted the keen edge of sorrow. Matilda's grief had declined into a gentle and not unpleasing melancholy, which gave a soft and interesting shade to the natural dignity of her character. Hitherto her attention had been solely directed towards rearing those virtues which nature had planted with so liberal a hand in her children, and which, under the genial influence of her eye, had flourished and expanded into beauty and strength.

A new hope and new solitudes now arose in her breast; these dear children were arrived at an age dangerous for its tender susceptibility and for the influence which imagination has at that time over the passions. Impressions would soon be formed which would stamp their destiny for life. The anxious mother lived but in her children, and she had yet another cause of apprehension.

When Osbert learned the story of his father's death, his young heart glowed to avenge the deed. The late earl, who had governed with the real dignity of power, was adored by his clan; they were eager to revenge his injuries, but their murmurs sank into silence, oppressed by the generous compassion of the countess. Yet they fondly cherished the hope that their young lord would one day lead them on to conquest and revenge. The time was now come when they looked to see this hope, the solace of many a cruel moment, realized.

The tender fears of a mother would not suffer Matilda to risk the chief of her last remaining comforts. She forbade Osbert to engage.

He submitted in silence and endeavoured, by applica-

tion to his favourite studies, to stifle the emotions which roused him. He excelled in the various accomplishments of his rank but chiefly in the martial exercises, for they were congenial to the nobility of his soul, and he had a secret pleasure in believing that they would one time assist him to do justice to the memory of his dead father.

His warm imagination directed him to poetry, and he followed where it led. He loved to wander among the romantic scenes of the Highlands, where the wild variety of nature inspired him with all the enthusiasm of his favourite art. He delighted in the terrible and in the grand more than in the softer landscape. Rapt in the bright visions of fancy, he would often lose himself in awful solitudes.

It was in one of these rambles that, having strayed for some miles over hills covered with heath—from whence the eye was presented with only the bold outlines of uncultivated nature, rocks piled on rocks, cataracts, and vast moors unmarked by the foot of traveller—he lost the path which he had himself made. He looked in vain for the objects which had directed him, and his heart for the first time felt the repulse of fear.

No vestige of a human being was to be seen, and the dreadful silence of the place was interrupted only by the roar of distant torrents, and by the screams of the birds which flew over his head. He shouted, and his voice was answered only by the deep echoes of the mountains.

He remained for some time in a silent dread not wholly unpleasing but which was soon heightened to a degree of terror not to be endured, and he turned his steps backward, forlorn and dejected. His memory

gave him back no image of the past; having wandered some time, he came to a narrow pass which he entered, overcome with fatigue and fruitless search. He had not advanced far when an abrupt opening in the rock suddenly presented him with a view of the most beautifully romantic spot he had ever seen.

It was a valley almost surrounded by a barrier of wild rocks, whose base was shaded with thick woods of pine and fir. A torrent, which tumbled from the heights and was seen between the woods, rushed with amazing impetuosity into a fine lake, which flowed through the vale and was lost in the deep recesses of the mountains. Herds of cattle grazed in the bottom, and the delighted eyes of Osbert were once more blessed with the sight of human dwellings. Far on the margin of the stream were scattered a few neat cottages.

His heart was so gladdened at the prospect that he forgot he had yet to find the way which led to this elysian⁵ vale. He was just awakened to this distressing reality when his attention was engaged by the manly figure of a young Highland peasant, who advanced towards him with an air of benevolence. Having learned his distress, the peasant offered to conduct him to his cottage.

Osbert accepted the invitation, and together they wound down the hill through an obscure and intricate path. They arrived at one of the cottages which the earl had observed from the height; they entered, and the peasant presented his guest to a venerable old Highlander, his father.

5. Sweetly blissful.

Refreshments were spread on the table by a pretty young girl, and Osbert, after having partaken of them and resting awhile, departed, accompanied by Alleyn, the young peasant, who had offered to be his guide.

The length of the walk was beguiled by conversation. Osbert was interested to discover in his companion a dignity of thought and a course of sentiment similar to his own.

On their way, they passed at some distance the castle of Dunbayne. This object gave to Osbert a bitter reflection, and drew from him a deep sigh. Alleyn made observations on the bad policy of oppression in a chief, and produced as an instance the Baron Malcolm.

“These lands,” said he, “are his, and they are scarcely sufficient to support his wretched people, who, sinking under severe exactions, suffer to lie uncultivated tracts which would otherwise add riches to their lord. His clan, oppressed by their burdens, threaten to rise and do justice to themselves by force of arms. The baron, in haughty confidence, laughs at their defiance and is insensible to his danger. For should an insurrection happen, there are other clans who would eagerly join in his destruction, and punish with the same weapon the tyrant and the murderer.”

Surprised at the bold independence of these words, delivered with uncommon energy, the heart of Osbert beat quick. “O god! my father!” burst from his lips.

Alleyn stood aghast, uncertain of the effect which his speech had produced. In an instant the whole truth flashed upon his mind: he beheld the son of the lord whom he had been taught to love, and whose sad story

had been impressed upon his heart in the early days of childhood.

He sank at Osbert's feet and embraced his knees with a romantic ardor. The young earl raised him from the ground, and the following words relieved Osbert from his astonishment and filled his eyes with tears of mingled joy and sorrow:

"There are other clans as ready as your own to avenge the wrongs of the noble Earl of Athlin; the Fitz-Henrys were ever friends to virtue." The countenance of the youth, while he spoke, was overspread with the glow of conscious dignity, and his eyes were animated with the pride of virtue.

The breast of Osbert kindled with noble purpose. But the image of his weeping mother crossed his mind, and checked the ardor of the impulse.

"A time may come my friend," said he, "when your generous zeal will be accepted with the warmth of gratitude it deserves. Particular circumstances will not suffer me, at present, to say more." The warm attachment of Alleyn to his father sank deep in his heart.

It was evening before they reached the castle, and Alleyn remained the earl's guest for that night.

Chapter II

The following day was appointed for the celebration of an annual festival given by the earl for his people, and he would not suffer Alleyn to depart. The hall was spread with tables, and dance and merriment resounded through the castle. It was usual on that day for the clan to assemble in arms on account of an attempt made two centuries before by a hostile clan to surprise them in their festivity.

In the morning were performed the martial exercises, with honorary rewards bestowed for excellence. The countess and her lovely daughter beheld, from the ramparts of the castle, the feats performed on the plains below. Their attention was engaged and their curiosity excited by the appearance of a stranger who managed the lance and the bow with such exquisite dexterity as to bear off each prize of chivalry. That stranger was Alleyn. He received the palm of victory from the hands of the earl, as was usual, and the modest dignity with which he accepted it charmed the beholders.

The earl honoured the feast with his presence, at the conclusion of which each guest arose and, seizing his goblet with his left hand and with his right striking his sword, drank to the memory of their departed lord. The

hall echoed with the general voice. Osbert felt it strike upon his heart the alarum of war. The people then joined hands and drank to the honour of the son of their late master.

Osbert understood the signal and, overcome with emotion, his every consideration yielded to that of avenging his father. He arose and harangued the clan with all the fire of youth and indignant virtue. As he spoke, the countenance of his people flashed with impatient joy; a deep murmur of applause ran through the assembly. When he was silent, each man, crossing his sword with that of his neighbour, swore that sacred pledge of union, never to quit the cause in which they now engaged till the life of their enemy had paid the debt of justice and of revenge.

In the evening, the wives and daughters of the peasantry came to the castle and joined in the festivity. It was usual for the countess and her ladies to observe from a gallery of the hall the various performances of dance and song, and it had been a custom of old for the daughter of the castle to grace the occasion by performing a Scottish dance with the victor of the morning.

This victor now was Alleyn, who beheld the lovely Mary led by the earl into the hall and presented to him as his partner in the dance. She received his homage with a sweet grace. She was dressed in the habit of a Highland lass, and her fine auburn tresses, which waved on her neck, were ornamented only with a wreath of roses. She moved in the dance with the light steps of the Graces.

Profound silence reigned through the hall during the performance, and a soft murmur of applause arose on its conclusion. The admiration of the spectators was divided between Mary and the victorious stranger. She retired to the gallery, and the night concluded in joy to all but the earl and Alleyn; but very different was the source and the complexion of their inquietude.

The mind of Osbert revolved the chief occurrences of the day, and his soul burned with impatience to accomplish the purposes of filial piety. Yet he dreaded the effect which the communication of his designs might have on the tender heart of Matilda. However, he resolved to acquaint her with them on the morrow, and in a few days to rise and prosecute his cause with arms.

Alleyn, whose bosom till now had felt only for others' pains, began to be conscious of his own. His mind, uneasy and restless, gave him only the image of the high-born Mary; he endeavoured to exclude her idea,⁶ but with an effort so faint that it would still intrude! Pleased, yet sad, he would not acknowledge even to himself that he loved; so ingenious are we to conceal every appearance of evil from ourselves. He arose with the dawn, and departed from the castle full of gratitude and secret love to prepare his friends for the approaching war.

The earl awoke from broken slumbers, and summoned all his fortitude to encounter the tender opposition of his mother. He entered her apartment with faltering steps, and his countenance betrayed the emotions of his

6. Image recalled by memory.

soul. Matilda was soon informed of what her heart had foreboded. Overcome with dreadful sensation, she sank lifeless in her chair. Osbert flew to her assistance, and Mary and the attendants soon recovered her to sense and wretchedness.

The mind of Osbert was torn by the most cruel conflict. Filial duty, honour, revenge commanded him to go; filial love, regret, and pity entreated him to stay. Mary fell at his feet and, clasping his knees with all the wild energy of grief, besought him to relinquish his fatal purpose and save his last surviving parent. Her tears, her sighs, and the soft simplicity of her air spoke a yet stronger language than her tongue.

The silent grief of the countess was still more touching, and in his endeavours to soothe her, he was on the point of yielding his resolution when the figure of his dying father arose to his imagination and stamped his purpose irrevocably. The anxiety of a fond mother presented Matilda with the image of her son bleeding and ghastly; and the death of her lord was revived in her memory with all the agonizing grief that sad event had impressed upon her heart, the harsher characters of which had been almost obliterated by the lenient hand of time.

So lovely is Pity in all her attitudes that fondness prompts us to believe she can never transgress; but she changes into a vice when she overcomes the purposes of stronger virtue. Sterner principles now nerved the breast of Osbert against her influence and impelled him on to deeds of arms.

He summoned a few of the most able and trusty of

the clan, and held a council of war. It was resolved that Malcolm should be attacked with all the force they could assemble, and with all the speed which the importance of the preparation would allow. To prevent suspicion and alarm to the baron, it was agreed it should be given out that these preparations were intended for assistance to the chief of a distant part. When they set out on the expedition, they would pursue for some time a contrary way, but under favour of the night would change their route and turn upon the castle of Dunbayne.

In the meantime, Alleyn was strenuous in exciting his friends to the cause, and so successful in the undertaking as to have collected in a few days a number of no inconsiderable consequence. To the warm enthusiasm of virtue was now added a new motive of exertion. It was no longer simply an attachment to the cause of justice which roused him to action; the pride of distinguishing himself in the eyes of his mistress and of deserving her esteem by his zealous services gave combined force to the first impulse of benevolence. The sweet thought of deserving her thanks operated secretly on his soul, for he was yet ignorant of its influence there. In this state he again appeared at the castle and told the earl that he and his friends were ready to follow him whenever the signal should be given. His offer was accepted with the warmth of kindness it claimed, and he was desired to hold himself in readiness for the onset.

In a few days the preparations were completed, Alleyn and his friends were summoned, and the clan assembled in arms. With the young earl at their head, they departed on their expedition. The parting between Osbert and his

family may be easily conceived; nor could all the pride of expected conquest suppress a sigh which escaped from Alleyn when his eyes bade adieu to Mary.

She, with the countess, stood on the terrace of the castle, pursuing with aching sight the march of her beloved brother till distance veiled him from her view. She then turned into the castle weeping and foreboding future calamity. She endeavoured, however, to assume an appearance of tranquillity, that she might deceive the fears of Matilda and soothe her sorrow. Since she could not prevent this hazardous undertaking, Matilda, whose mind was strong as her heart was tender, summoned all her fortitude to resist the impressions of fruitless grief and to search for the good which the occasion might present. Her efforts were not vain; she found it in the prospect which the enterprise afforded of honour to the memory of her murdered lord, and of retribution on the head of the murderer.

It was evening when the earl departed from the castle; he pursued a contrary route till night favoured his designs, when he wheeled towards the castle of Dunbayne. The extreme darkness of the night assisted their plan, which was to scale the walls, surprise the sentinels, burst their way into the inner courts sword in hand, and force the murderer from his retreat.

They had trod many miles the dreary wilds, unassisted by the least gleam of light, when suddenly their ears were struck with the dismal note of a watch-bell chiming the hour of the night. Every heart beat to the sound. They knew they were near the abode of the baron. They halted to consult concerning their proceedings,

and it was agreed that the earl with Alleyn and a chosen few should proceed to reconnoiter the castle while the rest should remain at a small distance awaiting the signal of approach.

The earl and his party pursued their march with silent steps. They perceived a faint light, which they guessed to proceed from the castle watchtower, and they were now almost under its walls. They paused awhile in silence to give breath to expectation, and to listen if anything was stirring. All was involved in the gloom of night, and the silence of death prevailed. They had now time to examine, as well as the darkness would permit, the situation of the castle and the height of the walls, and to prepare for the assault.

The edifice was built with Gothic magnificence upon a high and dangerous rock. Its lofty towers still frowned in proud sublimity, and the immensity of the pile stood a record of the ancient consequence of its possessors. The rock was surrounded by a ditch, broad but not deep, over which were two drawbridges, one on the north side, the other on the east. They were both up, but as they separated in the center, one half of the bridge remained on the side of the plains. The bridge on the north led to the grand gateway of the castle; that on the east to a small watchtower. These were all the entrances. The rock was almost perpendicular with the walls, which were strong and lofty.

After surveying the situation, they pitched upon a spot where the rock appeared most accessible and was contiguous to the principal gate, and they gave signal to the clan. They approached in silence, and gently throwing

down into the ditch the bundles of faggots⁷ which they had brought for the purpose, made themselves a bridge over which they passed in safety, and prepared to ascend the heights.

It had been resolved that a party, of which Alleyn was one, should scale the walls, surprise the sentinels, and open the gates to the rest of the clan, which with the earl were to remain without. Alleyn was the first who fixed his ladder and mounted. He was instantly followed by the rest of his party, and with much difficulty and some hazard they gained the ramparts in safety. They traversed a part of the platform without hearing the sound of a voice or a step; profound sleep seemed to bury all. A number of the party approached some sentinels who were asleep on their post. Then they seized while Alleyn, with a few others, flew to open the nearest gate and let down the drawbridge. This they accomplished, but in the meantime the alarm bell rang out, and the castle resounded with the clang of arms.

All was tumult and confusion. The earl with part of his people entered the gate; the rest were following when suddenly the portcullis was dropped, the bridge drawn up, and the earl and his people found themselves surrounded by an armed multitude which poured in torrents from every recess of the castle. Surprised but not daunted, the earl rushed forward, sword in hand, and fought with a desperate valour.

The soul of Alleyn seemed to acquire new vigour from the conflict; he fought like a man panting for honour and

7. Sticks.

certain of victory. Wherever he rushed, conquest flew before him. He, with the earl, forced his way into the inner courts in search of the baron, and hoped to have satisfied a just revenge and to have concluded the conflict with the death of the murderer. But the moment in which they entered the courts, the gates were closed upon them and they were environed⁸ by a band of guards. After a short resistance, in which Alleyn received a slight wound, they were seized as prisoners of war.

The slaughter without was great and dreadful. Inspired with fury, the people of the baron were insatiate for death. Many of the earl's followers were killed in the courts and on the platform; many, in attempting to escape, were thrown from the ramparts; and many were destroyed by the sudden raising of the bridge. Only a small part of the brave and adventurous band who had engaged in the cause of justice were driven back from the walls and survived to carry the dreadful tidings to the countess.

The fate of the earl remained unknown. The consternation among the friends of the slain is not to be described, and it was heightened by the unaccountable manner in which the victory had been obtained. It was well-known that except when war made it necessary, Malcolm never had more soldiers in his garrison than feudal pomp demanded. Yet on this occasion, armed men rushed from the recesses of his castle in numbers sufficient to overpower the force of a whole clan.

But the earl's followers knew not the secret means of

8. Surrounded.

intelligence which the baron possessed. The jealousy of conscience had armed him with apprehension for his safety, and for some years he had planted spies near the castle of Athlin to observe all that passed within it and to give him immediate intelligence of every war-like preparation. A transaction so striking and so public as that which had occurred on the day of the festival, when the whole people swore to avenge the murder of their chief, would not escape the valiant eye of his mercenaries.

The circumstance had been communicated to him with all the exaggerations of fear and wonder, and had given him the signal for defence. The accounts sent him of the military preparations which were forming convinced him that this defence would soon be called for. Laughing at the idle tales which were told him of distant wars, he hastened to store his garrison with arms and with men, and held himself in readiness to receive the assailants. The baron had conducted his plans with all that power of contrivance which the secrecy of the business demanded. It was his design to suffer the enemy to mount his walls and put them to the sword. This deep-laid stratagem had been nearly defeated by the drowsiness of the sentinels who were posted to give signal of their approach.

The fortitude of Matilda fainted under the pressure of so heavy a calamity. She was attacked with a violent illness which nearly terminated her sorrows and her life. The tender cares of her daughter, however, were effectual; she revived, and was supported in the severe hours of affliction which the unknown fate of the earl occasioned.

Mary, who felt all the horrors of the late event, was ill qualified for the office of a comforter. But her generous heart, susceptible of the deep sufferings of Matilda, almost forgot its own distress in the remembrance of her mother's. Yet the idea of her brother surrounded with the horrors of imprisonment and death would often obtrude itself on her imagination, with an emphasis which almost overcame her reason. She had also a strong degree of pity for the fate of the brave young Highlander who had assisted, with a disinterestedness so noble, in the cause of her house. She wished to learn his further destiny, and her heart often melted in compassion at the picture which her fancy drew of his sufferings.

Chapter III

After being loaded with fetters, the earl was conducted to the chief prison of the castle and left alone to the bitter reflections of defeat and uncertain destiny. But misfortune, though it might shake, could not overcome his firmness, and hope had not yet entirely forsaken him. It is the peculiar attribute of great minds to bear up with increasing force against the shock of misfortune; with them the nerves of resistance strengthen with attack, and they may be said to subdue adversity with its own weapons.

Reflection at length afforded him time to examine his prison. It was a square room which formed the summit of a tower built on the east side of the castle, round which the bleak winds howled mournfully. The inside of the apartment was old and falling to decay. A small mattress which lay in one corner of the room, a broken-matted chair, and a tottering table composed its furniture. Two small and strongly grated windows, which admitted a sufficient degree of light and air, afforded him on one side a view into an inner court, and on the other a dreary prospect of the wild and barren highlands.

Alleyn was conveyed through dark and winding passages to a distant part of the castle, where at length a

small iron-barred door opened, and disclosed to him an abode whence light and hope were equally excluded. He shuddered as he entered, and the door closed upon him.

The mind of the baron, in the meantime, was agitated with all the direful passions of hate, revenge, and exulting pride. He racked his imagination for the invention of tortures equal to the force of his feelings. At length he discovered that the sufferings of suspense are superior to those of the most terrible evils; for the contemplation of the latter, when once ascertained, gradually affords to strong minds the means of endurance. He determined, therefore, that the earl should remain confined in the tower, ignorant of his future destiny. In the meanwhile he should be allowed food only sufficient to keep him sensible of his wretchedness.

Osbert was immersed in thought when he heard the door of his prison unbarred, and the Baron Malcolm stood before him. The heart of Osbert swelled high with indignation, and defiance flashed in his eyes.

“I am come,” said the insulting victor, “to welcome the Earl of Athlin to my castle and to show that I can receive my friends with the hospitality they deserve. But I am yet undetermined what kind of festival I shall bestow on your arrival.”

“Weak tyrant,” returned Osbert, his countenance impressed with the firm dignity of virtue, “to insult the vanquished is congenial with the cruel meanness of the murderer. Nor do I expect that the man who slew the father will spare the son, but know that son is nerved against your wrath, and welcomes all that your fears or your cruelty can impose.”

“Rash youth,” replied the baron, “your words are air; they fade from sense, and soon your boasted strength shall sink beneath my power. I go to meditate your destiny.” With these words he quitted the prison, enraged at the unbending virtue of the earl.

The sight of the baron roused in the soul of Osbert all those opposite emotions of furious indignation and tender pity which the glowing image of his father could excite, and produced a moment of perfect misery. The dreadful energy of these sensations exasperated his brain almost to madness. The cool fortitude in which he had so lately gloried disappeared, and he was on the point of resigning his virtue and his life, by means of a short dagger which he wore concealed under his vest, when the soft notes of a lute surprised his attention.

It was accompanied by a voice so enchantingly tender and melodious that its sounds fell on the heart of Osbert in balmy comfort. It seemed sent by Heaven to arrest his fate—the storm of passion was hushed within him, and he dissolved in kind tears of pity and contrition. The mournful tenderness of the air declared the person from whom it came to be a sufferer, and Osbert suspected it to proceed from a prisoner like himself.

The music ceased. Absorbed in wonder, he went to the grates in quest of the sweet musician, but no one was to be seen. He was uncertain whether the sounds arose from within or from without the castle. When the guard brought him his small allowance of food, he inquired concerning what he had heard, but he could not obtain the information he sought and was constrained to remain in a state of suspense.

In the meantime the castle of Athlin and its neighbourhood was overwhelmed with distress. The news of the earl's imprisonment at length reached the ears of the countess, and hope once more illumined her mind. She immediately sent to the baron offers of immense ransom for the restoration of her son and the other prisoners.

But the ferocity of the baron's nature disdained an incomplete triumph. Revenge subdued his avarice, and the offers were rejected with the spurn of contempt. An additional motive, however, operated in his mind and confirmed his purpose.

The beauty of Mary had been often reported to him in terms which excited his curiosity. An incidental view he once obtained of her raised a passion in his soul, which the turbulence of his character would not suffer to be extinguished. Various were the schemes he had projected to obtain her, none of which had ever been executed. The possession of the earl was a circumstance the most favourable to his wishes, and he resolved to obtain Mary as the future ransom of her brother. He concealed for the present his purpose, that the tortures of anxiety and despair might operate on the mind of the countess to grant him an easy consent to the exchange, and to resign the victim to becoming the wife of her enemy.

The small remains of the clan, unsubdued by misfortune, were eager to assemble and, hazardous as was the enterprise, to attempt the rescue of their chief. The hope which this undertaking afforded once more revived the countess. But alas! a new source of sorrow was now opened for her as the health of Mary visibly declined.

Mary was silent and pensive. Her tender frame was

too susceptible of the sufferings of her mind, and these sufferings were heightened by concealment. She was prescribed amusement and gentle exercise as the best restoratives of peace and health.

One day, as she was seeking on horseback these lost treasures, she was tempted by the fineness of the evening to prolong her ride beyond its usual limits. The sun was declining when she entered a wood whose awful glooms so well accorded with the pensive tone of her mind. The soft serenity of evening and the still solemnity of the scene conspired to lull her mind into a pleasing forgetfulness of its troubles, from which she was, ere long, awakened by the approaching sound of horses' feet. The thickness of the foliage limited her view, but looking onward, she thought she perceived through the trees a glittering of arms. She turned her palfrey and sought the entrance of the wood.

The clattering of hoofs advanced in the breeze! Her heart misgave her, and she quickened her pace. Her fears were soon justified; she looked back and beheld three horsemen armed and disguised advancing with the speed of pursuit. Almost fainting, she flew on the wings of terror.

All her efforts were vain. The villains came up; one seized her horse, the others fell upon her two attendants. A stout scuffle ensued, but the strength of her servants soon yielded to the weapons of their adversaries. They were brought to the ground, dragged into the wood, and there left bound to the trees. In the meantime, Mary, who had fainted in the arms of the villain who seized her, was borne away through the intricate mazes of the wood.

Her terrors may be easily imagined when she revived and found herself in the hands of unknown men. Her dreadful screams, her tears, her supplications, were ineffectual; the wretches were deaf alike to pity and to enquiry. They preserved an inflexible silence, and she was being conveyed towards the mouth of a horrible cavern when despair seized her mind. She lost all signs of existence; in this state she remained some time.

It is impossible to describe her situation when she unclosed her eyes and beheld Alleyn, who was watching with the most trembling anxiety her return to life. His eyes, on seeing her revive, swam in joy and tenderness. Wonder, fearful joy, and the various shades of mingled emotions passed in quick succession over her countenance.

Her surprise increased when she observed her own servants standing by, and could discover no one but friends. She scarcely dared to trust her senses, but the voice of Alleyn, tremulous with tenderness, dissolved in a moment the illusions of fear, and confirmed her in the surprising reality. When she was sufficiently recovered, they quitted this scene of gloom. They travelled on in a slow pace, and the shades of night were fallen long before they reached the castle.

There distress and confusion appeared. The countess, alarmed with the most dreadful apprehensions, had dispatched her servants various ways in search of her child, and her transports on again beholding her in safety prevented her observing immediately that it was Alleyn who accompanied her. Joy, however, soon yielded to its equal wonder when she perceived him, and in the

tumult of contending emotions, she scarce knew which first to interrogate.

When she had been told the escape of her daughter and by whom effected, she prepared with impatient solicitude to hear news of her beloved son and the means by which the brave young Highlander had eluded the vigilance of the baron. Of the earl, Alleyn could only inform the countess that he was taken prisoner with himself within the walls of the fortress as they fought side by side, and that he was conducted unwounded to a tower situated on the east angle of the castle, where he was still confined. He himself had been imprisoned in a distant part of the pile, and had been able to collect no other particulars of the earl's situation than those he had related. Of himself he gave a brief relation of the following circumstances:

After having lain some weeks in the horrible dungeon allotted him, his mind involved in the gloom of despair and filled with the momentary expectation of death, desperation furnished him with invention. He concerted⁹ the following plan of escape: He had observed that the guard who brought him his allowance of food, on quitting the dungeon, constantly sounded his spear against the pavement near the entrance. This circumstance excited his surprise and curiosity. A ray of hope beamed through the gloom of his dungeon. He examined the spot as well as the obscurity of the place would permit. It was paved with flagstones like the other parts of the cell, and the paving was everywhere equally

9. Made a plan for.

firm. He, however, became certain that some means of escape was concealed beneath that part, for the guard was constant in examining it by striking that spot and treading more firmly on it; and this he endeavoured to do without being observed.

One day, immediately after the departure of the guard, Alleyn set himself to unfasten the pavement. This, with much patience and industry, he effected by means of a small knife which had escaped the search of the soldiers. He found the earth beneath hard and without any symptoms of being lately disturbed. But after digging a few feet, he arrived at a trap.

He trembled with eagerness. It was now almost night, and he was overcome with weariness. He doubted whether he should be able to penetrate through the door and what other obstructions were behind it before the next day. He therefore threw the earth again into the hole and endeavoured to close the pavement. With much difficulty, he trod the earth into the opening, but the pavement he was unable exactly to replace. It was too dark to examine the stones, and he found that even if he should be able to make them fit, the pavement could not be made firm. His mind and body were now overcome, and he threw himself on the ground in an agony of despair.

It was midnight when the return of his strength and spirits produced another effort. He tore the earth up with hasty violence, cut round the lock of the trapdoor, and raising it, unwilling to hesitate or consider, sprang through the aperture.

The vault was of considerable depth, and he was

thrown down by the violence of the fall. A hollow echo, which seemed to murmur at a distance, convinced him that the place was of considerable extent. He had no light to direct him, and was therefore obliged to walk with his arms extended in silent and fearful examination. After having wandered through the void a considerable time, he came to a wall, along which he groped with anxious care. It conducted him onward for a length of way. It turned; he followed, and his hand touched the cold ironwork of a barred window.

He felt the gentle undulation of the air upon his face. To him, who had been so long confined among the damp vapours of a dungeon, this was a moment of luxury. The air gave him strength, and the means of escape which now seemed presented to him renewed his courage. He set his foot against the wall; grasping a bar with his hand, he found it gradually yield to his strength, and by successive efforts, he entirely displaced it. He attempted another, but it was more firmly fixed.

Every effort to loosen it was ineffectual. He found that it was fastened in a large stone of the wall, and to remove this stone was his only means of displacing the bar. He set himself, therefore, again to work with his knife, and with much patience loosened the mortar sufficiently to effect his purpose. After some hours, for the darkness made his labour tedious and sometimes ineffectual, he had removed several of the bars and had made an opening almost sufficient to permit his escape.

When the dawn of light appeared, he now discovered with inexpressible anguish that the grate opened into an inner court of the castle. Even while he hesitated, he

could perceive soldiers descending slowly into the court from the narrow staircases which led to their apartments.

His heart sickened at the sight. He rested against the wall in a pause of despair. He was on the point of springing into the court to make a desperate effort at escape or die in the attempt when he perceived, by the increasing light which fell across the vault, a massy¹⁰ door in the wall. He ran towards it and endeavoured to open it; it was fastened by a lock and several bolts. He struck against it with his foot, and the hollow sound which was returned convinced him that there were vaults beyond. By the direction of these vaults, he was certain that they must extend to the outer walls of the castle. If he could gain these vaults and penetrate beyond them in the darkness of the ensuing night, it would be easy to leap the wall and cross the ditch.

But it was impossible to cut away the lock before the return of his guard, who regularly visited the cell soon after the dawn of day. After some consideration, therefore, he determined to secrete himself in a dark part of the vault and there await the entrance of the guard, who on observing the deranged bars of the grate would conclude that he had escaped through the aperture.

He had scarcely placed himself according to his plan when he heard the door of the dungeon unbolted. This was instantly followed by a loud voice, which sounded down the opening. "Alleyn" was shouted in a tone of fright and consternation. After repeating the call, a man jumped into the vault. Alleyn, though himself concealed

10. Massive.

in darkness, could perceive, by the faint light which fell upon the spot, a soldier with a drawn sword in his hand.

With execrations the soldier approached the grate, examined it, and proceeded to the door. It was fast; he returned to the grate and then proceeded along the walls, tracing them with the point of his sword. He at length approached the spot where Alleyn was concealed, who felt the sword strike upon his arm. Instantly grasping the hand which held it, the weapon fell to the ground. A short scuffle ensued.

Alleyn threw down his adversary and, standing over him, seized the sword and presented it to his breast; the soldier called for mercy. Alleyn, always unwilling to take the life of another, considered that if the soldier was slain, his comrades would certainly follow to the vault.

He returned his sword to the soldier. "Take your life," said he. "Your death can avail me nothing; take it, and if you can, go tell Malcolm that an innocent man has endeavoured to escape destruction."

The guard, struck with his conduct, arose from the ground in silence. He received his sword and followed Alleyn to the trapdoor. They returned into the dungeon, where Alleyn was once more left alone.

The soldier, undetermined how to act, went to find his comrades. On the way he met Malcolm, who, ever restless and vigilant, frequently walked the ramparts at an early hour. Malcolm enquired if all was well. The soldier, fearful of discovery and unaccustomed to dissemble, hesitated at the question. The stern air assumed by Malcolm compelled him to relate what had happened.

The baron, with much harshness, reprobated¹¹ his neglect, and immediately followed him to the dungeon, where he loaded Alleyn with insult. He examined the cell and descended into the vault. Returning to the dungeon, he stood by while a chain, which had been fetched from a distant part of the castle, was fixed into the wall. To this Alleyn was fastened.

“We will not long confine you thus,” said Malcolm as he quitted the cell. “A few days shall restore you to the liberty you are so fond of. As a conqueror ought to have spectators of his triumph, you must wait till a number is collected sufficient to witness the death of so great an hero.”

“I disdain your insults,” returned Alleyn, “and am equally able to support misfortune and to despise a tyrant.”

Enraged at the boldness of his prisoner, Malcolm retired, uttering menaces on the carelessness of the guard, who vainly endeavoured to justify himself.

“His safety be upon your head,” said the baron.

The soldier was shocked, and turned away in sullen silence. Dread of his prisoner’s effecting an escape now seized his mind. The words of Malcolm filled him with resentment, while gratitude towards Alleyn for the life he had spared operated with these sentiments. He hesitated whether he should obey the baron, or deliver Alleyn and fly his oppressor.

At noon, the soldier carried the prisoner his customary

11. Condemned.

food. Alleyn was not so lost in misery but that he observed the gloom which hung upon the soldier's features. His heart foreboded impending evil; the soldier bore on his tongue the sentence of death. He told Alleyn that the baron had appointed the following day for his execution and his people were ordered to attend.

Death, however long contemplated, must be dreadful when it arrives. This news was no more than what Alleyn had expected, and what he had brought his mind to gaze on without terror. But his fortitude now sank before its immediate presence, and every nerve of his frame thrilled with agony.

"Be comforted," said the soldier in a tone of pity. "I, too, am no stranger to misery, and if you are willing to risk the danger of double torture, I will attempt to release both you and myself from the hands of a tyrant."

At these words, Alleyn started from the ground in a transport of delightful wonder. "Tell me not of torture," cried he. "All tortures are equal if death is the end, and from death I may now escape. Lead me but beyond these walls, and the small possessions I have shall be yours forever."

"I want them not," replied the generous soldier. "It is enough for me that I save a fellow creature from destruction."

These words overpowered the heart of Alleyn, and tears of gratitude swelled in his eyes.

Edric, the soldier, told him that the door he had seen in the vault below opened into a chain of vaults which stretched beyond the wall of the castle and communicated with a subterraneous way. Anciently formed as a

retreat from the fortress, the passage terminated in the cavern of a forest at some distance. If this door could be opened, their escape was almost certain.

They consulted on the measures necessary to be taken. The soldier gave Alleyn a knife larger than the one he had and directed him to cut round the lock, which was all that withheld their passage. Edric's office of sentinel was propitious to their scheme, and it was agreed that at midnight they should descend the vaults.

Edric, after having unfastened the chain, left the cell, and Alleyn set himself again to remove the pavement, which had been already replaced by order of the baron. The near prospect of deliverance now gladdened his spirits. His knife was better formed for his purpose, and he worked with alacrity and ease. He arrived at the trap-door, and once more leaped into the vault. He applied himself to the lock of the door, which was extremely thick, and it was with difficulty he separated them. With trembling hands he undrew the bolts, unclosed the door, and discovered¹² to him the vaults.

It was evening when he finished his work. He was but just returned to the dungeon and had thrown himself on the ground to rest when the sound of a distant step caught his ear; he listened to its advance with trembling eagerness. At length the door was unbolted.

Alleyn, breathless with expectation, started up, and beheld not his soldier but another. He feared the opening was again discovered, and all was now over. The soldier

12. Exposed.

brought a pitcher of water, and casting round the place a look of sullen scrutiny, departed in silence.

The stretch of human endurance was now exceeded, and Alleyn sank down in a state of torpidity. On recovering, he found himself again enveloped in the horrors of darkness, silence, and despair. Yet amid all his sufferings, he disdained to doubt the integrity of his soldier. We naturally recoil from painful sensations, and it is one of the most exquisite tortures of a noble mind to doubt the sincerity of those in whom it has confided. Alleyn concluded that the conversation of the morning had been overheard, and that this guard had been sent to examine the cell and to watch his movements. He believed that Edric was now, by his own generosity, involved in destruction, and in the energy of this thought he forgot for a moment his own situation.

Midnight came, but Edric did not appear. Alleyn's doubts were now confirmed into certainty, and he resigned himself to the horrid tranquillity of mute despair. He heard from a distance the clock of the castle strike one. It seemed to sound the knell of death. It roused his benumbed senses, and he rose from the ground in an agony of acutest recollection. Suddenly he heard the steps of two persons advancing down the avenue. He started, and listened. Malcolm and murder arose to his mind; he doubted not that the soldier had reported what he had seen in the evening, and that the persons whom he now heard were coming to execute the final orders of the baron.

They now drew near the dungeon, when suddenly he remembered the door in the vault. His senses had been

so stunned by the appearance of the stranger, and his mind so occupied with a feeling of despair, as to exclude every idea of escape. In the energy of his sufferings he had forgot this last resource. It now flashed like lightning upon his mind. He sprang to the trapdoor, and his feet had scarcely touched the bottom of the vault when he heard the bolts of the dungeon undraw. He had just reached the entrance of the inner vault when a voice sounded from above.

He paused, and knew it to be Edric's. Apprehension so entirely possessed his mind that he hesitated whether he should discover himself. But a moment of recollection dissipated every ignoble suspicion of Edric's fidelity, and he answered the call.

Immediately Edric descended, followed by the soldier whose former appearance had filled Alleyn with despair. Edric now introduced him as his faithful friend and comrade, who like himself was weary of the oppression of Malcolm, and who had resolved to fly with them and escape his rigour.

This was a moment of happiness too great for thought! Alleyn, in the confusion of his joy and in his impatience to seize the moment of deliverance, scarcely heard the words of Edric. Edric returned to fasten the door of the dungeon to delay pursuit. After giving Alleyn a sword which he had brought for him, Edric led the way through the vaults.

The profound silence of the place was interrupted only by the echoes of their footsteps, which ran through the dreary chasms in confused whisperings and filled their imaginations with terror. In traversing these gloomy and

desolate recesses they often paused to listen, and often did their fears give them the distant sounds of pursuit. On quitting the vaults, they entered a winding avenue of considerable length, from whence branched several passages into the rock. It was closed by a low and narrow door, which opened upon a flight of steps that led to the subterraneous way under the ditch of the castle.

Edric knew the intricacies of the place; they entered, and after closing the door had begun to descend when the lamp which Edric carried in his hand was blown out by the current of the wind, and they were left in total darkness. Their feelings may be more easily imagined than described; they had, however, no way but to proceed and grope with cautious steps the dark abyss. Having continued to descend for some time, their feet reached the bottom, and they found themselves once more on even ground. But Edric knew they had yet another flight to encounter before they could gain the subterraneous passage under the fosse,¹³ and for which it required their utmost caution to search.

They were proceeding with slow and wary steps when the foot of Alleyn stumbled upon something which clattered like broken armour. Endeavouring to throw it from him, he felt the weight resist his effort. He stooped to discover what it was, and found in his grasp the cold hand of a dead person.

Every nerve thrilled with horror at the touch, and he started back in an agony of terror. They remained for some time in silent dismay, unable to return, yet fearful

13. Moat.

to proceed, when a faint light which seemed to issue from the bottom of the last descent gleamed upon the walls, and discovered to them the second staircase, and at their feet the pale and disfigured corpse of a man in armour. At a distance they could distinguish the figures of men.

At this sight their hearts died within them, and they gave themselves up for lost. They doubted not but the men whom they saw were the murderers; that they belonged to the baron and were in search of some fugitives from the castle. Their only chance of concealment was to remain where they were, but the light appeared to advance and the faces of the men to turn towards them.

Winged with terror, they sought the first ascent. Flying up the steps, they reached the door, which they endeavoured to open that they might hide themselves from pursuit among the intricacies of the rock. Their efforts, however, were vain, for the door was fastened by a spring lock, and the key was on the other side. Compelled to give breath to their fears, they ventured to look back and found themselves again in total darkness. They paused upon the steps, listening; all was silent.

They rested here a considerable time. No footsteps startled them, no ray of light darted through the gloom. Everything seemed hushed in the silence of death. They resolved once more to venture forward. They gained again the bottom of the first descent. Shuddering as they approached the spot where they knew the corpse was laid, they groped to avoid its horrid touch. Suddenly the light again appeared, and in the same place where they had first seen it. They stood petrified with despair. The

light, however, moved slowly onward, and disappeared in the windings of the avenue.

After remaining a long time in silent suspense and finding no further obstacle, they ventured to proceed. The light had discovered to them their situation and the staircase, and they now moved with greater certainty. They reached the bottom in safety, and without any fearful interruption. They listened, and again the silence of the place was undisturbed.

Edric knew they were now under the fosse. Their way was plain before them, and their hopes were renewed in the belief that the light and the people they had seen had taken a different direction. Edric knew there were various passages branching from the main avenue which led to different openings in the rock. They now stepped on with alacrity. The prospect of deliverance was near, for Edric judged they were now not far from the cavern.

An abrupt turning in the passage confirmed at once this supposition, and extinguished the hope which had attended it; for the light of a lamp burst suddenly upon them and exhibited to their sickening eyes the figures of four men in an attitude of menace, with their swords pointed ready to receive them.

Alleyn drew his sword, and advanced. "We will die hardly," cried he.

At the sound of his voice, the weapons instantly dropped from the hands of his adversaries, and they advanced to meet him in a transport of joy. With astonishment Alleyn recognized in the faces of the three strangers his faithful friends and followers, and Edric in that of the fourth, a fellow soldier. The same purpose

had assembled them all in the same spot. They quitted the cave together, and Alleyn, in the joyful experience of unexpected deliverance, resolved never more to admit despair. They concluded that the body which they had passed in the avenue was that of some person who had perished either by hunger or by the sword in those subterranean labyrinths.

They marched in company till they came within a few miles of the castle of Athlin, when Alleyn made known his design of collecting his friends and joining the clan in an attempt to release the earl. Edric and the other soldier solemnly enlisted in the cause. They parted, Alleyn and Edric pursuing the road to the castle, and the others striking off to a different part of the country. Alleyn and Edric had not proceeded far when the groans of the wounded servants of Matilda drew them into the wood, in which the preceding dreadful scene had been acted.

The surprise of Alleyn was extreme when he discovered the servants of the earl in this situation, but surprise soon yielded to a more poignant sensation when he heard that Mary had been carried off by armed men. He scarcely waited to release the servants before seizing one of their horses which was grazing near. Instantly he mounted, ordering the rest to follow, and took the way which had been pointed as the course of the ravishers.

Fortunately it was the right direction, and Alleyn and the soldier came up with them as they were hastening to the mouth of that cavern whose frightful aspect had chilled the heart of Mary with a temporary death. The abductors' endeavours to fly were vain; they were overtaken at the entrance. A sharp conflict ensued in which

one of the ruffians was wounded and fled. His comrades, seeing the servants of the earl approaching, relinquished their prize and escaped through the recesses of the cave. The eyes of Alleyn were now fixed in horror on the lifeless form of Mary, who had remained insensible during the whole of the affray.¹⁴ He was exerting every effort for her recovery when she unclosed her eyes, and joy once more illumined his soul.

During the recital of these particulars, which Alleyn delivered with a modest brevity to Mary and her mother, the mind of Mary had suffered a variety of emotions sympathetic to all the vicissitudes of his situation. She endeavoured to conceal from herself the particular interest she felt in his adventures, but so unequal were her efforts to the strength of her emotions, that when Alleyn related the scene of Dunbayne cavern, her cheek grew pale and she relapsed into a fainting fit. This circumstance alarmed the countess, but the known weakness of her daughter's frame appeared a probable cause of the disorder and repressed her first apprehension. It gave to Alleyn a mixed delight of hope and fear, such as he had never known before. For the first time he dared to acknowledge to his own heart that he loved, and that heart for the first time thrilled with the hope of being loved in turn.

He received from the countess the warm overflowings of a heart grateful for the preservation of her child, and from Mary a blush which spoke more than her tongue could utter. But the minds of all were involved in the

14. Brawl.

utmost perplexity concerning the rank and the identity of the author of the plan, nor could they discover any clue which would lead them through this intricate maze of wonder to the villain who had fabricated so diabolical a scheme. Their suspicions, at length, rested upon the Baron Malcolm, and this supposition was confirmed by the appearance of the horsemen, who evidently acted only as the agents of superior power.

Their conjectures were indeed just. Malcolm was the author of the scheme. It had been planned, and he had given orders to his people to execute it long before the earl fell into his hands. They had, however, found no opportunity of accomplishing the design when the castle was surprised, and in the consequent tumult of his mind, the baron had forgot to withdraw his orders.

Alleyn expressed his design of collecting the small remnant of his friends and uniting with the clan in attempting the rescue of the earl.

“Noble youth,” exclaimed the countess, unable longer to repress her admiration, “how can I ever repay your generous services! Am I then to receive both my children at your hands? Go—my clan are now collecting for a second attempt upon the walls of Dunbayne—go! Lead them to conquest, and restore to me my son.”

The languid eyes of Mary rekindled at these words. She glowed with the hope of clasping once more to her bosom her long-lost brother. But the suffusions of hope were soon chased by the chilly touch of fear, for it was Alleyn who was to lead the enterprise, and it was Alleyn who might fall in the attempt.

These contrary emotions unveiled to her at once the

state of her affections, and she saw in the eye of fancy the long train of inquietudes and sorrows which were likely to ensue. She sought to obliterate from her mind every remembrance of the past, and of the fatal knowledge which was now disclosed. But she sought in vain, for the monitor in her breast constantly presented to her mind the image of Alleyn, adorned with those brave and manly virtues which had so eminently distinguished his conduct. The insignificance of the peasant was lost in the nobility of the character, and every effort at forgetfulness was baffled.

Alleyn passed that night at the castle, and the next morning, after taking leave of the countess and her daughter, to whom his eyes bade a respectful and mournful adieu, he departed with Edric for his father's cottage, impatient to acquaint the good old man with his safety, and to rouse to arms his slumbering friends. The breath of love had now raised into flame those sparks of ambition which had so long been kindling in his breast. He was not only eager to avenge the cause of injured virtue, and to rescue from misery and death the son of the chief whom he had been ever taught to reverence, but he panted to avenge the insult offered to his mistress, and to achieve some deed of valour worthy her admiration and her thanks.

Alleyn found his father at breakfast, with his niece at his side. His face was darkened with sorrow, and he did not perceive Alleyn when he entered. The joy of the old man almost overcame him when he beheld his son in safety, for he was the solace of his declining years; and Edric was welcomed with the heartiness of an old friend.