

THE BISHOP'S LEAP. •

A. D. 1567.

THE Earl of Bothwell, who had been created Duke of Orkney at his marriage with Queen Mary, after his flight

* Napier's Memoirs of Napier of Merchiston ; History of the Douglasses ; Edmonstone's View of the Ancient and Present State of the Zetland Isles ; Peterkin's Notes on Orkney and Zetland.

from Carberry Hill, where she surrendered herself into the hands of her insurgent nobility, betook himself, overwhelmed with shame and remorse, in the direction of his castle of Dunbar. He stood for a moment gazing at its massive towers, but he saw it was no place of security for one so odious as himself, and he instantly started northward to seek a refuge among the islands from which he derived his new ducal title. He was Lord High Admiral of Scotland, and he contrived to fit out and arm some light piratical vessels of great fleetness, admirably adapted to the dangers of those narrow and intricate seas. He first attempted to seize and fortify himself in the castle of Kirkwall, but he was frustrated by the vigilance of the constable who commanded it, and who probably had received instructions from Adam Bothwell, Bishop of Orkney, as that prelate, although he had celebrated the marriage between the Earl and the Queen, was now the mortal enemy of the former, and anxious for his apprehension.

The persons to whom the Earl of Moray entrusted an expedition to seize the Earl, who was now at the head of a band of pirates in the Orkneys, were Sir William Murray of Tullibardine, and Sir William Kirkaldy of Grange, the daring characters of whom marked them as fit for such an enterprise. The rejection by the Earl of their challenge at Carberry Hill to fight, because they were not his equals in rank, had left them a personal insult to revenge, and they were accordingly associated together in this difficult and dangerous undertaking. On the 19th of August 1567, their armament was complete, and they sailed from the Orkneys accompanied by Bishop Adam Bothwell. But the guilty Duke of Orkney, as the Earl of Bothwell was now called, was destined for a different and even a more wretched fate than to die on his own deck.

The pursuers, with five ships heavily armed, and having on board four hundred soldiers, soon reached the Orkneys,

whence they were directed by one Gilbert Balfour to Shetland for the object of their search. It was not long before they descried two vessels cruising off the east coast of Shetland, well known for its fearful whirlpools, currents, and tides. These were vessels belonging to the Duke of Orkney, manned by desperate seamen on the look-out. Sir William Kirkaldy, who commanded the Unicorn, the swiftest of the Government ships, shot a-head, and approached Bressa Sound, through which the pirates steered. The pursuers pressed onwards, and the utmost exertions were made by the crew of the Unicorn to gain their object. The chase was so close that when Kirkaldy came in by the south of the Sound, the pirates escaped by the north passage. Continuing the pursuit northward, the military baron, whose vessel contained the Bishop of Orkney, strained every nerve in vain. The pirates were familiar with these narrow and dangerous seas. They knew well how lightly their swift vessels could dash through the boiling eddies which disclosed sunken rocks, and they saw at once the certain fate of the unwieldy ships of their pursuers if they dared to follow them. Steering upon breakers, although their keel grazed the rocks, the pirates carried their vessel through the foam, and soon found themselves in a safe sea.

Kirkaldy, in defiance of the remonstrances of his experienced sailors, ordered every sail to be set to impel his vessel in the very same dangerous track. He rushed on the breakers, and in an instant the Unicorn was a wreck. There was only time to secure a boat, and save the ship's crew and the soldiers. But there was still one person, heavily armed, who clung to the wreck, and it appeared almost impossible to save him from inevitable destruction. His cries were disregarded, and another moment of delay would have terminated his existence, when by a desperate effort he sprung into the already crowded boat, causing it to

reel with his additional weight. The leap, encumbered as this person was with a corslet of proof, was considered almost miraculous. "Who would have surmised," says a writer, "that this athletic man-at-arms, the last to quit the wreck, was a *bishop*—the Bishop who had so lately joined the hand of him he pursued with that of Queen Mary—the very Bishop who a month before had poured the holy oil on the infant head of James VI., and stood proxy for the extorted abdication of that monarch's mother! He was Adam Bothwell, Bishop of Orkney. The rock from which he leapt can be seen at low water, and is called the *Unicorn* to this day."
