

CHAPTER XI.

An ancient house, and a noble name,
 An honest heart, and a spotless fame,
 By the viper's sting, and the demon of play,
 Shall be blighted, and lost for ever and aye.
Old Prophecy.



R WILLIAM BLACKBURN, the gentleman to whose safe keeping I entrusted the documents in which you appear so deeply interested, was descended from the Blackburns of Cairnielee, an ancient Scottish family of considerable note. His father had died while he was yet a minor, leaving him heir to an ample fortune and a goodly estate, from which the family derived their title.

“After the death of his father, young Blackburn had been sent by his guardians to pursue his studies in France, where he arrived a few years previous to the Scottish Rebellion of 1745, and where he was introduced to Prince Charles Stuart before the latter embarked in his daring, though unsuccessful, attempt on the British crown. At the same college in Paris at which Blackburn studied were several young men, descendants of Scottish families who had been expatriated for their share in the rising of 1715, and he thus became acquainted and lived on terms of intimacy with many of those bold spirits who accompanied Charles to Scotland on a similar expedition with

that which had cost their forefathers their estates. Being naturally of a generous disposition and warm temperament, and knowing that his own father had been secretly disposed to forward the views and favour the pretensions of James in the former rebellion, Blackburn, at an early period of his residence in France, became a zealous advocate of the claims of the Stuarts to the throne of Britain ; and he would assuredly have been one of the gallant but ill-fated band who rallied around and accompanied to this country the representative of that family, had it not been that those to whose charge he had been committed had taken precautions to prevent him from following out his wishes.

“It was thus with feelings of regret on his own account personally, mingled with those of secret satisfaction at the apparently brightening fortunes of Charles, that young Blackburn beheld him whom he looked on as his lawful Prince, set out on his romantic adventure ; and when, after experiencing much privation, suffering, and danger, Charles returned to France, accompanied by a few faithful and devoted friends, who had equally shared in the glory of his achievements and the miseries of his reverses, the loyal Blackburn only attached himself the more closely to the Prince the more adversity frowned on him—to that Prince, for whom he would willingly have laid down his life, and at whose feet he now offered to lay his fortune. Thus, during the remainder of his stay in France, he was at once the friend and companion both of the Prince and his affectionate followers, with whom, after his return to Scotland, he kept up a close, though necessarily a secret and guarded correspondence.

“In this way Blackburn had been of good service to the Roman Catholic Church, then in a very poor condition, especially in Scotland ; and he was one of the chief channels through which her necessities were relieved, being the recipient of a large portion of the pecuniary contributions from the continent. A Roman Catholic himself, he was of course anxious to see his mother church restored to her ancient dignity and independence, although, by his manly and open avowal of his principles, he frequently subjected himself to the suspicion of the ruling powers, and exposed himself to the sectarian sneers of his otherwise kind and honest country neighbours. Shortly after his arrival at home, Mr Blackburn had married an amiable and accomplished Scottish lady, of good family, though small fortune,

and felt so happy in her society, that he retired almost altogether from public life into the quiet seclusion of domestic felicity. He was thus enabled to look with calm indifference on the smiles and frowns of those whose prejudices he pitied, whose exclusive sectarianism he despised, and he allowed no out-door excitement to interrupt the quiet of his peaceful home, no party storm to ruffle the current of a life which glided as smoothly along as the calm and pellucid stream that flowed past his own paternal tower of Cairnielee.

“This, the residence and mansion-house of Mr Blackburn, was situated almost in the centre of his estate, and close to the banks of a stream, which, after meandering for miles through a level moorland strath, empties itself into the Clyde at a little distance from the ancient town of Lanark. Along the banks of this tributary of the beautiful river just named, the scenery is, for a considerable way, very bare and monotonous, consisting of one vast tract of heather, extending in every direction as far as the eye can reach, and only broken here and there by a few patches of stunted grass, affording but scanty fare to a few straggling sheep thinly scattered over its barren surface. For some distance before it joins the Clyde, the stream runs through a dell or glen, crowded with picturesque objects, the whole scenery around becoming all at once singularly romantic and beautiful. Bold projecting precipices and dark ravines are relieved by sparkling waterfalls, thickly overhung with the hazel, the birch, and other indigenous trees and bushes. Green knolls and grassy holmes, in quiet and sequestered recesses, come unexpectedly on the eye at every bend of the stream, their rich verdure being cropped by the lazy cattle revelling in their luxuriance, or pressed by the no less lazy herd extended at full length in dreamy listlessness; while ever and anon beautiful vistas burst on the sight, consisting of small portions of sky and earth, of wood and water, all blended together by distance, or concentrated by the deep and shadowy frame-work in which they are placed.

“On a promontory which forms a connecting point between the pastoral and romantic scenery adjoining the stream, rose the tower of Cairnielee, a building in structure something between a peel tower and a small turreted castle. On the side which overhung the river, the tall mass of building seemed but a continuation of the perpendicular rock on which it stood, an

impression strengthened by the circumstance of both being of the same gray colour. The opposite side of the tower again rose up from a smooth green grass bank, in combination with which it formed an object at once picturesque and striking. The eminence on which the house stood being almost surrounded by the stream, was approached by a bridge thrown across a chasm, through which the waters flowed freely afar down, but at the top of which the cleft rocks on either side leant towards each other until they almost met. Immediately beneath the bridge, the stream made a giant leap, and poured its whole torrent, crowned with foam, and boiling with convulsive agitation, into a beautiful natural basin hollowed out by the action of the water. The other side of the eminence sloped gently down to the river's edge, and in midsummer the cattle were here to be seen knee-deep in the water feasting on the rich green herbage with which its margin was thickly fringed.

“The whole scene generally was of a sylvan and picturesque character, and in detail exhibited a series of objects well calculated to delight the eye and excite the fancy. Here the wild flowers of the country seemed to assume a brighter beauty; the azure of the blue-bell a deeper hue, the bloom of the rose, the thistle, and the foxglove a richer tint, the scent of the briar and hawthorn a more delicious fragrance. Here also the very hum of the bee seemed more musical than elsewhere, while the full-throated birds fluttered their wings with joy, and flooded the air with melody. The breeze played murmuringly on the bosom of the stream, making sweet music among the little wavelets as they rippled over the smooth and glistening pebbles, or boomed with a deep noise in the hollows beneath the ancient green moss-covered stones that were rounded away by the very water which kindly clothed them with their velvet covering. Here and there small light willow-trees shook their pale green locks, or threw their shadows over the glassy stream, now dancing in light, now half-buried in shadowy obscurity. Here, in short, all the more marked peculiarities and leading features of Scottish scenery seemed to be assembled, forming, as it were, an epitome of its most beautiful physical characteristics. The beauty of this elysium was heightened by the contrast with the bare and sterile country in the immediate vicinity; and but for the stern and warlike aspect of the tower of Cairnielee, with its small windows, its arched apartments, its huge fire-places, its

thick walls, its small loop-holes, the place altogether would have seemed a fitting retreat for the gentle spirits of peace and love.

“The antique building just alluded to, which bore evident marks of rough usage, had been built in the fourteenth century, and still looked as if it would defy the elements for a couple of hundred years to come. The upper portion, which was occupied as a dwelling-house by Mr Blackburn, had been somewhat modernised by being covered with a very steep roof, but the whole was kept in excellent repair. The greatest care was taken to preserve the old steep embrasured walls; and workmen were frequently employed at considerable expense, and apparent risk of life, in repairing or replacing old stones, which either had fallen, or threatened to fall, from the building. Care was also taken to keep up and mark out the boundaries of the ancient garden, which rose in the centre of the knoll behind the house, and the ascent to which was by a flight of old green mouldy steps, whose broad projections and bold mouldings indicated the previous existence of terraces in the French style of landscape gardening. Two very old and large yew trees, which had been planted some centuries before to furnish bows to the archers of the castle, still grew and flourished close by the old tower. These trees were highly prized as remnants of the olden time, and were preserved with pious care by their enthusiastic owner, whose whole income was expended in keeping his house in order, improving his estate, making his tenantry happy, and administering to the wants of the poor around him. He held, he said, his estate and fortune but in trust, and that for others as well as himself, and maintained that those who cultivated the soil were entitled to a comfortable living as the reward of their labours. Thus the blessing of the poor came upon him; and in Scotland there were few landed proprietors so happy or so respected as Mr Blackburn, the father of Feckless Phemie, at the time when, by the advice of my excellent friend and patron the bishop, I sought and found shelter under his hospitable roof.

“At that period Mr Blackburn, who was then in middle life, was a widower, and Phemie was his only child. She was about five years of age, and was the most perfect specimen of infantine beauty I had ever seen. Her eyes were of that deep blue colour, alike expressive either in joy or woe; her form was

slender, but elastic and buoyant, and a glow of colour overspread her countenance, the effect of which was heightened by the waving golden ringlets which floated around her head and neck in great profusion, while her brilliant blue eyes, glancing brightly beneath her finely-arched eyebrows, lighted every heart with love and joy. Even at that early age she exhibited a liveliness of apprehension, a fixedness of purpose, and a comprehensiveness of thought, not often found even in riper years; while an anxiety to alleviate the sufferings, or increase the comforts of those around her, was manifested in her every word and deed. Not an old person, not a child on her father's estate, but had some tale to tell illustrative of the kindness of the beautiful and gentle Phemie. Her talents, generally, were of a high order, but her genius for music was truly wonderful. She sung the native melodies, which she picked up in the cottages of the peasantry, with the most delicious freshness of feeling; and I never listened with such rapture to any strain as to the first wild notes I heard warbled by this unsophisticated child of Nature.

“Much struck with these indications of her genius, I volunteered my services to give her a few lessons in music, and much did she astonish me by the rapidity with which she mastered even the most complicated airs. Her father was so delighted with her progress under my tuition, that he made me an offer of a cottage and a yearly salary to become musical preceptor to his daughter. My wife and child were both delicate, and I was easily induced, having my friend the bishop's entire approbation of the step, to accept the offer made me by our kind host and benefactor. Ah! what a pleasing task was mine, what a world of delight did it afford me to communicate the musical knowledge I possessed to so apt a scholar, so charming a pupil! She seemed to have an intuitive perception of melody, while her exquisite voice, and the intensity of feeling which she threw into her songs, made her singing exceedingly effective. She also loved to wander alone by the woods and the streams, and always brought home some little posie of wild flowers, which she carefully nursed and watered while they lived; and when they began to fade and wane away, beautiful and touching were the little elegiac strains she sung or improvised over them. My little cottage stood at the end of the bridge formerly alluded to, and thither, at early morn, would

she come bounding, to hum over an air, or to solicit a lesson. Then would we wander together over the grassy meadow, by the murmuring stream, thence through the shady wood, or adown the echoing dell. Anon would she pluck a blue-bell, a wild rose, or a water-lily, and come running to plant them in my breast, or weave them among my hair. Then would she pat me on the cheek, clasp me round the neck, and hum over some little song; then would she run away, and laying her ear to the ground, hold up her little hands as if enraptured by some strain she heard; and now would she chant me a melody which she said the gliding stream had been singing to the water-lily, or the bee humming to the wild-flower. Words also came with the melodies; and she was almost continually pouring forth such chants as the following:—

“ Shaded in green bowers,
 Small birds are singing;
 Water-nursed wild-flowers
 Gently are springing.
 Bright rays of sunshine
 Sweetly are beaming,
 Over the ocean brine
 Flashing and streaming.
 All Nature's
 Twin features
 Mingling and blending;
 Birds singing,
 Flowers springing,
 All are ascending.

“ The enthusiasm and rapid progress of my pupil had such an effect on me, that I could think of nothing else, but how I best might discharge efficiently the important trust committed to my charge, and evince the gratitude I felt for the benefits her father had so kindly conferred on me. I therefore applied myself with renewed diligence to my musical studies. Through the kindness of Mr Blackburn, I was furnished with a complete set of the works of the great masters, and my days and nights were fully occupied and divided between instructing my pupil, and being myself instructed. In this way both pupil and teacher improved rapidly, and ere my charge had reached the

age of twelve years, she was one of the best trained and most thoroughly practised home-bred musicians to be met with in the country. This perfection in musical knowledge and skill was not sought by her for the purpose of being shown off as a wonder to the world, but from a pure love for the art, and a desire to contribute to her father's happiness. To him she was most devotedly attached, and the attachment was mutual. She would warble to him the touching air now known by the name of the 'Flowers of the Forest,' to which he would listen, gazing on her fair and expressive countenance the while, till the tears ran over his cheeks. Anon she would play him some little lively air, which she knew to be allied in his mind with some happy associations, till the lurking laugh crept over his face, and his whole frame became animated with merriment. At nightfall she would wander with him to the woods, and seating him beneath the dewy leaves of a young tree, would warble 'wood notes wild' that rivalled the mellifluous notes of the mavis which sung overhead. Then would she bound away into the thicket, shifting her place, and chanting her melodies, now like a spirit, now like an echo, pursued by her father on the one side, and by me on the other, till being hedged between us, she would leap forward, clasp her father round the knees, look up in his face, and chant some such verses as—

“ Merry as the little lark
On the jocund morrow,
Seeks the light and shuns the dark,
Shutting out dull sorrow ;
Let all hearts go forth a Maying,
When the little lambs are straying,
From the breeze so sweetly playing,
One bright measure borrow ;
Mirth, and glee, and harmony,
Drown the notes of sorrow !

“ As the young steed, full of glee,
O'er the meadows bounding ;
So should Nature's children be,
Flowers their path surrounding.
Listen, listen, gently stealing,
Birds and streams are now revealing

“ All their floods of joyous feeling ;
 Hark ! their music sounding ;
 Mirth, and glee, and harmony,
 Heal cold sorrow's wounding !

“ Having thus sung, she would steal a kiss from her father and run away, again repeating some similar serenade. She wandered also much alone at night, even at that early age ; and not unfrequently when I was engaged in telling my beads, or chanting my Ave Maria, accompanied by my wife and child, would the voice of Phemie suddenly stream in through the little window of my cottage, warbling some extempore effusion, that seemed more expressive and appropriate than the regularly-conned hymn we had ourselves been singing. One specimen may suffice—



COVERED by dewy leaves,
 Fond hearts are sleeping ;
 Couch'd under cottage eaves,
 Lone eyes are weeping ;
 Take every breast that heaves,
 Lord, in Thy keeping !

“ Let no vain strife or war
 Ever divide us ;
 Send forth Thy truth afar,
 Dwell still beside us ;
 Let Thy love-lighted star
 Lead us and guide us !

“ So shall all Nature fall
 Prostrate before Thee,
 And all Thy children shall
 Love and adore Thee,
 Father and Lord of all—
 Sovereign of Glory !

“ Long before Miss Blackburn had reached the years of womanhood, she had made such progress, not only in music,

but in other branches of education, that all who had an opportunity of meeting her were captivated by her manners and conversation. The general homeliness of those around her also tended to heighten, by contrast, her elegant and feminine attractions; and the wonder of those to whom she exhibited proofs of her attainments was increased, when they learned that she had acquired them in so remote a locality. Nature had done for her what art can never accomplish: her fine taste and acute discernment being apparent in her manner and conversation, and, like the bonny lassie of Burns, she seemed unequalled—

“ ‘Nature had made her what she was,
And never made anither.’

“ While Miss Blackburn was thus in mind a glorious impersonation of perfect Nature, her person and external appearance were no less complete and beautiful. Her figure was tall, graceful, and slender; and since she had grown up her step had become more sedate and stately, and her manner more timid and retiring. Her complexion, also, had waxed more pale, and thus given her rather a delicate than a blooming appearance. She dressed in the simplest manner, and at all times preferred the homely garb of a cottage maiden to the silken drapery of the drawing-room lady. She was accordingly on the most familiar terms with all the poor around her, and they in return looked up to her with a feeling little short of adoration. Gentle, kind, and patient was she with them all; in many instances abridging her own personal comforts to relieve their necessities, and frequently dividing amongst the most needy the money which had been given her by her father to purchase some article of dress; and when gently remonstrated with by him for carrying her benevolence to such an extreme, she would clasp him round the neck, saying, ‘My dear father, you cannot chide me for following your own example. You yourself love to relieve the wants of the poor; and I know you are better pleased to see a poor widow made happy, than to see your daughter encumbered by some superfluous ornament or piece of dress, for which she has no immediate use.’ Wherever there was distress, privation, suffering, or death in the neighbourhood, there was she to be found, cheering the drooping spirits of the weary, or pouring balm on the wounds

of the broken-hearted. On festive occasions, too, she was to be seen the gayest of the gay, the liveliest of the lively; and she made it a point to be present at all merry-meetings among the poorer classes in her vicinity. If a cottager had a daughter married, Miss Phemie gave away the bride, and generally presented her with some memorial in the shape perhaps of a piece of dress, wrought by her own fair hands. In the winter season Miss Phemie was invited to all the friendly and social meetings of the peasantry, and attended them all, setting her young friends an example of light-hearted gaiety. While the young ploughman roared his somewhat rough but honest stave, or the farmer's daughter lilted her pastoral song, Miss Phemie was never behind, but always wound up their early evening parties with one of her light fanciful breathings, thus adding to their cheerfulness, and endearing herself to young and old.

"The personal beauty, amiable manners, and numerous accomplishments of Miss Blackburn, were alone sufficient to bring a host of admirers around her, even although she had been entirely without fortune; but being besides the heiress of a handsome estate, it might have been inferred that the number who sought to win her good graces would have been proportionably increased. A variety of circumstances, however, combined to protect her from much of this kind of importunity. In the first place, her father, as he advanced in years, got so much attached to his daughter, that he could not suffer her to be out of his sight for a moment. She had now become his constant companion, accompanying him at all times in his walks, and sharing in all his other recreations and amusements: When fretful, she soothed him; when unwell, she nursed him; and although the old man was often irritable, as old people will frequently be, she devoted herself with untiring and uncomplaining assiduity to the promotion of his happiness and comfort. The task of pleasing him was a labour of love, and it brought along with it its own pure and heartfelt reward. Another consideration there was, that deterred the young lairds around from paying their addresses to Phemie,—this was, the old man's well-known pride of birth and family, which he took no pains to conceal; and as they could lay no claim to any but plebeian connections, they dared entertain no hope of being allowed to approach the object of their admiration in the capacity of lovers.

“While all was thus sunshine and joy in Cairnielee, the father and daughter happy in the society of each other, and their poor neighbours around happy in the enjoyment of their benevolence and kindness, a young gentleman arrived one day from France, with an introduction from one of Mr Blackburn’s old friends there. He was of course kindly received; and as he was the first person from that quarter who had come to Cairnielee, the old gentleman was proud of the visit, and celebrated the event by an entertainment, to which he invited all his friends and neighbours. Henri Champfleur, for that was the stranger’s name, was a youth of gallant bearing; and although born a Frenchman, was of Scottish extraction, and could speak the English language with tolerable fluency. Possessing these advantages, he soon became an established favourite, not only with his host, but with all who came in contact with him. He listened to every one with so much apparent deference, and hazarded opinions himself with such an air of humility, that he was set down as a youth of singular judgment and attainments. Mr Blackburn was delighted to have such a prodigy for his guest, and invited him to make his house his home during his stay in the country. The invitation was as frankly accepted as it was freely given; and although Champfleur had originally intended to stay for a few days only, weeks and months passed away, and still found him an inmate of Cairnielee.

“Those who had experience in such matters quickly perceived that the charms of the daughter had a greater influence over the stranger in inducing him to prolong his stay than the hospitality of the father; they saw also that the attractions of such a youth were calculated to make a deep and lasting impression on the pure mind of the unsophisticated Phemie. The former, who was but a few years older than Miss Blackburn, was deeply skilled in all those blandishments that exercise such influence over the female heart. His manners were engaging, his conversation polished; while his frankness and affability appeared to greater advantage when contrasted with the awkward simplicity of the young men in the neighbourhood of Cairnielee.

“The gentle Phemie, whose bosom had hitherto owned but a daughter’s love for a kind and affectionate father, began now to be disturbed by other and more agitating feelings. Another

image beside that of her beloved parent now occupied the inmost recesses of secret thought: it was that of the young stranger. The youthful pair, indeed, seemed formed for each other. Phemie was passionately fond of music, and so also was her lover. She was much attached to rural life, and an ardent admirer of Nature; so also was Champfleur. She sung to him the sweetest of our Scottish songs, he played to her the choicest French melodies. He talked to her in imperfect English, she to him in broken French, until they had nearly formed a new language of their own. They were often, very often, together; and were to be seen at early dawn and latest gloaming exploring every romantic spot in the neighbourhood, climbing every little hill, or sauntering through the most secluded dells. They lingered listening to the harmonies of the mountain linnets, or the deep-toned melodies of the forest minstrels. They ascended the hill at sunrise, to watch the first bright beams that fell upon the earth, or lingered by the streamlet at sunset, gazing on the long rays of light stretched out and reflected in its transparent bosom.

“The manners of the gay and gallant Frenchman were exceedingly agreeable to his host also, who seemed disposed to engross more of his conversation than he had either time or inclination to spare him. The old man loved to hear, again and again repeated, every particular about his old friends in France—what they were saying and doing—how they spent their time—what cafés they frequented—what billiard-rooms they attended—what games were their favourites. Then he would ask if they did not often long for a blink of old Scotland before they closed their eyes for ever; and would suggest how easily they might come over and reside with him without exciting suspicion, or incurring any danger of being discovered. Then he would write long letters, containing kind invitations to his expatriated friends, embodying hints that perhaps their estates might yet be restored to them by the usurpers (for so he termed the reigning dynasty); or that they might yet be able to strike a blow for their lawful sovereign. Then were all the reminiscences of his early days revived. His old acquaintances and associates were also conjured up, and, with the garrulity of old age, would he recapitulate the deeds of his early years—tell of the gay life he had led in Paris—and enumerate what were then his favourite amusements.

“Excited by such conversation, the old man’s early habits and feelings, which had long lain dormant, were again awakened. Cards and billiards were introduced into Cairnielee, at first merely to beguile a tedious hour; but by degrees they began to be resorted to when no such apology could be urged. The old man, whose revived attachment to these games gained strength with indulgence, began to sit up late at night, and to play with the keenness of second youth. All this was apparently without any encouragement from the young Frenchman, who often protested to Phemie that it was with much reluctance he played with her father to such late hours, but he could not help complying with the urgent entreaties of his kind and worthy host, to whom their jesting and harmless games seemed to afford much amusement. Night after night the same system was carried on, and the old tower of Cairnielee, which had been hitherto remarkable for its quiet seclusion, became, by degrees, a scene of reckless gambling. Mr Blackburn and his guest, often in a jocular spirit, played for large imaginary sums. But what is begun in jest will sometimes end in earnest. The sham play of the two friends gradually slid into serious gambling; and serious consequences, as a matter of course, were the result.

“During the stay of Champfleur at Cairnielee, he had insinuated himself into the good graces of many of the wealthy young men in the neighbourhood by his soft and highly polished manners. His accomplishments were so varied and pleasing, that, conscious of their own inferiority, they deferred to his opinions on everything, and on all occasions. Invitations poured in upon him from all quarters. Mothers and fathers were delighted to see their hopeful heirs looking up to such a paragon of perfection as a model for imitation, and were not without hope that their own offspring would, in course of time, catch some small portion of his enviable accomplishments, and that they would see engrafted on the loutish stock of a Scottish boor the ease, elegance, and self-possession of an educated Frenchman. Mr Blackburn was delighted to find the merits of his young guest so generally appreciated by his neighbours, and anticipated, with no small degree of pride and satisfaction, the high character which the young man would carry back with him to France of Scottish hospitality. Many parties were given at Cairnielee, to mark the high sense the old man entertained

of the kindness which had been shown to his young friend ; and the old tower was now frequently a stirring scene of feasting and rejoicing.

“On these merry-making occasions I was, as a matter of course, in frequent requisition, and was often there, both late and early, furnishing music to meet all tastes, and myself as merry in my humble capacity as the best of them. Many a bottle was cracked, many a jovial night was spent, in that old house, the remembrance of which even yet rises vividly before me, and brings along with it mingled feelings of pleasure and regret. The young Frenchman was the centre of attraction, and well did he play the part of the leader of the ton in our little locality. There was no end to his inventions for amusement, no pause in his industry in catering for the varied tastes of those around him. Everything was done too in the most exquisite taste, and there was a grace in all his movements, and a disposition to oblige in everything he said and did, that won all hearts and disarmed all jealousy. When cards were introduced, mock kingdoms were staked and played for, with such a good-humoured jocularly on Champfleur's part, that, when a serious game was played, and the deep well-filled purses of the young lairds were emptied into his, it was done so easily, so gracefully, so politely, that it required two or three days of after-thought before they could bring themselves to throw any portion of blame on their frank, affable, and most agreeable friend. Indeed, many of them deemed their losses but a fair price for the masterly lessons taught them by their antagonist in the course of play ; and, entertaining this view of the matter, went back with a determination to win, which of course ended in another and yet greater loss. A few of these gambling transactions passed on without exciting suspicion ; but after the same thing had occurred again and again, the losers began to murmur, and when it was rumoured that Miss Blackburn was to be united to M. Champfleur, disappointed lovers, and those who had lost considerable sums of money, were ungenerous enough to suspect, and even to whisper, that there must have been some collusion between Mr Blackburn and his intended son-in-law.

“This charge, I need hardly say, was as ungenerous as it was altogether false and groundless, the old man being himself the greatest dupe among them to the arts of the young French-

man. The propensity of the former early years had returned on him, and, like a child, he played with edge-tools till they cut him to the bone. Long after their visitors left them, would Blackburn and his guest continue their game, and often did the morning dawn find them still at play. Heavy were the stakes for which they contended, and large the sums they lost and won. House and land, mountain and meadow, changed owners jestingly. The most wild and hazardous games were played, daylight only putting a partial stop to their madness and folly. These private sederunts, however, were generally kept very quiet, none but themselves knowing anything about them. Phemie always retired early, and knew nothing of what passed on these occasions. Indeed, even if she had, such confidence did she repose in her professed admirer, that she would have attributed his conduct to a desire merely to gratify and humour her father; and thus such knowledge would have presented an additional claim only on the part of Henry Champfleure to her respect and esteem.

“One cold and stormy winter night, the friends sat, as usual, engaged at their favourite game. The room in which they sat was the old man’s favourite apartment, and was in part a library, and in part a boudoir. A cheerful coal-fire blazed in the grate, and on the table stood, almost untasted, a bottle of claret, part of a parcel that had been sent as a present from some of Champfleure’s relations. Dissipation formed no part of their enjoyments; the spirit of gambling being, in their case, as in most others, of itself sufficiently exciting. Thus, often had they sat playing from sunset to sunrise, without having even once tasted the liquor that stood on the table beside them.

“On this particular occasion, while they sat at play, the storm roared fearfully around them. The wind swept through the old building, and howled amongst its gray turrets. The stream hard by, swollen to a flood, was bawling hoarsely, and hurrying along with wild impetuosity. The doors creaked on their hinges, the drawbridge sung croaking in the wind; and the old tower of Cairnielee, which had withstood the storms of four hundred years, seemed fated to fall on this tremendous night. The gamblers paused in the middle of their game—they felt too much appalled to go on. Blackburn stirred the fire, and attempted to look cheerful, but failed. He could not raise his spirits, nor get rid of the gloomy mood of mind that

oppressed him. He filled a glass to the brim, and pledged the health of those over the water; the pledge was accepted, and the old man shortly after fell into a reverie, from which he was awakened by another violent gust of wind, that shook the very furniture in the apartment in which they sat. The old man's thoughts were with his friends in France. He rose unconsciously, it seemed, from his seat, took out a small silver key, which he kept secreted about his person, went to a panel in the wainscoating above the mantelpiece, touched a secret spring; the panel flew open, and discovered, to the astonished eyes of Champfleür, a recess, in which lay a strong box, which, with assistance, Blackburn lifted down and opened with the silver key, and drawing from it a large bundle of papers, said, addressing Champfleür—

“‘There, young man, there are all the documents connected with the political affairs of my countrymen now in France. There are letters there which I prize too highly to allow any one to look upon but myself; but as you are likely to become in time owner not only of this house, but of these papers also, it is requisite you should know their value. This, you will observe, is a bundle of letters from the Prince; and these,’ pointing to another parcel, ‘are from his friends in France, amongst whom are your own relations. They are all of great value in my eyes, and will, I have no doubt, be equally appreciated by you. There, also, is a bundle of papers entrusted to my care by the Bishop of the Roman Catholic Church in Edinburgh. They were rescued from the flames by which that building was destroyed, by the organist of the chapel, who is now residing with me, and who was formerly my daughter’s musical preceptor. Amongst these papers are the certificates of marriage connected with some of the expatriated families, without which their descendants cannot at any period claim the confiscated estates, even although the government were disposed to restore them to their ancient owners. Allow me to repeat what I have already said, that I am disposed to put a high value on the contents of this box, part of which is likely to be of use either to myself or to some of our friends of the White Rose.’

“‘I wonder,’ exclaimed Champfleür, ‘how you can retain such dangerous documents about you! You know right well, father, as I may, I trust, shortly have still better right to call

you, that were the government to obtain the slightest hint of such treasonable papers being in your possession, and to discover such as this, holding up a letter from the Prince, wherein the probability of another attempt being made on the British throne was pretty plainly hinted at; 'and this, which I perceive is a copy of your answer, the consequence might be not only the loss of your estate, but of your life.'

"'A fig for the government and their Hanoverian master!' exclaimed the spirited old gentleman. 'They never can possibly suspect any mischief in me; and, even if they did, they could never lay their hands on this box, for no one knows anything about it, excepting you, my friend, my daughter Phemie, and myself; while this panel is so well concealed, as you yourself must acknowledge, that the most lynx-eyed and practised searcher in their employment would be puzzled to discover it. Look at that,' he said, as, with a slight touch, the little door in the panel closed noiselessly, and so closely that no one could have ever suspected that there was such a thing there. 'Who,' continued he, 'could imagine that behind that panel was hid such a treasure? Nay, nay, they may frighten the hireling fools, and bribe the mercenary knaves to whom such secrets are too frequently entrusted. William Blackburn keeps this secret to himself and his own family.'

"The young man's eyes were lighted up with an unusual and unpleasant expression; a scowl lowered on his brow. To a close observer, he would have seemed about to assume an entirely new character. At this moment a peal of thunder burst on the old castle, and shook the whole building to its foundations. Champfleur grew deadly pale, seemed much disturbed, and exclaimed, in a half whisper, 'Hush! what a fearful blast. Think ye there is danger—the old house seems to be rocking to its fall!'

"'Tush, man!' said old Blackburn, 'fear not for the auld biggin. It hath stood many a rude assault of both war and tempest, and will not yield, I warrant me, to such a whiff of wind as that. After you have wintered here, you will become better acquainted with the roughness of our northern clime, and think little of a bit brush of a storm like this. The old house, young man, has good stuff in it, like its old master, and will not be easily capsized. So, off with your bumper to Charlie and the White Rose, and let us to our game again.'

What shall we play for? Come, let us stake our all—my moorland estate against your father's chateau and vineyards: Charlie Stuart against Geordie Guelph. What say you? here goes.'

" 'Done!' said the Frenchman.

"The cards were shuffled and dealt, the hands were nearly played out, the old man chuckled, he headed his opponent, and felt confident of victory. Elated by his good fortune, he exclaimed, 'What! ye could not expect to win the old tower and estate of Cairnielee, could ye? No, no, 'tis mine, and mine it will continue to be, in spite of wind or wyle.'

" 'Be not too sure of that, my good friend,' said his opponent, as he tabled his next card, 'for it is now mine.'

"Both players rose to their feet hastily, and at the same instant. The old man looked in the face of his opponent; it was stern, cold, and collected. Not a ray of light illumined that dark countenance, hitherto so bland and smiling. His eye, which was wont to sparkle so brilliantly, was now half buried beneath its over-arching eyebrow, now drawn forward with a portentous expression. Old Blackburn was at first stunned; he felt as if some fearful change had come over the spirit of his dream, or as if, after having long enjoyed some happy delusion, he had now awakened to a dismal reality. He passed his hand across his closed eyes, opened them again, and, with a faintly attempted smile, looked once more at his destroyer. But the same ominous frown still met his gaze. He raised, with trembling hand, the wine-bottle, filled up the glasses, and, in tremulous tones, which contrasted strangely with the confident words he had so lately used, said—

" 'Well, you are a lucky fellow; you have won from me my estate, but it would soon have been yours at any rate, my son. We will drink this bumper to her health who is to share it with you—my own dear daughter!'

" 'Debts of honour must be promptly paid,' replied Champfleur; 'your estate is now mine, without your daughter, for whom, I must now plainly tell you, I have no extravagant regard. You may, therefore, marry her as soon as you please to some of the clodpoles in your neighbourhood. She might have been useful as a stepping-stone to your estate, but we have reached it without her, and require not her assistance to

enable us to enjoy it. So, begone old man! and see that ye tell no one of this, otherwise the concealment,' pointing to the secret panel, 'contains secrets which at any time can be made available to bring you to reason. Ere you go, however, I must have your signature to this deed, which I have had for some time prepared for such an occasion as this. It simply states that you have sold me your estate, and acknowledge me as the rightful owner. You will admit, I doubt not, that I won it fairly.'

" 'Ah, but it was in jest!' said the old man, still unwilling to believe in the serious intentions of Champfleur, 'and you are in jest; I know it. Drive me not mad by continuing this cruel mockery, but acknowledge at once that you jest, and I shall laugh with you, and own it to have been an excellent joke.'

" 'Joke, truly! No, no; no joke, my old friend, but downright earnest,' replied Champfleur, with a sardonic smile; 'so, come, sign and seal without further delay, otherwise, as you and your daughter are both in my power, so shall both of you rue it.'

"The old man, roused to madness, poured out a torrent of invectives on his own head, and accused his guest of treachery and ingratitude. In his fury, he challenged him to fight; but while he did so, he felt his own weakness, and burst into a flood of tears. He besought his guest, 'for mercy's sake, for pity's sake, to spare him;' but the same iron visage and grim scowl met his view.

" 'Sign, seal, and vanish,' was the laconic reply; 'you shall in that case have what will carry you in safety hence: refuse, and your life and the ruin of your daughter shall be the price of your obstinacy. I certainly shall not forego my present advantage.'

"The poor old man, thus humbled, heart-broken, and affrighted, sunk senseless into a chair; and when he did recover, his eyes opened only on the same fiendish countenance, his ears but heard the same order to sign, seal, and vanish. With trembling hand he seized the pen, and signed the document which bereaved him for ever of his property. The villain, with a fiendish expression of joy, folded it up, and put it into his pocket. At the same instant, a fearful crash was heard; in the next, a light rapid step approached, and Phemie,

in her morning dress, burst into the apartment, to inform her father that the old corner tower, which had been long hastening to decay, and which he had been particularly anxious to maintain, had fallen with a tremendous crash.

"'Ah, and in good time, my child!' said her father, in reply to his daughter's intimation; 'that tower tradition hath connected with the first of my race, and now it hath fallen at the same moment with its unfortunate owner—alas! it's owner no longer.'

"'What means this, my father!' exclaimed his terrified daughter, as she clasped him in her arms. 'What does it mean,' she said, appealing to Champfleur.

"The latter made no reply, but stood firm and unmoved, while her father exclaimed, 'We are ruined, my child; let us hence. We are ruined, and by this heartless swindling villain,' pointing to Champfleur. Phemie stood for a moment silent and perplexed; but the look, full of dark meaning and stern purpose which the latter's countenance exhibited, gave her an indistinct idea of what had happened, and she glided from the apartment like a spirit, tremblingly leading her father along with her.

"In a state of great agitation and distress, the father and daughter sought my cottage at the dead hour of night. The storm that still raged fearfully had prevented me from sleeping, and I started up on my pillow at the first low tap which they gave at the little window of the apartment in which I lay. When I opened the door, the old man stood bareheaded before me, wrapped in a large cloak, and his gray hair streaming wildly in the wind. Tears flowed down his furrowed cheeks, his hands were clasped together, his limbs tottered beneath him, and, with his head leaning on his daughter's shoulder, he bewailed his fate in accents of despair, and besought my assistance in tones of heartrending anguish. Poor Phemie stood silent and motionless, but she looked earnestly in my face, then clasped her father to her bosom, and pressed him to her heart.

"'Save us!' exclaimed the old man; 'I am utterly ruined. I have been basely deceived and betrayed. I am in immediate want of assistance, ruined in fortune, and in imminent danger of my life, and have no resource but in instant flight. You have, indeed, been a true prophet; you warned me against what has come to pass; you advised me against confiding too



BLACKBURN RUINED

What means this, my father, exclaimed his terrified daughter, as he clasped him in her arms. What does it mean, she said, appealing to Cassy Bent.

much to that accomplished swindler Champfleur, and your words have proved too true; all, and more than you anticipated, has come to pass. The villain has become master of my secrets; he has won my estate from me at play; he has ordered me from the house—no longer mine, alas!—at this dead hour of the night, and has threatened to destroy me if I remain here an instant longer. I know he will carry his threat into execution, and I have no friend who can assist me in my extremity but you. My Phemie, too, the pride of my heart, the light of my eyes, the prop of my declining years, has been basely deceived. He who professed for her an undying affection, and who won her heart in return, has unfeelingly cast us forth unprotected, unbefriended. My child,' he continued, 'wherefore that heart-rending sigh! He is a villain, and shall some time or other be punished for his perfidy; but thou, so young, so pure, so beautiful, what can replace that void in thy heart? Look up, my love, we shall wander together. Our friend here shall accompany us, and we may yet live to see better days.' Then poor Phemie looked in her father's face, and half-whispered the following lines:—

“The forests groan, while the cold gray stone
 Feels not the wind that bloweth;
 My love he is gone, my heart is lone—
 Grief dwells where no one knoweth.
 The stricken bosom can heave no sigh,
 Sad sorrow lives in a tearless eye!”

“I listened with the blood boiling in my veins; and in this half-whispered lay discovered an incoherency which convinced me that the shock had been too sudden for the delicate and sensitive mind of poor Phemie. I took her father aside, remonstrated with him on his folly in flying, and represented to him that he had many friends, good men and true, who, at an instant's warning, would rally round him, and befriend him in his distress. I insisted on his staying with me in my cottage till morning, when we could easily summon all our neighbours and his own dependants to our aid. He steadily objected to all these proposals, knowing, he said, that all opposition would be unavailing. The villain possessed evidence sufficiently strong to convict him of treasonable designs against the government,

and would avail himself of that advantage. 'Besides all this,' he continued, 'he has fairly won the estate from me at play; I am the last man to deny a debt of honour. I can no longer meet with my equals in society, and must seek some private asylum, where we may live in a humble and economical manner. My poor girl, too, her heart is broken. Mine is a hard fate; forgive these tears!'

"Finding him thus determined, I resolved to accompany them and share their fate. I had now no inducement to remain at home. My wife had been dead for some time, and my boy, who had enlisted in a Highland regiment, was absent on the service of his country. I had been brought up in humble circumstances, and I knew I could buffet the troubled waters of adversity better than my master and mistress could. I had also saved a little money in their service; and believing a large town to be at once the best place for concealment, and the most likely place for me to earn a livelihood by the exercise of my talents, I deemed it the most prudent step we could take to proceed to Glasgow; and accordingly, hurriedly packing up a few necessary articles of clothing, we set out on our way to that city. The night was still dismally dark. The wind moaned, as if echoing the groans that burst from the oppressed bosom of the old man. We threaded our way through the winding labyrinths formed by the fine old aristocratic-looking trees, that, like old family friends, seemed to bewail, in broken murmurs, the departure of their late unfortunate owner. The clouds swept rapidly over the face of the sky, and just as we had cleared the private pathway, and reached the high road, the moon broke forth, and threw a stray gleam of light on the ancient tower of Cairnielee, peeping through the naked trees. The old man turned round to take a last look of his late happy home. The river rushed onward. The breeze again raised its voice among the branches. We all burst into tears, and passed on our way.

"At daybreak we found ourselves in the little town of Hamilton, whence, after taking some rest and refreshment, we proceeded to Glasgow, where we arrived in the evening, much fatigued. It was necessary that we should bend to meet our altered fortunes, and accordingly I took cheap, though comfortable lodgings, for my master and mistress, while I contented myself with a room of a still meaner description. Thus left

a good deal alone, and knowing the powers of my fiddle, I determined to make them available for the benefit of those who had so kindly befriended and supported me. My unfortunate friends, however, would not consent to be indebted solely to my exertions for their subsistence.

"Phemie, who was mistress of the finer kinds of embroidery and needlework, obtained abundance of employment, through the agency of her landlady; and between us we managed to keep the old man pretty comfortable, in so far as the necessaries of life were concerned, although his independent spirit was too deeply wounded ever to recover; while the effects of care and grief on his emaciated frame became every day more perceptible.

"I soon became a favourite street-fiddler with the Glasgow people; showers of coppers descended from the windows, and were handed me by the crowd. By-and-by I was asked to attend dancing parties, and obtained such a reputation, that I was invited to play at many of the most fashionable routes and balls of the day. I never was asked any questions, but was paid in the most handsome manner; so that, while my friends were in no danger of being disturbed, I made a most comfortable livelihood. In this way I got partially acquainted with some of the leading folks in Glasgow, and, among others, with the chief magistrate. He was an hospitable, kind-hearted man, very wealthy, and had a considerable dash of the cotton aristocracy about him. Partner in a large mercantile house, his conversation was all about trade and commerce, and he dwelt with great self-complacency on the idea, that future ages would identify his name with the origin of the commercial prosperity of the great city of the west. His standard of a man's value was exactly what he was worth in cash and cotton bales; and he relished his herring and coffee of a morning all the better for having been at the Broomielaw, and having there concluded a bargain about a cargo, which he calculated would yield him a nett profit of £500. This he considered, to use his own emphatic words, 'a gude morning's wark.' Although he had been the founder of his own fortune, and could not boast of a long line of ancestors, yet he was exceedingly given to court the society of people of family, was a connoisseur in heraldry, admired a good crest, venerated a well-filled shield, and adored a pair of rampant supporters. He had also a considerable spice of the Jacobite in him, and, like you, Mr Nairn,

was passionately attached to certain Jacobite melodies. This taste he had perhaps inherited from his father, who had come originally from Argyllshire, and, like many others of his enterprising countrymen, had never again returned to the place of his nativity. He easily discovered, by my favourite tunes, which I played at his parties, that I was tinged with the same principles and feelings, and we had several times, after the company's departure, our private conversation on political subjects, and nobbed glasses together 'to him over the water.' Once or twice I was on the eve of breaking to him the story of my poor master, who drooped more and more day after day, and who was evidently fast sinking under his griefs. But then I felt myself bound by his unfortunate commands to preserve silence, and I mastered my anxiety to see his wrongs righted, until I should be relieved from my obligation; and with this view I cultivated the good graces of the provost, confidently relying on his assistance when it should be wanted.

"I still entertained hopes that the old man's mind would recover its equilibrium, and frequently attempted to lay before him, in as clear a light as possible, the absurdity of his conduct in tamely submitting to such villany as had been practised on him by Champfleur. I pointed out to him the advantage his character gave him over the needy adventurer who had robbed him. I told him that government would never trouble him about papers, the dates of which were old, and the schemes of which they treated well known to be impracticable. I endeavoured to rouse him to a sense of the injuries he had sustained, and represented to him how distressing it was to see his only daughter deprived of the estate of her ancestors. Alas! all my arguments were vain. 'No,' he would reply, 'I perceive my daughter's heart is broken; she loved the villain dearly, and she has been deceived. Let him exult in the success of his villany. I leave him in the hands of Heaven. I am not long for this world; my days are numbered, my race is nearly run. Bury me privately with my fathers in the ancient cathedral of Glasgow. I leave my daughter to your care, and I feel assured that Providence will watch over both you and her.'

"Shortly after our last conversation, Mr Blackburn died. I remembered his wish, and, waiting on my friend the provost, I told him so much of the story as induced him to interest himself in the matter, and by his means obtained permission to

deposit the remains of my departed friend and patron Mr Blackburn privately in the family vault of his ancestors.

"The funeral was a solemn ceremony. Four hired persons bore him to the grave at an early hour of the morning, when the sun's rays had just begun to stream through the stone-ribbed and glassless windows of the chancel of the cathedral; the broad flat stone, having the figure of a mailed knight outlined on it, was lifted, and the coffin deposited in its dismal receptacle, in presence of the bearers, and of Phemie and myself, who were the only mourners. Long did we linger about that hallowed spot after the others had left the church; and when at last I led Phemie away, I found that her heart was indeed broken; her tears were dried up, and her reason was gone. I had now no inducement to make either disclosures or inquiries about Cairnielee; my whole spare time was spent in watching over and soothing the sorrows of my poor heart-broken charge. The malady was of the most harmless kind; she said nothing, she looked cheerful, shook me by the hand, gazed in my face, or moved away like some gentle melancholy spirit. At times she continued to work at her embroidery, but ever and anon she would steal out, and remain away for half a day. On such occasions I was sure to find her, in the dusk of evening, in the old cathedral, sitting on a broken tombstone, with her eyes fixed on her father's grave.

"After this we remained in Glasgow a considerable time. Phemie's malady gradually subsided into a fixed melancholy. She became more irregular at her work, and it was with difficulty she could be induced to do aught but sit and sigh. At times, indeed, she would break out into song, and warble some of her favourite old ditties, but without exhibiting any indication of amendment. The kind-hearted provost, who felt much interested in her fate, although he knew not the secret of her history, offered her an asylum in his own house; but when I mentioned the circumstance to her, she shook her head, flung her arms around my neck, as if I had been her father, and, in piteous accents, said, 'You will not surely leave your poor Phemie?' These were the only words she had spoken for days; they went to my heart; they affected me deeply. 'No, by Heaven,' I exclaimed, 'this arm shall shield and provide for thee, my poor suffering angel!' She dropped on her knee, she seized my hand, she kissed away the tears that

fell upon it from my eyes. From that hour she has been to me as a daughter, and I, I trust, to her as a father.

“A circumstance lately occurred which induced me to come to Edinburgh. In making inquiries about the estate of Cairnielee and its unprincipled possessor, I was informed that, after a year's life of dissipation and riot, the miscreant had digusted the whole country side by his open libertinism, and become so unpopular, that he was laid wait for, at every turn of the road, by justly offended fathers, brothers, and lovers. He had lately sold the estate, and had vanished from the country altogether. Knowing no one in whom I could place confidence, excepting my old friend the bishop, I resolved to come to Edinburgh to seek him out, and to lay the whole circumstances of the case before him, and ask his advice as to whether it might be prudent to take any steps in the matter. On my arrival I learned he was on the continent, and I was thus obliged to have recourse to the assistance of my never-failing friend, my violin, to procure subsistence, while I awaited the bishop's return. As I was playing in the High Street one night, I was accosted by you, Miss Hepburn, and engaged to come to your ball, Mr Nairn. I recollected, with gratitude, the kindness I had formerly received at your hands, and had resolved to wait on you after the ball to return you my thanks. I resolved on this proceeding, as I thought it might give rise to some unpleasant discussions were I to introduce such a topic in a public ball-room. I determined, besides, to disguise my playing, so that I could not be recognised. Your song of ‘The Auld Stuarts back again,’ carried me back into the past, and I could not resist the impulse I felt to play the air over on my violin, so, seizing my bow, I swept it over the strings unconsciously, and was only brought to my senses by your exclamation. Startled, and frightened by your cry,—and aware that I had committed a gross error in introducing that old party tune into such a company—I rushed into the street, and when I reached home I was in a burning fever, which, there is every reason to believe, would have carried me off, had it not been for the kind services of my worthy friend here, who, under God, has been the means of saving me twice from death.”

“He has yet another deliverance to achieve ere he dies,” said the Gaberlunzie, suddenly starting to his feet, “and the first part of the work is the discovery of that master villain through

whose machinations the old family of Blackburn has been brought to ruin. Those papers, which he must for his own safety still hold in his possession, must be recovered. Important events hang upon them, and I have registered a vow in heaven that I shall not rest until they are in my possession, or until their recovery shall have become utterly hopeless."

"Do nothing rashly," said the fiddler; "I shall accompany you in your search. Perhaps your kind friends will take charge of poor Phemie till we return. We shall set off this very night, and proceed on our journey by easy stages. I shall take my fiddle with me, and we shall at times chase away sorrow and thought with a tune. Grief and joy, tears and laughter, have been strangely mingled in my lot; yet I think I shall after all die playing a merry air on my good old fiddle."

Arrangements were instantly made for their departure. Many injunctions did they get to be cautious, careful, and vigilant, from uncle, aunt, and Nairn, who were charged to remain on their parts profoundly silent on everything connected with the subject of the impending search. The Gaberlunzie and fiddler were just about to depart on their journey, when the little girl rushed into Nairn's parlour with the intelligence that Phemie had suddenly disappeared, and that no trace of the course of her flight could be obtained.