

CHAPTER VII.

Solyman resolved to assault the breach.

KNOLLIS'S *History of the Turks.*

Again the flame

Flashed thick and fast—a volley came,

Then echoed wildly from within,

Of shout and scream the mingled din,

And weapon-clash, and maddening cry.

SCOTT.

CAPTAIN CLEAVER had already become a little impatient at the long stay his reconnoitrer was making, and was even beginning secretly to dread that some accident had befallen him, when he espied the figure of a man under the shadow of the broken gateway. He earnestly watched his motions, and observing that he was stealing towards them, he imagined it was Bill Handy returning; but he thought it advisable to challenge him.

“Bill! Bill!” he cried in an under voice—
“is that you, my lad?”

But observing that the figure, instead of advancing or replying to him, hastily retreated within the archway again,

“ I fear,” said he, turning round to Lord Eaglesholme and Macauley, “ I fear we are discovered, and if so, depend upon it poor Bill has been seized. We have nothing for it now but to advance with caution, and be ready to act with vigour, as circumstances may direct.”

In obedience to his orders the party was filing out from behind the rampart, when a volley of musketry was fired from the wall upon them, and two of the Random's men fell severely wounded.

Cleaver unsheathed his sabre, and shouting out, “ Now, my brave lads ! now's your time !— at them, my boys, like lions !” he rushed fearlessly and inconsiderately into the moat, and, in his eagerness to lead the attack, slipped from the narrow road-way by which Bill Handy had passed it, and which was only covered by a foot deep of mud and water, and went souse over head and ears into the profoundest part of it. Some of the men were hastening to his assistance, but the gallant sailor rose from the bottom, and, shaking his ears like a great Newfoundland dog,

he bawled out, "Never mind me, you rascals!—on then!—on then, I say!" and then swashing through the stagnant water and weeds, with a sort of half swimming, half scrambling exertion, still, however, keeping a firm hold of his sword, he grappled with some reeds growing on the bank, and, after an unsuccessful effort or two, he at last succeeded in hoisting his large carcass on shore, and began to scale the mound with an alacrity he had never exhibited in any of his shooting excursions.

Cleaver saw at once that to attempt the gateway would be to make his party a butt for the enemy's shot, without affording them a chance of returning it successfully. Prompt to his purpose, he hastily cautioned Macauley to keep an eye to the gateway, and to guard the causeway, and calling to some of the men nearest to him, "This way, this way, my lads, follow me!" he led them in a slanting direction about thirty yards to the right, and brought them to a breach in the wall he remembered, through which they got into the court without opposition.

The smugglers having observed the success of this manœuvre, and seeing that they could no longer hold out their present post without a cer-

tainty of being surrounded, retreated with all haste towards the keep. But as they were flying across the court, they presented so fair a mark to the two parties entering by the gateway and the breach, that by a single discharge of their pieces four of them fell.

At this moment, and just as the two divisions of the assailants, had united, a female shriek was heard from one of the high loop-hole windows of the keep. The voice struck upon the soul of Lord Eaglesholme, who, in the midst of the attack, had his thoughts filled with the hope of recovering his niece.

“Oh Heavens!” he cried, “she is certainly here then!—on, my brave men!—on, and let us force the place!” And, saying this, he rushed forwards followed by the whole party, and pursued the flying enemy round to the other side of the building. They reached it just in time to see a small door-way, about eighteen or twenty feet from the ground, closed up, and to hear it barricaded against them.

Some of the most forward of the lads of the revenue instantly ran to the broken flight of steps, with the hope of forcing an entrance, but before

they had time to reach the first of them, two musket shots were fired from loop-holes on each side of the door, which unhappily took effect on one of the sailors so surely, that the poor fellow staggered back a pace or two, and fell with a deep groan, announcing his immediate dissolution. But Cleaver, undismayed, saw his opportunity, and cheered them on. "Up to it, my lads, before they have time to fire again!" and two of them were in an instant at the top of the steps, where, by being so close to the wall, they were out of all risk of being aimed at from the flanking loop-holes. Meanwhile, as the space permitted no more than two men to remain there at the same time, he took immediate precautions for the safety of the rest, by drawing them to right and left, and placing them so near the building, as to remove them also from all chance of being fired upon. The thick oaken door, studded with nails, had once been of immense strength, but was now so wasted by age and weather, that the two sailors, though unprovided with proper implements for the purpose, had some hopes of breaking through it by banging at it with the butt-ends of their muskets, and cutting out slices of it with their

cutlasses. They made but very little progress, however, by these means, notwithstanding the ardour with which they worked, and that they frequently relieved each other. Cleaver was becoming impatient, and Lord Eaglesholme still more so. They were even thinking of sending to procure sledge hammers, when a loud clamouring noise of voices was heard within, and a blaze of light began to appear through the chinks around the door.

Bill Handy, after having been so suddenly left alone, began immediately to think how he could rid himself of his bonds. He accordingly rolled himself gently off the heap of straw, and after a great many efforts, he at length managed to work himself towards the fire. The logs composing it having been pretty much burnt down, some of them had fallen aside. By wriggling his body, he was enabled to advance his hands towards one of the ignited fragments, lying furthest from the rest, and by stretching his arms as far asunder as the ropes would admit, and bringing one on each side of the flame, so as to allow it to play upon the cords without injury to himself, he gradually consumed them, and then burst them in twain.

This took a considerable time to effect, and was not accomplished until the smugglers had been driven within the building. But after his hands were set at liberty, the release of his legs became a very easy matter.

Reflecting that he was but one against many, and guessing how matters stood, from the voices, as well as from the report of the fire-arms within and without the keep, he thought it right to act with caution, and accordingly he stole quietly, in the dark, up the narrow stair, leading from the vaults to the low-roofed, and very confined passage within the doorway, with the intention, if he found the coast clear, to let in his friends. But in this scheme he was completely baulked; for he had no sooner put his head over the uppermost step into the passage, than the trampling of feet on the stone floor, and the jostling and squeezing he heard, convinced him that the greater number, if not the whole of the gang, afraid of the door being forced from without, had crowded themselves together into that narrow space, to endeavour to resist an entrance.

In this dilemma, an expedient occurred to his fertile brain, which he lost not a moment in carrying into effect. Bethinking himself of the spirit-

kegs heaped up below, he hastened down into the vault, and succeeded in carrying first one, and then two or three more in succession, to the top of the stairs. Then fumbling for Mr Brouster's cork-screw, he drew the bungs, and inverted the kegs, one after another, allowing the liquor to flow slowly out of them, till he had deluged the pavement of the place in brandy, up to the very door. He then ran down to the fire, and taking up a piece of live charcoal, which he smothered up in straw, he returned to the top of the stair, and opening the sluice of his last barrel, he set fire to the stream of brandy, by applying the live coal and the straw together, and then retreated into the great guard-room behind, to watch the result of his stratagem.

The effect was instantaneous. The villains finding themselves thus suddenly and unaccountably enveloped in flames, and standing ankle deep in a flood of liquid fire, coming they knew not whence, were terrified beyond all conception. Crowded as they were, their clothes caught fire, and, howling like demons with pain and terror, they endeavoured to escape, most of them down the narrow stair into the vault, tumbling over the empty barrels with horrid din, and choking

up the straight passage. The old door having caught fire, burned like tinder, and was now assailed with redoubled shocks from without. But the liquid stream of fire came rushing out from underneath it, so copiously, that, for some time, the assailants could hardly keep to their posts. Cheered, however, by the shouts of their friends, and still more by the voice of Handy from within, who, from the shelter he had gained, called out to them that they might safely approach the entrance without fear of the enemy, they crowded up against it. The door yielded to their redoubled efforts; and the flaming tide having by this time ebbed away, the whole party entered.

Lord Eaglesholme, whose impatience was excessive, had already rushed forward, in an agony of anxiety, to search for his niece. Shrieks were again heard in the vaulted room above. He rushed up the narrow winding stair, followed by Cleaver and Handy. Attracted by the voice, he entered a small confined doorway in the thick wall.—There was an instantaneous flash, and report of a pistol, and Lord Eaglesholme fell backwards, with a groan, upon Handy, who caught him in his arms.

Cleaver squeezed past between them and the wall, and boldly entered the doorway, when a second pistol was discharged from within, but fortunately without doing injury. By the faint light coming through the aperture of an opposite window, he discovered a man standing in a posture of defence, with a drawn sword in his hand. He stopped not to consider, but instantly flew at him with his sabre, and, after a desperate conflict in the dark, in which many blows were spent in vain, he at last succeeded in running his unknown opponent through the heart, with a well directed thrust, as he came between him and the window. The man fell headlong on the pavement. He listened for a minute, until the last shudder of departing life convinced him he had nothing further to dread from his opponent.

The shrieks in the farther corner of the apartment were frequent. Cleaver, addressing Miss Malcolm, begged of her to fear nothing, for that she was now perfectly safe, and he entreated her to compose herself, and remain where she was till lights could be procured. He then hastened to the stair, where he found Bill Handy employed

in conveying down the senseless body of Lord Eaglesholme.

Cleaver eagerly demanded how his Lordship was.

“He’s gone, I fear,” said Bill.

“Good God !” said Cleaver, approaching the spot on the landing-place below, to which Bill had brought him,—“he speaks not—he breathes not—I feel no pulsation.—Heaven protect us, what a melancholy catastrophe !—And how shall we break it to the poor young lady above ?—For Heaven’s sake, get lights, some of you, as fast as you can.”

The light no sooner appeared, than a shocking spectacle presented itself. Lord Eaglesholme, covered with blood, and to all appearance already dead, was borne by two of the men into the apartment off the passage of entrance, and laid upon a sort of stone bench projecting from one of the walls. The fatal shot had taken effect in his head, which was dreadfully disfigured, his face being so covered with gore, that not a feature was to be seen. From the appearance of the wound, the ball must have entered the left temple, whence the blood still flowed, and a large tumor had arisen above and behind it. Not

a doubt remained that it had lodged in the brain.

Nothing could equal Cleaver's agitation and distress. He called loudly for water, which the alert Bill Handy ran off to fetch, and soon returned with a pitcher full. Cleaver immediately proceeded to wash away the blood; and, as he was occupied in bathing the wound, he remarked, with a faint expression of hope, that he thought his Lordship still breathed. He persisted with the cold application, and as he did so, Lord Eaglesholme fetched a deep sigh, and slowly opening his almost glazed eye, he looked languidly up in the face of the operator. Believing the wound to be so serious as he did, Cleaver naturally applied the wet handkerchief to it with great tenderness; but after he had got the blood thoroughly cleansed away from the spot, he looked narrowly into it for a moment, and suddenly relaxing the serious distress of his countenance, he jumped up, and began dancing about like a madman, waving the wet handkerchief round his head, and shouting out,—“ Hurrah! he's alive!—alive and well!—'tis nothing but a scratch—a mere scratch—hurrah!”

Cleaver, though no surgeon, had seen wounds enough in his time, and the close inspection he had given that of Lord Eaglesholme, convinced him that the ball had not penetrated the skull, but that striking sideways upon the projecting bone immediately over the temple, and without entering much deeper than the skin, it had turned round beneath it, and lodged in the muscles above the ear, which accounted for the immense swelling that had at first produced so alarming an appearance. The important point now seemed to be to stop the bleeding. Bill Handy immediately thought of the smuggler's recipe, and again running down to the vault, he brought up a flask of brandy, and one handkerchief being steeped in it and applied to the wound, they used another to bind up his head. A few drops of the spirits were administered internally, and Lord Eaglesholme began to revive, and even to sit up.

The first words he uttered were in a faint and languid voice, and were incomprehensible to those about him. But after his eye had rested for a moment on Cleaver, who was still hanging over him with great anxiety, he seemed to make an effort to recall preceding events, and the work-

ing of his countenance showed that the recollection of them was gradually returning upon him.

“Where is she?” inquired he, with extreme eagerness—“where is Eliza Malcolm?—is she safe?”

“Make yourself easy, my Lord,” said Cleaver, “she is safe, and in the apartment above—our chief solicitude has been about you!”

“Thank God!” exclaimed Lord Eaglesholme, clasping his hands, and looking energetically upwards—“thank God, she is safe! I beseech you, let my eyes be gladdened with the certainty of her preservation.”

“My Lord,” said Cleaver, “you may easily imagine that Miss Malcolm must be in great agitation and alarm; and your own faintness renders it, perhaps, necessary for your safety, that you should remain quiet for a little time. The emotions produced by such a meeting at present might even be fatal to you, and would certainly be highly injurious to both.”

“Fatal to me!” said Lord Eaglesholme.—“What is my worthless existence?—to myself, certainly nothing—but to her—” added he, after a short pause—“aye, I would not willingly relinquish it, until I shall have done her justice

myself—until I shall see justice done her by others. I thank you, Captain Cleaver, for your kind consideration about me; but you cannot now afford me a more efficacious medicine, than the tender embrace of my dear child—my dear Eliza!”

“ My Lord,” said Cleaver, “ Miss Malcolm, after all she has undergone, must require some little preparation for a meeting pregnant with strong emotions—I will go to her alone.” And, taking a torch from one of the bystanders, he walked quietly up the winding-stair, leading to the place where he had left her.

Having peeped through the narrow passage in the wall opening into the vaulted chamber, the first object that presented itself under the flashing of the torch, was the dead body of the wretch, whose pistols had so nearly terminated both Lord Eaglesholme’s life and his own. He lay stretched across the stone floor, his hand still clenching that sword, so lately wielded with furious courage against him,—the gaping wound in his side having poured out the whole tide of life. Crimes must have sat on his conscience, for the determined purpose of his soul, never to be taken

alive, was strongly expressed in his set teeth, and expanded lips, as well as in his strained eye-balls, still glaring as the light fell upon them. Cleaver, accustomed as he had been to scenes of death, could not contemplate the features of this ruffian, who had fallen by his hand, without a certain degree of horror. It immediately occurred to him, that if he felt the sight disagreeable, it must necessarily be still more revolting in the eyes of Miss Malcolm. He looked round, and observing a low doorway leading into a small vaulted chamber behind him, he hastily dragged the dead body thither, and deposited it out of view.

Having again returned, he raised his torch to permit the light to penetrate into the farther extremity of the apartment, when it discovered to him the lady seated, and half reclining within an arched recess in the farther wall, and with her head concealed in a part of her drapery. She was in the deepest distress. Not only were her sobs audible, but their short convulsive motions were visible through the mantle enveloping her form. Cleaver approached her with all the delicacy the circumstances demanded.

“Madam,” said he, “I fear you have been

much alarmed by the conflict. But be comforted, I beseech you. Your enemies are defeated, and you are now amongst your friends. Suffer me to lead you from a place which must have so many horrors for you. Though I am a stranger to you, there is one below, in whom you are probably more interested than for any other human being."

He had no sooner pronounced these words, than the lady started up, and discovered her face and person. Cleaver was dazzled with the extreme beauty of both, even though her features were clouded by the grief, the terror, and the suffering she had undergone.

"Is he then below?" demanded she, with a sudden emotion of joy, "Oh let me see him!"—and so saying, she endeavoured to rush past him to the doorway.

"Stay, lady, stay your haste for a moment," said Cleaver, "he is below; but I must warn you before you see him, not to be alarmed, for he has received a trifling wound, of no serious consequence to be sure; but it wears, at first sight, rather an alarming appearance."

"A wound!" exclaimed she, in a fainter tone,

“ Oh ! let me to him ! ” and darting past Cleaver, she hurried down the stair with so much rapidity, that he, not always so active as when he climbed the mound during the attack, had some difficulty in following her, and had she not by accident turned at first into a wrong apartment, he must have allowed her to announce herself. Having, however, by this means gained the doorway of the chamber where Lord Eaglesholme was, in sufficient time to precede her.

“ Miss Malcolm comes, my Lord ! ” said he almost out of breath.

Lord Eaglesholme’s countenance betrayed extreme emotion.

“ Where is he ? Oh tell me where he is ! ” exclaimed the lady as she hastily entered, and stood with her fair hair streaming in disorder, eagerly surveying every face in succession, and vainly trying to discover the object of her thoughts.—

“ Oh ! where is he ? ”

“ Here is Lord Eaglesholme, Madam,” said Cleaver.—“ Pray stand back a little, Macauley, my good fellow, and permit Miss Malcolm to behold her uncle.”

Lord Eaglesholme’s languid eyes, which had

received a temporary animation from the hope that gladdened them, darted through the intervening group, filled with all the tenderness with which they usually met those of his beloved niece. But they instantly recoiled from her who now appeared before him, and he betrayed symptoms of the most cruel disappointment.

“ Good Heavens !” exclaimed he, with extreme agitation, “ where is Eliza Malcolm ? can it be ? can we have been deceived ?”

“ Is not this Miss Malcolm, my Lord ?” inquired Cleaver, greatly surprised.

“ Miss Malcolm !” repeated Lord Eaglesholme in a tone of bitter mortification. “ But I beg your pardon, Captain Cleaver, you never saw her. But,” said he with great keenness, as if still flattered by a lingering hope, “ though you have been misled as to this person, she may still be confined somewhere within these walls. Let me go,” said he, making an effort to rise, “ I feel myself quite strong now—let me go to search for her myself.”

But his strength was only in idea, for so great was his weakness, that he had nearly fainted from the unavailing exertion he made.

“ I see,” said he—“ I see I have over-estimated my physical powers. But you, perhaps, Captain Cleaver ———”

“ My Lord,” said Cleaver, interrupting him—“ I will search every crevice within these walls—nay, every inch within the circuit of the moat, as if I were looking for a lost diamond: rest assured, that if the Castle of Moatmallard contains Miss Malcolm, I will find her.”

So calling Handy to him, and one or two others with lights, he proceeded up the broken stair to the top of the building, and beginning there, he examined every part of it, story by story, regularly downwards, peeping even into impossible places, and rummaging every nook and cranny; then diving into the subterraneous vaults, he sought the whole of their labyrinth, nay, even the ruins surrounding the court-yard did not escape him; but all without effect.

With a heavy foot, that, even from a distance, sounded ominously in Lord Eaglesholme’s ear, Cleaver returned to the apartment where he had left him.

“ Alas! you need not speak,” said his Lordship, surveying his countenance with a look of

despair; “ I already see in your face that you have been unsuccessful. Good Heavens ! what am I bound to suffer ! ”

— “ I am indeed sorry to say, my Lord, that Miss Malcolm has not been conveyed hither, or, if she was brought here at all, she must have been removed before we reached the place.”

“ But,” added he, “ let us inquire of this young woman what she knows. Pray, Ma’am, may I ask who you are ? and how did you come into such odd company ? ”

The unfortunate girl, whose style of dress was too splendid and gaudy for the ordinary attire of a lady, and whose beauty would not have disgraced the highest birth, had not her manners, and broad Scotch accent, betrayed her to be of low origin, had retired into a dark corner, and having wrapt herself up in the folds of her mantle, had hitherto remained absorbed in a sorrow of her own, and giving way to her grief without restraint. On being thus addressed, she slowly raised her head, and with her eyes streaming, and her hair hanging loosely dishevelled over her bosom—

“ Dinna ask me wha I am !—I was an honest

woman's honest bairn aince !—But noo," added she, after a pause, and shuddering as she spoke, " what am I ? Oh, I canna bear the thought !"

With these words, she hurriedly buried her face in her lap. And then again lifting it after a pause—

“ While he was wi' me and kind, while we rode the waves thegither in his bonny bark, my guilt was hidden beneath the silken fauld of the love I bore him. Even when his words fell sair upon my heart, they were his words, and though unkind, they were dearer to me than the soft breeze that blew us on our voyage. Oh, then, I thought na o' my faut ! But noo that he's gane—noo that a' is gane—noo that I am left like the widowed moor-hen on the hill, thoughts will come ower me—sad and stinging thoughts. The cup o' joy was sweet ; but 'twas a poisoned draught, and now its bitter dregs are workin' in my breast. Aince I sang lightly as the morning lark ; but that was when I was as innocent as her. Noo !—Oh to think on what I am noo, is mair than this poor head can stand !”

She pressed her hands forcibly to her forehead, as if her brain were bursting, and again

sinking her head between her knees, she drew her mantle over it, and gave way to the violence of her emotions.

The whole party were affected by her grief, and desirous to know who she was. One of Captain Macauley's sailors came forward, and told them in an under voice, that although, from the change in her dress and appearance, he had not at first recognised her, he now knew her to be the daughter of Mrs M'Claver, who had left her mother's house, inveigled away, as was supposed, by Brandywyn the smuggler.

The object now demanding their most immediate attention was the care of Lord Eaglesholme. Cleaver fortunately thought of a boat, kept by an honest farmer, whose house stood on the margin of the lake, about a quarter of a mile off. He had often borrowed it for his duck-shooting expeditions. He instantly dispatched Handy to get it ready. With some of the materials of the bales in the vault below, and with a ladder they found there, he managed in a few minutes to construct a tolerably easy litter, on which his Lordship was carried to the boat. He saw him put carefully and easily into it, and pro-

perly defended from the night air, and he sent Handy and some of his own men to row him across the lake to Eaglesholme Castle.

On his return to Moatmallard, he found that Captain Macauley had been occupying himself and his people in collecting the bodies of the slain, so that they might be interred next day, and in taking an inventory of the captured goods. Two of the smugglers were found dead in the stair leading to the vaults, but the rest had effected their escape through the broken arch by the ladder, which had lain concealed among the bales, and was left standing applied to the aperture. The wounded seamen were conveyed to the farmer's. Captain Macauley's men, well armed, were then left to guard the booty for the night, and having made all these dispositions, Cleaver and his friend prepared to return to Sanderson Mains.

But before doing so, they bethought them of the unfortunate Eppy M'Claver. They returned with lights to the apartment where they had left her, but she was no longer there. They ran over the whole of the keep of the Castle, and its adjacent ruins, with a care nothing short of that

bestowed by Cleaver in his search for Miss Malcolm. But all without effect—she was gone—whither no one could conjecture. But as they left the place by the causeway, her straw-hat, floating on the black waters of the lake, gave rise to the most dreadful suspicions respecting her.

The two friends returned to Sanderson Mains, as day was beginning to peep. Their first care was to rouse Dr Partenclaw. They found him fast asleep, entombed in the feather-bed, his face covered by his night-cap, his nose only erected above the snow-white bed-clothes, its fiery red, glowing with more than ordinary splendour from his late potations of rum, presenting the whimsical appearance of a beet-root tower, garnishing a dish of whipt cream. They found some difficulty in awaking him. But he no sooner understood that his attendance was required at Eaglesholme, than he began to move with very unwonted alacrity; to put on his clothes, and to call for Hippocrates with great eagerness.

Cleaver found some refreshment, and a warm drink, abundantly necessary after the ducking and fatigue he had undergone.