

LEGEND OF THE LAST GRANT OF
TULLOHCARRON.

IN my legend of yesternight, gentlemen, I think I told you, that one of Ballindalloch's yepespecial reasons for selecting the site he did, for his Peel Tower was the commanding view which he thence enjoyed all over the lands of Tullochcarron, lying above the fork of the Aven and the Spey, and which then belonged to another family of Grants, with whom he was liable to be frequently at dagger's drawing. It is of the last laird of Tullochcarron, that I am now going to tell you.

In the earlier part of his life, this laird of Tullochcarron lost a younger brother, who was killed while fighting bravely by his side, in a feudal skirmish with a former laird of Ballindalloch. Tullochcarron had a strong affection for this brother,

and would have been inconsolable for his death, had he not left an only son behind him, called Lachlan Dhu. Tullochcarron was then unmarried, and he therefore instantly transferred all that which had been his fraternal affection, to his orphan nephew. Accordingly, he set himself to nurture the boy with all the care and solicitude he could bestow, and with the full intention of making him his heir. But you are well enough aware, gentlemen, that yeddication in those days must have been a mere farce. Indeed, judging from the worthy Dame Julian Berner's Boke of St. Alban's, the which, I take it for granted, was the gentleman's *vade mecum* in its day, it was worse than a farce, nothing being taught there but hawking and hunting, and the mysteries thereof; as, for example, how to physic a sick falcon, and such like follies, with all the foolish vanities of coat armour, and the frivolities of fishing. Eh! I beg your pardon, Mr. Clifford! I see you are not just altogether pleased with that observe of mine. But I meant no offence,—as sure as death I did not. Where was I? Well,—as the lad, Lachlan Dhu, grew up, certain indications of an evil disposition began to manifest themselves, and these unpromi-

sing buds did so bourgeon through time, that after trying to prune away the wicked shoots that sprang from them, and finding, as is often the case, that they only sprouted forth the thicker and the stronger for the lopping, like the poisonous heads of the hydra, the good Tullochcarron found himself compelled to abandon his kind intentions towards the young man, so far as regarded the heirship. But he still continued to make his house his home, and likewise to show him all such kindness as an uncle might be expected to use towards a nephew.

Being thus disappointed in his views of a successor, the worthy man set himself to the serious consideration of another plan, and having cast his eyes about him, they fell upon a fair leddy, whom he resolved, with her consent, to make his wife, and accordingly, after a reasonable courtship, they were married. No couple could have been happier than they were, and his joy was, in due time, rendered complete by the birth of a son and heir, who was called Duncan. But, alas! what is yearthly felicity? Fleeting as the wintry sunbeam on a wall. His beloved wife died soon after the birth of her infant boy, whom she left as the only remaining hope of his family.

Lachlan Dhu had nearly reached manhood before his uncle's marriage, but Tullochcarron had taken especial care, from the very first, never to allow his nephew to know that he ever had any intention of leaving him the succession of his estate. There was therefore no ostensible cause for disappointment or jealousy in Lachlan. But the youth was sharp enough to have seen the position in which he had so long stood, and to have drawn his own conclusions ; and certain it was, that jealousy and disappointment did follow his uncle's marriage, and the birth of his cousin Duncan. But young though he might be, he was already so profound a master of the art of dissimulation, that he not only most perfectly concealed them, but he actually contrived to produce so great a seeming change for the better in his own character, that he gradually succeeded in verra much effacing the recollection of his former errors and iniquities from the memory of his kind and forgiving uncle.

Duncan Bane, as the young Tullochcarron was called from his fair complexion, was, in every respect a contrast to Lachlan Dhu, or Black Lachlan. Tullochcarron had committed his infant boy to be nursed and fostered by a respectable lady, a

distant relation of the family, who though low in circumstances, was high in piety and virtue. To this lady the infant Duncan opportunely came to supply the place of a child she had just then lost, and as the little fellow drew his nourishment from her bosom, all the strength of a mother's attachment fell in tender sorrow upon him; and he who never knew any other mother, repaid it with corresponding affection. Tullochcarron was too conscientious of the failure in his attempt at yeddication, in the instance of his nephew, to risk a repetition of it in the still more interesting case of his son. He therefore gladly left the tutoring of the boy to the care of his excellent nurse, who appears to have been as intellectually gifted as any woman of these barbarous times could have been. It is true that she must, in all probability, have been tinctured with some portion of the learning of Dame Julian. For, although nothing remains to establish that the young man had studied hawking and hunting,—the legend certainly informs us, that he had a complete knowledge of, and an ardent love for,—hum—ha—I would say for that art of which it would ill become me to speak disparagingly, seeing that we have had this evening so much reason to thank

Mr. Clifford, for having so ably and successfully exercised it. But—what was much better—under her godly care, the boy's heart was filled with all the best feelings of religion and humanity. He was amiable, generous, and kind-hearted, and ever ready on all occasions to sacrifice his own little interests to those of others; and he was so utterly devoid of guile himself, that he felt it almost impossible to imagine its existence in others. It was not wonderful, therefore, that he grew up with the warmest attachment to his cousin, Lachlan Dhu, who was the very prince of deceivers, and who well knew how to put on the mask of kindness. He allowed no opportunity of gaining his young cousin's affections to pass unprofitably, and so unremitting was his attention to the young Duncan, that he even succeeded in throwing sand into the eyes of old Tullochcarron himself, who began to thank Heaven for the happy change that had taken place on his nephew, and to trust that he might yet look to him as the future protector of his son's youth and inexperience, in the very probable event of his being called from this world before his boy had grown to the years of manhood.

But the old man was still a hale and hearty

carle, when his boy's seventeenth birthday came round. He had indeed been a marvellously stout and healthy man all his life. The only disease, indeed, with which he had ever been afflicted, was an almost insatiable appetite for food, which no endeavours of his own could restrain. It was a never ending ravenous hunger, for which the poor man was by no means morally responsible, and from the gnawing effects of which he must have died, if it had not been frequently and largely administered to. Nor did he ask for dainties, although there certainly was one species of food which he preferred to all others when he could get it in its season, and that was—salmon. Tulloch-carron's complaint, as you may very naturally conceive, grew with his growth, which was immense, and increased with every additional year that he lived. But, old as he was, and enormous as he became in bulk, his great strength remained unimpaired, and he was still able to move about with wonderful activity in the superintendance of his concerns.

I have already told you, that although he and Ballindalloch were not at absolute war, yet there did exist between them that ancient grudge and

jealousy, left by the ill-salved, though apparently bandaged up wounds of a peace, patched together when both parties had suffered too much to continue the war. And although the then existing Ballindalloch was not the man in whose reign and under whose attack Tullochcarron's much-loved brother had fallen, yet those were times in which the son was made answerable for his father's sins. The then laird of Ballindalloch, therefore, succeeded to all that secret animosity which his father had so industriously laboured to earn. Thus, as one might say, the military precaution, as well as the civil management of Tullochcarron's little kingdom, required an active superintendance and administration. But although he now scrupled not to employ his nephew in all duties where he thought his services might be useful to him, and although he had even begun of late to give occasional occupation to his son, yet, as they used to say in those days, he was *aye upon the head of his own affairs himself*, watched every thing with his own eye, and gave every order of importance from his own mouth.

Lachlan Dhu, then, having but little else in which to employ himself, spent most of his time in

the chase, and the venison which he slew was always sure to procure him a blessing from his hungry uncle. As for Duncan Bane, his whole attention was directed to fishing, and the salmon which he caught were always sure to be more highly prized than the best buck that his cousin ever brought from the forest. In strict attention to the fact, as well as in justice to the character of the youth himself, I must tell you, that the desire of procuring savoury dishes for his father, to whom his devoted attachment was excessive, was one great reason, as well as in some measure an apology,—that is, I mean, a-a to say, Mr. Clifford, if fishing ever required any apology at all, which I must confess, your excellent salmon of this day hath led me verra much to doot; I say it was a good reason for his following out that quieter sort of sport, instead of that of the chase, which some of your wild Nimrods would look upon as by much the more active and manly. But I must likewise inform you, that there was also a secondary cause that contributed to make him prefer this occupation to all others. This cause, you will doubtless consider of inferior strength to the other; but still it is a cause which is in itself supposed by many to

be very powerful in some of its effects; the cause I mean was—love.

Anna Gordon was the eldest of three orphans who were left to the care of their aunt, who was the vurra lady whom I have already introduced to you as the nurse and female preceptor of the youth Duncan Bane. Anna was but a year younger than the young laird of Tullochcarron. They had grown up together, and had loved one another like companions until their attachment insensibly assumed a warmer character. The penury to which the Gordons and their aunt had been reduced by circumstances, had hitherto induced Duncan to keep the mutual passion that subsisted between him and Anna a secret from his father, who never ceased to talk of some splendid alliance for his son as one of his most favourite schemes. But as this love of the young man for the lady waxed stronger, his fondness for fishing was most strangely and marvellously augmented in a similar proportion. Were I to attempt to guess at the cause of this whimsical combination of two predilections apparently so inconsistent with one another, I should say, that he began daily more and more to take to fishing, because it furnished him

with an apology for more frequently visiting his nurse's cottage, that was situated on a beautifully wooded knoll rising on the north bank of the river Aven. It was, moreover, an amusement which he could pursue without losing the society of her he loved. For as he loitered along the river's bank with his angle-rod in his hand, Anna Gordon was ever at his side; and I am doubting much that they wasted many a good hour in idle talk rather than in fishing. But I am no more than the simple historian of their tale, therefore it is no business of mine to defend either him or her from the charge which you will of necessity bring against both of them for such a mis-spending of their precious time. However, I'm thinking, gentlemen, that they must have had some peculiar pleasure in one another's conversation, or they never would have stolen secretly away thus by them-two-selves, as they were continually wont to do, even escaping from Anna's little sister and brother. The boy, poor little fellow, had been born deaf and dumb, and could have understood no other language but that of the eyes; and let me tell you, gentlemen, that learned as I am in tongues, both ancient and modern, that is one of which I must confess my-

self to have no knowledge, though they do say that there is much eloquence in it when it is rightly comprehended. It was not always an easy matter to *jink* these two children, for Duncan Bane had been so kind to both of them, especially to the poor dumb boy, that wherever he went, they ran after him like two *penny doggies*; and as he had too much good feeling in his composition to allow him to treat them harshly, he was often obliged to steal their sister Anna away from them when he wished to have a private saunter with her.

The lovers had one day escaped from them and all the world in this manner, for Duncan was anxiously desirous to be alone with Anna, that he might learn from her why it was that her fair brow wore an unwonted cloud upon it, and why her large blue eyes seemed to have been dimmed by recent tears. He was impatient till they reached a grove by the river's side, which was their ordinary place of retreat, when they wished to be free from all vulgar or prying eyes.

“Anna,” said the youth, the moment they had got within its shade, “something unpleasant has befallen thee; though thy face cannot be robbed

of its loveliness, yet it wants to-day that smile which is wont to be the sunshine of my heart."

"I must try to call it up, then," said she, with an effort to be playful that could not be mistaken. "I would not have thy heart chill if I can help it."

"Nay, but I entreat thee to tell me what has vexed thee, my love!" said he tenderly. "If I cannot relieve thy distress, let me at least share it with thee!"

"I would fain tell thee, Duncan," replied she, for I would fain shut up no secrets from thee in that heart which is so entirely thine—but——

"But what, my dearest?" cried Duncan impatiently; "do not keep me longer in suspense. There ought, indeed, to be no secrets with either of us that are not shared between us."

"There never shall be any on my part," said Anna, throwing down her eyes. "And yet—and yet I have much difficulty in uttering what I would now tell thee."

"Keep me on the rack no longer, my love, I beseech thee!" said Duncan.

"I *will* take courage to tell thee, then," said she, "but thou must first give me a solemn promise."

“What! of secrecy?” said Duncan. “Methinks thou mayest safely enough trust to me in that respect.”

“The promise I would exact of thee goes somewhat beyond that of mere secrecy,” said she gravely. “Thou must promise me that thou will not *act* upon what I have to tell thee, but in such manner as prudence may permit me to sanction.”

“And dost thou think, my Anna,” replied Duncan, “that I could ever do, or desire to do, any thing that thou couldst wish me not to do?”

“But promise me, solemnly promise me!” said Anna, persevering with unwonted eagerness in her demand; “do promise me, I entreat thee!”

“Well, well, I do promise thee,—thus solemnly promise thee,” replied Duncan, kissing the hand which he held. “And now, come! relieve my anxiety,—what is this gloomy secret? This is the first time I have seen traces of tears in thine eyes since the death of the poor thrush I gave thee.”

“The present matter is somewhat more serious,” said Anna, with a gravity and dignity of manner which he had never seen her assume before. “Your cousin, Lachlan Dhu, dared this morning to address me in odious terms, which he called

love. I answered him with a scorn and a reproof which I had hardly believed my young, weak, and untaught tongue could have used to one of his mauhood. But the Blessed Virgin lent me language; and he stood so abashed before me, that I trust I have reason to hope that he will not again dare to repeat his offence."

"My cousin, Lachlan!" exclaimed Duncan, overwhelmed with astonishment. "My cousin, Lachlan, didst thou say? Did my ears hear thee aright? Impossible!"

"I grieve to say it is too true," said Anna Gordon.

"Oh! villain, villain!" cried Duncan. "Most deep and consummate villain! Can so much apparent goodness be but the mask of deceit and villainy? But—I must straightway question him! I will drag him from the disguise which he wears—and—and then!"

"Remember that solemn promise which you have this moment made to me," said Anna, calmly taking his hand. "You see how wise it was in me to secure it. To be the innocent cause of awakening feud between kinsmen of blood so near, would indeed be a heavy affliction to me; and

were any of that blood to be spilled—were thy blood to flow—but thou must keep thy solemn engagement to me ; and thou must now pledge me thy word, that never till I give thee leave to do so, wilt thou, even by a look, discover to any one what I have now told thee.”

“ Anna,” said Duncan, after some little hesitation, “ I will promise you what you desire ; but my promise is given on the faith of a counter-pledge, which I now expect to have from thee. Promise me, on thy part, that no such cause of offence shall be again offered to thee that thou dost not instantly tell me of it.”

“ My present frankness should be my best pledge that I will do as thou wouldst have me,” said Anna. “ But the promise thou hast given me must then be held as consequently renewed.”

“ I am content,” said Duncan. “ I am content to trust that you will not tie me down too rigidly.”

Guileless as Duncan Bane naturally was, he felt it no easy task to commence and to carry on a train of dissimulation with one with whom he had been on terms of open and unreserved intercourse of mind from his childhood, as I may say, save on the one subject of his love alone. Duncan dread-

ed that the very next meeting he should have with his cousin, would throw him off his guard. He, therefore, proceeded forthwith to school himself as to the face and manner he should wear, and the words he should utter ; and so successfully did he do so in his own judgment, that, after the first interview with his cousin was over, he congratulated himself, that the deep dissatisfaction which he secretly felt had been entirely shrouded from him who had excited it. And certainly, whether it was so or not, the crafty Lachlan Dhu gave him no reason to believe that it was discovered.

It was on the vurra night after this, however, that the Laird of Ballindalloch was seated in the cap-house of the great round tower of the castle he had so lately built, engaged in some confidential talk with his faithful henchman, Ian Grant, when his favourite old sleuth-hound, that lay beside his chair, raised up his long heavy ears, and growled ; and soon afterwards a step was heard ascending the narrow screw stair leading to the small apartment where they were.

“ See who is there, Ian,” said the laird, in answer to a gentle tap at the door.

Ian obeyed ; and on opening it, one of the do-



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GRANT OF TULLOHCARRON.

see page 78, Vol. II.

mestics appeared to announce, that a stranger, who refused to tell his name, had been brought, at his own request, to the castle guard-room, having expressed a wish to be admitted to a private conference with the laird."

"A stranger demands to have an interview with me after the watch is set, and yet refuses to tell who or what he is!" cried Ballindalloch. "By Saint Peter, but this smells of treachery, methinks! Yet let him appear, we fear him not: let him appear, I say," repeated he, waving off the attendant. "Ian," continued he after the man was gone, "look that your dirk be on your thigh."

"My dirk is here, sir, and sharp," readily replied the henchman, as he moved towards the door, and planted himself beside it, to be prepared to strike, if any sudden emergency should require him to do so.

Again steps were heard ascending the stair—the door opened—and the door-way was filled by the bulky figure of a man, whose dark features were almost entirely hid by a blue Kelso bonnet of more than ordinary breadth, and the ample web of a large hill-plaid, of the red Grant tartan, put on as Highlanders know how to do when they

would fain conceal themselves, completely enveloped the whole of his figure, as well as the lower part of his face, leaving little more visible than the tip of his nose and his dark moustachios. For some moments he stood silent before Ballindalloch.

“ Speak !” said the laird at length. “ Thy name and thine errand at this untimeous hour !”

“ Ballindalloch,” replied the stranger, looking around him, and glancing at Ian, “ thou shalt have both incontinently, but it must be in thine own particular ear alone.”

“ Leave us then, Ian,” said Ballindalloch, waving him away, whilst at the same time he stretched forth his hand to lift his claymore within easier reach of the place where he sat. “ Leave us I say, Ian ! I would be private with this stranger.”

“ Uve! uve!” said Ian under his breath—then he moved—hesitated—shrugged his shoulders—looked at the stranger as if he would have penetrated him, plaid and all, to the very soul—then he shifted his position—yet still he did not quit the chamber, but stood and threw an imploring look of remonstrance towards the laird.

“ Begone, Ian !” said Ballindalloch in a voice

of impatience; and Ian at last vanished at the word.

“ Sir stranger !” said Ballindalloch, “ I hope I may now ask thee to rid me of all this mystery.”

“ I am most ready to do so, Ballindalloch,” said the other, laying aside his bonnet and plaid, and showing himself, to all appearance, entirely unarmed.

“ Lachlan Dhu Grant of Tullochcarron !” exclaimed the laird with astonishment, “ what stirring errand has moved thee hither at such an hour ?”

“ I come to thee but on peaceful private conference,” replied Lachlan Dhu, with a respectful obeisance; “ and I use this secrecy, because it is for the interest of both of us, that what I have to treat of should reach no other ears but our own.”

“ Proceed,” said Ballindalloch, “ thou mayest speak safely here, for in this place we are beyond all ear-shot.”

“ I need not tell thee, Ballindalloch,” continued Lachlan Dhu, “ I need not tell thee, I say, that which is sufficiently notour to all, that mine uncle, old Tullochcarron’s patrimony would have been mine as a fair succession, had he not married on purpose to disappoint me.”

“ I know this much,” said Ballindalloch, not altogether dissatisfied to see something like discontent in what he naturally held to be the enemy’s camp. “ Perhaps thou hast had but scrimp justice in this matter.”

“ Justice !” exclaimed Lachlan Dhu, catching eagerly at his words. “ Justice ! I have been deeply wronged. Bred up and cockered by the old man for a time as his successor, as if it had been with the very intent of throwing me the more cruelly off, and rendering the blasting of my hopes the more bitter, from the very fairness of those blossoms which his pretended warmth of affection had fostered !”

“ ’Twas not well done in the old man,” said Ballindalloch ; “ but now, methinks, ’tis past all cure.”

“ Nay,” said Lachlan Dhu sternly, “ I hope there is yet ample room for remede.”

“ As how, I pr’ythee ?” said Ballindalloch.

“ Mark me, and thou shalt quickly learn,” said Lachlan Dhu. “ But first of all I must tell thee, that I now come to offer myself to thee as thy vassal, on this simple condition, that thou wilt

give me thine aid and countenance against all questioners to help me to keep what shall be mine own after I shall have fairly won it."

"And how dost thou propose to win it?" demanded Ballindalloch, with a grave and serious air that seemed to argue a most attentive consideration of a proposal in itself so inviting to him.

"By secretly ridding myself of mine uncle's sickly stripling boy, whenever favouring fortune may yield me fitting opportunity," replied Lachlan Dhu, approaching his head nearer to Ballindalloch, and sinking his voice to a low sepulchral tone, and with a coolness that might have befitted a practised murderer.

"What!" exclaimed Ballindalloch, with an air of surprise. "What hath the youth done to deserve so much of thy hatred?"

"Twice hath he crossed my path," continued Lachlan Dhu, his features blackening, and his dark eye-balls rolling as he spoke. "He hath twice crossed my path; first, when he came into this world, and now a second time by thwarting me in my love."

"And what have I to do with all this?" demanded Ballindalloch.

“ Much,” replied Lachlan Dhu, earnestly. “ I am now thy sworn vassal. The feudal superiority of Tullochcarron will henceforth ensure to thee friendship and strength, where thou hast long had to deal with open or secret foes, and”——

“ Thou speakest as if thou wert already Laird of Tullochcarron,” said Ballindalloch, interrupting him.

“ That young *foulmart* once disposed of, I soon shall be,” said Lachlan Dhu, with fiend-like expression. “ Mine uncle’s time cannot now be long, even were nature left to take its course ; or,—it may be shortened. Sudden death to a man of his gross form and *purpled* habit could never seem strange—and then”——

“ True,” said Ballindalloch calmly ; “ but how can I aid thee in thy scheme ?”

“ I lack no present aid while I have this arm,” replied Lachlan Dhu ; “ it is the support and defence of thy faithful vassal, Lachlan Dhu Grant, Laird of Tullochcarron, that I require of thee, if unhappily some unlucky circumstance should awaken idle suspicions against him.”

“ I trust I shall always know how to defend my vassals,” said Ballindalloch proudly.

“ Then am I safe,” said Lachlan Dhu ; “ but in the meanwhile secrecy is essential to our purpose.”

“ I hope I have prudence enough to know how to conduct myself in all cases of delicacy,” replied Ballindalloch.

“ ’Tis well,” said Lachlan Dhu, again folding his plaid around him, and putting on his bonnet. “ Now I must begone ; for time presses. Farewell ! I shall trust to thee, and thou mayest trust to me.”

“ I shall not forget what is due to thee, when thou art my vassal,” said the laird, “ nor shall I ever forget what ought at all times to be expected from Ballindalloch. Here !—Ian Dhu !—See this stranger safe beyond the walls and outposts.”

The night I speak of seemed to be quite pregnant with strange visitations ; for, at a still later hour, after old Tullochcarron had himself seen that the guard at the barbican of his small place of strength was on the alert, and had secured the iron doors of the entrance of the peel tower, and had finally retired to his apartment to go to rest, he was surprised to see a packet lying on his table, of which no one of his attendants could give him any account. It was tied with a morsel of ribbon, the

ends of which were secured with wax, but without any impression. It was simply addressed :—

“ To Tullochcarron.”

And on cutting it open, he found that it contained the following letter, with a broad seal at the end of it.

“ Tullochcarron,—I write this private communication, to tell thee that thou hast a traitor in thy house, that thou dost nourish a viper in thy bosom that would sting thee. The life of thine only son is certain to be taken, if thou dost not secure it by the instant seizure of thy nephew, Lachlan Dhu. Thine own murder will speedily follow. The cold-blooded villain came to me secretly under the cloud of this night, and did unfold his devilish plans, offering to me the feudal superiority of thy lands of Tullochcarron, provided I should protect him as my vassal against all after question. I seemed to listen, and yet I evited direct promise ; and I now hasten to certiorate thee of these facts through ane trusty messenger, who engages, by certain means best known to himself, to have these placed upon thine own private table before thou sleepest. This traitorie is as yet alone known to thee, to me, to the foul faitour who planned, and

to the devil who prompted it. And that thou mayest have no doubt left in thee of the truth of what I have here written, I do hereto affix my sign-manual, as well as the seal, the which is attached to the last instrument of pacification that passed between our houses.—Ballindalloch.”

You may conceive, gentlemen, that this letter, read alone, at midnight in his chamber, dreadfully alarmed old Tullochcarron. He started from the large oaken chair in which he had seated himself to peruse it, and snatching his lamp, he rushed to his son's apartment, where he held up the light, and gazed with fear and trembling on his son's couch, almost expecting to see his boy foully murdered, and weltering in his blood. Stretched on his bed, he did indeed find him; but his eyes were closed in the sweet slumbers that attend the pillow of pure and spotless youth. He gazed on him in silent anxiety for some time, till he was really certain that he breathed; and then the old man's lip quivered, and his eyes were dimmed by the big drops that rapidly distilled over his eyelids. Stooping gently down, he kissed Duncan's cheek, and then quitting the room upon tiptoe, he called up an old and tried domestic.

“Hamish,” said he “I had a strange and troubled dream, as I dozed in mine arm-chair.”

“Thou didst sup somewhat of the heaviest, Tullochcarron, replied Hamish.—“After so many pounds’ weight of salmon, ’tis but little wonder if the foul hag on her night mare should have been riding over and over thee.”

“Psha!” said Tullochcarron in a vexed tone and manner that showed he was too seriously affected to be trifled with.—“My dream touched the safety of thy young master. Hark ye! I bid thee watch his couch, and let no one approach it with impunity.”

“My young master!” said Hamish with energy. These grey hairs shall be trodden under foot ere the latch of his door shall be touched.”

I know thy fidelity,” said Tullochcarron. “Be sure thou givest me the alarm if aught extraordinary should occur.”

Having taken this hasty precaution, the old laird of Tullochcarron again seated himself in his arm-chair to read over for the second time the alarming communication he had received. Ballindalloch’s name and seal were the first things his eyes rested on after opening it. Doubts and suspicions instantly flashed across his mind.

“What a silly fool am I after all,” said he, “to let any information from such a quarter so agitate me! What truth is to be expected from a house so full of hereditary enmity against mine of Tullochcarron! And is not Lachlan Dhu the son of that very brother of mine who worked so much sore evil to the house of Ballindalloch? And is he not at this moment the best, the stoutest, and the sharpest arrow I have in my quiver? And are not these reasons enough to prompt such a secret enemy to urge me to whet my knife against him? Dull old idiot that I was! but now I see it all!—I see it all!—What a trap was I about to run my head into!—But stay, let me think what is best to be done. Prudent precautions with regard to my son can do no harm. I shall put him well on his guard; and that secured, the best thing I can do is to bury the contents of this paper in mine own bosom.”

With such determinations as these, Tullochcarron retired to rest; but his repose was disturbed and put to flight by visions which were not altogether to be laid to the account of the heavy meal he had taken ere he retired to rest. He was early visited by his son Duncan.

“Father,” said the young man, “how was it that old Hamish took post in my chamber last night? I found him sitting by my bed-side at day-break this morning, and all the explanation I could extract from him was that he had the laird’s orders for being there.”

“He had my orders, my dear boy,” said Tullochcarron, pressing his son to his bosom, and kissing his forehead. “A strange dream had come over me, that alarmed my foolish old heart about thy safety.”

“A dream about me!” said the young man smiling, “What harm couldst thou dread for me, father?”

“I dreamed that thy life was threatened, boy,” said his father; and therefore it was that I made Hamish watch thee.”

“My life in danger, father!” exclaimed Duncan, “and from whose hand?”

“From the hand of thy cousin Lachlan Dhu,” replied his father: “Hast thou any cause to dread that my dream might have aught of reality in it?”

“My cousin Lachlan Dhu!” exclaimed Duncan, with unfeigned surprise—“Nay,” continued

he, after some little hesitation, during which he remembered the promise he had given to Anna Gordon : " why should I think that Lachlan should wish to injure me ? "

" *Why should we think it, indeed ?* " exclaimed the old man, with considerable emotion : " Both I and mine should look for any thing but hostility from Lachlan Dhu, if there be any faith or gratitude left in man. Let us then think no more about it. "

" Trust me, I shall think no more of it, " said Duncan.

" Aye ! " said the old man again ; " but yet I'd have thee to be cautious. I would entreat thee to guard thyself as if there were danger. Thou hast a dirk and a hand to use it, boy ! Thou hast a claymore and an arm that can wield it ; and though thou art as yet but a stripling, still thou art the son of old Tullochcarron ! But let faithful Hamish be thy constant henchman, and then my heart will be at ease. "

" I will defend mine own head as a true Tullochcarron should do, if dirk or steel can do it ; " said the youth energetically, and by no means relishing the idea of his motions being watched, and

his person eternally haunted by an attendant. "But I have nothing to fear, and Hamish might be better employed than in following me in all my idle wanderings."

Duncan thought with himself that he had perhaps better grounds for entertaining some suspicion of evil intentions against him on the part of his kinsman, than any which a dream could have afforded to his father; and yet we must not wonder, gentlemen, that, in such superstitious times, old Tullochcarron's alleged vision had also its own effect upon the young man, when taken in combination with that strange new light that had recently opened on his cousin's character. The gallant youth was above all fear, however; but he had prudence enough to resolve to expose himself to no unnecessary danger. As to old Hamish, Duncan thought it better to gratify his father, by allowing that faithful servant to be his companion at all times, save and except only when he went to meet her, of his attachment to whom he still thought it wise to keep Tullochcarron ignorant. Then, indeed, the God of Love inspired him with so much ingenuity in escaping from his attendant, that he baffled every attempt at discovery.

It was upon one of these occasions, when he had an especial wish to have an hour or two of private talk with Anna Gordon, that he, in the first place, contrived to escape from old Hamish, and afterwards to steal her from her dumb brother and little sister. Away tripped the pair together, laughing, and rejoicing in their own cleverness. Duncan had his angle-rod in his hand, but he wandered with Anna through the groves, by the margin of the Aven, without ever thinking of casting a line into its waters. The subject of their conversation was one of peculiar interest to both of them, for Duncan had sought this interview, for the purpose of informing her, that, from certain circumstances which had recently occurred, he was led to believe that their secret attachment might now be safely divulged to the old laird his father, in the hope that he might be brought to consent to the speedy solemnization of their marriage. The time they spent together was by no means short, though to them it appeared as trifling. At length they found out that it *was* time to part; and a more than usually lingering parting took place between them on the top of that *vurra* high and precipitous crag, where now rests the northern extremity of the

noble bridge that spans the river Aven above Balindalloch. When they did at last sever from each other, Anna took her way homeward by a footpath leading up the river through the thick oak copsewood that covered the ground behind it, and clustered to the very brink of the precipice where she left Duncan.

The young man stood entranced with his own happy thoughts for a moment after Anna had disappeared, and then bethinking him that he must hasten to make the best use of the time that now remained, if he would not return empty-handed to his father, he stood on the verge of the cliff, eyeing the stream below, and thoroughly occupied in preparing his tackle with all manner of expedition, previous to descending by a circuitous way to the water's edge to commence his sport. He was alone, as you may think, gentlemen; but there was an evil eye that watched him with the tiger's lurid and unvarying gaze, aye, with such a gaze as the tiger's fiery orbs assume, when he has slowly and silently tracked his unconscious prey through all the mazes of the jungle, till he at last beholds it within his reach. As the head of the traitor, Lachlan Dhu, appeared from the thicket, within

three paces of the spot where young Tullochcarron stood, a fiendish smile of eager triumph gave a hellish expression to its features. It was but one desperate spring. One piercing shriek was uttered by the unhappy Duncan Bane, and in one instant his lifeless corse was floating, shattered and bleeding, on the crystal stream of the Aven.

That scream was heard by Anna Gordon, and from the moment it entered into her ears, it never left her mind. As it reached her, she happened to be passing round a turn of the river some little way above, whence the fatal crag was still visible.

“ Merciful saints !” she cried, as she turned quickly round, “ that was my Duncan’s voice !”

She caught one instantaneous glimpse of the figure of Lachlan Dhu, as he fled from the summit of the crag. A dreadful suspicion shot across her mind. Winged by her agonizing terrors, she flew back to the spot where she had parted with Duncan. There she met the poor dumb boy, her brother, pulling his little sister along by the arm. No sooner did he behold Anna, than with a wild animation of countenance, and with gesture so expressive, that no one but a creature deprived of the power of language could have employed, he imi-

tated the action of one person pushing another over the face of the cliff, and then he ran down the path that followed the course of the stream. Anna rushed frantically after him; and when she had reached the margin of the Aven, her eyes rested on the lifeless corse of her beloved, which had been carried by the eddying current into a little quiet nook, where it lay half-stranded on a grassy bank.

It happened that old Hamish, who as usual had been anxiously seeking his young master, came a few moments afterwards accidentally to the same spot; and what a spectacle did he behold! Seated on the bank by the water's edge, was the wretched Anna Gordon, with her lover's mangled and bleeding head upon her knee. Her eyes were fixed upon its livid and gory features, as if they had been gazing on vacancy. Not a tear flowed, not a groan nor a sigh was uttered. A monumental group could not have been more motionless or silent. Hamish was distracted. He tried to make her speak; for altogether ignorant of the powerful cause of interest which operated upon her, he viewed her but as an idle spectator, an indifferent person, from whom he anxiously desired to extract

something that might enable him to guess as to how this dreadful calamity had occurred. His questions were rapid, urgent, and incessant; but still she minded him not, until he bent forward as if to attempt to lift the body from her knee. Then it was, that turning round with all the frenzied dignity of fixed insanity, she fastened the severe gaze of her unsettled eyes upon him, and spoke in a tone that froze his very heart.

“ Begone, old man!” said she, “ begone. What! wouldst thou rob me of my love on our bridal day? He is mine! he is mine! But hush,” said she, suddenly lowering her voice and changing her expression, “ hush! he sleeps! He slumbers sweetly now. But he will awake anon with smiles, and then our bridal revels will begin. Go, go, old man! go, bid the guests! Bid all!—bid all, I tell thee!—bid all, but—but—the murderer!” A shrill shriek, graduating into a violent hysterical laugh, followed these wild wandering words; and a convulsion shook her delicate frame, till she fainted away, as if life itself had fled from her.

I must leave this heart-rending scene, gentle-

men, to tell you what soon afterwards took place in the old peel-tower of Tullochcarron.

“What!” exclaimed the laird, as he was in the act of sitting down to one of those many meals which the craving of his naturally enormous appetite rendered so essentially necessary for him. “What!” said he, “still no salmon? Hath Duncan not yet returned, then? Why, methinks the boy must have tynd his luck altogether. But I trow that the fish have lost the way into our waters, they are so rare to be seen. Ha! who comes there with haste so impatient? Is it thou, Lachlan Dhu?”

“Alas, uncle!” cried the murderer, rushing in without his bonnet, and with a frantic air, “alas, uncle! alas! alas! Duncan! Duncan!”

“What—what of Duncan?” exclaimed the anxious and alarmed father, starting from the table.

“Duncan,” cried the traitor, “my poor cousin Duncan is no more!”

“What! Duncan? Villain! accursed villain! you lie,” cried the old man half-distracted, and grappling his nephew by the throat with his powerful gripe. “You lie, most accursed villain!”

“ Alas ! alas ! I wish I did ! ” said Lachlan Dhu, with feigned sorrow. “ But I grieve to say that what I tell is, alas, too true. I was walking accidentally by the banks of the Aven, about a bow-shot above the high craig, when, on looking towards it, I beheld him standing carelessly on the very brink of the cliff; and whether it was that his foot had tripped upon some of those roots that scramble for a sustenance over the surface of the rock, or whether some sudden gust of wind had caught him, I know not; but I saw him fall head-long thence; and after being dashed horribly against the projecting points below, I could perceive his inanimate body borne off by the stream. Wild with despair, and scarcely knowing what I was doing, I ran directly home hither to tell thee the doleful news; and”——

“ Villain ! ” shouted the old man, in a voice like thunder. “ Villain ! thou art his murderer. Seize him, and drag him hence to the dungeon. He hath reft me of my boy ! my only hope on earth ! the solace of my old age ! Oh, fool ! fool ! Why did I not take the well-meant warning ? Oh ! I am now indeed bereft ! But his murderer must die ere the sun goes down. Where is Ha-

mish? He at least should have been at my poor Duncan's side!"

At that moment Hamish himself entered. He whose hypocritical acting I have just described, had taken so long to prepare it for exhibition, that this old and faithful attendant had had full time to procure help to carry his young master's remains, and had now come on before the body, with the well-meant intention of breaking the afflicting intelligence as easily as he could to the bereaved father. He had been relieved of the task, as I have already told you; and the sad news had spread so, that all the vassals and dependants within reach had crowded to meet the body of their beloved Duncan Bane. The woful wail of the pipes was heard at a distance. The old laird became dreadfully agitated. The sound drew nearer. Tullochcarron bit his nether lip, clenched his hands, and wound himself up to go through with the trying scene as he felt that Tullochcarron should do. He put on his bonnet with energy, wrapped his plaid tight around him, and descended with a resolute step into the court-yard. The clang of the pipes became louder; and yet a louder crash of their rude music burst forth, as they passed inwards from

beneath the arched gateway. The old man strode two or three steps forcibly forwards, with his eyes fixed upon the spot where the rush of human figures came squeezing in. At length his sight fell on the bloody corse of his murdered son, his only earthly hope; and he became rooted to the ground he stood on.

And now a light airy figure appeared tripping fantastically beside the bier with her hair fancifully wreathed up with worthless weeds. She came dancing towards the old laird with gay smiles upon her face, and threw herself upon her knee before him.

“Thy blessing, father! thy blessing!” said she, “we come to crave thy blessing, father! and now,” continued she, starting up, “let the feast be prepared!—and the dance!—for Duncan, thine own dear Duncan, has made me his bride, and I am the happiest maiden in all Scotland!—See, see! look here, how gaily my head is garlanded! Indeed, indeed, as all the neighbours were wont to say, we were made for each other. And now I am Duncan’s bride!—Aye, gentlefolks!” added she, curtsying gracefully around, and then hiding her blushing face in her hands for a moment, “and I

shall soon be my Duncan's lady! So, as the fair
maid sings in the old ballad,—

Oh! I shall henceforth be, my love,
As happy as a queen,
For such a youth as thee, my love,
Was never, never seen——never! no, never!

Father! father! thou art my father now as well
as Duncan's—hath not Duncan told thee all, fa-
ther! Methinks it was but to-day that we agreed
to break the secret of our love to thee—and Dun-
can, thine own Duncan Bane, was to tell thee all!
and thou wert to give us thy blessing—and we
were to be wedded—aye, wedded as man and wife,
never again to sunder—but my brain so burns
with joy, and my foolish heart beats so, that—but
no matter—ha!—I forget—I must go bid the guests!
—I must away—I must go bid the bridal guests,
they will take it all the kinder that I bid them myself.
Hush, then!” added she, sinking her voice, and ap-
proaching the bier upon tip-toe, and gently stooping
to kiss the cold lips of the corse. “Hush, then,
Duncan, my love, rest thee in sweet slumber till
I return. All good be with ye, good gentlefolks.
Mark me, I bid ye all to our bridal—but I have

other guests to bid—I must away!—I have many guests to bid—away, away!” and so she hurried forth from the gate-way, singing as she went,—

“ And when that we shall wedded be,
All by the holy priest,
Full many a knight and lady bright,
Shall grace our bridal feast.”

The true interpretation of the cause of Anna's phrenzy came palpably to the mind of the old laird of Tullochcarron. Whatever he might have thought of the attachment of the lovers under other circumstances, he now felt that the discovery of it had only come like a gleam of sunshine to enhance the brightness of those earthly prospects which were henceforth darkened for ever. Yet still with iron nerve he strung himself firmly up to bear it all. He gave one piteous glance of despair towards the bier where lay the dead body of his son, his only child, and then he suffered himself to be led passively up into the hall of the Peel-tower, whither the corpse was immediately carried and laid out. Then it was that human courage could no longer support him,—it yielded, and he gave way to all a father's grief. For a time he indulged fully in this; and then drying up his tears, he

summoned his vassals, ordered in the prisoner Lachlan Dhu, and instantly proceeded to hold a court upon him.

The murderer would have fain denied his guilt, but little evidence was necessary to convict in those days. In this case there was enough to convince all present. An assize was set upon him—Ballindalloch's letter was produced and read—at once his bold and resolute air of innocence was shaken. The prisoner's own statement as to the point where he stood when he had witnessed the alleged accident, was proved to be false by old Hamish, who chanced to see him whilst running along a path which led, not from that point, but directly from the brow of the cliff whence Duncan Bane had met his death. The dumb boy described and pointed out, with most intelligent action, how and by whom the murder was perpetrated; and his little sister distinctly told, that she and her brother had seen Lachlan Dhu push Duncan Bane over the crag. Finally, the sheet was removed from the body of Duncan, and then, they say, the wounds began to well forth afresh; and the agitation of the murderer was so great, that he called for a priest, confessed all, was shortly shriven; and as the sun

of that day which had witnessed his crime was preparing to disappear behind the western mountains, its slanting rays were throwing a horrible splendour over his powerful but now emaciated frame, as it swung to and fro in the evening breeze from the fatal tree on the gallow hill.

The afflicted Anna Gordon wandered wildly about with maniac energy during all that day, no one knew where. At last, her friends, who went in search of her, found her on the mountain, and led her gently homewards. It happened that the path they took passed by the gallow hill. At some distance off she descried the figure of him who had so recently paid the penalty of his crime.

“ Yonder is a guest ! I will bid yonder guest ! ” cried poor Anna, with a frantic laugh, as she broke from her friends, and hurried towards the spot where it hung, ere any one could arrest her. She stood for some moments with her eyes steadily fixed upon the ghastly visage, and then bursting out in a sudden fit of phrenzy, “ I heard my Duncan’s cry ! ” she shrieked aloud, in a voice that pierced the ears and the hearts of all who heard her. “ ’Twas his last joyous cry to call me to our bridal ! quick !

quick!—let us away!—hark!—hark!—again!—again!—again!”

She rushed rapidly forwards a few steps, as if she had been flying to meet her lover. She tottered, and fell in a swoon, was borne home by her friends in a state of stupor, and placed in bed. But it would seem that some internal and vital failure had taken place, for the poor thing ceased to breathe; and the gentle spirit of Anna Gordon fled to unite itself with that of him she loved. Nor were their earthly remains sundered, for the father of Duncan Bane saw them consigned together to the same grave, and he wept over them both.

The old laird of Tullochcarron was but little seen beyond the court-yard of his Peel-tower for many weeks after his son's murder. Then, indeed, he did come abroad, as if to superintend his affairs as he was wont to do, but it was more because he thought that it was right for him so to do, than from any relish he had in the employment. It was this conviction of what was expected of him, that likewise made him force a false smile of cheerfulness over his good-humoured countenance,

which, alas! was with him but as the sunshine that gilded the sepulchre of unextinguishable mourning within. One of the first visits that he paid was to the castle of his ancient feudal enemy, Ballindalloch. He was kindly received, for his severe recent affliction was sincerely pitied by his generous neighbour.

“Ballindalloch,” said he, “I am come to thank thee for the friendly caution which thou gavest to a foolish old man, who, if he had taken it as it was meant, would have had his roof-tree still fresh and firm. But let that pass,” continued he, with a sigh, and with the full tear rising over his eyelid. “The obligation I owe to thee is not the less, that I, blinded man, refused to give more heed to thy caution.”

“Talk not of this, sir,” said Ballindalloch. “I must e’en confess to thee, Tullochcarron, that the advice came from so questionable a quarter, that had I been in thy case I might have spurned it myself. But say, sir, wilt thou not eat and drink with me?”

“Willingly,” replied Tullochcarron.

“Wilt thou name aught that might, perchance,

be most pleasing to thy taste?" said Ballindalloch.

"I know I need not ask for salmon," said Tullochcarron, "for such food is hardly now to be had."

"Though the fish have been somewhat rare with us of late," said Ballindalloch, "I think I can promise thee that thou shalt have as much of thy favourite dish as shall satisfy thee."

"Alas!" said Tullochcarron, with a faltering voice, and with a tear rolling down his cheek, "Salmon have, indeed, been rare with me since—since—but," added he, making a strong effort to overcome the feelings excited by the recollection of his son, and perhaps with the hope of hiding his agitation under a good-humoured jest, "I hear that the salmon are so bewitched, that they hardly ever come farther inland now than the Bog of Gight. In so great a scarcity, then, I much doubt whether the stock of fresh fish within the Castle of Ballindalloch will stand against my well-known voracity."

"Be assured that there is as much in the house, of mine own catching, too, as will extinguish thine

appetite, and leave something to spare," said Ballindalloch.

"Thou knowest not what a cormorant I am," said Tullochcarron.

"I have heard much of thy powers," said Ballindalloch.

"And I am as sharp set at this moment as ever I was in my life," said Tullochcarron.

"All that may be ; yet I fear thee not," said Ballindalloch, laughing.

"Art thou bold enough to lay a wager on the issue?" demanded Tullochcarron.

"I am so bold," said Ballindalloch.

"Well, then," said Tullochcarron, "I will wager thee the succession and heirship of my lands against thy grey gelding, that I shall not leave thee a morsel to spare."

"Thou dost give me brave odds, indeed," said Ballindalloch ; "thou hadst best bethink thee again ere we strike thumbs on it."

"Nay, I require no more thought," said Tullochcarron ; "and, moreover, I grow hungrier every moment. Besides," said the old man with a sigh, that shewed that all this jocularity was only as-

sumed to cover a broken heart ; “ I am putting in peril that in which I can have no interest, whilst, if I win thy gallant grey, I shall be sure of being well mounted for the rest of my life. Art thou afraid of losing thy steed ? or wilt thou say done to the wager ? ”

“ I do say done, then, since thou wilt have it so,” said Ballindalloch, and he accordingly gave the necessary orders for having the matter put to the proof.

After a little time, a serving man entered with a covered trencher, in which lay, smoking hot, one half of a small salmon. When Tullochcarron lifted the cover, he eyed it with something like contempt, and impelled as he was by his irresistible disease, he fell upon it, and devoured it with an alacrity that astonished every beholder. A whole salmon, but of moderate size, was then brought in, and was instantly attacked by Tullochcarron with as much avidity as if he had not eaten a morsel. Wonderfully and fearfully did he go on to clear his way through it ; but as he approached the conclusion of it, his jaws began to go rather more languidly than before. Ballindalloch observed this.

“ Ho there !—Bring more salmon !” cried he aloud.

“ No,” said Tullochcarron, shoving the trencher from him, and wiping his knife and fork in his napkin, and sticking them into his dirk sheath. “ No, no ! I have enough.—Ballindalloch, my lands shall be yours the moment the breath is out of my body.”

“ Nay, then,” said Ballindalloch, “ I must in truth and honesty confess that I called for more salmon but as a bravado ; for thou hast indeed finished all the salmon that was in the house, and it is my grey gelding that is thine, not thy lands that are mine.”

“ It matters not, Ballindalloch,” replied the other.—“ The lands of Tullochcarron are thine, notwithstanding. See, there are the writings which I had made out the week after my poor Duncan was so foully murdered. Thou wilt find that thy name was then inserted therein. I but seized on this of the wager as a whimsical means of breaking the matter to thee ; and now thou mayest make of Tullochcarron what it may please thee. I shall not stand long in the way, poor decayed sproutless stock as I am ! and I have now known enough of

thee to be convinced that thou wilt not see me kicked over before my time ; but that thou wilt take care of me during the brief space that I may yet cumber this earth, and see me laid decently beside Duncan, when I die."

Such then, gentlemen, was the way in which the lands of Tullochcarron came to be united to those of Ballindalloch,—ane union, the which I am told, did vurra much impruv the value of both, and which still subsists to the present day.