

CHAPTER V.

How rev'rend is the face of this tall pile,
 Whose ancient pillars rear their marble heads,
 To bear aloft it's arch'd and ponderous roof,
 By its own weight made stedfast and immoveable.

CONGREVE.

Give but the word, we'll snatch this damsel up,
 And bear her off.

CATO.

Their mighty strokes their habergeons dismay'd,
 And naked made each other's manly spalles.

FAIRFAX.

THE reader is, no doubt, by this time desirous to know something of Lord Eaglesholme. The contusion he had received in his head from the pistol ball, gave him considerable uneasiness for a day or two, but he was soon restored to perfect health by the medical skill and attention of Dr Partenclaw, who, as it was the first time he had found footing within the castle, took particular

pains to prove himself worthy of having been called in, and the fee he received was such as to make him the less regret the rooting out of the nest of smugglers, and the temporary annihilation of his hopes of cheap claret and brandy.

All Lord Eaglesholme's attempts to discover his daughter in Scotland having proved ineffectual, he was no sooner convalescent, than he set out for London, where he had some hopes of gaining intelligence of her. After much minute and anxious inquiry, however, he began to be convinced that he had been mistaken in his conjectures, and in the deepest despair he was about to return to Scotland, when he received a letter from Madame Bossanville, giving him the soothing intelligence, that Eliza was again safe within the ancient castle of Eaglesholme.

Immediately on receipt of this happy news, he not only determined to remain in town to conclude the settlement of certain affairs demanding his attention, but for reasons best known to himself, he also resolved to write to Eliza to leave Eaglesholme as soon as circumstances would allow, and journeying by easy stages, to join him in London with all convenient speed.

It was long after the departure of the Dasher, that this paternal command reached Miss Malcolm. It found her in a state of low, nervous irritability, vainly endeavouring to occupy her mind by the employment of her hands, for she found it impossible to read. She succeeded, indeed, in busying her fingers mechanically, and her mind too was occupied; but it was with something very different from the work her fingers were engaged in. It was with her one cruel and continued struggle, to forget him whom she was doomed to have in her thoughts, as long as thought should remain with her. But this could not last long, for the struggle was fast wearing her away.

The letter of Lord Eaglesholme came in some measure as a relief, and in obedience to its command, she lost no time in preparing for her journey; with the faint hope that change of scene might do something to alleviate her sorrows, and trusting that she should be able to prevail on her father to permit her to retire with Madame Bosanville into the sanctuary of some foreign convent, where she might reside as a boarder, and

so spend the wretched remainder of her existence, if not in peace, at least hid from the world.

The knowledge she had obtained of the disreputable nature of her origin, had induced her, ever since the cruel discovery, to discontinue many of those gorgeous decorations so bountifully lavished on her by Lord Eaglesholme, which she had always taken a pride in wearing as his gifts, but which were now, she thought, as ill suited to her birth, as to her present feelings. She endeavoured, indeed, altogether to lower her state, and in this species of humiliation, she felt an indescribable sort of gratification. Under happier circumstances, she would have taken one of his Lordship's carriages for the journey, as well as such a number of attendants as might have befitted the niece of an Earl. But as in the hasty epistle which his Lordship had written to her, he had merely desired that Robertson should accompany her, as also Ferdinando, an Italian servant whom he particularly named, she felt that in taking them, she should be obeying his orders to the letter, and that after arranging thus much, she might, in all other respects, choose her own mode of travelling.

She accordingly signified her intention of performing the journey on horseback, accompanied by her maid, and the individuals we have mentioned.

This being by no means an uncommon mode of travelling, even for ladies, at the time we speak of, excited no great surprise, though Mr Robertson used the freedom of an old servant, to suggest the superior convenience of the coach, but without effect. Those were not the times when, as at present, post-horses and a travelling chariot could convey the traveller in four days to the metropolis, even from the distant spot where Miss Malcolm then was. So slow and tedious was the journey then rendered by bad roads, and bad machinery, that perhaps to a young lady of her equestrian powers, there was no way in which she could have got on so expeditiously and with so little trouble.

They travelled by easy stages, and little worth notice occurred until they reached the city of York, where Miss Malcolm resolved, on her own account, as well as on that of her attendants and their horses, to take a full day's rest. Having reposed at the inn for a great part of the day, she

walked out in the evening, attended by Robertson, to enjoy the effect of sunset upon that magnificent pile, which gives so venerable and dignified an air to the ancient city surrounding it. She had already surveyed it with great attention during a visit she had paid to it in the early part of the morning, and the holy and peaceful solemnity of its interior had been gratifying to her wounded soul, and awakened reflections, harmonizing with her future plans, and confirming her intentions. It was peculiarly gratifying to her in this second visit, for the twilight without deepened the shadows within, and by causing the more minute parts of the architecture to disappear, increased the sublimity and grandeur of the whole.

After loitering till the hour and the decaying light warned her away, she was in the act of leaving the interior, in a temper of mind much more calm and resigned than she had for some time enjoyed, and she had already got beyond the entrance, and into the open air, whilst Robertson, who was considerably behind, was doing all he could to hasten after her, his aged steps echoing feebly under the immensity of the vault, and at-

tended by a garrulous cicerone yet more infirm than himself, when she observed two men advancing hastily towards her from a projecting buttress that had hitherto concealed them. They were armed ; and before she had time even to scream for assistance, or at least before she could do so effectually, she was seized,—her mouth gagged with a handkerchief,—her eyes and her whole person shrouded up,—and she was forcibly carried off through a bewildering labyrinth of narrow unfrequented lanes, until she fainted away.

When she recovered, she perceived that she was in a vaulted apartment. The two men who had carried her off, and whom she now, to her increased horror, discovered to be the villain Antonio and his associate Brandywyn, were hanging over her, as if watching her countenance, whilst a third ruffian, whose face she had never before seen, held a lamp on high, that threw a more glowing and fierce expression over the features of the others. She thought she read murder in their eyes,—and the blood forsaking her heart, she again fainted.

How long she remained in this state, she was of course ignorant ; the consciousness of exist-

ence had no sooner returned, than she felt she was in rapid motion on horseback, borne in the same rude way she had been when she was carried off in Scotland; but being muffled up as before, she had no means of determining whither she was carried.

She endeavoured to scream, but her ineffectual efforts only produced a volley of Italian oaths from the person behind whom she was carried. She could distinctly hear the tramp of another horse, and the sound convinced her they were galloping along a road, for although the riders talked loud to each other, the clatter of the horses hooves rendered their words unintelligible.

They continued to ride in this manner for a considerable time, until at length the horses seemed to be suddenly turned off into some bye path, where the badness of the way compelled them to go more leisurely. From this circumstance, she was now able to gather some occasional words passing rather angrily between the two men.

“Why have you turned thus from the main road?” demanded Brandywyn rather sharply.

“*Corpo di Christo!* and why do you ask?” demanded the other in return. “Am I not re-

sponsible, and may I not manage the thing in my own way? What right have you to interfere with me?"

"By Heaven, I will give myself a right," said Brandywyn, "and I will exert it too. Had it not been for my information, the existence of this poor thing would never have been known; nor should it have been known for me, had I not believed that all you intended with her was to send her abroad to be out of the way."

"Out o' the way?" said the other, with a hellish ironical laugh.—"*Per Dio l'avete toccato.*—That was all that was wanted indeed, and that is all I have to look to now, so make yourself easy, *amico!*"

"That answer wont do with me, Antonio—you must speak plainer, as I shall do. Bad as I am, I have long since done with such deeds. I will have no more blood on my conscience,"

"Well, well!" said the other gruffly, "walk away with your conscience, and leave me to the management of mine;—nobody asks you to dip your's deeper than you please."

"No, no," said Brandywyn hastily, "you shall not persuade me to leave you, I promise you!—

I will ride with you to the world's end; and, mark me! by all the powers of hell, you shall not lay a finger on her, farther than may be necessary to convey her in safety to ——."

"Ugh! hold your tongue!" cried Antonio, "methinks, you have grown tender-hearted *al miracolo* of late!—But what you say, I tell you, is not worth a *baiocco*. *Ditemi*, was it your information that made me smell her out, and pounce upon her so cleverly at York?—*Corpo del Diavolo!* what have you to do with her now? Where was the good of all your information, which occasioned abundance of trouble, and ended in smoke after all?—But it will be my own fault, if I don't make things sure enough this time, especially since I am now more certain of having the right bird by the neck.—Ha! ha! ha! I should be *schiocco davvero*, were I to allow the partridge to slip out of my net a second time.—*Credemi questo non è il modo mio*.—I am little used to being twice fooled.—This wood seems sufficiently lonely for the purpose—and if I can only find some hole or pond large enough to hide ——."

"By Heavens!" cried Brandywyn, interrupting him, "you shall not touch a hair of her head!

—So, at your peril, I insist upon your turning back into the great road without a moment's delay!"

“ Say ye so? *il mio bravo Camarado?*” replied Antonio, in a sort of quiet taunting tone.—
“ *Per Baccho! siete troppo ostinato!*—*mandiamo dunque*—and since I must submit—”

For a moment, there was a cessation of words, and they seemed to be in the act of turning their horses to retrace their steps, when the sudden report of a pistol, roused Miss Malcolm from the chill torpor which had taken possession of her in the dreadful suspense the men's dialogue had thrown her into. Her scream of despair followed instantly after the shot:—

“ Ah, traitor!” cried Brandywyn, “ I might have looked for this much at your hand; but for once you have failed;” and immediately a tremendous blow of a sabre from the sinewy arm of the smuggler, fell at once on the head, arm, and side of the Italian, and hurled him from his saddle upon the ground.

The horse, alarmed by the pistol-shot, the shock of the blow, and the sudden fall of his rider, all which took place nearly in the same

breath, darted off with Miss Malcolm into the wood. But he had not proceeded more than ten or twenty yards, when having no power of keeping his back from being so muffled up, she was swept down to the ground by a horizontal branch, and though she luckily fell on a mossy bank, and the shock was in some degree shielded off by the drapery that enfolded her, she was so stunned and confused, that she lay for a time unable to avail herself of her freedom to escape. She had sufficient presence of mind left, however, to free herself, and creep into a bush where she heard, rather than saw, a most tremendous conflict between the two ruffians.

Antonio having risen without much injury from the soft ground he was thrown on, was enabled to scan the figure of his antagonist on horse-back, with the sky above him, much better than Brandywyn could see him. By a wary and well directed thrust of his sword, he gave his opponent's horse a mortal wound in the body, that brought him immediately to the ground, and before the rider could extricate himself from the fallen animal, Antonio succeeded in wounding him also very desperately. But this only roused Bran-

dywyn to greater exertion, for starting up, he attacked his enemy with the utmost alacrity.

The combat then raged with dreadful fury, and for some time without advantage to either party. Several severe wounds, chiefly cuts, however, were given and received on both sides, guards being altogether neglected, as of little avail in the obscurity. Many were the random blows that fell without effect. Their rage increased. The most horrible imprecations broke from them amidst the clash of their weapons. The whole length of their blades occasionally shearing against each other, produced entire sheets of flame, that for a moment rendered even their demon-like countenances visible.

At length, whether from some new wound, or owing to the loss of blood from some of those he had already sustained, Brandywyn became faint. He gave way before the renewed blows of Antonio, and as he retreated, staggering, but at the same time defending himself to the last against the invigorated onset of his enemy, he fell backwards, over the dead body of his horse, uttering a deep groan.

The ruffian flew towards him with a hellish

and exulting shout, making sure of his victim, when in his eagerness, he also tumbled headlong over some impediment lying in his way, and ere he could recover himself, lights appeared rapidly flaring into the thicket, and horses came galloping, and he had just time to regain his legs, and dart off into the deepest part of the wood, before the scene of their combat was surrounded and filled by about a dozen horsemen.

“ This way with your lights !” cried an official-looking person, who was at the head of a party of constables. “ Here seems to be a man on the ground murdered. Scour the wood some of ye, and do you Gaston, Willis, and Burton, gallop in different directions around the outside of it. Look sharp, d’ye hear, and if you see any one flying, stop him in the King’s name, or shoot him if he wont stand on your order.—Where can they have conveyed the Lady, Mr Robertson? Can she be hereabouts, think ye? or have we been misled by some fresh adventure? I hope she may have come by no harm !”

“ God in his mercy grant that she may be safe !” replied the attached old servant. “ I cannot think but we have hit upon the right

place, for Ferdinando here tells me he tracked their horses, by the light of his torch, fresh along the road from the very spot where he first lost sight of them, nearly all the way to the edge of this wood ; and, moreover, he says he observed that one of the hinder shoes had a bit broken off its heel, and here you see this dead horse, with his heels up, has the very broken shoe he speaks of. God grant they may not have murdered my young mistress !”

The Italian servant, who had dismounted, now held his torch over the face of the lifeless man, as he lay on his back doubled across the body of the dead horse, and signified in Italian to Mr Robertson, that he knew him to be one of the ruffians he had observed. But all doubt was speedily put an end to, by the appearance of Miss Malcolm herself, who, recovering in some degree from her deadly apprehension, and being reassured that she had friends near her, crept from her concealment, and came forward, to the infinite joy of the good old Robertson, who went upon his knees to Heaven for this providential restoration of his Lady, whom he considered as by far the most

precious charge his master could have confided to his care.

Preparations were immediately made for mounting Miss Malcolm on one of the horses, and she slowly returned to York, very much oppressed by the agitation, the terror, and the fatigue she had undergone.