



The CASTLES *of*
ATHLIN AND DUNBAYNE
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Chapter 3

THE Earl, after being loaded with fetters, was conducted to the chief prison of the castle, and left alone to the bitter reflections of defeat and uncertain destiny; but misfortune, though it might shake, could not overcome his firmness; and hope had not yet entirely forsaken him. It is the peculiar attribute of great minds, to bear up with increasing force against the shock of misfortune; with them the nerves of resistance strengthen with attack; and they may be said to subdue adversity with her own weapons.

Reflection, at length, afforded him time to examine his prison: it was a square room, which formed the summit of a tower built on the east side of the castle, round which the bleak winds howled mournfully; the inside of the apartment was old and falling to decay: a small mattress, which lay in one corner of the room, a broken matted chair, and a tottering table, composed its furniture; two small and strongly grated windows, which admitted a sufficient degree of light and air, afforded him on one side a view into an inner court, and on the other a dreary prospect of the wild and barren Highlands.

Alleyn was conveyed through dark and winding passages to a distant part of the castle, where at length a small door, barred with iron, opened, and disclosed to him an abode, whence light and hope were equally excluded. He shuddered as he entered, and the door was closed upon him.

The mind of the Baron, in the mean time, was agitated with all the direful passions of hate, revenge, and exulting pride. He racked imagination for the invention of tortures equal to the force of his feelings; and he at length discovered that the sufferings of suspense are superior to those of the most terrible evils, when once ascertained, of which the contemplation gradually affords to strong minds the means of endurance. He determined, therefore, that the Earl should remain confined in the tower, ignorant of his future destiny; and in the mean while should be allowed food only sufficient to keep him sensible of his wretchedness.

Osbert was immersed in thought, when he heard the door of his prison unbarred, and the Baron Malcolm stood before him. The heart of Osbert swelled high with indignation, and defiance flashed in his eyes. "I am come," said the insulting victor, "to welcome the Earl of Athlin to my castle; and to shew that I can receive my friends with the hospitality they deserve; but I am yet undetermined what kind of festival I shall bestow on his arrival."

"Weak tyrant," returned Osbert, his countenance impressed with the firm dignity of virtue, "to insult the vanquished, is congenial with the cruel meanness of the murderer; nor do I expect, that



the man who slew the father, will spare the son; but know, that son is nerved against your wrath, and welcomes all that your fears or your cruelty can impose.”

“Rash youth,” replied the Baron; “your words are air; they fade from sense, and soon your boasted strength shall sink beneath my power. I go to meditate your destiny.” With these words he quitted the prison, enraged at the unbending virtue of the Earl.

The sight of the Baron, roused in the soul of Osbert all those opposite emotions of furious indignation and tender pity which the glowing image of his father could excite, and produced a moment of perfect misery. The dreadful energy of these sensations exasperated his brain almost to madness; the cool fortitude in which he had so lately gloried, disappeared; and he was on the point of resigning his virtue and his life, by means of a short dagger, which he wore concealed under his vest, when the soft notes of a lute surprized his attention. It was accompanied by a voice so enchantingly tender and melodious, that its sounds fell on the heart of Osbert in balmy comfort: it seemed sent by Heaven to arrest his fate: — the storm of passion was hushed within him, and he dissolved in kind tears of pity and contrition. The mournful tenderness of the air declared the person from whom it came to be a sufferer; and Osbert suspected it to proceed from a prisoner like himself. The music ceased. Absorbed in wonder, he went to the grates, in quest of the sweet musician, but no one was to be seen; and he was uncertain whether the sounds arose from within or from without the castle. Of the guard, who brought him his small allowance of food, he inquired concerning what he had heard; but from him he could not obtain the information he sought, and he was constrained to remain in a state of suspense.

In the mean time the castle of Athlin, and its neighbourhood, was overwhelmed with distress. The news of the earl’s imprisonment at length reached the ears of the countess, and hope once more illumined her mind. She immediately sent offers of immense ransom to the baron, for the restoration of her son, and the other prisoners; but the ferocity of his nature disdained an incomplete triumph. Revenge subdued his avarice; and the offers were rejected with the spurn of contempt. An additional motive, however, operated in his mind, and confirmed his purpose. The beauty of Mary had been often reported to him in terms which excited his curiosity; and an incidental view he once obtained of her, raised a passion in his soul, which the turbulence of his character would not suffer to be extinguished. Various were the schemes he had projected to obtain her, none of which had ever been executed: the possession of the earl was a circumstance the most favourable to his wishes; and he resolved to obtain Mary, as the future ransom of her brother. He concealed, for the present, his purpose, that the tortures of anxiety and despair might operate on the mind of the countess, to grant him an easy consent to the exchange, and to resign the victim the wife of her enemy.

The small remains of the clan, unsubdued by misfortune, were eager to assemble; and, hazardous as was the enterprize, to attempt the rescue of their Chief. The hope which this undertaking afforded, once more revived the Countess; but alas! a new source of sorrow was now opened for her: the health of Mary visibly declined; she was silent and pensive; her tender frame was too susceptible of the sufferings of her mind; and these sufferings were heightened by concealment. She was prescribed amusement and gentle exercise, as the best restoratives of peace and health. One day, as she was seeking on horseback these lost treasures, she was tempted by the fineness of the evening to prolong



her ride beyond its usual limits: the sun was declining when she entered a wood, whose awful glooms so well accorded with the pensive tone of her mind. The soft serenity of evening, and the still solemnity of the scene, conspired to lull her mind into a pleasing forgetfulness of its troubles; from which she was, ere long, awakened by the approaching sound of horses' feet. The thickness of the foliage limited her view; but looking onward, she thought she perceived through the trees, a glittering of arms; she turned her palfry, and sought the entrance of the wood. The clattering of hoofs advanced in the breeze! her heart, misgave her, and she quickened her pace. Her fears were soon justified; she looked back, and beheld three horsemen armed and disguised advancing with the speed of pursuit. Almost fainting, she flew on the wings of terror; all her efforts were vain; the villains came up; one seized her horse, the others fell upon her two attendants: a stout scuffle ensued, but the strength of her servants soon yielded to the weapons of their adversaries; they were brought to the ground, dragged into the wood, and there left bound to the trees. In the mean time, Mary, who had fainted in the arms of the villain who seized her, was borne away through the intricate mazes of the woods; and her terrors may be easily imagined, when she revived, and found herself in the hands of unknown men. Her dreadful screams, her tears, her supplications, were ineffectual; the wretches were deaf alike to pity and to enquiry; they preserved an inflexible silence, and she saw herself conveying towards the mouth of a horrible cavern, when despair seized her mind, and she lost all signs of existence: in this state she remained some time; but it is impossible to describe her situation, when she unclosed her eyes, and beheld Alleyn, who was watching with the most trembling anxiety her return to life, and whose eyes, on seeing her revive, swam in joy and tenderness. Wonder; fearful joy, and the various shades of mingled emotions, passed in quick succession over her countenance; her surprize was increased, when she observed her own servants standing by, and could discover no one but friends. She scarcely dared to trust her senses, but the voice of Alleyn, tremulous with tenderness, dissolved in a moment the illusions of fear, and confirmed her in the surprising reality. When she was sufficiently recovered, they quitted this scene of gloom: they travelled on in a slow pace, and the shades of night were fallen long before they reached the castle; there distress and confusion appeared. The Countess, alarmed with the most dreadful apprehensions, had dispatched her servants various ways in search of her child, and her transports on again beholding her in safety, prevented her observing immediately that it was Alleyn who accompanied her. Joy, however, soon yielded to its equal wonder, when she perceived him, and in the tumult of contending emotions, she scarce knew which first to interrogate. When she had been told the escape of her daughter, and by whom effected, she prepared to hear, with impatient solicitude, news of her beloved son, and the means by which the brave young Highlander had eluded the vigilance of the Baron. Of the Earl, Alleyn could only inform the Countess, that he was taken prisoner with himself, within the walls of the fortress, as they fought side by side; that he was conducted unwounded, to a tower, situated on the east angle of the castle, where he was still confined. Himself had been imprisoned in a distant part of the pile, and had been able to collect no other particulars of the Earl's situation, than those he had related. Of himself he gave a brief relation of the following circumstances:

After having lain some weeks in the horrible dungeon allotted him, his mind involved in the gloom of despair, and filled with the momentary expectation of death, desperation furnished him with



invention, and he concerted the following plan of escape: — He had observed, that the guard who brought him his allowance of food, on quitting the dungeon, constantly sounded his spear against the pavement near the entrance. This circumstance excited his surprize and curiosity. A ray of hope beamed through the gloom of his dungeon. He examined the spot, as well as the obscurity of the place would permit; it was paved with flag stones like the other parts of the cell, and the paving was everywhere equally firm. He, however, became certain, that some means of escape was concealed beneath that part, for the guard was constant in examining it by striking that spot, and treading more firmly on it; and this he endeavoured to do without being observed. One day, immediately after the departure of the guard, Alleyn set himself to unfasten the pavement; this, with much patience and industry, he effected, by means of a small knife which had escaped the search of the soldiers. He found the earth beneath hard, and without any symptoms of being lately disturbed; but after digging a few feet, he arrived at a trap; he trembled with eagerness. It was now almost night, and he overcome with weariness; he doubted whether he should be able to penetrate through the door, and what other obstructions were behind it, before the next day. He therefore, threw the earth again into the hole, and endeavoured to close the pavement; with much difficulty, he trod the earth into the opening, but the pavement he was unable exactly to replace. It was too dark to examine the stones; and he found, that even if he should be able to make them fit, the pavement could not be made firm. His mind and body were now overcome, and he threw himself on the ground in an agony of despair. It was midnight, when the return of his strength and spirits produced another effort. He tore the earth up with hasty violence, cut round the lock of the trap door, and raising it, unwilling to hesitate or consider, sprung through the aperture. The vault was of considerable depth, and he was thrown down by the violence of the fall; an hollow echo, which seemed to murmur at a distance, convinced him that the place was of considerable extent. He had no light to direct him, and was therefore obliged to walk with his arms extended, in silent and fearful examination. After having wandered through the void a considerable time, he came to a wall, along which he groped with anxious care; it conducted him onward for a length of way: it turned; he followed, and his hand touched the cold iron work of a barred window. He felt the gentle undulation of the air upon his face; and to him, who had been so long confined among the damp vapours of a dungeon, this was a moment of luxury. The air gave him strength; and the means of escape, which now seemed presented to him, renewed his courage. He set his foot against the wall, and grasping a bar with his hand, found it gradually yield to his strength, and by successive efforts, he entirely displaced it. He attempted another but, it was more firmly fixed, and every effort to loosen it was ineffectual; he found that it was fastened in a large stone of the wall, and to remove this stone, was his only means of displacing the bar; he set himself, therefore, again to work with his knife, and with much patience, loosened the mortar sufficiently to effect his purpose. After some hours, for the darkness made his labour tedious, and sometimes ineffectual, he had removed several of the bars, and had made an opening almost sufficient to permit his escape, when the dawn of light appeared; he now discovered, with inexpressible anguish, that the grate opened into an inner court of the castle, and even while he hesitated, he could perceive soldiers descending slowly into the court, from the narrow staircases which led to their apartments. His heart sickened at the sight. He rested against the wall in a pause of despair, and was on the point of springing into the court, to make a desperate effort at escape, or die in the attempt, when he perceived, by the increasing light which fell

across the vault, a massy door in the wall; he ran towards it, and endeavoured to open it; it was fastened by a lock and several bolts. He struck against it with his foot, and the hollow sound which was returned, convinced him that there were vaults beyond; and by the direction of these vaults, he was certain that they must extend to the outer walls of the castle; if he could gain these vaults, and penetrate beyond them in the darkness of the ensuing night, it would be easy to leap the wall, and cross the ditch; but it was impossible to cut away the lock, before the return of his guard, who regularly visited the cell soon after the dawn of day. After some consideration, therefore, he determined to secrete himself in a dark part of the vault, and there await the entrance of the guard, who on observing the deranged bars of the grate, would conclude, that he had escaped through the aperture. He had scarcely placed himself according to his plan, when he heard the door of the dungeon unbolted; this was instantly followed by a loud, voice, which founded down the opening, and “Alleyn” was shouted in a tone of fright and consternation. After repeating the call, a man jumped into the vault. Alleyn, though himself concealed in darkness, could perceive, by the faint light which fell upon the spot, a soldier with a drawn sword in his hand. He approached the grate with execrations, examined it, and proceeded to the door; it was fast, he returned to the grate, and then proceeded along the walls, tracing them with the point of his sword. He at length approached the spot where Alleyn was concealed, who felt the sword strike upon his arm, and instantly grasping the hand which held it, the weapon fell to the ground. A short scuffle ensued. Alleyn threw down his adversary, and standing over him, seized the sword, and presented it to his breast; the soldier called for mercy. Alleyn, always unwilling to take the life of another, and considering that if the soldier was slain, his comrades would certainly follow to the vault, returned him his sword. “Take your life,” said he, “your death can avail me nothing; — take it, and if you can, go tell Malcolm, that an innocent man has endeavoured to escape destruction.” The guard, struck with his conduct, arose from the ground in silence, he received his sword, and followed Alleyn to the trap door. They returned into the dungeon, where Alleyn was once more left alone. The soldier, undetermined how to act, went to find his comrades; on the way he met Malcolm, who, ever restless and vigilant frequently walked the ramparts at an early hour. He enquired if all was well. The soldier, fearful of discovery, and unaccustomed to dissemble, hesitated at the question; and the stern air assumed by Malcolm, compelled him to relate what had happened. The Baron, with much harshness, reprobated his neglect, and immediately followed him to the dungeon, where he loaded Alleyn with insult. He examined the cell, descended into the vault, and returning to the dungeon stood by, while a chain, which had been fetched from a distant part of the castle, was fixed into the wall; — to this Alleyn was fastened. “We will not long confine you thus,” said Malcolm as he quitted the cell, “a few days shall restore you to the liberty you are so fond of; but as a conqueror ought to have spectators of his triumph, you must wait till a number is collected sufficient to witness the death of so great an hero.” “I disdain your insults,” returned Alleyn, “and am equally able to support misfortune, and to despise a tyrant.” Malcolm retired enraged at the boldness of his prisoner, and uttering menaces on the carelessness of the guard, who vainly endeavoured to justify himself. “His safety be upon your head,” said the Baron. The soldier was shocked, and turned away in sullen silence. Dread of his prisoner’s effecting an escape, now seized his mind; the words of Malcolm filled him with resentment, while gratitude towards Alleyn, for the life he had spared, operated with these sentiments, and he hesitated whether he should obey the Baron, or deliver Alleyn,

and fly his oppressor. At noon, he carried him his customary food; Alleyn was not so lost in misery, but that he observed the gloom which hung upon his features; his heart foreboded impending evil: the soldier bore on his tongue the sentence of death. He told Alleyn, that the Baron had appointed the following day for his execution; and his people were ordered to attend. Death, however long contemplated, must be dreadful when it arrives; this was no more than what Alleyn had expected, and on what he had brought his mind to gaze without terror; but his fortitude now sunk before its immediate presence, and every nerve of his frame thrilled with agony. "Be comforted," said the soldier, in a tone of pity, "I, too, am no stranger to misery; and if you are willing to risque the danger of double torture, I will attempt to release both you and myself from the hands of a tyrant." At these words, Alleyn started from the ground in a transport of delightful wonder: "Tell me not of torture," cried he, "all tortures are equal if death is the end, and from death I may now escape; lead me but beyond these walls, and the small possessions I have, shall be yours for ever." "I want them not," replied the generous soldier, "it is enough for me, that I save a fellow creature from destruction." These words overpowered the heart of Alleyn, and tears of gratitude swelled in his eyes. Edric told him, that the door he had seen in the vault below, opened into a chain of vaults, which stretched beyond the wall of the castle, and communicated with a subterraneous way, anciently formed as a retreat from the fortress, and which terminated in the cavern of a forest at some distance. If this door could be opened, their escape was almost certain. They consulted on the measures necessary to be taken. The soldier gave Alleyn a knife larger than the one he had, and directed him to cut round the lock, which was all that with-held their passage. Edric's office of centinel was propitious to their scheme, and it was agreed that at midnight they should descend the vaults. Edric, after having unfastened the chain, left the cell, and Alleyn set himself again to remove the pavement, which had been already re-placed by order of the Baron. The near prospect of deliverance now gladdened his spirits; his knife was better formed for his purpose; and he worked with alacrity and ease. He arrived at the trap door, and once more leaped into the vault. He applied himself to the lock of the door, which was extremely thick, and it was with difficulty he separated them; with trembling hands he undrew the bolts, the door unclosed, and discovered to him the vaults. It was evening when he finished his work. He was but just returned to the dungeon, and had thrown himself on the ground to rest, when the sound of a distant step caught his ear; he listened to its advance with trembling eagerness. At length the door was unbolted; Alleyn, breathless with expectation, started up, and beheld not his soldier, but another; the opening was again discovered, and all was now over. The soldier brought a pitcher of water, and casting round the place a look of sullen scrutiny, departed in silence. The stretch of human endurance was now exceeded, and Alleyn sunk down in a state of torpidity. On recovering, he found himself again enveloped in the horrors of darkness, silence, and despair. Yet amid all his sufferings, he disdained to doubt the integrity of his soldier: we naturally recoil from painful sensations, and it is one of the most exquisite tortures of a noble mind, to doubt the sincerity of those in whom it has confided. Alleyn concluded, that the conversation of the morning had been overheard, and that this guard had been sent to examine the cell, and to watch his movements. He believed that Edric was now, by his own generosity, involved in destruction; and in the energy of this thought, he forgot for a moment his own situation.

Midnight came, but Edric did not appear; his doubts were now confirmed into certainty, and he resigned himself to the horrid tranquillity of mute despair. He heard, from a distance, the clock of the castle strike one; it seemed to sound the knell of death; it roused his benumbed senses, and he rose from the ground in an agony of acutest recollection. Suddenly he heard the steps of two persons advancing down the avenue; he started, and listened. Malcolm and murder arose to his mind; he doubted not that the soldier had reported what he had seen in the evening, and that the persons whom he now heard, were coming to execute the final orders of the Baron. They now drew near the dungeon, when suddenly he remembered the door in the vault. His senses had been so stunned by the appearance of the stranger, and his mind so occupied with a feeling of despair, as to exclude every idea of escape; and in the energy of his sufferings he had forgot this last resource. It now flashed like lightning upon his mind; he sprung to the trap door, and his feet had scarcely touched the bottom of the vault, when he heard the bolts of the dungeon undraw; he had just reached the entrance of the inner vault, when a voice sounded from above. He paused, and knew it to be Edric's. Apprehension so entirely possessed his mind, that he hesitated whether he should discover himself; but a moment of recollection dissipated every ignoble suspicion of Edric's fidelity, and he answered the call. Immediately Edric descended, followed by the soldier whose former appearance had filled Alleyn with despair, and whom Edric now introduced as his faithful friend and comrade, who, like himself, was weary of the oppression of Malcolm, and who had resolved to fly with them, and escape his rigour. This was a moment of happiness too great for thought! Alleyn, in the confusion of his joy, and in his impatience to seize the moment of deliverance, scarcely heard the words of Edric. Edric having returned to fasten the door of the dungeon, to delay pursuit, and given Alleyn a sword which he had brought for him, led the way through the vaults. The profound silence of the place was interrupted only by the echoes of their footsteps, which running through the dreary chasms in confused whisperings, filled their imaginations with terror. In traversing these gloomy and desolate recesses they often paused to listen, and often did their fears give them the distant sounds of pursuit. On quitting the vaults, they entered an avenue, winding, and of considerable length, from whence branched several passages into the rock. It was closed by a low and narrow door, which opened upon a flight of steps, that led to the subterraneous way under the ditch of the castle. Edric knew the intricacies of the place: they entered, and closing the door began to descend, when the lamp which Edric carried in his hand was blown out by the current of the wind, and they were left in total darkness. Their feelings may be more easily imagined than described; they had, however, no way but to proceed, and grope with cautious steps the dark abyss. Having continued to descend for some time, their feet reached the bottom, and they found themselves once more on even ground; but Edric knew they had yet another flight to encounter, before they could gain the subterraneous passage under the fosse, and for which it required their utmost caution to search. They were proceeding with slow and wary steps, when the foot of Alleyn stumbled upon something which clattered like broken armour, and endeavouring to throw it from him, he felt the weight resist his effort: he stooped to discover what it was, and found in his grasp the cold hand of a dead person. Every nerve thrilled with horror at the touch, and he started back in an agony of terror. They remained for some time in silent dismay, unable to return, yet fearful to proceed, when a faint light which seemed to issue from the bottom of the last descent, gleamed upon the walls, and discovered to them the second staircase, and at their



feet the pale and disfigured corpse of a man in armour, while at a distance they could distinguish the figures of men. At this sight their hearts died within them, and they gave themselves up for lost. They doubted not but the men whom they saw were the murderers; that they belonged to the Baron; and were in search of some fugitives from the castle. Their only chance of concealment was to remain where they were; but the light appeared to advance, and the faces of the men to turn towards them. Winged with terror, they sought the first ascent, and flying up the steps, reached the door, which they endeavoured to open, that they might hide themselves from pursuit among the intricacies of the rock; their efforts, however, were vain, for the door was fastened by a spring lock, and the key was on the other side. Compelled to give breath to their fears, they ventured to look back, and found themselves again in total darkness; they paused upon the steps, and listening, all was silent. They rested here a considerable time; no footsteps startled them; no ray of light darted through the gloom; every thing seemed hushed in the silence of death: they resolved once more to venture forward; they gained again the bottom of the first descent, and shuddering as they approached the spot where they knew the corpse was laid, they groped to avoid its horrid touch, when suddenly the light again appeared, and in the same place where they had first seen it. They stood petrified with despair. The light, however, moved slowly onward, and disappeared in the windings of the avenue. After remaining a long time in silent suspense, and finding no further obstacle, they ventured to proceed. The light had discovered to them their situation, and the staircase, and they now moved with greater certainty. They reached the bottom in safety, and without any fearful interruption; they listened, and again the silence of the place was undisturbed. Edric knew they were now under the fosse, their way was plain before them, and their hopes were renewed in the belief, that the light and the people they had seen, had taken a different direction, Edric knowing there were various passages branching from the main avenue which led to different openings in the rock. They now stepped on with alacrity, the prospect of deliverance was near, for Edric judged they were now not far from the cavern. An abrupt turning in the passage confirmed at once this supposition, and extinguished the hope which had attended it; for the light of a lamp burst suddenly upon them, and exhibited to their sickening eyes, the figures of four men in an attitude of menace, with their swords pointed ready to receive them. Alleyn drew his sword, and advanced: "We will die hardly," cried he. At the sound of his voice, the weapons instantly dropped from the hands of his adversaries, and they advanced to meet him in a transport of joy. Alleyn recognized with astonishment, in the faces of the three strangers, his faithful friends and followers; and Edric in that of the fourth, a fellow soldier. The same purpose had assembled them all in the same spot. They quitted the cave together; and Alleyn, in the joyful experience of unexpected deliverance, resolved never more to admit despair. They concluded, that the body which they had passed in the avenue, was that of some person who had perished either by hunger or by the sword in those subterranean labyrinths.

They marched in company till they came within a few miles in of the castle of Athlin, when Alleyn made known his design of collecting his friends, and joining the clan in an attempt to release the Earl; Edric, and the other soldier, having solemnly enlisted in the cause, they parted; Alleyn and Edric pursuing the road to the castle, and the others striking off to a different part of the country. Alleyn and Edric had not proceeded far, when the groans of the wounded servants of Matilda drew them into the wood, in which the preceding dreadful scene had been acted. The surprize of Alleyn was

extreme, when he discovered the servants of the Earl in this situation; but surprize soon yielded to a more poignant sensation, when he heard that Mary had been carried off by armed men. He scarcely waited to release the servants, but seized one of their horses which was grazing near, instantly mounted, ordering the rest to follow, and took the way which had been pointed as the course of the ravishers. Fortunately it was the right direction; and Alleyn and the soldier came up with them as they were hastening to the mouth of that cavern, whose frightful aspect had chilled the heart of Mary with a temporary death. Their endeavours to fly were vain; they were overtaken at the entrance; a sharp conflict ensued in which one of the ruffians was wounded and fled: his comrades seeing the servants of the Earl approaching relinquished their prize, and escaped through the recesses of the cave. The eyes of Alleyn were now fixed in horror on the lifeless form of Mary, who had remained insensible during the whole of the affray; he was exerting every effort for her recovery, when she unclosed her eyes, and joy once more illumined his soul.

During the recital of these particulars, which Alleyn delivered with a modest brevity, the mind of Mary had suffered a variety of emotions sympathetic to all the vicissitudes of his situation. She endeavoured to conceal from herself the particular interest she felt in his adventures; but so unequal were her efforts to the strength of her emotions, that when Alleyn related the scene of Dunbayne cavern, her cheek grew pale and she relapsed into a fainting fit. This circumstance alarmed the penetration of the Countess; but the known weakness of her daughter's frame appeared a probable cause of the disorder, and repressed her first apprehension. It gave to Alleyn a mixed delight of hope and fear, such as he had never known before; for the first time he dared to acknowledge to his own heart that he loved, and that heart for the first time thrilled with the hope of being loved again.

He received from the Countess the warm overflowings of a heart grateful for the preservation of her child, and from Mary a blush which spoke more than her tongue could utter. But the minds of all were involved in the utmost perplexity concerning the rank and the identity of the author of the plan, nor could they discover any clue which would lead them through this intricate maze of wonder, to the villain who had fabricated so diabolical a scheme. Their suspicions, at length, rested upon the Baron Malcolm, and this supposition was confirmed by the appearance of the horsemen, who evidently acted only as the agents of superior power. Their conjectures were indeed just. Malcolm was the author of the scheme. It had been planned, and he had given orders to his people to execute it long before the Earl fell into his hands. They had, however, found no opportunity of accomplishing the design when the castle was surprized, and in the consequent tumult of his mind, the Baron had forgot to withdraw his orders.

Alleyn expressed his design of collecting the small remnant of his friends, and uniting with the clan in attempting the rescue of the Earl. "Noble youth," exclaimed the Countess, unable longer to repress her admiration, "how can I ever repay your generous services! Am I then to receive both my children at your hands? Go-my clan are now collecting for a second attempt upon the walls of Dunbayne, — go! lead them to conquest, and restore to me my son." The languid eyes of Mary rekindled at these words, she glowed with the hope of clasping once more to her bosom her long lost brother; but the suffusions of hope were soon chased by the chilly touch of fear, for it was Alleyn who was to lead the enterprize, and it was Alleyn who might fall in the attempt. These contrary emotions unveiled to her at once the state of her affections, and she saw in the eye of fancy, the long train of

inquietudes and sorrows which were likely to ensue. She sought to obliterate from her mind every remembrance of the past, and of the fatal knowledge which was now disclosed; but she sought in vain, for the monitor in her breast constantly presented to her mind the image of Alleyn, adorned with those brave and manly virtues which had so eminently distinguished his conduct; the insignificance of the peasant was lost in the nobility of the character, and every effort at forgetfulness was baffled.

Alleyn passed that night at the castle, and the next morning, after taking leave of the Countess and her daughter, to whom his eyes bade a respectful and mournful adieu, he departed with Edric for his father's cottage, impatient to acquaint the good old man with his safety, and to rouse to arms his slumbering friends. The breath of love had now raised into flame those sparks of ambition which had so long been kindling in his breast; he was not only eager to avenge the cause of injured virtue, and to rescue from misery and death, the son of the Chief whom he had been ever taught to reverence, but he panted to avenge the insult offered to his mistress, and to achieve some deed of valour worthy her admiration and her thanks.

Alleyn found his father at breakfast, with his niece at his side; his face was darkened with sorrow, and he did not perceive Alleyn, when he entered. The joy of the old man almost overcame him when he beheld his son in safety, for he was the solace of his declining years; and Edric was welcomed with the heartiness of an old friend.