

The man withdrew, and Cromwell resumed his walk, making no comment on the brief dialogue. William blew a long whistle, then he laughed a little.

When the colonel came in, Cromwell turned to him and said:

"Is that malignant brawler, chaplain to Lord Rudby, in the cells yet?"

"Yes, Excellency."

"Tell your men to clear out the chapel at once and light it. There are some stores in it, I think, and bring the reverend greybeard to me."

In a few moments the colonel returned, accompanied by an aged clergyman, who, despite his haggard and careworn look and bent shoulders, cast a glance of hatred at the General, which seemed to entitle him to the epithet Cromwell had bestowed upon him. To this silent defiance Cromwell paid no attention, but said to him:

"Sir, you may earn your liberty to-night by marrying two young people in the chapel."

"That will I not," returned the clergyman stoutly, "and all your tyranny cannot compel me to do so."

"The wench," continued Cromwell, unmoved, "you already know. She is Frances Wentworth, daughter of the late Earl of Strafford. The groom stands here before you; William Armstrong, a Scot, who has but lately carried a message from the man Charles, at Oxford, to Traquair on the Border. I should hang him, but he prefers the noose you can tie to the one my hands might prepare."

The old clergyman looked at Armstrong with an interest he had not displayed on entering the room.