

prond towers of Glenelvin broke upon the view, and Malcolm turning to his sister, exclaimed:

"Behold my Isabella, our father's home! there, anxious hearts are bleeding for thy sake! There are our parents mourning the fate of their darling child! Shall not I ride forward and announce thy coming?"

Ere Isabella could reply, Malcolm had left her side, and was dashing on at a rapid pace toward the castle. His noble steed bore him onward with impetuous speed, and in a few moments he was lost to the view of Francis and Isabella. Naught stayed his progress, until he checked his rapid course at the gateway of his ancestral home and then he threw himself from his panting steed, undid the fastenings with his own eager hand, and walked hastily up the broad avenue that led to the castle. Rarely did aught of either joy or sorrow ruffle the philosophical calmness of Malcolm McDonald, but in his anxiety to impart the joyful intelligence of the rescue of Isabella, he forgot, that next to his descent from a long line of noble Scottish ancestors was his cool firmness of purpose which naught could disturb, a source of pride; and thus he found himself at the very door of the castle, surrounded by an eager crowd, who had seen and hastened forth to meet him, ere he remembered that for once in his life he had yielded to the excitement of a moment, and that an action which might not excite a thought if performed by another, had had the power of drawing forth the whole household, when performed by him. But there he stood beside his panting steed, while every voice demanded the cause of his eager haste.

"Why 'tis nothing!" he replied with his own calm smile, as soon as he could make himself heard, "save that I have returned home after an absence of some months! I hope it was not unexpected! did you think I had said adieu forever?"

"We were beginning to fear it!" replied the Earl, but our lost Isabella,—he paused, unable to inquire further; for Malcolm's was not a face which told its sorrows, or its joys, and the fact that he had returned alone, almost quenched the last faint hope that his long lost darling might be yet restored to him."

"Well in good faith, if I am not to gain admittance to the interior of your well guarded castle until I have related all my adventures, and heard your remarks upon them, I may as well begin at once; for in truth I am weary with long journeying, and much I fear that my fellow travellers will be bearing down upon us, ere I have accomplished the purpose for which I left them behind me!"

"And who may your fellow travellers be?" asked the Earl impatiently, as the fate of his darling remained still untold, although the words of his son had inspired a hope of her safety.

"Why who should they be but my true and faithful friend, Francis d'Auvergne, although I have several times since we left Glenelvin, been tempted to discard his friendship, and a fair maiden whom we met in one wanderings, and who gladly accepted our protection, and moreover, I have promised this same fair one, a hearty welcome to the hall of Glenelvin.

Though the words of Malcolm were vague, yet all knew him too well to suppose for a moment that he would say aught to excite hopes which might not be realized, and in a moment all was joyous confusion. The countess, overcome by glad emotions sank into the arms of her lord, who for some moments called for assistance in vain, Lord Robert and his young brother, with eager haste were already rushing to meet their idolized sister, and Malcolm was surrounded by the happy menials, who in the joy of their hearts regarded not even the call of the lord to whom for long years they had yielded implicit obedience. The Lady Josepha had retired to a short distance, and stood apparently absorbed in watching the receding form of Lord Robert; but thoughts of her brother were passing rapidly through her mind. The story of the danger to which he had been exposed by the hand of an unknown assassin had been conveyed to her in a letter from her brother, and she had ever felt assured that the reserve of Isabella had been in some way connected with that event, and now although from the length of time that had elapsed, she felt assured that the deed had not been effected, yet her heart felt sick and faint lest she was doomed to hear a tale of that brother's guilt, truly painful for a sister's ear. The countess at length was led into the castle, and in expectation too deep to permit them to converse with Malcolm or even to inquire the means by which her restoration had been accomplished, the parents awaited the coming of their child. How slowly to those anxious hearts did the moments pass away! how intensely was the eager gaze fixed on the point from which the first glimpse might be obtained! but the delay seemed intolerable to the fond father and soon he too hastened forth, leaving the countess and Malcolm alone. But at length a glad shout was heard from the servants of the household, who like their superiors were anxious watchers for the coming guest. And Francis d'Auvergne and his precious charge, now accompanied by Lord Robert and his brother, were seen descending a gentle hill at no great distance