

warm fold of the valley, in the very bosom of Mac-Caillein's land, with finest grazing of the parish stretched for half a mile along the river bank, and on the other side two profitable farms. Upon that green expanse of arable and pasture land a single tree had never been encouraged, save a scrog of beech and alder Duncanson the laird had put as a kind of screen between his outlook and the dovecote tower, which stood, three stories high, more like a place of ancient strength than a pigeon-house, upon the river's brim. As yet the planting was too young to hide the tower in any sense, except, as it might seem, from its former tenants. Never a bird was harboured now in the dovecote, where, in the time of Paul Macmaster, Æneas's father, they had swarmed. No one rued their absence less than the laird himself, who had made great ado with them and helped to breed some droll fantastic kinds of them with ruffs and pouter bosoms when Paul was still the laird, and he was Paul's commissioner. Many an hour they spent there in the dovecote loft; the little lower-story window would be lit till midnight sometimes, when these two were waiting for a pigeon-post; on the leg of a homer-pigeon came to Duncanson the news of Sheriffmuir. The fancy for them must have been most strong in Paul Macmaster; for, when he was dead, and Duncanson became the laird, he counted what it cost in grain upon the stalk to feed them, and could never thole the cooing of a dove again. So he locked the dovecote up, and set the beech and alder round it, yet even in its abandonment its presence someway marked the glen more palpably than did the mansion-house.

So much for the place by daylight, but this was a September night when Æneas Macmaster stepped out on the lawn of what should have been the house of his inheritance, from the sound of the usurper's booming and the smell of his celery soup, and early though the night was yet, it was as black as a porridge-pot. There had been rain all day, so that the Aray roared at the cataracts below Carlunan Mill, but now the night was dry; a wind, most melancholy, burdened, to his bookish