

England, was still strong in this kingdom, for a kingdom it was then. Many of the northern nobility and great chiefs refused to acknowledge the power of Parliament, and among these, the most distinguished was James Graham, Marquis of Montrose. For a long time he had maintained the contest with his hereditary enemy, Argyle, and, so long as the northern Highlanders under his command were opposed to the western clans, victory was doubtful, and alternated from side to side. But the discipline of the parliamentary levies under Generals Leslie and Strachan at last prevailed over the stubborn and untrained courage of the clans, and the last great battle fought at Invercarron put an end to the hopes of the royalists, and scattered the forces of Montrose. His standard with the well known motto of Queen Mary: "Judge, and avenge my cause, O Lord!" was that day found on the field, together with his cloak and star, and the garter of his knightly order, but whether he had fallen or escaped none could tell. The strictest search was made for him, but no other trace could be found. Therefore, least he should have fled, he was declared by open proclamation a traitor and an enemy to the Commonwealth, and a price was set upon his head.

Some days after the battle, a stranger presented himself at the gates of Assynt, and asked to be shown into the presence of the laird. He was dressed in mean clothing, but his air and demeanor were not those of a peasant, and his voice, though sweet, had a commanding tone, which did not correspond with the general poverty of his appearance. He was ushered into the great hall, where Macleod was sitting at table with his family and retainers. The chieftain glanced his eye on the stranger for a moment, as if to discover his clan by the chequer of his plaid, and then, motioning him to a seat at the lower end of the apartment, resumed his meal in sullen silence. It was, indeed, a perilous time for the Macleod. At the commencement of the war, he, in common with the other northern chiefs, had raised his clan, and taken field, as a matter of course, along with the royalist party; but, as soon as fortune seemed to incline to the other side,

he took advantage of a casual quarrel with a neighboring chieftain, and retired altogether from the conflict.

Still he had not taken the new oath of allegiance, and, his former conduct having been well known, he had much to apprehend from the vengeance of the Parliament, and more from the cupidity of a rival branch of his own family, who had marched under the banner of Argyle.

When the banquet was ended, the chief turned to his guest and said,—

"I see by your tartan that you are a Mackenzie. Come you from the Lewis?"

"I came last from Invercarron," replied the stranger.

"Then you can give us tidings of the battle," said Macleod, eagerly. "We have heard that Leslie gained the day, and also that the Mackays passed yesterday by Loch Naver, on the way to their own country, but I have seen none that were at Invercarron."

"I was there," replied the stranger, sadly, "and would to God that I had lost my eye-sight before I witnessed such a day! The best hearts in the Highlands were struck down by the southern horsemen, like deer at the driving of the Tinehel."

"And the Marquis?" asked Macleod; "know you what has become of him? Was he slain, or taken, or has his good fortune not yet deserted him?"

"Slain he was not, nor taken prisoner, if report say true. He was the last man who left the field. I saw him, when all the others were gone, dash through the ranks of the enemy, with none beside him save O'Brien and Hector Mackenzie of Conan; and, though the troopers spared not for stab or spur, he distanced them all, and rode toward Torridon. Hector was not so fortunate. He was shot dead on the spot."

"And where wert thou to have seen all this?"

"Not far from the side of Montrose. As near to him there, as you were, Macleod, at Inverlochy."

"So, we have met before then?" said the Macleod, doubtfully, for he did not much relish this allusion to his former conduct in the war. "I remember no Mackenzie like thee, and yet I think I have seen that face before."