

breast-plates, with a pair of pikes or halberds here and there. A fire had been lighted in the great hearth as the evenings were chilly; and Sir Nicholas was standing before it, still in his riding-dress, pouring out resentment and fury to his wife, who sat in a tall chair at her embroidery. She turned silently and held out a hand to Isabel, who came and stood beside her, while Hubert went and sat down near his father. Sir Nicholas scarcely seemed to notice their entrance, beyond glancing up for a moment under his fierce white eyebrows; but went on growling out his wrath. He was a fine rosy man, with grey moustache and pointed beard, and a thick head of hair, and he held in his hand his flat riding cap, and his whip with which from time to time he cut at his boot.

"It was monstrous, I told the fellow, that a man should be haled from his home like this to pay a price for his conscience. The religion of my father and his father and all our fathers was good enough for me; and why in God's name should the Catholic have to pay who had never changed his faith, while every heretic went free? And then to that some stripling of a clerk told me that a religion that was good enough for the Queen's Grace should be good enough for her loyal subjects too; but my Lord silenced him quickly. And then I went at them again; and all my Lord would do was to nod his head and smile at me as if I were a child; and then he told me that it was a special Commission all for my sake, and Sir Arthur's, who was there too, my dear. . . . Well, well, the end was that I had to pay for their cursed religion."

"Sweetheart, sweetheart," said Lady Maxwell, glancing at Isabel.

"Well, I paid," went on Sir Nicholas, "but I showed them, thank God, what I was: for as we came out, Sir Arthur and I together, what should we see but another party coming in, pursuivant and all; and in the mid of them that priest who was with us last July.—Well, well, we'll leave his name alone—him that said he was a priest before them all in September; and I went down on my knees, thank God, and Sir Arthur went down on his and we asked his blessing before them all, and