

The Braes of Yarrow

An Historical Tale of the Sixteenth Century.

CHAPTER X—A SECRET MISSION.
As the plain path to their design appears, Of whose wish'd sight they had long delair'd By the dissolving of those threat'ning fears That many a purpose, many a plot had marr'd: Their hope at full so heartily they cheer, And their protection be a stronger guard. Lends them to relate the events to cast Of things to come by those already past.

'You are amazed,' said the Chevalier, in his low voice; 'but you will understand all by and by; at present I can explain nothing.'

'I do not seek your confidence, sir; but I pray you acquaint me where is the child I trusted to your care?'

'Safe and well. I was compelled to leave the cairn sooner than I anticipated, and, dreading accident, brought the bairn with me. To-morrow I should have completed my promise to you by sending her to the Queen.'

'You have not done so yet—then she is here?'

'Not here?'

'Where then?'

'I will take you to her.'

'Let it be at once, for without her the poor lady her mother is without hope.'

'Is Lady Spens in Edinburgh?'

'The Chevalier's voice faltered a little here. 'Yes, we arrived this afternoon.'

'There is danger on every hand to her life and honor.'

'We know it; but she will obtain the Queen's protection.'

'I am not sure of that. Listen, the body of Walter Spens has not been found yet; it is suspected that he lives?'

'Impossible. He would have made himself known to me or his wife.'

'The Chevalier shook his head sadly. 'He is condemned to torture and to death; but more, all those who give him shelter, or even know that he lives without delivering him up, are condemned to like punishment. He might conceal himself from you, and even from his wife, lest any accident should betray your knowledge, and bring upon you the fate undesired by you and by him.'

'Lady Spens is suspected, is sought for, and every hour she remains in Scotland adds to her peril.'

'She will not leave Scotland till her husband's honor is redeemed.'

'The Chevalier seemed to reflect. Presently—'Her only hope of safety, then, rests in the Queen's protection, and I fear that may be difficult to obtain now.'

'And wherefore?'

'Because the Queen herself is under the influence of Douglas, Earl of Angus, and through him Scott of Tusculaw has obtained the lands of Spens.'

'The lands of Spens gifted to Tusculaw?'

'Even so.'

'This is monstrous.'

'But the Lords in Council have decreed it, and we must bow to the law till we can show its injustice, or become strong enough to overthrow it. You see, I have thought much of these matters, and I think you may credit me as a friend of the house of Spens.'

'I do, without a doubt.'

'You would risk something to retrieve the honor of Sir Walter?'

'I count risk as nothing. To prove this truth I would give my life.'

'And you would do something to punish the treachery which destroyed our good King at Flodden?'

'To help that object there is nothing that I would not do.'

'Your hand upon it.'

Their hands were joined for an instant, and a bond of friendship was silently sealed between them. Then, the Chevalier said—

'You shall begin the work at once. Here is a secret—Douglas aspires to the hand of the Queen.'

'What! before the people are satisfied that the King is dead?'

'The Earl of Angus cares little what the people think.'

'Well, and does this affect our cause?'

'Much, as you shall learn. Hamilton of Arran, who opposes Douglas in the grand struggle for supremacy in the guidance of our unhappy country, was the friend of Spens—Tusculaw has more than once served Douglas, who therefore favors him. Should Douglas become the husband of the Queen, there is little hope that we shall ever be able to revoke the judgment pronounced upon our friend.'

'We cannot stay the union, indiscreet as it may be.'

'But we can serve others who may have the power to prevent it. Take this packet. I will guide you to the King's Park. After leaving me, you will find a man waiting at the north gate. You will say to him, 'England wakes.' Why do you start?'

'I will not serve England.'

'No, but you will serve Scotland and Sir Walter Spens.'

'I doubt if this will serve either.'

'It is our only chance of serving both.'

'Explain, then.'

'Not now, I cannot.'

'Then take back the packet.'

'Foolish youth, are you afraid?'

'Yes, of being false to myself and to my country.'

'You shall be false to neither, I pledge myself.'

'That is not enough,' persisted Gilbert dourly.

The Chevalier raised his hand to his mask as if to tear it from his face. He checked himself, and said, sadly—

'As you will; I do not mean to force your humour but, I thought that you had learned to treat me.'

Something in the man's voice and manner inspired confidence.

'Give me the packet, I will go.'

'That is well for us all. You remember the signal?'

'England wakes.'

'The man will answer, if he be the one you seek, 'Scotland wakes.' Follow him.—He will conduct you to a lady, who will ask how England fares. For answer you will give her this missive.'

'May there be need for sword?'

'Perhaps not; but keep guard. Above all, be silent as to whence you came, and let no word escape you to show that you have divined anything of the contents of the packet.'

TO BE CONTINUED.

TORONTO RACES.—The races over the Newmarket Course, near Toronto, which begin to-morrow, are expected to surpass anything of the kind that has ever taken place in Canada. They are to be under the personal management of officers of the garrison and leading citizens, and this fact gives them a character which races heretofore in this country have not enjoyed. Every arrangement is being made to preserve order, and enable visitors to enjoy themselves. An efficient force of military, acting for the time as constabulary, will be present in charge of the Course, upon which a large stand is erected for the accommodation of ladies, and another for the use of gentlemen. The first day (to-morrow) there will be five races: The Dominion Plate, the United Service stakes, the Queen's Plate, the Hussar's Charger Race, and the Toronto Hurdle Race. For the Queen's Plate there are sixteen entries, among which we notice Sheriff Grange's "Rath-own."

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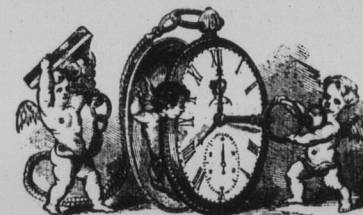
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