

CHAPTER VI.

THE appearance of the carrier's cart among the bivouacked Jacobites was the signal for a gathering of all the unemployed soldiers, eager to know whither the carrier was going, and on what business he was bent.

"Going?" said Charlie; "I am going no further than I am at present. I have business with the Laird of Darvel, and I shall be obliged if you will conduct me to him."

At this there was a general outburst of kindness on the part of the loungers.

"Oh, if he's sib to Darvel, he's of the right sort."

Through groups of soldiers, most of whom were attired in Highland dress, the carrier and his cart were piloted. When they came to the circle where the Buchan horses were picketed, Forbes of Darvel was quick to recognize the new-comer, and came forward with outstretched hand and a cheery word of welcome.

"I was not expecting that you would appear among us, but I need not say how glad I am to see you. At present we are enjoying a quiet time, while the good folks of Edinburgh are making up their minds as to the nature of the reception they will accord us when we make our way up the Grassmarket. Alistair has gone out with a small party to reconnoitre, but we expect them to return very shortly. Now, tell me how we find you here."

The young farmer gave a low laugh and said:

"I have not come to join the troop, sir, much as I should like to do so. I am simply acting as an agent of the commissariat. My mother has sent a supply of provisions for the men; I am also the bearer of many messages to you from the young ladies at Luncarty, and to Alistair from various friends. I can only stay for a