

"As God is my judge, that is the truth," replied the minister, "and I had forgotten all about it. Oh! John Percival, as you are the nephew of my beloved Mary, answer me with truth, and say that you are innocent of this heinous deed!"

"I am indeed innocent, my dear uncle," said the young man; "nor did I know until this moment who the unfortunate man was, of whose untimely death I am accused."

"Here he is, gentlemen; we've got him safe and sound!" cried several voices; and dragging a wild and haggard-faced man, the fishers and officials of justice approached the trio who stood by the Nut-tree-hole.

"The Lord be our guide!" exclaimed Mr. Comyn, it is really David Bain!" and as the wretched sexton struggled to free himself from the arms that pinioned him, the minister, prompted by a sudden impulse, advancing toward him, and looking steadily in his face, said—

"David Bain, look not to deny your crime, but confess it, and implore your Maker's pardon, even at this the eleventh hour. In my Bible, this morning, I found a paper, written by the spirit of him you murdered here last night, and charging you with the commission of the deed."

At these strange words, which in our modern times might have produced mirth, the guilty creature, losing all self-possession, uttered a loud cry, and pointing to the bloody cudgel which still lay at the magistrate's feet, exclaimed—

"I did it with that! I did it with that!" and fell back in a fit.

It would be easy to lengthen out our historiette into one of circumstantial evidence, trial, condemnation, and ultimate discovery; but we have preferred telling it as it really happened. On the person of David Bain were found a pocket-book and purse, recognized as the property of the late Mr. Bruce, and containing bank-notes and bills to a considerable amount; the sight of which, in the possession of his lodger, had evoked the cupidity of the bell-man. He made a full confession, and in due time suffered the penalty due to his offence. Meanwhile the minister, in the thankfulness of his soul to find his nephew guiltless, embraced him tenderly, and freely permitted that courtship to proceed between his daughter and him, which he had before so strenuously opposed.

One circumstance still remained a mystery, undeveloped to all save Barbara's aunt, Percival, and the worthy magistrate,—by whose advice, indeed, it was concealed from the minister; who, to his dying day, confidently believed that the paper he had found in his Bible had been placed there by supernatural interposition. But the hand of the dead had nothing to do with it, as we mean to explain.

On the evening of the murder, Barbara Comyn sallied forth to meet her cousin, leaving Mr. Bruce and her father discussing punch and polemics. She was later than usual, and as she sped along, she became aware of the approach from Aberdeen of an individual, whom she could not avoid meeting if she proceeded direct to the tryst.—She therefore stole in a different track, thinking to make a circuit which would occupy the time the stranger might take in passing the cove of hazels; but, unfortunately (or fortunately was it?), she met a poor woman, the wife of a neighbouring peasant, who was on her way to the manse to implore some black currant jelly for a child suffering from sore throat. The call of distress was never disregarded by Barbara, and she flew back to the manse, procured the jelly, and giving it to the woman, hastened amidst falling rain to the trysting-place. As she was about to round the point which hid the Nut-hole from view, she heard the sounds of struggling feet and wrestling arms; and regardless of danger to herself in her fears for Percival, she forced her way through some bushes, and beheld two men, in no friendly embrace, staggering on the very verge of the pool. Before she could look again the one had fallen on the earth; and the other, with a desperate blow of his stick on the head of the prostrate man, uttered an oath in a voice whose peculiar tones were well-known to Barbara, and in the twinkling of an eye shoved the wounded man over the bank into the Nut-tree hole!

Her blood curdling with horror, Barbara found no voice, no strength, to speak or stir; but she became, so to speak, all eye; and as the murderer, swiftly cramming into his hat and pockets something which she could not define, rose up, and forgetful of the cudgel, which lay blood-dabbled on the grass, rushed from the place where he had taken the burden of a deadly sin upon his soul, she