

"Never mind about a chair, my hearties," said the seaman; "this will do!" And, before Peter could speak to withhold him, he had thrown himself carelessly into the hallowed, the venerated, the twelve-years-unoccupied chair! The spirit of sacrilege uttering blasphemies from a pulpit could not have smitten a congregation of pious worshippers with deeper horror and consternation, than did this filling of the vacant chair, the inhabitants of Marchlaw.

"Excuse me, Sir! excuse me, Sir!" said Peter, the words trembling upon his tongue; "but ye cannot—ye cannot sit there!"

"O man! man!" cried Mrs. Elliot, "get out o' that! get out o' that!—take my chair!—take ony chair i' the house!—but dinna, dinna sit there! It has never been sat in by mortal being since the death o' my dear bairn!—and to see it filled by another is a thing I canna endure!"

"Sir! Sir!" continued the father, "ye have done it through ignorance, and we excuse ye. But that was my Thomas's seat! Twelve years this very day—his birth-day—he perished, Heaven kens how! He went out from our sight, like the cloud that passes over the hills—never—to return. And, O Sir, spare a father's feelings! for to see it filled wrings the blood from my heart!"

"Give me your hand, my worthy soul!" exclaimed the seaman; "I revere—nay, hang it! I would die for your feelings! But Tom Elliot was my friend, and I cast anchor in this chair by special commission. I know that a sudden broadside of joy is a bad thing; but, as I don't know how to preach a sermon before telling you, all I have to say is—that Tom an't dead."

"Not dead!" said Peter, grasping the hand of the stranger, and speaking with an eagerness that almost choked his utterance; "O Sir! Sir! tell me how!—how!—Did ye say, living?—Is my ain Thomas living?"

"Not dead, do ye say?" cried Mrs. Elliot, hurrying towards him and grasping his other hand—"not dead! And shall I see my bairn again? Oh! may the blessing o' Heaven, and the blessing o' a broken-hearted mother be upon the bearer o' the gracious tidings! But tell me—tell me, how is it possible! As ye would expect happiness here or hereafter, dinna, dinna deceive me!"

"Deceive you!" returned the stranger, grasping, with impassioned earnestness, their hands in his—"Never!—never! and all I can say is—Tom Elliot is alive and hearty."

"No, no!" said Elizabeth, rising from her seat, "he does not deceive us; there is that in his countenance which bespeaks a falsehood impossible." And she also endeavoured to move towards him, when Johnson threw his arm around her to withhold her.

"Hands off, you land-lubber!" exclaimed the seaman, springing towards them, "or, shiver me! I'll shew daylight through your timbers in the turning of a hand-spike!" And, clasping the lovely girl in his arms, "Betty, Betty! my love!" he cried, "don't you know your own Tom? Father, mother, don't you know me? Have you really forgot your own son? If twelve years have made some change on his face, his heart is sound as ever."

His father, his mother, and his brothers, clung around him, weeping, smiling, and mingling a hundred questions together. He threw his arms around the neck

of each, and in answer to their inquiries, replied—"Well! well! there is time enough to answer questions, but not to-day—not to-day!"

"No, my bairn," said his mother, "we'll ask you no questions—nobody shall ask ye any! But how—how were ye torn away from us, my love? And, O hinny! where—where hae ye been?"

"It is a long story, mother," said he, "and would take a week to tell it. But, howsoever, to make a long story short, you remember when the smugglers were pursued, and wished to conceal their brandy in our house, my father prevented them; they left muttering revenge—and they have been revenged. This day twelve years, I went out with the intention of meeting Elizabeth and her father, when I came upon a party of the gang concealed in Hell's Hole. In a moment half a dozen pistols were held to my breast, and, tying my hands to my sides, they dragged me into the cavern. Here I had not been long their prisoner, when the snow, rolling down the mountains, almost totally blocked up its mouth. On the second night, they cut through the snow, and, hurrying me along with them, I was bound to a horse, between two, and, before day-light, found myself stowed, like a piece of old junk, in the hold of a smuggling lugger. Within a week, I was shipped on board a Dutch man-of-war; and for six years was kept dogging about on different stations, till our old yawing hulk received orders to join the fleet which was to fight against the gallant Duncan at Camperdown. To think of fighting against my own countrymen, my own flesh and blood, was worse than to be cut to pieces by a cat-o'-nine tails; and, under cover of the smoke of the first broadside, I sprang upon the gunwale, plunged into the sea, and swam for the English fleet. Never, never shall I forget the moment that my feet first trod upon the deck of a British frigate! My nerves felt as firm as her oak, and my heart free as the pennant that waved defiance from her mast-head! I was as active as any one during the battle; and, when it was over, and I found myself again among my own countrymen, and all speaking my own language, I fancied—nay, hang it! I almost believed—I should meet my father, my mother, or my dear Bess, on board of the British frigate. I expected to see you all again in a few weeks at farthest; but, instead of returning to Old England, before I was aware, I found it was helm about with us. As to writing, I never had an opportunity but once. We were anchored before a French fort; a packet was lying alongside ready to sail; I had half a side written, and was scratching my head to think how I should come over writing about you, Bess, my love, when, as bad luck would have it, our lieutenant comes to me, and says he, 'Elliot,' says he, 'I know you like a little smart service; come, my lad, take the head oar, while we board some of those French bum-boats under the batteries! I couldn't say no. We pulled ashore, made a bonfire of one of their craft, and were setting fire to a second, when a deadly shower of small-shot from the garrison scuttled our boat, killed our commanding officer with half of the crew, and the few who were left of us were made prisoners. It is of no use bothering you by telling how we escaped from French prison. We did escape; and Tom will once more fill his vacant chair.'"

Should any of our readers wish farther acquaintance with our friends; all we can say is, the new year was still young when Adam Bell bestowed his daughter's