

was killed, fighting bravely in the middle of his enemies, and only a very few of his men found their way back to the castle.

When Lord James had thus slain two English commanders or governors of his castle, and was known to have made a vow that he would be revenged on any one who should dare to take possession of his father's house, men became afraid; and the fortress was called, both in England and Scotland, the Perilous Castle of Douglas, because it proved so dangerous to any Englishman who was stationed there. Now, in those warlike times, Master Littlejohn, you must know, that the ladies would not marry any man who was not very brave and valiant, so that a coward, let him be ever so rich or high-born, was held in universal contempt. And thus it became the fashion for the ladies to demand proofs of the courage of their lovers, and for those knights who desired to please the ladies, to try some extraordinary deed of arms, to show their bravery and deserve their favour.

At the time we speak of, there was a young lady in England, whom many knights and noblemen asked in marriage, because she was extremely wealthy, and very beautiful. Once upon a holiday she made a great feast, to which she asked all her lovers, and numerous other gallant knights; and after the feast she arose, and told them that she was much obliged to them for their good opinion of her, but as she desired to have for her husband a man of the most incontestable bravery, she had formed her resolution not to marry any one, save one who should show his courage by defending the Perilous Castle of Douglas against the Scots for a year and a day. Now this made some silence among the gentlemen present; for although the lady was rich and beautiful, yet there was great difficulty in finding themselves within the reach of Douglas. At last a brave knight stepped forward, and said that for the love of her, he was willing to