

heavy silence brooded on all ; even Nat Gordon was silent and sad.

“ Who are they ? ” I asked, pointing to the women.

“ Your cousin and Maudlin,” he answered.

“ And where is she ? ” I asked, in a sudden great fear.

Hearing my voice, the two ladies rose and came to me. I heard them sob and sigh as women and children do in the last exhausted stage of a paroxysm of grief.

“ Where is she ? ” I repeated, overwhelmed with horrid dread.

“ Oh, Alec, Alec ! ” cried my cousin. “ She is not here ! She is, I doubt, gone to her God ! . . . ’Tis too—too terrible ! ”

“ And ye brought me off ? ” I cried in reproach to Nat Gordon.

“ Oh ! ” moaned Maudlin, “ if ye had only let me go back to perish with my dear—! my dear ! ”

“ It was you big Sir John that spoiled our business ! ” said Nat.

Thereafter came disjointed explications, which gave me a clear understanding of what had happened. With the setback given by Sir John Colquhoun the guards got hold again of Lady Katherine ; and to turn back and seek to recover her meant the rescue of neither her nor me, and the capture of the Gordons—whom Nat had brought all the way from Strathbogie. Moreover, the crowd while indifferent to my escape, were determined not to suffer a convicted witch to live. . . . And so,—and so the dear lady had endured the barbarous sentence passed upon Maudlin. . . . I could not restrain my grief, and at the sound of it the weeping of the ladies broke out afresh.

“ If ever there was a saint and martyr on this earth,” I cried, “ she is that ! ”

Then I gathered how our dear saint’s plan of taking Maudlin’s place was communicated to none, save the Gaber-