

condition. Her pale and emaciated countenance, the faint forced smile, and the slight, cold, formal courtesy with which she acknowledged the wishes of the guests for long life and happiness to the Countess of Casillis, but too plainly showed how little of the latter she anticipated, and how little of the former she desired.

All the singing and joyous revelry usual on such occasions, nevertheless, went on; but it was soon interrupted by an occurrence that threw a damp on the revellers and finally hastened their departure. In the very midst of the mirth and rejoicing, and at the moment when those seemed to have attained their height, the whole assembly was suddenly thrown into the utmost consternation by a loud and piercing shriek proceeding from that end of the hall where the Countess of Casillis was seated. All hurried towards the spot—some leaving the dance unfinished, others hastily throwing down the untasted goblet—and crowded around the sufferer from whom the alarming cry had proceeded. It was the bride. Senseless and extended on the floor, there lay the miserable Countess of Casillis. But what had happened to cause this extraordinary accident no one could tell. It was ascertained that she had been sitting quite alone when the illness, of whatever nature it was, under which she was now suffering, had seized her; so that no sudden injury of any kind could have befallen her. Her illness, in short, was quite inexplicable. But, as she was about being removed, which was instantly done, there were one or two around her who, hearing her muttering, as she was being raised from the floor, 'I've seen him, I've seen him!' more than guessed the cause of the poor lady's sudden illness.

On the removal of the Countess, there were some attempts made to revive the revelries of the evening and to reinfuse the spirit of mirth into the revellers, which the occurrence just related seemed to have dissipated; but in vain. After some ineffectual efforts of this kind, the company broke up; and, long before the anticipated hour, the guests were gone, the lights extinguished, and silence reigned in the halls of Tynningham Castle.

On the day following this event, the Countess of Casillis was removed by her husband to Casillis Castle, an old, heavy, gloomy-looking fortress on the banks of the Doon, in the shire of Ayr, where the unhappy lady remained for four years, heart-broken, crushed in spirit, and looking forward to the grave as the only termination of her sorrows. Her stern husband took no pains to reconcile her to her destiny, nor did he even show her any of those little kindnesses and attentions which are so well calculated to win on the female heart, and which, had they been employed in this case, might have induced the Countess of Casillis, since she could not love, at least to esteem her lord. But the Earl had obtained, in a large accession of wealth, all that he desired or cared for in uniting himself to the unfortunate Lady Jane; and the consequence was, that, soon after his marriage, he neglected her, to pursue his schemes of ambition and personal aggrandizement. Thus left alone, as she often was, for weeks, nay, for months, in the lonely castle in which she had been immured, the Countess of Casillis might often be seen walking on the battlements—almost the only species of recreation within her power—in solitary sadness; at one time, clapping to gaze, but with listless eye, on the wide and

romantic scene that lay around her; at another, to look on the sleeping and dreaming waters of the Doon, immortalized by the poet's song, and to think of the days that were past, of her blighted hopes and untoward destiny.

Most appropriate to her, to her feelings and circumstances, would have been the melancholy song of Burns, of which her present locality was long afterwards to be the scene. Well might the Countess of Casillis have exclaimed—

"Ye banks and braes o' bonny Doon,
Flow on ye bloom o' youth and fair!
Flow on ye chaunt, ye little birds,
And I see weary, fu' o' care!"

But this beautiful lyric was not then in existence, nor for nearly two centuries after.

It was about the end of the fourth year after her marriage, and while leading this solitary and melancholy life, that the Countess of Casillis, as she walked one evening, as was her wont, on the battlements of the castle, was suddenly alarmed by seeing a numerous band of gipsies approaching the building; and she was the more alarmed, that the Earl, with nearly all his immediate retainers, was at that moment from home, the former being then in attendance on the assembly of divines at Westminster. The Countess, however, would have felt but little uneasiness at the threatened visit of these wanderers, although they had been even much more numerous than they were—for such visitations were then of ordinary occurrence—had they presented the usual appearance, and had the band been composed of the usual materials—that is, of men, women, and children. But in this case there were none of the latter. The whole were men—and all young, stout, active-looking men they were; and hence the alarm of the Countess.

Her fears, however, did not prevent her watching their motions for some time ere she descended from the battlements; and this surveillance discovered to her that they were under the conduct of a leader, and that they were approaching the castle with a very suspicious degree of caution, and yet with a still more startling haste.

Strongly suspecting that the designs of the gipsies were evil, the Countess of Casillis hastened down from the battlements, and secured herself within the walls of the castle. In the meantime, the band of gipsies approached; but, instead of attempting any violence, they began to sing some of the wild strains with which they usually sought to attract the notice and excite the charity of those to whom they appealed. Her apprehensions somewhat allayed by this peaceful indication, the Countess ventured towards a window that overlooked the rude minstrels, and was about to fling them a suitable guard, when, on obtaining the nearer view of their leader, which this step afforded, she uttered a piercing shriek and fell senseless on the floor. His disguise had not been able to conceal from her—for sharp, sharp are the eyes of love—that the leader of the gipsies, she had met with the lost Knight of Dunbar. In the next instant, the Countess was in the arms of the lover of her youth. He it was who acted as leader of the gipsies; and the purpose for which he now came was to carry off, in the absence of her husband—of whose absence he was aware—the betrothed of his early years.