

come—leave me, silly one—it concerns not thee; no evil hath overtaken the house of Blackadder, but the Homes have become a mark for the arrows of desolation, and their necks a footstool for tyrants. Away, Alison—to-night I can think of but one word, and that is—vengeance!”

Lady Alison wept and withdrew in silence—and Wedderburn paced the floor of the gloomy hall, meditating in what manner he should most effectually resent the death of his kinsman.

It was only a few weeks after the execution of the Earl of Home and his brother, that the Regent Albany offered an additional insult to his family by appointing Sir Anthony D'Arcy warden of the east marches—an office which the Homes had held for ages.—D'Arcy was a Frenchman, and a favourite of the Regent; and on account of the comeliness of his person, obtained the appellation of the *Sieur de la Beaute*. The indignation of Wedderburn had not slumbered, and the conferring the honours and the power that had hitherto been held by his family upon a foreigner, incensed him to almost madness. For a time, however, no opportunity offered of causing his resentment to be felt; for D'Arcy was as much admired for the discretion and justice of his government as for the beauty of his person. To his care the Regent had committed young Cockburn, the heir of Langton, who was the nephew of Wedderburn. This the Homes felt as a new indignity, and together with the Cockburns they forcibly ejected from Langton castle the tutors whom D'Arcy had placed over their kinsman: the tidings of this event was communicated to the Chevalier while he was holding a court at Kelso, and immediately summoning together his French retainers and a body of yeomen, he proceeded with a gay and gallant company by way of Fogo to Langton. His troop drew up in front of the castle, and their gay plumes and burnished trappings glittered in the sun: the proud steed of the Frenchman was covered with a panoply of gold and silver, and he himself was decorated as for a bridal. He rode haughtily to the gate, and demanded the inmates of the castle to surrender.

“Surrender! boasting Gaul!” replied William Cockburn, the uncle of the young laird; that is a word the men of Merse have yet to learn. But yonder comes my brother Wedderburn—speak it to him.”

D'Arcy turned round, and beheld Sir David Home and a party of horsemen bearing down upon them at full speed. The Chevalier drew back, and waiting their approach placed himself at the head of his company.

“By the mass, Sir Warden!” said Sir David, riding up to D'Arcy, “and ye have brought a goodly company to visit my nephew. Come ye in peace, or what may be your errand?”

“I wish peace,” replied the Chevalier, “to come to enforce the establishment of my right—why do ye interfere between me and ward?”

“Does a Frenchman talk of his rights over the lands of Home?” returned Sir David, “by whose authority is my nephew ward?”

“By the authority of the Regent, my Scot!” retorted D'Arcy.

“By the authority of the Regent—dare a foreign minion, speak of the authority of a murderer of the Earl of Home, while within the reach of the sword of his kinsmen?”

“Ay! and in his teeth dare tell him,” replied the Chevalier, “that the Home now before me is not less a traitor than he who sold false to his sovereign on the field of Flodden, who conspired against the Regent and whose head now adorns the port of Edinburgh.”

“Wretch!” exclaimed the henchman, leaping forward, and raising his sword, “said ye that my master proved false at Flodden?”

“Hold!” exclaimed Wedderburn, grasping his arm—“Gramercy! ye uncivilised dog for the sake of your master's head would lift your hand against that face which he would die to look upon. Pardon me, most beautiful Chevalier! the salutation of my servant must be too rough for your French palate, but ye and your master treated my kinsman somewhat more roughly. What say ye, Sir Warden, do ye depart in peace, or wish ye that we should try the temper of our Border upon your French bucklers?”

“Depart ye in peace, vain boaster,” replied D'Arcy, “lest a worse thing befall you.”

“Then on, my merry men!” cried Wedderburn, “and to-day the head of the Regent's favourite (the Chevalier of Beauty) for the head of the Earl of Home!”

“The house of Home and revenge!” exclaimed