

"Urgent! babbler!" replied the other impatiently; "to-day the best blood of the times has been lapped by dogs upon the earth; and I have seen it."

The warder aroused the domestics in the hall, and the stranger entered. He was conducted into a long, gloomy apartment, dimly lighted by a solitary lamp. Around the walls hung rude portraits of the chiefs of Wedderburn, and on the walls were suspended the arms and the spoils of their victories.—The solitary apartment seemed like the tomb of war. Every weapon around him had been stained with the blood of Scotland's enemies: it was as a fitting theatre for the recital of a tale of death: he had gazed around for a few minutes, when heavy footsteps were heard coming along the dreary passages, and the next moment Sir David Home entered—"Welcome as for the field."

"Your errand, stranger?" said the young lord of Wedderburn, fixing a searching gaze upon him as he spoke.

The stranger bowed, and replied—"The Regent!"—

Ay!" interrupted Home, "the enemy of our house—the creature of our hands, whom we lifted from exile to sovereignty, and who, with his minions tracks our path like a blood-hound! what of this gracious Regent? ye see one of his myrmidons, and seek to strike the lion in his den?"

"Nay," answered the other; "but from childhood the faithful retainer of your murdered kinsman."

"My murdered kinsman!" exclaimed Wedderburn, grasping the arm of the other,—"What! more blood! more! What mean stranger?"

"That to gratify the revenge of the Regent," replied the other, "my Lord Home and your kinsman William have been beheaded and murdered. Calumny has blasted his honour. Twelve hours ago I beheld his head tossed like footballs by the foot of a common executioner, and afterwards rolled over the porch of the Nether Bow, for execration and indignities of the slaves of Albany. All day the blood of the Homes dropped upon the pavement, where the haric and the clown pass over and tread it."

"Hold!" cried Home, and the dreary hall

echoed with his voice. "No more!" he continued, and he paced hurriedly for a few minutes across the apartment, casting a rapid glance upon the portraits of his ancestors—"By Heavens! they chide me," he exclaimed, "that my sword sleeps in the scabbard, while the enemies of the house of Home triumph."

He drew his sword, and approaching the picture of his father, he pressed the weapon to his lips, and exclaimed—"By the soul of my ancestors, I swear upon this blade that the proud Albany and his creatures shall feel that one Home still lives!" He dashed the weapon back into its sheath, and going near the stranger, drew him towards the lamp, and said—"Ye are Trotter, who was my cousin's henchman, are ye not?"

"The same," replied the messenger.

"And ye come to arouse me to revenge," added Sir David: "ye shall have it, man—revenge that shall make the Regent weep—revenge that the four corners of the earth shall hear of, and history record. Ye come to remind me that my father and my brother fell on the field of Flodden, in defence of a foolish king, and that I, too, bled there—that there also lie the bones of my kinsman, Cuthbert of Fastcastle, of my brother Cockburn and his son, and the father and brother of my Alison. Ye come to remind me of this; and that as a reward for the shedding of our blood the head of the chief of our house has been fixed upon the gate of Edinburgh as food for the carrion crow and the night owl. Go, get thee refreshment, Trotter; then go to rest, and dream of other heads exalted, as your late master's is, and I will be the interpreter of your visions."

Trotter bowed and withdrew, and Lady Alison entered the apartment.

"Ye are agitated husband—hath the man brought evil tidings?" said the gentle lady?"

"Can good things come to a Home," said Sir David, "while the tyrant Albany rides rough-shod over the nobility of Scotland, and like a viper stings the bosom that nursed him—away to thy chamber, Alison—leave me—it is no tale for woman's ears."

"Nay, if you love me, tell me, for since your return from the field of Flodden, I have not seen you look thus," replied she, laying her hand upon his brow.

"This is no time to talk of love, Ale; but