

tion which he was evidently struggling to suppress. He had seen the first meeting and embrace of the lovers; and, thinking that he had a right to know who dared assume such familiarity with his affianced bride, he approached unseen, so near as to overhear all their conversation. This he was easily able to do, from the nature of the place, and the engrossing power of their feelings, which rendered them insensible to all around them. He soon learned that, though he should claim and obtain the hand of Fanny Maxwell, it was no longer in her power to bestow her heart. It would be superfluous to say that this discovery agonized his bosom more keenly than all that had ever befallen him. But his heart had learned that there was more real gratification in the exercise of noble and generous virtue and self-denial, than in all the pleasures that could flow from the enjoyment even of life's dearest blessing. His love for Fanny Maxwell had taught him generosity; and her words, when she knew not that he heard the sacrifice they vowed to make, for whom that sacrifice was to be made, confirmed him in his purpose. He took her trembling hand in his, pressed it fervently to his lips, and spoke:—Heaven knows, my dearest Fanny! with what sincerity I have loved you, and how fondly I would have made you mine. My heart, before I loved you, was a deadened, selfish thing. If it now has any virtue, any sense of generosity, it is to you that it owes them. Let me prove my gratitude. I have heard all that has passed since your meeting with your first lover. To him I resign any claims which I might have conceived that I had upon you. Receive, sir, this highly-valued hand from me. May you both be as happy as your brightest hopes can picture, in the auspicious return and the steady continuance of that purest, sweetest of human passions, "FIRST LOVE!"

THE COUNTESS OF CASSILIS.

AT a short distance from the ancient castle of Tynningham—the seat, at the period of our story, (the beginning of the seventeenth century,) of Thomas, first Earl of Haddington, a man remarkable at once for his talents and successful ambition—there is a sequestered little spot, enclosed with steep banks, now cleared and cultivated, but then covered with natural wood, which, together with the abruptness of the rising ground, excluded all view of the smooth stripe of greenward that lay between, until approached within a few yards' distance.

Here, in this lovely and retired spot, met, every evening, or at least as often as circumstances would permit, two fond and happy lovers; and here had they vowed a thousand times to remain true to each other while life endured, under all changes of circumstance and time. One of these personages was a remarkably

stout and tall young man, of about three-and-twenty, of a frank, bold, and unassuming expression of countenance; the other was a young lady in the nineteenth year of her age, possessing more than ordinary beauty, together with a singularly graceful form and carriage.—The first was no other—a personage of no mean note—than Sir John Faa of Dunster—a gentleman who had already established a high reputation for bravery and for superior prowess and dexterity in all manly exercises. The other, more than his equal in rank, was the Lady Jane Hamilton, daughter of the Earl of Haddington already spoken of.

It may be thought that such clandestine meetings between persons of such condition as this, was not altogether becoming in either. But there was a reason for it.

The addresses of Sir John to the Earl's daughter were not approved of by her father, who, desirous of connecting himself with the older peers—his own title being but a recent one—intended that Lady Jane should marry the Earl of Cassilis—a stern Covenanteer, and a man, besides, of haughty and imperious temper, who had already made some overtures for the hand of the Lady Jane.

The interviews between the lovers, therefore, were—no uncommon thing—stolen ones; as the Earl, aware of their attachment, had peremptorily forbidden Sir John his house, and had as peremptorily forbidden his daughter ever to see or hold any correspondence with him. But love was stronger than the sense of duty; and the fair lady continued to evade her father's injunctions, to elude his vigilance, and to meet with her lover, in the little dell between the woods, as often as occasion permitted or opportunity offered.

This intercourse, however, was carried on, on the part of the young Knight, at the imminent risk of his life; since, had his stern rival, the Earl of Cassilis (who already considered himself as the affianced husband of the Lady Jane, although he had never deigned to consult the lady herself on the subject) been aware of his perseverance in his suit, his death would have been inevitable. The proud Earl would not have brooked the insult, and it is not unlikely, had he known what was going forward, that others besides Sir John would have felt his vengeance. The lovers, therefore, were perfectly aware of the dangerous game they were playing; but this circumstance, instead of damping the ardour of their passion, had the effect only of increasing it, and of endearing them still more and more to each other.

It will readily be conceived, from what has been related, that the two rivals for the hand of the Lady Jane Hamilton entertained the most deadly dislike of each other—for the Earl of Cassilis was not ignorant of Sir John's pretensions; and this feeling never failed to evince itself when by any chance they happened to meet—a circumstance which more than once occurred.

On one of these occasions, they had even gone so far as to draw upon each other, and were prevented from closing in deadly strife only by the determined interference of some mutual friends who chanced to be present.

'Beware, Sir John,' said the stern Earl, on the occasion we allude to, at the same time turning his