

well. The horned cattle and the horses were rushing wildly to and fro through the fire. The invaders burst through the gap: Elspeth tore a pearl drop from her ears,* and thrusting it in the pistol, discharged it at the head of the first man who approached the house. It was evident they intended to blow up the house as they had done the wall.—Sandy had now no weapon that he could render effective but his spear, and he said—“They shall taste the prick o’ the hedgehog before I die.” He thrust it down furiously upon them, and several of them fell at his threshold, but the deadly instrument was grasped by a number of the besiegers, and wrenched from his hands.

The sun had already set, darkness was gathering over the morass, and still the fire burned, and the cattle rushed amongst the armed men in the court-yard.

“Elspeth,” said the freebooter, “it is not your life they seek, and they canna hae the heart to harm our bairn. Gie me my Jeddart-staff in my hand—an’ fareweel to ye, Elspeth—fareweel!—an’ eternal fareweel!—Archy, fareweel, my gallant bairn!—never disgrace your faither!—but ye winna—ye winna—an’ if I am murdered, mind ye revenge me, Archy! Now we maun unbar the door, an’ I maun cut my way through them or perish.

Thus spoke the Borderer, and with his battle-axe in his hand, he embraced his wife and his son, and wept. “Now, Archy,” said he, “slip an’ open the door—safely! safely!—an’ let me rush out.”

Archy silently drew back the massy bars; in a moment the iron door stood ajar, and Sandy Armstrong, battle-axe in hand, burst into the court-yard, and into the midst of his besiegers. There was not a man amongst them that had not heard of the “terrible Jeddart-staff o’ Sandy Armstrong.” He threw them down before him—his very voice augmented their confusion—they shrank back at his approach; and while some fled from the infuriated warrior, others fled from the arm of the freebooter. In a few seconds

he reached the gap in the court wall—he rushed upon the moss; darkness had begun, and a thick vapour was rising from the morass. “Follow me who dare!” shouted Sandy Armstrong.

Archy withdrew into a niche in the passage, as his father rushed out;—and as the besiegers speedily burst into the house among them was one of the muffled men bearing a torch in his hand. Revenge fired the young Borderer, and with his Jeddart-staff, he made a dash at the hand of the traitor—the torch fell upon the floor, and with it three of the fingers that grasped it. The besiegers were instantly enveloped in gloom, and Archy escaping from the niche from whence he had struck the blow, said unto himself, “I’ve given ye a mark to find out wha ye are, neebor.”

The besiegers took possession of Cleughfoot—and the chief men of the party remained in it during the night, while a portion of their followers occupied the court-yard, and others with their horses remained on the morass.—Archy and his mother were turned from their dwelling, and placed under a guard upon the moss, where they remained throughout the night; and in the morning Cleughfoot was blown up before them. They were conveyed as prisoners to Sir William Selby, who had fixed his quarters near Langholm.

“Whom do ye bring me here?” inquired the new made knight—“a wife and bairn!—hae ye been catching sparrows and let the eagle escape? Whar hae ye the head and the hand o’ the outlaw?”

“Troth, Sir Knight,” replied an officer, “and his nead is where it shouldna be—on his ain shouthers. At the darkenin’ he escaped upon the moss; three troopers, guided by a muffler and a sluth-dog, pursued him; an’ as we crossed the bog this mornin’, we found ane o’ the troop sank to the middle in’t, and his horse below him—and far’r on were the dead bodies o’ the other twa, the sluth-dog and the muffled man. I am sorry, therefore, to inform you, Sir Knight, that Sandy Armstrong has escaped, but we hae made a bon-

* The wives and daughters of the Borderers at this period wore numerous trinkets—spoils doubt presented them by their husbands and wooers.