

Elspeth wore a short cloak of faded crimson, and in a sort of pouch in it, every coin, watch, and other article of value which was put into her hands were deposited, in order, she stated, to forward her mystic operations. Now the chronometer had just disappeared in the general receptacle of offerings to the oracle, when heavy footsteps were heard ascending the staircase leading to the hall. Andrew, the ruler of the household, appeared—the blood forsook his cheeks, his hands involuntarily knocked one against another, and he stammered out—

"For Heaven's sake gie me my chronometer—O gie me it!—we are a' ruined!"

"It canna be returned till the spell's completed," rejoined Elspeth, in a solemn and ominous tone, and her countenance bore no trace of her dupe's uneasiness, while her husband deliberately placed his hand upon a sort of dagger which he carried beneath a large coarse-jacket, that was slung over his shoulders. The males of the household, who were eight in number, followed his example.

At another moment the laird, with wrath on his countenance, burst into the hall.

"Andrew Smith," cried he sternly, and stamping his foot fiercely on the floor, "what is this I see? Answer me, ye betrayer—trust?—ye robber answer me?—ye shall die for it?"

"O sir! sir!" groaned Andrew, "mercy! mercy!—O sir!" and he wrung his hands together and shook exceedingly.

"Ye faus knave!" continued the laird, seizing him by the neck; and dashing him against the wall, Andrew fell flat upon the floor; his terror had almost shaken him from his feet before—"speak! ye faus knave!" roared the laird, "what means your carousings?—ye sic a gang? Ye robber speak?"—and he kicked him with his foot as he lay on the ground.

"O sir!—mercy sir!" vociferated Andrew, in a stupor and wildness of terror, "I canna live!—ye hae killed me outright! I am a stone dead! But it wasna my blame ye'll a' say that if they speak the truth."

"Out! out ye thieves!—ye gang o' plunderers born to the gallows! out o' my house!" roared the laird, addressing Willie Faa and his followers.

"Thieves! ye ached loon!" exclaimed the Faa King, starting to his feet, and drawing himself up to his full height—"wha does the worm that burrows in the lands o' Clennel ca' thieves? Thieves say ye!—speak such words to your equals, but no to me. Your forbears came owre wi' the Norman, invaded the nation, and seized upon land—mine invaded it also, and only laid a tax upon the flocks, the cattle, and the poultry—and wha ca' ye thieves?—or wi' what grace do ye speak the word?"

"A way ye audacious vagrant!" continued the laird, "ken ye not that the king's authority is in my hands, and for your former plunderings, if I again find ye setting foot upon ground o' mine, in the nearest tree ye shall find a gibbet."

"Boast awa'—boast awa' man," said Willie, "ye are safe here, for me and mine winna harm ye, and it is a fougie cock indeed that darena craw in its ain barn-yard. But wait until the day when ye may meet upon the wide moor, wi' only twa bits o' steel between us, and see wha shall brag then."

"Away!—instantly away!" exclaimed Clennel, drawing his sword, and waving it threateningly over the head of the gipsy.

"Proud, cauld-hearted and unfeeling mortal," said Elspeth, "will ye turn fellow-beings frae beneath your roof in a night like this, when the fox darena creep frae its hole, and the raven trembles on the tree?"

"Out! out! ye witch!" rejoined the laird.

"Farewell Clennel," said the Faa King, "we will leave your roof and seek the shelter o' the hill-side. But ye shall rue! As I speak man ye shall rue it!"

"Rue it!" screamed Elspeth, rising, her small dark eyes flashed with indignation; "he shall rue it—the bairn unborn shall rue it—and the bann o' Elspeth Faa shall be on Clennel and his kin, until his hearth be desolate, and his spirit howl within him like the tempest which this night rages in the heavens!"

The servants shrunk together into a corner of the hall, to avoid the rage of their master, and they shook the more at the threatening words of the weird woman, lest she should involve them in his doom; but he laughed with scorn at her words.

"Proud, pitiless fool," resumed Elspeth, more bitterly than before, "repress your