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THE
I N V A S I O N.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“THE COLLEGIANS,” &c.

Gerald Griffin

One foot on sea, and one on shore,
To one thing constant never.

Shakspeare.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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THE INVASION.

CHAPTER LXII.

HIS own reflections, the reserve of Kenric, the caution of Vuscfræa, and the late warning of his parent, all now combined in Elim's recollection, and filled his breast anew with alarms which he had often made a duty of repressing. Walking out soon after into the neighbouring woods, in order to meditate on the course which he should take, he was overtaken by the Anglo-Saxon, who hurried towards him with assemblance of great

haste. To the surprize of the Ithian, he appeared in full attire for travelling; and there was in his demeanour, and in the expression of his countenance, a look of decision and of cheerfulness which were most unlike the usual character of both.

“Elim,” he exclaimed, “I have been seeking thee at the house, and in the grove, and by the bridges, and wherever there was any hope of finding thee.”

“Indeed!” said Elim:

“I have found thee now, however,” he continued, laying his hand familiarly on Elim’s shoulder, “and in good time for my purpose. Elim!” he continued, letting his head droop, and pausing for a long time, “I am about to leave thee.”

“To leave us, Kenric!”

“Aye, this very hour. My friend, my dear,

dear friend, I thank thee for thy love, for all thy kindness."

"But, Kenric!—"

"For kindness," continued the Northumbrian, "that was undeserved at first—that still is unrequited—but that never—never shall be forgotten."

"To leave Rath-Aidan, Kenric!" exclaimed Elim.

"To leave it," answered the latter; "instantly to leave it. Come hither, Elim, my friend, and listen to me. I have often vexed thee by my waywardness; I have often met thy expressions of kindness and regard with sullenness and bitterness of speech; I am sorry, very sorry for it now. I would give much now, Elim, that I had never uttered a harsh thought before thee, or cherished a harsh feeling in thine absence."

"Still meditating on these trifles, Kenric,"

said Elim, seriously, but calmly; "believe me, you wrong us both in dwelling on them thus; we cannot always judge of the evil by the surface."

"True, true—oh, very true!" cried Kenric. "Still, Elim," he continued, looking up again, "at parting I may say that I am sorry. If ever I have seemed to fail in sympathy, let me now pay thee all with truth and earnestness. Thou hopest to enter soon on the fulfilment of thy scheme of happiness. May it be long continued; deep, and ample! May it be perfect in its kind, and quite untroubled in its continuance! May Elim, the good friend, ere long, be Elim, the happy, happy chieftain of his people!"

"What need this warmth, dear Kenric?" asked the Ithian. "Do I not perfectly, entirely know thy thoughts in this respect?"

"I bless thee, because I leave thee," answered

Kenric, "and would not have my parting words bear any other sound but those of blessing and of gratitude. And now one word of business : thou must not ask me at this time the cause of my departure ; the time may come when thou shalt learn it fully. One thing I am at liberty to say, and that is all. Thou needst not yet, for many a month to come, dread any thing from the Nordland raven. The Vikingr has left the coast, but with the fixed design of returning ere the year is ended ; and yet a word—thine isle has traitors in her bosom. This warning I can fairly give, but not a hint besides. Farewell, I leave thee to make use of it."

"A moment, Kenric," cried Elim, "do not treat us thus. If thou wilt go thus suddenly, at least say whither ?"

"Whither, I know not," answered Kenric. "Do not detain me, Elim."

“To Northumbria, is it?” asked the Ithian.

“I tell thee I am ignorant,” said Kenric,
“but I think not yet of home.”

“Thou makest an ill beginning of thy blessing,” said Elim, “in robbing me of my friend. One day to speak of this, dear Kenric.”

The Anglo-Saxon pressed his arm, and said, in a lower but more earnest tone than before:—

“I would not stay an hour for all this earth.”

CHAPTER LXIII.

HE hurried off, leaving Elim still perplexed by the nature of the scene, and bewildered by its suddenness. Impetuous in good, as he often was in error, away he hurried in the direction of the coast, where a hired fishing vessel was awaiting his arrival. On the outskirts of the wood he was hailed by the voice of Inguar, who called, and waved his hand to him at a distance.

“Ho! Kenric, whither now?” inquired the Swede.

“Rejoice with me!” cried Kenric, hastening

towards him: "rejoice that I have yet some justice left. 'Tis over now, and I am quite at peace."

"'Tis peace of a tumultuous kind," said Inguar, "that sets thee moving at such panting speed as this."

"I gasp for it; I do but taste the draught," said Kenric; "I have not yet drank deep."

"What dost thou mean?" said Inguar.

"The war," replied the scholar, "the war within my breast is at an end, but it is yet too soon for perfect quiet. The contest, Inguar, grew too close and painful, but it is over now. I have given it up!"

"Given what?" cried Inguar, with eagerness.

"Thy scheme—thy kindly meant but deadly scheme—thy scheme that, if fulfilled, would

have secured my fortune, it may be, but plundered all the little peace I have."

"Thou art mad!" cried Inguar.

"No, no!" replied the youth. "I only now see clearly and think coldly. I feel not so, indeed, for love, and gratitude, and many a good affection, long imprisoned, are once more free and warm within my breast."

He was hurrying away when Inguar seized his cloak.

"Stand here, thou fool!" he cried, "thou brainless fool!"

"I will not stand—I will not hear thee speak!" exclaimed the youth. "I know thou brewest some cursed poison for me, but I forewarn thee that I will not drink!"

"Thou'rt pledged to me, thou cheat!" cried Inguar.

"It was a pledge of sin and wrong," said

Kenric. "I have a higher pledge to keep, or perish!"

"Dost thou forget," cried Inguar, rising in wrath, "that I too suffer by thy foul desertion? that I am pledged besides?"

"It will be well for thee," cried Kenric, "if thou dissolve that pledge as I do thine."

"Yet hear me, Kenric, yet consider well. Yet, Kenric—"

"No!" cried the young scholar, struggling in his grasp—"I will not hear thee speak. I know my part is flight—I know it well. No, Inguar, I know the luring poison of thy speech—the subtle, fatal, venom of thy words. Well do I know thou canst make virtue vice, and falsehood truth; but thou shalt never do so more for me. I will hear nothing from thee; I will consider nothing at thy bidding, for I have proved thee a bad counsellor!"

“Thou shall not go!” cried Inguar, springing on him, with a face almost infuriate with rage. Kenric struggled for freedom, but the hard vigour of the stranger made his efforts for a long time useless. They rolled together on the ground, and the Swede succeeded in securing the advantage. He pressed one knee upon the scholar’s breast, and held him to the earth—while his eyes flashed with baffled hate, and the angry foam appeared between his teeth.

“Beware of what thou doest,” said Kenric. “Let go thy hold, I warn thee! I have a way to make thee do it.”

With these words he endeavoured to slip the Gaulish dagger from his girdle, at which the stranger started, and made an effort to seize the weapon. The girdle burst, and came away in his hand—but in the attempt he lost his hold of Kenric. The latter, throwing all

his force into one vigorous effort, heaved off the stranger from his breast, and hurled him to a distance on the grass. More nimble than his enemy, he was on his feet in an instant, and so far beyond his reach that the latter did not even offer to pursue him.

CHAPTER LXIV.

IN the meantime, Elim, recovering from the effect of his first surprise at Kenric's resolution, followed, as nearly as he could conjecture, the path which the latter had taken. The way, however, was not certain, and thus it happened that, until Inguar had departed, Elim did not arrive at the spot on which the struggle had taken place. Great were his alarm and his surprise at observing the evident vestiges of recent combat in the trampled condition of the sod; and greater still at finding Kenric's girdle and the dagger. Folding them

within his garment, he returned towards the Rath, where, after instituting the strictest search throughout his territory, he was compelled to remain unsatisfied.

The vessel in which Kenric sailed pursued its voyage along the iron-bound range of coast that breaks the western surge of the Atlantic. The intention of the young scholar was, to accompany the fishermen the whole length of their voyage into the mouth of the Senau, and to the city of Ships, where his acquirements might procure him some present mode of independent subsistence. It had cost him a violent effort to make this sacrifice, all necessary as it had become, and he had not yet felt all the natural pain of the privation, for the occupation by which the effort of self-conquest was succeeded, prevented his reflecting much upon it. In the evening the little vessel cast her anchor on the leeward of the wild and craggy Skeligs; and

here it was resolved to wait the light of the returning morn, in order to continue their course with more security. The men were unwilling to leave their cargo, but Kenric resolved to look out for some more commodious resting place on shore. Accordingly, he landed on the greater isle, and walked up the sloping ascent which led towards its shattered peak. It was a calm and lovely sunset, and Kenric turned from the height to look across the tranquil waters, in the direction of Inbhersceine. The lonesome nature of the scene, heightened by the solitary cry of the gannet on the crags above him, the thought of his friendless condition, of the companions he had left, of all that he had lost both at home and elsewhere, now came together on his mind, and oppressed it so much that he could not forbear sitting down to indulge his grief. What now was to supply to him the loss of an intimacy so full

of happiness as that which he had lost? What occupation, what pursuit was now to fill his time—his weary time? Without an object in the future, or an enjoyment in the present, how was he now to make the moments light? Such were the thoughts and feelings that afflicted him as he sat beneath the crags, and the sense of his desolation increased at length to a degree extremely painful. In this situation he remained until the declining twilight warned him that it was time to seek a lodging, if he wished to avoid spending the whole night in the open air. Ascending the slope a little higher, his glance fell, at a turn of the rock, on one of those lonely hermitages which were scattered in these days throughout the whole of Europe. It was a low building of brown free-stone, in the form of a parabola, the only aperture appearing to be a small doorway in one end, but unprovided with either board or wicket.

There did not appear to be any other dwelling in the place, nor indeed, except for the purposes of religious retirement, did it appear likely that any one would select this lonesome crag as a place of residence. While he was examining the curious dove-tailing of the stones which formed the building, he was startled by the sound of a voice from the crags which overhung the hermitage, and which, accompanied by the sound of a cruit, sung, in a manner rendered peculiarly agreeable by the stillness of the scene and hour, the following stanza of a song which Kenric imagined he had somewhere heard before :

*So firm be thy merit,
So changeless thy soul,
So constant thy spirit,
While seasons shall roll.
The fancy that ranges
Ends where it began ;
But the mind that ne'er changes
Brings glory to man.*

After some effort, the Northumbrian called to mind that he had heard these words, while he stood by Vusfræa's side, in the convent yard of Muingharidh, on the first morning of his arrival at the abbey. While he listened for the repetition of the strain which conveyed, in a manner so charming, a counsel of which he stood peculiarly in need, the solitary, a man of more than middle age, dressed in a garment of the coarsest woollen stuff, and bearing, like most members of the religious orders, a small cruit hung around his neck, passed him with a silent reverence. He was about to enter the little building, when Kenric accosted and made him acquainted with the object which had tempted him to land upon the island. Great was the astonishment of the Northumbrian, as he spoke, to recognize, in the countenance of the old man, the features of one of the choristers of Muing-

haridh, who had come to end his days in this retirement. The latter, with difficulty, was made to remember the Northumbrian disciple, and offered him the shelter of his cell, which, he said, was the only inhabited spot upon the island. The proposal was accepted by Kenric, who, in the course of the evening, made the solitary acquainted with a part of his past adventures, and with his present intention of returning to take up his residence at Deochain Assain. His aged host, who seemed changed no less in mind than in his person, furnished him with the necessary instructions for obtaining success in his scholastic pursuits in the city. They soon after lay down to rest upon their rush beds, and Kenric, after the fatigue and agitation of the day, enjoyed an unbroken sleep until the sun was risen.

He arose early, with fresh and active spirits,

and a mind entirely quiet and serene. The morning was as calm and beautiful as the evening had been ; the sun was shining cheerily, and Kenric, perceiving that his host had already left the cell, walked out by the sea-shore, to enjoy, with a keen and vigorous delight, the sweetness of the early breeze, the brilliant aspect of the sun-streaked ocean, the cries of the busy sea-fowl, and the exhilarating odour of the coast. Beneath him, heaving gently at her cable, appeared the little vessel in which he had approached the island.

The change which had taken place in his own feelings, astonished him still more than he was pleased by the tranquil scene around him. Never since his boyhood had he enjoyed such peace, such pure serenity of spirit. All tumult, all strife, was at an end within his breast ; his heart was no longer divided ; he had embraced

his part, and bitter as the draught had been at first, and arduous the effort of decision, all now was happily concluded, and nothing remained but the delicious rest of conquered passion.

While he continued to enjoy, with strange delight, a feeling such as he had never before experienced, he observed the solitary returning, with his implements of husbandry, towards the cell, from the height on which his garden lay.

Kenric greeted his host, and, at his request, agreed to partake of his morning repast in the cell. While they were seated, a currach touched upon the island, and a stranger landed, whom Kenric shortly found to be a relative and frequent visitor of the solitary. With this person, after he had taken leave of the old hermit, and as they walked down the slope which led to the beach, the young scholar entered into conversation on the nature of the

life which his kinsman led in so solitary a place, and expressed his admiration of the fortitude which enabled him to support a course of life so toilsome, and yet so barren of the common end of toil—enjoyment.

“It seems so to us, who know nothing of it, but I believe it is not so,” said the stranger. “Without speaking at all of the motive that cheers and lightens it, I might venture to say truly, that there is no life on earth so happy as my kinsman’s. He has no cares upon his mind; his line of duty is simple and regular; one thought, one wish, one hope, engrosses all his faculties, and he finds no impediment in cultivating that. Without having any natural talents for exerting a commanding influence in society, it is much to be questioned if the simple unobtrusive light of so serene an example of virtue does not effect more good than many

a brilliant genius ; for say what you will, men never think you thoroughly in earnest until they see you practise what you teach. My kinsman is naturally stupid, with the exception of his slender skill in music, and was obliged, in youth, from absolute incapacity, to discontinue the ordinary studies of his colleagues. He bore those mortifications with an unvarying good humour, and notwithstanding his want of learning, in the course of his life obtained so high a character for sound discretion, that he is consulted in his solitude, on the most important affairs, by men who far surpass him both in genius and acquirement. He rises in the morning at a certain hour—a certain time at his religious duties—a certain time in his garden—a certain time at his meals and necessary recreation, and then a certain time to rest again. A life like this, neither indolent nor solicitous, without an hour unpro-

vided with its customary duty, and all falling in in their harmonious course, does not leave a chink for either vice or selfishness to fasten in. What he does seems painful, but the pain is sweetened by a tranquil conscience—the restraint seems rigorous, but it is softened by the strongest hopes. We all despise him, and he smiles at us, and with the better reason.

By this they had reached the shore, and Kenric, after bidding farewell to the stranger, re-embarked on board the fishing vessel.

CHAPTER LXV.

ARRIVED in the city of Luimneach na Luingas, Kenric found less difficulty in acquiring that condition of independence, without which no honourable or conscientious mind can feel at rest, than when he journeyed first into East-Anglia. He attained, with little disappointment as to time, the office of Lector in one of the schools in Deochain Assain, where he was easily recognized by many of the teachers. Remembering there the hermit of the Skeligs, his first care was to lay down with exactness, the rule of life which

he proposed to follow, dividing his time into regular portions for the due fulfilment of his purpose. Independent of those hours which his duties in the school demanded, a considerable time was to be devoted daily to the study of the history of Inisfail, of which he had obtained a glimpse from Elim ; its laws, its so much prized, yet now so little known, scholastic literature ; its natural peculiarities, and the origin and character of its people. Those who have known what it is to enter on a life of innocence and regularity, from one of turbulence and passion, may conceive something of the happiness which the young scholar enjoyed during the month which succeeded his being established within the city. His walks were pleasant, his hours of tuition and of study serene and quiet, his recreations salutary and delicious, his sleep sound and peaceful, his heart released from passion, and his mind healed of

that feverish and inquisitive folly, the fruit of discontent and pride, which had in him turned knowledge, the food of the mind, into a poison deadly to its peace.

But conscience, once triumphant in his breast, was not to be appeased with half a conquest. It was not long before he found in his new occupation too powerful a remembrancer of home and of his boyhood to leave his thoughts at rest upon this point. He often thought of his last parting with Domnona on the bridge, and the same worn face and low and hurried voice invaded his dreams so frequently, that he began at length to find the night unwelcome. He strove to quiet his mind by reasoning on the justice of his cause, but never, in his most impassioned moments, had he been fully satisfied of this; then wherefore should he now, when he had grown almost too wise to be proud any longer? still, while he rea-

soned, he found that conviction did not bring him peace, and that it was one thing to reason, and another to be rational.

The peace, the holy calm, the smiling and celestial industry that filled these shades, had rather a reproachful than a soothing influence on Kenric's mind, for they reminded him most forcibly of what he had been himself when he studied here with Elim, and showed him, in a plainer, deeper contrast, the alteration in his character. In these sanctified abodes, all seemed at once at rest and active, diligent and peaceful; the countenances of the inhabitants were illumined by a perpetual calm of mind, their voices sounded ever kindly and sweetly, the tones of anger never grated on the ear, the voice of blame came seldom, and with more of grief than wrath in its expression, a cheerful humility regulated the demeanour of the community, and never, never,

among these simple-hearted children of virtue, was the mind offended by the hateful sneer, the sign at once of weakness and of pride.

On an evening in autumn, Kenric walked towards the river side to enjoy his customary exercise. As he passed the outskirts of the city of letters, his ear was greeted by the sound of one of those rude Welch harps, whose horse-hair strings he had been once accustomed to hear with such delight in Northumberland. The air likewise was one of those melodies to which his ear had been accustomed in his childhood, and the words he had often heard his mother sing in the midst of her daily occupations :

Summer is a coming in,
Loud sings cuckoo !
Groweth seed,
And bloweth mead,
And springeth the wood new !*

* The song, of which this forms the opening stanza, is supposed to be the oldest in the English language. The reader will pardon an anachronism so inconsiderable as its introduction here.

The song and its accompaniment, all rude as they might sound in the ear of an accomplished crotarie, were dear and touching to the heart of Kenric, but so startling withal, that instead of turning to accost his wandering countryman, he hurried away to the river, and, as if fearing to be recognized, walked along its sedgy winding bank until the voice and instrument were both unheard. He could not, however, banish from his mind the single verse which he had caught in passing. It haunted him to his lodging, and he dreamed Domnona sang it to him all the night. In the morning it mingled with the tolling of the convent bells; it pursued him to his daily occupations, and again, when he went to rest at night, the same sweet English voice seemed still to haunt his pillow with the same wild words :

Summer is a coming in,
Loud sings cuckoo !
Groweth seed,
And bloweth mead,
And springeth the wood new !

It would be difficult for one, who has not been similarly situated, to imagine with what force this simple verse brought back to Kenric's mind the recollection of his Northumbrian meads and woods, and the aspect of the opening summer in his native land. In a word, his mind was wholly filled with the thoughts of home, and his breast with a lonesomeness and longing that amounted at times to anguish.

CHAPTER LXVI.

ON the following evening he walked in the same direction, and heard the sound of the same instrument, but to a different air and words. It was a Cambrian melody, and the words he well remembered to be an effort of his own early skill at Muingharidh. The young scholar, instead of passing on as before, now staid to listen to the music and to observe the figure of the minstrel. In the dress of a different tongue, the following might bear some resemblance to the words he sang :

I.

While the stars of heaven are shining,

Ar hyd a nos,

Here at midnight lone, reclining,

Ar hyd a nos.

Fancy flies to those wild bowers,

Sunny fields and springing flowers,

Where I passed my infant hours,

Ar hyd a nos.

II.

To my own beloved mountains,

Ar hyd a nos,

Rushing streams and quiet fountains,

Ar hyd a nos.

Sleepless, still my thoughts returning

Leave my lonely bosom mourning,

And my heart within me burning,

Ar hyd a nos,

III.

There light slumbers blessed my pillow,

Ar hyd a nos.

There beside the star-lit billow,

Ar hyd a nos,

Visions soft to me were given,

Pure as mountain winds at even,

Peace for earth and hope for heaven,

Ar hyd a nos.

IV.

Still that sabbath bell is ringing,

Ar hyd a nos,

Still that sabbath choir is singing,

Ar hyd a nos ;

Sounds beloved ! Oh restore me
With the scenes ye bring before me,
Hopes that then hung blooming o'er me,
Ar hyd a nos.

Long ere the song had ended, Kenric had, with an astonishment easy to be conceived, recognized the countenance of the wanderer to be that of Webba, the Cambrian servant of his aged uncle and tutor, who thus seemed now endeavouring to procure a subsistence by exercising the trade of a wandering minstrel. The reader may imagine with what feelings it was that Kenric learned from this person that his second refusal to submit himself into his father's hands had been followed by the death of his mother, the too affectionate Domnona. His severe, but kind-hearted uncle Vuscfraea, on the morning after the funeral, had taken Webba apart, and after informing him by what means he might make his way to that part of Inisfail where Elim, Kenric's

friend resided, advised him to assume his present minstrel trade, in order to facilitate his journey. "Go, find him," said the gray-haired instructor, "go, find the wretched rebel, and tell him of the murder he has done; bear him no message; give him no advice; but tell the miserable dupe the simple fact, and let it do its own work on his heart. It would be to defile good counsel to waste it on a mind so lost as his."

"Did my mother," asked Kenric, when Webba had got thus far in his narrative, "did my mother leave me no message, do you know?"

"She died a sudden death," was Webba's answer.

"Indeed?" said Kenric, turning pale as a corpse; "well, Webba, what besides?"

The servant proceeded to inform him that Ailred, his father, was greatly changed, and in-

deed not for the better, since Domnona was taken from his fireside. He still continued, however, to lead the same life as before, to serve the duke in the day-time, and amuse himself over his ale and the game of *tœfl* by night, more freely now than ever.

A dismal horror seized on Kenric's mind the instant he had heard those dreadful tidings. The contemplation of such an event as his mother's death, had never once in all his vicissitudes, occurred to his mind, and new and awful was its influence. He hurried to his lodging, bidding Webba follow, and remain until he should have leisure to attend to a more full detail of those unhappy circumstances. As soon as he was in his chamber, he cast himself upon the rushes, and lay still as death in thought. A deep fit of reflection fell upon him, and he remained for several hours, almost

motionless, on the rude bed, in passive subjection to the tyranny of fearful recollections. He thought of flying now at length to the feet of his widowed parent, and he called Webba into his room at midnight to ask him whether he thought it likely, in such a case, that his father could forgive and receive him. The latter had his own reasons for apprehending otherwise ; because he had often, since Dommona's death, heard Ailred attribute all his present desolation to Kenric and his scholarship. Still, however, he rather encouraged him to make the trial, of which he thought no harm could come at any rate.

But his deep-rooted and long-cherished pride was not to be so easily dislodged as the more recent passion had been. Grief, fear, and deep remorse assailed him alternately, day after day, and urged him, with unceasing in-

stances, to humble himself before his desolate parent; and to make a reparation, full, though late, for his long desertion. But often as the draught was offered to his lips, and strong as were the motives to induce him to comply, it still was gall and wormwood to his taste, and he refused to drink it. Not even his filial affection, now strongly awakened by the lonely condition of his parent, was sufficient to subdue the bitterness it had for a heart so long and deeply vitiated. At one time his reason would accord a full assent, and in the next his breast would swell and darken at the thought of Ailred rejecting him in his prostrate condition. An empty fancy was sufficient to disgust him, though his heart reproached him often with the injury he did to Ailred by these thoughts. “ Even should he fail to do his duty, Kenric, it will be well for thee if thou

do thine," was the thought in which those discussions generally concluded, but still his heart was stubborn and resisted.

Day after day the truth became more clear to his own mind, but yet he loitered, and was reluctant in the accomplishment of what his better judgment taught him to be necessary. A week rolled by, and still he had not resolved on taking the first backward paces of his long and luckless journey.

CHAPTER LXVII.

ONE good effect, at least, this mournful change produced. It made all other duties light to Kenric. The severest discipline, the closest application to his necessary pursuits, the utmost exactness as to time, the most rigid course of self-denial, all appeared smooth and easy in comparison with the humiliating step which his conscience demanded, and he wondered wherefore it was that while he went beyond so many in his actions, his heart did not enjoy their peace.

But here again his conscience did not long continue silent. "Thou most unwise!" it whispered in his breast. "Thou art doing more than would make many virtuous, and thou art doing all in vain! Thou givest what is not asked of thee, and thou refuseth the only thing that is! Thou utter fool! Infatuate Kenric! I give thee but one counsel, and thou seemest to follow a thousand. I say 'return to Ailred,' and thou redoublest thy diligence. I say 'return to Ailred,' and thou closest thy breast against all pleasure. I say 'return to Ailred,' and thou actest, sufferest, dost all, except return to Ailred. Down with this Babel, Kenric, which confounds my language. Down with this Babel, pride, or it will fall and crush thee."

In the midst of these reflections, Kenric, who almost daily walked to Luimneach, for the purpose of conversing with the traders from the south,

was surprised to find that the alarm of war had rather died away than increased upon the coast. Unable to ascertain the cause of this prolonged delay to the designs of Baseg, which seemed, when he had been invited to the Coom, to be only retarded by the temporary absence of the Vikingr, he gave up all thought of it, and pursued, without interruption, his customary duties at Deochain Assain.

He had kept Webba at his lodging, unwilling that the latter should return until he had brought his mind to resolve upon some decided course with respect to the message of his uncle. Sometimes he caught so eagerly at any thing in the shape of an argument to justify his remaining, that he would urge, in the hearing of Webba, in terms of the silliest levity, the excellence of his prospects here in Inisfail as a reasonable obstacle to his return.

“Thou seest, Webba,” he would say, “how

I am tethered in this place. Thou seest, also, (not to speak it in vanity) the honour I am paid amongst the people. Without talking folly, Webba, which I despise, I may confide to thee that there are few in Deochain Assain more honoured than myself; and fewer still who have better reason to look forward with confidence for fortune still more brilliant than I have earned already. Thou dost not understand these matters, and I do not love the appearance of boasting, so that I shall be silent altogether, except that it be just to hint to thee, that to resign Deochain Assain, at present, would be to resign a burst of literary splendour and renown, such as the age, perchance, might find it hard to match. But this is folly. What I would have you bear in mind is this: that there are solid motives for my stay, such as, I make no doubt, my father would himself admit to have their weight."

To these remarks, the Northumbrian servant, who had no head at all for disputation, would only reply by a smile and head-shake, or by saying that he knew that Vuscfraea would be glad to see him, with all the hardness of his speech, or that it was a sin to see the house of Ailred going, as it was, to wreck and ruin, in his absence.

A struggle like that which Kenric had been now so long maintaining in his breast could not continue for ever undecided. The state of strife, always an unnatural condition, could not be otherwise in him, and, according as his resistance was protracted, his heart began to feel less difficulty in subduing its occasional remorse. The memory of his mother's death became more faint, the thoughts of home began to lose their influence, and his prospects of advancement at Muingharidh, which were indeed as favourable as they

were seductive, began to occupy his mind, and to fill it as full as ever with his old conceits.

And now again his days grew active, and his labour incessant. The reputation of his genius and his industry had spread about the place, and many deemed they saw a rising star of learning and of science in Kenric. His acquirement astonished the aged, and the young were delighted by his eloquence.

In the midst of these occupations, which soon became absorbing, he was one morning surprized by Webba's entering his apartment, and asking him whether he had any commissions for his native place, as he did not himself desire to remain in this strange country any longer.

“And, wherefore, Webba?” enquired the scholar, “hast thou not every thing to make it agreeable to thee?”

“Every thing, Kenric, except that it is not

Northumberland," answered Webba. "Beside, Vuscfræa would marvel at my staying."

"Well, well," said Kenric, "and sure thou art not bound to him? He did not buy thee, did he?"

The servant smiled earnestly, and shook his head. "It is true, Kenric," said he, "Vuscfræa never was my master that way—but—but—I do not choose to leave him on that account. He was more than a master to me; my own father could not care more for me than he always did, and I must go back to him."

"Thou art a strange being," said Kenric, "Vuscfræa, in the common course of things, cannot continue long to be thy master. He is very old, and must be now grown weak and almost bed-rid, and he has nought to leave thee when he dies."

"I know not how it will be, Kenric," re-

plied Webba; "I shall not be worse off than when Vuscfraea took me first, and if I be not able to live, I can die."

"Thou errest, be assured," said Kenric, vexed at he scarce knew what; "such generosity is perfectly unreasonable. Gratitude is a good thing, no doubt, but then we owe a duty to our own interests which it is a folly, and not a virtue, to neglect."

Webba smiled again, and seemed for some time hard at work to discover why it was that this reasoning did not satisfy his mind. As he reflected on the matter, his thoughts were set to work so forcibly that his face grew red, and the perspiration began to appear upon his brow.

"I do not know, Kenric," he said, at length; "it seems all very true, what thou hast told me—but—in truth, son of Ailred,"

he continued, suddenly changing his tone; "I have but a poor brain for arguing, only I know I wish to go back to Vuscfræa, and I can't help it. For being poor, I do not much mind that, for I am used to it, thou knowest, so long a while, that I do not feel it. If I were of gentle blood and fortune indeed, perhaps (heaven forgive me), I might stay. But it is heaven's will that I should serve my master."

Kenric was irritated, he knew not wherefore, at the simple minded perseverance of the attached domestic. "Perverse!" he exclaimed, with harshness, "it is not as thou sayest. Thou art more cunning than thou wouldst pretend."

Webba seemed, as he was, utterly at a loss, to judge what now was running in the head of Kenric.

"Thou art daring and presumptuous, both,"

cried Kenric, increasing in irritation, “and thou wouldst erect thyself into a censor of my conduct!”

“Me, Kenric!” exclaimed Webba, in amazement, “me erect myself! me censure!”

“It is so—I see it,” answered Kenric. “Is nature weaker in my breast than gratitude should be in thine? Thou pratest of thy love and thy attachment to make my conduct take the look of coldness! Thou dost, thou hypocrite!” he continued, bursting into a paroxysm of rage, “thou daring, subtle hypocrite!”

Poor Webba, who was the last person in the world that could be accused of subtlety, was utterly astonished and distressed at what he heard.

“Oh, master!” he exclaimed, extending his hands and eyes—“Kenric! Oh, master! Son of Ailred! Kenric! Me blame the greatest scholar in Muingharidh?” here he crossed himself

devoutly, and with a look of fear; “me sell my soul to the fiend of pride in that way? So clever a master! so rare a scholar! so wise a youth as Kenric! One that, they say, can read the stars themselves! Oh, Kenric! Oh, dear master! Oh not so, thou son of Ailred! Thou hast plentiful wit, and books, and all, to guide thee, so thou knowest thou must be right; I have little thought or learning to be led by; but there is a ship for Mercia lying in the port of Luimneach, and I want to go back to my old master.”

“Get thee gone, and be dumb!” cried Kenric, thrusting him from the room with passion; then, suddenly recollecting himself, as he heard Webba leave the house, he snatched a purse from a secret place, and hurried after him.

“Here,” he said, thrusting the money, a considerable sum, into his hand, “you may want some assistance on the road.”

Webba, the instant he discovered what it was, refused the money quietly, but firmly. He would take nothing: Vusfræa should not say he sought his nephew to enrich himself; he would go as he came. Kenric, impatient, dashed the money on the earth, and returned hastily to his lodging.

“The money must not be lost, at all events,” said Webba, picking it out of the mud, and stepping aside into a private place, until he saw a mendicant approach: “Here,” said he, after glancing on all sides, to see that nobody observed him, “here—but stop ’till I have made it clean for thee,” he added, wiping it in a corner of his mantle, then placing it in the hand of the poor beggar. “Take this,” said he, “for the good of the owner’s soul.”

He then pursued his way toward the spot where Kenric first had heard and recognized him.

Then, tuning up the horse-hair strings of his rude harp, he resumed the outward character of the trade by which he had supported himself during his toilsome journey to Deochain Assain, and departed from its precincts, humming over his favourite national melody :

Summer is a coming in,
Loud sings cuckoo,
Groweth seed,
And bloweth mead,
And springeth the wood new.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

ON the following evening, Kenric, greatly disturbed in mind, went out to walk beside the broad and calm Senan. Since the departure of Webba, his uneasiness had been so great that he found it impossible to perform his duties with the same regularity as before. His head was aching from reflection, his breast burned, and his very limbs were feverish from distress of mind. In this miserable condition he sat down upon the bank, in hopes that the sweetness of the evening landscape might give some rest to his mind. As his reflections continued, better dispositions began to wake

within him. He took an altered view of the conduct of Vuscfræa's servant, and was strongly inclined to become the companion of Webba's voyage. He formed, at all events, the resolution, as soon as the fortunes of his Ithian friend should be decided, to end, at any sacrifice, this state of unnatural alienation from his parent, and to give to his native valley the advantage of his acquirement and his industry.

In this condition he sat on the shores of the island, on which that part of Luimneach, then called the City of Strangers, * stood in its earliest days, but which is now scarce better than a ruined and neglected suburb. Before him flowed one branch of the divided Senan, winding softly from the bosom of the distant mountains, and sweeping gracefully by the towers and ramparts of the fortified city. While he me-

* Baile Gall, now called the English town.

ditated thus, with his eyes fixed upon the sunlit hills of Clair, and the low peillices which occupied the shores, now cumbered with many a costly edifice, he was startled by the galloping of troops in the streets behind him. On inquiring, he was informed that large subsidies had been levied by Airtree, in all the provinces, to strengthen the state against the northmen, who had dared to enter the very mouth of the Senan ; and that the horsemen he had seen were the Dal Gassian body set apart for this purpose. There was much tumult and hurrying to and fro of people in the streets, and general expressions of alarm and curiosity. In the shop of a brog-maker stood a woman quieting a child, and devouring the news of a neighbouring ceanraighe, who was describing, with terrific emphasis, the dress, the size, the weapons, and the ferocious manners, of the expected foe.

“The prayers of the sainted Munchin be our shield!” said he; “the learned, and men of parts, who have the best right to know, say that it was never woe with Christendom till now. If the herrings became ships they could not muster thicker on the seas than those wild northern pirates, that never knew what it was to swallow a morsel earned by their own honest industry. Neither man nor woman nor child ever yet found pity from a northman; and the wisest in the country say, that it will be a woe-ful day for Inisfail, for hundreds of years to come, the first that saw their keels upon our coasts.”

On the following day, prayers and masses were offered up in all the churches for the deliverance of the island from this fearful scourge. Being Holy Thursday, the churches were illuminated at evening, and Kenric mingled with the crowds who thronged the city, entering in

various directions, some from the northern principalities of Tuath Muimhean,* and others by the bridge which communicated with the Baile Gaoidhel, at present called the Irishtown.

Having spent some time in witnessing the splendid ceremonies of the evening, Kenric made his way over the bridge last mentioned, and hastily turned his steps along the bank of the Senan, in the direction of Muingharidh, considering how far these tidings might affect his Ithian friend. The twilight woods in which the college was embosomed had arisen on his view, when he paused to meditate awhile upon the news which he had heard.

“The Nordman, then, it seems,” he said, in his own mind, “has returned to keep his word, and now a struggle must commence in which O’Haedha’s happiness and hers must be involved,

* Afterwards Thomond.

while I must take no part against or for them. I am a miserable wretch—I am always miserable! First duped — then undeceived — to be duped again more dreadfully than ever! Deceitful Inguar! I had almost quelled all lingering thoughts of this, until thou camest to light the fire afresh with thy deceitful promises! Thy flattering promises, that always—always end in three-fold disappointment! Was it for this that I almost consented to do violence to the only feeling I had to support me in that struggle—my gratitude, my fervent gratitude to Elim? Oh, would that I had never left my father's house! Misery on misery, and worse than misery, has been augmenting daily ever since! Deceitful Inguar! If it were not for thee, I might be now once more the loved inmate of Domnona's dwelling. If it were not for thee, I might rejoice this moment in the approaching

happiness of Elim ! I cannot now rejoice—no—no—I cannot now—my heart is black within me with its own selfish disappointment, and for this, along with all, I have to thank thee, Inguar ! ”

Scarcely had he uttered these words, when, as if the Flying Vidar of his own Valhalla had bestowed upon him his supernatural speed, the form of the Scandinavian appeared upon the lofty bank of the Senan on which he sat. Notwithstanding the circumstances under which they had parted, Kenric, in the present unfixed condition of his mind, was not displeased at his appearance. A month before he would have fled his sight like that of a basilisk, and even now he started at the sight of him—but he did not fly, although he thought of it.

“ We are met again, ” said Inguar, with a winning and a smiling look.

“We are,” said Kenric.

“It would be strange,” continued Inguar, “if a friendship such as ours had terminated in a manner so abrupt. Thou hast cooled since then.”

“I have had time to cool,” said Kenric.

“And so had I,” returned Inguar, “and I am sorry now that I ever needed it. It was the heart of a madman, but a heat that had its origin in love, not enmity. I am glad that we have met, for I longed to tell thee this—to tell thee I am sorry for my violence.”

He paused, but Kenric continued to gaze upon him, without making any reply.

“Let us forget that maniac hour,” said Inguar, “it was unworthy of our long-trying friendship. Let us be friends once more; at least let us suspend all enmity. Why,” he added, with a look of smiling frankness, “why dost thou hesi-

tate? If I were violent to thee, thou wert no lamb, I warrant, in my hands. My bruised side and aching limbs for many days gave testimony against thy forbearance.”

Kenric continued, with a suspicious but wavering look, to draw his mantle close around his shoulders, and stand apart with a reserved air.

“Trust me,” said Inguar, “this mystery of wisdom is superfluous. I wear neither dagger nor sword, nor have I even a gift to fright thee with. When last we met, indeed, I had a project, which, but for thine own folly, would have made my friend the thing that nature formed him for—a being to command, not to obey—to rule, not serve—to enjoy, not suffer—a star to shine in the firmament of empire, and not a buried gem to lie hid in the mine of servitude—a free-born spirit, not a bitted slave; but now the op-

portunity is lost, the hour of fortune slipped away in vain : 'tis gone—and let it go.”

“ I do not grieve for that,” said Kenric.

“ Nor I,” rejoined his friend ; “ 'twere useless. But say for what hast thou to thank me now ? I came in time to receive the expression of thy gratitude.”

“ My thanks,” replied Kenric, in anger, “ are not of the kind thou lovest to receive. They are thanks such as men pay in their hearts for blasted hopes and cheated confidence.”

“ What blasted hopes ?” said Inguar, descending from his elevation, and slowly approaching Kenric. “ What cheated confidence ? thou silly—silly boy ! Thou always breakest thy toys, and murmurest at the giver. I never trimmed a garden for thy pleasure, that thou didst not thyself destroy its order, and then upbraid me with thy scattered flowers. Thou selfish and re-

pining boy, what evil hast thou lately done to thine own happiness, that I must once again repair in vain ?”

“In vain,” said Kenric, “thou hast justly said it, for every seeming good thou dost is false and perishing. Thy gifts are all of them delusive. They look brighter than the day in thy speech, but their end is darkness, failure, grief, and anguish of heart.”

“Well—rail, and ease thy heart,” said Inguar ; “in that way also I can be thy friend. But when thou art content, inform me what new injury I have added to all my former malice.”

“I would,” said Kenric, “that, for evil or for good, I never had to thank or to upbraid thee. On the morning when I first beheld thee in Cair Lud, I was about to do what, had I done it, might have left me now a peaceful and a happy mind. I had failed in all my worldly and ambi-

tious schemes. The sanguine heart, with which I sought East-Anglia, was changed to one of grief and low dejection. I had made no friends—the schools were closed against me, because there was none to guarantee my character and principle—I wanted every thing, even food and drink, and raiment for my body. I well remember what my thoughts were then ; I had resolved to return into Northumberland, to seek out my father's house, and sue for the protection of his roof once more. Why did I not pursue that wholesome thought ? for oh, there are moments, Inguar, in which I feel such thoughts are wholesome—when that painful spirit, which I cherish by the name of independence, puts on the look of pride, and resistance wears the hellish hue of disobedience. For three days earlier some good spirit had been warning me to take this step, and I had put the warning off until all

hope beside was lost, until (as now appears) it was too late. Even while I heard thee urging on me the shelter of thy roof and the refreshment of thy board, and while thou continuedst to load me with promises of fortune and of splendour, I could not keep the warning from my mind, I could not still that whisper in my heart. I thought in my own breast it would be better for me if I were able to continue my journey, than to accept assistance which might only hinder me from ever performing it. I felt that I must die if I refused thy aid, and yet even then I thought it might be better for to me die than run the risk of changing my design: for thy promises and thy proposals sounded like those which my own fancy made, before I left my father's house, and I feared that they, like them, would prove deceptive. My fears were quite prophetic. Why didst thou save me from that happy death—that happy peni-

tent death? Why didst thou press upon me that destructive hope—that funereal prosperity?”

“I came not here,” said Inguar, “to listen to reproaches, but to act. I have not time to speak with thee at all, far less to waste in words without a use. But we may meet again. Where shall it be?”

“I care not,” answered Kenric, “I have no good cause to wish that we should meet at all.”

“Even be it so,” said Inguar, “be it so. I am not so eager as to urge thee to it; but thou art deceived if thou think thou servest Elim by remaining, for Aithne is a captive in the Coom, and some ships of the Vikingr in the Senan. Another moon will see the question ended.”

Inguar rightly judged that this intelligence would effect a great alteration in Kenric’s resolution. Stunning and unexpected as it was, it

threw him wholly off his guard, and he betrayed his weakness by the multitude of hurried questions with which he overwhelmed the Swede. Inguar, however, declined affording any farther information.

“And wherefore art thou here?” asked Kenric, when he had concluded.

“I have come,” replied the Swede, “solely for the purpose of communicating these tidings to thyself, from on board a portion of the fleet of the Vikingr, who are at present riding, as I have told thee, on the waves of the Senan, almost within the view of Inis Catha. We are on the eve of action, and I must return with these allies to the Coom.”

“Let us meet after sunset then,” said Kenric, “I will do so much for thee in memory of former benefits.”

CHAPTER LXIX.

THE moon had risen behind the mountains of Shior Muimhean, when Kenric, leaving the unwalled city of letters, hastened to his appointment on the river-side. He hurried out into the fresh night air, and walking rapidly, soon found himself on the banks of the Senan, near the northern outskirts of Deochain Assain. A bright moon glanced upon the waters of the river, which were also spangled at intervals along the banks, and near the city of Luimneach na Luingas, by the rush-lights gleaming through the open

wickets of the shielings, from the prows of the benighted currachs and fishing vessels on the stream, and in greater profusion around the walls of the water-girt city ; giving, even to commercial reality, the charm and illusion of romance. The murmur of the town and city, heard distinctly in the dead calm, the hoarse noise which still arose from the peopled streets, and all the moonlight sounds by which he was surrounded, had that strange and altered air, to the unhappy scholar, which even the most familiar objects assume after the condition of the mind has been changed by some new and strong emotion. He left his place, and walked listlessly along the bank. The eternal choir of Muingharidh, with its solemn harmony of praise, rose plainly on his ear as he advanced, and he imagined, notwithstanding the distance, that the strain was the same which Elim and himself had heard together,

on the morning of their first, and, to him, most painful, separation. But the sounds fell now upon an altered ear, and dropped into an altered heart. He remembered the difference of temper with which both had listened to the strain, and the difference of the sentiments which fell from both; and he ran rapidly over the train of their after lives, the separate character of which had been thus early marked, and since, for him, so mournfully sustained.

On their re-union, Inguar had little difficulty in persuading the Northumbrian to accompany him on his way to Gleanamhain, assuring him that he should not be urged to take any part in the struggle which was to follow.

While they spoke, a small currach, manned with a number of athletic figures, in the attire of the country, but evidently of a foreign shape and physiognomy, glided under the bank on which

they stood. They hailed, and were answered by Inguar, in a low voice, and with signs which seemed to have been pre-concerted. Inguar at once embarked, and Kenric followed, after sending word, by a student whom he met upon the bank, to the people of the house in which he dwelt, that he would not return to Deochain Assain for several days.

The men, who were vigorous rowers, plied briskly at their labour, and they sped rapidly along in the moonlight, by the wooded and level shores of the Senan, by the far seen hills of Ouen ui Clearna, and through the scattered islets of the Feargus. In the course of the voyage, Inguar gave his companion a more ample detail of the circumstances which had taken place since his departure from the Coom. To Inguar's eye, the sight of the raven was a sight of joy revived, and he hailed its bloody beak and gloomy

wings, when they appeared once more upon these coasts, as an omen of success in the project which they had in hand. The sea-warriors had already been introduced, in numerous and well armed parties, to the Coom-na-Druid, where their strange attire, their large persons, lofty stature, their violent manners, and, above all, the sanguinary character of their belief, which resembled in some points the Druidical doctrines, while they went far beyond them in the license they held out to rapine, luxury, and bloodshed, produced a strong impression on the planet-worshippers, whose friendship they were urged to seek.

Towards sunset on the following day, as they passed the eastern point of that small bay which washed the oak-crowned shores of Corcobascin, the Northumbrian beheld, for the first time, riding in the inlet, an armed fleet of that

terrific race, who were afterwards doomed to become so severe a scourge to Elim's country and his own. They consisted of near a hundred barks, of different sizes, and variously equipped; some being little better than a twelve oared barge, while others, of loftier shape, and finished with a nicer care, accommodated no less than thirty banks of rowers. From the prow of that which lay about the centre, the light sea breeze at intervals unfolded, with a sluggish movement, the dreadful banner of the North—the raven, with his wings outspread, on a field of dingy azure. In the stern appeared a wolf, whose gilding seemed much injured by accident and weather, and on the top of the mast, from which the sails at present hung inactive, a brazen serpent indicated the direction of the wind. Around the ship of the Vikingr the Anglo-Saxon beheld several barks, but little inferior in size or equip-

ment, and filled with men, some armed with skiolds and hauberks, leaving no part of the person visible but the blue and eager eyes that glanced incessantly from shore to shore, like those of ravened eagles on the wing for prey. Others were equipped with leathern garments closely fitting, their persons protected by the huge skiold, which, it is said, often served the northern warrior for a house on land, and even for a boat at sea; and armed with the ponderous battle-axe, whose strokes resounded, in succeeding centuries, from the stormy billows of the Skaggerac to the sunny shores of the Adriatic gulf. On the sterns of all the larger vessels appeared a shark, a bear, a snake, or some other figure rudely carved, expressive of rapacity or violence, and all were provided with whale-hide cables, grappling-irons, and huge stones for the catapulta; an instru-

ment of destruction not wholly unknown even to those remote and uncivilized sea warriors.

It was with feelings of intense curiosity and emotion that Kenric found himself, for the first time, on board one of those piratical vessels whose fame had already filled the European coasts with terror; and it was only when he gazed on their fierce and sea-washed visages, and called to mind what he had heard of their ferocious character in Gaul and elsewhere, that he perceived the imprudence of the step which he had taken. Soon after they had boarded the Vikingr's ship, Inguar left him for a few moments, in order to deliver to the latter the commission with which Baseg had entrusted him. As he returned, a skalld, or northern harper, accosted him with a familiar air, and inquired when the fleet was like to sail. "At midnight,"

was the answer of Inguar, who had scarcely uttered the words, when his eye encountered the figure of a hoary-headed man, standing on the deck before him, not armed, like the warriors, but attired in garments somewhat resembling those of the skald, but costlier in material.

“ Well, Inguar,” said the old man, in the Swedish tongue, which Kenric’s facility of acquirement had enabled him long since to learn from the former, “ how long are we to rock at anchor here, while Baseg lingers in his plans ?”

“ At midnight, Servant of the Incendiary,” said Inguar, bowing low in reverence, “ at midnight the Vikingr’s trumpet gives the signal for the deep.”

So saying, he once more bowed profoundly, and rejoined the Northumbrian.

“ This man,” he said, “ is the mighty

Runner of Odin, the priest of the Vikingr's fleet. These, Kenric, are indeed a fleet of warriors. It is their pride to make the deep their home, and never to abide on land except for purposes of spoil and conquest."

At midnight the deep sound of the Vikingr's trumpet gave out the signal for hoisting anchor; and, by the light of an unclouded moon, they glided by the shores of Corcabascin into the open waters of the queen of Irish rivers. They doubled the precipitous headland of Ciar, and winding round the coast, pursued their voyage to the south; taking shelter in the bays and amongst the islands when the weather grew tempestuous, and using their oars and sails, without intermission, when the seas and skies appeared more prosperous. On the second day, leaving their larger vessels, with a small crew, at anchor, in one of the most deserted

bays about Ross Ailithri, and embarking in the light and shallow currachs in which their descents were usually effected, a full spring tide wafted them swiftly up the narrow stream which glided seaward from the bosom of the Druid's Valley. When interrupted by shallows these skiffs were borne along the bank; and pursuing their journey thus, the following evening brought them within view of the opening retreat.

The sounds of martial music in the valley, together with the rapid movement of several armed bands, whom they beheld at a distance, descending the mountain sides, announced the forward state of the warlike preparations made by the thanist and his friends. The Vikingr, as they glided along the banks into the bosom of the vale, was received with shouts of welcome, and Kenric, following the

Swede as he leaped on shore, was conducted by him through crowds of armed warriors, in various costumes, in the direction of the Dun.

CHAPTER LXX.

LET us, in the meantime, return to the Rath at Inbhersceine, in order to explain what Inguar has already said of the captivity of Aithne.

Ignorant of the events which had occurred to divide the interests of Elim and Tuathal, it may be easily conceived with what astonishment it was, within a short time after her arrival in the Coom, that she found herself forcibly seized, during an excursion along the shores of the lake (in no other company than that of Duach and her two female attendants), by a party of mounted

hobblers, whose uniform she easily recognized to be that of the Ard-Draithe's sept. Duach and the handmaids were likewise roughly handled, and conveyed away in the same direction with their mistress. Still greater was the astonishment of the latter, when, on arriving in Tuathal's portion of the Coom, she found it crowded with armed men, with banners of strange devices, particularly around the bridge and Dun, which seemed to be held as a place of garrison, so great was the crowd of warriors in the place.

In the interior of the Dun, occupying the seat so often filled by the deceased Ard-Draithe, she beheld the bulky form and the malignant countenance of the aspiring thanist. Around him stood a number of fierce looking men, some wearing dresses that in shape resembled that of Kenric the Northumbrian, with the fur bonnets and cross garters of the Anglo-Saxons ; while others were

armed with crooked swords, and shields of a small size. While she gazed with wonder and affright on the strange circle she beheld around her, the voice of Tuathal, whom she had not seen since her return, was heard outside, and presently the young Ard-Draithe rushed into the Dun.

“They told me at the bridge,” he said, looking around, “that—ah, poor Aithne, art thou there? Samhuin sees that thou art welcome to the Dun.”

In the midst of her fear and confusion, the Ard-Draithe’s niece showed great joy at the sight of Tuathal.

“I am sure of it, Tuathal,” she replied, “I am very sure of it. But why am I enforced in this strange way? What men are these who fill the Ard-Draithe’s house?”

“They are friends, Aithne,” replied the Ard-

Draithe, moved by the earnestness and pathos of her accents.

“What friends, Tuathal?” continued Aithne, more anxiously. “To please what friends have I been violently seized like a foe, and bound like a prisoner on my father’s land? Tuathal, why do you look down and seem disturbed? Tell me what friends are these? I fear them, for they do not look on me with friendly eyes. Tuathal, if this place is not to be my home, remove me from it quickly. Restore me my home, or to Raith-Aidan. I do not feel at ease amongst these men.”

“Samhuin sees——” said Tuathal, still more moved.

“Samhuin sees that thou art but a child,” muttered the thanist to himself; “let the maiden be removed as she desires,” he added, aloud, to one of his attendants.

“Stand back,” cried Tuathal, placing the point of his sheathed sword against the breast of the advancing Saxon. “If thou touch but her robe, bright Bel shall see thy blood.”

“Wherefore is this, Tuathal?” said the thanist. “Dost thou forget our league?”

“I do not, Baseg,” answered the Ard-Draithe, “but she is my kinswoman, and was the play-mate of my childhood.”

“I thank thee for that word, Tuathal,” whispered Aithne. “I know some evil is on foot against me, but thou wilt not at least become a traitor.”

“Let Bel declare,” said Tuathal, “how much I marvel that I should ever think of thwarting thee.”

“Wilt thou restore me to my home at once?” continued Aithne, pressingly. “Restore me to my friends, for these are not my freinds, nor

thine, I am certain. I charge thee to place me in my father's dwelling."

"I am a traitor if I see thee not restored this very even," said Tuathal, entirely discomfited "I will order a guard of marc-sliadh, with a banner of peace, to leave thee in thy house, or in the Rath, before the sunset. Whatever way our fortunes run in the Coom, thou shalt not be gain-said at any rate."

"And this is thy regard for thy young kins-woman!" said Baseg, with a smile of pity and reproach, "to leave her in the hands of the usurping Ithian."

"The usurping Ithian!" repeated Aithne, suddenly starting, and losing colour, as if some fearful truth had suddenly darted on her mind. "Is it possible? Art thou so lost, Tuathal? Oh, yes, I know thee now, gray-headed man! but thou shalt find thy wiles as vain as thy imputa-

tions are untrue. The right of Elim has been confirmed at Tamrach, and not a chief through all Leath Mogha but has long since declared his readiness to aid him in this quarrel. Tuathal, ah, Tuathal! must I number thee amongst the foes of Inisfail? Must I number thee amongst the enemies of Elim?"

"Samhuin sees—" exclaimed Tuathal, looking irresolute.

"Hear me, thou perverse maiden!" cried the thanist. "Thy blind affection for the usurper of my birthright would make thee be the accomplice of his injustice, and lure away my allies to his cause. But this is a question of right, and not of favour. I blame thee not, Tuathal, for feeling the affliction of thy kinswoman, but be not foiled like a boy by a woman's weapons. Remember, thou hast chosen thy part already, thou art pledged to me, and canst not break thine oath."

“Nay, nay,” said Tuathal, shaking his head with a serious air, “that is the truth, indeed. I am pledged to thee, that must not be forgotten. A valiant use of the gen becomes not a chieftain so much as his fidelity.”

“And hast thou no fidelity to keep,” said Aithne, “to Elim and to me?”

“And that’s true too,” cried Tuathal, with a nod; “I have a kind of pledge to Aithne also.”

“But not the same, Tuathal,” added Baseg.

“No—not the same—no, surely, not the same,” said the Ard-Draithe, nodding again. “In truth,” he cried, waving his hands, as if in perplexity, before him, “let Bel decide between you, for my poor brain is unequal to it. I have a pledge here and a pledge there. Aithne I love; and I am bound to Baseg; if I please one I shall pain myself, and if I please the other,

I shall break my plighted word; so, between both, it would need a brehon's head to settle it."

"Let it be thus, Tuathal," said the thanist. "Leave Aithne to my charge for a few days, that I may place the truth before her plainly. Thou hast the power to punish, if I should betray my trust."

"No! hear him not, Tuathal!" exclaimed Aithne, "do not commit me to his dreadful keeping. If thou wilt not restore me to my dwelling, at least I challenge thy protection here. I do not ask a favour, but a right. The last Ard-Draithe gave me to thy hands. His cairn is there within our very sight. If thou wilt dare, before those aged bones, to play the traitor to his dying trust, now give me to the keeping of the thanist."

Tuathal remained for some moments fixed in

thought, and then addressed the thanist with more decision.

“Thou mayest receive her in thy charge,” he said, “provided I may name the guard who are to be set for her protection.”

“I pardon thy distrust,” said Baseg, “and agree to the condition.”

In vain did Aithne indignantly exclaim against this decree. She was borne away, Tuathal looking angry with himself, and yet without decision enough to contravene the order of the thanist. For several days she was suffered to remain in her own apartments in the Dun, with liberty only to walk in a small garden which lay between them and the river side. On the sixth evening, as she sat meditating her condition in a small grotto which bordered on the stream, the sounds of distant shouting and of warlike music in the vale excited her alarm and curiosity

together. She had no means, however, of gratifying the latter, for none of the guard which Tuathal had appointed were permitted to approach or speak with her, and the Saxon attendants whom Baseg sent to prepare her food and supply her other wants, neither spoke nor understood the tongue of Inisfail. She heard, as the night fell, the sound of preparation in the Dun, and the voices of artificers hurrying to and fro, as if some festival was near at hand. She could obtain no information, however, from her attendants, and was compelled to spend a restless and unsatisfied night. During the whole of the two following days the sounds of music and rejoicing seemed to have increased, and Aithne thought she could detect the notes of instruments entirely strange to her ear, and a character of equal novelty in the pieces which they played. In the twilight, as she stole out to the end of the garden,

by which the river flowed more gently and more deeply, the deepened murmur of the sounds which filled the valley showed her that the number of its inhabitants had been augmented, still more than it had been when her captors hurried her so swiftly through the Coom. While she leaned over the pebbly shore, endeavouring to reach one of those flowers, called by the moderns the Bruges Rose, which here grew wild, as an indigenous shrub, the appearance of a human figure on the opposite side of the river attracted her attention. The place on which she stood was a point of ground forming the lower end of the small isle on which the Dun was built, and around which the river of the Coom divided. In this place, re-uniting again its parted waters, the stream formed a lake both wide and deep. More than half its surface was concealed from Aithne's view by a lofty crag, which formed the extreme point

of the islet, yet not so perfectly that she might not discern the prows of two or three currachs riding at a distance, with a folded banner planted in the foremost, which, even though its device could not be discerned, she knew was not the ensign of the Hooded People. On the opposite side, directly in her view, arose, to a great height, a pile of crag on crag, so barren of all verdure that no living creature, not even a wandering goat, was seen amongst its broken points. Descending this dangerous precipice it was that Aithne first discerned the figure we have mentioned. Imagining that he might be some stranger, unacquainted with the perils of the place, which rendered it almost impossible to re-ascend the path when once the termination had been reached, the maiden waved her veil, with a motion that was intended to deter the stranger from approaching. On perceiving the signal, however, it seemed as if the

latter understood it in the directly contrary sense, for he hastened down the rocks, using extravagant gestures of delight and satisfaction. To the astonishment of Aithne, he paused not until he had reached the lowest part of the rude descent, a ledge of crag precipitous on all its sides except that by which it was connected with the mountain, and presenting to the water-side a lofty wall of granite. Pausing a moment, in order to look down the fearful steep, Aithne beheld the stranger take out the wooden pin which fastened his hooded cloak in front, and, rolling it into a bundle, bind it fast between his shoulders with his girdle. With an involuntary exclamation of affright, she then beheld him leap headlong from a rock, and dive, like an arrow, into the placid waters. Drawing back her hair from her eyes, as if her sight would have devoured its surface, and holding in her breath with

keen suspense, she watched for the re-appearance of her desperate *cleon*,* for such his hooded cloak had now proclaimed him. The suspicion of self-destruction did not cross her mind, for that was an event at all times rare amongst the elastic spirits of Inisfail; and, besides, the preparations made by the stranger were those of one disposed to gain the opposite shore by swimming. After a long interval, however, the dark head rose into the twilight almost at the centre of the basin, puffing away the water, and shaking the drenched locks that formed the coolun. Perceiving that the swimmer directed his course toward that part of the shore on which she stood, Aithne retired for a moment, in order to observe him well before she ventured to let herself be seen. With the strong and vigorous action of one accustomed to such exercise, the stranger soon approached the

* Kinsman.

point of land, and emerging from the flood, stood for a time ringing his drenched garments, and looking around with an enquiring eye, while he spoke in broken soliloquy aloud :

“Not here ! Samhuin sees my disappointment ! I thought it was her form I saw but now, waving the veil from underneath the rock. Let Bel declare my grief !”

Scarce had he uttered the words, when Aithne, hurrying from the leafy screen, exclaimed, in a low voice :—

“Duach ! what, Duach, is it thou, indeed ?”

“Child of Modharuidh ! oh, daughter of the snowy-haired Ard-Draithe, (for wert thou not almost his child ?)” cried Duach, starting at her voice, and extending his huge arms as if he would have embraced her—“but no—” he added, suddenly closing them again, “thou must not touch me, for I am drenched as a fish, or as if I had

risen from the city of youth, that lies, they say, at the bottom of the lake, with every comfort in abundance, except a little firing and sunshine. Well, I have seen what I have seen to-night. The lake is deep, and none but those who have been at the bottom can tell what may be seen there?"

"Wonders enough, I doubt not, Duach," answered Aithne, "but what brings thee here? I thought thou wert a prisoner like myself."

"Oh, daughter of Modharuidh!" cried the kern, still wringing the water from his flowing coolun, "it glads my heart to see thee, even in this way. Let fair Samhuin judge how cold the lake is! A prisoner, Aithne, in thine own old dwelling! Here in the garden the old Ard-Draithe gave thee, and which these hands have tilled so oft! The new Ard-Draithe is not like the old. My own poor shieling is no more my home.

Tuathal has given it for a place of coshering to a party of the ruffian Fionn Geinte."

"What sayest thou? The sea-rovers in the Coom?" cried Aithne, in renewed alarm. "I see it all! It breaks upon me with terrific force. The traitor, Baseg, for he is a traitor, has leagued with this abhorred race of plunderers, and Tuathal has forgotten his allegiance, to join the horrible confederacy—to aid the foes, not only of unhappy Inisfail, but of all other lands, of all mankind. I see it now, I know what sounds they were I heard to-night in the Coom, what boats are floating yonder on the stream, and what the dreadful banner, whose rapacious emblem the very winds seemed fearful to unfold. Oh, Duach, I am trembling for our homes! The power of Baseg is beyond our strength, beyond even that of Tuathal, though I could gain him over to my wishes."

“ Beyond our strength, perhaps,” said Duach, shrewdly, “ but not beyond our wit, if we but manage it. For me, I have beat them all at stratagem. I was indeed, a prisoner, as thou sayest, and closer kept in the Caircer na Nguiall than thou art here in thy delicious garden. Yet here I am to see and speak with thee. I have slipped like an eel through the fingers of the guard Tuathal placed upon me; I have visited my poor peillice, and found it occupied as I have told thee. Banba, my wife, is here in the Dun, employed in keeping Baseg’s griddle hot (a task, to say the truth, no two hands in the Coom could match her in), and Geidbe and Fiachadh, thine old daltins, are tending now on the gray-headed runner, the priest, they say, of this sea-scouring herd. I saw him at a distance as they bore him in a splendid carbudh toward the temple.”

“ Thou runnest on at a strange rate, Duach,”

exclaimed Aithne, "tell me what presses most. What hast thou learned of Baseg and his views?"

"Nothing, that I have heard," replied the kern, "but much that I surmise from what I saw."

"Oh, what would I not give," cried Aithne, clasping her hands, and looking up with earnestness, "that Elim did but know what storms await us!"

"Thou touchest the chord aright now, Aithne," said the kern, "and that must be my part to execute. Before the morning dawns, my own rough voice shall tell him the secret in Rath-Aidan.

"Is it possible? What, Duach, wilt thou find him?" cried Aithne, rapturously, and seeming to forget that there was any difficulty in the kern's proposal. "Do — do — good Duach, haste. Give him this bodkin, as a token from Aithne; tell him what force is mustered in the Coom, and where I am confined. Yet let him

not approach too hastily; his own small sept would be lost in the encounter, as readily as a currach in a cataract. It were better, at whatever risk to us, that he should wait the arrival of O'Driscol, who was to join him, as I think, some days hence, for they had heard already of the return of the Fionn Geinte on the coasts."

"If he come not single-handed," said the kern, "thou mayest account thyself fortunate in his discretion. Wait for O'Driscol! He will as soon await a subsidy from Tamrach. But what of that? I must despatch my office."

"But how—oh, thoughtless as I am," cried Aithne, with a sudden recollection, "what way art thou to execute this message? Return the way thou camest thou never canst, and every other avenue is guarded."

"What has been once done may be done again," said Duach. "I pass to the valley

through the very Dun. I have found means to make Banba acquainted with my purpose, and she will give me a signal, at thy door, when the favourable moment is arrived. Meantime, fair child, let us haste to thy apartment, for it is near the hour. Go thou before, that I may make the necessary change in my attire.”

So saying, he opened the bundle which he bore, and displayed a flowing dress, which once had been the robe of the deceased Ard-Draithe, and was bestowed on Duach at his death. Aithne entered her apartment, and in a short time beheld the gaunt figure of the kern appear upon her threshold, clad in the flowing robes of her beloved guardian. She refrained from making any remark upon the appearance, and both remained awaiting in silence the expected signal of Banba.

In the meantime, the worthy helpmate of Duach, having received her instructions, prepared

to play her part effectually in the drama which her skin-clad lord had planned. The following day was to be devoted to a magnificent entertainment in the Dun, at which the Vikingr and the chiefs of the northern fleet were to be present, and the strong-armed Banba was employed to bake a quantity of griddle bread, and other staple articles of food, sufficient for the occasion. In this she was assisted by several daughters of the sept, over whom she presided with an authoritative air; now looking to those who turned the ponderous quern, now to the nimble hands that kneaded the flour into cakes as fast as it proceeded from the revolving stone, and now to those whose task it was to beat the grain from the husk on a round limestone, or search it with the sieve and dildorn for the grinders. The chief apartment of the Dun was given up to the purposes of preparation, and this circumstance facilitated

the design, which otherwise would have been utterly hopeless.

The dusk of twilight had now almost deepened into darkness, and the hour of the evening meal, the moment anxiously expected by Banba, was announced by the buabhal, or great wooden trumpet, from a distant mountain. The work-women laid aside their task, and hastened to their respective homes, leaving Banba alone to make all secure behind them. A single galloglach kept guard on the platform before the Dun, and at a distance, by the Ard-Draithe's cairn, which rose at the side of the bridge, Tuathal and a numerous party seemed keeping careless watch. The Ard-Draithe, sitting on the rustic battlement, was listening intently to the tales of the Nain, and other spirits of the haunted trilithons, with which the memory of the aged Eogan Bel abundantly supplied him.

To disarm the single centinel was the first step necessary, but this it would be premature to attempt before Duach was prepared to take advantage of the manoeuvre. Going softly to the door of Aithne's chamber, Banba struck softly on the wicket with her hand. It opened instantly, and to her consternation, instead of her husband, she beheld, in the dim light, the tall sepulchral figure of the deceased Ard-Draithe, as she believed it, issuing from the room.

“Bright stars!” cried Banba, flinging herself on her face, “I am lost for ever! I have raised the dead unknowingly to life. I have broken the sleep of the cairn.”

“Speak softly, brainless woman,” cried Duach, in an earnest whisper, “or thou wilt soon repair thy fault by bringing those who live to death, against their will.”

“O shade of the reverend Ard-Draithe!”

cried the woman, "forgive my ignorant head, and rest untroubled."

"O shade, and sign, and substance of a simpleton," said Duach, stooping down and tapping her shoulder, "thou wilt destroy us with thy foolish fright. Not know thy husband yet?" he added, in surprize, then looking over his shoulder to see that Aithne could not observe him, he slipped the girdle from his waist, and laid it smartly two or three times across the shoulders of the prostrate Banba, saying at every stroke :

"Dear Banba, rise. Arise, beloved Banba. The night will pass before we leave the Dun. Dost thou not know thy husband, honey Banba?"

The action had the effect of producing instant recognition.

"What, darling of my eyesight, is it thou!" cried Banba, springing to her feet, and flinging

her arms around his neck. "I thought it was a shade of the Ard-Draithe's sprite, that menaced me."

"I shall be a shade, and a sprite, and a heap of earth to boot," said Duach, "if thou delay me thus with prating here. Is the sentinel armed?"

"He shall not be so long," said Banba, eagerly. "See here; I've brewed his draught for him already," she added, holding up a horn of liquor, "and drugged it too. But how came thou in the Ard-Draithe's robes? Well, up and down is now the word in the Coom. There's that old Baseg rules it like a chieftain, and here art thou an Ard-Draithe, all but the power and person. Who knows how soon Tuathal may lay his skene and cap at Duach's feet?"

"Who knows how soon he may find Duach's head at his own," said the kern, "if thou wilt

loiter thus? Away! away! dear Banba, for the sentinel. Take him his draught—and—hark! What guard is on the bridge?”

“Tuathal, with a score of galloglachs,” replied his spouse.

“What, but a score?” cried Duach, “and with Tuathal at their head? ’Tis nothing. Haste, thou, and do thy part on the sentinel.”

Banba, throwing a plaided mantle around her shoulders, and placing the horn of liquor under it, proceeded to accost the sentinel, whom she found little difficulty in persuading to refresh his spirits with the draught. Returning to the Dun, she awaited, with her husband, the effects of the potent dose which she had given, and soon after had the satisfaction of seeing it produce its full effect. The man walked to and fro for a time, humming a song, and seeming much exhilarated by the drink. At length, how-

ever, his pace became less steady, his voice faltered, and after many efforts to shake off the heaviness which seemed to press upon him, he thrust the pole of his battle-axe into the soft bawn, and stretching his frame at ease upon the grass, resigned himself to sleep.

So far successful, Duach possessed himself of the forsaken weapon, and after giving Banba her directions, stole round in the dusk to the side of the cairn opposite, to that on which Tuathal's guard was placed. Reaching the stony mound, now bound with earth, and decked by many a plant, he could plainly hear the voices of the guard, Tuathal being at that moment busily engaged in conversation on an awful story which Eogan Bel had just related.

“Thy narrative is fearful,” said Tuathal, in a low voice, “and the twilight gives it three-fold terror. It is strange, is it not, that I

had rather front a Cath in arms than one of those thin shadows thou describest ? ”

“ It seems not strange to me,” replied the dresbdeartach. “ The line between the living and the dead is one that nature means not should be violated, but when it is the adept in the secrets of the grave has all the advantage over poor, ignorant, trembling flesh and blood.”

“ And yet is it not singular,” said Tuathal, “ with all that I have heard of sprite and shade, none ever yet disturbed me except in thought ? ”

Those words were yet upon the lips of the speaker, when a galloglach was seen hurrying across the biridge, and directing his steps to the young chieftain. Flinging himself prostrate at the young warrior’s feet, he said, in a low voice of smothering dread and shame :—

“ I come, Tuathal, to crave thy pardon, and

if thou give it not, at least believe me not a conscious traitor."

"What meanest thou, Eimhir? Rise and tell thy tale," replied the Ard-Draithe. "What brings thee hither from the Caircer, where I placed thee as a guard upon our renegade prisoner?"

"The prisoner has escaped," replied the galloglach.

Before Tuathal had time to utter a word in answer to this startling information, a low cry of terror was heard in the direction of the Dun, and presently after they beheld Banba, flying, with uplifted arms, towards the bridge.

"The Ard-Draithe! Ullulu! the Ard-Draithe!" she exclaimed, in wild affright—"Oh, sons of Modharuith, the Ard-Draithe!"

"I am here, Banba! the Ard-Draithe is here!" cried Tuathal.

"Not thou! not thou! the old Ard-Draithe!"

Oh, the old Ard-Draithe! Look! there he is! He rises from the cairn! He is coming towards us! he is coming towards us! Oh, there he comes. Tuathal! save me! save me!"

Saying this, she cast herself upon her face, while Tuathal, with a countenance aghast with terror, and an imagination excited by the tales to which he had been listening, looked askance in the direction of the cairn. Slowly descending the mound, habited in the flowing garments of his departed predecessor, and bearing in one hand the battle-axe which he had taken from the sleeping centinel, he beheld, with eyes expanded, and lips dragged back in fear, the shade, as he believed, of the Ard-Draithe, approaching with a slow and solemn movement. Tuathal was the first to fly, and not one of the party forbore to imitate his example. He secreted himself by lying lengthwise in the shadow

of the shrubs by which the rough-hewn railing of the bridge was decorated; and cast from his prostrate posture a sidelong glance of terror at the figure which stalked by him, without daring to move a muscle, or utter the lightest sound. The remainder of the party, in the meantime, who had been equally wrought upon by the fancy of the dresbdeartach, and were no less proof against imaginary terrors than their master, lay huddled together on the opposite side, more scared by what they deemed a painted shade, than they might have been by a Cath of Ithians. When, however, he had reached the opposite bank of the river, Duach could not contain his exultation, but hastily flinging off the dress which had served his purpose so completely, gave utterance to a shout of "Coun Crehir a-bo!" that made the banks re-echo, and brought all the party to their feet at once.

“ Follow him ! We are foiled ! It is the prisoner ! ” cried Tuathal, flourishing his brazen gen, and hurrying across the bridge. “ Oh, Jonnuaruidh of the Stipend, thou the first that ever wrote of martial forms, behold how we are flouted by a kern ! Let loose a flight of arrows after him. Eimhir, thy crantuball ! Thou art dexterous at the sling. See where he flies into the copse ! Now, Eimhir—now, to regain thy prisoner and preserve thy own freedom.”

The small sharp arrows whistled in the air, some darts were flung, and the ponderous brazen ball was hurled, with a hissing sound, from the sling of Eimhir ; but Duach had already reached the copse, and a renewed shout of exultation, as he plunged into the wood, announced at once his safety and his defiance.

“ He is gone ! ” said Tuathal. “ It were vain to follow him into that thicket, for the

martin is not more familiar with every turn of the mountain fastnesses. In idle times, it was his wont, like a wild cat, to lie in wait for prey amongst the underwood, and many a lonely traveller has found his spring a sure one. But come, thou faint limbed ghost-seer, come, good Banba. Thou'lt learn in the Caircer how to watch for spectres."

"Thou ill-tongued chief," said Banba, struggling with the galloglach, "I will not stir a foot until the thanist's orders are completed. There's bread still wanting towards the festival."

"If it be, we will find honester hands to bake it," said Tuathal. "Take her away, and Eimhir, too, along with her. Keep a close guard on both."

He added to the number the sleeping centinel, whom he found still lying on the bawn.

before the Dun. After which he hastened toward the magnificent dwelling which had been raised for Baseg, near the temple; and, at no great distance from which, since the arrival of the Vikingr, Kenric had also taken up his residence. The vociferations of Banba, who struggled violently with her captors, pursued him to the entrance of the building.

CHAPTER LXXI.

WE turned aside from the Northumbrian as he followed Inguar through the armed tribes by which the Coom was peopled, on his way from the place where the Vikingr landed. He supposed that Inguar would have at once conveyed him to the dwelling of Tuathal, but, on pretence of preparing Baseg for his reception, he introduced him, instead, to a small peillice on the outskirts of the valley. His attendants at this place were two tall Danes, whose flaxen hair and finical attire, while they pro-

claimed them perfect adepts in the early foible of their country, contrasted strangely with their lofty persons and coldness of demeanour. The night passed away without Inguar's return, and on the following morning the impatience of Kenric became so great, that he was about to go in search of the Scandinavian, or at least to wander a little from the cottage, to see what might be passing in the valley.

To his great surprize and indignation, one of the men, a person of an affected air, and with something gaudy in the fashion of his attire, obstructed his attempt to leave the house, by placing a naked sword between him and the doorway. Kenric remonstrated by angry gestures, which the stranger received with a cool and flippant demeanour, and without evincing any inclination to change his design.

Provoked to find himself a prisoner, but

unable, from the difference of language, to obtain any information from his sentinels, Kenric was compelled, unsatisfied, to retire again into the interior of the peillice. The idea that this restraint could be designed by Inguar was one which Kenric would not admit; and yet, as the absence of the latter became protracted, he began to question, with a still more anxious feeling, the prudence of his conduct in committing himself so wholly to the power of the Swede and his patron.

In the course of the day, however, his distrust was removed by the appearance of Inguar. The latter expressed the utmost astonishment at what he mentioned of the conduct of the men, which, he said, was wholly a mistake of theirs. He addressed them at the same time in their own tongue; but it seemed to Kenric as if they hardly took his words in a reproving sense, for they smiled, and

the person who had first obstructed him replied, in a bantering tone, of which Kenric only understood as much as was conveyed by air and accent :

“ Destroyer thwarted him, good Inguar. He was for walking, but Dazzler crossed his steps. I am glad of thy return—most glad, for my feet were weary of their durance. My feet!—Alas, poor Rugen and Defiance! they died the ignoble death of age, long ere I thought I should again behold their giver.”

He departed, while Inguar turned to Kenric, who still appeared dissatisfied.

“ Well, Inguar,” said the Anglo-Saxon, “ thou wilt conduct me now, without delay, to Aithne.”

“ I will,” said Inguar, “ but not without delay. Thou must see Baseg first. He has become the pride of the Vikingr, the Runner of the great In-

ceudiary, and even now officiates in his temple. I would not, however, have thee meet him yet, for reasons thou shalt know hereafter. In the meantime, dwell here in privacy throughout the day, and in the even be merry with some friends of mine, to whom I shall conduct thee when the night falls.”

“And Aithne?” said the Anglo-Saxon.

“Thou must learn patience, learned as thou art,” said Inguar, “or thou wilt weary mine. Aithne thou canst not see until it is the pleasure of the thanist, and that is to be won by slow approaches.”

Saying this, he departed, and Kenric re-entered the shed, where the remaining sentinel was satisfying his hunger with food which the Northumbrian felt no inclination to partake.

He came again at the appointed time, and Kenric followed him in silence through the valley.

Before they entered the dwelling, which was no other than the peillice of Duach, altered and prepared inside for Inguar's use, the latter, turning to the young Northumbrian, advised him to be content for this evening to share in the enjoyments of the feast, without seeking to enter into conversation with any of the guests. Kenric, finding that he made this a point of essential consequence, consented to the arrangement, though not without some discontent.

The feast was a gayer one than he had ever witnessed. The skallds and crotaries vied in their minstrelsy, and the northern warriors exhibited their wondrous sleights of dexterity, such as twirling a dagger in the air, keeping up some brazen balls together, and other feats, such as were the grace of a Scandinavian hero, but which in these degenerate days have become the accomplishments of poor street-jugglers only. Mirth, music, dan-

cing, singing, in a spirit of freer revelry than any to which Kenric had ever been accustomed, composed the chief amusements of the evening. Its effect upon the mind of Kenric was proportioned to his long and rigorous seclusion amongst the quiet inhabitants of Deochain Assain.

Tuathal saw and welcomed him, but did not enter into any prolonged discourse, and it surprised him that Baseg, whom he wished to conciliate for Aithne's sake, did not once make his appearance. Notwithstanding this disappointment, however, and a certain strange air which was over all the proceedings, he did not forbear to enter into the spirit of the scene, and it was with regret that he saw Inguar approach to whisper him that it was time to go, consoling him, at the same time, by the information, that this festivity was to continue for some days, and that he might return the following evening if he pleased. But it was ne-

cessary to their eventual success that Kenric, for the present, should be entirely under the guidance of the Swede.

The amusements on the following evening were not less spirited nor less delightful ; nor on the third, nor fourth occasion did Kenric feel more weary than at first. On the contrary, Inguar had more difficulty in persuading him to leave the scene of mirth, at the time he wished, at the last, than he had in the beginning.

One morning at day break, as he lay awake, he heard a man's voice, at a little distance from the secluded hut. Curiosity and restlessness induced him to arise and leave the house, which was no longer guarded by the strangers.

“ Ale ! morat ! mead ! ” he heard the person say, as he waved his arms in the dim twilight, and enforced his words with violent gesticulation ; “ let Eimhir never see, let Eimhir never hear the

sound of the detested words again! Let Baseg be the king of Coom na Druid! Let Tuathal be as angry as he will, I kiss the beard of Baseg and of Inguar! They are indeed the favoured sons of Bel, for they give us the very fire of his rays to drink. As for all weaker draughts, let the adorers of Samhuin make much of them! To the cold moon let them be dedicated! I am for Bel, and for the drink of Baseg!"

Kenric, without staying to exchange any conversation with him, returned to the cottage, marvelling much if Baseg and his colleague had already gained such influence in the Coom. These thoughts, however, did not prevent his accompanying the latter to the peillice of Inguar on the following evening, and sharing in the festivities even more freely than before.

Still Aithne did not appear, nor did Kenric hear her name once mentioned in the Coom,

throughout the week. To his frequent inquiries, Inguar replied that Tuathal did not wish she should at present leave the Dun, nor was it yet her own desire to come amongst her kinsfolk. Kenric, although he strongly suspected that some secret tyranny might be exercised against her, did not, however, permit such thoughts to escape him, but continued the same course of still increasing dissipation, stifling the occasional remorse that reproached him with his infidelity to Elim, by whatever means he could.

On the morning of the sixth day, he had taken his seat at the three legged table which stood in the centre of the building, and remained for a long time with his head resting on his hands, and his person motionless. In this condition he was found by Inguar, who called him more than once, by his name, before he seemed to hear.

“Well, Inguar!” he exclaimed, starting up, and with a look of greater ardour than he had yet assumed, “how is it with the thanist now?”

“He is willing to converse with thee this evening,” answered Inguar, “if thou art ready for the conference.”

“I follow instantly,” said the Northumbrian.

“Not quite so fast,” replied the Swede. “At sunset, or immediately before, thou wilt be expected at the temple; and, in the meantime, I return, to prepare the thanist for thy coming. For he, Kenric, holds thee not a common guest to deal with.” The Northumbrian, disappointed that there should be any delay, promised to follow Inguar at the appointed hour.

CHAPTER LXXII.

THE latter, hurrying along the valley, betook him to the temple in the grove, which had been lately re-erected by Tuathal, and consigned to the custody of Baseg. On this evening the hoary thanist was employed within the building, preparing for the celebration of a festival, which was intended to partake, at the same time, of the gloomy nature of the Scandinavian rites, and of the milder superstition of the fire-adorers of Inisfail. The manner in which the interior of the building had been altered in its new construction

had something of this mingled character. The altar, with its planetary signs, remained the same, but in a circular recess behind, three niches hollowed from the wall, contained, in timber roughly hewn, but of gigantic size, the three great idols of the north, with the customary symbols of terror, wrath, and blood; the sword, the club, and Frigga's cruel bow.

Standing at the feet of Thor, and holding in his hand the gory brush which was used in sprinkling the blood of the victims on the surrounding worshippers, appeared the gray-haired Baseg, employed in directing the movements of some men, who were preparing the interior for the approaching rite. The sunshine, striking through the open door, the only orifice admitting light, and falling on the ground around the feet of the gigantic idols, gave a lurid splendour to the edifice.

“Hast thou brought him?” asked Baseg, with a smile, as he beheld his colleague hastening towards him, with a look of eagerness and of perplexity.

Inguar answered in the negative.

“I told thee,” said Baseg, “thou wouldst find him not the babe thou seemedst to think. Here, Geide!” he added, addressing one of Duach’s children, who stood near, “let this brazen vase be placed beside the iron altar; and thou, Fiachadh, place the ox-yoke near it, on the earth. I have myself too long attempted,” continued the old man, with the same hard smile, “to do what thou art striving now to bring to pass, with this Northumbrian.”

“Thou camest too suddenly upon him,” said Inguar.

“Aye, even as thou pursuest him now too lingeringly,” replied Baseg. “He’ll strike a

course between, if thou still loiterest, and leave us both like fools, on either side, with the empty noose to mock us in our hands. Thou toldest me on thy coming from Luimneach, where thou hadst found thy pupil once again, that one short moon should see him grasping the armilla here, before the blood-stained altar of the Incendiary. The festival is close at hand, and thou art here without thy learned ally.”

Inguar looked downward, with a chidden aspect. After considering for a long time, while Baseg, with the same flinty coldness of aspect and manner, proceeded with his occupations, he said :

“ Mane is not as yet in his third quarter, and there is time to make that promise good. It is something, (is it not)? that he is in the Coom again. Here comes Tuathal, looking troubled also. If thou hast yet not wholly lost thy eloquence, exert it, grey-haired servant of the

Whirlwind, and we shall prosper yet with the Northumbrian.”

Saying this, he hurried out of sight, leaving Baseg to deal alone with the Druid chieftain. The latter came to complain of the unruly demeanour of the Scandinavian troops, who had already begun to swagger in the Coom, as if they were its conquerors, not allies. Baseg made some excuses for the Vikingr, on the score of their well-known character, but these did not satisfy Tuathal, who seldom ceased to murmur until the thanist had recourse to anger. On this occasion he displayed even more dissatisfaction than at former times, and at length began to menace Baseg with a change of measures :

“ Hold ! dare not thus to speak in the temple of the Whirlwind,” answered Baseg, at length assuming an incensed tone. “ Anger is good, but not against the Incendiary ! Rage is a folly, vented

against the Supercilious. I'll tell thee how this evil has arrived. The soft and lazy worship of thy sires, their cold and bloodless offerings, their sluggish rites—these were the crimes that angered haughty Odin, and brought the ire of Thor upon the valley.”

“Thou art bold thyself,” replied Tuathal, “to take my sires to task for their belief. Our fathers held this valley long in peace. War never seared its herbage till the Coom first opened its bosom to thyself in exile. It flourished in the keeping of Conraoi, it sickened and declined in mine. Thou toldest me it should soon again revive, that Odin wanted blood, and that was all. He has had blood, it reeks about his feet, yet are we now farther from peace than ever. Those sons of violence, whom Inguar hath brought to be our friends, are dogs of prey, that worry and destroy us. Thy scheme against the Ithian rests idle still.

Thou hast withdrawn my people from their fear ; thou hast corrupted them with dissolute vice, with revels that have more of woe than mirth, and drink that turns their blood to maddening fire. Thy plot against our foes is gone abroad, and even now they are beginning to awake, for their own safety and for our destruction. Thou saidst the Sire of battles, in return for countless offerings, would make the sons of Modharuith warlike. The sons of Modharuith never yet were otherwise than valiant until now. Our valley is in danger. Is it now to drunkards and to revel rioters that I must turn for its security ?”

While he said this, a loud shout, as of a person in a high state of excitement, was heard without the temple, and soon after Eimhir, the slinger, appeared at the porch, with a drinking vessel in one hand, while the other was extended, as in a gesture of oratorical energy :

“ Ho, Baseg, ho !” exclaimed the kern. “ What, Odin ! Thor ! Who says that Eimhir fears ? Who says that Eimhir dares not face the universe ?”

“ Is that the unwarlike spirit ?” said Baseg, with his usual hard and unmoved smile.

“ Of old,” replied Tuathal, “ he talked less boastfully but could do better. The silent valour wrought the steadiest. Of what avail that rash and frantic spirit, with such a frame to second it ? Come hither, Eimhir.”

“ Not for thy fear, but for thy love,” said Eimhir, staggering into the temple ; “ to please myself, not thee. Because thou art the heir of the Ard-Draithe, and not because thou art my chief. I love thee, Tuathal, but I defy thee !”

“ Eimhir,” said Baseg, “ be more reverent.”

“ I am reverent enough,” said Eimhir, drink-

ing, "as reverent as thyself, cold grey-beard, or any Thor, or Odin of ye all! Ha! Eimhir knows what arrow pierced young Conall! Thinkest thou I fear thee? Thinkest thou that Eimhir fears that wooden thing, with his great club and sword? or that tall slattern with her bow? That for them!" said he, using a gesture of contempt. "They shall not bully Eimhir."

So saying he drank again.

"Thou sayest thou lovest me, Eimhir," said Tuathal. "Is this the way thou showest it?"

"Son of the Ard-Draithe," answered the kern, "thou knowest I love thee. Dost thou not know it?" he added, staggering towards Tuathal, and confronting him; "dost thou not know I love thee? Darest thou tell me that I love thee not?"

"If thou dost," replied Tuathal, putting him back with the point of his sheathed sword, "it is

not by drunkenness, or by disobedience, I would have thee show it."

"Hear me, Tuathal," said Eimhir, grasping the sword point with one hand, and looking affectionately into his chieftain's face. "There is no man more knowing in the affair of right and wrong than Moyel of Rath-Aidan. This Baseg is a fool to Moyel. And yet I have heard Moyel say himself, when we have sat together over Matha's ale, that there was evil in unreasonable abstinence."

"Thou wretch!" said Tuathal, "did that give warrant for thy vile excesses."

"Not for excess," said Eimhir, staggering back, as his chieftain angrily pushed him away with his sword; "not for excess," said he, taking the drinking cup between both hands, and endeavouring to stand steady while he drained it to the bottom; "extremes in every case are surely

evil ; so Moyel said, and Moyel spoke the truth. I only strive to keep a kind of medium."

Saying this, he left the temple, not indeed observing, in his way to the door, the strict unerring medium of which he made his boast.

"There's discipline ! there's order !" said the Ard-Draithe. "But hear me, Baseg. I will no longer wait in this inaction. This very night the beacon shall be lit upon the crags, and every hood in the Coom shall march for Inbhersceine."

"Be patient, brave Tuathal," said the thanist. "These northmen have their fancies, which must be humoured, if we would have them firm as well as fierce. They will not advance a weapon in the enterprise until their feasts, and rites, and auguries are quite perfected. Bear with me, then, who know our allies well ; and leave me now, for yonder comes a youth who will be a most needful auxiliary."

The young Ard-Draithe departed, and Inguar entered, followed by the Northumbrian, whose eye wandered, with a mixture of curiosity and awe, over all the lurid splendours of the building.

The thanist received him with an air of real kindness, and bidding Inguar leave them for a time, addressed the Anglo-Saxon thus :

“Inguar has informed me that thou hast a complaint to make, and reparation to desire.”

“I have,” said Kenric, “and I pray thee hear me favourably.”

“Respecting what, or whom ?” said Baseg.

Kenric paused for a few moments, and then replied :

“A party of Tuathal’s galloglach have laid rough hands upon a friend of mine, who is now detained a prisoner in the Coom. I desire her freedom, and that I may conduct her to her friends.”

“Thou meanest Aithne,” answered Baseg, “the niece of the deceased Ard-Draithe.”

“The same,” said Kenric.

“She is in the Coom, indeed,” returned the thanist, “but by no means a prisoner; and as to violence, who told thee she was siezed by force?”

“One who should know,” said Kenric, “In-guar, the Swede.”

“He erred, or he deceived thee,” said the thanist; “there was indeed the semblance of assault, but nothing more, for it was her own wish to leave Rath-Aidan.”

“Her wish!” cried Kenric, in astonishment. “Her wish to leave Rath-Aidan!”

“And where’s the wonder?” said the thanist. “Why should it raise surprize that she should join the fortunes of her sept, in preference to those of one she never loved, except as a dependent loves its guardian?”

He proceeded to use his former instances with Kenric. The allurements were strong, but the discovery of the real name and character of the alleged usurper was sufficient to render them unavailing. Yet Kenric did not question Baseg's right to look upon himself as one aggrieved; for, though he had heard from Elim an indistinct account, and faintly understood, of the grounds on which he held his title, he gave credit to Baseg's denial of the offence by which it had been forfeited, and which indeed had never been publicly proved in evidence against him. He believed that what Baseg called a calumny was an unfounded suspicion on the part of his sept; but he could not bring himself in any degree to inculcate Elim.

“The devastating swarm!” said Kenric, with impatience, as he gazed on the Vikingr's troops, who mustered without; “they and their ill-

omened ensign, ere long, will muster on our seas as thick as those shoals the northern winter drives into the nets of our fishermen."

"They say," said Baseg, "that their object is not wrong, but justice."

"What!" exclaimed Kenric, sharply, with a smile, "is that become the pirate's pretext also?"

"Even were it not," replied the thanist, "and were they not, as they allege, the descendants of a people sorely and wrongfully aggrieved by southern Europe, I cannot yet perceive, if there be such a right as right of conquest, why a Vikingr of Nordland may not as freely claim it as a Righ-fine of Rome or Macedon."

"There is a difference," said Kenric, "between a right to make conquests, and the right to keep conquests made by our ancestors centuries before."

“Waiving that question, however, for the present,” said Baseg, “let us turn our thoughts to other matters. To-night there is a concert of the scalds in my poor dwelling. Thou wilt be welcome, as thou ever wert, to share our mirth, and, if thou wilt, our power. And now despatch, for I have weighty business.”

Saying this, he dismissed the Anglo-Saxon, well knowing that the single information he had given would work its way deep into Kenric’s mind. The latter spent the day in watching the Scandinavian and the native troops, at their various exercises on the plain; the hobbelers coursing gracefully in their mock-fight with headless spears, and the northmen practising with battle-axe and faulchion. Here might be seen a body of Saxon auxiliaries, distinguished by the ponderous hammers which hung from their saddle bows, and there a close body of the Danish infantry, clad

in the scaled helmet and chain hauberk, wielded the two-edged sword, which was in after times the terror of many a close contested field. In the midst of all this variety, however, the sprite of his own passion haunted Kenric, and as the evening fell, he sought, on the river side, the repose of mind which it is hard to suppose he could obtain in this suspense. The calm of nature, however, in his troubled state, had something of a quieting effect, and he sat down by the foot of an old oak, whose roots were washed bare by the flood, to hear the peaceful bubbling of the stream, to feel the fresh, sweet wind upon his cheek, and to enjoy the cool and quiet light of evening.

Not since he spoke with Moyel, in the caves where first he learned the tale of his own disappointment, did Kenric feel the loneliness that sunk upon his spirit at this moment. What, should he now succeed in his suit to Baseg, then

Elim, after all, was to be happy, and he was to be wretched; and what had Elim suffered that this flood of brightness and of peace should pour itself upon him, all unforced, almost unsought? A troubled, fearful movement crept through all his limbs, and made him rise with quickness and alarm.

“What spirit rules me now?” he said, trembling with a fear that still was virtuous. “The same, the very same! Returned again, but with a sevenfold power!” He pressed his hands upon his temples, and stamped, as if the action could shake off the influence he dreaded. “It is all my fault, my own fault,” he continued; “I had my warning; I had my bitter past experience to guide and to restrain me. Well, let it be enough that I have yielded, that I have been once more found wanting to filial duty, and to friendship, both. But let me shut this dark and deadly

spirit from out my heart with hate, with detestation. No, no; this is too hideous, too abhorrent. 'Tis I that have enjoyed, not Elim; Elim has suffered and has earned his happiness. Thou canst not blind me, fiend! Though thou shouldst ruin me, thou canst not blind me. The path that duty traced for him at first, he has kept, unquestioning, and he deserves his happiness. Despair and envy, hate and jealousy! Black monsters! Ugly inmates! Do I hear your brawling voices in my tranquil house once more? My house, I thought, was purified and quiet! Domnona! oh, Domnona! Oh, spirit of my mild and tender mother! If thou art happy, aid thy wretched son."

Distracted by these thoughts, and utterly unsettled in his mind, he saw the night approach with fearful feelings. He almost longed for the return of Inguar, although the revels in the valley

were not now the kind of consolation he desired. He sought the solitary cottage, and lit up his fire with strange and altering spirits. There was no comfort all around him now. He lighted at the embers one of the small tapers which were left for his use in the shed, and sat beside it on his shapeless tripod, to gaze upon the fire, and see the forms of convents, raths, and castles in the embers. He thought awhile (if such a continuous whirl of disconnected images within the brain could be entitled thinking) of Aithne, of Elim, Ailred, Inguar, and matters still more fearful. Wearied, at length, by the intensity of reflection, he dropped into a long and dreamless slumber.

Before he awoke, the weather had changed, and a showery gust drove full on the little dwelling, and sometimes stirred the skins of which the roof was formed. Scarce had he waked

when the wicket latch was raised, and, seeming to be borne upon a gust of rain and wind, the Scandinavian rushed into the dwelling.

“ Kenric,” said he, “ come quick. The thanist’s house is full, and he is impatient for thy presence. A wretched accident has occurred, which must precipitate the stroke of war, and this may be the last night we shall ever spend in mirth.”

He alluded to the escape of Duach, who, on this night, had fled to Inbhersceine. The Northumbrian hastily threw around him one of the hooded cloaks of frieze which formed the characteristic costume of the sept of Modharuith, and followed Inguar through the rain, which seemed like the commencement of a rising storm. On the way, the Swede informed him that the utmost confusion had been occasioned by the escape of a prisoner, thoroughly known to Elim,

who had been rashly entrusted by Tuathal to the custody of Eimhir, when scarce recovered from the effects of the morning's intemperance.

They found the house of the thanist (a building splendid in relation to the period) crowded with revellers and brightly lighted up. The walls of the building were of polished yew, the apartments not numerous, but extensive, and the floor composed of the beautiful blue and white marble of Corca Luighe, than which not Italy itself afforded finer. The thanist received him with augmented favour, and an eagerness of welcome that had something in it of anxiety. In the course of the evening, at a time when the volatile Northumbrian was excited by the music and poetry of the scalds, the wily Baseg renewed his instances, with greater force and eloquence than ever, to win him from his fidelity.

“If thou art bound to Elim, as thou sayest,” said he, “remember still, that in Cair Lud, before thou knewest of his usurpation, thou gavest me hope of thine assistance first. Thou dost not deny the justice of my claim, for thou hast thyself admitted, long ago, that Elim’s right, at least, is questionable. Consider, therefore, well, if I possess no claim upon thy service.”

A song of the chief scald, in praise of Brage, the Scandinavian Apollo, interrupted their discourse, and gave Kenric exquisite delight. When it was ended, an attendant served to the thanist a copious horn of oel, which the chieftain tasted, and passed to Kenric.

“I’ll drink no more,” said the latter, rejecting the cup, “my brain is dull already.”

“Nay,” answered Baseg, “this cup thou canst not pass. It is the votive draught, and thou must drain it dry to mighty Odin.”

“To Odin!” exclaimed Kenric.

“To Odin, Frigga, Thor, or any other sounding shade thou wilt,” said Baseg, “but do not send the cup away untasted, or there will be some angry eyes around thee.”

“Nay, sooner than offend,” said Kenric, taking the vessel, “although, in truth, I fear for my weak head. Not weak,” he added, after having drunk, “in itself, for without vanity, there are not many clearer in the day time, but thus assailed,” he took another draught, “’tis mortal after all.”

“Now ply him close,” said Baseg, whispering Inguar, as the latter glided in behind their seats. “The breach is opened, now he has began to rail at vanity once more. Ply him still closer, while I go to Aithne. If thou canst get him (as, what may not the songs and oel do?) to take the oath to night, in any mood, ’twill not

be difficult to urge him to act up to it. We must, at any price, place an effectual bar in the way of this connexion between Tuathal and the usurping Ithian. 'Tis more in hate than policy I speak it; for, though we fail, that still can blast his happiness."

He departed, and Inguar took his place by Kenric's side.

"Kenric," said he, "thou wert for many moons a guest at Inbhersceine?"

"Thou knowest I was," said Kenric.

"And didst thou in that time see reason to suppose that this young slip of the Coom, this Aithne, loved another than its chief?"

Kenric returned a slow and astonished negative.

"Remember well," insisted Inguar, "didst thou see nothing to raise a doubt on that point?"

"Their love," said Kenric, as if sobered by

the remembrance, and after a long pause, "was like that of two calm and happy spirits, secure of each other's truth, and boundless in their confidence."

"Say rather," said Inguar, "of two spirits, yoked together by the cold and perishable tie of interest. But take thine oel, and be merry. How like you the invention of our scalds?"

"Somewhat gloomy and hyperbolic, methinks," said Kenric, "and over nice in the adjustment of the measure. If they gave their words a little of the freedom they allow their thoughts, the movement of both would be more easy. That droquet we have heard, with its monstrous images, and strict syllabic harmony, was like a giant walking in a pair of pinching brogs."

"Thou art very dull," said Inguar, "if Aithne's mind was not clearly visible to thee at Inbhersceine. I passed but six short days beneath

that roof, and yet, from what I saw within that time, if I were asked to point the bridegroom out, my finger should not mark the Ithian chief."

"Whom then?" said Kenric, smiling.

"In honest truth, thyself," replied the Swede.

"Absurd!" cried Kenric, "let us hear the scalds. This talk was silly jesting, but it is madmen's earnest."

The subject of the song was one of the more attractive and imaginative of the legends of the north. The minstrel took occasion to relate the story of the giant Nor, and his gloomy daughter, Night, who, wedding with Daglingar, of the family of Heaven, gave birth to Day, a child as shining and as beautiful as she was black; how Odiu gave to each a car in heaven, and commanded the child to follow the parent in regular succession. "Even now," continued the bard, "we have seen Day, borne on his horse Skinfaxa, of the

Shining Mane, plunge down beyond the confines of the world, pursuing the course of his gloomy mother, who, toiling up the east, assumes her brooding empire over Earth. The dew which falls so cold upon the hills, and glitters hoary and congealed upon the lofty northern pines, is the foam which is shaken from the bit of her steed Renifane, of the Frosty Mane. Saw ye the bright broad moon that sped so gloriously at dusk amid the broken vapours. That lovely planet, and the gorgeous sun that turns every thing to light, wherever she appears, were once, as we are, human dwellers on the earth. Unhappy Mundilfara! Proud of his beautiful children, he expressed his admiration in the names he gave to both. Unhappy Mundilfara! not to remember that even the gods are prone to jealousy. Offended at the sublimity of their names, they took his children from the dwelling of the partial

father. To the beauteous Sunna they committed the guidance of the car of Day, and her brother Mane even now careers amid the clouds above our head. Know ye those two fair stars that follow in the course of the great orb, as lesser jewels shining near that which is the pride of the diadem. They too once dwelt on earth, in the forms of the children Bill and Hinke. Returning from a fountain, with a water-vessel hung between, the rapacious Mane eyed their beauty from the heavens, and bore them away by violence, to add their gentle radiance to his track.”

Inguar, having once set foot upon the course, would not desist from pressing what he announced ; more especially as he perceived that, although Kenric treated it with ridicule, it was a dream too pleasing not to be acceptable. The excitement of the scene, the music, and the drink, which had already strongly affected him, restored the

habitual character of levity which deeper feelings had so long repressed. He loudly combatted the theories launched forth by the more learned minstrels, respecting the origin and movement of the heavenly bodies; of Sunna, Mane, and of Bill and Hinke; which last, in the midst of the anger and derision of the assembly, he declared to be masses ponderous and opaque, like this of earth. From this time forward, the scene seemed to grow misty and dreamlike to his view. He had a consciousness of Inguar pressing him with brilliant promises and with assurances of Aithne's love, which, even in his stupor, he could not help deriding. He was half conscious, too, of other incidents, of a more fearful nature; that Inguar urged him to forswear his faith to Elim, and become a member of a northern gild, at which a crowd of scalds and warriors pressed around, and offered to conduct him to the temple, bearing

torches in their hands, which cast a light upon the fierce and half intoxicated countenances of the guests :

“Thou fabulous fellow !” he said, addressing one of the scalds, who pressed him more than others. “A kern might teach thee to correct thy notions. Aske and Embla ! Sunna and Daglingar ! Off with this gibberish ! But that I might be charged with self-conceit, I’d tell thee where thou might’st learn something better ! Where would ye lead me, Inguar ?”

“Make way for the Hofgodar !” cried the latter. “The young Hofgodar of the Incendiary.”

The crowd gave way, and Kenric was hurried forth, amid a group of noisy revellers, some of them waving torches in the air, some chaunting snatches of a popular droquet, and all unheeding the tempest which now raved with terrific violence above their heads. The gate of the temple

was thrown open, and Kenric, as if moving in an awful dream, allowed himself to be led, without resistance or remonstrance, to the foot of the iron altar on which the perpetual fire was lighted up. The three gigantic idols seemed to scowl upon him, as, in stupified compliance with the instances of Inguar, he grasped the brazen ring which hung from the altar, and which felt moist and clammy in his hold, as if it had been lately washed (as in reality the custom was) with clotted gore, from the fount of sacrifice. Amid the momentary silence of the assembly he took the oath of fidelity to the gild, and felt, at the same instant, a shower descend upon his person which had the hue of blood. Looking up, he beheld the Adelerunner, one of the priests, and one of those who were at the feast of Baseg, in the act of dipping in the marble vase that formed the sacrificial font, a brush with which he sprinkled all who

were present. Before they left the temple, the votive horn was once more handed round, and as he quaffed the liquor in his turn, the temple, lights and all, disappeared from the eyes of the miserable Northumbrian, whose rashness courted the danger which he had not virtue to resist.

CHAPTER LXXIII.

IN the meantime, Baseg hastened to the Dun alone. On this evening, as has already been related, the active Duach had effected his escape from the valley, and Aithne anxiously awaited the result of his departure. She knew enough of the character of the northern warriors to fear the worst from their power in the Coom, and her anxiety increased, as her suspense was heightened, by the departure of the kern. She heard from her chamber door the tumult which succeeded his escape, and the vociferations of Banba

filled her with alarm. Nor could she gather, from her Saxon attendants, the slightest clue to the result of their undertaking.

“If I had but one friend amongst them all,” she said, as she paced anxiously through her apartment: “but there is not a being in the Coom who can assist me, or whom I dare entrust. These horrid Fionn Geinte; they say nor sex, nor age, nor place, nor virtue, ever yet were able to move a warrior of the north. Tuathal could not surely see me injured, but he is weaker than a child in mind. These horrid tyrants of the deep! They say they offer human sacrifices to their terrific idols, and that at times the blood of their own chiefs has flowed to make their fearful gods propitious. It was my fault—my rashness wrought it all. Hark! was not that a footstep in the Dun! How still—how very still the night has fallen! Baseg has power, it seems,

amongst these northerns. He is not alone the rival, but the foe of Elim ; and yet if I could only see him here, I think that I could move even him to pity. But no, I will not sue a foe of Inisfail. I will be firm, though it is fearful to look forward. Perhaps I never may see Elim more ! Perhaps I never more may see Rath-Aidan—nor Matha, nor the pleasant kerne and keyriaghts that fed their flocks along the valley side. Poor Kenric ! Little did I dream, when I wept for losing one friend, that all might shortly follow.”

While she dwelt upon these thoughts—now following them in her own mind, now uttering them aloud, with bursts of grief, the twilight darkened, and the weather changed to the indications of a rising storm.

“ Blow wind and rain, and roll ye gathering clouds,” said Aithne, “ if ye can serve to cover

his escape. How little would I heed the driving of the bitterest storm that ever howled amongst the hills, if I could be the partner of his flight !”

The tempest rose, and towards midnight had acquired a fearful violence. The loneliness of her situation, and the dreary tumult of the elements, increased the pain of Aithne’s contemplations, and made her long for morning. It was in the midst of such agitating thoughts that she heard the door of her apartment open, and beheld, wrapped in a hooded cloak, which had been drenched with the recent showers, the form of Baseg, the grey-headed thanist.

A movement of deep fear assailed the heart of Aithne at the sight of her malignant persecutor, at so unusual an hour ; and she waited, in motionless silence, until he should open an interview which she had so much reason to regard with apprehension.

The thanist made the wicket fast behind him, and then, letting down the hood upon his shoulders, advanced towards Aithne. As he approached her, the thought which was uppermost on her mind expressed itself in a tremulous murmur on her lips :

“Thou knowest,” she said, “that I am in thy power.”

“I would thou wert,” said Baseg; “it would be well for thee and for thy friends. Thou art in my charge, indeed, but that will not be long, for in two days more thou wilt pass into other and less temperate hands. One question I have come to ask thee now. Hast thou been privy to the escape of Duach?”

“He has escaped then?” cried Aithne, clapsing her hands, and gazing earnestly upon the thanist.

“I see it gives thee joy,” said Baseg.

“ It does, indeed, heartfelt and grateful joy,” replied the maiden. “ Poor faithful fellow, he, at least, is safe.”

“ Aye, and may warn thy Elim, as thou hopest,” said Baseg; “ and so he will, I have no doubt of that. But hear me, daring abettor of that traitor. His speed will be in vain; his treason fruitless. Blood may be shed! these rocks may reek with gore; but long ere that can happen thy fate at least will be decided here; and whomsoever chance may destine to the sovereignty of Rath-Aidan, thou never shalt behold again the face of its possessor.”

“ Thou canst not say it,” cried Aithne, sinking at heart, in spite of her resolve. “ What have I done to thee, or to thy friends, that I should merit such a fearful fate?”

“ He will reach Rath-Aidan,” continued Baseg, with a vindictive smile, “ and Elim will

hear the truth before the morning. Yet, at his utmost speed, two days must pass before his force can muster on these hills, and those two days, whatever be the issue of the contest, will see thy ruin sealed, and his scheme of happiness destroyed. Thou rash, unthinking maid! Thou hast ensured the out-break of a war that, until now, was doubtful. I still had hopes that blood might have been spared by treaty, but now the fate of either party is decided, for war alone can settle the dispute."

He paused to let this information do its work, which it did, by chilling Aithne to the very soul.

"Heaven sees my heart," she said, in a low voice, and twining her fingers in agony, "that I had rather die a hundred deaths than be the cause of strife between the septs. If my poor life be all that is required to bring back peace

to the Coom, and security to Rath-Aidan, I would not see them for a day at strife."

"Rise, Aithne," said the thanist, "and hear me speak."

"I will not rise," said Aithne, lifting her clasped hands, with a look of supplication, "till thou hast heard me first. Old man, refuse not to listen to me, at least. The old Ard-Draithe was thy constant friend, and his forlorn successor did not close against thee in thy necessity the gates that, in his day, stood ever open. By the memory of his kindness, and by the hospitality of the roof which seems to have become almost thine own, I conjure thee look upon his sept with pity. We never injured thee in word or work, and many a time our hands have dressed thy food."

"Rise, Aithne," said the thanist, lifting her from the earth. "Thou dost not know the nature

of thy peril, nor how it yet may be avoided. Implore not me, for mercy lies not with me; but hear me patiently awhile."

He led the maiden to a tripod, the seat of which was formed of the variegated marble of Keunmare, and, standing at a little distance, said:

"I am not one of those who seek to cover, under specious pretexts, the machinery of their own selfish passions. What I am I care not thou shouldst see, whether it move thy pity or abhorrence. I said that mercy did not lie with me, and yet it is in my power to save, or to destroy thee. The former I can do, but if it be so, thou canst not, sure, deny me some return."

"I would—I will make any in my power," said Aithne, expanding her hands as if inviting the demand. "Tell me what thou requirest, and I will do my utmost to fulfil it."

"'Tis fairly spoken," said the thanist, "if

thou wilt but perform it half so fairly. Dissolve," he added, approaching nigher, and bending to her ear, "dissolve this union with the young usurper, wed with one who can befriend thy sept, and be a sure protector to thyself."

Astonishment for the moment took place of every other feeling in the breast of Aithne, so that she did nothing more for some moments than gaze on the speaker, who continued to address her, without observing in the dim rush light the alteration which his words had occasioned in her countenance :

"One too," he added, "superior to the Ithian in accomplishments, in genius, and in letters ; a poet and a scholar, young and well-formed, and in external graces scarce excelled by any." He was proceeding further to expatiate on the attractions of his client, when Aithne, recovering from her surprize, interrupted him.

“And is it possible,” she exclaimed, “that thou canst seriously urge me to forswear the faith that I have pledged to Elim? for, however thou hast heard the tale, it is the very truth. Or canst thou imagine that I should hear, with aught but anger, thy eulogies of this young friend of thine? Is this the only means of safety left me?”

“I say not even this is certain,” answered Baseg, “but if thou do this, all my influence shall be exerted to save thee from the violence of the Vikingr.”

“Then hear me, Baseg,” answered Aithne, speaking in a firmer and a deeper tone, “if I were at this instant in their gloomy caverns, where it is said their fearful deities are invoked with rites too horrid to be named, and if consent could render me immortal, I had rather die that fearful death they give than utter it.

“Even take thy choice,” said Baseg, going

towards the door, "I have done my part, and now thou canst not blame me."

He departed, having expected nothing but a refusal at this interview, and leaving her to combat with her sense of the approaching danger, at which he darkly hinted. Aithne had heard enough of the dreadful practises of these detested pirates to shudder at the consequences of her refusal.

"I will be true," she said, "I will be firm, although the worst should follow. Oh, Elim, haste! Oh, Elim, tarry not, or all is lost. Oh, guardian spirits of this saintly isle, lift up your radiant hands for us, that we may not perish by the hate of those unholy plunderers! Speed, faithful servant, speed, through storm and gloom, and bring relief to the mistress thou hast loved so faithfully."

She cast herself upon her bed of the wild

deer skins, and remained listening to the beating wind and rain, until a troubled sleep removed her consciousness without diminishing her misery. Visions of the most appalling description succeeded her real apprehensions, and she woke to the uncertain light of morning, at the very instant when, in her dreams, a band of fierce Vikings were dragging her, with loud shouts, to the foot of their blood-stained altars, and the island rang from shore to shore with war.

The sun had not shone upon the gloomy terrors of the night, when Baseg returned to renew his instances and menaces. He did not, however, manifest the least appearance of anger or of anxiety upon his own account, but counselled Aithne in the manner of a friend who saw her standing in an imminent danger, and wished to urge her to the measures necessary for her own safety.

“Thou dost not know,” he said, “the character of those whose fury thou bravest with so much ease. They are the progeny of a race that made the masters of the world turn pale. I will not pain thee with the horrible details of all their mystic rites; the hideous modes of augury with which the dying victim furnishes his slayers; nor all the fearful ceremonies that follow their inhuman offerings. They are the foes whom thou hast now to dread, and in whose power thou dwellest. To-night they feast in the Dun at Tuathal’s invitation, and thou thyself shalt see the race thou fearest. I’ll tell thee more:—this morning, the Raven, on the Vikingr’s standard, was seen to droop the wings, a fearful omen for the coming enterprize. The sulky race, at all times formidable, are never so dangerous as in their moments of superstitious dejection,

and then it is that hope of mercy is most vain and idle. And now thou knowest with whom thou hast to deal. Consider well the proposal I have made, and take what part thou wilt, for mine is done. If thou consent, Elim, indeed, must lose his principality, and thee, his promised bride; but Inisfail will not be torn by war, and not a northern battle-axe shall drench its thirsty edge upon her hills. Deny me, and for ages yet to come, the Danes shall be a proverb in the mouths of her children, when they would speak of bloodshed and oppression.

He left the presence of Aithne without waiting a reply, and throwing his hood over his brow, walked quickly toward the isle in which the temple stood. Two of the magi, who stood at the porch, flung the door wide open to admit him, and he entered without speaking, suffering

it to close behind him as before. The only light which was admitted from outside came through the door, so that now, when it was closed, although the morning was already bright, the temple remained wrapt in total darkness. Baseg, however, knew the place sufficiently well to advance without hesitation, and after traversing a considerable space, he paused on a sudden, and called, in a loud voice :

“Heida! Heida, the prophetess! come forth!”

“Who calls me from my watch?” asked a shrill and broken voice, that bore the accents of a female.

“Thou mayest be free and open,” said the thanist, “it is the Runner, Baseg, and alone.”

As he finished speaking, a curtain was drawn behind the altar from which the armilla hung, and a recess disclosed, so strongly illuminated as to

cast a doubtful light outside, over the darkened vault of the temple. An altar appeared within, plated with sheets of iron, from which ascended the perpetual fire, by which an aged woman sat, as if to watch the flame.

“Heida,” said Baseg, “you changed the Reafan standard, as I bade thee, in the Vikingr’s ship?”

The woman took from a corner a banner, bearing the device of a raven with outspread wings, in act to fly, which she unfolded in the sight of Baseg.

“I see,” said the thanist, “and I will not be ungrateful. The drooping pinions have been substituted. It is very well. A wandering scald observed the fearful augury at dawn, and spread the panic through the fleet. There is one thing more that I must thank thee for. To-night thou wilt be called upon to name the victim

whom the gods require. Observe my glance, and wheresoever it falls, there let thy choice fall too. To-morrow we will have the happy augury restored."

The woman lowered her head, in token of assent, and Baseg turned to depart. The hanging fell once more, and he returned through the darkness to the temple porch. The door was opened at his summons, and closed again as he departed from the grove into the light of the clear winter day.

CHAPTER LXXIV.

IN the peillice to which Kenric was borne, after the oath was taken which devoted him to Baseg and his cause, a number of men were employed in steeping, over a great fire, the peeled rushes which formed the torches used at their nocturnal assemblies, while others twisted them together and laid them against the wall to harden. Waking at frequent intervals from dreams of a still more fearful nature than those which troubled the sleep of the Ard-Draithe's niece, yet not sufficiently to recover perfect consciousness, the shapes which

passed between him and the flame became mingled with his sleeping visions, and gave them a striking vividness and force. Towards morning a deeper sleep succeeded those uncertain slumbers, and when he awoke the cottage was deserted, the men having disappeared, together with their manufacture.

A pang of the keenest anxiety and remorse seized on the heart of the Northumbrian, as a confused remembrance of the scene which had just closed the events of the preceding day came back upon his mind. While he strove to think on what his course should be, the door was opened, and Inguar entered, with an eager look.

“Kenric,” said he, “you are wanted at the council of the Vikingr.”

“I!” exclaimed Kenric, “I wanted at the council!”

“Dost thou so soon forget?” said Inguar,

with a gesture of surprize, “dost thou forget that thou art of the gild?”

“I remember a hideous vision,” said the Northumbrian, “but whether all a dream, or true in part, I am unable to declare. But what was done I utterly disclaim, nor will I move a step to execute what reason never would have recommended. Renounce my friend, my country for (it is in part, my country), aye—and her faith, to pleasure thee and Baseg?”

“Thy tone was different in East-Anglia once,” said Inguar, with a gaze of mournful reproach.

“Taunt me not thus unjustly,” said the scholar; “thou knowest the course that I have trod with thee. Thou knowest what first thou foundest me in Northumberland. With thee I left it first, and darkness, storm, and danger ever since have been about my path like flitting fiends.”

“ This is but fancy,” answered Inguar.

“ I left it,” continued Kenric, “ and well thou knowest if my evils have been fanciful. My childhood was instructed in that faith which now thou urgest me to condemn and to abandon; my earliest thoughts of virtue blended with it. Its mysteries I treasured in my soul, its rites I practised with the fervour of a young and ardent spirit. I was happy in its bosom. My conscience was pure, my mind serene and quiet, my heart at rest, my hope untroubled, bright; my love unchanging—my very fear was sweet; my very trembling was delicious; the path of duty straight and clear before me. Now it is otherwise. I speak not of the faded feeling of religion, my succour and my joy; I speak not of those mysteries I have ceased to venerate, nor of those rites that I have ceased to practice. But my own breast! the hell of my own breast!—my conscience! What is that? A

knot of serpents, twined in Gordian perplexity! My mind, a midnight in itself! my heart, a hell! my hope, despair! my love, a traitor's love! my fear, a useless fear! my trembling, an unprofitable horror! my path a growing labyrinth, where reason every day is more disturbed. My murdered mother! my forsaken father! my home forgot! my duties all despised! These are the fruits of that accursed friendship to which thou chargest me now with being false."

"Thy feelings, Kenric," said the Scandinavian, after a pause, and in a soothing tone, "thy feelings hurry thee away from wisdom."

"Wisdom!" cried Kenric, "tellest thou me of wisdom? If fancy and if feeling both were false, yet wisdom would upbraid me with my weakness. 'Thou fool!' it whispers me, from night to night, 'thou knowest that virtue only is the end of temporal life, and when wert thou

most virtuous? Thou knowest what is to be the recompense of temporal virtue, and when didst thou think most, do most, long most, and suffer most for that reward? Thou senseless, whither didst thou seek to wander?" This wisdom says, true wisdom," added Kenric. "This is the voice of reason, and the true one. No, perished honour—no, forsaken virtue, if I have lost, at least I will not wrong you."

Saying this, he covered his eyes with one hand, and leaned long in silence on the table. Inguar would have said something, but, at the motion of his frame, Kenric waved his hand softly, as if to signify that he did not wish to be disturbed.

After a little time, the Swede arose gently, and seemed about to leave the house.

"I will see thee again, Kenric," said he, "when thou art more at peace—when thou art

better inclined to do justice to thy friend and to thyself."

"My friend!" said Kenric, with a smile.

"Thy friend, thy patient friend," cried Inguar, looking round upon him with an appearance of anger. "Thy friend, whose brain is weary of devising modes of compassing thy happiness, and who finds all his recompense from thee in base suspicion and ungrateful taunts. Darest thou deny," he continued, observing Kenric still smile, and fix his glance upon him, "darest thou deny what I have sacrificed? what I have wrought to do thee lasting service? what I am labouring at this moment to accomplish? Beware, beware," he added, "to what measure I may be provoked."

"What measure, prithee?" asked the Northumbrian.

"Thy hope, thy brightest hope, is in my

hands," said Inguar; "I hold the painted vase that holds thy happiness. Beware, lest I may be provoked to break it."

"Thou holdest what vase? what painted vase?" said Kenric. "Leave riddles, and speak plainly. The less of poetry thou handlest, Inguar, the clearer will thy wit appear, believe me."

"Thy Aithne!" Inguar cried, aloud, "is that a riddle? The hope that brought thee from Muingharidh here—that I have raised, and that I can destroy! Like you that poetry? Beware it, Kenric."

"I will," said the Northumbrian.

"I told thee Aithne was in Coom-na-Druid," continued the Scandinavian, "'twas by my agency that she was restored to the roof of her fathers, and by my agency again she may be hurried hither—thither—any where—every where, that I may order."

“ If thou design such movement for the maiden,” returned Kenric, “ thou mayest spare thy labour, and keep thy vapid and ill-acted anger for some happier time, for I have now resolved upon my part. I will do nothing more, say nothing more to Baseg.”

“ What then ?” said Inguar.

“ Fly hence,” replied the Anglo-Saxon, “ and mourn my failure and my weakness at a distance.”

“ Aye, fly to Elim, mourn in the Rath,” said Inguar, with a sneer. “ And think you Baseg now will suffer your departure ?”

“ If he will not,” said Kenric, “ I can stay here, or die here, if he will, but move a finger against Elim I will not, though joint by joint should be hewn off to force me. I will not join this council of marauders. Urge me no more ; my brains are not a stripling’s, to be purloined

through the ears with eloquent words. There was a time thy words had influence, but that is past. Thy menaces I hold as lightly too. Away! Thou threatenest proudly, Inguar, but thy threats are empty as thy promises are vain. I have weightier thoughts at present on my mind than thy last treachery, dreadful as it is, and far beyond all former injuries. Go, Inguar, go; leave me to myself."

The Swede stood for a long time motionless, with his head bent down, and his forehead dark with the fury of disappointed cunning.

"Go, go," said Kenric, calmly motioning him away; "thou sayest indeed the truth. My mind is not sufficiently at peace to hear thee speak. Go, break that vase, go fashion some new scheme of happiness; go hurry Aithne in that kind of whirlwind; go plot new tortures for the hearts of men; go weave new meshes for their souls

—begone! Go any where thou wilt, so thou take thyself away from eyes that are weary of beholding thee, and a heart that thou hast broken.”

So saying, he turned aside, in order that he might not look again on the Scandinavian. The latter paused for a little time, as if deliberating what he should do.

“Kenric,” said he, turning round once more when he had reached the door, “whatever thou mayest think, I can explain this matter if thou wilt.”

Not finding Kenric disposed to notice him, he added :

“I go then, as thou biddest, but not in shame, nor guilt, nor even in anger. I go to bring thee proof that thou hast wronged me, to show thee that, whatever be thy thought, it wrongs me foully if it says I sought thine evil.”

“ Impudent seducer !” said Kemic to himself, as he heard the wicket close behind the Swede. He went out himself, soon after him, in order to meditate more at leisure, in the freshness of the evening air, and by the side of the little river which ran bubbling through the Coom. He meditated once more the stealing away from the valley; but besides that he supposed Inguar was not without having taken precautions to prevent his escape, in case he should attempt it, he was, himself, unwilling to depart while yet so ignorant of Aithne’s condition. Yet she was in the Coom, and bitterly now did he recall his subterfuge to Elim. His thoughts, however, after some time, were diverted from this subject by the sound of a cruit on the river side, and a voice, which he remembered to have heard before, singing some lines, of which the following may give something like the sense :

I.

War, War ! Horrid War !
Fly our lonely plain,
Guide fleet and far,
Thy fiery car,
And never come again !
And never,
Never come again !

II.

Peace ! Peace ! smiling Peace !
Bless our lonely plain,
Guide swiftly here,
Thy mild career,
And never go again !
And never,
Never go again !

Little as the words conveyed, the voice of the singer, and the accomplished skill with which he touched the instrument, were sufficient to awaken Kenric's interest, even if he had not recognized in the singer the hereditary fifea of the Ard-Draithe's household, the same who sung the welcome song to Elim, and who still bore upon

his cloak the golden clasp which the young Ithian had given him as a guerdon. From this person Kenric learned that the utmost gloom and anxiety had spread amongst the northmen in the Coom, the consequence of many a gloomy augury, and that it had already required all the influence of Baseg to prevent their re-embarking, and pursuing their marauding life on more propitious coasts.

“Would they were on the Baltic once again,” said Kenric; “but knowest thou any thing of Aithne, the niece of the deceased Ard-Draithe?”

“I know not what may have happened her of late,” replied the filea, “but, on her first arrival in the valley, I saw her given up to Baseg’s hands by Tuathal himself. She is detained a prisoner in the Dun, where the northmen feast to-night.”

Kenric was silent, and letting the minstrel know where he might always find him, returned, with a troubled spirit, to the peillice in which he lived, and, falling asleep by his fireside, dreamed vividly of all that he had heard and witnessed during the day ; of Aithne, of Tuathal, and other persons, who became strangely blended in his visions with the wonders of the wild mythology which he had been lately studying. Sometimes the faithless Oder, with the countenance of Elim, passed rapidly along before his eyes ; and, while he wondered at his sudden speed, came Aithne, following in the cat-drawn car of Freya, seeking her lord, and weeping golden tears upon his track. Now Blader, with inviting hand, opened to him the portals of his spotless palace, Bre-dalbik, where nought that is impure can obtain admission ; but, as he entered the golden gates, he started back, on detecting, beneath the beauteous

ringlets of the god, the guileful eyes of his betrayer—Inguar. Now he sat with Torsete, the peace-maker, in the halls of Blitner, upheld by golden pillars, and covered with a roof of silver; but, as he whispered in his ear a prayer that he would make him reconciled to Elim, his blood ran cold when the god looked slowly round, and showed the hoary brows, and the malignant smile of Baseg.

CHAPTER LXXV.

THE Scandinavians assembled at the feast, but with no festive looks. The scalds were forbid to play, the warriors forbore their sleights of skill, and they took their viands in gloom and silence, as at a feast of sorrow. Aithne, closely veiled, was placed on the right hand of Baseg, and on Tuathal's left, and endeavoured, through the filmy flax, to discern the countenances and forms of those redoubtable warriors whose characters she had been taught to regard with so much fear and horror. On one side of the

apartment sat the Saxon followers of Baseg, distinguished by their short cloaks, in many instances edged with gold, and contrasting strongly with the flowing mantles and deep hoods of the children of Modharuidh who sat opposite. The end of the apartment was filled by the Vikingr, comprizing adventurers from Nordland, from Denkirke, and nearly all the coasts which bordered on the northern seas, most of them attired in the plaided stuff which originated with the Teutons. On this stern circle the enormous torches cast a fiery glare, that suited not amiss the character of violence suppressed, which marked the assembly, and which resembled the insecure repose of a train of artillery, full charged, and waiting but the incentive spark to spread destruction round them.

In the midst of this profound silence, a mur-

mur arose without, and presently after, those who sat near the doorway observed a long double train of torches crossing the bridge, the reflection of which, in the waters underneath, gave a striking effect to the procession.

“It is the prophetess!” was the murmur which spread amongst the guests, and Aithne, startled by the noise, involuntarily put aside her veil to discover what had occasioned it. She beheld, in the act of crossing the threshold, a woman, drooping with age, and bearing in her hand a long divining wand, which she used to direct her somewhat feeble steps. Fifteen young virgins, clothed in robes of white, attended in her train, and double that number of armed warriors, formed files on either side of the venerated priestess, each bearing in his hand a lighted torch of pine. All rose to do honour to the prophetess, who was conducted, with great ceremony, to an

elevated tripod at a little distance from the thanist.

“Heida,” said Baseg, standing while he addressed her, “knowest thou the cause why thou art summoned hither?”

The priestess paused awhile, and then, raising her feeble head, replied :

“The Reafan droops the wing on the Vikingr’s standard. I saw it in the clouds ere it appeared on earth.”

“And how,” asked Baseg, “can the omen be averted? Speak, Heida, and thy guerdon shall be great.”

The priestess paused for a longer time than before, and then replied :—

“The gods demand a victim. The armilla must be wet with noble blood, if Odin’s anger would be turned aside. The victim he demands is now amongst us.”

A sudden murmur arose amongst the northmen, and all looked round and in each other's faces, as if to inquire in which might be discerned the writ of doom recorded by the Incendiary.

“Heida,” said Baseg, “Odin shall be obeyed, but do thou point out the victim.”

The priestess murmured long, but, on the repeated instances of the thanist, raised her divining wand, and, fixing her eyes on his, passed it round the circle with a slow and tremulous motion, while the deepest silence and suspense sunk suddenly upon the assembly. Aithne beheld the wand approaching her with an inward misgiving, for which the conversation of the preceding noon had given the fullest occasion. Her fears were verified by the event; for Heida, with a low moan, let fall the wand at her feet, and hurried from her tripod towards the door, uttering cries of terror and of pain. She crossed the

threshold, followed by her train of attendants, and bearing in her hand a massy chain of gold, which Baseg had flung at her feet as a recompense for her prediction.

In the meantime, nothing could exceed the tumult which she left behind her. The Vikings rose to claim their victim ; the Saxons, at a signal given by Baseg, arose to second them, and the children of the Coom, with equal promptitude, arranged themselves, with bare and glittering skenes, around the daughter of their line of chiefs, not less beloved for her father's apostacy. The northmen, however, had been forewarned by Baseg to come armed ; and were, in numbers as well as weapons, far superior to the native kerne who prepared to resist them. Tuathal, with his brazen gen displayed, was about to strike at the advancing foe, when Aithne, with a shriek, implored them not to stain the Ard-Draithe's floor with blood.

“ Hold back your hands,” she cried, “ put up thy sword, Tuathal ! You cannot serve, and may destroy me. Strangers, I yield myself into your hands, but spare your violence here.”

“ And sayest thou so, most liberal of kinswomen ?” cried Tuathal, putting her forcibly back out of the reach of harm. “ Let all proceed in order, if it please you.”

Before he had finished speaking, the weapons had almost crossed in front, and the menaced conflict would have soon decided the matter in favour of the northmen, had not Baseg interposed his influence to allay the storm. He reminded Tuathal that the maiden was for the present in his charge, and added something, in a whisper, which seemed to change the temper of the latter into something more complying, while he pledged himself to the northmen, that he, as their chosen chief, and the elected Runner of the

Gods, would not see Odin cheated of his victim. He thus contrived, amid much tumult on either side, to win the confidence of both, and to retain possession of Aithne, whom he led from the assembly, lest her presence might renew the dissension. Instead of conducting her to her apartment, he had her conveyed, under the escort of a troop of his own Saxons, to the temple, which she entered with a feeling of despair, as if already at the place of sacrifice. There she was lodged in a solitary chamber, adjoining that in which the priestess and her handmaids kept perpetual watch beside the fire of Odin.

“ I conjure thee,” said the maiden, as her keeper was about to leave the prison, “ forget not that we were thy friends in need, and save me from this horrible extremity. Thou art aged, and must know, from frequent trial, how bitter it is to part from all we love.”

“I do,” replied the thanist, turning round upon her, with a countenance which evinced more emotion than she had ever seen him manifest before. “I know how hard it is to be robbed of name, of place, of power, of influence; to be banished from home, and all that makes home lovely.”

“Then, by that experience,” said Aithne, “I conjure thee pity me, and save me now.”

“Thou conjurest with a most unlucky spell,” said Baseg; “it binds the charm that thou wouldst seek to break. Yet do not throw the burthen thus on me. It still is in thy power to shun this fate, of which I half forewarned thee. Thou knowest the terms, and they can still avail thee.”

“And this is all my hope?” said Aithne, in a distinct voice.

Baseg gave answer in the affirmative, and

Aithne, arising from her supplicating posture, suffered the thanist to depart without another word. With the comparative ease of a mind accustomed to self government, and a heart that reproached its owner with no dark remembrances, she then prepared herself to meet her fate with decency and resignation. She performed, with attention and composure, the duties of religion which seemed adapted to her condition, and, after these were concluded, went to rest upon her heap of rushes with a resigned and almost tranquil breast.

CHAPTER LXXVI.

SPEEDING all night through wind and rain, darkness and storm, the fugitive Duach arrived in the valley of Rath-Aidan as the fresh grey light of morn was spreading over the troubled waves of Inbhersceine. The keyriaght, or wandering herdsman, was driving his kine to their pasturage on the mountain side ; and the seneschal inspected the ramparts, and caused the gates to be undone which made the Rath secure from nightly injury. Without loss of time, Duach procured admittance to the presence of Elim. It was

only on the preceding morn that the Ithian had learned something of the proceedings in the valley, and of Aithne's disappearance, for not even her own dependents knew what had befallen their mistress. He had yielded to the persuasions of Matha and their kinsfolk, who urged him to repair his strength by sleep, in order that he might be the better qualified for a journey to O'Driscoll, on the following morn. He had already risen, and ordered Moyel to prepare the troop of galloglachs, with which he always travelled. Some inferior leaders, amongst whom were Carbre and Kieran, mentioned in an early chapter, being the same who rode with him on the morning when he first visited the Coom, the others bearing the titles of Fear Comhlan Mile, or Fear Comhlan Cead, according as the number of their followers varied, were receiving instructions for the management of their forces in his absence. At this

moment, a kern appeared at the door, to inform the chief that a stranger desired to speak with him immediately.

“A stranger?” asked Elim, “of what sept, or country? Perhaps the bearer of a message from O’Driscol.”

“It is not so,” replied the kern. “It is the daltin of the Hooded Lady, Duach, from Coom na Druid.”

“Duach!” cried Elim, starting from his seat, “admit him instantly. Chieftains, you know your duty; I have some important business to discharge, and hope tomorrow to meet you in the mountains.”

The chiefs departed, and Duach was admitted into the presence of the Ithian, who received him with an eagerness that, for the moment, almost deprived him of the power of utterance.

“Good fellow, bear with me awhile,” he said,

leaning on the ashen javelin which he always carried about his person, in the chace or in the fight. "I well remember how thou lovedst thy mistress. I am not ashamed to let thee see my weakness."

"I could die for thee while thou tremblest so," said Duach. "Thou knowest her worth, and, if any chief in Inisfail deserved her, thou art he."

"Speak low," said Elim, growing still more pale, even with the effort to maintain his firmness; "there are women lodged in the next apartment. They told me thou wert with Aithne, when she left her dwelling in the Coom, to which she has not returned. What accident prevented her?"

"The chance of war," said Duach, hastily.

"I see," said Elim, speaking at broken intervals. "Thou need'st not tell me more. My dearest hope on earth is taken from me, but I

am patient of my grief. Aye, so it is. Well, let them now come on. The war is pleasing now. What do I say? Defend me from these horrors, gracious heaven! Preserve my reason sound—my purpose firm. Thou knowest at some time we should have been parted, perhaps when years of love and tried fidelity had made that parting even bitterer than now. Well, now to action. These ruffian northmen must not spoil the land, though it contain no farther hope for me. My native soil must not be quite forgot, because the dearest gift she gave is lost to me for ever. Well, so it is. What, Moyel! is the hobbie at the rampart? See that the troop are ready on the instant. Good fellow, help me to make fast the girdle. Poor Kenric, 'tis his dagger—his gaudy Gaulish toy. Well, be it so. We are men still, Duach, are we not? The northmen soon will find us

work enough to keep our thoughts from painful recollections. Poor Kenric, thou wilt grieve to hear that fate has made our fortunes even after all. Thy search is vain now, Kenric—thy peril wholly needless. As for this Baseg, I regard him nothing—he can at most but give a change of masters to Rath Aidan; but these sea-roving plunderers, now that they have once trod our tranquil shores, I fear, will leave their foot-marks deep on Inisfail's green breast for many an age to come. My skiagh, good fellow.”

Duach, unable to reply, from the rapidity with which Elim poured forth his thoughts, as if to overcome by volubility the anguish that was struggling at his heart, walked toward the wall, on which the shield of O'Haedha hung. It was a piece of armour, framed of wicker work, and covered with leather and shining plates of brass.

“But that it were a thankless crime to in-

dulge the thought," continued the heart-stricken young warrior, "I had as lief that part of my accoutrement was spared. But that's a folly—that's a weakness, is it not? 'Tis thus, they say, that love-sick poets feel in such occasions, is it not? My gen, it hung beneath the skiagh. Whatever coasts these Baltic plunderers touch have reason long to rue their first descent. They say that Charlemagne shed tears to see them, although he lived not to——The chance of war! Why, we must take it, though it comes like ruin; I am content. Aithne has perished, yet I will not murmur."

He sat on the tripod, and suddenly suspended all speech and motion, gazing fixedly before him, as if wrapt in the most profound and absorbing meditation.

"Let Bel be praised," said Duach, slowly approaching, and bending his bony person a little

forward, "that thou hast given me space to speak a word. I did not say that Aithne was destroyed—she is not dead, thou most long-spoken Ithian."

"Not dead!" cried Elim, starting from his mood of thought, while the blood rushed over his features, before so palid, and the brightest animation appeared in all his frame. Where is she then, good fellow? Is she close at hand? Is she well?"

"In truth," replied Duach, "if thou wert fifty chieftains—if thou wert even the Righ—nay in the face of Bel, if thou wert the Ard-righ of Inisfail, Duach will take his time to answer thee. Duach is not a clod. He will not have his news pulled out of him as thou wouldst shake apples out of a wicker basket."

"Good Duach, speak as thou wilt," replied Elim, "but keep me not in pain. Tell me that she is safe, and say what else thou wilt."

“ ’Tis fairly offered,” said Duach, “ but though thou madest me Flath (a story to tell in truth) within this hour, I could not tell thee she is safe. That she was well last night, and, I believe, is still in health, is certain.”

“ And is that nothing ?” cried Elim, in an exulting tone, while, for a moment, he raised his eyes, with an expression of the deepest gratitude, “ I tell thee, there have been times, within the last two days, when I could have suffered any thing that Baseg could inflict to hear so much of Aithne. But tell me where she is, and in whose charge ? Thou hast made my blood course gladly in my veins once more.”

“ She is in the Coom,” said Duach.

“ And in whose charge ?” asked Elim, changing colour.

“ In Baseg’s, now.”

“ In Baseg’s ! That’s a funeral sound again.

But tell me all, from the beginning, Duach ; I will be silent till thou hast told all."

The kern related all the circumstances of Aithne's capture, and of his own escape, while Elim listened with the keenest attention until he had concluded.

"Thou hast done," said he, at length, when Duach ceased to speak, "thou hast done the duty of a brave and faithful servant, and shalt be so considered. And now, without another word, to horse, and away at once."

"Whither?" asked Duach.

"To the Coom, of course."

"Nay," said the kern, "to go there, true enough, the way is straight, but thou mayest find returning somewhat difficult."

"Why dost thou say so, Duach?" asked the chieftain.

"Because I have myself observed their force.

The Fionn Geinte alone would outnumber thee, without speaking of the score of tribes that have poured in from Fearnmuighe Fene, and the hills of Musery. Samhuin never crazed a wilder brain, if thou entrust thyself unguarded amid such a wood of battle-axes."

Elim paced to and fro a little while, seeming perplexed, and stopping short at times, as if to investigate a rising suggestion.

"It matters not!" he cried, at length, with a sudden burst of fervour. "Be they as countless as the summer leaves, as the billows of the sea they make their home, Rath-Aidan still can muster hearts and hands that will not fail their master in his hour of need. Wait for O'Driscoll? No, he could not, with his utmost expedition, reach the Coom before tomorrow, and it is horrible to think an instant on all that might be acted in the interval. No, thou, or Moyel, or some other

messenger, shall go to Cleir and quicken the Canfinny, while I conduct our troops into the mountains. What, Moyel!" he continued, hastening into the adjoining apartment, which was crowded with retainers of the household. "Away, and send the war cry through the sept! Let every blade and point throughout the territory be mustered in the vale ere noon, and thou Ciasral," addressing the old soldier, who, on his first return from Muingharidh, remarked his capability for action, "do thou light up the beacon on the highest hill, that all may understand the cry when it is heard. Yes, Duach!" he continued, as he returned to his own apartment, with a countenance glowing, and eyes sparkling with the sanguine ardour of vigour, and inexperience combined; "yes, we shall drive these northmen from the Coom. We shall teach this Baseg--throw down my helm, for I too must take horse upon the in-

stant. We'll teach this Baseg what a thing it is to drag in foreign aid to forward his own selfish purposes, and plant the hungry carrion bird of the Baltic where he might tear the vitals of his country—as yet, alas! he may. We'll teach— Ah, Matha! mother! standest thou there? She is found, my mother!”

So saying, he expanded his arms, and all mailed, and helmed, and shielded, as he was, clasped to his heart, with fervour, the worn and care-struck figure of Matha, who, aroused by the unusual noise, had stood for some moments in the doorway, gazing with wonder on her son, and awaiting an opportunity to speak.

“She is found!” he repeated, exultingly, removing Matha a little from his embrace, and gazing tenderly on her countenance, as if delighted with the joy he saw reflected in it. “Thou who hast always shared my joys and

sorrows, rejoice with Elim now, for he is not yet bereft—not yet undone.”

“I give thee joy, dear child,” said Matha, “affectionately returning the caress, but where is Aithne?”

Elim started, as if he had been slumbering on his business, and, hastily fastening his helmet over his abundant locks, replied, in a rapid tone :

“True — true — our work is yet not well begun. I am going for her, mother, fare you well!”

“And thou art going for what thou never wilt bring home,” said Duach, breaking in upon the scene; “there are more battle-axes round her than pebbles on the shore of Inbhersceine.”

“I have gallant followers, and our cause is good,” said Elim, hastening to begone.

“And because thy followers are brave,” said

Duach, "thou wouldst be rid of them, and because thy cause is good, thou wouldst destroy it."

"Thou art not bound on any rashness, Elim?" said Matha, raising her hand, as if to entreat him to pause.

"In truth, but he is," said Duach; "he is going to the Coom with his handful of galloglachs, where, to speak in Aithne's words, expressed to me but yesterday night—'his whole sept would be lost in the encounter as readily as a currach in a cataract.'"

"Did Aithne say so?" asked Elim, in an altered tone.

"She did," replied the kern, "and that it were better, at all events, to wait the arrival of O'Driscol. And this she bade me give thee for a token."

Saying this, he handed Elim the bodkin. The latter recognized it as that which usually

bound the veil which Aithne wore, and took with a look of tenderness and affection.

“It was not needed,” he added, making the ornament fast in the secret folds of his own attire, “thou art trustworthy on thine own report. And now be satisfied. Travel to Cleir I assuredly will not ; but this I am content to do : at noon, I will conduct our troops to the mountains of Gleanamhain, which overlook the Coom, on the eastern side, and there await O’Driscol, till the morning, or longer, if my scouts inform me that it may be done with safety. Meantime, do thou, my faithful messenger, and Moyel, haste to Cleir with the troop which was intended to accompany myself. I have a friend in the Coom, and he will help me to know the moment to which I may defer the onset.”

“Thou meanest the merry Saxon, with the long head of learning,” said Duach, “that used

to talk such pleasantries with Aithne as kept the household ever like a wedding."

"The same," said Elim.

"Trust not in him," said the kern, "for I doubt him for a double-hearted traitor."

"How is this?" said Elim, turning quick upon him. "Upon what grounds dost thou say this?"

"On very sure grounds," answered Duach, "and I will let thee know them, if thou wilt give attention for a while."

"Speak on," said Elim, while he and Matha interchanged a conscious glance.

"I will, then," answered Duach; and advancing slowly into the centre of the apartment, he remained for some time rubbing his coolun with his hand, as if labouring to put his narrative in order.

"In the Caircer it happened. Yes. 'What

do you think?' says he. Baseg, I mean, the thanist. Lying, I was, in this manner, in a corner of the Caircer, thinking how I should get out, for what else was my business there? And there I heard them talking, and they spoke of Kenric as their friend and ally—and that it could be easily done, they said, meaning Aithne, if thou wouldst know, and something they said of him and Aithne which I could not gather. But this same Kenric is a rotten reed. The two of them, I heard by accident, in the sight of Bel; Baseg, and that Anstruth, who is as much an Anstruth as thou or I, but a pirate Dane, and as thorough a Loch Lannoch* as the rest."

"Art thou sure of this, art thou sure that stranger was not what he seemed?" asked Elim, slightly colouring.

"I saw him in the Coom with my own eyes,"

* Sea warrior.

said Duach, "and know him to be nothing of what he pretended, although the rogue could tell his tale so roundly."

Elim paused, while a crowd of recollections pressed upon his mind, and murmured in a tone of deep amazement :

"If it were possible—Vuscfrae's hint—a moment, but a moment's pause. He said the Anstruth was an old acquaintance. Where were they known? East-Anglia? Baseg? both were in Inismore—and Kenric? What!" he exclaimed aloud, throwing up his hands, and stopping short in his hurried walk, as if startled by a bolt of lightning. "Is this the day that breaks, or new suspicion? Suspicion! It is evident as noon. The time, the place, the persons all accord—I am basely wronged! They are all a knot of vile conspirators, and he whom most I trusted is amongst them."

“His father’s heat,” said Matha, involuntarily uttering her thoughts aloud, “his father’s heat comes to him in these terrible times, where most there is need of coolness and precaution.”

“Away!” cried Elim, waving his hand, as if to dash aside a painful thought, “I held him as a brother, let it pass. Why art thou there?” he continued, in a loud voice. Away! Thou hast thy orders, take the troop of galloglachs, and Moyel with them; fly like the wind, like thought; speed, for the life of Aithne. I erred, most weakly erred, but that is past, and now let me bend all my force to repair the evil. In league with Baseg! It is very strange! Most strange! He warned me himself against the Fionn Geinte. ’Tis very strange! And yet it is his character; he was struggling then to cling to his fidelity, and it has failed him since.”

The young chieftain proceeded to make the necessary preparations for his departure. The beacon, a fire, composed of a small wooden cask filled with tar, and placed at the top of a long pole, was lighted on the highest hill in the neighbourhood; and the war cry of the sept was echoed from throat to throat, till it rang round all the territory of the Ithian leader. The mountaineers of Sliabh Miskisk beheld the alarm-fire from their scattered hamlets, and hastened to assume their ready arms; the shepherds of Glean-garibh heard the cry, and drove their flocks to pen; the tumult spread through every township in the disputed principality, and, long ere noon, the troops of kerne and galloglachs, of hobblers and heavy-armed marc-sliadh, had begun to assemble from different quarters in the valley of Rath-Aidan, like rivulets settling in a central lake.

CHAPTER LXXVII.

WHILE Elim was receiving from Duach an account of the Northumbrian's duplicity, the latter, long awaked from troubled sleep, and pressed anew by the urgent instances of Inguar, had left the hut in which he slept, and accompanied the latter into the grove of oaks by which the temple was surrounded.

“Thou knowest,” said Inguar, as they came to a stand in one of the closest recesses of the wood, “that thou hast taken an oath to us; and thou hast never bound thyself so to Elim.”

“Thou sayest the truth,” replied Kenric, with a haggard and a wavering look, like one about to dare some desperate chance—appalled, and yet unwilling to retire. “I never bound myself by oath to Elim.”

“Besides, thou knowest his right at least is doubtful.”

“He almost avowed as much to me himself,” said Kenric.

“And for priority of time, long ere thou hadst heard of this disputed claim, thou hadst pledged thyself to Baseg.”

“Aye, but in ignorance,” replied the Northumbrian. “Yet where is Aithne? My head is burning hot, and I feel, at thinking of her, as if the cool sea-wind of Iubhersceine were beating on it once again. I pray thee let me speak with her awhile.”

“Thou shalt do so,” replied the Swede,

“but patience! Come in, and tell the thanist thou art ready.”

“Oh, Inguar! I had horrid dreams last night.”

“I might suppose it,” said Inguar, laughing, “to judge by that pale cheek and wandering eye. Psha, Kenric, be a man, and scorn those fancies.”

“My mother’s ghost appeared to me in sleep,” said Kenric, “and I thought her left hand burned like a lighted torch. She smiled when she saw me gaze upon it, and pointing to it with the other hand, said, in the sweetest tone, ‘’Tis painful, but it is for thee I suffer it.’”

“Come, come,” said Inguar, “the thanist will be impatient.”

“And then,” said Kenric, “I thought I was again at the thanist’s festival, and Aithne by my

side, arrayed in white, and with a bridal chaplet on her head; when, presently after, by what circumstance I know not, the banquet hall became the temple, and Aithne lay dead at my feet; while, as I looked up in wonder, the gloomy image of your war-god, Odin, pointing down with his giant finger on the corpse, said, with a hideous smile, ‘Take her, wed her, and serve me well.’ ”

At this moment, the burst of tabors, violins, horns, and trumpets, on the plain without the grove, broke in upon their conference.

“Hear me,” said Inguar, hastily approaching the Northumbrian, “and let this consideration strengthen thee. On thy compliance with the wish of Baseg more now depends than thou art yet aware of. I am forbidden to speak out, yet this much I will tell thee, at peril of my life. Thou knowest how Baseg hates the name of

Elim. The lark that struggles in the falcon's gripe is surer of recovered liberty than Aithne in the power of Elim's enemy."

"Thou dost not say," whispered Kenric, with a face of horror, "that he would dare to practice on her life."

"His proposal to thyself," replied the Swede, "is proof that he harbours no malice against her. But there is not a torture that can wring the human heart which he would not inflict on Elim if he could; nor, if he thought her death would grieve him more than marrying thee, would Aithne live an hour."

"Inhuman tyrant!" cried Kenric, with a sudden burst of anguish and anxiety combined. "Can such malignant thoughts enter a human breast?"

"Hush, speak with more discretion," said Inguar, "or we may be overheard. That music

accompanies the thanist to his house. I tell thee, let this war go as it will, Elim and Aithne never more shall meet. So, if not for thine own, for her sake, let the thanist have his way."

"Where is he now?" said Kenric, with a wavering look.

"Said I not he was going to his dwelling?" replied the Swede. "Follow, and see him ere he grows impatient."

"I will," replied the Northumbrian. "I'll hear what he would say. Dost thou go thither?"

"Not yet," said Inguar, "I have business in the temple. Farewell! To-night our yearly festival begins, and the morn must decide the fate of Aithne."

They parted, Inguar to the temple, and Kenric, with an interrupted pace, and an agi-

tated frame, the result of his own misgivings, that he was about to perpetuate some hideous infamy, in the direction of the thanist's house.

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

O'DRISCOL, the Sior Lamh, and his aged father, were found by Duach and his companions, on the ramparts of their dwelling; the latter already in arms, and in the act of reviewing his troops as they passed before him, well accoutred and disciplined; though in such fashion, perhaps, as might rather move the wonder than the admiration of a modern hero. The dwelling of the aged Canfinny was seated, like most of the buildings of the period, on an eminence, from which, as he stood upon the ramparts,

leaning on an oaken staff, and suffering the wild sea breeze to sport with his gray locks, he watched, with a delighted eye, the military procession pass at a little distance, and slowly wind along, until the van was hidden in the intricacies of the mountain. First came a large body of galloglachs on foot, armed with the heavy spear, the skiagh or wicker shield, the round helmet and long sword, with a shirt of mail and an under dress, bearing a resemblance to the hacqueton of after times. Next came a troop of mounted knights, distinguished by the golden fleasg, an ornament equivalent to the Gaulish torques, which gave his surname to Manlius Torquatus. After these came a large body of the light-armed cavalry, called hobbelters, from the circumstance of their being mounted on the small and spirited hobbies indigenous to the isle, and close behind them a

Cath, or legion of the kerne, some carrying the javelin, held by its leathern thong, some armed with diminutive bows and piercing arrows, resembling those whose flight was often so galling in the Scythian wildernesses, while others bore the kran-tabal, a kind of wooden sling, which they charged with brazen balls from a pouch that hung at their sides. The procession was closed by a body of the marc-sliadh, or heavily armed cavalry, being in fact little more than mounted galloglachs, except in their using the battle-axe instead of the spear. By every horseman a barefooted daltin, or attendant, bounded nimbly along; now holding by the furniture of the animal, and now, when greater speed was requisite, relieved by a seat on the croup. The bell, the drum, the cymbals, and the horn, with many another ancient instrument, gave a cheering animation to the scene, while, at a little distance from

the aged Canfinny, sat his family filea, who sung the following rude strain with all his force, accompanying the words with the shrill music of the droneless piobh-mala :*

WAR-SONG OF O'DRISCOL.

I.

From the shieling that stands by the lone mountain river ;
 Hurry, hurry down with the axe and the quiver,
 From the deep-seated Coom, from the storm-beaten highland,
 Hurry, hurry down to the shores of your island.

Hurry down, hurry down !

Hurry, hurry ! &c.

II.

Galloglach and kern, hurry down to the sea—
 There the hungry Raven beak is gaping for a prey.
 Farrah ! to the onset ! Farrah ! to the shore !
 Feast him with the pirate's flesh, the bird of gloom and gore !

Hurry down, &c.

III.

Hurry, for the slaves of Bel are mustering to meet ye ;
 Hurry, by the beaten cliff the Nordman longs to greet ye,
 Hurry from the mountain ! hurry, hurry to the plain !
 Welcome him, and never let him leave our land again !

Hurry down, &c.

* Bag-pipe.

IV.

On the land a sulky wolf, and on the sea a shark,
Hew the ruffian spoiler down and burn his gory bark !
Slayer of the unresisting ! ravager profane !
Leave the White sea-tyrant's limbs to moulder on the plain.
Hurry down, &c.

Before the song had ended, and while his own troop of veteran galloglachs were awaiting his summons to depart, the Sior Lamh observed a small troop of horse, in the costume of the O'Headhas, appear on the hills over which his own van were marching out of sight, and gallop, with a speed that seemed to speak of imminent peril, towards the place on which he stood. As they approached more near, the foam which speckled the reeking coats of the animals, and the dust with which the riders were begrimed, showed that the whole journey must have been made with a similar speed, and O'Driscoll had no doubt that war was already raging on the boundaries of the Ithian sept.

“How, Moyel,” cried the Canfinny, “are the Fionn Geinte in the Rath?”

Duach pressed before to answer—“Not yet, O’Driscol.”

“How then?” said the Sior Lamb, who recognized the follower of Aithne, “is thy young mistress swallowed up in the earth, for I know nothing else that could send thee speeding at so wild a rate.”

Duach, springing from his horse, and laying his skene at the Canfinny’s feet, by way of greeting, informed him and his son briefly of the fate of Aithne, of his own escape, and of the meditated rashness of the youthful chief.

“Let Bel give Matha eloquence to keep him,” said the kern, “until thou hast reached the Rath; for the foe are numerous enough to lay the whole sept as level as ever a field of wheat lay lodged by summer rain.”

“What, Matha meddles in it?” said the Sior Lamh, “but no more of that—To horse! to horse, my comrades, and away! What, Duach, is it thus you mount your hobbies in the Coom?”

Saying this, he vaulted on his horse's back, with the agility of a stripling, while his armour clanged, and the animal bounded under him, when he had reached his seat, as if it shared his satisfaction. The troop set off at full speed, and soon overtook the main body of the forces of Cleir.

Elim, however, did not wait for their arrival. Before noon he had set off for the mountains near the Coom, leaving a strong party to defend the Rath, with orders to strengthen the ramparts by an additional guard of galloglachs and slingers.

At nightfall, the Ithian force encamped

amongst the mountains, in a position so convenient, that they could pour down upon the portion of the Coom in which the temple stood upon the readiest notice ; and it was finally resolved to wait, till morning, the arrival of O'Driscol with the troops from Cleir. Elim passed the greater part of the night, which was bright star-light, in listening to the sounds of revelry which filled the valley, and viewing the distant groups that were dispersed around the watch-fires in many places. The mountain on which he had encamped was the same by which Aithue had seen the kern descend on the preceding evening, and the spot which had been occupied by the Ithians was at some distance from the outermost of the thanist's lines of watch.

CHAPTER LXXIX.

THE earliest beams of the succeeding morn found Aithne risen from her couch, and kneeling, with hands close clasped, and person motionless as a sculptured image, before the narrow opening which gave light to her narrow prison. She was startled from this posture of devotion by a noise at the door, which was presently after opened. A figure entered, wrapped in a cloak and hood, and the door was closed again, as if by another person who remained without. The stranger remained for some time without moving, and Aithne,

while she devoured the figure with her eyes, did not dare to break the silence which she had too much cause to fear must end in her destruction. At length, tormented by the long suspense, Aithne addressed him in a tone of deprecation :

“ Why shouldst thou add this needless cruelty? If I must perish, let me hear my doom, and without more delay.”

“ Aithne,” replied a low and broken voice from the cloak, “ thou art nearer to a friend than thou believest.”

The maiden almost sprung from the drooping attitude of supplication which she had assumed, and cried aloud, with a look and gesture of the wildest joy, “ Kenric ! ’Tis Kenric ! I am saved ! ’Tis Kenric !”

“ ’Tis Kenric, indeed,” said the Northumbrian, while he dropped the hood and mantle from his shoulders. He would have proceeded,

but the tumult of Aithne's delight was too great, for some moments, to suffer her to contemplate any thing but the presence of a friend, and the absorbing idea of present deliverance from the horrible fate she dreaded.

“And is it thou, indeed?” she said, with ecstasy. “If I were to die this hour, I am glad at heart to see thee, very glad. I am sure I shall escape this horrid death, since thou art come—thou who hast spent so many happy days with Aithne.”

“It was for that I came,” replied the Anglo-Saxon.

“Thou wouldst tremble,” said Aithne, in a low and shuddering tone, “if thou knewest the character of those horrid men into whose hands I have fallen. Oh Kenric! my dear friend, forgive me if I weary thee with selfish prayers, when I should say something of the joy I feel in seeing

thee again, and seeing thee thus unexpectedly, when I thought the Coom contained no heart that could befriend us."

"It is affection," thought Kenric in his own mind, while he gazed, with an absent air, upon the ground. "It is affection—warm, and kind, and true, but not the love that Inguar would suggest."

"Thou lookest not healthy, Kenric," said Aithne, in a calmer tone, "and thou art troubled too—perhaps with cause. Perhaps—but say it is not so—perhaps thou hast perilled thy life to seek me here, and standest in equal danger now thyself."

"It matters not," the Northumbrian continued, communing still in silence with himself. "It is not now the time to balance hopes and fears, to question inclinations and dislikes. The step is taken, and the course begun, and to recede would be weakness, and not virtue."

Those who have spent their early years in the practice of that purity and tender goodness of heart which practical virtue inculcates, may imagine something of the inward struggles which Kenric underwent, at finding himself thus upon the verge of perpetrating a hideous moral baseness, such as not all the subtlety of reasoning could palliate to his conscience. It is strange, that in the anguish of his struggles with himself, he almost railed at the holy counsels and instructions, which had given him what he now considered too clear a sight of the distinction between right and wrong, and wished, in the bitterness of his spirit, that he had been left in ignorance of the nature of passion, in order that he might enjoy it with the less remorse. He envied the almost bestial indifference with which the untutored savages around him pursued and indulged their natural inclinations, and would

even have resigned those gifts of mind, which were at the same time the theme of his pride, and the innocent cause of his misfortunes, that he might embrace, with a blunted heart, the worthless part he had already chosen. He feared it too; for amid all the radiant simplicity of Aithne's character, there was something in it of that hidden excellence, the influence of which is strong in proportion as it is concealed. But the last consideration, that what he looked on as the decisive step, had been already taken, made him dispel with an effort these wavering thoughts, and follow up his first design with an effort at determination.

“Aithne,” said he, “I will not tell thee now by what means I am here. Let it be enough to say, that I am here by Baseg's will, and with the power, indeed, to give thee liberty; yet not without conditions.”

‘ And what are they,’ asked Aithne, anxiously, ‘ that Kenric would consent to bear from Baseg ? ’

‘ He has spoke with thee, himself,’ said Kenric.

‘ He has,’ replied the maiden, ‘ and spoke to me of some conditions likewise.’

She related with simplicity the conversations which had taken place between herself and Baseg, while Kenric listened with profound attention. When she had ended, the latter raised his head, and said in a gentle voice :

‘ And did he tell thee, Aithne, who this unhappy stranger is, for whom he sought thy sympathy so earnestly ? ’

‘ He did not name him,’ answered Aithne.

‘ I know him well,’ said Kenric ; ‘ and so dost thou too, Aithne, well and long.’

Aithne paused for a little time, and said :

“ It cannot be—what folly to suppose it ?—it cannot be Tuathal. No, no ! the description of the traitor Baseg proves it. No—this he could not dream of.”

“ Not in his maddest dreams,” said the Northumbrian, “ when Jonnaruidh and his code of tactics ran busiest in his fancy. No, Aithne, ’tis not he whose peace is troubled with such thoughts as these. It is one to whom thou art more than ever thou couldst be to him. Aithne, be patient for a time, and hear me. Thou never more wilt meet with Elim. Thy life thou mayest preserve from these dark savages, yet only by compliance with the will of Baseg, for the northmen hold the Coom as if it were their own. But for thy restoration to Rath-Aidan, or to the protection of its chief, if thou wert underneath the cairn already, that could not be more hopeless than it is.”

“ Sayst thou so ?” said the maiden, in a tone of subdued emotion.

“ Yet life and liberty are in thy power, and all beside that can make either desirable. Aithne, be rational, and yield to circumstances.”

“ What dost thou mean ?” said Aithne, gazing on him with a look of utter perplexity.

“ I know this young man’s secret long,” said Kenric, “ I know, that—that—”

“ Thou knowest what, good Kenric ?” asked the maiden, wondering at the strange mixture of boldness and confusion that appeared in his demeanour. “ In these dismal circumstances, be plain at least, and let me comprehend thee. How wouldst thou counsel me to act toward Baseg ? What didst thou mean but now ?”

The consciousness of baseness, and his knowledge of Aithne’s character, were too much for the forced assurance of the young scholar. He stam-

mered out some confused and awkwardly worded sentences and then, perceiving that he had already awaked an undefined alarm in Aithne's mind, which must be satisfied, he broke forth into a torrent of the most impassioned language, avowing a long cherished affection for the Ard-Draithe's niece, and confessed that he was himself the suppliant for whom the thanist pleaded.

Astonishment for the moment deprived Aithne of the power of utterance, and almost of motion ; and when she sought, at length, to speak, the impetuosity of Kenric's manner was so great as to prevent her saying a word.

“ Forget,” he said, “ forget what cannot now be recollected to any happy purpose. Thou dost not wrong Elim, for thou robbest him of nothing. Aithne, I pray thee, say that I am heard. Wave not thy hand with that forbidding air. I cannot pause ; I cannot hold my peace,

look not upon me with that horrid look of pale and cold surprize. I am borne along, as on a rushing flood, and there is but one word that now can stay me."

"Kenric!" cried Aithne.

"No, not that," said Kenric, "that must not be the word, nor gesture neither." And proceeding until his language almost resembled that of one intoxicated, he ventured at length to take one of Aithne's hands in his. This action, however, aroused the natural energies of the betrothed bride, and using her utmost strength, she repelled the Northumbrian with an effort which made him stagger to a considerable distance.

"Hold off that traitor hand!" she exclaimed, with the deepest emotion. "I hope," she added placing one hand against her side, and pressing the other close upon her brow, "I hope it is a

dream, and that I have not seen so dire a change. What! Kenric! What! the gay, the gifted Kenric! He that was to me as a playmate and a brother! He whom I loved as if we had been friends from infancy! Thou art not Kenric, thou art some dark fiend that playest thy horrid game in Kenric's shape! The plighted friend of Elim here, in league with Baseg—and for Aithne's ruin? Kenric, this is the soil of Inisfail. Is this thy gratitude? Is this thy recollection?"

The abashed Northumbrian, like one awakened from some incomprehensible delusion, bent down his head in silence, while his face was hidden by his hands.

"I loved thee like a sister," continued Aithne, "and thus thou valuest my affection. And he was thy friend hardly less than mine. Thyself canst best declare in what he served thee; how long his roof has sheltered thee; his fire

has warmed thee ; and his heart has loved thee. When thou wert friendless he befriended thee ; when thou wert helpless, he was thy helper ; when all seemed wanting to thee he gave thee all."

She paused, but Kenric offered not to move or interrupt her.

"And now," said Aithne, "thou turnest upon him in his absence, and thou seekest to rob him of his nearest affections. I tell thee, Kenric, if thou wert twenty times a scholar, I tell thee thy course is treacherous and ungrateful. I tell thee, Kenric, I abhor thy falsehood."

"My falsehood, Aithne?"

"Aye, thy utter falsehood. Few ever had such friends as thou in Elim. He loved thee with a simple, manly love ; a blessed and a most forbearing charity ; and thou hast always answered

his affection with coldness and distrust. If there be any stain in Elim's heart, it is that he has wasted it on thee."

"Thou art hard upon me, Aithne," answered Kenric; "thou art right, I know, but very hard upon me. From thee—from thee, these words indeed are bitter. Yet once I *was* the friend of truth and Elim. But 'twas a hurried—'twas a flying burst of sunshine in a life of gloom and sin. What now avails it that thou sayest the truth? It is too late a lesson for Kenric. Aye, now I feel the warnings of Vuscfraea! Now—now I feel the anger of my father—aye, now I feel Domnona's parting words!"

While he spoke thus, Aithne stood motionless, as if perplexed in thought. Suddenly the sound of a trompa without appeared to have revived her previous apprehensions in their fullest force:

‘Hark!’ she exclaimed. “They are summoning their dreadful hosts already. Kenric, I have but one word more for thee, Remember, that what thou wast once thou mayest become again. Remember, that if it be late for us, it may not yet be so for others.”

Kenric sprung forward with a sudden rapture of delight peculiar to his too enthusiastic temper.

“I do!” he exclaimed, in extacy; “I will! Thy generous confidence shall not be disappointed. I see my baseness—my unworthiness of him and thee, but I rejoice that it is not too late. No, Aithne—no, thou shalt not be deceived, thou hast redeemed, restored me to myself—to more than I, myself, could ever be. Thy life,” he added, in a low and hurried whisper, after glancing at the door; “thy life is imminently threatened, but one whole day remains, and shall be well employed, if Kenric’s mind or frame are capable of

their common uses. Preserve thy courage firm—thy spirit undisturbed, but one day more. At morn relief may reach thee.”

With these words, he bade the maiden a hurried farewell, and left the small and rush-strewn cell, his self-reproach absorbed, for the moment, by the glowing desire of a speedy reparation, and the prospect of success.

“One thought distresses me,” said Aithne, to herself, after remaining for some time silent in her chamber, “I taxed him—mean that I was—I taxed him with his obligations to Elim. Mean, and unkind! for Elim’s generous spirit would grieve to know that such a speech was uttered. I have put a blot upon his noble work.”

In the passage leading to the temple porch, Kenric met Inguar, who hastened, with an eager face, to inquire into the result of his interview with Aithne. The re-action which had taken

place in the mind of the Northumbrian now served him well, for it led Inguar to the natural conclusion that all had succeeded to his wish. He did not, therefore, press him with questions, but rested content with his reply, that "he had parted from the maiden in kindness and affection, but that she wished, nevertheless, to remain undisturbed during the day."

"I had not thought it possible," said Inguar, gazing after the retiring figure of the scholar. "What, novelty hunting sex! Is there not one amongst you framed for constancy—not one who values principle more than pleasure? This fellow's vaunt and folly, in one hour, have made him of more account in the eyes of that hair-brained thing, than all the solid worth of her betrothed—or even her dread of Baseg and the Vikingr. A mouthful of bombastical words, with perhaps a flourish or two of the hands and feet, have done

what the dread of death could not—have made her false and base as Baseg could desire.”

The same answer which Kenric returned, would scarce have satisfied the wily thanist, had he not found him at a moment when all his attention was absorbed by tidings which had reached the Vikingr of the successful descent of his countrymen in the northern parts of the island. They had burned some villages, pillaged a number of monasteries, murdered the inmates, and carried off a load of booty to their ships.

“It is done!” said Baseg, with a look of triumph. “What they have achieved in other lands they will not fail to do in Inisfail. The first blow of the battle-axe has resounded on her shores. It will be centuries before the echo of the last shall die away.”

Shocked at the unnatural exultation of a monster who thus rejoiced in the misfortune of

his native land, the Northumbrian withdrew from his presence, and passing, without question, the troops, to whom his person had now become familiar, soon found himself without the lines of the thanist's watch. Taking his way, with reviving spirits, towards Inbhersceine, he was met by a kern on the track, who informed him of Elim's present situation, and offered to conduct him to the camp. The Northumbrian accepted his proposal with readiness, but such were the intricacies of the way, that it was night fall before he reached the heights, where Elim, notwithstanding his determination of falling on the Dun at morning, remained still close within his camp.

CHAPTER LXXX.

THE night fell calm and silent on the hills around the Coom, and all the preparations were made for battle on the following morn.

In the depth of night, while yet the troops of the conspirators were busied in their gloomy rites and coarse carousals, the spears of O'Driscoll and his auxiliaries first caught the glimmer of the moonlight over the crags of Coom-na-Druid. The law, however, which forbade any of the national troops to attack an enemy at night, or by surprise, made them rest upon the mountain heights until the dawn of day. The

night was calm and bright, and the sounds of frantic mirth, the interrupted music, and the hurrying of blazing torches to and fro amongst the tents, and along the river side in the Coom, gave indications of confusion, which seemed to promise an easy conquest in the morning. The truth was, Baseg, although he had already learned that the native princes were aware of the designs on foot, had no apprehension that measures for their discomfiture could be adopted with so much promptitude.

Some deserters from the Coom brought intelligence to Elim, not only of the events upon the northern coasts, but of the confirmed apostacy of Kenric, and even (for the truth had already transpired) of the nature of the correspondence between him and Aithne. Wounded to the soul by this double treachery, which appeared not improbable from the light in which he already

understood that Aithne was regarded by the Northumbrian, he retired to his tent for the night, and remained now meditating by his fire, now pacing to and fro, looking out into the air to see if yet the dawn was brightening in the east. Since he had first received, what he considered sure intelligence of the Northumbrian's duplicity, though no reflection could lead to an extenuation of the act itself, yet much had occurred to soften his feelings towards the unhappy individual who had committed it. His natural weakness of mind was known to him, and the probability that he had been made the dupe of his designing enemy, by an appeal to passions which Kenric had too long neglected the art of governing, was sufficient to mitigate his censure, with a feeling of compassion. Indulging such thoughts as these, he remained, on the night before the battle, meditating, amongst other things, on the fate of his wretched

friend, longing for an opportunity of placing before him, in its real light, the nature of the course he had adopted, and regretting that he had not sooner forced himself into the confidence of a mind almost incapable of governing itself.

He was seated on his tripod, gazing on the dagger which the Northumbrian prized so highly, when he heard the centry challenge outside the tent. The word was given, and presently a muffled figure entered hastily, and, advancing towards the Ithian chief, fell prostrate at his feet. Elim, who imagined it was some fugitive from the forces of the enemy, thus urged by fear or conscience to desert, encouraged him to speak without hesitation.

“Whoever thou art,” said he, “tell out thy story, and fear nothing. Thou wilt find protection here, if not redress. What art thou, stranger? speak!”

“One,” replied the Northumbrian, “who has redress to give, not seek.”

“Kenric!” cried Elim.

“Even that faithless wretch.”

Elim, who had started at his first recognition of the Northumbrian, now paused for some time, while he considered in what way he should open an interview so unexpected. A long silence ensued, which was broken first by the Northumbrian :

“Elim,” said the scholar, in an earnest tone, “whatever thou mayest think of what is past, no words that are within thy power to utter can heighten what I feel within my soul. Say what thou canst, the reproaches that are rising there this instant will make the heaviest of thine resemble praise.”

The chieftain heard him for some time without a reply.

“Rise, Kenric, rise,” he said, at length, “and let us meet as equals, at least, if not again as friends and early schoolfellows.”

The Northumbrian complied without speaking, and continued for a long time silent; while Elim paused, to deliberate within himself the part which he should act towards a person of so unhappy a disposition, the utter weakness and inconstancy of which he never before had fully understood. At length, remembering in their school days how much the Northumbrian had been the prey of misdirected feeling, his anger gave way to pity.

“I would not lose in an hour,” said he, “the friendship I have made in years. We were fellows in our boyhood, Kenric. We had the same instructors—the same course of duty. We drank at the same source the early draught of knowledge, and we started on our career in life with

the same desire of spending it in virtue and in honour. Why have not our intentions been fulfilled? I have been often cautioned to beware of thee, no less by thine own friends than mine. I never heeded such suggestions, Kenric. I always trusted in thee. I thought thou wert incapable of falsehood. Why hast thou made me change that sentiment? If I were nothing to thee, was reputation nothing? Was virtue nothing? Was every manly quality that makes fidelity respectable—affection, principle, and all forgotten? And to what vile and miserable end? that thou mightest gain the person of a woman, whose love, were it possible to win it by so base a step, would not be worth the seeking. Was this the prize for which thou wert false to the friend that loved—to the land that gave thee all but birth? Thou art fallen! Kenric, fallen!—and I say it with an aching heart.”

The friendly lecture, and, more than what was said, the tone of feeling and affectionate grief with which it was uttered, moved the miserable and wayward Northumbrian to the very depths of his soul. As Elim spoke, he twined his hands together, and extended them trembling towards his friend, while the bitter tears fell down in showers before his feet.

“I thank thee,” said he, “though thou hast pierced my mind as with a dægger’s blade. I have acted basely, and I feel it now. But what do I say?” he suddenly exclaimed, starting, as if a death-strain sounded in his ear. “Away! Rouse up the camp! To arms, for Aithne’s life! Laggard that I am—she dies to-morrow morn, if the power of Baseg be not passed ere then. Stay not to question farther—Aithne is in the temple—she dies to propitiate the war god of the Fionn Geinte. Thou

knowest the whole! Away! the dawn is in the east."

"I thank thee," said the Ithian, hastily snatching his skiagh, and fastening on his helmet, "I understand the whole. What, sound to arms!" he cried, as he hastened to the door of the tent: "to arms, and give the war-cry of the sept! Yet, Kenric," he continued, "ere we part, perhaps to meet no more, let me restore thy property. Rememberest thou the gift of Charlemagne?"

Saying this, he unbound the girdle which held the Gaulish dagger of the scholar, and held it towards him.

"I found it," said he, "on the morning of your departure from Rath-Aidan, lying near the outskirts of the wood, and where the soil was trampled deep enough to give me cause of fear, on thy account."

“I do remember it,” said Kenric, averting his head, with a quick shudder, and waving his hand behind him, “but I beseech you keep it still. Keep it, I pray you, Elim, for my sake, for a remembrance of me.”

“Oh, no,” said Elim, smiling, “when I take a remembrance from you, Kenric, it shall be a remembrancer of peace, not strife.”

Without reply, Kenric took the weapon, and made the girdle fast around his waist, while Elim regarded him with a smile that had at least as much of sorrow as of reproach in its expression.

Meanwhile the stuit sounded in the camp, the war-cry of the sept was iterated far and wide among the hills; the galloglachs seized their helms and heavy battle-axes, the horses neighed in the defiles far beneath, and the kerne, starting from beneath the coarse grey coat of frieze, which was their tent at night, and covering by day, arranged

in haste their brazen skenes, their slings, and slender javelins. The war-cry of O'Driscol was mingled with that of the Ithian sept, and, soon after, deep silence sunk again on either camp, which was only interrupted by the bustling of the troops, and the occasional voices of the commanders, as they sought to put their companies in order.

On a sudden, the sound of a goll-trompa, or Danish trumpet, from the Coom, showed that the northmen were preparing to receive the onset; and Elim, placing himself at the head of a body of well armed galloglachs, ran down the crags in the direction of the temple (the place of Aithne's confinement), turning at intervals, and waving his sword by way of summons to his followers. They were met on the borders of the stream by the Bay-kings, whose habitual readiness for action rendered no more time ne-

cessary to transport them from their revels to the field. Before a blow was struck, Elim despatched a messenger to O'Driscoll, to inform him that he might direct his assault with more advantage on the Dun, where, as the deserters had let him know, Inguar and Tuathal were stationed with the native troops. When both parties came in sight the Ithians slackened their speed, in order to advance in better order, and gazed with wondering eyes on the immoveable and well armed force, who stood awaiting them on the further side of the river. The wood of gleaming battle-axes, where scarce a movement was visible except the fluttering of the Reafan standard in the gentle morning wind, the gigantic persons of the northmen, and the steady discipline with which they seemed to await the charge, seemed to strike the native forces with astonishment and awe. Presently, as was their custom, the scalds of the

northmen raised a hymn to Odin, in which, soon after, the whole army joined. The Ithians descended to the onset with shouts of defiance, while their minstrels played the most inspiring strains, and the Rosg-catha, or Battle-song, was chaunted by the poet of the sept.

In their attempt to ford the stream, the Ithians were repulsed with dreadful slaughter. They did not, however, lose courage, but returned to the charge with vigour, and, after much effort, succeeded in dislodging a portion of the foreign force. This slight advantage was followed up so strenuously that the bank would have been gained in a short time, but for a reinforcement, consisting of Baseg and his adventurers, with a large body of the allied tribes. The Ithians were wholly unable to resist this new accession of force, and, after suffering severely, gave way, and fighting step by step (till the stream was dyed

with blood) retired to the bank from which they had set out, and along the rocks in the direction of those cliffs which overlooked the Dun. On the crags the Ithians again had the advantage of ground, and their chieftain was urging them by voice and gestures to another onset, when, bursting through the crowd of mountain warriors who stood before him, he beheld the huge and mailed figure of the infamous mover of the war—his rival and the murderer, Baseg.

“Hold back!” cried Baseg, to his troops as they were passing forward; “back, on your lives! This prey is mine alone!”

Around the persons of the rival chieftains the inferior warriors stopped short, as if by mutual consent, and lowered their weapons, while Elim and the long exiled thanist perused each others person with the intensest curiosity.

“Thou art but a stripling,” said Baseg, rest-

ing his ponderous sword blade on the open palm of his left hand, while he surveyed, with a grim smile, the slender frame of the Ithian, "but thou hast the air, the shape of him to whom I owe the first poison-draught that made my whole life healthless."

"And thou," said Elim, "thou fittest the horrid tale that, even in childhood, I have heard of thee with shuddering and with abhorrence. I knew thee even before I heard thy voice. I know the purchaser of Eimhir's skill and Conall's blood."

"Stand to thy weapon then," said Baseg, furiously, "for our acquaintance shall be brief and bloody."

So saying, he addressed himself to combat, while Elim, fixing his eye steadily on his assailant received him with the coolness that was habitual to his character. They were not, however, long

permitted to maintain the contest single handed. A sudden onset from the northmen forced the Ithians from their ground, and by ill fortune separated Elim from the main body of his troops. A few close followers only remained beside him, all of whom he had the grief to see perish one by one beneath the battle-axes of the sea-kings. Still parrying with unabated vigour the blows of the revengeful Baseg, and seeing it impossible to rejoin his friends, he retreated step by step towards the brow of the cliff which overlooked the Dun, and reached the rock from which Duach had cast himself two days earlier, at the moment when the raven standard vanished from the Dun, and, amid tremendous shouts of triumph, the banner of O'Driscol was planted in its place. Here Elim finding himself alone, and pressed by a host of foes, whose battle axes had already hacked his shield, gave up the useless contest, and dived,

accoutred as he was, down the dizzy height, and into the deep basin of the widening stream beneath.

A cry of dismay burst from those of his own sept who witnessed his disaster from the height, but their fears were allayed when they beheld him emerging from the tranquil waters, and, still keeping his shield upon his arm, pursue his way, with vigorous strokes, to the opposite shore, amid a shower of javelins, arrows, and battle-axes, from the disappointed northmen. Their exultation was complete when they saw him received on the other side by a party of the troops of Cleir, at whose head he was soon seen hurrying to the captured Dun.

“To the temple,” cried Baseg, hastily re-ascending the crags; “that villain Inguar, has betrayed his post! The coward! See the coward where he flies across the ford! To the temple!

Though he has escaped my weapon, I know where I can cut him deeper yet."

In the meanwhile, Elim joined O'Driscoll at the Dun, where Inguar had set the first example of dismay. He beheld the latter crossing the bridge, amid showers of brazen balls and darts, not only from the enemy but from his own indignant friends, the Northmen, who had been left to aid him in preserving this strong hold, and with whom, as courage was the deifying virtue, so cowardice was the last of vices. He entered the copse by which Duach had effected his escape and was not again seen in the valley.

Elim delayed in the Dun only to receive from the Sior Lamh, who laughed heartily at his dripping plight, a body of forces strong enough to enable him to attack with success the troops by which the temple was protected.

"Take with thee the marc-sliagh and gallo-

glach," said O'Driscoll, "and make as clean a piece of work as we have of the Dun. Away, for I see these northmen hurrying along the crags, and the Ithians press them hard upon the rear."

Elim, without making any reply, vaulted on the back of the horse which was presented to him, and, at the head of a large body of heavily armed cavalry, galloped along the river side in the direction of the temple, while the galloglach followed with such speed as their inferior equipment might allow.

CHAPTER LXXXI.

THE alarm had spread through the valley on the preceding evening, and though the festival had not been interrupted, precautions were taken by the chiefs to prevent a surprize on the following morn. Aithne was still confined in her small chamber, when the bustling of arms around the Temple, and the shouts which resounded all over the Coom and the surrounding mountains, excited at once her hope and her anxiety. At the moment when Elim and his troop were departing from the Dun, Baseg

had already penetrated the temple, and commanding his followers to remain without, burst alone into the chamber of the Ard-Draithe's niece.

Aithne, who read her fate in his countenance, shrieked aloud when she beheld him, and cast herself at his feet. The ruffian stooped, but only to entwine his fingers in her long tresses, by which he half dragged, half led her, to the front of the iron altar.

“ I entreat of thee,” she cried, at length, looking up with a piteous expression, as he paused a moment to list to the sounds of conflict which had already commenced without—
“ by thy manhood, and by thy memory of him who once was chieftain in this vale, to spare my life. I am defenceless, and a woman.”

“ Swear to me,” said the thanist, seeming to relent—“ swear that thou ne'er wilt wed that

vile usurper, and take thy wretched life, which I have no desire to rob thee of. Thou wilt not speak?" he added, observing Aithne pause, "then die and——ha! ingrate! serpent! art thou there?"

Aithne, with astonishment, beheld him, on a sudden, fix his eyes on some object behind her, and remain as if immoveable. Following his glance with her own, she suddenly disengaged herself with a violent effort from his grasp, and sprung to the stranger's feet.

It was the Northumbrian, who, aware of Aithne's danger, had sought the temple alone, and owing to the ignorance of the guards, who esteemed him still a friend, obtained admission to the apartment of the prophetess, and from thence to the body of the temple. The thanist, directing his rage into a new channel, was about to wreak on the Northumbrian the vengeance

which he had dared to cross, when the gate of the building was burst open, and the Ithians pouring in, compelled him to defend his own life instead of molesting others. He died, fighting with the obstinacy of a bull dog, at the foot of the iron altar; while Kenric, conveying Aithne from the scene of conflict, assisted in restoring her to consciousness. Having seen her safely placed in the arms of her betrothed lord, he hastened from the captured pile—nor was he seen again in the valley, notwithstanding all the efforts made by Elim for his discovery. In the meantime, Duach, severing, with one sweep of his skene, the head of the discomfited thanist, placed it upon a spear, and, mounting his horse, rode off in savage triumph to Rath-Aidan, where he gave Matha a sounding narrative of what had taken place, comparing Elim to Fuan M'Coul, and himself to the great Coun Crehir, of Lougheryar,

and averring that such a contest had never been witnessed since the Monarch of the World came to conquer Ireland, “when the engagement was such that all the country echoed from their tremendous blows; the sea seemed to roar and swell; the earth to shake; the sun, moon, and celestial planets, to alter their courses and natural motions; and even the unwieldy monsters of the deep to forsake the profound caverns of the ocean and crowd into the harbour, being as much frightened as if all these supernatural and terrible concussions intended immediate dissolution.”

The sun that rose that morn upon the valley of the Druids, gave light to scenes of a nature too frequent in the history of Inisfail to make their detailed description either new or pleasing. War mingled fiercely in the parting festival, and raged throughout the morn and

till the afternoon. The fall of even beheld the remnant of the Loch Lannochs flying with their shattered raven through the defiles leading toward Ross Ailithri, while the native forces still maintained a hopeless struggle among the fastnesses which bounded in the fertile Coom.

A few of the northern leaders who had longest maintained possession of the disputed temple, perceiving that it was likely to be wrested from their hands by Elim and the troops of Cleir, gave up the whole for lost, and were amongst the first to leave the valley. O'Driscoll, who judged that such would be the policy of the Vikingr, in case of a defeat, was not without providing for their interception. They were almost all destroyed in the passes, and their ships were fired in the bay.

Towards evening, Inguar entered, almost alone, the rocky pass by which Elim had first

approached the valley. As he hurried up the crags, a groan, as of one in pain, struck on his ear, to which, nevertheless, he would have paid little heed, if it had not been followed by the sound of a familiar voice. He looked around, and beheld, lying transversely in the bed of a small torrent almost dry, the figure of a man, of middle age, who supported his head with difficulty against the rock, and strove to diminish, with one hand pressed against his side, the flow of blood, from a deep and painful wound. It was the Dane who had been Kenric's guard in the peillice where he had been placed by the Swede.

“Inguar,” said the dying man, in a voice of faint upbraiding, “wilt thou pass thy foster broder, while the shades of Hella gather on his eyes?”

“Ferreis wounded!” cried the Swede.

“And very like to die,” replied the Dane, “but what is that? Behold Destroyer broken!” he continued, holding up the shattered blade of his small crooked sword. “See Dazzler’s glory all departed, Inguar; no matter—thou art witness to my gild, I kept the hilt still fast in spite of them.”

“Poor wretch!” said Inguar, “thou art perishing.”

“I could have wished to fall in a cleaner spot,” said the Dane, “but the parti-coloured queen strikes where she pleases. That breeder of this turmoil, Baseg, fought for me till I got this gash in the side, and the Ithians made him look for safety for himself. Oh, Yrling, I am coming to thee, Yrling. Good friend,” he added, looking in the face of Inguar, “if thou shouldst bury me, make them cleanse my garments, wash all this ugly gore from my hair, and let my cloak be——”

“Night!” exclaimed Inguar, as he saw the wounded man fall back and die in the effort of speech. The sounds of triumph at a startling proximity warned him to begone, and he departed, leaving the unfortunate Dane in the place where he had found him.

Deprived of the assistance on which they relied so much, the native troops were not able to maintain a lengthened struggle with their foes. The vale, though long and obstinately contested after the death of Baseg, was in the hands of Elim before evening, and the sight of the standard of the Ithians upon the dwelling of the chief, soon quelled the ardour of resistance in the breasts of his dependents. The forces which had joined the enterprise from other Druid holds, dispersed to their several territories, and, ere midnight, the after-battle stillness had sunk down upon the ravaged Coom. Still the broad light

of the rush torches showed that the inmates of the captured Dun were active. Still through the death-like silence, a distant shout from the pursuers—the voice of watchers in the valley, and the hasty galloping of a single horseman, came with a lonesome influence on Kenric's ear, as he turned from the mountain heights to look back upon the valley. Still, along the river side, the burning embers of the ruined cottages revealed the wasting work which war had done, and night would hide, but could not.

“Short-lived ambition!” said Kenric, as he gazed upon the altered scene, and flung down into the deep ravine beneath him the spear and skiagh which he no longer needed, “that folly of a day is dearly purchased. O Inguar, the promiser! the promiser! Thy promises are over now at last. O lonely Coom, I brought little with me when I sought thee last, and now I leave

thee utterly bereft, for all is gone. I gave up all on yesterday. Grim Baseg, where are now thy bright assurances?"

Hurrying from these thoughts, no less than from the dangers of the place, the wretched apostate hied from the scene of carnage, without considering to what point he should direct his steps for safety. In the Coom, after every effort had been made to find him, he was at length given up for one of those who had perished in the river. The body of the unhappy Ard-Draithe, Tuathal, was found upon the very threshold of the Dun, at no great distance from that of the haughty Eira, whose neck a shaft had pierced, while she was employed in urging on the warriors to resistance.

CHAPTER LXXXII.

THE summer months had rolled away before all traces of this dreadful day had vanished from the bosom of the vale. Aithne, without dispute, was vested with the possessions Tuathal had abused so vilely, while the title and power passed to a distant branch of the sept. The influence of Elim and O'Driscol obtained an easy peace for its inhabitants. An intercourse, more constant than before, was sustained from henceforth between them and the people of Rath-Aidan. A species of traffic in corn, forest skins, and other commodities, was

established with Ross Ailithri, and other towns and brughs along the coast, and Aithne had the satisfaction of seeing the indolent and savage habits which characterized her tribe, give place to a spirit of peaceful industry. Abundance blessed, at first, the wild retreat, and beauty graced it as before. The intercourse spread wider with the neighbouring townships, and the valley promised soon to be as flourishing as it was lovely.

With the return of autumn, in the following year, the preparations were made for celebrating, at Dun Druid, the nuptials of the Ithian chief and the Ard-Draithe's niece. The news of this event reached Kenric's ears as he was teaching in the famous school of Dyma,* where he had found an asylum from all but his own memory. A prey, to the last, to the unhappy foible of his

* Kildimo.

character, he could not endure the idea of presenting himself before Elim, after the humiliating avowal of his baseness. He had chosen Ceil Dyma for a residence, because it was not far from Deochain Assain; and, though he dared not now return to the city of letters, he felt as if the air of the place might do him good. The account of Elim's approaching nuptials reached him, as he sat on the very spot where, shortly after his first arrival, in boyhood, at the college of Muingharidh, he had been defended by the latter against the jests of their two schoolfellows. The contrast in their fortunes, now deeper than it had ever been before, made him more disturbed at this intelligence than formerly, when the news of Elim's happiness had often reached him in his hours of self-incurred dejection.

He brooded indolently over these thoughts throughout the day. In the evening he went out

to seek some amusement at a coshering in the neighbourhood. Far, however, from diverting his mind from the prevailing passion, the mirth of this assembly deepened its hold upon him. The music had the sound of bridal music, the dancers timed it with the air of Aithne, and those who drank seemed drinking to the happiness of Elim. The messenger who had brought him the intelligence was Moyel, who was bound on some affairs of traffic to the City of Ships. He had seen Kenric accidentally at the place already mentioned, and had promised to call at Ceil Dyma, on his return. Before he fulfilled his pledge, however, the scholar had formed, in the course of the night, the determination to leave at once a land which had been to him the scene of so much suffering.

CHAPTER LXXXIII.

ON the evening which was intended to precede the bridal, Matha was seated with her son on a bank near the little bridge which crossed the river that flowed round Dun Druid. They were conversing quietly of the approaching event, while the charm of a calm autumnal afternoon gave a delicious interest to the scene which lay before them. Far down the valley, now rich with ripened corn fields, and other tillage, some groups of the earlier invited guests, among whom was the young prince Airtree, were seen loitering along

the river side, pausing and turning, from time to time, as some oratorical individual extended his arm, directing their attention to some particular improvements in the landscape. The yellow sunshine lay steady on the luxuriant picture; the wood-larks sung in flocks among the oaks on the hill-side; the water ouzel dived into the stony current which flowed by the Dun; in the deeper basins of which the gambols of the trout made frequent circles.

“It is a delicious season,” said Matha, after they had sat some time in silence, “as fair as the promise of thine own fortunes, Elim.”

“And yet,” said the Ithian, “amid all this sweetness and serenity, there is something to remind us of its opposite.”

So saying, he pointed upward, to a bird which floated far above their heads upon the sunny air. It was one of those falcons which built

their aeries in the clefts of Coolun, and seemed to hover, like something evil, above this scene of natural peace and joy.

The preparations for the ceremony of the following day commenced in such a manner as became an union by which the interests of two considerable septs were to be closely blended. The Dun was adorned with garlands of orphine and wild roses, and the wooden bridge concealed, with closely woven wreaths of the double-flowered water avens, the sweet-scented creeping camomile, and the little sunflower. Parties of the wealthier members of both families were seen grouped about the Dun, or loitering in the soft twilight along the river side. The bright green caps and many-coloured cloaks of the male, and the large rich veils and snow-white garments of the female guests, gave a gay and brilliant air to the rich autumnal scene. On either side the river, far

as the eye could reach along the Coom, multitudes of the kerne and humble husbandmen, arriving party after party, were gathered in larger companies, in cloaks of the arbutus dye, and the dark purple canabhas—the women with kerchiefs folded modestly around their heads, the men with their hoods thrown back, and suffering the mass of curls which formed the coolun to appear. Some danced to the sound of the harp or piob-mala; while others sat listening to the song of the filea, or the imaginative story of the dresb-deartach.

On the small green spot which lay between the entrance of the Dun and the bridge by which it was connected with the valley, appeared the individuals whose fortunes formed the subject of interest to the whole of the assembled multitude. Matha, her sister Melcha, and O'Driscoll, slowly walked apart; the matron figure of the former,

wrapped in a deep blue mantle, with a silken kerchief wound around her head. Aithne, who sat on a flower-woven bench, near the entrance of the Dun, between Elim and her brother, was dressed in a plain white robe, with a golden bodkin fastening up her hair, and another binding an ample veil of the whitest silk, which went scarf-wise round the shoulders, and was secured upon the waist. Elim, who sat beside her, was attired in a dress that, in the eyes of many who beheld him, was admirably suited to the expression of his countenance and figure. A close-fitting tunic, or saffron hose, and sandals of the most graceful form, a tunic of flesh-coloured silk, and a cloak of azure dye, made fast upon the shoulder with a fibula of gold, harmonized with his clear and open countenance, the calm serenity of his unchanging manner, and the light, fair mass of curls that floated in the national fashion down his neck.

Two pearls, the purest that had ever left Loch Lene, hung gracefully behind (not from) his ears, and marked the wearer's rank, while they adorned his person. Not the least interesting figures in the group were those of the aged Canfinny and his partner, who had lived to witness the wedding of their grand-child, surrounded by a numerous group of happy offspring. And not the least remarkable were those of the physician Fighnin and his three immortal daltadhs, who sat, solemn as night, in the shadow formed by the projecting roof of the Dun.

Along the Coom, in various places, large furnaces of the losa wood were piled together, great copper cauldrons were suspended over the blaze, and griddles laid upon the broken embers, at which the numerous cooks were busy in preparing fish and meat in various ways, and making all necessary provision for an abundant festival; while

numbers of women were seen, some turning the quern with all their might, others gathering the wheaten flour as fast as it was formed, and kneading it into cakes, which were baked as rapidly as they were made. Lest any deficiency should occur, a number of men, who were relieved at intervals by fresh parties from the crowd, were seen reaping in the neighbouring corn-fields, so that many consumed at night the grain which, a few hours before, had been receiving the last maturing glow from the declining sun. On the plain, along the river, three-legged tables were placed for the wealthier sort, while beds of grass, or rushes, laid in rings, formed the accommodation of the lowest classes. The music of the trompa, the tinkling crotal, the tiompan, the brassy crotalin, the corabas, the wild oirpheam, and other instruments, was heard at intervals in various parts of the valley. After having long enjoyed the

scene, in silent delight, from their elevated seat beside the entrance, Melcha could not avoid directing the attention of her companions to its tranquil beauty.

“Yes,” said Matha, “it is beautiful; but Elim’s eye is not upon the Coom.”

“It is not,” answered Elim, “and yet I have been looking on it long, and admiring it too. But seest thou, Matha, upon the point of that distant crag, where a single streak of sunshine yet is resting, a solitary figure, standing upright, and gazing down upon the scene of joy? How lonely is the effect of that figure, far apart, and separated from the festival! How dark it looks in the little gleam of sunshine! How far its shadow falls across the rocks!”

“I see the person thou meanest,” answered Aithne. “The distance is great, and yet I can see he does not wear the dress of either sept.”

“Why does he not descend and share the feast?” continued Elim, still gazing towards the motionless figure on the distant crag—“some forlorn soul, perhaps, that cannot open to the tide of joy; perhaps the only heart in all the multitude that will to-night give woe or pain a welcome. I wish he would come down and join the dancers.”

“He seems as if he understood thy wishes,” said Matha, “for he is already beginning to descend. But hark! the buabhal sounds for the hour of refreshment in the valley, and Geide and Fiachadh come to announce to us that our own banquet is ready in the Dun.”

A choir of wind music, consisting of corn-beans, readans, conches, and other instruments then in use, broke suddenly upon their hearing, and presently the guests of nobler rank, who were to join the party of the bridegroom, began to cross the bridge in graceful order. The banners of

both septs, placed in the ground, on either side of the entrance, were wreathed into a kind of arch with bands of flowers, under which they passed into the dwelling. Here several tables were displayed with various kinds of food, the produce of fishing and the chase, as much as of domestic husbandry. Numbers of attendants, attired in hose and tunics of the shamrock green, supplied the guests with mead, and other kinds of drink, in cups of wood, of horn, of brass, or silver, according to the rank of those they served. The night had now completely fallen, and the natural light was supplied by the rushen torches; two of which, twisted to the thickness of a man's arm, were placed near the open entrance, while another, of enormous magnitude, burned like a furnace in that part of the building which, in the colder seasons, was cheered with lighted fuel, and where Elim, now so many years ago, had seen, for the first

time, the old Ard-Draithe, and his blooming niece. The feast was followed by the song and dance, and the evening passed in still increasing merriment.

At midnight, after the guests had wearied themselves with mirth, the loud, though deep-toned sound of the buabhal, from a neighbouring height, announced, at the same time, a change in the moon's quarters, and the hour at which the festivities of the evening were to terminate. The company separated to find repose for some few hours in the surrounding peillices, or under tents erected for the occasion. At sunrise it was intended that the bride and bridegroom should be accompanied by both septs, in orderly procession, to the edifice where Baseg once performed his gloomy rites, but where the gods of Baseg dwelt no more.

Wearied by the unusual dissipation of the

evening, and longing for a quiet hour of meditation, which might restore her mind to its usual tone of peace, Aithne beheld with pleasure the last of the long train of guests departing from the Dun, in which there only now remained the attendants, busy in arranging whatever the evening festival had left in disorder, extinguishing the torches, and assisting the crotaries to put up their silent instruments of music. After a little time, spent in tranquil conversation with her friends, and bidding them an affectionate goodnight, she retired with Matha through a curtained recess which led to her own apartment.

Soon after, and with little previous conversation, the daughter of the Ard-Draithe bade Matha, too, farewell, embraced, and parted from her. A deep and serious mood of anxious thought oppressed her spirits on a sudden, and made her long for perfect solitude. The buabhal had

spoke truly in announcing the approach of the full-moon, for her light fell now, all yellow with the harvest tinge, upon the floor and yew-built walls of Aithne's chamber. The lonely sound of the attendants' voices, calling to each other through the now deserted dwelling, the echoing of footsteps in the outer chambers, and other similar sounds, at once disturbed the train of Aithne's thoughts, and deepened the feeling of natural loneliness which she was endeavouring to subdue. She thought of the Ard-Draithe's lonely cairn, of the days of her childhood, and, at length, of Kenric, the Northumbrian scholar.

A wicket, leading to the garden which bordered on one branch of the divided river, formed a kind of postern to the Dun, and was connected by a short passage with the apartment of Aithne. Still touched with compassion at the fate of the unhappy Anglo-Saxon, she left her chamber, in

order to think awhile at leisure in the open air. As she opened the small wicket, the sweet night wind came gratefully around her, and a moonlight landscape broke upon her view, where every object, flower, tree, shrub, or river, was shown with a distinctness clear as that of morn.

CHAPTER LXXXIV.

THE figure which Elim had discerned at sunset, on the distant crags which bounded in the Coom, was that of the unhappy son of Ailred. Not having to encounter on his journey, the many delays which had retarded that of Moyel, the evening of the day which brought the former to the valley, saw Kenric also toiling up the heights that formed the natural wall of the retreat. Weary of his journey, and of the reflections which had haunted it incessantly, he reached the craggy summit, in a disposition little suited to the cha-

racter of joy and festive ease which brightened the face of the Coom. He paused, in troubled wonder, on the rocks, to look upon the change which had been wrought since last he turned to look upon the valley. How different was this scene of prosperous industry and of cheerfulness, from that deep gloomy picture of desolation which he had left behind him on the night of the defeat of the Vikings. He shuddered as he thought upon the days which had preceded that disastrous struggle—a day of which he had never dared to speak, and strove, though all in vain, to banish from his memory. He knew not what he should do now for peace. Returning to Northumbria he had fixed upon; and haply, there, he thought that years of patient suffering and retirement might do—he knew not what, he feared to hope; he feared despair still more; he only knew that he was all a chaos; and parting with his friends at Inisfail, and seeking

once again his father's home, were all that lay before his mind distinctly.

The sound of mirthful music from the valley, for the moment, checked the train of his reflections. He had forgot that it was Elim's wedding-day. How happy was the scene! how cheerful was the aspect of the assembly! It was like all the unclouded life of Elim, so free from care and from solicitude, so widely different from his own. He arose from the earth, and remained for some time without moving, thinking of this, and listening to the music. Alarmed, at length, at the continual recurrence of these painful feelings, he hastened down into the vale, resolving to despatch, without delay, the parting interview he came to seek, and then to place himself beyond the reach of any danger which they could occasion.

He remained amongst the guests on the river-side, mingling, though without sympathy, in their

mirth, until the broad and beamless harvest-moon rose, like a sanguine shield, upon the Coom. Undecided as to the manner in which he should seek admission at the Dun, he wandered along the river, until the sound of the buabhal announced the hour of separation to all the guests. He crossed the bridge before the lights were extinguished in the Dun, but refrained from entering the dwelling, as he had designed, and turned aside to collect his thoughts, for a time, on the shore of the little isle.

CHAPTER LXXXV.

NEAR the pebbly margin of the little river, where it broke, with a shallow murmur, over uneven beds of limestone, a kind of grotto had been formed by Aithne, in her leisure hours, while yet the Ard-Draithe was living in Dun Druid. The interior, all the work of her own hands, she had fashioned like an altar-piece, and adorned with minerals, the natural product of her native kingdom of Muimhean. The glittering rock crystals of Ciar, the star-stone of Glammire, the amethyst, rent from the cliffs that bordered on the

mouth of the Senan, and lucid pebbles of different brilliant hues, found in the streams and quarries of the Coom, gleamed from the walls and ceiling of the recess. The floor was formed of the variegated marble of Kenmare, and two huge stalactytes, brought from the caves of Ovens, and measuring several feet in height, were placed, like shafts, on either side the entrance. The waters bubbled within a single pace of the retreat, leaving free a space sufficient only for the approach.

Here, seated on a bench in perfect solitude, while the Ard-Draithe's daughter meditated on the events which had gone by, and which she yet expected, the shadow of a human figure fell upon the marble floor on which her eyes were fixed. She suddenly looked up, and beheld, standing in the moonlight, between her and the river, the wild and altered form of Kenric, the Northumbrian.

“Aithne,” he said, “what, Aithne, is it thou?”

The surprize of Aithne left her for some moments unable to reply.

“How fortunate it is,” continued Kenric, “that I should thus have found thee here alone. I was about returning to Northumbria, and I could not bid farewell, a last farewell to Inisfail, without saying a parting word to my quick pupil.”

“And to thy friend?” said Aithne, timidly.

“My friend? What, Elim? Ah, may he forget me. He’s happy enough, quite happy enough without me. Talk not of Elim now; he’s happy enough. What sayest thou, Aithne? Are the stars forgot? Where moves the wain? Where weep the Pleiades? Does Venus ever smile upon the Coom? That Mars has lighted it

at times, I know. Is all forgotten, Aithne, in the heavens?"

"Not all," said Aithne, still not quite at ease.

"I am glad of that," said Kenric, hastily, and with a somewhat wild air. "It would be strange if it were otherwise, for—for—thou hadst a quick and retentive memory. I never was, myself, more apt in that respect; and that, if one might say it, without boasting, would be considered no light praise by many."

"I am very sure of it," said Aithne, in a soothing tone, and with a feeling of anxiety, which was rather increased than diminished by the tone of Kenric's conversation.

"Concerning Elim—hark!" what sound is that?" he added, starting, and trembling violently.

"The voice of some one calling from the vale," said Aithne. "There are guards around us."

“How much it startled me!” said Kenric, still all trembling; “one would think I was afraid of something, Aithne. I am greatly altered, too, in this respect. There was a time when fear, except the best, was utterly a stranger to my nature. But it is not the only ugly guest that has of late days forced itself upon me.” He paused a moment, and then, taking from his tunic a small volume, and gazing on it long, with a mournful smile, he placed it in the hand of Aithne. “Keep this,” he said, “in memory of Rath-Aidan. It has some merit, for it once amused thee. Preserve it, Aithne, and whenever thou lookest, on a cloudless night, upon the stars, thou wilt think of me, wilt thou not?” Aithne received the book without reply, and at the same instant, with a low and mournful “farewell,” which she had not even time to return, the Northumbrian disappeared.

CHAPTER LXXXVI.

LET us follow Kenric to his lonely dwelling at Ceil Dyma. As evening fell, his torments grew almost intolerable, and he hurried out of the house in order to try whether action might relieve them. He took what used to be his favourite course, the road which led to Deochain Assain. He was walking rapidly along, when a brother of the convent, one of those with whom, during his last residence in Deochain Assain, he had been most intimate, suddenly accosted him.

“Kenric!” exclaimed the religious, “is it possible thou art returned at length?”

“I am glad to see thee,” answered Kenric.

“Where hast thou been? what sudden accident occasioned thy departure? The regent was afflicted at thy absence.”

“He had reason,” answered the scholar, in a low voice.

“Thou art strangely altered,” continued the religious, “hast thou been ill?”

“A little,” answered Kenric.

“Come with me to the convent,” said the monk. “It is near the hour of evening service, and I cannot stay now to question, or to answer thee, but come to me at sunset, and I will tell thee what has happened in thine absence. Hark! there—the bell is tolling—fail not to come.”

“Thou art happy!” answered Kenric, “thou art very happy; thou art very peaceful.”

The monk gazed on him, at a loss to know what he meant.

“Thou art happy,” continued Kenric, “but I am wretched, very wretched. I am not ill in frame, as thou supposest, but miserable in mind. Oh, could I but unload my heart to thee, could I but hope that thou wouldst hear me patiently, could I but hope thy good, thy holy counsel, for never, never was the voice of charity more needful to a miserable ear.”

The religious seemed affected.

“Whatever change, said he, of blame or of distress, thy words denote, thou knowest that thou art certain of my assistance. Fail not to come to me again at sunset.”

Kenric remained, for a longer time than he imagined, gazing on the earth, with something like a gleam of hope just breaking on the darkness of his mind. At length he said, in a soft

low tone, that wore the accent of returning peace :

“ I will not fail. It may be good for me.”

There was no reply, and Kenric, looking up, received a shock that thrilled through all his nerves—the monk had disappeared, and Inguar was standing in his place.

It were needless to detail the scene of miserable recrimination which took place, on their reunion, between those two acquaintances in evil. It was ended by Inguar, who pointed to a carbu'h, in the road beside them, to which were harnessed a pair of light steeds.

“ Where wouldst thou fly ? ” asked Kenric, anxiously, and with a wavering look.

“ To Inismore,” replied the Scandinavian. “ Could we but reach Port Lairge without detection I could be certain of our passage thence.”

The prospect of a speedy return to his native shore, the hope of flying from a land where now the very face of cheerful nature was changed, for him, to menace and to gloom, where even the winds, the hills, the trees, the streams, were all remembrancers of dreadful hours, made Kenric waver about his appointment with the religious. The temporary relief from pain, which the remembrance of home occasioned in his mind, contributed to change his resolution. Besides, he could do nothing here that might not be as well done in Northumberland, and more securely. The instances of Inguar decided him, and he took his seat beside him in the carbudh. The vehicle was hurried rapidly away, the vigorous horses charging, with their laborious steam, the calm autumnal air, while Kenric, leaning backward from his seat, gazed long upon the receding scenes that

had been so dear to his childhood—so eventful to his maturer years; and listened, with a farewell sorrow, to those eternal harmonies that soon, to him, died faintly away for ever in the vault of distance.

CHAPTER LXXXVII.

THEIR journey was interrupted by an unexpected incident. It may be remembered that, since the decisive day of Coom-na-Druid, nothing farther has been related of the fate of Gurmund, and the remaining troops of the Vikingr. Compelled to retreat by the cowardly desertion of Inguar, they had, in conjunction with a party of the worsted natives, effected their escape from the scene of contest, and found refuge among the fastnesses of the mountain land which bordered on Fear-

nuighe.* The second evening of their flight beheld them established, within an earthen fort, in a lonesome district, difficult of access, where they maintained themselves, during a long period, by nightly plunder, in the surrounding vallies.

The fortitude with which these gloomy sons of rapine supported their adversity, was not equal to the ferocious energy which they manifested in their expeditions. On the first night of their encampment in the rath, a dark desponding spirit brooded over them, and their demeanour was as gloomy as the solitudes in which they mustered their small force. Some sat in sullen silence on the earth; some slept beneath their huge, round skiolds; while others, of a more impatient temper, spared not to rail against the power of Odin, shot arrows, in defiance, against the stars, and scoffed at their deity and his blustering attributes. In the morning, however, when their

* Fermoy.

chieftain pointed out to them the means of procuring all that was needful for their present use, and afforded them the means of continuing their zeal for deprecation with impunity, they grew more reconciled to their reverse.

On the third night of the journey of the two fugitives, for they rested not an hour on the way, it happened that their carbudh drove in the moonlight, by the mountains of Fearmuighe Fene. The midnight found them in a lonesome district, with a mountain, severed by two great defiles on one hand, and a wide and dreary heath upon the other. During the preceding afternoon, the anxieties of Inguar, which continued increasing since they had left Muingharidh, began perceptibly to diminish. They had now nearly passed the frontiers of the hostile territory, and hoped, on the ensuing day, to reach the harbour, from which they were to take shipping.

While Inguar was expressing his satisfaction at the good success which had hitherto attended them, the Northumbrian directed his attention to the glimmering of weapons, from the defile which they were about to pass. The sight appeared to chill the soul of the Swede, and he suffered the rein to slacken on the necks of the flying steeds.

“We are lost!” he murmured, “they have intercepted us.”

“Why dost thou slack the reign?” said the Northumbrian, “Haste rather—and re-double thy dispatch.”

“It would but quicken our destruction,” answered Inguar, in violent agitation, “they would send their deadly missiles after us. Is there no way? no turning?” he added, looking behind, and on both sides, with a miserable eye.

“It is too late to fly,” said Kenric. “Drive

through, it is our only chance. Hold! hold! We are safe, they are the weapons of the Vikingr!”

“The Vikingr!” cried Inguar, with redoubled terror.

“The same,” cried Kenric, seizing the reins with one hand, “and I have a dull recollection if that be not the ponderous club of Gurmund.”

“Let go the reins!” cried Inguar, but the Northumbrian had scarcely time to comply with his request, when they found themselves in the midst of the northerns.

They were recognized at once by several of the Vikingr, and Gurmund, accosting them with coldness, bade Inguar to alight.

“Thou art welcome to us,” he said, with a smile, “I have been longing for thee ever since we parted at the Coom. For thee, Northumbrian,” he continued, addressing Kenric, while

Inguar, trembling, descended from the vehicle, "remain in the car, and take what course thou wilt. The hurdle is for the coward only."

The wretched Inguar uttered a horrid cry, that rent the soul of Kenric with a strange sensation of disgust and pain. He clung to the side of the carbudh, from which, however, he was quickly dragged by the command of Gurmund, who, at the same time, pricked the steeds with his many pointed club, and sent them galloping forward at a speed which Kenric's utmost efforts could not make them slacken. Meantime, the hoarse cries of, "the hurdle for the coward, quick! the hurdle!" together with the despairing yells of Inguar, were mingled fearfully with the rolling of the carbudh wheels, and the trampling of the affrighted horses.

"My life! my life! oh, spare my life!" he heard the miserable wretch exclaim; "torture

me, flay me, give me the lash, the fire, but spare my life! Life! life! do any thing but take my life!"

His horrid cries were drowned in the noise of the vehicle. When Kenric was able to rein in the horses, he turned to listen, but all was dead silence behind him, and the figures, dimly seen in the moonlight, of some warriors who were trampling on the fatal hurdle, showed him in what way Inguar's shrieks had been suppressed.

Of Gurmund himself, it was afterwards ascertained that he had perished by the gory ox-yoke of the Runner of Odin, as an offering to propitiate the angry deities in the distress of his followers, at a time when, seizing on the barks of some native fishermen, they put to sea, once more, in search of safety.

CHAPTER LXXXVIII.

LET us leave the unhappy scholar to pursue his journey alone along the dreary road, and return to some persons, concerning whose fortunes our narrative has long been silent.

The aged Vuscfræa was seated, at nightfall, by his hearth, and listening to the tales of Webba, whose voyage into Inisfail had supplied him with abundant matter for the entertainment of his master's leisure hours.

“Webba,” said the old man, “lay aside thy stories for awhile, and fetch thy little horse-hair

foolery, and let me hear that song thou learnedst from the old minstrel who met thee on the highway near the City of Hurdles.”

Webba went for his harp, and complied with his master's wish.

THE SONG OF THE OLD MENDICANT.

I.

A man of threescore, with the snow on his brow,
 And the light in his aged eye dim,
 O valley of sorrow ! what lure hast thou now,
 In thy changes of promise for him ?
 Gay Nature may smile, but his sight is grown old,
 Joy sound, but his hearing is dull !
 And pleasure may feign, but his bosom is cold,
 And the cup of his weariness full.

II

Once, warm with the pulses of young twenty-three,
 With plenty and ease in my train,
 Thy fair visions wore an enchantment for me,
 That never can gild them again.
 For changed are my fortunes, and early and late,
 From dwelling to dwelling I go ;
 And I knock with my staff at our first mother's gate,
 And I ask for a lodging below.*

* This beautiful sentiment occurs in Chaucer.

III.

Farewell to thee, Time ! in thy passage with me,
One truth thou hast taught me to know,
Though lovely the past and the future may be,
The present is little but woe.
For the sum of those joys that we find in life's way,
Where thy silent wing still wafts us on,
Is a hope for to-morrow—a want for to-day,
And a sigh for the times that are gone.

The song had not long been concluded, when a low voice was heard at the window, exclaiming, in accents of penetrating entreaty :

“ Uncle ! Vuscfraea ! ”

“ Hark ! ” cried the old man, “ Webba, what was that ? ”

“ It is the voice of Kenric, or his ghost, ” cried Webba, changing colour rapidly. “ Perchance he has had the grace to follow me at length. ”

“ Lay aside thy instrument, ” cried Vuscfraea, “ and open the door, whoever he be that knocks. ”

It is now four years since he left this dwelling to seek his fortune in East-Anglia.”

The door was opened, and Vuscfræa had little difficulty in recognizing, all worn and altered as they were, the features of Domnona's wretched son. He had travelled, almost without rest or food, from the sea-side ; and now, before any greeting could pass between him and his aged relative, he sunk upon the floor, from which so many years before he had started on his brief career—a miserable wreck, the victim of self-will and wretched pride.

They bore him to a sleeping room, and laid him on one of those narrow couches which were used at the period. Assistance, however, came too late to save him from the effects of extreme exhaustion, both of mind and frame. A species of delirium, of the most melancholy kind, partaking much more of the character of imbecility than violent madness, seized on his

brain, and took away the acute intelligent fire from his eye. He recognized neither Vusfræa nor his attendant, nor even, on the following morn, when Ailred himself was brought to his bedside, could nature's self, all powerful remembrancer, remove the fatal torpor from his consciousness. He made, nevertheless, no allusion whatever to the dreadful transaction which had consummated his gloomy course. His thoughts seemed wandering to the days of his continental life, to the favourite pursuits and early successes of his youth, and his conversation was full of the vainest and silliest self-complacency.

“Thou mayest shake thine head as thou wilt,” said Ailred, addressing his brother-in-law, after they had listened together to a long and rambling discourse of the sick man's, in which, after a strong denunciation of the vice of self-conceit, he recounted all the favours he had ever

received from men distinguished in life, beginning with Alcuin, and stopping short when he came to Charlemagne, "thou mayst shake thy head as wisely as thou wilt, but now is not the time for me to say whose fault it is that Kenric's head is turned. Alas, poor youth! poor boy! it was never otherwise since—since—but, as I said, the time is past—poor Kenric! Ah, scholarship! ah, sheepskin! it is over! The stars have done their worst, Vuscfraea, now; he's moonstruck now, at last—he has his fill of it. His lunatic lunations! there's the sum of them—the sum of all those calculations with which he used—between ourselves be it spoken—make old Elfwin himself look flat and gaping. Aye, let the poor—poor boy, enjoy his merit, his silly, empty merit; he had a gifted kind of a crack-brained wit—a patchwork of his own and other's brains, as frantic and fantastic as his own, that often gave plain sense as

much to do as any learned witling's of ye all. Even still the duke speaks kindly of poor Kenric."

"The grave hides all," said old Vuscfraea, with an earnest look.

"I spake not of the dead, good brother," answered Ailred, "the dust it shields is nearer to me than thee. I spake of thee alone, and of Elfwin."

"Elfwin," said Kenric, softly, gazing on the speaker, "and wherefore should—well, but I'll not dispute it; tell Ailred I am ready to go with him, to ask his pardon—any body's pardon now—for, let me whisper you a word old man; come hither, and tell nobody—my spirit is broken quite: and it is not because he is the duke; for, hark you, I have talked with greater men, and freely too, ere now; but I'll not cross Ailred any more. Is this what they call happiness—take it away."

“ ’Tis strange he should not know me,” whispered Ailred.

“ Indeed, I crave thy pardon,” continued Kenric. “ I know thee well, the learned Eginhard. Don’t heed the envious tongues—Virgil is right. See here, this little book will tell the truth ; ask not who penned it, for after thy praise,” he said, affecting to hide his face, with a foolish smile, “ it would look vain in me to answer thee ; where is it ? Surely I had it in my bosom : oh, true—true—true, thy excellency will pardon me—I gave it to a friend in Inisfail. Ah, there’s a thought—Is this the flowery way ? How full of thorns it is !”

“ Poor boy !” said Ailred, “ learning has made him mad.”

“ I doubt it much,” said Vuscfræa ; “ it follows not, because he raves of books, that books have been the cause of his disease. The mind

was stored with knowledge, and being unhinged by some physical affliction, it naturally runs most, in its disorder, on what it was accustomed to contemplate in its health. Disease or accident it is that breeds the ruin in the brain, and chance or memory directs the tone of the delirium. Had Kenric been as fond of arms as letters, this sudden violence, whate'er it be, that has benumbed his reason, would have filled his mind with phantasies, just as wild, of wars, and battles, sieges, camps, and conquest."

"Do you ask so soon the order of my funeral?" said Kenric, in a sad tone, and with a mournful smile, "even hear me, then, for, if I left no will, it might be done with too much cost and pomp, and have the hateful show of vanity. Alcuin, Claude Clement, Scot, and Eginhard," he added, counting on his fingers, "these friends will bear the pall. If Eginhard refuse, I mur-

mur not, for I deserve, I want humiliation. Virgil, of Saltzburg, will supply his place. Bury me near the temple in the valley, with my head against Domniona's feet, and, if you can, with a pathway across my grave, that this proud dust may be thoroughly trampled on. My coffin, did you say? Oh, plain—plain—plain.”

Soon after, his delirium increased to a degree that made them tremble. Images, of a nature almost too horrid for description, seemed now to have possessed his brain, and he struggled in the hands of his friends, as if he feared that they laid hold on him for his destruction.

“ Oh, bring me again,” he said, imploringly, “ oh, bring me once again to the point from which I started, and you shall see me run a different course. A thousand worlds to have the past again! Oh, youth, youth, youth! Give me again my fresh and faultless youth, and you shall

see I will avoid it all ! Oh, horror ! do not bind me ! Spare me ! Spare me ! Oh, miserable fool ! Oh, blind ! Oh, thoughtless ! Oh, wasted, wasted hours ! Oh, lost occasions ! Oh, truth despised ! Oh, slighted, slighted warnings !”

Forced to remain upon his bed, his delirium arrived at a height which filled the listeners with dismay. Towards morning, however, he sunk into a deep sleep, from which he did not wake till late on the following day. When he did so, to Vusfræa’s great surprize, his phrenzy and his idiotcy both had wholly left him, and he spoke with perfect quietude. He recognized his father and Vusfræa, as well as Webba, but did not manifest the slightest concern at the sight of them, nor even once inquire into the causes which had led to his present situation. Perfect consciousness, combined with a strange insensibility, appeared to have succeeded to the terrific

tumult which had arisen in his mind on the preceding day.

“ Uncle,” he said, as Vusfræa stood beside the bed, contemplating the sufferer with a pitying eye, “ dost thou know if the old clergyman yet lives that was Domnona’s confessor when I returned from Inisfail ?”

Vusfræa replied in the affirmative.

“ Send Webba to him,” said Kenric, “ and tell him that Domnona’s son desires to see him here.”

“ I will go to him myself ; Webba, my staff,” said the old man ; “ if Ailred should return from the duke’s castle in my absence, thou wilt acquaint him whither I am gone.”

When he had departed, Webba occupied his place by the bedside of Kenric, who, after looking for a long time towards the window, with an absent air, said :—

“Webba, dost thou hear the distant sound of music in the direction of the valley?”

Webba listened for some moments, but answered gently in the negative.

“I thought I heard it faintly from the west,” said Kenric. “On such a morn it was that Vusfræa brought me to Muingharidh first. So calm, so still, and that song arose, too, so peacefully. On such a morning, too, I left the hermit’s dwelling in the solitary Skelig. Does he live still in his tranquil sea-side solitude? And just on such a morning I lingered with Elim on the way to the abbey, while the verse of Sedulius swelled from the distant choir, and the sun rose calmly beyond the hills of Shior Muimhean. Webba, come hither,” he continued; “that dagger, which thou seest upon the tripod, give to Vusfræa, when he comes, and tell him that, for all his warning, it has been still un-

stained. Webba, dost thou remember Deochain Assain?"

"Ah, master! ah, dear master!" answered Webba.

Kenric continued to fix his eyes upon the attendant with a look of wandering indifference. What he had seen, and what he saw, moved Webba so much, that, even without knowing the cause of his distress, he could not refrain from tears. The sight of them seemed to awaken, in a slight degree, the attention of the sufferer, for he took Webba's hand in both of his, and let his forehead rest upon it for some moments with a sigh of relief. They remained for some moments without moving, Webba feeling at a loss what to say or do. In a little time the agitation of Kenric seemed returning, for he grasped the attendant's hand more tight, he trembled in a fitful manner, and waved his hand before him several times :

“’Tis coming at last!” he said, “I feel it coming.”

“What, master?” said Webba.

“Don’t leave me! do not, Webba! ’Tis coming—coming! I am sure it is! Don’t leave me alone! I dread to be alone! Oh, save me! hide me! Do you hear me? Hide me!”

Poor Webba, who had never before imagined, far less witnessed, any thing like this, could only answer in a soothing tone :

“I am not going any where, dear master! I will not leave you, Kenric.”

By an effort, Kenric now seemed to restrain himself, and lay back silent in the bed.

“They often warned me,” he continued, in a low tone, “they often warned me, but I followed my own course. I thought them all below me—I am humbled—humbled. So haughty! so secure in my own strength! Webba, if thou ever

have a child to counsel, bid him beware of pride, and idle curiosity. Look out at the window, and tell me if they are coming.”

Webba complied, throwing open the little casement for greater convenience. While he gazed along the street, in the direction of the bridge, he heard a faint, but painful moan from the patient.

“Muingharidh!” he murmured, in a low voice, “Muingharidh! I was happy then!”

He was silent, and Webba continued for some time longer endeavouring to descry the form of Vuscfraea amongst those which passed to and fro between their dwelling and the bridge. He arrived at length, with Ailred and Donmona’s aged confessor, but they came too late for Kenric. When Webba closed the window, and returned to the bedside, he found the unhappy youth already dead.

CHAPTER LXXXIX.

STILL left in mystery as to the course of his affliction, and of the phrenetic allusions which had escaped him in his illness, his friends complied with Kenric's dying wishes, and buried him in the churchyard near the river, his sepulchre adjoining that of Domnona, in the manner he had himself desired. Years passed away, and nature claimed her right from Ailred, from Vuscfraea, and even reduced Elfwin (unconscious agent in so many

strange events) to the same level with his young antagonist in dispute, before the crime of the latter was made known in Inismore. Few then were interested in the recollection of the fortunes of the family, and all, ere long, forgot it.

In Inisfail, the event did not so soon depart from the recollection of those who had been so nearly affected by it on its first occurrence. In other respects no painful recollections remained to allay the happiness of the united families of Rath-Aidan and the Coom. It is true that this repulsion of the Scandinavian invasion was but local and temporary, and, ere long, succeeding swarms carried fire and sword throughout the whole extent of Inisfail, until the sovereignty itself was divided by a northern chief. But long before the isle was visited by this consummation of disasters, Elim and his consort,

advanced in years, in happiness, and honour, slept the last sleep within the bosom of their native soil.

THE END.





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