

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

MALE

The Gentry

Robert Kennedy of Dungarren	20s
Murrey of Torwood.	40+
Rutherford, minister of the parish,	35+
Fatheringham, friend of Murrey.	40+
The Sheriff of Renfrewshire.	40+
The Baillie or Magistrate of Paisley.	40+

Common people

Black Bawldy, the herdbooy of Dungarren.	15-20
Anderson, the priricipal domestic of Dungarren.	30+
Wilkin, an idiot.	10-20
Donald, a servant	20+

Crowd, gaoler, landlord, etc.

WOMEN.

The Gentry

Lady Dungarren, mother of Robert Dungarren	40+
Violet, daughter of Murrey.	18-25
Annabella, the rich relation of Lady Dungarren.	18-25

Witches

Grizeld Bane	40+
Mary Macmurren	35+
Elspy Low	18-30

Common people

Phemy, maid to Annabella.	15-25
Nurse	30+

maidservants, crowd etc

Scene in Renfrewshire, in Scotland

** The subject of this drama was first suggested to me by reading that very curious and original scene in the "Bride of Lammermuir," when the old women, after the division of largess given at a funeral, are so dissatisfied with their share of it, and wonder that the devil, who helps other wicked people willing to serve him, has never bestowed any power or benefits upon them. It appeared to me that the gifted author had come within one step of accounting for a very extraordinary circumstance, frequently recorded in trials for the crime of witchcraft, — the accused themselves acknowledging the crime, and their having had actual intercourse with Satan and other wicked spirits. This was a confession that was sure to be followed by a cruel death, and the conjectures produced to account for it have never been satisfactory. It has been supposed that, previously to their trial, from cruel treatment and misery of every kind, they desired to have an end put to their wretched existence, even at the stake. But this is surely not very probable ; for, if a fair trial by unprejudiced judges acquitted them of the crime, — a circumstance not likely to happen, — it was still in their power to get rid of life in the first river or pond deep enough to drown them, or by some other means less dreadful than fire and faggot. Neither can it be supposed*

that such confessions, at least all of them, were made in a state of delirium. It is more reasonable to suppose that some of those unhappy creatures, from the state of their minds, and from real circumstances leading to it, actually did believe themselves to have had intercourse with the Evil One, consequently to be witches ; and the design of the play is to illustrate this curious condition of nature. Soon after the publication of that powerful and pathetic novel, I mentioned my thoughts upon the subject to Sir W. Scott, and urged him to pursue the new path he had just entered into. That I was unsuccessful in my suit, and failed to persuade him to undertake the subject, all his warm admirers — and who are not ? — must regret, — a regret that will not be diminished by the perusal of the Tragedy on Witchcraft. The language made use of, both as regards the lower and higher characters, is pretty nearly that which prevailed in the West of Scotland about the period assigned to the event, or at least soon after it ; and that the principal witch spoke differently from the other two, is rendered probable from her being a stranger, and her rank in life unknown. Even in those days the well-educated classes were distinguished from their neighbour's on the south side of the Tweed, by their accent and pronunciation, rather than any actual difference of words.

The story is entirely imaginary, one circumstance excepted, viz. the piece rent from the gown of the supposed witch, produced in court as a proof that she had actually been present, though invisible, in the chamber of the tormented patient, — a real circumstance, mentioned, I believe, in one of the trials for witchcraft, though I forget where.

ACT I. SCENE I.

A parlour in the house of Dungarren.

Enter Lady Dungarren and Annabella

ANNABELLA

You must be surprised, my dear cousin, at my unexpected return.

LADY DUNGARREN

I will frankly confess that I am. How did you find your friends in Glenrowan ?

ANNABELLA

With their house full of disagreeable visitors and discomfort. Another day of it would have cast me into a fever so I will trespass on your hospitality a week longer, knowing how kindly disposed you have always been to the child of your early friend.

LADY DUNGARREN

It would be strange, indeed, if the daughter of Duncan Gordon were not welcome here.

ANNABELLA

How has poor Jessie been since I left you?

LADY DUNGARREN

I have but a sorrowful account to give of her.

ANNABELLA

Had she any rest last night ? Does she look as wildly as she did ? Were any strange noises heard in the chamber during the night ?

LADY DUNGARREN

Aye ; noises that made me start and tremble, and feel a horrid consciousness that some being or other was in the room near me, though to the natural eye invisible.

ANNABELLA

What kind of sounds were they ? Why did you think they were so near you ?

LADY DUNGARREN

I was sitting by the table, with my head resting on my hand, when the door leading from the back staircase, which I am certain I had bolted in the evening, burst open.

ANNABELLA

And what followed ?

LADY DUNGARREN

I verily thought to see some elrich form or other make its appearance, and I sat for some moments riveted to my chair, without power to move hand or foot, or almost to breathe.

ANNABELLA

Yet you saw nothing ?

LADY DUNGARREN

Nothing.

ANNABELLA

And heard only the bursting of the door ?

LADY DUNGARREN

Only that for a time : but afterwards, when I listened intently, I heard strange whisperings near me, and soft steps, as of unshod feet passing between me and the bed.

ANNABELLA

Footsteps ?

LADY DUNGARREN

Ay ; and the curtains of the bed began to shake as if touched by a hand, or the motion of some passing body. Then I knew that they were dealing with my poor child, and I had no power to break the spell of their witchcraft, for I had no voice to speak.

ANNABELLA

You had no power to speak ?

LADY DUNGARREN

No ; though the Lord's prayer was on my lips, I was unable to utter it.

ANNABELLA

Heaven preserve us ! what a dreadful situation you were in ! Did the poor child seem to notice any thing ?

LADY DUNGARREN

I cannot say how she looked when the door burst open ; but as soon as I could observe her, her eyes were wide open, gazing fixedly, as if some ugly visage were hanging over her, from which she could not turn away, and presently she fell into a convulsion, and I at that instant recovered my voice and my strength, and called nurse from her closet to assist her.

ANNABELLA

What did nurse think ?

LADY DUNGARREN

Nurse said she was sure that both Grizeld Bane and Mary Macmuren had been in the room. And this I will take my oath to, that afterwards, when she fell quiet, she muttered in her sleep, in a thick untuneable voice, and among the words which she uttered, I distinctly heard the name of Mary Macmurren.

ANNABELLA

What an awful thing it is if people can have power from the evil spirit to inflict such calamity !

LADY DUNGARREN

Awful indeed !

ANNABELLA

How can they purchase such power ?

LADY DUNGARREN

The ruin of a Christian soul is price enough for any thing. Satan, in return for this, will bestow power enough to do whatever his bondswoman or bondsman listeth.

ANNABELLA

Yet they are always miserable and poor.

LADY DUNGARREN

Not always ; but malignant gratifications are what they delight in, and nothing else is of much value to them.

ANNABELLA

It may be so: — it is strange and fearful !

LADY DUNGARREN

I must go to my closet now, and mix the medicine for poor Jessie, to be ready at the proper time ; for I expect the minister to pray by her to-night, and would have every thing prepared before he comes.

Lady Dungarren exits.

ANNABELLA

Ay, if there be in reality such supernatural agency, by which a breast fraught with passion and misery may find relief. Dreadful resource! I may not be so assisted.

Oh, Dungarren, Dungarren ! that Violet Murrey, a paltry girl, the orphan of a murderer — a man disgraced, who died in a pit and was buried in a moor : one whose very forehead is covered with blushing shame when the eye of an irreproachable gentlewoman looks upon her — that a creature thus naturally formed to excite aversion and contempt should so engross thy affections ! It makes me mad !

"May not be so assisted !" Evil is but evil, and torment is but torment ! — I have felt both — I have felt them to extremity — what have I then to fear ?

Phemy enters

Who is there ?

PHEMY

Only me, madam.

ANNABELLA

What brings thee here ?

PHEMY

I came to know if you will trust the Glasgow carrier, who is just come for the orders of the family, with your commission to the silk shop.

ANNABELLA

What art thou telling me ?

PHEMY

Of your commission to the silk shop.

ANNABELLA

I don't understand thee.

PHEMY

The additional yards of silk that are wanted.

ANNABELLA

I want none, fool ! Thy wits are bewildered.

PHEMY

Not *my* wits, madam. What will you please to have, then, for the trimming of your new mantua ?

ANNABELLA

Newt skins and adder skins, an thou wilt.

PHEMY

That might do for a witch's gown, indeed. Grizeld Bane might have a garniture of that sort.

ANNABELLA

What dost thou know of Grizeld Bane ?

PHEMY

Stories enough, if they be true. It is she, or Mary Macmurren, who has, as they say, bewitched the poor young lady here ; and it was a spell cast by her, that made the farmer's pretty daughter fall over the crag and break her leg, the week before her wedding.

ANNABELLA

Before her wedding ?

PHEMY

Yes, truly, madam ; and no wedding at all will ever follow such an untoward mischance.

ANNABELLA

Who told thee this ?

PHEMY

Everybody tells it, and knows it to be true.

(Aside) But the carrier is waiting. She does not heed me.

What is the matter, madam ? Are you not well ?

ANNABELLA

Dost thou know Grizeld Bane ?

PHEMY

Heaven forefend !

ANNABELLA

Dost thou know where she lives ?

PHEMY

Somewhere not far distant, I believe : Black Bawldy the herd knows her den well enough.

ANNABELLA

Is he in the house at present ?

PHEMY

Very likely ; for this is the time when his cows are brought in for the milking.

ANNABELLA

Go find him, if thou canst, and send him to me immediately.

Phemy exits

ANNABELLA (cont)

If there be a spell to break wedlock, and to break affection also, it were well worth its purchase at any price ; yea, though the soul's jeopardy were added to the gold.

Phemy and Bawldy enter

PHEMY

I had not far to seek for him : he stood waiting in the passage, for the cooling of his brose.

ANNABELLA

Come nearer, Bawldy. Dost thou know where Grizeld Bane lives ?

BAWLDY

Ay, that I do, to my cost. She and her black cat, too, live ow'r near my milk kye. Brindle and Hawky gi' but half the milk they should gi', and we wat weel whare the ither half gangs to.

ANNABELLA

Never mind that, my good lad ! Hie to her immediately, and tell her to come to me.

BAWLDY

To you, lady?

ANNABELLA

Yes : to come to me without loss of time. — There is money for thee. Do thy errand speedily and secretly : let nobody know that I have sent thee.

BAWLDY

An' she's to come to you here, hidlings, as it war ?

ANNABELLA

Yes, Bawldy and when she comes, let her wait for me in the cattle shed, by the wood, and I'll meet her there. Dost thou understand me, man ? Go quickly.

BAWLDY

The night, lady?

ANNABELLA

Yes, to-night. Why dost thou look so scared ?

BAWLDY

I dama gang to her at night. — Gude be wi' us ! an I war to find her at her cantrips, I had better be belaired in a bog, or play coupcarling ow'r the craig o' Dalwhirry.

ANNABELLA

She must be very terrible to make thee so afraid.

BAWLDY

When she begins to mutter wi' her white wuthered lips, and her twa gleg eyen are glowering like glints o' wildfire frae the hollow o' her dark bent brows, she's enough to mak a trooper quake ; ay, wi' baith swurd and pistol by his side. — No, no, lady! the sun maun be up in the lift when I venture to her den.

ANNABELLA

Thou wilt get there before it be dark, if thou make good speed.

BAWLDY

No, though I had the speed o' a mawkin. It is gloaming already ; black clouds are spreading fast ow'r the sky, and far-off thunner is growling. There is a storm coming on, and the fiends o' the air are at wark ; I darna gang till the morning.

ANNABELLA

Timid loon ! Retire then, and go in the morning. But see that thou keep the secret, I'll give thee more money, if thou prove trusty and diligent.

Bawdly exits

PHEMY

The carrier will set off in a trice, madam.

ANNABELLA

Let him go.

PHEMY

And no orders given ?

ANNABELLA

Give him what orders thou wilt, and plague me no more.

Both exit

ACT 1 SCENE II.

Before the gate of Dungarren Tower; Anderson and other servants loitering.

Enter Dungarren returned from hunting

ANDERSON

I'm right glad to see your honour returned ; for the night draws on, and it wad hae been nae joke, I trow, to hae been belated on a haunted warlock moor, and thunner growling i' the welkin.

DUNGARREN

The sky indeed looks threatening.

ANDERSON

And what sport has your honour had the day ? The birds grow wilder every year, now.

DUNGARREN

Think you so, Anderson ?

ANDERSON

Troth do I ! There's something uncanny about them too. It's a fearfu' time we live in.

DUNGARREN

I have done pretty well, however. Give this to the housekeeper to increase the stores of her larder. *(Giving his bag to Anderson.)*

ANDERSON

By my faith ! she'll be glad enough o' sic a supply ; for Madam Annabell is come back again, wi' that episcopal lassie frae the Isle o' Barra, that reads out o' a prayer book, and ca's hersell her lady's gentlewoman. Lord be mercifu' to us ! the lady's bad enough, but Job himself could hardly thole the gentlewoman.

DUNGARREN

What has brought her back so soon ? She was to have staid a week in Dumbartonshire.

ANDERSON

That's more than I can say : but here comes Black Bawldy, wha was sent for to speak to her ; ay, and gaed into the very parlour till her. He, maybe, kens what has brought her back.

DUNGARREN

That's strange enough.

ANDERSON

Nae mair strange than traе. Into the very parlour : I saw him set his duty feet on the clean floor wi' my ain eyen.

Enter Bawldy

DUNGARREN

So, Bawldy, thou'rt become company for ladies in a parlour.

BAWL DY

Toot, your honour ! ony body's gude enough to haver wi' them, when they're wearying.

DUNGARREN

What makes Mrs. Annabell return to us so soon, if she be wearying ?

BAWL DY

She'll no weary now, when your honour's come hame.

DUNGARREN

Has any thing happened? She was to have staid a week in Dumbartonshire.

BAWL DY

May be she has been a week there, o' her ain reckoning, though we ca' it only twa days. Folks said when she gaed awa', that she wou'd na be lang awa'. It wou'd be as easy to keep a moth frae the can'le, or a cat frae the milk-house, as keep her awa' frae the tower o' Dungarren (*lowering his voice*) when the laird is at hame.

DUNGARREN

What sayst thou, varlet ?

BAWL DY

Only what I hear folks say, your honour.

DUNGARREN

Go thy ways to thy loft and thy byre. Folks are saucy, and teach lads to forget themselves.

Bawldy exits

DUNGARREN (cont)

Take it (*the bag*) in, Anderson.

Anderson exits

DUNGARREN

I thought to have crossed the threshold of my own house in peace. — To be pestered with the passion of an indelicate vixen ! — She fastens her affection upon me like a doctor's blister-sheet, strewed with all the stinging powders of the torrid zone, for daring and desperate medication.

And my gentle Violet, too : must she be still subjected to her scornful looks and insulting insinuations ? A noble spirit like hers, under such painful circumstances to be exposed to such insolence ! It shall not be : I will not suffer it. To affront a lady in my own house ? Not to be thought of ! To leave the country at once, and let the sea and its waves roll between us ? Ay, this were well, were not all that is dear to me left behind ; — my mother, my poor afflicted sister, my dear, dear Violet, the noble, distressed Violet Murrey. — No; I will stay and contend with the termagant, as I would with an evil spirit. Had she (*Annabella*) the soul of a woman within her, though the plainest and meanest of her sex, I would pity and respect her ; — but as she is - O ! shame upon it ! she makes me as bad as herself.

I know not what to do : I dare not enter yet.

Dungarren exits

ACT 1 SCENE III.

A wild moor, skirted on one side by a thick tangled wood, through which several open paths are seen. The stage darkened to represent faint moonlight through heavy gathering clouds. Thunder and lightning.

Enter Elspy Low, Mary Macmurren and her son Wilkin

MARY MACMURREN

Ay, ay ! this sounds like the true sound o' pryncedom and powerfu'ness.

ELSPY

Ay ; it sounds royally ! we shall nae mair be deceived ; it will prove a' true at last.

MARY MACMURREN

This very night we shall ken what we shall ken. We shall be wi' the beings of power — be wi' them and be of them.

ELSPY.

It is an awful din, and tells wi' a lordly voice wha is coming and at hand : we shall nae mair be deceived.

MARY MACMURREN

Dinna tug at me sa wickedly, Wilkin ; thou shalt ha' a bellyfu' soon o' the fat o' the lawn, my poor glutton.

WILKIN

Fou ! fou ! meat! great meat ! — hurr, hurr ! it's a coming !

MARY MACMURREN

We shall ha' what we list at last, — milk and meat ! meat and malt !

ELSPY

Mingling and merry-making ; and revenge for the best sport of a' !

MARY MACMURREN

Ay ; the hated anes will pay the cost, I trow. We'll sit at our good cogs of cream, and think o' the growling carle's kye wi' their udders lank and sapless, and the good wife greeting ow'r her kirn.

ELSPY

Ha, ha, ha ! there's good spice in that, woman, to relish far poorer fare.

MARY MACMURREN

They refused us a han'fu' in our greatest need, but now it wull be our turn to ha' fou sacks and baith cakes and kebbucks at command, while their aumery is bare.

ELSPY

Ha, ha, ha ! there's good spice in that kimmer.

MARY MACMURREN

Hear ye that ! the thunner grows louder and louder ; and here she comes wi' her arms in the air and her spirit as hie as the clouds. Her murky chief and his murky mates wull soon fra a' quarters o' the world, I warrant you, come trooping to their tryste.

Enter Grizeld Bane with wild frantic gestures

GRIZELD

Come, come, my mighty master !

Come on the clouds ; come on the wind !
Come for to loosen, and come for to bind !
Rise from the raging sea ; rise from the mine !
There's power in the night storm for thee and for thine !

MARY MACMURREN

Dost thou really see him ?

ELSPY

Dost thou see him ? or hear him ?

MARY MACMURREN

Is he near us ?

ELSPY

Is he on the moor ?

GRIZELD

Hold your peace, wretches ! he may start up by your side in an instant, and scare the very life from your body, if ye forget what I told you.

ELSPY

I have na' fogotten it.

MARY MACMURREN

Nor I neither. We're to tak' han's first of a'. And thine, too, Wilkin.

WILKIN

Meat, meat !

MARY MACMURREN

No, glutton ; thou mun gi' me thy haun and go round, as I told thee.

WILKIN

Round ! round ! pots be round, dishes be round ; a' fou for Wilkin ! hun-, hurr !

They all take hands, circle and chant

ALL

To the right, _ to the right, to the right we wheel ;
Thou heaving earth, free passage give, and our dark prince reveal.
To the left, to the left, to the left we go ;
Ye folding clouds, your curtain rend, and our great master show !

Loud thunder

ELSPY

Is he coming yet ?

MARY MACMURREN

Is he coming, Grizeld Bane ? I see nothing.

GRIZELD

(hands round Mary's neck) Hold thy peace, or I'll strangle thee ! Is it for a wretch like thee to utter earthly words on the very verge of such an awful presence ?

MARY MACMURREN

For God's sake ! — for Satan's sake ! — for ony sake, let gang thy terrible grip.

Loud thunder

GRIZELD

There's an astounding din to make your ears tingle ! as if the welkin were breaking down upon us with its lading of terror and destruction ! The lightning has done as I bade it. I see him, I see him now.

MARY MACMURREN

Where, where ? I see nothing.

ELSPY

Nor I either, Grizeld.

GRIZELD

Look yonder to the skirt of that cloud : his head is bending over it like a knight from the keep of a castle. Hold ye quiet for a space ; quiet as the corse in its coffin : he will be on the moor in a trice.

ELSPY.

Troth, I think he will ; for I'm trem'ling sae.

MARY MACMURREN

I'm trem'ling too, woman ; and sae is poor Wilkin.

Loud thunder

GRIZELD

Ay, roar away ! glare away ! roar to the very outrage of roaring ! Brave heralding, I trow, for the prince of the power of the air ! — He will be here, anon.

MARY MACMURREN

I'm sure he will, for my legs bend under me sae, I canna' stand upright.

GRIZELD

Hold thy tongue ! he is on the moor. Look yonder, where he is moving with strides like the steps of a man, and light by his side. Dost thou see it ?

MARY MACMURREN

Preserve us from scath ! I see like a man wi' a lantern. Dost thou see it, Elspy ?

ELSPY

Distinctly : and wi' what fearfu' strides he comes on !

GRIZELD

It is he ; he approaches. Bow your heads instantly to the earth, and repeat the Lord's Prayer backwards, if you can.

As the trio bow and mutter, Murrey enters, sees them, covers his lantern intending to avoid them.

GRIZELD

Do not pass from us ! stay with us ; speak to us, Satan ! Our spells are shrewd and sure, and thou knowest we have served and will serve thee. Turn not away ! Give us power and we'll worship thee. Art thou not come to our tryste ?

MURREY

Miserable women ! what brings you here at this hour in this place ? With whom have you made a tryste ?

GRIZELD

With thyself, mighty Satan ! for we know thee well enough for all the screen of darkness that enckles thee.

MURREY

(in a deep, strong, feigned voice) What is your will with me ?

GRIZELD

Give us power, and we'll worship thee.

MURREY

What power do you covet ? Power over goods and chattels, or power over bodies and spirits ? Say which, by your compact, you would purchase !

GRIZELD

Both, both !

MURREY

Ye ask too much ; take your choice of the one or the other.

MARY MACMURREN
What sayst thou, Elspy ?

ELSPY
I'll consider first.

MARY MACMURREN
Goods and chattels for my compact.

GRIZELD
Sordid caitiff ! Bodies and spirits for mine !

MURREY
I will see to that at convenient season.

ALL
Now, now !

GRIZELD
Let us have it now, mighty master, and we'll swear to the compact on this spot.

MURREY
Have ye considered it? Ye shall have your will on earth for a term, and then ye must serve my will in the pit of fire and brimstone for ever.

GRIZELD
Be it so ! and make this very night the beginning of our power.

MURREY
Ye are rare mates, indeed, to be so eagerly set upon evil.

GRIZELD
Are we not, master ? Swear us forthwith, and remove that dull darkness from thy presence. Call round thy liege imps and begin. Ay, ay ; they are all coming.

MARY MACMURREN
Where, where, Grizeld ?

GRIZELD
A score of grinning faces to the right and the left. Dost thou not see them, blind mole that thou art ? But where is he who was wont to attend thee, great chieftain ? Thou hast never a liege man like him.

MURREY
Whom dost thou mean, haggard dame ?

GRIZELD
He with the wreath round his throat ; the fellest and bravest of them all.

MURREY
He shall be with me when I meet you again.

GRIZELD
Do not leave us now, princely master ! do not deceive us again : bind us and give us power ere we part.

MURREY

Go to the further side of the wood, and I'll follow you : I may not bind you here, for I hear the sound of horses approaching. Begone ; mortal man must not disturb our rites.

Horses approach then stop. The Reverend Rutherford, riding crop in hand, appears behind a hillock. There is a flash of lightning that reveals the scene to him. Startled, he draws back and away.

At the same time the three women leave the scene

MURREY

And so there be verily such wretched creatures in the world, who are, or desire to be, in league with the wicked one ! It is a fearful and mortifying glimpse of human nature. I hope they have not scared my poor child upon her way ; or rather, that this awful storm has prevented her from coming abroad. O, would I had not requested her to meet me ! for I know her brave spirit and the strength of her affection ; neither storm nor danger will deter her. Why did I tempt her ? Alas, my gentle child ! is this the love of a parent ?

Here she is !

Violet enters

VIOLET My father ! my dear, dear father !

MURREY

My own sweet Violet ! all that I can call my own, and worth all that I have lost. But for thee, my dear child, I should in truth be, what I am now, by all but thyself, believed to be, — no longer a being of this world.

VIOLET

Say not so, my dear father ! are there not kindness and humanity every where, whether you receive it under one name or another ? And if this be not the case, take me with you, and you shall be no longer friendless and bereft.

MURREY

No, Violet ; that I will never do. To see thee by stealth, were it but a few times in the course of years, with sad dreary intervals between, is still worth living for ; and more than a man, stained with the blood of a fellow creature, deserves.

VIOLET

Ah, why will you tax yourself so harshly? The quarrel was fastened on you.

MURREY

Fool that I was, to let the angry reproaches of a fool get such mastery over me ! were reason, and prowess bestowed upon me for such a despicable use ? Oh ! had Fotheringham, who stood by, and was the only witness of the combat, endeavoured, as he might have done, to reconcile us, that blood had never been shed.

VIOLET

But what is past is past ; let us think of the lot which is our portion now — of that which lies before us. I will love you always, and think of you always, and be with you always, if you will permit me. The rank and the fare and the home that are good enough for you are good enough for me. And if Fotheringham be still in life, he may again appear to clear you from this crime. In the meantime, your supposed death and your supposed body being found and buried by your friends, give you in any distant retreat a complete security. Let me then, my dear father, go with you now, or follow you soon.

MURREY

Is there not one to be left behind who is dear to you ?

VIOLET

No one who is or ought to be so dear as you. And I shrink from the thought of being received into a family who will despise me.

MURREY

Violet, thou art too proud : thou hast my infirmity by inheritance. Yes, I was proud once : but, dead in men's belief, and separated from the social world, I am now, as it were, a dead man in my own feelings. I look on the things of this earth as though I belonged not to it. I am meek and chastened now, and will not encourage thee in the cherishing of imprudent unreasonable pride. But we will talk of this elsewhere : I hear voices from the wood. I fear they will return when they find I do not join them.

VIOLET

Whom do you mean ?

MURREY

Didst thou meet nobody on the way ?

VIOLET Nobody but our good minister going, as I suppose, to the Tower of Dungarren, to pray by the sick child.

MURREY

I hope he did not see you.

VIOLET

I hope he did not : for I tried to conceal myself behind a bush ; and he passed me in silence.

MURREY

Let us leave this spot : those creatures are returning to it. I will tell thee about them when we are in safety.

Murrey and Violet exit

ACT 1 SCENE IV.

A narrow passage hall or lobby.

Enter Phemy and Anderson

ANDERSON

We may a' gang to our beds now that are nae appointed to sit up.

PHEMY

What a terrible storm we have had ! The brazen sconces in the hall, with the guns, pistols, pikes, and claymores, made such a clattering, as if they were coming down upon our heads altogether, with the slates and rafters of the old roof on the top of all. I'm certain a thunderbolt struck somewhere or other on this unlucky house : I wish I were out of it.

ANDERSON

It's a pity ye dinna get your wish, then. I'm sure there's naebody rightfully belonging to this family that has ony mind to baulk it.

PHEMY

Don't be so hasty, Mr. Anderson : I had no intention to disparage the house of Dungarren, though there be neither silk nor tapestry on its walls, like the houses that I have lived in.

ANDERSON

Weel, weel ! be it sae ! Silk and tapestry may be plentier than manners in the rich island of Barra.

PHEMY

I have lived in other places than Barra, I assure you.

ANDERSON

I dinna doubt ye hae ; but let us mak nae mair quarrelling about it now, whan we shou'd a' be thankfu' that we war sheltered frae sic a storm in ony house. — Grizeld Bane and her mates war on the moor the night, I'll tak my aith on't. God help ony poor wanderer wha may hae been belated near their haunts ! I wadna hae been in his skin for the best har'st fee that ever was paid into a Lowlander's purse or a Highlander's spleuchan.

PHEMY

Was not the minister expected ?

ANDERSON

O! he belike, might cross the moor unscathed. It wad be a bauld witch or warlock either, that wad meddle wi' the minister. And that is the reason, I reckon, why he winna believe there is ony sic thing in a' the country about.

Enter Bawldy

PHEMY

Here comes Bawldy. What keeps thee up, man ?

BAWLDY

I'm waiting for the minister.

ANDERSON

Wha bade thee wait? What is Duncan about ?

BAWLDY

He's about a Highlandman's business, just doing naething at a'; and wad be snoring on the settle in the turning o' a bannock, if fear wad let him sleep.

PHEMY

Is he more afraid than the rest of you ?

BAWLDY

He has mair cause, mistress : he has seen bogles enough in his time, and kens a' the gaits and fashions o' them.

PHEMY

Has he indeed ?

BAWLDY Ay, certes ; by his ain tale, at least. We hae heard o' mawkins starting up in the shapes of auld women, whan chased to a cross running burn, but Duncan has seen it. Nae wonner if he be feared !

ANDERSON

Weel, than, an thou will sit up, he'll tell thee stories to keep thee frae wearying ; and I dinna care if I join you my sell for an hour or sae, for I'm naewise disposed for my ain bed in that dark turret-chamer.

BAWLIDY

But gin ye keep company wi' stable loons and herds, Mr. Anderson, ye'll gi' them, nae doubt, a wee smack o' your ain higher calling. Is the key o' the cellar in your pouch ? My tongue's unco dry after a' this fright.

ANDERSON

Awa' ye pawky thief ! Dost thou think that I'll herrie the laird's cellar for thee or ony body? — But there's the whiskey bottle in my ain cupboard, wi' some driblets in it yet, that ye may tak ; and deil a drap mair shall ye get, an thy tongue were as guizened as a spelding. I wonder wha learnt sic a youngster as thee to be sae pawky.

PHEMY

Bawldy has by nature cunning enough to lose nothing for want of asking ; and Mr. Anderson, too, has his own natural faculty for keeping what he has got. — Good night to you both.

ANDERSON

Good night to you. (*Aside*) I'm sure I wad rather bid you good night than good morrow, at ony time.

All exit

ACT 1 SCENE V

A large chamber, with a bed with a sick child, Lady Dungarren seated seated by it.

Enter Dungarren

DUNGARREN

Is she asleep ?

LADY DUNGARREN

Yes ; she has been asleep for some minutes.

DUNGARREN

Let me watch by her then, and go you to rest.

LADY DUNGARREN

I dare not : her fits may return.

DUNGARREN

The medicine you have given her will, I trust, prevent it : so do go to rest, my dear mother !

LADY DUNGARREN

No, dear Robert ; her disease is one over which no natural medicine has any power. As sure as there are witches and warlocks on earth — and we know there are — they have been dealing with her this night.

DUNGARREN

Be not too sure of this. The noise of the storm, and the flashes of lightning, might alarm her, and bring on convulsions.

LADY DUNGARREN

Ah, foolish youth ! thou art proud of the heathenish learning thou hast gleaned up at college, and wilt not believe what is written in Scripture.

DUNGARREN

Nay, mother, say only that I do not believe . . .

Annabella enters unnoticed

DUNGARREN (cont)

. . . such explanations of Scripture as have given countenance to superstitious alarm. Our good pastor himself attaches a different meaning to those passages you allude to, and has but little faith in either witches or apparitions.

LADY DUNGARREN

Yes, he has been at college, good man as he is. Who else would doubt of it ?

DUNGARREN

But Violet Murrey has not been at college, and she has as little faith in them as Mr. Rutherford.

ANNABELLA

If Violet Murrey's faith, or pretended faith, be the rule we are to go by, the devil and his bondsfolk will have a fine time of it in this unhappy county of Renfrew, She will take especial care to speak no words for the detection of mischief which she profits by.

DUNGARREN

Profits by ! What means that foul insinuation?

LADY DUNGARREN

Be not so violent, either of you. Soften that angry eye, Robert ; and remember you are speaking to a lady.

DUNGARREN

And let her remember that she is speaking of a lady.

ANNABELLA

What rank the daughter of a condemned malefactor holds in the country, better heralds than I must determine.

DUNGARREN

Malignant and heartless reproach ! Provoke me not beyond measure, Annabella. For this good woman's sake, for thy own sake, for the sake of female dignity and decorum, provoke me no more with words so harsh, so unjust, so unseemly.

ANNABELLA

Not so unseemly, Dungarren, as degrading the heir of an honourable house, with an attachment so --- but I will say no more.

DUNGARREN

You have said too much already.

LADY DUNGARREN

Hush, hush ! for heaven's sake be peaceable ! You have wakened the child from her sleep. Look how she

gazes about. Nurse ! nurse !

Enter Nurse.

NURSE

Are they tormenting her again ? They hae time now, when their storm and their revelry is past, to cast their cantrips here, I trow. O you ugly witch ! show your elrich face from behint the hangings there, an' I'll score you aboon the breath wi' a jocteleg.

LADY DUNGARREN

Dost thou see any thing ?

NURSE

I thought I just saw a waft o' her haggart visage in the dark shadow o' the bed hangings yonder. But see or no see, she is in this room, as sure as I am a Christian saul. What else should mak' the bairn stare sae, and wriggle wi' her body sae miserably ?

DUNGARREN

But are not you a bold woman, nurse, to threaten a witch so bloodily ?

NURSE

I'm bauld enough to tak' vengeance at my ain haun upon ony body that torments my bairn, though it war Satan himsel. Howsomever, I carry about a leaf o' the Bible sewed to my pouch, now ; for things hae come to sic a fearfu' pitch, that crooked pins and rowan-tree do next to nae good at a'. Bless us a' ! I wush the minister war come.

DUNGARREN

And you have your wish, nurse ; for here he is.

Enter the Reverend Rutherford

LADY DUNGARREN

My good sir, you are welcome : but my heart reproaches me for having brought you from home in such a dreadful night. What is the matter with you ?

DUNGARREN

He cannot speak.

LADY DUNGARREN

Sit down in this chair, my good sir. He is going to faint.

DUNGARREN

Has the lightning touched you, dear sir ?

RUTHERFORD

Not the lightning.

LADY DUNGARREN

Has aught happened to you on the moor ?

ANNABELLA

Have you seen any thing ? He has seen something.

DUNGARREN

Have you seen any thing, my good sir ?

RUTHERFORD

Nought, by God's grace, that had any power to hurt me.

DUNGARREN

But you have seen something which has overcome your mind to an extraordinary degree. Were another man in your case, I should say that superstitious fears had o'ermastered him, and played tricks with his imagination,

RUTHERFORD

What is natural or unnatural, real or imaginary, who shall determine ? But I have seen that, which, if I saw it not, the unassisted eyesight can give testimony to nothing.

LADY DUNGARREN and ANNABELLA

What was it ? What was it ?

Rutherford does not speak

DUNGARREN

You saw, then, what has moved you so much, distinctly and vividly ?

RUTHERFORD

Yea, his figure and the features of his face, as distinctly, in the bright glare of the lightning, as your own now appear at this moment.

DUNGARREN

A man whom you knew, and expected not to find at such an hour and in such a place. But what of this ? Might not such a thing naturally happen ?

RUTHERFORD

(lowering his voice) No, Robert Kennedy. He whose form and face I distinctly saw, has been an in-dweller of the grave these two years.

DUNGARREN

(in a low voice also). Indeed ! Are you sure of it ?

RUTHERFORD

I put his body into the coffin with mine own hands, and helped to carry it to the grave ; yet there it stood before me, in the bright blazing of the storm, and seemed to look upon me too, with a look of recognition most strange and horrible.

ANNABELLA

Whose ghost was it? Who was the dead man you saw ?

RUTHERFORD

I reckoned, madam, but upon one listener.

LADY DUNGARREN

Nay, be not angry with her. Who can well refrain from listening to such a tale ? And be not angry with me either, when I ask you one question, which it so much concerns me to know. Saw you aught besides this apparition ? any witches or creatures of evil ?

RUTHERFORD

I will answer that question, lady, at another time, and in greater privacy.

ANNABELLA

He has seen them ; it is evident he has. ,But some of his friends might be amongst them : there may be good cause for secrecy and caution.

DUNGARREN

Why do you press so unsparingly upon a man whose spirits have, from some cause or other, received such a shock ?

RUTHERFORD

I forgive her, Dungarren : say no more about it. It is God's goodness to me that I am here unhurt, again to do the duty of a Christian pastor to my dear and friendly flock now convened. Let me pray by the bed of that poor suffering child, for her, for myself, and for all here present.

LADY DUNGARREN

Let us put her in a different position before he begin: she must be tired of that ; for see, she moves again uneasily.

Lady Dungarren and Annabella make the child more comfortable

DUNGARREN

It is a most extraordinary and appalling apparition you have seen. What do you think of it?

RUTHERFORD

What can I think of it, but that the dead are sometimes permitted to revisit the earth, and that I verily have seen it.

DUNGARREN

I would more readily believe this than give credit to the senseless power and malevolence of witchcraft, which you have always held in derision.

RUTHERFORD

It is presumption to hold any thing in derision.

DUNGARREN

Ha ! say you so, in this altered tone of voice ? Have you met with any thing to-night to change your opinions on this subject ? Have you seen any of the old women, so strangely spoken of, on the moor ?

RUTHERFORD

Would that I had only seen such !

DUNGARREN

The voice in which you speak, the expression with which you look upon me, makes me tremble. Am I concerned with aught that you have seen ?

RUTHERFORD

You are, my dear Robert, and must think no more of Violet Murrey.

Yes ; it has stricken you to the heart. Think upon it as you ought. I expect no answer.

DUNGARREN

(endeavouring to recover speech) But I must - I will try - I must answer you - for I can believe nothing that accuses her.

RUTHERFORD

Were a daughter of my own concerned, I could not be more distressed.

DUNGARREN

It makes me distracted to hear thee say so !

RUTHERFORD

Go to thine own room, and endeavour to compose thy mind, and I will pray for thee here. Pray for thyself, too, in private : pray earnestly, for there is, I fear, a dreadful warfare of passion abiding thee.

Dungarren exits, Rutherford and the women kneel to pray - then exit

ACT 2. SCENE I.

The inside of a miserable cottage, with a coarse table by the wall, on which stand empty wooden bowls.

Enter Wilkin, who runs eagerly to the board, then turns away disappointed.

WILKIN

Na, na ! tuim yet ! a' tuim yet ! Milk nane ! parritch nane ! Tuim there ! tuim here ! Woe worth it ! to say they wad be fou, an' they're no fou ! Woe worth it ! woe worth them a' !

Enter Bawldy. Wilkin runs to him

BAWLDY

Han's aff, I tell thee !

WILKIN

Hast brought ony thing ? Gie me't, gie me't.

BAWLDY

(pulling a horseshoe from his pocket)

Stan' aff, I say ! Nane o' your witch nips for me ! I hae, maybe, brought what thou winna like, an thou hae wit enough to ken what it is.

WILKIN

Will't kill me ?

BAWLDY

Ay ; fule as he is. he's frightened for't - the true mark of warlockry. They hae linket him in wi' the rest : naething's ow'r waff for Satan, an it hae a soul o' ony kind to be tint.

WILKIN

Will't kill me ?

BAWLDY

No ; but I'll score thy imp's brow wi't, — that's what I'll do, — an tu lay a finger on me. But dinna glow'r sae :

stan' aff a bit, and answer my quastions, and there's siller for thee. Was tu on the moor i' the night-time, wi' thy mither ?

WILKIN
Mither?

BAWL DY
Ay ; was tu on the moor wi' her, whan the thunner roared ?

WILKIN
Thunner roared, fire roared, thunner roared ! hurl ! hurl ! hurl !

BAWL DY
Ay an' ye ware there ?

WILKIN
Ay, there.

BAWL DY
An' wha was there beside ?

WILKIN
Beside?

BAWL DY
Beside thee an' thy mither. What saw ye there ?

WILKIN
Black man an' fire : hurl! hurl !

BAWL DY
Gude saf us ! has tu seen the deil then, bodily ?

WILKIN
Deil, deil !

BAWL DY
Keep me frae scath ! That I should stand sae near ane that has been with Satan himsel ! What did you see forbye ?

WILKIN
Saw ? Saw folk.

BAWL DY
What folk ? Auld women ?

WILKIN
Auld women ; young women. Saw them a' on fire. Hurl ! hurl ! hurl !

BAWL DY
Saw a young woman ? Was it Maggy Kirk's crooket daughter ?

WILKIN

Na, joe ! young woman.

BAWLDY

What's her name ? What did they ca' her?

WILKIN

Lady - young lady, on fire.

BAWLDY

Gude saf us a' ! can this be true !

MARY MACMURREN (off)

I'll tak amends o' her for cheating us again.

ELSPY (off)

An' sae will I, spitefu' carline ! Maun naebody hae power but hersel ?

The two women enter as Bawldy hides

MARY MACMURREN

There's power to be had, that's certain: power that can raise the storm and the fiend ; ay, that can do ony thing. But we're aye to be puir yet : neither meat nor money, after a's dune !

ELSPY.

Neither vengeance nor glawmery, for a' the wicket thoughts we hae thought, for a' the fearfu' words we hae spoken, for a' the backward prayers we hae prayed ! — I'll rive her eyen out o' her head, though they shou'd glare upon us fi-ae their hollow sconces, like corpse-can'les frae a gravestane.

MARY MACMURREN

Even they puir cogs are as toom as before (*bowls as empty*), and my puir idiot as hungry. Hast tu had ony thing, Wilkin ?

Sees BAWLDY

What brought thee here, in a mischief to thee I Thou's Dungarren's herd, I reckon.

BAWLDY

I came frae the tower of Dungarren wi' an errand, I wou'd hae ye to wit.

MARY MACMURREN

Tell thy errand, then, and no lurk that gate, in a nook, like a thoumart in a dowcot : for if tu be come here without an errand, thou shalt rue it dearly to the last hour o' thy life.

BAWLDY

Isna this Grizeld Bane's house ?

MARY MACMURREN

No, silly loon ! it's my house. She's but a rinagate rawny, frae far awa' parts, that came to be my lodger. Ay ; and she may gang as she came, for me : I'll no harbour her ony mair. Nae mair Grizeld Banes in my house, to reeve an' to herrie me sae ! She maun pack aff wi' hersel this very day.

Enter Grizeld Bane.

GRIZELD

Who speaks of Grizeld Bane with such unwary words ? Repeat them, I pray thee.

Thou wilt not.

(to ELSPY) And what hast thou to say of Grizeld Bane ?

And thou, too, art silent before my face.

ELSPY.

There's a callant frae Dungarren, i' the nook, that comes on an errand to thee.

GRIZELD

(to Bawldy) Do not tremble so, silly child ! What is thine errand ?

BAWL DY

She bade me — she bade me say— ye maun come to her.

GRIZELD

To whom, and where ? Thou speakest as if my hand were already on thy throat, where it shall very soon be, if thou tell not thy errand more distinctly.

BAWL DY

The stranger lady at the tower, the lady Annabel!, desires that ye wad meet her in the lone shed, near the outer gate, in the afternoon. Gi' me an answer, an please ye.

GRIZELD *(chanting)*

Where there be ladies and where there be lords,
Mischief is making with glances and words.
Work is preparing for pistols and swords.

BAWL DY

Is that an answer ?

GRIZELD

She may take it for one ; but if it please thee better, thou mayst say to her, I will do as she desires. And take this token with thee, youngster.

BAWL DY

Na, na, I thank ye; I have answer enough.

Exit Bawldy hurriedly.

GRIZELD

(to the women) And ye are dissatisfied, forsooth! you must have power as you will and when you wUl.

ELSPY

Thou hast deceived us.

GRIZELD

Was there not storm enough to please ye ?

ELSPY.

Enough to crack the welkin ; but what got we by it ?

GRIZELD

Did he come in the storm ? Did you not see him and hear him ?

MARY MACMURREN

Certes did he ; but what gat we by it ? He keepit na' his tryste wi' us the second time ; an' we gaed wearily hame ou our feet, as wat and as puir as we came.

GRIZELD

O that false tongue ! ye rode upon clouds : I saw you pass over my head, and I called to you.

MARY MACMURREN

The woman is a fiend or bereft a' thegither ! I waket hame on my feet, en' gaed to my miserable bed, just as at any ony ither time, an' sa did she.

GRIZELD

But rode ye not afterwards, my chucks ? I saw you both pass over my head, and I called to you.

ELSPY

If we ware upon clouds, we ware sleeping a' the while, for I ken naething anent it. Do ye, neighbour?

MARY MACMURREN

I dare na' just say as ye say, kimmer, for I dreamt I was flying in the air and somebody behind me.

GRIZELD

Ay, ay, ay ; ye will discern mist and mysteries at last. But ye must have power, forsooth ! as ye list and ivhen ye list. If he did not keep tryste in the night, let us cast a spell for him in the day. When doors and windows are darkened, mid-day is as potent as midnight. Shut out the light and begin. But if he roar and rage at you when he does come, that is no fault of mine.

Grizeld draws a circle on the floor

MARY MACMURREN and ELSPY

Na, na I dinna bring him up now.

Mary and Elspy exit hurriedly

GRIZELD

Black of mien and stern of brow.
Dark one, dread one, hear me now !
Come with potency and speed ;
Come to help me in my need.
Kith and kindred have I none,
Ever wand'ring, ever lone.
Black of mien and stern of brow.
Dark one, dread one, hear me now !

He is now at hand ; the floor yawns under my feet, and the walls are running round ; he is here !

Ha! is it thou ? art thou risen in thy master's stead ? It becomes thee to answer my call ; it is no weak tie that has bound us together. I loved thee in sin and in blood : when the noose of death wrung thee,

I loved thee. And now thou art a dear one and a terrible with the prince of the power of the air. Grant what I ask ! grant it quickly. Give me of thy power ; I have earned it. But this is a mean, narrow den ; the cave of the lin is near, where water is sougning and fern is wa-ving ; the bat-bird clutching o'er head, and the lithe snake stirring below ; to the cave, to the cave ! we'll hold our council there.

She exits, showing the way to an invisible great person

ACT 2 SCENE II.

A flower garden hy the cottage of Violet Murrey

Enter Dungarren

DUNGARREN

The lily, and the rose, and the gilliflower ; things the most beautiful in nature, planted and cherished by a hand as fair and as delicate as themselves ! Innocence and purity should live here ; ay, and do live here : shall the ambiguous whisper of a frightened night-scared man, be his understanding and learning what they may, shake my confidence in this ? It was foolish to come on such an errand.

Yet being here, I had better have some parley with her : I may learn incidentally from her own lips, what will explain the whole seeming mystery. (*Looking on the flowers*) Pretty pansy ! thou hast been well tended since I brought thee from the south country with thy pretty friend, the carnation, by thy side. Ay, and ye are companions still ; thou, too, hast been well cared for, and all thy swelling buds will open to the sun ere long.

Enter Violet

VIOLET

You are come to look after your old friends, Dungarren ?

DUNGARREN

I have friends here worth looking after, if beauty and sweetness give value. Thou art an excellent gardener, Violet ; things thrive with thee wonderfully, even as if they were conscious whose flowers they are, and were proud of it.

VIOLET

Ah ! that were no cause for pride. Me-thinks, if they were conscious whose flowers they are, they would droop their heads and wither away.

DUNGARREN

Say not so : thou art melancholy ; the storm has affected thy spirits. Those who were abroad in it say that the lightning was tremendous.

VIOLET

It was tremendous.

DUNGARREN

And the rolling of the thunder was awful.

VIOLET

It was awful.

DUNGARREN

And the moor was at times one blaze of fiery light, like returning bursts of mid-day, giving every thing to view for an instant in the depth of midnight darkness.

One who was there told me so.

And more than that, a strange unlikely story.

But thou hast no desire to hear it : even natural curiosity has forsaken thee. What is the matter ?

VIOLET

Nothing is the matter: tell me whatever you please, and I will listen to it. Were witches on the moor ?

DUNGARREN

Yes, witches were there, but that is not my story. There was a form seen on the moor most unlike any thing that could be evil. Thou art pale and disturbed ; hast thou a guess of my meaning ?

VIOLET

The moor is wide, and benighted wanderers might be upon it of diff'erent forms and degrees.

DUNGARREN

But none who could look like one, whom, nevertheless, 'tis said, it did resemble.

VIOLET

Nay, nay, Dungarren ! do not amuse yourself with me : if the devil has power to assume what form he pleases, that will account for your story at once. If he has not, you have only to suppose that some silly girl, with her plaid over her head, was bewildered by the storm at her trysting place, and that will explain it sufficiently.

DUNGARREN

These are light words, methinks, to follow upon melancholy gravity so suddenly.

VIOLET

If my words displease you, Dungarren, there is more cause for sorrow than surprise, and the sooner I cease to offend the better.

DUNGARREN

Violet Murrey of Torwood !!!

VIOLET

Robert Kennedy of Dungarren !!!

DUNGARREN

What am I to think ?

VIOLET

Thoughts are free : take your range. Thinking is better than speaking for both of us : and so, if you please, we shall wish each other good morning.

DUNGARREN

We must not so part, my Violet. Had any woman but thyself used me thus, — but what of that! I love thee and must bear with thee.

VIOLET

No, Robert Kennedy ; thou lovest me not : for there is suspicion harboured in thy mind which love would have spurned away.

DUNGARREN

Say not harboured. O no ! Spurned and rejected, yet, like a trodden adder, turning and rearing again. I ask to know nothing that thou seekest to conceal. Say only that thou wast in thy own home during the night, as I am sure thou wast, and I will be satisfied, though all the diabolical witnesses of Renfrewshire were set in array against thee.

VIOLET

Must I be forced to bear witness in my own behalf ? There is one who should bear witness for me, and lacking that evidence, I scorn every other.

DUNGARREN

And where is that witness to be found ?

VIOLET

In the heart of Dungarren.

DUNGARREN

Thou wringst it to the quick ! I am proud and impetuous, but have I deserved this haughty reserve ? Dost thou part with me in anger ?

VIOLET

I am angry, and must leave thee ; but perhaps I am wrong in being so.

DUNGARREN

Indeed thou art wrong.

VIOLET

Be thou charitable, then, and forgive me ; but for the present let us part.

Violet exits

DUNGARREN

(increasingly angry) Her behaviour is strange and perplexing. Was her anger assumed or sincere ? Was she, or was she not, on that accursed moor ? " Some silly girl bewildered by the storm at her trysting place," — were not these her words? Ay, by my faith ! and glancing at the truth too obviously ; at the hateful, the distracting, the hitherto unsuspected truth. It is neither witch, warlock, nor devil, with whom she held her tryste. Yea, but it is a devil, whom I will resist to perdition ! It is a devil who will make me one also. O, this proud rising of my heart ! it gives the cruelty of distraction ; and, but for the fear of God within me, would nerve my hand for blood.

Violet returns

VIOLET

Oh Robert, Robert ! what mean those tossings of the arms — those gestures of distraction? You doubt my faith, you think me unworthy, and it moves you to this fearful degree. If I deserve your attachment I deserve to be trusted. Think of this, dear Robert, for it kills me to see you so miserable.

DUNGARREN

Dear ! you call me dear, only because you pity me.

VIOLET

I call thee dear, because — because — Out on thee, Robert Kennedy ! hast thou no more generosity than this ? (*bursts into tears*)

DUNGARREN

O forgive me, forgive me ! I have treated thee ungenerously and unjustly : forgive me, my own sweet girl !

VIOLET

I will not only forgive thee, but tell thee every thing when I am at liberty to do so. Let us now separate ; I have need of rest.

He leads her towards the house caressing her hand tenderly as they go.

ACT 2SCENE III.

A passage or entrance-room in the tower.

Enter Anderson.

ANDERSON

(looking off stage) What's the cunning loon standing, wi' his lug sae near that door for? *(calls out)* What's tu doing there, rascal ?

Bawldy enters

Wha gies thee leave to come near the chambers o' gentle folks, and lay thy blackened lug sae close to the key-hole ?

BAWLDDY

As for gentle folks, they come to me oftener nor I gang to them ; and as for my lug, there was nae need to lay it to the key-hole whan the door was lialf open.

ANDERSON

Catch thee who can unprovided wi' a ready answer ! Thou hast the curiosity o' the deevil in thee and his cunning to boot : what business hast thou to pry into people's secrets ?

BAWLDDY

A secret, forsooth, tauld wi' an open door and voices as loud as twa wives cracking in the lone ! And gude be wi' us a' ! they war only talking o' what we are a' talking or thinking o' fra' morning till night and fra' Sabbath day till Saturday.

ANDERSON

And what is that, ne'er-do-weel ?

BAWLDDY

What should it be but witchcraft and the young lady? But this last bout, I trow, is the strangest bout of a'.

ANDERSON

What has happened now ?

BAWLDY

As I was passing by the door, I heard nurse tell the lady Annabell how the young lady was frightened frae her rest, as she lay in her bed, wi' the room darkened.

ANDERSON

And how was that ?

BAWLDY

Witches cam' into the room, I canna tell how mony o' them, and ane o' them cam' upon the bed, and a'maist smooored her.

ANDERSON

The Lord preserve us !

BAWLDY

Ay ; and she would hae been smooored a'thegither, gin she had na claught hand of the witch's arm, and squeezed it sae hard that the witch ran awa', and left a piece o' her gown sleeve in the young lady's han'.

ANDERSON

It was Grizeld Bane or Mary Macmurren, I'll be bound for 't.

BAWLDY

Wha it was she could nae say, for she could nae see i' the dark.

ANDERSON

But the piece of the gown sleeve will reveal it. Show me that, and I'll ken wha it was, to a certainty. I ken ilka gown and garment belonging to them.

BAWLDY

So does nurse, too: but the young lady took a fit, as the roodies left the chaumer, and she has lost the clout.

ANDERSON

That was a pity. The chamber maun be searched for it carefully, else they'll come again, and wi' some cantrup or ither, join it into the sleeve it was riven frae, as if it ne'er had been riven at a'. But gang to thy crowdy, man, and dinna tine a meal for a marvel. Thou hast nae business here : the kitchen and the byre set thee better than lobbies and chambers.

Exit Bawldy

That callant lurks about the house like a brownie. He's a clever varlet, too : he can read the kittle names in the Testament, and ding the dominie himsel at the quastions and caratches. He's as cunning and as covetous as ony gray-haired sinner i' the parish ; — a convenient tool, I suspect, in the hands of a very artful woman.

Exit Anderson

ACT 2 SCENE IV.

The apartment of Annabella, who enters, and throws herself into a chair, remaining silent, for a short time, and then speaks impatiently.

ANNABELLA

What can detain her so long ? Could she miss finding him ? He is seldom far off at this hour of the day, Avhen broth and beef are on the board ; and he can send a boy to the hill as his substitute. I wish the sly creature were come ; for time passes away, and with it, perhaps, opportunity.

Enter Phemy

PHEMY

He's here, madam.

ANNABELLA

That's well. Let him enter immediately, and do thou keep watch in the outer room.

Exit Phemy and presently Bawldy enters

I want thee to do an errand for me again, Bawldy. Do not look so grave and so cowed, man : thou shalt be well paid for it.

BAWL DY

A'weel, I'm ready enough to do ony errand, gin there be nae witchery concerned wi 't.

ANNABELLA

And what the worse wilt thou be if there shouldd ? Didst thou not go to Grizeld Bane this morning, and return safe and sound as before, both soul and body, with a good crown in thy pocket to boot?

BAWL DY

Certes my body cam' back safe enough ; but for my pair saul. Lord hae mercy on it ! for when I gaed to my kye on the hill again, I tried to croon o'er to mysel the hunder and sixteen psalm, and second commandment, and could hardly remember a word o' them. Oh ! she's an awfu' witch, and scares the very wit frae ane's noddle.

ANNABELLA

Never fear, Bawldy : she has left thee enough of that behind to take care of thine own interest. Thou hadst wit enough, at least, to do thy business with her ; for she came to me in good time, to the spot which I appointed.

BAWL DY

If she kens the place, she may meet you there again, without my ganging after her. The Lord preserve us ! I wadna enter that house again for twa crowns.

ANNABELLA

Be not afraid, man : it is not to that house I would send thee ; and thou shalt have two crowns for thy errand, though it be both an easy and a short one.

BAWL DY

As for that, madam, an it were baith lang an' hard, I wadna mind it, so as it be an errand a Christian body may do.

ANNABELLA

A Christian body may go and speak a few words privately to Mrs. Violet Murrey's pretty maid, I should think.

BAWL DY

There's nae great harm in that, to be sure.

ANNABELLA

And a Christian body may slip a crown quietly into her hand, and

BAWLDY

(quietly) Ay, ane o' the twa ye spak o'.

ANNABELLA

No, indeed, Bawldy : a third crown, which I will give thee to take from tliine own pocket, and put into her pretty hand. Perhaps it may prove the forerunner of some other token between you. She is a good tight girl, but a few years older than thyself : she may take a fancy to thee.

BAWLDY

Ah ! Madam Annabel!, somebody has been telling you that I hae a fancy for her; for they never devall wi' tlieir havers. But what is she to do for the crown ? for I reckon she maun won it some way or anither.

ANNABELLA

In a very easy way. Tell her to send me her mistress's striped lutestring gown, for I want to look at the pattern of it, and will restore it to her immediately.

BAWLDY

Is that a' ?

ANNABELLA

Only thou must make her promise to conceal, from her mistress and from every body, that I borrowed the gown. Be sure to do that, Bawldy

BAWLDY

That's very curious, now. Whaur wad be the harm o' telling that ye just looket at it ?

ANNABELLA

Thou'rt so curious, boy, there's no concealing any thing from thee. Art thou silly enough to believe that I only want to look at it ?

BAWLDY

Na, I guessed there was somewhat ahint it.

ANNABELLA

And thou shalt know the whole, if thou wilt promise to me solemnly not to tell any body.

BAWLDY

I'll tell naebody. Gif my ain mither war to speer, she wad ne'er get a word anent it frae me.

ANNABELLA

I have been consulting with Grizeld Bane, about what can be done to relieve our poor sick child from her misery, — for those who put her into it can best tell how to draw her out of it, — and she says, a garment that has been upon the body of a murderer, or the child of a murderer, — it does not matter which, — put under the pillow of a witched bairn, will recover it from fits, were it ever so badly tormented. But, mark me well ! should the person who owns the garment ever come to the knowledge of it, the fits will return again, as bad as before. Dost thou understand me ?

BAWLDY

I understand you weel enough : but will witches speak the truth, whan the deil is their teacher ?

ANNABELLA

Never trouble thy head about that: we can but try. Fetch me the gown from thy sweetheart, and thou shalt have more money than this, by-and-bye.

BAWLDY

Since you will ca' her my sweetheart, I canna help it ; though I ken weel enough it's but mocking.

ANNABELLA

Go thy ways, and do as I bid thee without loss of time, and thou wilt soon find it good, profitable earnest. She will make a very good thrifty wife, and thou a good muirland drover, when thou'it old enough.

Exit Bawldy

ANNABELLA

Now shall I have what I panted for, and far better, too, than I hoped. To be tormented by witchcraft is bad ; but to be accused and punished for it is misery so exquisite, that to purchase it for an enemy were worth a monarch's ransom. Ay, for an enemy like this, who has robbed me of my peace, stolen the affections of him whom I have loved so ardently and so long ; yea, who has made me, in his sight, hateful and despicable. I will bear my agony no longer. The heart of Dungarren may be lost for ever ; but revenge is mine, and I will enjoy it. It is a fearful and dangerous pleasure, but all that is left for me.

(voice getting louder)

Oh, oh ! that I should live to see him the doating lover of a poor, homely — for homely she is, let the silly world call her what they please — artful girl, disgraced and degraded ; the daughter of a murderer, saved only from the gibbet by suicide or accident ! That I should live to witness this ! - But having lived to witness it, can revenge be too dearly purchased ? No ; though extremity of suffering in this world, and beyond this world, were the price.

Cease, cease ! ye fearful thoughts ! I shall but accuse her of that of which she is, perhaps, really guilty. Will this be so wicked, so unpardonable ? How could a creature like this despoil such a woman as myself of the affections of Dungarren, or any man, but by unholy arts ?

Enter Phemy

PHEMY

Madam, madam ! there are people in the passage!

ANNABELLA

And what care I for that ?

PHEMY

You were speaking so loud, I thought there was somebody with you.

ANNABELLA

Whom dost thou look for? Could any one be here without passing through the outer room ?

PHEMY

I crave your pardon, madam, they can enter by holes, as I have heard say, that would keep out a moth or a beetle.

ANNABELLA

Go, foolish creature ! Thy brain is wild with the tales thou hast heard in this house. Did I speak so loud ?

PHEMY

Ay, truly madam, and with such violent changes of voice, that I could not believe you alone.

ANNABELLA

I was not aware of it. It is a natural infirmity, like talking in one's sleep : my mother had the same. — I'll go to the garden, where the flowers and fresh air will relieve me.

PHEMY

Are you unwell ?

ANNABELLA

Yes, girl ; but say so to no one, I pray thee.

They exit

ACT 3 SCENE I.

A half formed cave, partly roofed with rock and partly open to the sky, which is seen through the overhanging bushes ; a burn or brook crossing the mouth of it, at the bottom of the stage, banked by precipitous rocks mixed with wood and fern.

MURREY (off)

Indeed, thou canst not pass this way.

VIOLET (off)

I don't mind it at all ; the water will do me no harm.

MURREY (off)

Thou shalt not wet thy feet, my dear child, when a father's arms are here, so able and so happy to carry thee.

Enter Murrey by the mouth of the cave, bearing Violet in his arms, whom he sets down by some loose rocks near the front of the stage.

VIOLET

Set me down, my dear father ; I am heavy.

MURREY

I could carry thee to the world's end, my own dear girl. O that thou wert again a baby, and mine arms locked round thee as of yore !

VIOLET

I remember it, father.

MURREY

Dost thou, sweet one ? Ah, ah ! thou in my arms, and she whom I loved by my side, and thy pretty wordless lips cooing to us by turns — an utterance that made all words contemptible ! Alas, alas ! such days, and many bright succeeding days, have been and are gone. The fatal passion of a few short moments has made me a homeless outlaw, while reproach, instead of protection, is a father's endowment for thee.

VIOLET

Dear, dear father ! do not reproach yourself so harshly. If the world call what you have done by a very

dreadful name, it is not a true one : equal fighting, though for a foolish quarrel, deserves not that appellation.

MURREY

Whatever it may deserve, it will have it, when there is no witness to prove the contrary. Fotheringham alone was present, and he disappeared on the instant. When my trial came, I could not prove that the man I had slain fell in equal combat ; nay, was the real aggressor in first attacking me.

VIOLET

It was cowardly and strange, — it was not the act of a friend to disappear and leave you so exposed.

MURREY

Some evil fate befell him : he was not alive, I am certain, when I was apprehended, else he would have come forward like an honest, manly friend in my justification. The sentence of death is upon me ; the mark of Cain is on my forehead ; I am driven from the fellowship of men.

VIOLET

Say not so ; for you have by the accidental death of your servant been, as it were, providentially saved from a fearful end ; and being so saved, I must needs believe that some better fortune is in reserve for you.

MURREY

Ay, poor Donald ! I believe he would willingly have died for my sake, and Providence did so dispose of him. I little thought, after my escape from prison, when I had changed apparel with him, how completely our identity was to be confounded. He lies in the grave as James Murrey of Torwood, — in an unhallowed grave, as a murderer.

VIOLET

Were you near him when he fell into the pit?

MURREY

Dear Violet, thou art bewildered to ask me such a question ! When we had changed clothes completely, and I had even forced upon him as a gift, which he well deserved, the gold watch and seals of my family, we parted ; and when his body was discovered, many weeks afterwards, the face, as I understand, from the mutilations of bruises and corruption, was no longer recognizable. But this is a mournful subject, and it is useless to dwell upon it now.

VIOLET

Very true ; let us speak of those things for which there is still cause of thankfulness. The Irish home you have found on the mountains of Wicklow, is it not a pleasant one ?

MURREY

Pleasant to those who look on sky and cliff, on wood and toiTent, to rouse and refresh the mind, in the intervals of such retirement as hath a purpose and a limit. To the lonely outcast what scene is pleasant ? The meanest man who plies his honest trade in the narrow lane of a city, where passers-by may wish him a good day, or bid God speed him, has a domicile and a home which I think of with envy.

VIOLET

O do not, then, live any longer in this deserted situation !

MURREY

I know what thou wilt offer, but it must not be.

VIOLET

Why so ? Since I have lost my dear mother, and have no farther duties to detain me here, may I not cross the sea with you now, and spend some time with you in Wicklow. It will be thought that I am gone to visit our Irish relation.

MURREY

No, my affectionate child, that may not be.

VIOLET

I should go to our relation first, and nobody should know that I went anywhere else but Dungarren ; nor should I even tell it to him without your permission.

MURREY

Which thou shalt never have.

VIOLET

Why do you utter those words so vehemently ? He is honourable and true.

MURREY

He is thy lover, and thou believest him to be so.

VIOLET

Are you displeased that he is my lover ?

MURREY

Yes, I am displeased, for he will never be thy husband.

VIOLET

O think not so hardly of him ! in his heart there is honour even stronger than affection. And if I might but tell him of your being alive

MURREY

Art thou mad ? art thou altogether bereft of understanding ? Swear to me, on the faith of a Christian woman, that thou wilt never reveal it.

VIOLET

He is incapable of betraying any one, and far less –

MURREY

Hold thy tongue ! hold thy tongue, simple creature ! Every man seems true to the woman whose affections he hath conquered. I know the truth of man and the weakness of woman. Reason not with me on the subject, but solemnly promise to obey me. I should feel myself as one for whom the rope and the gibbet are preparing, should any creature but thyself know of my being alive.

VIOLET

Woe is me ! this is misery indeed.

MURREY

Do not look on me thus with such mingled pity and surprise. Call what I feel an excess of distrust — a disease — a perversion of mind, if thou wilt, but solemnly promise to obey me.

VIOLET

Let my thoughts be what they may, I dare not resist the will of a parent ; I solemnly promise.

MURREY

I am satisfied, and shall return to my boat, which waits for me on the Clyde, near the mouth of this burn, with a mind assured on so important a point, and assured of thy good conduct and affection.

I hear a noise!

VIOLET

'Tis the moving of some owl or hawk in the rifts of the rock overhead. To this retired spot of evil report no human creature ever ventures to come, even at mid-day.

MURREY

Yes, I remember it used to be called the Warlock's den, and had some old legendary pretensions to the name. But there is a noise.

Looks up to the open part of the cave, and sees Dunganren looking down upon them

VIOLET

It is Dunganren; what shall we do? Begone, father.

MURREY

I must stand to it now ; he will be down upon us in an instant : it is too late to avoid him.

VIOLET

No, it is not ; he shall not come down.

Robert Kennedy, is it thou ?

DUNGARREN

Does the voice of Violet Murrey dare to ask me the question ?

VIOLET

Stay where thou art, and come no farther ; I dare ask of thee to be secret and to be generous.

DUNGARREN

Distracting and mysterious creature, I obey thee. *(Retires.)*

VIOLET

(quiet) He retires, and we are safe. Let us now separate. Farewell, my dear father! you will come and see me again ?

MURREY

I hope next summer to pay thee another and a less hurried visit. Farewell. No, no ! do not embrace me.

VIOLET

He has retired, and will not look again.

MURREY

Be not too confident. Farewell, and remember thy solemn promise. My ship will sail for Ireland to-morrow morning early, and thou shalt hear from me soon.

Exit Murrey

VIOLET

If they should meet without, and they may do so ! — But that must not be. (*Calling Dungarren, Dungarren !*
art thou still within hearing ?

Dungarren re-appears above.

I cannot speak to thee in so loud a voice ; come down to me here.

He descends and stands before her with a stem and serious look

Robert Kennedy ! look not on me thus ! I meant to thank you for your friendly forbearance, but now I have
no utterance : I cannot speak to you when you so look upon me.

DUNGARREN

Silence is best where words were vain and worthless.

VIOLET

You deserve thanks, whether you accept them or not.

DUNGARREN

To obey the commands of a lady deserves
none.

VIOLET

Nay, but it does, and I thank you most gratefully. He who was with me is gone, but — but —

DUNGARREN

But will return again, no doubt, when the face of a casual intruder will not interrupt your conference.

VIOLET

O no! he will not return — may never return. Who he is, and where he goes, and how I am bound to him, O
how I long to tell thee all, and may not !

DUNGARREN

What I have seen with mine eyes leaves you nothing to tell which I am concerned to hear.

VIOLET

Be it so, then ; since the pride of your heart so far outmates its generosity.

DUNGARREN

You have put it out of my power to be generous ; but you desire me to be secret, and shall be obeyed. Is it
your pleasure, madam, that I should conduct you to your home, since he who was with you is gone ?

VIOLET

That I accept of a service so offered, shows too well how miserably I am circumstanced. But I do accept it :
let me leave this place.

DUNGARREN

Not by the burn, the water is too deep.

VIOLET

I came by it, and there is no other way.

DUNGARREN

Came by it, and dry-shod too ! He who was with thee must have carried thee in his arms.

VIOLET

Yes, he did so ; but now I will walk through the stream : wet feet will do me no injury.

DUNGARREN

There is another passage through a cleft rock on this side, concealed by the foxglove and fern.

VIOLET

Lead on, then, and I'll follow.

They exit

Act 3 SCENE II.

A large hall or entrance-room

Enter Nurse with a tankard followed by Anderson

ANDERSON

Nurse, nurse, I say ! Is the woman deaf?

NURSE

What are ye roaring after me for ? Can a body get nae peace nor comfort ony time o' the day or night? Neither o' them, by my troth, bring muckle rest to me.

ANDERSON

That may be, but ye'r tankard comforts, that belang, as it wad seem, to baith day and night, maun be stinted at present ; for the sheriff and a' his rascally officers frae Paisley are at the yett, and writers beside. Lord preserve us ! wi' ink-horns at their buttons and paper in their hands. Gae tell the lady quickly, and set ye'r tankard down.

NURSE

For the sheriff officers to lay their lugs in. Na, na ! sma'er browst may serve them ; I'll mak' sure o' some o't.

Nurse exits

ANDERSON

I wonder whaur the laird is : it's an unchancy time for him to be out of the gaet. Donald, Donald !

Enter Donald.

Whaur's the laird ? He should be here to receive the sheriff.

DONALD

He's no in the house.

ANDERSON

Gang and find him in the fields, then.

DONALD

He's no in the fields, neither.

ANDERSON

Whaur is he, then ?

DONALD

He'll be a clever fellow, I reckon, that finds him on the hither side o' Dumbarton.

ANDERSON

How dost tu ken that sa weel ? What suld tak him to Dumbarton ?

DONALD

His ain ill humour, I believe, for he returned fra' the fishing wi' his knit brows as grumly as a thunner cloud on the peak o' Benlomond, and desired me to saddle his mear : and he took the road to the ferry without speaking anither word ; and the last sight I gat o' the mear and him was frae the black craig head, whan they war baith in the boat thegether, half way over the Clyde.

ANDERSON

That's unlucky : I maun gang to the yett and receive the sheriff mysel, as creditably as I can.

DONALD

Ye may save yoursel that trouble, I trow, for he has made his way into the house already.

Enter the Sheriff with his Officers and Attendants, and Servants of the family following them.

SHERIFF

We would see the Laird of Dungarren.

ANDERSON

He's frae hame, an please your honour.

SHERIFF

From home ! are you sure of this ? we come on no unfriendly errand.

ANDERSON

I mak' nae doubt o' that, your honour : but he is frae hame, and far a-field, too.

SHERIFF

That is unfortunate ; for I am here officially to examine the members of his household. His mother, I presume, is at home ?

ANDERSON

Yes, your honour ; the lady is at hame, and will come to you immediately.

SHERIFF

It is said you have been disturbed with strange noises and visitations in this family, and that the young lady is more tormented than ever. What kind of noises have been heard ?

ANDERSON

O Lord, your honour, sic elrich din ! I can compare it to nothing. Sometimes it's like the souging o' wind ; sometimes like the howling o' dogs.

DONALD

Sometimes like the mewling o' cats ; sometimes like the clattering o' broomsticks.

SERVANT

Sometimes like the hooting o' howlets ; and sometimes like a black sow grunting.

SHERIFF

A black sow grunting !

DONALD

Ay, please your honour. The grunt of a black sow is as de'il-like as its colour : I wad ken't, in the dark, frae ony white sow that ever wore a snout.

SHERIFF

Well, sometimes hooting of owlets, and the grunting of a black sow.

ANDERSON, DONALD, SERVANTS

And sometimes like a --

SHERIFF

Spare me, spare me, good folks ! I can listen but to one at a time.

Enter Lady Dungarren, Annabella, Phemy, Nurse and more servants

Good day, and my good service to you, Lady Dungarren. I'm sorry the laird is from home : my visit may perhaps disturb you.

LADY DUNGARREN

Do not say so, sheriff; I am at all times glad to see you ; but were it otherwise, we are too well accustomed to be disturbed in this miserable house, to think much of any thing.

SHERIFF

I am very sorry for it, — very sorry that your daughter continues so afflicted. — *{Showing her a paper.}* Have you any knowledge of this paper ? The information contained in it is the cause of my present intrusion.

LADY DUNGARREN

I know nothing of the paper itself; but the information it conveys is true.

SHERIFF

Have you ever seen the handwriting before ?

LADY DUNGARREN

No — yes — I think I have. Look at it, Annabella : it is somewhat like your own.

ANNABELLA

Dear madam, how can you say so ? The l's, and the m's, and the n's are all joined stiffly together, and you know very well that I never join my letters at all.

LADY DUNGARREN

Very true, cousin ; I see there is a great difference now, and I don't know whose hand it is, though doubtless the hand of a friend ; for we cannot remain in this misery much longer. It should be examined into, that the guilty may be punished, and prevented from destroying my poor child entirely.

SHERIFF

Has any person of evil repute been admitted to see her ? Who has been in her chamber ?

LADY DUNGARREN

Who has been visibly in her chamber, we can easily tell ; but who has been invisibly there, the Lord in heaven knows.

SHERIFF

Have they never been visible to the child herself whom they torment ?

LADY DUNGARREN

She has stared, as though she saw them.

ANNABELLA

She has shrieked, as though they laid hold of her.

NURSE

She has clenched her hands as if she had been catching at tliem.

PHEMY

Ay, and moved her lips as if speaking to them. I saw her do it.

NURSE

And so did I ; and I saw her grin, and shake her head so, most piteously.

PHEMY, NURSE, SERVANT

And I saw her –

SHERIFF

Softly, softly ! Three tellers are too many for one tale, and three tales are too many for one pair of ears to take in at a time. (*to Lady Dungannen*) Has she ever told you that she saw witches by her bed-side ?

LADY DUNGARREN

Yes ; several times she has told me so, in wild and broken words.

SHERIFF

Only in that manner.

ANNABELLA

You forget, madam, to mention to the sheriff, that she told us distinctly, a few hours ago, how a witch had been sitting on her breast, as she lay in bed ; and that, when she struggled to get rid of her, she rent a piece from the sleeve of her gown.

SHERIFF

The witch rent the sleeve from her gown?

NURSE

No, no, your honour ; our poor child rent a piece frae the sleeve o' the witch's gown.

SHERIFF

Has the piece been found ?

ALL SPEAKING AT ONCE

Ay, ay ! it has ! it has !

SHERIFF

Silence, I say ! — *(To Annabella)* Have the goodness to answer, madam : has the rag been preserved ?

ANNABELLA

It has, sir ; but it is no rag, I assure you.

NURSE

As good silk, your honour, as ever came frae the Luckenbooths of Edinburgh.

SHERIFF

Are not witches always old and poor ? The devil must have helped this one to a new gown, at least ; and that is more than we have ever heard of his doing to any of them before.

ANNABELLA

We have read of witches who have been neither old nor poor.

SHERIFF

Ha ! is there warrantry, from sober sensible books, for such a notion ? I am no great scholar on such points : it may be so. — But here comes the minister : his better learning will assist us.

Enter Rev Rutherford.

I thank you, my reverend sir, for obeying my notice so quickly. Your cool head will correct our roused imaginations : you believe little, I have heard, of either apparitions or witches.

RUTHERFORD

My faith on such subjects was once, indeed, but weak.

SHERIFF

And have you changed it lately?

Since when has your faith become stronger ?

SEVERAL VOICES

Since the storm on Friday night ; when Mary Macmurren and a' the crew were on the moor.

SHERIFF

Silence, I say again ! Can the minister not answer for himself, without your assistance ? — You heard my question, Mr. Rutherford : were you upon the moor on that night ?

RUTHERFORD

I was.

SHERIFF

And saw you aught upon the moor contrary to godliness and nature ?

RUTHERFORD

What I saw, I will declare in fitter time and place, if I must needs do so.

SHERIFF

Well, well, you are cautious, good sir ; and, perhaps, it is wise to be so. — Lady Dungarren, with your permission, I will go into the sick chamber and examine your daughter myself.

LADY DUNGARREN

You have my permission most willingly. Follow me immediately, if you please, and ask the poor child what questions you think fit. Mr. Rutherford, do you choose to accompany us ?

Exit all except Anderson, Nurse, Donald, Phemy

ANDERSON

And he'll gie nae answer at a', even to the sheriff.

NURSE

Certes, were he ten times a minister, he should hae tauld what he saw to the sheriff of the county.

DONALD

A gentleman born and bred, and the king's appointed officer into the bargain.

NURSE

And he winna tell what he saw afore us, forsooth — for that's what he means by fitter time and place — foul befa' his discretion! He wadna believe in witches, I trow ; but they hae cowed him weel for 't at last.

ANDERSON

To be sure, he looket baith ghastrly and wan, when the sheriff speered what he saw upon the moor.

NURSE

Ay, ay, it was some fearfu' sight nae doubt. God's grace preserve us a' ! the very thought o' what it might be gars my head grow cauld like a turnip.

DONALD

It was surely something waur than witches dancing that frightened the minister.

NURSE

As ye say, Donald : either Highlander or Lowlander has wit enough to guess that. I like nane o' your ministers that'll speak naewhere but in the pu'pit. Fitter time and place, quotha !

ANDERSON

Hoot, toot, woman ! he has gotten his lear at the college, and he thinks shame to be frightened.

NURSE

Foul befa' him and his lear too ! It maun be o' some new-fangled kind, I think. Our auld minister had lear enough, baith Hebrew and Latin, and he believed in witches and warlocks, honest man, like ony ither sober, godly person.

ANDERSON

So he did, nurse ; ye're a sensible woman, but somewhat o' the loudest, when ye're angry. Thae gude folks want some refection, I trow ; and there's gude yill and ham in the buttery.

Exit Anderson

NURSE

Whaur can Black Bawldy be? His smooty face is seldom missing whan ony mischief is ganging on !

PHEMY

What do you want with him ?

NURSE

To send him owre the craft for the new-laid eggs, that the ploughman's wife promised us.

PHEMY

He has been sent further off on another errand already.

NURSE

And wha sent him, I should like to ken, whan we are a' sae thrang ?

PHEMY

My lady sent him.

NURSE

Your lady, say ye ! She has grown unco intimate wi' that pawky loon o' late : I wish gude may come o't. I maun gang for the eggs mysel, I warrant. — But I maun e'en gang first to the chaumer door, and listen a wee ; though we'll only hear the hum o' their voices, an our lugs war as gleg as the coley's.

PHEMY

And I'll go with you too : the hum of their voices is worth listening for, if nothing more can be heard.

They exit

ACT 4 SCENE I.

An open space before the Abbey Church of Paisley.

Enter the Sheriff and the Reverend Rutherford, in earnest discourse.

SHERIFF

Yes, you may, indeed, be well assured that I have never, during all the years in which I have served the office of sheriff of this county, performed a duty so painful ; and I am very sensible that what I am compelled to summon you to perform, is still more distressing.

RUTHERFORD

Were it not sinful, I could wish myself incapable, from disease or disaster, or any other let, of giving legal testimony. Oh ! to think of it clouds my brain with confusion, and makes me sick at heart ! Violet Murrey, the young, the unfortunate, the gentle, and, I firmly believe, the innocent, — to give evidence to her prejudice, — it is a fearful duty !

SHERIFF

It is so, good sir ; yet it must be done. I have taken into custody, on accusation of witchcraft, the fairest woman in the west of Scotland ; and you must answer on oath to the questions that may be put to you, whether it be for or against her. If she be innocent. Providence will protect her.

Enter the Chief Baillie of Paisley

BAILLIE

If she be innocent ! Can any one reasonably suppose that such a creature would be accused, or even suspected, but on the strongest proofs of guilt ? Some old haggard beldame, with an ill name at any rate,

might be wrongfully suspected ; but Violet Murrey, good sooth ! must have been where she should not have been, ere a tongue or a finger in the county would have wagged to her prejudice.

SHERIFF

That's what your wife says, I suppose.

BAILLIE

By my faith, sheriff, it's what every body says ; for it stands to reason.

RUTHERFORD

That it stands to folly, would be an apter cause for every body's saying it, my worthy baillie.

BAILLIE

Grace be with us all ! does a minister of the Gospel set his face against that for which there be plain texts of Scripture ? And when cattle are drained dry, children possessed, storms raised, houses unroofed, noises in the air, and every one's heart beating with distrust and fear of his neighbour, — is this a time for us to stand still, and leave free scope for Satan and his imps to lord it over a sober and godly land ? By my certes ! I would carry faggots wdth my own hands to burn my nearest of kin, though her cheeks were like roses, and her hair like threads of gold, if she were found, but for one night, joining in the elrich revelry of a devil's conventicle. *{A distant trumpet heard.}* Ha ! the judges so near the town already !

SHERIFF

Would they were further off ! they come sooner than I reckoned for.

BAILLIE

Soon or late, we must go to meet them, as in duty bound. — You take precedence, sheriff; I will follow you.

Exeunt Sheriff and Baillie

RUTHERFORD

What is or is not in this mysterious matter, lies beyond human reason to decide. That I must swear to the truth of what I have seen, when questioned thereupon by authority, is my only clear point of discernment. Hard necessity ! My heart, in despite of every proof, whispers to me she is innocent. *(A loud brawling and tumult heard)* What noise is this ? — The senseless exasperated crowd besetting one of those miserable women who held orgies on the heath on that dreadful night.

Enter Mary Macmurren and Wilkin, in the custody of constables, and surrounded by a crowd, who are casting dust etc at her, the constables endeavouring to keep them off.

CROWD

Deil's hag ! she'll pay for her pastime now, I trow.

For a' the milk kye she has witched.

For a' the bonnie bairns she has blasted.

She girns like a brock at a terry-dog.

Score her aboon the breath, or she'll cast a cantrup, and be out o' your han's in a twinkling.

MARY MACMURREN

What gars ye rage at me sae ? I ne'er did nae harm to nane o' ye.

CROWD

Hear till her ! hear till her ! how she lees !

CROWD

And what for no ? Leeing is the best o' their lear, that hae the de'il for their dominie.

CROWD

Ay, wicket witch ; leeing's nought to her : but we'll gie her something forbye words for an answer. Wha has gotten a joeteleg (*knife*) to score the wrinkled brow o' her ?

CROWD

Here ! here !

The crowd rush furiously upon her, and are with difficulty kept off by the constables.

CONSTABLE

Stand back, I say, every mither's son o' ye, an' every faither's daugliter to boot. If the woman be a witch, winna she be burnt for't, as ithers o' that calling hae been afore her ? Isna that enough to content ye ?

CROWD

Ay, we'll soon see that ugly face, glowering through the smoke o' her bonfire, like a howlet in the stour of an auld cowping barn.

CROWD

An that piece o' young warlockry by her side, see how he glow'rs at us ! can tu squeek, imp ?

WILKIN

O dule ! O dear ! the're meddling wi' me.

CONSTABLE.

Shame upon ye, shame upon ye a' ! Ha' ye nae better way o' warring wi' the de'il than tormenting a poor idiot ?

MARY MACMURREN

Shame upon ye ; he's a poor fatherless idiot.

CROWD

Fatherless, forsooth! He's a fiend-begotten imp I warrant ye, and should be sent to the dad he belongs to.

CONSTABLE

Red the way, I say, and gang out o' our gait, ilka saul and bouk o' ye ! The judges are at han', and my prisoner maun be carried or they come, else they'll order ye a' to the tolbooth at a swoop.

Exit all

ACT 4 SCENE II.

A poor, mean room in a private house in Paisley.

Enter Annabella

ANNABELLA

Now let me breathe awhile, and enjoy my hard-earned triumph unconstrainedly. — Revenge, so complete,

so swift-paced, so terrible ! It repays me for all the misery I have endured. — May I triumph ? dare I triumph? — Why am I astounded and terrified on the very pinnacle of exultation ? Were she innocent, Providence had protected her. What have I done but contrived the means for proving her guilt ? Means which come but in aid of others that would almost have been sufficient.

Enter Bawldy

BAWLDDY

O dule ! O dule ! she's condemned ! she'll be executed, she'll be burnt, she'll be burnt the morn's morning at the cross, and a' through my putting that sorrowfu' gown into your hands, and by foul play, too, foul befa' it ! hone, O hone !

ANNABELLA

What's all this weeping and wringing of hands for ? Art thou distracted ?

BAWLDDY

I kenna how I am, I care na how I am; but I winna gang to hell wi' tlie death of an innocent ladyon my head, for a' the gowd in Christentie.

ANNABELLA

Poor fool ! what makes thee think that the gown thou gottest for me had any thing to do with her condemnation ?

BAWLDDY

O you wicked woman ! I ken weel enough ; and I ken what for yon confined me in that back chammer sae lang, and keepit my brains in sic a whirlgig wi' whiskey and potations.

ANNABELLA

Thou knowest ! how dost thou know ?

BAWLDDY

I set my lug to a hole in the casement, and heard, folks below in the close telling a' about the trial. It was that gown spread out in the court, wi' a hole in the sleeve o't, matching precisely to a piece o' the same silk, which na doubt you tore out yonsel whan it was in your hands, that made baith judge and jury condemn her.

ANNABELLA

Poor simpleton ! didst thou not also hear them say, that the minister, sore against his will, swore he saw her on the moor, where the witches were dancing, in company with a man who has been in his grave these three years ? was not that proof enough to condemn her, if there had. been nothing more ?

BAWLDDY

It may be sae.

ANNABELLA

And is so. Is not Mary Macmurren a witch ? and has not she been condemned upon much slighter evidence ? Thou'rt an absolute fool, man, for making such disturbance about nothing.

BAWLDDY

Fool, or nae fool, I'll gang to the sheriff and tell him the truth, and then my conscience will be clear frae her death, whate'er she may be.

ANNABELLA

Her death, frightened goose ! Dost thou think she will really be executed ?

BAWLDY

I heard them say, that she and Mary Macmurren are baith to be burnt the morn's morning.

ANNABELLA

They said what they knew nothing about. Mary Macmurren will be burnt, for an example to all other witches and warlocks, but a respite and pardon will be given to Violet Murrey : it is only her disgrace, not her death, that is intended ; so thy conscience may be easy.

BAWLDY

If I could but believe you !

ANNABELLA

Believe me, and be quiet ; it is the best thing thou canst do for thyself, and for those who are dearest to thee. Be a reasonable creature, then, and promise to me never to reveal what thou knowest.

BAWLDY

I will keep the secret, then, since she is not to suffer. But winna you let me out the morn to see the burning o' Mary Macmurren ? It wad be a vexatious thing to be sae near till't, and miss sic a sight as that.

ANNABELLA

Thou shalt have all reasonable indulgence. But what scares thee so ?

BAWLDY

(trembling) I hear the voice o' Grizeld Bane. She maun ha' been below the grund wi' her master sin' we last gat sight o' her at the tower, else the sheriff officers would ha' grippet her wi' the rest. Lord preserve us ! is she coming in by the door or the winnoch, or up through the boards o' the flooring ? I hear her elrich voice a' round about us, an my lugs ring like the bell o' an awmous house.

Enter Grizeld Bane

GRIZELD

Now, my brave lady, my bold lady, my victorious lady ! Satan has many great queens in his court, many princesses in his court, many high-blooded beauties in his court ; I saw them all last night, sweeping with their long velvet robes the burning pavement of it : thou wilt have no mean mates to keep thee company, and thou wilt match with the best of them too ; there is both wit and wickedness in thee to perfection.

ANNABELLA

Hush, hush, Grizeld Bane ! What brings thee here ? Are there not good ale and spirits in thy cellar, and a good bed to rest upon ? What brings thee here ?

GRIZELD

Shame of my cellar ! thinkst thou I have been there all this time ? I have been deeper, and deeper, and deeper than a hundred cellars, every one sunken lower than another.

BAWLDY

I tauld you sae, madam.

ANNABELLA

Go to thy chamber, if thou'rt afraid.

GRIZELD

Ay, deeper and deeper

ANNABELLA

Thou needst not speak so loud, Grizeld Bane : I understand thee well enough. I hope thou hast been well received where thou wast.

GRIZELD

Ay ; they received me triumphantly. They scented the blood that will pour and the brands that will blaze ; the groans and the shrieks that will be uttered were sounding in their ears, like the stormy din of a war-pipe. What will be done to-morrow morning ! Think upon that, my dainty chuck ! and say if I did not deserve a noble reception.

ANNABELLA

No doubt, with such society as thy imagination holds converse with.

GRIZELD

Yes, dearest ! and thou, too, hast a noble reception abiding thee.

ANNABELLA

Heaven foi'efend !

GRIZELD

Ha, ha, ha ! Art thou frightened, dearest ? Do not be frightened ! it is a grand place ! my own mate is there, and the cord about his neck changed into a chain of rubies. There is much high promotion abiding thee.

ANNABELLA

And will have long abiding, I trust, ere I am invested with it.

GRIZELD

Not so long ; not so long, lady : whenever thou wilt it may be. Dost thou love a clasped gorget for thy pretty white neck ? *(Going up to her with a sly grin of affected courtesy, and attempting to grasp her throat)*

BAWLDY

Blasted witch ! wad ye throttle her ?

GRIZELD

Ha ! imp ! hast thou followed me so fast behind ? Down with thee ! Down with thee ! There is molten lead and brimstone a-cooking for thy supper ; there's no lack of hot porridge for thee, varlet.

BAWLDY

Oh madam, oh madam ! what hae ye brought on yoursel and on me, that was but a poor ignorant callant ! O send for the minister at once, and we'll down on our knees, and he'll pray for us. The damnation of the wicked is terrible.

ANNABELLA

She is but raving : the fumes of her posset have been working in her brain ; be not foolish enough to be frightened at what she says.

BAWLDY

I wish, O I wish I had never done it ! I wish I had never set eyes or set thoughts on the mammon of unrighteousness. Oh, oh !

GRIZELD

Ha, ha, ha ! Thou'rt frightened, art thou ?

ANNABELLA

Thou seest she is in jest, and has pleasure in scaring thee. Go to thy chamber, and compose thyself. (*Calling him back as he is about to go, and speaking in his ear.*) Don't go till she has left me.

Hie to our kitchen, Grizeld Bane.

GRIZELD

And leave thy sweet company, lady?

ANNABELLA

For a good savoury meal, which is ready for thee. Go, go ! I have promised to visit Lady Dungannen at a certain hour, and thee must leave.

GRIZELD

The de'il thank thee for I will not.

Exit Grizeld Bane

BAWLDY

The Lord be praised she is gone ! for she has been in the black pit o' hell since yestreen, and wad pu' every body after her an she could. Dear lAdy, send for the minister.

ANNABELLA

Hold thy foolish tongue, and retire to thy chamber. Violet Murrey's life is safe enough, so thy conscience may be easy. Follow me, for i must lock thee in.

BAWLDY

Maun I still be a prisoner ?

ANNABELLA

Thou sha'n't be so long; have patience a little while, foolish boy.

They exit

ACT 4 SCENE III.

A prison. Violet Murrey is discovered sitting on the ground by the light of a lamp fixed in the wall;

Enter Dunganren by a door, which is opened by a turnkey, who shuts it again and disappears.

DUNGARREN

Violet, Violet, my once dear Violet ! dost thou know my voice ? Wilt thou not raise thy head and look upon me ?

VIOLET

I know your voice : you are very kind to come to me in my misery.

DUNGARREN

Misery, indeed ! Oh that I should see thee thus, — the extremity of human wretchedness closing around thee !

VIOLET

Say not the extremity, Robert Kennedy, for I am innocent !

DUNGARREN

I will believe it. Ay, in despite of evidence as clear as the recognition of noon-day, — in despite of all evidence, I would believe it. The hateful sin of witchcraft, if such a sin there be, thou hast never committed ; it is impossible.

VIOLET

I know thou wilt believe it : and O! that thou couldst also believe that I am innocent of all falsehood and fickleness of affection ! But thou canst not do so ; it were unreasonable to expect it. Thou wilt think of me as an ungrateful, deceitful creature ; and this is the memory I must leave behind me with Robert of Dungarren.

DUNGARREN

I forgive thee ! I forgive thee, dear Violet ! for so in thy low estate I will call thee still, though thou lovest another as thou hast never loved me.

VIOLET

I love him, full surely, as I cannot love thee, but not to the injury of that affection which has always been thine.

DUNGARREN

I came not here to upbraid : we will speak of this no more.

VIOLET

Alas, alas ! I should speak and think of things far different, yet this lies on my heart as the heaviest load of all. May God forgive me for it !

DUNGARREN

And he will forgive thee, my dear friend ! for such I may and will call thee, since I may not call thee more.

VIOLET

Do, my noble Robert ! that is best of all. And, resting in thy mind as a friend, I know — I am confident, that something will happen, when I am gone, that will discover to thee my faithfulness. Death will soon be past, and thou wilt live to be a prosperous gentleman, and wilt sometimes think of one — my evil fame will not — thou wilt think, ay, wilt speak good of Violet MuiTey, when all beside speak evil. Thou wilt not — (*bursts into tears*)

DUNGARREN

My dear, dear creature ! dear as nothing else has ever been to me, thou shalt not die : the very thought of it makes me distracted !

VIOLET

Be not so : it is the manner of it that distresses thee. But has it not been the death of the martyrs, of the holy and the just ; of those, the dust of whose feet I had been unworthy to wipe ? Think of this, and be assured, that I shall be strengthened to bear it.

DUNGARREN

Oh, oh, oh ! If deliverance should be frustrated !

VIOLET

What art thou talking of? thou art, indeed, distracted. Nay, nay ! let not my execution terrify thee so much.

I, too, was terrified ; but I have learnt from my gaoler, who has been present at such spectacles, that the sentence, though dreadful, is executed mercifully. The flames will not reach me till I have ceased to breathe ; and many a natural disease doth end the course of life as mine will be terminated.

DUNGARREN

God forbid ! God help and deliver us !

{Runs impatiently to a corner of the dungeon, and puts his ear close to the ground.}

I do not hear them yet : if they should fail to reach it in time, God help us !

VIOLET

What dost thou there? What dost thou listen for ? What dost thou expect ?

DUNGARREN

Means for thy deliverance, — thy escape.

VIOLET

Say not so ; it is impossible.

DUNGARREN

It is possible, and will be, if there's a Providence on earth — if there's mercy in heaven. *(Puts his ear to the ground as before.)*

VIOLET

I hear nothing. What is it thou expectest to hear ?

DUNGARREN

I do hear it now : they are near ; they will open upon us presently.

VIOLET

What dost thou hear ?

DUNGARREN

The sound of their spades and their mattocks. O my brave miners ! they will do their work nobly at last.

VIOLET

A way to escape under ground ! my ears ring and my senses are confounded. Escape and deliverance ?

DUNGARREN

Yes, love, and friend, and dear human creature ! escape and deliverance are at hand.

VIOLET

How good and noble thou art to provide such deliverance for me, believing me unfaithful !

DUNGARREN

Come, come ; that is nothing : be what thou wilt, if I can but save thee ! — Life and death are now on the casting of a die.

The ground moves ; it is life !

VIOLET

The ground opens ; wonderful, unlooked-for deliverance ! Thank God ! thank God ! His mercy has sent it.

The earthen floor of the dungeon at one corner falls in, making a small opening, and the miners are heard distinctly at work.

DUNGARREN

(calling down) May we descend ? are you ready ?

VOICE BENEATH

In two minutes the passage will be practicable.

DUNGARREN

Make no delay ; we will pass any how.

VIOLET

How quickly they have worked, to mine so far under ground since yesterday !

DUNGARREN

That mine was completed many months ago to favour the escape of a prisoner, who died suddenly in prison before his projected rescue. The secret was revealed to me yesterday, by one of the miners, who had originally conducted the work.

VOICE

We are ready now.

DUNGARREN

Heaven be praised ! I will first descend, and receive thee in my arms.

(As they are about to descend, the door of the dungeon opens, and enter Rutherford and Lady Dungarren, accompanied by the sheriff and gaoler

SHERIFF

Ha ! company admitted without due permission ! Dungarren here ! Your underling, Mr Gaoler, is a rogue. How is this ?

GAOLER

As I am a Christian man, I know no more about it than the child that was born since yestreen.

SHERIFF

It is only one born since yestreen that will believe thee. A hole in the floor, too, made for concealment and escape ! Dungarren, you are my prisoner in the king's name. To favour the escape of a criminal is no slight offence against the laws of the land.

DUNGARREN

You distract me with your formal authorities : the laws of the land and the laws of God are at variance, for she is innocent.

SHERIFF

She has abused and bewitched thee to think so ; and a great proof it is of her guilt.

DUNGARREN

It is you and your coadjutors who are abused, dreadfully and wickedly abused, to hurry on, with such unrighteous obduracy, the destruction of one whom a savage would have spared. Tremble to think of it. At your peril do this.

SHERIFF

I am as sorry as any man to have such work to do, but yet it must be done ; and at your peril resist the law.

(to Gaoler) Take Robert Kennedy, of Dungarren, into custody, in the king's name.

DUNGARREN

Witchcraft ! heaven grant me patience ! her life to be taken for witchcraft ? senseless idiotical delusion !

SHERIFF

Do your duty, gaoler: he is beside himself ; distracted outright.

VIOLET

Noble Dungarren ! submit to the will of heaven. I am appointed to my hard fate ; and God will enable me to bear it. Leave me, my dear friend ! be patient, and leave me.

DUNGARREN

They shall hack me to pieces ere I leave thee.

VIOLET

Dear Robert, these are wild distracted words, and can be of no avail. — Good Mr. Rutherford, and Lady Dungarren, too ; ye came here to comfort me : this I know was your errand, but comfort him ! speak to him, and move him to submission !

RUTHERFORD

Your present vain resistance, Dungarren, does injury to her whom you wish to preserve.

LADY DUNGARREN

My son, my Robert, thou art acting like a maniac. Retire with these men, who are only doing their duty, and neither wish to injure nor insult you. I will stay with Violet, and Mr. Rutherford will go with you.

DUNGARREN

Leave her, to see her no more !

LADY DUNGARREN

Not so ; the sheriff will consent, that you may see her again in the morning, ere —

SHERIFF

I do consent : you shall see her in the morning, before she goes forth to — to the — to her —

DUNGARREN

To that which is so revolting and horrible, that no one dare utter it in words. Oh ! oh ! oh !

Dungarren subsides and is meekly taken out by the gaoler

RUTHERFORD

His mind is now exhausted, and unfit for present soothing ; attempts to appease and console him must come hereafter ; there is time enough for that.

(to Violet) But thy time is short ; I would prepare thee for an awful change. Unless thou be altogether hostile to thoughts of religion and grace, which I can never believe thee to be.

VIOLET

O no, no ! that were a dreadful hostility ; and thou, even thou, the good and enlightened Rutherford, my long-trying monitor and friend, canst express a doubt whether I am so fearfully perverted. Alas ! death is terrible when it comes with disgrace, — with the execration of Christian fellow-creatures ! O pray to God for me ! pray to God fervently, that I be not overwhelmed with despair !

RUTHERFORD

I will pray for thee most fervently ; and thou wilt be supported.

VIOLET

I have been at times, since my condemnation, most wonderfully composed and resigned, as if I floated on a boundless ocean, beneath His eye who says, " Be calm, be still ; it is my doing." But, oh ! returning surges soon swell on every side, tossing, and raging, and yawning tremendously, like gulfs of perdition, so that my senses are utterly confounded. My soul has much need of thy ghostly comfort.

LADY DUNGARREN

Comfort her, good Rutherford ! I forgive her all that she has done against my poor child, and may God forgive her !

VIOLET

And will nothing, dear madam, remove from your mind that miserable notion, that I have practised witchcraft against the health and life of your child ? Can you believe this and pity me ? No, no ! were I the fiend-possessed wretch you suppose me to be, a natural antipathy would rise in your breast at the sight of me, making all touch of sympathy impossible. I am innocent of this, and of all great crime ; and you will know it, when I am laid in a dishonoured grave, and have passed through the fearful pass of death, from which there is no return.

LADY DUNGARREN

You make me tremble, Violet Murrey ; if you are innocent, who can be guilty ?

VIOLET

Be it so deemed ! it is God's will : I must be meek when such words are uttered against me.

And you think it possible that I have practised with evil powers for the torment and destruction of your child ; of poor Jessie, who was my little companion and playfellow, whom I loved, and do love so truly ; who hung round my neck so kindly, and called me ay, sister was a sweet word from her guileless lips, and seemed to be — *(bursts into an agony of tears)*

LADY DUNGARREN

(to Rutherford) She may well weep and wring her hands : it makes me weep to think of the power of the Evil One over poor unassisted nature. Had she been less gentle and lovely, he had tempted her less strongly. I would give the best part of all that I possess to make and to prove her innocent. But it cannot be ; no ! it cannot be !

RUTHERFORD

Forbear ! forbear ! Prayer and supplication to the throne of mercy for that grace which can change all hearts, convert misery into happiness, and set humble chastised penitence by the side of undeviating virtue, — prayer and supplication for a poor stricken sister, and for our sinful selves, are our fittest employment now.

VIOLET

Thanks, my good sir ; you are worthy of your sacred charge. I am, indeed, a poor stricken sister ; one of the flock given you to lead, and humbly penitent for all the sins and faults I have really committed. Pray for me, that I may be more perfectly penitent, and strengthened for the fearful trial that awaits me.

RUTHERFORD

Ruth. Thou wilt be strengthened.

VIOLET

O ! I have great need ! I am afraid of death ; I am afraid of disgrace ; I am afraid of my own sinking pusillanimous weakness.

RUTHERFORD

But thou needst not be afraid, my dear child ; trust in His almighty protection, who strengthens the weak in the hour of need, and gives nothing to destruction which in penitence and love can put its trust in Him.

VIOLET

I will strive to do it, my kind pastor ; and the prayers of a good man will help me.

RUTHERFORD

Let us kneel, then, in humble faith.

SHERIFF

Not here, good sir ; I cannot leave her here, even with a man of your cloth, and that opening for escape in the floor.

RUTHERFORD

As you please, sir : remove her to another cell : or, if it must be, let a guard remain in this.

Enter an Attendant.

ATTENDANT

It is ready, sir.

SHERIFF

You must be removed to another prison-room.

VIOLET

As you please, sheriff.

SHERIFF

Lean upon me, madam : woe the day that I should lodge so fair a lady in such unseemly chambers !

VIOLET

I thank you for your courtesy, good sheriff : — you do what you deem to be your duty ; and when you are at last undeceived, and convinced of my innocence, as I know you will one day be, you will be glad to remember that you did it with courtesy.

SHERIFF

Blessings on thy lovely face, witch or no witch ! dost thou speak to me so gently ?

Exit all except ATTENDANT

ATTENDANT

A bonny witch, and a cunning ane, as ever signed compact wi' Satan ! I wonder what cantrap she'll devise for the morn, whan the pinching time comes. I wish it were over.

ACT 5 SCENE I.

*A mean chamber, with a window looking upon the market-place of Paisley.
Enter Annabella and the landlord of the house.*

LANDLORD

Here, madam, you can remain concealed from every body, and see the execution distinctly from the window.

ANNABELLA

Yes ; this is what I want. And you must let no creature come here, on any account. Keep your promise upon this point, I charge you.

LANDLORD

Trust me, madam, nobody shall enter this room, though they carried a bag of gold in their hand. I have refused a large sum for the use of that window ; and excepting some schoolboys and apprentices who have climbed up to the roof of the house, there is not a creature in the tenement, but Grizeld Bane and Black Bawldy, each in their place of confinement,

ANNABELLA

I thank thee, landlord, and will reward thee well : thou shalt be no loser for the money thou hast refused on my account. What is the hour?

LANDLORD

The abbey church struck eight, as I reckon, half an hour ago.

ANNABELLA

Longer than that — much longer. The time should be close at hand for leading out the criminals. (What a concourse of people are assembled ! and such a deep silence through the whole !

LANDLORD

Ay ; in the day of doom they will scarcely stand closer and quieter.

ANNABELLA

Hold thy tongue ; we know nothing of such matters.

LANDLORD But what the holy book reveals to us.

ANNABELLA

Art thou sure that no reprieve has arrived? It must be past the hour. (*Bell tolls*) Ha ! the time is true.

LANDLORD

That awful sound ! It gives notice that the prisoners will soon be led forth. Lord have mercy on their sinful souls ! on all sinful souls !

ANNABELLA

Thou mayst go : I would be alone.

Exit Landlord.

Bell tolls again, and at intervals through the whole scene.

ANNABELLA

Now comes the fearful consummation ! Her arts, her allurements, her seeming beauty, her glamour, and

her power, — what will they all amount to when the noon of this day shall be past ? a few black ashes, and a few scorched bones. — Fy upon these cowardly thoughts, — this sinking confidence ! Revenge is sweet ; revenge is noble ; revenge is natural ; what price is too dear for revenge? — Why this tormenting commotion? To procure false evidence for the conviction of one whom we know or believe to be guilty, — is this a sin past redemption ? No ; it is but the sacrifice of truth for right and useful ends. I know it is ; reason says it is ; and I will be firm and bold, in spite of human infirmity.

Enter Grizeld Bane.

GRIZELD

Yes, dearest ; thou art very bold. There is not a cloven foot, nor a horned head of them all, wickeder and bolder than thou art.

ANNABELLA

What brings thee here ?

GRIZELD

To be in such noble company.

ANNABELLA

What dost thou mean by that ?

GRIZELD

Every word hath its meaning-, lady, though every meaning hath not its word, as thou very well knowest. I am great ; thou art great ; but the greatest of all stands yonder.

ANNABELLA

What dost thou point at ? I see nothing.

GRIZELD

But thou wilt soon, dearest. The master we both serve is standing near us. His stature is lofty ; his robe is princely ; his eyes are two flames of fire. And one stands behind him, like a chieftain of elrich degree. — But why is he thus ? Can no power undo that hateful noose ? It wavers before my eyes so distractingly !

ANNABELLA

Thou art, indeed, distracted and visionary. There is nobody here but ourselves.

GRIZELD

The master of us all is waiting yonder ; and he will not sink to his nether court again till the fair lady is with him.

ANNABELLA

O! I understand thy moody fancy now. The master thou meanest is waiting for Violet Murrey.

GRIZELD

Yes, dearest, if he can get her. If not, he will have some one else, who is worthy to bear him company. He must have his meed and his mate : he will not return empty-handed, when a fair lady is to be had.

ANNABELLA

Heaven forefend !

That bell sounds differently : they are now leading them forth.

GRIZELD

Come, come here, darling : here is a sight to make the eyes flash, and the heart's blood stir in its core. Here is a brave sight for thee !

They both go to the window, and the scene closes.

ACT 5 SCENE II.

The market-place prepared for the execution, with two stakes, and fagots heaped round them, erected in the middle, but nearer the bottom than the front of the stage. A great crowd of people are discovered. The bell tolls rapidly, and then stops.

Enter the Sheriff and Magistrates, and Mary Macmurren supported by Rutherford, and guarded.

RUTHERFORD

Now, prisoner, may God be merciful to thee ! Make use of the few moments of life that remain, by making confession before these good people of the wickedness thou hast committed, and the justice of the sentence that condemns thee. It is all the reparation now in thy power ; and may God accept it of thee !

MARY MACMURREN

Oh, hone ! oh, hone !

RUTHERFORD

Dost thou not understand what I say ? Make confession.

MARY MACMURREN

Oh, hone ! oh, hone !

RUTHERFORD

Dost thou hear me, woman ? Make confession.

MARY MACMURREN

Confession ?

RUTHERFORD

Yes, confession, woman.

MARY MACMURREN

Tell me what it is, an' I'll say 't.

BAILLIE

How cunning she is to the last !

RUTHERFORD

Didst thou not confess on thy trial that thou wast a witch, and hadst tryste-meethigs and dealings with the devil ?

MARY MACMURREN

Lord hae mercy on me : I said what I thought, and I thought as ye bade me. The Lord hae mercy on a wicked woman ! for that, I know, I am.

BAILLIE

How cunning she is again ! She calls herself wicked, but will not call herself witch.

RUTHERFORD

Mary Macmurren, make confession ere you die, and God will be more merciful to you.

MARY MACMURREN

Oh, hone ! oh, hone ! miserable wretch that I am ! Do ye mak confession for me, sir, and I'll say't after you, as weel as I dow. Oh, hone ! oh, hone !

SHERIFF

There is no making anything of her now, miserable wretch ! Lead her on to the stake, and make her pray with you there, if the Evil One hath not got the entire mastery over her to the very last.

Mary Macmurren is led to the stake

And now there is a sadder duty to perform ; the fair, the young, and the gentle must be brought forth to shame and to punishment.

Violet Murrey is brought in

SHERIFF

Now, madam, it is time that I should receive from you any commands you may wish to entrust me with : they shall be faithfully obeyed.

VIOLET

I thank you, Mr. Sheriflf. What may be allowed for mitigating my sufferings, I know you have already ordered : have you also given similar directions in behalf of my miserable companion ?

SHERIFF

I have, madam.

VIOLET

Thanks for your mercy ! My passage to a better state will be short: and of God's mercy there I have no misgivings ; for of the crime laid to my charge I am as innocent as the child newly born ; as you yourself, worthy sir, or this good man on whose arm I now lean.

SHERIFF

If this be so, lady, woe to the witnesses, the judges, and the jury by whom you are condemned !

VIOLET

Say not so. I am condemned by what honest, though erring men, believed to be the truth. What God alone knows to be the truth, is not for man's direction. *(To Rutherford)* Weep not for me, my kind friend. You had good cause to believe that you had seen me in company with a creature not of this world, and you were compelled to declare it.

RUTHERFORD

I wish I had died, ere that evidence had been given !

VIOLET

Be comforted ! be comforted ! for you make me good amends, in that your heart refuses, in spite of such belief, to think me guilty of the crime for which I am to suffer. There is another — you know whom I mean — who thinks me innocent. When I am gone, ye will be often together, and speak and think of Violet

Murrey. This is the memory I shall leave behind me: my evil fame with others is of little moment. And yet I needs must weep to think of it ; 'tis human weakness.

RUTHERFORD

God bless and strengthen thee, my daughter, in this thy last extremity !

VIOLET

Fear not for that : I am strengthened. You have prayed for me fervently, and I have prayed for myself; and think ye I shall not be supported ? (*Looking round on the crowd*) And these good people, too, some of them, I trust, will pray for me. They will one day know that I am innocent.

CROWD

We know it already. — She must be so. —
She is innocent.

BALLIE

I command silence ! — Mr. Sheriff, your duty calls upon you.

SHERIFF

Madam.

VIOLET

You speak, and turn from me : I understand you.

SHERIFF

I am compelled to say, though most unwillingly, our time is mn.

VIOLET

And I am ready. The last fearful step of my unhappy course only remains : you (*Rutherford*) have gone far enough, my good sir. Receive my dying thanks for all your kindness, and let us part. Farewell ! till we meet in a better world !

RUTHERFORD

Nay, nay ; I will be with thee till all is over, cost what it may, — though it should kill me.

VIOLET

Most generous man ! thou art as a parent to me, and, woe the day ! thy heart will be wrung as though thou wert so in truth.

BAILLIE

(*to sheriff*) Why so dilatory ? Proceed to the place of execution.

SHERIFF

Not so hasty, sir! The psalm must first be sung.

BAILLIE

It will be sung when she is at the stake.

SHERIFF

(*aside*) Would thou wert there in her stead, heartless bigot! — (*Aloud*) Raise the psalm here.

VIOLET

You are very humane, good sheriff, but we shall, if you please, proceed to the place appointed.

Enter Murrey in a rush

MURREY

Stop ! stop ! stop the execution. She is innocent ! she is innocent ! Ye shall not murder the innocent !

SHERIFF

Who art thou, who wouldst stop the completion of the law ?

MURREY

One whom you have known ; whom you have looked on often.

SHERIFF

The holy faith preserve us ! art thou a living man ?

RUTHERFORD

Murrey of Torwood ! doth the grave give up its dead, when the sun is shining in the sky ?

SHERIFF

Look to the lady, she is in a swoon.

MURREY

My dear, my noble child ! thine own misery thou couldst sustain, but mine has overwhelmed thee : dear, dear child !

Enter Dungarren, running

BAILLIE

Dungarren, broke from prison, in defiance of the law !

DUNGARREN

In defiance of all earthly things. *(to Murrey)* Who art thou ? What right hast thou to support Violet Murrey ?

MURREY

The right of a father ; a miserable father.

DUNGARREN

Her father is dead.

MURREY

Not so, Dungarren : I would I were dead, if it could save her life.

DUNGARREN

(pointing to Rutherford) This good man, whose word is truth itself, laid Murrey of Torwood in the grave with his own hands.

MURREY

Did he examine the face of the corse which he so piously interred ? I had changed clothes with my faithful servant. — But it is a story tedious to tell ; and can ye doubt his claims to identity, who, in the very act of making them, subjects his own life to the forfeit of the law ?

BAILLIE

By my faith ! he is a condemned murderer, and will be required of our hands ; keep well on the watch, that he may not escape.

DUNGARREN

She seems to revive ; she will soon recover. (*To Murrey.*) And it was you who were with her on the heath, and in the cave ?

MURREY

It was I, Dungarren.

DUNGARREN

No apparition, no clandestine lover, but her own father !

VIOLET

(*recovering*) Call him not father ! I own him not ! Send him away, send him away, dear Robert !

MURREY

My generous child ! the strength of thy affection is wonderful, but it is all vain : I here submit myself willingly to the authority of the law, though innocent of the crime for which I am condemned — the wilful murder of a worthy gentleman. And now, Mr. Sheriff, you cannot refuse to relieve her, who is mainly convicted for that, in being seen with me, she seemed to hold intercourse with apparitions, or beings of another world.

SHERIFF

You speak reason : God be praised for it !

DUNGARREN

God be praised, she is safe !

BAILLIE

There be other proofs against her besides that.

DUNGARREN

Be they what they may, they are false !

Enter Bawldy running

BAWLDY

Hear, my lord sheriff, — hear me, your honour — hear me, Dungarren ; — hear me, a' present ! She's innocent ; — I stole it, I stole it mysel : the Lady Annabel tempted me, and I stole it.

SHERIFF

Simple fool ! it is not for theft she is condemned.

BAWLDY I

ken that weel, your honour. She's condemned for being a witch, and she's nae witch : I stole it mysel and gied it to the Lady Annabel, wha cuttet the hole i' the sleeve o't, I'll be sworn. Little did I think what wicked purpose she was after.

SHERIFF

Yes, yes, my callant ! I comprehend thee now : it is that gown which was produced in court, thou art talking of. Thou stol'st it for the Lady Annabel, and she cut a piece out of it, which she pretended to have found in

the sick-chamber ?

BAWLDY

E'en sac, your honour. Whip me, banish me, or hang me, an' it maun be sae, but let the innocent lady abee.

SHERIFF

Well, well ; I'll take the punishing of thee into my own hands, knave. What shrieks are these ?

Repeated shrieks are heard from the window of a house, and two figures are seen indistinctly within, struggling : a dull stifled sound succeeds, and then a sudden silence.

There is mischief going on in that house.

BAILLIE

Baillie

(at the door of the house, knocking) Let me enter : I charge you within, whoever ye be, to open the door.

No answer ! *(Knocks again.)* Still no answer ! Open the door, or it shall be forced open.

GRIZELD

(from the window) Ha, ha ! what want ye, good Mr. Magistrate ?

BAILLIE

Somebody has suffered violence in this house ; open the door immediately.

GRIZEL

And what would you have from the house that ye are so impatient to enter ? There be corses enough in the churchyard, I trow; ye need not come here for them.

SHERIFF

She is a mad woman, and has murdered somebody.

CONSTABLE

Mad, your honour ! she's the witch we ha' been seeking in vain to apprehend, and the blackest, chiefest hag o' them a'. By my faith, we maun deal cannily wi' her, or she'll mak her escape fra' us again through the air.

BAILLIE

Open the door, woman, and you sha'n't be forced ; we want to enter peaceably. Who is with you, there ? Who was it that shrieked so fearfully ?

GRIZELD

Never trouble thy head about that, Mr. Magistrate ; she'll never disturb you more.

SHERIFF

Who is it you have with you ?

GRIZELD

(throwing down the scarf of Annabella) Know ye that token ? It was a' fair lady who owned it, but she has no need of it now : hand me up a winding-sheet.

SHERIFF

The cursed hag has destroyed some lady. — Officers, enter by force, and do your duty. Witch or no witch,

she cannot injure strong men like you, in the open light of day.

The constables burst into the house and presently return with the body of Annabella

BAILLIE

Stand back, every one of you, and leave clear room round the body. It is the Lady Annabella. She has been strangled : — she has struggled fearfully ; her features are swollen, and her eyes starting from her head. — Stand back, I say; or I'll deal with you as breakers of the peace.

SHERIFF

Be not so angry with them, good baillie: they must have some frightful sight to stare at, and they will be disappointed of that which they came for.

BAILLIE

Disappointed, sheriff ! You. do not mean, I hope, to reprieve that foul witch at the other stake.

SHERIFF

Ay, that poor wretch had gone out of my head.

BAILLIE

Wretch enough, good sooth ! the blackest witch in Renfrewshire, Grizeld Bane excepted.

SHERIFF

But we need not burn her now : her evidence may be wanted to convict the other.

BAILLIE

Not a whit ! we have evidence at command to burn her twenty times over. A bird in hand is a wise proverb. If we spare her now, she may be in Norway or Lapland when we want her again for the stake.

DUNGARREN

(approaching the body of Annabella) And this is thy fearful end, most miserable woman ! It wrings my heart to think of what thou wast, and what thou mightst have been.

MURREY

(to sheriff about Violet) Your authority having, on these undoubted proofs of her innocence, reprieved her, may I request that she be now withdrawn from the public gaze ? It is not fit that she should be further exposed.

SHERIFF

True, Torwood ; you shall lead her back to prison, where she shall only remain till safe and commodious apartments are prepared for her. As for yourself, I am sorry to say, we have no power to lodge you otherwise than as a condemned man, obnoxious to the last punishment of the law.

VIOLET

O say not so, dear sir ! He had made his escape, he was safe, he was free, and he surrendered himself into your hands to save the life of his child. Will ye take advantage of that ? it were cruel and ungenerous.

SHERIFF

We act, lady, under authority, and must not be guided by private opinions and affections.

BAILLIE

Most assuredly ! it is our duty to obey the law and to make it be obeyed, without fear or favour.

VIOLET

On my knees, I beseech you ! I beseech you for an innocent man ! Royal mercy may be obtained, if ye will grant the time — time to save the life of the innocent — innocent, I mean, of intentional murder.

SHERIFF

Has he further proof of such innocence to produce than was shown on his trial ?

BAILLIE

If he has not, all application for mercy were vain. He slew the man with whom he had a quarrel, without witnesses. If he is innocent, it is to God and his own conscience, but the law must deem him guilty.

VIOLET

He did it not without witnesses, but he who was present is dead. Alas, alas ! if Fotheringham had been alive, he had been justified.

BAILLIE

Forbear to urge that plea, lady : that the only person who was present at the quarrel or combat is dead or has disappeared, throws a greater shade of darkness on the transaction.

SHERIFF

These are hard words, baillie, and unnecessary.

BAILLIE

You may think so, sheriff, but if you yield on this point, I entirely dissent from it ; ay, from granting any delay to the execution of his sentence. Shall a man be made gainer for having defied the law and broken from his prison ?

SHERIFF

(to Murrey) I am afraid we can do nothing for you. You must prepare for the worst.

MURREY

I came here so prepared, worthy sir : I knew you could do nothing for me. *(To Violet, who kneels imploringly.)* Forbear, dearest child ! thou humblest thyself in vain. I will meet fate as a man : do not add to my suffering by giving way to such frantic humiliation. Dungarren, I commit her to your protection. You will be her honourable friend.

DUNGARREN

Ay, and her devoted husband, also, if you esteem me worthy to be so.

MURREY

Worthy to be her husband, were she the daughter of a king, my noble Robert Kennedy ! But thou must not be the son-in-law of such a one as I am, — one whose life has been terminated by —

DUNGARREN

I despise the prejudice !

VIOLET

But I do not ! O ! I cannot despise it ! If my father must suffer, I will never marry thee, and I will never marry another. — My fate is sealed. Thou and this good man *(Rutherford)* will be my friends, and Heaven will, in pity, make my earthly course a short one. A creature so stricken with sorrow and disgrace has nothing to do in this world but to wait, in humble patience, till God in His mercy shall take her out of it.

MURREY

Come from this hateful spot, my sweet child ! Cruel as our lot is, we shall be, for what remains of this day, together.

Grizeld Bane is led out of the house and hissed by the crowd

CROWD

Ay, there she comes, and the de'il raging within her. — The blackest witch of a'. — Let her be brunt at the stake that was meant for the lady. — Hurra ! hurra ! mair fagots and a fiercer fire for Grizeld ! — Hurra ! and defiance to Satan and his agents !

A trumpet sounds and a company of soldiers enters with an Officer and Fotheringham

OFFICER

You will please, Mr. Sheriff, to make the contents of this paper public.

SHERIFF

I charge every one here, at his peril, to be silent.

"Be it known unto all men, that the King's Majesty, with the Lords and Commons in Parliament assembled, have decreed that the law punishing what has been called the crime of witchcraft as a felonious offence be repealed, and it is therefore repealed accordingly. Henceforth there shall no person be prosecuted at law as a wizard or witch, throughout these realms ; and any person or persons who shall offer injury to any one, as being guilty of the supposed crime of witchcraft, shall be punished for such aggression. God save the King!"

Silence, then

CROWD

My certes ! the de'il has been better re-presented in the house of Parliament than a' the braid shires in the kingdom. — Sic a decree as that in a Christian land ! — To mak Satan triumphant ! — There'll be fine gambols on moors and in kirkyards for this, I trow, — Parliament, forsooth! we hae sent bonnie members there, indeed, gin thae be the laws they mak. — And will Mary Macmurren escape after a' ? — Out upon 't ! She may be brunt at ony rate, for she is condemned by the gude auld law of our forefathers. — Ay, so she may; that stands to reason.

Crowd close round the stake where Mary Macmurren is bound

SHERIFF

Desist, I say, or the soldiers shall disperse you forthwith.

FATHERINGHAM

Would they burn the miserable creature for an imaginary crime ; one may say, for a pastime ?

BAILLIE

No, good sir ; not imaginary. She is a witch by her own confession. And that woman (*Grizeld Bane*) is also, by her own words, convicted of consorting and colleaguig with Satan, — an awful and mischievous witch.

FATHERINGHAM

Is she so ?

GRIZELD

Who says otherwise ? The sun shines now, and that makes thee bold ; but my time of power is coming,

FATHERINGHAM

Is this you, Grizeld Bane ? What brought you to this part of the country ?

GRIZELD

The prince of the power of the air.

BAILLIE

There, sir ! you hear her confess it. And who is she ? for you seem to know her.

FATHERINGHAM

A miserable woman whose husband was hanged for murder, at Inverness, some years ago, and who thereupon became distracted. She was, when I left that country, kept in close custody. But she has, no doubt, escaped from her keepers, who may not be very anxious to reclaim her.

BAILLIE

We must secure her, then, and send her back to the north.

GRIZELD

Lay hands on me who dare ! I defy you : my master is stronger than you all, since you sent him to his kingdom of darkness . Ye cannot stop the breath of a spirit, though you had a score of executioners at your beck. Lay hands upon me who dare !

FATHERINGHAM

Nobody will do you any violence, dame ; but you will quietly retire with these two friends (*soldiers, who take charge of her*). Nay ; make no resistance : look steadfastly in my face, and you will plainly perceive that you must go.

OFFICER

Now, Mr. Sheriff, release your prisoners, since the laws against witchcraft are abrogated.

SHERIFF

I do it most gladly. Would you had authority to command the release of all my prisoners !

OFFICERS

It is only those condemned for witchcraft, whose enlargement I have authority to command.

MURREY

(*confronting Fotheringham*) But there is a prisoner condemned for murder whom thou, James Fotheringham, knowest to be innocent, and therefore thou art by nature authorized, yea, compelled, to demand his release, — I mean, the reversion of his sentence.

FATHERINGHAM

Murrey of Torwood in the land of the hving !

MURREY

No thanks to thee that I am so! To desert me, and leave the country too, circumstanced as thou knewest me to be, — the only witness of that fatal quarrel, — was it the act of a friend, of a Christian, of a man ?

FATHERINGHAM

No, neither of a Christian, nor a heathen, had it been a voluntary act. But you were not yet in custody, when I left the country, with no intention of going further than the southern coast of Ireland, to visit a dying relation.

MURREY

In Ireland all these years ?

FATHERINGHAM

Be not so hasty. That coast I never reached : a violent storm drove our vessel out to sea, where she was boarded and captured by a pirate. My varied tale, dear Murrey, you shall hear on a fitter occasion. Thank God, that I am now here ! and have this day accompanied my friend (*the officer*) on his public errand, still in time to save thee. For hearing, on my return to England, some weeks ago, thy sad story, how thou hadst been condemned, hadst made thy escape from prison, how thy dead body was found in a pit, and interred, — I was in no hurry to proceed northwards, as the justification of thy memory could not be disappointed.

MURREY

Thou shouldst not have suffered even my memory to rest under such imputation, — no, not an hour.

VIOLET

Dear father, be not so stern when deliverance — a blessed deliverance, is sent to thee. See ; there is a tear in his eye. It was not want of friendship that detained him.

FATHERINGHAM

I thank thee, sweet lady, for taking my part. It was not want of friendship that detained me ; though Murrey has always been so hasty and ardent, and I so deliberate and procrastinating, it is wonderful we should ever have been friends.

DUNGARREN

No, not wonderful : though slow yourself, you loved him, perhaps, for his ardour.

FATHERINGHAM

Yes, young man, you are right. But how was it that he loved me ? if, indeed, he ever loved me. Perhaps he never did.

MURREY

I did — I do — and will ever love thee, wert thou as slow and inert as a beetle.

DUNGARREN

Now ye are friends, and this terrible tempest has past over us ! May such scenes as we have this day witnessed never again disgrace a free and a Christian land !

A murmur among the crowd

SHERIFF

Good people, be pacified ; and instead of the burning of a witch, ye shall have six hogsheads of ale set abroach at the cross, to drink the health of Violet Murrey, and a grand funeral into the bargain.

DUNGARREN

Forbear, sheriff : the body of this unhappy lady is no subject for pageantry. She shall be interred with decent privacy ; and those who have felt the tyranny of uncontrolled passions will think, with conscious awe, of her end.

CURTAIN